

# Metropolitan Tabernacle Pulpit.

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A GRATEFUL SUMMARY OF TWENTY VOLUMES.

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## A Sermon

DELIVERED ON LORD'S-DAY MORNING, DECEMBER 27TH, 1874, BY

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“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.”—Ephesians iii. 8.

THIS is a very remarkable day to me, for, if I am spared to preach this present sermon, I shall have completed twenty years of printed discourses issued week by week.\* This will be the last sermon of my twentieth volume, making 1,209 in all. This is by no means a common occurrence; indeed, I have not heard of another case in which for so long a time published discourses have been welcomed by the Christian church, and scattered broadcast over the land. Having obtained help of God, I continue unto this day testifying the gospel of Christ Jesus. For this I magnify the name of the Lord, and ask my dear friends associated with me to assist me in the expression of my thankfulness to Almighty God for such special lovingkindness. I could not find even in the rich volume of inspiration any language more expressive of the deep emotions of my soul than the verse which is now before us, “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles the unspeakable riches of Christ.” How long or how short the time allotted to my future ministry may be I do not wish to know, whether I shall complete another twenty years or become silent in a few months; but for these twenty years of blessed assistance in the ministration of the gospel of Jesus Christ I must and will adore the name of the Lord, even if never again he should permit me to open my lips in his service. It is enough of mercy for one man to have enjoyed, even if there were no more to follow. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

While we shall consider the verse as Paul's own expression, we shall retain our own hold upon it, and use it very much as a summary of our own emotions.

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\* For fuller account of the twenty years of sermons, see “Sword and Trowel” for January.

Note from the text that *Paul thought very little of himself*. "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints," saith he, "is this grace given." I am sure Paul was never guilty of mock modesty, and never pretended to be humbler than he really was. At suitable times he could vindicate himself, and claim his position among his fellow men. If any denied his apostleship, he proved it by abundant arguments. Yea, he even became on one occasion what he calls a "fool in glorying"; he recounted his abundant labours, and his frequent sufferings; he pointed to his success, and protested that he was not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles, though he was nothing. Although all this was true, and Paul expressed only the bare truth, when he thus defended himself, yet in his heart of hearts he chose to take the lowest seat in the lowest room, and because there were no adjectives in correct language which could express his opinion of himself, he did violence to language, and said that he was "less than the least of all saints." His straining of words is not to be censured, for language was made for man, and not man for language, and when within the bounds of grammar a mighty heart cannot express itself, it does well to snap the bonds and let its strength have space to exercise itself. I do not quarrel with Paul's language, but I do dispute his right to push me out of my place. Less than the least is a position which I had hoped to occupy, but he has taken it from me, and I would fain give him a touch on the shoulder and say, "Friend, go up higher"; for as there are no lower seats, and we could not think of sitting above the great apostle, he must allow us to allot him a higher place.

Was Paul really less than the least of all saints? Was not this too low an estimate of himself? Brethren, I suppose he meant that he felt this to be the case when he looked at himself from certain aspects. He was one of the late converts, many of his comrades were in Christ before him, and he yielded precedence to the older ones. He had been aforetime a persecutor and injurious, and, though God had forgiven him, he had never forgiven himself; and when he recollected his share in the sufferings and martyrdom of the saints, he felt that, though now numbered among them, he could only dare to sit in the lowliest place. Besides, any devout man, however eminent he may be in most respects, will find that there are certain other points in which he falls short; and the apostle, instead of looking at the points in which he excelled, singled out with modest eye those qualities in which he felt he failed, and in those respects he put himself down as "less than the least of all saints." This strikes us as being a very different mode of speech from that which is adopted by certain brethren. One friend asserts that he has ceased from known sin for some months; and then another brother, to go a little further, asserts that the very being of sin in him has been destroyed, root and branch; of which I believe in both cases not one single word. If those brethren had said that they were sixteen feet high, that their eyes were solid diamonds, and that their hair was Prussian blue, I should feel towards them very much as I do now. They simply do not know themselves, and the best article of furniture they could have in their houses would be a looking-glass which would let them see their own selves; if they had once had such a sight, I warrant you they would sing another tune, pitched

to a far lower key. Many who now shine in the highest places of self-estimation, will one day be glad enough to sit at the feet of the poorest of the saints, unless I am greatly mistaken ; for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased. For my part I had sooner hear Paul say that he was less than the least of all the saints, than I would hear the holiest brother out of heaven say that he had been living without sin. I could believe the one, but I could not believe the other. Paul was as holy as the holiest now upon earth, but among the humble he was the humblest. The Lord make us each so.

