

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ

EPHESIANS CHAPTER THREE

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end"—Luke 1:32-33.

THE Bible Companion method of reading the Scripture of Truth has once more brought us to Paul's letter to the saints at Ephesus.

If we were to appraise it carefully, and attempt to compare it with his other letters, we might, as one has said, come to the conclusion "that it is perhaps the profoundest writing in existence."

But that is not the purpose of the letter. It was written for the instruction and edification of the ecclesia at Ephesus, and **it is evident that Paul expected them to understand it.**

This shows us how well he had taught them while he was with them, for if they could understand this letter, Paul's teaching must have been thorough and forceful.

What about ourselves? Can we understand it? Have we been well taught concerning the things pertaining to the way of salvation? We hope so. But, if not, then let us, as Peter said, "be alert and gird up the loins of our mind." This letter is not to be read and laid aside, but to be read and understood.

This morning, we begin the 3rd chapter with these words—

"For this cause I am the prisoner of the Anointed Jesus on account of you of the Gentiles."

"For this cause," that is, because of what he just said in chapter 2, where, especially in vs. 11-13, he said—

"Wherefore remember, that ye being in time past Gentiles in the flesh . . .

"That at that time ye were without Christ, being aliens from the Commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:

"But now in Christ Jesus ye who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

It will be remembered that it was because of his preaching to the Gentiles that Paul was apprehended and taken to Rome, where this letter was written at a time when he was bound to a soldier in his prison. But he said little of that, for his whole thought was that he might finish his course as the apostle to the Gentiles.

He fully realized the responsibility of his work, as he said in his letter to the Romans—

"For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office." (11:13).

That is, he honoured or glorified his ministry. There was great reason for this, as he said to Agrippa in Acts 26:16-18; repeating the words of Jesus to him—

"But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee:

"Delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light,
"And from the power of satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me."

That the Gentiles should share in the salvation offered to Israel was not something new, because it had been testified in the prophets, but in an obscure manner, and was therefore not understood by the apostles until it was revealed to Peter, and later to Paul.

Paul refers to it several times as the "mystery." But in our readings this morning, he deals with it in particular, for in vs. 2-7 (Diaglott) he says—

"Since indeed, you heard the administration of that favor of God having been given me for you;

"That by revelations He made known to me the secret—(as I wrote briefly before, by reading which, you can perceive my intelligence in the secret of the Anointed One, which in other generations was not known to the sons of men, as it has now been revealed to His holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit)—that the Gentiles are fellow-heirs, and a joint-body, and co-partners of the promise in Christ Jesus, through the glad tidings, of which I became a servant, according to that gracious gift of God, which was imparted to me by the energy of His power."

It is only necessary to read the record of Paul's work in the Acts of the Apostles, and in his own letters, to understand and appreciate how he served God and how he honoured and glorified his ministry. But one thing is certain; he did not claim any glory for himself for, in 1 Cor. 15:10, Paul said—

"But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

It is not uncommon for a person who has gained considerable knowledge, or who has been promoted to a position of high honor, to become puffed up, or become inflated with pride; but not so with Paul.

Memories of his life previous to his conversion, seemed to weigh heavily upon his mind, for in 1 Cor. 15:9, he said—

"For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God."

This lingering thought comes out again in our reading this morning in v. 8, but is overshadowed by his declaration and explanation of the hidden mystery as it related to the Gentiles, for he continues:

"Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ;

"And to make all men see what is the fellowship (stewardship or administration) of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God Who created all things."

It should be noted here that the words "by Jesus Christ" are not in the original, and it should read, as it does in the RV, "God Who created all things"—

"To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be known, by the ecclesia, the manifold wisdom of God,

"According to the eternal purpose which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

What sublime thoughts these words stir up within us! They lift us up out of the mundane things by which we are surrounded, and carry us away to the limitless heights and grandeur of the divine purpose.

BUT DO THEY? When these words were read this morning, did we try to place ourselves in the company of Paul, and could we hear him talking to us, and could we feel their weighty import? We should, brethren and sisters.

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NOW Paul says his mission was "to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ." What are these unsearchable riches? Is our question not fully answered when we learn of the subject-matter of his preaching? We believe so!

In the last chapter of Acts, we are instructed that Paul reasoned with the Jews of Rome out of the Law of Moses, and out of the Prophets, and when they agreed not among themselves, they departed.

Because of their rejection of the Word of God, we read in vs. 28-31 that he said to them—

"Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it . . .

"And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him,

"Preaching the Kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him."

Here, then, in the Anointed Jesus we have the unsearchable riches, for he is the Son of God, the future King of the whole earth, our Mediator and High Priest, the Saviour of all who come unto him or, as Paul has said, he is (1 Cor. 1:30)—

"Made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption."

