

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

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

Begging to Be a Blessing

[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,
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.

Giving Is an Act of Worship

2 Corinthians 8:5 (NASB)

⁵“**And this, not as we had expected, but they first [prōtos] gave themselves to the Lord** and to us by the will of God.”

And this introduces the next feature of the Macedonians’ giving. Their response was more than Paul **expected**. He had hoped for an offering, which they did freely give, **but they first gave themselves to the Lord**.

First (*prōtos*) has the meaning here not of first in time, “**but of first in priority**” (it is so used in [Mark 6:21](#); [Luke 19:47](#); [Acts 13:50](#); [Acts 16:12](#); [Acts 17:4](#); [Acts 25:2](#); [Acts 28:7, 17](#)). The Macedonians’ first priority was to give themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord, and giving financially to the church followed. This is the key problem in many churches today. **Many have not given themselves wholeheartedly to the Lord, so do not expect their finances to follow.**

Mark 6:21 (NASB)

²¹“A strategic day came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his lords and military commanders and the “**leading**” [*prōtos*] men of Galilee.”

Luke 19:47 (NASB)

⁴⁷“And He was teaching daily in the temple; but the chief priests and the scribes and the “**leading**” [*prōtos*] men among the people were trying to destroy Him.”

Acts 13:50 (NASB)

⁵⁰“But the Jews incited the devout women of prominence and the “**leading**” [*prōtos*] men of the city, and instigated a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and drove them out of their district.”

Acts 16:12 (NASB)

¹²“And from there to Philippi, which is a “**leading**” [*prōtos*] city of the district of Macedonia, a *Roman* colony; and we were staying in this city for some days.”

Acts 17:4 (NASB)

⁴“And some of them were persuaded and joined Paul and Silas, along with a large number of the God-fearing Greeks and a number of the “**leading**” [*prōtos*] women.”

Acts 25:2 (NASB)

²“And the chief priests and the “**leading**” [*prōtos*] men of the Jews brought charges against Paul, and they were urging him.”

Acts 28:7 (NASB)

⁷“Now in the neighborhood of that place were lands belonging to the

“**leading**” [*prōtos*] man of the island, named Publius, who welcomed us and entertained us courteously three days.”

Acts 28:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“After three days Paul called together those who were the “**leading**” [*prōtos*] men of the Jews, and when they came together, he *began* saying to them, “Brethren, though I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.”

The supreme act of worship is not giving money, attending church, or singing hymns, but “**giving oneself.**” In **Romans 12:1-2** Paul wrote,

Romans 12:1-2 (NASB)

¹“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship.

²And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.”

As “a holy priesthood,” believers are “to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ” (**1 Peter 2:5**), the most important of which is themselves. Only when it is from a devout life, given to Christ wholly, does financial giving become an acceptable act of worship.

1 Peter 2:5 (NASB)

⁵“You also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.”

THE PRIORITY OF PRESENTING THEMSELVES TO THE LORD—**2 Corinthians 5:5**

2 Corinthians 5:5 (NASB)

⁵“Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge.”

Why did the Macedonian believers beg to be a blessing? What caused them to have abundant joy in affliction, benevolence in barrenness, a sentiment of sacrifice and selflessness, and an intensity to invest in others? The root of these attitudes is found here. They gave themselves to the Lord first, and then they gave themselves to others according to the will of God.

2 Corinthians 8:5 (NASB)

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

The word “**first**” is from the Greek word *protos* has the meaning here not of “**first in time,**” but of “**first in priority.**” The Macedonians’ first priority was to give themselves

wholeheartedly to the Lord, and giving financially to the church followed this decision. There is an implicit lesson here: It won't do any good to give our possessions to God unless we have given ourselves. The supreme act of dedication and worship is not giving money, attending church, or singing church hymns, but giving oneself to the Lord Jesus Christ.

Romans 12:1 (NASB)

¹ “Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is your spiritual service of worship.*”

It was around the year **200 A.D.** **The Roman emperor Septimus Severus** was cracking down on traitors and he believed those Christians showed a dangerous lack of loyalty. They wouldn't offer incense to the Roman gods—even under threat of death. A woman named **Perpetua** stunned Roman society when she denied her father's plea that she renounce her faith in Jesus Christ. Young women, especially in noble families, were expected to obey their fathers, but Christianity established a new family, the church. Perpetua's loyalty to the Body of Christ and to her heavenly Father superseded any obligations to her natural family and her human father.

