

Ephesians 3:7-9

0204

The preacher of the gospel, the Proclaimer of the gospel, his central task is to proclaim your riches in Christ. In Christ Jesus, you are indescribably spiritually wealthy.

The Church of Jesus Christ is the most under appreciated institution known to man.

The Church of Jesus Christ—I'm not talking about the sham things that all of us, unfortunately, know are all around us—but I'm talking about the true and genuine Church of Jesus Christ, and I'm not speaking of one local assembly in particular, I'm not speaking of a denomination. I'm speaking of the true Church of Jesus Christ. It is the most undervalued and misunderstood institution on earth. It is the most beautiful thing that God has created and left here.

If you have your Bibles open to Ephesians chapter three, just glance with me over to chapter five. These will be familiar words to everyone in the room.

Verse 25, Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

Jesus loves His church profoundly and deeply. The church is the object of Jesus' affection and love. He came for His church. He suffered for his church and he died for his church. He endured shame and humiliation for his church and he rose for His church. His Church is the only institution that he ever built. It is the only institution that he left behind. It is the only thing that he's coming back for. The Church of Jesus Christ is something Jesus turns to in Matthew's Gospel in chapter 16. Matthew 16, in which Jesus is speaking here, these will also be familiar words. I tell you, you are Peter and on this rock, I will build my church.

We are His church, he owns us. We are his. He is our master. He is our Creator. He is our Sustainer he is our Redeemer. He is our Rescuer. We are His church, he will build his church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. The Church of Jesus Christ is indestructible. It is indestructible because Jesus is indestructible. It is invincible because Jesus is invincible and he declares that his church to like him, is invincible. Nothing will ever prevail against the church of Jesus Christ. Nothing will ever stamp out the Church of Jesus Christ, nothing will ever defeat it.

Because the Church of Jesus Christ—as our Master—is invincible.

Matthew 18—These are words that Jesus is speaking about the hardest thing that the church ever has to do, and that is when one of its own has openly embraced sin and refused to repent and turn from sin. And so Jesus describes to us this extraordinarily difficult process of when one who has confessed Christ and united together with his church as a covenanted member, will instead, openly embrace sin and refuse to repent of it. He's as he describes this process of going and speaking in the church working and praying through this. And then finally, in verse 20, he describes this process to where if this person, if this brother or sister still refuses to repent, you are

to do the hardest thing of all. You are to go to them and you are to confront, confront them lovingly and gently but you are to confront them.

In verse 20. Jesus says, For where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am, among you, Jesus is not talking about some nice little prayer meeting in somebody's home on a Wednesday night with three people there. Jesus is talking about the hardest thing that the church ever has to do, which is to confront, lovingly confront one of its own over a sin that they have embraced. And Jesus says, when you do that hardest of things, I will be there with you. In other words, there is nothing so difficult, nothing so hard, that separates us from Christ. Jesus is inseparable from his people. Jesus cannot be forced apart from his people, neither can his people be forced apart from him.

Chapter one, verse 22. Jesus is summing (I'm sorry), Paul is summing up chapter one With these words: He put all things—meaning the Father—put all things under his—meaning Jesus'—feet and gave Jesus as the head over all things to the church. Jesus is given to the church as our head, he is our head, and we are his—Paul says—body.

So that's the intimacy of the relationship between Jesus and His Church. It's as intimate as a head and a body. It is as inseparable as a head from a body. And we are, nonetheless, Paul says, the fullness of Him who fills all in all the church is the fullness of Jesus. The church isn't just a representation of Jesus—though we are—we are not just an expression of Jesus—though we are—we are the fullness of Jesus here on Earth. As difficult as that is to comprehend, and even harder as it is to accept. Nonetheless, Paul tells us we the true church, or the fullness of Jesus here on Earth.

How can anyone possibly say that they love Jesus, but they don't love his church? How is it possible to love Jesus and yet not love his fullness? How is it possible to love Jesus and yet not love the expression of Jesus, that is just as impossible as it sounds. We are the bride of Christ. And so, to love the Bridegroom, without loving the bride is nonsensical. It is if someone were to were to say to me, you know, Hey, Jason, I really like you. And I think you're pretty sharp guy, I'd like to be friends and get to know you a bit better, but I just can't stand your wife. Just as long as you keep her away from me, you and I will be fine. You and I have no relationship, because you cannot distance yourself, you cannot hate the spouse while loving the other spouse.

