

The syntax and grammar here are difficult. The text may be saying 1 of 3 things:

- That God lavished his grace on us in His wisdom and understanding (that is it was His wisdom and understanding that pertains to our forgiveness) (ESV)
 - 7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of his grace, 8 which he lavished upon us, **in all wisdom and insight** 9 making known to us the mystery of his will, according to his purpose, which he set forth in Christ (ESV)
 - Paul is saying that when God lavished His grace upon His people, it was not a haphazard or ill-considered action... His decision to lavish His grace upon His people by paying the cost of their redemption in the death of His beloved Son was in accord with His infinite capacity for wisdom and understanding.¹ (True)
- Or it may be connecting the phrase to the next verse and God's having revealed to us the mystery of His will **according to** His wisdom and understanding (NASB)
 - 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace 8 which He lavished on us. **In all wisdom and insight** 9 He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (NASB)
 - God's making known to us the mystery of His will is an act of His wisdom and insight as God (True)
- Or, the text is saying that wisdom and understanding are part of Gods salvific gift to believers (NLT)
 - 7 He is so rich in kindness and grace that he purchased our freedom with the blood of his Son and forgave our sins. 8 He has showered his kindness on us, **along with all wisdom and understanding.** 9 God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan regarding Christ, a plan to fulfill his own good pleasure. (NLT)
 - God not only redeems us from the power and penalty of sin with the precious blood of His Son, but He also (in His kindness) gives us wisdom and understanding so that we might know and live differently—according to His plan (True)

Though all 3 are generally true (or at least not denied in Scripture); we take the latter rendering

- 1. Most interpreters take the phrase this way^{2 3}
- 2. Verse 9 is also speaking of a gift of **revelation** from God (God has now revealed to us his mysterious plan)
 - So there seems to be a connected **theme** here—that God is giving us understanding that we previously did not have
- 3. Also, this is **consistent** with the way that Paul prayed for the churches (Eph 1:16-17; Col 1:9)

¹ Frank Thielman, *Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2010), 62-3.

² Thielman, 61.

³ For the majority sense see Harold W. Hoehner, *An Exegetical Commentary: Ephesians* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Baker Academic, 2010), 212-213. Where he states 5 reasons why the prepositional phrase refers to believers “as a result of God’s grace rather than referring to those attributes of God which cause His grace.”

God has not only **loved** us, **chosen** us, **adopted** us, **redeemed** us and **lavished** His **kindness** on us, but He has also given us **wisdom** and **understanding**.

- We must rely on the benefits of **grace** **and also** the benefits of **wisdom** and **understanding** to live well.
 - In **grace** we realize that when we sin we are forgiven and secure to the glory of God
 - Grace reveals to us our utter sinfulness
 - In **wisdom** we realize that our freedom is not for ourselves but that we might live to the glory of God
 - Wisdom reveals to us our utter foolishness
 - In **understanding** we discover or discern how to live for God's glory in every instance
 - Understanding reveals to us our utter recklessness

Wisdom and **understanding** are part of the way God enables us to live holy lives

- Practical holiness & sanctification

Though there are subtleties in the definition of each of the 2 words, Scripture really uses them synonymously (most of the time)

- The use of a single idea by the expression of two words⁴
- Cf. “**It’s nice and warm out.**” or “**While being baptized in the ocean, I was beaten and battered by the waves.**”
- The two words mutually define each other

Wisdom and **understanding** are Scripture's way of speaking of that which **we need** to live right lives

- They both refer to the **right handling** of the **right thing** at the **right moment**
- The ability to act appropriately
- The ability to discern between right and wrong

Because God does not only want us **saved but also well**; not only going to **heaven but also glorifying** Him on earth; not only experiencing **positional holiness but also practical holiness**. So, He gives us **wisdom** and **understanding**.

In fact, He **lavishes** it on us

- When we speak of **lavish** we speak of **excess**
- To **lavish** something on someone is to **shower** it on them
- To have **way more than enough**

The verb **lavished** in the text is speaking of God's **grace** and **kindness** and **wisdom** and **understanding**

- It is in the past tense—He has given us these things
- God has given us an **excess of grace**
- Has dealt with us with an **excess of kindness**

We are getting this (we must get this)

⁴ A structure known as “hendiadys”—one idea through two words

But what we must also get is that **God has given us wisdom and understanding** to live rightly before Him (Cf. the text)

- Ecclesiastes 2:26
For to the one who pleases him... God **has given** wisdom and knowledge... and joy
- Proverbs 2:6
For the Lord **grants** wisdom!
From his mouth **come** knowledge and understanding.

