

(Ephesians) the Unsearchable Riches of Christ

by Brian Brodersen

Brian Brodersen explores the unsearchable riches of Christ as revealed in Ephesians, emphasizing the inclusion of Gentiles and the purpose of suffering in God's plan.

Duration: 51:32

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Ephesians 2:19 - 3:3, Ephesians 3:5, Ephesians 3:9-10

Topics: "Sovereignty Of God", "Christian Ministry"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the book of Ephesians and specifically on Paul's prayer for the Ephesians. The speaker explains that Paul starts his prayer but takes a detour to share about his ministry and calling to be a messenger to the Gentiles. The speaker emphasizes the importance of understanding and apprehending all that God has done for believers. They also highlight the privilege and responsibility of helping others understand the unsearchable riches of Christ. The sermon concludes with the reminder that God is sovereign and has a purpose for believers, even in difficult circumstances, and that all we need is to ask for the power of God to work in our lives.

Transcript

Alright, let's turn to Ephesians 2, verse 19, just to get some background as we enter into verse, or chapter 3. We're going to start the third chapter tonight, but I want to just read verses 19 through the end of the second chapter to give a connection for us as we come to chapter 3. So, Paul says, speaking to the Ephesian church, which is predominantly a Gentile congregation, he says, Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone in whom the whole building being fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the spirit. For this reason, I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus for you Gentiles. So as Paul is explaining to the Gentiles the great things that God has done for them, as he's just sort of unfolding God's redemptive plan and letting them in on all that God has done to bring them in to be part of his family, Paul himself, he's getting excited as he's telling them what God has done for him and that excitement provokes him to want to pray for them as he thinks of all that God's done for them.

He then is moved to pray for them, that they would really be able to apprehend all that God has done for them. And so here in verse one, Paul starts into his prayer, but he suddenly takes a detour and he doesn't

actually get to the prayer until he gets to verse 14. Notice verse 14, he says, for this reason, so he begins for this reason and then he sort of goes off on a different subject for a few moments and then he comes back and he says, for this reason, I bow my knee to the father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

So what we have in verses two through 13 are what you would call parenthetical. Statements, it's a parenthesis, Paul takes a momentary detour off into another subject, and then he comes back to the subject at hand, which is the prayer for the Ephesians. But it's interesting as he goes off into this detour, what he does is he tells us a little bit about himself, about his ministry and about the particular calling that was upon his life to minister to the Gentiles, to really be the messenger to the Gentile nations of the gospel.

And so that's what we want to concentrate on tonight. This little bit of a sidetrack that Paul goes off on, but it's important and there's some tremendous things stated in here that I think you'll find greatly encouraging. But notice he refers to himself as I, Paul, the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

This is interesting. Now, I don't know if we pointed this out in the past. I think we might have.

But in case we didn't, let me remind you that this epistle, as well as several other New Testament epistles, were written by Paul from prison. Paul was literally a prisoner. He spent time in a dungeon.

He spent time chained to a Roman centurion. He spent quite a bit of time doing that, you know, as we read through his epistles and as we read through the book of Acts, we see Paul was energetic. We see that he was on the go.

He was going from country to country, from people to people. And we forget that he spent some years in prison as well. You know, it doesn't seem like that would be a good use of time.

I like to be busy for the Lord. I like to be active. I like to be going and doing things for the Lord.

But, you know, there are times when we find ourselves sort of in prison. We're stuck somewhere. We're not, you know, feeling like we're really getting anywhere, doing anything.

But sometimes it's during those times that we end up growing in ways that we couldn't grow if we were on the move. Sometimes we end up doing things during those times for the Lord that are more profitable than anything else we ever do. And what Paul did during his imprisonment.

Outlasted everything else he ever did, you know what he did, he wrote the New Testament. He wrote much of it. And so Paul, looking at his imprisonment, although it was certainly a frustration to him, it was something that he could see God's hand in.

And so when he refers to himself as a prisoner, although he was technically a prisoner of the Roman emperor, he looks beyond the Roman emperor and he refers to himself as a prisoner of Christ Jesus. It was the Lord who allowed him to go into prison and Paul had the mentality that if I'm here, this must be where God wants me to be.

Now, Paul, of course, knew that Jesus could have delivered him from prison any time. There was no difficulty for the Lord. Paul, of course, knew the story of Peter, how Peter had been imprisoned.

