

Following Jesus in a world where money is real and powerful

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 08 January 2017

Preacher: Rev. George Sinclair

[0 : 00] Father, it's hard for us to acknowledge before you that often we read your Bible, your word, with a cynical and unbelieving heart. It's hard for us to acknowledge before you, Father, that we often do not believe your promises or your word.

It is hard for us to acknowledge before you, Father, that often we see you as fairly small and fairly distant and fairly unimportant. And so many other things so big and so powerful and so present. Father, we ask that you would do a mighty work of your Holy Spirit in our hearts and minds and lives this morning. Father, may you reveal to us what our hearts are really like.

May you convince us, Father, of your truthfulness in your word. And in all things, Father, grip us with the gospel. Make us disciples of Jesus who are gripped by the gospel, learning to live for your glory.

And this we ask in the name of Jesus, your Son and our Savior. Amen. Please be seated. We're going to talk about money.

[1 : 16] That dreaded topic. We're going to talk about money. We're talking about money not because it's January 8th and some of you are going to be getting your credit card bills really soon and you're going to have a gasp, maybe fall on the floor, collapsing in shock, or see what your line of credits happened to it.

And you're going to be complete. We're not talking about money. We preach through books of the Bible. And 2 Corinthians 9 is a text about money. And if you're a guest here this morning, one of the great fears that people who are not Christians have is that all Christians want to do is try to get your money from you.

They believe that it's common in our culture to believe that Christians are sort of preoccupied with money. And so I just want to say if you're a seeker or you're just here just out of some type of curiosity, if you come with your friend, as I'll explain in a moment, as long as you come to this church, you can come week after week after week.

And if you haven't given your life to Jesus, don't give us any money. Like we don't want any money. And even after you've come to Jesus, we're going to let the Holy Spirit work in your lives and all, but God isn't interested in your money and we're not really interested in your money.

And so please don't give us any money, but have lots of cookies and coffee on us and we're just really glad you're here. But why on earth would we even talk about money and are we preoccupied with money?

[2 : 44] In fact, I would actually say that Christians, we're far too timid about talking about money. Let's just sort of realize why this is important. How many people have spent money already today?

Raise your hand. Actually, I bought a coffee. Okay. How many people have spent money in the last 24 hours? How many people think they're going to spend money within the next 24 hours?

How many people either have money on them or they have a credit card, which if they used, it would actually not be declined. And if they had a cash card with them, if they used it, it won't be declined.

How many of you fit in that category here? Okay. Just about everybody here has some money on them. And in fact, the fact that matters is that we live in a world where money is present.

Money is always around us. The things that money can buy are always before our eyes. And we get bill payments, tax payments. We see prices for things.

[3 : 49] We are surrounded completely and utterly by money. So the simple question is, what does it mean to follow Jesus in a world where there's money? Like, isn't that a reasonable question?

In fact, what does it mean to follow Jesus in a world where money is always present and seems to be so powerful? Like, given how we spend money all of the time, and I didn't even go to the other thing.

I mean, some of us here have jobs or have retirement checks and stuff. Like, many of us will be expecting to receive money. It's not just putting money out, but we'll be expecting to receive money over the next month.

In fact, probably most of us here in the room are expecting to receive money over the next month. So what does it mean to follow Jesus in a world where money is present? Money is powerful. Money often has a very, very great hold in our lives. Said many of us will be a little bit shocked when we see our credit card statements sometime in January after our Christmas spending.

[4 : 52] And so the Bible talks about it. The Bible has lots of things to say about it, and the Bible, believe it or not, is very wise. And we're going to be looking at a particular subsection of talking about following Jesus in a world where there's money.

And it's going to talk about something very countercultural, but something that on one level, I think, most people wish that they were. And it's going to be talking about generosity. I think most people would like to have lots of money, and they'd also like to be known as being generous.

Probably very few people in Canada would like to be referred to as cheap or a miser. In fact, probably if it were, you overheard people in the cubicle.

Most people, if they overheard people a couple of cubicles away talking about you, and your name picks up, you hear your name and your ears prick up, and you'll start to listen, and then you hear them saying how you're cheap, you'd be deeply offended.

