

Ephesians 1:8—which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight

which He lavished upon us. (1:8a)

A believer can't commit enough sins to surpass God's gracious forgiveness because His grace is "*lavished upon us*" (Ephesians 1:8a)—made abundant toward us. On the other hand, a true born-again believer will detest sin—no longer enjoy sin. He will sin at least to some degree while inhabiting an earthly body, but will despise even the slightest indication of disobedience.

Because the phrase, "*In all wisdom and insight*" (Ephesians 1:8b), ties in with verse 9, we will study this section of Scripture as a solid block.

In all wisdom and insight (1:8b) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (1:9)

In all wisdom and insight (1:8b).

God bestows additional blessings to the redeemed and forgiven (Ephesians 1:7)—(*sophia*) "*wisdom*" and (*phronesis*) "*insight*" (Ephesians 1:8b).

Vine's Expository Dictionary defines "*wisdom*" (*sophia*) as, "The insight into the true nature of things." I perceive wisdom as the ability to view life from God's perspective. Only believers possess wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), wisdom being revealed through the Person of the Holy Spirit (1Corinthians 2:6-12). Due to the abundant wisdom accessible to the New Testament saint, Paul is even free to proclaim: "*We have the mind of Christ*" (1Corinthians 2:16).

Insight (*phronesis*), according to *Vine's*, is "understanding, prudence in the management of affairs." *Vine's* also contrasts wisdom (*sophia*) to insight (*phronesis*): "While *sophia* is the insight into the true nature of things, *phronesis* is the ability to discern modes of action with a view to their results; while *sophia* is theoretical, *phronesis* is practical."¹ Therefore, wisdom (*sophia*) allows the believer to begin to determine the true nature of the character of God, the will of God, God's plan for man, God's overall strategy in history, the cross, hell, heaven, etc. Insight (*phronesis*) is more practical, helping the saints understand how to apply the theoretical to daily living. Thus, "*wisdom*" allows the believer to determine God's will, while "*insight*" links His will to the practicalities of everyday living.

He made known to us the mystery of His will, (1:9a)

Let's apply what we have gleaned to verses 8 and 9. "*In all wisdom and insight*" (Ephesians 1:8b) "*He made known to us the mystery of His will*" (Ephesians 1:9a). Only through wisdom (theoretical understanding) and insight (practical application) can God make known to His people "*the mystery of His will.*" Hence, God makes known "*the mystery of His will*" to His people; we never make known "*the mystery of His will*" to ourselves. Everything the believer learns regarding the Godhead and His strategy results from God's revelation of Himself (Romans 1:17; Ephesians 1:9a; 15-19; 3:3; etc.). What, then, is "*the mystery of His will*"? "*The mystery of His will*" is what He is accomplishing through His overall strategy in human history. God has a plan. He gives man the freedom to choose as he desires; yet regardless of man's response, nothing can thwart His overall strategy. "*The mystery of His will*" is understood only by the born again/justified saint of God. This reality does not negate the fact that the depraved/lost have access to ample truth to repent and believe, for Adam was convicted of his wrongdoing as soon as he partook of the forbidden fruit and became depraved (Genesis 3:6-20)—before God made a covering for he and Eve in Genesis 3:21. Thus, God later gave the Law to Israel to convict the depraved (lost) of sin (Galatians 3:24; 1Timothy 1:9-10), confirming that the depraved are capable of understanding truth prior

to spiritual regeneration.

God's "mystery," a subject addressed in verse 10, can be understood by the New Testament believer (Romans 11:25; 16:25; 1Corinthians 2:7; 15:51; Ephesians 1:9; 3:3-4; 6:19; Colossians 1:26-27; 2:2; 4:3; etc.). Because Christ is "the wisdom of God" (1Corinthians 1:24), New Testament believers possess wisdom due to having been placed "in Christ" (2Corinthians 5:17; 1Corinthians 12:13). Comprehending God's strategy for man through the wisdom and insight granted in Christ (Ephesians 1:8-9), we can many times discern how present-day events fit into God's overall plan. Therefore, only the redeemed can properly interpret the evening news. These events, broadcast to the masses, must be extremely unnerving to those void of insight into God's strategy. Realizing that the free will of man can never thwart God's overall plan, believers bask in the confidence that God wins in the end! To Him be the glory!

