

Uniting All Things In Christ

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[0:00] Ephesians 1 and verse 1. Paul, an apostle of Christ Jesus by the will of God, to the saints in Ephesus, the faithful in Christ Jesus.

! Grace and peace to you from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the one he loves.

In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding.

And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment, to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

[1:29] In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory.

And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, having believed you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession, to the praise of his glory.

Jesus is the reason for the season, we often say. But from a different perspective, so is sin.

Sin not just in our hearts, but the curse of sin, the frustration that's bound up in the whole world. We sing, No more let sins and sorrows grow, or thorns infest the ground.

Why did Jesus come? For that exact reason, thorns and thistles and sorrows and sin. He came to fix what we broke.

[2:53] He came to restore what we destroyed. Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall.

And all of the king's horses and all of the king's men couldn't put Humpty together again. Well, Jesus came to fix the great cosmic Humpty that fell apart.

And so we've seen his glory so far in this series and who he is. He's the face of God. He's God and man. We've seen his glory in his coming, in his obedience, in his dying, his glory in taking the highest place, his glory in ruling and reigning and returning.

And tonight we come right up to the end. Next week, Lord willing, we will reach the finish line in this series. But, well, what's at the end is the faith shall be sight.

So that's what we'll look at, Lord willing, next week. But tonight we want to see Christ's glory in how Jesus sums up everything in himself.

[4:07] He unites everything in himself. And so I want to look at Ephesians chapter 1 and verse 10. Now Paul has been praising God for all the blessings that are ours in Jesus Christ.

Our brother Kevin prayed through many of those blessings. So in him we've been chosen, we've been predestined to be adopted, we've been redeemed, we've been forgiven.

But in verse 9, he says something rather different. He says one of the blessings that we receive in Christ is the knowledge of a mystery.

The knowledge of a mystery. So look at again what it says in verse 9 and 10. And he made known to us the mystery of his will.

The mystery of his will according to his good pleasure. Now remember in the New Testament, a mystery is not something that is mysterious. It is something, it's Paul's way of talking about something that was not revealed in the Old Testament, but now in the New Testament, in Christ, it has been revealed.

[5:16] So that's what a mystery is. So he has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment.

And here it is. Here's the mystery that is blessed, it's blessed for us to know. To bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.

Now Peter, in 2 Peter, speaking of Paul, says, his letters contain some things that are hard to understand. And if Peter the Apostle felt that way about Paul's writings, I think it's certainly okay for us sometimes to think that as well.

And so if you're saying, I have no idea what Paul is saying here, why is this a blessing? I don't even know what it means. The mystery is still a mystery. That's okay. It's hard to understand, but it is not impossible to understand.

Sometimes the hardest things to understand are actually the sweetest when you've come to terms and when you've got your hands around them. Thanksgiving dinner takes a long time to cook and a long time to put together, longer than most meals, but it really is one of the best meals of the year.

[6:35] And so I'm asking you to stick with me and by the end, with God's help, you'll see that this really is a wonderful view of the glory of Christ.

You're going to have to climb the mountain, but the mountain has a good view. So let's begin with a question. What is Paul saying here in Ephesians 1, 9, and 10?

What is he saying here? Why is this here with all these other glorious benefits? benefits? And I think that is the first clue that this is something really good.

That Paul felt like after talking about predestination and adoption, and later he talks about the Spirit coming and living in our hearts, right in the middle of all these blessings, he talks about this mystery.

So this is a big deal. So what is Paul saying? Well, to answer that question, we have to begin at the beginning. We have to go all the way back to Genesis.

[7:36] In the beginning, God created everything good. Do you remember as he's creating, he's saying again and again, it is good. It was good. It was good. And then on the sixth day, after the creation of man, when the crown of creation is completed, man, God looks and he says, it is very good.

Now, why the difference? Why go from good to very good? Because creation is more glorious than just the sum of its parts. It's more glorious as a completed system.

And with the creation of man, with man at the head, now the first creation is complete. The system is organized. The first creation is tied together with man in his place, the place of dominion.

With a right relationship with God, the whole system of the first creation is beautiful. It's wonderful. And so there, man was in the garden.

