

Ephesians 1, Part 2 (Conrad Bowman) (December 11, 2005)

We're in Ephesians, chapter 1. Boy, I understand Tom was right next door in Galatians. Fullness of time. Fullness of time. That's it. That's it. Andrew Jukes. Andrew Jukes wrote a paper on the fullness of time here a while back. And wrote this around the turn of the century. A marvelous, marvelous man with the Word. I found a copy of his stuff and got it for Tom about a year ago, and I wasn't familiar with Jukes. So I got one also, and in the book that we got, there was a paper in there called *The Fullness of Time*. Talking about the culmination of everything the Father ever intended for man being drawn together and centered on the Church today. He didn't put time together in order to call Himself a nation. That wasn't His intent. His intent was the Body of Christ. The Bride of the Son. That was always His intention. This is not Plan B on His eternal plan. He didn't default with Israel and fall back to the fall-back plan which was the Church. The Church was His intention. And the more we understand that, the more we understand the high standards He set, the demands He makes of us, the commands He give us, and the power He has poured into His Body. Not that we should weld it for our own purposes and satisfy our own views. But just so that it would flow out as our minds come into concert with His and His will is being done through us. And, we find that it's less of us – like John says – and more of Him. And, the more that happens, the fuller His will is displayed. I've got to get that message to hear from Tom this morning.

Alright. We're in Ephesians chapter 1. Boy, what fond memories we have. We lived in Terry Town, we moved down there just before Betsy, two weeks before Betsy. So, we fled from Houston to New Orleans and had a hurricane pull in behind us. I can sympathize with you on a lot of fronts. But, we have a sense of loss because on the North side of the river, the lake, there's a shopping center. And on the road to the shopping center, the back road off of I-10, there was a Time Saver store. A Time Saver is just like a Stop & Go, and it had two or three racks of groceries, and it had a kitchen window in the back. And, behind that kitchen window there were two ladies who made oyster & shrimp poor-boys. After 20 years they closed the place. In and out deli, it was called, finally, and they closed it a couple of months ago, and absolutely, we have no reason to go back and visit family. We live in Mississippi. It's terrible. We used to have to explain to Mom why we couldn't stay for lunch. "We can't stay for lunch, we've got to get on the road because it's a long way back to Houston." And thirty minutes later we were at the Time Saver scarfing down the best Oyster & Shrimp poor-boy you ever put in your mouth, and it had to stay a secret.

Lady. You couldn't tell your Mom?

Conrad Bowman. No. Tell her that I'm giving up lunch with her and in two or three hours I'm going to get a poor-boy – she would have never understood that. Or, maybe she would have.

Ephesians. Life is full of grace, isn't it? We covered the first few verses of Ephesians. Now there are – Phil – those other sets of Notes. They're in the back? Okay. There's one left?

Gentleman: One left.

Conrad Bowman. Okay. I need to make some more then. Alright. There's one left back there. That's a complete set of notes on the whole Book. If you don't get one today, I'll bring some more tomorrow. I thought I had enough.

OK. We covered the first five verses of Ephesians last week. So, I'm going to start there, and not try to redo that old ground, even though I have a number of new people in here. I'm going to start with verse 5.

He [the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself...

Now understand now, the adoption that we enjoy puts us in a direct relationship with the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is so very important. You're related to God the Father. You're adopted into His family. Okay? You're not just an appendage. You're adopted directly into His family. Okay?

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will ...

It was always His will that that should happen – that's the Father's will. And the end of this is

... the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved [in Christ].

Now look at what has happened. The Father's intention and will from before the moment of creation, before the foundation of the world, was that you would be

adopted, through Christ, to Him, the Father, as His son, forever. And, it was the kind intention of His will that determined that.

