

# Unsearchable Riches of Christ - Part 4

by T. Austin-Sparks

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*The sermon explores the unsearchable riches of Christ, specifically the election and adoption of believers as sons, and the purpose of God's selection to display His grace to the nations.*

**Duration:** 50:05

**Topics:** "Riches Of Christ"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker focuses on the concept of grace and its significance in the lives of believers. He highlights five aspects of God's grace, which he refers to as the 'exceeding riches of his grace.' The first aspect discussed is the idea of being chosen by God before the foundation of the world to be holy and without blemish. The speaker emphasizes the depth and greatness of this grace and envisions a future where redeemed nations walk in the light of God's work in believers. He concludes by emphasizing the ongoing need for more and more grace in our lives and the ultimate display of God's grace in the ages to come.

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## Transcript

I will read again the passages which are basic to our present meditation. In the eleventh chapter, the letter to the Romans, and verse thirty-three, all the depth of the riches, both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God, how unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. Letter to the Ephesians, chapter three, verse eight.

Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, was this grace given to preach the unsearchable riches of Christ? And seeing that we have not yet said all that we have to say for this present time about the first context of riches, that is, the riches of grace, we will just look at one or two passages in that connection. In the Ephesian letter, chapter one, and verse seventeen, that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give unto you a spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of him. Now that is following what we have in verse seven of that chapter, in whom we have our redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace.

The apostle's prayer at the end of that chapter for a spirit of wisdom and revelation has to do with the apprehension of the riches of his grace, according to the riches of his grace. Chapter two, and verse seven, that in the ages to come he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. The exceeding riches of his grace.

We have already considered some things related to this grace, which are the riches thereof. We have seen the nature of grace. We have seen God's work of grace.

And we have set grace over against our own works for merit. And we have seen that the great initial of divine grace is in the free action of the Holy Spirit to bring us into that grace. Before we go on to look still more deeply into this fathomless, unsearchable ocean of divine grace, let us remind ourselves that just as grace is the beginning of everything for us and with us, so grace is the continual basis of everything to the end.

What is true of the beginning is true throughout the whole life of the child of God. It sounds like a contradiction, but it is not. To say that the law of grace governs the whole life of the people of God.

What grace begins, grace carries on, and grace crowns. We will never be off the basis of grace. And we shall discover as we go on increasingly how we are bound, just bound to grace for everything that comes to us from God.

For everything that we know of God. For everything that we can be or can do, it will always be grace. Nothing else.

We will never move from that grace, from that ground, on to any other. That sounds simple, but this is something which confronts us every day of our life. And all the way along, we shall be simply compelled by the Holy Spirit to recognize this and to accept it, to take this position.

Now, this is all a matter of the grace of God. We will never get by this. We will never get any farther.

Only by His grace. So that we are steadily moving, but really moving in a very practical way toward that passage which we have just read, that in the ages to come He may show the exceeding riches of His grace toward us. In the ages to come, the riches of grace will be exceeding and displayed in us.

And I think we are beginning to realize that that is a fact. I think more and more we are becoming aware that it's got to be more grace and still more grace. And if we have any difficulty about that, I feel that that's rather difficult.

And it's going to be more and more difficult. It's going to require more and more grace. Let's put this climactic statement over the whole life in the ages to come to show the exceeding riches of His grace toward us.

You can't get to that point where it's so great, so complete, perfect, full and final. You cannot leap there in one day or in one experience. The whole of the life of the people of God is a pilgrimage of grace.

I expect you know, and it's worth our pausing here to note it or remind ourselves of it. I expect you know that Peter's letters are founded upon this one word, grace. It's a great pity that the translators have not given us the correct translation in every case in Peter's letter.

But Peter, as you also know, represents the church as in its pilgrimage. Paul represents the church as in the heavenlies, having arrived, very largely. He is viewing it from above.

But Peter is viewing it here, and he says, I beseech you as pilgrims and strangers. Pilgrims. That's Peter's standpoint.

The pilgrimage of the church. And the great word of the pilgrimage with Peter is the word grace. Grace.

He has so much to say about grace. When I referred to the unfortunate translation, you will probably remember. He said, if you take persecution, opposition, ill-treatment, joyfully.

