

STRENGTH THROUGH WEAKNESS

2 CORINTHIANS 8:8-9

RICHES TO RAGS



FIRST BYRON CHRISTIAN REFORMED CHURCH

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INTRODUCTION

This evening we have the privilege of witnessing professions of faith in our congregation. It's always a wonderful time in congregational life to see the fruition of many years of teaching and preaching by parents, grandparents, school-teachers, Sunday school teachers, catechism teachers, Youth Group leaders, and pastors. Professing faith is a massive step in the life of faith. But what comes next? Professing faith must be followed by proving faith. **How do we prove our faith?** There are many ways to prove our faith to God, to ourselves, and to others, but the one Paul highlights in 2 Corinthians 8:8-9 is by giving to God and his cause from a particular motive.

BACKGROUND

The Corinthians excelled in many areas, but lacked in the area of giving. They got an 'A+' for faith, speech, knowledge and earnestness, but a 'C' for giving. Having used the example of the Macedonians' giving to motivate greater Corinthian giving (1-7), he then turns to the ultimate example of Jesus's Christ's giving (8-9).



What's the motive behind Christian giving?



1. JESUS WENT FROM RICHES TO RAGS (9)

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sake he became poor (9)

Jesus was rich

When we think of riches, what do we think of?

- **Financial wealth:** A big beautiful house and many expensive possessions.
- **Relational wealth:** A big united family and many loyal friends.
- **Emotional wealth:** inner happiness and peace
- **Social wealth:** Status, admiration, respect, power, influence.
- **Travel wealth:** Go anywhere anytime
- **Educational wealth:** Access to the best education, teachers, knowledge
- **Health wealth:** Healthy life and lifestyle with access to best healthcare if needed
- **Spiritual wealth:** Enjoying God's favor, blessing, presence

The eternal Son of God lived a rich life before becoming a baby at Bethlehem. He didn't ever become rich; he was eternally rich. There was never a time he wasn't rich.

- **Financial wealth:** Lived in the richest home in heaven and owned the whole earth (Ps. 50:10-12).
- **Relational wealth:** Had rich relationships with the Father, the Spirit, angels, and glorified saints.
- **Emotional wealth:** None could be happier, none could have more peace.
- **Social wealth:** He had unprecedented status, admiration, respect, power, and influence.
- **Travel wealth:** As the omnipresent God, he was in all places at all times.
- **Educational wealth:** As omniscient, he knew everything and never had to learn or ask a question.
- **Health wealth:** Never knew a moment of pain or weakness.
- **Spiritual wealth:** As the beloved Son of God, he had God's full favor, presence, and blessing.

Jesus became poor

None was richer; none become poorer. Jesus exchanged his riches for rags.

- **Financial wealth:** Born into poor family in poor place, lived in poverty (Lk. 9:58), died in poverty.
- **Relational wealth:** Lost his sense of God's presence (Matt. 27:46), angelic helpers, friends support
- **Emotional wealth:** All happiness and peace replaced with all sadness and fear.
- **Social wealth:** Reduced to zero status, admiration, respect, power, influence.
- **Travel wealth:** Limited to one body in one place at one time.
- **Educational wealth:** Had to learn from imperfect teachers, by admitting ignorance and asking questions
- **Health wealth:** No one was weaker, no one experienced more pain in more places
- **Spiritual wealth:** Lost every sense of God's favor, presence, and blessing



Why would anyone do this? Why would anyone give up so much? Why would Jesus give up all that, give up everything until he had nothing, go from such riches to such rags? Paul answers "**For your sake.**" He did this for us, for our good, for our benefit.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Worship this astounding Savior. In 2010, Warren Buffett and Bill Gates announced the Giving Pledge. Those who sign up promise publicly to give away at least half their wealth, either during their lifetimes or in their wills. The aim, said Gates, was for those who had great wealth "to use their wealth to create good circumstances for other people." A decade later, 11 of the 62 living signers who were billionaires in 2010 have seen their wealth decline because of 'aggressive' charitable giving or market changes. But the other 51 are earning money so fast they're having a hard time giving it away. Jesus gave it all, Jesus gave his all, Jesus gave for all, Jesus changes all.

Read the Gospel through this lens. "For your sake." There's no other book that can be read with this lens. Every decision Jesus took to move from riches to rags was "for your sake."

THE RICHEST GOD BECAME
THE POOREST MAN



What benefit do we get from Jesus going from riches to rags?



2. WE GO FROM RAGS TO RICHES

...so that you by his poverty might become rich (4).

We were poor

As this verse predicts that we can become rich in Christ, it implies that without Christ we are not rich.

