

# The Gospel of Self-Imposed Poverty

2 Corinthians 8:9

© Mike Riccardi

## Introduction

I want to begin this evening by asking you to think back with me to just about a month ago—to the middle of the month of December—in the thick of preparation and anticipation of Christmas. The retail stores had their Christmas displays up, full of Christmas lights, and wreathes, and ornaments. The department stores were advertising their Christmas sales in full fury. The radio stations had put the Christmas music on loop. And we were all finishing up our Christmas shopping, remembering that Christmas is the season of giving. And though the world does its best to make that giving about consumerism and selfishness, as Christians, we celebrate Christmas as the season of giving because Christmas is when we celebrate God giving man the greatest gift ever given: the incarnation of God the Son.

In the God-man, the person of the Lord Jesus Christ, fallen humanity is given a perfectly sufficient, perfectly suitable Savior from sin and judgment. Fully man, and therefore able to stand in man's place, both to bear man's punishment and accomplish man's righteousness. And yet at the same time fully God, and therefore able to bear the wrath of God without perishing eternally, and able to bestow His infinite merit upon the innumerable sinners who come to Him in repentance and faith. Christmas is the time of year when we celebrate the *incarnation* of the God the Son—the eternal Word become flesh and dwelling among us (John 1:14).

But the sad thing about that is we can tend to restrict our reflection and meditation upon the incarnation of Christ to the month of December. After Christmas Day, our minds quickly turn to an anticipation of the New Year, and then to all the things that we need to get done at work or at home once the holidays are over, and before you know it, it's January 14<sup>th</sup>, and the incarnation of Christ is out of sight and out of mind.

And that is a shame, because the incarnation is worth more than merely *seasonal* contemplation. It is worthy of our *constant* attention, study, and adoration. Think of it! The infinite, eternal, self-existent, self-sufficient, almighty *God* takes on the nature of finite, temporal, dependent, mortal humanity—*without* shedding His divine nature! The unchangeable God becomes what He wasn't, while never ceasing to be what He was! The Irish Reformer, James Ussher, said of the incarnation that it is “the highest pitch of God's wisdom, goodness, power, and glory.” Pastor and author, Mark Jones, said, “The incarnation is God's greatest wonder, one that no creature could ever have imagined. God himself could not perform a more difficult and glorious work. It has justly been called the miracle of all miracles” (*Knowing Christ*, 25).

And if we slow our minds down enough to reflect on these truths, we are constrained to confess that there *is* a peculiar glory to this greatest of God's miracles—that, among all the amazing works that Almighty God has accomplished in this world, the incarnation has a special luster of magnificence. And I think the reason for that peculiar glory is that the incarnation takes two things of an infinite difference and distance and puts them side by side. The incarnation takes the infinite God, and the finite man, and unites them together in One magnificent Person. And it's the juxtaposition of the majesty of God with the humility of man that renders the glory of the Lord Jesus—the glory of the incarnation—more especially brilliant than all other of God's glorious works.

And if that's true—if the incarnation is the miracle of miracles, the most glorious of God's works—then it is a unique fount for our worship, and we as His people must devote our minds to the study of this truth, in the service of enflaming our hearts with the worship that God rightly deserves. John Murray wrote of our subject, "It is high and heavenly doctrine and for that reason of little appeal to dull minds and darkened hearts. It is the mystery that angels desire to look into. But it is also the delight of enlightened and humble souls; they love to explore the mysteries which bespeak the glories of their Redeemer" (3:240). And they love to explore those mysteries not only in the month of December, but all year round. So I thought it would be beneficial for us to devote a Sunday evening in the middle of January to magnifying the glory of God and the grace of Christ put on display in the incarnation.

And to do that, we will give our minds to the study of a single verse: Second Corinthians chapter 8, and verse 9, wherein the Apostle Paul writes, "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." And the title of our message tonight will be: The Gospel of Self-Imposed Poverty.

Now, this Mount Everest of a verse comes in the larger context of 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9, where Paul is writing to the Corinthian church in order to stir them up to give generously to a collection for the poor saints in Jerusalem. This was an offering that the Corinthians had known about. They had begun making preparations a year ago to participate in support of the Jerusalem church, but progress had been stalled by a conflict instigated by false teachers who had incited a mutiny in the church against the Apostle Paul. But now that that conflict had been resolved, Paul writes to urge the Corinthians to pick up where they left off, and bring to completion the offering that they had begun a year prior.

