

## BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

# THE MINISTRY AND ITS FINANCIAL INTEGRITY, [2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15](#)

## Begging to Be a Blessing

[2 Corinthians 8:1-24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>1</sup>“Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,

<sup>2</sup>that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.

<sup>3</sup>For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord,

<sup>4</sup>begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

<sup>5</sup>and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.”

### A. The Challenge to Give, [2 Corinthians 8:1-15](#)

[\(2 Corinthians 8:1-15\)](#) **Introduction:** the churches throughout Judea were suffering great poverty and needed help badly. This is what this passage is about: meeting the desperate need of fellow believers and human beings who were being threatened with starvation and death, many of whom were without Christ and doomed to an eternity apart from Christ.

The need of missions is an *unending call*, a *call that never ends*. The desperate needs of the world must always confront man. Why? Because the world is sinful and corruptible, full of greed and covetousness, banking and hoarding. People who *have* more than they need should be helping and giving, serving and ministering. Instead they are banking and hoarding. The result is a world reeling in desperate need. The challenge to the church is clear! **Give**—give all you are and have to reach and help the desperate of the world.

- 1. Know the spirit of the Macedonians: they gave because of the grace and favor of God (v.1-5).**
- 2. Excel in the same spirit of giving (v.6-7).**
- 3. Prove the sincerity of your love (v.8).**
- 4. Know the example of Christ—He gave (v.9).**
- 5. Remember your own past record (v.10).**

**6. Give readily and willingly (v.11-12).**

**7. Meet the needs of one another—equally (v.13-15).**

**1. (2 Corinthians 8:1-5) Stewardship— Giving— Offerings: the first challenge is to know the spirit of the Macedonians.**

**2 Corinthians 8:1-5 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,  
<sup>2</sup>that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.  
<sup>3</sup>For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord,  
<sup>4</sup>begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,  
<sup>5</sup>and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

**Giving Is Motivated by God’s Grace**

**2 Corinthians 8:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.”

The particle *de* (**now**) marks Paul’s transition to a new subject. Since the apostle’s relationship with his beloved **brethren** at Corinth had been restored (**2 Corinthians 7:5-16**), he could now discuss with them the issue of giving.

**2 Corinthians 7:5-16 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup>“For even when we came into Macedonia our flesh had no rest, but we were afflicted on every side: conflicts without, fears within.  
<sup>6</sup>But God, who comforts the depressed, comforted us by the coming of Titus;  
<sup>7</sup>and not only by his coming, but also by the comfort with which he was comforted in you, as he reported to us your longing, your mourning, your zeal for me; so that I rejoiced even more.  
<sup>8</sup>For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while—  
<sup>9</sup>I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that you were made sorrowful to *the point of repentance*; for you were made sorrowful according to *the will of God*, so that you might not suffer loss in anything through us.  
<sup>10</sup>For the sorrow that is according to *the will of God* produces a repentance without regret, *leading* to salvation, but the sorrow of the world produces death.  
<sup>11</sup>For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow, has produced in you: what vindication of yourselves, what indignation,

what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.

<sup>12</sup> So although I wrote to you, *it was* not for the sake of the offender nor for the sake of the one offended, but that your earnestness on our behalf might be made known to you in the sight of God.

<sup>13</sup> For this reason we have been comforted. And besides our comfort, we rejoiced even much more for the joy of Titus, because his spirit has been refreshed by you all.

<sup>14</sup> For if in anything I have boasted to him about you, I was not put to shame; but as we spoke all things to you in truth, so also our boasting before Titus proved to be *the* truth.

<sup>15</sup> His affection abounds all the more toward you, as he remembers the obedience of you all, how you received him with fear and trembling.

<sup>16</sup> I rejoice that in everything I have confidence in you.”

### **2 Corinthians 8:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> “Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you **the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.**”

He began by calling their attention to **the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia**, whom he would use as an example of giving. The Roman province of **Macedonia**, the ancient kingdom of Alexander the Great, was located in the northern part of modern Greece. As noted above, the three **churches of Macedonia** Paul had in mind were **Philippi**, **Thessalonica**, and **Berea**. **Macedonia** was an abysmally poor region, ravaged by wars and plundered by the Romans. But despite its deep poverty, the Macedonian believers were amazingly generous (cf. [2 Corinthians 11:9](#); [Philippians 2:25](#); [Philippians 4:15, 18](#)).

### **2 Corinthians 11:9 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> “And when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.”

### **Philippians 2:25 (NASB)**

<sup>25</sup> “But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need.”