You remember the story back in the early chapters of the book of Acts where Peter was imprisoned and an angel actually came and delivered him and some of the other apostles. And then later, Peter alone was

delivered. And Paul, of course, knew this history.

He knew that God was able to move upon the situation and to bust him out of jail if need be. But evidently, he figured this must be the Lord and the Lord's got me here. So I'm going to just rest in him.

I'm going to trust in him. Not an easy thing to do. We get into difficult circumstances sometimes and we feel maybe like we're in prison and then we start complaining, Lord, what am I doing in this prison and God, where are you and why don't you get me out of this situation? We need to remember that God could get us out of it in a second.

I remember years ago when I battled for a long time with a chronic illness and I would often ask God those kinds of questions, Lord, why me? Why this? Why, you know, every day am I in the same situation physically and mentally? And I had a lot of time to complain and a lot of time to think about that. And finally, through a process of time, I came to the place of just being able to accept the fact that the Lord must want me here. I didn't like it, but I had to accept that fact, the Lord must want me here.

Why did I figure that? Well, because I knew he could get me out of it any time he chose to. He wasn't powerless. He wasn't unaware of my situation.

He could have simply said, be free and I would have been free, but he didn't do it. And so I finally came to the place of figuring, well, the Lord must want me here. And it made it a little bit easier, it was still difficult, but now I can look back on those years, you see, it's always great after the fact, as they say, hindsight is always 20, 20.

I can see so clearly now that God was doing things in me that couldn't have been done in any other way. And so I can look back on those times and now I realize, yes, indeed, I was in a sense the prisoner of the Lord. He had me in a place that was beyond my control, but it was in that place that he was doing a deeper work in my life.

And God will put us in those places sometimes. And we will be, in a sense, like a prisoner, and yet we'll find that God is doing a good work. John Bunyan, we know John Bunyan from the story, *The Pilgrim's Progress*.

John Bunyan was a great evangelist. He was an effective preacher, and because he belonged to a group known as the Nonconformist, he was persecuted and John Bunyan was put in jail for 13 years. For 13 years, he was in jail, he was freed from jail after a 13 year period of time, and he went on and he had a ministry for another few years, I think maybe nine or 10 years or so, and then he went to be with the Lord.

When he left, he left his wife and his children, but what he also left were the manuscripts of the books that we have come to know and love. And an interesting thing here is that his wife found those manuscripts, took them, they were published, and that's how the family was able to survive because of the work that he did in prison in writing these manuscripts. Now, not only was his family enabled to survive, but of course, many Christians have been blessed throughout the succeeding generation since the time of John Bunyan through his writings.

Pilgrim's Progress is the second best selling book of all time next to the Bible. Interesting. It was in his time of imprisonment.

So if you feel like you're in prison, remember this. You're the prisoner of Christ Jesus. He's got you where he wants you to be and he's got you there for.

Some education for some purpose, Paul said that he was the prisoner of Christ Jesus for the sake of the Gentiles, and I have personally found I know that many can testify to the same thing, that when we go through difficulties, although at the time we're going through it, we don't necessarily understand it. But later on, we find ourselves being able to minister to people. We're able to help people.

And then suddenly we realize, you know, I couldn't have done this had I not been through that kind of a situation. And I can't tell you how many times I've sat down with a person, I've listened to their story and they themselves have thought, I'm all alone. No one's ever been through this.

No one will understand me. You know, I'm just ready to give up. And as they're talking to me, I'm thinking, boy, I've been right there.

You're kidding. I thought I was the only one. We do think that sometimes, don't we? But no, God leads others ahead of us.

And then he brings them back around into our lives and they can become a great blessing to us. I remember years ago when I was on staff here, back in the early 80s, along with Justin Alfred. Some of you know Justin from to every man and answer.

He's on to every man and answer one day a week answering Bible questions. And he's the guy with a strong Southern accent and, you know, big old voice and all. And Justin's great.

And he had at that time, Justin's a bit older than I am, and he'd been through a few more things. And I was entering into that deep time of testing that difficulty, that illness. And I remember I was, you know, always looking for somebody that could relate to me in some way and give me some kind of help.

And Justin, he didn't say much, but. He used to say this and it really stuck with me, he'd look at me and say, Brother Brian, one day at a time, Brother Brian, one day at a time. And, you know, at the time, I think one day at a time, what's that all about? You know, forget that one day at a time.

I want to help, you know. No, that's not what I want to hear. Get me out of this situation.

