

I want you to know that I can stand up here, walk from one of those chairs, come up here, and say to you, "Would you all turn to Ephesians one and begin to preach to you, and your relationship with me would change completely." I would be an "other than." I would be something out here, something you admire, something you would come up and say, "Brother Edwards, could I have a word with you?" And I would never get the insults thrown at me that Ida throws at me. Well Ida? She could not possibly be mean back if I were ministerial. Every day I live, I pay the price of not being ministerial. It actually leaves me looking like somebody who... "What's he doing here, anyway?" What does this guy think he's doing? He's not a preacher, or maybe he's a preacher, but he's not one of them."

When I pray, I am talking to the Lord, and I'm not talking to you, and I am being as sincere with Him as I know how. I have found my own niche in praying. Everything else I do, I do not do it by ritual or form, nor do I do it by past traditions of other men. Or, in other words, we've never had things like a Wednesday night prayer meeting and stuff like that. And I don't know that we have ever prayed for the President of the United States. And I know that we are exhorted to pray for Caesar. And you know, what really bothers me too is, oh man, do you know there's no way to win in the ministry? There's just no way to win. There's always somebody who, no matter how normal you get, just wants to worship you. Brothers and sisters, I do everything in my power to keep that from happening. It happens anyway, but it is usually short-lived.

Those of you from Chicago, I bet some of you have gone through one or two phases with me. I hope we still love one another very deeply. I won't tell you I love you all like crazy. That night or that afternoon, I came in and sat down on the floor with you all. You know, God only knows what might have happened to all of us if of us had been pretentious. I don't think any of us are. I'm completely off the subject, and I don't even know what the subject was, but I'm off of it.

I know I'm a disappointment to all of you, but boy oh boy, if you can set your eyes on the Lord Jesus Christ instead of me, I'll be the happiest person. I am not here to sell Gene Edwards. And because I earn my own living, I don't have to be careful with what I say. That is also an albatross around my neck. You cannot imagine how careful we get when a paycheck is involved, and we do it even unconsciously. Because I am not dependent on the ministry, I unconsciously know that. I don't consciously know that I unconsciously know it, and therefore I do say things that probably no normal, sane human being would say. But nobody can fire me. If I don't get an honorarium, my wife and children will not starve.

So that's enough of that. Does anybody want to say anything? See what you did, Betty, just by coming up here and introducing me? Now I have something I want to say: tomorrow afternoon at 2:30, I would like to invite all the sisters to come in here and sit down with Betty for an hour. Betty, that's all you get is an hour because we got so many other things going on around here, and I know that women will talk to women in ways they will not talk to men. So, if you will... if you'd be so gracious to come in here tomorrow at 2:30 and stay

until 3:30? That'll make it a very busy day for everybody. Just answer sisters' questions and talk to them about anything on your heart, anything that's on their heart. We need more ministry from women. The only thing in the world I would ask of you, Betty, is that you keep your head covered. (laughter) See, I told you I got in trouble with these ways of mine. How intimidating is it for me to put this thing on this way? Doesn't this bother you a little bit? Captain Hook, thanks.

Well, I was saying before I was so rudely introduced...that was a pun...before I was interrupted by Sister Betty, that you come into these places and you feel very inadequate, but tonight, I really feel inadequate. I'm going to open Ephesians 1 and try to unravel that thing. And it simply cannot be done. We would all have to have an IQ of at least 150... that would be minimal... just to keep the different thoughts in our heads that we have to in order to get through Ephesians 1. It was like Paul was keeping three or four balls in the air here and three or four here and two or three here and maybe juggling one with his head while he wrote Ephesians 1. You can't just, there's just no way, and it doesn't matter what you do, if you deal with one subject, you don't cover it. If you try to cover all 20-25 subjects in that one chapter, then it's too this. Excuse me, too that. I just fall back and say, I just don't want to do this, but I'm going to make an effort.

Now then, for those three of you who are sitting here, one back there, and one who's out working, I want you to remember that this is not a message, either Paul's or mine, that has anything to do with the individual. Well, a little bit, but not much. I want us, again and again and again, to remember that this is corporate. Now, who's your leader? Christy, are you their leader? When I leave here, you're not going to end. You're not going to say, hmmm. You are going to deal with these tapes. You're going to listen to me, and you're going to get together, and you're going to talk, and you're going to bring these things to the Lord, and you're going to say them with your mouth, which seals them. If you don't open your mouth, you'll lose these things. These are too important for you. If you can't do it for the Lord, and you can't do it for me, will you do it for John Hus? Well, only half of that is serious. I can't help but remember that we had a brother here one time, and if I had a little time this week, I'd like to talk to you a bit more about John Hus, some things you may not know about him.

Okay, I'm going to ask you to get your Bible out now and get your nose in it, and let's try to look at some of these things. In Ephesians 1, we found one negative verse or had negations in it, which was verse 7. In chapter 2, we found verses 1, 2, 3, 4, and part of 5, and verses 11 and 12, which were talking about your sad state before you became a believer. Do you remember that? That was your state number two. Last night, we looked at your state number one, but I'd like to go back and remind you of what I said, because that's not all I did. I also talked to you about what God was like before he brought you forth. Do you remember that? Then we talked a little bit about your first state.

