

This Grace was Given to Preach

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Preacher: Prof Donald Macleod

[0 : 00] I want to turn now to Ephesians chapter 3 and the words of verse 8.

Ephesians 3 and verse 8. To me, though I am the least of all the saints, this grace was given to which the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

To me, this grace was given. Paul is telling us here of the great honor that God has laid upon him. He has given him this grace, this great gift. To be a minister of the gospel. And Paul has such a sense of honor as he contemplates that development in his own life.

In many ways, it's a paradox. Because he was, after all, only a minister.

[1 : 26] Only a servant. A word that first meant a domestic servant. No great role.

He wasn't a lord. Or a duke or a king. He had no power. At that level at all. He was simply a servant. Of the gospel of Jesus Christ. And yet, in Paul's own estimation. There could be no greater honor. And no greater calling. And furthermore. It had cost the apostle dearly. He had to make huge sacrifices.

Of which, of course, he himself was quite unaware. He had given up or lost a great career. As a great public figure.

[2 : 24] As a famous teacher. A man of influence. And great prospects. And all these had gone. He had lost the favor of his own people, the Jews.

They now held him largely in contempt. And furthermore. There was so much suffering. In the word that God had called Paul to.

All that traveling. Those shipwrecks. Those floggings. Those imprisonments. All those privations.

No comforts. Offer no freedoms. Offer no friends. He writes this letter from. A person.

He is a captive in Rome. He is chained day and night to a Roman soldier. And yet all he can think of is. What an honor.

[3 : 29] God has put upon him. To call him to this great work. And make him a servant. Of his own gospel. What a reversal it is.

Of the world's roles. And the world's standards. And sense of values. That a man writing. In such privation. In such bondage.

Should yet feel. That of all the humans on the planet. He was the most honored. And the most privileged. I would hope.

That all of us. Who preach the gospel. Have that. The same sense. Of the honor. God has placed upon us.

Some of those. Are men who gave up. A great deal. To engage in this ministry. The late.

[4 : 27] Don't. Martin Lloyd-Jones. Was once. In public. Complemented. On his sacrifices. In. In. The gospel ministry.

Because. He had been. An eminent physician. With a great career. Before him. In London's. Harley Street. He had turned. His back on that. And he was. Complemented. Lovishly. At this meeting. On. That self-sacrifice.

But he rose. With some. Irritation. And he said. Very sharply. I did nothing. It was all.

Done. For me. You may know. The name. Of the famous. Missionary. William Carey. Who went. To India. To have been.

[5 : 25] The gospel. To that. Then. Benighted. Continent. He had a son. Who. In his young days. Was. A preacher. But later.

In life. He entered. The diplomatic. Service. And became. Eventually. An ambassador. To another. Great power. And William Carey.

Said. With some. Grief and pain. My son. He said. I shrunk. From a preacher.

To a diplomat. To an ambassador. Most. Most. Parents. Today. Would be. So proud. My son.
Is an ambassador. But not. William Carey. His son. Had shrunk. From a minister. To.
[6:24] An ambassador. Ambassador. Now. Of course. Paul. Was. An ambassador. For his. Lord.
Jesus. Christ. And so.

Should minister. He. Will. Plead. Not his. Own. Cause. But the. Cause. Of his. Lord. And. Savior.
Our.

Great. Reformer. John. Knox. Said. Once. My. Calling. Is. To blow. My. Master's. Trumpet.
Not. To blow. My. Own. Or. Anybody. Else's. But. To blow. My. Master's. Trumpet. And.
Your. Minister. Will. Do. Exactly. That. He. Will. Blow. His. Master's. Trumpet. But. Then. There.
[7:19] Is. This. Two. Two. Did you know. Not. Only. Had. God. Given. Paul. This. Great. Gift. And.
Showing. Paul. This. Great. Grace. But.

You know. There. Is. This. Truth. As well. God. Has. Given. You. A. Great. Gift. In. Chapter. Four.
Of. The.

Same. Epistle. Paul. Writes. God. Gave. Some. Others. The. Christ. Gave. Some. To. To. To. Be.
Pastors.

