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V.P. 324

The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ

Sermon preached by Mr. H. Dawson at Union Chapel, Bethersden, on Christmas morning, 1958.

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.

MY first thought is, how glad I should be if I could feel about all of you what the Apostle Paul felt concerning the Church at Corinth when, out of the abundance of the heart the mouth was speaking concerning those on the church roll there: "For ye *know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." Oh, how glad I should be if I could think that each one in this assembly did know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Many of you do know it; some of you desire to know it; and remember "'Tis grace that makes men feel their need, and cry to God for more."

The subject is great and, it might be well, first of all, to look just a little at the background of it. The Apostle was desiring to encourage the Church at Corinth to do good. The Church there had been notable for doing good, and the dear Apostle did not want them to become slack in doing it, and in the context he uses arguments. He might have quoted various precepts in the Word of God which the Gospel enjoins upon those who know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ to do all the good they can, but the Apostle Paul gets down to a bedrock truth. He does not use the precepts of the Gospel as an argument, although that is a sure foundation to argue upon; he uses the Example of our Lord Jesus Christ. "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." "For ye *know* the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ;" do you? Ye have heard of it often; ye have sung about it thousands of times; ye have read about it. The words, as phraseology, are very familiar to you, "The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ"; but something must be known and felt of it, and you and I must by that grace be able to declare: "By the grace of God I am what I am."

I want, as the Lord shall help me, to look at the subject from two or three viewpoints, and I desire you to try to pray while I try to preach, because, as I have said, the subject is great, there are ocean depths in it, and if grace is given to preach a sermon from it, it will be no more than taking out the equivalent of a thimbleful from what is the depth of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. First of all, "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was *rich*," and this brings before us our Lord Jesus Christ as our *Lord Jesus Christ*, and that is not just meaningless repetition. Our Lord Jesus Christ was rich as verily God. Remember that. Verily God—One with the Father, One with the Holy Spirit in the blessed Trinity, the Eternal Son of God in His Divine Nature. How good if you and I can say *our* Lord Jesus Christ. How can I set before you that He was *rich*, language fails us, our ability is very small, our minds are limited, and yet something must be attempted to show you how He was rich as verily God. Rich in His Eternity.

The Eternal God is He. Our Lord Jesus Christ is Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and for ever. Rich in His Power, Almighty God is our Lord Jesus Christ. Rich in His Omniscience. "The Eye of the Lord is upon them that fear Him, and upon them that hope in His Mercy" (Psalm 33, 18). Rich beyond all conception of mortal minds though they may be wrought upon by the Spirit of God. Rich, inasmuch as He is verily God. And then the Word of the Lord is: "In Him there dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell." And what a fulness it is: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich." If I can help you by my poor words to understand it, think of it like this—our Lord Jesus Christ as verily God was rich *independently*. *Rich in Himself*. A man may have riches, earthly riches, but they may be inherited, or they may be acquired, and, as he uses up those riches, so they diminish, and he may use them up altogether. Our Lord Jesus Christ as verily God is rich, and it matters not how many thousands, yea, millions of poor sinners He enriches, He is just the same, and He is as rich as ever He was, and will be, and there can be no diminution as He gives out, because, I have told you: "Jesus Christ the same, yesterday, today and for ever." Yes, His grace is the river of God which is full of water. Remember that. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ that, though He was rich,"—rich as verily God; and now we come to another viewpoint of the subject. "Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might be rich." Mark the wording; He *became* poor. The emphasis is on the word "became". He did it in accordance with what was ordained in the Covenant, when He was set up as the Mediator from Everlasting. Remember that. It was then ordained that, in the fulness of time, Jesus Christ, verily God, would be seen among men as verily Man, and veiled in our humanity, although the God ever shone gracious through the Man. "He became poor", and when He was "born a Babe, by Birth mysterious", what was the picture to be looked upon by those who had faith to do it?

"Away in a manger, no crib for a bed,
The little Lord Jesus lay down His sweet head."

"He became poor."

"Veiled in flesh the Godhead see,
Pleased a Man with men to be."

"He became poor" when He came into the world. Let us now go unto Bethlehem and see the thing that came to pass there, it will do you good, as grace is given to you to go. It will help you to "be content with such things as ye have"; it will enable you to cease from grumbling and grizzling about this and that in your life which you would like to be rearranged, otherwise than it is, and to please the flesh too. I'm not fitting caps on. It is good when poor sinners born again can go to Bethlehem, and see our Lord Jesus Christ, that He became poor.

"The Word in the bliss of the Godhead remains,
But in flesh comes to suffer the keenest of pains;
He is what He was, and He ever will be;
He became what He was not, for you and for me."