This is, and the translators have put the word acceptable with God, but the real word there is grace. The word in the original is, this is grace. The pilgrimage contains persecution, opposition, misrepresentation, and what not.

And if any man knew about that, Peter did. And if any man knew the meaning of grace, it was that man who had denied his Lord in such a way as to feel he had sinned beyond the possibility of forgiveness. If ever you had done a thing like that thrice, in a vehement, angry way, declared that you didn't know Jesus Christ after having been with him for three years, in the closest contact, despair yourself so strongly, wrathfully refused the suggestion that you had any association with him at all.

If you'd done that, or I had done that, I think that would be good ground for believing in the unpardonable sin. Don't you? No wonder he went out and wept bitterly. No wonder the Lord had to make a special mention of him in recalling the scattered disciples after his cross.

Go to my brethren, say unto them, and to Peter, and to Peter, mentioning him by name. Well, that's old ground so familiar that we can understand why Peter's great word was grace, can't we? Grace, yes. Well, grace for the pilgrimage, and what Peter is saying so much about in his letter is the sufferings, the sufferings of this present time, and it's grace all the way along.

Old Johnny calls for grace. But, and this belongs to a further consideration, it's grace unto glory. Grace unto glory.

Well, I think it was worth reminding ourselves of that. What grace begins, and we all know that it's through grace that we begin. Grace of God that brings us into salvation.

But grace is going to perfect the works. Going to carry it right through and crown it at last. Topstone will be brought forth with shoutings of grace.

Grace unto it. Now, when we talk about riches of grace, we are in the realm of the unsearchable. The inexhaustible.

And we shall never be able to fathom these depths. But, I think we can for a little while go a little deeper this evening. And I want you to come to this first chapter, the letter to the Ephesians.

I'm not going to make anything of this. It may be a coincidence, or there may be really nothing in it. But, you know that the number, in Bible numbers, the number of grace is five.

Five. And here in this chapter we have five of the exceeding riches of his grace. And when I say exceeding, I'm quite sure that as we look at them, you will say, that is beyond me.

I cannot comprehend that. That's too big. Nevertheless, you know, we're allowed to look at big mountains even if we can't compass them.

And it sometimes does us good to look at them. But, thank God, these are not just objective things that are presented to us here. We are in them.

We are in them. And so we just look at these five great, I think the greatest, riches of his grace. Chapter four then.

Chapter one then. Sorry. Verse four.

Even as he chose us in him before the foundation of the world, we should be holy without blemish before him in love. He chose us in him. Before the foundation of the world.

Do you understand that? Can you comprehend that? This is election. Very troublesome word in theology and doctrine. But we are not at this moment interested in theology.

Nor in Christian doctrine as such. What we are concerned with is spiritual value. Because we're talking about riches.

Riches. I have studied a good deal of theology in my time, but I can't say that I've got much wealth out of it. Many riches.

It's as dry as dust. And studying the subject of election as a doctrine. Oh how arid it is.

How lifeless. And yet here it is in the word. It is definitely stated that he chose us in Christ.

Before the foundation of the world. There was an election which took place in those eternal councils of God. Which included us.

If we are today in Christ Jesus. We are in Christ Jesus because we were chosen in Christ Jesus. Before the foundation of the world.

You see to begin with you're dealing with a timeless God. What was so far as time was concerned. Four thousand years ahead was present with God.

Before time began. Because he is timeless. Everything which for us is future time is always present time.

And so for him in effect Christ was then. We were then. In effect we were then.

And God acted on eternal ground. That may not be very helpful or interesting. But let us look at this matter of election.

I'm going to change the world. I don't like that word election. Although it in certain forms is in the New Testament.

Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. That is Peter. And the elect is there mentioned.

As a body. But I say again I'm not fond of this word election. Because of its associations.

So I'm going to change it. And speak about selection. It's the same thing in meaning and in working.

Selection. Now then. When we get that word we are helped.

The nation of Israel was selected. Out of all the nations. Selected.

Chosen if you like. Elected if you like. But God looked on all the nations of the earth.