Now, what is your first state? Can you help me just a little bit? Okay, then I'll help you. You were predestined to be something wonderful. You were predestined because of love; you were determined to be what you are as part of an eternal plan. This word "plan" keeps

coming up, and when it's not a plan, it's an administration. A plan has to be worked out. I'll anticipate here and say to you, you can have a plan, then you have to work it out. The administration of that plan is referred to here, the working out of it. You're part of it. Actually, it's rather a mind-boggling plan that he has, in that it is eternal, and it does not have the attributes you would normally expect. For instance, you would not expect that whatever he did when he put you into your first state would be to turn you into praise. Not to turn you to praise, but to turn you *into* praise. Now, you wouldn't think that would be part of an eternal plan. Secondly, you would not think that, as fallen creatures as we are, and the shadows and the smoke of the second state always bothering us, you would not think that Jesus Christ would want to inherit us when he could inherit so much.

But that's part of the plan. And all these incredible things that he extends to you out of his graces, his mercies, and his glory seem to be quite remarkable indeed. Perhaps the most mind-boggling part of this ongoing plan that he is working out is the simple fact that it took the death of God to do it. It took the death of God and the blood of God to accomplish it. What a negative thing to introduce into a plan, an eternal plan and purpose: your own death, and your own blood. You wouldn't do that, would you? Would you not agree with me? I wouldn't do that, would you? I just wouldn't. Well, why did He? What could provoke God to shed His blood, to die, and to do it with foreknowledge? Do you know the answer to that? Because he was so superabundantly endowed with grace. Lavishly endowed with grace.

I cannot conceive a grace so great that God Himself would willingly suffer and spill His blood and die to accomplish a plan. Can you? If I can understand that I can get a hold of a small thing about God. Boy, that song that says, Oh, what love. Oh, what love. Oh, what love. Well, you and I are not going to understand a love and a mercy and a grace like that, but this God of yours was filled with this love, filled with this grace, filled with this mercy before He augmented His plan and then made you part of it. That's how rich He was, how lavishly rich He was in all these endowments and endowments.

Another part of that ongoing, outworking plan is, of course, to glorify His Son. But also, a part of the glorifying of His Son is to... What do you think? Do you think God the Father asked the Son what he'd like to have for an inheritance? Or do you think he just told Him? You think he just did it? Do you think he just knew? I know I'm being too human here, but on a human basis, which would you expect of your understanding of God? I would ask. I think He would ask. Certainly, whatever it was, it was very satisfying to the son.

If the Father asked the Son, then the Son said, "This is what I want my inheritance to be." And the Father said, "Wonderful, this will be a glory to my praise, and this will be a praise to my glory, and this will be a glory to my grace, and this will be a praise to the glory of my grace." Oh, Paul, God love you, I would have really liked to send you to a writing school. Yet, it's there to be dug out if the Lord has mercy and shows us with his Holy Spirit.

Now, there is one other thing about this marvelous plan and the working out of the administration of the dispensing of this plan; oh, there are a lot of things, but I said I can't keep all these balls in the air, and that is the absolute necessity of works. Now, I'm going to shock all of you in just a moment by telling you that grace is not enough. Now I know that all the preachers have been telling that there are no works, and salvation is by grace, and I am telling you tonight, I am disappointing you greatly, but I am telling you tonight, there are works in getting you saved. And I don't mean just kind of little works. I mean, really big, sweat of the brow, heavy-duty works. There are. There is a great deal of works involved. A great deal of works involved, and if those works are not worked, you're going to go to hell...or wherever it is, to the pit. Hell, I'm not sure of the many, many names that are used for hell. Perhaps you've heard a study of this, Gehenna, and all of this: the ancient meaning of the word hell was not what we consider hell and all of that, but the pit. I can understand. You're going to get thrown in the pit if there are not some works that accomplish your salvation. What do you think about that? See, and you thought you had slid home free, didn't you?

Alright now, then, let's go back again to that moment just before He did anything; those things He did. I gave you a rather odd illustration last night, when He began to do what He was doing, when He began to work out His plan. What was it that caused Him to get up and do this? Thank you, thank you, brother. Absolutely, He had counsel with His will, and His will said, This is what I want, and God said, You know, I agree with my opinion. I agree with my desire. I agree with my will. Now I think that's beautiful. He worked these things out according to the counsel of his own will. I guess Paul was trying to tell us he didn't get any advice from anybody. From the counsel of his own will alone. And again, this is one of those many, many balls we keep in the air, and this is the will of God — one of those words that keep recurring.

Now, just before he does this, I described to you how rich he was, and I want to go over some of those verses again if I can find the right pair of glasses. Alright, and this first time, it's in chapter one that we get an idea of what He was like. We see "to the praise of the glory of His grace." So, there's a great deal of glory to His grace. Now this is sitting in verse 6, right in the middle of what we are told that God did way back before creation. That's one of them. Now I want you to also notice in the next verse "His kind intent." Whatever He decided to do out of that, this is verse 5, out of that great glory of His grace. Can you see His grace just spewing glory? There was also, in the counsel of His own will, kind intention toward you. Now this is before He marks you off, before He predestines you, alright?

