

Ephesians 3:8, “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.”

Discovering The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

The Apostle Paul counted the preaching of Christ as a great privilege, and a solemn responsibility in his life. He knew he was undeserving of such a privilege. He knew that God called him by his grace to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

What a phrase Paul used to describe the purpose and essence of true preaching! What a profound, and sublime statement!

“The unsearchable riches of Christ” is worth a year of sermons.

Martin Lloyd Jones writes, “The test of all preaching is its conformity to this definition of the message, and to this standard. The business of any man who claims to have been called to be a minister of the gospel is to *preach* ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ.’”

The riches of Christ are the true wealth of men and nations. And those riches are “*unsearchable*” or “*unfathomable*.”

A news story came out of Tampa Florida in 2007 that Deep-sea explorers had mined what could be the richest shipwreck treasure in history, bringing home 17 tons of colonial-era silver and gold coins from an undisclosed site in the Atlantic Ocean.

A jet chartered by Tampa-based Odyssey Marine Exploration landed in the United States recently with hundreds of plastic containers brimming with coins raised from the ocean floor. The more than 500,000 pieces are expected to fetch an average of \$1,000 each from collectors and investors.

Odyssey won permission from the Spanish government to resume a suspended search for the wreck of the HMS *Sussex*, which was leading a British fleet into the Mediterranean Sea for a war against France in 1694 when it sank in a storm off Gibraltar.

Historians believe the 157-foot warship was carrying nine tons of gold coins to buy the loyalty of the Duke of Savoy, a potential ally in southeastern France. Odyssey believes those coins could also fetch more than \$500 million.

But under the terms of a historic agreement Odyssey will have to share any finds with the British government. The company will get 80% of the first \$45 million and about 50% of the proceeds thereafter.

We will never possess that kind of treasure in our life time but the Apostle Paul reminds us in Ephesians 3 that there are unsearchable riches in Christ for everyone who believes. That is because these riches find their source in eternity, and in a divine love that far exceeds any human relationship.

These riches are boundless in their extent, and they are designed to astonish and satisfy us.

What are these unsearchable riches of Christ? Although they cannot be described we must try to mention some of them.

Let us look at these riches in the following manner. I am poor, I am empty-handed, I am a pauper; what do I need? Christ has everything that I need. Therefore, the title of my message is simply, *Discovering The Unsearchable Riches of Christ.*

What are the things I need most of all?

The answer is found in a sentence of Paul's in the First Epistle to the Corinthians, where he says, '*... who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption*' (1:30). These are some of the 'unsearchable riches'.

The first thing we need is 'wisdom', that is, knowledge and understanding. We live in this great world, with its problems and possibilities.

The first questions to be answered are, What is it all about? Why is man as he is? Is there a God? Why is not God doing something about it all? How can I know God? As I see the world collapsing around and about me is there no place of steadiness and steadfastness? How then can we arrive at this knowledge and this wisdom? Note the Apostle's answer: it is in Christ. '(He) of God is made unto us *wisdom*'.

Wisdom. Jesus Christ is to us the Source of wisdom; it is by him that we are made wise. It means simply, that Christians have become truly wise by the agency, the teaching, and the work of Jesus Christ.

Worldly philosophers and teachers have attempted to become wise by their own investigations and inquiries.

But Christians become wise by the work of Christ; that is, it had been by his instructions that they had been made acquainted with the true character of God, with his law, with their own condition, and with the great truth that there is a glorious life beyond the grave.

None of these truths had been obtained by the investigations of philosophers, but by the instructions of Christ. In like manner it was that through him they had been made practically wise unto salvation.

Col 2:3: "In whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge." He is the great Agent by whom we become truly wise.

Therefore we read in James, “If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God who giveth to all men liberally and upbraideth not.’(1:5).

Christ is often represented as eminently wise, and as the Source of all true wisdom to his people, Isa 11:1, “And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots; Mt 13:54, “And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?”; 1Co 1:24, “But unto them which are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God, and the wisdom of God.”

Christ may be said to be made wisdom to us, or to communicate wisdom,

1.) Because he has in his own ministry instructed us in the true knowledge of God, and of those great truths which pertain to our salvation.

(2.) Because he has by his word and Spirit led us to see our true situation, and made us "wise unto salvation." He has turned us from the ways of folly, and inclined us to walk in the path of true wisdom.

(3.) Because he is to his people now the Source of wisdom. He enlightens their mind in the time of perplexity; guides them in the way of truth; and leads them in the path of real knowledge.

