

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

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[0:00] Ephesians comes right after Galatians, right before Philippians and Colossians.! So it's Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians.

And we just started chapter 3 here. Looked last week at the first seven verses, Paul's ministry, the stewardship of the mystery, the hidden mystery of the Christ.

And now we come to this morning, we're going to look at one verse this morning. So, it should be easy, it should be short, right?

No? Okay. It takes what it takes, right? So, we want to read first the text, chapter 3, we're going to read 1 to 8, and then we'll pray and then we'll dig into verse 8.

So if you're able, please stand with me for the reading of God's Word. Ephesians chapter 3, beginning at verse 1. For this reason I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus, for the sake of you Gentiles, if indeed you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace, which was given to me for you, that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery, as I wrote before in brief.

[1:46] And by referring to this, when you read, you can understand my insight into the mystery of the Christ, which in other generations was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit.

To be specific, that the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel, of which I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me according to the working of his power. For the Lord, to me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ.

So it reads, let us pray. Father, give us insight. Help us to grasp the unfathomable, the unsearchable riches of Christ that is displayed in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

So open our hearts and open our minds today, Father. Grant your spirit, Lord, send your spirit to change lives, to open eyes, to remove veils.

[3:20] This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Please be seated. Amen. Well, I have good news and bad news, said the doctor.

Well, what's the bad news, doc? Well, we had to cut off both of your legs. Well, then what's the good news? Well, the guy in the next room wants to buy your shoes.

No? Too much? Too soon? Publishing agent said to the writer, I've got good news. Paramount, love your story.

Just ate it up. Well, that's great. What's the bad news? Well, Paramount is my dog. Yeah, I know. Okay. Rewind.

Good news and bad news. Good news and bad news. Good news is the meaning of the gospel. Gospel means good news. Paul talks about preaching the good news.

[4:26] He says, Now, the good news only makes sense.

Only becomes good to us when we understand the bad news first. So, in chapter 3, Paul has, he began by explaining his role.

He wanted the Ephesians. He wants us to understand his role as the steward of the mystery of the Christ. He began, we saw in verse 1, right?

He begins, first of all, talking about himself. He talks about his identity. How he sees himself. He sees himself, not as the prisoner of Rome, because he is in prison in Rome at this point.

But he doesn't see himself that way. He sees himself as the prisoner of Christ Jesus. That's a whole different perspective. To be the prisoner of Jesus means that changes his perspective on everything else that happens in his life.

[5:41] It changes his perspective on what his hopes are, what his dreams are. All of that is just under the category of prisoner of Jesus Christ. Whatever hardship he accepts from the Lord, because he owes everything to the Lord.

He is voluntarily a prisoner of Jesus Christ. He's in bonds to Jesus Christ. That is not a negative to him. That is an all-encompassing life purpose for him.

So he entrusts his life, his circumstances, his security, his future. He talks about how I had all these things. And I have lost them all. I have lost them all for the sake of knowing Jesus Christ, my Lord. And then he wants us to understand. We saw last week that he talked about his role as a steward. He wanted us to understand these things. First of all, that he's a steward.

And so the fact that he's a steward, verse 2, that he's a steward of God's grace and that he has made, he has come to by revelation to know this mystery.

[6:51] The fact that he sees himself and that his role as a steward gives us confidence. Because what Paul brings to us is not something of his own making. It is something by revelation.

So when we read Paul's writings, it's not just, oh, this is Paul's opinion. This is Paul writing from what the Lord has told him to show to us.

So that gives us confidence. It's not man's ideas. And then he wanted us to understand the content of this mystery. The content of this mystery is significant to we who are non-Jews.

Because the Jews had everything. They had the promises. They had the covenant. They had the miracles of God. They had all the history. They had all that God had.

They were God's people. And Gentiles were outsiders. And now in Christ, he has made us. What does he say in verse 6? To be specific, Gentiles are fellow heirs.

