

1 *** This file was autogenerated by a tool and not a person. Please be aware of possible transcription errors. ***

2 I invite your attention back to Ephesians chapter 3. Ephesians chapter 3. Our text is gonna be verse 8. Ephesians 3 verse 8. Here, Paul writing says, 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.

3

4 Paul said, I am less than the least of all saints. That struck me. We think of this man, and I believe rightfully so, as the chiefest apostle. He said, I'm less than the least of all saints. What a confession.

5

6 Honestly. I titled this message, grace given to unworthy sinners. Grace given to unworthy sinners. Paul said, unto me is this grace given. God said, I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious.

7

8 Paul said, God has been gracious to me. Now, for our message, I would like to consider Paul's story. Who he was, what God in his grace did for him, and the message that god called him to preach. Alright? We're gonna do a little bit of turning this morning.

9

10 Turn with me to the book of Acts chapter 7. Acts chapter 7. Towards the end of the chapter, acts 7 verse 54, Acts 7 verse 54. Now this is the account of where Stephen, a faithful minister of Christ, had been declaring the gospel. He'd been taken, and he's about to be stoned.

11

12 Alright? Acts 7:54. When they heard these things, what Stephen had to say, they were cut to the heart and they gnashed on him with their teeth. But he, being full of the Holy Ghost, looked up steadfastly into heaven and saw the glory of God and Jesus standing on the right hand of God and said, behold, I see the heavens opened and the son of man standing on the right hand of God. Then they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears and ran upon him with 1 accord and cast him out of the city and stoned him.

13

14 And the witness laid down their clothes at a young man's feet, whose name was Saul. Saul of Tarsus. This is the apostle Paul. That's who this man is. Alright?

15

16 Now keep reading. Verse 59. And they stoned Stephen. Stephen was calling upon God and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge.

17

18 And when he had said this, he fell asleep. Chapter 8 verse 1, and Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time, there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem. And they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles. And devout men carried Stephen to his burial and made great lamentation over him.

19

20 As for Saul, he made havoc of the church, entering into every house and hailing men and women committed them to prison. He stood there while a faithful servant of God was stoned to death. And not only did he stand there, he consented unto it. Here's what that means. He approved of it.

21

22 He approved of this murder, And he was pleased by it. And as we read at the end of chapter 7, while Steven prayed for him and the others who were there, those that were stoning him. Paul did that. Did that not strike you? This is the apostle Paul.

23

24 Same man. Who was he? He was a wicked enemy of God and God's people. There was a great persecution against the church and he led it. He led it.

25

26 He hated God. It told it told us that he wreaked havoc. That means he treated shamefully. He sought to ravage, devastate, ruin the church. That's who he was.

27

28 And that's what he did. That's what he sought to do. He went into the houses of God's people and had them sent to prison. He was an evil man. In acts chapter 6, we're told that the men who took Stephen, the men who stoned Stephen, were of the synagogue.

29

30 That means they were religious. They were the the chief priest. Paul was a religious man. He was among them. He was among them that took him and accused him of blasphemy.

31

32 Paul told us in Galatians 1:13 that he was a devout Jew, a religious leader exceeding zealous. In Philippians 3 verse 5, he tells us he was a Pharisee. Means self righteous. Ignorant of Christ. This is what Paul warned us against.

33
34 Against being confident in our flesh, against going about to establish our own
righteousness, not submitting to the righteousness of God, which is Christ. He said,
that was me. That was me. Who was Paul? He was a religious leader who did not know God,
and we have a ton of those in our day.

35
36 Religious leader who does not know God. You see a problem there? Paul said, I was a I
was a blasphemer. He claimed to know God. He claimed to love God.

37
38 Paul was raised having learned the scriptures, but he had not so learned Christ, whom
the scriptures declared. He very evidently hated God. He was injurious. He was cruel and
lifted up with pride. He was lost and he didn't have a clue.

39
40 Again, according to God's word, that's the case for many. It's the case for many. In
summary, here here's who Paul was, okay, before god's sake to him. He was a man bound
for hell and deservedly so, just like me, just like you, but God. Not, but he reformed
and turned it No.

41
42 But God. Look here in chapter 9 verse 1. And Saul yet breathing out threatenings and
slaughter against unto the high priest and desired of him letters to Damascus, to the
synagogues, that if he found any of this way, any believers on Christ, whether they were
men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem. And as he journeyed, he came
near Damascus, and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven. And he
fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou
me?

43
44 And he said, who art thou, Lord? And the lord said, I am Jesus, whom thou persecutest.
It is hard for thee to kick against the pricks. Now look at his reaction. Verse 6.

45
46 And he trembling and astonished said, lord, what will thou have me to do? And the lord
said unto him, arise and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.
God stopped him in his tracks. Literally. He was on his way.