Our next remark is, that *Paul thought very much of his brethren*. These two things usually go together—a low opinion of one's self and a high estimate of others. He calls himself less than the least—not of all the apostles, though even that would have been a lowly judgment, but less than the least of all *saints*; and yet there were some very imperfect saints among his acquaintance. His pastoral observation had discovered many weak, trembling, half-instructed, and even backsliding brethren. Remember how he differed from Barnabas about John Mark, and how he rebuked Peter to his face, because he was to be blamed. He was not insensible of the defects of the saints, for in some of his epistles he gives us a very sad picture of the condition of some of the members of the churches; ay, and of some who were true saints: he tells them that he could only write unto them as unto carnal, as unto babes in Christ, and that when they ought to have been teachers they needed themselves to be taught the very elements of the faith; and yet he says he was less than the least of them. He must have thought very highly of the least instructed and most imperfect of the divine family. After all, dear brethren, though we hear much fault found with professing Christians and church-members, and hear it said that they are no better than men of the world, we dare not be among their detractors. If we cannot find saints in the church of God, certainly we shall find them nowhere else. They are faulty, no doubt, but still they are the Lord's elect, and the people on whom his heart is set. They are the excellent of the earth, and if we may but be numbered with them we shall be thankful even if our name should stand lowest and last on the list. We count the regenerate and the sanctified to be the true aristocracy, the real nobility of the world. "O God thou art my God, my goodness extendeth not to thee, but to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent in whom is all my delight." The church, notwithstanding her spots, is fairest among women, and though her garments are sometimes stained, (would God they were not), yet for all that she is all glorious within, her clothing is of wrought gold. She is beautiful in the eyes of her Lord, he loved her well enough to redeem her with his precious blood, and to make her his bride; it would be shameful on our part to despise her. She ought to be lovely in our eyes, yea, and she is, for we love the people of God beyond all others. My inmost soul can say of the church of God—

"My soul shall pray for Zion still  
While life or breath remains;  
There my best friends, my kindred dwell  
There God my Saviour reigns."



The next reflection suggested by the text is that *Paul thought very highly of his work*. He says, "Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach." He looked upon his ministry as a great gift from God, an honour bestowed, a favour granted. Yet, my brethren, Paul's office was not such a very attractive thing after all, looking upon it after the manner of men. Paul was not a Lord Bishop or a right reverend, his salary was less than nothing; he received no homage from men; his greatest gains were his losses, his honours came from his dishonours, and his glory from his sufferings. Stripes and imprisonments awaited him in every city; stoning and shipwreck, perils of robbers and perils of traitors, care and grief, were his portion. He was made an outcast for Christ's sake; his Jewish brethren even foamed at the mouth at the very thought of the renegade Pharisee who preached to the Gentiles. He had suffered the loss of all things for Christ's sake, and he says he "counted them but dung that he might win Christ and be found in him." If the advowson and next presentation of Paul's office had been put up at Garraway's, our modern imitators of Simon Magus would have been very slow in the bidding, they would rather have paid a heavy sum to be excused. Paul himself said of it, "If in this life only we have hope we are of all men most miserable." Yet so contented was he to preach the gospel that, notwithstanding all the hardships and reproaches which went with it, he considered it to be a special favour granted him of the Lord that he was permitted to proclaim the unsearchable riches of Christ among the Gentiles.

The apostle even lifts up his hands in grateful astonishment that so great an honour should be bestowed upon him. He says "Unto me—unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that *I*—the persecutor, the man who breathed out threatenings and slaughter—that *I* should preach among the Gentiles." He marvels at it; he cannot make it out; the passage reads as if he paused in his writing, and burst into a song of adoring gratitude because the Lord had honoured him so exceedingly as to put him in trust with the gospel. How deeply do I sympathise with him in his wonder at electing love! My heart cries, "Why me, Lord, why me?"