There was the creation. And the whole of creation thrived and grew under the blessing of God.

Everything was as it should be. Everything was related to each other as it should be.

[8:58] man and God, God and man, angels and men, men and animals, animals and men, men and plants, the whole thing. Everything was working together. Everything was as it should be.

And all together, the creation served the creator and showed how glorious and powerful and wonderful and wise he was. but then man, the head of that creation, fell.

The unifying factor fell. The center fell. And when the center fell, the whole of creation fell into decay. And the whole of creation came under the curse.

And that explains why when man sins, the whole creation is cursed because man is the head of that creation. And so Romans 8 says all that creation was subjected to frustration.

And that's where we are. And that's why it's nigh on impossible for us to imagine heaven.

Sometimes we tell you that and even then I know how difficult it is for us to imagine heaven.

[10:13] We think about two thoughts and then we don't know what to think anymore. Our minds are so full of the here and the now and the here and the now is falling apart.

Heaven is so far away from our experience. Everything, everywhere we look, there's conflict.

There's strife. There's decay. Rot is at the heart of this creation because sinful man is at its head.

And so there's disease and there's cancer and our houses fall apart and our cars rust and they fall apart and we take our pets to the vets and we go home without them.

We lose our parents. We lose our babies and society. A lady I know is a teacher's aide at Plymouth and she told me this week about a fourth grader that she had in her class there.

He threw a chair at another student in the middle of class. Had a hysterical fit. She had to physically take her arms, wrap them around him, drag him outside out of the hallway.

[11:32] She let him down. He threw himself on the floor, threw a fit. the school did nothing. And the parents think the kid needs testing.

Obviously, I don't need to tell you that society is broken. People aren't doing what they're called to do. And then our families ache.

And perhaps we see that no more clearly during this season when we're all supposed to be together and we're all supposed to be happy and we're supposed to be full of Christmas cheer and yet our hearts are bruised and broken and we're at our wits end.

We don't know what to do and it's our families. And Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall and Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. And so now we sit and we live in the pieces of Humpty Dumpty.

And we're able to put some of the pieces together for a brief time and then they fall apart on us. And that's the great cosmic problem.

[12:37] That's the background of Ephesians 1, 9, and 10. If we're going to understand what Paul is saying we have to understand that's the background. That's why this is so good because the situation that we find ourselves in is so bad.

And it's hard as a preacher to know how to balance these things because if you're going to feel the goodness of what Jesus is going to do you have to live in the badness of the situation. But we're going to move on.

And I just trust that you'll have your eyes open and you'll see Jesus as you're going through your week and you run into things and you run into frustrations and you run into that disease and that sickness and the problems of society and family you'll think this is what Jesus came to fix.

So that's the great cosmic problem. And now Paul says God has made known to us the mystery of his will. He's going to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head even Christ. Now in the Greek this phrase together under one head is a single word and it means to sum up. It means to gather together. It means to unite under one principle.

[13:56] to bring everything into its proper place. It's the main idea of a paragraph. It's the main sentence that ties the whole paragraph together.

It's the main theme. Paul uses the same word in Romans 13 when he says the commandments do not commit adultery, do not murder, do not steal, do not covet, and whatever other commandments there may be are summed up.

that's the word. It's summed up in this one rule love your neighbor as yourself. You see what that word means then? To sum up.

It's the unifying feature. It's the one thing. Everything hangs on it. It's the strand that runs through all of the commandments to love your neighbor as yourself. And so with love in the law then each commandment finds its proper place.

that's what it means to be united under one head to be summed up. And so that's what Paul is saying here. Everything is out of order. Everything is fallen. Everything is broken. It's falling apart.

[15:03] But Jesus is going to gather it up and fix it. He's going to put it back into its proper place. And so just like the law is properly oriented when love is at the center and then when you take love out of it the law becomes a horrible abusive thing but when you put love into it it's a beautiful and wonderful thing.

So Christ is going to take the center. Christ is going to take the center of the creation the new creation.

He's going to sum everything up. Everything is going to depend on him. Everything is going to hang on him and find its proper place as it's related to him.