Let us, during this quiet period of meditation, refresh our minds regarding the boundless riches that are set before us in the Gospel. With the eye of faith, we go right back to the beginning—

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel" (Gen. 3:15).

The seed of the serpent is allegorical of those over whom sin reigns. The seed of the woman is allegorical of the servants of righteousness, of whom Christ is the head.

The sin-power brought about the death of Christ but it did not destroy him. The time is yet to come for him to return and destroy the sin-power or, as John said, he will destroy the works of the devil.

It is difficult to comprehend the magnitude of what this signifies. We do know the great power of sin and death, and we have this inspired statement of Paul in 1 Cor. 15:25-26—

"For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death."

The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death. Let us not read that sentence and pass it by. Do we fully appreciate the magnitude of that promise? The word "magnitude" does not convey the depth of meaning we would like to bring out, but the words of Jesus do in Rev. 21:4, where we read—

"And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain."

Again our mind travels back in faith, and we hear the gracious words of God to faithful Abraham—

"I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 12:3).

In Gal. 3:8, Paul says that by this promise God **preached the Gospel** to Abraham. What a glorious thing it is to know that when Christ establishes the Kingdom of God, a state of blessing will rest upon all nations! Abraham was assured—

"Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:17).

This promise signifies that when Christ reigns, he will conquer all nations and, as Mary said (Luke 1:52-53)—

"He will put down the mighty from their seats . . . and the rich he will send away empty."

These promises made to Abraham almost 4000 years ago are so distant that they seem to be obscure. But they are **still in force**, as we learn from Paul in Gal. 3:16—

"Now to Abraham and his Seed were the promises made. He saith not, 'And to **seeds**,' (as of many), but as of one, 'And to thy **Seed**,' which is Christ."

But to bring these promises closer to us, and leave no vestige of obscurity, Paul adds—

"For **as many of you as have been baptized** into Christ have put on Christ . . .

"And **IF** ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal. 3:27-29).

Ponder these words:—baptized into Christ—put on Christ . . . Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise. That is the glorious gateway to life!

In our readings this morning, Paul puts it in another way—

"That the Gentiles should be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel" (Eph. 3:6).

Here we have the words "fellow-heirs," and "partakers of His promise." What could be more beautiful and inspiring! Think of it. Fellow-heirs with Christ, and partakers of God's promise in Christ by the Gospel.

Think of the greatness of Christ as stated by Paul—

"Whom He hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also He made the worlds . . .
("Or as we read in the Diaglott, "On account of whom also He constituted the ages.")

"Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person, and upholding all things by the Word of His power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

"Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they" (Heb. 1:2-4).

Is it possible for us to comprehend the depth of meaning in these beautiful words of Paul? **Should we not dwell lovingly and repeatedly upon them, allowing them to transform our fleshly hearts?**

Here is a person with whom we have become associated by our belief and obedience of the Gospel. Do we realize how great he is, and what it really means to be a fellow heir, and to be a partaker of God's promise in him?

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ANOTHER point worthy of our special attention is the apostle's reference to Jesus as being the "brightness of God's glory." We can understand that, for from him shone forth the glory of God, for God was in him, and as he said, the works that he did were the Father's.

Paul has another beautiful reference to this matter of glory in 2 Cor. 4:3-6—

"But if our Gospel be hid, it is hid to them that are lost:

"In whom the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious Gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them.

"For God, Who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ."

This is further illustrated in John 1:14—

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and Truth."

These are some of the things that Paul describes as "the unsearchable riches of Christ" and a consideration of them should fill us with awe, and encourage us to serve God with reverence and godly fear.

We must be influenced in this manner, in such a way that we will reflect in our way of living a form of conduct that will stamp us as being obviously different from those by whom we are surrounded in our daily work.

This can be accomplished if we permit the transforming inspiration of the unsearchable riches of Christ to develop in us an exalted frame of mind generated by a manner of thinking that is far superior to that of the natural mind.

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WE come back now to the third chapter of Ephesians and v. 14 where Paul enters into prayer, and his first petition appears in v. 16—

"That He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

"The riches of His glory" is a phrase often used by Paul:

"That He might make known the **riches of His glory** on the vessels of mercy, which He had afore prepared unto glory, even us, whom He hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles" (Rom. 9:23-24).

"But my God shall supply all your needs according to **His riches in glory** by Christ" (Phil. 4:19).

"To whom God would make known what is the **riches of the glory** of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of Glory" (Col. 1:27).

It is evident from these references that "the riches of His glory" comprehends the abundance of good things that God has prepared for His people to be given to them in the day described by Isaiah in 40:5—

"And the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together; for the mouth of the Lord hath spoken it."