[7:52] They are fellow members of the body. They are fellow partakers of the promise. In Christ, Jesus through the gospel. And so God has brought us in. That's the good news. Part of the good news for Gentiles.

He's brought us in. We're in. And in Christ, we go into the holy place. We go right in to see the Father without any hoops to jump through.

We have Christ. And so that's what he communicated to us. He showed us, right, these things that he wanted us to understand. And now I want to take kind of a pause here thing in verse 8 because now it's almost like it's an afterthought.

Verse 8, to me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles, the unfathomable riches of Christ. Right?

Yeah, say that five times fast. Right? So it's okay. He just makes a statement. But I want to pause there because there's two things here that come out as he talks about this message, this grace that's given, and then this preaching that he does.

[8:55] And he's focusing on, and I call it the unfathomable or what do we say? The unsearchable riches of Christ. Something that's so vast.

Something that's so big. Something that's so deep and wide. And height and depth, right, of the gospel. It's simple yet there's much to it.

There's much behind it. And so I want to just take some time today to look at the message of the gospel. Paul brings up a couple of issues here in verse 8.

Two things that he wants to illumine for us. One is, first part of verse 8, is the effectiveness of grace. The effectiveness of grace.

That's where it begins. He talks about this grace that's given to me. And the second part of verse 8, he talks about these unfathomable riches of Christ. It's the essence of the gospel.

[9:56] So what is the gospel? When we talk about the gospel, we hear the word gospel, good news. What is it? Right? How do we define it? How do we explain it to others? Do we know the gospel well enough to share it with others?

Do we have a handle on that? Right? Without going into some big thing, can we explain that to our friends and coworkers and neighbors?

So, first of all, in the first part of verse 8, he says, To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given. So first we see the effectiveness of God's grace.

It's to the least. Paul calls himself, To me, the very least of all the saints. That's quite a statement. To me, the least of all the saints.

So he's got this other, you know, we talked about the identity in verse 1. He's the prisoner of Jesus Christ. Now he talks about himself in terms of I'm the least. By comparison, he's the least.

[11:01] This grace was given. And so I want us to consider how effective God's grace is that even the least of sinners can be transformed. So there's an emphasis on grace.

In fact, we see in the first three chapters of Ephesians, this word grace comes out nine times. So it's a big subject.

We see it in verse 2, right? The stewardship of God's grace. We see it in verse 7, right? I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace.

And then again, we see it in verse 8. To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given.

The gift of grace. Gift of grace is something unexpected, unearned, undeserved, unmerited.

It's unexpected. It's an extraordinary privilege, is the way Paul thinks of it. He's humbled by it, right?

To me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given.

[12:03] This grace was given even to me. The least deserved. He calls himself the least of all the saints.

In fact, grammatically, it's literally the least-er or the least-er-ist. It's kind of a comparative superlative.

Write that down. So the least-er compared to others. So the least-er-ist, to be technical. So look what he says about himself, his view of himself, to call himself the least.

He's deeply conscious of his unworthiness. He has a sense of his inferiority compared to others.

He feels unfit. He feels undeserving. As he compares himself to others, he doesn't compare himself to others in terms of what he accomplishes.

[13:14] You know, he's not competitive. He used to be, but he's not now. As he compares himself to others, he thinks of himself in the terms of, I'm the least worthy.

I'm the least deserving. In fact, I'm less than the least. He talks about this in 1 Timothy 2. He says, Christ Jesus, this is 1 Timothy 1.15, Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am the foremost.

Of all the sinners, I'm the foremost. But I receive mercy for this reason that in me, as the foremost, Jesus Christ might display his perfect patience as an example to those who were to believe in him for eternal life.

So, Paul's view is he picked me to be an example of how low God will go. Of how far God will reach to the foremost of sinners.

If he reaches to me, he will reach to you. The foremost of sinners.

[14:36] Now, that's interesting because what we know of Paul, in fact, what he tells us in Philippians 3, he tells us about all his accomplishments before Christ, right?