Note well that the apostle had a very clear view of what he had to do. "That I should preach," says he, "among the Gentiles." Paul does not claim to be sent to regenerate the Gentiles by sprinkling them, to hear their confessions of secret sin, to pry into their private lives with filthy questions, and to absolve them on the fulfilment of appointed penances; he has not a word to say about playing the priest; he does not glory in the grace which enabled him to display a comely ritual, or restore a pompous ceremonialism; he boasts not of carrying a crucifix or a banner in a procession up and down the aisles to delight the Gentiles; nor, in a word, does he set himself up as a sort of demi-god, able to kill and to make alive, to distribute pardons and to regenerate babes. Paul was quite satisfied to preach the Gospel, that was as far as his commission went, and whenever God the Holy Spirit sends forth a minister to bless the Church that is the purport of his mission and nothing else,—he is to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Neither our Lord nor his apostles command us to set up altars, but the grand



command is "preach the gospel to every creature." O ye priests of the Church of England, take off your tag-rags, and stand out like men and preach the gospel, if indeed ye be ministers of God, and not sappers and miners for the pope of Rome. God sends men to preach the gospel, but he never sends them to intrude into the office of Christ, and set themselves up as priests offering sacrifice for the quick and dead, when in him the priesthood is fulfilled. Paul knew what his vocation was, and he kept to it. Find me one instance of his acting the priest. Wherever he went he was preaching and teaching, preaching and teaching, preaching and teaching, that was the one object of his life; whether in Damascus or Corinth, Jerusalem or Rome, he must preach. When he was amid the Areopagites on Mars' Hill why did he not show them the beauty of divine service as performed in the most approved fashion? Why at Lystra did he not offer a sacrifice to God, and wave a censer?—all the materials were ready. No; but he *preached everywhere*. When detained at Rome he did not train a choir, or instruct a company of clergy in ecclesiastical calisthenics, or Church millinery, but he taught Jesus to all around. We read nothing of his genuflexions and intonations, but a great deal of his preaching the word in season and out of season. This too is our work. The Church must see to it that this ordinance be used above every other for the conversion of men. It pleases God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe. Stand to your guns, my brethren; preach the word; make full proof of your ministry, and cease not to teach all men the truth concerning Jesus.

Remark how Paul calls his ministry a "grace." Every true preacher of the gospel will have to thank God that he has been permitted to preach. I do not know how my soul would have been kept alive if it had not been for the searching of Scripture, the prayer, the faith, and the joy which preaching has involved. Though it may be true that professional familiarity with sacred things is apt to breed a want of personal enjoyment in them, I do not find it so. To me it is a great blessing to have to prepare for preaching; often the best means of grace to my own soul are the groaning, the pleading, the meditation, and the communion needed for the selection of the right subject upon which to feed your souls. Preachers ought to grow in grace, for their very calling places them at a great advantage, since they are bound to search the Scriptures, and to be much in prayer. It is a choice mercy to be permitted to preach the gospel. I wish some of you would be ambitious of it, for earnest preachers are wanted. There are several brethren here who ought to preach, and I believe they would preach with great power if they were once driven to the attempt. A modesty which may be cowardice silences many; a diffidence, which may also be culpable love of ease, keeps them back from speaking in the name of the Lord. Brethren, let it be so no longer.

Thus, you see, Paul thought little of himself, much of his brethren, and highly of his work.

Again, *Paul thought very lovingly of his congregation*. He counted it a great grace that he was permitted to preach *among the Gentiles*. Peter had a much more respectable sphere, for he was the apostle of the circumcision, and preached to the ancient aristocratic race of the Hebrews;