And selected Israel among the nations. Did that mean. That God rejected all the other nations.  
Because he selected this nation. Did it mean that. He.  
Selected them to be saved. And all the other nations to be lost. Because they were not selected.  
Well let us come into this room. Here we are a little company of people. Allow me.  
Not to take the place of God. But. Just to take this place.  
By way of argument. Of wanting something done. I want something done.  
And I look over this company. And of course this is not true. I know everyone.  
Fairly thoroughly. But I look over. And I say.  
Brother. I want you to come. Alongside of me.  
For this thing that I want done. I select. From this company.  
For the thing that I want to do. Now don't jump to conclusions. Either you or the others.  
Do not jump to the conclusion. That you are more important than all the others. And that you are better than all the others.  
You are more worthy of this. That is not true. And you others.  
Do not jump to the conclusion. That because I don't select you. Anyone or all.  
That you. Are. Rejected by me.  
And have no place. In this plan of mine. Don't conclude that.  
That you are less worthwhile than this one. Less worthy. Because you are not selected for this thing.  
Come to no such conclusion. The Lord selected the nation of Israel. And said.  
I have chosen you. Not because you are better than the other nations. Not because you are better.  
Not because you are more worthy. But I have acted sovereignly. And chosen you.  
Or selected you from among the nations. Because I have a purpose. That I want fulfilled.  
Now my purpose is just this. To use you to the good of all the other nations. All these other nations are going to come into blessing.  
Through my use of you. My selection of you. Let's go to the Bible.  
What was the covenant with Abraham. The first of this nation. In thy seed shall all nations of the earth be blessed.  
That doesn't sound as though all the nations were rejected. And consigned to be lost. Does it? Because they were not the selected nations.

In thy seed. In thy seed. Great illustration.

In history. Joseph. The beloved announced his brethren.

The beloved of the father. Joseph. Sold into Egypt.

Through Joseph. Egypt was saved from death. From famine and death.

Not only his brethren. The children of Ishmael. His father.

But through Joseph. The blessing of life. Salvation.

Came to the land of Egypt. To the nation of Egypt. A chosen one.

A selected one. Of a nation. To bring blessing.

To the nation of Israel. Election. Chosen.

Selected. General word we like to use. Just means the purpose.

To serve God in a purpose. Not that you should be saved and the others appointed to be loved. See the twist that has been given to this world.

How false it is. And we know. Right through their history.

That whenever Israel. For God. Must fight on.

And. Fail. To fulfill.

Their. Vocation to the nations. They were put under.

They were in the nations. For the. Shut up to themselves.

Despised the nation. And called the Gentiles dogs. And had no dealings with them.

And said we are the people and we are the only people. God so heartily disapproved. That he withdrew their vocation.

And sent them into captivity. And mark you dear friend. The two thousand years.

Of Israel's history since. Their rejection of the son of God. Is because.

They failed to recognize their own calling. That through. Jesus Christ.

They could be made a blessing to all the world. They put a hedge around themselves. Said we are the beginning and the end of everything.

God is only interested in us. The other nations are doomed. Just the reverse of their very calling.

And I see. And that seed says Polish Christ. Shall all nations of the earth be blessed.

And when instead of being a blessing. They became really a curse amongst the nations. God said that's enough.

You have canceled out your own vocation. Your own calling. Your own election.  
Canceled it out. And Israel. For these two thousand years.  
Has been in the outer darkness. With much weeping. Wailing.  
And gnashing of teeth. That's how it is. Isn't it? Why? Because in the son of God.  
Their vocation for the whole world. Was secure. And they rejected.  
Their own vocation. When they rejected him. That's history.  
And that is the meaning of election. Selected. Not to be saved.  
As over against all others to be lost. But. For a purpose.  
The blessing of all others. The salvation of all the others. Who will be saved.  
Now you see we come to Ephesians. One fourth. The church.  
Chosen. In him before the foundation. Part four.  
To be a blessing. The vessel and instrument of God. To be a blessing to the whole world.  
Paul. In his letter to the Galatians. Speaks of the church.  
As the Jerusalem which is above. The Jerusalem which is above. Which is our mother.  
John. In his vision. Sees.  
The holy city. New Jerusalem. Coming down.  
From above. Out of heaven. From.  
Paul has seen it there. The new Jerusalem. Our mother.  
John sees. The coming down of the new Jerusalem. From above.  
Our mother. And. He goes on.  
To say. The nation shall walk in the light thereof. The nation shall walk in the light thereof.  
So there are nations. Extra to this. Selected nation.  
And this selected nation. Peter again. Ye are a chosen nation.  
This selected nation. The church. Has been selected.  
To be a light to the nations. In the ages to come. The nation shall walk in the light thereof.  
This is the. As I see it. The true doctrine.  
Of election. Now. You and I. In Christ.

