

The Riches of God's Grace

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 18 December 2016

Preacher: Rev Robert Sinclair

[0 : 00] I would like us to turn this evening to Paul's letter to the Ephesians, chapter 1, and reading at verse 13.

Ephesians 1, verse 15. Ephesians 1, verse 15.

Ephesians 1, verse 15.

The dead. Especially words there, the last part of verse 18 and 19. What are the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints?

And what is the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us? Amen. We are right in the middle of what the world now calls the Advent season.

[2 : 04] Not only in the world, but the church also engages in that particular terminology. It's a season of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ into this world to seek and to save the lost and to give his life a ransom for the many.

And that surely is the greatest inheritance any of us could anticipate as we look at this particular verse.

As the word of God says, Christ in you, the hope of glory.

The secular world has nothing to say of this season, the season of the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Except that they would like to see the season. Except that they would like to see the season banned. And those who write their books, those who engage in the philosophy of the world, that those who try to denigrate and to destroy the gospel really have nothing to say to the world that is new.

[3 : 36] All the heresy that is being brought out today has been already spoken, written about, and defended in the great works of the great theologians of the past age.

Even as you perhaps would look at the statue there outside the courts of justice at the moment. There's a statue there with a man supposedly reading a book, David Hume, and there's nothing there.

The pages are blank. The cover is blank. If you were to look at the statue of John Knox, which the world has seen fit to consign to the precincts of New College, he has a Bible in his hand.

And his hand is raised. And he is proclaiming the unsearchable riches of Christ. And so, for the Christian, eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man, what God has in store for those who love him.

At this time of year, it's very beneficial to think about the Lord Jesus Christ's incarnation, his coming into this world in human flesh, which no doubt will be preached in greater detail next Lord's Day.

[5 : 20] but also the unique benefits that accrue to us from that coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. But why?

Why should we think on these things when the last proportion of the world denies it most vehemently? denies it to the utmost of their power.

People say things like, here we are in a deeply troubled world. We are surrounded by wars and bombings.

We are living in a world in the 20th century that has seen two world wars, that has caused untold destruction and misery.

Wars in the Middle East today, civil war in that region, untold cruelty and disregard for human life.

[6 : 25] And you want to talk about an event that perhaps might have or might not have taken place 2,000 years ago. You, the churches, should be urging world leaders and governments to put an end to all this suffering.

And to a certain extent, they write, God doesn't physically intervene in the affairs of this world.

He's appointed his people, you and me, to be his spokesmen, to be his witnesses, to be those who will reach out with mercy and grace to those who have none.

We are his hands, we are his feet, we are his tongue, we are those who act for him in our day and generation.

See, modern man and his rebellion against God wants nothing to do with the afterlife or the offer of the gospel.

[7 : 51] At least that's what they think. But there's no hope for any of us without the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. No hope for any of us except what God holds out to us in the gospel.

So I want to ask, first of all, who is the his of the inheritance that's spoken about here in these verses?

If we were to ask Moses, as we read that chapter, he would say that here he is, he's the one who is the seed of the woman.

he is the one who has come to crush the head of the serpent. If we were to ask Isaiah, who is this? He would say he is the mighty God, the Lord. His name is wonderful. His name is counselor, the mighty God, the everlasting father, the prince of peace.

[9 : 03] If we were to ask John the Baptist, he would say the lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world. If we were to ask God, he would say this is my beloved son in whom I am well pleased.

And David also, if he would ask him, who is this? He says, this is the king, this is the king of glory. Ask a hymn writer, who is this? And he'd reply, who is this? And he understood all at whose feet the shepherds fall.

It is the Lord, a wondrous story. It is the Lord, the king of glory, at his feet. We humbly fall, crown him, crown him, Lord of all.

And then Paul wants utterly to contrast all such talk of the world as it comes to us.

[10 : 23] we've seen who the his of his inheritance is. And Paul then wants us to examine in the light of scripture what arguments we can find against what the world says to us.

In the epistle to the Hebrews, we have some of the great heroes of the faith. heroes have fixed their eyes firmly on not this world, but the world that was to come.