but Paul was sent to preach to the Gentile dogs, who were despised by the Jews as uncircumcised and unclean. Our Lord Jesus Christ himself gave the Gentiles a sad character, for when speaking of worldly things, he said, "After all these things do the Gentiles seek," as if they were utterly gross and carnal, and entirely besotted with groveling pursuits. Paul, however, rejoiced to preach to these worldly-minded Gentiles, he was glad to bring the outcasts to Jesus. They were such an ignorant crew,—these Gentiles, ignorant of the true God and eternal life; though they were some of them wise in their own conceits, yet were they sunk in spiritual ignorance. There were the Greeks, proud of their learned folly, the Romans, boasting of brute force and despising a merely spiritual kingdom, the Scythians, barbarous and uncouth, and the bondsmen, sunk in vice and degradation; but he who was sent to labour among them preferred them to any other audience. Paul thanked God for his congregation, ignorant as they were. Worse than ignorant, they were worshippers of idols; they had gods many and lords many, and they bowed themselves before the personifications of their own wickedness; yet Paul was glad to preach to idolaters. The first chapter of his epistle to the Romans contains a fearful indictment against the Gentiles, for their horrible vices. They were sunk in a horrible slough of corruption, and yet Paul considered it a great privilege to preach among these ignorant, heathenish, debased, vicious Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ; and a privilege it was. It is a royal honour to preach to the lowest of the low. Dear brethren and sisters, wherever you and I are called to labour we ought to be thankful that God has given us that particular place to labour in. I like to see Christian workers fall in love with their spheres: for instance, the brethren who work in Golden Lane and Seven Dials do well to look upon their districts as the most important in London; and every city missionary, if he is to succeed, must feel that his particular part of the city is that which is best for him. I like to hear Mr. Moffat speak as if there were no people in the world of more consequence than Bechuanas and Hottentots. I never knew a man succeed among a people unless he preferred them to all others as the objects of his care. When ministers despise their congregations, their congregations are very likely to despise them, and then usefulness is out of the question. When a man thinks himself above his work the probability is that he is in the clouds altogether, or stands in the way of some practical worker of a more commonplace kind, who would do the work which he is despising. Oh you who teach little children, love them or you cannot teach them. If you preach in the street feel a sympathy with the people who gather around you, or you had better give over. Paul became a Gentile for the Gentiles' sake. Pharisee as he had been, we see nothing of his phylacteries or the broad borders of his garment. He always loved his kinsmen according to the flesh, and would have gladly died to save them, but Jew as he was, and at one time bound by the strongest possible Jewish prejudices, he had broken them all down, and had made the Gentiles his clients, his flock, his children. It was his daily joy that he was ordained to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ.

Upon our next remark we will more fully enlarge, it is this,—

*Paul thought most of all of his subject.* That he had to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ was his highest bliss. The glories of Jesus, whom once he had persecuted, were his one and only theme. All he had to say was contained within the circumference of that word Christ, and all that he aimed at was to glorify his Lord. Neither ceremonies, nor orthodoxies, nor philosophies, nor sects, nor parties did Paul labour for, but he exalted Christ Jesus the Lord. Nor did he feel that his engrossment by one solitary subject restricted him in his thought or speech, for he looked upon his theme as full of riches, riches altogether unsearchable. He had a deep insight into the truth which he had to proclaim, and saw within it veins of precious thought which he could never exhaust, lodes of more than golden treasure which no research could ever fully explore. O to be in this fashion enamoured of the gospel, absorbed in it, and wholly carried away by its charms.

Let us meditate a few minutes upon the unsearchable riches of Christ, which it has been our joy to preach, even as it was Paul's.

Notice, first, that the apostle dwelt much upon *the essential riches of Christ's person*. Beloved, there are unsearchable riches in Christ, for he is by nature "God over all, blessed for ever." Others may make him a mere man, but we behold the unsearchable riches of the Deity in Jesus Christ, "In whom dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." He is the Creator, without whom was not anything made that was made. He is the preserver of all things, and by him all things consist. What riches there must be in him who both makes and sustains the universe by the word of his power. In Jesus Christ all the attributes of God are manifest: the wisdom, the power, the immutability, the truth, the faithfulness, the justice, and love of God are all to be found in the character of Jesus Christ our Lord. Even while he was here on earth, and clothed himself in mortal flesh, the Godhead shone through the veil. The winds knew him and were silent, the waves knew him and kissed his feet; the angels ministered to him and the devils fled before him; diseases were healed, for his touch was omnipotent; the dead lived, for his voice was almighty. He was God even while to mortal eye he was only the carpenter's son. To-day he has put off his servant's garments, and laid aside the towel wherewith he wiped his disciples' feet, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth; let us then proclaim his unsearchable riches. Now is he crowned with universal sovereignty, and the government is upon his shoulders, and his name is called "Wonderful, Counsellor, the mighty God, the Everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace." Riches beyond compare belong to him who for our sakes became poor; riches unsearchable, for he is God, and "Who by searching can find out God? Who can find out the Almighty unto perfection?" Jesus is "very God of very God," and as such we adore him, and glory in the wealth of his nature.

Jesus our Lord is also man, man of the substance of his mother, bone of our bone. And here we may descant upon the wealth of human love which is treasured up in him and manifested to his brethren; his wealth of sympathy with his people, for he has been tempted in all points like as they are; his wealth of discernment, for he knows the secrets of our nature, having worn that nature himself.