"He became poor." God purposed to be made manifest as "a just God, and a Saviour"; therefore, that wonderful word was brought to pass: "God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life." (John 3, 16). "And when the fulness of time was come, God sent forth His Own Son," verily God, "made of a woman", verily Man. "And that Holy Thing that shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God." "Made of a woman, made under the Law," that He might keep it in every jot and tittle of its demands, that poor sinners like you and me might have a righteousness wherein to appear before God, seeing we have none of our own in which to stand before His Holy Majesty. "He became poor", and, if you follow along the Life that Jesus Christ lived as verily Man, in all the details of it, it is emphasised that "He became poor". "Who remembered us in our low estate, for His mercy endureth for ever." (Psalm 136, 23). It might be helpful to look at it in some characteristics of the Life that Jesus lived. "He became poor." He was tempted of the devil, forty days and forty nights, and the Word of God tells us He was anhungered, and He was among the wild beasts, and at length angels came and ministered unto Him. "He became poor," and yet when He was seen on earth as verily Man, He was in the world which He made. "All things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made" (John 1, 3); and He, who became poor that you and I might be made rich by His grace, what does He declare? "The gold and silver is Mine, the cattle upon all the hills I own." "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." Yet He became poor, and it is declared: "Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay His head." Our Lord Jesus Christ was a poor Man as He lived on earth a while as "Emmanuel, God with us", poor at His birth, and poor throughout His Life. Poor when He was tempted, and "what He endured no tongue can tell, which must have sunk our souls to hell" otherwise. "In all our afflictions, He was afflicted;" the world hated Him, set Him at nought, treated Him with all contumely and ignominy, He was mocked, spit upon, scourged, "He became poor", and He endured it. "Who, when He was reviled, reviled not again." Our Lord Jesus Christ, He became poor in the Life He lived; and His Word says: (and that is helpful to contemplate) "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 Himself the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross" (Phil. 2, 6-8). "And took upon Himself the form of a servant"; oh, it is a wonderful contemplation that our Lord Jesus Christ, though He was rich, as verily God, took upon Himself our nature. Remember, it was our nature, but spotless, innocent and pure. Not *our* nature as fallen, mortal sinful; no, no; His human nature was sinless, holy, but passible. Keep that thought uppermost in your minds. He took upon Himself our nature that He might suffer in our stead. Adam, before the Adam

Fall, could not suffer, and knew not the meaning of the word as an experience. The Word of God declares he was made in the image of God, and had a perfect humanity, and a moral righteousness, and a free will. When the Adam Fall took place, sin entered into the world, and in came suffering, and sorrow, and sighing. Our Lord Jesus Christ took upon Himself our nature that He might suffer in our stead. Ask God to help you understand it — “A body hast Thou prepared Me,” capable of suffering. “For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending His Own Son in *the likeness* of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: that the righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit.” (Romans 8, 3-4). Our Lord Jesus Christ, the holy, harmless, undefiled Son of God, took upon Himself our nature, that in it He might suffer in our stead, live under the Law for us, and, at the last, die for us, and then rise again from the dead for us on that Easter morn long ago. “He took upon Himself the form of a servant,” says the dear Apostle Paul. He took upon Himself our infirmities; “Himself took our infirmities,” the Word of God declares. He took up Himself our miseries; yes, He took upon Himself our condition; He took upon Himself our sins. One thing He did not take upon Himself, our diseases. It was an impossibility for our Lord Jesus Christ as verily Man to be sick, or to fall a prey like you and I may do to a disease, and be ill, because that is to do with our mortality, and the outcome of sin. He had a perfect humanity in which the Godhead resided, and does still reside; and as verily Man He became poor, and did all that had to be done, that matters might be made right between God and that amazing host of sinners saved by grace, a number that no man can number. You can never arrive at the number by any human arithmetic, but, it is a sweet thought that:—

“People of every realm and tongue,
Dwell on His Name with sweetest song.”

So Jesus Christ became poor, and as verily Man, verily God, lived under the Law, and kept it, and said at the end of His lovely Life: “I have finished the work which Thou gavest Me to do”; and God the Father declared: “This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased.” “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 made rich.”