None but those who are instructed by the Son of God become thus wise. So we learn that wisdom is part of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

In addition to wisdom, **righteousness** is included in the unsearchable riches of Christ.

How can a sinful man stand before God? ‘How should man be just with God?’ (Job asked that question in Job 9:2).

Christ is made unto us ‘righteousness’. If you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ then your sins will be forgiven, and you will be clothed with the righteousness of Jesus Christ at the very moment, and you can stand in the presence of God!

This declaration of righteousness simply affirms that we become righteous through Christ, as it is affirmed that we become wise, sanctified, and redeemed through him.

A Bible commentator observes, “The leading idea of the apostle, which should never be lost sight of, is, that the Greeks by their philosophy did not become truly wise, righteous, sanctified, and redeemed; but that this was accomplished through Jesus Christ.”

The doctrine of justification is, that God regards and treats those as righteous who believe on his Son, and who are pardoned on account of what he has done and suffered on the Cross.

But it does not end there. How can I continue with God? Though I know I am forgiven, and given the righteousness of Christ, I know that sin is still within me, and I know that the devil is still my enemy. How can I stand up in the fight against evil and sin?

Paul answers: Christ is made unto us not only wisdom and righteousness, but also *sanctification*. Whenever we come to die we can be sure of this, that in Christ we shall stand before God ‘faultless and blameless’.

He is our sanctification, and He helps us to work out in our daily lives by putting His Holy Spirit within us.

By him we are sanctified, or made holy. This means, that by his work applied to our hearts, we become personally sanctified or holy.

This is done by the agency of his Spirit applying truth to the mind, Joh 17:19, “And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth.”

This is done by the aid which he furnishes in trials, temptations, and conflicts, and by the influence of hope in sustaining, elevating, and purifying the soul.

All the truth that is employed to sanctify, was taught primarily by him; and all the means that may be used are the purchase of his death, and are under his direction; and the Spirit, by whose agency Christians are sanctified, was sent into the world by him, and in answer to his prayers, Joh 14:16; 15:26.

The riches of sanctification.

And Christ is also *redemption*, which means that He will raise my body and glorify it and change it. The redemption is complete and entire, there will be nothing lacking in body, mind or spirit. In your poverty, in your need, you are confronted by ‘the unsearchable riches of Christ’. He is everything you need.

*Ransomed, healed, restored, forgiven,
Who like thee His praise should sing?*

The things which are specified above, "justification and sanctification," are a part of the work of redemption.

A Christian author writes, “Probably the word is used here in a wide sense, as denoting the whole group, or class of influences by which we are brought at last to heaven; so that the apostle refers not only to his atonement, but to the work by which we are in fact redeemed from death, and made happy in heaven. Thus in Ro 8:23, the word is applied to the resurrection, "the redemption of our body."

The sense is, "It is by Christ that we are redeemed; by him that an atonement is made; by him that we are pardoned; by him that we are delivered from the dominion of sin, and the power of our enemies; and by him that we shall be rescued from the grave, and raised up to everlasting life."

Thus the whole work depends on him; and no part of it is to be ascribed to the philosophy, the talent, or the wisdom of men. He does not merely aid us;--he does not complete that which is imperfect; he does not come in to do a part of the work, or to supply our defects;--but it is all to be traced to him. See Col 2:10: "And ye are complete in him."

It is Christ again who has said, 'I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly' (John 10:10). Life means spiritual life; life means a relationship to God and an enjoyment of His fellowship; and Christ our Lord has it in all its fulness. He says, 'He that cometh unto me shall never hunger, and he that believeth on me shall never thirst' (John 6:35). 'The water that I shall give you', He says to the woman of Samaria, 'shall be in you a well of water springing up into everlasting life'.

Christ Himself is the riches, and it is as I know Him and possess Him that I am a participant in the riches. The Apostle had a personal knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, and that is the greatest treasure in the world.

We often say, and it is true, that the greatest blessing that we can have in this world is to have a good husband or wife or friend. We say that that is a priceless possession. But in the gospel we are offered this knowledge of, and this companionship with, Christ.

The Apostle in writing to the Philippians says, ‘To me to live is Christ’ (Phil 1:21). It is life to him — to know Christ. Then he proceeds to say that his greatest ambition is ‘that I may know him’.

He does not mean simply to know about Him, he means to know Him, so that he can go and talk to Him and listen to Him. That is how the Apostle Paul lived. He was in this state of communion with Christ. Christ was nearer to him and dearer to him, and more real to him, than anything in the world. He is enjoying this already, and he wants more and more of it.