This portion of our study should be enormously encouraging since God uses the "bad things" in life for the believer's good. So long as we are "fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith" (Hebrews 12:2), we will learn that pain is healthy for the soul. Jesus, "who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God" (Hebrews 12:2), knew well that "hardship" yields spiritual maturity within the wise. When Jesus was crucified, the disciples were ill equipped to deal with adversity. In fact, they viewed Christ's crucifixion as the death of their dreams. Because they followed His teachings, their physical wellbeing was also in jeopardy. What could they possibly do to make life normal again? Only after receiving the Holy Spirit in Acts 2 (which transformed Jesus' words from information to revelation subsequent to their believing on Christ) did they comprehend the depth of the significance of the cross. Hence, God's instruction manual for Kingdom living (the truth of the Scriptures) differs greatly from Satan's "lies" (John 8:44) that so permeate his sphere of influence (2Corinthians 4:4).

For example, Jesus said:

"For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the gospel's shall save it. (Mark 8:35)

He also said:

and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; (Matthew 20:27)

What radical proclamations! Yet, once the depraved believe and are made new (the depraved comprehend enough truth to choose to be saved—as verified on several occasions in this study), a wealth of wisdom is granted so they might understand the deeper things of God (Ephesians 1:8b, 9). They realize, for instance, that one day the slain Lamb of God will rule as "King of Kings, and Lord of Lords" (Philippians 2:10; Revelation 5:12; 19:16). What will be the characteristics of His Kingdom? Brokenness, gentleness, meekness, and selfless love will permeate this unprecedented environment. Satan, meanwhile, who rules by brute force, pride, and arrogance, will be removed from the premises (Revelation 20:2). Good always overcomes evil (Romans 12:21; 1Thessalonians 5:15), for wisdom and insight consistently defeat error before the eyes of the wise.

Jesus was glorified through His resurrection. In fact, He was "taken up in glory" (1Timothy 3:16). But Jesus seems to indicate that He was glorified through His crucifixion (read John 12:23-25, 27-28; 13:31-33). The glory of Jesus, as we have touched on briefly, is centered around His being "the Lamb that was slain" (Revelation 5:9, 12, and 13). He conquered his enemies by dying as a grain of wheat for the purpose of giving life (John 12:24) to those who accept Him as Savior. Clearly, His glory differs from the "glory" of those who rule based on the values of the world system, the "might-makes-right" mindset.

The church will reign “*with Christ for a thousand years*” (Revelation 20:4). Thus, a slain Lamb will ultimately rule over creation (Revelation 5:13), the church (Christ’s body—Romans 12:5) ruling with Him (Revelation 5:9-10; 20:4). The church must possess the character qualities that will permeate the Kingdom (brokenness, gentleness, meekness, and selfless love) to properly rule. How does one own such characteristics? By: (1) allowing the Spirit of God to work in our lives as we gaze at Christ (2Corinthians 3:18) through His Word (2) living through difficult circumstances known as “adversity.” Yes, in many cases, pain is used of the Lord to transform information into revelation.

In the midst of our trials, we must continually remind ourselves that life comes through death, that true power is gained through brokenness, and that selfless love, rather than self-centeredness, always wins in the end. We will never learn these transforming truths from the world system, which consistently rejects truth while endorsing self-centered living. We learn them by focusing on the Lamb Who was slain, Who will lead us into a deeper understanding of His heart as we face the “variables” of our day. No wonder Paul viewed pain as his friend (2Corinthians 12:10). Through his struggles he discovered the “deeper life” accessible only to believers. Not all of the redeemed will experience this “deeper life” due to rejecting the mindset of the Lamb. They refuse to say, “Whatever it takes Lord, whatever I need to experience to know the depths of the cross, so be it.” They refuse, in other words, to place a blank check on God’s desk and say, “Fill it out, Father, however You like.”

