

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

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

Begging to Be a Blessing

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

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

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

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

⁴begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,

⁵and *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)

¹“Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia,
² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.
³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord,
⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints,
⁵ 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 Generous

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

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

Paul now explicitly stated what has been implied throughout the passage, piling up words to express the profound generosity of the Macedonians. **Overflowed** translates *perissueō*, the verb form of the noun translated “**abundance**” earlier in [verse 2](#).

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

²“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.”

Repeat purposefully:

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

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

Paul now explicitly stated what has been implied throughout the passage, piling up words to express the profound generosity of the Macedonians. **Overflowed** translates *perissueō*, the verb form of the noun translated “**abundance**” earlier in [verse 2](#).

Scripture uses it to describe the surplus goods of the rich ([Mark 12:44](#)),

Mark 12:44 (NASB)

⁴⁴“For they all put in out of their **surplus** [*perissueō*], but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

Scripture uses it to describe an abundance of material possessions ([Luke 12:15](#)),

Luke 12:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“Then He said to them, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not *even* when one has an **abundance** [*perissueō*], does his life consist of his possessions.”

Scripture uses it to describe God’s saving grace that abounds to sinners (**Romans 5:15**; **Ephesians 1:7-8**),

Romans 5:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, **abound** [*perissueō*], to the many.”

Ephesians 1:7-8 (NASB)

⁷“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace

⁸ which He **lavished** [*perissueō*] on us. In all wisdom and insight.”

Scripture uses it to describe the abundant hope produced by the Holy Spirit (**Romans 15:13**),

Romans 15:13 (NASB)

¹³“Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, so that you will **abound** [*perissueō*] in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.”

Scripture uses it to describe the abundant comfort that believers have in Christ (**2 Corinthians 1:5**), and

2 Corinthians 1:5 (NASB)

⁵“For just as the sufferings of Christ are ours in **abundance** [*perissueō*], so also our comfort is **abundant** [*perissueō*], through Christ.”

Scripture uses it to describe God’s abundant grace toward believers (**2 Corinthians 9:8**).

2 Corinthians 9:8 (NASB)

⁸“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an **abundance** [*perissueō*] for every good deed.”

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

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

Though *ploutos* (wealth) can refer to material riches (e.g., **Matthew 13:22**; **1 Timothy 6:17**; **James 5:2**; **Revelation 18:17**),

Matthew 13:22 (NASB)

²²“And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the

man who hears the word, and the worry of the world and the deceitfulness of **wealth** [*ploutos*] choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

1 Timothy 6:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of **riches** [*ploutos*], but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”

James 5:2 (NASB)

²“Your **riches** [*ploutos*], have rotted and your garments have become moth-eaten.”

Revelation 18:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“For in one hour such great **wealth** [*ploutos*] has been laid waste! And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance.”

However, *ploutos* (wealth) is more commonly used in the New Testament to speak of spiritual riches (e.g., [Ephesians 1:7, 18](#); [Ephesians 2:7](#); [Ephesians 3:8, 16](#); [Philippians 4:19](#); [Colossians 1:27](#); [Colossians 2:2](#); [Hebrews 11:26](#)), as it is here.

Ephesians 1:7 (NASB)

⁷“In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the **riches** [*ploutos*] of His grace.”

Ephesians 1:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“*I pray that* the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the **riches** [*ploutos*] of the glory of His inheritance in the saints.”

Ephesians 2:7 (NASB)

⁷“So that in the ages to come He might show the surpassing **riches** [*ploutos*] of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.”

Ephesians 3:8 (NASB)

⁸“To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable **riches** [*ploutos*] of Christ.”

Ephesians 3:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“That He would grant you, according to the **riches** [*ploutos*] of His glory, to be strengthened with power through His Spirit in the inner man.”

Philippians 4:19 (NASB)

¹⁹“And my God will supply all your needs according to His **riches** [*ploutos*] in glory in Christ Jesus.”

Colossians 1:27 (NASB)

²⁷“To whom God willed to make known what is the **riches** [*ploutos*] of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.”

Colossians 2:2 (NASB)

²“That their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and *attaining* to all the **wealth** [*ploutos*] that comes from the full

assurance of understanding, *resulting* in a true knowledge of God's mystery, *that is*, Christ Himself.”

Hebrews 11:26 (NASB)

²⁶“Considering the reproach of Christ greater **riches** [*ploutos*] than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

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

Though they were not rich in material possessions, the Macedonians did possess a wealth of liberality. *Haplotēs* (**liberality**) can also be translated “simplicity” (**2 Corinthians 11:3**) or “sincerity” (**Ephesians 6:5**; **Colossians 3:22**).

