

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

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: 28 June 2026

Preacher: Rev Calum M Smith

[0:00] We can turn back now to our reading in Ephesians chapter 3. We can read again at verse 8. Ephesians chapter 3, reading at verse 8.

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 ages in God, who created all things, and so on.

Two things that we have in these verses that we're going to be focusing on this evening. We have the unsearchable riches of Christ mentioned there in verse 8, and also we see how Paul here is speaking about a mystery, and to bring to light for everyone what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in God, who created all things.

What do you think of when you think of that word mystery? What comes to mind? It might have something, bring something to mind that's hard to understand.

Perhaps if you're in school, you're thinking about things that you find difficult as you're studying. They seem like a mystery, algebra, physics, a foreign language. It just seems like a mystery when you first start looking at them.

[1:26] How do you understand these things? It might be something you've misplaced. It's a mystery where it's gone. You leave your keys, you leave glasses, leave all kinds of things lying around and just say, well, it's a mystery.

I don't know where they've gone to. It might be something like a book or a TV show that you enjoy. Maybe you're into mystery novels or mystery shows. You're wondering about, as it starts, there's an unsolved mystery and who it's going to be that's done it as it were.

And it takes you in different directions before you see the answer coming that was staring you in the face all along. There's so many things that we can relate to when we think of the word mystery.

As Paul is writing to the people here in Ephesus, he uses the word mystery often. And he uses this phrase in verse 8 as well as he is a preacher, seeking to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. And they sound like things that cannot be known. They sound like things that are maybe so far off that we just cannot reach them. But as you make your way through this letter, you find that the people of Ephesus, as he is preaching to them, are hearing the things that they need to hear.

[2:46] And this point in his letters, we're about the halfway point. And he's been teaching them many different things. And he's been teaching them because there are people who have had their concerns, who have had their struggles.

They've been discouraged. They've been discouraged by what has happened to Paul himself. They have seen him writing to them from prison. They've heard what's happened to him.

They're concerned. They're discouraged. They've got their own things going on in Ephesus as well. There's persecution all around them. There's threats all around them. There's fears all around them. And it's in light of that, then, that Paul is writing to them. And he's writing to encourage them. And so it maybe seems a little strange that you write to encourage them, talking about things that are a mystery or things like the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But that is what he is revealing to them as he writes to them. And he has already told them so much up to this point that we're going to think about. Because what you find as you're going through this letter, the people are encouraged.

[3:55] They're encouraged through what they hear. And it's like their darkness is turning into light. As Paul is teaching, as he is proclaiming the gospel to them, their confusion that has seemed like darkness is becoming light.

The light of God's word is coming in. Confusion is turning to understanding. The things that they have been confused about, they are beginning to understand more in the light of the gospel of

Jesus Christ.

And especially that phrase, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Because the more they get to know that, the more they are strengthened and encouraged.

So their understanding is growing, their light is coming. And that is what God's word does for ourselves as well. That's what the preaching of God's word is meant to do, to build us up in the faith, to help us understand the things that are the mysteries of the gospel and the unsearchable riches of Christ.

But how do we understand? How do we get to that point? Well, you could say that it's through much prayer. We have to get there by much prayer.

[5:09] And that's where this chapter is leading, to that wonderful prayer that you have in verse 14 to verse 21, where Paul says, For this reason I bow my knees before the Father.

And he prays that they might have a grasp, that they might grasp the height and length and breadth and depth of the love of Christ. It's a wonderful prayer.

And be filled with all the fullness of God. But before he comes to that prayer, before he comes to pray that prayer for them, he wants them to be assured and to be strengthened, not just by prayer, but by understanding the word of God, by understanding the truths of what God has been teaching. And it's a great reminder to ourselves tonight when it comes to our own prayers. As we come to pray to God, we can pray that great prayer of these verses 14 to 21, that we might grasp with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

Again, it seems like something that is far away, surpasses knowledge. Can it be known? It can. But in order to know it through our prayers, we really have to come first and foremost to see it in his word, to see it in all the truths that he has revealed to us, to grasp the depths of what God's word is telling us.

[6:44] Even as we were thinking of this morning, as we were looking at Paul's letter to the Galatians, just the previous pages to this, we were thinking of how often we are caught up in that way of sin, how we are repeat offenders, that sin that just keeps coming back to us again and again.

And yet, as we see here, we are reminded that we have grace, we have mercy, we have forgiveness, we have all of these things. And that's what God has revealed through his word.

And the more we understand these things, the more we are then able to pray to him with a greater knowledge, with a greater understanding. Things that seem beyond our understanding.

