

The Unsearchable Reaches of Christ

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[0 : 0 0] So, as John mentioned in his prayer, I just got back last night from our Denomination's yearly gathering in St. Louis, and I know many of you are curious and interested in what happened.

I'll just give you a brief summary, which is that lots of good things happened. I'm encouraged about the future of our denomination, and I'm happy to talk about it more with you one-on-one if you'd like. Many of you know, of course, we're celebrating Independence Day, our independence from Britain, but now, of course, we also have a special relationship with Britain.

Our church, in a similar way, has a special relationship with Westside PCA, our sister church here in town, and it's our pleasure to welcome Davis Morgan, who's their pastor, to bring God's Word to us today.

So, Davis, welcome. Greetings, Cheyenne Mountain. It is so great to be with you on this Lord's Day, on this Independence Day, to come together and to bring God's Word from Ephesians chapter 3.

And so I want to invite you, if you have your bulletin there, I see the text is there for you, or if you would like to open your Bible to Ephesians 3. We, as a church, have been going through the book of Ephesians.

[1 : 0 7] We just wrapped up chapter 3 about a month ago or so, and we were studying the book of Ephesians to learn, as a church, just what we are called to be as a church. As Christians, our identity in Christ, our identity as being part of the body of Christ in the troubling days in which we find ourselves, the book of Ephesians was a timely word from Scripture for us, and so I pray and hope that it will be timely for you as well.

So draw your attention to the reading and to the preaching of God's holy, His inspired Word that He has preserved for us as people. Ephesians 3, 1 through 13.

For this reason, I, Paul, a prisoner of Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles, assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly.

When you read this, you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

This mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me by the working of His power.

[2 : 2 9] To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for the ages in God, who created all things, so that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places.

This was according to the eternal purpose that He realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in Him. So I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

This is the Word of God. Thanks be to Him. Let us pray for our time in His Word. Lord God, we do thank You for this time. We thank You for this Word from Ephesians 3.

We thank You that we have the privilege as Your people to hear this Word. And I pray that for every one of us in this room, we would not overlook that fact, that it is a privilege to hear Your Word proclaimed.

And so we ask that You would give us humble hearts, Lord. We ask that You would give us ears to hear and to understand, eyes to see and to savor the glory of Jesus, Lord, and a spirit, a spirit to respond with faith, with repentance, with joy, with comfort, Lord, with adoration and worship of You, the King of kings, the Lord of lords.

[3 : 59] And Heavenly Father, we also pray for our little theologians that are in here, Lord, our covenant children, those little ears that will be listening as well. We pray that You would give them the gift of understanding Your Word, illumination by Your spirits.

You say in John 3 that, Lord, we cannot understand a single thing from heaven unless You give it to us, You grant it to us. And so we ask that You would do that by Your grace.

In Jesus' name, amen. Amen. Amen. Fifty-six men signed it. Their conviction resulted in untold sufferings for themselves and for their families.

Of the fifty-six men, five were captured by the British and tortured before they died. Twelve had their homes ransacked and burned. Two lost their sons in the Revolutionary Army.

Another had two sons captured. Nine of the fifty-six fought and died from wounds or the hardships of war. And yet if you were to ask them, was it worth it?

[5 : 03] Was the Declaration of Independence made on July 4, 1776, 245 years ago, and the years of war and hardship that followed, was it all worth it in the end?

Their answer would have been, unequivocally, to quote Patrick Henry, give me liberty or give me death. Without question, it was the fortitude, the resolve of those patriots that eventually led to the founding of this great nation.

Indeed, that is because all things, all things in life of lasting value require great endurance. They require fortitude and resilience that comes before seeing the desired outcome.

You know what that is called? The Bible calls that faith. Faith. But it is not a blind faith, as the common misconception goes. Biblical faith, friends, is not a leap into the darkness.

But it is a step into the light of God's revealed will and his acts in history. And it is being swept up by that astounding story. One man who knew this perhaps better than anyone else who has ever lived on the planet was the Apostle Paul.

[6 : 19] Paul, who at one time had been Saul of Tarsus, a Pharisee, a vehement opponent, persecutor of the church, as he says in Philippians 3. It was his mission to wipe the church out from existence.

And sometimes we forget that not only had Paul arrested Christians, but Paul was complicit in the murder of Christians. We know about the stoning of Stephen in Acts 7, but he says later on when he's recounting his testimony that those that were brought into Jerusalem on the charges of being traitors to the nation of Israel, Paul signed off on their execution as well.

