

THE GRACE OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST
II COR. 8: 8-9

INTRODUCTION:

“Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so.” We learn to sing those words in the early years of our lives and they are still meaningful when we sing them. This is an expression of our deepest confidence – Jesus does love us!

What do we base our confidence on? What proof do we have that Jesus loves us? Is this only an empty dream, or is there some trustworthy bases for believing that Jesus loves us? The little song says that we know because “the Bible tells me so.” But what does the Bible tell us?

One of the greatest statements about the love of Jesus for us is found in this great stewardship passage. The Apostle Paul points to the manner and measure with which Jesus gave as the proof of His love for us. He does all of this in order to motivate us to be like Jesus – to be generous and sacrificial in our giving. I cannot imagine a subject about which I feel less prepared to speak than the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul states it in this beautiful passage it is beyond our ability to ever comprehend it or explain it. And yet we must if we are to be benefited and to be blessed by His example in giving.

I. WHAT HE GAV.

The statement as found in this little letter reads, “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 through His poverty might become rich.” The Apostle uses two words with which we are familiar – rich and poor. There was a time when the Lord Jesus was “rich.” The Apostle is referring to that time before the Lord Jesus became a man in the incarnation through the virgin birth. He is referring to the state of our Lord in His pre-existence – He was indescribably rich. He talks about what He gave so that it made Him impoverished, he is referring to what it costs him to become one like us so that He could become our redeemer and savior.

When we begin to meditate upon this part of our Lord’s life we stand in the midst of mystery and we approach it with awe. What was His pre-existence state? What did He give in order to become our Savior?

1. He gave His home.

The eternal home of the pre-existent Son of God was heaven. His home was the Father’s House. He had lived in the presence of His Eternal Father in the loving unity of the triune God head from all eternity. But in order to become our Savior He had to give up His home.

When we think about what it must have been for Him to live in the splendor and glory of the Father’s presence from all eternity, we have to contrast that with what he became. When He was born of the virgin He opened His eyes first in the midst of a damp cave reserved for the shelter of animals outside the little town of Bethlehem in Judah. From the time of his birth until the time of His death, He never had a place that He could call home. He spoke of Himself as “the son of

man who had no place to lay His head.” When you visit Israel they will take you to Capernaum and show you the site of what they believe to be the House of Simon Peter. They will take you to a number of places that Jesus visited and ministered during the days of His life. But they will not take you to a site and say to you, “This is where Jesus lived. This piece of property belonged to Him.” There is no such site! There is no such plot of land! He gave his home.

2. He gave his family.

Jesus has always been the Son of God, the only begotten of the Father. The relationship of love between Him and the Father is an eternal relationship. But when Jesus was born of the virgin and became incarnate in human flesh, he gave up the enjoyment of that relationship as he had known it from all eternity. Oh, we must acknowledge that he was no less the son of God during the days of his flesh on earth than He had been in heaven, but his relationship with the Father was radically transformed. Instead of living moment by moment in the presence of the Father, He lived out His days on earth like we have to live out our days on earth. He communed with the Father as men commune with the Father through prayer and supplication. In a very real sense for those years that He spent on earth working out our salvation He had given up His family, at least the enjoyment of His family on a continual bases. Before His journey to earth had finished He would experience the unspeakable horror of being separated from His Father during those hours upon the cross. That heart wrenching cry would be heard, “My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?” So when we talk about He was rich and became poor we must remember that He gave His family.

3. He gave His wealth.

As the eternal Son of God living in the presence of the Father in a real sense He was the owner of everything. Heaven and earth with all its riches belong to Him as the creator of heaven and in earth. He was indeed the richest of the rich since he owned everything including those who claim ownership of things on earth.

But when He became a man and began His sojourn on the earth He did so as a poor man. He was born in poverty and He lived in poverty. He was dependent upon others to sustain Him and keep Him during the days of His flesh. He had no flocks or herds. He possessed no gold or silver. He was without any of the things that His world would have used to measure wealth. He was without them because He had given them up in order to become our redeemer and savior. When it was time for Him to pay His temple tax He send His devoted disciple, Peter, to catch a fish who would have a coin in its mouth, and then to use the coin to pay His tax. Jesus lived His life in poverty. He gave up all of His wealth in order to become our savior.

4. He gave His clothing.

In heaven He was clothed with the robes of divine glory and splendor. As He walked around as the pre-existent Son of God in the midst of the praise of the angels and of the glory of heaven, he was clothed with the splendor of light. But when He came to earth and was born of the virgin, he was wrapped in “swaddling clothes.” He was wrapped in the kind of little blanket – garment that any ordinary peasant woman would use to wrap her new born infant. He never accumulated any of this world’s fineries in terms of clothing during His years. In fact, when He died they took the one garment that he owned and gambled it away as he was dying on the cross. It would be

factual to say that Jesus died without one stitch clothing to cover his nakedness. He died utterly exposed in nakedness. He gave it all.

