

Ephesians Chapter 3

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- [0 : 0 0] Come before you now to thank you that we have so much to rejoice about. Those blessings of grace, those riches of grace that were mentioned in that song.
- Lord, we thank you that you demonstrate your grace to us day by day. And Lord, we can constantly look back and see the way that you've led us in this life.
- And how you protected us. And Lord, how you continue to put your arms around us as we walk through this dark world. We just pray, Lord, that tonight as we worship you, as we bring these songs of praise to you, as we bring our prayers to you, that Lord, you will hear us.
- And that you will answer the prayers of our hearts. That you will turn many to yourself. And Lord, that you will encourage all those who trust in you. Lord, we thank you for the many promises that you have in your word.
- And we pray that even tonight as we meet together, we'll have a real sense of your presence with us. That your Holy Spirit will guide us in every aspect of our service this evening.
- [1 : 1 0] And Lord, that we will leave knowing that we've been in your presence. And so we come, Lord, to worship you and praise you for all that you've done for us. And Lord, for the knowledge that we are safe in you.
- And that one day we'll be able to see you and meet you face to face if we trust in you. So we thank you, Lord, that you sent the Lord Jesus Christ to die on the cross.
- And to be raised from the dead. That we might have that eternal hope. That strong hope. That hope which gives us great belief and faith to carry on in the work here.
- And we ask, Lord, that even tonight as we meet together, you'll encourage us in our hearts to continue in the way that you've chosen for us to go. So, Lord, be with us now.
- And bless us as we meet together. In Jesus' name. Amen. Amen. Amen. Well, it would be useful to have that passage open before you.
- [2 : 1 4] You may have noticed, those who were here this morning, the theme carries on. Peter was talking this morning about what it will be to stand before the Lord and worship him.
- You're going through those blessings that were mentioned in that passage you read. And look what it says in verse 4. When that time happens, it says, Nor will we think of ought or anything beside, My Lord, my love is crucified.
- But one day we'll see him not crucified, but risen and ruling for eternity. Well, let's come to this passage in Ephesians.
- I don't know whether you remember it. I struggle to remember, so I admit I had to look this up on Google. But does anybody remember the name Kit Williams? Do you remember a book called Masquerade?
- Do you remember a golden hair? Well, at one stage, it was a publishing phenomenon. It was quite an unlikely thing to happen. Because Kit Williams was an artist and he did a lot of pictures in which he said there were clues to where this golden hair was to be found.

[3 : 35] And whoever found it, it was theirs to keep. And it became quite a phenomenon. And several people found that their lawns had been dug up when somebody thought that they'd found a clue to where the hair would be buried.

In fact, it got to be such an obsession with the country that Kit Williams himself disowned it eventually and went back to painting and tried just to concentrate on that without all of the problems that went along with this particular task.

And that sort of thing has carried on, hasn't it? There are many newspapers and many books now where there's some complex problem, something that you have to understand.

It's usually in stages. You do one thing first and then you go on to something else. And when you've got all these clues together, you've got to unjumble them, put them together again and find another clue that's going to go somewhere else.

And so you carry on until you get to the end. And in this particular passage that we read, there are three mysteries that are mentioned, which I'll come to in a minute.

[4 : 49] But you might call the overall title for what I'm going to be speaking about tonight is what we find in that passage that we read.

Because in there, it talks about the manifold wisdom of God. Now, manifold is not a word that you commonly hear these days, but it just means very many and various ways.

In other words, it's saying that the wisdom of God is so complex and has so many facets to it that we won't ever understand fully what it's all about.

Except that we know the scripture says that when we are Christians, then in one sense we have the mind of Christ. And those three mysteries are mentioned in the passage that we read.

Go to verse 8 first for the first one. It says, he's talking about grace given to him to preach. It says, to preach to the Gentiles the boundless riches of Christ.

[5 : 54] And you may have noticed that in one of the hymns that we sang, it talked about the riches of Christ. This is the boundless riches of Christ. The second mystery is found in verse 19.

In verse 19, he wants people to understand the love of Christ and to know that this love surpasses knowledge that you may be filled to the measure in all the fullness of God.

This love that surpasses knowledge. And the third one is in the following verse, verse 20. Now to him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we can ask or imagine according to his power that is at work within us.

How do I know that these are mysteries? Because the first one it says, the riches of Christ are unsearchable. So he could look for them forever, he couldn't find them.