So the Bible's going to talk today about this whole issue of generosity. So it'd be a great help if you got your Bibles and opened them. But we're not going to be looking first at 2 Corinthians 9.

[6 : 03] We're going to look at 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9, one particular verse. So if you have your Bible, 2 Corinthians 8, verse 9. And you see, one of the things is that all of chapter 8 and all of chapter 9, it's all talking about money and generosity.

And in a sense, the first few verses of chapter 8 are leading up to this huge statement in verse 9.

And it's, in a sense, in light of verse 9, that all of the other things that Paul is going to say, that the Bible is going to say about money, it's all in light of this profound truth.

And if you're a Christian, it's a really, really, really wonderful verse to memorize. Maybe many of you have. And it goes like this. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich. Now, what the Bible is doing here with this verse is it's using riches and poverty sort of the way that we would talk about, you know, if you want to talk about capitalism or rich people, you talk about Bay Street or you talk about Wall Street, you know.

And it's just you use Wall Street. And if you're talking about Wall Street, you know, the Occupy Movement or something like that, it's just talking about capitalism, about rich people, a whole range of different institutions and banks and companies and people and processes are all just encapsulated by this little two word phrase Wall Street.

[7 : 46] And the Bible here is just trying to give us a bit of an understanding of who Jesus is and what he did, like who is he and what he did. And so it's very, very interesting, you know, for, you know, verse nine, you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is to know Jesus is to know grace.

That grace is what defines him unmerited, powerful, real favor towards specific people like you and me and me.

And he's the Lord, Lord of Lords and King of Kings. And he's Jesus and he's Christ. He's the anointed. He's the Messiah. But everything about him is grace.

Everything about him is grace. And so it says, you know, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, though he was rich. And here the text is basically telling us that before Jesus was born, it's telling us that Jesus existed.

God, the son of God existed before his birth. And it's trying to describe what it was like for God, the son of God, to be in perfect communion with the father and to be with the angels and to be what we refer to as just in heaven and to be completely and utterly at one at whatever things the Lord and the God have created.

[9 : 04] God, Jesus was at peace. God, the son of God was at peace with them. And he looked down and he saw our rebellion and he saw that we had gone far from him and he saw that we were poor.

And this is a bit of a counterintuitive thing to us that we are poor. If you go into, if you read some newspapers on a Saturday, they'll often have little financial checkup types of things.

If you go to a financial advisor, you know, I think it's a Bank of Nova Scotia will tell you that you're richer than you think. Because if you go to a financial advisor, you know, they'll count up how much your car is worth.

And if you own a house, how much your house or your condo is worth. And they'll count it all up and they'll show you that you actually have a lot more financial resources than you actually believe you have. You're richer than you think.

But in a sense, what God says is, how much are you worth five minutes after you die? And five minutes after you die, you're poor.

[10 : 06] Bill Gates and me will have the same financial resources five minutes after our respective death. And God, the Son of God, looked down.

He was rich. That's how it's just describing him in unbroken communion with the Father and the created order. He sees human beings like you and me and our lives are turned away from God. They're turned in on themselves. We're each of us seeking to be our own little God. And all it means is that we're becoming poorer and poorer and poorer, deeper in debt.

So that five minutes after our death, when the bills are all due, that we are completely and unutterably, unspeakably in debt. And so the text is saying, you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake, he became poor.

That God, the Son of God, sees our need and becoming poor, it's just a way of describing that he takes on our human nature, that he comes and walks amongst us. And it's saying that everything that he does is for our sake.

[11 : 12] Like, here's one of the things about giving gifts, and, you know, I'm sure I'm not the only one who's gone through this, but often when we give gifts to other people, we want to get a gift back.

And because we are hard-hearted and selfish, when we get a gift back, we want it to be normally of greater value than what we gave, or at least the same value.

Like, how many of us have given a gift, and then a person gives us a gift back, and we look at it and think, oh, that's not very much. I spent way more on my gift on them than they spent on me, and we're disappointed.

You see, for many of us, we don't really give gifts. We're really just embarking on a process whereby we get a gift back that's of greater value.

We really want to give ourselves a gift. And the Bible here is saying that God, the Son of God, in his dealings with human beings, he's doing nothing for his own sake.