Because of the riches of his love, he is not ashamed to call his redeemed ones brethren. It is a wonderful subject, the wealth of pure manhood which dwelt in Jesus, for he both thought, and spake, and acted as man, with a richness of perfect manhood which never dwelt in any other son of man. He was the true Adam—the sum of humanity's best glory, made to have dominion over all the works of Jehovah's hands. Thus in the two natures which make up his mysterious person, Son of man and Son of God, there was a measureless wealth, and this Paul preached.

My brethren, I boldly appeal to you whether during these twenty years I have not tried to set forth the unsearchable riches of my Lord and Master in his blessed person. I have preached him to you as no mere abstraction, but as a real Christ. I have not talked of him as if he were a myth, I have spoken of him always as an actual personage, who lived and died, and is risen and gone into heaven. I have also preached him as still amongst you in spirit, Head of the church, and Lord over all. Neither have I preached to you a Christ stinted in power or glory. I have endeavoured, according to my ability, to set him forth as King of kings and Lord of lords. Your hearts have rejoiced to hear concerning him, and mine has rejoiced to speak of one so altogether lovely, so good, so kind, so ready to forgive, so faithful, and mighty. In a word, I have preached the unsearchable riches of his person.

Next, we have to preach the riches of our Lord Jesus *as the Christ*; that is to say, in his relationship towards us. Now, think a minute or two. In the old eternity, or ever the earth was, the unsearchable riches of Christ were displayed when he entered into covenant with the Father on our behalf. What matchless love it was which prompted the second person of the Divine Unity to become the surety of the covenant of grace for his elect. Unsearchable were the riches of love which suggested the covenant, and the riches of the wisdom which planned it. It was worthy of a God.

Remember, that as time rolled on his people as they were one by one created were saved simply on the ground of his word and pledge; and if the bare bond of Christ, before he had shed a drop of his blood, was able to save myriads of his elect, what riches there must be in his atonement itself. If his promise to redeem was enough for thousands of years to save multitudes from death and hell, what must be the riches of the finished righteousness and the accomplished substitution?

Think of the riches of Christ's grace from the day of man's fall until the day of his redemption. He saw man in his waywardness, and knew what he would be under the best conditions, yet he did not turn aside from his pledge of love because of the baseness of fallen humanity. He knew that men would prove ungrateful, yet did he resolve to redeem his people. He had throughout those ages an opportunity of estimating what the pangs of death would be, he knew the cost at which he must seek and save the lost; but through those thousands of years such were the riches of his infinite love that he never started back from the compact which he had made, but determined to push on till by his death he had delivered man from sin, and the earth from the curse. Wealth of mercy! What can transcend this?

Down the Lord descends to Bethlehem's manger, and there he lies a babe wrapped in swaddling clothes. Who shall tell the riches of the condescending love which made the infinite incarnate? Amongst the sons of men he tarries, going about doing good: calculate if you can the riches of that generous heart which detained him for years amongst a sinful and gainsaying generation. The life of Jesus on earth is a mint of grace. But oh, the unsearchable love which led him to give his hands to the nails and his heart to the spear! What love unspeakable is centred in the cross! What riches of grace that he should deign to die a malefactor's death for his enemies! Can any of us conceive the unsearchable riches of merit which must lie in the holy life and painful death of our beloved Lord. If the Son of God himself deigns to die, the just for the unjust, surely no limit can be set to the virtue of that death, neither indeed can we calculate how precious it must be in the Father's sight. O thou bleeding Saviour, when thou hadst become poorest of all in thine own glory, surely thou didst also become richest of all for the redemption of the sons of men! None shall ever know, nor even eternity itself fully declare, the infinite value of thy tears, and bloody sweat, and agony and death!

But see, he rises again, for the tomb could not contain him: he rises for our justification. In the risen Saviour what wealth may be seen, for while he justifies all his people by his rising, he also secures to them eternal life, and guarantees to their bodies a glorious resurrection. Think of our Lord as the first fruits of them that sleep, and you will see in his resurrection a truth which is the corner stone of the entire gospel, and the sure pledge of eternal bliss.