It was to this man, this man that the exalted Christ had gloriously appeared to, and he appeared to Paul to become, Paul to become Christ's chosen instrument of bringing the gospel to all of the non-Jews in the world.

No matter the ethnicity, no matter the region of the known world, the Old Testament promises to the faithful descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were now being fulfilled.

The nations of the earth were indeed coming under the blessing of God through the seed of Abraham, the Lord Jesus Christ. Those who were once considered unfit and outside of the kingdom of God, God has now brought near by the blood of his son, Ephesians chapter 2.

[7 : 43] In this sense, Christianity is the most inclusive religion in the world. What I mean by that is that there is no one who is forbidden.

Outwardly, there is no one who is forbidden from embracing Jesus Christ. The good news of what God has done for sinners goes out to all who were here. There is no longer Jew nor Greek, Paul says.

There is no longer slave nor free, male, female, Greek, barbarian, Scythian, Roman. All are one in Christ Jesus, Galatians chapter 3. Christianity is unique in this regard in that from beginning to end, the emphasis in Christianity is on God's work.

It is on his invitation to all without discrimination. God has done this. It is his work. And he graciously calls and he applies it to whomever he freely will apply it to.

This is what the Apostle Paul had given his life to. And you know what it cost him? It cost him essentially everything.

[8 : 51] In the face of intense hardship and affliction, persecution, you know the list from 2 Corinthians chapter 10 where he goes through. The Corinthians have the gall, they have the audacity to question the ministry of this man.

They have the gall, the audacity to question his authority as an apostle. And Paul says there in 2 Corinthians 10, do you not know what I have been through? Do you not know about the beatings?

Do you not know about the lashings? Do you not know about the stoning? Do you not know that I have been in danger from robbers, danger from my own countrymen, danger from the Gentiles, danger from robbers?

I have spent a sleepless night at sea, he says there. And more than that, Paul says, you really want to know what keeps me up at night? It is not knowing where the other blow is coming from.

You know what kept Paul up at night? It was his anxiety for the church. It was his anxiety for the churches that he had planted that they were going to go astray, that they were going to essentially deny the faith that had saved them.

[9 : 59] Paul gave his life for this. Finally, Roman imprisonment even, that will eventually lead to his martyrdom for the faith under the Roman Emperor Nero in the year 65 AD.

Why do I share all that with you? The reason I share all that with you is because I have a question for you today. It is important to be reminded of these things by the Apostle Paul, and of course we could go on and on down through the ages of the voice of the martyrs of the faith, the suffering, the affliction that the church has undergone.

It's important, brothers and sisters, to remember that, especially on this 4th of July independence in our country where we still enjoy the freedom to worship, freedom to gather in the name of Jesus Christ to worship.

It's important for us to be reminded of this because eventually, eventually, the question will come for you. The question, is it worth it? Is it worth it?

Christianity, the Bible, church, living as a Christian in an increasingly hostile and strange world that we live in now, strange and hostile to the teachings, to the beliefs of our faith.

[11 : 07] Is it worth it in the end? In the age of social media, it's become quite the public spectacle when a well-known professing Christian in the realm of pop Christianity renounces the faith and makes it known that they are on a process of deconstruction.

That's how it's phrased in our day. That they are renouncing the faith. Perhaps we personally know someone who has walked away from the faith, and we are confronted with questions and doubts at the time, and we're wondering, is being a Christian really worth it?

The tension is especially strong when social issues are brought up and the church's position seems completely out of step with the modern world. And the pressure to conform, the pressure to give in can leave us wondering, is it really worth it?

Is it really worth being openly ridiculed in a college classroom? Is it worth being maligned and misrepresented at work? Is it worth being demonized and slandered about?

Is it worth being rejected and feeling as though you are completely alone, you are isolated in your conviction? Is it worth it? The good news is that Scripture does not leave this most pressing question for us unanswered.

[12 : 28] As we'll see, we will all face adversary and trials in our lives as Christians. The question about the worthiness of the Christian faith is one that the New Testament wants us to be sure about.

And that is why we have the testimony here of the Apostle Paul and the reason he says that he's willing to suffer. Paul's reason that he is willing to suffer, that is his answer to the question of, is it worth it when facing difficulties as a Christian?

