

Ephesians

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Date: 22 November 1964

Preacher: Dawson, Herbert (1890-1969)

[0 : 00] I ask the Lord to be pleased to help me. I shall call your attention to a subject you will find in the epistle to the Ephesians, chapter 3 and the 8th verse.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach.

Among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Chapter 3, the epistle to the Ephesians, and the 8th verse.

This is a wonderful word to contemplate. And it is wonderful to contemplate who the speaker was, the apostle Paul.

And then to contemplate what he was before, he was made an apostle, an enemy to God, and godliness.

[1 : 24] And yet, so wrought upon by the grace of God, that he became the greatest apostle of all time.

And yet, when he speaks about it, what wonderful humility is to be seen in his confession unto me, who am less than the least of all saints.

one who would be regarded as the least of all saints would not be one who was very special to look at.

The least of all saints was though he was only just a saint, and very little more could be said. But, the apostle Paul declares that as he appeared before God with whom he had to do, although he was looked on as a great apostle, and in his ministerial life he was so owned and honored of God, as he appeared before God, I am less than the least of all saints.

It is not possible for any preacher to tell you much about that, because there is not much more that can be said than to simply quote it, less than the least of all saints.

[3 : 07] And it just shows the wonderful humility the apostle Paul was the subject of. And now, that is just one extreme in the text.

Here is to be seen Paul, the man of God, and what he felt to be before God, unto me, who am less than the least of all saints.

And now he goes to another extreme. unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given.

And now he is speaking of ministerial grace, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

I want to look at that subject, as the Lord should help me, from just three viewpoints. And you try to pray while I try to preach.

[4 : 14] And it might be, preacher and people alike will be helped to rejoice together. unto me, who am less than the least of all saints.

Here is, first of all, a viewpoint of Paul, what he felt to be as a man. And he was an outstanding character, was Paul as a man.

But, what I want to emphasize in looking at Paul as a man, was what he felt as a man before God.

And if I can make it plain, the Apostle Paul had such a view of his own heart, and the sinfulness of it, what he was by nature, that he never looked upon any other fellow sinner as in a worse category than he felt to be in himself.

You might prayerfully think that over, and it will help you to a balanced judgment in viewing your fellow creatures before God.

[5 : 44] Every man whom God sends to preach, who has ministerial grace given to preach, which he will do if God is pleased to send him, when he describes what man is by nature, he can do it out of his own heart.

He can dip his brush in there, and he can never paint in the pulpit the picture as black as he feels it to be, because language fails to describe it.

you have got to use scripture language to say much about it. Our own words fail. Behold, I am vile.

What did Paul say? And what he wrote in his epistles, he wrote before God. And now, you might have thought that the apostle Paul, being the great man that he was in the church of Christ, might have had otherwise views of himself, and that he might have been a little puffed up with the exalted position that he occupied, but he was not like that.

He had got that grace given to him, that he ever had a right view of what he was by nature, and that what he was, as an apostle, he was alone by the grace of God, and that he was evermore a debtor to grace.

[7 : 18] And when he speaks of what he felt before God, he simply declares, O wretched man that I am, who should deliver me from the body of this death.

You all know the illustration. It was a method in those far back days whereby criminals were put to death. When the dead body of a man was fastened on the poor criminal and the outcome of it was, as the criminal tried to move about or otherwise, the dead body on his back ultimately brought about his own death.

And now, the apostle Paul felt like that regarding to what he was by nature. He speaks of it as a body of sin and death.

And when you think of the apostle Paul and his labors, think how he was inspired of God to write 14 epistles, quite a big piece of the New Testament is due to the apostle Paul being inspired of God to pen the pages of it, and yet see him going along the Damascus road, as full as he could be of enmity against God and godliness, seeking to hail men and women to prison who were followers of Jesus Christ.

And then, by the grace of God, he is cut down. And when, as I read in the chapter, in the Acts of the Apostles, concerning his call to you, what did the word of God say?