And. Teachers. Teachers. He. Gave. Pastors. And. Teachers. It's. The. Lord. He. Gives. Pastors.
And. Teachers. And.

He's. Given. You. A. Pastor. And. A. Teacher. Many. Churches. In. Scotland. Today. Have. No.
Ministers. And.

[8:12] Many. Of. Those. Who. Have. Have. Men. Who. Sadly. Don't. Preach. The. Gospel. Of.
The. Lord. Jesus. Christ. But.

God. Has. Given. You. This. Gift. This. Privilege. He. Has. Given. You. A. Pastor. Teacher. And.
Given. You. A. Minister. So.

There. Are. Two. Gifts. God. Gave. The. Minister. The. Gift. Of. This. Great. Calling. And. God.
Given. You. This. Ministry.

Of. A. Pastor. And. A. Teacher. But. Then. Notice. As. Well. This. The. Sheet. With. Which. Paul.
Conducted.

This. Ministry. To. Me. Who. Am. Less. Than. The. Least. Of. All. Saints. That. So. He. Saw.
Himself.

[9:07] And. He. Uses. Remarkable. Language. And. He. Says. I. Am. The. Least. Of. All. Saints.
He. Seems. So.

Small. In. His. Own. Eyes. As. Such. A. Nobody. And. You. Know. That. Too. Is. So. Strange.
Because.

Paul. Had. So. Many. Privileges. He. Had. Great. Revelations. God's. Power. Had. Come. Into. His.
Life. God. Gave. Him. Great. Gifts. God. Blessed. His. Work. And. Through. This. Man. God.
Didn't. Simply. Convert. Someone. Here. And. Someone. There. But. Through. This. Man. God.
Planted. Whole. Churches. And. Over. That.

[9:59] Whole. Known. World. Then. There. Were. Churches. Here. There. Everywhere. Planted.
By. This. Man. And. Yet. When. Paul.

Thought. Himself. As. You. Was. I. Am. The. Leastest. Of. All. The. Saints. He. Had. No. Doubt. He.
Was. A. Saint. A. Child. Of. God. But.

He. Was. The. Least. The. Smallest. Of. All. The. Children. Of. God. Now. Paul. Could. Be.
Sometimes. Very. Authoritative. And.

Lay. Down. The. Law. In. No. Certain. Terms. But. He. Never. Forgot. How. Small. He. Was. The.
Least. Of.

All. The. Least. Unleast. Of. All. The. People. Of. God. There. Are. Many. Reasons. Why. We.
Should. Feel. That. Way.

[10:50] We. Even. Would. Stand. Up. In. This. Apparent. Eminence. This. Great. Poop. But. With.
All. Its. History. I. That. We. Should. Be. Standing.

Here. Feeling. As. Paul. Did. The. Least. Of. All. The. Saints. Because. Paul. You. His.
Own. Spiritual. Struggle. He. Wanted. His. Says. To. Do. Good. But. Instead. He. Found. Himself.
Doing. Do. The.

Thing. That. Was. Wrong. He. Knows. His. Own. Failures. His. Own. Limitations. He. Knew. The.
Problems. He. Couldn't. Solve.

To. Which. His. Wisdom. Had. No. Answer. He. Had. His. Own. Thorn. In. The. Flesh. Something. Off. Putting. Something. That. That.

[11:43] Held. Him. Back. In. His. Ministry. And. He. Had. To. This. Glorious. Gospel. And. It. Was. So. Big. And. He. Was. So. Small. Compared. To. The. Message. And. The. Savior. He. Had. To. Preach. Plus.

Not. His. Real. Point. His. Real. Point. Is. This. That. Compared. To. All. The. Saints. Compared. To. Those. He. Preached.

To. And. Those. He. Pastored. He. Felt. So. Very. Very. Small. Paul. Did. Not. Think. For. A. Moment. That. He. Was. More. Saitly. Or. More. Holy. Than. Those. He. Preached. To. And. Those. He.

[12:34] Pastored. And. Those. He. Minister. To. There. Was. No. Way. Paul. Could. Look. Down. At. What. Are. Called. Today. Ordinary.