[12 : 15] Listen to it again. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

And it's describing his sinful life, his teaching, his prediction of his death, his death upon the cross. As Flannery O'Connor famously said, you can't be any poorer than dead.

And his death for us, him, in a sense, paying all of the debts that we have to pay five minutes after we die to Almighty God.

And he pays them all. And not only does he pay them all, we discover that when we've put our faith and trust in Jesus, that he's paid off all of our debts. And his riches, his bank account is ours.

And it's just trying to describe it in very simple terms for people who understand a little bit about money, a way to understand the whole mystery of what it is that Jesus has done for us.

[13 : 11] For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, by his poverty, might become rich.

You see, it's because of this that 2 Corinthians 8 says that if you haven't given your life to Jesus, God doesn't actually want your money. Why? Because he didn't give us a gift so he could get money back.

He doesn't really care about money. He's already infinitely rich. He doesn't want money. He wants you and me to be reconciled to him so he can make us rich.

That's what he wants. And that's why in 2 Corinthians 8, just before this, it basically says, if you haven't given your life to Jesus, like, don't give money to the church. Don't give money to God. Don't give money to the gospel ministry because God actually doesn't want it.

He doesn't want us to think that there's anything that we're in somehow buying God off or paying our dues or keeping the big guy happy or paying our fire insurance or, you know, keeping in his good books or any, like, none of that type of language whatsoever.

[14:23] It's not what God's heart is. It's not what God's plan is. Now, some of you might say, okay, George, that's, you know, interesting.

But isn't it, in fact, often the case that Christians try to shame and embarrass people into giving money? Like, George, isn't it sometimes the case that, you know, like some churches maybe have seen them, George, where they all come dancing down the aisle to give in their money.

And then everybody claps. And it's sort of a way so that, okay, there are the people who don't come dancing down the aisle giving in their money. Or maybe, you know, that there's a type of, don't you think, George, that often churches try to do all this peer pressure to try to have people give or lay on the guilt or lay on the embarrassment?

George doesn't, and I, you know what? That has happened way too many times. Can't disagree with that at all. But you know what? The Bible actually tells us not to do that.

Like, so if you have your Bible, so that's how 2 Corinthians 9, and we'll see how, in a sense, the Bible says we should never try to embarrass or guilt people into giving money. Christians shouldn't do that to other Christians.

[15:31] The church should never do it. Look how it begins, 2 Corinthians 9, verses 1 to 5. Now it is superfluous, in other words, needless, for me to write to you about the ministry for the saints.

For I know your readiness, of which I boast about you to the people of Macedonia, saying that Achaia has been ready since last year, and your zeal has stirred up most of them. But I am sending the brothers so that our boasting about you may not prove empty in this matter, so that you may be ready as I said you would be.

Otherwise, if some Macedonians come with me and find that you are not ready, we would be humiliated to say nothing of you for being so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift that you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

In other words, sort of, you know, pulled out of your gripping hands. So what's this all saying?

Basically, Paul is saying, these people, they had, you know, maybe they had a prayer meeting, they had a worship service, they all got completely and utterly filled with zeal about the way they were going to give all this money to their brothers and sisters across ethnic and linguistic lines who were Jewish and living in Jerusalem and Judea, and they were going to give lots of money to help them in their ministry to the poor and ministry of spreading the gospel in Jerusalem.

They got all fired up, they made big pledges, and then Paul had to go. So, and what he's saying here is, I don't want to embarrass you. I don't want to embarrass you.

[17:11] I don't want you to be embarrassed, and I don't want you to give money out of embarrassment. I don't want you to give money out of any type of sense of guilt.

And so I'm taking these very practical steps. I'm sending a letter. That's why these guys are here. You know, it's, you made the promise, and, you know, enthusiasm's all good, but it's actually when the rubber hits the road, right?

It's when the actual money, you know, gets out of the pocket, and I don't want to embarrass you. I don't want money to come from any type of motivation of embarrassment or guilt or shaming. I want to spare you that.

And so it's, you know, so churches that try to embarrass us into giving are actually going against the Bible. It's not that we have to watch television shows that teach us that this is wrong.

