

## 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 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.

**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 Is with Joy**

### **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.”**

*Perisseia* (abundance) means “a surplus,” or “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.”**

The Macedonians did not give grudgingly, reluctantly, out of a sense of duty, or under duress. Nor, were they motivated by fear of divine punishment or of Paul’s displeasure. They gave gladly, freely, joyfully, knowing that **“Each one *must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*” (2 Corinthians 9:7).**

The Macedonians’ joy transcended their pain, sorrow, and suffering. **“You also became imitators of us and of the Lord,”** Paul wrote to the Thessalonians, **“having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit” (1 Thess. 1:6; cf. Acts 5:41).**

**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.”**

**Acts 5:41 (NASB)**

**<sup>41</sup>“So they went on their way from the presence of the Council, rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.”**

Their giving reflected that reality, as they joyfully divested themselves of what little they possessed. They rejoiced at laying up treasures in heaven (**Matt. 6:20; 19:21; Luke 12:33**),

**Matthew 6:20 (NASB)**

**<sup>20</sup>“But store up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”**

**Matthew 19:21 (NASB)**

**<sup>21</sup>“Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be complete, go *and* sell your possessions and give to *the* poor, and you will have **treasure in heaven**; and come, follow Me.”**

**Luke 12:33 (NASB)**

**<sup>33</sup>“Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, **an unfailing treasure in heaven**, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys.”**

Here is what they understood, that the greater blessing is to the giver, not the receiver (**Acts 20:35**), and that God will give back in greater measure (**Luke 6:38**).

**Acts 20:35 (NASB)**

**<sup>35</sup>“In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, **‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’**”**

**Luke 6:38 (NASB)**

**<sup>38</sup>“Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”**

## Giving Is Not Hindered by Poverty

### [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.”

To express how little the Macedonians actually had, Paul described their impoverishment in strong language. **Deep** translates the phrase *kata bathos* (lit., “according to the depth”). The corresponding English expression would be “extremely deep”; or in the vernacular, “the pits” or “rock bottom.”

High taxes, slavery, low economic status, and persecution had all reduced the Macedonian believers to abject poverty. *Ptōcheia* (poverty) describes those with almost nothing, forced to beg to survive. Paul used it in [2 Corinthians 8:9](#) to describe Christ’s poverty when He “emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men” ([Philippians 2:7](#)).

### [2 Corinthians 8:9 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>9</sup>“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.”

### [Philippians 2:7 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>7</sup>“But emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, *and* being made in the likeness of men.”

A related word, *ptōchos*, is used to describe the blind and the lame ([Luke 14:13, 21](#)), a destitute widow ([Mark 12:42](#)), and Lazarus the beggar ([Luke 16:20](#)).

### [Luke 14:13 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup>“But when you give a reception, invite *the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind.*”

### [Luke 14:21 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>21</sup>“And the slave came *back* and reported this to his master. Then the head of the household became angry and said to his slave, ‘Go out at once into the streets and lanes of the city and bring in here the poor and crippled and blind and lame.’”

### [Mark 12:42 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>42</sup>“A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent.”

### [Luke 16:20 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>20</sup>“And a poor man named Lazarus was laid at his gate, covered with sores.”

The Macedonians’ confidence that God would supply all their needs ([Psalm 37:25](#); [Philippians 4:19](#)) freed them to give generously.

**Psalm 37:25 (NASB)**

**<sup>25</sup>“I have been young and now I am old, Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken Or his descendants begging bread.”**

**Philippians 4:19 (NASB)**

**<sup>19</sup>“And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”**

Devout Christians do not wait until they have more money; they give despite their poverty, like the poor widow of [Luke 21:1-4](#).

**Luke 21:1-4 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.**

**<sup>2</sup> And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.**

**<sup>3</sup> And He said, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all of them;**

**<sup>4</sup> for they all out of their surplus put into the offering; but she out of her poverty put in all that she had to live on.”**

Jesus said in [Luke 16:10 NASB](#), **“He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much.”** Giving is not a matter of how much one possesses but is an expression of an unselfish and loving heart. The Macedonians’ refusal to allow their poverty to stifle their generosity made them models of Christian giving.