

This is Your Life, Part 7

Ephesians 2:7

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Our culture is really defined by ancient philosophies. We'd like to think that we are the carvers of our own fate, the makers of our own destiny, but in reality, we and the thoughts of the people around us are shaped by ancient ideas. It was the Greek philosopher Protagoras who wrote "man is the measure of all things." He was the father of moral relativism. There is in that statement "man is the measure of all things" the ultimate statement of human autonomy, man is in control of everything. He is the measure of everything. He determines the rightness or wrongness of everything. Man is, in fact, at the very center of the universe. Fortunately, in the ancient world, even the Athenians, the city from which Protagoras came, (those who were attracted to all kinds of different philosophies who were called in the book of Acts seed-pickers looking for this and that, and new ideas), even the Athenians had enough sense to throw Protagoras out of town and to burn all of his works. They understood that that was not the basis for a culture.

But sadly, the ideas that Protagoras promoted are alive and well in twenty-first century America. The child, the stepchild, if you will, of his philosophy is humanism, secular humanism. And humanism continues to assure us that man is the measure, that he is the center of the universe. In every day language, if we could reduce it to its most common denominator, we would say, "It really is all about me." There's a reason that that whole concept resonates so deeply in all of us. It's part of the fallen human condition, it's part of who we are as sinners to think that the universe revolves around us. In fact, we can even be tempted to think that the universe exists for us. A recent best-seller said just that: *The Secret*, so heavily recommended by Oprah Winfrey. The universe exists for us.

What does the Bible say? Colossians 1 says all things were made for Jesus Christ. This world doesn't exist for us. The universe doesn't exist for us. It exists for Christ. We come to the conclusion as we start with this base of man as the center; we come to the conclusion that even God exists for us—that God's chief end is to make me happy and to meet all my needs. Instead, Scripture declares that God's chief end is His own glory.

We're prone, as Christians, to even take that secular idea of 'man as the measure,' 'man as the center,' as the determiner of all things, and to believe that God saved us for us. That our salvation is primarily about us, but that's not what the Bible says. Remember Ephesians chapter 1. Look back, it's been many months I know since we were there, but Ephesians 1:6, He predestined us to adoption as sons "to the praise of the glory of His grace." Verse 12, "to the end that we who were the first to hope in Christ would be to the praise of His glory." Verse 14 ends with the fact that the Spirit has been given to us "to the praise of His glory." Listen, God worked

in salvation to get glory to Himself. In chapter 2 Paul continues this great theme. He returns to this great theme and he develops it even more deeply. In 2:7, we will discover in a single verse what is frankly mind-bending and life-altering in its implications and its application.

We've been studying Ephesians 2:1-10. In this sentence in the Greek text, Paul describes how God rescued us. A rescue that was entirely His work from beginning to end. And Paul develops this whole idea of this rescue, or this change that has occurred, in three simple and basic movements through these ten verses. The first part or movement is in verses 1-3. Paul rehearses what we were; what we were when God found us, and it's not a pretty picture. We've looked at it in great detail. We were dead, and we were in slavery, and we were the enemies of God, and we were only awaiting His wrath to fall on us and our sin. That's what we were.

The second movement comes in verses 4-6 and it's what God did. In response to what we were, let's look at what God did. And last week we looked in great detail at what it was that God did. It's described in the three verbs in verses 5 and 6. He made us alive, He raised us up, and He seated us with Christ in the heavenlies. We looked at what those mean, and they are so profound and so deep. Taken together, God intends to tell us through the apostle Paul here that He intervened to rescue us from sin, to make us new. To deliver us from slavery, and to make us slaves of God, and to deliver us from wrath and make us His eternal sons—already, as it were, present in heaven with Christ. That's what God did.

Today, we come to the third part of God's great dramatic plan. We've seen what we were. We've seen what God did. In verses 7-10, we see why God did it. Notice the two little words that begin verse 7, “So that?”; to this end; for this purpose. Let me read for you these verses, verses 7-10. In light of all that God has done, in light of who we were, here in verse 7 Paul comes to why.