Now, little theologians, I see a few kids with us. Kids, if you want to follow along, I have an assignment for you kids, if it's okay with your parents. One assignment, kids, is to draw a picture of something you really love or value in your life.

It could be your family, it could be your church family, it could be a favorite hobby or stuffed animal, something like that. And then here's the question, kids, that I want you to listen for.

What does Paul say that we as Christians have that is beyond valuable? What are the riches that he says that we have, kids? Now, as I said earlier for the rest of us, the big question that we are attempting to answer today is the worthiness of our faith in the face of suffering and adversity.

[13 : 45] Is it worth it? I want you to keep that question in mind as we go and see if you can answer it the way that Paul does. First, I want you to look with me at verse 7 of Ephesians 3 and the grace that was given to Paul.

Of this gospel, he says, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace, which was given to me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given.

If you read the book of Ephesians, you'll notice that one thing that stands out about the apostle Paul is how deeply rooted his theology is in the grace of God.

Understanding the gracious nature, the gift of God's favor towards him, the very least of all the saints. This was the foundation of Paul's theology.

He knew that he did not deserve what he had gotten. If anything, he had gotten the exact opposite of what he deserved. And that's what grace is. Grace, we commonly hear it referred to as unmerited favor.

[14 : 47] But technically, what grace is is demerited favor. Meaning that all we have earned from God are demerits or penalties for our sinful condition. And yet, God still moves toward us and he acts on our behalf so that we can be forgiven, so that we can be loved, we can be redeemed, we can be reconciled to him.

And while he's at it, God's grace begins to change us from within. It begins to change or transform our nature so that we become what we are in Christ, which is holy and blameless.

Grace, church, brothers and sisters, grace is the only hope for you and I. As a matter of fact, grace is the only hope for our world. Did you know that? We see that in what Paul goes on to say about the wisdom of God being revealed in the eternal purpose or plan in Christ Jesus, our Lord.

The reason that God has revealed that is what Paul says there to bring light to everyone, to bring this truth about God's grace to everyone, the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God who created all things.

So here's what we have to understand about grace. Grace not only saves us from sin, but it also saves us from futility. It saves us from deception.

[16 : 08] It saves us from nihilism and despair in terms of our outlook on life, our worldview. It is through the mystery of Christ that we come to know the true God and what His purpose and His plan is for the ages and that He has included us in that plan.

You know, it's quite telling. It's quite telling about our society. Whereas, as a society, we've never been more affluent. We've never had more technology and capabilities at our fingertips.

We've never had more freedom and pleasure. And yet, the percentage of adults identifying as lonely has never been higher in the history of our country. Did you know that?

Over 50% of adults between ages 18 and 49 identify as being lonely. The number of prescriptions for anxiety-related stresses has also never been higher.

They estimate one out of every three Americans are on medication for anxiety. Even in the age of social media, where it would seem, at least on the surface, that connecting and socializing are part of the purpose of being plugged in, studies have actually shown the opposite.

[17 : 25] That the more time you spend on social media, the more unhappy you are, actually. In her book, *The Happiness Effect*, how social media is driving a generation to appear perfect at any cost, author Donna Freitas, she writes, she writes this, that while sexting, cyberbullying, and narcissism are very real and present threats online, she says that the overall greatest danger for young people is that they always have to appear happy.

Here's what she writes, quote, young people face enormous pressure to appear to look perfect online, not just happy, but blissful, ecstatic, and fabulously successful.

Unable to achieve this impossible standard, they are anxious about letting the less-than-perfect parts of themselves become public knowledge. Far from wanting to share everything, they are brutally selective when it comes to curating their personal profiles and worry obsessively that they might unwittingly post something that could come back to haunt them the rest of their lives.

That is the current state of our culture. And over against this, friends, stands the mystery of Jesus Christ.

The mystery of Christ as the watershed moment of human history and the universe. This mystery, this mystery, mystery there meaning that unless God revealing it to us, unless God revealing the meaning of the incarnation, the purpose of the incarnation, it would remain hidden to us.

[19 : 07] This mystery has been revealed to you, church. It has been revealed, the purpose, the plan in Jesus Christ. It is so that you would be filled with the grace and truth that are found in Jesus Christ.

And what we must see, brothers and sisters, is that this grace, this truth, you know what they are? They are the sure footing in a world of uncertainty and speculation, in a world of suffering and turmoil, of death and despair, of injustice and oppression, of war and tyranny, the grace, the knowledge revealed in Jesus Christ that penetrates the hopelessness of nihilism that our culture cannot escape from.