Do you this evening come here believing God can be known? Do you come here this evening thinking, I've got a great knowledge of God? Or have you come here this evening thinking, there are so many things I don't understand?

There are so many things that seem beyond my understanding. Well, probably all of us should be in that latter category. We don't come here knowing everything because we cannot possibly know it all.

[8:00] But we should come here seeking to understand more, seeking to have our knowledge increased, seeking to understand the ways of salvation.

When you go back to the Old Testament, to the book of Deuteronomy, chapter 29, verse 29, there it reminds us of what we have before us this evening as well.

It says there, the secret things belong to the Lord our God. So there are things that we don't understand. There are secret things that belong to God.

But it says then, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law. So there are things that are revealed to us.

There are things that are given to us that we can seek to understand. So many things that seem a mystery to us. The more we study, the more we learn, the more they begin to be revealed to us.

[8:57] You think of algebra, you think of physics and maths and foreign languages. All of these things, they can seem like a mystery to begin with. But the more we're taught, the more we come to understand.

And that's the way it is with God's Word. And that's what Paul is doing in this letter, seeking to teach them the mysteries of the gospel and the unsearchable riches that there are in Christ.

And so we want to just look at two things together this evening based on these words. The first is the mystery of these things. And then secondly, the marvel of these things.

The mystery and the marvel of these things. Well, the first thing we have is the mystery. Have you ever been left with a kind of sense of being dumbstruck before God?

Left with no words to utter. There's just nothing you can offer up to God. Maybe it's something that's happened in your life. It may be a good thing. It may be a bad thing.

[10:04] There can be so many things that happen in life and we're just silenced before God. We don't know what to say. We don't know how to express ourselves. Well, as you look through God's Word, you find that that is a common occurrence.

Especially when you look in the book of Psalms, many Psalms, you find the Psalm is questioning, asking questions of God. And there's one Psalm, Psalm 77.

I'm going to quote some of the verses from that Psalm. And you find the Psalm is there with a sense of being dumbstruck, as it were, before God. He has many questions.

But listen to how the Psalm works out. Verse 4, it says, Mine eyes debarred from rest and sleep, thou makest still to wake. My trouble is so great that I unable am to speak.

And so you see there the Psalmist, it's almost like he just cannot sleep, he cannot rest. His trouble is so great, but he says, I am unable to speak.

[11:08] It's almost like there's nothing he can bring to God. But then you see in verse 7, he has his questions. Forever will the Lord cast off, and gracious be no more.

Forever has his mercy gone. Fails his word evermore. So he's got questions. And it's questions that are concerning him. Has God's mercy gone?

Has his word failed forevermore? Is there nowhere I can turn? He's in the midst of a difficult providence. It's a mystery what is going on in his life.

Then in verse 10 it says, Then did I say that surely this is mine infirmity? I'll mind the years of the right hand of him that is most high.

Yea, I remember will the works performed by the Lord, the wonders done of old by thee, I surely will record. How does the transformation come about?

[12:06] From being unable to speak in verse 4 until in verse 10 and 11, he's able to see the works of his right hand most high, his works performed, the wonders done.

How? By looking to God. By looking to him. What is the psalmist saying? He's saying, I have many worries, I have many questions, but God is over all.

God is in control. And that's the very thing that we're seeing here with Paul in Ephesians. As he is writing to the church in Ephesus, as he's writing to the people there, they have their concerns, they have their worries about Paul in prison, about themselves and their own situation.

But what Paul is saying is, God is in control. Even in the mystery of the things that take place. Two kinds of mystery we see here with Paul in chapter 3.

In verse 1, we see the mystery of providence. A great mystery to us all at times, the mystery of God's providence. Verse 1, it says this, For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles.

[13:25] What is he saying there? Well, the people are concerned that he's in prison. But what is Paul saying to them? Well, who put Paul in prison?

The people then, and we ourselves reading through this, would say, well, it's those in authority. It's those in power. Nero was the emperor at this time.

He was an evil man. He had no time for Christians. He treated them wickedly. And so was it him that put Paul in prison?

Well, Paul is saying to the people here, in providence, it's not. Because he's reminding them that he is a prisoner for Christ Jesus.

This is where he wants him. Because he wouldn't be in prison if that's where Christ didn't want him. And so he's reminding them that there is this mystery of providence.

[14:24] That there are things that are happening here for Paul beyond understanding for him or for the people. But that there are assurance that their comfort is found in the knowledge that it is all of Christ.

He is a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles. He is there for them. He is reminding them that the powers of this world have no control over these things.