Help me. Give me some wisdom or whatever. And yet, you know, as the years have gone by, I look back and I see, you know, that was what God was wanting to teach me, to depend on him one day at a time.

And so Justin was able to share that with me. He told me later that he had gone through a very difficult period as well. And that was, in essence, what God had taught him back then, one day at a time.

So Paul was a prisoner, not of Nero, but of Christ Jesus and not for nothing. But he said, for the sake of you Gentiles, it was for the benefit of the Gentiles that Paul was allowed to spend time in prison. That's where he wrote most of his epistles to the Gentiles and blessed us with the inspired word of God.

And of course, it's where he ministered to many Gentiles as well. And so now he goes and he says, if indeed you have heard of the dispensation of the grace of God, which was given to me for you, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery, as I have briefly written already, by which when you read, you may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men. So notice again, you see here right in the parenthetical verses, we have

another parenthesis, how that by revelation he made known to me the mystery.

Then we come to the brackets and then which in other ages was not made known. You could skip what's in the brackets and just pick up in verse five. And that's where the thought continues.

But he again takes just a brief little detour to tell them about the fact that he has a deep understanding in the mystery of God. And he says, and you know that by now, having read what I've already written to you. Now, some people say Paul must have written another brief epistle to them, and that's what he's referring to.

Other commentators say, no, it's the previous things that he said in this particular epistle. That's probably what it is. And of course, as we read through chapter one and chapter two, we see that Paul did indeed have a deep understanding of the things of God.

God had revealed these things to him, and notice he refers to this gospel as the mystery of Christ. The word mystery appears numerous times in our New Testament, but it does not mean what we generally think of when we think of mystery. And so it's important that we know the meaning of the word, because if we don't, we can go around thinking, wow, this Christian thing sure is a mystery.

I can't figure it out. And some people teach that Christianity is a mystery. It's not a mystery at all.

In the sense that it's something that's so complicated that very few people could ever really understand it, and it takes decade after decade of deep meditation and mystical thought and so forth. No, that's not it. The word mystery, the New Testament word mystery, the Greek word is a word that means something that can only be known by revelation.

It was used in biblical times, it was used to refer to some of the cults of the day and to the fact that the devotees of the cult, they had to be initiated in order to really understand the the mystical depths of the cult. So it was a person who was initiated and really let in on the deeper secrets, they they were people who understood the mystery. Now, Paul takes that term and what he tells us is that the things that he's revealing to us are things that we could not have known apart from the fact that God chose to reveal them.

But he did choose to reveal them. So the mystery in the sense that we usually think of it doesn't apply here. If God had not brought forth this revelation, we would have never figured it out.

And you know what? I believe that with all my heart when I read the gospel, when I read what God has done, I am convinced just by reading it and understanding it that no man would have ever figured this out. No man would have ever even thought this up. It's only God who could have come up with a system like this, where God himself would come and die in the place of sinful people, give his own life as a ransom for ours so we could live with him forever, and he would give us the gift of salvation all for the taking, just free of charge, and that he would actually come into our lives and make us new people.

By the power of his spirit in that glorious, no man has ever thought of that. You can read the writings of man from back in the earliest period of human history. You could go back and if you understood Akkadian or some of these ancient languages, you could read on those cuneiform tablets.

You could read all that man has thought through all of the long, long centuries of human existence upon the earth, and you'd never find anything close to what the gospel says. And that to me is a powerful evidence that this message is not from men, it's from God, it has come from God, it's a revelation from

God, he's revealed to us himself and what he's done and what a glorious thing it is. And so he says, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed by the spirit to his holy apostles and prophets.

So even prior to the New Testament period. Although there was a revelation, it was not a thorough revelation or a complete revelation, what we have in the Bible is what you call a progressive revelation. God progressively revealed himself from the beginning of time, and then when it came to that point in history, when Jesus the Messiah entered into the world, then God revealed himself in his fullness at that time.

Somebody recently asked the question, did all of the prophets understand everything about the gospel? Somebody asked me the question, did everybody in the Old Testament understand that God was a trinity? No, they did not. That was not clearly revealed in the Old Testament, it was alluded to, it was hinted at, it was implied in many statements, but it wasn't spelled out clearly back in the Old Testament period of time. When we come to the New Testament, this is where the clear revelation of the fact that God is one, but he's also three is brought out.

