2 Corinthians 8:9 (Walter Potter) 139537

Gathering Up the Fragments, Chapter 15 (8:9)

Riches and Poverty2 Corinthians 8:9

2 Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich."

There is one thing that gives exceeding sweetness to all that we have and are to have as the children of God and that is that all we possess is in and with and through the Lord Jesus. How striking are these words, "Jesus, when He had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom." What a wonderful thing it will be to be in heaven and to have entered in that way, the only way, of course, in which poor man could enter. Oh! the sweetness of it! In heaven, entered through a door that is opened by the death of the Saviour! It is not only the fact that we are to be there, but oh, the way in which we shall know ourselves to be there is that which will add such joy to our being there. We shall be forever with and in the presence of the One to whom we shall gladly own that we owe everything.

In this simple little verse we get a great deal of truth. First, of course, the apostle is writing to Christians. It is to Christians the epistles are written, and when he is writing to Christians, he can write to those who know the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Are there any reading these lines who are strangers to the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ—who have never casted that grace which brought a Saviour from heaven to be the Saviour of sinners? All God's people have tasted that grace, some more deeply than others, but all know in some measure the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. It is that grace and the knowledge of it that makes one a Christian—a child of God. That is the grace that brings to us the Saviour and salvation.

Suppose He were here and could do so, what do you think He would do? The first thing He would seek to do if He were here, would be to open your heart to that grace. Do you know how? He would just bring that blessed Saviour in all His love before that poor, cold heart of yours and so seek to win it for Christ. For a heart that has tasted the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ is a heart that is won for Christ and that is what God is after, not only your salvation, but He wants your heart, poor man's heart, for Himself and His Son. He does it in His own infinite love and the gratification of that love and in the presentation of that love. Do you not see it is all made known in Christ?

He says here, "the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." He does not say the grace of the Saviour; He does not say the grace of God; He does not say the grace of the Lord, or the grace of Jesus, but He says, "the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ." He brings in all those titles that belong to Him. He says you know His grace, the grace of the One who is the Lord Jesus Christ.

We will just call attention to that title of His—Lord. God has made Him Lord of all and decreed that every knee must bow, and not only bow in silent submission, that would not do; that will not do, not in itself. No, God is going to have something more in connection with His Son for His own glory. When the knee is bowed, the tongue shall confess that Jesus Christ is Lord to the glory of God the Father.

Jesus is the Lord of all and He wants to be the Saviour of all. Lord of all He is, and as such, all must sooner or later confess Him, but He wants to be known as the Saviour of all; He wants the joy of that. It gives His heart joy when the poor sinner accepts Him as the sinner's Saviour. Just think of the blessed Lord seeking your poor heart that He may be your Saviour! Just as He is your Lord and wants to be your Saviour, if He is not your Saviour, you will find Him presently your Lord and your Judge!

Now He says, "You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." How can I know it? What is His grace? In order to know the Saviour's grace, we must learn a little of His glory. We learn the two together; as we learn the glory of Christ, we learn the grace of Christ. How can He speak of His being rich? What are the riches the apostle here refers to? Certainly not His circumstances here on earth. No! No! far from that! His birthplace was in the stable of an inn, and His tomb a borrowed one; He said to one who had said to Him, "Master, I will follow Thee whithersoever Thou goest," you do not know what you are saying; you will follow Me wheresoever I go? He says, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay His head." Now, He says, Do you want to follow Me?

He does not refer to His circumstances on earth when He speaks of being rich, does He? No, He took His place with the poor and was ever found among them and delighted to be found with them. When His glory was manifested, they were made to marvel at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. They began to think a little of who He was and asked, "Is not this the carpenter?" When they thought of that, they despised Him, despised the wondrous words they had been listening to. He took that place and was known as the carpenter and the carpenter's son. Where did He come from when He came into this world? In the 6th of John, He says, "I came down from heaven." That is the One we have in the Saviour, the One who came down from heaven. It is that the apostle speaks of when he refers to His being rich and becoming poor—His coming into the world and the circumstances into which He came when He was here.

There are so many scriptures that tell us of His riches. We see in that beautiful first chapter of John: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by Him; and without Him was not any thing made that was made. In Him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not."

Just think of the One of whom all that and much more could be said. A little further down we read, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." That is the wealth that He laid aside and became poor. Another scripture tells us, "Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant." That is His first step in His wonderful descent—"took on Him the form of a servant."