Now look at verse 7. We got that word "according", alright? I'm going to skip the word "according" here, although this word "according," I guess I'm not, is also saying this is part of the working out of this great eternal plan that He got the idea from the counsel of His own advice. This was one of the things He decided; He decided about His riches. I'm in verse 7. ...according to the riches of His grace. So, we see grace that's full of glory. We see kind intention, and we also see riches; not just the glory of His grace, but how rich His grace is. This is what He is before He does anything, before He goes to work.

Now then, verse 12. We just passed a whole lot of things here, but in verse 12, you find again "to the praise of His glory." We're not praising His grace here; we're just praising the glory of His grace. The grace is so glorious, and so we see again the incredible amount, oh, I don't know what to even say. There was glory in Jesus Christ and the Father.

Alright, I want you to come down to verse 17. Saints, forgive me for being personal here. If you see me struggling with words, it's because I can't see much out of my right eye, and my left eye leaves out letters, and when I drive down the street, it leaves out cars. It really does. There'll be five cars turning like this, and I'll see four of them. I really have to be careful. I don't drive except in broad daylight; right about high noon is the only time I get out to drive. My wife does the driving. Okay, so that's one of the reasons I'm not a total idiot — partially, but not totally.

In verse 17, the Father of glory. Now, if you could think of glory as a person, then you would know that glory had a Father, and He has fathered glory. Now, glory is locked up in God, when God is the All, but as He begins to work out this great counsel He got from Himself and all of these things that we have said, toward an administration of working out this great purpose, He is the Father of glory. Glory comes only from God the Father. Add to that the fact that Paul is absolutely stunned by what he's writing about. Over and over again, he breaks into anthems of praise concerning the riches of God, the glory of God, the glory of the grace of God, and the grace of God. He does it again and again. And then he adds to that that we are a praise. We not only praise Him, but we're part of the praise. I think only the Holy Spirit can explain to you what that means, that we are part of the praise. Obviously, Paul of Tarsus believed we ought to praise God for what He had done and what He was before He did it.

Alright, I want to go ahead and capture a few more of these along the way. Now he begins to use the word "rich" instead of "praise". The riches of the glory of His inheritance. Okay, that doesn't fit, though. That's something. That's no subject. It's not, but it is. Okay, now come on down to chapter 2, and we see verse 4. But God, being rich in mercy... So, we've got not only the greatness of His glory, the greater greatness of His grace, but we also find, in this God who has not yet begun to work, riches in His mercy. We find mercy, and then we find them so very, very rich. Now then, that's not the only thing about God that is rich. He is rich in this very passage in two things. He is rich in mercy, and He is rich in love.

Now, we come on down just a little bit further than that, and in verse 7, we find His kindness again. Whatever He's doing...we have grace, and we have kindness married together. Now, in verse 4, there were riches of love and riches of mercy, but here, in this God before His act, there are riches of His grace. Not that He is rich in grace, but there are so many riches in His grace. As you watch this eternal purpose being worked out, and Paul's many, many things he's keeping up in the air, there are so many things that He is doing in working out His purpose, and each one of them is one of His riches. Every one of them is something rich, and in that verse, He includes His kind intention.

I need to stop here, and you need to stop here, and the brothers from Constance need to stop and remember, as I said to you last night, there are going to be a lot of rough waters. That doesn't mean He's not rich in mercy, rich in grace, rich in glory, rich in His riches, and that He has many, many riches. And included in that, I think, mentioned now three times, He's kind. His intent is kind. Sometimes His ways don't seem to be kind, but His intent is kind. There's kindness in your God, and there's the intention toward kindness. Now, I know that doesn't mean a whole lot to you now, and that's why when I leave here, I want you brothers and sisters to swim in this, because you need to, one day, as one person, as one body, as one person in Constance, to remind one another.

But this is kindness. But this is kindness. And this is to the glory of His grace. And this is His intent. His intent is kind, and He's working out His plan, and this is the administration of His plan, the working out of it. Okay, I'm picking all of these up so you may once more appreciate the God who acted before He acted. Let me see if I have any more marked in these three chapters. I think I found one more over here. This is really interesting. Boy, these things get so interesting.

I want to talk to you for just a second about Paul, and to anybody in this room whoever thinks they're going to work for the Lord or serve the Lord's people. I think that in every letter that Paul starts off, he starts off with grace and peace, does he not? To the churches: grace and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Now, this man is absolutely drunk on grace. And you should never get to know a worker very well unless he's drunk on grace, because he can really hurt you—if he is a legalist, and Paul is just driven by God's grace, that's—that it's the grace of God, it's the grace of God, and it's the grace of God. It's the grace of God, and it's the grace of God, and may you have grace in that church, may that church have grace, and in that grace have peace. These are not just superficial words he's throwing out. The man is absolutely saturated with grace.