[9 : 14] And there fell from his eyes as it had been scales. And when his eyes were opened, he not only saw things without, he saw things within. And he saw so much, which shall know every man the plague of his own heart, that from that time on it was his concern to preach the gospel of the grace of God, and that men and women everywhere, irrespective of nationality, should be wrought upon by it in accordance with eternal purposes.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given. If you had a talk with the apostle Paul, as he was going along the Damascus road, while he was still known as Saul of Tarsus, before he was born again, you would have found he had no such thoughts as these about what he was.

he was just chock full of his own importance, and pressing on with persecuting the saints, if to be, he might become someone of importance in the Sanhedrin, be a rabbi, someone outstanding in the Jewish life in which he was living, but when he was born again, when there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, then he sees himself in heaven's own light, and he declares, less than the least of all saints, and yet, looking at the subject from another viewpoint, unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach, and now it is a great thing to preach, it is not so easy as some folks might think it is in looking on, it is a tremendous responsibility to preach, and when a man is sent to preach by

God with whom he has to do, and given ministerial grace, he realises the tremendousness of it, and it is not a matter to be surprised at if those whom God is pleased to send forth to preach, and are used and owned by him to the lasting good of poor sinners, are often suffering from ill health, because of the strain there is upon them in their labours, in word, and in doctrine, for there is often a great bodily reaction in being helped to preach the gospel, but of the grace of God.

the apostle Paul seems to have been much afflicted throughout his ministerial life, and yet he was helped of God to labour on, and he says, unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given that I should preach?

[12 : 36] And now, he had a specific work to do, and he says that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ. He was ordained to be the apostle to the Gentiles, and he tells us in this same chapter, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

Oh, my friends, it is a wonderful thing if a poor sinful man is ordained of God, and can declare, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God.

It is not every man in the pulpit that is made a minister by God. It is a very solemn consideration. and now, all who have the mercy to be made ministers, as God makes a man to be, they realize the awful importance of the position they are found in.

The apostle Paul speaks about it like this in one place, where he speaks about being ambassadors for Christ.

Now then, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God did beseech you by us. We pray you, in Christ's stage, be ye reconciled to God.

[14 : 23] The great concern, if a man is made a minister, is that sinners shall be saved. in listening to the gospel, that God enables him to preach.

And such did the apostle Paul feel about it, that he says, woe is me, if I preach not the gospel. And I might just make a comment, on this viewpoint of the subject, where the apostle Paul says, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God.

What a wonderful thing it is to contemplate that God ordained the ministry, and that sinful men, being sinners born again, should be qualified, by the gift of the grace of God, to preach the gospel, and that heaven should be filled with saved sinners, as the outcome of it.

through the foolishness of preaching. And remember, it can only be according to the gift of the grace of God, that such signs will follow.

It is not to do with education. Education is good in its place, and it may help a man, a minister, to preach grammatically, but that is not of necessity, to say that he will preach graciously.

[16 : 02] No. Power belongeth unto God, and every man made a minister is made to realize, and without me, ye can do nothing.

The ministry is indeed ordained of God. And according to what the New Testament tells us, it stands out in its importance in the worship of God, and is not to be set aside.

It is a privilege, an honor. But you must remember two things regarding those who were made ministers. One is, what the Apostle Paul desired, and what every man ordained to preach, desires, brethren, pray for us.

And he says, and for me, that utterance may be given me, that I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. And the second thing, you must ever remember, that while a man has the honor to be a minister, he is also a man.

And the word of God says, we have this treasure in earthen vessels. And if sometimes there should be something which causes you searching of heart, not to say uneasiness, if there should be something to do with a minister, whereby you are cast down, or you are the subject of questioning, because there may be some weakness to do with him, as a man, that is to do with the earthen vessel.

[17 : 53] It is the treasure within the earthen vessel which makes the man to be a minister according to the gift of the grace of God. It seems so simple when you look at it, that it seems surprising that the church of Christ has not realized it, and viewed the ministry in that light.

it. And now, what I really want to unfold is the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Say just a little, and only a little can be said, for it is like attempting to empty the ocean depths with a bucket, than to say much in a sermon about the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And now, the Apostle Paul knew that he was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God, yet strange to say the word of God does not give us any details about his call to the ministry, only how he was called by grace.

[19 : 20] And remember, a call to the ministry is completely separate from a call by grace. It is something apart from it, and is outstanding.

Whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the grace of God, ministerial grace. given unto me by the effectual working of his power.

And now, there are two or three questions in approaching this subject, which I would like you to answer. Some of you have been under the gospel, most of you, all your life long, from baby days on.

You have been found in the attitude of the worship of God. You must have heard, some of you, thousands of sermons. I have tried to preach, I think, over 6,000 sermons in Union Chapel pulpit.

And I have not at any time preached a sermon without some reference, I trust, to the unsearchable riches of Christ, and sought to preach the gospel that poor sinners might get some good in listening to it.