The love of Christ surpasses knowledge. Nobody could understand the love of Christ. And the third one, the immeasurable work of Christ.

[7 : 04] That appears to me as a mathematician. You can't measure it. So I want to look at those three and in particular to think about what impact they would have on us as Christians.

I want you to imagine this scenario at school. Another few teachers here. So Kirstie, you could be one here. Put your hand up if you know anything about teaching. Have you been a teacher or you've been in school? That's everybody, right.

Okay. And you'll recognise this situation. Not necessarily these words, but here's the situation. Imagine that when you're at school, the teacher said, look, I want you to do a project on this particular topic that you realised you knew nothing about that topic.

And so you asked the teacher some questions to help you along the way. And here are the questions and the answers. First question. What book or book should I read to find out about it, sir?

Answer. There are no books and it's not on the internet either. Second question. What work that we've done in class will I need to help me with this?

[8 : 15] Answer. Nothing. It's well beyond anything that you've ever done. Third question. When will I know that I've done enough for this project? You won't know because it's always going to be more things for you to learn.

Now, I don't know whether your teacher ever did that to you, but wouldn't you be a bit discouraged? And you wouldn't think much about this project. Well, in a way, it could be pointed out that when Paul is mentioning these things, these people he was speaking to, the Ephesians, could have been very discouraged.

But actually, that's not his intention. His intention is rather the opposite, to encourage them. Because what he has already said in the previous two chapters about the blessings of Christ Christ and about how we live for him and how we've been born again, more than cover the answers to some of the questions that we're going to ask.

So, he's putting forward these things, but it's not as discouraging as it might seem on the surface. And all of this comes under this heading, that all of these things are part of the manifold blessings or the manifold wisdom of God.

So, for each one of these, I'm going to give you an introduction, which is something that you'll all recognize. And then I'm going to go on to see how it might involve the passage that we read.

[9 : 48] Think about the first one, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Think about the first one. I wonder if you've ever been sent up, this is a men thing, this one, to find some socks from a drawer.

Mum, wife, somebody says, go find some socks. You know, we're going out, go find some socks. And you go to the drawer, full of socks, and there's a particular pair of socks you're looking for.

And about ten minutes later, you shout to your wife or you shout to your mum. You say, I can't find them. They're not in this drawer.

And mum or wife comes up, reaches the drawer. There they are. And they sort of go and walk off. Sound familiar?

The other one. This is maybe ladies, but this is men as well. This covers all of us. Right? You're washing up. Right?

[10 : 59] And you've been washing up quite a long while. There's a big pile of pots on the side. And you get to the point, and you feel around in the water. There's nothing there. And you're just about to leave.

So you think, I'll empty the bowl. And what always happens? A spoon falls out of the bowl. You felt around it with your hands, but you couldn't find it.

It wasn't there. And even worse, I've got a lot of books. And sometimes, I know there's a book on my shelf. I know it's titled. I know it's there, because I've read it lots of times before.

I even know the colour of the spine. Can I find it? No. And then somebody would just say, there it is. Sound familiar?

Well, when Paul is talking to these people about the unsearchable riches of Christ, what he's actually saying is, it's a bit, as Peter was saying this morning, the words, we need really to turn them on the head.

[12 : 05] It's not a case of the fact that they're unsearchable. You don't search because they've been given already. We don't have to find them. We already have them.

We just need to realise what's happened. So, if you look at what's happened in the previous chapter, this is what it says. Some of the riches that are mentioned.

And again, when we think of riches, we might think of money. We might think of possessions. But these are spiritual riches. Things that the world, it's true, it's unsearchable to them.

Because they're looking for the wrong sort of riches, and they're looking in the wrong place anyway. Let me just remind you of just a few of many that are in this book and other letters of Paul.

Ephesians 2, verses 4 and 5 says, God made us alive with Christ. Ephesians 2, verse 6 says, God seated us with him in the heavenly realms.

[13 : 10] In Ephesians 2, verse 13, it says, In Christ Jesus, you who were once far away have been brought near. This whole chapter, remember, started by saying that the real mystery was why Gentiles, us, non-Jews, came to earn this salvation, or be given this salvation, of Christ.

That must have been a fantastic mystery to the Jews who heard it at the time. Ephesians 2, verse 14. He, this is talking about Jesus, is our peace.

