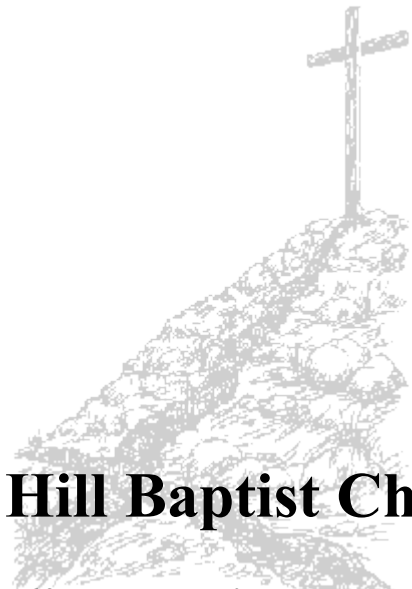


# Keeping The Main Thing The Main Thing

Ephesians 3:8-11



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**FOCAL Read Responsively** Ephesians 3:8-11 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**<sup>KJV</sup>

When did Opie die?

One of my favorite shows of *yesteryear* is the "Andy Griffith Show". I was saddened when I heard that the actor who played "Barney" (Don Knotts) passed into eternity. Mayberry - though it only existed on a television studio - was such a wonderful place. The harshest thing you saw on this show was when Otis (the town drunk) made an appearance, locking himself into "his" jail cell. People went to Church on Sunday in Mayberry. After services they would come home to Sunday dinner, then sit on the front porch to lovingly talk to one another until time for bed. The best part of the show, in my opinion, was when "Andy" (Andy Griffith) and his son "Opie" (actor Ron Howard) interacted. Opie periodically got into trouble, though the troubles he faced never involved illicit sex or illegal drugs. Opie was a child growing up in a loving family and in a loving town. When did Opie die?

My heart breaks that the Opie of Mayberry grew up and became a part of the sick Hollywood culture that today attacks family and Christian values. Mr. Howard, now a director/ producer, recently completed a direct attack against all that is Godly and honorable in his movie "The DaVinci Code". The same Opie who sat in the fictitious Mayberry Community Church is now portraying Jesus Christ as fallen man, not the very Son of God. This movie mocks the Lord of all creation as a figment of the imagination of the early Church, a "conspiracy" that the Christian community continues to push on America. It is understandable when the unbelieving world rejects the claims of Jesus Christ. Those who do not know the Savior, who have never accepted Him as Lord of their lives, cannot understand why we Christians love Him so. The world thinks the Christian to be ignorant, or superstitious, or *both*. Yet we are none of these things. I have never met a Christian who was not - prior to his or her salvation - a skeptic. The apologist C.S. Lewis was a great skeptic until he met the Lord face to face. Lewis would later write in his book *Mere Christianity*:

**"A man who was merely a man and said the sort of things Jesus said would not be a great moral teacher. He would either be a lunatic - on the level with a man who says he is a poached egg - or he would be the devil of hell. You must take your choice. Either this was, and is, the Son of God, or else a madman or something worse. You can shut Him up for a fool or you can fall at His feet and call Him Lord and God. But let us not come with any patronizing nonsense about His being a great human teacher. He has not**

**left that open to us."**

Mr. Lewis, along with millions of others, are people who were called into salvation by God *through the preaching of the Gospel* (1 Corinthians 1:9). A Christian is someone who has a *living and vibrant relationship* with the Faithful God Who made us all. A Christian is someone who, even in the midst of trials, finds God to be faithful to what He has promised (1 Corinthians 10:13). A Christian is not a conspirator, nor confused, nor conscripted into the ranks of faith. A Christian is someone who, on hearing the preaching of the Gospel, **"Believed on the Lord Jesus Christ and was saved"** by the Faith Creator of all things (Romans 10:9-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:24). When we are attacked, we do not respond as the unbeliever does. We do not riot, burn things, nor attack back. We do as our Savior bids. We love, and show our love by telling others what Jesus told us to say (John 14:6). **Jesus is THE Way, THE Truth, and THE Life. No man comes to the Father (God) but by Jesus.**

When did Opie die? Opie, I fear, was just a figment of our imagination. He, like the make believe place called "Mayberry", never really existed. Andy, Opie, Barney, Aunt Bea - these were all actors on a stage. But oh, how I wish Opie had lived! What a great good he could have done in America if he had only preached the Truth.<sup>1</sup>

What Ron Howard did, he did out of a heart of unbelief. His heart preached what he truly believed. What do we

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<sup>1</sup> note: Pastor Buffaloe will send a copy of "Deflating the DaVinci Code" to any who write "Rock Hill Baptist Church, 605 Rock Hill Road, Lexington, Tn, 38351". There is no cost nor obligation to any who write

believe? Do we believe the Word of God to be without error, fully true in all that it presents – or do we believe that this Word is adulterated with error? Do we believe that the Gospel presented by the Word of God is sufficient not only to save, but also to *enable* – or are we merely killing time and saying words when we attend the preaching of this Word? Do we, like Paul, understand that ....