[20 : 40] And now it might be well to do a little stop-taking, a little summing up, weigh matters up before God, to see how matters really are between our souls and God.

And now, first of all, what think ye of Christ? The subject is to do with the unsearchable riches of Christ. And this is the question of all questions.

What think ye of Christ? And you let your consciences tell you what you do think. And can you appeal to God, Lord Jesus, make thyself to me a living bright reality?

Can you declare, to me Christ is more precious fire than life and all its comforts are? Is it you a concern in everyday life to make manifest in your lips, your life, what you do think of Christ, so that men might discern it and see that you have been with Jesus?

What think ye of Christ? Do you say with the Salmist one thing have I desired of the Lord? That will I seek after, that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord and to inquire in his temple, what think ye of Christ?

[22 : 16] It is worded in a way which is very encouraging to think on, what think ye of Christ?

Are you one of them that think upon his name as you read of in Malachi's prophecy? Them that think upon his name? Are you like Mary and she pondered all these things in her heart?

What think ye of Christ? And remember what you do think will influence your life as you live it day by day, and it will be discernible.

Wherefore, by their fruits, ye shall know them? And I might add another question relative to this one.

Not only what think ye of Christ, what think ye of yourself? And that might be helpful to get an answer to it. When you draw near to God, are you like the woman in the gospel falling down at Jesus feet?

[23 : 30] She told him all the truth. You dare not tell that out in public, for adequate words could not be found to tell all that needs to be told, but you can tell it into the ear of God and appeal to him, O Lord, thou knowest, to thee I come a sinner great, and well thou knowest all my state, yet full forgiveness is with thee, O God, be merciful to me.

What think ye of yourself? O do you think of yourself like this, as you look at your life, with you dear young people especially, much of it's still before you to live, you're in, you're out.

Have you a thought like this, life is real, life is earnest, and the grave is not its goal? dust thou art to dust returnest, was not spoken of the soul?

You must answer this question before God sooner or later, what think ye of yourself? O some of us, as we think of ourselves, before God have to declare, from the sole of the foot, even to the head, there is no soundness in it, wounds and bruises, putrefying sores, the Holy Ghost will make the soul feel its sad condition, for the sick and not the whole, need the good physician, what think ye of yourself?

There is just another question, which might be helpful, if you can answer it, what think ye of Christ's servants? And remember, if you appreciate Christ's servants, and prize what they have to say concerning Christ, follow them along, dwell on their words, if so be, there might be some encouragement, some help, by the way, for a poor sinner like you, we shall know what you think of Christ's servants, because your heart is right before God, with whom you have to do.

[26 : 06] But what think ye of Christ's servants? Are there any under Union Chapel group that think of Christ's servants, that in what they have to say, concerning God, and his gospel, the grace of God, that the best word in the sermon is the Amen that concludes it, and lets them go out into the world again, where they desire to be, in the world, and of it.

Oh, very solemn it is, to be under the gospel, and have no ear for it, no heart for it. You might be prepared to ponder that, and you might even be ready to argue, and say, you cannot give yourself an ear to hear it, nor a heart to receive it.

You tell us that sometimes, when you are preaching, eh, but you will not be allowed to make an attitude like that, any excuse before God, with whom you have to do, because you are welcome to wait on God for an ear to hear, and a heart to receive, and who can tell but what God will be gracious to you, all the while you listen to what your heart tells you within, as you were born, we will not have this man to reign over us, depart from us, we desire not the knowledge of thee or thy ways, you may think of Christ's servants, that the amen that concludes the sermon is the best word in it, but what will that avail you when you are before the judgment seat of

Christ? Oh, it is a solemn responsibility to be under the gospel, and the word of God says, if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, and to be found amongst them that are lost, lies at your door, do remember that, the word of God makes that plain, but if our gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost, in whom the God of this world, a little g-God, hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

Oh, dear friends, young and old alike, do seek to appreciate the gospel, the privilege of being under it, and do pray for those who desire to preach it according to the gift of the grace of God, and oh, that you might learn, blessed is the people that know the joyful sound they shall walk, oh Lord, in the light of thy countenance.

[29 : 27] What a divine harmonious sound the gospel trumpet gives, no music can with it compare, and the soul that knows it lives.

Looking at the subject from another viewpoint, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

And now, you cannot say much about it, only to give hints. There are unsearchable riches when you think of Christ's person, when you think of who he is.