And he begins this appeal, first, in the first five verses of chapter 8, by holding up the churches of Macedonia as an example of generosity to be imitated. He says, "Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in

a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, and this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.” The grace of God was so operative in the hearts of the Macedonians that their difficult circumstances—which Paul describes as severe affliction and deep poverty—could not stop them from overflowing with joy in Christ, and *begging* Paul to allow them to meet the needs of the saints!

And then, in verse 7, he aims to stir them up by commending them for how the grace of God has worked in *them*. Verse 7: “But just as you abound in everything, in faith and utterance and knowledge and in all earnestness and in the love we inspired in you, see that you abound in this gracious work also.” He commends them for their spiritual giftedness and maturity, and he sees that as a foundation from which to exhort them to excel still more in the grace of generosity. And then in verse 8 he exhorts them to prove the genuineness of their love by overflowing in practical actions of generosity. He says, “I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also.” “I know you love the brethren in Jerusalem! Well, here is an opportunity to prove and express that love!”

And then Paul comes to the climax of his argument. Having appealed to the example of the Macedonians, having commended the Corinthians concerning the grace of God *already* at work in them and calling them to a generosity consistent with those gifts and graces, and having stirred them up by the Macedonians’ earnestness to prove their own love also, Paul now appeals to the supreme and purest motivation for Christian generosity, and for *all* moral and ethical instruction in the Christian life. Namely, the abounding *grace* of our Lord Jesus Christ. One commentator defines this grace as “the utterly undeserved, royally free, effective, unwearying, inexhaustible goodwill of God, active in and through Jesus Christ; God’s effective, overflowing mercy” (Cranfield, 106, as in Garland, 376).

And Paul defines that grace as that which is preeminently displayed in the Gospel of Christ’s incarnation, life, and substitutionary death for sin. He speaks of “the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that*”—that is, *namely*: “that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.” Although in His pre-existent, eternal glory and deity He was in possession of spiritual riches whose wealth words are unable to describe, He nevertheless voluntarily and sacrificially renounced those riches, and embraced the poverty of life and death as a human being, precisely so that we who were destitute of God’s favor and blessing could be enriched with the very righteousness of God Himself.

And so the context of this verse is chiefly concerned with the display of Christ’s grace as a motivation for Christian generosity. But it is nevertheless a fitting text to bring our minds to

reflection on and contemplation of the incarnation. And it breaks down nicely into three units of thought. First, we'll give our attention to **Christ's riches**. Second, we'll meditate on **Christ's poverty**. And third, we'll consider **Christ's purpose**. Christ's riches, Christ's poverty, and Christ's purpose.

## I. Christ's Riches

Well, in the first place, then, let us contemplate **Christ's riches**. Paul says, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, *that though He was rich.*"

And literally, this phrase is translated "though *being* rich." Paul uses a present participle, which expresses ongoing, continuous action. And that's significant, because when he speaks of Christ's poverty, he'll use an ingressive aorist and say, "He *became* poor." Theology is often wrapped up in verb tenses. His poverty had a beginning, as we'll see, in His incarnation. But Christ had never *become* rich. From all eternity, He was *being* rich, or *existing* as rich.

Paul says something similar in Philippians 2:6, where he calls on the grace of the incarnation of Christ to stir the churches to humility. And he speaks of Christ, Philippians 2:6, "who, although *existing* in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped." He was *existing* in the nature of God. And then also in John chapter 1. In John 1:14 we learn that the Word *became* flesh. But in John 1:1 we read, "In the beginning *was* the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word *was* God." The Word *became* flesh, but the Word never *became* God. From all eternity, before there was a beginning, the Word *was existing* as God, in the richness of full equality with God the Father and God the Holy Spirit.

This Christ is the eternal Son, the One who from all eternity was fully subsisting in the divine nature. He is the image of the invisible God, Colossians 1:15—the very radiance of His glory and the exact representation of His nature, Hebrews 1:3. And so He is rich as the possessor of all the divine attributes, and the possessor of all the divine prerogatives. All of the fullness of Godhood dwells in Him no less than in the Father or the Holy Spirit. He is the Creator of all things. Colossians 1:16: "For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him." He is the Sustainer of all creation, Colossians 1:17: "He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together." Hebrews 1:3: "He upholds all things by the word of His power." As its Creator, He is therefore the *owner* of all creation. Deuteronomy 10:14 says, "Behold, to Yahweh your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it." In Job 41:11, the Triune God says, "Who has given to Me that I should repay him? Whatever is under the whole heaven is Mine."