But lo, he spurns the acclivity of Olivet and mounts into the opened heavens, a cloud receiving him from mortal sight. As he ascends, he scatters gifts among the sons of men. The Holy Ghost is given, he rests in tongues of fire upon the heads of chosen men; he gave "some apostles, some pastors and teachers," for the building up of his church. Those gifts he still continues to bestow, for he "received gifts for men, yea, for the rebellious also, that the Lord God might dwell among them." The riches of the ascended Saviour it is not possible for the mind to calculate.

Look ye again! Behold him in heaven! There he sits at the right hand of the Father to represent his people, is there not a wealth of comfort in that representation? He sits on the throne to rule for his people;—there is another mine of consolation. His presence is the guarantee of our being there—is not this full of richness? He intercedes for all his saints before the eternal throne; there is another treasure house of marvellous instruction and delight. Jesus for ever sits at the right hand of God, because his work is done, he waits until his enemies become his footstool, is he not to us a treasure of unsearchable riches?

But he is soon to come, and who shall tell the riches which then shall be revealed, when sin shall fly before him, and this burdened earth shall be eased of the load which has made her groan continually; when instead of thorn and thistle, shall come up the cedar and the rose, when the desert shall rejoice and blossom, and men down-trodden and weary, shall lift up their eyes to behold a new paradise, and enjoy a glory such as eye hath not seen nor ear heard, a splendour of

millennial bliss, of which may every one of us be partakers? All this shall be because he cometh. There are unsearchable riches in Christ, whether living, dying, rising, dwelling in heaven, or descending a second time to earth. See what a subject Paul had to preach; and we have preached it too. These twenty years our one theme has been Christ Jesus in his relationship to his people, in his everlasting love, in his once-offered, completely-atoning sacrifice, in his pleading before the Father's throne, and in the kingdom which is yet to subdue all things to itself. What a mercy it is to have been privileged to preach all this!

Thirdly and briefly, Paul had preached the unsearchable riches of Jesus Christ *in and to his people*. He had told them that Christ had paid their debts, and they were free. How wondrously had he put it—"There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus." We cannot stop to repeat the texts, but Paul had been clear enough upon the point, that the riches of Christ in pardoning sin were unsearchable. He had told the saints that Christ had provided all that could be needed by them between where they were and the gates of heaven, for, said he, "ye are complete in him." "All things are yours, whether things present or things to come." Paul had delighted to dive into the depth of overflowing grace. What a grand swimmer he was in the sea of joy.

He had also told the saints that they might have whatever they asked for in answer to believing prayer. How often had he put it before them that he who spared not his own Son, but freely delivered him up for them, would also with him freely give them all things. What riches of Christ are found at the mercy seat! He who knows how to draw nigh to God by Jesus Christ will find great store of wealth therein.

He had assured them that the Lord himself was theirs, yea, said he, "all things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. He had told them that heaven was theirs, for they had obtained an inheritance in Christ, and were on their way to the glory, every hour bringing them nearer. Truly, if you want to know the deep things of God, you must listen to Paul, for he tells us of the eternity of Christ's love, a love without beginning and without end. He tells us of the immutability of that love, for Jesus Christ is "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever." He tells us of the infinity of that love, and delights to declare that it passeth knowledge. In fact, he tells us that God himself is ours, to be our portion for ever. Oh, children of God, if you are straitened, you are not straitened in the preaching of the apostle, you are straitened in yourselves. I venture also to say that in my own preaching I have not knowingly restrained any of the blessings of the covenant of grace, nor spoken lightly of the boons which Jesus gives to his beloved. No, I have delighted to expatiate upon what the Lord has given to his saints, and have bidden believers enjoy the fat things full of marrow which he has provided for them. Happy people to have such a Saviour.

But lastly, the point Paul most rejoiced to preach upon was this—the *unsearchable riches of our Lord towards sinners*, for he says that he preached *among the Gentiles*, the sinners, the unsearchable riches of