And so in that same sense, Jesus says, This is my bride. We are the object of his profound love. Not only are we the object of Jesus's love, we are the object of the entire Godhead's love.

Jesus profoundly loves His church. So does the Father profoundly love his church, because the church is the expression of Jesus, the church is the fullness of Jesus, the Father, who loves the Son profoundly, also loves the expression of his Son, and the fullness of His Son.

Likewise, the Spirit also loves the church, because the giving of the Spirit is the birth of the church. Without the Spirit, the church does not exist, if the Spirit were not here, the church would not exist. And so therefore, the Spirit loves the church, just as the Father loves the church, just as Jesus, the Son loves the church.

And so we are the most loved institution that has ever existed. There has never been another group, another body, another organization, another institution, there has never been anything as loved as the Church of Jesus Christ, we are the most undervalued in institution ever to exist.

And so Paul is in this section in which he's telling us about this thing called the church, the institution, the nature, the character of the church. And he wants the Ephesians, just like he wants us to understand what the church is, because he's about to tell us beginning from chapter four, he's about to tell us how we are to act. And so before he begins telling us how we're to act, he wants to tell us who we are. Because our identity, our embracing our understanding of who we are, has direct correlation with how we act. Has anybody ever said to you: No, we don't act like that. Maybe a parent, when you saw some deviant behavior or something, or when you, when you yourself experimented with some sort of deviant behavior? Has anybody ever had a parent say to you: we don't act that way?

In the same way, our identity as the church informs how we are to act and how we are to behave. And so Paul is first taking these three chapters to tell us deeply about who we are. What is the church?--Before he begins to then turn to the subject of how is the church to behave.

And so this section here in which Paul is speaking about the church, we now come to verse seven. And let's just begin by reading verses seven through verse 13. And then we will dive into verse seven: Of this gospel, 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'm the very least of all the saints this grace was given to preach, 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? So that through the church, the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose that has, he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord in whom we have boldness and access with confidence through our faith in him. So I asked you not to lose heart over what I am suffering for you, which is your glory.

So just picking up here in verse seven, Paul says: of this gospel, I was made minister 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.

So once again, we see again, Paul's emphasis on his lowliness, his humility. Paul wants to insist that God has done just an incredible thing to even choose him, to be one, to not even be a child of God, but to be one who takes this gospel to these Gentiles. So he says twice here: to me, this was given them beginning of verse eight: to me, and that that's fronted there to the beginning of verse eight to put emphasis there's. It's not as though Paul is saying: Can you believe me, of all people, me, I'm the one the least of all the saints, the least of the apostles, to be chosen with this glorious task of taking the gospel to, to this Gentile world.

So this is once again God's pattern of using the least likely the most unlikely of human candidates to do his work for him. When God, for example, needed someone to go and speak to the most powerful man on the planet—Pharaoh—he chooses someone with a speech impediment to go speak to the to the most powerful man on the planet, or when God needs a king for his earthly people, He chooses the youngest and the least of all the

sons of Jesse. That's just God's pattern throughout his word is to always choose the least likely the least capable from a human standpoint.

So Paul says, to me, I'm the one that has been chosen, I am the one chosen to take the gospel to the Gentiles. And I was the one who most hated the Gentiles. I was the one that Gentiles most feared, and were most suspicious of, and now God has made the one that they were the most suspicious of, to be the one to take them this message of peace and reconciliation.

And Paul says that this is God's purpose, it is His purpose, to choose the least capable, the least likely in order to reflect all the glory upon the Father. First Corinthians chapter one, verse 27: God chose what is weak and foolish in the world to shame the wise he chose what is weak to shame, the strong. And for this purpose, God chooses the weak so that the vessel the carrier, the spokesperson, won't be the one that's seen as being the intelligent one, the clever one, the Crafty one, the smart one. Instead, God chooses the weak vessels so that His power and His wisdom are clearly perceived through this.