He is verily God, verily man. And there is one tremendous word in the word of God, which might help you, only you will need to take your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy ground, as you contemplate it.

And that is a word like this, God, in him there dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily. Oh, that word bodily is a wonderful word to contemplate, for it means the God shines gracious through the man.

[30 : 47] Otherwise, God could not be approachable. There is one God, one mediator between God and man, the man Christ Jesus.

In him there dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, which means that fullness that dwelleth in him, such unsearchable riches, as they really are, oh, that fullness, I say, is communicable.

You can draw from it, receive of it, a fullness resides in Jesus our head, and ever abides to answer our need.

The Father's good pleasure hath laid up in store a plentiful treasure to give to the poor. Yes, there are unsearchable riches of Christ, as you contemplate, his person, who he is.

Could we, his person, learn to prize, we more should prize, his grace. And then, there are unsearchable riches of Christ, when you think of his work, love's redeeming work.

[32 : 08] What a great word that was. What unsearchable riches of comfort millions of poor sinners have found in thinking upon it.

It is finished, cried the Lord in his dying minute. Holy Ghost, repeat the word, full salvation's in it.

Unsearchable riches, finished on behalf of hundreds of millions of poor sinners, untold, a number which no man can number, saved in the Lord with an everlasting salvation.

Oh, the gospel of Christ, in the proclamation of it, is not a narrow-minded gospel. Often, those of us who try to preach free grace are supposed to be narrow-minded, but we are not.

We are not broad-minded either. We are just right-minded. We want to preach and proclaim what is the mind of Christ.

[33 : 19] And the mind of Christ, to poor sinners, is just this. This man receiveth sinners. Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out.

Jesus said, if any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. he shall find unsearchable riches, as he, a poor sinner, draws near to me, as the sinner's friend, and a welcome is guaranteed.

Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, to obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need.

The unsearchable riches of Christ, think of his work, as I said, love's redeeming work, his life, as he lived it, made of a woman, made under the law, unsearchable riches of righteousness, in thought, word, and deed, as he kept it, magnified it, honored it.

Christ is the end of the law, for righteousness to every one which believeth. and what unsearchable riches there are, not only in his life, but in his death, when he died in the stead of poor sinners like you and me.

[34 : 52] And what unsearchable riches of Christ there are, when he rose from the dead, on that Easter morn long ago, triumphant over sin, and death and hell, who was delivered for our offenses, who rose again for our justification.

And think of his unsearchable riches, which he delights to dispense from where he is, on the throne of grace above. He lives, the great Redeemer lives, what joy the blessed assurance gives, and now before his Father God pleads the full merit of his blood.

Unsearchable riches of Christ then, in his work. And I might say, there are unsearchable riches of Christ in the words which he spake.

Never man spake like this man. The promises are declared to be exceeding great and precious promises. There you see, adjectives piled on each other, exceeding great and precious.

And they are. And they have never been forfeited. Scripture cannot be broken. What more can he say than to you he has said, you who unto Jesus for refuge have fled.

[36 : 24] There is indeed unsearchable riches to be found in every promise. Yea and amen in Christ Jesus you will find it to be in your soul's experience.

Much might be said along that line of thought. Then there are the unsearchable riches of Christ when you think of him in the offices that he fills.

Think of his office not only as our mediator, our advocate, and what a beautiful scripture that is. If any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.

And as our advocate, he has unsearchable riches of wisdom, ability, and he delights to plead the causes of poor sinners before his Father's throne, and to make them welcome in their approaches thereto.

But think of the unsearchable riches as he fills the office of our High Priest on high. With joy we meditate the grace of our High Priest above, and there he is, with all his wondrous merit to plead, on behalf of poor sinners, join near to God in his great name.

[38 : 01] Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus, and as you consider him, you will find unsearchable riches to be discerned in how he behaves and makes his priesthood known.

consider how kind he is. He ever welcomes poor sinners. Consider how great he is in his dealings with poor sinners.

He has great grace to display so that poor sinners of deepest doubt are received and are made meet for the inheritance of the saints in light.

Consider too, not only how kind he is, how great he is, consider how worthy he is to be worshipped, and that you and I should draw near to him, pleading his infinite merits, to partake of these unsearchable riches, unsearchable riches of Christ.

And then I would say also just a word or two about his unsearchable riches as the great physician.

