

Small Group Guide

****Ephesians 3:8-9 | Week 10: The Prison Epistles****

OPENING PRAYER

Begin your group time by thanking God for His unfathomable riches in Christ and asking the Holy Spirit to guide your discussion and deepen your understanding of His grace.

ICEBREAKER

****Share a time when you received a gift that far exceeded what you expected or deserved. How did it make you feel?*****

KEY SCRIPTURE

****Ephesians 3:8-9****

****"To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ, and to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things."****

SERMON RECAP

The sermon explored four "jewels in the crown of grace"—four treasures at the heart of the Gospel:

1. **Forgiveness** - A debt fully cancelled
2. **Justification** - A verdict of righteousness
3. **Redemption** - The price Jesus paid to set us free
4. **Adoption** - From strangers to sons and daughters

Each represents a different dimension of God's grace that is so deep, we can spend our entire lives exploring it and never reach the bottom.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Understanding the Depths of Grace

1. **What does the word "unfathomable" mean, and why is it significant that Paul uses this word to describe the riches of Christ?** How does this challenge our tendency to treat salvation as something simple or shallow?
2. **The sermon used the imagery of taking soundings in the ocean to describe exploring God's grace.** In your own spiritual journey, have you experienced discovering new "depths" in understanding God's love? Share an example.

The Four Jewels in the Crown of Grace

3. **FORGIVENESS:** The sermon described forgiveness as pages from a ledger being dipped in Christ's blood until the writing disappears. How does this imagery help you understand what God has done with your sin? How is this different from God simply "overlooking" sin?

4. **JUSTIFICATION:** The phrase "Just-As-If-I'd never sinned" was used to explain justification. How does knowing that God sees Christ's righteousness when He looks at you change the way you approach Him in prayer or worship?

5. **REDEMPTION:** In the Roman slave market illustration, Christ not only purchases us but sets us free. What are some "chains" or areas of bondage that Christ has freed you from? Are there areas where you still live like a slave rather than someone who's been set free?

6. **ADOPTION:** The sermon emphasized that adoption is familial, not just judicial—God isn't merely a Judge who clears us, but a Father who embraces us. How does viewing God primarily as Father (rather than Judge) change your relationship with Him?

Going Deeper

7. **Which of these four riches (Forgiveness, Justification, Redemption, or Adoption) resonates most deeply with you right now, and why? Which one do you need to understand better?**

8. **The sermon stated: "When you fail, come home quickly; sons and daughters run TO their Father, not FROM their Father." Why do we often run away from God when we fail? What would it look like practically to run toward Him instead?**

9. **Paul describes himself as "the very least of all saints" yet was given the grace to preach these unfathomable riches. What does this teach us about who God chooses to use? How does this encourage you personally?**

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- God's grace is **inexhaustible**—we can explore it our entire lives and never reach the bottom
- **Forgiveness** removes the record of our sin completely, not just overlooks it
- **Justification** declares us righteous based on Christ's perfect obedience, not our performance
- **Redemption** means we've been purchased at the highest price—Christ's blood—and set free
- **Adoption** gives us intimacy with God as our Father and full rights as His children
- These riches operate in past, present, and future tenses—securing our complete salvation

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

This Week, I Will:

Choose one or more of the following to practice this week:

1. **Meditation Exercise:** Spend 15 minutes each day this week meditating on one of the four riches. Use Scripture, prayer, and journaling to explore its depths.

- Monday/Tuesday: Forgiveness (Colossians 2:14, Psalm 103:12)

- Wednesday/Thursday: Justification (Romans 5:1, 2 Corinthians 5:21)
- Friday/Saturday: Redemption (Ephesians 1:7, 1 Peter 1:18-19)
- Sunday: Adoption (Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:4-7)

2. **Share Your Story:** Identify one person this week who needs to hear about the unfathomable riches of Christ. Invite them to Easter Sunday or share which of these four riches means the most to you personally.

3. **Practice Running Home:** The next time you fail or sin this week, practice immediately turning to God in prayer rather than avoiding Him. Thank Him that you're a child who can always come home.

4. **Gratitude Journal:** Each day, write down one specific way you've experienced forgiveness, justification, redemption, or adoption. At the end of the week, review your list and thank God for His grace.

5. **Family Conversation:** If you have children or family members, share one of these four riches with them this week using the illustrations from the sermon (ledger book, courtroom, slave market, adoption).

PRAYER FOCUS

Spend time praying together as a group:

- **Thanksgiving:** Thank God specifically for each of the four riches—forgiveness, justification, redemption, and adoption

- **Personal Application:** Pray that each person would live in the reality of their identity as forgiven, justified, redeemed, and adopted children
- **Outreach:** Pray for specific people in your lives who need to receive these unfathomable riches, especially as Easter approaches
- **Deeper Understanding:** Ask the Holy Spirit to continue revealing the depths of Christ's riches to your group

CLOSING THOUGHT

"You can take soundings all your life in the depths of Christ, and still there's more depth to be found. His love is not shallow; His mercy doesn't run out; His patience doesn't wear thin."

Challenge: This week, when you pray, begin by addressing God as "Abba, Father" and remind yourself that you are His beloved child, fully forgiven, completely justified, totally redeemed, and forever adopted.

PREPARATION FOR NEXT WEEK

Continue inviting people to Easter Sunday and be prepared to share what God has been teaching you about His unfathomable riches.