So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, so that no one may boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.

God had a plan. Chapter 1:10 tells us God had this great eternal plan, and behind that plan there were specific reasons God acted. Often, a master doesn't tell his slaves what he's doing. He simply tells them what they need to do, and they fulfill their little function not knowing the bigger scheme. But as John MacArthur pointed out when he was here, we have a most unusual master. We are slaves of Jesus Christ. And our master lets us in on what He's doing. John 15, He says, "No longer do I call you [merely] slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you [also] friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have

made known to you." Although we are slaves of Jesus Christ, our Lord takes us into His confidence, makes us His friends, and He tells us what He's doing. And amazingly, sometimes as He does here in Ephesians 2, He not only tells us what He's doing, He even tells us why. Why!

Today, as we come to these verses, God tells us exactly why it is that He acted to change us, that why it is He acted to rescue us. And here's the shocking thing, God's reasons for rescuing us are not primarily about us. That rocks our world, because we still think selfishly and as humanists. Don't misunderstand, of course, God loves individuals. We're described as His sheep that He knows by name, whom He takes to Himself as a shepherd would an individual sheep. There is an intimacy in our relationship to God. Of course that's true. But when the apostle explains what really lay behind God's plan, it was much bigger than any individual. It was much bigger than you and it's much bigger than me. There were cosmic reasons that God acted to rescue you from sin. And here in Ephesians 2, Paul identifies three reasons that God acted in sovereign grace to rescue you from sin. If you're a Christian this morning, this is why God did it. This is what God had in mind. This was the motive for which He acted.

Today, I want us to look just at the first of these three reasons, in verse 7. Because it is the greatest and the grandest reason of all. God acted to rescue you in Christ in order to display His own glory. God acted to rescue you to display His own glory.

In one of the most famous soliloquies in English literature, in the play *As You Like It*, Shakespeare wrote these words:

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits, and their entrances,
And one man in his time plays many parts.

Shakespeare was right. He was right in ways that he could not have imagined, and in ways that he never intended. The world is a stage. This planet that we call home, this pale blue dot in the Milky Way galaxy, hurling through the blackness of endless space, is a stage. It's the greatest stage in the universe, because it's the stage on which the eternal God has put His character on display.

Look at the word "show." Verse 7, in order that "in the ages to come He might show." It's a very interesting Greek word. It literally means: to display; to give proof; to demonstrate something either by argument or act; to make something evident and obvious. To put it on display, is the idea. God is engaged in a grand demonstration on a cosmic, universal, eternal scale. And He's doing it right here on this planet we call home. This is the purpose of God.

Francis Foulkes writes:

The purpose of God for His church [that's for us] as Paul came to understand it, reaches beyond itself, beyond salvation of individuals, beyond its unity and fellowship, beyond even its witness to the world. The church is to be the exhibition to the whole creation of the wisdom and love and grace of God in Christ.

William Hendricksen, the great commentator writes, "God's purpose in saving His people reaches beyond them. His own glory is His chief end." God has a grand demonstration and it's happening right here in the earth.

Now, there are several important questions about this demonstration, this grand demonstration, that God's involved in, that Paul answers here in verse 7. I want us to see the questions that he answers and then see his answers to them.

The first question, as we think about this sort of grand demonstration that God's putting on, is when? When is this exhibition? When is this display? Well notice he begins verse 7 "so that," for this purpose, God has rescued you. He saved you, He's changed you for this reason. And then he says, "in the ages to come," in the coming ages. What does Paul mean? Well, there are three possibilities, and commentators take various approaches to this.

Some would say that he means the ages from the first century when Paul wrote this letter until the return of Christ. The ages, if you will, the periods of time between when Paul lived and when Christ returns. And certainly, God is displaying Himself now. Chapter 3:10 makes that clear. He has "now" made known certain things about Himself.