Believers. Instead. Paul's. Whole. Tone. Was. I. Am. The. Littlest. And. The. Smallest. And. The. Leastest. Of. All. The.

Ordinary. Believers. I. Rekker. Looking. Back. On. My. On. My. Own. Year's. Ministry. That. I. Had. One. Great. Privilege. And.

That. Is. When. I. Began. To. Preach. I. Preached. To. Churches. Which. Were. Full. Of. Men. And. Women. Crofters. Fishermen. Domestic. Servants. Builders. And. Weavers. And.

[13:29] I. Knew. When. I. Preached. To. Them. I. Preached. To. People. Who. Knew. More. Than. I. Did. Of. God. Gospel.

And. Who. Were. Closer. To. God. Than. I. Was. And. Today. I. Hope. I. Maintain. That. Same. Mentality. I. Have. Always. Preached. Up. To. The. Church. I. Never. Pitched. Down. I. Never.

Held. Back. Any. Doctrine. Because. I. Thought. It. Was. Above. The. Heads. Of. The. People. If. God. Put. In. His. Word. It.

Was. For. His. People. And. That. So. I. Think. Paul. Was. He. Could. Be. As. I. Said. Authoritative. And.

[14:23] Yet. Always. He. Who. He. Was. The. Leastest. Of. All. The. Saints. Our. New. Minister. Will.

Feel. The. Same. Way. The. Site. Of. His. Couession. And. Deacon's. Court. Will. Sometimes. Be. Very. Intimidating.

The. Site. Of. This. Church. Fool. Will. Often. Be. Intimidating. And. He. Will. Learn. With. Every. Passing. Day. How.

Much. There. Is. Still. To. Know. How. Much. Still. To. Overtake. And. In. Some. Ways. As. He. Grows. He. Will. Grow. Ever.

Smaller. And. Become. Even. Lesser. Than. The. Leastest. Of. All. The. Saints. And. So. We. Have. This.

[15:17] Man. This. Man. Who. Feels. So. Honored. He. Was. A. Servant. In. The. World's. Terms. And. Nobody. But. God. Had. So. Honored. Him. And. As. He. Fulfilled. His. Ministry. He. Felt. I'm. Sure. Smaller.

And. Smaller. With. Every. Passing. Year. Every. Passing. Day. He. Seemed. To. Know. Less. And. Seemed. To. Get. Even.

Ever. Littler. But. Then. See. What. He. Preached. And. That's. A. Great. Thing. Here. The. Unsearchable.

Riches. Of. Christ. He. Preached. Christ. Christ. And. Him. Crucified. That's.

[16:09] What. You. Hear. Not. Comment. On. The. World's. Politics. Not. Not. Assessments. Of. Cultural.

Trends. Not. Analysis. Of. Society. But. Christ. That. Marl.

The. Story. Of. God's. Old. Son. Who. Was. In. The. Form. Of. God. Rich. Beyond. All. Splendor. And.

Took. Out. Human. Form. And. Come. Into. Our. Poverty. Our. Vulnerability. And. At. Last. Is. There.

Alone. On. The. Cross. Of. Calvary. And. Nobody. An. Entity. Crucified. Between. Two. Thieves.

[17:00] That's. The. Story. That's. The. Trumpet. We. Blow. That's. The. Message. We. Are. Called. Upon. To. Proclaim.

Our. Incarnate. Savior. Our. Crucified. Redeemer. Our. Written. Lord. And. In. Him. Paul. Said. We. Have. Riches. At. Last. When. Paul. Went. To. The. Execution. Block. In. Rome. To. Be. Be. Be. Headed. He.

Seemed. To. Have. Nothing. And. The. World. Might. Say. What. A. Fool. You. Were. Paul. Would. You. Give. Up. For. This. Man. This.

Crucified. Man. Jesus. Ah. So. Paul. Says. I. Am. Rich. As. He. Was. Rich. Beyond.

[17:53] All. Splendor. Because. He. Is. Mine. And. All. He. Has. Is. Mine. He. Is. The. Air.