As a part of that nation. Of that Jerusalem which is above. That holy city.  
You and I. Have been called. And chosen in Christ. To form.  
This. Body which is. Symbolized as the city.  
To diffuse. The light of grace. In the ages to come.  
To the redeemed nation. That they shall see. The full manifestation.  
Of. The grace of God. The exceeding riches of his grace.  
To us what. Now dear friends. When I'm saying these things.  
I'm all the time. Catching my own breath. I know quite well.  
That I'm involving myself. In something. Which will be a very real test.  
Ground of very deep testing. And I say this. That because of the greatness of the vocation.  
Which is to display. The exceeding riches of his grace. Not only to angels.  
But. To nations. Redeemed nations.  
In the ages to come. Because of that. You and I. Will have to learn.  
The meaning of grace. Very deeply. If it's to be displayed in its fullness.  
My. How you and I are going to be. Made to know.  
The necessity of the grace. The greatness of grace. It's all grace.  
May that not explain. The fiery trial. Which Peter speaks.  
In connection with grace. Think it not strange. Concerning the fiery trial.  
You are in heaviness. For a season. Through many foes.  
Why? He just says there. Grace. Grace.  
Grace. To know it. And to show it.  
Chosen. Why? He just says there. Grace.  
Grace. Grace. To know it.  
And to show it. Chosen. What grace? How deep is this grace? If.  
This is true. Not imagination. Under a beautiful idea.  
That if. We could see with John. The nations.  
Redeemed nations of the earth. Walking in the light of what God has done in us. Deriving.

Their blessing. Through this vessel. If we could just see that.  
Then we should bow and say. Unsearchable. Riches.  
Oh the depth of it. How great is grace. That in the ages to come.  
The ages to come. He might show forth. The exceeding riches of his grace.  
In his kindness. To us. Well I've taken a lot of time on.  
Only one of the five. Of these riches of grace. But it wants.  
A great deal more doesn't it. To explore. That one realm.  
Perhaps I might. Take another this evening. If we don't get farther it doesn't matter.  
For the time being. We go into the next verse. Of Ephesians.  
One. Verse five. Having foreordained us.  
Unto adoption. As sons. Through Jesus Christ.  
Unto himself. According to the good pleasure of his will. Foreordained us unto adoption.  
As sons. Unto himself. Through Jesus Christ.  
At all wants breaking up. I will just be content. With this.  
Phrase. This part of the whole. Unto adoption.  
As sons. Selection. Adoption.  
What does that mean. Paul has. More to say about that in.  
His letter to the Romans. Chapter eight. Where he is.  
Defining. Sonship. He is saying.  
These are the sons of God. That are led by the spirit of God. Any man have not the spirit.  
He therefore is. Not his. None of his.  
And he is explaining. That it is by the spirit. That we become sons of God.  
Now here. He goes right back. Says foreordained.  
Unto adoption. And one meaning of adoption. Is certainly this.  
That. An adopted one. Does not stand on the natural ground of sonship.  
But is brought in from the outside. This letter to the Ephesians as you know was written. Almost entirely if  
not entirely to Gentiles.  
Brought in. From the outside. Called outsiders by the Jews.

But this goes far back before Israel. Was a people. Existed.

Foreordained. To be brought in from the outside. And made sons.

You are not sons by nature. You are not sons or children of God. On natural grounds at all.

It disposes of the whole theory. That everybody by natural birth is a son of God. A child of God.

Not true. Now. Not true.

The sons of God are brought in on other than natural grounds. They are not the born ones. They are the adopted ones.

The church is an adopted body. We are not of the church by nature. We are not.

You know this has been a controversy. Both in the natural realm and in the religious realm. For hundreds of years.

In the natural scientific realm. A controversy has raged for 300 years. Or did rage for 300 years.