All angels, however glorious, are only servants— glorious servants they are as God's Word shows us, but servants. It might be a Michael or a Gabriel, but, listen to Gabriel himself, when asked, "Whereby shall I know this?" His reply was "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God, and am sent to speak unto thee...these glad tidings." They stand. That is the servant's place. It is not sitting, but standing in the presence of God, waiting for His commands. As a servant waits for orders from his master, so these glorious creatures wait upon God.

Consider Psalm 103:20: "Bless the Lord, ye His angels, that excel in strength, that do His commandments, hearkening unto the voice of His word." What an exalted position is brought before us in the place of the servants that wait constantly upon God! But servants they are and it is their joy and service to be such. But here is ONE who takes that place—One who was God's equal, too, subsisting, as it is said, in the form of God. With whom did He associate Himself when He thus took upon Him the form of a servant? With the angels? Those glorious creatures of whom we have been reading just a little, and of whom we might read much? No. He took on Him the form of a servant and was found in fashion as a man! That blessed One was found here below a Man among men, Jesus the Lord, and He took on Him the form of a servant that He might be the servant of men! It was for the glory of God—God's servant among men.

Those are the riches which the apostle refers to. We find this One coming down in that way and here He is among us, not as a king reigning and ruling, not as some mighty conqueror, but as a lowly servant, coming to save. The Son of man is come to seek and to save and to give His life a ransom for many. He took upon Him the form of a servant and was found in fashion as a man, and then what? If He has undertaken poor man's cause, if He has undertaken for the glory of God to lift poor man out of the pit into which he has fallen, He has undertaken a wonderful work, for we had fallen, fallen, fallen very low. He has undertaken poor man's cause and that for the glory of God. Here He is in this servant's form in our midst and being found in fashion as a Man. What? Just think of the descent! From the form of God to the form of a servant in fashion as a man! It is that glorious One of whom we were thinking just now as brought before us in the first of John, found here in the place and form of a servant! But He must, if He is going to lift us out of that pit, He must go very low. He humbled Himself and became obedient unto death! And we find that glorious One going down, down, down until we find Him in death, and that the death of the cross.

It is this grace of the Lord Jesus Christ that makes Him so precious to our hearts. Any set of doctrines, however correct, cannot meet and satisfy this heart of mine or that heart of yours. It is such a large heart that we have. It is a very bad one, but it is very large, and there is but One that can fill it, and that is the One who came down from heaven. What the gospel of God's grace presents is a living Person and the glorious work of the blessed Saviour, the Son of God.

That wonderful epistle to the Romans gives us the gospel of God, good news of God. It is all concerning His Son and the gospel and the blessed Spirit in the ministry of the gospel "concerning Jesus Christ our Lord." It is constantly in some way pointing to the Son of God for the gospel of God concerns His Son. Poor human ears and hearts may be indifferent to the gospel of God concerning His Son, but there is an ear above that delights to hear the story told out time and time again, however feebly. There is one theme of which the ear of God never tires and that theme is the gospel concerning His Son. But what a contrast! Here we are, and if in our unconverted state, the blessed Name of the Saviour touches no chord there; it is the very Name that is the very joy of God. How that tells the difference between our hearts and the heart of God.

We began with Him in the form of God and now we have Him down in death, the death of the cross. If He is going to lift us out of the pit, He had to come down into the pit where we were, and we are all sinners under the sentence and power of death. Sin has made this poor world death's great harvest field; death is ever abroad with his sickle and we never know when he is going to claim this one or that one, for there is no respect of persons with him. He claims the young; he claims the old; he claims the rich; he claims the poor; he claims the high; he claims the low; and there is not a soul who can say, I know that death will not lay his hand on my shoulder and say, "Come with me" before tomorrow morning. Not one! It is the valley of the shadow of death and through sin we are all under the power of and subject to death.

There is a solemn passage of Scripture which says, "It is appointed unto man once to die, but after this the judgment" (Heb. 9:27). You see, the Saviour, in order to lift us out of that dreadful pit, that hole into which our sins had brought us, has got to come right down to where we are and right under the weight and burden and judgment of it all. That is what makes Him so precious to the heart. The Saviour, every saved one knows, is the One who died for him. What a link that forms in the heart of the Saviour between the sinner and the Saviour. There is a wonderful link between these two. Look at that poor saved one! He looks by faith into the Saviour's face and what does He say? He says, "There is the One who bore my sins; there is the One who died for me." Is there not a link there? A link of love. And what does the Saviour say as He looks into the face of the saved one? He says, "There is one that cost Me the travail of My soul." That is a link in affection, not exactly in life, that exists between the Saviour and His saved ones. They know Him as the One who loved them so much as to die for them, and He knows them as those who were in such a state that, ere He could be their Saviour, He has to go down into the very dust of death to bear the judgment of God for their sins upon the cross. That link between the soul and Christ is very precious.