Of. All. Things. This. World. Has. Many. Rich. Men. Every. Millionaire. In. This. World. Every. Billionaire. Can. Count. His. Riches. Some. To. The. Last. Penny. For. The. Last. Cent. Great. Nation. States. They. Can. Calculate. Their. Gross. Domestic. Product. Great. Companies. Know. Their.

Assets. Their. Revenues. And. Their. Reserves. They. Can. Put. That. Down. On. Their. Accountancy. Returns. Every.

[18:46] Year. They. Know. The. Riches. Because. They. Are. Not. Unsearchable. A. Great. Bank. Has. To. Us. Mind.

Boggling. Sums. Of. Money. But. They. Can. Count. It. And. Calculate. It. To. The. Last. Penny. But. Here. There.

Are. Riches. Which. Are. Unsearchable. Which. Can't. Be. Weighed. And. Can't. Be. Measured. Can't. Can't. Can't.

Can't. Can't. Can't. Can't. Can't. Could. Can't. Can't.

Can't. First. Can't. Sure. The. Can't. Can't.

[19:43] Let me mention briefly just three things that Paul had. He had little in worldly terms. But three great things he had.

He had a great inner peace. He said being justified by faith. We have peace with God.

I remind you again who this man was. This man who had peace with God. Who had no fear of God's judgment.

No fear of death. No fear at all. Because he had peace. And yet what a past that man had.

How could such a man have peace with God? He had been a bigoted persecutor of the church of Jesus Christ.

[20:47] He had been a self-righteous hater of Jesus Christ and of his people. He had hauled them to prison.

He had seen that they were flogged. And he'd be even put to death. And yet this man was one day going to look God in the face.

Without any fear. Because he was at peace with God. I remember as I say these words.

A man that many of us knew. He and a former council convener. The Donald MacLeod of Shawbust. Those words he once spoke famously.

In the context of his own. That sometimes tragic life. Every saint has a past.

[21:52] Every sinner has a future. Paul was a saint. And what a past he had. I wonder sometimes.

Did the face of the martyr Stephen. Sometimes disturb his night's sleep. Because he had shared in the stoning. Of that great man of God.

And yet he had peace with God. Most of us. Most of you here this morning. Have had.

Respectable. Ordinary decent lives. But maybe somewhere. There is someone.

Whose sins. Seem to her. Or to him. To be on the same scale. Out of the same magnitude. As those.

[22:53] Of Saul. Of Tarsus. He said. I am the chief of sinners. Remember that Pharisee. That.

Publican. Of the temple. And he said to God. Lord. Be merciful to me. And as if he heard. God saying.

Who's calling. And he said to him. It's the sinner Lord. You know. You know the sinner. Because to himself.

He was the only sinner. In the whole wide world. With an unforgivable past. He thought. But maybe. Some for today. There is someone here. Young or old. Who sees. Harder. Who sees. His sins. In that same light. And yet.

[23:52] For you too. There is peace with God. In the blood of the Lamb. Justified. By faith. We have peace with God. Go there.

Go there. For the peace. Blessed assurance. Jesus is mine. Sinners. Plunge beneath this flood. Lose all their guilty stains.

I speak to those. On the verge of despair. There may be some. Such one. Who seems to himself. For herself. Beyond redemption. More sinful than Saul. Out horses. And yet this man.

He is a model for us. A model for those. Who are depressed spiritually. Who are almost in despair. Spiritually.

[24 : 51] In me. First. In me. As the foremost. As the outstanding example. Of a sinner. God showed his mercy.

And so. Whatever you are. Whatever corner. You want to hide in. There. I am saying to you. God's peace will follow you.

Is following you. I am saying. Take me. Take me. Take me. Take peace with God. On the second item.

In this inventory. Of Christ. And such of a riches. Is this. Paul had. A special. Relationship.

With God. God. He had once. Been his enemy. He had once. Hated him. The God. Of his Lord.

[25 : 47] Jesus Christ. But now. In Christ. He was a child. Of God. And he could. Go to God. Anytime.