They are all in God's hand. That not one hair from his head can be taken without God knowing and giving permission for it. So you have this mystery of providence.

And providence is one of those things that is so often a mystery to us. It can leave us to that sense of we have no words before God. And it can be in the providence that we see as wonderful providence and the providence that we see as hard providence.

that we see God is in control. There's a story told a story that actually happened of two sides of the same situation and both looking at it as the providence of God.

[15 : 41] It goes back to the year 1980 and someone wrote about a Christian wrote into an article in a magazine about a Christian who providentially escaped death.

And this was because an unexpected delay in New York kept this man from catching a flight flight 191 in Chicago in 1980. That flight crashed and 254 people lost their lives.

And the article was written by the person saying this is a wonderful providence. How this man was delayed in one place that he ended up missing his flight.

And you could say it's a great providence. But someone replied to the article and said this I just had to let you know about a Christian who ran to make flight 191 and made it.

He got on the plane and he perished. And this man was a minister in a church in California and his plane had been late when he arrived in Chicago and he had to run to catch the flight but he made it.

[16 : 55] He got on board. And the last thing his friend saw was running towards that gate to catch that flight. And this made the man who wrote the original article just ponder just pause for a few moments and think well where was God's providence there?

Was God's providence operating only in New York where one man was kept from catching that flight? Or was God's providence at work where that man made the flight?

He was a man who was a Christian minister who had a fruitful ministry. And the question could be well why has God allowed that? It's a mystery of providence.

But one comment that was made was from the friend who had seen the minister who caught the plane. And he put it like this. At the time the minister didn't know that he was indeed running to heaven.

That although it was his providence that he would pass away that day he had a greater hope in the Lord Jesus Christ that he was safe for eternity.

[18 : 07] And providence should be seen in light of eternity. And Paul often speaks of it in that way the mystery of providence. The mystery of his providence here in that he's in prison but it's for Christ.

The mystery of the afflictions that we have in this world but they are light momentary afflictions he describes them as and so we have this mystery of providence and in the midst of that we are to have an eternal perspective to look at it from eternity.

And what helps with that then is the second mystery that we have here and that is the mystery of the gospel. Paul uses the word mystery here in verse 3 and verse 4 and verse 6 and verse 9.

and they are all associated with the gospel. When you see it in verse 3 how the mystery was made known to me by revelation as I have written briefly.

So this mystery was made known. There's been a revelation of this mystery. And the word made known revelation here is an uncovering.

[19 : 24] An uncovering uncovering of things. So this is what Paul has been doing for the church at Ephesus for the church in Galatia for the gospel spreading. It's a revelation and it's a revelation of a mystery.

Just go back to Deuteronomy 29 verse 29 the things that are revealed belong to us. There's this sense of revelation. So you have this revealing but you also have this mystery.

The mystery refers to something that's been hidden and especially here it implies hidden by God because they're beyond our natural understanding until he reveals them.

Until he reveals them. There are various things that you see being launched in our world. Things that are kept secret until there's a big reveal as it were.

If you're into Formula One racing every new season they reveal the new car. All these secrets that are being kept behind the scenes.

[20 : 36] The preparations that's going on and then the launch day comes and the car is taken off under a cover. It's revealed and people are looking to see what has been done.

How they've done certain things. there's this big revelation. It can also be done with phones. Many of the big companies launch a new phone every year.

There are secrets that are kept and then you have this big launch day when things are revealed. The same as through another big ceremonies whether it's launching boats or opening buildings. They're often done to a great fanfare and people come curious to see what it's like, what's inside, how it's been built, how it's been designed.

People want to look. That's the same with the gospel. It's a mystery that is revealed and we should be longing to see what is in this mystery.

[21 : 36] What is the mystery that is being uncovered, being revealed here by Paul? It is the word of God, the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

He's saying God has lifted a veil away from the truths that were hidden by God. A divine secret is revealed and it's something that has been hidden.

It's been hidden. In verse 5 it says this was not made known to the sons of men and other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit.

So there were things that were hidden. Even to people like Moses and Abraham, David, Isaiah, they couldn't see the whole mystery. They couldn't see the full revelation of it.

But here this revelation is for us. And it's in verse 6 it goes on to say, this mystery is that the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

[22 : 47] And this would be a moment for these people to think, we thought that God was only for the Jews. But here we are being told this mystery, the Gentiles, that all people everywhere can be fellow heirs, members of the same body, partakers of the same promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel.

gospel. This is a revelation that is being made. The mystery that is revealed to you and to me tonight is that we can be partakers of this gospel.