47
48 He said he desired papers. Well, clearly, he had them. He was off. He was headed that
way. He was on his way to arrest more of God's saints when almighty love arrested that
man.

49
50 And my confession is that was me. I did the exact same thing. I have experienced the
exact same thing. Madly, I ran the sinful race thinking I was secure without a hiding
place. But god came to me and stopped me.

51
52 Is that is that the case for you? Can anybody else relate to this? Go on reading verse
7. And and the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but
seeing no man. And Saul arose from the earth, and when his eyes were open, he saw no man.

53
54 But they led him by the hand and brought him into Damascus. And he was 3 days without
sight, and neither did eat nor drink. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus named
Ananias. And to him said the lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, behold, I'm here,
lord.

55
56 And the lord said unto him, arise and go into the street which is called Straight, and
inquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul of Tarsus. For behold, he prayeth, and
hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in and putting his hand on him that he
might receive his sight. Now look at this, verse 13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have
heard by many of this man how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem. And
here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

57
58 But the Lord said unto him, go thy way, for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my
name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel, for I will show him how
great things he must suffer for my name's sake. When I read that, I think about what we
just read about. Paul consenting to Stephen's death. Arresting God's people. And I must
acknowledge this.

59
60 God was sovereign over all of that. God was sovereign over the whole thing. Over all of
it. When he said when he said to Saul in verse 5, he said, it's hard for thee to kick
against the pricks. Saul tried as hard as he could to resist.

61
62 There's no resisting god. He's not in our hand. No. No man can say unto him, what doest
thou? We can't stay his hand.

63
64 God knocked Saul of Tarsus off his horse, literally. Blinded him and saved him. We know because the scriptures tell us, and hopefully we know by experience, before Saul had ever done any of his evil, we just read it, he did evil. And we read that he persecuted the church, but the Lord said, you persecuted me. What we've done to the brethren, we've done to him.

65
66 But before he did any evil, God loved him. God chose him, chosen vessel, unto the Lord. That the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth. Paul's work certainly couldn't save him. God called him.

67
68 God chose him. God saved him. In Romans chapter 9, we read about vessels of mercy, which God hath, of fore, prepared to glory. That's what Paul was. Right?

69
70 That's what we are too. Look here at verse 17. And Ananias went his way and entered into the house, and putting his hands on him said, brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight and be filled with the Holy Ghost. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales, and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized. Ananias had just told the lord, I've heard about this man.

71
72 I imagine he had some some nerves regarding our lord's command here. But at the lord's command, he went. And he greeted Saul, who again had just had Stephen killed. Dear saint. And he looks him in the face and says, Brother Saul, Is that not amazing to you?

73
74 Honestly, it just when I read that, it just captivated. Does that not bless your soul? And then God physically opened Saul's eyes and let him look into his brother's eyes. Brother Ananias. Turn back to our text, Ephesians 3.

75
76 Now, that's the first part of Paul's story. Alright? Ephesians 3 verse 8, unto me who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given. Paul was the recipient of god's sovereign grace. Unmerited favor.

77
78 God's grace turned wicked, God hating Saul of Tarsus into a saint of god, an apostle, prisoner of Jesus Christ. It was not anything that that Saul or Paul did. Nothing. And Paul told us that time and time again. The one I wanna show you is back a few pages in Galatians chapter 1.

79
80 Paul was very transparent about what god had done for him all through his writings. And I especially love this here in Galatians 1. Look with me starting at verse 11. Galatians 1:11. He said, but I certify you, brethren, that the gospel which was preached of me is not after man, for I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

81
82 That's what we just read in Acts. Alright? Verse 13, for you've heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it and profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers. But when it pleased god, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace to reveal his son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen, immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood. He was a self made man, self saved man, or so he thought, until God's grace came to him.

83
84 His confession was this, when it pleased god. Lost and undone without god's precious son until it pleased god to reveal Christ, the son of god, to him and in him. He said he said, God separated me from my mother's womb. It's like the Lord told Jeremiah, before I formed thee in the belly, I knew thee. I chose thee.

85
86 I love thee. I've called thee by thy name. Thou art mine. Oh, when it pleased God to do this for Saul of Tarsus, nothing would ever be the same for this man. He received God's grace.

87
88 He didn't choose to receive it. God's grace came to him and drew him in. Again, can we relate to this? Oh, I pray we can. Now, a big change took place when God's grace came to Paul.

89
90 God's grace caused Paul to be put in his place. And God's grace will do that to you and me too. Right here, he said, back in our text, he said, I'm less than the least of all saints. Less than the least of all saints. Turn with me to 1st Corinthians 15.