It's we just actually need to listen to God's word that tells us that this is wrong. And so what Paul is going to do, he's going to talk more about how to give and how to be generous, and he's going to talk about something in the very next point, which is really surprising, because it's actually the same sort of thing that coaches say, that professors say, that financial planners say.

[18:25] It's a very, very simple, common point, and he's going to make the point in terms of how we give and how we live our lives. I don't know if you noticed it when Ken was reading, but look at verse 6. The point is this, by the way, it's an aside.

I don't know how successful I was when I was teaching my, you know, my preaching course, but one of the things in preaching is that preaching should come out of listening to the Bible first. And when you listen to the Bible, you should try to figure out what the Bible is saying is important. And sometimes that can be very subtle, and sometimes you need language helps in the Greek or whatever, because there's something going on in the Greek or the Hebrew that helps you know it's important.

But sometimes the Bible just says, the point is this. Like, the point is this. And so here's the point. It's actually not just verse 6, but the verses that come after it. And here's what the Bible says. The point is this. The word sparingly could also be translated as miserly, like a miser.

[19 : 36] So whoever sows like a miser will also reap a miserly or miserly amount. And whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

And God is able. Actually, in the original language, it actually, it sounds more like Yoda. Able is God. Able is God to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency, in other words, a type of personal security and your needs are being met and you know that, you know, relationally, and you just know that you're cared for and that you're loved.

There's just this basic self-security in God and his providence and in his covenant. Just this basic security. So, and able is God to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things, at all times, you may abound in every good work.

So here's the first thing, if you could put it up, Andrew. In both the natural and the supernatural worlds, so to speak, I reap what I sow.

I mean, the surprising thing to the financial poster, to, you know, trainers and most professors, is they wouldn't acknowledge that there's something that's like a gospel movement, that God's at work in the world.

[21 : 09] They wouldn't acknowledge that, but it's the same God who sends Jesus to be our savior. It's the same God who created the entire world. And so whether you're talking about things within his kingdom, or so-called spiritual or supernatural things, or whether you're just talking about the way the natural world works, we reap what we sow.

I mean, you know, basically, if we spend a lot of quality time on the couch, getting up from the couch to eat poutine, well, we'll have bodies that reflect a habit of poutine and couch.

If we, I don't know what Usain Bolt eats, I don't know, he looks as if he only eats lean chicken breast, steamed kale and brown rice, and trains constantly, well, you're going to look a little bit more like Usain Bolt, right?

You know, for professors, they'll tell students all the time, you know, if you spend no time in class, no time in the books, no time studying, well, your mark's going to reflect that a little bit, you know? Or even if you're clever, you might manage to get the mark, but you actually still don't know anything, because you've just been going through the motions. It's a very, very thing of the world. And the Bible here is saying that the same God who's made the natural world has made this movement, launched by 2 Corinthians 8-9, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you, through his poverty, might become rich.

[22 : 36] That this is God's movement. He sees a world at enmity with himself. He sees a world that's just becoming poorer and poorer and poorer. He sees people who are becoming lost, that will be eternally lost.

And he sees that they don't even want a Savior, but his response is one of grace. His response is to send a Savior. And he sends a Savior not by saying, look how rich and powerful I am.

In a sense, they should already be able to look at the stars and the planets and the seas and the oceans and the trees and the birds and the beasts of the field and know that God is unimaginably rich.

But he comes and he becomes poor and walks amongst us. And he becomes poor to the point of dying upon the cross and bearing the debt that we, in a sense, owe God.

And bestowing upon us his riches so that we could become rich. And that's this movement that God has launched in the world. And God is saying, in this movement, we've got to sow into that to reap.

[23 : 36] We've got to sow into that to reap. And so if you could put up the next point, Andrew. If I sow like a miser, I will reap very little.

The gospel shapes me, the gospel shapes me to sow generously, so as to reap bountifully. You see, because everything in this text, there's no commands in the text.

At no point in time in the text does the text say, so therefore you've got to start giving money. The text, in a sense, keeps helping us to look, try to look back at who God is and what he's done for us in his son.