He is the eternally glorious One. Christ speaks in John 17:5 of “the glory which [He] had with [the Father] before the world was.” 1 Corinthians 2:8 calls Him “the *Lord* of glory.” And Isaiah 6 gives us a glimpse of what it meant for the Son to exist in heavenly glory, as John 12:41 tells us that it is He, the Son, who is the exalted Lord that Isaiah saw seated on the throne of heaven. It is the train of the *Son’s* robe that fills the heavenly temple! And it is to the glory of *His* name—no less than the Father’s name, no less than the Spirit’s name, for it is one name—it is to *that* name that the bright, burning seraphim along with the rest of the angels of heaven sing, “Holy, Holy, Holy, is Yahweh of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory!”

And even beyond all of that—beyond the richness of His divine being, the fullness of God dwelling in Him and the glory of God emanating from Him; beyond the richness of His divine possession: that He is the Creator and thus the owner of Heaven and Earth—beyond even those things is the richness of His divine relations. Anyone in possession of all those riches that we just outlined would be infinitely wealthy, even if he possessed such riches in isolation—devoid of relationship, devoid of love! But the Son possesses those riches in the glory of perfect communion with and delight in His Father and the Holy Spirit.

In Luke 10:22, Jesus says that no one knows the Son except the Father, and no one knows the Father except the Son. And though there are oceans of mystery wrapped up in that statement, one certain implication is that there is a unique knowledge and communion that exists between the Persons of the Trinity. Each member of the Trinity “has a unique, exclusive, all-comprehensive, all-penetrating knowledge” of the others. Our knowledge of God increases little bit by little bit, as we strive and strain to wrap our finite minds around the infinite fullness of God as He’s revealed Himself. And even when we are by grace able to grasp just a little more knowledge of God, we are at once confronted with the ineffable delight of knowing One so perfect, and at the same time confronted with the blessed despair that we could ever know Him fully. Oh, but the Son knows the Father in such comprehensive intimacy, that compared to that knowledge no one else knows the Father at all! Listen to what John Murray says, “The knowledge of the Son of God is a knowledge for which there are no obscurities, no inscrutable mysteries. It is a knowledge that penetrates the very being of God, that comprehends the totality of the divine glory and that searches the deepest mysteries of the divine will. What tides of ineffable delight, without beginning or end, without ebb or flow, must eternally ravish the heart and mind of the eternal Son!” (3:228–29). Friends, has there ever been anyone rich like Christ was rich?

## II. Christ’s Poverty

And yet. Though He was rich—though *being* rich—, yet for *your* sake He became. poor. And here we come to our second point: **Christ’s poverty**.

And after meditating as we have for just a moment on the Son's eternal riches, these words land on us with almost utter bewilderment. How could it possibly be that someone so rich as Christ could ever experience anything that might be called poverty? Well herein we behold the peculiar glory of the incarnation, the matchless beauty of Gospel grace. Paul puts it this way in Philippians 2, verses 6 and 7. He says, "Christ Jesus, existing in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave, being made in the likeness of men." Even though Christ existed eternally, even though He was eternally existing in the very nature and essence and glory of God, even though He was existing in equality with God the Father, ruling creation in majesty, and receiving the worship of the saints and angels in Heaven, He did not regard the dignity of His station as something to be grasped. But He emptied Himself. He nullified Himself.

Now, that does not mean that in becoming man, the eternal Son of God ceased to be what He was as God, in the richness of His own divine being. That would be impossible! No, He remained the Creator and Sustainer of the universe. He continued to fully subsist in the divine nature. He remained the possessor of all the divine attributes and prerogatives of God; Colossians 2:9 says of His incarnate state that "in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells *in bodily form*." So Christ did not become poor by *subtracting* some aspects of His Godhood from Himself. Scripture does not teach that the Son *exchanged* His deity for His humanity. No, He didn't become poor by ceasing to be what He was: God; He became poor by becoming what He was *not*: man. He became poor by *addition*, not subtraction—by becoming what He wasn't, even while never ceasing to be what He was—by taking on a *human* nature, even while never shedding His *divine* nature.