91
92 1st Corinthians 15 verse 9. 1st Corinthians 159. He said, for I'm the least of the
apostles that am not meet to be called an apostle because I persecuted the church of
God. He said, I'm not worthy. I'm not fit.

93
94 I'm not meet to be an apostle. He knew he wasn't worthy to be an apostle. He knew he
wasn't worthy to be a saint, a child of God. He's not worthy. I'm unworthy.

95
96 Do we do we know how unworthy we are for God to have anything to do with us? Look at
verse 10 though. But by the grace of God, I am what I am. And his grace which was
bestowed upon me was not in vain, and it never is. But I labored more abundantly than
they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.

97
98 Grace caused Paul to know and to truly believe he was the least, less than the least,
and absolutely unworthy of god's favor. And this was not this was not merely some
pretentious show of humility. I'm telling you, God's grace changed this man. When God
saves a person, He creates a new man in that person. Christ in us.

99
100 We're new creatures in Christ. Now, Paul tells us, as a believer, in his flesh dwell no
good thing. They that are in the flesh cannot please God. He said, I'm a wretched man.
Oh, wretched man that I am.

101
102 I need to be delivered. Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? He said, I
thank God for Christ Jesus. Paul was a wretched man before God saved him. But now, after
God saved him, now he knows what he is.

103
104 Now he knows how vile he is. Not how vile he was, how vile he is. Do we know? In 1
Timothy 115, he referred to himself as the chief of sinners. It's believed that he
penned those words towards the end of his life on this earth.

105
106 The chief of sinners. The worst not not not merely the least of the apostles. Not merely
less than the least of all saints, the worst of all sinners, which is all mankind. He
said, That's me. God taught him that's who Christ came to save, the very chief of
sinners.

107
108 Grace taught him that. In 2nd Corinthians 12, he said he said, in nothing am I behind
the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing. He said, I'm nothing. Nothing. By God's
grace, he wasn't behind the chiefest apostles, and by God's grace, he was nothing.

109
110 He was nothing. I think of this quote about every time I'm asked to preach, but that
quote by Brother Scott Richardson. What is a preacher? He's a nobody. Who tells
everybody about somebody who can save anybody?

111
112 That's what god's grace caused Paul to be. Oh, my. Yeah. God in his grace knocked him
off his high horse, laid him in the dirt and blinded him. I pray God would do that for
us if he hasn't.

113
114 And if he has, I pray God would keep us low. I pray God, and it takes God, would cause
us to be clothed with humility. Looking away from ourselves and trusting only in the
Lord Jesus Christ. That's what he did for Paul, and I pray that's what he'll do for us.
Now look here back in our text, Ephesians 3.

115
116 Look at verse 7. Paul said, whereof I was made a minister, according to the gift of the
grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power. The gift of God's
grace and the effectual working of His power saved Paul and called him to the ministry,
called him to God's ministry, made him a minister, a minister of God. Now let me say
this, we don't make ourselves ministers of God. People people are putting other people.

117
118 Men are putting other men in the ministry left and right, but not God's ministry. Not
God's ministry. I I I preached I preached in Danville several years ago, and and someone
in my family who is not a believer asked my mom what seminary I went to. She said, he
didn't go to seminary. That's what everybody thinks.

119
120 We gotta go to seminary. We must be taught of God. God said that all his people shall be
taught of him. Paul Paul was taught at the feet of Gamaliel, a religious leader who was
lost and did not know Christ. He learned the gospel that he preached, he just told us,
by revelation of Jesus Christ.

121
122 He heard from the mouth of the Lord Jesus himself. And God speaks to us through his word

today. He does. Can't put ourselves in a ministry. The effectual working of God's grace in Paul caused him to preach the faith that he once destroyed.

123
124 At the end of Galatians 1, he went preaching the gospel. He went declaring the grace of God in Christ. And that's what these men said. They said, he now preaches the faith he wants destroyed. What in the world could cause a man to do that?

125
126 Grace. God's grace. Nothing else. Nothing else. I told you, before God's grace came to him, he was just a Pharisee.

127
128 Just a Pharisee. God gave him a new message. God gave him a good hope through grace and sent him to declare it. Verse 7 again, whereof I was made a minister according to the gift of the grace of God given unto me by the effectual working of his power, 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 told Ananias concerning Saul of Tarsus, he said, he shall bear my name before the Gentiles.

129
130 Paul was a Jew physically. Okay. Now he told us a true Jew is not one outwardly, but one inwardly. But Paul was of the Jewish nation, okay, of the tribe of Benjamin, the stock of Israel. But god saved him, and god sent him to preach to the Gentiles.

131
132 Now, I won't comment much on that, but I'll say this. The Jews and the Gentiles were separate. You remember the account where Paul rebuked Peter for getting up away from the Gentiles, go sit with the Jews? They were separate. The Jews, that's who God, for many years, had had given his word to.

