

A Transfer of Riches

2 Corinthians 8:9

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Do you know that Jesus condemns people for not being rich? It is a little discussed truth, but it is what Jesus clearly teaches. Someone says, “But Jesus said that it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” Yes. That is true too!

In Luke 12, a man comes to Jesus with a problem. Evidently, his brother is the executor of his dad’s estate and he contends that his brother is cheating him. He believes that Jesus is a man of justice so he asks Jesus to arbitrate this dispute.

“Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Of all the needs in this man’s life that He could have asked Jesus for help, he asks Jesus to help him with a money problem. This man thought that his selfish brother was the biggest threat to rob him of joy, security and happiness. **But Jesus knew that the biggest threat to this man’s life was not his brother, but the greed of his own soul. Greed would rob this man of joy.** If his brother gave him all the inheritance, this man would be left without God and without joy in this world.

Jesus in love says, “Man, who made me a judge or arbiter over you?” Then Jesus points to the real danger to this man’s life: *“Then he said, ‘Beware! Guard against every kind of greed. Life is not measured by how much stuff you own.’”* Jesus drives his point home by telling a story about a wealthy farmer who was really good at what he did. He was so productive that his barns could not hold all of the crops.

17 He said to himself, ‘What should I do? I don’t have room for all **my** crops.’ **18** Then he said, ‘I know! I’ll tear down **my** barns and build bigger ones. Then I’ll have room enough to store all **my** wheat and other goods. **19** And I will say to my soul, “Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.”’

This farmer confused material prosperity with eternal wealth and happiness. Jesus says,

20 But God said to him, ‘Fool! This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ 21 So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God.”’ (Luke 12:20–21 *ESV*)

*This is not a transcript of the sermon. It is a manuscript the pastor used to preach the sermon.

Do you see that Jesus condemns as a fool every person who is not rich? **For sure, Jesus never condemns anyone for being poor in this world's stuff.** Jesus Himself had no home, no bank account, no farm, no wardrobe. But Jesus teaches that the person who is not rich **toward God** is a fool.

The question naturally comes, ***“But HOW can a person become rich toward God?”*** This is what Easter morning is all about. Jesus came to earth and died upon a cross and rose again so that we might be made rich . . . rich toward God.

We open our Bibles to 2 Corinthians 8:9 this morning where we learn . . .

Main Idea: Jesus became poor so that through His poverty we 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.” (2 Corinthians 8:9 [ESV](#))

Context: Paul has been encouraging the members of the church in Corinth to complete the offering that they had started to take to help their brothers and sisters who are living in Jerusalem. He is urging them to give generously with cheerful hearts. This is a VERY practical chapter in God's Word. **Notice the profound connection that Paul makes between sound doctrine and right living.** In the middle of this very practical encouragement we find this profound verse of deep doctrine.

Observe how the apostle Paul motivates the Corinthians to give. He does not offer sympathetic stories of children in Jerusalem who are starving. He does not twist their arms with guilt and shame. He does not proclaim the Law of God and tell them their obligations before the LORD. What does He do? *He reminds them of the profound theology discovered in the birth, the death and the resurrection of Jesus.*

Truth: Christian doctrine matters.

He introduces the truth about Jesus by saying, *“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.”* This word “know” means simply to “know by experience”. Paul is not reminding the believers of something that they learned in a theology book. He is reminding them of the supernatural grace that they experienced when they came to believe in Jesus.

Upon believing in Jesus, they experienced the joy of having their blind eyes opened so that now they see God and His glory in the face of Jesus. **They now KNOW who God is. They now enjoy a deep personal relationship with God.**

They know Him to be a God who cares for them every day. They know Him to be a God of power and provision. They worship and fear Him as a God who is righteous and holy. **They walk with Him and talk with Him as a God who is merciful and kind.** They stand in awe of Him as a God of beauty and majesty. All this they EXPERIENCED when they heard the Gospel and believed in Jesus.