Now, Brenda, my daughter, got from Louie Gigglio a couple of shots from the Hubble telescope. They sent that thing out there, and they sent – they sent an Explorer satellite out and the Hubble telescope and they had pictures coming from both, and they converged those things and made a couple and Carl Sagan had one. Just as that thing, that Explorer, got ready to get into Pluto's gravity and sling-shot on farther into deeper space, it's like 4 million light years away, or something like that, they turned that baby around and had it take a shot of earth. And, the distortion in the lens had a few little lines cutting across the scene – I want to blow that thing up if I can do it and still maintain fidelity. And right in the middle of this line – you could barely discern it – was a small blue dot. That was it. The faintest blue dot you could imagine. Now understand, that's the Explorer looking back at earth, and taking a picture of this place, and that's all it could see. And he named it, "That Small Blue Dot," – that picture. Now, at the same time, they had Hubble trained in the area of one of the last stars in the handle of the Big Dipper. And they had clarified that thing, and stopped the wobble, and cleaned it up, and it was shooting in deep space. And, it took a picture of a galaxy in which that star resided, and it's called the "Spiral Galaxy." It's one of the most beautiful shots of space I've ever seen. Here's a spiral of red, and blue, and blue-white stars in a spiral shape, and right in the middle of it was a bright spot. Right in the middle. See that spiral clear – this is a galaxy. It's like 41 million light years wide. Okay? And it's a spiral, about that big, and right in the middle is this little white spot. So they trained on that little white spot, and they got as close in and as tight a shot as they could, and focus that thing on maximum. And, what they photographed in the middle of that white spot – and sooner or later I'm going to write on that screen, that would be disastrous if I did that, but it marks a lot, wouldn't it. What they had in the middle of that white spot, right here, was this image. [Image of a Cross]. It's absolutely stunning. That image. Now this [the horizontal bar of the cross] was 14 million light years across. That image. It's just a dark image. You can't get any more definition than that. But here in the Spiral Galaxy, right in the middle, it's in a constellation formation called "The Hunting Dog" Now Bren took it and put it in her – she's got a binder she's building at the office of these phenomena – and she stuck it in there, and right behind it she stuck the poem, "The Hound of Heaven." Wasn't that appropriate? Those of you who know the "Hound of Heaven."

I fled Him, down the days and down the nights;
I fled Him down the pathways of my own life;

I fled Him, having found Him, I should give up all others.

A mind tortured by opium. Son of a doctor. Prayed over by his grandmother. Okay? Won to the Lord, he said, by God's un-swerving, unending hunting him down and bringing him to Himself. That's the way we all come. That's the way we all come. Kicking and screaming.

Mary Ann Jacobsen. Who is the author?

Conrad Bowman. The author is – his name is Johnson. I send you a copy of it. I've got it. I'll be happy to do that. I'll be happy to – I've passed it out in here a couple of times. It's marvelous. It's a long poem. It's a long poem. Convoluted. The story of a man's life, running from God, and God running after him. And I heard the feet, thundering, thundering after him, pursuing him. Up trellis pathways and down snowy blossoms, I slid. But always those feet were behind me. That's the way God works. His will. The kind intention of His will directed toward us. He doesn't give up on us. He doesn't give up on us.

Now, Paul the apostle has lived his life in service. He's written most of his letters. Ephesians comes later in his list. And Ephesians, and 1st and 2nd Timothy and Titus, they're right toward the end of his ministry. We're starting there with Ephesians and we're going to back down through the other ones, I hope. Because, at this point he realizes that his life is coming to a close, and he's laying down the foundations on which the young Church is going to continue to grow, and thrive, and prosper. And the first of these, in this letter to the Ephesians, lays down the foundation of why we came to be. How we got drawn together. Whether it was through the yellow pages, or whether it was through chance meetings at work, or whether it was through a spiritual urge at home when you were cocooned away, whatever. God brought us together here for different reasons, and under different circumstances, but He drew us together as a Body. A living organism, functioning together. The last two years I have spent alive based on your prayers for me. Okay? That's the reason I'm here today. I don't have any question about it. That I've skated through life, and the difficulty of the last two years, based on your prayers. And more. You know. And that's why I'm here today. We are a living organism, and we hold one another up on the basis of our connections with the Father. Not that we bend His mind to what we think needs to be done, but through the intensity of our prayers our minds get drawn alongside of His will which has been in place since before the foundation of the world. How comforting is that to you? Through the intensity of your prayer for one another, your mind is drawn along side the mind of the Father, and our Lord

Jesus Christ, and it's brought into conformity with His will. That's the place where your mind gets exchanged for the mind of the Son which was always in concert with the mind of the Father. Never separated. And your mind is exchanged for His, and you find yourself thinking and praying, not with your own, but with His. Isn't that gorgeous? And it starts right here. And it starts right here, with this foundation rock in Ephesians.

He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will [and it's all done] to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.

That word freely is enormous, because what it says is, Christ has now ascended and is on His throne in heaven, and it's from that throne that the water of life that He was trying to give to Israel flows. That water which gives life and satisfies thirst so that a man will never thirst again, and it's living water, and it flows from heaven. And that flow, freely flowing, comes from where He is to you and out to a thirsty world. And that flow is unending, and is unquenchable. Okay? There is nothing greater than it. It can put out every fire. It can slake every hurt. It can fill every river and need on this earth. And it flows continuously through you to them. To one another. It's marvelous. When Tom delivers one of those sermons that just connects and – boom – it just hits you like that, that's the flow. That's what hit us. Okay? And if you have somebody in your family in need, and your prayer surrounds them and covers them and bathes them with comfort – that's that flow again. We don't scream and shout about it. That's that flow again. It's coming, and it does not stop. It's me, it's you, everyone of us. Okay? Same water, same source.

