



CAPITOL COMMISSION™

The Ultimate Redistribution of Wealth

TIM PAULEY

2 CORINTHIANS 8:9

FEBRUARY 27, 2014

Tim Pauley / PO Box 58403, Charleston, WV 25358 / 304.767.8430 / tim.pauley@capitolcom.org

The redistribution of wealth is an issue that is hotly debated in the discussion of economics and policy in our federal and state capitols. It is defined as the transfer of income, wealth, or property by some mechanism such as taxation, monetary policies, welfare, charity, or tort law. To say that the desirability and effects of such redistribution are actively debated on ethical and economic grounds is quite an understatement.

However the Bible gives us an example of the ultimate redistribution of wealth which we all can agree is a great blessing from God and something we all desperately need. In 2 Corinthians 8:9 we find a brief statement that summarizes the whole message of the gospel:

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

This is a wonderful brief statement summarizing all that Christ has done for us. Paul writes quite similarly in Philippians 2:5-8 where we find another grand statement summing up the message of the gospel:

⁵ Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, ⁶ who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷ but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. ⁸ Being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross.

OUR EXAMPLE FOR HUMILITY, SERVICE, AND GIVING

In 2 Corinthians we read that Jesus “became poor”. In Philippians we see that Jesus “emptied Himself”. These are similar statements describing what Christ did for us. While these statements are tremendously profound summaries of gospel truth, we must keep in mind the context in which they are found. 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9 are Paul’s exhortation to the church at Corinth to give generously to the needy church in Jerusalem. As Paul encourages them to follow

through and give generously he calls upon the message of Christ’s sacrifice as an example for their own giving.

In Philippians, Paul is dealing with division and strife among the believers. In 2:2- 4 he writes: *“...Make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose. ³ Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴ do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others.”* In urging them to exhibit humility, unity, and service to others he again turns to the example of Christ’s sacrifice for us. It is significant that in both these instances, Paul points to the glorious truth of the gospel as the basis and motivation for our Christian living. Challenges to Christian growth and living may often be rooted in duty and “guilt trips”. Spurgeon said it well when he noted that “Believers are to be constrained by gospel motives rather than by legal arguments”. Paul urges the believers in both Corinth and Philippi to consider all that Christ had done for them as the basis and motivation for their Christian living. As a clear challenge for us to pursue humble service and giving to others, let us consider more closely the “redistribution of wealth” described in these passages.

THE RICHES OF CHRIST

2 Corinthians describes Christ as “rich”. This is not talking about monetary or economic wealth. Philippians says that Christ was in the form of God and equal with God. “Jesus Christ is eternal God. And as eternal God He is as rich as God is rich. God owns everything. He owns the universe and all that is in it. He owns all power and all authority and all sovereignty and all glory and all honor and all majesty and all that is created and uncreated. The wealth of our Lord Jesus is beyond comprehension. It is boundless. It is infinite. He is infinite and His wealth is as infinite as His being. In John 17:5 Jesus speaks of the *“Glory I had with You (the Father) before the world was”*. We cannot even begin to imagine the glory and riches of Christ as He eternally existed with God the Father.

BIBLE STUDIES

CAPITOL BIBLE STUDY: **THURSDAYS 8:00 AM; 12:00 NOON** TREASURER’S CONFERENCE ROOM (EB 54)

The Ultimate Redistribution of Wealth

HE BECAME POOR

Though He had all the riches and glory as the eternal Son of God, Jesus left all that in order to come to earth as a man so that He could suffer and die for us. Again the fact that Jesus “became poor” is not referring primarily to economic poverty or material circumstances. Where His riches were the eternal glory He had with the Father, His poverty was the incarnation. “Becoming poor” speaks of when He came to earth in the likeness of man, humbled Himself, and became obedient to the point of death on the cross. Again we think of the “divine excellencies” Jonathan Edward’s found in Jesus Christ. Though infinite in the riches of glory as God the Son, Jesus became poor.

WE MIGHT BECOME RICH

Why did Jesus do this? Paul says it was for our sakes, that we might become rich. Again this is not referring to material wealth as some TV health and wealth preachers might have us believe. It is describing the spiritual blessings that have been provided us through Christ.

Though this passage does not state it directly, it intimates at the condition of spiritual poverty in which we find ourselves without Christ. This is the spiritual poverty Jesus spoke of in the Sermon on the Mount: “Blessed are the poor in Spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” Matt. 5:3). We must realize we are desperately poor in our own spiritual resources and that we must have help from outside sources. He is speaking about a complete absence of pride, a complete absence of self-assurance and of self-reliance. He means we have a consciousness that we are nothing in the presence of God. We must realize we have no resources or abilities within ourselves to come to God or be right with God. We must rely completely upon His grace as He gives to us that which we cannot earn or do not deserve. “Poor in spirit” must be the attitude of those who would come to Christ for salvation.

We find ourselves in a condition of abject spiritual poverty. However, because of Christ’s life of perfect, sinless obedience and His death and resurrection, through repentance and faith we can gain great spiritual riches through Him! Paul’s letter to the church at Ephesus deals a great deal with these riches. Eph. 1:3 speaks of the “spiritual blessings” we have in Christ. Paul also describes the “riches of God grace” which was shown us in Christ (Eph. 1:7; 2:7; 3:8). We see in Romans 8:17

that if we are children of God (ones who have repented and trusted Christ) then we are “*heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ*”. Can even begin to comprehend what that means for those who have trusted Christ? Just a brief survey of God’s Word reveals the great riches God has given us through Christ. We have redemption and the forgiveness of sin (Col. 1:14). We have eternal life (John 3:36). We can look forward to heaven (Col. 1:7). We have the assurance of salvation (Rom. 8:38-39). We have fellowship with God and with other believers (1 John 1:3). We have the Word of God (Ps. 119:72, 127).

So we certainly see the ultimate redistribution of wealth. Though we are in abject spiritual poverty with no means to be right with our holy God, we have been granted God’s riches. This was all through what Christ did for us when He became poor, humbled Himself, and emptied Himself for us.

ALL THROUGH GRACE

Paul began his example in 2 Corinthians with the words, “*You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ...*” All that He did in becoming poor so that we might be provided God’s riches was through grace. We recall from previous studies that grace is God’s unmerited favor. Not only is it unmerited, it is the working of a holy God in the lives of undeserving sinners. We cannot earn God’s riches. We certainly do not deserve God’s riches. As sinners, we deserve just the opposite – the eternal punishment of our sin in hell. Yet through grace God “redistributed the wealth”. Christ became poor, so that we might be rich!

CONCLUSION

- **HAVE YOU EXPERIENCED THE RICHES OF GOD WHICH HAVE BEEN PROVIDED FOR YOU THROUGH REPENTANCE AND FAITH IN WHAT CHRIST HAS DONE?**
- **ARE YOU SEEKING AFTER GOD’S RICHES RATHER THAN THE RICHES OF THE WORLD?**
- **PAUL’S CHALLENGES IN THESE PASSAGES WERE WRITTEN TO MEMBERS IN LOCAL CHURCHES, BUT I BELIEVE THEY HAVE IMPORTANT APPLICATION FOR BELIEVERS SERVING IN THE CAPITOL. ARE YOU SEEKING TO FOLLOW JESUS’ EXAMPLE OF HUMILITY, SERVICE AND GIVING TO OTHERS AS YOU WORK HERE IN THE STATEHOUSE?**