

Jesus Christ Made Poor That We Might Be Rich

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[0 : 00] I'm going to sing to God's praise from Psalm 73, Psalm 73 at verse 23, and we can sing to the end of the psalm.

Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee, thou dost me hold by my right hand and still upholdest me, though with thy counsel while I live wilt me conduct and guide, and to thy glory afterward receive me to abide.

Whom have I in the heavens high, but thee, O Lord, alone, and in the earth whom I desire besides thee there is none. My flesh and heart doth faint and fail, but God doth fail me never, for of my heart God is the strength and portion forever.

For, lo, they that are far from thee, forever perish shall, them that are hearing from they go, thou hast destroyed all. But surely it is good for me that I draw near to God.

In God I trust, that all thy works I may declare abroad. We shall sing these verses to God's praise, Psalm 73 from verse 23.

[1 : 18] Nevertheless, continually, O Lord, I am with thee. O Lord, I am with thee. Yet there is the death's contemporary, O Lord, I am with thee.

To■■■■■ Must be.

Thou with thy counsel, I will live with me on the left and right.

Unto thy glory afterwards, which give me true of I.

Whom have I in the heavens, I, but thee, O Lord, not only.

[2 : 48] And in the earth, whom I desire, is I, may see the red is none.

My flesh and heart of faith until the waters fill me in heaven.

For of my heart, what is the strength and portion of heaven?

For loath it all, not only, all ye ever perish shall.

Then thou just put it from me, O Lord, thou hast been soiled all.

[4 : 14] But surely it is true for me that I've got near to God.

In God I trust, and all my works, I may be free of Lord.

Amen. We can turn now to the chapter that we read. Paul's second epistle to the Corinthians in chapter 8.

And we can read at verse 9. 2 Corinthians chapter 8, verse 9. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that he, through his poverty, might be rich.

So you will understand the burden of this chapter, and the following chapter, is to encourage Christian liberality.

[5 : 43] that is to remember those who are in what? Remember the poor, both in the local church and in the broader church.

And to endeavour out of the provision that God has made for us, that we should provide for those who are in want.

The theologian John Murray teaches that the family of God have an interest in the affairs of family members.

They have fellowship in plenty and in want, and in riches as well as poverty. And that's important for us to have that in mind.

When we think of the Church of Christ, we think of the family of God. I think it's something that we cannot say that is sufficiently to our attention.

[7 : 00] the relationship that we have with fellow believers. We have an interest in our own family members, and we have a careful interest in them, and we're concerned for them.

And we want to do our utmost to assist them whenever that assistance is called. And we think nothing of it. But we're also required to think of those who are fellow believers, who are part of God's Church, the children of God, the same Father and the same ties through faith.

Now, Paul teaches the Corinthians by way of the example of the churches in Macedonia.

And he begins the chapter here, 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.

He cites them as an example to encourage that liberality. And despite their straitened circumstances, despite the trials and testings that they themselves encounter, he brings to their attention the generous spirit that they have towards others.

[8 : 46] But it's important to remember that he doesn't measure that generosity as some would do, in pounds, shillings, and pence as we have it.

But out of the willingness to provide to others, out of their own meager resources.

And we have examples of this in the scriptures, and particularly through the teachings of the Lord Jesus himself. They gave not because they were wealthy, but because of their love to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Jesus uses the illustration of the widow's mite, and she gave of her meager resources, far more than those who had much more to offer than her in financial terms.

It was not the value, as one put it, of the contribution, but the love of the giver. Now, not only does Paul cite this example, but he attributes the example, rather interestingly, to the grace of God.

[10 : 12] You would think that they themselves were to be commended for their activities. And for their giving. But he goes right back to where this spirit of generosity begins.

He attributes it to the grace of God, so that there is recognition that they are able to do that, not just because God has given them what they are able to give, but God has given them the desire to give, which is all important.

If we have a full purse and an empty heart, it's not going to work. But when our heart is full of what God has bestowed upon us, however meager our resources are, we're willing to share them.

And this is what Paul brings to our attention. But then he uses this sublime example, the example of the giving of the Lord Jesus Christ.

For you know, he says, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that he through his poverty might be rich.

[11 : 39] And I think that's a wonderful example to start. But it's quite a, you know, if you look at the whole chapter and the following chapter, you wouldn't say that it was the most spiritual of chapters.

The most spiritual, I mean, if I as a minister start to lecture people or preach to people about financial things, almost instantly there's a switch off because finances and spirituality, to our way of thinking, don't walk hand in hand.

But I used to hear them, many of the older Christians say that our worship begins the moment we put our collection in the plate. And, I mean, that at least is worth thinking about.

We don't think about putting a collection in the plate as being a spiritual activity. We don't worship God until we sit down and sing a psalm. But no, the older generation, some at least said, that's where your worship begins.

And it's something that we need to remind ourselves of. But it's interesting that Paul, even in giving such information and instruction and encouragement, that he uses this illustration to encourage it and to encourage us as we think about our own generosity to the cause of Christ.

[13 : 18] He uses the illustration of the giving of Christ. I want us to think briefly about what he says here, just under three headings.