And so there we have all the material stuff. All the broken stuff of this created world in ourselves in society in our families in the created world itself and Jesus is going to reorient it all to himself.

So you've seen a needle and a magnet and you know how you can reorient a pen's magnetic field by rubbing a magnet on it.

[16:17] So you can actually by rubbing the magnet change the lines of magnetism and turn them and change them to point in a different direction.

So you put the needle in your little bowl of water and sometimes it will point south but if you rub the magnet on it it will point north. That's what Paul is saying.

Jesus is going to take everything to himself and reorient it, re-point it so it's facing heading toward God.

He's going to reorganize all of creation so it's just like him. So it fits in with him. So it's facing the same direction as he is.

So Colossians 1.19 for God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him in Christ and through him to reconcile to himself all things not all people all things whether things on earth or things in heaven by making peace through his blood shed on the cross.

[17:19] So he's reconciling all things back to God through himself. Things are falling apart. Things are going their own way. They're clashing. There's strife.

There's conflict. But Jesus is going to bring it all back and that is nothing less than a new creation. A new creation.

So in the first creation Adam was the unifying feature. He was the main point. And Christ is the unifying head of the second creation.

The new creation. And we get hints of it even in the gospel stories as we read them. It says that the spirit overshadowed Mary.

In the first creation the spirit hovered over the waters. And as God spoke he brought forth the first creation.

[18:17] It's the same word. It's the same idea. In the beginning of the new creation the spirit hovered over Mary's womb. And the second Adam was born.

and it was the beginning of a new creation. And in the resurrection Jesus became the first fruits of that new creation. Paul in 1 Corinthians 15 talking about the resurrection says the first man Adam was a living being.

And the second the last Adam a life giving spirit. spirit. So they're kind of the same but they're not quite the same.

Adam was a living being in the last Adam a life giving spirit. Then he goes on to say just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man so we will bear the likeness of the man from heaven.

So Adam fell and we died with him. He brought us into this place of this huge mess and we fell with him. But in the same way but exactly the opposite Christ gives us life.

[19:28] He's a life giving spirit and through his resurrection. So Adam gave us death. Jesus gives us life. Adam destroyed this creation.

Jesus is rebuilding it. And so as we are joined to Jesus and this is how it works with us personally as we are joined to Jesus we ourselves personally become new creations.

And it's no longer fallen fragile Adam as our head as our representative but it's now the risen exalted Lord Jesus.

And so what was scattered and what was falling apart in us spiritually it's brought back it's gathered up and it's brought back to God. And so the life we live now we live for him.

We once were going our own way. And when we were joined to Jesus the life we live we live to God now. So Jesus fills us and he reorients us with Christ's spirit in us we're turned around and we're restored.

[20:35] That happens in part now and it will happen at the resurrection completely. but you see it's not just us.

It's not us that it's just it's not just us that experience this new creation. It's all things. He won't just save us he won't just gather restore and realign us but everything and you notice that in our verse in verse 10 to bring all things in heaven and on earth.

It doesn't say all persons. It doesn't say all people. It doesn't say all humans or all angels. He says all things in heaven and on earth.

And then we will be home. we will be in a world that fits us then. We will be in a world that we belong in.

Right now we are strangers and we are pilgrims. And we see society and family and we see things in creation that distress us. But then Christ will fill everything in every way and we will be home.

[21:50] Because we will all be in our proper place. We'll all be back to where we belong. Well that's what's ahead.

And Paul says it's a blessing to know that. It's a blessing to know that. We don't have to live this life in doubt and fear wondering what's ahead.

We don't have to live in distress over the state of creation. It should break our hearts what sinners do to the creation, to animals, to plants, to the forest, to what we do to each other, what we do to babies, what our children do, what our co-workers do, what our government does.

Those things should legitimately distress us and break our hearts. But that's not where we have to stay. We don't have to get angry and we don't have to get violent.

We don't have to get fed up and frustrated and write our angry letters to the editors. Why? Because this world isn't all there is. And this isn't the way it's going to be forever.

[22:57] Jesus is going to heal everything. He's going to make his blessings known as far as the curse is found. Where does the curse reach?

What corners? What dark places? His blessings are going to reach into those places. And then Jesus is going to take the center stage and the whole created order.