### **Philippians 4:15 (NASB)**

<sup>15</sup> “You yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I left Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone.”

### **Philippians 4:18 (NASB)**

<sup>18</sup> “But I have received everything in full and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.”

**2 Corinthians 8:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“Now, brethren, we *wish to* **make known** to you the **grace of God** which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.”

The Corinthians were apparently unaware of the magnitude of the Macedonians' generosity, prompting Paul to **make it known** to them. Their giving was not motivated primarily by philanthropy or human kindness, but by the **grace of God** at work in their hearts. One of the effects of saving, transforming, and sanctifying **grace** is a longing to give generously and sacrificially to those in need, especially other believers.

The Macedonians did not give like worldly rich people often do, mere tokens of their riches, without sacrifice. Nor did they give like selfish Christians, whose love for temporal things matches their love for eternal things. Giving for them is a battle, because they are still holding on to the temporal. The Macedonians gave magnanimously and abundantly, consistent with Christ's command to “**seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you**” ([Matthew 6:33](#)). But Paul shuts out all thought of human merit by noting that they did so because they were prompted by God's grace (cf. [Ephesians 2:10](#)).

**Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup>“**For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.**”

**THEY HAD ABUNDANT JOY IN THEIR AFFLICTION—[2 Corinthians 8:1-2A](#)**

**2 Corinthians 8:1-2a (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“**Now, brethren, we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,**

<sup>2</sup>**that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.**”

**2 Corinthians 8:1 (KJV)**

<sup>1</sup>“**Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit** of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.”

The phrase, “**Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit**,” means “**we make known to you; we inform you.**” This phrase, “**we do you to wit**,” is used in Tyndale's translation, and means, “**we cause you to know.**” Paul is sharing with the Corinthian believers the testimony and example of Christians in Macedonia that had an intense desire to be a blessing to others. He is using their example to be a challenge and example to the Corinthians to have the same desire. Why?

The apostle is about to cover the matter of raising funds for the Christians in the city of Jerusalem. **The Corinthians** were not in the dark about this issue, so the apostle reminds them of his earlier instructions and gives them further details. This issue was not only addressed with **Corinth**, but also with the other churches in **Asia Minor**,

**Macedonia, and Greece.** This concern was brought up with the churches in **Galatia** ([1 Corinthians 16:1](#)) and **Rome** ([Romans 15:25-26](#)).

**1 Corinthians 16:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also.”**

**Romans 15:25-26 (NASB)**

**<sup>25</sup>“But now, I am going to Jerusalem serving the saints.**

**<sup>26</sup>For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.**

**Why was Paul raising funds for the Jerusalem church?** The answer was that this church was suffering extreme poverty for several reasons.

## **1. Pilgrims**

The church was comprised of many pilgrims that were saved on the Day of Pentecost. Three thousand were saved on that day. Many of these Jews lived in Gentile lands and chose to remain in Jerusalem, so they could remain under the teaching of the apostles and fellowship with other believers. Most of these pilgrims could not afford to stay at length in the inns, nor would they want to stay in these inns that were many times characterized by corruption and vice. The folks that were saved on Pentecost ended up being rejected by their Jewish relatives and had to leave their homes. Their only option was to move in with Jewish Christians. Many of these folks were also poverty stricken.

## **2. Persecution**

These new believers lost their jobs or businesses and were ostracized by their families and friends. Just as Jesus had predicted, they became the outcasts of Jewish society.

**John 16:2 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>“They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God.”**

Some Christians were put to death for their faith in Christ and Paul had a part in this before he was saved when he was known as Saul ([Acts 8:1](#)).

**Acts 8:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.”**

Families were economically devastated when husbands or sons that financially supported the entire family, were severely injured, imprisoned, or put to death. I believe Paul was trying to do all that he could to care for these folks where he had a part in the economic devastation of their family.

### 3. Poor Economy

The Romans extracted all they could from their conquered territories, seizing their resources and imposing a heavy burden of taxation. The result was rampant poverty in Israel. Adding to the region's economic woes was a worldwide famine. The Jerusalem church gave a noble effort to see to the demands of its poor members. These believers sold their possession and property to support one another. This worked for some time.