Though it has been given to us, we must **grow** in it and **cultivate** it (like the gospel)

- **This is how we are daily saved from living according to our own foolishness and for our own glory**

So, Scripture beckons us...

- Proverbs 9:6
Leave your simple ways behind, and begin to live;
learn to use good judgment. (I.e. wisdom and understanding)
- Proverbs 7:4
Love **wisdom** like a sister;
make **insight** a beloved member of your family.
- Proverbs 4:7
Getting wisdom is the wisest thing you can do!
And whatever else you do, develop good judgment.

We are talking about wisdom and understanding from God (not human or worldly)—there is a difference

- James 3:13-18
13 If you are **wise and understand** God's ways, prove it by living **an honorable life**, doing **good works** with the **humility** that **comes from wisdom**.
14 But if you are bitterly jealous and there is selfish ambition in your heart, don't cover up the truth with boasting and lying.
15 For jealousy and selfishness are not **God's kind of wisdom**. Such things are earthly, unspiritual, and demonic.
16 For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition, there you will find disorder and evil of every kind.
17 But the **wisdom from above** is first of all pure. It is also peace loving, gentle at all times, and willing to yield to others. It is full of mercy and good deeds. It shows no favoritism and is always sincere.
18 And those who are peacemakers will plant seeds of peace and reap a harvest of righteousness.
- Proverbs 3:5-8
5 Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not depend on **your own understanding**.
6 Seek **his will** in all you do, and he will show you which path to take.
7 Don't be impressed with **your own wisdom**. Instead, fear the Lord and turn away from evil.
8 Then you will have healing for your body and strength for your bones.

Scripture promises a different quality of life for those who practice Godly wisdom and understanding

- Proverbs 3:13
Joyful is the person who finds wisdom, the one who gains understanding.
For wisdom is more profitable than silver, and her wages are better than gold.
- Proverbs 16:16
How **much better** to get wisdom than gold,

- and good judgment than silver!
- Proverbs 10:23
Doing wrong is fun for a fool,
but living wisely brings **pleasure** to the sensible.

Joyful, better, pleasurable living!

Where does it start?

- Proverbs 9:10
Fear of the Lord is the foundation of wisdom.
Knowledge of the Holy One results in good judgment.

The **fear of the Lord** and the **knowledge of the Holy One**...

- Revere, study and get to know God
 - We esteem our selves too much (live for our own glory)
 - We are distracted by so many things other than God (idolatry)
 - And yet, by His kindness...
 - God has drawn us to repentance (Romans 2:4)

So seek the Lord and His wisdom and understanding

- Job 28:28
The fear of the Lord is **true wisdom**;
to forsake evil is **real understanding**.

And forsake evil... and pursue the wisdom of God for the

Here is how we do this (Scripture, prayer, community)

- **Scripture**
 - Isaiah 45:19
I, the Lord, speak only what is true
and declare only what is right.
 - 2 Timothy 3:15
You have been taught the holy Scriptures from childhood, and they have given you the wisdom to receive the salvation that comes by trusting in Christ Jesus.
 - Psalm 119:98-105
98 Your commands make me **wiser** than my enemies, for they are my constant guide.
99 Yes, I have more **insight** than my teachers, for I am always thinking of your laws.
100 I am even **wiser** than my elders, for I have kept your commandments.
101 I have refused to walk on any evil path, so that I may remain obedient to your word.
102 I haven't turned away from your regulations, for you have taught me well.
103 How sweet your words taste to me; they are sweeter than honey.
104 Your commandments give me **understanding**; no wonder I hate every false way of life.
105 Your word is a lamp to guide my feet and a light for my path.