### 1. The Gospel We Have Been Given Is Priceless

**FOCAL** Ephesians 3:8 **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;****

When the Apostle speaks of the Gospel, he refers to it as the **unsearchable riches of Christ**. The word rendered **unsearchable** by the King James translators is a Greek word<sup>2</sup> which means **not tracked out** or **untraceable**. In short, the Apostle considered this Gospel Message to be *priceless* – not *without price, but something that we could not have earned nor purchased*.

This Gospel is priceless because it lifts those who believe to view the very face of God. The Gospel *enables and empowers* all who surrender to it. Look at what Paul said:

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2 G<sub>421</sub>, ἀνεξιχνίαστος, anexichniastos, *an-ex-ikh-nee'-as-tos*, From G<sub>1</sub> (as a negative particle) and a presumed derivative of a compound of G<sub>1537</sub> and a derivative of G<sub>2487</sub>; *not tracked out*, that is, (by implication) *untraceable*: - past finding out, unsearchable.

**FOCAL** Ephesians 3:8 **Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles**

It is as if someone asked Paul, “What is the secret of your success?” I am sure if the great Apostle were here today he would tell you as he did in the Scripture, that the secret of his success is the **unsearchable riches of Christ, the glorious Gospel of salvation**. Paul surrendered himself to that Gospel on Damascus Road. Like Isaac of old he willingly tied himself to the horns of God's altar, making himself a *living sacrifice* for God's sake. The surrendered life is what God honored in Paul, and will honor in every believer here today.

If left to myself, if I walk away from the Master in my way for even a moment, I find myself sliding back into the abyss of sin. The Bible says:

**Jeremiah 17:9 The heart is **deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked: who can know it?****

Humanism would have you believe that there are unsearchable riches in the human heart, yet history disproves this lie time and time again. As humans we began in a Garden doubting God's Word, and look where that got us! The human heart, if divorced from the Grace of God in Christ, like a rudderless ship begins to drift into every confusion. We are not saved by our own hand, but by the ...

Romans 1:16 ... **gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth**; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek.

We are not *kept* by our own hand, but by the loving hand of God.

Oh, how rich is the waters of God's love! You who believe shall *never see* the wrath of God. Those of you who *have not believed unto salvation* are presently under the condemnation of God.- **children of wrath** according to God's Word (**Ephesians 2:3**). Yet those of you who believe, it is God's desire to prevent you from wrath, both in this world as also in the world to come. The life that ever dwells in Christ dwells ...

Romans 15:29 ... **in the fullness of the blessing of the gospel of Christ.**

The salvation that drew us from this world bids us to live as if we are citizens of the next world. **G.K. Chesterton** said:

**"The Christian ideal has not been tried and found wanting. It has been found difficult and left untried."**

What does God expect of His children? That we *be children* in our faith. Jesus said:

Matthew 18:3-4 ... **Except ye be converted,**

**and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (4) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.**

We are called to live our lives as *dear children*, loving the Lord and hating sin. When we step into sin we are called to *repent* and to *confess* that sin before the Lord of all creation. The Grace of God is priceless – no price is ever affixed to it. We cannot make payment for our sins. They were paid for on Calvary through the precious shed Blood of Christ. What can I add to that? Shall I add tears? All my tears will do is dilute the Blood, for He is sufficient to save. Shall I add penance, to *purchase* my salvation as is blasphemously suggested in the Romish Church? To pay for a gift of God is to sully the gift, and salvation is a gift from God. What can I pay or add to what He has done? Nothing! Nothing at all! It is in the heart of God that we be saved, that we be kept saved, and in the heart of Satan that we sully that priceless gift which God has given us. Look at the Words of our Savior:

**Matthew 9:13 "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 "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 "I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."**

Jesus Christ came to receive sinners like you and I. He did not demand that we pay for our sins, but accept His payment. We are not the physicians, but He is the Great Physician. Oh, the **unsearchable riches of Christ!** What wonders there are in the heart of God, that He loves us as He does. If you do not know Jesus as Savior, why do you wait? And if you do know Him, but have perhaps drifted off course of the faith, why do you drift? Come to the Water of Life Freely!

## **2. The Gospel Admits It's Hearers Into The Fraternity of the Saved**

**FOCAL** Ephesians 3:9-10 And to make all men see what is the **fellowship of the mystery<sup>3</sup>**, 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,

The word we translate **mystery** is a Greek word that means "a secret known only to members of the

<sup>3</sup> G3466, **μυστήριον**, *mustērion*, *moos-tay'-ree-on*, From a derivative of **μῦθος** *muō* (to *shut* the mouth); a *secret* or "mystery" (through the idea of *silence* imposed by *initiation* into religious rites): - mystery.