Like Moses, who refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, esteeming rather the reproach of the children of Israel than the riches of Egypt.

or of Joshua, the one who stood against all those of his colleagues and said this land, this land of promise is the land that God has promised to give us and if God be with us who can be against us? Or for Rahab, the prostitute, the harlot who believed against all natural inclinations that the spies were the spies of God and the fear of God was upon her and so she gained an inheritance amongst those people.

[12 : 01] Oh, Gideon, Gideon who felt so weak and so unable to pursue the calling to which God called him to go and deal with the Midianites and yet he goes.

Yes, he puts out fleeces but he goes and he commits himself to the one he cannot see but the one to whom he places his trust and of Samson also and of Samuel, of Samuel who says, Lord, speak for thy servant hears.

But quite apart from the history of Scripture and there's also the history of the world which proves beyond any shadow of doubt that the greatest benefits are to those who believe in the life to come. The greatest benefits to the world come from those who believe in the world that is to come. It has always been the case that those who live for this world have very little to offer the world.

They don't love their neighbor. They don't give of themselves and works of mercy or necessity.

They don't engage in looking out for others and trying to better the world.

[13 : 41] It's the born again men and women. Those who've been instrumental in bringing about such things as care for the sick and the needy.

Those who've developed hospitals and those who've made social advances in bringing about trade unions and those who've set up places where leprosy could be treated.

The abolition of slavery. All these have been brought about by men and women who had an eye to the reward to the unseen God whom they served, who gave their lives to him, whose whole interest was not in this world, whose whole delight was not in the delights of this world, but in the thought of the world to come, and what God in Christ is preparing for us.

And so Paul argues that if there's no life after death, and death is the end of the story, well then let us eat and drink and be merry for tomorrow we die.

That's all the world can offer us. If there's no God and there's no heaven and there's no hell, we can do what we like, we can live how we like, we can say what we like, we can treat each other in any way we want.

[15 : 23] But as Paul reminds us in his epistles, there is a life to come. Christ did arrive from the dead.

He is ascended to the right hand of the majesty on high. There he rules and makes intercession for us. And so for the Christian, there's no greater stimulus in living for Christ than to know something of the inheritance that's spoken of here in these verses.

And also of the immeasurable power that he extends towards us also in Christ. Not to be interested in heaven and not to be interested in the afterlife is to be very unlike the greatest saints or the apostles or even the Lord Jesus Christ himself.

So what are we to know from scripture about our glorious inheritance? The very essence of that glory is Christ himself.

And the fact that one day we shall be like him. As far-fetched as it may seem the apostle John in his epistle talks about the fact that as we look at ourselves there's very little to commend us for what we are or what we try to attain to be.

[17 : 12] But time is coming that we shall be like him. we shall see him as he is and we shall be with him.

That's the great desire this place in our hearts to be with him and to be like him. John in his gospel tells us let not your hearts be troubled.

You believe in God believe also in me. This is also part of the glorious inheritance. inheritance. In my father's house there are many mansions. If it were not so I would have told you.

But I go to prepare a place for you and if I go I will come again and take you to myself. There's the reward there's the inheritance there's the prospect for all those who are in Christ Jesus.

Paul's view of death is to be with Christ is far better. To see him as he is to be like him to be with him is all part of the inheritance that Christ and God have in store for us.

[18 : 43] and to achieve this while we are in this life God separates us to himself.

It's not something that we would desire not something that any of us in our unconverted state would want yet God in his mercy has made us willing in a day of his power.

He sanctifies us he separates us out from the mass of humanity amongst whom we live and brings us to know him and to love him and desire him to be our Lord and our God.