It radiates the purpose and the end for which everything exists, the glory of the triune God. This mystery stands beneath as the foundation of our society, of America itself.

It stands as the foundation of the modern world. Because it gave the modern world the preconditions that are necessary for you and I making sense of anything. It stands above as the transcendent authority that post-modernism and moral relativism, again, these are the philosophies of our culture, of our day and age.

They cannot escape from the inconsistency and the contradictions that they are. But Christianity stands above and gives transcendent meaning to everything, friends.

[20 : 30] These are the most common secular worldviews that are raised up against the knowledge of Christ and His gospel. And they are everywhere in our day and age, from pop culture references and TV, film, music, to our current state of politics and the university classrooms, to the forementioned social media platforms.

The point that I'm making is that we are confronted with these destructive belief systems and they have direct consequences for how people think and live. And that leaves us as a society ultimately without God and without hope.

The Christian worldview, however, as here described by Paul, leaves us with boldness and access to God directly. And we see how it provides a certain confidence in the midst of suffering that he mentions at the end of verse 12 and verse 13.

He says there, so I ask you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory. Why, Paul? Why should the Ephesian church not lose heart?

How can you say that? As he says in verse 1, you're in prison. He is a prisoner. And he is unjustly in prison, we might add. Why shouldn't they lose heart?

[21 : 50] And why shouldn't we here in 2021 not lose heart? What is the basis for so bold a claim? How do we know that everything you have been through, Paul, for the sake of the gospel is worth it?

His answer is in verse 8 and following. His answer is in verse 8 and following. In spite of his unworthiness, Paul was declared worthy by grace.

And it's the same for you and I today. Even though we may feel unworthy, we are declared worthy. Even though we may be plagued with guilt and shame, his mercy is more and his grace covers us.

His spirit makes us alive and unites us to Jesus. And you know how it comes to you and I. It all comes to us through the unsearchable riches of Jesus.

It comes to us through union with Christ. Our identity, our identity is not found out there.

[22 : 54] Our identity is found in Jesus Christ. We are holy and blameless in him. Our comfort, our comfort, what did we confess earlier? That we belong body and soul in life and in death to our faithful savior, Jesus Christ, who has paid for our salvation with his precious blood.

God, our hope, our destiny, all of these are the questions that the world is searching for answers to. Christ, Christ in us, he is the hope of glory, the promise of future glory.

Our destiny, it's the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ, friends, so that in the coming ages, as Paul says in chapter 2, God might show you and I the immeasurable riches of his kindness toward us in Jesus Christ.

There is no one like Jesus. There is no one like this God, friends. Paul says in verse 8, to me, this grace was given to the Gentiles to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ.

The word translated unsearchable means unfathomable, incomprehensible, meaning that it is something so inscrutable and infinite that you cannot possibly fully understand or exhaust its meaning.

[24 : 04] The image is of one trying to track something back to its source but cannot be found. Another commentator said that the picture is that of a reservoir that is so deep that you cannot reach the bottom of it.

Therefore, there's no limit that can be placed upon it. Brothers and sisters, church, we have these riches. You and I have these riches, these unfathomable, unsearchable riches in Jesus.

And it's so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace toward us and kindness in Jesus Christ. Paul is saying that not only is our future defined by these unsearchable riches, but our present is also defined by them.

Because Christianity, friends, it's not about escapism. It's not about retreating and living in a cave until that day arrives. No, Paul's whole preaching ministry, indeed, every minister who is faithful to that tradition, to the apostolic tradition in the New Testament, our preaching ministry for you is that you would know these unsearchable riches.

You would know them. They are yours. They are yours here and now to face, to face the certain suffering that you will undergo in this life.

[25 : 27] The pain and the sorrow that will all come upon us at some point. The loneliness and the despair, the anxiety that fills our hearts and lives. Consider these unsearchable riches that are yours.

That your heavenly Father has graciously provided for you. That your blessed, one of a kind, faithful, and merciful high priest, his ministry through the word every Lord's day, he proclaims these riches to you.

That your patient and preserving Holy Spirit reminds you of and lifts your hearts to heaven even if it is just for a moment because of the spiritual struggle that you are facing and that I face.

Consider these unfathomable riches now. Because of the Father, you are in Christ Jesus who became for us wisdom from God, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption so that it is written, let him who boasts boast in the Lord.

