



Speaker:
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God's Riches in Christ

◀ Series: Philipians · 15 of 15

11/16/2022 (WED) | Bible: **Philippians 4:14-23**

The message I want to bring to you today is based on v19. It concerns the riches of God found in Jesus Christ.

The riches spoken about encompass everything we receive which is good. James says the kindness of our God is seen in “every good and perfect gift.” Whether we receive directly from God or through another, it is ultimately God who is the giver.

I intend that we together meditate on the great supplies of mercies which daily come to us from God. I hope to make it clear that access to the riches of God is only given to those who belong to Jesus Christ. And hopefully, we’ll glorify God in our hearts today.

But before we do that, I’m going to take a detour. We’ve come to the end of this book. We began it in December last year. I thought it would be right to briefly recap some of the key teachings we’ve studied together.

1. There was, firstly, the matter of the local church. By “local church”, we don’t mean the one which happens to be down the road from where we live. A local church is simply a congregation of believers, properly set up. Its people meet together for worship as often as they can. It’s this group which has the word of God ministered to them week by week to help their spiritual growth. And it’s the headquarters for their evangelism.
2. Secondly, we learned the importance of sharing our gospel message with others. This isn’t a work to be left to those who we think are most capable but is rather an activity expected of all believers. And since there’s a multitude of ways in which this can be done, no one can exempt themselves from this responsibility. All of us can—and must—do something.
3. Paul then spoke about our individual growth as disciples of Jesus Christ. He exhorted us to grow in love—firstly, towards God; secondly, towards the brethren; and lastly, towards everyone else. There was also an encouragement to grow in knowledge, the primary way we do that being the study of the Scriptures. Another aspect of growth was the fostering of a spirit of wisdom, applying our knowledge of God to all areas of our life.
4. Paul mentioned the unpopular subject of our death. Although death is part of the universal curse of God, which we all must taste, Paul instead chose to view death

- as a gateway to the paradise of God. It wasn't death itself he relished but rather the glory which came after it. Having said this, he acknowledged he still had work to do and intended to get on with it.
5. In the beginning of a wonderful piece of poetry, Christ is shown as the one who humbled himself to an astonishing degree. It was necessary for the accomplishment of salvation. But it also provided us with a great example. If the King of Kings is prepared to humble himself, how much more should *we* be prepared to humble *ourselves* before God!
 6. The same poem, or song, ends with a magnificent statement of the exaltation of Christ. From the low point of humility, he ascended to regain the exalted status he had with God before the world existed. And in doing this, he became our advocate and secured our salvation.
 7. We then spoke about the power of God in us. Although the Bible's clear that God is the source of all we're able to do, his Scriptures speak about *us* doing things for *him*, things appropriate for one of his workers. This is why we're meant to work furiously for God while we have time, and yet always acknowledge the power to do these things comes from above.
 8. The letter looks at the issue of who the real Jews are. Up until his day, it was pretty clear. Jews were those who were part of that arrangement, that covenant, with God. But Paul shows how, with the advent of the kingdom of God, the definition has changed. Now, the true Jew is the one who has Christ as their saviour. The value of bodily circumcision has gone. God perform *circumcision on the hearts*—of people from all races, bringing them under his new covenant.
 9. The apostle continued by describing his old self. He'd trusted in his credentials as a model Israelite. But when the risen Jesus appeared to him, and granted him full redemption, he became aware of the utter worthlessness of all those things. He understood that real acceptance with God could only happen if a person had perfect righteousness, and only those who'd allied themselves with the Messiah could get this.
 10. The book continued with an encouragement for the believer to identify with Jesus. We're to expect suffering if we belong to him. Paul said it was a privilege to suffer for Jesus sake—we come closer to him as a result. And just as Jesus went to the grave, so shall we follow him. The great news of course is, just as he exited the grave and became alive forever, so shall we.
 11. We then talked about being citizens of heaven. There is a way we were supposed to act in this world, showing kindness even to our enemies and being generally good members of society. But our citizenship of the heavenly kingdom is far more important. And it's our job to act in such a way as to make us model citizens of Zion.
 12. The peace of God, it's said, is so great as to be beyond our comprehension. The more we make ourselves dependent on God, the more peace we can enjoy. God

gives us this valuable gift in response to our prayer. And we saw that, despite the complexities of the human brain and the multitude of ways it can go wrong, whenever the peace of God does come, it eradicates all forms of anxiety.

13. There was a list of virtues presented to us. Paul coaxed the believers to look out for these things in the world around them. It was beneficial to see God at work in the people of this world, even if they remained in a state of rebellion against him. It's good, Paul said, to raise our eyes above the sinfulness of this world and consider higher things. But seeing these things, and even doing them ourselves, will not help someone get right with God in the slightest way. If they're to find salvation, a man or a woman must raise their vision even higher and see the perfection of Christ.
14. Our last message was about the great subject of Christian contentment. It surprises some to find contentment being urged on people of all social statuses and degrees of wealth. People with hardly anything are to be content with what they have. And the people who have plenty are also to be content and not covet more. Wisdom will teach us the Biblical truth that "godliness accompanied by contentment" is of great advantage.

