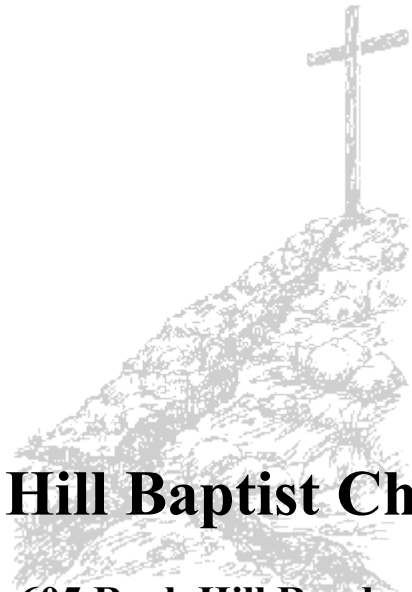


The Unsearchable Riches

Ephesians 3:8-17



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FOCAL Read Responsively (Ephesians 3:8-17 KJV)

"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; {9} And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: {10} **To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, {11} According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord: {12}** In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. {13} Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. {14} **For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, {15} Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, {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; {17} **That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love "**

Today we have a double treat - we will celebrate *Mother's Day*, and will also celebrate our *Homecoming* - a time when we remember our families. I have had several people ask me as to why we have our Homecoming on Mother's Day. After all, this does *fill the day*, and make it a long one. Some stay away from Church today *because* it's Mother's Day. That's sad to me, because though I love fellowships, and though I love my mother (Hi mom!), this is a *wonderful day* to be in Church. Church is *all about family*. In fact, when Church

ceases to be about family, then we need to stop having Church.

Though I believe that all of you probably come from good families, *great families*, families who loved you and brought you (or are bringing you) up, there is one family that matters *above all others*. And that family is the Family of God. If you don't belong to the Family of God, then no matter *who's family you come from* - you're just not where you need to be.

**1. Your Earthly Family Is Built On Physical Birth,
Whereas The Heavenly Family Is Built
On Spiritual Birth**

FOCAL (Ephesians 3:8 KJV) "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;

The Apostle Paul begins by doing something that few in this day ever does - he lowered himself in humility before God Almighty. You see, in our day we like to think we're all worth something - that we have value within ourselves. And we do have value, we do have potential - but *only* insofar as we receive this value or potential from the Lord Jesus. The Apostle said "[I] **am less than the least of all [the] saints**". Or as another translation¹ puts it "**though I am the least deserving Christian there is**". Paul wrote, under the guidance of God the Holy Spirit, most of our New Testament. The Apostle was *set aside* by Jesus on Damascus Road to

carry the Gospel of salvation to the Gentiles (that's everyone who isn't a Jew by natural birth). The Apostle Paul was, at one time in his life, given a vision of Heaven, where he saw and heard things he could not repeat (**2 Corinthians 12:2**). Here is a man whom God has blessed beyond measure, a man who was so blessed that God allowed a *messenger from Satan* to attack him lest he be lifted up with pride. And this man, with all these honors bestowed on him by God, said "**I am the least of all the Christians**"! Why?

I believe the closer a person comes to God, the more that person realizes his own failures and shortcomings. The closer a person gets to the God Who is holy, holy, holy², the more that person realizes that he, like Isaiah said, is

Isaiah 6:5 (HCSB)³ "Then I said: Woe is me, for I am ruined, because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips ..."

You see, the *earthly family* that you are in, you were *born* into that family because of the love your momma and daddy had for one another. Your birth was *biological* and *natural*. But your birth into God's Family is *not natural, but supernatural*. You see, we are all born sinners, and our natural inclination apart from God is to *sin* and *please ourselves*. We can only enter the Family of God *because of Grace*, because God in His infinite mercies made a way for our entrance on that Hill we call Calvary. Paul looked at his life, looked at his accomplishments, and said "**Unto me, who am less than**

² **Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 4:8**

³ Holman Christian Standard Bible, Copyright © 1999, 2000, 2002, 2003 by Holman Bible Publishers, Nashville Tennessee.

the least of all saints, is this grace given". Paul was given Grace, *Double Grace*, just as I am given Double Grace today. Neither he nor I nor even *you* deserve salvation. We deserve eternal punishment, eternal casting away from God ... but instead we received Grace. For Paul and I we not only received the Grace that saved us, but we received a *commission to Grace*, a calling to preach that neither one of us deserve. We preach:

FOCAL (Ephesians 3:8 KJV) "... that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ ..."