Now, the last passage I'm going to mention to you here is, not only does God have grace, but because grace is so unnatural to fallen man, because grace is...because it's so much easier, easier to be religious. I'm using my imagination here; I hope I don't throw you off. It's like you have this sacred room where grace dwells, and there are keepers of grace; those who make sure that nothing touches grace and turns it into law. There are those who take the fire in this holy place, the fire of grace, and go out and give it away, and make sure that in a world of law and legalism, Paul says in chapter 3, I have been made a steward of grace. He's walking out in the midst of Israel and its laws, and he's walking out into a world where people are slaughtering animals to appease their gods. He's walking out as the one who's carrying this holy, sacred thing, this rare, precious thing called grace. He is one who is walking along with this purpose that's being worked out through the ages.

Now, all of that was just to remind you of what it was like before God acted. A God rich; rich in what? Rich in riches. Rich in grace. Rich in mercy. Rich in kindness. Rich in the glory of grace. Rich in glory, and then He decided that He wanted to do something. Now, will you come back with me to chapter 1 and watch Him seek to take you on this pilgrimage through

this plan of God's? Perhaps you have never noticed this in verse 4. Can you look at the word "just"? Look at the word "just". That sort of starts it. Just as He chose you, just as He predestined you, and then He stops with His anthems of praise. Then, in verse 7, he takes us to redemption and tells us that redemption has been lavishly poured out upon us.

Then He tells us something else about what's moving along in this marvelous plan: to make known the mystery. I want you to look at verse 10, where He says that all this is pointing in that direction. Can you follow me? It says, "to a view," toward a view, toward a place out there somewhere, toward something. All that I have listed up until... "With a view" is in verse 10, and everything previous to verse 10 is working toward something out there. So, he thinks about what's out there. Everything's working toward that. Then he stops and says, "Wait a minute, that's not all it's working toward", and we're coming back to all these balls he's juggling here. Look at the next verse. It says "also." He just remembered that there was something else that it was working out toward. With a view toward, and also with a view toward, is verse 7. Are you following me? And then He says, and when you get past the things He's done that move—have a view toward—and also another view toward, and then He says, "with an end."

Now look at the end: we will be the praise of His glory. Well, Paul can't write. The man absolutely does not know what he's doing. He's presented to us many things that God has done, which he says are working toward, and then he says, "Oh, also." And then he says, and the ultimate thing out there is—what verse is that? Verse 12? Alright. The ultimate end out there is...you'd think He'd quit, wouldn't you? Well, now, look at verse 14, with a view toward. So, we have another thing that is working out in His purpose. I'm seeing God's purpose begin is counseled with His will, and this happens, and this happens, and this happens toward that, and this happens, and this happens toward that, and this happens toward an end, and also this is happening with a view toward. So, you find a purpose and a plan of God that is strewn with many, many riches, all moving toward something out there.

Now then, dear, dear, dear brother Paul said, all these things are working toward—and that you might be a praise to His glory. You think, please, Paul, rest there. We're full. We can't handle any more, and then Paul indicates, when he says in verse 10, "with a view toward," and when I read 10, I say wait a minute, Paul—it's not only the end being that we are praised to His glory. The end has got to be, verse 10, the summing up of all things in Christ. Would you not agree with me? Toward the view, ultimately, that which is the summing up of all things in Christ.

Brothers and sisters, I just want to take one more moment and say to you that after He counseled Himself, and He saw that great purpose of His unroll like some great carpet that literally moves across the galaxies and across the universe and space and time and the heavenlies, then He began to work. And what He first did was to choose you...a church. Choose you...a church. Marked you off in Jesus Christ and made sure that you would be blameless. You—the church—blameless and holy. You: corporate. I don't want to go too far with this. Just remember: you corporate, would you? He predestined you corporate. He

made sure that you, corporate, would be holy, and that you, corporate, would not be blamed. This is the work of God. You are holy, and you are without blame, and you were in love, chosen, predetermined, predestined—you as a corporate you—before the foundation of the world, and He did it because He loved you. It was out of the riches of His love that He loved you. He's doing all of this out of the riches of the mercies of the glory of His grace, which is filled with kind intentions. And so, He worked, and this is what He accomplished.

Now, I'd like to add one more word to this. It's hard to convince Christians that they are holy. Did you know that? Margaret, how long have I been trying to convince you you're holy? A long time. How am I doing? How am I doing, Margaret? Why can I not do any better than that, Margaret? Can you tell me? Why is it just so-so? *I just don't believe it sometimes.* That's right. Therefore, we have to be reminded, and I am a steward of the grace. No, you don't tell somebody they're holy one time and walk away. Brothers and sisters, I'm not the only one who's a steward of grace. You have got to minister to one another that you are holy. You've got to minister to one another that you are blameless. ..as a people. Brother Randy, this is a continuing ministry in the body of Christ, that we are filled with grace, and we are blameless, and we are holy. Now I'm going to try to do that one more time because I happen to be a steward of His grace.

Let me ask you a Question. Is Jesus Christ holy? Is He blameless? Maybe this thought had never crossed your mind. Did you ever notice that Jesus Christ did not have a sister? But let's pretend for a moment that he did have a sister, okay? A sister. Do you figure she'd be holy and blameless? Any questions about that? As holy as He is, and blameless as He is? Would you agree with that? If Jesus Christ had a sister, she would be holy and blameless. Anybody want to mull on that a minute or question it, or disagree with it? Could He have a sister who is not holy and blameless? I mean, like God gave birth not to a Son, but to a Son and a daughter. And He had a daughter. Yeah. And He had a sister. Yeah. Absolutely. There'd be no difference.