[39 : 29] And there, when you think of him, under that beautiful title, the great physician, his skill in all cases infallible is.

He has unsearchable riches of skill to deal with whatever the case of any poor sinner may be. He will never be at a loss in dealing with the poor sinner's case.

He is a savior, of quick understanding. And he delighteth in mercy. And it says that when he dwelt on earth and went about as Emmanuel, God with us, that he healed all them that have need of healing.

Unsearchable riches does he possess as the sinner's wise physician. And do remember, regarding your case, which gives you many searchings of heart, what though bad is your condition and your wounds you can't endure, Christ the sinner's wise physician will effect a perfect cure.

Much might be said along that line of thought. Think too of the unsearchable riches of Christ as the sinner's friend.

[40 : 54] friend. Oh, how many millions of poor sinners as Christ befriended. And he has ever made known his friendship.

And when he begins to make it known, it is for time and eternity too. They who once his kindness through, find it everlasting love.

the unsearchable riches of Christ as a friend. And it says in our Bible here, a man that hath friends must show himself friendly, and there is a friend that sticketh closer than a brother.

Oh, you have found it, some of you, the unsearchable riches of Christ as a friend. They who once is kindness prove, I say, find it everlasting love.

Then, I might also give you a hint or two, regarding the unsearchable riches of Christ, when you think of the names that he bears in the word of his grace.

[42 : 10] When you think of him as the bread of life, and he said, I am the bread of life, and he has unsearchable riches, as the bread of life, to feed poor sinners, and so lace their never dying souls, for time and eternity too.

And what a beautiful word that is to contemplate. He that eateth of this bread, he shall live forever. Think to when he said, I am the door.

There you see the unsearchable riches of Christ are opened up, and now it goes on, not as you might have thought it would have been worded. I am the door.

By me, if any man enter in, any man, if any man enter in, he shall go in and out, and find pasture, he shall be saved, as he enters in.

Yes, wonderful it is to contemplate that word, oh, that is the door of thy mercy, which is open all day to the poor and the needy, who knock by the way.

[43 : 35] there you see demonstrated the unsearchable riches of Christ, when he says, I am the door. By me, if any man enter in, he may not have dwelt at Sinai's Mount for twelve months, he may not be able to say much as yet about sound doctrine, but if as a poor sinner, in his felt need of salvation, he shall enter in, he shall be saved.

Yes, he shall go in and out and find pasture. Is he a door? I'll enter in. Yes, behold the pasture's fresh and green.

The shepherd is divinely fair, none but the sheep have freedom there, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

and I might say too, think of his unsearchable riches, wherein he says, I am the light of the world. He that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.

And now, it is impossible, no mortal man can tell how many sinners, the light of the world, as illuminated by his grace.

- [45 : 02] The unsearchable riches of Christ have been demonstrated to a number which no man can number. And still on this earth, there are thousands, tens of thousands, not to say millions of poor sinners, who are lighted up by him who is the light of the world, and who desire to live their lives in that light.

Yea, even to say, I came to Jesus, and I found in him my star, my sun, and in that light of life I'll walk, till travelling days are done, the unsearchable riches of Christ, dear friends.

Not only so, what unsearchable riches there are, when you think of him as the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

Mark how that is worded. When he died on Calvary's cross, then the sin and guilt of the church of Christ was removed in that day, when the Saviour died.

But it says, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away, present tense, you need it done, in your soul's experience is the meaning, behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, and he has unsearchable riches of forgiveness of sins, to make known and reveal to poor sinners in their felt need of it.

- [46 : 45] The vilest sinner out of hell, who lives to feel his need, is welcome to the throne of grace, the Saviour's blood to plead.

The unsearchable riches of Christ, in whatever way Jesus Christ is viewed, whether it be his person, as verily God, verily man, his work, his words, every office he sustains, and whatever the word of God describes him to be, whether it be the light of the world, or the door of mercy, whether it be the true vine, or the bread of life, whatever name is given to him, that he sustains with unsearchable riches.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Do go back in your minds to the questions I ask. What think ye of Christ? What do you think of yourself before God?

What think ye of them that preach the gospel to you? Do you esteem them in love for their work's sake, and appreciate the gospel that they preach?

- [48 : 22] And when you think of Christ, can you come to a conclusion like this, compared with Christ in all beside no comeliness I see?

The one thing needful, dearest Lord, is to be one with thee. the Lord help you to think on these things. Amen.