You know, if you look around the world, and you look at all the turmoil that's going on, and all the people who aren't at peace, either nation between nation, political party to political party, families, or worst of all, people who aren't even at peace with themselves, then every single person needs this peace.

And yet, you could search for a lifetime and never find it in this world. You can only find it in Christ. And then Ephesians, chapter 2, verse 16, it says that Jesus is going to reconcile them to God, that's us, through the cross.

So all of these things have gone on. These are some of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

[14 : 42] And yet, when a man or a woman turns to Christ and believes in Him, then all of these things, all of these riches, are given to them. But you know, I've seen some people in my, what is now quite a long life, who have become Christians, understand about the gospel, understand that they've been saved, but for some reason, they've missed out on many of the riches, because they then really stop looking for them.

It's almost as if the Lord gives us, when we become Christians, glasses, and we can put them on, and we can actually see now, because it says beforehand, we were blind, we couldn't see. And He's given us these, if you like, spiritual glasses.

And now we can see all the riches of Christ. But you know, some Christians have still got their eyes closed. And they can't see them. They don't realize that meeting together, like we're doing tonight, is a tremendous blessing, is a tremendous, one of the riches of Christ, that we can meet together, around this word.

And they starve themselves of that. Some people have difficulty praying. I don't mean verbally. They don't pray about anything much.

I think we need to pray, not just every day, but every minute of every day. Because there's something, always, that's happening, where we need to go back to God. So that's the first mystery.

[16 : 15] But Paul is saying, but it's been given to you. It's unsearchable, but God's given you, these riches of Christ. And as I say, those are only a few, of the very many more, that are there.

So, what is the application, of that? It's alright, understanding that. It's alright, reading that. But what is it actually going to mean, to us, as Christians?

Well, educationists say, that, you don't learn anything, if you're afraid. So some of the teachers, I had at school, used to have a big stick, and used to threaten you with it.

I'm not sure, that they ever hit anybody, but they certainly threatened them. Certainly, board rubbers flew. Fortunately, I never got caught by one. But it said, nobody can learn, if they're fearful.

You only learn, if you're confident, in your, well-being, as it were. And you know, as Christians, when we understand, that we have, the riches of Christ, we have them.

[17 : 25] Not because of anything, we've done, but because we've been given, them, by himself. To enjoy. To take note, of the fact, that we're secure, in him.

That one day, we'll be with him, for eternity. Then, surely, that's when we'll start, to learn. If we're, those people, who are always afraid, as the world seems to be, of Christians, and what, the gospel says, then, they're never going to learn, about these riches.

Because people, who are afraid, never learn. All they do, is worry, about what they don't know, and they're never going, to find out, what they need to know, because, it's unsearchable.

What about, the second one? The love, that surpasses, knowledge. Just think about that, for a minute. And now, I'm going to read, part of a report, that appeared, in an American paper.

In 1982, in Lawrenceville, Georgia, Tony Cavallo, was repairing, was repairing, a 1964, Chevrolet Impala, from underneath. The vehicle, was propped up, with jacks, but it fell.

[18 : 50] Cavallo's mother, Mrs Angela Cavallo, lifted the car, high enough, and long enough, for two neighbours, to replace the jacks, and pull Tony, from underneath the car. The love, that that woman showed, gave her, a strength, beyond, what she was capable of.

You know, if you said to any, lady here tonight, oh just go and lift that car, it's parked a bit awkwardly, can you just lift it, and move it over a bit. They'd think, I was mentally deranged. But, this lady, lifted a car.

Why? Because her son, the one she loved, was underneath, and would have died. It's said, that she ripped, all the tendons, and sinews, and you know, many muscles, in her body, and it took her, a long time to recover.

But she did it, out of love. This love, that's mentioned here, is Christ's love, that surpasses, knowledge.

All of us, will have loved, sometime in our lives, whether it's a child, whether it's a parent, whether it's a wife, or a husband, or, just some, other person, that we just, loved so much.

[20 : 12] But, whatever that love, is like, God's word says, that's nothing, compared, to the love of Christ, which he demonstrated, on the cross.

nothing. It surpasses knowledge. There's nothing, in our heads, there's nothing, in our minds, that could comprehend, the love, that God, has, for us.