5. He gave His life.

The life of the Lord Jesus before His incarnation was indescribably full and complete. He enjoyed the eternal life of the divine God-head from all eternity. When he became incarnate in human flesh, he did not give up that divine life but rather united that divine life with human existence. But as He came to the end of His life, it was obvious to Him that if He was to be the savior of the world He would have to give His life. He knew it to be the will of His Father that He give His life. So on that dark Friday afternoon on a Roman cross just North of the city of Jerusalem in Palestine while a critical, crazy collection of human beings watched and while heaven itself stood still in awe and wonder, the Son of God laid down His life. He laid down every ounce of His life before the Father as a sacrifice for the sins of the whole world.

The founder of the Turner Broadcasting Network, Mr. Ted Turner, caught the attention of the world this past week with a gift that he gave. While the television cameras were recording everything that happened this son of Georgia made a gift of one billion dollars to the United Nations for special humanitarian projects. All of us stood in wonder that a man would be able to give that kind of gift. However, that was not the greatest gift ever given. Mr. Turner himself acknowledged that really constituted his income since the first of 1997. Over the nine months of this year his net worth had increased from over two billion dollars to something over three billion dollars so all he did was give nine months of income. When he had made his gift, he still had a home, ranches, airplanes, family, the finest clothing that money can buy, all of the things that

make his life on this planet luxurious. In a real sense his gift didn't cost him any thing. But when the eternal Son of God made His gift for you, when he had finished giving, He was absolutely destitute. He was improvised. "Though he was rich – He became poor."

II. WHY HE GAVE.

There are two expressions in the statement that reveal the purpose of His giving. The first statement says simply "for your sakes." What Jesus did when He gave up all of His wealth and became poor had as its ultimate purpose something that was for our good. Then the Apostle adds this, "So that you through His poverty might become rich" He gave up all that He had so that we might become rich. Again, when we try to measure the riches that become ours because He became poor, we stand in the midst of mystery.

1. We have a home because he became poor.

We have already noticed how He became homeless for our sakes. The ultimate outcome of His homelessness is that we now have a place in the Father's house. It is now possible for us to share in the realm of the eternal and to see it as our home because He became without a home.

2. We have a family because he became poor.

The family that He gave up has not become our family. Because He became poor we have been enriched with a new relationship with God in which we are now the sons of God and the full revelation of what we will be has not been known yet. Can you imagine this? You and I are brothers and sisters in the family of God all because He became poor.

3. We now have clothing because He became poor.

We consider the clothing of heaven's glory that He gave up in order to be exposed to the nakedness of the cross so that we might become rich, a wondrous truth is made known. Before He came we had no apparel that was appropriate to be worn into the presence of God. We were naked and destitute. But because He became poor we now have the garments of righteousness which are suitable to be worn into the very presence of God Himself. The garments that we have through Christ are made up of His own perfect righteousness.

4. We now have life.

We were dead in trespasses and in sins. We were cut off from all true life. But because He gave His life, we now have eternal life. Through His death we have received the gift of eternal life which is freely given to all who believe upon Him.

5. We now have wealth.

We now have spiritual wealth. Riches that are immeasurable in worth because He became poor.

I am sure that there will be some people positively impacted by the tremendous financial gift of Mr. Turner. But it will pale into insignificance when compared to the impact of the gift of the Son of God. Because He gave His all for us, we now have everything that we need for the living of life in this world and for the sharing of life with Him in eternity. Our Lord is a marvelous and wonderful giver!

III. WHAT WE GIVE.

It would be totally inappropriate for me to share what I have shared with you and not say something about our giving. This beautiful statement is in the context of an appeal for generous and sacrificial giving on the part of Christians. In fact, the Apostle introduces this statement by writing, “I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.” He is appealing to the believers in Corinth and in Lubbock to do what Jesus did. Jesus demonstrated His love by His generous and voluntary giving. You and I are to demonstrate our love by our generous and voluntary giving.

We are to demonstrate our love for the Lord Jesus by such giving. We sing, “My Jesus I Love Thee, I Know Thou Art Mine.” How does He know that we love Him? What proof is there that we love Him? The proof is in generous and voluntary giving.

We prove our love for each other through our giving. Someone says, “I love First Baptist Church. It is my church.” What proof do we have that you love First Baptist Church? What proof do we have that you love the body of Christ? The ultimate proof is in the grace of giving. It is those who are generous in their giving who demonstrate that they genuinely love the body of Christ.

Now it is time for us to consider what Jesus gave and why He gave it as we consider what we will give and how we will give it. I want to challenge you to spend some time in the presence of our risen Lord, and to say to Him, “Lord Jesus, I love you, I want to do something for your church as proof that I love you and love your people. Lord Jesus, what would you like for me to give so that it will be a proof to you that I love you? Then, just wait on Him until He lets you

know what He wants you to give. Then when He shows you what He wants you to give, do it!
Do it because you love Him. Do it because you want to honor His name. Do it because you
want others to see the evidence that Jesus Christ is the love of your heart.