

BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

THE MINISTRY AND ITS FINANCIAL INTEGRITY, 2 Corinthians 8:1-9:15

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).**

4. (2 Corinthians 8:9) Stewardship— Giving— Jesus Christ, Humiliation; Condescension: the fourth challenge is to know the example of the Lord Jesus Christ.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

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 through His poverty might become rich.”

The Poverty That Made Us Rich

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

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 through His poverty might become rich.”

The story is told of a Persian monarch who reigned in opulence and splendor, living amid the wealth and comfort of the royal palace. Yet his concern for the common people frequently drove him to dress as a poor man, leave the palace, and mingle with the lowliest of his subjects.

One day he visited a fireman, whose job was to heat the water in the bathhouse. Dressed in tattered clothes, the shah descended a long flight of steps down to the tiny cellar where the fireman sat on a pile of ashes, tending the fire. The ruler sat beside him, and the two men began to talk. At lunchtime, the fireman shared his humble meal of coarse bread and water with his guest. Eventually, the shah left, but he returned again and again, his heart filled with sympathy for the lonely man. The fireman opened his heart to his kind, compassionate friend, who gave him wise counsel.

Finally, the shah could not bear to keep up the pretense any longer and decided to reveal his true identity to his friend. He then asked the poor fireman to name a gift he could give him. To his surprise, the man said nothing, but merely sat looking at him with love and wonder. Thinking he had not understood him, the shah offered to make the fireman rich, elevate him to the nobility, or make him ruler over a city. But he replied, “Yes, my lord, I understood you. But leaving your palace to sit here with me, partake of my humble food, and listen to the troubles of my heart—even you could give me no more precious gift than that. You may have given rich gifts to others, but to me you gave yourself. I only ask that you never withdraw your friendship from me.”

That parable illustrates the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, heaven’s King who left His glorious throne to become the friend of sinners. As the writer of the hymn, **“Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne,”** eloquently expressed it,

Thou didst leave Thy throne
And Thy kingly crown
When Thou camest to earth for me;
But in Bethlehem's home
Was there found no room
For Thy holy nativity.

Heaven’s arches rang
When the angels sang,
Proclaiming Thy royal degree;
But of lowly birth
Didst Thou come to earth,
And in greatest humility.

Tucked away in this very practical, pragmatic section of the discussion of giving is a profound doctrinal treasure. Like [2 Corinthians 5:21](#), this verse is a Christological gem of incalculable value, a many-faceted diamond that far outshines all the other jewels around it.

2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB)

²¹ “He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.”

The wonder of this verse is captivating. Its vast **scope**, **profundity**, and **impact** transcend the simplicity of the twenty-one Greek words that comprise it. Its truth is not couched in technical theological language; its words are not complex or confusing. And though its message may be grasped in one reading, the truth it contains may not be fully comprehended throughout eternity. It describes Christ’s descent from riches to poverty so that believers might ascend from poverty to riches.

As noted in the previous teaching of this section, the theme of **chapters 8** and **9** of **2 Corinthians** is Christian giving. In this section, Paul discussed the offering he was collecting for the poor saints in Jerusalem. To stimulate the Corinthians’ giving, he pointed out the example of the Macedonians, who gave generously and sacrificially despite their deep poverty (**2 Corinthians 8:1-8**).

But as the apostle thought about the reality that love manifests itself in sacrificial giving, his mind was irresistibly drawn to the greatest example of such love and sacrifice the world has ever known—the Lord Jesus Christ. Unlike the rich of this world, who rarely if ever impoverish themselves by their giving, He, the worthy One, became poor to make unworthy ones rich.

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

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 through His poverty might become rich.”

For links this verse to **verse 8**, where Paul wrote, **“I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity of your love also”** (**2 Corinthians 8:8 NASB**) The apostle did not need to command the Corinthians to give because they knew **the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**. They may have been unaware of the Macedonians’ giving, but they knew that Christ came down from heaven and gave His life as a sacrifice for sinners. That magnanimous gift eclipses all others as the example for all Christians to follow.

The apostle used the term **grace** to refer to Christ’s giving because His self-giving was motivated by **unmerited, spontaneous kindness** to undeserving sinners stemming from pure and uninfluenced love. That act of the Savior defines grace giving at its purest level.

Paul refers to Him using the full name of the Incarnate God, the **Lord Jesus Christ**. That rich title encompasses the fullness of His person and work.

Lord is the name above every name that was given Him by the Father because He accomplished the work of redemption (**Philippians 2:9**);

Philippians 2:9 (NASB)

⁹“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name.”

Jesus depicts Him as the Savior of His people ([Matthew 1:21](#));

Matthew 1:21 (NASB)

²¹“She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Christ describes Him as the anointed Messiah and King ([Matthew 27:11](#); [John 18:37](#)).

Matthew 27:11 (NASB)

¹¹“Now Jesus stood before the governor, and the governor questioned Him, saying, “Are You the King of the Jews?” And Jesus said to him, “*It is as you say.*”

John 18:37 (NASB)

³⁷“Therefore Pilate said to Him, “So You are a king?” Jesus answered, “You say *correctly* that I am a king. For this I have been born, and for this I have come into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.”

The many facets of truth contained in this verse may be categorized under three headings: the riches of Christ, the poverty of Christ, and the gift of Christ.