**Acts 2:44-45 (NASB)**

<sup>44</sup> **“And all those who had believed were together and had all things in common;**

<sup>45</sup> **and they *began* selling their property and possessions and were sharing them with all, as anyone might have need.”**

**Acts 4:32 (NASB)**

<sup>32</sup> **“And the congregation of those who believed were of one heart and soul; and not one of *them* claimed that anything belonging to him was his own, but all things were common property to them.”**

As the church continued to grow, it became overwhelmed by all the needs and was not able to keep up. Paul recognized the needs of the Jerusalem believers and determined to take up a collection for this church from the churches of Asia Minor and Europe. He also sought by raising these funds, to strengthen the spiritual bond between those largely Gentile congregations and the Jewish church in Jerusalem. The apostle knew that the love offering would serve to ease the suspicion, bitterness, and hostility with which Jews and Gentiles generally regarded each other. The financial support would demonstrate the unity and oneness of Christians, the relationship we have as brothers and sisters in Christ, and that the Lord did break down the wall between Jews and Gentiles.

Paul needed the Corinthians to know how the Macedonian Christians were such a great blessing and how God's grace had transformed their lives. He used their example to challenge and be a model to the Corinthian church. He was trying to show this church at Corinth what God could do through them and how they could be a blessing to the Lord and others. Let me ask, **“Are you not challenged by the faith and dedication of others?”**

These churches in **Macedonia** were located in **Philippi**, **Thessalonica**, and **Berea**. They suffered persecution and affliction, but remained faithful to Christ and did not lose the joy of the Lord. They had a craving to learn the Word of God, especially in **Berea** where they searched the Scriptures daily and received God's Word with readiness of mind. What a blessing they were to one another!

**Philippians 1:29-30 (NASB)**

<sup>29</sup> **“For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake,**

<sup>30</sup> **experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.”**

**1 Thessalonians 1:6-7 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup>“You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, <sup>7</sup>so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia.”**

**2 Thessalonians 1:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>“Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”**

**2 Corinthians 8:2a (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>“That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”**

In their afflictions, these Christians demonstrated abundant joy. The word “affliction” is from the Greek word *thlipsis* {*thlip'-sis*} which means “pressure, oppression, distress, and tribulation.” It was used to describe the pressing of grapes together to extract the juice. The literal idea is that these people were being crushed by life. Have you ever felt this way? The surrounding culture kept squeezing them harder and harder due to the Macedonians’ devotion to Christ. They were under immense pressure! They were poor and pestered. The grinding poverty and the crushing tribulation made ordinary life very difficult, almost impossible by our standards.

**2 Corinthians 8:2a (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>“That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”**

In spite of their tribulation, they responded with abundant joy. The word “abundance” is from the word *perisseia* {*per-is-si'-ah*} which means “superabundance, an overflow.” Paul used it to describe God’s saving grace that He pours out on believers through Jesus Christ. (**Romans 5:17**).

**Romans 5:17 (NASB)**

**<sup>17</sup>“For if by the transgression of the one, death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.”**

These folks had great joy in spite of difficult times. It’s easy to be happy when your tummy is full and your bed is warm and cozy at night. It is the person of faith and spiritual maturity that rejoices even though his tummy growls like a lion and Jack Frost blows his breath on him through the night. These believers continued to rejoice, and in so doing, they were a huge blessing and encouragement to others who were going through trials and distress. They were reliant upon the Lord for their needs and lived out **Philippians 4:13**.



**Philippians 4:13 (NASB)**

**<sup>13</sup>“I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.”**

These folks teach us to not let our problems get us down and sponge away our joy. We minister, we encourage, and we bless others when we rejoice in spite of the trials we are facing. Let me ask, “**Are you begging to be a blessing? Is that what you definitely want to be to other people?**” Rejoice! The Holy Spirit of God will enable you to do this. His joy strengthens us. Notice the second fruit of the Spirit of God.

**Galatians 5:22 (NASB)**

**<sup>22</sup>“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness.”**

**Nehemiah 8:10b (NASB)**

**<sup>10</sup>“Then he said to them, “Go, eat of the fat, drink of the sweet, and send portions to him who has nothing prepared; for this day is holy to our Lord. Do not be grieved, for the joy of the LORD is your strength.”**

**Ben Patterson** shared the following story in the **April 13, 2004** edition of **Leadership Journal**. It was entitled “**Resurrection and Pandemonium.**” He records the events that took place in the jungles of East Asia. Imagine the mystery and delight of not just hearing, but seeing the story of Jesus for the first time, almost as an eyewitness. That’s what happened to a tribe in the jungles of East Asia when missionaries showed them *The Jesus Film*.

Not only had these people never heard of Jesus, they had never seen a motion picture. Then, on one unforgettable evening, they saw it all, the Gospel in their own language, visible and real. Imagine again how it felt to see this good man, Jesus Christ, who healed the sick and was adored by children, held without a trial, beaten and scourged without mercy to a bloody pulp by jeering soldiers and mobs.