This is what Paul means in this passage. And second Corinthians chapter four, we all are familiar with the clay jar passage: For we have this treasure in jars of clay, we are the jars of clay. And the treasure that we have is Paul says, this treasure of the Gospel, the greatest treasure known to man.

Paul, or Paul says, God puts this treasure into jars of clay so, think for just a moment about the fragile nature of a clay jar. Think for just a moment about an ancient world clay container and how easily broken that is, how unattractive most of them had to have been, just these very functional sort of clay pots and jars. And just imagine the greatest treasure in earth being put into one of these clay jars that's fragile, and not attractive and easily broken. And Paul says, that's like the gospel message. This gospel is put into such unattractive, fragile, weak containers as us people in order to show that the grace and the magnitude and the glory belongs to God and God alone.

So he says to me, though, I'm the least of all the saints this grace was given and what grace is to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches. So the grace that was given, Paul says is the grace to preach—or your translation might say, to preach the gospel. Actually, the word there is not the word for preach. It's the verb form of 'gospel.' So literally, Paul says, the grace was given to me 'to gospel.' So 'evangelize' might be an acceptable translation. But I think to preach the gospel is really the root of what Paul's getting it, to preach the gospel is the grace that's given to Paul, in order to take this gospel message through these jars of clay to the Gentile world.

Now, this emphasis on preaching the gospel, it's something that's worth just bringing our attention to for just a moment here because the preeminence of the preaching of God's word is something that Scripture teaches to us and something that the kingdom of God—as long as it's here on earth—will always have this preeminence of preaching the gospel. The kingdom of God will always be advanced primarily by a man whom God has been raised up, standing up, taking the Scriptures, opening the Scriptures before God's people and proclaiming God's Word to them. That is always the basis, the main way in which the kingdom of God will advance on Earth.

We live in a time today of much technological advances. And we all have a device probably in our pocket or in our purse that would connect us immediately to all kinds of audio/visual material—videos, and podcasts and books and all kinds of everything is at your fingertips.

And so, the temptation is for us to begin to think, well, now the gospel—we have these all these other methods—the Gospel now can move forth, and all these other technological, technologically advanced message methods, is what I'm trying to say. And yes, we praise God for the increased availability of the gospel. But nevertheless, the proclamation, the simple—if you want to call it old fashioned—preaching of God's Word will always be the preeminent way in which God's Kingdom is advanced.

Paul says to Timothy and Second Timothy four, verse two: here is your central charge, the main charge of your life, Timothy: preach the Word. Or Romans 10 And verse 14, when Paul says: how are they to hear about Jesus without a preacher coming in preaching to them? Because that is the way in which the kingdom of God will primarily always advance forth. So call it old fashioned, call it 19th century call it whatever—it is, God's chosen method of advancing His kingdom, is just to have a man that he has risen, he has raised up to stand up before his people, take his word, open his word, and say: Thus says the Lord.

So he says, this grace is given to me to preach to the Gentiles. Now, what is Paul preaching? He's preaching to them the unsearchable riches of Christ. So we'll pause on that phrase for just a minute the unsearchable riches of Christ. What are the unsearchable riches of Christ? Well, first, let's think about this word 'unsearchable.' The word doesn't mean that you can't search it out or you can't find it. It really has more the meaning of unfathomable, unattainable, and inexhaustible. Think of something whose boundaries cannot be marked, like for example, the universe. You know, every time we have a new telescope developed, then we find out that—oh, the universe is a whole lot bigger than we thought it was. And now we know it's bigger not because we can see the edge of it, because we can now see more of it and there's still no edge to see. There's still no boundary or end of it to see.