Nothing. Let me read you, a couple of verses. First one is, again from Ephesians, chapter 2. But because of his, great love for us, God who is rich in mercy, made us alive, with Christ.

And of course, most famous, verse, I would think in scripture, John 3, 16, for God, for God, so loved the world, that he gave his only son, whoever believes in him, should not perish, but have, eternal life.

The love of that lady, for her son, was so great, that, it enabled her, to do something, that would be impossible, to lift a car.

[21 : 29] If God's, love, and our experience of it, gets anywhere near, what God's love really is, even with our limited, ability to understand, then, we'll be able to do, great things.

Many missionaries, have gone out, to the mission field, and when people, have asked them, well, you know, how did he do it, how did he go to Africa, or China, or wherever it was, and they always answered, well, it wasn't, anything that I thought, I could do, but, out of love, for Christ, I just obeyed, and did it, and they achieved, great things, for God.

And we've all got, to ask ourselves, a question, based on that, in the hymns, that we've sung, this evening, and hidden in the prayers, that we prayed, and in this, this text, it's all, about love, and it was about love, this morning, about God's, love for us, and it leads, to, a question, if, someone, just an ordinary person, like that lady, was able to lift that car, because of her love, for her son, and that's only, the minutest fraction, of, the love, that God has for us, and that he demonstrated, and said, he cries to the cross, what, can we do, for God, because of our love, for him, well, the Bible, tells us a number of things, I'm not going to revert, to verses, I've just put a few, bullet points here, we're to love each other, we're to love each other, if God loves us so much, surely, we can love one another, and sometimes, that can seem difficult, we're to pray for one another,

Paul in his letters, is always praying, for the people, he's writing to, he says, I'll pray for you, that this will happen, that will happen, that you'll get stronger, he prays for them, we're to help those, who need help, we're to be servants, the Bible says, servants of God, and finally, we're to tell others, about our faith in Christ, not because of, what a book says, albeit an inspired book, because, we've got, the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Spirit, in our hearts, we just need to testify, to what we know, it's as simple, but as difficult, as that, so that is, a love that surpasses knowledge, what about the last one, in verse 20, the immeasurable work, of Christ, quite often, I'm walking on the moors, and when we got these long, summer nights,

I usually stay out, a bit too long, to see the sunset, and realise, I'm in the middle of the moors, it's going to be dark, before I get back, and I haven't brought a torch with me, which is a problem, but when you look up, as darkness falls, you see, usually, one, or two stars, in the sky, sometimes, if you're not an astronomer, they might be planets, but who knows, if they twinkle, I assume it's a star, and then, as it gets darker, you see more and more, and if you get away, from the lights, of the town, or the city, more and more, begin to appear, and I've seen photographs, taken, in the middle of the Sahara desert, or something, and, you just can't count, the number of stars, there are so many of them, this, is what, is being spoken about here, whatever we think, about the work, that Christ, Christ, has done, when he sat down, at the right hand of God, he said, it's finished, well he said that, on the cross as well, but then he sat down, at the right hand of God, and that also suggested, everything has been done, that needed, to be done,

[25 : 52] I wonder if you thought, about, what that would mean, millions, and millions, of things, that would need to happen, for, this plan, to come, to completion, to save, his people, again I'll just read you, a few verses, just to remind you, of some of the things, Psalm 103, verses 11 and 12 says, as high as the heavens are, above the earth, so great, is his love, for those who fear him, as far as the east, is from the west, so far, he has removed, our transgressions, progressions, from us, and he talks, in Ephesians 2 again, that Christ Jesus, is the cornerstone, of his church, and he's still building, that church, because the church, as we know, isn't the building, it's the people, so this is another verse, from that same chapter, and in him, you too, are being built together, to become a dwelling, in which God lives, by his spirit, why are we all, here tonight, yes to, read the word, to pray, to sing, our songs of praise, but, in meeting together,

God is building, his church, he wants us, to be together, so that, we can become a dwelling, in which God lives, by his spirit, do we want the Lord, to come, I prayed earlier, about revival, and how people, could be converted, if we were, this dwelling, where God, was living, by his spirit, it would happen, we're the hindrance, because, we don't always, do these things, which, make the church, grow, so every Bible verse, that you could read, here, is telling us, the same thing, that all of this plan, all of these, wonderful things, in the wisdom, the manifold wisdom, of God, he's given us, these mysterious, promises, that are difficult, to understand, they're difficult, to count, and from a human, point of view, we can't understand, any of this, but, for what purpose, well,