It was Jesus who said, go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father and of the son and of the Holy Spirit. And then, of course, the other apostles talked about the deity of Christ, and many times they use the Trinitarian formula and so forth. So this is what we have in scripture throughout the Old Testament period.

We have a progressive revelation. But at the end of the Old Testament period, our Old Testament ends with Malachi. He was the final prophet of the Old Testament.

The gospel was yet to come. The full and complete revelation of God had not yet been delivered. The Old Testament by itself is incomplete.

The Old Testament is what you would call anticipatory. If you're reading the Old Testament and you get to the end. Guess what? It's a cliffhanger.

And if that's all you're left with, oh, no, come on. We went and saw the Lord of the Rings. I don't know how many of you have seen that.

I mean, talk about that. Miserable ending. I mean, they just leave you hanging and, you know, it's at least another year before they bring out the next one in the series and, you know, oh, great.

You know, you're just getting into the story. And then so what do you do? You go out and buy the books and they're making a killing on this thing. Well, for anyone who just has the Old Testament, that's really.

The best you can do, in a sense, now, because there is a New Testament, the Old Testament can let you in on that. And you can certainly come to know the God of the Bible through the Messiah, Jesus Christ, by using the Old Testament alone. But many have failed to do that.

But as you come to the end of our Old Testament, you come to the end of the book of Malachi, that's what you find. You find the Lord. He's talking about he's talking about Elijah, the prophet.

He's saying, remember the law of Moses. And it's all in anticipation of the coming of the Messiah. So that's what Paul is alluding to when he says, which in other ages was not made known to the sons of men, as it

has now been revealed by the spirit to his holy apostles and prophets that the Gentiles.

So here here's what was not known. That the Gentiles should be fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel. See, this this was not known.

Now, if you go back to the Old Testament, you'll find that there were definitely statements made by the prophets concerning the Gentiles and implying that there was going to be a blessing upon the Gentiles. The Messiah was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles and the hope of the people of Israel. Simeon said that regarding him, and there are many places in the prophets and in the Psalms where you'll find references to the Gentiles praising the Lord and so forth.

But no Jew in the first century ever dreamed, ever would have imagined that Gentiles could have a relationship with the God of Israel on the same basis that they would have a relationship with the God of Israel, that they could come to God on equal ground. No Jew would have ever dreamed this. Paul saying, I didn't dream it, I didn't make this up.

This is what was given to me by revelation. The Gentiles have become fellow heirs of the same body and partakers of his promise in Christ through the gospel, of which I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given to me. So Paul became a minister to the Gentiles.

When we began to study Ephesians, we did a little bit of biographical background on Paul, that's been a while now, maybe it's a good time to refresh our memory. But you remember, Paul was the Jews Jew. He was not a compromising Jew, he wasn't a Jew that embraced Hellenistic culture, he was a Hebraic Jew, he was he was a Jew to the bone.

And he was in love with Judaism, he was in love with the traditions, the culture, the God of Israel, the whole thing was that was everything to him. And if you ever would have been looking for a candidate to become the apostle to the Gentiles, this is the last guy you would have even considered. He would have never considered it.

I take Peter, on the other hand, here's the interesting way God works. Peter, on the other hand, Peter was from Galilee. He was every bit as much a Jew as was Paul.

But yet he was from that northern region of Israel that was dominated by Gentiles. And the culture there had been influenced to a large degree by the Gentiles. And Peter was a fisherman.

He was a very common man. He wasn't part of that religious elite within the nation. And, you know, if you're looking for an apostle for the Gentiles, Peter would have been a great candidate.

But God. And I love this about the way God works, he does just the opposite of what we would have thought. He takes Peter, the uneducated, the one who's rubbed elbows with the Gentiles, the one who's had, you know, that cultural influence from the Gentile nations around him coming from the despised area of Galilee.

Do you remember there was a time in the Gospels where they were disputing over the claims of Jesus and so forth, and Nicodemus was was embracing Jesus as a messiah. And they just the leaders, they scoffed at him and they said they said, where do you read about a prophet coming from Galilee? There's no that that was absurd in their thinking, because Galilee was known at the time as Galilee of the Gentiles. But that's what God does.

He takes Peter from Galilee of the Gentiles and he says, OK, I'm going to make you the apostle to the Jews and I'm going to take this guy who's a Jew. To the core, who knows Judaism inside and out, who has. Done nothing all of his life, but eat, drink and sleep, rabbinic Judaism, I'm going to take him and I'm going to send him out to minister to the Gentiles.