When the fatal day came, **Perpetua** and **Felicitas** left the prison for the Roman arena “joyfully as though they were on their way to Heaven,” as the eyewitness account puts it. Before a raging crowd, the Christians were thrown to the wild beasts. A mad heifer charged the women and tossed them, but **Perpetua** rose and helped **Felicitas** to her feet. She was ready, even eager, to die for the Lord.

“You must all stand fast in the faith and love one another,” she called to the other martyrs, “and do not be weakened by what we have gone through!” When the beasts failed to kill the women, soldiers came to finish them off, but the soldier who came to **Perpetua** was trembling so much, that she had to grip the tip of his sword, and guide its tip to her throat. By this act, she was indicating that she was giving her life willingly for the Lord. She had willingly given herself to Christ. This is what the **Macedonian Christians** did and is the reason why they were begging to be a blessing.

Giving to the Lord, without giving Him your heart can mess you up. Why? Some folks wrongly conclude that giving of their substance will make the Lord happy and pleased with them. Such giving develops a false sense of security and religious pride. Giving things instead of ourselves can easily become our religion, so that we never turn to Christ for salvation or obey His Word. God wants our heart. He wants our obedience to Him.

1 Samuel 15:22 (NASB)

²² “Samuel said, “Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices As in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, *And to heed than the fat of rams.*”

We should give ourselves willingly to the Lord because we belong to Him. Your life belongs to Jesus Christ if you are a Christian. The Bible is emphatically clear about this

and provides several important insights about your life as a Christian. These insights deal with our past, our present, and our future. They explain why and how we should give ourselves to Christ.

Why and How we Should Give Ourselves to Christ

A. The Price of Your Life... the blood of Jesus Christ

A person gives himself to the Lord first by being saved. Salvation is the beginning. Because of what Christ has done for us in saving us, we are to serve Him.

1 Corinthians 7:23 (NASB)

²³ “You were bought with a price; do not become slaves of men.”

1 Peter 1:18-19 (NASB)

¹⁸ “Knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers,

¹⁹ but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, *the blood of Christ.*”

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 (NASB)

¹⁴ “For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died;

¹⁵ and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.”

B. The Person Within You.... the Holy Spirit

How do we give ourselves to the Lord? The Holy Spirit plays a vital role. The Holy Spirit indwells every Christian. If you are going to give yourself to the Lord, then it is essential that you yield to the Lord in your life. Don't fight against His Word and will.

1 Corinthians 6:19 (NASB)

¹⁹ “Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and that you are not your own?”

1 Corinthians 3:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶ “Do you not know that you are a temple of God and *that* the Spirit of God dwells in you?

¹⁷ If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.”

Ephesians 5:18 (NASB)

¹⁸ “And do not get drunk with wine, for that is dissipation, but be filled with the Spirit.”

When you give yourself to the Lord, you release the control of your life over to Him, just as you would if you gave something to someone else. The gift leaves your possession and control and is given to another.

2 Chronicles 30:8 (NASB)

⁸“Now do not stiffen your neck like your fathers, but yield to the LORD and enter His sanctuary which He has consecrated forever, and serve the LORD your God, that His burning anger may turn away from you.”

C. The Priority of God’s Control.... lest we lose our testimony for Christ.

We should give ourselves to the Lord in order to avoid damaging our Christian testimony for Christ. Yielding to the Holy Spirit’s control will help you to have self-control and His control of you. The Spirit of God empowers us to keep our flesh in check when we yield to Him and to make the right decisions.

Romans 6:13 (NASB)

¹³“And do not go on presenting the members of your body to sin as instruments of unrighteousness; but present yourselves to God as those alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.”

1 Corinthians 9:27 (NASB)

²⁷“But I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified.”

D. The Purpose of Our Life.... to glorify God.

If you are going to give yourself to the Lord, then you must make the purpose of your life to glorify Him. His will must become the priority of your life instead of your will. When your purpose is to please the Lord and serve Him, He will use you.

1 Corinthians 6:20 (NASB)

²⁰“For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body.”

We glorify God by fulfilling God’s purpose for our lives. We glorify Him by worshiping Him, loving, obeying, and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. We glorify Him by becoming like Christ and bringing pleasure and joy to the Lord.

Philippians 1:20 (NASB)

²⁰“According to my earnest expectation and hope, that I will not be put to shame in anything, but *that* with all boldness, Christ will even now, as always, be exalted in my body, whether by life or by death.”

2 Corinthians 4:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“Always carrying about in the body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.”