**fraternity or the sorority or club"**. Paul spoke of the Gospel, the Word of salvation offered to those who believe in Jesus, as a Word that caused it's hearers to **enter into a specialized fraternity or club**. If you have heard the Gospel of salvation, and have believed on Jesus Christ as Savior, trusting your soul to Him, then you are part of God's Redeemed Family. This is a thing that has not been offered to what Paul called the **principalities and powers, the angels of Heaven, both fallen and elect**. God has never offered salvation to the angels. This puzzles them, causing them to ask:

Hebrews 2:6-7 .... **What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? (7) Thou madest him a little lower than the angels;** thou crownedst him with glory and honor, and didst set him over the works of thy hands:

Man is *lower than the angels*, not as powerful, not as beautiful. Why should God save man, and not the angels? Because Jesus Christ did not become angel and go to Calvary...

Hebrews 2:9 **But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death,** crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

Jesus Christ took on humanity and died for our sins.

Those who believe in Him *from among mankind* will one day stand with God in Heaven, whereas those who do not believe will die and go to hell to be with the fallen angels. Jesus said:

**Matthew 25:41 Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:**

Unless a person *accept this mystery*, as a little child believe that Jesus Christ died and rose again *for them*, then they cannot enter into this *sacred fraternity of the saved*. There are many who will hear this Word, that Christ must be received, that faith in Him and Him alone is the only Way to life eternal, and they will reject Jesus regardless. **C.H. Spurgeon** said<sup>4</sup>:

“Ah! my friends, if you would believe it to be true and act accordingly, you would also find in that which the mouth of the Lord hath spoken a way of escape from the wrath to come; for the Book is far more full of hope than of dread. This inspired volume flows with the milk of mercy, and the honey of grace. It is not a Doomsday Book of wrath, but a Testament of grace. Yet, if you do not believe its loving warnings, nor regard its just sentences, they are true all the same. If you dare its thunders, if you trample on its promises, and even if you burn it in your rage, the holy Book still stands unaltered and unalterable; for “The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it.” Therefore, I pray you, treat the sacred Scriptures with respect,

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4 Sermon *The Infallibility of Scripture*

**and remember that “These are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.”**

We who believe, we who are of the **brotherhood of God**, know that we are not saved by God because of our innate goodness. No, my Friends. If we are saved, it is not because we are good, but because Jesus is good! If we are made whole it is not because we have some leanings toward wholeness, but because Christ has called us, and made us whole.

I have no use for a whiner, for those who run to and fro crying out “poor me, poor me”! I am sorry, but my stomach will not eat such pabulum! We are all poor, all lost, all pitiful. Shall we wail over this fact, whining forever more? Or shall we recognize with the Scripture:

**1 Corinthians 1:26-28 For ye see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: (27) But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; (28) And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to naught things that are ...**

that God has chosen the weak, the foolish, the pitiful, the

powerless to save. Yes, my Beloved, we are all this and more. Life is tough! People are insincere, fallen, grafting and grabbing. So what! Shall we wallow in pity along with the other victims of this age, the other “poor pitiful me” criers. Or shall we come to Christ, realizing that the **love of God was manifested**

**1 John 4:9 ... toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him.**

Which fraternity would you prefer? I prefer the fraternity of God in Christ, for here is *power living*. My sins have been forgiven, and I am a Son of God, not a servant of Satan. I will walk through this life telling others of this *musterion*, of this *fraternal secret* that Satan tries to hide, but God publishes through His Church.

### **3. The Fraternity Of The Saved Share An Eternal Purpose With God**

**FOCAL** Ephesians 3:11 **According to the eternal purpose which he purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.** ... {17} **That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love "**

It was God's Plan from the *very beginning* to raise up a Family for Himself. This is God's purpose in Christ, to adopt all who believe into His Eternal Family. 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 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*. 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**. God, in times past, always presented Himself as **The God of Your Father**, but never as **God Your Father**. The New Testament Mystery, the Gospel of Christ, points to God the Son as our Savior and Lord, God the Father as the Head of this Great Family of redeemed, and to God the Holy Spirit as our Helper and Partner in life. Jesus said:

**Matthew 12:50<sup>s</sup> "For whoever does the will of My Father who is in heaven, he is My brother and sister and mother."**

and finally,

**John 6:29<sup>s</sup> "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent."**

The Christian is a creature with **eternal purpose**. If you are saved by faith in Christ your **purpose is eternal, not temporal**. A Christian should not be consumed by the things of this world, but *by the things of God*. As Christians, we are called to **keep the main thing the main thing**. Our calling is to tell others of God's calling. Our purpose must ever be poised toward the salvation of

souls. When we teach Sunday School, we should teach with hell in mind, knowing that every child and adult under our teaching may be gone into glory tomorrow. When we preach, we should preach knowing that our hearers must be saved today if at all possible, for tomorrow may never come. Where we go and what we do, be it work, school, play, or in the shopping malls, we must ever seek to tell others that faith alone in Christ alone saves.

Is Christ **dwelling in your hearts by faith**? Then you, My Beloved, are part of the great Family of God. Is Christ merely a word that you have heard, but do not know as Savior and Lord? Then today, dear friend, is the day of salvation. Come to Him. Blessed Spirit, call the unsaved to Thee, to Calvary, to the Love of God that died for all who believe.

May God touch your hearts with these words.