What an amazing thing. But, you know, that's how God works, and that's such a wonderful thing, it's such a glorious thing to think about how God can take a person's life and just. As he did with Paul, just equip him to do a work for him and send him out to do it, and everybody stands and they marvels marvel, they they scratch their head, they think, well, wait a second, we wouldn't have done it this way, right? We wouldn't have done it this way.

If you look at something and say, you know, I wouldn't have done it that way, you probably be pretty certain that God is doing it. Because he generally does things just the opposite of the way that we do them. But Paul tells us here really.

About. How it is that he did what he did, he said, I became a minister according to the gift of the grace of God. You know, it said in Hebrews chapter five concerning the priest.

It said that no man takes this office to himself, but he that is called by God. Back under the Old Testament. You couldn't just go over to the tabernacle and fill out an application to become a priest, you know, you lost your job, you know, working out at the vineyard.

So, you know, I'm tired of this vineyard thing anyway, I think I'll become a priest. Let me go get an application and fill it out. And, you know, I'll send in a resume and we'll see what happens.

It didn't happen that way. The only way you could become a priest is if you were part of the priestly family and that priestly family was appointed by God. But, you know, the same thing is really true of being a minister of the gospel.

You can't just look at a page of possible occupations and down there in the middle of the page, you see minister, good pay, easy living, light work. Hey, give me an application. I want to sign up for that.

Sadly, you can do that in some places, but you can't be a real minister of Jesus Christ. You can't be a real. Minister of the gospel, apart from this right here, the gift of the grace of God given to me by the effective working of his power.

That's what it takes to be a minister of the gospel. The gift of the grace of God, the effective working of his power, you know, as I read this verse, it really strikes me. Paul was a brilliant man.

He was very intelligent. He was educated. He was cultured.

He was in many ways refined. He was an excellent specimen of humanity in many ways. But that is not what qualified him to be a minister of the gospel.

And he himself over and over again makes that fact clear to us. And I appreciate so much that he did that. Sometimes we can put too much of an emphasis on human abilities and qualities.

Sometimes we can be looking for the wrong things, and I find sometimes I myself, I get caught up in that even as I think of my own self and my own ministry, and I think, OK, I've you know, I've got to develop my vocabulary more or I need to understand my theology. I you know, and you start going toward these things

and these things aren't necessarily bad. But if you start emphasizing them or putting, you know, the priority on that sort of thing, you know, after a while you just you're missing a lot here, missing the main thing.

That's not what it's all about. It's all about the gift of God, it's all about the power of God, it's all about what Paul says right here, the effective working of his power. And even if I had all of those qualities, if I had a brilliant mind, if I had great oratory power.

If I had great knowledge of every conceivable subject, if I could get up and dazzle an audience. It doesn't mean anything if it's not done in the power of the spirit of God, it's not doing anything, it's not doing anything that's worth anything because it's the effective working of his power that matters. And we've got to keep that in mind.

And those of us in ministry have to keep that in mind. And. I thank God for these statements that the apostle Paul made here.

Because I realize that for myself, that it's the effective working of his power that is really the important thing and not those other things, those other things might to some degree have a place and be beneficial to some degree. But I think the problem we've had is to overestimate the importance of those things and to miss the main thing, and that's the anointing of the spirit, the power of the spirit of God. But Paul understood it all the way through.

Listen to what he says in verse eight to me. Who am less than the least of all the saints, this grace was given that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable. Riches of Christ.

Listen to Paul, to me, who am less than the least of all the saints, Paul was a truly humble man, not only was he a truly humble man, but he was a man who obviously had a sensitive conscience because I think he carried throughout the remainder of his life, throughout his entire ministry, I think he carried the burden of his past around with him, not to the extent that it prevented him from moving ahead, but to the extent that occasionally he would be pained as he would reminisce over his previous state. And as he would think about where he was, as he would think about his own human sufficiency, as he would think about his arrogance, as he would think about the self righteousness that caused him to strike out against the believers in Jesus and to see the idea of of needing an imputed righteousness is utterly foolish. I think that those are the things that they would strike Paul deep in his heart.

And as this would strike him, this is where he would see himself as less than the least of all the saints couldn't believe that he was a saint because of his background. And he saw himself as completely unworthy of the mercy and the grace of God. But, of course, he didn't let that stop him.

As I said, you know, sometimes people are held back by the past. God has cleansed your past. If you've received Christ, don't be bound by it.