He's going to bring it all back. He's going to tie it all to himself and present it to God. As he takes over the authority and the dominion, as he takes the headship of not only the church and our hearts, but the whole created world, he'll present it to God.

And the second Adam, the second Adam will do what the first Adam failed to do. He will turn this whole world into a temple to God. Read revelation.

There's no more temple. Why? Because God is his temple. Everywhere they go, God is there. He fills the whole creation. And so Jesus Christ will turn every tree, every rock, every animal into part of the grand worship to God.

[24:08] The whole world will then come under the blessing of God. And that's what revelation means when it says, for there is no sun in the new creation because the glory of God gives its light and the lamb is its lamp.

So there's no more sun in that new creation. Now I don't think that should be taken literally. I could be wrong, but I don't think it should be taken literally. The point is that now, naturally, the sun gives us light and energy.

All the life that we experience here, it's from the sun, now, and without the sun, this planet grows cold and dead really quick.

But in the new creation, there's nothing between God and his creation. There's nothing between God and man. The glory of God and the lamb are its sun.

It's face to face with nothing in between blessing. So in Christ, the whole world is brought into the direct blessing of God and fellowship and communion with God.

[25:20] And so Christ sums it up. He ties it all together. He unites it to himself and restores it to God. Now, that's what Paul is getting at, and he's saying it's blessing to know that.

Now, the second question is this. How do we see the glory of Christ in this? How do we see the glory of Christ in this? first, and I think foremost, Jesus does what everyone else fails to do.

Jesus does what everyone else fails to do. Adam failed to do it. We do. The government does. All the king's men, all the king's programs, all the king's government, all the king's horses, can't put Humpty together again.

So, what politicians, and what teachers, and what programs, and what education, and what businessmen, and what charities, and what philosophers, and professors, what good men have failed to do, Jesus does.

Jesus does it. Jesus alone could do it. Jesus alone could bear the weight of all of creation on him, depending on him, and he does it.

[26:38] And so, what a mighty savior we have. Christians, this is something that you should just take heart in, and be encouraged in. Your savior, the one that you trust in, and live upon, the one that you go and get grace from, he's not weak, he's strong.

He's so strong that he can save an entire cosmos, the whole heavens and earth. And so, he doesn't just save our souls, he saves our bodies. And he doesn't just save us, he saves the plants and the animals, the whole created order, he rescues it all from sin and from Satan.

And so, we don't have to look anywhere else other than Jesus. And we have that tendency, don't we? We look at what the government is doing and we're distressed, we're so distressed, and

rightfully so.

But, has the government ever been our hope? Has it been ever able to rescue everything? And so, we don't have to put our trust in men and princes and talk show hosts and programs and schools, anything.

Jesus is a mighty Savior. He's the only Savior that we need. He's a complete Savior for both us and for our circumstances. And he doesn't just care about our souls, he cares about our situation and our circumstances and our environment.

[28:03] That we live in. And he's going to gather everything up to himself and bring it all back to God. And so, the word is trust in him. When you run into those things and when you see people failing you out there, your hope isn't giving way.

Your hope is still there in heaven. And at the right time, when the times will have reached their fulfillment, he will do it. Now, that might not change things here and now.

I'm well aware of that. You might go on suffering and we might suffer more. And your children might cause you grief and your work might cause you heartache and the political scene might go from bad to worse.

God. But this is the blessing in it. God invites us to look past that to the end.

And he will wipe away every tear from their eyes and there will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain for the old order of things has passed away.

[29:15] Old order will be here. The old order will not be remembered anymore. And so does that answer all the questions?

Does that make everything better now? No. this is a veil of tears. It is a valley of sorrow. But we don't have to go through it ignorant of the future.

There is light at the end of the tunnel. God has a plan. He has a purpose. And he's made it known to us in Christ. When times have reached their fulfillment to bring all things in heaven and earth together under one head, even Christ.

So Christ will make his blessings flow as far as the curse is found. So you don't have to live in ignorance. You don't have to live in doubt.

God has made known to you what his plans are. Now, how do you see the glory of Christ in this second? You see the place that he will have forever and ever.