In just this one letter then we have a wealth of teaching: what type of people we should be, how we're meant to work together, and how we're to exalt God in our hearts through being conformed to the image of Christ.

Now we come to our final theme. God's riches found in Christ.

1. In Christ, God becomes ours

We can't talk about riches until we talk about Christ—in particular, how he becomes ours. He is *the* saviour and king, but we must have him as *our* saviour and king.

You'll notice in verse 19 Paul says it's his God who'll supply their need. He's obviously not saying, *He's my God, not yours!* He was, and is, Paul's God, but it's clear that the supplies he promises the Philippians can only be theirs because they are themselves in a relationship with Jesus.

It's helpful that Paul speaks in this way. It allows us to highlight wrong thinking about our relationship with God. There'll be those who think about being a Christian in a very individual way. They might see their relationship with God as so important that worshipping and working alongside other believers isn't as important. Their attendance at times of worship might be erratic, but they reason that everything's okay because they have Christ as their "own and personal saviour."

And it is possible to go to the other extreme. You can so emphasise the body of Christ and the importance of the local church that you make the opposite kind of error. This is far less common, but the danger is believers might think Christ died for a group. They'll never be

encouraged to think about what a personal act of deliverance Christ was accomplishing for them at Calvary.

The balance, then, is to hold both as equally true. If you're a believer, **Jesus died for you personally**. He had you in mind as he bore all the penalty for your sin.

But he most certainly didn't die so that believers could exist in isolation. Just as Jesus is not the Father but can't live in isolation from him, so we are individually treasured by God but must always see ourselves as part of a larger whole, the church.

But how does it happen? What do I say to people on the street? How do I present the way by which my God can become *their* God? I share the gospel:

- I tell them about sin, righteousness and judgement
- I tell them they're in danger
- I tell them to flee from the wrath to come
- I tell them to appeal to God for mercy
- I tell them all who come to God in sincere repentance will be accepted and forgiven

Those of you who have borne witness for Jesus to others will confirm there is widespread indifference to these gospel messages. It doesn't mean the message is faulty. It doesn't mean you need to be more professional in your approach. God will save his elect people, without exception.

Those who have been created by God to save them and make them great trophies of his grace will **all** come to Jesus. All those who God has prepared for destruction **will not** come to Jesus. As our brother Laurie said the other day, the Lord will use our witness in whatever way he sees fit.

Our witnessing is always successful, whether people believe or not. This is why as a church we shouldn't think the word of God is only successful when people are added to our number. God will have mercy on whom he will have mercy. We just need to just do our job.

2. In Christ, God supplies us

If at some point in your life you've repented towards God and exercised faith in Jesus Christ, you are now regarded as being "in Christ." And being in that new state, you have access to the abundant supplies held in store by God.

You remember Paul had been thanking the Philippian believers for helping him out financially. And it's in response to that he promises them *their* needs will be taken care of as well. And by reminding them that whatever good things they receive are really from God, he's in effect teaching them that their gift to him was in a way *also* from God.

But again, the riches of God are found **in Christ**. It's not merely that he's the middleman who passes on the riches of God to the faithful believers. The picture here isn't of God handing over gifts from his warehouse to his Son which he then hands to us. More accurately, Christ *is* the warehouse. It's not enough to know Jesus; we have to be *in* him, so to speak.

You should remember this when you receive from the saints—or give *to* them. This is nothing less than God moving resources from one place to another using us as his machinery. When you receive something from a brother or sister, you rightly thank them, but more so you thank God for them.

And when you give, you recognise you're simply transferring a benefit of God's to where it's needed more. Now we're in Christ, the whole nature of giving and receiving changes.

Last time, we spoke about believers who had next to nothing and other believers who had plenty. But if we're all in Christ, we're all in one sense *rich*. Very rich. In all the ways which matter most, we are the multimillionaires of this world. And it's all to do with the riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

Listen to this. **2 Corinthians 8:9**—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 by his poverty might become rich.

We spoke earlier about Jesus in his state of humiliation. And the only reason we receive riches from God is because of the willingness of Christ to humble himself and take the form of a servant.

Jesus was poor in terms of the family he was born into. He was poor in terms of where he came from. He was poor in terms of his wealth. He was poor in terms of his social standing. But the most important way in which he was poor was that he put aside the riches of his heavenly dwelling-place. He left all that behind to be born of a woman, suffer and die. And he did that for you.

In terms of the true riches of soul, he was willing to become poverty-stricken so you could be found in him, having access to all the riches of God. Even the Christian with the weakest profession of faith is mega-rich compared to the unbelievers of this world.

You are wealthy. All your fellow believers are wealthy. When Jesus himself delivered a message for the New Testament church at Smyrna, he acknowledged they were being persecuted and had no money but told them they were rich!