A second view says that no, it's not talking about now. It's not talking about until Christ returns. It's talking about after Christ returns. And God also will display certain things after Christ returns. Chapter 1:21 refers to the age to come. This age and the age to come, meaning the age after Christ returns. So God is going to put certain things on display then.

But there's a third view that I think is the best way to understand what Paul is saying here, and that is, it includes both of the first two. Paul was standing in the first century and he was looking as it were, at time as it unfolds and he was saying, in all the coming ages. Literally translated, he says, "in the ages, the ones coming and coming and coming." He uses the present tense. The ages that just keep on coming. It's really a very picturesque expression because it pictures time, this time in which we live and the time in which Paul lived as the shoreline onto which breaks wave after wave after wave. And the individual waves don't represent days or decades, or even centuries. But each wave as it breaks on the shoreline represents another age. And as another wave comes, another age. If you look out from the shore at the horizon, as if you were standing

on a beach looking at the horizon to the vanishing point, all you can see is more waves. That's the picture behind this expression.

That's how it is with eternity. Age after age after age hits the shore of time. That's when God is going to put Himself on display. He started when Christ came, and it will never end. Wave after wave, age after age, God will be putting Himself on display.

F.F. Bruce writes, "...in the limitless future, as age succeeds to age, the crowning display of God's grace will ever be His kindness to His redeemed people, ..." When is this exhibition? It started with Christ, and it'll never end.

There's a second question that Paul answers here, and that's what does God display? What exactly is the demonstration intended to show about God? Well, he puts this very clearly—verse 7, so that in the coming ages, “He might show the surpassing riches of His grace.” God intends to put His grace on display.

I wish you'd never heard the word *grace*. I wish you'd never heard it defined. I wish this were the very first time I were explaining this truth to you, because we are so prone as human beings to become so accustomed to things that we lose the sense of wonder, the sense of grandeur, the sense of majesty that comes with certain concepts. And grace stands at the head of the line. You know what grace is? If I were to ask you to define grace, how would you define it? The most common definition would be unmerited favor. And that's okay as far as it goes. But that's such a weak definition of grace. Let me give you a couple that resonate in my own heart.

A. W. Pink writes, "grace is the favor of God to those who not only have no positive deserts of their own, but who are thoroughly ill-deserving, and hell-deserving."

A.W. Tozer writes, "it is God's goodness directed toward human debt and demerit. It is by His grace that God credits merit where none previously existed, and declares no debt to be where one had been before."

Grace is that miracle of God in which He, because of His own character, extends favor to those who deserve exactly the opposite. It's not just unmerited favor, it's favor that we deserve the opposite of. And grace is the truth by which God, as A.W. Tozer said here, credits merit where there was none, and declares no-debt where there had been one before. You see, grace is what stands behind what we talked about even in the conference, that wonderful truth of imputation, of crediting.

God, in a miracle of grace credits my sin to Christ and treats Christ as if He'd lived my life, and in a miracle of grace, He credits Christ's perfect life to me and to my account, and treats me as if

I had lived that life. That is grace. That is the heart of grace. That is the most powerful display of grace. It's God doing good to those who deserve exactly the opposite. This is God's character.

In Exodus 34, when He displays Himself to Moses, He says, I am gracious. I am full of grace. I am by nature One who delights in doing good to those who deserve the opposite. In 1 Peter 5:10, Peter calls Him “the God of all grace.” God the Father is the fountain of grace. Jesus Christ is the channel through which that grace flows to us, and the Holy Spirit is the one who takes that grace and applies it to our hearts. Now we stand in grace, Paul says in Romans 5:2. You know what that means? We stand in grace? That means we live in an atmosphere of grace. We actually breathe, as it were, grace. We live in a kingdom where grace rules. God constantly overwhelms us with kindness that we not only do not deserve, but that we deserve the opposite of.