Something that seems a mystery to us at times, so difficult to understand, and yet here we are told that God through Christ and his spirit works in us so we might understand these things that have been hidden for generations.

The revelation of God to us through his son, Jesus Christ. What a wonderful mystery has been made known to us.

Do you long to see it more? We can show interest in F1 cars, we can show interest in phones and buildings and boats and all of these things, but the greatest mystery has been revealed to us in the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ.

[24 : 14] So there's a mystery here that is revealed. And as this mystery is revealed, we then see that there is a marvel at this. And this then is what Paul is describing as his role.

In verse 7 of this gospel, this mystery that's been revealed, I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power.

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.

To me, though the very least, Paul is a strange word there that it was almost like he made up a word, I am the leastest of all the saints.

That's the way he saw himself, as we saw this morning reading in Romans, Paul, O wretched man that I am. He is the leastest of all the saints, but he has been given grace, and he's been given grace and a purpose to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[25 : 24] So again, when you have the unsearchable, what does it mean? Does it mean it cannot be known? Well, the word unsearchable can also mean unfathomable.

There's a depth to it, a great depth, it's almost like a depth that can never be reached. And it's the way every preacher feels, I'm sure it's the way every Christian feels.

There's just a depth to the wonder of the gospel that we just cannot get all the way down, even though as Paul prays later in this chapter, that we may grasp the breadth and length and height and depth.

it's a prayer that we might know it, but there's a size, there's a scale to this that goes beyond our understanding. And it's a marvel to us.

But Paul is declaring this message to the church. He's declaring this message to ourselves here tonight. He's declaring it in a way that he's saying, well, no, we cannot fully comprehend it, but that we should delve into the very depths of it because there's a richness here, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[26 : 37] This is worth delving into, this is worth knowing because it's about a relationship, a relationship that we have by faith in the Lord Jesus Christ.

A mystery revealed to us and the unsearchable riches of Christ, they are worth getting our teeth into. A man called Patrick Henry He knew that his days were coming to an end and he wanted to sort out his affairs with his family and leave to them his property and various things.

And so he did that. He arranged things, made sure that his property would be given to his family and sorted between them. But then he said, there's one more thing I wish I could give them and that is faith in Jesus Christ.

And he said, if they had that and I had not given them a single penny, they would have been rich.

And if they had not that and I had given them all the world, they would have been poor indeed.

If they had that faith in Christ and nothing else, they would be rich. That's what Paul is saying here.

He is preaching to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[27 : 55] What are they? what are the unsearchable riches of Christ? It's like they're saying there's so many, they're bottomless, no one can fully comprehend all that they entail, but they are priceless things to God's people, to his redeemed, and they are made known to us through his word.

And the more we understand these unsearchable riches of Christ, the richer then our prayer, the richer then our understanding, the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

What are these riches then? We could go on all evening talking about them, but just to highlight a few for ourselves. He is preaching the unsearchable riches.

We are loved by God. there are so many verses in the scriptures that remind us of this. Romans 5 verse 8, but God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.

It's a mystery and it's a marvel. While we were still sinners, while we were away from God, he showed his love to us that Christ Jesus died for our sins.

[29 : 25] Unsearchable riches, that we are loved because how can you get to the depths of that love? You can't, but we can marvel at it. Isn't it a mystery and a marvel that we could say with John Newton, amazing grace, how sweet the sound that saved a wretch like me.

It is grace. It's the grace that Paul writes of in this letter, by grace you have been saved through faith.

The wonder of God's love, the marvel of God's love. What about the fact that we are a chosen people? You go back to chapter one of this letter, you know, Paul has said that he has written briefly before chapter three.

Well, in chapter one, in verse four, what does he say? Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world. There is a mystery and a marvel in that.

There is the doctrine of election for us. He has chosen us before the foundation of the world. How can we understand these things?

[30 : 40] Charles Spurgeon was asked by one of his congregation, how do I know if I am in the elect? It's a question maybe many of you here have. It's a common question.

Well, Charles Spurgeon's reply was, ask yourself instead, do I believe with all my heart? If you do, you are in the elect.

We cannot understand the depths of these things, the mystery of these things. us. But yet the gospel calls us to put our trust in the Lord Jesus Christ, to believe in him with all our hearts.

And then we are reminded that how can we know we are in the elect? How can we be one of those? Well, in Ephesians 1 verse 7, we are told we are saved by the blood of his Son.