Because as that grips us, it will shape us. As that grips us, it will shape us. Now, some of you might say, okay, George, you know, you've said in other times that you became a Christian when you were in grade 12.

Were you instantly generous? Like, George, are you just up there trying to lay heavy loads on us? Like, George, when you were a university student and when you were just working, you know, just in stores and you weren't making that much money, were you generous, George?

[24 : 55] George, are you just one of these guys who goes up there and then tries to lay a whole pile of burdens on us? You know, because you're a bit older and, you know, I don't know, you maybe, you know, you own a house and maybe your mortgage is close to being paid and you have a little bit of financial resources.

And, George, it's really easy for you to stand up there and just talk about these types of things and just lay guilt on us. And so, George, when you became a Christian, did you start becoming financially generous?

That's a really good question. And the answer is no. The answer is no. Because, you know, and this is a problem for Christians for a large part of their lives.

Often the gospel just seems so distant to us, doesn't it? In fact, actually, Andrew, if you could put up this big, long list of things, here's the problem.

And I could, I said we here, but I, you know, this is, you can substitute in there, maybe it would be better if I'd written it with I. We often live our day-to-day lives as if money is huge and God is tiny.

[26 : 22] George, that credit card bill of mine is huge. George, my student loan debt is humongous. George, not just money.

It's not just money per se, but it's the things that we want. George, you don't realize, you know, if I could only get a car or something like that, I don't know, maybe I'd be able to ask a girl out and, you know, something like that relationship would work.

You know, George, if I could only get that extra bit of money, I could do that rock climbing that I wanted to do or I could get that professional certification and that's huge. And God just seems tiny.

And for so many of us, I mean, you know, we have the things, you know, in our pockets and we spend money and we look at how much we're making and how much other people, and it seems to many of us as if money is necessary, but you know what?

It's as if the gospel, it's as if God is more like my hobby. Like money is more like air, George, but God doesn't seem like real to me, like he's like air.

[27 : 32] And money presses in on me. But God seems like he can always wait. And money just is always present.

That's the next one, I think. I don't know how much you have up there, but God, I mean, he just seems so absent or far away. And you know what, George? Or like what it can be in our hearts, not just George.

Money seems to do real things, but you know what? God doesn't. And you see, for many of us, the things of God and the gospel, it's very distant.

But God is, but money, and the things that money apparently can accomplish, seems just to be really, really, really huge. And part of the process of discipleship is to come face to face, not just that we've trusted Jesus.

You see, this is what's so wonderful about the gospel. for you know the grace, for you know the grace, for you know the grace, for you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes, he became poor so that you, by his poverty, might become rich.

[29 : 05] It doesn't say, for you know the ability of our Lord Jesus Christ to evaluate your financial readiness, to evaluate when you were going to be able to be psychologically and emotionally present with him.

And once you've reached that stage of awareness of him and disciplines for him, and once you've met his demands in these areas, then he'll become poor so that together the two of you can become, no, no, no, no, no, no, no.

That's why it's grace. He didn't look down there and say, oh, look at George. George is just so aware of money and how big things are compared to him and how small things are compared to my glory.

George is just so ready for the gospel. I think I'll come alongside him and add a little bit of value to his life. That's not how it worked. You know, he sees a young man or a young woman burdened with maybe senses of unworthiness and senses of incompleteness and everything around them just seems so big and they realize that they're poor and that there's something more that they need and they give their lives to Christ.

And discipleship is partially, largely about the Holy Spirit in conjunction with God's word convicting us of these many, many, many, many ways that we make God small and make things big and live as if we are in a world of really, really big things with a tiny, distant, powerless God.

[31 : 02] But the text begins by saying, for you know the grace of our Lord, God, Messiah, Jesus Christ.

Though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you, through his poverty, might become rich. You see, it's because we have these beliefs of money is huge but God is tiny, money is necessary but God is my hobby, money presses in on me but God can wait, money is present but God is absent, money does real things but God does not.

It's because these things are so unexamined but powerful in our hearts that when we read and listen to the Bible, we listen to them with great cynicism and disbelief.