Well, the very first thing God did when He marked you off in Christ was to make you His daughter. Praise the Lord. Praise to the glory of His grace. I didn't make that up. It's in the Book. The first thing He did was to make sure that we were sons and daughters. So, if He's blameless and His sister's blameless, His sister had to be fathered by God, and you have been fathered by God, and I'm telling you that girl is blameless and she is holy.

Now, exhort one another with these things. Listen, I'm trying to build a foundation in Constance a little better than most foundations. I expect you to exhort one another and remind one another. And I expect that when I leave here, you will come back, and you will bring these things to the Lord. You tell one another these things, and you establish your mind here and no place else. You understand? Daniel, wake up. Michael, are you hearing me? I don't want you to start the way Chicago started. I want you to start with the ultimate riches of Jesus Christ and pass them around to one another. I don't want you to put your thoughts down here; neither does the Lord. Look, Paul is writing to a church he's never

seen, and by the way, I might have to agree with Brother Peter. Man, there must have been some groundwork laid for this chapter because this is absolutely incredible.

Brothers and sisters, I just want to stop here. Are you impressed so far? Are you impressed? Say amen then, would you? And here's the funny part: all I'm doing is revealing. Now I'm going to start the message. Are you with me? This cannot be unraveled, but we're getting close. I started at age 17. I ought to be somewhere by now, but I never do this without finding...just getting stunned.

I'm going to start with verse four, and I'm just going to read. He chose you, the church in Constance; you, the church in Colossae, but we're going to just make it you. This is a very personal letter to a church. He chose you, the church in Constance, before the foundation of the world, that you should be holy and blameless before Him. Now, it's no small thing that Paul wrote "before Him." Where's the last place on earth you ever want to be...or in heaven? In the presence of a holy God, when those fiery, burning, blazing eyes, Ida, look straight into you and see every ulterior motive of your heart. Yes, sister, tremble. Well, think about it. To stand before the all-knowing eyes of God, who has watched every dirty thing you've ever done, thought, or said. And when you stand before the blazing, burning eyes of God, He will find you blameless. Amen. Holy. To the praise of His glory. To the praise of His grace. Well, let's say "to the praise of the glory of His grace," would you? To the praise of the glory of His grace. You, a body of believers, will stand before the Lord, and you, a body of believers, in the presence of the burning, searing, all-knowing, blazing eyes of God, shall be found holy and blameless—to the praise of His glory. To the praise of His grace. Praise the Lord.

Then He also predestined you to be adopted as sons and daughters through the works of Jesus Christ. And here we go - according to this, it works out just exactly, parallels and perfectly belongs - it's right in the center of what He counseled Himself that He would do. This is working out according to the kind intention of His will. That you were adopted as sons and daughters, that you're holy and blameless and will be before...when you stand before the Lord Jesus Christ, you, when that happens, that's just part of the working out of His will, which He counseled Himself to do. That's one part of this great drama. You following me? If you're following me and this makes sense, this will be a miraculous night because it is really not possible to understand all this.

Well, let's keep going. ...to the praise of the glory of His grace. That's verse 6. Let's do it again - To the praise of the glory of His grace. Do it again - To the praise of the glory of His grace. Out of His grace, He made you; He predestined you. Out of His grace, He chose you. Out of His grace, He calls you. He did it before the foundation of the world. He made sure you would be holy and blameless when you stand in His presence, and He would make you sons and daughters, and all of that would just be working out...that's just the kind will that He has brought forth in this universe. This will of His is that all of those things happen to you, a body of believers, and you can't do anything but stop and say: to the praise of His glory, of His grace. And Paul, you just really ought to stop and let us rest a minute, would you? These things He just told you that you are. And, by the way, the subject is your present

state. Not God in the past, nor your second state, nor your first state, but your present state. Can you keep that in mind, please? Would you? This is your present state.

And so, Paul goes on and says He freely bestowed upon us in the Beloved. What did He bestow on the believers in Colossae and Constance? He freely bestowed predestining you, the blamelessness, the holiness, being in His presence, being sons and daughters, and that this was His kind will, and there is His grace, and all of this was without your efforts, bestowed on you...in the Beloved. We have to stop again. With our tongues hanging out. Why did we stop? Because He didn't say "through the Beloved. He said in the Beloved. Do you know where "in the Beloved" is? That's inside of Jesus Christ. This great outpouring of His—of that which He freely bestowed on you—I'm not going to repeat them again—happened inside of Jesus Christ. Not through Christ but in Christ.