At 5 P.M. on **April 12, 1945**, Vice President **Harry Truman**, wearied by his afternoon in the United States Senate, ducked into Sam Rayburn’s private office in the Capitol. Someone mentioned to him that the White House had called. Harry picked up the phone and dialed the number, National 1414. **Press Secretary Steve Early** came on with a tense voice, asking Truman to come to the White House “quickly and quietly.” He was to enter the main entrance on Pennsylvania Avenue.

Harry exited the room alone, then began racing through the ornate halls of the Capitol, his shoes pounding the marble. He jumped in his old Mercury and sped through the traffic. At 5:25, he pulled under the north portico. Two ushers took his hat and escorted him to the small elevator. Waiting for him upstairs was **Eleanor Roosevelt**, the wife of the President. “Harry,” she said, “the President is dead.” Truman groped for words. “Is there anything I can do for you?” he asked at length.

Eleanor replied, “Is there anything *we* can do for *you*? You are the one in trouble now.” That night, Truman took the oath of office as the President of the United States, his hand resting on an inexpensive Gideon Bible grabbed from the desk of the White House’s head usher.

The following Monday, Truman addressed a joint session of Congress. His speech lasted but fifteen minutes. Most of it had been written by presidential speech-writers, but the conclusion of the speech he added himself.

The Congress was hushed and the nation spellbound by their radios as he said: *At this moment I have in my heart a prayer. As I have assumed my duties, I humbly pray Almighty God, in the words of King Solomon: “Give therefore Thy servant an understanding heart to judge Thy people, that I may discern between good and bad: for who is able to judge this Thy so great a people?” I ask only to be a good and faithful servant of my Lord and my people.”*

It is interesting to note that it was **President Truman** who made the difficult final decision to use the atomic bombs on Japan to speed up the end of the World War II. His use of the bombs was a way to stop what could have been a bloody fight on the mainland of Japan. Truman’s goal was to stop the war quickly avoiding further losses of allied troops. Japan sued for peace on **August 10th**, and surrendered on **September 2, 1945**. The use of the atom bomb was also to send a message to the communists in the Soviet Union that the United States was not afraid to use the bomb if necessary.

Ending World War II [WW2] was extremely significant, but Truman’s most significant act, in my opinion, took place in **May of 1948**. The state of Israel was reborn. For a hundred years before the establishment of the modern state of Israel, Christians worked alongside Jews in advancing Zionism, but nothing created more sympathy for the rebirth

of the Jewish nation than reports emerging after World War II of the Holocaust. Still, President Harry Truman, aware of impending Arab-Israeli conflict, was reluctant to recognize Israel.

On **May 12, 1948**, several advisors gathered with **President Truman** to discuss the issue. Secretary of State George C. Marshall was against recognition, warning that the Jews faced war on every side. To Marshall's dismay, Clark Clifford, Truman's political advisor, urged the President to recognize Israel at once. Mr. Clifford made his case calmly and persuasively. He reminded the men of the 6 million Jews murdered by the Nazis, and of the survivors with nowhere to go.

A separate Jewish state was inevitable, Clifford said. And then he quoted"

Deuteronomy 1:8 (NASB)

⁸“See, I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the LORD swore to give to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to them and their descendants after them.”

George Marshall became so angry he threatened to vote against Truman in the next election, bringing the meeting to an icy close. Two days later, however, the nation of Israel was reborn, the prophecy of **Ezekiel 36** was fulfilled, and **President Harry Truman** became the first head of state in the world to afford the nation of Israel official recognition.

Later, when **Israel's Chief Rabbi, Isaac Herzog**, visited the White House, he told President Truman, “God put you in your mother's womb so that you would be the instrument to bring the rebirth of Israel after 2000 years.”

Upon hearing those words, tears flowed down the face of the President. God used a willing servant to accomplish His will. He gave him wisdom to make the right decision.

The price of your life, the person within you, the priority of God's control, and the purpose of your life, are reasons why and how you should give yourself to the Lord. The fifth reason is the powerful change that will take place in your life at the Rapture.

E. The Powerful Change that will take Place in us at the Rapture.

Why should we give ourselves to the Lord? The answer is because of what God has planned for us in the future. His care, His present and future blessings should inspire us to “**want**” to give our lives to Him.

1 Corinthians 15:51-52 (NASB)

⁵¹“Behold, I tell you a mystery; we will not all sleep, but we will all be changed,

⁵²in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed.”

1 Thessalonians 4:16-17 (NASB)

¹⁶“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of *the* archangel and with the trumpet of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first.

¹⁷Then we who are alive and remain will be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, and so we shall always be with the Lord.”