The Riches of Christ

2 Corinthians 8:9 (NASB)

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 through His poverty might become rich.”

Though as God Jesus owns everything in heaven and on earth ([Exodus 19:5](#); [Deuteronomy 10:14](#); [Job 41:11](#); [Psalm 24:1](#); [Psalm 50:12](#); [1 Corinthians 10:26](#)), His riches do not consist primarily of what is material.

Exodus 19:5 (NASB)

⁵“Now then, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine.”

Deuteronomy 10:14 (NASB)

¹⁴“Behold, to the LORD your God belong heaven and the highest heavens, the earth and all that is in it.”

Job 41:11 (NASB)

¹¹“Who has given to Me that I should repay *him*? *Whatever* is under the whole heaven is Mine.”

Psalm 24:1 (NASB)

¹“The earth is the LORD’S, and all it contains, The world, and those who dwell in it.

Psalm 50:12 (NASB)

¹²“If I were hungry I would not tell you, For the world is Mine, and all it contains.”

1 Corinthians 10:26 (NASB)

²⁶“FOR THE EARTH IS THE LORD’S, AND ALL IT CONTAINS.”

The riches in view here are those of Christ’s supernatural glory, His position as God the Son, and His eternal attributes. The eternity of Jesus Christ is the most crucial truth in all of Christology, and therefore the most crucial truth of the gospel as well. If He is not eternal, He must have had a beginning, and would therefore be a created being. The eternality of Christ offers clear, powerful, and irrefutable proof of His deity, for it is an attribute only God possesses.

Despite the false claims of heretics throughout history, the Bible teaches that Jesus Christ is not merely preexistent to human history, but eternal. He does not depend on anything outside of Himself for His existence, nor was there ever a time when the second person of the Trinity came into being. Jesus is not an emanation, demigod, Michael the archangel, a spirit created by God, or an exalted man; He is the Creator ([John 1:3](#), [10](#); [Colossians 1:16](#); [Hebrews 1:2](#)), not a creature.

John 1:3 (NASB)

³“All things came into being through Him, and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”

John 1:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him.”

Colossians 1:16 (NASB)

¹⁶“For by Him all things were created, *both* in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created through Him and for Him.”

Hebrews 1:2 (NASB)

²“In these last days has spoken to us in His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the world.”

In a prophecy predicting His birthplace, [Micah 5:2 NASB](#) says of Him, “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, from the days of eternity.”

[Isaiah 9:6](#) describes Jesus as the “Eternal Father” of His people. John’s gospel opens with the truth that “in the beginning [of creation; cf. [Genesis 1:1](#)] was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Isaiah 9:6 (NASB)

⁶“For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.”

Genesis 1:1 (NASB)

¹“In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.”

John 1:1 (NASB)

¹“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

Jesus Christ existed from all eternity, because when the universe was created and time began, He already existed. In [John 8:58 NASB](#) Jesus declared His eternal existence to the unbelieving Jews: **“Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”** Had He merely been claiming to have preexisted, He would have said, **“I was,”** instead of, **“I am.”**

In [John 17:5 NASB](#) He prayed, **“Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.”**

As the eternal second person of the Trinity, Jesus is as **rich** as God the Father. To the Colossians Paul wrote, **“For in Him [Jesus] all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form”** ([Colossians 2:9](#)), and **“[Jesus] is the radiance of [God's] glory and the exact representation of His nature”** ([Hebrews 1:3](#)).

Arguments for Christ's eternity and deity are inseparable. Since the Scriptures reveal Him to be eternal, and only God can be eternal, Jesus must be God. Therefore, He owns the universe and everything in it, possesses all power and authority ([Matthew 28:18](#)), and is to be glorified and honored ([John 5:23](#); [Phil. 2:9-11](#)).

Matthew 28:18 (NASB)

¹⁸“And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.””

John 5:23 (NASB)

²³“So that all will honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent Him.”

Philippians 2:9-11 (NASB)

⁹“For this reason also, God highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name,

¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus EVERY KNEE WILL BOW, of those who are in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and that every tongue will confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.”

The eminent nineteenth-century theologian Charles Hodge wrote,

“All divine names and titles are applied to Him. He is called God, the mighty God, the great God, God over all; Jehovah; Lord; the Lord of lords and the King of kings. All divine attributes are ascribed to Him. He is declared to be

omnipresent, omniscient, almighty, and immutable, the same yesterday, today, and forever. He is set forth as the creator and upholder and ruler of the universe. All things were created by Him and for Him; and by Him all things consist. He is the object of worship to all intelligent creatures, even the highest; all the angels (i.e., all creatures between man and God) are commanded to prostrate themselves before Him. He is the object of all the religious sentiments; of reverence, love, faith, and devotion. To Him men and angels are responsible for their character and conduct. He required that men should honour Him as they honoured the Father; that they should exercise the same faith in Him that they do in God. He declares that He and the Father are one; that those who had seen Him had seen the Father also. He calls all men unto Him; promises to forgive their sins; to send them the Holy Spirit; to give them rest and peace; to raise them up at the last day; and to give them eternal life. God is not more, and cannot promise more, or do more than Christ is said to be, to promise, and to do. He has, therefore, been the Christian's God from the beginning, in all ages and in all places." (*Systematic Theology*, [Reprint; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1979], 2:382)