

## RICH THROUGH CHRIST

"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." II Corinthians 8:9.

In the preceding verses of this chapter, Paul was trying to stir the Corinthian Christians to be more liberal. He was doing his utmost to collect a generous gift from them with which to supply the needs of the poor saints in Jerusalem and Judea, who were suffering from famine, persecution and unfavorable circumstances over which they had no control. Paul desired this liberality as a fruit of Christian faith, as a token of Christian love to brethren in need and, above all, as a response to the unmeasured love of God in Christ.

In his effort to arouse this desirable spirit in them, Paul pointed to the liberality of the Macedonians. They had given seemingly more than they were able to give, and until the Apostle was almost ashamed to receive what they gave. "Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves" (II Corinthians 8:1-3). They were certainly worthy examples of sacrificial giving, but not the highest example. The highest example was the Lord Jesus Christ. "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" (II Corinthians 8:9). This verse is a priceless gem of truth.

"Ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." His grace is worth knowing. "By grace are ye saved." The thought of it warms my heart, stirs my spirit and thrills my soul with a rapturous joy. The Corinthian Christians knew the grace of the Lord Jesus, which was love giving beautifully and abundantly to the undeserving. There was not anything in man to merit the divine favor which brought Christ from heaven to earth. It was love in the heart of God that sent Christ to earth. "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son."

### I. Christ Was Rich.

"He was rich." Thus the Word of God describes the original condition of our Saviour. We are not to think that our Saviour began to live when He was born of the Virgin Mary. His birth in Bethlehem had meaning only because of what lay behind it. It is just as great a mistake to begin the story of Christ Jesus with His birth as it is to close it with His burial.

The riches which are mentioned in this text are those which Christ had with the Father before the world was. Human language cannot describe the eternal riches of Christ.

1. He was rich in the love of the Father.  
To be loved by God the Father is the truest and greatest of all riches. The love of God is unchanging and undying. None ever enjoyed His love as did the Son of God.
2. He was rich in surroundings.  
Heaven, with all of its beauty, perfection and artistry, was His home. The angels were His companions.

3. He was rich in possessions.

He was rich in the abundance of His material possessions. All things were made by Him. "For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him" (Colossians 1:16). All of the diamonds, pearls and golden gems that ever sparkled were His, for He made them. This world with all of its sparkling fountains, rippling rills, babbling brooks, rushing rivers, quiet lakes, restless seas, majestic and towering mountains, glorious sunsets, silvery moon and twinkling stars were His.

Christ Jesus had rights in all things such as we do not have in anything. His rights were those which creation gave. They were absolute. The universe with all of its wonders was His.

4. He was rich in position.

One day John gently pushed open the door to that upper room in Jerusalem and allowed us to hear the great Saviour in prayer. He prayed, "And now, O Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17:5). He shared all the glory of the Father. "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:6-7).

5. He was rich in power.

Creative power was His for He made all things. Sustaining power was His, for "in Him all things hold together." Reigning power was His, for dominions and principalities and powers were subject to Him. Whatever of power, glory, riches and blessedness the Father had, they dwelt with equal fulness in the Son; for He was in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God. He also has all authority over your life. He can cause you to die or He can enable you to continue to live.

## II. Christ Became Poor.

1. He became poor in position.

Christ left His home in heaven and the hallelujahs of the heavenly world for the manger at Bethlehem. This was a voluntary act on His part. His wonderful condescension in coming from the highest heights to the deepest depths, from the highest honor to the deepest shame and from the greatest wealth to the most abject poverty, amazed the angels, startled the earth and terrified Satan and his cohorts. He became poor of His own choice.

2. He became poor in circumstances.

(1) At His birth.

This world gave the Lord Jesus a cold reception. When He was born, the best door that opened to Him was a stable door, the best bed afforded Him was a litter of straw, and He was wrapped in the swaddling clothes of poverty. He was born of a peasant mother and had for His foster father a poor carpenter. He was an outcast, as there was no room for Him in the inn, which was a foreshadowing of His whole earthly life.

(2) In His life.

a. As an artisan.

Born in a stable of poverty, wrapped in the swaddling clothes of poverty, lulled to sleep in the arms of a mother of poverty, rocked in a cradle of poverty, He lived in Nazareth which was noted for its poverty. Being a synonym for abject poverty and depravity, Nazareth was the most despised village of the land. In Nazareth Christ Jesus earned His living as a carpenter by the sweat of His brow.

b. As a traveler.

Christ did not ride in a chariot, but He walked His weary way, footsore o'er the flints of Galilee. He did not have a place to lay His head. After watching the fox as it hurried to its burrow and the fowl as it went to its resting place, our Lord said, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but I, the Son of man, have not where to lay my head." The Lord Jesus was born in a borrowed stable, preached from a borrowed boat, rode into Jerusalem on a borrowed donkey and ate His last passover with His disciples in a borrowed room.

c. As a preacher.