On the question of life. Life. The origin of life.

Now one side of the argument represented by highly qualified intellectual scientists. Argued. Argued and tried to prove that life is spontaneous.

It is there naturally. And it just comes about of itself. Comes about of itself.

And they wrote wonderfully highbrow books about this. And argued and had their conferences. Life is just there and it comes about of itself.

The other side took this position. No. Not at all.

Life can only come from life. It does not come from nothing. It can only come from life.

And if life springs up. Life comes into being. You will track it down to some living organism.

You see the whole science of microorganisms. The very air. The very dust of the air.

Is impregnated with some organism. Minute. Too minute for the natural eye to see.

But put under certain tests in the test tube. You will see. You will discover there is a living organism there.

But always life is coming out of life. It does not come out of nothing. It comes out of life.

Well in the end of course. Second side won. The great Lister proved it.

Wrote over the whole of the argument. The theory of spontaneous. Life is dead.

It's killed. And he carried out all the experiments to prove. That if you bring sufficient heat.

Or cold. To the nth degree. To bear upon a substance.

So intense. Far beyond normal heat. You will never be able to prove use life.

From that material. Where it burns. Now this same thing.

What I'm getting at. This same kind of argument and contention. Has gone on for hundreds of years.

In the religious world. It's a very large school. Of people.

Theologians. Who say we are sons of God by natural birth. Humanism is built upon that.

Human good. Natural good. And you've only got to develop the natural good in people.

And it may take a few millions of years. But in the end they'll become God. The deification of humanity.

Is in the very nature of man. How under the experiments of two world wars. That theory can stand.

I don't know. When we discovered what really is in man. And what he can do.

When man has been developed to the highest level. Of education and civilization. Then we know what man can do to man.

And is doing today. How you can speak about. The natural sonship of God.

Inherent in man. Without any special intervention. Or operation.

Well. There's the other side. That comes to the Bible.

The word of God. And says. Only from him who has life.

Can life be derived. Life. Eternal life can never be.

Unless it comes from a living source. There must be life. Eternal life.

Somewhere before you can have it. It must come from there. It does not come.

Out of. What is dead. Simple inquiry of the angel.

Of the resurrection morning. Has a profound meaning. Why seek he the living.

Among the dead. That's incongruous. Contradictory.

Belongs to two worlds. There is nothing of life. Where there is death.

To what? Are you seeking life amongst the dead? You can only seek life. Where life is. In the living source.

The eternal life. In him. Was the life.

Now you see this. Sonship. Oh no.

We are not sons of children of God by natural birth. By adoption. Being brought in from the outside.

And given life. We haven't got it. Of course you people don't need such an argument do you? But perhaps it's helpful.

For us to recognize. That we are brought. Out of nothingness.

So far as. A relationship with God is concerned. And given that.  
Which makes us children of God. Which we do not have. Which we cannot have.  
Only by adoption. I know there are other fuller meanings of adoption. But this is its basic meaning.  
Brought in. From outside. And made members of a family to which we do not belong by nature.  
Only by new birth. Are we adopted and brought in. What a wonderful thing.  
This is the grace of God. Ye who were once afar off. Are now made nigh.  
Who were not children. Now made children. Not sons.  
Now made sons. And what a terrible plight and state. Is represented by that word not.  
Not. And were afar off. God only knows the great chasm.  
That was between. Us and him and his family. By nature.  
And there is a terrible chasm. Which has got to be bridged. We've got to be brought over that chasm.  
And that is the grace of God that does that. And the bridge. In Christ Jesus.  
Our adoption is in Christ. As our election is in Christ. He's the bridge.  
Comes over. And brings us across. And brings us in.  
How unsearchable. Are his judgments. Oh the depth of the riches.  
The riches of his grace. We are truly in deep waters. We can only wonder.  
And worship. If this is true. If this is what.  
The word of God teaches. I believe it does teach this. If so.  
How deep. Are the wonders and the mysteries. And the riches.  
Of grace. In his kindness. Kindness to us.  
He who were once a borrower. By his kindness are made now. In other words by his grace.  
I think we must leave it there for this evening. Not overload. Leave these other three things.  
For any other time that the Lord may choose. We pray.

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