All the riches and treasures of God are in Christ, and He comes into the life and into the heart, and He dwells there.

We read in Colossians 1:27, “To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

The Apostle goes on to pray for these Ephesians that they might be ‘strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith’.

And the object of this is that they may know ‘the breadth and length and depth and height; and to know the love of Christ which passeth knowledge’.

Nothing in the whole world is comparable to that, to be loved by Christ, to feel it and to know it. What are the riches of the whole universe in comparison with this! To be loved by the Son of God! ‘The unsearchable riches of Christ.’

But apart from the gift of Himself Christ also gives us His own Holy Spirit. 'I indeed baptize you with water', says John the Baptist; 'He shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost and with fire' (Matt 3:11).

We receive the gift of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit resident within us; and, further, His power activating us and enabling us to 'work out our own salvation' and to be witnesses of all this to others.

But there are also certain particular riches which result from this. The first that Christ gives us is rest: 'Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest' (Matt 11:28). Do you know this? He is able to give it superabundantly. Then there is peace.

This is what He says: 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you; not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid' (John 14:27).

Whatever may happen in the world outside He gives us His peace. 'In nothing be anxious, therefore', says Paul; that is, 'In nothing be crushed with anxious care'; 'But in all things by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God'. And then, 'the peace of God that passeth all understanding shall keep your heart and mind through Christ Jesus' (Phil 4:6-7). All this is included in the riches.

Then think of the joy. 'The Lord says, 'ye have asked nothing in my name; ask, and ye shall receive, that your joy may be full'. That was said in the context, 'In the world ye shall have tribulation, but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world' (John 16:24, 33).

The Lord offers us guidance, understanding, wisdom and discretion. This leads to one of the most wonderful things of all, namely, the ability to be content with our lot whatever may take place.

Paul tells the Philippians, 'I have learned in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content. I know both how to be abased and I know how to abound.... I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me' (4:11-13).

What a way to face the future, dark and troublesome though it may be! Whatever may happen we can face it quietly and steadily. 'I can do *all things* through Christ which strengtheneth me'.

'To me to live is Christ, and to die is gain', says Paul to the Philippians (1:21). Oh, 'the riches of His grace'!

The blessed hope He holds out before us because we are children of God, and 'if children then in us, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ', enables us to smile even in the face of death. There remains for us 'an inheritance which is incorruptible and undefiled and that fadeth not away' (1 Peter 1:3-5).

I have but started telling you about the riches, but these are some of the things that are found in the treasure-house of God's grace. Are you enjoying these riches, 'the unsearchable riches of Christ'? Are you unhappy? Are you miserable? Are you troubled and perplexed? Do you feel that you are bereft of everything? May God have mercy upon you!

With all these treasures that are freely given we have no right to be in need; and we are a disgrace to Christ if we are in that condition. Are you enjoying Christ Himself? He stands at the door and knocks. Do we contemplate these riches? Do we dwell upon them? Are we thrilled as we think of them? Are we receiving them more and more?

God forbid that we should be like the Laodiceans, who thought that they had everything and were very rich! The message of the Son of God to such is, 'Because thou sayest, I am rich and increased with goods . . .' I am 'all right' and I can sit down and relax; if you think so and believe that you have need of nothing, the truth about you is, 'Thou knowest not that thou art wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked'.

Or are you doubtful about yourself and what you have? If so, this is the Lord's word to you: 'I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that you mayest be rich; and white raiment that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve that thou mayest see' (Rev 3:18).

Thus He offers to all who believe in Him His 'unsearchable riches'.

The world today is presenting us with a unique opportunity of telling men and women about 'the unsearchable riches of Christ'. We are being watched, we are being observed; and many in their spiritual bankruptcy are wondering whether, after all, the answer is in Christ.

The world judges Christ by what it sees in us. If we give the impression that, after all, to be a Christian does not help very much when there is a crisis, they will not listen to our message or look to Him.

But if they find that we are entirely different from them, and able to maintain a calm and balance and peace and poise, and even joy in the midst of the hurricane of life, under God that may be the means of opening their eyes, and leading them to repentance, and bringing them to the Lord Jesus Christ and His 'unsearchable riches'.

In conclusion, Paul preached the unsearchable riches of Christ and so must we. Some of these riches include wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption. Have you discovered the unsearchable riches of Christ for yourself? Do you possess this treasure? The Lord's Table reminds us of how truly rich and blessed we are in Christ. Let us pray!