So, I would like to take the church in Constance and put it where it belongs. Do you know where the church in Constance belongs? Inside of Jesus Christ. He did so many things in God and in Christ, but we're just going to stop and look at one of them and then be reminded for the rest of the evening. I can promise you that right now, as I look at you through these blurred and unfocused eyes of mine, I'm looking at you; you're not in Christ. I see you, you, and you. Did Regina get back in here yet? Has she arrived? But these are the wrong eyes. Boy, I tell you, the right eyes always see you in Christ. And when you were a stranger and an alien and foreign to the commonwealth of Israel and without God and without hope in the world and you were dead in your trespasses and sins, *He saw you in Christ*. Why did He see you there? And why are you there? Because He puts you there before the foundation of the world—to the praise of His grace. Again, if you had worked out a plan, would it have looked like this? Saints, is this not awesome? Alright, we'll keep on going.

Will we ever get through this? Inside Jesus Christ, we have our redemption through His blood and the forgiveness of our trespasses. And this also, when He was counseled by His own will, and He agreed with His own opinion, was working out exactly as it was planned. And right here we stop as we move toward an end: the fact that you were saved, that you were saved inside of Jesus Christ, that you were saved by the blood of God, that you have forgiveness of your trespasses, that just exactly fits with His plan. It's just working out according to all of those riches He had in Him before He ever listened to the counsel of His own will and enacted. You were saved, washed, forgiven in Jesus Christ through His blood, your trespasses and sins forgiven, because that just happened to fit perfectly, with lavish, boundless, unfathomable riches in the Lord. If we really understood this, we'd all be jumping up on our chairs and shouting until we were hoarse. Just happened exactly the way He planned it to.

Now, when you go home tonight, and someone says to you, "What did you hear this evening?" I want you to be able to tell them everything you heard, alright? Can you see this brother talking to us, stopping, and then probably running around the room shouting praises? He says, "To the riches of His grace..." Paul, why not stop there? And then he says, "Which God lavishly poured on you." He took rich grace and drowned you in it. And this is

exactly what He planned to do, working out exactly as He planned. He then drowned you in the riches of His grace.

Margaret, am I making any progress at all? Am I? When are you going to lose all this? The first time Darlene treats you mean? And so, we need stewards of His grace to remind us of these things. So may God give brothers and sisters in the church in Chicago to be stewards of His grace, and you are going to be stewards of His grace, or I'm going to come back to Germany and lay the law down on you. You're going to know grace, and you're going to drown in it; that's an order. (laughter)

Oh man, then a new paragraph starts, and it never lets up. "Which He lavished upon us...." Now, to me, the word "in" should be capitalized. "In all wisdom and insight, He made known to us the mystery of His will." So, right at this moment, we don't know what the mystery is, but let me explain what this is saying: here is the course of His plan, here is the course of His opinion, the counsel of His will; all of these things that are happening. These riches are strewn like diamonds all along the way. Before He predestined you, God decided to keep what He was doing hidden. Are you following me? He did not decide to just announce this publicly. He hid it. And I want you to know something else: He's still hiding it. But, to the brothers and sisters in Chicago, and the brothers and sisters who gather in Constance and who will grow, He let you know what His will was. You ready? You know something God kept secret from everybody else. You don't know it, and you don't know it, and you don't know it, and you don't know it. But you (corporately) know it. If you're listening to this on tape, I'm talking to each individual who doesn't know it, but it is given to the church. It is given to the church, and it is given to the church.

This throws a spear, a sword, right through evangelical Christianity. It is given to the church. It cannot possibly mean people sitting on pews listening to a sermon on Sunday morning. It is given to the church to know His will, which He has hidden, has been made known unto you, the church. And what is that mystery? And this is why I thought Paul should just stop right here. That in the working out of His plan, do you see the word "administration"? Are you with me? To the administering, to the working out, to the dispensing, to the carrying out of His will. Man. There will come a moment of pregnancy. When time, pregnant, will burst forth in the pregnancy of time; in the fullness of time, some moment out there time issues forth. Time finds its highest moment, time finds its place and purpose, time finds its purpose and issues forth in the fullness of time, in the fullness of the pregnancy of time...When is that? Right here, I would like to gather all the scholars in the world together and ask them, "When is the fullness of time? I don't think I can improve on that, brother. In the fullness of time: in the birth of the church.

Now, I have to confess that I need something right now. I need to be there at the fullness of time. I am just going to cut through everything else and say, I'm not willing for that to have happened in the first century, because I don't care what they learned in the first century. I

didn't learn it in the first century. There had to come a moment of pregnancy, of time, for me.

Now then, you might say, brother, that it is the coming of the birth of the church. Others would say to you, "The fullness of time is at the very end." And that will come the moment when all things are summed up in Jesus Christ, and He will fill all with all. Now, I'm holding back some words here. I really don't care whether it was at Pentecost or in Cornelius's house when the Gentiles spoke in tongues, or if you're Pentecostal and received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I don't care if it was at the time that Epaphras preached the gospel in Colossae, and I don't care if it was when I was sitting out in the backyard in a hammock or in a shower stall in New York. Oh, Lord, when did I see? But there was a fullness of time for me, when in a flash of revelation I saw something. Now, maybe it has already happened. Maybe it has not happened yet. It doesn't matter. As far as I am concerned, when Paul said to the Colossians, "In the fullness of time," he must have also been surely letting them know there was a precious moment for them. Let's have our precious moment.

