

# **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)**

**<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.”**

### **What is Economics?**

We can begin the process of understanding economics by first being clear as to what economics means. To know what economics is, we must first know what an economy is. Perhaps most of us think of an economy as system for the production and distribution of

the goods and services we use in everyday life. That is true as far as it goes, but it does not go far enough.

The Garden of Eden was a system for the production and distribution of goods and services but it was not an economy, because everything was available in unlimited abundance. Without scarcity, there is no need to economize----and therefore no economics.

A distinguished British economist named Lionel Robbins gave a classic definition of economics:

**Economics is the study of the use of scarce resources which have alternative uses.**

## **SCARCITY**

What does “**scarce**” mean? It means that what everybody wants adds up to more than there is. This may seem like a simple thing, but its implications are often grossly misunderstood, even by highly educated people. For example, a feature article in the New York Times laid out the economic woes and worries of middle-class Americans---one of the most affluent groups of human beings ever to inhabit this planet. Although this story included a picture of a middle-class American family in their own swimming pool, the main headline read: “The American Middle, Just Getting By.” Other headings in the article included:

Wishes Deferred and Plans Unmet  
Goals That Remain Juts Out of Sight  
Dogged Saving and Some Luxuries

In short, middle-class Americans’ desires exceed what they can comfortably afford, even though what they already have would be considered unbelievable prosperity by people in many other countries around the world----or even by earlier generations of Americans. Yet both they and the reporters regarded them as “just getting by” and a Harvard sociologist was quoted as saying “how budget-constrained these people really are.” But it is not something as man-made as a budget which constrains them: Reality constrains them. There has never been enough to satisfy everyone completely. That is the real constraint. That is what scarcity means.

The New York Times reported that one of these middle-class families “got in over their heads in credit card spending” but then “got their finances in order.”

“But if we make a wrong move,” Geraldine Frazier said, “the pressure we had from the bills will come back, and that is painful.”

To all these people---from academia and journalism, as well as the middle-class people themselves---it apparently seemed strange somehow that there should be such a thing as scarcity and that this should imply a need for both productive efforts on their part

and personal responsibility in spending the resulting income. Yet nothing has been more pervasive in the history of the human race than scarcity and all the requirements for economizing that go with scarcity.

Regardless of our policies, practices, or institutions---whether they are wise or unwise, noble or ignoble---there is simply not enough to go around to satisfy all of our desires to the fullest. “Unmet needs” are inherent in these circumstances, whether we have a capitalist, socialist, feudal, or other kind of economy. These various kinds of economies are just different institutional ways of making trade-offs that are inescapable in any economy.

## **THE EXAMPLE OF CHRIST—[2 Corinthians 8:9](#)**

### **[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.”**

The story is also 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 lunch time, 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 fireman sat and looked at him with eyes of love and wonder. Thinking he had not understood him, the shah offered to make the fireman rich, elevate him to nobility, or make him ruler over a city. The fireman 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.”

This parable illustrates the incarnation of the Lord Jesus Christ, Heaven’s King who left His glorious throne to become the friend of sinners. Paul refers to this here in verse nine.

### **[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.”**

The Macedonians had not been induced into giving by gimmicks or fear. Rather it was the heavenly example of giving (“**the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ**”) that brought about the grace of giving in their lives. The Lord Jesus Christ was and is the great example and motivation for giving. Paul reaches for the highest example and the ultimate motivation for giving in order to challenge the Corinthians. The apostle is using the example of the Lord Jesus to teach the importance of grace-giving and being unselfish. He is also confirming the fact that the Lord finished what He started.

This verse teaches the pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ. When was the Lord wealthy? Certainly, not when He came into the world as the Babe of Bethlehem, and certainly not during His thirty-three years of wandering “as a stranger in the world His hands had made.” His family was poor in Bethlehem. He himself never possessed any property among men from the stable to the cross. Jesus did not have anything to bequeath at His death but His peace.

Our Lord was rich in a bygone eternity, dwelling with the Father in the courts of Heaven, but He became poor for us. Paul describes Christ's descent from riches to poverty so that believers might ascend from poverty to riches. It was all for our sakes, that we, through His poverty, might become rich.