- **Prayer**

- Jeremiah 33:3
Call to me and I will answer you and tell you great and unsearchable things you do not know.
- 2 Chronicles 1:10
Give me the wisdom and knowledge to lead them properly, for who could possibly govern this great people of yours?
- Psalm 90:12
Teach us to realize the brevity of life,
so that we may grow in wisdom.
- Psalm 119:169
O Lord, listen to my cry;
give me the discerning mind you promised.
- Ephesians 1:16^b-17
I pray for you constantly, asking God, the glorious Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, to give you spiritual wisdom and insight so that you might grow in your knowledge of God.
- James 1:5
If you need wisdom, ask our generous God, and he will give it to you. He will not rebuke you for asking.
- **Community**
 - Proverbs 15:22
Plans go wrong for lack of advice;
many advisers bring success.
 - Colossians 3:16
Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives.
 - Hebrews 3:13
You must warn **each other** every day...so that none of you will be deceived by sin and hardened against God.
 - Cf. The Book of Acts
- Not doing these things (prayer, scripture, community)?
 - Then you are minimizing your capacity to experience the new life of Jesus
 - Blowing it!
- You are showing yourself to be foolish even though God has offered you wisdom!
 - Proverbs 26:12
There is more hope for fools than for people who think they are wise.
 - Isaiah 47:10
You felt secure in your wickedness. 'No one sees me,' you said. But your 'wisdom' and 'knowledge' have led you astray
 - Jeremiah 4:22
My people are foolish and do not know me," says the Lord. "They are stupid children who have no understanding. They are clever enough at doing wrong, but they have no idea how to do right!"
- Hear Scripture exhort you to live rightly before God!
 - Matthew 7:24
Anyone who listens to my teaching and follows it is wise, like a person who builds a house on solid rock.
 - Hosea 14:9

Let those who are wise understand these things. Let those with discernment listen carefully. The paths of the Lord are true and right, and righteous people live by walking in them.

- Psalm 119:34; 73

Give me understanding and I will obey your instructions; I will put them into practice with all my heart. You made me; you created me. Now give me the sense to follow your commands.

...Give me the sense to follow your commands.

In light of God's **love** and **grace** and **kindness** toward us who deserve His **wrath** and **judgment**, we must see it as true **wisdom** to live for Him

- 2 Corinthians 5:14-15

Christ's love controls us. Since we believe that Christ died for all, we also believe that we have all died to our old life. He died for everyone so that those who receive his new life **will no longer live for themselves**. Instead, they will live for Christ, who died and was raised for them.

- **Living for God's glory because of God's love!**
- Greek Scholar Kenneth Wuest explains the concept of Christ's love controlling us
"For the love which Christ has for me presses on me from all sides, holding me to one end and prohibiting me from considering any other, wrapping itself around me in tenderness, giving me and **impelling motive**."⁵

In the face of kindness and love we must see sin as it is—to have been forgiven so much and then continue to pursue sin is to spit in the face of the Redeemer!

- In Scripture, when God's people sin He uses words like **rebellion** (Lev. 16:21), **defiance** (1 Kings 13:21) and **despising** (2 Samuel 12:9-10) to describe our actions against Him
- How can we, who have been **chosen, adopted, loved, redeemed** and shown **excessive grace and kindness**
- Rebel against, defy and despise so great a lover!?!?

We must **wise** up and gain **understanding**

- Ephesians 4:30 and 5:15

Do not bring sorrow to God's Holy Spirit by the way you live. Remember, he has identified you as his own, guaranteeing that you will be saved on the day of redemption.

So be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise.

The way we do this is to **pursue Jesus** (Cf. Scripture, prayer, community)

- Colossians 2:3

In Him lie hidden all the treasures of **wisdom and knowledge**.

- 1 Corinthians 1:24

Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God

Don't set your heart and mind on anything less than Christ

- Watch your heart every time it trusts in and learns from anything else
- If Christ is our wisdom
 - Are we listening *to* Christ as our wisdom?
 - Are we learning *of* Christ as our wisdom?
 - Are we leaning *on* Christ as our wisdom?
 - Are we enjoying Christ as the source of all true wisdom and life?

Maybe you need to repent of your foolish sins and come to Christ—the Wisdom of God

⁵ As quoted in Jerry Bridges, *The Discipline of Grace* (Colorado Springs, CO.: Navpress, 2006), 25.