The salvation that we have, we have because - not because we are good - but because of the **unsearchable riches of Christ**. Another version⁴ translates this as "**the great riches in Christ which do not come to an end**". I don't know if I like that translation or not - let's see what the *original text* says. The word the King James translates **unsearchable** is a word⁵ which means **something that is past finding out**. It is a thing that is so huge that, when you learn what you think is all of it, then you find out even more. That word⁶ we see translated as **riches** means just that. In other words, the *riches of salvation* are something that our mind cannot grasp. If you were to fully understand *how much you deserve damnation*, then Beloved, you'd understand how rich and precious it is that any of us gain entrance into the Family of God.

4 New Life Version (NLV) Copyright © 1969 by Christian Literature International

5 **anexichniastos** [pronounced an-ex-ikh-nee'-as-tos]

6 **ploutos** [pronounced ploo'-tos], 1) riches, wealth, 1a) abundance of external possessions, 1b) fulness, abundance, plenitude, 1c) a good i.e. that with which one is enriched

Illustrate The worst funeral sermon I've ever heard - and I've a lot of bad ones in my life - the preacher stood there and said how *good* the recently departed was. How *good*? Are you mad? Did not our Lord Jesus Christ said:

Mark 10:18 (DBY)⁷ "... no one is good but one, [that is] God."

I do not want to *try and get* in to Heaven, into the Family of God, based on my goodness. Better to say nothing about the deceased than to say that he or she was *good*. There are *none good but God*, and unless God - by the Grace of Calvary, by the *unmeasurable riches of what Jesus Christ has done*, places goodness on my account, then I cannot enter the Family - and I cannot enter Heaven if I am not in the Family. If you think you're *good*, then you'd better read the words of Jesus:

Matthew 9:13 (KJV) "But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Mark 2:17 (KJV) "When Jesus heard it, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

Luke 5:32 (KJV) "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

7 Darby Translation (DARBY), Public Domain

Those who believe themselves to *be good or righteous need not apply to the Family* - Jesus didn't come for those who were - as they believed - good or whole. What does God say about our goodness?

Isaiah 64:6 (ESV)⁸ "... all our righteous deeds are like a polluted garment. ... our iniquities, like the wind, take us away."

You may have gotten into your physical family because your parents loved one another, but you'll only get into the Family of God when *you* accept *His love, His unsearchable riches, His Grace gift*. You may be the apple of your mother's eye, but if all you have is a relationship with your physical family but no relationship with God through Jesus Christ, then **you cannot be pleasing to God (Romans 8:8)**. Those who have accepted Jesus Christ as Savior live *good lives* and *worthy lives* for Him, because they live *for Jesus through Jesus*.

People who do not know Jesus Christ as Savior *believe themselves and others to be inherently good*, but God in His Word says that this is not true -

(Romans 3:10 KJV) "... There is none righteous, no, not one:"

Illustrate There was a man who believed himself to be good, yet did not believe in God. This man often scoffed at Christians for *leaning on Jesus Christ* for

⁸ The Holy Bible, English Standard Version Copyright © 2001 by Crossway Bibles, a division of Good News Publishers.

salvation. After all, he believed, all people are inherently good, good at heart. We certainly don't deserve hell.

One day this man was ridiculing a preacher named Henry Ward Beecher. As the man attacked Brother Beecher, that saintly man said nothing. Someone asked him why he said nothing in his defense. Brother Beecher said: "As I was walking downtown today, I saw a poor lame man with crutches slowly and carefully picking his way through a cesspool of mud in his endeavor to cross the street. He had just reached the middle of the filth when a big burly ruffian, himself all bespattered, rushed up to him, jerked the crutches out from under the unfortunate man, and left him sprawling and helpless in the pool of filth". The atheist said, "What a brute he was!". Brother Beecher said, "Yes, he is a brute, for you are that man! The human soul is lame, but Christianity gives it crutches to enable it to pass the highway of life. It is your teachings that knock these crutches from under it and leave it a helpless wreck in the slough of despond."⁹

There are many illustrations I could use to show how *sinful and deserving of hell and eternal punishment* we are ... but the best illustrations I can use are found in the Holy Writings. **Abraham** was told to leave family and friends behind and follow the Lord¹⁰. He took **Lot his nephew** with him ... and lived to regret it. **Moses** failed