You see, we come together not to feel guilty but to say, Lord, I am so glad that you saved me by what you did and not by what I did and Lord, I have so, I, Lord, grip me with this gospel, grip me with 2 Corinthians 8-9, grip me with this, help me to understand that this is the rock solid, rock bottom, transcendent, shining, beautiful, deeply, thoroughly, complete truth about who I am and the world that I live in.

Father, grip me with this gospel and as this gospel grips us, it changes, it starts to shape how we live.

[32 : 53] See, that's what the Bible is doing here and it's not giving us a whole pile of new commands, things to wear us down and make us guilty, it's trying to wake us up and shine the light of the beauty of God's word as to the world that we live in and who God is and what our eternal destiny is.

So, listen to it again from verse 6 on. The point is this, whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. In a sense, the Bible is saying that's just the way the world works.

Well, I shouldn't work in my movement as well. Each one must give as he has decided in his heart. God's waiting for us to make a decision in our heart.

Not to be impulsive, not just to be haphazard, not to be motivated out of guilt, but in a sense to be motivated by the beauty of the gospel. That the gospel not only starts to give us a bit of a ground that this is my father's world and I will have times when I will have to call out to God for help and his wisdom and his provision in my finances and his order in my finances, but there's one thing I know beyond everything out that everything else that nothing will stop God loving me.

He has given me his son, Jesus Christ, and one second after I die, I have the riches of God. For all eternity. And nothing can take that away from me.

[34 : 26] Each one, verse 7, must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all the grace abound to you.

Why? For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich. That's why it says in verse 8, and God is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency, being secure in 2 Corinthians 8, 9, being secure in the fact that it's God who makes you rich, that's reconciled you to himself, that nothing will stop God from making you rich for all eternity.

And so God, verse 8, is able to make all grace abound to you so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work as it is written.

And here it's describing God. Who is God? He is distributed freely. He is given to the poor. His righteousness endures forever. In other words, his rightness, fitness, meekness, nothing can stop him being God.

Nothing can bring his rule as God to an end. Nothing can stop it. Verse 10, he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest

of your righteousness.

[35 : 52] You will be enriched in every way to be generous in every way which through us will provide thanksgiving to God. for the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God.

By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission, your obedience that comes from your confession of the gospel of Christ because as you've confessed the gospel of Christ and as you confess the gospel of Christ, you realize there's a type of submission and obedience that comes from knowing that you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others while they long for you and pray for you because of their surpassing grace of God upon you.

Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift. Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift that you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you through his poverty might become rich.

That is a gift that the greatest poets and the greatest dancers and the greatest musicians and the greatest painters and the greatest philosophers and the greatest theologians can only describe in the most partial way because the richness and the grace and the mercy and the beauty of that grace and the beauty and the wisdom and the justice of who God is and the hugeness of it defies our ability to ever capture it in song or dance or word.

His gift is inexpressible. It surpasses our ability to fully understand it.

[37 : 53] We will spend all eternity plunging into the depths of the riches and the mercy and the beauty and the grace and the justice and the rightness and the fitness of God.

Let's just wrap this up. Andrew, if you could put up the big sort of point God enriches me so I will be generous and give freely so that he gets the glory.

God enriches me so that I will be generous and give freely so that he gets the praise. And, you know, that's what the text is telling us.

And so there's sort of just two things sort of in closing just to wrap this up. The first one is that there's a real call upon our hearts to pray if you're all like me. And we'll put this up here now.

I'll just read it. We're going to, Andrew, after we've done the practical things we'll put this slide back up because I'm going to have the congregation pray it with me. But this is just my attempt. This will all be on the webpage. This is my attempt to try to put this into prayer.

[39 : 01] If God has touched your heart at all, if you are struggling with the things of this world being really, really big and really, really huge and really, really powerful and God seeming tiny and distant, then it's a call for us to pray, to call out to God that we'd be gripped with the gospel.

I've just tried to put some words into it. Lord, I confess that I often live my life as if money is huge and you are small, as if money is crucial and you are my hobby, as if I must deal with the demands of money first and you, whenever.

please forgive me and help me to die to these lies. Please grow in me a humble, trusting, and obedient knowing that you are big and money is small, that your grace is huge and everything else is tiny.