I will look now, as grace is given, at the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ; I sometimes think of those words of the Apostle Paul's: “And He called me by His grace.” What can *you* say about it? Has He called you? Has the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ arrested you, brought you to a pause in life's journey to contemplate things eternal, and made you aware; “I am a sinner with a never-dying soul, I am journeying through this life to an eternal destiny, either to heaven or to hell?” A wonderful mercy to know just a little of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. I will look at some characteristics of it. This grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is *illuminating* in its nature. The Saviour said: “I am the Light of the world, he that followeth after me shall not

walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life”; and, going back to the Apostle Paul, as he writes in the Hebrews' epistle, I do like that description when he speaks of the Godly Hebrews: “After ye were illuminated”—you can think, if you can, of what you were before—“Ye were one time darkness, but now are ye light in the Lord.” Yes: “One thing I know, that, whereas I was blind, now I can see.” Can you? The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ alone can open poor sinners' eyes, and create within this heavenly illumination. “The entrance of Thy Word giveth light”—it illuminates the sinner, makes him to know what a sinner he is, makes him accept the truth of it as revealed in the Word of God:—“From the sole of the foot even to the head, there is no soundness in it, but wounds and bruises and putrifying sores” (Isa. 1, 6)—“Behold I am vile.” Good it is to know illuminating grace.

“Sinner, if thou art taught to see
How great thy guilt, thy misery;
In every thought and act impure,
The blood of Christ thy soul can cure.”

You will know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ as pardoning grace in His time. The Lord bless you. Not only so, the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is *separating* in its nature. When it is communicated, the life of a sinner is revolutionised, and he can never live as he has been living, “after the flesh, the things of the flesh,” and be living just for *Time*; no, he finds in his heart a movement “after the Spirit, the things of the Spirit”, and he wants to live, not for *Time alone*, but *Eternity*; and he realises that he cannot be in the world and of it, for he finds within an aching void, which this world cannot fill. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ makes him feel: “I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, than to dwell in the tents of wickedness” (Psa. 84, 10). “Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season” (Heb. 11, 25). And the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is not only separating in its nature, but it is *constraining* grace. “The love of Christ constraineth us.” You may have said sometimes, when things have come into your life, hard to be understood, “I will not brook it.” It may be you have been persecuted, or you may have suffered an injustice, and have felt, according to what you are by nature, an indignation, and then you have found the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ has come to quieten you, humble you, meeken you, bring you down at Jesus' feet “clothed, and in a right mind,” and then you have said, “The cup which my Heavenly Father has given me, shall I not drink it.” You have been reconciled to the Will of God, and have learned that: “The wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.” It is wonderful when you see a lion constrained to be a lamb, and the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ does that with the people who are the subjects of it. What they are by nature is subdued; what they are by grace triumphs. It must be so. “Sovereign grace o'er sin abounding.” Constraining grace. I might add *conquering* grace. It will help you to get that biggest of all victories. “He that ruleth his spirit, is better than he that taketh a city” (Prov. 16, 32), and enable you to con-

quer the great "I" in you. You will ask our Lord Jesus Christ by His grace to crucify it.

"Oh, crucify this self, that I
No more in me, but Thee may live;
Bid all my vile affections die,
Nor let one hateful lust survive."

Conquering grace. It will help you to conquer the world, not like Alexander the Great did, long ago, and wept because there were no more worlds to conquer, no, but the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is conquering grace, inasmuch as those who have that grace can sometimes look round on all this world has got to offer and then declare:—

"Let others after earth aspire,
Christ is the Treasure I desire."

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is *uniting* grace. There is what the Word of God terms "the unity of the Spirit." Mark the word "unity". It does not say "uniformity". No, as yet in the church of Christ on earth there is not uniformity in church order, and there are varied denominational labels, but they are valueless unless you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. *You can be as orthodox as you please, and be graceless.*

"Good creeds may stock our heads about
And in our hearts no grace be found."

The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is uniting in its nature, and wherever you discern it, in young or old, with faces black or white, you are like Barnabas, "who, when he came to Antioch, and saw the grace of God, he was glad." "Endeavouring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." It causes those who have this grace to flow together. "He that is joined to the Lord is one spirit." "Grace be with all them that love our Lord Jesus Christ in sincerity." "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." I might say a word about this grace in what is the climax of it. *Pardoning* grace, when it overflows a poor sinner's heart, and his conscience too, and he realises an interest in that delightful Scripture: "I will be merciful to your unrighteousness, and your sins and your iniquities I will remember no more" (Jer. 31, 34). Oh, wonderful is the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ when it comes: "Thy sins be forgiven thee," and you know in your own soul:—

"Jesus' Blood through earth and skies,
'Mercy, Eternal Mercy,' cries."

Pardoning grace. I add a word that it is also what I like to think of as *cross-bearing* grace. If you do indeed know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, it will lead you to contemplate His Cross, and as you contemplate how heavy His Cross was, *your* cross will get lighter and lighter in bearing it, and you will have the feeling wrought within:—

"Did Christ my Lord suffer, and shall I repine?
His way was much rougher and darker than mine,"

and you will understand that word in Philippians: "Not only is it given unto you to believe on His Name, but also to suffer for His Sake" (Phil. 1, 29). Cross-bearing grace will help you to take up your cross willingly, and carry it for Jesus' Sake, as well as your own; and this line of things is sometimes known:—

"Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross;
But the Saviour's Power to know,
Sanctifying every loss."