Notice though in Ephesians 2, he doesn't say just “God's grace.” He says the riches or the wealth of His grace. And not just the wealth of His grace, but the surpassing wealth of His grace. Paul adds term to term to try to get us to comprehend what he's talking about. This word that's translated in English as “surpassing” is a very interesting word. It's the word **huperballó** in the Greek text. It literally means “to throw over or beyond something; to surpass in throwing.” You may recognize the word because we get an English word from it. **Huperballó**, we get the English word *hyperbole* from it. When it's used figuratively, it's not talking about literally throwing something—when it's used figuratively, it expresses the highest ultimate degree. Whatever it's talking about is beyond comparison. It's beyond comprehension. It is beyond measurement.

Now this word—Paul likes it. He only uses it a few times however in the New Testament. And he uses it several times here in Ephesians. In those times, we are told that God's power is **huperballó**. In Ephesians 1:19, God's power can't be measured. It can't be comprehended. It can't be compared. In 3:19 we're told that Christ's love for us is **huperballó**. And here in 2:7 we're told that God's grace is **huperballó**. Paul is saying that the wealth of God's grace cannot be compared to anything else. There's nothing like it in the universe. It is incomprehensible to our finite minds in its fullness, and it cannot be measured. God has put His incomparable, incomprehensible, immeasurable wealth of grace on display. That's what God has displayed.

Now that brings us to a third question. How does God display His grace? How does He put this grace on display? Look again at verse 7, “so that in the ages to come He might show” or prove or demonstrate the surpassing—the **huperballó**—“riches of His grace in kindness toward us.” This is how God displays His grace. Now, folks, that is a remarkable statement. Because just four verses before, we are told that we are the objects of God's eternal wrath. And now, just four verses later, we are told that we are the objects of God's eternal kindness. What a remarkable change God has produced.

What is this word kindness? It's really hard to define with an English word. When the Greeks used this word kindness to refer to things, and they often did, it means mild and pleasant as opposed to harsh or hard or sharp or bitter. For example, it's used in the New Testament this way in Luke 5:39, it's used of wine. Wine that has mellowed with age. It's not got a harsh taste. It is mellowed and softened with age. In Matthew 11:30, that famous verse where Jesus describes being His disciple as taking His yoke. It's interesting, since Jesus took on His father's business after Joseph's death. He became a carpenter, and Justin Martyr says that Jesus made farm implements including yokes and plows. And so He uses that image of yokes. He says My yoke is, and it's translated *easy*, the same family of words translated *kindness* here. My yoke is kind. My yoke isn't harsh. It isn't severe, it isn't hard.

When the word is used of people, it means kind as opposed to harsh or severe. For example, in Romans 11:22, it's contrasted with severity. You have the kindness of God and the severity of God. And those two are considered to be opposites. So kindness then, is the opposite of harsh or severe. It is tender love in action. God displays His grace—listen carefully—God displays His grace by not treating those who deserve His wrath with harshness or severity, but instead treating them with kindness.

This too is the character of our God. God demonstrated this kindness for all men to see when He sent Jesus. Titus 3:4 refers to the coming of Christ as “when the kindness of God our Savior appeared.” God is kind even to the unrepentant, even to those who are His enemies, and He is kind to them for the purpose of leading them to repentance. Look at Romans 2:4. As he indicts all of mankind for its sin he says this in Romans 2:4, “do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness?” Don't you know that the kindness of God is intended to lead you to repentance? God is kind to His enemies in order to provide a platform for their repentance. What is this kindness? I think Paul explains it to the crowd in Lystra. Turn back to Acts 14. In Acts 14 he explains this kindness. He sort of exegetes it a little bit. You remember the scene there. Paul and Barnabus show up, they heal somebody, and pretty soon, the people there in Lystra are ready to worship them as gods. And so Paul and Barnabus rush in to tell them “don't do that—stop—we're just men.” Verse 15 of Acts 14. This is what they said to them,

Men, why are you doing these things? We are also men of the same nature as you, and [we] preach the [good news] to you that you should turn from these vain things to [the] living God, WHO MADE THE HEAVEN AND THE EARTH AND THE SEA AND ALL THAT IS IN THEM. In [the] generations gone by He permitted all the nations to go their own ways; and yet He did not leave Himself without [a] witness, [here comes the kindness of God to all men] in that He did good and [He] gave you rains from heaven and fruitful seasons, [He satisfied] your hearts with food and gladness.

