

Though He Rich, Yet He Became Poor

“...that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor...”

(2 Corinthians 8:9)

The apostle Paul was contemplating the powerful change in God the Son's Personhood when He added a human body to His Deity. What was life like for Him before He took on humankind to Godhood and what was life like afterward? ...Though he was rich, yet ... he became poor.

When he had everything, when he was rich in power, when he had omnipotence at his command and could do all things in the universe, he became poor—hungry, tired, and thirsty. When he was rich in the love and fellowship of the Father and the Spirit, when all the angels of heaven adored him, he gladly laid it aside. When he was rich in earth's resources, he became the poorest of poor so that he said, “the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.” (Matthew 8:20).

He had no home; his parents borrowed an animal's feeding trough for His bed. They laid Him the swathed baby in a manger. He had to borrow a coin to illustrate what was rightly the Father's and what was Caesars. He depended on others for his clothes; he went day after day without certainty that he would under a roof tonight. Though he was rich, yet for our sakes, he entered into the poverty of human existence, He held nothing back that we might consider “riches,” not even his own life. He surrendered to the Father and His will, and with joy became a man!

There on Calvary's hill, on a rugged, bloody, cruel cross, He surrendered, He poured out everything He had. All that was His, all that He could call his own, He released. His own life he willingly poured out for sinners like you and me. John puts it, “Having loved his own who were in the world, he loved them to the end.” (John 13:1). He went the entire limit; He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. The Lord Jesus models true giving. That is what Paul is talking about in 2 Corinthians 8. No reserves, no half-measures, no conditions, no holding back--pouring out everything that He had. That is the great pattern for our giving, too.

We have never truly given until it costs us, until it pinches. It is shameful the way some Christians seek some kind of angle to get something for ourselves in their giving. Giving becomes an investment. What does my gift get for me?

Does it meet the criterion of Christ's giving when we seek to give only if we feel we can deduct it from our income tax, or get a benefit in return? There is nothing wrong with deducting gifts from our income tax, but what bothers me is the reluctance of some believers to give beyond the benefit that may come from their gift. Christians sometimes refuse to give anything beyond their personal safety. However, the example of the Lord Jesus is that He gave without any expectation of return. He had no thought of anybody giving back to Him, but freely poured out all that He had.

Do we tend to give only out of our surplus? Do we wait until we have a surplus, something left over for ourselves, to begin giving? True giving has always meant some degree of self-impoverishment. It is only when we have something less than what we began that it can be called Christ-like giving. It is to become poor... or certainly less rich.