2 Corinthians 11:3 (NASB)

³“But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the **simplicity** [*Haplotēs*] and purity of devotion to Christ.”

Ephesians 6:5 (NASB)

⁵“Slaves, be obedient to those who are your masters according to the flesh, with fear and trembling, in the **sincerity** [*Haplotēs*] of your heart, as to Christ.”

Colossians 3:22 (NASB)

²²“Slaves, in all things obey those who are your masters on earth, not with external service, as those who *merely* please men, but with **sincerity** [*Haplotēs*] of heart, fearing the Lord.”

It is the opposite of duplicity, or being double-minded. Double-minded people find their ability to give crippled, because their concern for themselves and temporal matters conflicts with their concern for others and the kingdom of God. But the Macedonians **were rich in single-mindedness**, and gave with no thought of themselves or this world.

Their selfless generosity was a practical application of Paul’s command, “³**Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; ⁴do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others”** (**Philippians 2:3-4 NASB**).

THEY HAD BENEVOLENCE IN THEIR BARRENNESS—**8:2B**

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

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

The Macedonian Christians were a great blessing to Paul and other believers because they were benevolent in spite of their barrenness. Two centuries before Paul came to **Macedonia**, gold mines in that province generously provided a measure of wealth for its population. However, during the first century of the Christian era, the economy had deteriorated, and the province was brought to the depths of economic ruin. Wars, barbarian invasions, Roman settlement, high taxes, slavery, persecution, and the restructuring of the province had contributed to a condition that rivaled the crash of the stock market in America in the early 1900's.

Not only was the countryside affected by poverty, but also the urban centers, including the Romanized cities of **Philippi**, **Thessalonica**, and **Berea**. In stark contrast, the **city of Corinth** flourished financially due to the volume of trade generated by its two harbors, **Cenchrea** and **Lechaeum**. There was a distinct difference between **Macedonia** and **Corinth** in economic terms.

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)

²“**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 financial weakness, the Macedonian believers were begging to be a blessing. They gave to others in spite of their own deep poverty. The picture that Paul is painting here of their financial condition is very dire. The word “**deep**” translates the phrase *kata bathos* which literally means “**according to the depth.**” It forms our English word “**bathysphere,**” a ship which is used to probe the depths of the ocean. The corresponding English expression would be “**extremely deep; the pits, or rock-bottom.**”

What was rock bottom? It was their poverty. For most of us, it is a major stretch to relate to deep poverty in an ancient setting. We fancy ourselves poor if we have to think about it before going out to dinner. As to credit cards, the Macedonians always left home without them. They had no cars, no designer wardrobes, no vacations, no TVs. These folks were poverty stricken. This word “**poverty**” is from the Greek word *ptocheia* {*po-ke-a*} and describes those with almost nothing, forced to beg to survive. Paul used it in verse nine of this chapter to describe Christ's poverty when the Lord emptied Himself and took the form of a servant.

Philippians 2:7 (NASB)

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

The Macedonian believers were benevolent in their barrenness because they were confident that the Lord would supply all of their needs. That is His promise to us.

Psalm 37:25 (NASB)

²⁵“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)

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

The Macedonian Christians reveal an important truth about giving and Christian maturity. These believers teach us that giving is not a matter of how much one possesses, but is an expression of an unselfish and loving heart. They demonstrated to us that devout Christians do not wait until they have more money. They give despite their poverty, just like the poor widow we read about in [Luke 21](#).

Luke 21:1-4 (NASB)

¹“And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury.

² And He saw a poor widow putting in two small copper coins.

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

⁴ 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.”

These folks were benevolent in their barrenness because they were begging to be a blessing to others. They did not allow their situation to have a negative effect on their giving. They gave because they wanted to, not because they were intimidated into giving or worried about what others thought.

There is a humorous story of a preacher in a small town who was having trouble with his collections. The people were not giving to the Lord. So one Sunday he announced from the pulpit: “Before we pass the offering plate today, I would like to request that the person who stole the chickens from Brother Smith’s henhouse please refrain from giving any money to the Lord. The Lord doesn’t want money from a thief.” The collection plate was passed around, and for the first time in many months, everybody put something in the plate. Amen!

The Macedonians gave willingly. In the midst of their trials, they put the demands of others, whom they had never met, ahead of their own needs. Though their poverty may have limited the amount they could give, it did not diminish their love. Dedicated Christians give no matter what the situation, because even the worst circumstances cannot hinder their devotion to Jesus Christ. When you look at your giving, the attitude you have about giving, how does it measure up to the standard of the Macedonian Christians?