Paul had learned to live in any state and be “*content*” (Philippians 4:11-13) by understanding how his “circumstances” related to the mystery of God’s will (Ephesians 1:8-9). He had learned, in other words, that pain carries purpose. Paul’s sufferings as an apostle (not having been orchestrated by God, but used by God for Paul’s good) were preparing him to reign with Christ—thus fulfilling God’s sovereignly ordained plan orchestrated before time began. Circumstances transpiring around Paul were no “mystery” to him, for his wisdom allowed pain to become his friend. So, Paul had every right to say, “*He made known to us the mystery of His will*” (Ephesians 1:9a). He possessed the authority to say as well:

For to you it has been granted for Christ’s sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, (Philippians 1:29).

according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (1:9b)

This phrase can actually be interpreted “*according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him.*” Consequently, the mystery of God’s will is made known to believers “*according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him.*” Be sure to notice that this mystery is only understood “*in Him*” (in Christ). Paul may have emphasized this truth to refute the Gnostics—who taught that a deeper “knowledge” of the universe is revealed to a select few, and that “knowledge” is superior to faith. The Gnostics also believed that Deity could not inhabit humanity—totally contrary to Paul’s gospel which advocated that the fullness of Deity resided in Christ (Colossians 1:19; 2:9), and that Christ dwelt in every New Testament believer (Galatians 2:20). The apostle taught that a person must be “*in Him*” (2Corinthians 5:17; 1Corinthians 1:30; Ephesians 1:9b) before he can know the mystery of His will and interpret how the events of daily living fit into God’s overall strategy.

The *wisdom* and *insight* granted the New Testament believer “*in Him*” (in Christ) brings understanding concerning Who God is and how He, in a practical sense, is fulfilling His overall sovereign plan. The plan that God has devised is clearly revealed in verse 10.

Note: Some versions translate the last phrase of Ephesians 1:9, “*according to the kind intention which He purposed in Him*” (the “*in Him*” pointing to Christ), as “*according to the kind intention which He purposed in Himself*” (the “*in Himself*” pointing to the Father). Either translation is fine, for in both instances the wisdom and insight required to understand the mystery of God’s will is unattainable outside the Godhead—the Godhead consisting of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit.

Ephesians 1:10—with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him

with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, (1:10a)

Because “*administration*” can be interpreted “plan,” “*fullness*” interpreted “completion,” and “*times*” interpreted “seasons,” Ephesians 1:10a can be rendered: “*with a view to a plan suitable to the completion of the seasons.*” The “*seasons*” are the cycles of history that have transpired throughout the ages; discord has abounded in some “*seasons*,” and peace in others. All of these seasons have been working toward a final season, “*the completion of the seasons*,” when God’s ultimate plan comes to full fruition. The next phrase of verse 10 describes this plan.

that is, the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. (1:10b)

“*All things...in the heavens and...upon the earth*” will eventually be summed up “*in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:10b) and reconciled to God (Colossians 1:20). The phrase, “*the summing up of*” (from the Greek *anakephalaioo*—Ephesians 1:10), can actually be interpreted, “*to bring together several things under one.*” Wuest’s commentary states:

the compound preposition *ana* signifies *again*, pointing back to a previous condition where no separation existed. God contemplates a regathering, a restoration to that former condition when all things were in perfect unity, and normally combined to serve God’s ends. This unity was broken by sin. The mystery of God’s will includes the restoration of this unity in and through Christ.ⁱⁱ

God’s will is that the created realm bask in the unity present before the fall. This state of affairs will be brought about through His holy Son, the Savior of the world (John 3:16).