Suppose we think of the blessed God. You and I know Him just in the way He delights to be known. We know Him as the God that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all. Angels do not know Him like that. That is your blessing and mine; your joy and mine, present and eternal, to know the blessed God in that way and to know His Son. How God does delight to hear His saints make use of that word of His in the 8th of Romans: "He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" It is the triumph of faith: the joy and glory of God when faith knows God and lays hold of Him in that way so as to be able to challenge everything, as it says a little further down in the same chapter, in heaven, in earth, and under the earth, things present and things future.

Here then, He has come down, down, down into death. Just think, how does the Saviour have us contemplate Him in the breaking of bread? There He is living in our midst as He says, the living One that was dead, but how does He call Himself, and in what circumstance does He call Himself to our remembrance in the breaking of bread and the drinking of the cup? It is as the Saviour in death. One feels how little he knows

what it is to contemplate the Saviour in death. If we knew a little more of that, we would be found more frequently at the table of the Lord. It would take a good deal to keep us from that precious service that He has in such a special way requested of us. If our hearts and souls only knew a little more of what it is to contemplate that blessed One in the circumstances in which He brings Himself before us when He says, "This is My body which is given for you . . . this is . . . My blood, which is shed for you." He brings Himself before us in death and says, there in that precious service to us, I am bringing Myself before you again in the circumstances and conditions into which I had to enter in order to save you from your sins.

There are the depths into which He went; that is the poverty He entered into. We do feel the necessity to press upon souls this truth in a special way that nothing short of the death of Christ could save one soul! We bring it before you again in this way. In spite of all that life of unswerving devotedness to God, that life of His, every thought, every word, every act of which was a sweet savor going to God night and day (for the fire on the altar was to be continually burning,) had Jesus gone to heaven from Gethsemane, you and I would never go there at all. You might say, All that life of precious service to God to count for naught? As far as you and I are concerned, He had not gone low enough. The solemn majesty of God says, "The day thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." He had said, "The wages of sin is death." "By one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin" and had the Saviour gone to heaven from Gethsemane, you and I would have been excluded from heaven for ever! Sin was not atoned for. It is death that atones for sin. It is His precious blood that puts sin away and cleanses the soul and makes it meet for the presence of God.

You and I presently, when we are in the glory of God, will be there as having entered through that rent veil, as having been cleansed by that precious blood. All the hosts of heaven, as they view the innumerable company of the redeemed, will know that they are not there as the result of creative power but as the result of redemption, and there as those who were sinners, vile and undone in the presence of God, but those whose case and deed have been met by the death of God's own Son and by the shedding of His precious blood.

Can you not see, can you not feel how wonderful it will be to be in heaven in that way? That is the only way in which poor man can be there. If the Lord Jesus had gone to heaven from Gethsemane, if He had refused the cup and had not said, "Nevertheless, not My will but Thine be done"; if He had refused at last to take that cup and had gone back, as He could have done at any moment, instead of a rent veil, instead of an open door, the door would have been opened for Him and closed behind Him. There would have been no such thing in heaven and heavenly glory, as a Saviour and His saved ones, and saved ones and their Saviour; heaven would never have known such a sight, such a theme, such joy.

It was when Jesus died, and only when He died, that the veil of the temple was rent in twain. Do you not see, when He went away, the door was not only open to Him, but it has been open ever since, and it is open now. So in one scripture we read, "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused Him that spoke on earth, much more shall not we escape if we turn away from Him that speaketh from heaven." There is an open door, and God is speaking to us from heaven. Heaven is open to us, but opened to us through the cross of Christ.

In order to reach us in our need, to what depths of poverty He went! "Though He was rich...He became poor." He had to go right down into those depths where the heart adoringly contemplates Him. What is so wonderful! What is there that fills the heart with such a deep, solemn peace and joy and sense of indebtedness as the contemplation of the Saviour in death? Nothing, NOTHING, NOTHING is like the death of Christ. Our souls learn that to our blessing and to our eternal joy and glory. Just get a little of God's estimate of the cross, something of His thoughts of the cross, this is what it will do: it will just make all that this poor world is and has pale into nothing. There is a little hymn which starts something like this:

"The thoughts of the cross turn earth into dross!"

That is seeing, so to speak, with the anointed eye and getting God's thoughts of it. Nothing is like the cross, and none like Him. It is for our sakes He became poor, that we through His poverty might be rich. The first thing that God does for a soul that accepts the Saviour is to forgive him his sins, to impart eternal life—the first thing. Here you have one that is saved. God is going to answer the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ according to the estimate He sets upon all that He in grace did.