I've given you, the clue, and what I've said, we need to answer, the question, how can we, help God, to build his church, in this place, because, that's, the theme, of every verse, in the New Testament, this was a time, of tremendous, church growth, all of these books, that we're reading, Ephesians, Galatians, Philippians, and all the others, they were all new churches, that had sprung up, because, they understood, and of course, the Holy Spirit, was especially at work, in those days, things, but they were, things that we've all, experienced, from time to time, so, what is our responsibility, in all this, well, I've got three things, first, it's obvious, we've got to be Christians, he's never going to build, his church, if it's full of, people who aren't Christians, we need to, continue, to serve him, as we, have our own, walk with God, and hopefully, then we can, proclaim to other people, what we've learned, if it's impossible, for people in this world, to learn these, unsearchable things, then the only alternative, since,

Christ isn't here, physically on this earth, is for us to tell them, what we've experienced, and of course, it's still his work, to perform the conversion, but we need to tell, of what we've experienced, the second thing, is that having understood, the depth, of Christ's love for us, in dying for our sins, despite the fact, that we hated him, at one point, then, we can more easily, demonstrate, his love to others, because we can, remember, what we were like once, and how we didn't see, and how stubborn, we were, as we built the church, and the third thing is, this whole passage, tells us, that we have access, to this power, that's mentioned, the power, of Christ, and this, thing that we need, to know, he's given us, authority, to use, his power, there's no limit to it, in growing his church, it's unlimited, and yet, even as Christians, sometimes, we're barely, touching the surface, of what is possible, in terms of accessing, this power, that is, available to us, the Bible says, that this power, that's at work, in the Christian, is the same power, that brought Jesus, back from the dead,

I can't comprehend, how much power, that is, but it's enormous, isn't it, and yet, we've all got to admit, in our lives, we only use, the tiniest proportion, of what's available, it's like somebody, giving you a generator, that can produce, thousands and thousands, of watts, joules, or whatever else you want, to power your house, and it would actually, power a whole city, and you just use it, to boil a kettle, this is what, Paul is saying, to these people, that he's speaking to, the only conclusion, you can reach, about this passage, I think, is that, Paul wants, everyone, to understand, and not, to, be concerned, because, because, this mystery, is very simple, to explain, and, this is through, the Holy Spirit, he's the one, who reveals these things, to our hearts, and minds, just a few more, quotes, to close,

[32 : 39] Matthew, Matthew 7, verse 7, ask, and it will be given to you, seek, and you will find, knock, and the door will be opened to you, for everyone who asks, receives, he who seeks, finds, and to him who knocks, the door will be opened, Matthew 6, 33, not sure we had this morning, but seek first his kingdom, and his righteousness, and all these things, will be given to you as well, 1st Timothy, chapter 3, verse 16, beyond all question, the mystery of godliness, is great, he appeared in a body, was vindicated by the spirit, was seen by angels, was preached among the nations, was believed on in the world, was taken up in glory, and the last one, Paul again this time, speaking to the Colossians, chapter 2, verses 2 and 3, my purpose, is that they may be encouraged in heart, and united in love, so that they may have the full riches, of complete understanding, in order that they may know, the mystery of god, namely Christ, in whom are hidden, all the treasures, of wisdom, and knowledge, what is the manifold, wisdom of god,

Christ, Christ, I've forgotten how many times, I've said that this week, but, the only conclusion, you can reach, in looking at this, is we must always, be looking to Jesus, looking anywhere else, looking at any other person, looking at any other religion, is a complete waste of time, because only he, can reveal, those mysteries, to us, the mysteries, of his grace, and I've got one question, to finish, and I'll tell you the answer, which is a good thing, the question is this, just if you could imagine, what would it be like, to be really, really loved, to be really, really rich, and to be able to work, without having to take a rest, just work and work and work, to accomplish whatever you wanted, wouldn't that be great, well, this passage that we just read, tells us, that we are loved, like that, by Christ, that we have, all the riches, we might ever need, in Christ, and, that we have, the work of Christ, to do, and if we, look to Christ, and remember those things, then we'll be servants, of the living God, and one day, we'll be with him, in glory, isn't that a fantastic thing, to look forward to,

Amen.