For you KNOW the grace of God . . . and then Paul reminds them how the grace of God came to them: *that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.*" (2 Corinthians 8:9 [ESV](#))

Immediately some questions fire in our hearts: In what sense was Jesus rich? How was He made poor? In what sense were we poor? How were we made rich? No questions could be more profitable to our soul. Let us begin by fixing our eyes upon Jesus.

Jesus' reversal from wealth to poverty

The phrase, "though He was rich" describes Jesus before He was born of a virgin. This is a reference to Jesus' eternal existence as God prior to His coming to earth. There never was a time when Christ our Lord did not exist. He is God of very God.

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. 3 All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. 4 In him was life, and the life was the light of men." (John 1:1–4 [ESV](#))

15 He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 16 For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things were created through him and for him. 17 And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together." (Colossians 1:15–17 [ESV](#))

Charles Hodge, the great theologian, wrote, "All divine names and titles are applied to Christ. He is called God, the Mighty God, the Great God, God over all, Jehovah, Lord, the Lord of Lords, and King of Kings, all divine attributes are ascribed to Him. He is declared to be omnipresent, omniscient, almighty and immutable, the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is set forth as the Creator and Upholder and Ruler of the universe."

How rich is Christ? He is as rich as God. His wealth is as infinite as His being. He has no needs. He has no wants. He possesses power to create anything He desires and to do everything He wants to do. He lacks nothing. As God, His power, His possessions, His majesty, His wisdom, His glory is all infinite in measure.

I started a list of the riches of Jesus . . . this is incomplete, but this list has helped me to consider the vast store of His wealth. **The Eternal Wealth of Christ**

- 1. He received the glory and honor that is due to Him as God the Son.** Every intelligent creature saw Him for the perfect, beautiful Person that He is. Every being bowed before Him as Lord. The angels sang His praises every moment. Even the demonic realm acknowledged His authority and power.
- 2. He enjoyed eternal communion with the Father and the Spirit.** He and the Father and the Spirit are ONE. Complete unity. He was never lonely. He never experienced the sorrow of broken relationship. He always enjoyed the sweet fellowship of these two other separate Persons. He always experienced wholeness and harmony in the community of His own Being.
- 3. He possessed undiminished power.** Everything He wanted to do, He accomplished without opposition . . . without restraint. He never lived under the stress of deadlines.
- 4. He experienced uninterrupted happiness . . . absolute freedom from suffering.** He never experienced pain. He lived without anguish, without the temptation of fear, without the prospect of suffering, without any grief.
- 5. He enjoyed complete knowledge and wisdom.** He never had to learn anything because He already knew everything. He never was tempted to think contrary to what is true.
- 6. He is untouched by temptation or sin.** He is completely free from elements of evil.

that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor, so that you by his poverty might become rich.” (2 Corinthians 8:9 [ESV](#))

The phrase “he became poor” describes Jesus’ experience when He came to the earth as a man and then suffered upon the cross for our sin.

Jesus lost so much when He entered Mary's womb and became a human being. He lost more when He suffered upon a cross and bore our sins in His own body.

Now it is important to state as we think of Jesus' poverty that Jesus did not lose any of the possession of His absolute deity. He did not cease to be God when He became a man. He is and always will be God of very God . . . without any interruption in His divine being. Yet He did "become poor".

In what way did Jesus become poor? Return to our list. The Temporary Poverty of Jesus

1. **Jesus will now be considered as of no account with no glory. Few will see any glory in Him.** He will be despised and rejected by sinful man. He will be mocked and scorned and rejected at every turn. He will be crucified between two criminals.
2. **Jesus will experience the wrath of His Father.** He will cry out from the cross, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken Me?" In bearing our sin, the Father will turn His face from His own Son. He will experience the anguish of a fellowship broken.
3. **Jesus voluntarily limits the use of His undiminished power. The infinite becomes an infant.** The Creator becomes part of creation. He experiences vulnerability to enemies. His parents have to hide Him in Egypt to keep Him safe. He experiences physical needs . . . like food, clothing, water, and rest. From the cross, He cries out "I thirst". He is dependent upon the Father and the Spirit to do miracles:

"So Jesus said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of his own accord, but only what he sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, that the Son does likewise."(John 5:19 [ESV](#))

4. **Jesus experiences interrupted happiness.** He is no longer free from suffering. The God of all comfort becomes a "man of sorrows". He is known as one "acquainted with grief." He weeps at the funeral of a friend. He sweats drops of blood in the Garden as He asks for the cup of suffering to be taken from Him. He bears the wounds of His tormentors. He receives our sin upon His shoulders and suffers an infinite agony.

Bernard of Clairvaux in 1153 AD wrote a hymn that captures this aspect of Jesus' impoverishment:

*"O sacred Head, now wounded, with grief and shame weighed down,
Now scornfully surrounded with thorns, Thine only crown;
O sacred Head, what glory, what bliss till now was Thine!
Yet, though despised and gory, I joy to call Thee mine."*

5. **Jesus voluntarily limits the use of His infinite knowledge and wisdom.** *The all-Wise has to grow in wisdom.* He becomes a baby who has to learn everything . . . how to walk, how to talk, how to relate to people, how to read the Bible. He allows Himself to become ignorant about many important matters.
6. **Jesus will now experience the pressures of temptation to sin.** He will feel the weakness of His human body to be drawn into sin. He will overcome all temptations in living a completely righteous life, but then on the cross become sin for us. In bearing our sins, this darkness of shame and guilt will fall upon Him.

Paul does not explain this detail here, but he does in Philippians 2:

5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, 6 who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, 7 but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. 8 And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."
(Philippians 2:5–8 **ESV**)

Every important matter in our life always takes us to the cross of Jesus.

*We can never attach too much importance to the atoning death of Christ. It is the leading fact in the Word of God, on which the eyes of our soul ought to be ever fixed. Without the shedding of His blood, there is no remission of sin. It is the cardinal truth on which the whole system of Christianity hinges. **Without it the Gospel is an arch without a keystone, a fair building without a foundation, a solar system without a sun.*** J C Ryle

**Do you suppose this impoverishment that Jesus endured was difficult for Jesus?
Yes!**

"And now, Father, glorify me in your own presence with the glory that I had with you before the world existed." (John 17:5 [ESV](#))

Jesus is not impoverished today! He has returned to His wealth. BUT for His earthly life Jesus voluntarily yielded His riches when He came to the earth. Why did He choose to endure such a painful loss? FOR YOUR SAKE!

The believer's reversal from poverty to wealth.

"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." (2 Corinthians 8:9 [ESV](#))

In what way were we "poor"? Every person is born "poor" . . . poor in all the ways that matter most.

Poor in our relationship with God.

Poor in our eternal future.

Poor in our ability to avoid divine judgment.

Poor in our ability to find peace and happiness.

Poor in our ability to resist temptation to sin.

Poor in our freedom from the guilt of our sin.

Poor in our ability to solve our own problems.

Poor in our ability to resolve the world's problems. "Visualize whirled peas."

Poor in our knowledge of the truth about life.

Poor in our freedom from personal conflict.

Jesus became poor so that He might transfer His wealth to us and then we will be made rich!

One of the cartoons that I loved to read when I was little was Richie Rich. Here was this little boy with blonde hair and a great name who had unlimited financial resources at his daily disposal. I would think, *"What if I had a friend like Richie Rich?"* Interesting, I do not remember wishing I could BE Richie Rich. But I remember thinking, *"What if I had a good friend who was like Richie Rich."* I imagined him sharing some of his wealth with me.

The Gospel tells us that we have a Friend who loves us and is infinitely more wealthy than Richie Rich! We have One who is God of very God. Who voluntarily gave up His wealth so that we could be co-heirs with Him.