One so delights in that Word of God, "He shall see of the travail of His soul and shall be satisfied." Who said that? God. And God is going to give His dear Son as an adequate answer to all that He did when He stooped so low, and He says, "That ye through His poverty might be rich."

Poor man, when first awakened to the knowledge of his need, his one great thought is how he can be saved. That is all right in its place, but God is going to answer the work of Christ according to His thoughts of its worth. It is a marvel. You and I are going to be blessed according to God's value of Christ and the work of Christ.

Sometimes people say (and they think it is very humble, too) I will be quite content if I get just inside heaven. They think it very humble and that they are hardly worthy of such a place, but how thankful they will be to get it! In a certain sense, however, it is the pride of a deceived heart. I say, "I'm sure you would be thankful, but how do you think you will get a place just inside of heaven?" There is no such place for man in heaven. If you and I have a place in heaven, we have got to have such a place as is worthy of the work that was done for sinners upon the cross. So we say, "How do you expect to get there?" Then they will tell you that it is through the blessed Saviour. All is so vague and indefinite before them, but you will find where there is a true heart, they are sure to tell you in some way or other that Christ is the Way, the Truth, and the Life. They will gladly own that there is no other way. Now we say, Come, you want a place in heaven through faith in Christ and the work of Christ, and do you think the place such as you have been thinking of would be a just answer to all that Christ did upon the cross? Just look at it in that way, that our salvation has to be according to the work that the Saviour did in His grace, and you will see what kind of place we will get in heaven. Our place in heaven is in association with Christ.

"That ye through His poverty might be rich." How rich? Take one of the most elementary truths—one that is one of our most common blessings as Christians, as children of God: listen, "If children," that is, if children of God, then what? If I am not a child of God, what am I? I am a sinner in my sins, and every one of us is either a sinner in sins, or we are children of God. Well, suppose I am a child of God. "If children"

then what? "Heirs." The heirship goes with the relationship. Heirs of what and of whom? "Heirs of God!" What is that? Oh, that we through His poverty might be rich. Can you measure what it is to be an heir of God? Is there an angel in heaven who is an heir of God? Oh, no! "If children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ." Think of that!

God has crowned His Son with many glories. When we find Him coming from heaven, we find Him coming from the glory of God as God's eternal beloved Son. "The only begotten Son which is in the bosom of the Father." That is the way we have to contemplate Him. It is the Word that was with God and was God, the One who made all things and without Him was not anything made that was made. Think of those glories! They are all His still, but in coming here He has gained glories, has acquired glories, and has gone back to heaven with many glories. One of these glories is that He is the Saviour of sinners, and He like Joseph of old now has a coat of many colors. Just think what the Saviour is Heir to now as the One that accomplished redemption! Think of all that He is Heir to now as the One who has created all things, but as the One who redeemed everything, all that you and I will share! "If children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ."

He says in the 17th of John, "The glory which Thou gayest Me I have given them." That is, He shares with those for whom He suffered all the answer to His sufferings, all the answer that the blessed God Himself has given Him. That is what He refers to when He says "that ye through His poverty might be rich."

In another passage He says, "Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us that we should be called the sons of God." Whom do we owe that to? Our deepest joy is that we owe all that we have to the blessed God and to the work of His dear Son.

Presently the Lord Jesus is going to come and gather up all those joint and fellow•heirs, and they are going to share with Him all that He is Heir to as the Accomplisher of redemption and we shall be forever with Him in the Father's house. When He comes to reign, we are going to reign with Him, and when He comes to judge, we are going to judge with Him, ever with Him, never separated from Him when once we meet Him. When once the saints meet the Saviour, they never never part again. If He reigns, they reign; if He judges, they judge; wherever He is, they are with Him as His fellow and co-heirs, and there in the joy of the Lord everything is owed to Him, who though He was rich, for our sakes became poor that we through His poverty might be rich.

May the Lord increase in our souls for our peace and joy and for His own glory the sense of our indebtedness to Christ. How little these poor hearts of ours think of what we owe the Saviour. What are the returns of these hearts of ours, these lips of ours? May the Lord beget in these hearts of ours something of a more worthy response to all that precious grace of His.

Take that poor woman in Luke 7. What a sight it is, and how precious those tears. What was Simon's feast and his company to the Saviour? What a feast He had from that creature sitting at His feet. What brought her there? The sense of who He was and her indebtedness to Him. How is it we love so little? It is because we have only a little sense of what we owe Him. May He increase in our hearts a sense of what we owe Him for His Name's sake.

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