"For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ."

Let us look at the third viewpoint of the subject, as grace is given to do it. "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." Godly James speaks of people taught of God as being "rich in faith", maybe if our eyes could be opened to look abroad in the world as to where these people taught of God, are to be found, you would find some of them in most unlikely places. You would find each one, every one, entering into the meaning of that word: "For we must through much tribulation enter into the Kingdom of God." Every one would answer to that Scripture: "I will leave, in the midst of thee, an afflicted and poor people." (Zeph. 3, 12). Many of these people, who do know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ (and maybe they know much more about it than either preacher or people do) have not got half of the mercies in every day life that you and I enjoy by night and by day. Remember that, and ask for grace to stand alongside David, and say: "Who am I, O Lord God, and what is my house, that Thou hast brought me hitherto?" "That ye through His poverty might be rich." I can only give you hints, because, as I have said, the subject is so great. Those who do know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ are rich, but if you and I *do* know it, one thing is very evident, *you and I do not know how rich we are.* First of all, all who know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ are *rich in their privileges.* Think of the privilege that *God is approachable.* Think of Him as an Heavenly Father, of Whom the Word of God declares: "Your Heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of." Think of the privilege of a mercy-seat, and, He Who reigns therson declares: "I will commune with you from above the mercy-seat." Oh, precious privilege is this, wherein all who know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ are rich beyond any preachers' words to describe; but, though you are rich with such a privilege, preacher and people must all plead guilty before God as to how little use is oft-times made of such a privilege.

"When prayer is a burden and task,
No wonder I little receive;
O Lord, make me willing to ask,
Since Thou art so ready to give."

Rich in privileges. A God to go to, a Heavenly Father, Who stretches out the Sceptre of His "exceeding great and precious promises" to embolden, and to encourage them that know His grace to ask for more. And think of the privilege to be clothed with that righteousness, which our Lord Jesus Christ, in becoming poor, and living under the Law, wrought out for us. Do dwell on it:—

"Naked I come to Thee for dress,
And helpless look to Thee for grace."

Dwell on the privilege that there is the *righteousness of God* for poor sinners like you and me. Our Lord Jesus Christ is "Jehovah Tsidkenu", the Lord our Righteousness. "That ye, through His poverty, might be rich." I might say *rich in promises.* I have

already hinted at them, "exceeding great and precious promises"; and I will just say this, which is all that can be said; God is "able to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we can ask or think", and:—

"Oh, what amazing words of grace
Are in the Gospel found;
Suited to every sinner's case,
Who knows his soul's deep wound."

And then, all who know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ are *rich in the protection* afforded them, as they journey on through life, as the Hymnwriter tells us:—

"A Sovereign Protector I have
Unseen, yet for ever at hand."

The Word of God tells us there is the ministry of angels, holy angels; "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister unto them who shall be heirs of salvation?" (Heb. 1, 14). These people in the text, who do know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, are rich in their protection, and, I might say, *their Protector*. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, and there is that lovely Scripture, in which I desire that you, and the preacher too, might have a living interest: "Who are kept by the Power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." (1 Peter 1, 5). Rich in protection. God is their God. "That ye, through His poverty might be rich." And I add this, *if* you do know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, as you journey on through life you will become rich, and richer still, in *your retrospect*, as you look back, and you are helped to remember the way that God has led you, year in and year out, wherein every day, all day, goodness and mercy have attended you; and the longer back you look, the more waymarks you see, here and there, to confirm you that you are a pilgrim to Canaan bound. Sweet it is to look back, and reflect, and to see the way you have come along is the *way wherein God has led you forth by the right way*; and there is only one thing to say about His dealings: "He hath done all things well." Rich in *the retrospect*; but that means this: *rich in the prospect* that is before us in journeying on into life's evening time, and this may be the last Christmas morning some heaven-bound pilgrim will be found in the attitude of worship. If you do know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, how rich you are in the prospect before you:—

"We are travelling home to God
In the way our fathers trod;
They are happy now, and we
Hope their happiness to see."

If you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you get down to the end of life's journey, you will be found, on the other side of the grave, at the Fountain-head from whence it flows—the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, in its ocean fulness—and then you will enter into that word of the Psalmist: "In Thy Presence is fulness of joy, and at Thy right Hand there are laid up pleasures for evermore." Dear friends, the Lord bless you, young and old, and give you to know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, then, living and dying, it shall be well. *Amen.*