Now, He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved – when He put us into Christ, He turned it on. In Him, in Christ, we have redemption through His blood. Redemption – that word “redeem” means to be bought back from sin. We were sold unto sin, slaves unto sin, we're on the block of sin, and He bought us back. The sense of the word, in the Greek, is to have had a possession, lost it to another, found it on the auction block in the public square, and bought it back. That's what the word implies. Okay? That's what He did. He made us for Himself. That's what happened in Adam. He lost it though Adam's disobedience, and it became the possession of sin. He found that possession on the slave block where sin was dealing it to others. And the God of all heaven, of all creation, bought us back at the price of His own Son's blood. And we claimed His possession. That's how much He thought of you. He did that individually.

Now think about this. If man, in his own mind's eye, can see himself as a pale blue dot, barely discernable – and that's the whole universe, the whole earth that we occupy – and down on that earth, the insignificant little spot, that speck, that's you today. The whole of the earth that we occupy is only a dot the size the head of a pin. And on the head of that pin is Houston, Texas, the Spring Branch, and it's me and you. We don't have anything that will discern anything that small. That the God of all creation had you in mind before the foundation of the world, and He put it all together, and said "that is Mine," and the hound of heaven came after you, across the universe, and across the time, and claims you for His own. That's fabulous. That's fabulous. You can't get anymore insignificant than that. And yet He had you in mind in every little aspect of your life. Yes ma'am, Donna?

Donna Rankin. [Question. Inaudible].

[Discourse from Class members back and forth. Inaudible].

Conrad Bowman. Before the foundation of the world. Lavished on us. Yes ma'am.

Lady. [Question. Inaudible].

Conrad Bowman. We get surrounded by so much, that we begin to take all that affluence for real and as normal. And then God reminds us every once and a while in a strange way – Katrina was one such reminder. My mom is in a nursing home in North Alabama today, because of Katrina. She came from Pascagoula. She's lived on the Gulf Coast all her life. She'll spend the rest of her life where she is. The amazing thing is she has accepted that, she never speaks of the house and what was in it. The only thing she says to me is, "I'm here. I'm not going back home." It's wonderful to watch grace fill up a whole life that she just got moved away from in just a matter of hours. It's marvelous to watch the love of God, and in this case – I would say, divine grace. Divine grace, as she faces changes here at the end of her life. I watched her mom do the same thing – my grandmother. You know, grace is genetic, I think. It's marvelous. Did I miss a hand over here?

That is so much a part of what the Apostle is sensing as he writes these last letters in his ministry. I have just finished the notes on Titus, and it just nails it down even more when we get to Titus.

In Christ we have redemption ...

Being bought back.

... through His blood,

That's the price. We have ...

... the forgiveness of our trespasses,

They're removed from us. How often do we pray, "Father forgive us of our sins," and that's like a kid with a mouth full of chocolate saying, you know, thank you for the chocolate, and you've already eaten it. The sin has been removed. You know. **No man dies and goes to Hell because of sin, because that's been paid for. All of it has been paid for. That's the total effect of the death of Christ. He dies and goes to Hell for rejecting the price.** He absolutely will not accept that on his own behalf. He wants to participate in it some way. Foolish thought. But, that's man for you. You know. He wants to get in there and make some contribution on his own.

Lady. [Inaudible. Comment about not hearing from the pulpit that the sin has been forgiven].

Conrad Bowman. That's right. Because guilt is a terrible motivator. And people still feel that if they can just make people feel guilty enough they'll come to Christ. Listen, you can't argue somebody into a relationship with the Lord. You can't convince them by clever argument. You cannot by anything you do or say move somebody from a lost rejection condition into a compliant, receiving condition. That's the work of the Spirit. The Spirit's job is to do that. He convinces, He calls, He drives, He pulls you in, He is the Hound of Heaven. Okay? It's the Spirit's job to grow the Church. We're not here to grow the Church. That's not our job. Not even through our missionary work. We're here to grow the people that God has grown the Church and brought together. Our job is to fill one another up with our gifts of service so that we understand the God we serve better. The missions work is what happens to lives that are overflowing when we leave this property and go to Luby's or Rock Fish Grill or wherever we go for lunch. And to meet our neighbors. That's what happens. Missionary work should be 100% the overflow of this living water that's hit our lives, filled us up full, and now is splashing over on other people. And it gets their attention. And, they want to know what in the world is going on with your life. And just be

ready, it said, instant, in season and in out, to tell them what's happening in your life. That's real missions work. Some are called to leave where they are, the comfort of their surroundings, and go to foreign lands. Some "foreign lands" are in here. And that's what Peter is talking about. You need to be ready. Meet them where they are, with the need fulfilling property of that water that's filling our life. But it should be a natural action on our part. Okay? To share. Ready to offer whatever it is we have. If it's a room, or a dollar, or a baloney sandwich, or whatever. You know.