When our Lord needed a pulpit from which to preach to the waiting multitudes along the seashore, He borrowed a boat from one of His disciples. Instead of paying Him homage, they mocked and insulted Him. Very few believed on Him. He was called a Sabbath-breaker, winebibber, glutton, traitor, deceiver, blasphemer and friend of sinners. Frequently they plotted to kill Him.

When Christ wanted to feed the multitudes He borrowed loaves and fishes. When tax-paying time came and He did not have sufficient money to pay them, He wrought a miracle to get money to pay them by sending Simon Peter to get a fish with the tax money in its mouth. In preparing to eat the Passover for the last time with His beloved disciples, He borrowed a room in which to observe it.

(3) In His death.

Although He made the earth, and it was therefore His by right of creation, He did not even own a cemetery lot. After His death, He was wrapped in a borrowed shroud. He was buried in a borrowed tomb. What a shame that the Son of God should be buried in a borrowed tomb!

III. Christ Became Poor For Our Sakes.

"Yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye, through His poverty, might be rich." The truest test of any action lies in its motive. Many deeds, which on the surface seemed to be glorious, were really ignoble because they were done with a base intention; while other actions, which appeared to be poor and paltry, were really full of the beauty and glory of a noble purpose. As the mainspring of a

watch is all-important, so the spring of an action is everything. Note the motive at the root of Christ's action in becoming poor. With Him there was no self-seeking. He did not come to this earth and suffer for Himself. He came for others, lived for others and died for others.

When we think of what Christ did for us, we ask, "What made Him do it?" To that question the only accurate answer is Grace. He did it because of the eager longing which He had to put away the black barrier of sin that stood and stands between His creatures and Himself.

Christ became poor in order that we through His poverty might become rich. The Son of God became the Son of Man in order that we who are the children of men might become the children of God. He who was the richest of the rich became the poorest of the poor in order that we who are the poorest of the poor might become the richest of the rich. Christ came to bring pardon, peace, and salvation and to lead us through the gates of pearl to eternal bliss. He came to make us heirs of God and joint heirs with Himself. All who believe on Him, He will make rich in the forgiveness of the past, the fellowship of the present and the future glory that is waiting for us. It will ever remain a wonder to me that the Son of God should have condescended to die for me. What gratitude and love should fill my heart as I think of all that Christ bore on my behalf! Everything He did was for our sakes. Think of what we can do for Him because of what He has done for us.

1. Christ wants us to be rich in faith.  
Christ wants us to give up our self-reliance, our strutting about in our own cleverness, and our bragging about our accomplishments and to open up our whole beings to His promises and His power. While all possessions, positions, power and prestige cannot save a single soul, the blood of Christ can blot out every transgression, cover every iniquity and remove every spot, stain and stigma from the soul of every believer in Christ.
2. Christ wants us to be rich in fruitfulness.  
In II Corinthians 6, Paul says that the real Christian goes about "making many rich." This means that when we are rich in the love and beauty and the peace and joy of Christ, we have real wealth to share. Rich in Christ we ought to make others rich also. God's utmost for man's highest calls for a worthy response, which is man's utmost for God's highest.

An eccentric Frenchman, whose name was Guizot, lived on the coarsest fare, dressed in rags and slept on a hard bed. His home was one of the worst hovels in the city of Paris. As he moved about the city, urchins cried after him, "There goes old rags." Poverty and rags have few friends and receive few compliments. Therefore, expressions of taunting scorn greeted him at every turn. Parents and children plied him with mocking gibes.

In due time Guizot met the appointment which every man must meet. He died. Nobody supposed that he had made a will or that he possessed any property worthy of consideration by the courts. But a will was

discovered. When it was read, some unexpected and interesting facts were disclosed. By industry and self-denial he had accumulated a large fortune. This he had bequeathed to the City of Paris to supply the poor of the city with an abundance of pure water. When these facts were revealed, the surprised and delighted people ceased to sneer and mock and gibe. They no longer referred to him as "old rags" They thought and spoke of him as their generous benefactor. They erected a monument, properly inscribed, to perpetuate the fame of the beneficence of the disguised philanthropist and as a record of their gratitude. He had lived in poverty for their sakes.

But the most generous of benefactors is the Son of God. He lived a life of extreme poverty and died a death of agony and shame to provide for us an abundant supply of the water of life. According to the provisions of His will, this invitation is extended, "And let him that is athirst come, and whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely." "For your sakes He became poor."

Unsaved friend, receive the Lord Jesus Christ as your Saviour now. He will give you everything that is worth having. He will make your life beautiful, useful and happy.