Please make me a disciple of Jesus who is gripped by the gospel and learning to live a life of disciplined generosity to your glory and praise. In Jesus' name, Amen.

For many of us, that's really the main heart work that we have to do is just to call out to God in prayer that you not be, that God just not be so distant that the gospel grips you.

[40 : 16] And then I just have a few little practical things as you pray that if you're moved to start actually trying to be generous, just three little practical things. The first is give at the front end of your pay and not at the back end of what's left the day before payday.

You know, I knew a guy, he used to come to the church and he used to say, George, no matter how much money I spend every week, I have more money in the bank at the end of the week, at the end of my pay period than when I began.

And I thought, well, it's nice to be a single man in a mortgage-free house with a really, really well-paying job. That's not my life.

It's never been my life. And you know, I mean, part of my problems with being generous is I would live my life, I would pay my debts, and then basically if there was money left over after all that is over, I would be generous with it and there was never money left over.

And the way to start to have disciplined generosity is you give at the front end of your pay, not at the back end of what's left the day before paying. Here's another suggestion. Give money as regularly as you receive money.

[41 : 32] Goes along with the first point. Some people have, because they give quite generously, they might move money instantly into another account which they only use to give.

But these are just suggestions. It's whatever works. And the third thing is pray your way to giving 10% of your income to gospel ministry. The Bible doesn't command tithing as a rule, but it's just a rule of thumb.

It's like, you know, when I went to the hospital a few years ago, I had to go through this, you know, training thing to visit even though I'd been visiting for many years. And one of the things is you had to make sure you washed your hands long enough. Wash your hands properly before you visit, after every visit in between visits.

And so you have to wash your hands properly. Well, what does washing your hands properly mean? Like, you know, I mean, I don't want to be gross, but if you go to, you know, washrooms, public washrooms, some people don't wash their hands at all.

And others, it's like they put a little tiny bit of water on a couple of their fingers and fling it off like this and out they go. Like, what does washing your hands properly mean? And I remember they said, say the Lord's Prayer slowly.

[42 : 39] Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be your name. Thy kingdom come. And they said, if you say it nice and slowly as you wash your hands, it's properly. I thought, that's, I like that.

You know, it's like there's lots of things in life. And the Bible here is saying, you know, it's so interesting. The Bible isn't saying that you have to all become like Mother Teresa or you can't seek to have jobs, you can't seek to have promotions, you can't work.

God enriches us in different ways. And some of us, he's going to really enrich. And the Bible just gives, you know, so what does generous mean? Well, try about 10% of your income to pray your way to that, to start your way towards that.

But there's no rule. The basic thing is that you're gripped by the gospel, that you're shaped by the gospel. Because you see, if day by day, I want to live my life with Jesus and I want to walk through my day and my life with Jesus and I'm walking with the man who is filled with grace and you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich.

That's who we follow. That's who our lives have been saved by, who are to be molded by. Andrew, if you could put the prayer up, please stand.

[43 : 59] Not just Andrew, everybody. And, you know, the other thing is if you haven't given your life to Jesus, if maybe for the first time 2 Corinthians 8-9 and the gospel has started to make some sense to you, you know what I suggest, you can say this prayer that we're going to give you as a conversion prayer but you know what I would just say to you is just say to God in your own words, God, 2 Corinthians 8-9, that's true and I'm poor and I want to receive the riches that only Jesus can give me, only you can give me and I want, just in your own words, call out to him in the words of that, or you can use this prayer as a conversion prayer and if God has put it on your heart, join with me in praying this out loud.

Lord, I confess that I often live my life as if money is huge and you are small, as if money is crucial and you are my hobby, as if I must deal with the demands of money first and you whenever.

Please forgive me and help me to die to these lies. please grow in me a humble, trusting, and obedient knowing that you are big and money is small, that your grace is huge and everything else is tiny.

Please make me a disciple of Jesus who is gripped by the gospel and learning to live a life of disciplined generosity to your glory and praise.

In Jesus' name, amen. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us. Only you can touch our hearts. Only you can bring the gospel home to us. Father, pour out your Holy Spirit upon us.

[45 : 49] Make us disciples of Jesus, gripped by the gospel, living for your glory. In Jesus' name, amen.