

Unsearchable Riches of Christ - Part 5

by T. Austin-Sparks

The sermon explores the unsearchable riches of Christ, emphasizing God's eternal purpose for unity and grace among believers.

Duration: 35:57

Scripture: Romans 8:28, Ephesians 1:4-5, Ephesians 1:7-8, Ephesians 1:10-11

Topics: "Riches Of Christ"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker addresses the conflicts and problems that arise among Christians. They emphasize the need to face and acknowledge the realities of these issues. However, the speaker encourages believers to look back into the past and future eternities to see God's intended plan and ultimate consummation. The sermon also highlights the unsearchable riches of Christ, which are presented in the first chapter of Ephesians, and the fifth aspect of these riches is the consummation of all things in Christ. The speaker emphasizes that the ultimate goal is togetherness universally, which is the result of putting into effect God's purpose and the riches of His grace.

Transcript

The Unsearchable Riches of Christ and their five-fold presentation in the first chapter of the Letter to the Ephesians. We now come to the fifth, from election to adoption, from adoption to redemption, from redemption to wisdom, the ability to see into the heart of it all. So, we come finally to consummation, verse 10, unto a dispensation of the fulness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, the things upon the earth, in him, I say, in whom also we were made a heritage, to sum up all things in Christ.

That is the consummation of the riches of his grace, for grace is the first great context of that word, riches. It is helpful if we remember the standpoint of this great letter. The apostle who wrote it had in his other letters, or most of them, been dealing with things now, because he had been in close contact with present conditions in all places where he went, amongst the Lord's people, in the numerous localities where churches had been born.

All the problems, the requirements, the affairs of present life were pressing upon him, and most of his letters, up to this time, were occupied with those present-time demands, needs, problems, and situations. But when he was released from all that, and that phase of his life and ministry was closed, an end to his journeyings and his scattered preaching had come, and he was shut up in the prison, in Rome, it was

more than a release from local responsibilities. It was a release of his spirit out into the all-comprehending, the vast arrange of all that in which the local things were set.

He was now able to release all that was pent up in him. The accumulation of experience, of knowledge, of revelation, he had only been able to give it, so to speak, piecemeal, here and there and there. But now, all that he had in his knowledge of the Lord could be set forth and given out in these final letters, and in this one in particular.

And when he is so able to unburden himself, his reach and range is no less than from eternity to eternity. And so he immediately, in writing this letter, immediately, in what we call the first chapter, there are no chapters when he wrote it, it's just one continuous outflow. But here, right at the commencement, he plunges into the eternity past.

We were chosen in him, before the foundation, predestinated, foreordained. He's right back there in the past eternity. And before he has got through, he will have leapt right over into the ages of the ages.

That is his phrase in this letter. From eternity to eternity he is comprehending all that lies between the two eternities of what he calls the eternal, the timeless purpose of God in Christ. It is important for us and helpful to recognize that standpoint.

Helpful in this way, while you have got to face all that is in these other letters. The problems of the letter to the Romans. Tremendous effort on the part of the apostle to solve some of the fundamental problems of life, and the whole question of sin, death, and justification.

It's a tremendous letter. And the problems in Corinth, terrible problems, might have, well have, made him despair, and give up everything, and say, it's useless, look at this, look at these people, look at these professing Christians, what's the good of anything or the good of it all, and just close down on it in despair. The problems in Galatia, what problems.

So on. But, when you have got to take notice of those things, they are, they're facts, they're realities, and terrible realities. Calculated to take all the heart and all the heart out of you.

We need not think back into those days, we've only got to look into the state of things amongst Christians today, what is called the church. And we could easily give it all up and say, well, what is the good of it, as we know it. We have to face it, take account of it, know it is real, it's not all imaginary, very real.

What are we going to do with it? Well, just look back into the past eternity to see what was intended, and look into the future eternity and see it realized. God from eternity to eternity, through all these vicissitudes, all these difficulties and problems, at last is shown here to have exactly what he planned to have a way back there. It's going to be.

The consummation of all will be as God intended before time was. That help you? It ought to help us. Here it is, positively stated, not far on, in the letter, in the fullness of the times.

A dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens and the things upon the earth. Let us stay for a moment just to get clear about this word dispensation. Margin says stewardship.

The root of the word means a house order, or a household order. The order, the system which obtains that the word grows, is enlarged, comes to mean something more than just that. It comes to mean the carrying out and putting into effect of the purpose.