So what then *was* His poverty, if not being deprived of His deity in some way? Just this: that though He had every right to continue in unlimited manifest power and authority, to radiate the very essence and glory of deity, to receive nothing but the most exalted worship of the host of heaven—immune from poverty, pain, and humiliation—He did not selfishly count those riches to be slavishly held on to, but sacrificed them to become man and accomplish salvation for sinners. One commentator said, "He surrendered all the insignia of divine majesty and assumed all the frailty and vicissitudes of the human condition" (Harris, 579). And I like that: He surrendered all the *insignia* of divine majesty. John Calvin wrote: "Christ, indeed, could not divest himself of godhead, but he kept it *concealed* for a time, that it might not be seen, under the weakness of the flesh. Hence he laid aside his glory in the view of men, not by lessening it, but by concealing it" (*Philippians*, 56–57). He concealed the riches of the divine majesty of the Lord of glory behind the veil of the poverty of a slave. Though being rich, yet He became poor.

He is rich as the uncreated Creator, but poor insofar as He assumes a created human nature. The One who always was coming to exist as a human embryo in His mother's womb, and being born of a woman. He is, as Augustine said, man's Maker made Man.

He is rich as the divine Son of God, and yet poor as He was born to a poor virgin who had been disgraced by suspicions of immorality.

He is rich as the rightful owner of everything in heaven and earth, and yet poor as He is born in a stable and laid in a manger—a feed trough—for a bed.

He is rich as the One whose glory fills the earth, who is rightfully worshiped by the saints and angels of heaven, and yet He is poor, as the one who was made for a little while lower than the angels (Heb 2:9).

He is rich as the sustainer of all things, upholding the galaxies by the word of His power, and yet poor—at the same time being sustained by the nutrients of his mother's body.

He is rich as the immutable One, so perfect that He could never change for the better and so righteous that He could never change for the worse, and yet poor as the one who, Luke 2:52 tells us, “kept increasing in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and men.”

He is rich as the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills (Ps 50:10), and yet poor as the man who had no place to lay His head (Luke 9:58). The foxes *He* created had holes! The birds whose life *He* sustained by His word had nests! But the Son of Man who had spoken the world into existence had no place on that earth that He created to call His own.

He is the bread of life, who out of His infinite fullness satisfies the hunger of every soul who feasts upon Him (John 6:35), and yet He experiences hunger.

He is the fountain of living waters (Jer 2:13) who invited the thirsty to come to Him and drink (John 7:37–38) and never be thirsty again (John 4:13–14), and yet He experiences the parched mouth of human thirst.

He is rich as the omnipotent One—the source of all strength—who calms the winds and waves with a word (Luke 8:25), and yet poor as one who grew weary from a day's journey (John 4:6) and needed to sleep (Luke 8:23).

He is the Truth, John 14:6. He is the Truth slandered and accused of bearing false witness. The King of the angels, accused of being possessed by demons. The embodiment of faithfulness, betrayed by His friends.

The One who clothes the grass of the field and lilies of the valley (Matt 6:29–30) was stripped bare. The One who healed the sick with a touch has His back torn open by the scourges of sinful men. The brow that should have borne the crown of heaven was pierced by thorns.

The One who upheld the universe is collapsed under the weight of His own crossbar, and needs the help of a man whom He had made, whose life He was sustaining at that moment, to carry His cross to Golgotha.

In the majesty of Heaven, to look upon Him would have been to look upon the epitome of all beauty. But Isaiah, who told us in chapter 6 of the angelic worship He received in heaven, tells us in chapter 53 that on earth He had “no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men.” And the beautiful one—the one fairer than the fairest of ten thousand!—“like one from whom men hide their face He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.”

The worshiped became the despised. The blessed One became the man of sorrows. The Master became the slave. Friends, the rich became poor.

But His poverty did not reach its depths at the shame, and the pain, and the torture. We must raise our eyes to Calvary—up to Golgotha—and behold the one who was rich in that He had life within Himself, John 5:26, rich as the one who gives life to whomever He wishes, John 5:21, and see there the *Author* of Life humbly submitting to death. The sinless one, ever and only the worker of righteousness, as if He served sin paid the wages of *death*. “Amazing love! How can it be, that Thou, My God, shouldst die for me?”