⁹ from *Pulpit Helps*, "Why Science Cannot Discover God" by *Spiros Zodhiates*

¹⁰ see **Genesis 12:1**

to honor the Lord¹¹ at a place called Meribah, and because of this he was forbidden to enter the Promised Land. **David**, the youngest obscure son of Jesse, was blessed beyond measure when God elevated him to the place of **King of Israel**. He repaid God for this blessing by *numbering* the soldiers of Israel¹², bragging on what he had done rather than praising God for what He in Grace had done. I'll not even mention David and **Bathsheba**, and how this sin of adultery and murder destroyed the innocent life of **Uriah** as well as **Uriah's unnamed son**.

Beloved, we *need* the endless wealth and riches of Christ's Grace. We must have the "**the unsearchable riches of Christ**" at the point of salvation - when we enter the Family of God - and as we *live our lives before Him*. We who are in the Family *must* have the Blood of Calvary. We read:

Romans 5:8-9 (NIV)¹³ "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us. Since we have now been justified by his blood, how much more shall we be saved from God's wrath through him!"

We need Him **much more** if we expect to be **saved from God's wrath**. A time of wrath is coming - but it is unnecessary, and will never come to you, if you are in the Family of God through the **unsearchable riches of Christ**.

11 see **Numbers 20:10-12**

12 see **2 Samuel 2:24**

13 New International Version , Copyright © 1973, 1978, 1984 by International Bible Society

2. Your Heavenly Family Is NOT Built On Human Logic: It Is A Mystery

FOCAL (Ephesians 3:9-11 KJV) "**And to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been hid in God, who created all things by Jesus Christ: {10} To the intent that now unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places might be known by the church the manifold wisdom of God, {11} According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord:**

The Bible calls our Fellowship the **Fellowship of the Mystery**. None of the translations *quite accurately* explain what this word **Mystery** means. Some translate this word as "**something that God did not tell anyone about**"¹⁴. Others translate this word as **mystery**¹⁵ or **secret**¹⁶. Yet the original *definition* of that word¹⁷ means *a secret known only to members within that organization*, a fraternal secret. If you have accepted Christ as Savior, then you share *certain truths* that the world cannot know nor understand.

1 You share an "**eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord**". It was God's Plan from the *very beginning* to raise up a Family for Himself. The *Jew of the Old Covenant* would not even *conceive* of calling God "Father". This was a thing that was unheard of in the Old Testament. The Jew was so frightened of saying

14 Worldwide English Bible

15 Holman Christian Standard and King James Version

16 New Life Version

17 musterion [pronounced moos-tay'-ree-on]

God's name out loud, lest he accidentally blaspheme it, that the Scribes usually blended the *Eternal Name of God* (YHWH) with the more used name of God (ADONAI), so that the resulting name was *unpronounceable*. In **Exodus 6:2-3 God told Moses His Prophet:**

".. I showed Myself as God All powerful [El Shaddai] to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But I did not make Myself known to them by My name, the Lord. [YHWH]"

God was known to His Old Testament saints by many names, and at different times. But it was not until the time of Christ, when *the Blood of Calvary* was at hand, that the Lord ever revealed Himself as **Father**. He always presented Himself as **The God of Your Father**, but never as **God Your Father**. The Old Testament saint didn't see this coming - and Beloved, neither would we have seen it. It was Jesus Christ Who began to reveal this part of the **Mystery of the Fellowship** when He said:

Matthew 23:9 (NASB)¹⁸ "Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven."

and again,

Matthew 12:50¹⁸ "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."

and finally,

John 6:29¹⁸ "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."

The *first part of the Mystery of the Fellowship* is that those who believe on Jesus Christ are *entered* into the Family of God by God Himself.

FOCAL (Ephesians 3:12-16 KJV) **"In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him. {13} Wherefore I desire that ye faint not at my tribulations for you, which is your glory. {14} For this cause I bow my knees unto the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, {15} Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, {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;**

2 The second part of the **Fellowship of the Mystery** is that this Family is *not just localized to this earth*. We read about **"the whole family in heaven and earth"**. The Family of God - *which the Believer is a part of* - is *here and now*. This Family, just like God Himself, *transcends space and time*.

