

Do you remember the flood of August 2016? When this building had 30 inches of water in it?

I remember standing in here in that water praying, and asking God for help, but also not knowing what was ahead for us. Many of you who were here at that time worked tirelessly day after day, (after work), and then there were those whom God sent from other churches that came to help us to rebuild, and then, there were churches from all over who sent money to help us, not to mention the many who prayed for us.

We were needy saints and a needy church at that time. I remember thinking that it was very humbling to be on the receiving end of the kindness and love of God's people, from His churches.

I could "personally" write a letter in the words of 2 Corinthians 8:1-7, and I could tell you about the liberality, generosity, and the kindness of the churches that helped us; HELP that we didn't ask for, but there was one church and pastor who sent a message by e-mail to many other churches, who asked for help for us!

Many of the churches that helped us were going through their own trials, but still, they wanted to help, as so they did. Paul, in this text was teaching the church @ Corinth by the good example of the Churches of Macedonia who (IN THAT TIME) helped other churches in their time of need. "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, SEE that ye abound in this grace also"

Now in 2 Corinthians 8:8, Paul wrote, "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness (or eagerness) of others, (namely the churches of Macedonia), and to prove the sincerity of your love"

I am NOT commanding you to be generous and liberal in your giving, I am proving (or testing) the sincerity of your love by the good example and love of Christ from the churches of Macedonia.

No one commanded them to give, it was voluntary, extemporaneous, and from "willing hearts". 2 Corinthian 8:3-5

No one here is going to coerce you to give, but when you do give, your giving should be voluntary, cheerfully, and from your heart, and it should be done by faith in Christ!

So, Christ's churches ought to show the same love and graciousness of spirit and giving toward other churches and needy brethren! We were richly blessed in our time of need from many churches who helped us, and God in-turn allowed us to help some other brethren and churches during that time. We've tried to continue to help brethren in their times of need.

Paul wanted the Church @ Corinth to learn from the good example of the Churches of Macedonia, he wanted them to emulate them and learn

from their "eagerness" toward other churches and brethren, to help them.

It all came down to this, Paul's desire for the Church @ Corinth was:

"To prove the sincerity of (their) your love". 1 John 3:14-19, Ezekiel 33:31.

Paul's heart was to test and to prove the sincerity of their love, primarily to THEM and for their sakes! Listen, as children of God, we should want PROOF of Christ in us, and of the sincerity of our love to Christ.

1 John 4:20-5:2

Paul now prepared to set before them the greatest example of sacrificial giving in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Look back at 2 Corinthians 8:2: "How that in great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality".

2 Corinthians 8:5: "And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.

Their giving was Christ-Like, self-sacrifice is one of the greatest indications of genuine love, which brings us to 2 Corinthians 8:9. How did Christ give?

"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".

One of the greatest demonstrations of grace, or graciousness, kindness, and love, was in the incarnation, condescension, and humiliation of the Lord Jesus, when He came into the world as a Man.

Paul began (V9) by telling the Corinthians, this is one of those wonderful things about Christ that "you should know"!

Remember in (V8), Paul wrote to the Corinthians about the Macedonian churches, and that he wanted to "prove the sincerity of their love"; now here in (V9) Paul gave them the greatest example and proof of love, in the condescension of the Lord Jesus!

"Though He was rich, yet for your sakes, He became poor"

How was He rich? What did He have before His incarnation? I think we can get a little peek into Christ's riches before His incarnation and His humiliation in John 17:5:

"And now, Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was"

Note here, the glory that He had "before the world was"; there was no earth, no world, and there were no humans, but Christ, the 2nd Person in the Godhead was "rich in glory". Ephesians 1:3-7, 2:4-8 Here we come to understand, THAT EVEN "before the foundation of the world" God intended and purposed to bestow the riches of His grace

upon fallen humans IN THE incarnation, life, and in the sufferings and death of Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary for our salvation.

God decreed in eternity past, that Christ would lay aside His deity to become clothed in humanity. The Word would be made flesh and dwell among us!

Christ laid aside the riches of His divinity and glory, which He always had with His Father and with the Holy Spirit to be robed in the poverty and rags of human flesh; "though He was rich, yet for your sakes, He became poor".

Philippians 2:3-8: John Calvin: "Christ's humility consisted in abasing Himself from the highest pinnacle of glory to the lowest ignominy" or esteem.

This is another wonderful quote, but I cannot remember who said it: "He did not consider the prerogatives of His deity something to be grasped at, but voluntarily and willingly humbled Himself "Most in the world would feel threatened by the loss of status and riches, who would not willingly humble themselves and intentionally put themselves lower. This Christ did willingly, for our sakes!"

He who was in the form of God would now be in the form of a man. He "who made all the worlds" would now take upon Himself the form of a servant in the world. He who had power over the devil, and who would crush him, would now, in His humanity, and as a man be subjected to be tempted by him.

He who never tired, would now need sleep, He who fed all of creation as God, would now hunger and thirst as a Man; He who sat in the throne of the heavens would now, not have a home or a place to lay His head. He who hated sin would now become sin by giving Himself and His body as the perfect sacrifice for our sins!

In these examples we may learn just a little of how the Lord Jesus became poor for our sakes. So, you see, there has never been condescension and poverty like Christ's in giving up all that He possessed with His Father, none have ever humbled themselves like our Lord!

"He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich"

If Christ had not become poor for our sakes, if He had not laid aside the robes of His divinity for the rags of flesh, to die for a world of sinners, NONE WOULD KNOW, NONE COULD KNOW the riches of His grace and His kindness in the salvation of their souls!

John 17:18-23, Romans 8:15-17, Galatians 4:7

Now, in Christ, we are made rich, though now in this life, we are to walk as He walked in the days of His flesh, in humility and meekness and in reverence to God as His children.

But in that day, we shall be exalted with Him in His exaltation, which could never have happened apart from His humiliation and poverty for our sakes!

We will forever and throughout all eternity be partakers of the riches of His glory, for we are joint heirs with Him, and we will forever be enthroned with Him in heaven! Revelation 3:21

To those of you who are in Christ this morning, you should know by faith, and in the experience of your own salvation, the riches of His grace toward you! But you should also know that the cost of what you possess in Christ, could not be unless the Lord Jesus had become poor for your sakes!

Romans 8:32, Ephesians 3:8, 2 Peter 1:4