

The Impact of Christmas 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Has this year's celebration of Christmas brought any lasting impact to my life? What will I take away from the messages, music, plays, and programs that have centered upon the true meaning of Christmas?

❖ The **context** of Paul's message to the Corinthians.

The background concerns Paul's collection for the poor primarily Jewish Christians living in Jerusalem. 2 Corinthians 8-9 is one of the key New Testament passages on Christian grace giving. However that is not the focus of today's message. The church of Corinth had made a commitment "a year ago" (10) but they had not followed through. Paul first used a human example of sacrificial giving "the churches of Macedonia" (1).

➤ As Paul thought about sacrificial giving **motivated by love** he thought of Jesus Christ (9).

The greatest love caused the greatest gift to be given, John 3:16 & Romans 6:23. Every Christian knows that Jesus Christ became a man to give His life on the cross to pay our sin debt, Romans 5:8 & Titus 3:4-5. This they would not nor could not be ignorant of. This is the heart of the Gospel of grace. Paul uses the full name "our Lord Jesus Christ." This encompasses Jesus' complete person and work.

▪ **God's grace comes to us not through a religion but by a Person**, Titus 2:11.

So at the beginning of this spiritual and pragmatic section on grace giving we find this amazing doctrinal gem. John MacArthur, "And though its message may be grasped in one reading, the truth it contains may not be fully comprehended throughout eternity." This is one of those succinct verses of scripture about the coming of Jesus like 1 Timothy 1:15 & 1 John 3:5. 2 Corinthians 8:9 contains 21 Greek words yet it encompasses both time and eternity.

❖ This verse goes from **riches to rags to riches**.

We will consider in what way Jesus was rich, in what way He became poor and how His poverty makes us rich.

➤ The riches of Jesus refer to His **eternal glory** as the Second Person of the Godhead.

It is true that Jesus as God owns everything, Psalm 24:1. Even though the context of Paul's instruction involves material goods Jesus' riches are not primarily material. Paul is speaking of Jesus' pre-existence and His eternity. Jesus is eternally self-existing God. Jesus was rich in love in His unbroken relationship within the trinity for all eternity, John 10:3. The angels of heaven continually bowed before Him crying "Holy, Holy, Holy is the LORD of hosts", Isaiah 6:3.

The poverty of Jesus refers to His **incarnation**. People have gone to extremes with these verses. They believe that Paul is focusing upon Jesus material poverty. Therefore we should make ourselves poor to be His disciple. Others think the riches are material so Jesus provided for material wealth in His work of redemption. Both such views are wrong. Paul is not talking about Jesus being economically poor.

Jesus as God became poor when He became man.

Jesus left the glories of heaven, veiled His own glory and laid aside the independent use of His divine attributes. The best description of the Incarnation is Philippians 2:6-11. The word "form" (6) is a Greek philosophical word which has no reference to shape. The word refers to the outward manifestation of an inner reality. The word "robbery" (6) here refers to a treasure to be grasped and held on to at all hazards.

The phrase (7) "...made Himself of no reputation..." comes from the Greek term *kenosis*. This is referred to as the self-emptying of Jesus Christ. This involved the expression not the possession of His deity.

▪ **It is not only what Jesus emptied Himself of but also what Jesus emptied Himself into.**

Jesus did this not by subtraction but by addition. The word "likeness" means that which is made like something else. The word "appearance" is an outward expression assumed from the OUTSIDE as compared to "form" which comes from the INSIDE. To see Jesus was to see a man. However He is more than just a man, Colossians 2:9. Jesus subjected Himself to all of the limitations of humanity yet without sin. Jesus entered into a permanent union with humanity. Jesus did this not for Himself.

➤ We can become sons and daughters of God through His **humiliation**.

Paul is not talking economically but spiritually. In Romans 11 Paul is discussing God's blinding of the Jews because of their unbelief.

Romans 11:12, "Now if their fall is **riches** for the world, and their failure **riches** for the Gentiles..." Paul clarifies what he means by riches in Romans 11:15.

▪ **Reconciliation means that because of the cross God is now able to show mercy where only judgement was deserved**, 2 Corinthians 5:18.

Reconciliation is the man ward effect of the value of the cross, 2 Corinthians 5:19. This is what Paul means by “through His poverty we became rich.” The condescension of Jesus not only included His incarnation but His humiliation and death upon the cross. Philippians 2:8. This literally reads “even a cross death.” Jesus descended from heaven to become a man, a servant and to die. He was destined not just to die but to die on a cross.

Crucifixion was one of the most humiliating, shame ful and painful forms of execution devised by man.

Paul in 2 Corinthians 8:9 is giving another example of Jesus’ self-less, sacrificial love. Jesus gave up and gave everything for us.

Paul’s primary focus here is not on the material but our inheritance involves both spiritual and material blessings, Romans 8:16-17. Peter asked Jesus a question and received an answer from Him. Matthew 19:27-29. The “regeneration” refers to the remaking of the earth in Christ’s Millennial Kingdom which will be incorporated into the eternal kingdom, Revelation 21:7.

An Understanding of the Real Meaning of Christmas Should Impact My Present Attitude and Actions and Ensure My Future Hope