There's three things that we can think about. There's the riches of Christ, the preeminence of Christ, shall we say.

And there's the poverty of Christ. And finally, there is the provision that Christ makes through these two things, his riches and his poverty combined, make us provide for us, provide for the believer.

Because he's speaking to the believer here. You can see that. Because he says, you know the grace. You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. So he's speaking to believers, people who are able to understand what he's talking about.

If you go out to the street and speak to a person who doesn't know the Lord Jesus Christ, well, you're not really too concerned about what the Bible says about him or how the Bible speaks about the grace of God in Christ Jesus.

[14 : 39] It's meaningless to us. It's mumbo-jumbo to them. But to you, the Christian, you know when he talks about the grace of God in Christ Jesus, you understand what he's talking about.

Now, humanly speaking, when we think about the riches of Jesus Christ, we wouldn't begin with the incarnation.

We wouldn't think about his birth and his life as anything other than being poverty. But that has to be considered in light of what his poverty involved and how it came about that he became poor.

The scripture insists that we see beyond the veil of his humanity and glimpse even fleetingly the deity of Christ that lies behind it.

Paul says, you know the grace because he expects the believer to know who Christ was, to know that the person of whom he is speaking here is the incarnate Christ, the only begotten Son of God who ever lived in the bosom of the Father.

[16 : 18] He is, if you're familiar with the Shorter Catechism, as I'm sure you are, he is God and man in two distinct natures and one person forever.

And you know that because the Bible insists upon it that the Son of God is the equal of God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

One God, three persons. All divine and all eternal. Professor Rolt MacLeod, when he lectured on systematic theology, he used to say, many in this world, when they begin a Christology, they begin their Christology from beneath.

They look at this world and where Christ appeared in this world. But the New Testament scriptures, he said, doesn't begin their Christology from beneath.

It begins from above. What he meant by that was that the person of whom the scripture speaks is a person who is from everlasting to everlasting God.

[17 : 34] He is someone who must be understood as having everything said of him that can be said of God, especially as far as his attributes that are divine are concerned.

Christ did not begin with the conception in the womb of the Virgin Mary. Christ did not begin with his birth in Bethlehem.

Christ did not begin when he appeared in his pages of history books. Christ was from everlasting to everlasting.

The Apostle Paul, when he writes this epistle to the Colossians, he says, that Christ is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature.

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.

[18 : 41] And he is before all things and by him all things were created. All of these words suggest to us somebody who was incredibly mighty.

He is the almighty. He is all-powerful. He is the creator of God in the same way as we would imagine we would speak of the everlasting Father.

The principal Cunningham who recently been looking at some of his lectures and some of his preaching, he has written the following about the way that the scripture describes to us the richness of Christ or the Christ who is rich.

And he says he was rich, unspeakably rich in all the perfections of divinity, in all the excellences which would render him a proper object of adoration to intelligent creatures.

Rich in all the sources of happiness which infinite moral excellence could furnish, which unlimited power and dominion could bestow.

[20 : 13] Well might it be said or he be said to be rich who had all the fullness of the Godhead who was the creator and proprietor of all things whose was the earth and the fullness thereof.

So he invites us there to reflect upon Christ as being rich.

There was no point at which anything that is descriptive of his riches cannot be said about him.

There is no point at which you can say he became rich. I think we need to emphasize that. Can you add to what he had?

No. You can ascribe to it, you can acknowledge it, you can describe it, but there is nothing that you or I or any other creature can do to make Christ richer than he was because he is infinitely rich.

[21 : 34] And we are all familiar with the words of the apostle to the Philippians and it speaks of him there as being in the form of God and he thought it not robbery to be equal with God.

So if that is true and that must be true often then we cannot but believe that these words that speak of the riches of Christ can be understood by us.

and this is just an invitation for any one of us to think about what it means to be rich.

For we have a tendency to think about riches in the sense of this world and we can read about and hear about people who possess material riches.

Christ's riches materially subsume all riches that are material. Any possession that Bill Gates has or anyone like Bill Gates who are rich in the eyes of the world Christ possesses these riches as he possesses the owner of them.

[23 : 00] They are his possession. He is the proprietor of this world and all its resources those that are known and those that are yet to be discovered. You know they talk about a limitless resource in the depth of the oceans that have yet to be discovered.

Well Christ possesses them because he is their creator and you could explore that even trying to understand the rich Christ.

But then the remarkable thing is that this Christ who was rich and is rich and ever will be rich became poor he says.

He became poor. And that is a mystery for us. Where do we begin to explore his poverty?

In what sense did he become poor? Well we need to understand that that was his initiative. We read in that passage that we quoted from Philippians that Paul says that he made himself of no reputation.

[24 : 25] No one made him poor but himself. And if you read on in that chapter he says he took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of man.

Being found in fashion as a man he humbled himself and became obedient unto death even the death of the cross. This was his doing.

He was not compelled to do it by anything or anyone other than his own divine compunction. He did not become rich but he did become poor because his riches have no origin but his poverty has a point at which that poverty was embraced.

John Murray in his collected writings invites us to remind ourselves that when we think about the Christ who became poor that we need to guard against error in the sense that theologians over the centuries have talked about this embracing of poverty of Christ.