All that he was. He had the lineage, you know. He had the T-shirt and the checkbook. You know, he took the classes and he studied under Gamaliel. He was ahead of everybody advancing in his righteousness beyond all of his contemporaries.

He was going to be the man in Judaism. He was the rising guy. And then Christ met him, remember?

On that road. When he's going to just try to crucify this cult, this Christianity, this what he saw as blasphemy, he's going to go tear it up, literally tear up people.

He was a violent aggressor, he calls himself. You know, he used his religion as an excuse to do violence, to beat people up. And then Jesus met him and he found out he was wrong.

[15:45] He was wrong about Jesus. He knew about Jesus. He was there in Acts 7. He was there at the feet of those who stoned Stephen.

And remember, Stephen in Acts 7 preached this incredible sermon about the Jewish people, about God's promise. So Paul heard that.

He heard the preaching of Stephen. He may have heard the preaching of Peter. He may even have heard the preaching of Jesus at some point. He doesn't tell us that, but we know for a fact that he heard about Jesus through the gracious and powerful preaching of Stephen, who was then stoned. So he wasn't ignorant about Jesus. He had heard the truth. But he had formerly been this righteous guy. He was obeying, right, as to the law, blameless.

Right? As Dezeal, a persecutor of the church, he was a very good works guy. In terms of doing good works, he was the man.

[16:59] He did good things. And yet now, after he meets Jesus, he sees himself as the least and the foremost of sinners.

How does that happen? When he did so many good works? Well, I think it's because he knew in his conscience that he had heard of Jesus and he rejected him.

And to reject Jesus, knowingly reject Jesus, becomes the foremost of sinners, becomes the worst sin.

Because the only unforgivable sin is what? To not see and accept Jesus when you've heard of him. Everything else is forgivable. If you reject Jesus, what are your options?

[18:02] Do good? Well, you can try. And a lot of people do good. But they don't do it for God. They don't do it for God's glory.

They don't do it for Jesus. To reject Jesus, who is the creator, is to reject the one who gave you life, the one who gave you, even the, he gave you his image that you might do good works.

So that's where Paul is. That's how he sees himself. So he has this view of himself. He's very conscious of his unworthiness. Right? He sees himself as least and the foremost of sinners.

So you would think if that kind of view of yourself would lead you to what? I'm nothing. I'm the worst. And I think if I ask those who have experienced the conviction of the Holy Spirit, you might all say, well, no, I'm, I think I'm the worst.

Because I know what I've done. And I know what I've not done. Right? And I know how I've run from God and I know all these things. Right? I'm the worst. And I think that's appropriate for all of us to see that.

[19:17] I think that's just a measure of that, the greatness of grace and we feel unworthy of it. So when you experience grace, you can go one of two ways. You can go, just okay, I'm so bad.

I can't do anything. I'm not worthy to do anything. I can't serve God. I'm a dirty person. I'm not worthy to do anything. You can take that road. Right? And some of our personalities are more gauged to that.

Right? We just crawl in a hole. But Paul doesn't do that. Notice what he does. He says, to me, the very least of all the saints, this grace was given.

He said, though he has this view of himself, yet grace was given. And so don't miss this impact. He sees himself as unworthy.

We can see ourselves as unworthy. That's healthy. Yet, that unworthiness does not hinder us. It does not hold us back. It does not frustrate us. It does not get us stuck.

[20:20] Because God revealed that grace to us. He gave that grace to us for a reason. To serve him. Not to crawl in a hole. God doesn't show us our sinfulness in order to make us go hide.

He shows us our sinfulness that we might come into his light and then he might cleanse us. Right? And then that he might use us. As those as foremost of sinners and those who are least of all the saints to come and minister for God.

Because we can then minister. Because out of that brokenness, out of that unworthiness, we can minister to other people who see themselves the same way. Those who see themselves as unworthy.

Those who see themselves as the foremost of sinners and the least of all the saints. Out of that humility. Right? Remember when Peter was broken? Jesus said, you're going to deny me. And Peter's like, no, no, no, no.

