

SPECIAL SERMON: ***"The Gospel of Self-Imposed Poverty"***

INTRODUCTION

Context – **"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ" (8:9)**

- Paul is writing to the Corinthian church in order to stir them to give generously to a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
- Paul appeals to the supreme and purest motivation for Christianity: the abounding grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

[Grace] denotes the utterly undeserved, royally free, effective, unwearied, inexhaustible goodwill of God, active in and through Jesus Christ, God's effective, overflowing mercy." (C.E.B. Cranfield, "The Grace of Our Lord Jesus Christ")

THREE TRUTHS REGARDING CHRIST'S INCARNATION (2 Corinthians 8:9)

"The incarnation is God's greatest wonder, one that no creature could ever have imagined. God himself could not perform a more difficult and glorious work. It has justly been called the miracle of all miracles." (Mark Jones)

A. Truth #1: Christ's Riches – "that though he was rich" (8:9)

- The present participle "though being rich" expresses ongoing continuous action.
- Christ's poverty had a beginning, but Christ never *became* rich. He was *being* rich from all eternity.
Philippians 2:6, John 1:1, Colossians 1:15, Hebrews 1:3, Colossians 1:16-17, Hebrews 1:3, Deuteronomy 10:14, Job 41:11
- Beyond the richness of Christ's **divine being** is the richness of His **divine relations**.

"It is a knowledge that penetrates the very being of God, that comprehends the totality of the divine glory and that searches the deepest mysteries of the divine will. What tides of ineffable delight, without beginning or end, without ebb or flow, must eternally ravish the heart and mind of the eternal Son!" (John Murray)

B. Truth #2: Christ's Poverty – "yet for your sake he became poor" (8:9)

- **Philippians 2:6-7:** Christ "did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself,"
 - Christ did not become poor by subtracting some aspects of essential deity. Instead, He became poor by addition, not subtraction.
 - Christ took on a **human nature**, even while never shedding His **divine nature**.

"He surrendered all the insignia of divine majesty and assumed all the frailty and vicissitudes of the human condition." (Murray J. Harris)

- **Philippians 2:8:** Christ "humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross."

"The shame and the pain and the crucifixion was not the lowest depth that the Son of God humbly submitted himself. . . worse than the shame pain and worse than the torture. . . [is] his bearing of the divine curse as the unmixed fury of God." (Riccardi)

C. Truth #3: Christ's Purpose – "so that you by his poverty might become rich." (8:9)

- Through Christ, we are made rich with "every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places" (Eph 1:3)

Sermon Application Questions

September 8, 2019

PERSONAL RESPONSES

1

C.E.B Cranfield defined God's gospel grace as "the utterly undeserved, royally free, effective, unwearying, inexhaustible goodwill of God, active in and through Jesus Christ, God's effective, overflowing mercy."

Why is it so necessary for Christians to continue to relate to God on the basis of His grace and His grace alone? What are some of the negative things that happen when we as Christians lose sight of God's grace?

2

In his book *The Discipline of Grace*, Jerry Bridges writes: "We need to continue to hear the gospel every day of our Christian lives. . . preaching the gospel to ourselves every day gives us hope, joy and courage."

Why do we as Christians need to hear messages on the gospel? What are some practical ways that we can remind ourselves of the gospel on a daily basis?

DIGGING DEEPER

1

Take some time and reflect on some of the key passages related to this week's sermon. Ask the Lord for help in making application of these truths to your life.

John 1:1-4

In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men.

Colossians 1:15-17

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. 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. And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together.

Hebrews 1:3

He is the radiance of the glory of God and the exact imprint of his nature, and he upholds the universe by the word of his power.

Philippians 2:5-8

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

2 Corinthians 5:21

For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

Ephesians 1:3

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places,

2

Read Ephesians 1:3-14. What are some of the specific riches that are named by Paul that belong to the believer through faith in Jesus Christ? How are these blessings superior to the earthly riches of wealth and material possessions?

Take pains to apply these truths to your own life. How would your life be different if you centered your perspective around the eternal riches that we have in Christ?

PERSONAL APPLICATION

1

Mike Riccardi taught us that Christ “became poor by addition, not subtraction – by becoming what He wasn’t, even while never ceasing to be what He was, by taking on a human nature, even while never shedding His divine nature.”

What did you think about this statement? Why is it so important for Christians to understand the doctrine of the incarnation in terms of **addition**, not **subtraction**?

What difference does this make in our worship of Christ?

2

One of the key threats to our spiritual lives is the danger of forgetting the things which matter the most. This is why Paul exhorted Timothy to “**Remember** Jesus Christ, risen from the dead, the offspring of David, as preached in my gospel. (2 Timothy 2:8).

The following are some practical ways to remember Christ and His saving work. Review these applications and check any which are most helpful to you. Do you have any other practices that have been useful in centering your focus on Christ?

- Memorize verses and passages that speak of Christ and His saving work.** (Examples: Isaiah 53:3-6, 2 Corinthians 5:21, Romans 5:6-8, Romans 8:31-34).
- Fill the soundtrack of your life with songs that extol the person of Christ.** (Suggested exercise: what are your top 3 hymns and/or praise songs that magnify Christ and His salvation?)
- Begin each day by deliberately reviewing the gospel.** A good way to do this is to pray through a passage of Scripture such as Romans 3:21-26, Colossians 1:15-23 or 1 Peter 1:3-7).
- Celebrate your salvation testimony.** The Apostle Paul never forgot who he was before he was saved (1 Timothy 1:12-17). Make it a practice to review and rejoice in Christ’s work in your life.
- Engage in the discipline of thanksgiving.** Note: merely “feeling thankful” is not the same thing as engaging in the act of specific prayer which focuses on thanksgiving (Philippians 4:6-7).
- Engage in a theological study on the cross.** Learn to define and learn the meaning of terms such as *incarnation*, *hypostatic union*, *atonement*, *propitiation*, *justification*, *substitution*. Perhaps a more detailed study of the book of Romans would be helpful to you.
- Other Ideas: _____.