Sometimes people are reluctant to advance toward the Lord because of their past or their their background, maybe recent background, maybe even their present condition. But yet the spirits moving upon them, convicting them, calling them. But they're thinking, oh, no, I can't progress.

I can't move ahead because look who I am and look what I've done. And surely God doesn't want to have anything to do with me. But that isn't true.

It doesn't matter where you've been or what you've done. The moment you're ready to turn to God, he's ready to embrace you. He's ready to receive you.

And Paul actually wrote to us and told us that it was in him that God was actually demonstrating the extent of his mercy and grace. Paul referred to himself on another occasion in writing to Timothy as the chief among sinners. And he said, and this is what God has done.

God has set me forth as an example. Of his long suffering and of his patience and of his mercy and of his grace, and basically what he said is this, hey, if God can save me, then I'm convinced he could save anybody. And that's what drove Paul to preach to anyone and everyone.

And he never worried about their background. There was never a person that the apostle considered too far. Gone to be saved by Jesus Christ because of his own personal experience.

And so here again, he alludes to it, to me, whom less than the least of all the saints, not only was he now a saint, a great privilege, but Paul could not believe that he should be allowed to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. In modern vernacular, Paul was blown away when he thought about his present occupation as an apostle and his previous life as a Pharisee and as a. Self-righteous persecutor of God's people, he was absolutely blown away, he couldn't believe it. He sat and marveled often that God would do.

With him, what he had done, and that's a place that I think of all of us have a true perspective of who we are and what God's grace is all about. I think we all. Really, inevitably, we'll do that, we stand amazed.

I am amazed at what your word tells me you did. As we think about God's love and his grace, and I think about my own life personally, and I know each one of you have a testimony as well. Sometimes I think about my past and.

I can't believe that God has had mercy on me and I can't believe that he's allowed me to preach his gospel and it's such a humbling thing. It's such an incredible privilege, but Paul refers here to the gospel, I like this way he describes it as the unsearchable riches of Christ. The unsearchable riches, another translation is the untrackable riches, another translation is the unfathomable riches.

Cannot be fathomed, they're so deep. You know, a fathom is a means of measuring the depth of water, the depth of the sea. And so you put out and you go down a fathom six feet and then you go a couple of fathoms and, you know, you continue to take readings and.

And there are those places where you go to and you can't really even discover the depth that's deeper than your capacity to even discover, and that's what Paul says about the riches of Christ, they're deeper than our capacity to discover. How is it that sometimes we think, oh, yeah, you know, I read that before I've been there, done that, heard that, yeah. You know, we can get like that, can't we? And God help us when we get that way, we need to remember these are the unsearchable riches of Christ.

We could spend a million lifetimes meditating upon these truths and never even begin to get close to the bottom of it. That's reality. That's a fact.

If you're bored with God, if you're bored with the word of God, then you need to go before the Lord and say, God, touch my heart, change my heart, soften me up, because I know that I have not. I have not reached the bottom of the treasure chest when it comes to your riches, I haven't even begun to mine out.

Even the smallest portion.

Of this mother load here. They're the unsearchable riches of Christ, and Paul had the privilege of preaching them, and we have the privilege of sharing the unsearchable riches of Christ with others and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery. Which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God, who created all things through Jesus Christ.

So this is what Paul was given to do to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery. So that was Paul's calling. To go around and to help people to see how fellowship with God.

Was now open to them, available to them in the greatest occupation in all the world is teaching people about God, and you know what, it's not just the pastors who are called to do that, it's not just the evangelist who are called to do that, it's every one of us are called to do it for those that God brings into our lives. Moms and dads, you're called to do it with your kids. We're called to do it with our friends.

We're called to do it with our neighbors. We're called to do it with people that God brings into our lives. To be sharing with them, and of course, there are those who have that more specific kind of calling, like Paul did as an apostle, as an evangelist, as a teacher of God's word.

But yet we all, to some degree, have that responsibility to pass this glorious information on to others to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery. Thank God for the gift of teaching. Thank God for the gifted teachers that he has placed in his church today.

And I'll tell you, we are spoiled, rotten. Turn on the radio. And you've got a lineup of some of the best Bible teaching that you could ever hear.