Whether it took place on Calvary or at the tomb, whether it took place on the day of Pentecost, whether or not it will take place on the day when Jesus Christ returns, I am not bound by space and time. If it took place in the birth of the church in Chicago or the birth of the church in Atlanta, or the birth of a church in Constance, it doesn't matter. Or I can say to you that all of these things work toward a time when God will take everything, and this is the best I can describe it, and bring it all back to Christ, and then He will fill all with all.

Now let me read the passage. He has made known to us in all wisdom and insight as He peered down the corridors of time and eternity. And His will, the counsel of His will, is working, and His will is saying, "This is wise. And this is insightful. And what you have done here is full of wisdom." He made known to us the mystery of His will, and I want to know what that mystery is. Whatever that mystery is, God was kind when He thought it up and when He worked it out. And God had a will, and God had a mystery which He purposed, and I want you to take this great carpet we're looking at that stretches across time and eternity, and look at that word "purpose" again and say that it was inside of Jesus Christ that God purposed. He did it when He was in a mood of being very, very kind, and whatever it was, it was His will, and it was a mystery, and it is toward a time. It is toward a moment. It is with a view toward a working out of this plan through the ages, that at a time that was full and pregnant, it would no longer be a working out, but a completion of the following: the summing up of all things in Christ, things in heaven and things on earth.

Now, to me, that can only mean one thing: that when Almighty God created, He created through His Son and by His Son, and if you please, He created in His Son. And if you want to know where creation is located, it's located in Jesus Christ. Not Christ of Galilee, but the great cosmic Christ. And one day, all of creation, both this earth and the heavens that lie between us and the clouds, and the heaven that lies between the clouds and as far as these galaxies go, and the heavens that lie beyond the created visible heavens, but the heavens that are spiritual. He will bring them all back. From out of His creating hand, they flowed;

they will come back to Jesus Christ, and all things will be Christ again. I don't mean C-H-R-I-S-T- apostrophe S. I mean that it will be Christ, and He will fill whatever He chooses to fill. He will fully fill everything with all of Him. If it's there, if it has not died with the old creation, whatever is left, the only thing in it will be Jesus Christ. And that doesn't include just the "in", but it also includes the rim. If you see something that's full of Christ, include the rim, but it will all be Christ.

Well, Gene, that's wonderful, but I don't understand what you said. You think maybe I do? He had a will; there will be a moment when He will take all things back to Himself, and there will be a fullness of Christ, and He shall be all in all. When will that take place? When does that take place? Hmm? In the fullness of time. When is that? I have no idea. Now, the brothers and sisters from Chicago have heard me talk about this so much that I'm sure they'll want to head for the door.

This is Christ. This is creation. Where is creation? Inside of Jesus Christ. And right there, and about this much, a very fragile temporal thing is time. Now, to illustrate, I'm going to blow it up just a little bit. Here's Christ. Here's eternity and creation. Let's take time. And I know that every one of us thinks that God is here and He's kind of going along with us, you know, He's kind of keeping up with us and the clock as it goes along, but time is inside of Jesus Christ. Are you following me? Okay, then God only knows the beginning of time. That's over here on my left, you're right, that's the beginning of time. And that's all God knows. That's not possible, because God's over here too. I've used the illustration: if a log is going down to...the county I live in has a big river in it. And if I'm standing there, you're standing here, and someone else is standing here, he can see the log, and I can't. The log gets to me, and I can see it, but he can't. Then in a minute, he can see the log, but he can't, and I can't. But if I'm standing on a hill, I can see the log and you and you and you, and I see them all at once. Well, God does better than that.

When He said, "I am the Alpha," He did not say, "And someday I'm going to be the Omega." I am at this present moment: I am the Omega, the end of time, and at the beginning of time. In God, it has already taken place; I just haven't caught up with it yet. I'm an ant on that log, and God...Hebrews 4:3 or 3:4 says, He completed everything before He began everything. And all things have taken place in Him. He is not only yesterday and today; He is forever. He is not only the past and the present and the future; He is all three at once. Or, if you want to put it in two words, just two words: "I am." Not "I was" and "shall be." *I am*. Therefore, He floods His creation at all points on the clock, at all points on the map. Praise the Lord.

Now then, this is who you are. Now we come to a little bit more of who you are. If you stick with me, it would be better if we got this all at once, because tomorrow morning you're not going to remember a thing I said. Can you give me another 15 minutes? Can you handle it, Randy? You're getting lower and lower and lower. Bobby, you're completely lost, aren't you? You have no idea what I'm talking about. So-so. Then you're ahead of an awful lot of Christians. Can you imagine someone having the audacity to write all this stuff to a young church? And I beg you, Constance, I beg you to start off here. Don't get cheap and don't start

cheap. I'm imploring you to take these things and take them on the highest ground possible. Let this be your thought.