Dispensation, or stewardship, means the carrying out, carrying into effect, of the purpose of everything. In the fullness of time, the whole purpose will be carried out, put into effect. And the apostle said that there was given to him a stewardship of the ministry.

He meant that he was called to have something to do with the putting into effect of what was in the mind of God. So much for the moment. For the word here, dispensation, it's translated.

What is this putting into effect? Well, it says to sum up all things in Christ. And that is not satisfactory. It's not adequate.

It means to gather together, to reunite all things in heaven and in earth in Christ. And the emphasis is upon that word together. Together.

That's a thrilling thought. That in the fullness of the times, putting into effect of the purpose means everything will be at last together. Together.

Not just outwardly. We are together in this place. I wonder if it could be said of us all in an inward way, we are absolutely together here.

It's a grand thing, isn't it? When we really are in spirit, in heart, in an inward way, in object, in purpose, in outlook. Together. That's a mighty thing.

That's a grand thing. That's a fruitful thing. That's a joyous thing.

It's everything we desire. When you think of the opposite. The opposite.

When you are not together. When two people who have to live under the same roof are not together, it's a miserable, not life, but existence. The company of people who have to meet outwardly together, but are really not inwardly together, it is not a happy state.

There's a strain. There's an atmosphere. There's a lack.

But it says that putting into effect of God's purpose will be found at last in togetherness universally. That is the riches of his grace. The riches of his grace.

But see the setting of that. What a history stands over against that. The Bible, from one standpoint, is a record of the opposite to that togetherness.

The effect, the result of an interference with God's purpose. It began apparently outside of this world, what we could call the cosmic disruption in this universe. Various hints of it are given to us.

One apostle speaks about the angels which kept not their fastest speed. Now bound in everlasting chain. Angels which kept not their fastest speed.

Or the hint as to Lucifer's primeval position, and then coveting just the next step up, place of the Son of God, equality with God. And through that pride and ambition, bringing about that terrible disruption in the very realm of God himself. There.

A disruption in the heavenlies. And that is not something that happened and was concluded in some undated period called before the world was, or before times eternal. That very realm today called the heavenlies.

The very atmospheric realm occupied by principalities and powers, world rulers of this darkness, host of wicked spirits, is a realm of utter confusion, conflict. And sensitive believers know it. That it's an atmosphere of conflict and strife and destruction began there.

And then repercussions came down to this created earth. And God had made all things to his own pleasure and satisfaction and said it's very good. Put man into it.

Gave man his help meat. One meat to help him. It was not long before that thing which had happened above broke in and disrupted the first human family.

And Cain murders his brother. Family. Life is broken.

And you move on to the race which has grown, multiplied and expanded. And come to the Babel. The disruption of the human race.

The breakup into conflicting nations with the strife and confusion of tongues. The whole earth is full of confusion. Babel.

On you go. And there arises the story of Israel. A family.

Tribes. And then that broke. The ten and the tomb divided.

Fighting each other. Scism in Israel. On further.

And the awful disintegration, disruption of the exile. Long story of everything, everything being contrary to what God intended in the breakdown of human relationships. The state of confusion.

Confusion. It didn't stop with the Old Testament and with the exile. It's there when you come into the New Testament.

It's there. Terrible atmosphere of conflict you meet. Immediately open your Gospels.

And God brings in something very beautiful. Pentecost. They continued steadfastly.

The apostles teaching. Breaking of bread. Prayer.

Hardly said it before. This touch of schism breaks in again. To divide it all.

To spoil it all. And the rest of the New Testament is a story of battling with this thing. Division, division, division.

Scism. Strife. Disintegration.

Great appeals for fellowship. Oneness. Go on.

And what about today? What about today? Well the world has grown so much bigger than it was in those days. A much bigger world altogether. New countries have been discovered and populated.

Far greater world. And with the literal historical expansion and growth what has happened? Was there ever a time when there was more conflict, more confusion, more strain in relationships than there is now? Truly the prince of the power of the air is very busy today. This world holds more of this confusion, divisiveness, strain in relationships than ever before.

Despite every effort of every council and every union, every effort of man to bring the nations together, it all breaks down every time. Isn't it true? Well, all right, that's how it is. And it isn't of course all right.

It's very wrong. But you see, what the apostle is telling us here, by revelation to him, the Lord himself, that the great work of God in Christ, through grace, is going to see that whole historic system of disruption brought to a complete end. And the things in the heavens and the things on the earth reunited in Christ together again.