Anywhere. And say to him. Abba. Father. Father. And he could. Spread. Absolutely. Everything. Before him. Because.

As a child. He had. Access. To his father. He didn't need. Any special time. Any special place.

But. Wherever. And whenever. He could. Go to God. And. Sometimes. All he could. Say. When he.

When he went. To God. Was sorry. And. Sometimes. He'd go to God. And he would. Go to God.

And. Sometimes.

[26 : 42] He'd go to God. And he'd say. Abba. It's very odd. But. I don't know. How to speak. To you. And I'm not good. At talking. To you. And for some.

Reason. I find it. Very difficult. To talk to you. But he could. Go to Abba. To his father. And say that. Even. I find it hard. To talk to you.

And he could. Cast. Every burden. Upon the Lord. All the huge. Burdens. Of the churches. All those churches. And all the. We burdens. He needed.

A cloak. Abba. I need a cloak. I need a parchment. A book. He would tell. Abba. He didn't. Grace. Grace. To live. And grace.

To die. But always. Go to God. To his father. And because. Always. The door. Was open. Some of you.

[27 : 37] May have known. The late. Reverend. Hector Cameron. Whose grandfather. Minister of. The free church. And back. In. 19.

Or the 1900 era. And. Hector. Cameron. Was well known. For his. Care. And simply. For those. For those. Who had fallen. On hard times.

Especially. The vagrants. Used to. Be a feature. Of life. In the highlands. Often. Men. With. Alcohol addiction. Problems.

Hector. And. Hector. Hector. Knew. One. Such. Man. Himself. As it happened. A son. Of the manse. Of a free church manse.

And he said. To this poor man. One day. My door. Is always open. My front door. And my back door.

[28 : 33] I've never forgotten that. Sometimes. The front door. Is very public.

We don't want to go. By the front door. But God's. Back door. Is always open too. It's not a case of. Hours. Or appointments. God says to you. My door. Is always open. And so. As a child of God.

We have. Access to God. All the time. And as children of God. We are God's heirs. He's saying to us.

All I have. Is yours. All my. My love. Are this way. All my promises.

[29 : 33] You know. Sometimes. We spoke. And said. I got a promise. Well. I got a promise. It got a long.

Long ago. And the promise. Was this. That all. God's promises. Are ye.

And amen. In Christ Jesus. And they're yours. Not because. You could have. A funny feeling. Or a powerful feeling. About them. But because.

God spoke them. And. For every crisis. And every need. In your life. And every opportunity. There's.

A promise. And they're all yours. Every single one. Is yours. Every promise. In the Bible. Belongs. To all.

[30 : 31] Of God's children. I will supply. All your need. God says. Sometimes. In the middle of the night.

You have to say that. To yourself. My God. Will supply. All my needs. Sometimes you say. He. Works. All.

Things together. For the good. Of those. Who love him. And so. There we are. We are heirs. What's in God's. Will.

God's covenant. What has Christ. Left me. Secured for me. By his death. Every single. Promise. In the Bible. Belongs. To the youngest. Believer. In this congregation. Maybe a four year old. Child. For all I know. But all God's.

[31 : 25] Promises. Belong to her. And they belong. To you. If you are in Christ. Christ. Because he is the covenant. And he is the promise.

Cling to those promises. Sometimes. There is nothing else. But that. Almost like. As I hinted. When we were praying. That. There is a promise. On the shelf. That God takes down. When the need arises. For its application.

How rich you are. With all the promises of God. What's the expression called. The checkbook. Of the bank of faith.

And. Yes. There may be lots of checks. In the book. But there is one. Great check. In the book. And it says this. To Donald MacLeod.

[32 : 25] All the promises of God. Every single one. Is there. And in the riches too. In this fact of. Being God's children.

We have such security. All love. That will not let me go. I rest my weary soul. In you.

Or in thee. Which is a love. From which nothing can separate. In John's gospel. We are told that. Nothing can pluck us out.

Of the father's hand. But also told by Jesus. No one can pluck them out of my hand. You are held by two.