Okay, I'm going on. This strange verse: "With a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of time, that is the summing up of all things in Christ, things in the heavens and things upon the earth, all things summed up in Him." Then he stopped and remembered and said, "Oh yes, also there is something else about the mystery, about His will and its mystery. You, the church in Constance, the fellowship of believers in Constance, have obtained...not an individual, but a group of you...have obtained an inheritance." And he does not define it; therefore, I will not. But you were predestined to this purpose, and again, this is just exactly the way He planned it. That's the way Paul puts it. Oh yes, you have also obtained an inheritance because you're predestined to it, that inheritance, and that's just the way He planned it. It's just the way God planned it. Yes, the God who works all things out according to the counsel of His will. So, when you get an inheritance, and when He sums up all things in Christ, that's just exactly the way He planned it, when He counseled with Himself, and then agreed with His opinion. Okay.

Well, he just got through saying, with a view to the moment of the fullness of time, and He also adds, "You will have an inheritance." Then He says, "All of that comes to another end, to the end that we who first hoped in Christ...and I'm sure He makes a reference to the Jews here, but He gives the same inheritance to the Gentiles and to Constance and to Colossae and to Chicago. "To the end that we who have hoped in Christ shall," and this is exactly the way He planned it to be, "that ultimately, and in the end, we shall be a praise to His glory. Where I'd like to go, to the end of creation, and see all things melted into Christ." I would like to see myself gaining Christ, gaining my inheritance. I would like to see Christ gaining His inheritance. And then I would like so very, very much to see that in His final work, that those riches of His glory, the riches of His grace, the riches of His kind intention, the riches of His mercy, and the super bounding abundance and the lavishness of His grace, in working all these things out, has caused me, as all things slip back into Him, including us, that the last shout of our lips as we are filled with all the fullness of Christ and all things have come to an end, that the last thing that I ever do as an individual is to shout my praises to Him, and that I become like the incense on the altar that rises up with the, in the fire, the incense becomes a praise to God. As Romans says the same thing, I become part of that which rises together, a praise to Him, a praise to all that He has done so far.

Now, brothers and sisters, I'm going to quit, but boy, I don't want to. I'd sure like to go into the rest of this, but it will take at least until tomorrow night to finish these last few verses in chapter 1. Now, would you please do me a big favor? Please do me a favor. Randy, sit up straight. Darlene, sit up straight. Margaret, are you sitting up straight? Would you just say something, please? I don't care what it is. Have you nothing to say in the presence of these things? Please, just say anything...to the glory of His grace.

Did I ever want a Christ this wonderful? Absolutely not. These things reach beyond anything I can understand, and I have to tell you that we haven't even started talking about who you

are now. We haven't gotten to that. That's the next verse. Who you are now. We saw your second state; we saw God before creation in His state at that time. We've seen you in your first state, and we're warming up our motor to get to our present state, because we already know we are blameless, because we have been ever since He marked us off in Christ.

Do you know what God calls us? And what Paul called us? What did Christ call us? We're believers. We're believers. Unfortunately, and it's really a loss in our language, the words "believers" and "faith" are the same word, except one's a verb and one's a noun. It never calls us believers; we're faithers. We're faithers, brothers. Do you believe? Absolutely. You know why? Because you're a believer. We're gullible folks; we believed. Let me tell you how gullible we are. We believe that we could find God pleased with us without doing anything to make Him feel good about us. We actually believed that, and that's insane. Everybody knows that God's sitting up there looking down at you and saying, "Behave yourself. You'd better do something I like." But we believe that wasn't possible, and that, if we can do brother, we can believe anything. Yeah, this is too big for you, isn't it, sister? Can you handle this by yourself? I can't even remember this by myself.

Hopefully, if we don't run out of time, before this week is over, you'll be in chairs facing one another from all four sides, and I won't be present, and you'll talk to one another. I may extend the length of this conference, change my plane ticket, and tell you that you can't leave until some people around here start opening their mouths. Isn't that beautiful? Is that all you have to say, brother? Are you sure? We can listen to more. It does me too.

I hope that is not a question. If it is, I am not answering it. I don't like the answers to that question, I never have, and it's not because the answer wasn't correct; it was the way it was answered. I'll let God answer that one for you, brother. Okay, now then, you did spend some time with it, alone? Daniel, you did. Well, finally. Finally, take the dunce cap off of this guy.

Okay? Well, now did you get together with one person? You did. The way to do it is to get up front with it right quick, head it off at the pass. Okay, did most of you... you did? Nod your head, let me know. Yeah.

Now then, this is what I want to know. Did you get more out of the first or the second time? You don't know? First, yeah. When you were alone or with someone else, huh? The second. Second. Corporate. Yeah. Anybody get more out of it being alone? Definitely, there usually is someone who is, who does.

Alright. I think, for me, my impression is that some of you, this meant a lot to you, or a little bit at least. Okay, now then, it's 10 o'clock, and you're going to do this right now. If we have to put the meeting off tomorrow a little bit, we'll run over, but I want you to go find somebody while you're full of these things. I want you to find two other people, and y'all get together and decide on a passage, and then hold your nose and jump in. Just whoever can and whoever will, alright? You know, no form, no going around in a circle. If you need to start in a circle, do so. And I want to say again, if someone says something and it sparks

something in you—your spirit—say it. Don't hold it. And if you see something they didn't, you make it a declaration to the Lord. I don't call this prayer; I call this fellowship. You may call it prayer if you wish; I don't mind that one bit. You can call it anything you want, but for me, this is really fellowship with the Lord.