

## 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 – Living out of the Overflow

How was your Christmas?

- Good – maybe you got all that you wanted
- Expensive – maybe you spent rather a lot of money
- Sad – maybe you were missing someone this year

Christmas is about sharing – sharing with those you love

- Especially the giving and receiving of presents – Why do we do that?
- In celebration of the best of all presents, ever
- That God gave us his beloved Son

This amazing generosity of God is summed up by the apostle Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9, A verse which, in a few words, summarises the whole of the Gospel – the whole of the good news concerning Jesus Christ – listen to what Paul writes:

- “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 through his poverty might become rich.”
- Wow! What a verse!

Jesus was rich – unimaginably rich

- The world’s richest person is, I understand, Bill Gates
- Apparently he is worth about 70 billion pounds (I’ve converted the figure from dollars)
- That’s more than enough to give £1,000 to everyone in the UK
- It’s enough to give £10 to everyone in the world!
- That’s rich!

But it’s nothing compared with the riches of the Son of God

- The one through whom and for whom all things were created
- The one who owns the cattle on 1,000 hills and the gold in every mine
- The one who owns every hill and mine
- The one who owns the entire world and everything in it
- The one who owns the entire universe
- And the one who is rich in glory – enjoying the worship of countless angels
- Can you imagine the riches of the Son of God?

But he gave up all of this **for us**

- “yet for your sakes he became poor”
- Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
- Yet, for love’s sake, became so poor;
- Leaving your throne in glad surrender,
- Sapphire paved courts for stable floor:
- Lord, you were rich beyond all splendour,
- Yet, for love’s sake, became so poor.

He was born not in a palace but a stable and laid not in a cot of gold adorned with jewels but in a grubby manger

He grew up to be a carpenter, one who earned his bread through the sweat of his labour  
And when he began his public ministry he said that, unlike the birds and foxes, he had nowhere to lay his head

He became poor **for us**

- He came to identify fully with us
- to be as we are, to live as we live
- to reveal to us the heart of the living God

And more than that, he went to the cross **for us**

He so identified with us in our sin and need that he died the death that was our due  
– though he had done nothing wrong  
He hung there naked on the cross  
The Lord of glory, stripped of everything and dying in poverty and shame  
He did it **for us**

“So that you through his poverty might become rich”

He is risen from the dead – defeating sin and death **for us**  
He has returned to glory, to the embrace of the Father and the adoration of angels **for us** – that we might be rich  
So that in him, we too might own the cattle on 1,000 hills – all things are ours  
That we might know the riches of  
sins forgiven – no more condemnation  
the embrace of the Father – accepted in the beloved  
the ministry of angels  
the promise of glory

We are rich beyond measure!

Do we realise it?  
Do we understand the enormity of what Christ has done for us  
– this great transaction, great exchange?  
You are our God, beyond all praising,  
Yet, for love’s sake, became a man  
Stooping so low, but sinners raising  
Heavenwards, by your eternal plan:  
you are our God, beyond all praising,  
Yet, for love’s sake, became a man.

In these verses Paul reminds the Corinthian Christians of the **grace** of our Lord Jesus Christ

This is **GRACE, God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense**; riches streaming to us from

- his birth, stooping to our level and becoming one of us
- his life, revealing to us the character and purposes of the living God
- his death, paying the price for our sins, bringing the world to judgment
- his resurrection to glory **for us**, the beginning of the new creation

Paul reminds them (and us), of these things because he wants them to live by grace

To live out of the riches that God has freely given them

To be like Christ – to live generously

Not hoarding what they have and keeping it for themselves but gladly giving freely to others

Paul is collecting money from the churches throughout the Gentile world to which he has ministered the grace of Christ, collecting money for needy Jewish Christians in Judea

Paul is encouraging the Christians at Corinth to give to this collection

And to encourage them, he tells them of the way the Christians in Macedonia have already responded to this appeal, vv. 1-5

“And now, brothers and sisters, we want you to know about the **grace** that God has given the Macedonian churches. In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity. For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Lord’s people. And they exceeded our expectations: they gave themselves first of all to the Lord, and then by the will of God also to us.”

Here were Christians who had been deeply affected by the grace of Christ towards them

Though they were poor themselves, they pleaded for the privilege of giving to others

And they gave with overflowing joy

Have we appreciated what God has done for us in Christ – the enormity of God's grace?

Is it shown in the way our lives are shaped by grace

– the joy of generously giving ourselves to others as Christ our Lord has given himself to us?

May God move us by his grace

And teach us to live generous lives in 2017, lives shaped by grace that overflows to others

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