I love you too much. I will never do that. Right? I will stand. These guys might want, but I'll take the sword out and I'll take on the Roman army. Which he tried to do. But then when the...

[21:30] I was trying to think of a creative thing. He's at the fire. Something hit the fire. Anyway. When the little servant girl, right? Asked Peter, aren't you one of them?

And then he's denying, right? But remember what Jesus said when he said to Peter, you're going to deny me three times. Right? He says, you're going to deny me three times. Do you remember what Jesus said?

But I have prayed for you. I've already been praying for you, Peter. And this is what I prayed. Not that you overcome that. Not that you have victory over that temptation.

Not that you remain loyal to me. Not that you are faithful. Not that you're all the things you say you are. But I prayed for you that your faith will not fail.

Because what that experience did to Peter, who's... It broke him, right? It talked about how he went and he wept bitterly.

[22:35] I mean, he was just devastated. How could he do that? Jesus prayed that his faith will not fail.

That's what he prays for. I believe that's what he prays for us. When he puts us in those situations that break us. That show us kind of, okay, yeah, I'm not all that I thought I was. Or I wasn't as prepared as I thought I was.

And why would I walk away from the Lord in that situation or this situation? Why would I have those thoughts? He prays that our faith will not fail.

I love that. And here's Paul. Though he has been humbled, though he's unworthy, it does not hinder him, it does not frustrate him.

In fact, the grace fuels him. Instead of it putting him down, it fuels him, it motivates him all the more. Because in his mind, I'm the worst, but the Lord has given me this incredible privilege.

[23 : 41] He's given me this incredible honor to serve him, to speak for him, to show to others these unsearchable riches. I get to do that.

And I don't deserve to do that. But this is what the Lord has given to me to do. This grace fuels him. That we all experience this undeserved grace.

We recognize that, but it shouldn't be our focus. Because this grace that has humbled us also empowers us, also enables us, it also frees us.

Listen to Paul in 1 Corinthians 15, 8, he says, when Jesus revealed himself, he says, hey, last of all, as to one untimely born, Jesus appeared also to me.

For I am least, here he says it again, I am the least of the apostles, unworthy to be called an apostle. Why is he so unworthy? Because I persecuted the church of God.

[24 : 53] I persecuted what I knew deep down in my heart was the truth. And I persecuted it because I like violence. But, so I did all that.

He confesses that. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, it didn't push me down.

It didn't frustrate me. It didn't leave me stuck in this wallowing. This grace toward me was not in vain. On the contrary, I worked harder than any of them.

Though I'm the least worthy of all of them, I worked the hardest because that's what grace did to me. Grace fueled me. Grace encouraged me. It freed me. Though it was not I, but the grace of God that is within me.

So Paul's always conscious of his unworthiness. He never downplays it. He is honest. He's humble. Yet it does not discourage him.

[25 : 56] It does not impede him. What frees him is this grace. This grace that is so effective in his life. It is grace that shows him who he is, but it's also grace that raises him back up.

It breaks him, but then it enables him and frees him to speak to others who are broken. Do you feel this kind of unworthiness?

Has God's grace struck you in that way? To not feel like, yeah, I deserve this, but more like, I do not deserve this.

Are you ever reminded that you don't deserve? Well, yeah, you just said it. Yeah, all the time, huh? If I hear him.

Do you focus on that or do you turn your focus on the grace of what an honor and a privilege and a joy it is to serve the one who woke me up, who turned on the light to what I was and now gives me purpose in my life?

[27 : 12] It gives me joy in my life. It gives me experiences that I would never have in a life focused on myself. So he speaks of this grace, the effectiveness of grace.

Now let's look at the essence of Christ's gospel. We see here he calls it to preach to the Gentiles, the second part of verse 8, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And so I think it's another term he's using for gospel to preach the essence of the gospel, those unsearchable riches. So what is this gospel? What is this good news?