How did Jesus become poor for us? There is no evidence that Jesus was any poorer than most first-century Palestinians; rather, Jesus became poor by giving up His rights as God and becoming human. In his incarnation, God voluntarily became a man known as Jesus of Nazareth. As a man, Jesus was subject to place, time, and other human limitations. He did not give up His eternal power when He became human, but He did set aside His glory and His rights. Paul spoke of this in [Philippians 2](#).

**Philippians 2:5-7 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup>“Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus,  
<sup>6</sup>who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped,  
<sup>7</sup>but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.”**

Jesus was a man, but He was also God. Wow! Our Creator lived among the creation. The God of the universe put on a robe of human flesh so that we could begin to understand and know Him and His great love for us. By becoming a man, He became the only one who could act as a mediator between God the Father and mankind. A mediator represents both parties. This is why the Virgin Mary does not qualify for the job. She could not represent God, but Jesus could, for He was God and also man. Paul put it this way, “**For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus**” ([1 Timothy 2:5 NASB](#)).

At the Cross, our mediator Jesus, paid the bail, paid the debt, and reconciled man to God. Jesus represents both God and man. He was God incarnate, God in the flesh, and He

was also man. He came from the courts of Heaven, yet, He could represent man for He was clothed in a garment of humanity. Jesus carried **man's burdens**, endured **man's agonies**, suffered **man's sorrows**, and He was tested by man's **trials and temptations**. He lived as a man among men and died a man's death. He was **Infinite** who had become **Intimate**. He was the Divine Sovereign who became the Human Sufferer. He was the God man. Though a man, He did not surrender His power as God.

- *As a man, He got tired, but as God He said, “Come unto me all ye that labor and are heavy laden and I will give you rest.”*
- *As a man, He wept at Lazarus' grave. As God, He raised him from the dead.*
- *As a man, Jesus was despised of men. As God, all the angels of Heaven worshiped Him.*
- *As a man, our Savior got hungry. As God, He fed thousands with a little boy's lunch.*
- *As a man a boat carried Him. As God, He walked on a rolling, raging sea.*
- *As a man, our Lord got thirsty, and as God He gave us living water.*
- *As a man, He was tempted in all points as we are. As God, He was without sin.*
- *As a man, Jesus got tired and slept. As God, He arose from His sleep and calmed a raging storm.*
- *As a man, Jesus could die, but as God, He could not remain dead. God had to become man to die for us because God cannot die.*

In response to the Father's will, Jesus limited His power. Christ became “**poor**” when He became human, because He set aside so much for all of us. From His cold welcome into the world on a pallet of straw, until the time when He was cruelly thrust out on the point of a spear, no one has ever found Jesus Christ guilty of sin. His life was a flawless mirror of stainless purity, reflecting the wisdom of God.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the sun on which all the telescopes of time have failed to find a flaw. The character of our Savior continues to shine as earth's purest diamond.

Our Lord is the **verity** of God's truth,  
the **beauty** of God's holiness,  
the **purity** of God's nature,  
the **reality** of God's love,  
the **surety** of God's promises,  
the **majesty** of God's power,  
the **authority** of God's throne,  
the **pity** of God's heart,  
the **repository** of God's fullness, and  
the **legacy** of God's will.

When Christ came to earth, He came down from the coronations of Heaven to the condemnations of this earth. The excellencies of Heaven were surrendered to experience a Roman execution. He came down from the favor of the Father's face to the fury of an angry mob. Hallelujahs were replaced by hisses. Joy was met by jeers. The tender ears of

the Son of God that enjoyed the songs of Heaven, had to listen to the sneers of sinful men on earth.

The love He enjoyed in Heaven's halls was replaced with the lying accusations of religious men. The King of kings left Heaven's throne to fulfill an appointment on the tree of Calvary as our suffering servant because He was determined to finish what He had started before the foundations of the earth were made. By giving Himself, He made us "**rich**" because we received His salvation and gift of eternal life. He finished what He started.

Emily Elliot eloquently penned the self-emptying of Christ in the song, "***Thou Didst Leave Thy Throne.***"

*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.*

*The foxes found rest, and the birds their nest  
In the shade of the forest tree;  
But Thy couch was the sod, O Thou Son of God,  
In the deserts of Galilee.*

*Thou earnest, O Lord, with the living Word,  
That should set Thy people free;  
But with mocking scorn and with crown of thorn,  
They bore Thee to Calvary.  
O come to my heart Lord Jesus, there is room in my heart for Thee.*