Paul says listen, look at the good things you enjoy in this life. That is the kindness of God to you. If you're here this morning and you don't know Jesus Christ, you live enjoying the kindness of God. He has given you so many wonderful things that enrich this life. Yes, this life is filled with trouble and trial and sin, but there are also many wonderful things that enrich our time here. And those are the demonstration of God's kindness to you. And He intends that those things would bring you to true repentance, where you would acknowledge your sin before Him and come and embrace His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is good. He is kind.

But God especially shows this kindness to those sinners whom He has chosen and set apart for Himself. In Romans 11:22 we read of that. God shows kindness to those He saves. By the way, before I leave this point, this quality of kindness is something that all of us who are believers to show to each other as well. Galatians 5:22 says the fruit of the Spirit is kindness—the opposite of harshness and bitterness and heaviness and severity. Colossians 3:12 says, “as those who have been chosen of God, ... put on a heart of ... kindness.” Treat other people the way God has treated you.

But this quality in God called kindness is not only how God treated us in the past when we were unbelievers, it's not only how God treated us when He sent Jesus, but listen carefully. This describes how God plans to treat us throughout eternity. Ephesians 2:7 says, “so that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing riches of His grace” by being kind toward us in Christ Jesus. For eternity, God plans to treat us with kindness as opposed to harshness and severity. How can a holy God respond to those of us who have accumulated such guilt, like that? On what basis can God show kindness? Well, look at the last three words in the verse: “in Christ Jesus.” Every kindness God shows sinners was purchased at the cross. That's true of unregenerate, unbelieving sinners. The fact that God lets a sinner live a moment longer than his first sin is a demonstration of His kindness purchased at the cross, according to Romans 3:25-26. Every temporal blessing human beings in rebellion against God enjoy was purchased at the cross. God vindicated His righteousness, Paul says in Romans 3, in letting sinners live, in tolerating sinners, at the cross.

And for us who are believers, this is true as well. Listen carefully. The reason I am accepted today is that I am in Christ. The reason that I will be accepted for the rest of this earthly life is that I am in Christ. And we all understand that. But it's easy, isn't it, when we begin to think of eternity that we kind of tweak our thinking and we think, well yeah, I know I can never get into heaven on my own. I can never get into heaven without Christ. But once I'm there, and once I'm thoroughly forgiven, and once I'm perfect, somehow, from that point, we kind of begin to think we deserve to be there. Listen, we will never deserve to be there. That is the devil's lie. From the moment I came to Christ, throughout this life, and until the endless ages sweep across eternity, the only reason I will ever be accepted in the Father's presence is because I am in

Christ—because He is permanently my representative, and I am permanently united to Him as the source of my spiritual life. Like the vine and the branches, eternal life will for eternity flow from Him into me.

If it were possible for this relationship to be severed, and thank God it's not, but if it were possible for it to be severed, even if I had lived in perfection for ten thousand years, at the moment that relationship was severed, I would be immediately damned. I would deserve the eternal wrath of God. The fact that God continues throughout eternity to show kindness to us is not because we will ever deserve it. It's because Christ deserves it and we're connected to Him.