[30:24] Who will be the head of the creation forever and ever? Who will have the center stage forever and ever? He will. He will bless us forever and ever.

And for ages and ages, the blessings of God will flow to us through Jesus Christ. All of God's blessings now come to us through him and that's never going to change.

Just as much as we are excited and we rejoice and we believe in Jesus now, forever and ever we are going to be excited and rejoicing in Jesus. Look over at what chapter 2 says in verses 5 through 7.

Ephesians chapter 2 verses 5 through 7. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus in order that in the coming ages, He might show the incomparable riches of His grace expressed in His kindness to us in Christ Jesus in the coming ages.

Ages. What's ahead of us? Ages of time. And what will we be receiving? We'll be receiving kindness in Christ Jesus.

[31:48] And so we don't only receive grace now from Christ Jesus. But in the coming ages, all of God's kindness will flow to us through Christ. And so forever and ever, our eyes will be on Christ.

And that's where God wants them. God wants us to see Jesus and love Him and live upon Him. And we will do that forever. He will have the center stage.

Now, third, how do we see the glory of Christ? Well, we see another side of the glory of Christ's incarnation in this.

So here we are at Christmas time, and we're used to thinking of Him coming to die for His people, coming for us. And that is certainly why He came.

But He came for more than that. Jesus was God's gift to the whole created world, to the whole created cosmos.

[32:53] Long lay the world in sin and error pining till He appeared. Haggai, the prophet, called him the desire of the nations.

things. The world ached for Him, even if they didn't know that that's what they were aching for. It was Him that they wanted, even if they didn't know it was Him that they wanted.

They longed to be fixed. They longed to have this. And yes, they didn't accept Him when He came, but He was what they were longing for, a way of fixing them.

And so we were scattered. We were going our own way. And creation was falling apart. How could it be brought back? How could the whole mess of it all be healed?

The Son of God took on flesh. the Creator joined Himself to creation. So is there hope for this broken world?

[34:01] Yes, because the Son took on created flesh. He joined Himself and is now still joined to our humanity. So why can you have hope for this world?

When you look in the poverty and the typhoons and the death death, why can we still have hope? Because a bit of this world is now seated at the right hand of God.

It's glorified. He's glorified. He's changed. But it's still a piece of our world. It was a body that He took from His mother, Mary.

And so there's hope because Jesus is the first fruits. He went before. And if He went before, then everything else shall follow.

So we can rejoice in our Savior. There's hope in Him even in the face of the deepest and the darkest distresses that we see in our world today. And to you who are lost, Jesus is your only hope.

[35:13] He's the only one who can bring you back to God. He's the only one who can put you on right standing with God again. See, you're attached to Adam now.

And Adam fell. And Adam's guilty, and you're guilty. You need to get out of Adam. You need to get into the second Adam. You need to get into Christ.

He's the only one who can put you on the right ground with your maker again. And then you have two problems. You have a sin problem. And you have a world problem. And what I mean is, both you and your circumstances need changed.

You and your world need saved. And Jesus is the Savior. See, it wouldn't be enough if you just saved our souls and left our bodies.

And it wouldn't even be enough if he just saved us, but then left us in a sinful, fallen world. We would never be happy. We have these two problems. And Jesus is the answer to both sides of that problem.

[36:19] So, Humpty Dumpty sat on a wall. Humpty Dumpty had a great fall. And all the king's horses and all the king's men couldn't put Humpty back together again.

But Jesus can. And Jesus is. And so I would encourage you and I would invite you to trust him. This is his work. He's the savior.

He's God's gift to sinners. And so trust yourself to him. Well, let's pray. Heavenly Father, thank you for the gift of your son.

Amen. we don't appreciate him nearly as much as we ought to. We don't hope in him and trust him as we ought to.

Pray that you would forgive us and help us, Holy Spirit, to understand our savior, believe in him, to know his heart toward us.

[37:22] I pray for those who are outside of Jesus, will you wake them up? They're running their head into a wall trying to fix problems that are beyond them.

Jesus must do that. And so I pray that you would break them, humble them, and save them. Lord, will you give us joy as we look forward to the second coming of our savior.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen.