

UNSEARCHABLE RICHES

Ephesians 3:18

Intro: Anyone who memorizes the Book of Ephesians, or even if one reads the Epistle over and over, it is hard to see how he can fail to notice that Paul used the word "riches" a number of times.

It appears first in 1:7, "the riches of his grace." Next in 1:18, "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." Third, in 2:4, "But God, who is rich in mercy. Fourth in 2:7, "the exceeding riches of his grace." Fifth, in 3:8, "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Sixth and last, in 3:16, "the riches of his glory."

Most of these speak of God as the One possessing these riches, and yet they are always passed on to the people of God through Christ.

"Riches" always speaks of an abundance, something that is more than sufficient.

If you look through those verses you will see that there are only two words used to explain that abundance, that great sufficiency that is more than enough. They are the words "exceeding" and "unsearchable." It is important that we understand what these mean.

"Exceeding" means that it surpasses all other riches. No other riches can be compared. None is more secure. None is more satisfying. They are riches which go beyond human comprehension. They really defy description.

In addition, "unsearchable" means that they are so great, so wonderful, that they cannot be fully explored. We can go as far as possible into the riches of God, and then we find that we stand only on the outskirts. It seems that the more we know, the more we realize there is to know. We try to reach the outside boundaries, and it seems that they move farther and farther away from us. This is another way of saying, like the word "riches," that we have an inexhaustible supply. "Unsearchable riches" are riches which even eternity will not be able to deplete.

When we talk about the riches of God we are speaking, according to Ephesians, of (1) His grace, (2) His mercy, and (3) His glory. And all of these are always and only to be found in Christ.

Leaving Ephesians for just a moment, let me remind you of that great verse, 2 Cor. 8:9:

For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ,

that, though he was rich,
 yet for your sakes he became poor,
 that ye through his poverty might be rich.

This is why it can be considered, and needs to be considered, at the Lord's Table. We are rich because Christ, for our sakes, "became poor." And His poverty is to be seen at Calvary where He died on the Cross. There He was forsaken of God. He died at the hands of His enemies as a common criminal. Before and during His death, He suffered more humiliation than any person has ever suffered when you consider the heights from which He had come to the depths to which He was taken. His poverty was the price of our enrichment. We would be still be in our sins, in the worst kind of poverty, if it were not for the death of our Savior.

But let us look at the riches of God which have been bestowed upon us.

I. THE RICHES OF GOD'S GRACE (Eph. 1:7; 2:7).

Our relationship with God in actual experience is marked both as to its beginning and its eternal manifestation by the word, "grace."

A. Grace brings the forgiveness of our sins.

Now remember: This grace is "exceeding," and it is "unsearchable."

It is so wonderful to know that we are forgiven, forgiven of all of our sins, and yet we do not deserve to be forgiven of a single sin.

And it makes no difference what the sins are, nor how many sins there are, nor how many sinners may come to Christ for forgiveness, there is enough grace to go around--and more than enough. The more you know about the grace of God in Christ, the more wonderful it will become to you. And the more you know, the more you will be amazed at what God has done for you.

Marvelous grace of our loving Lord,
 Grace that ~~exceeds~~ our sin and our guilt,
 Yonder on Calvary's mount outpoured,
 There where the blood of the Lamb was spilt.

Grace, grace, God's grace,
 Grace that will pardon and cleanse within;
 Grace, grace, God's grace,
 Grace that is greater than all our sin.

But there is something else that we learn about the grace of God. And we are only thinking of it tonight as it applies to our salvation.

B. The grace of God in eternity (Eph. 2:7).

Please do not ask me to tell you how God is going to do this because I do not know. But I do know that it is going to mean far more than our feeble minds can take in now.