You know, the thing is. Is that we so often take that for granted, but we are just. A very small group of people that have that kind of privilege that isn't the case in most places, but how we thank God for those gifted teachers and how the saints generally thank God for the gifted teachers, you hear of people who, you know, tune in on the radio by accident and start listening to J. Vernon McGee or someone and, you know, their eyes are open and they see what is the fellowship of the mystery and all the things that were previously unknown to them or hidden.

And now they're being opened up. What a beautiful thing. To the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places, you know, we as Christians, sometimes we get to thinking about angels and we get to thinking about that whole other dimension of the spirit and those other beings that are there.

And we have some curiosity about the angels. Well, you know what? They have curiosity about us as well. And here's an interesting thing, that God is through the church.

He's making known the manifold wisdom of himself to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This is an interesting thing, that Church of Jesus Christ is the universal display of the manifold wisdom of God. Think of all of the things that manifest the wisdom of God, you know, just think in terms of the creation itself and the complexity of of various life forms and so forth.

And all of these things, of course, as you stop and think about them, my, this all demonstrates to me the wisdom of God. But the greatest demonstration of God's wisdom, God says, is through the church. He's demonstrating his wisdom and, you know, to paraphrase it again and to put it in the modern vernacular

through the church, God is blowing the minds of the angels.

That's what he's saying, he's saying basically that the angels are looking at this, then they will ultimately look at it and say, oh, Lord, we can't believe it. We knew you were wise. We thought we knew the depth of your wisdom, but Lord, you have just blown our minds.

You are so much wiser than we ever even dreamed. And that's all happening through the church. They must see it from a different perspective than we see it from, huh? From our perspective, sometimes it's like, what is this thing? Boy, this is sure messed up.

You know, God help. But God is working and he's demonstrating his wisdom, his manifold wisdom, according to the eternal purpose which he accomplished in Christ Jesus, our Lord, in whom we have boldness. And access with confidence through faith in him, therefore, I ask that you do not lose heart at my tribulation for you, which is your glory.

Paul says, don't worry about me. I'm OK. I'm the prisoner, not of Nero, I'm the prisoner of Christ Jesus.

And my situation is all part of God's plan for me to help you better understand who he is and what he's done for you. That's more or less what the apostle is saying here. And so as we wrap things up this evening.

Wherever you're at tonight, if you are a believer, if you find yourself in some sort of a prison. And. Remember this, God is sovereign.

And if you're there, then God must have a purpose for you there and he's going to bless you there and he's going to develop something in you there and he's going to use you from there. Also. Remember that it's according to the working of his mighty power that we serve him, his effectual power working in Paul, his effectual power working in us.

All we need is the power of God working in our lives. How do we get that? We just ask for it. We depend on it.

We seek the Lord and draw near to him. And as we do, he draws near to us and his power then just is imparted to us through that. And then we can go about our lives, not just living out a mundane life, but actually serving him in the process.

At work, at home, with the family, in the neighborhood, with the neighbors. Wherever we are, we're serving the Lord. And remember, also, we have this great, great, great privilege as well.

All of us, to some degree of helping other people to see. The fellowship of the mystery, helping other people to get an understanding of the unsearchable riches of Christ, what a glorious thing. And, you know, we do that for a while.

And then when we're finished, we go be with the Lord and we enter into the the fullest manifestation of that forever and ever. What a glorious thing. Thank God for that.

Let's pray. Father, we thank you for the words of Paul, the encouragement that we receive from the things that you did in his life, the things that you taught him, the things that you commissioned him to do. And Lord, tonight, I want to pray for those who are in some sort of prison.

At least it feels that way to them. I pray that they would remember that you are the Lord, that your sovereign and Lord, if they're there. Then you must have a plan for them there and help them, Lord.

Help us, Lord, to not lose heart, but to trust in you. Lord, we thank you for having made known to us the unsearchable riches of Christ. And Lord, may we just keep digging deeper and deeper and deeper into who you are.

And Lord, for any tonight that are. Maybe a bit weary or maybe even have hit sort of a. Place of being stagnant or feeling bored with their relationship with you. Oh, Lord, just.

Just dunk them real deep in your riches, renew them, we pray. And Lord, if there's any among us tonight that have yet to receive Christ, maybe they're thinking that because of their past or maybe even their present situation, they can't come to you. Lord, may they know tonight by your spirit.

That there's not anyone. That you've excluded from your kingdom. That would like to come, so help them, Lord, to make that decision to come to you.

To be forgiven and to enter upon that new and glorious life that you have for them. We pray these things in Jesus name. Amen.

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