We must not overlook the fact that all things were created not only “*by Him*” (by Christ), but “*for Him*” (Colossians 1:16). Therefore, “*in*” and “*through*” Christ this regathering will occur—“*the summing up of all things in Christ*” (Ephesians 1:10b). Only those “*things in the heavens*” and “*the earth*” will be involved—not the things in hell. Paul is in no way teaching universal salvation. Those who have rejected Christ (while on earth) will one day “*bow*” before Him (Philippians 2:10), but will spend eternity in “*the lake of fire*” (Revelation 20:15).

Christ will reign in the Millennium until “*He has put all His enemies under His feet*” (1Corinthians 15:25). At the end of the Millennium, after Satan has been cast into the lake of fire (Revelation 20:7-10) along with all the unredeemed (Revelation 20:11-15), “*death*,” the final “*enemy*,” will be destroyed (1Corinthians 15:26). (Death cannot be annihilated until the author of death, Satan, has been abolished.) At this time, or this season, God’s plan of “*summing up...all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth*,” will be fulfilled (Ephesians 1:10b). The old creation, as we have known it, will be destroyed and replaced with the new (Revelation 21:1). All that remains will be totally holy. When all things are subject to Christ, “*then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all*” (1Corinthians 15:28). What a marvelous strategy!

The Father will sum up “*all things*” in the Son (Ephesians 1:10). The Son, in the process, dedicates Himself to the Father so as to reveal (Matthew 11:27; Luke 10:22), glorify (John 7:18; 17:1; 21:19), and please (obey—John 4:34; 5:30; 6:38) the Father. After all things are subjected to the Son through the Father, the

Son will reign over the entire universe. Once seated in this prominent position of power, the Son will turn everything over to the Father (1Corinthians 15:28). Why? The Son is in relationship with the Father for what the Father receives, never for what He (the Son) receives—and vice versa. Even the Spirit does not glorify Himself, but the Son (John 16:13-14)—meaning that the Person of the Spirit lives with the same selfless mindset as the Father and the Son. God would have us operate from this same perspective, placing the interests of the Godhead and others above our own. Paul functioned in this manner, for he states:

For if we are beside ourselves, it is for God; if we are of sound mind, it is for you.
(2Corinthians 5:13)

Paul served without regard to self, always placing God’s interests and the interests of others first—the attitude of all who have progressed from self-centeredness to God-centeredness.

The principle of the cross (selfless love), which has eternally existed in each member of the Trinity, was displayed in time by the Son and explained by the Spirit (John 16:13-14). Thus the principle of the cross, which demonstrates selfless love, must control our decisions if we are to embrace God’s way of living. Only when man fails to apply this principle is a cross needed in time—Christ’s cross at Calvary. Had Adam and Eve laid aside their own desires (lived by the principle of the cross), they would have lived by the tree of life (by God’s very life) and matured into individuals who consistently put God’s interests above their own. (An excellent book that addresses this topic is *The Ultimate Intention* by DeVerne Fromke—Sure Foundation.)

Paul said it well:

For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. (2Corinthians 4:11)

Paul lived by the principle of the cross (by viewing adversity as an opportunity to bring glory to God), which meant that the cross as a principle was continually manifested through his life as he suffered for the cause of the gospel. He experienced great joy in the midst of his trials by realizing that difficult circumstances, coupled with God’s incredible grace, served to remind others that as Christ died, He was also raised. The hearts of the redeemed were empowered by Paul’s lifestyle, for he states, “*So death works in us, but life in you*” (2Corinthians 4:12).

ⁱ Vine, W.E.; Unger, Merrill F., White, William Jr. (1996). *Vine’s Expository Dictionary*. Thomas Nelson. Nashville, TN. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

ⁱⁱ Wuest, Kenneth S. (1983). *Ephesians and Colossians*. Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co. Grand Rapids, MI. www.eerdmans.com. Used by permission.