But it was not just death. If one so rich as God the Son had to know the poverty of death, one would think that at least it would be an honorable death! But no, as Philippians 2:8 says, “He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, *even death on a cross*.” One commentator said, “The cross displayed the lowest depths of human depravity and cruelty. It exhibited the most brutal form of sadistic torture and execution ever invented by malicious human minds” (Hansen, 157). In crucifixion, metal spikes were driven through the victim’s wrists and feet, and he was left to hang naked and exposed, sometimes for days. Because the body would be pulled down by gravity, the weight of a victim’s own body would press against his lungs, and the hyperextension of the lungs and chest muscles made it difficult to breathe. Victims would gasp for air by pulling themselves up. But when they would do that, the wounds in their wrists and feet would tear at the stakes that pierced them, and the flesh of their back—usually torn open from flogging—would grate against the jagged wood. Eventually, when he could no longer summon the strength to pull himself up to breathe, the victim of a crucifixion would die from suffocation under the weight of his own body. This was the most sadistically cruel, excruciatingly painful, and loathsomely degrading death that a man could die. And there



on Golgotha, 2,000 years ago, the innocent, holy, righteous Son of God died *this* death. God. On a cross.

But it doesn't stop even there. The shame and pain of the cross was not the lowest depth of poverty to which the Son of God humbly submitted Himself. Deuteronomy 21:23 taught that anyone hanged on a tree is accursed of God. And Paul quotes this verse in Galatians 3:13: "For it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree.'" Worse than the pain, and the torture, and the shame: the self-impoorishment of the Son of God climaxes in His bearing of the divine curse, as the unmixed fury of the Father breaks over the head of His beloved Son, in whom He is well-pleased, as Christ bears the sins of His people as our substitute, and cries out in words that exhaust the depths of mystery, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" The Author of life dead. The fountain of all divine *blessings* become a *curse* under the wrath of God.

Dear friends, *no one* was ever richer than the Son of God. And *no one* was ever poorer than that same Son of God.

### **III. Christ's Purpose**

And why did He do this? Why should this what-seems-to-be terrible miscarriage of justice take place? Well here we come to our **third** point. We've meditated upon Christ's riches. We have raised our eyes to consider the mystery of Christ's poverty. What was **Christ's purpose**? Look again at our verse. "Though He was rich, yet *for your sake* He became poor, *so that* you through His poverty might become rich."

Dear Christian, He did this for you! It was *your* sin that He bore! It was *your* spiritual poverty that required the surrender of His riches! The price your sin required was nothing less than the death and the curse of *the Son of God* in your place! The wrath He suffered at His Father's hand: Christian, that was *your* wrath! The abandonment He experienced, that was *your* abandonment! That cry of dereliction was *your* cry of dereliction! And yet you may go free into the cloudless peace of divine blessing! You, through His poverty, might become rich!

And rich, not in the passing treasures of this earth, which moth and rust destroy and which thieves break in and steal! Rich in every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places, Ephesians 1:3! Romans chapter 10 verse 12 says, "The Lord is abounding in riches for all those who call on Him." In Romans 11:33, Paul erupts in that famous doxology in praise of the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! And in Colossians 2:3 he declares that all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden in Christ! Ephesians 3:8 speaks of "the unsearchable riches of Christ." Ephesians 2:7 speaks of "the surpassing riches of God's grace." Romans 2:4 speaks of "the riches of His kindness." And all throughout Paul's letters are references to "the riches of His glory" (Rom 9:23; Eph 1:18; 3:16; Col 1:27)! Dear friends, all

the fancy cars, and multi-million-dollar homes, and jets, and boats, and toys—all the gold and silver in the world couldn't hold a candle to “the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints” (Eph 1:18).

These are the riches of the loving election of the Father before the foundation of the world! The riches of union with Christ our Redeemer and Friend! The riches of the forgiveness of sins! The payment of our debts! The washing of our stains! The cancellation of our guilt! The riches of the imputation of righteousness! Clothed in garments of salvation—the pure white robe of Christ's own obedience! Adoption into the family of God! The permanent indwelling and sanctifying ministry of the Holy Spirit! A cleansed conscience! Communion with the Triune God that grants an indomitable joy and a peace that surpasses all understanding! Made a partaker of the divine nature! Increasing conformity to the very likeness of Christ Himself! And one day to be free from all sin and suffering in the presence of Christ on the New Earth! All these riches are yours for the taking!

But they're all wrapped up in the Savior! They are all stored up in the person of Christ! And dear friend, if you would take possession of these spiritual riches, you must come and take possession of Christ by faith alone this evening. If you do not yet know Christ, if you remain outside of Him, if you remain wallowing in the wretched poverty of your own sinfulness, I entreat you to confess your sins before God where you sit right now, and turn to Christ who has accomplished all your righteousness. He has descended the infinite distance from heaven to earth—from deity to humanity! The God whom you have offended by your sins Himself comes to you *in your own nature* and offers you terms of peace! How could you reject Him? How could you turn Him away? Not even the *demons* have committed so vile a sin as to refuse a Mediator who has assumed their own nature to offer them salvation! Don't you commit that sin tonight! Dear sinner, turn away from your sins, turn away from yourself, disown your own righteousness, and put all your trust for acceptance with God in this sovereign Savior! And you, through His poverty, will become rich!