He's made us his own peculiar people. He's called us to trust in Christ to believe in the word of the gospel to believe in the work of the cross to believe in the fact that as he calls us so he will justify us accept us as righteous in his sight only for the righteousness imputed to us and received by faith alone that he will glorify us one day that we shall be truly like him in the glory he had with the father before the world was this moment all of us sitting here this evening we're either in Christ or we're not in

Christ either we have hope of the life to come or there is only a fearful looking forward to the judgment Romans 8 chapter 8 verses 33 to the end speak about the great prospect there is for all those who are in Christ Jesus what shall we say to these things if God before us who can be against us he who did not spare his own son but gave him up for us all how will he not also with him freely give us all things who shall bring any charge against God's elect it is

[21 : 36] God who justifies who is to condemn Christ Jesus is the one who died more than that who was raised who is at the right hand of God who indeed is interceding for us who shall separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus shall tribulation or distress or persecution or famine or sword as it is written for your sake we have been killed all the day long and we are regarded as sheep for the slaughter though in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us for I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come no powers no height nor depth nor anything else in all the creation will be able to separate us from the love of God which is in

Christ Jesus our Lord all this speaks of the love Christ has towards us later on in this epistle in chapter 3 the chapter that I read earlier on Paul prays that we might know the love of Christ that passes knowledge or surpasses knowledge the breadth and the length and the depth and the height of Christ's love to us it is beyond our understanding it is beyond human computation but we're asked to meditate on it we're asked to visualize what is being written there for us of the great

love Christ has for his church for his people for us as individuals we're not saved as a church or as an aggregate we're saved as individuals we come to believe as individuals and Christ loves us as individuals as we talk about what is the breadth of

Christ's love to us we think of the verses there in revelation chapter 7 people of every kindred and every nation and every tongue and every people thousands upon thousands ten thousands upon ten thousands will all fall before the lamb of god and worship him today we might seem a small percentage of the human population of this world but in reality we're a great multitude without number of every people and tribe and nation if we're discouraged by small numbers let us look to this glory let us look to the fact that in nothing Christ shall be superseded even in the numbers of those who will be saved and be at his right hand

Christ shall have the preeminence the length of the love Christ has to us he's loved us with an everlasting love before time was he set his seal on us when I was growing up at my father's sight he would daily my delight and my delights were with the children of men never was there a time when God existed without knowing us and without loving us never was there a time when our names were not engraved in the palms of his hand we are discovering continually a love that will never let us go and the depth of his love who being in the form of God and thought it not robbery to be equal with God made himself of no reputation and came in the form of a servant and came in the fashion of a man and became obedient and to death even the death of the cross he became obedient and to death and to the cross he had to suffer the hatred and the vilification and the mocking and the ridicule all for us a modern hymn writer has penned it in such ways how deep the father's love for us how vast beyond all measure that he should give his only son to make a wretch a treasure I would not boast in anything not gifts no power no wisdom but I will boast in Jesus Christ his death and resurrection and ultimately the height of the love to which Christ loves us and will raise us his purposes are to make us heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ of every gift and every benefit and every token of love that the father can bestow on us to be with him where he is in the glory that he had with the father before the world was we have been quickened by him we have been raised from unbelief and destitution to be heirs together with him we have been seated with him at God's right hand not seated on some far extremity but in the midst of

[29 : 05] God's own throne we have made been made sons of God and daughters of God we have been told that we shall rule with him and we know that privilege that the Lord is the lover of our soul we do have one problem as we live out our days in this world we never fully realise how much Christ has loved us how much he did for us oh that we might know it that we might grow in it and as

Paul says again and again that we might rejoice in it may the Lord then bless these thoughts to us let us then conclude our worship singing to God's praise in Psalm 24 Psalm 24 and those words that we were quoting earlier on are from David if we asked him who this person is verse 7 ye gates lift up your heads on high ye doors that last for a be lifted up as for the king of glory enter me to the end of the psalm four stanzas to God's praise he he he he slipped up your heads on high ye doors at last for a he lifted up the soul the king of glory enter me but whom of glory is the king the mighty Lord is his in that sin Lord that great in might and strong in matters he lands in Lord that great in might and strong in matters he is lift up your head he yours yours yours that do not for he he lifted up the soul the king of glory entering but who is he his king the king of glory who is this the lord of hosts and number teeth the king of glory is the lord of hosts and number he the king of glory is hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah hallelujah amen amen amen

Amen. And now may grace, mercy and peace in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, one God, rest on you and abide in you, now and always.

Amen.