Paul understood he was rich in Christ. And he had so much confidence in the abundance of God's riches in Christ, he was able to make this bold promise to the Philippians. He knew God could identify need in the church and take care of that need fully.

You might remember me making the point last time that we need to understand Scriptures based on where we find them. Paul had been talking here about receiving financial gifts. So when he promises the Philippians God would sort *them* out too, we might think it's all about money. We might think Paul is simply promising the Philippians that God will make sure they have enough *materially* to cover all their needs.

This is part of it. Through other people, God provides us with money and clothing and food.

But when we think about the larger context, by which I mean not just this chapter but the whole letter, we remember Paul has been preoccupied with the *spiritual* wealth of the people at Philippi. I started this message by rehearsing all the things Paul had written to the Philippians about. Their spiritual growth. Their conformity to Jesus Christ. Their zeal for the gospel. He was clearly far more interested in their spiritual wealth than their material wealth.

Jesus understood material needs. But one day, when he had that encounter with Satan, he quoted this verse from the Old Testament: **Deuteronomy 8:3—And he humbled you and let you hunger and fed you with manna, which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that he might make you know that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by every word that comes from the mouth of the LORD.**

But what are these riches? What are the things we have and which we should always want more of? Here are a few:

- In Romans 2, Paul says these riches are his **kindness, tolerance and patience**
- In Romans 11, the riches are the **wisdom and knowledge of God**
- In Colossians 1, the riches are the **revelation of Christ to us**
- And in Ephesians 1, the riches are **all that comes from God's grace**

Have you experienced the kindness of God? Has he revealed Christ to you? Can you say you've been saved by his grace, through faith? Then you possess untold riches.

3. In Christ, God's riches are inexhaustible

In the middle of v19, there's an important term. It says, "according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus." *According to* is the important bit. Let me try to define this. The ability of God to supply the Philippians' needs—and our needs—is based on the level of riches he has in his possession. He can't give what he doesn't have!

Of course, no one here believes God's ability to give is finite. We all know God's generosity is not limited, and he'll always have enough to fulfil that generosity. For those who are in Christ, they will find God's riches are infinite.

Romans 11 talks about the “depth” of the riches of God. *O, the depth*, it says. If we were to now liken the wealth of God to an ocean, it would be one which had no bottom to it. And these riches are ours for the asking! And God himself promises he’ll give us what we need.

We should avoid thinking of this process of giving as merely a sort of supply-and-demand arrangement. **The vastness of the wealth of God tells us something about him. It reflects his glory.** He is after all the king above all Kings.

So we can see how, in giving to us so generously, we learn even more about the glory of God. He’s like the ultimate philanthropist. He not only has wealth which he didn’t receive from anyone else, but he gives it away in abundance that can’t be measured.

From the dawn of time, when the Christian church was formed in the garden of Eden, God was dispensing riches to his people. Down through the ages, he has continued showering his riches on his elect people. And now we find ourselves as the newest recipients of those riches.

His wealth is limitless. He gives endless supplies away...and his wealth *remains* limitless. No wonder Paul ended this section, v20, with this short doxology: “To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.”

God not only supplies our need. He teaches us **his riches in glory are inexhaustible.** And **he glorifies himself by giving it away liberally.**

We have a new Prime Minister. And, surprise surprise, like many politicians from different parties, he’s a multi-millionaire! His net worth is in the region of £730m! To put that in perspective, if you said you were going to give me £1m, it’d take me the best part of the day just to wrap my head around that figure. So to talk about someone having *hundreds* of millions of pounds just doesn’t compute.

A few years from now, our Prime Minister will be lying on his deathbed. The amount of money he owns at that point will be irrelevant. Others will spend his money—a tiny proportion of it, anyway. The rest will sit in the bank. And when these others die, it’ll be passed on to someone else.

They have better houses than us. They drive round in nicer cars. They have fancier holidays than us. But it’s all temporary.

And when these people stand before God at the judgement, they’ll understand their material wealth is worthless. At that point, they would gladly swap all those hundreds of millions for a saving knowledge of Christ.

But that won’t be possible. Their eternity will be one devoid of any material *or* spiritual comforts.

Do you see, friend, the value of the riches that you have? On behalf of God, I confidently give you the go-ahead today to covet the riches of God in Christ! I'm telling you this week to be discontent! To want more of the knowledge of God, more of his wisdom, more of all those qualities we want to see increasing us.

My job as a preacher is to help you increase in these riches of God in Christ, so that you might be dripping in the jewellery of God's graces.

And today, as well as reminding you of the great riches of God that you enjoy now in Christ, I leave you with this. As you continue in your walk with God, **there are even more riches being stored up for you in heaven**. You don't only have the joy of seeing all your needs met in this life, but there are untold riches, securely stored in the bank of God, reserved for you to enjoy for ever more.

May you be much in prayer that God will continue to enrich you and in doing this bring glory upon his great name.

Amen.