As they watched this, the people came unglued. They stood up and began to shout at the cruel men on the screen, demanding that this outrage stop. When nothing happened, they attacked the missionary running the projector. Perhaps he was responsible for this injustice! The missionary was forced to stop the film and explain to these people that the story wasn’t over yet. There was more to come. Consequently, they settled back onto the ground, holding their angry emotions in tenuous check.

Then came the Crucifixion, and again, the people could not hold back. They began to weep and wail with such loud grief that, once again, the film had to be stopped. The missionary again tried to calm them down, explaining that the story still wasn’t over. There was more to come. So they composed themselves and sat down to see what happened next with intense attention. It was clear they were very upset about what they were seeing.



Then came the Resurrection, and pandemonium broke out this time, but for a different reason. The gathering had spontaneously erupted into a party. The noise now was of jubilation, and it was absolutely deafening. The people were dancing and slapping each other on the back. **Christ is risen! Christ is risen! He's alive! He's alive!**

Again the missionary had to shut off the projector; this time he didn't tell them to calm down and wait for what was next. All that was supposed to happen—in the story and in their lives—was happening. They rejoiced in the truth that the Lord Jesus Christ is a living Savior and trusted in Him! This is the reason the Macedonian Christians rejoiced in their trials. They had a living Savior living within them. Beloved, rejoice! He lives in you too, if you have put your faith in Him. You and I have a lot to be thankful for and shout about! He is risen! He is alive! Your joy will be a blessing to others and help you to face another day!

## Giving Transcends Difficult Circumstances

### 2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup>“**That in a great ordeal of affliction** their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”

Paul's strong language vividly depicts the Macedonians' desperate situation. *Polus* (great) means “much,” or “many” and indicates the extreme nature of their ordeal. *Dokimē* (ordeal) refers to a test or a trial (cf. [2 Corinthians 2:9](#) and the use of the related verb *dokimazō* in [1 Cor. 3:13](#); [1 Peter 1:7](#)).

### 2 Corinthians 2:9 (NASB)

<sup>9</sup>“For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the **test** [*Dokimē*], whether you are obedient in all things.”

### 1 Corinthians 3:13 (NASB)

<sup>13</sup>“Each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is *to be* revealed with fire, and the fire itself will **test** [*dokimazō*] the quality of each man's work.”

### 1 Peter 1:7 (NASB)

<sup>7</sup>“So that the proof of your faith, *being* more precious than gold which is perishable, even though **tested** [*dokimazō*] by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Jesus Christ.”

### 2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

<sup>2</sup>“That in a great ordeal of **affliction** [*Thlipsis*] their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”

*Thlipsis* (affliction) literally refers to pressure, as in crushing grapes. Figuratively, it describes the spiritual pressure the Macedonians endured from their poverty and persecution.

Scripture repeatedly describes the suffering endured by the Macedonian churches. After Paul and Silas initially preached the gospel in Thessalonica the Jews, becoming

jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people. When they did not find them, they began dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “<sup>5</sup> **But the Jews, becoming jealous and taking along some wicked men from the market place, formed a mob and set the city in an uproar; and attacking the house of Jason, they were seeking to bring them out to the people.** <sup>6</sup> **When they did not find them, they *began* dragging Jason and some brethren before the city authorities, shouting, “These men who have upset the world have come here also; <sup>7</sup> and Jason has welcomed them, and they all act contrary to the decrees of Caesar, saying that there is another king, Jesus.” <sup>8</sup> They stirred up the crowd and the city authorities who heard these things”** ([Acts 17:5-8 NASB](#))

Paul also referred to persecution in his epistles to the Macedonian churches:

**1 Thessalonians 1:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> “You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit.”

**1 Thessalonians 2:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> “For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews,

<sup>15</sup> who both killed the Lord Jesus and the prophets, and drove us out. They are not pleasing to God, but hostile to all men.”

**2 Thessalonians 1:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> “Therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure.”

**Philippians 1:29 (NASB)**

<sup>29</sup> “For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake.”

But the Macedonians rose above their trying circumstances. They did not allow their situation to have a negative effect on their giving. In the midst of their trials, they put the needs of others, whom they had never met, ahead of their own. Though their poverty may have limited the amount they could give, it did not diminish their love. Devout Christians give no matter what the situation, because even the worst circumstances cannot hinder their devotion to Jesus Christ.