Christ is our wisdom. He is our wisdom as opposed to the world's futile speculation and their leap of faith into the unknown. Christ is our righteousness as opposed to the unrighteousness and the ungodliness that lies not only out there but also lies in here.

[26 : 51] He is our sanctification. In comparison with our perversion and our uncleanness, Jesus makes us clean rather than us making him unclean.

He is our redemption. He is the remedy to slavery, to sin, to bondage, to sin and unbelief. Christ is our knowledge, the answer to our ignorance about the nature of who God is and what he is like.

He is our peace. He is our sufficiency. He is the answer to the old song, I can't get no satisfaction. Jesus is our peace. Jesus is our sufficiency. He is our reconciliation that stands in contrast to our propensity for conflict and division.

For sin, he is our high priest that alone stands between us and God. He is able to save us to the uttermost because he alone atones for sin. For authority, Jesus is our prophet who is the final revelation from God, Hebrews chapter 1.

For politics and social issues, he is our king that stands above our corruption and our hypocrisy. In every conceivable way, friends, Jesus answers the dilemma of human suffering, of human corruption, of human injustice, of human weakness.

- [28 : 07] We live in a dog-eat-dog world, a world that is defined by strength, not weakness, pride, not humility, power, and privilege, not service, and self-sacrifice.
- Only the strong survive, they tell us. Look out only for you because you're the only one who will. You must perform and you must perform well. Don't let them see you struggling.
- Otherwise, they will take advantage of you and they will exploit you while doing so. If you don't perform, you're out, fired, let go, unfriended, canceled. The gospel that the world has to offer, friends, really isn't gospel.
- It's law. Perform or else. Agree with us or else. Be on the right side or else. Vote this way or else.
- Believe the right way or else. On and on it goes. The never-ending cycle of law-keeping and gracelessness, it's a world without God and without hope, friends.
- [29 : 12] But this gospel, this gospel, little theologians, this book, this God, this Father, Paul says, he has brought the ministry of the apostles for the purpose to preach to you and I these unsearchable riches.
- So as a testimony to the rulers and authorities and the heavenly places, it has cosmic, cosmic ramifications. What we're doing right now, cosmic ramifications. That's ultimately the purpose, the reason undergirding Paul's ministry and the church's ministry, friends.
- What you are doing here week in and week out, it is to preach the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ. It is to bring to light to everyone what God has done. The plan for the ages, the God who created all things, he is redeeming and he is reconciling all things to himself.
- And this is what the church is to testify to. We are to testify to it. The church's faithful ministry in proclaiming these riches in Jesus, which God has now revealed for the world.
- It testifies to the wisdom of God's plan. And incredibly, the ministry of Paul then and the continued ministry of the church in preaching this gospel, these unsearchable riches that are part of the eternal purpose and plan of God, it all comes down to, back to that question, is it worth it?
- [30 : 44] Is it worth it? Is the value of the Christian faith worth it? Paul's answer, you better believe it. Don't lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.
- I am suffering on behalf of you. I am the prisoner for the Lord. And I do it to bring to you the unsearchable, the unfathomable riches of the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ.
- In the end, friends, it really does boil down to this. Christ or chaos? Which one are you going to choose? So that when dearest friends depart and all is darkened in a veil of tears, then you shall better know his love, his heart, who come to soothe your sorrow and your fears.
- Be still, my soul. Your Jesus can repay from his fullness all that he takes away. Be still, my soul. The hour is hastening on when we shall forever be with the Lord, when disappointment, grief, and fear are gone.
- Sorrow for God loves purest joys restored. Be still, my soul, when change and tears are past. All is safe and blessed we shall meet at last.
- [32 : 08] This Jesus, he is offered to you today. These riches are offered to you today. Let's pray. Lord, we thank you.
- We thank you for the unsearchable riches of your son that every question that we might have, every dilemma that we have caused, he is the answer. Lord, we love you and we love your son and we thank you for all that you have done for us in him.
- And we pray that you would, Lord, you would calm our fears, you would calm our anxiety, our worry as we look around us. Lord, maybe there are perhaps marriages in this room that are struggling.

There are kids in this room who are struggling. Lord, you know us better than we know ourselves and you still call us, you call us by faith to embrace what you have done for us.

I pray that that would be a source of comfort, a source of encouragement for all of us in this room. Lord, that we would go forth from here ever more convinced and confident of the riches we have in you.

[33 : 13] And it's in your son we pray. Amen. Amen.