Christ. This is the most delightful theme of all, to tell poor sinners that there is an unspeakably rich Saviour. I lament to say that there are brethren who do not preach this among the Gentiles. They have a great deal to say to God's own people, but they have nothing to say to the Gentiles, to the sinners, to the insensible, unquickened sinners, nothing to say to them. I have known them close a sermon by saying "The election hath obtained it, the rest are blinded," and sit down with not a word for those dead in sin. Brethren, we have not so learned Christ; we delight to preach among the *Gentiles* the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the fellowship of the mystery." What have we to say to Gentile sinners? Why, we have to tell them that our Lord Jesus is so rich in grace that he keeps open house all day and all night long, and "Come and welcome" is written over his palace gates. "Whosoever will, let him come and take of the water of life freely." We have to tell you that, though millions of sinners have already come, the banqueting table is as loaded as it ever was; he has as much grace and mercy to distribute as he had eighteen hundred years ago; he is as able to cleanse from sin, as able to justify and to sanctify as he was when first he began his work of mercy. There is no limit to his grace to those that come to him; whosoever cometh to him shall receive eternal salvation. My Master is so rich that he wants nothing from any of you. You need not bring a rag with you, he will cover you from head to foot; you need not bring a mouldy crust, he will give you of the bread of heaven. You need not stop to cleanse away a single spot, he will wash you white as snow. Help from you! Does the sun want help from darkness? Christ wants no help from sinners. Let them come empty-handed, naked, sick, helpless, and believe that he is able to do for them all that they require. I am bold to tell you that my Master's riches of grace are so unsearchable, that he delights to forgive and forget enormous sin; the bigger the sin the more glory to his grace. If you are over head and ears in debt, he is rich enough to discharge your liabilities. If you are at the very gates of hell, he is able to pluck you from the jaws of destruction. So mighty is his mercy, that no case did ever exceed his power to save or ever will.

I will challenge you to a contest with regard to my dear Lord and Master, that if you will sit down and think the best and largest thoughts you can of him, you will not think him to be so good and loving as he really is: if you will try and wish for the largest blessings you can conceive you shall not be able to wish for such blessings as he is prepared to bestow; and if you will open your mouth wide, and make request for the greatest favour that ever human being asked of God or man, you shall not ask for a tenth of what he is prepared to give. Come and try him! Let it be a wrestling match between your wants and Christ's abundance—and see which will win the day. I tell you that as Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods of the magicians, so my Master's all-sufficiency will swallow up all the demands of your dreadful necessities. Only come and try him now! All that you want between the gates of hell and the gates of heaven you shall find in Christ, and you shall have it all for nothing, all for the asking for. Open your hand and take it, it is all he asks

of you, that you believingly receive what he freely bestows ; trust in him, in him as dead and risen, and ascended, and reigning ; rely upon him, and by so doing you shall find that there are unsearchable riches of grace in him.

Now, I have done when I have said just this. I have no doubt Paul would not have been so pleased to preach Christ as he was unless something had come of it. Now, at the close of twenty years of printed sermons, my great delight in having preached the unsearchable riches of Christ lies in this, that something has come of it. How many souls have been converted it is not in my power to tell. I do not think I ever pass a single day, nor have done so for some years, without having intimations of some persons at the very ends of the earth, or at home, having been led to the Saviour by the reading of the sermons. I am not prepared to say how many persons have gone through this church to other churches or to heaven; the number can hardly be far short of those which remain, and of these it may suffice to say that four thousand seven hundred souls are with us, still kept by the power of grace, and knit together in church fellowship. Is not this matter of great thankfulness to God? During these twenty years the dew has never ceased to fall, the church has been planted like a tree by rivers of water, she has brought forth her fruit in her season, and whatsoever she has attempted has prospered. I joy, therefore, and will joy in this.

Yet once more I think Paul must have felt an especial gladness that through his preaching the unsearchable riches of Christ others had been raised up to preach it too. So has it been with us. How many tongues this day are preaching Christ, out of our church members and students, I cannot assert definitely, but that they are to be counted by hundreds is certain ; would to God they were ten times as many. I wish all the rest of this congregation who love Christ would go and talk about him too. Some among you are very diligent, and I bless God for you. I wish more of you were trying to bring these unsearchable riches of Christ within the knowledge of the ignorant and sinful. It is the last Sabbath of the year. Could we not begin next year with a great deal more industry than we have shewn last year? I am afraid there are many members who have no work to do for Jesus, and these are the sort of people to backslide. You that have neither to do nor to suffer are the baggage of the army, the impedimenta which prevent the host from marching on to victory. Bestir yourselves, feed upon Jesus, and then take of the good cheer to those who do not know the riches of Christ, and as God gives you grace, go you and fulfil this ministry, and you will then say, as I do, and as the apostle said of old, "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 Lord bless you. Amen.

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PORTION OF SCRIPTURE READ BEFORE SERMON—Ephesians iii.

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