We entered into the Family of God when His Spirit - in response to our our faith in Christ - came to live *inside of us*. The Bible says:

¹⁸ New American Standard Bible, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation

1 Thessalonians 4:8 (CEV)¹⁹ "... God ... gives you His Holy Spirit

God has given you His Spirit, Who lives *inside of you to guide you* as you follow His Word and His Will. This is why our Ephesians text tells us that Paul was praying that these believers would be "**strengthened with might by his Spirit in the inner man**". If you are a believer, you are *indwelt* by the Holy Spirit. If you are a believer, you are *entered into the Family of God* through the operation of this same Spirit. We also read:

Romans 8:15-17 (HCSB)²⁰ "For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption, by whom we cry out, " Abba, Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies together with our spirit that we are God's children, and if children, also heirs —heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ—seeing that we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him."

We are *adopted* into the Family of God by the Spirit of God Who lives and works in each one of us. The world will never understand this relationship between God and man, between believer and Heavenly Father. The world will never understand that Jesus Christ is *not just a Prophet*, but Jesus Christ is *Eternal God Who made something impossible possible*.

I love my earthly family, but I cannot live apart from my

Heavenly Family. I love my mother and dad, but without my Heavenly Father I am no better than an orphan on this earth.

Two parents made my physical life, but Three Persons - Father, Son, and Spirit - worked together to grant me Eternal Life. Unless you are in the Way, where

FOCAL (Ephesians 3:17 KJV) "**... Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith ..**"

Then what hope do you have?

Illustrate There was a commercial that came on television a few years ago – you probably remember it - where a frustrated man was trying to get his barbecue grill lit. He'd been working with it for a while, but to no avail. Just a few coals showed a little white around the edges, and he was still a long way from cooking those steaks. Finally, in frustration, he decided that he'd pour the lighter fluid directly on the partially lit coals. Of course, this was the worst thing he could do! A small spark traveled up that stream of lighter fluid, and a huge ball of flame covered the man. In the next scene you see that poor man, minus eyebrows, while the announcer says "We all do dumb things".

Though this may be humorous (unless it happens to you), in reality pouring lighter fluid on smoldering coals can be heartbreaking. The National Fire Data Center estimates that yearly outside cooking grills cause more than 6,000 fires, 5 fatalities, more than 170 injuries, and \$35 million in property loss. If you use lighter fluid carelessly, you could find yourself minus a lot more than

19 Contemporary English Version, Copyright © 1995 by American Bible Society

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eyebrows. You could find your quality of life degraded or destroyed.

Though most of us would never consider foolishly dumping a flammable liquid on smoldering coals, many of us do something just as foolish. We ignore our Creator while we chase after the things of this world. Those of us who are parents and grandparents particularly need to come to the Lord. Do you realize that in the next thirty minutes somewhere in America 29 teenagers will attempt suicide, 14 teenage girls under the age of 16 will have a baby, 685 teens - both boys and girls - will take narcotics, 57 teens will run away from home, and 32 young girls will have an abortion. Most of those children belong to parents that have spent little time living their lives for Jesus. The Bible warns us that "You will always harvest what you plant!" (Galatians 6:7). This is absolutely true for children. Children learn to live their lives either inside or outside of Christ based on what their parents do. If we model our lives after Christ, our children will at some point come to know Him and be blessed with the abundant life that our Savior offers (Proverbs 22:6). The seed you plant by your actions can lead your loved ones to eternal life, or to live their lives dancing to the tune of this world.

This week we will celebrate a holiday we call "Mother's Day". I praise God for my mother, and praise God for every parent who introduced their children to the Savior. Were it not for my mother and grandmother who lovingly took me to Church (whether I wanted to go or not), I know that I would be a statistic on a police blotter or a mortician's table today. A life rich in Christ is never dumb, for it equips you to handle the inevitable ups and

downs that we all encounter every day. The Bible says that God is "not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance" (2 Peter 3:9). Our Lord wants to bless you, to bless your family, to lead you all to "know the love of Christ ... that you might be filled with all the fullness of God". God wants us all to find salvation through a relationship in Jesus Christ, believing on Him, trusting in Him. God wants this for the grandparents, the parents, and the children of every family on this earth. The salvation of our children will come when we live our faith before our children, showing them that Jesus is not found in ritual but in a living and abiding relationship. Give your children - and yourself - a high quality life. Turn fully to Jesus Christ - and have a wonder filled Mother's Day!