In verse 7, in him we have redemption through his blood for the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

[31 : 49] We are saved because of God's love, because of God's choosing, because of God's giving his Son. So when we are discouraged, as the people in Ephesus were, when we are discouraged by sin, as we were thinking about this morning, when we are discouraged by the world, and by feeling unworthy, and all of these things, where do we have to go?

Where can we look? Not to ourselves, but to the cross of Jesus Christ, whereby his blood we are forgiven. We have redemption through his blood.

And then Paul goes on into chapter 2 here, and give us a wonderful assurance there in verse 6, chapter 2, verse 6, comes in that great part where we are by grace saved through faith.

We were dead in our trespasses and sins in which we once walked. But then in verse 6, we have those words, and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.

Isn't that a mystery? Isn't that a marvel? That he has raised us up. And when you go back to verse 4, that reminds us of how but God, being rich in mercy because of the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ.

[33 : 26] By grace, you have been saved. And that is how we are seated in the heavenly places. Even now, you are alive in Christ. You are in him. You have access to the very throne of grace in heaven.

And you see there, it kind of ties all these things together. We're chosen. We're loved. We are seated. We are forgiven by his grace.

All of these things, they're so mysterious to us, and yet we can marvel at them. So the more that we look, the more that we see the depth of his love for us.

We are also secure in him. In verse 8, for by grace you have been saved through faith. This is not your own doing.

It is the gift of God. It is God who has done this. It is God who has given us this security. And that is what we can marvel at.

[34 : 29] It is a gift. A gift from God. And so then as we read other passages such as Romans 8, verse 38 and 39, what great assurance, what great comfort we can take there from these riches of Christ.

For I am sure that neither death nor life nor angels nor rulers nor things present nor things to come nor powers nor height nor depth nor anything else in all creation will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.

How? Well, because of God's grace to us. For by grace you have been saved through faith, a gift of God.

We have security in him. This is just a small sampling of the unsearchable riches of Christ. There are so many other things that we can look at, but they are reminders to us of what the mystery that is revealed to us.

This gospel gives us. It is to marvel at these unsearchable riches of Christ. So we can praise him now and praise him for all eternity.

[35 : 48] And so then that is why Paul goes on to pray in understanding these things. For this reason I bow my knees before the Father. This is verse 14.

From whom every family in heaven and on earth are named. This is his prayer. That they may have strength to comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge.

That is where the prayer comes from. From understanding the mystery that is revealed of these unsearchable riches of Christ that are so many.

Let us look into this mystery. Let us search the depths of these unsearchable riches. Because the more that we know them the more they bring us closer even in our prayers to coming seeking that prayer to grasp even more all of these things.

I quoted from Martin Luther this morning. I will quote him again as we conclude this evening. He once said, I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess.

[37 : 12] It is a wonderful thought that. I have held many things in my hands and I have lost them all, but whatever I have placed in God's hands, that I still possess, because with God all things are secure, and we seek to take hold of things ourselves, we lose them.

But when we put ourselves into the hands of God, we lose nothing, and we gain so much more, the unsearchable riches of Christ.

There is a mystery around them, but they are revealed to us through his word, and there is reward for those who seek him and follow him.

And so may he help us to delve into them, to understand them, and to know them more fully and more meaningful for ourselves, to lead us closer at all times to him.

Let us pray. Lord, our gracious God, we do thank you for your truth, we thank you for your gospel, we thank you for how it is revealed to us, through your word, and we pray that prayer this evening that we will be able to grasp with all the saints what is the length and breadth and height and depth,

and to know the love of Christ that surpasses knowledge, that we might be filled with the fullness of God, as we ask it in Jesus' name.

[38 : 41] Amen. Amen. We'll conclude by singing to God's praise in Psalm 146, Scottish Psalter version, page 446 of the psalm books.

Psalm 146, we'll sing from verse 8 to verse 10. Page 446 of the psalm books, the Lord doth give the blind their sight, the bow down doth raise, the Lord doth dearly love all those that walk in upright ways.

We'll sing from verse 8 to the end of the psalm, to God's praise. The Lord doth give the blind their sight, the love and the down the praise the Lord doth hear thee love all who's that obey our high grace.

The stranger shield the widows stay, the orphan of the helpless!

the the be the the wind! wind! the wind side down shall be!

[40 : 25] The Lord shall wait forever! Lord shall wait forever for thy God who's high on thee!

thee! praise to all generations! praise to the Lord give thee!

after the benediction I'll go to the door to my left we'll close with the benediction now may grace mercy and peace from God Father Son and Holy Spirit rest upon and abide with you all now and forever more Amen Thank you.