“For your sake,” He has done this, Christian. “For your sake.” And I want to read a bit of an extended quote to you, written by the Puritan John Flavel. It's called, “The Father's Bargain with the Son,” and it pictures that intra-Trinitarian council of salvation that took place before the worlds were made. And it captures something of the self-imposed poverty of the Lord Jesus Christ for your sake.

Father: My son, here is a company of poor miserable souls, that have utterly undone themselves, and now lie open to my justice! Justice demands satisfaction for them, or will satisfy itself in the eternal ruin of them: What shall be done for these souls?

Son: O my Father, such is my love to, and pity for them, that rather than they shall perish eternally, I will be responsible for them as their Surety; bring in all thy bills, that I may see what they owe thee; Lord, bring them all in, that there may be no after-reckonings with them; at my hand shalt thou require it. I will rather choose to suffer thy wrath than [that] they should suffer it: upon me, my Father, upon me be all their debt.

Father: But, my Son, if thou undertake for them, thou must reckon to pay the last mite, expect no abatements; if I spare them, I will not spare thee.

Son: Content, Father, let it be so; charge it all upon me, I am able to discharge it: and though it prove a kind of undoing to me, though it impoverish all my riches, empty all my treasures ... yet I am content to undertake it.

### Conclusion

And therefore, dear friends, we have Christmas. Therefore we have the incarnation to celebrate and to bless God for every day of the year. Behold your king, Grace Church! Behold your King in all the beauty of His grace, who as it were steps in between His people and their Judge and says, “Upon *Me*, Father, upon *Me* be all their debt!” Behold your King in the infinite worthiness of His person, who, because of His infinite righteousness can say, “Charge it all upon Me; I am able to discharge it!” Behold your King in the glory of His magnanimity—of His large-hearted humility—who says, “Though it impoverish all My riches—though it empty Me of My most precious treasure: even of the sweetness of My communion with You dear Father—such is My love to sinners, that I am content to undertake it!”

Dear friends, as you meditate upon the incarnation—as you reflect on and contemplate the Gospel of self-imposed poverty, revealed in the incarnation, life, atonement, and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ—worship God the Son for His matchless grace! Worship God the Father whose mind is so vast, whose wisdom is so unsearchable, that He devised this plan of salvation. Only God Himself could ever atone for sin, and yet only *man*'s sacrifice would be accepted on behalf of man. If God had convened the entire company of angels to employ all their collective wisdom and devise a plan to save sinners in such a predicament, they would have been at an eternal stalemate! And yet in His marvelous wisdom, God conceives of the unthinkable: that to reconcile man to God, God would become man!

The Second Person of the Trinity would take upon Himself a human nature, without altering the divine nature! The divine nature and a human nature would be bound together in the single person of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet, as the Chalcedonian Creed puts it, “without confusion, without change, without division, and without separation; the distinction of natures being by no means taken away by the union, but rather the property of each nature being preserved, and

concurring in one Person and one Subsistence, not parted or divided into two persons, but one and the same Son.” These truths that we struggle and strain so mightily to understand don’t even make God break an intellectual sweat. They’re elementary to Him! And that ought to bow us in humble wonder and move us to praise and worship of God for His wisdom.

I’ll close with the words of the Puritan pastor and professor, Stephen Charnock. In his magisterial treatise on *The Existence and Attributes of God*, he wrote the following of the incarnation: “What a wonder that two natures infinitely distant should be more intimately united than anything in the world . . . that the same person should have both a glory and a grief; an infinite joy in the Deity, and an inexpressible sorrow in the humanity; that a God upon a throne should be an infant in a cradle; the thundering Creator be a weeping babe and a suffering man;—” And we could add: that the God so rich should be made a man so poor. Charnock concludes, “[The incarnation astonishes] men upon earth, and angels in heaven” (*Works*, 2:150).

May it never cease to astonish each and every one of us. And may it be a cause of worship—not just in the month of December, but a cause of perpetual worship—of God the Son incarnate, through the Holy Spirit, to the glory of God the Father.