God's grace is incomparable. It is incomprehensible. It is immeasurable. And by treating us with kindness for all eternity, God puts the riches of His grace on display. Hendricksen recounts a Roman noblewoman was asked about her jewels. “Where are your jewels?” Then, as now, wealthy people delighted in the luxuries of life, and she responded to the question by calling her two sons. And she put her arms around them and said, “These are my jewels.” Hendricksen goes on to say, “Throughout eternity, the redeemed will be exhibited as the jewels of the grace of God.”

That brings us to a fourth question. This question is raised by this text, but it's not answered here. The question is, who is the audience? Who is the audience? When there's an exhibition, when there's a display, when you're showing something, there is someone expected to see it and to benefit from it. For whom does God set us forth as the display of His grace? To whom is He showing His grace? To whom is He making this display, this exhibition? Scripture gives us three answers, briefly.

Number one, it's for all of humanity. You remember, even back in Exodus 9? In Exodus 9 when God rescued His people Israel from Egypt, that great picture of redemption, do you remember what reason God gave? In Exodus 9 He tells Moses, verse 13, I want you to go, stand before Pharaoh, say, “Let my people go.” I'm going to send plagues, verse 14, “on you and your servants and your people, so that,” here's my reason, “so that you may know that there is no one like Me in all the earth.” So, so that Pharaoh and the Egyptians could know that He was God. Verse 15, I love this. God says, tell him that, “if by now I had put forth My hand and struck you and your people with pestilence, you would have been then cut off from the earth.” God says, listen, you tell Pharaoh that I'm not trying to destroy him. If I was trying to destroy him, he'd already be gone. Instead, verse 16, “But, indeed, for this reason I have allowed you to remain, in order to show *you* My power and in order to proclaim My name throughout all the earth.” God says, “I'm going to rescue My people Israel. I'm going to redeem them from Egypt and slavery, to show who I am to all of humanity.” And God is still doing that through His redeemed ones.

You come to so many Old Testament passages. Just one other that I'll mention, Psalm 67. In Psalm 67:1, the Psalmist says "God be gracious to us and bless us," He's talking about Israel now, the people of God, "and cause His face to shine on us." Why? In order "That Your way may be known [to] the earth" and "Your salvation among all [the] nations." Listen, God saves and rescues to put His glory on display to all of humanity, and we are to be that demonstration to all of humanity.

There's another audience God had in mind—not only all of humanity, but He had us, the redeemed in mind. That's hinted at in verse 7 of Ephesians 2, "in kindness toward *us*." That *we* would benefit from the display. You see that in Revelation as well. In Revelation 4 and 5, if you sort of read those chapters, you see that those who are praising God for His grace that has been displayed in us, are the redeemed. They are turning around and saying, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain to receive power and riches," and on and on the list goes. So not only does all humanity see and glorify God and His grace, but we glorify God because of His grace put on display in us.

But there's a third group that we never think about, and yet the Bible makes much of them —not only all of humanity, and not only us. You say, well, who else is there? All of the intelligent beings God created besides man. The angelic host, the angels. This is quite interesting as you look at it in the New Testament, and we don't have time to go through it, but let me just give you a couple of references. Look at passages like 1 Corinthians 4:9, 1 Corinthians 11:10, 1 Peter 1:12. And in those passages, you will discover the angels watching, being spectators on what's going on in God's work in believers in the world.

I want to show you one passage though. Turn to Ephesians 3, because here the apostle Paul puts it very clearly, what God is doing. Ephesians 3:9. Beginning in verse 8 actually. Paul says, I've been given this grace to preach the riches of Christ, "to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God." Why? Verse 10, "so that," in order that, here's the reason, "the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known through the church." So the church, the redeemed people of God are going to put the wisdom of God on display. To whom? Look at the rest of the verse. "to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places...in accordance with the eternal purpose which He carried out in Jesus Christ our Lord."

I don't know if you've ever thought about this or not, but there is an audience to the drama of redemption that is occurring on planet earth. And that audience is not just all of humanity, it is not just us who are being saved, but it is this universe of intelligent beings that God has created. Jay Adams writes, "God's grand demonstration has been taking place before hundreds of thousands of intelligent beings throughout the universe." There are myriad of these powerful

beings that so much is said about in Scripture. And they're watching, and God is putting His character on display for them as well.