Carol Johnson. [Comment. Inaudible].

Conrad Bowman. That's it. To the praise and the glory of his grace. That's His story, it's not our story. It's not about us. It's about Him. You know. God did it all, so that He might receive glory. It's not. It's not, to an omnipotent, all powerful, all sovereign God. It's not selfish. It's about Him. Okay? And, because it's about Him, He pours on us things that we could not even imagine so that He might be glorified. Isn't that amazing. We are trophies of His grace. Crowns on our head given to us for works the Spirit has done for us in our life while we were alive that we didn't contaminate. Okay? As trophies of His grace cast down as crowns before the feet of the Father, the dowries, the Bride's dowries, given back to His glory. To His glory. And, in verse 8:

Which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight He made known to us the mystery of His will.

And that mystery which is hidden in the past is the mystery of the relationship that we enjoy to Him.

according to the kind intention which He purposed in Him [in Christ] with a view to an administration [the King James says dispensation, I believe] suitable to the fullness of the times, that is

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Tom hit it in Galatians, and here it is in Ephesians. They're locked together. They're in lock step.

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 on the earth.

There is a day staring us in the face when everything is going to come down to the Lord Jesus and His position, as the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, over everything, all made subject to Him because He in all things points to the Father. The Spirit in all things points to the Son.

What's our job? We are to be joined to the Son, through the Spirit, enabled by the Spirit, we are to be joined to the Son. And just as the Son points everything to the Father, so do we. FOR ETERNITY. Now, we can't understand what that means. Louie reminded me on a tape I saw a couple of years ago that there's people from every tribe and every nation; that every tongue on earth is going to be there. It's not going to be a quaint little organ recital. It's going to be drums, it's going to be brass, it's going to be stringed instruments, its going to be voices that you cannot imagine, all singing the praises of the Father. It's going to be loud. There's going to be dancing in the aisles – heaven forbid [laughter]. What are we going to do? Okay? Can you imagine that? Every tongue and every nation together in one vast celebration of the glory of the Father, FOREVER. And we'll never get tired of it. This is the foundation of it, where He put it together. And that's going to be the culmination of it. In the fullness and the summing up of all things together in Christ. We are the clock at the last second of time ticking away before that happens. How can we hang on to our stuff so hard. Okay? We're worried about our stuff so bad we want a different face for the world to see. Let's give it a different face. Let's give it a face of absolute expectancy, as we live in the hope of His appearing, the joy of His appearing, because He's coming again. He comes again. All of your "stuff" is going to be left behind. There won't even be a trace of it left. It's all going to be left right were it is. And in an instant you are going to be out of here.

Now, release your grip on what you're holding on to. I can't imagine losing all of Mackintosh. [Laughter]. Just can't imagine. Some jerk that can hardly read is going to have my library. [Laughter]. We all have our stuff, don't we, that keeps us anchored here. It keeps pulling our vision away from where we are going and where we're headed and what God's kind intention and will is and keeps pulling our vision back down here. Man, we are a heartbeat away. Just a heartbeat away. Let's live our lives this week, just this week, in anticipation of that. Okay? This is the fullness of time. This is it. We're in it, guys. We're in it. We're standing at the door to the vestibule of eternity with God. That's what sunset ought to being us. If this is a foretaste of what God has in store for us, what is heaven going to look like? If we could stand here and see this. I appreciate you this morning, more than ever. Mary Ann?

Mary Ann Jacobsen. [Inaudible. Comment about what Tom Douthit said this morning about our possessions].

Conrad Bowman. That's it. That's it. I love it when I find myself coinciding with something he said.

Closing Prayer. Father we thank You for just the way You work your will, the way You work Your work, to join us together in this place, for so much love and appreciation for those that are here in this room and in this church. I thank You for sustaining me and Norma by means of it, and just open us up, Father, that we can be vessels for Your use. We thank You in Christ's name, Who paid for it everywhere. Amen.

[This recording was transcribed on a tape recorder, and transmitted to a digital format. The earlier recordings, of which this is one, were made on a tape recorder. Some are more audible than others. This particular recording was extremely unclear, and therefore is not including in the audio section of this site]