So unsearchable riches of Christ. Think about the unsearchable, the unfathomable, the unmappable expanse of the universe. Or I was reminded of—if you remember the story back from school, of Ferdinand Magellan. Remember? Everybody's nodding your head like you really do remember Ferdinand—nobody remembers Ferdinand Magellan. Anyway, 1521 He's gonna sail across the ocean, you know, this Portuguese explorer, and he's sailing for the first time they're trying to map the ocean. And he wants to fathom, he wants to measure the depth of the ocean. And so he's out of the ocean, and they tied together six lengths of rope. And on the end of that, they fasten a cannonball. And they lowered over the side, just to try to tell how deep the ocean is. And so they lowered it down to a distance of, or to a depth of 400 fathoms. Now, if you're not up to speed on your Fathom-to-feet conversion chart, that's about 2400 feet. So he lowers this down 2400 feet and it touches nothing. And he says the ocean is unfathomable. It has no it has no bottom, we cannot reach the bottom, it's just far, too deep. Now what he didn't know was that in that particular place to reach the bottom would have taken about 50 links of rope. Because the ocean at that point was almost four miles deep, which wasn't even the deepest part of the ocean, which is over five miles deep.

So think of that. Think of five miles of water, the unfathomable riches of Christ—Paul is trying to explain to us he's trying to open our thinking, to a store of resources to a vast wealth of resources that, like the edges of the universe has no limit.

In eternity, we will never experience a limit of Christ, we will never experience the end of him, we will never experience: well, I've known Jesus now, I've been with Jesus for 400 billion years. I guess I know him pretty well. No, we will never be there, because he is fathomless he is unsearchable. He is without boundary.

So these unsearchable riches. What? What does Paul mean by riches? It's just the standard word there for wealth. And I think what Paul is trying to communicate to us is this idea of resources that know no end.

Of course, spiritual resources is what was what Paul's speaking of here, just like he began the letter from chapter one, verses three and four. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places—so every blessing is ours, every privilege is ours.

We are indescribably wealthy in Christ, our spiritual wealth, knows no limit in Christ. We are, there's no word to describe the wealth of spiritual blessings and privileges that are ours in Christ. This is what Paul has been attempting to explain to us, for now almost three chapters, is that the spiritual privileges and blessings that are yours in Christ, they know no limit, they cannot be expressed in words, they are unsearchable.

This is the primary task of the preacher of God's word, to open God's word to show to God's people, not what you should do and what you shouldn't do, not how you sinned this past week, not how you're not living up in this way, not how you what you should be doing, and not how the world is sinning. All of those are vastly inferior methods of preaching the gospel.

Instead, the preacher of the gospel, the proclaimer, of the gospel, his central task is to proclaim your riches in Christ, in Christ Jesus, you are indescribably spiritually wealthy, and that wealth can never be lost. You are the co-heirs of the kingdom of God, you are joint-heirs with Jesus of all that God possesses.

And all of that is ours in Christ, and Paul is almost stumbling over himself, in his words here to explain to us just how rich we are in Christ. So this is our task when we come to the Scriptures. Yes, the Scriptures have things to tell us about how we are to behave and how we are to live and not live. That's what chapter three, four or four, five and six are all about. But the central focus of Scripture, what we should always put our Scriptures down, having comprehended, we take our Scriptures up, we study them, we read them, when we put them down, we should come away from them, thinking how rich we are in Christ, how wealthy how blessed we are to be in Christ, what God has done for us in Christ, the immeasurable riches of knowing Him.

And so this is what Paul says, this is the grace given to me to preach to the Gentiles, the unsearchable riches of Christ, verse nine, and to bring to light, that just word means to come to an understanding, to cause to understand, to bring to light for everyone. So everyone is in the dark outside of the Scriptures. And outside of the work of the Holy Spirit, everyone is in the dark, there's not somebody somewhere in the corner of the world that's been sitting on a mountain in the yoga position for three months, and he is not in the dark. Nobody exists

like that. Everyone outside of the Scriptures, and outside of the work of the Holy Spirit, everyone is in the dark. And so Paul says: My task is to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ, so as to bring to light. So think about a dark room. Our power went out Friday night, and you know, cloudy night, no power, that's a dark, dark. So think of a dark, dark house, a dark, dark room, and how nothing can be seen, nothing can be perceived, and then the light comes, and then you can then see.

So this is what Paul's saying, to bring to light to bring to understanding for who for everyone. So God is not a secretive God, who only wants certain people to know about him, who only wants to, he wants to kind of protect information about him, so that not everybody knows about him. God wants to be revealed. And he has charged Paul to tell everyone to bring to light to all people this revelation this unsearchable riches that are available in Christ.