What are the lessons, very quickly, from this amazing verse, for us? There are three of them. Number one. It should give us a sense of humility. Listen folks, it is not about us. God is doing something far greater. You see, you and I are so bound by time, it's hard to think beyond our own lives. We think about our problems and our issues and our sins. But right now, while you're living today on planet earth, there are five billion plus other people experiencing exactly the same thing. And we are only one generation of thousands of years of human history. They never thought about us, and we rarely think about them, unless we're sitting in a history class. And if the Lord tarries, there will be hundreds or thousands of years more with the world filled with people just like us. And all of us will live and die on a tiny cosmic speck of dust hurtling through space on the edge of a small galaxy twirling amidst billions and billions of other galaxies. The universe, my friends, is not about us. But God has a great cosmic eternal plan to put His character on display—to do it before all of humanity, to do it before those He redeems, and to do it before all of the intelligent creation that He's made. And for those of us who are His by an act of sovereign grace alone, He has made us part of that plan. That's very humbling. Your Christian life doesn't begin and end with you. It's not all about you and what you get. You are a small part of a great cosmic eternal plan.

Secondly, it should provide a sense of assurance. When we look at ourselves and our failures, it's easy for us to begin to doubt whether we'll end up really making it after all, isn't it? And if our salvation were up to us, that would be natural. But my salvation is so much bigger than me. God chose me in eternity past to be part of this grand demonstration, that He would put Himself on display, and He decided that my salvation would actually display His amazing grace. And if God were to fail in the plan of redeeming me, He would undermine the grand demonstration that He has set up. So I can rest in confidence and assurance that God, who began a good work in me will be faithful to perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ.

Thirdly, there's a great sense of privilege. Think practically about what Paul is saying here in verse 7. He's saying that in eternity, it's as if God will point to you and say to the angels and to every other intelligent being in the universe, “Look at him, look at her, and see the greatness of My grace!” We will literally be trophies of God's grace. Lloyd-Jones writes:

This is, to me, the most overwhelming thought that we can ever lay hold of, that the almighty, everlasting eternal God is vindicating Himself and His holy nature and being by something that He does in us.... God is going to open His last great exhibition at the consummation, and all of these heavenly powers and principalities will be invited to attend. The curtain will draw back, and God will

say, “Look at them!” Through us God is going to vindicate His own eternal wisdom and His majesty and His glory and all the attributes of His holy person to the principalities and the heavenly powers.

What privilege! The question that comes to my mind is, “Why me?” Why would God choose me to be part of such a grand demonstration? Often, art galleries will solicit collections of a famous painter, and they'll feature his work. They'll feature the paintings very carefully with just the right lighting so as to bring out the skill of the painter in light or color or texture or hue. But the point is not the paintings. The point is the skill of the painter. Through God's spiritual rescue of us, we have each become a portrait of God's masterpiece, displayed for the universe to see, to examine, to marvel at. We are the exhibition. Our salvation isn't the point any more than the individual painting is the point. The point is, in this case, not only the *skill* of the artist, but the *character* of the artist as well. The incomparable, incomprehensible, immeasurable grace of God! Our salvation is not all about us. It's all about Him.

Let's pray together. Our Father, we confess to You that we are so self-centered and so skewed in our perspective of life. Father, I pray that you would lift our heads. Let us look beyond ourselves and our own troubles and our own failures and our own weaknesses, and see what You are doing in this grand demonstration. And that You have allowed each of us who know you, that you have made us part of that by Your grace. Father, thank You that someday, solely because of You, You will hold us up as the models of Your great character, of the grace that you have displayed in rescuing us. Father, help us to live in ways that would honor such grace until He comes. We pray in Jesus' name. Amen.