In the fullness of the times. That is what the apostle says. What the Holy Spirit says is the consummation of it all.

What a tremendous phrase this is. In Christ. In Christ.

Mark you, it's in Christ. We're not talking about that popular theory of universalism. We're talking about what is in Christ.

There will be a lot afterward that is not in Christ. Not in Christ. But it's altogether outside of his domain, of his kingdom, of his realm.

Outside completely. But the realm of this creation and of this cosmos, heaven and earth, will be his realm. Kingdoms, plural of this world, shall be the singular kingdom of our God and his Christ.

One kingdom. And that within Christ is a one, united, together state of things in Christ. Because this really doesn't need arguing.

We know quite well that if there is any hope at all for anything like this now, it will only be as we really are in Christ. I'd stay there. We get out of Christ into ourselves, we get into disruption and confusion.

If we abide in him, all of us abide in him, then we are together in an inmost way. Hence, the necessity in the first place for position. Position in Christ.

And then abiding in Christ. And then growing in Christ. And then perfected in Christ.

It's a process. It's a work of grace to abide in Christ. Trouble is, dear friends, that we do meet one another so much.

You meet me and I meet you. And you have to say so often, that's him. And I have to say, that's you.

That's you. That's just you. You know what I mean? Just ourselves.

Our way of thinking. Our way of talking. Our way of expressing ourselves.

The outcoming of ourselves, or the forthgoing of ourselves in some way. It's there. And it's a real joy and relief and pleasure to meet a person and not meet them, but meet the Lord.

Isn't it? Just to say, when we've been with them well, I wasn't struck and impressed by them, but I was of the Lord in them and about them. What impressed me was the grace of God in them. Grace bringing Christ out.

Making Christ the impression. Grace doing it. Now, that is exactly what Peter means by growing in grace.

It means diminishing of all that is outside of grace. Of ourselves. Growing in grace.

When we do come into contact with one another, it's more Christ as the effect and the result than ourselves. What we want. What we think.

How we think things ought to be. And all that whole gamut of self-interest and self-life. Christ.

Until the consummation, the spirit of grace is seeking to displace that which is not gracious and bring Christ, who is gracious, more fully into being where we are concerned. For the consummation is that all things will be united in him and he will fill all things. It will just be Christ.

You've heard that so often. It will just be Christ. Oh, what a grand day it will be when the ten thousand times ten thousand and thousands of thousands of redeemed individuals are utterly one person.

Because it's all Christ. And no more of this ugly self. Now, that's as the word is what God intended from the beginning.

That is the eternal purpose of God. That is the explanation of all the conflict in this universe. To spoil it.

To hinder it. To contradict it. But that is what the word says.

Is how it is going to be in spite of everything. In spite of everything. Dear friends, we shall agree with one another then.

Absolutely agree with one another. Shall. Should all be saying the same thing.

All be doing the same thing. That won't be monotonous and uninteresting to be all occupied with one thing. What will that be? And the various ways of putting it.

But I think it will be what a lot we owe to the grace of God. That will be our eternal occupation. The wonder of his grace.

The marvel of his grace. If the apostle was able to say in the presence of his large and yet so imperfect apprehension and knowledge and realization of the grace of God, oh the depth of the riches. Then of the wisdom and knowledge of God.

How unsearchable are his judgments and his ways past finding out. If he could say it was given to me, the least of all saints to preach, the unsearchable riches of Christ. If in the imperfection even of that knowledge and ministry he could speak like that.

What about when we come into the utter fullness of it. In the ages of the ages. We'll be saying all the time, oh the depth of the riches.

The unsearchable riches. The riches of his grace. But do you notice that between the eternities are the past intention and purpose of God.

And the ultimate consummation, realization. The apostle just does say walk worthy of the calling wherewith you're called. In all meekness, that selflessness, loneliness.

Walk he would say in the grace which is going to lead at last to this oneness. As far as walk he would say in the grace which is going to lead at last to this oneness. As far as people will allow us to do so.

As far as we can make it possible for them to do so with us. Let us ask the Lord that this grace, this grace of fellowship of oneness may be found in us increasingly now. Because there are a lot of Christians who won't let us, who won't let us.

Make it impossible for us to have fellowship, to be together. But as far as it is in our power. Let us seek by the grace of God to live in the light of the day when he will reunite in Christ all things in heaven and on earth.

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