So notice he's given grace to preach. The word here, though, is not the word for preach. It's actually the word euangelizzo.

Okay. I know, right? Euangelizzo. No, I had it. Yeah. Euangelizzo. What does that mean? It actually transliterates into English.

[28 : 24] Not the U. Instead of the U, they put the V in there. Evangelizzo. Evangelizzo. evangelizzo. Evangelizzo. Or gospelize.

Euangelizzo. So, good news. So, it could be translated evangelize, it could be translated gospelize.

To tell the gospel with authority and power. It's not the word preach, it just means to do the gospel. It means to communicate the gospel. To gospelize. To evangelize.

What's evangelize? Well, the way I grew up, I had a picture of evangelism had this one kind of look. Right? It was this event. And then it was a testimony.

And then it was asking people to receive Christ. Raise your hands. That was what I thought evangelizing means. To gospelize. Well, it is to communicate the gospel.

[29 : 28] To do the gospel. To both speak and live the gospel. To gospelize. So, to gospelize what? So, he says, this grace was given to gospelize, or to evangelize to the Gentiles.

What? To gospelize the unfathomable or unsearchable riches of Christ. Why say it that way?

Is it, if it's unfathomable, if it's unsearchable, if it's so vast that it's not fully comprehended, if it's beyond tracing out, why bother?

It's too deep. And I think he's just saying it's so wide. This gospel, the riches of God's grace are so big, so high, so vast, so deep, that as we search it, we'll never come to the end of it.

But we'll definitely benefit from digging into it. It's always something we can dig deeper into. It's always something, it's not something so, so just so simple and compact.

[30 : 44] It's bigger than that. So you read the book of Romans. You know what the book of Romans is about? The gospel.

The whole book is about the gospel. That's his opening statement. It's, I've been waiting to preach the gospel. Okay, here we go. And he spends three chapters on what the problem is.

Why we, the bad news. And then the second half of chapter three, he talks about the good news.

And then he talks about the result of that, how we live.

Romans is incredible. If you want to, if you want to, the, what do you call it, the summary form of Romans? What'd they call it in school when you read a book?

The cliff notes. Yeah, you want the cliff notes on Romans to read Galatians. So what's, what is this?

[31 : 42] So we've seen it in chapter two of Ephesians. The first three verses of chapter two of Ephesians talk about the problem, the bad news, right? We are dead in our trespasses and sins, right?

In which we formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them, we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind and were by nature children of wrath even as the rest.

That's a big problem. How we live, how we live, we live for sinfulness. That's just natural. That's just what we did. We didn't know any better. That's just how we live and we didn't even know that we were under the influence of the evil one.

We didn't know he was pulling the strings on us. We didn't know also that we were under the wrath of God. So that was the problem and then verses four on in chapter two talks about the good news. But God, right? That was our problem. But God being rich in mercy because of his great love with which he loved us, that's his motivation, his love for us. Even when we were dead in our transgressions, he made us alive together with Christ.

[32 : 55] By grace, you have been saved. God acted. In spite of us, God acted. Grace, grace, grace, grace, grace. Changes us. So there we see the gospel.

So what's the gospel in essence? We have talked about it a number of times. What is the gospel? We say it's four words, right? Four categories, right? Right? And all four parts help us understand the gospel.

So one, God. Starts with God. Who's God? Right? Big, big, right? He is, as Moses revealed in Exodus, he is holy and, wait, he is a forgiver.

He is merciful. He's loving. Right? He's bearing with all these incredible, merciful, compassionate words to describe him. And then he says, he's also holy.

There's this tension in our relationship to God. We want all this love stuff. The love, the forgiveness, the mercy, the, you know, the kindness of God, all of which he is.

[34 : 04] But he's also holy. He's also holy. He's also just. And he's not going to say, okay, I'll just not be just toward you. I'll not give you what you deserve.

His very nature is he has to. He has to. Right? So that's God. We realize, okay, here's God. And then what's the second part of the gospel?