- **Financial poverty:** We were spiritually homeless
- **Relational poverty:** We were spiritual orphans, fatherless and friendless
- **Emotional poverty:** We were sad and fearful
- **Social poverty:** We had zero status, respect, power, influence with God
- **Travel poverty:** We were separated from God and stuck on a one-track road to hell
- **Educational wealth:** Ever learning, never coming to a knowledge of the truth.
- **Health wealth:** However healthy our bodies, they were doomed to death with our souls
- **Spiritual wealth:** We did not have God's favor, blessing, or presence.

We are rich

Christ's poverty was necessary to reach into our poverty and raise us up to his riches.

- **Financial wealth:** We have a mansion in heaven and are joint heirs with Jesus (John 14:2-3; Rom. 8:17)
- **Relational wealth:** We are loved by God and part of his loving family.
- **Emotional wealth:** We have deep reserves of God's centered happiness and peace.
- **Social wealth:** God has given us status, power, and influence in and through Christ.
- **Travel wealth:** We can access God anywhere anytime and we are going to heaven.
- **Educational wealth:** We know God and Jesus Christ whom he has sent (John 17:3)
- **Health wealth:** We have the prospect of perfect health and strength forever (Phil. 3:21)
- **Spiritual wealth:** We enjoy God's favor, blessing, and presence.

CHANGING OUR STORIES WITH GOD'S STORY

Motivate your giving by faith. The grace of Christ is the greatest motive to giving. If we know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ we will give like the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. The more we understand his riches to rags and our rags to riches the more we will give our riches for those who are still in rags.

Prove your confession of faith. "I say this not as a command, but to prove by the earnestness of others that your love also is genuine" (8). Giving by faith increases assurance of faith. Giving by faith proves your confession of faith.

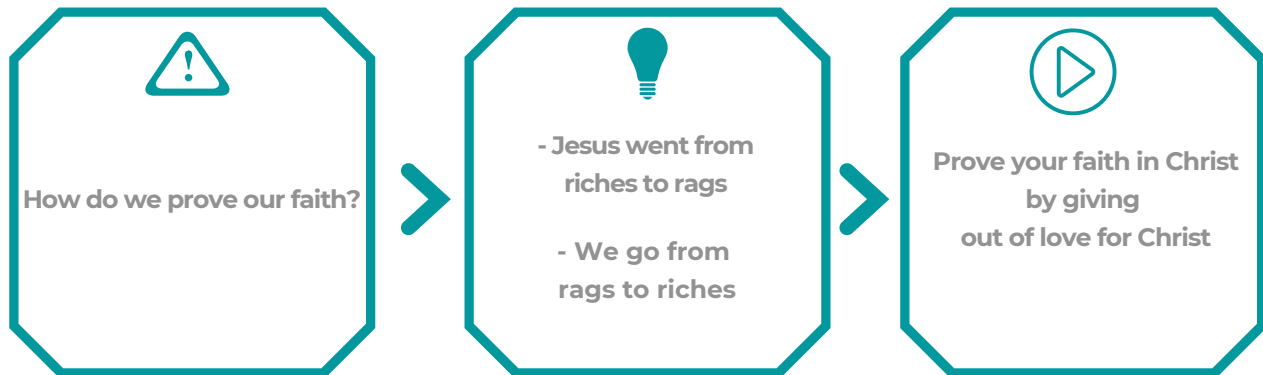
GIVE YOUR FINANCE
TO PROVE YOUR FAITH



Hear God's Story > Change your story > Tell the story > Change others stories



SUMMARY



A NEW CHAPTER

- **Gospel:** Gospel riches are for spiritual paupers. Plead your poverty, your need, your lack.
- **Jesus:** At no point, did he say, "I've given enough. I don't want to give any more."
- **Prayer:** Let's pray for the Holy Spirit to push these truths deep into our hearts and our bank accounts.
- **Church:** Gospel fundraising does not resort to bribery, threats, legalistic commands, or emotional manipulation. It simply sets Christ forth. Christ-centered preaching and teaching is the greatest fundraiser in the world.
- **Monday:** Let's enter the week with the question "What can I give?" rather than "What can I get?"
- **Hell:** We brought nothing into this world and it is for sure we shall carry nothing out. What shall it profit you gain the whole world and lose your own soul?
- **Heaven:** When we reach heaven we are going to see all the riches Christ has and we are going to share in all of them.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. In what ways can we prove our faith to ourselves, others, and to God.
2. What are wrong motives or reasons for Christian giving?
3. Read a chapter of the Gospels through the lens of "for your sake." What changed?
4. Which part of Christ's riches were the hardest for him to give up?
5. Which part of your riches in Christ are the most valuable to you?
6. How should this passage affect Christian fundraising?

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