133
134 God's promises are to the Jews, but again, they're not all Israel which are of Israel. God taught Paul something. God taught Paul that there's no difference between the Greek and the Jew. Oh, those Greeks, those Gentiles, they're unclean. We're all unclean.

135
136 Lord taught Isaiah that we're all as an unclean thing. All righteousness, mine and yours, filthy rags. God taught Paul there's no difference between the Jew and Greek. There's no difference between the circumcision, the uncircumcision, barbarian, Scythian, bond, nor free. No.

137
138 He said, Christ is all and in all. No difference. I'm unworthy. You're unworthy. But Christ is worthy.

139
140 Christ is all. Who maketh even different from another? Christ is all. What do we have that we have not received? Christ is all.

141
142 What's your hope? Happy Jack. Right? I'm a poor sinner and nothing at all. But Jesus Christ is my all in all.

143
144 Oh, he's my all in all. Now, what what exactly was it that Paul declared when god sent him to preach? He said that I should preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ. Those of you whom god has saved, I know you love that phrase just like I do. The unsearchable riches of Christ.

145
146 What a message to be called to preach. Let me tell you, it's an honor. The highest honor I know to get to declare the unsearchable riches of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul, he said things in his writings like whom we preach. We preach a person.

147
148 He said, I know whom I have believed. What do you believe? What do you believe? I believe him. I believe he's able to keep that which committed unto him, which God has caused me to commit unto him.

149
150 That's everything. I believe he's able to save to the uttermost those that come to God by him. I believe if he saved a wretch like me, he can save a wretch like you. He's able. It's no wonder Paul said, but we preach Christ crucified.

151
152 Oh, he's a stumbling block. Oh, that message is foolishness until God causes us to believe it. That message, Christ, the power and the wisdom of God, God will cause his people to believe it. You come here enough, watch out, God might just cause you to believe it. Anything, but this right here, Jesus Christ and him crucified.

153
154 There's no other message. There's no other hope. God forbid I stand here and say anything else. God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone. And let me tell you this, Paul, he he had a lot of knowledge.

155
156 I'm talking before God saved him. He had a lot of knowledge. Religious knowledge. He had a lot of accolades. People looked up to him.

157
158 They didn't just lay down their coats at some nobody. No. But once once he had the unsearchable riches of Christ, Once Paul had the Lord Jesus Christ revealed to him and in him, he counted everything that he'd ever had before. Loss, dung, nothing. He just wanted Christ.

159
160 He said, oh, that I may win Christ. That I may be found in him. Not having my own righteousness which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteous which is of god by faith. He said, oh, that I may know him. He just wanted to know the savior.

161
162 God's grace did that for him. God's grace will do that for us. One thing needful, we just need to know him. We just need to be found in him. We just need to win him.

163
164 Turn with me to second Corinthians chapter 8. We will see the unsearchable riches of Christ if God ever causes us to see his grace. It's the grace of Christ. We believe that by the grace of Christ, we shall be saved even as they Look here. 2nd Corinthians 8 verse 9.

165
166 For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. This isn't talking about money. You know, we all wanna be rich. Don't we? He who himself is unsearchable riches made himself to be poor.

167
168 He made himself to be sin. Made himself to be a curse in order to make us, who had no spiritual wealth, us, who are spiritually poor, to be rich. To be rich toward God. To have experienced the riches of his grace. To be righteous accepted in him before God.

169
170 That's what God's grace will do for you. Oh, how we need God's grace. I wanna close by reading some verses in Ephesians chapter 2. Ephesians 2 starting in verse 1. I believe all the verses I have read were either accounts of Paul or written by Paul, under inspiration of God, and same is true here in Ephesians chapter 2 verse 1.

171
172 He said, and you hath He quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins. Wherein in time past, ye walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience, among whom also we all had our conversation in times past in the lust of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind. And we were by nature the children of wrath even as others. But god, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ by grace, ye are saved. And hath raised us up together and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus, that in the ages to come, he might show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus.

173
174 Oh, the riches of his grace. Are you interested in the riches of his grace? Do you find his grace to be rich? Do you need it? Turn back a page, or maybe you don't have to turn, Ephesians 1 verse 7.

175
176 It says, in whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins according to the riches of his grace. Oh, how rich is his grace. Oh, the unsearchable riches of Christ. Paul said unto me, who am less than the least of all saints is this grace given, that I should preach the unsearchable riches of Christ. I'll tell you this about God's grace.

177
178 It's greater than all my sin, and it's greater than all your sin too. I pray God would reveal this grace to us. I pray God would give this same grace that he gave to Saul of Tarsus unto you and me, the grace of the lord Jesus Christ, for his sake, for his glory. Amen. God bless his word.