Man. Right? Us. So when you see who God is, where are we at? Yeah, we're, you know, we're in trouble. We want the one part of him, but the holiness and justice, can we just kind of put that off? Because I don't want what I really deserve. I just want mercy. So how's God going to do that? How is God, the holy, the holy and just God, going to be merciful and forgiving and kind to us? Or there's only one way. The cross. Because in the cross, that's the third part of the gospel. You have God, man, Christ.

[35 : 15] Who, one, lived a holy life. Right? Tempted and everything, yet without sin. So he is a righteous, holy sacrifice, gives himself for us to pay our debt.

He pays our debt on the cross. He pays what we deserve. He pays the debt that we deserve. Because God sent Jesus to do this very thing. To take the sin of the world.

Isaiah 53, to bear our iniquities so that he might declare us righteous. So Christ takes all of our sin. He gives to us his righteousness so that we can be declared righteous, so that we can be called saints.

We haven't earned that. We don't deserve that title. But it's a gift of grace. And he can do it because Christ carried away, took away our sins.

The Lamb of God. And then what's the final thing? So we got God, man, Christ. Okay, we got all that. Then what?

[36 : 19] Okay, what do I do? Response. What's my response? How can I receive this gift that Jesus has done? Faith. Faith.

Trust. Faith. Believe. Everyone who believes. Everyone who has faith. So we have, I am saved by grace alone.

God does it. Through faith alone in Christ alone. To the glory of God alone. Based on the scriptures alone.

Get all the solas in there. So there it is. God, God, he's the creator. I owe him everything. What do we do? Romans 1, I have suppressed the truth.

I have rebelled against him. I think my works are fine enough. I don't need God. I don't need his forgiveness. I'm okay. And yet scripture says, my best works are filthy rags.

[37 : 19] Compared to him. And then the remedy is Christ's death. I'm saved by grace. Through faith. In Christ. Christ. So let me give you some quick examples.

How are we doing? Are we, we're not even at one o'clock yet. So we're, teasing, teasing. Let me give you some quick examples in scripture of the, of the gospel. So, so scripture doesn't necessarily do it like we just did.

God, man, Christ. Okay. But all those elements are in the expressions of the gospel throughout the scriptures. They're all there. All those four parts are there. You don't have the gospel without God and you don't have the gospel without understanding our problem.

You don't have the gospel. Absolutely. Don't have the gospel without Jesus Christ. And you don't have the gospel without faith. So all those elements. So first Corinthians 15, Paul outlines the gospel in a nutshell.

He says, uh, I would remind you brothers of the gospel. I preach to you, which you received in which you stand by which you are being saved. If you hold fast to the word, preach to you unless you believed in vain.

[38 : 28] So belief is part of that gospel. For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received. What? That Christ. Here we go. There's another part of the gospel. Christ died for our sins.

So sins, that's another part of the gospel. So I got belief. I got Christ. I got sinfulness. According to the scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance to the scriptures and that he appeared to Cephas, then to the 12.

So we got those three parts and all of those imply God behind it. Acts 3, Peter's sermon. He explains the power behind the miracle of salvation.

He says, but what God foretold by the mouth of the prophets that his Christ, there's part of the gospel, would suffer, he thus fulfilled. Repent therefore and turn back that your sins may be blotted out.

So we have Christ blotting out our sins, our sins and repenting. Acts 13, Paul's sermon in the synagogue. So he's preaching to Jews who think they don't need salvation, who think they don't need forgiveness, who think they do good works.

All the works that, all the things that you have done, the motivation to save us, Lord, that you loved us so much that you sent your son. Your son loved us so much that he lays down his life.

[44:40] Your spirit loves us so much that he's the one that comes and awakens us and rebirths us and then walks with us.

We thank you for your love and for your mercy, Father. Help us to know the bad news that we might cherish and be fueled by the good news.

This we pray in Christ's name. Amen. Amen. Thank you.