What did it involve? He became man and that is an understatement. He became man. He became something that he was not.

[26 : 06] There was a point at which this happened. There was a point in which the Virgin Mary became the carrier of the holy thing that she bore and that was born of her into the world.

But people want to explore this and think about this but there's always the danger to go too far one way or another.

John Murray the theologian writes the following some say that Christ became poor by emptying himself.

That's a common phrase that's used the self emptying of Christ. But they go beyond what the scripture says when they attribute to Christ a self emptying that requires his divinity to be put to one side because the scripture at no point says that he emptied himself of his divinity.

He did not become poor by subtraction by divesture or by depotentiation.

[27 : 28] John Murray's good at big words. He didn't become poor by subtraction. he became poor by addition. That makes sense. The scripture does not support any such notion.

He took our humanity. He humbled himself. He took the form of a servant. Our human frailties without sin.

Free from sin but suffering from the consequences of sin because he was the sin bearer. He followed a path that took him into poverty.

He followed a path that took him into the realms of abandonment and persecution. he went into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.

He went into the world where he was constantly encountering the enmity that was in the world against God and against him as God. He experienced the trials of Satan and the torments of the enemies of God.

- [28 : 42] Do you not think that these words that we quoted earlier insisted that all was his and yet all the riches that he possessed and yet we read at the same time that foxes have holes the fowls of the air have nests but the son of man has no place to lay his end.
- You may want to think of this for yourself and you do well to do it and we do well to reflect upon it the riches of Christ and the poverty of Christ.
- We can follow him on the path that took him to Gethsemane. We can follow him on the road that took him to the place where he knew suffering was, to Golgotha, to the cross.
- We can go to these places and we can see the point at which heaven is silent. where he is crying out, my God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
- Who would feel destitute unless the person at that point who was forsaken or felt forsaken by the world and all in it and even God himself?
- [30 : 07] Would you say he had anything at that point? Or do you think you had anything at that point where you were in the very grip of the darkness of this world?
- Even death itself. Christ became poor. He became poor and his poverty must be spoken of in this way.
- We can't leave anything out. There was nothing that he endured that was not necessary for him to be the redeemer of those who were impoverished by sin because he came to their place to take them from that place to his place that he had prepared for them before the world was.
- So what is the provision? The provision we are told is this Yet for your sakes he became poor that you through his poverty might be rich.
- What he experienced was to enrich his own people. You know he says the grace.
- [31 : 30] he did this for you. Generosity such as this knows no bounds. If you read for a moment the words of the Apostle Peter in the second epistle at the beginning of chapter one.
- Simon Peter a servant and apostle of Jesus Christ to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ.
- Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord. According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue.
- whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises that by these ye might be made partakers of the divine nature having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.
- But you are made partakers of the divine nature a gift what Christ has given to his own to enrich our lives and only he could do it and only by way of the cross could he do it.
- [33 : 03] There may be countless passages that we could quote that sustain such an opinion and I'm sure they're worth looking out and thinking about what the scripture says about the enriching of the Christian by reason of what Christ has done for the Christian.

Paul again in his first epistle to the Corinthians he says to the believer there all things he says are used well if all things are used what's left out he says all things are used whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas or the world or life or death or things present or things to come all are used and you are Christ's and Christ is God's do you think he's exaggerating do you think he's overstating the case do you think he's saying to you more than is merited by what he has done no he can't but say this because of what he has secured by his this person who was rich becoming poor so that those who are his would become rich in him grace he says in order to stimulate grace initially he's talking about this to encourage generosity of spirit on the part of the believer towards those in need within the body of Christ to think of the needs of others and to use this prime example this perfect example this great example that each one of us might learn for ourselves what real sacrifice is all about what real generosity of spirit is all about by looking to Jesus the author and finisher of our faith may God encourage us to think on these things because we need to be encouraged to do what is right and proper for us as believers in the

Lord Jesus Christ may he bless to us these thoughts let us pray ever blessed God we give thanks when you cite for us examples you give many examples to us but the best examples are always focused and centred upon the person of the Lord Jesus Christ how he lived how he died how he had a heart that was full and a love that overflowed from it help us to understand what is expected of us in our Christ likeness that we cannot leave anything out grant mercy for every shortcoming and there are many pardon us in his name amen we're going to conclude singing from psalm 72 the last three verses of that psalm psalm 72 whose name forever shall endure last like the sun it shall men shall be blessed in him and blessed all nations shall come and blessed be the

Lord our God the God of Israel for he alone doth wondrous works in glory that excel and blessed be his glorious name to all eternity the whole earth let his glory fill amen so let it be he swears his name forever shall endure last at the sanctuary let love In the Lord ever shall let you us like the Son it shall.

May it shall be blessed in heaven and blessed, all nations shall them call.

[37 : 53] Now blessed be the Lord, the Lord, the Lord of Israel.

For He alone shall have blessed works in glory, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, the Lord, and blessed be His glorious name to all eternity.

The whole earth let His glory fill.

Amen. May grace, mercy, and peace from God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit rest and abide with you all, ever and always.

Amen.