But this "glory of the Lord" has not yet been made known. It is held in reserve for the faithful in Christ Jesus, as Paul says in 1 Cor. 2:9—

"As it is written, Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love Him."

His first petition on their behalf is that they may be "Strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

Or as he expressed it in the letter to the Colossians —

"That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, increasing in the knowledge of God;

"Strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, unto all patience and longsuffering with JOYFULNESS" (Col. 1:10-11).

This strengthening with might by His Spirit in the inner man does not appear to us to have any relation to the Spirit gifts, but rather the Word of God, for Jesus said—

"The words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life" (John 6:63).

One of Paul's most beautiful applications of this thought is found in Col. 3:16—

"Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Brethren and sisters, **do we hear those words of Paul?** Can you picture this ecclesia, wholly dominated by these thoughts expressed here?

THEY SHOULD BE; there is no question about it. Think of it—

1. "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly in all wisdom."
2. "Teaching and admonishing one another in Psalms and Hymns and spiritual songs."
3. "Singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord."

Is that what we as individuals are above all things striving for, or are we attaching too much importance to the petty things of this life?

Now if we go back to Rom. 8:8-10, we find Paul using the same thought, but with more emphasis—

"But ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you.

"Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is NONE OF HIS!

"And if Christ be in you, the body is dead because of sin; but the Spirit is life because of righteousness."

This all leads us to Eph. 3:17, where Paul says—

"That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

As we look back on these statements of Paul, what conclusions do we arrive at? Does it not seem clear that God's eternal purpose, through Christ, is to cause to grow a closely-knit community of spiritual beauty based upon holiness; a community dedicated to the service of Christ whose word dwells in them **richly**, thereby causing them to lay aside the ways of the world where all is bitterness, wrath, anger and bad feeling of every kind.

Having done this, they replace these things by being kind one to another, tender-hearted, and **WHATEVER THEY DO** is done in the Name of the Lord Jesus, and by this their love is made perfect.

The result of Christ dwelling in our hearts by faith is manifest by Paul's concluding petition in vs. 17-19—

"That ye, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height;

"And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be **filled with all the fulness of God.**"

"Rooted and grounded" expresses the idea of being stabilized, consolidated or settled, or as he said in another place—

"Rooted and built up in him, and stablished in the faith; a faith that worketh by love and purifies the heart."

Paul then goes on to show that by this indwelling of the Spirit of Christ we—

"May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height, and to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge."

Thus he describes the love of Christ in all its completeness, and then he brings his prayer to a climax with that comprehensive and sublime statement—

"FILLED WITH ALL THE FULNESS OF GOD."

What does the apostle mean by this unusual way of speaking? We get a clue in Col. 1:19, where in speaking of Jesus, he said—

"For it pleased the Father that in him (that is, Jesus) should all fulness dwell."

And again in Col. 2:9—

"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily."

When we consider that God was in Christ manifesting Himself by every attribute of His Almighty Name, we can realize why it was that "never man spoke like him."

His words and his works testify of him and prove beyond any doubt that his statement in John 14:10, is true—

"Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me?"

"The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, He doeth the works."

Grace and Truth came by Jesus, and when we partake of it we are exhorted by Paul "to go on unto perfection, or full growth." Or as Peter expressed it (2 Peter 3:18)—

"But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ."

This brings us to the words of Paul in Eph. 4:15-16—

"But speaking the Truth in love, we may **grow up** into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ:

"From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love."

If we could but keep this glorious conception of the Truth constantly before our eyes, how brilliant its light would be in all its transcending glory!

Brethren and sisters, WE MUST. As we said in our opening remarks, this letter to the Ephesians is not only in our Bible to read, but to read, inwardly digest and **become a part of our daily lives.**

It is by that course, and by that only, that we will ever be "filled with all the fulness of God."

When we consider that before we became partakers of "the unsearchable riches of Christ" we were—

"At that time without him, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world."

Let us pause for a moment and reflect upon the change that has taken place in our lives because of our belief, our understanding, and obedience of the Gospel—

1. We were aliens from the commonwealth of Israel;
2. We were strangers from the covenants of promise.
3. We had no hope.
4. We were without God in the world.

. . . BUT . . .

". . . But in Christ Jesus we who sometimes were far off are made nigh by the blood of Christ."

What a notable change has taken place! —

"Now therefore, ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints, and of the Household of God;

"And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner-stone."

Our gratitude should be unbounded, so much so that we should join with Paul and say (Rom. 11:33-36)—

"O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

"For who hath known the mind of the Lord? or who hath been His counsellor?

"Or who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?

"For of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to Whom be glory for ever. Amen."

—G. A. G.

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