Loving hands. Who will never let go. This world's love. Is feeble. And variable. Sometimes. So intense. And sometimes.

[33 : 23] Extinct. It's come. It's gone. It's vanished. It's nothing. It's there no longer. God never gives up. God never.

Abundance a child. God never says to any of his children. God never says to any of his children. You must leave my house. He loves you.

In a way. Beyond your imagining. You are so so precious. He couldn't bear to lose you. Because you're his child. And he loves you.

And I keep feeling tempted to say. He's so proud of you. Because you bear the image. Of his beloved eternal son.

Jesus. And so then. We have peace. And we have this special relationship. We have these things.

[34 : 23] In the Lord Jesus Christ. And we have strength. We have strength. We sometimes speak of people. In these terms.

He or she has great inner strength. That may be so. Well you know. Paul had great inner strength. And he needed it all. But you know. It wasn't his own strength. But he was strengthened. With might. By God's spirit.

In his inner man. Let me be for a moment provocative. I've heard often. That prayer is the powerhouse.

Of a congregation. I'm not sure if I. Would want to endorse that. But I would at least want to qualify it.

[35 : 24] And say this. No. The powerhouse. Is the Holy Spirit. Prayer. He put us in contact with him. But it's not our prayer.

That's the power. And it's this. Incredible dynamo. The Holy Ghost. And where is he? It's in some huge congregation.

It's that where he is. In the middle. No. Paul says. The dynamo. Is in your heart. Strengthened with all might.

With all the strength. And power. And stamina. You need. By his spirit. That is the spirit. The creator spirit. Who in Genesis 1.

Gave form to the universe. And gave life to all that lives. And that spirit. With that power.
[36 : 23] Is in you. You are strengthened. You have a strength. Now. This Christian life. It's an endurance race.

An obstacle course. You need huge reserves. Or stamina. And so would you minister. But. All these.

Resources are ours. For every duty. Responsibility. For every temptation. Keep on. Saying. There's no mountain. You can't climb. There's no spiritual burden. You can't bear. There's nothing. God. Asked you to do.

Or ask you to suffer. But he doesn't give you strength. For. You have such. Resources. You can't do all things.

[37 : 21] And the Christ who strengthens. And so. These riches. The inventory. In the will. The inventory. We have peace.

We have a special relationship. And we have infinite resources. But I must close. The formalities. Are over. For you as a congregation. Now. The induction. Has taken place. And you have. Your minister. The one. You. Yourself. Shows. And. Elected. And called. And you called him. Because. Your hearts. Told you. Your hearts. Told you. That he was the man. For you. The one. The man you wanted. As a shepherd.

[38 : 24] Of your souls. And your instructor. In the faith. He will. Lead you. Worship. He will.

Open the scriptures. To him. You will go. For counsel. From him. You will find. Comfort. In bereavement. He. Will. Use his gifts. To fan.

Your gifts. Into flame. Him. So that. Every member. Of this congregation. Becomes. Herself. Or himself.

A minister. Because. That's why. God gave us. Pastors. To. To. Equip. The saints. All of them. For works.

[39 : 21] Of service. He will. Cherish you. He will.

Make. Eureka. The great. Concern. The great. Dominant.

Passion. Of his life. Night. And day. Will bear you. On his heart. And you.

Will cherish him. And bear him. On your hearts. And as you can. You'll encourage him.

You'll remember. How small he feels. How he doesn't sleep. Started to night. How he trembles. At the prospect.

[40 : 22] On the Sunday morning. How he worries about. Talking to the children. And you will hold him up. It's a mutual relationship.

He will cherish you. And you will cherish him. And so. By God's grace. We move forward. Into God's promises.

And that future. Is as bright. As those promises. Of God. May God bless.

To us this world. Let's bow our heads. In prayer. Amen. Oh Lord. We thank you. For your word. For its surprises.

For the things. It says. Which we find. So hard to believe. But which. A reflection. There seem. So glorious.

[41 : 32] So beautiful. Lord. Go. Go with us. We pray. Bind us together. In love. And pardon all our sins.

For our Savior. Sake. Amen. Amen. Thank you.