But the important thing that I want you to note here is that this grace is truly "exceeding," truly "unsearchable." Even through eternity we will not be able to exhaust it. We have laid hold of the grace of God for our salvation. We depend upon the grace of God every day that we live. And yet we will find that when we get to heaven, and all through eternity, we will never, never, never be able to use up the grace of God. We have all spiritual blessings now through grace, and we are going to get lots more, not just when we get to heaven, but as long as we are in heaven--which is forever and ever and ever and ever!

But let me go on to the second supply of riches:

II. THE RICHES OF GOD'S MERCY (Eph. 2:4).

Always link mercy with misery. God's mercy is His answer to human misery. Sin brings misery, terrible misery, often unbearable misery. We have all of the consequences of sin. It is only because of the spiritual blindness of man that he does not recognize that the problems we have are all traceable to sin.

Paul pictured that misery for us in Eph. 2:1-3, and then he pointed to the remedy in verse 4, "But God, who is rich in mercy . . ."

Can you explain God's mercy? Can it fully search it out until there is no more to learn, or no more to experience?

When we try to trace out the mercy of God, where does it lead us? It leads us directly to the Cross, and then to the empty tomb, and then to the right hand of God. Notice that these wonderful verses, 4-7, are bounded on one end by the mercy of God, and on the other by the grace of God--reaching into a timeless eternity!

After our country has gone as far away from God as it has, is there any hope for sinners? Yes, thank God,

there is! And our only hope is in God. It is through His mercy that ruined lives can be reclaimed, broken homes can be restored, enslaved sinners can be set free.

Come, thou Fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing thy grace;
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

But we have one more point:

III. THE RICHES OF GOD'S GLORY (Eph. 1:18; 3:16).

What is God's glory? God's glory is is God Himself. In the OT when manifested His glory, He manifested Himself! In the NT when he manifested His glory, He manifested it in Christ. Cf. John 1:14.

One interesting thing about these two verses which speak of the riches of God's glory is that they are both found in Paul's prayers. That is true of Eph. 1:18; that is also true of Eph. 3:16.

Both of these references have to do with the glory of God in reference to us. In Eph. 1:18 Paul was concerned that the saints in Ephesus would know "the riches of the glory of his inheritance in the saints." That is the end result of salvation in your life and mine. In Eph. 3:16 he was praying that the saints of Ephesus would, "according to the riches of his glory," be strengthened inwardly now, in the present time.

Cf. 2 Cor.3:18.

Now what does this amount to when we try to put all of this together. It is this: God's purpose in our salvation is not just to get us to heaven. It certainly includes that, but that is not all. **GOD'S PURPOSE IN SALVATION IS TO MAKE US LIKE HIMSELF!** Can you imagine anything more incredible, anything more wonderful?

How many of you would say that that purpose has been accomplished in you, that the work is done?

How many of you feel that God has a lot to do in your own life before this will be accomplished?

What assurance do you have that it will ever be finished, and that you will be like the Lord?

Well, this is expressed in different ways in Scripture, but the way Paul expressed it here is that our sanctifi-

cation is guaranteed by "the riches of his glory." There is enough glory in God, enough of Himself, if you please, to guarantee that we will have the needed strength now, **and that the work will finally be completed in every single one of His people!** That includes you, and that includes me!

Have you ever hoped to understand all that can be known about God? Don't expect to do it. It is like God's grace, and God's mercy: Go as far as you can, and then you will see that you have not even started! I doubt if we will reach the end of any of these truths even in heaven itself.

Concl: Tonight we observe the Lord's Supper. The purpose of this Supper is to bring us back in our thoughts and in our fellowship together, to the Cross of Christ. The Cross of Christ was the expression of God's grace, God's mercy, and God's glory, **ALL IN ONE!** And as we remember the Lord tonight, let us remember that there would have been no grace for us, no mercy for us, no glory for us, if the Lord Jesus had not died for us, and opened the way for God to be perfectly righteous in extending to us grace, mercy, and glory.

How thankful we need to be for God and for Christ and for the Holy Spirit, and for the work that gave to us God's grace, God's mercy, and God's glory.