5 he saved us, not because of works done by us in righteousness, but according to his own mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewal of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us richly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that being justified by his grace we might become heirs according to the hope of eternal life.” (Titus 3:5–7 [ESV](#))

In what ways are we made rich? **Our Wealth in Jesus Again,** I return to our list . . .

1. **We participate in the glory of Jesus.** Jesus alone deserves the glory. But as we draw near to Him we participate in His glory. Even as a citizen of a victorious kingdom participates in the glory of the King and Conqueror of the kingdom.

13 But we ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the first fruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. 14 To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (2 Thessalonians 2:13–14 [ESV](#))

2. **We receive the forgiveness of our sins and a freedom from all condemnation.** Our failures and sins are remembered no more. And we are given power to be free from sin’s enslaving demands.

“and the blood of Jesus his Son cleanses us from all sin.” (1 John 1:7 [ESV](#))

3. **We receive eternal honor through the grace of Jesus.**

“Henceforth there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me but also to all who have loved his appearing.” (2 Timothy 4:8 [ESV](#))

4. **We enjoy eternal communion with God.** We are never alone. We are loved. We are adopted as sons. We have a room in the Father’s house that Jesus prepares for us.
5. **We possess divine power to overcome the evil one. We are not victims to the devil’s oppression.**
6. **We experience strength in suffering and will one day be free from suffering.** We are given peace and hope.

"Revelation 21:3 And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. Revelation 21:4 He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away."" (Revelation 21:3–4 [ESV](#))

If a poverty-stricken Christ did so much for us as He sweats drops of blood in the Garden, as He stumbles under the weight of His cross, as He cries out in anguish . . . **If a poverty-stricken Christ did so much for us in poverty, what can he do now for us as He sits at the right hand of the throne of God.** If He routed Satan with nails securing His hands to a wooden beam, what can He do now for us now that He reside in glory with His Father in heaven?

Question: Do you feel your poverty? Have you been made rich by Him?

"Revelation 3:14 "And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: 'The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation.

*15 " 'I know your works: you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! 16 So, because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth. 17 **For you say, I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.***

*18 I counsel you to buy from me gold refined by fire, so that you may be rich, and white garments so that you may clothe yourself and the shame of your nakedness may not be seen, and salve to anoint your eyes, so that you may see. 19 Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline, **so be zealous and repent.** 20 Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and eat with him, and he with me. 21 The one who conquers, I will grant him to sit with me on my throne, as I also conquered and sat down with my Father on his throne. 22 He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'"" (Revelation 3:14–22 [ESV](#))*

Turn to Him. Turn away from your own plan for you life. Your way is an impoverished way. Impoverished today. Impoverished forever. Turn to Him and be made rich!!

Friends, you have to be rich in order to pay the entrance fee to heaven. Not rich in this world's stuff. But rich toward God!! You must have the riches of Jesus in your account.

As you stand before God to give an account, you will either stand before Him with the riches of Jesus or with your own riches. Friend, your riches are nothing! You have nothing to give God that will merit any favor. Do not say, "I am rich." When indeed you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind and naked.

Illustration: Walk before God as our Judge with two suit cases. We feel confident in the suitcase that holds our righteous deeds. Yes, the other suitcase full of our sins feels heavy. We know that there is stuff in there. But we are confident as we bring both suitcases to God. We open the suitcase of our sin first. Huge weight on the scales of Justice. More than we realized! Yet still confident. Open the suitcase of our righteous deeds. God takes our the first act of righteousness and puts it on the sin side of the scale. One by one. Every act of righteousness we have done is placed upon the sin side. Now the scale is hopelessly indicating our judgment. WHY GOD? Why did you not give me credit for my good deeds.

Because all your good deeds are like filthy rags to me. They are filled with pride, self-interest, self-righteousness. In fact, your righteous deeds excite my judgment just as much as your sinful acts.

Where is there hope? **Main Idea: Jesus became poor so that through His poverty we might become rich.**