

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).**

5. (2 Corinthians 8:10) Stewardship— Giving: the fifth challenge is to remember your own past record.

2 Corinthians 8:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“I give *my* opinion in this matter, **for this is to your advantage**, who were the first to begin a year ago not only to do *this*, but also to desire *to do it*.”

As mentioned above, the Corinthians had undertaken the mission project of meeting the needs of the poor churches in Judea, but they had backed off the project when divisiveness had reared its ugly head in the church. (see above note 2—2 Corinthians 8:6-7). Now that they had experienced revival, Paul gives his advice: pick up the mission project again. “**For this is to your advantage**”: expedient and beneficial for you personally and for your ministry. Recommitting yourselves to missions will stir God to bless the church.

Note that the church had been forward, that is, *zealous* in undertaking the mission project about a year before. Since the revival of recommitment, they should be *even more zealous* to launch a ministry of missions for the Lord.

Matthew 20:28 (NASB)

²⁸ “Just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.”

Luke 10:36-37 (NASB)

³⁶ “Which of these three do you think proved to be a neighbor to the man who fell into the robbers’ hands?”

³⁷ And he said, “The one who showed mercy toward him.” Then Jesus said to him, “Go and do the same.”

John 21:16 (NASB)

¹⁶ “He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.”

Galatians 6:2 (NASB)

² “Bear one another’s burdens, and thereby fulfill the law of Christ.”

Galatians 6:10 (NASB)

¹⁰ “So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.”

Ephesians 6:7 (NASB)

⁷ “With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men.”

Toward a Christian View of Economics

Regrettably, many American Christians know little about economics. Furthermore, many Christians assume that the Bible has nothing at all to say about economics. But a biblical worldview actually has a great deal to teach us on economic matters.

The meaning of work, the value of labor, and other economic issues are all part of the biblical worldview. Christians must allow the economic principles found in Scripture to shape our thinking. Here, then, are twelve theses for what a Christian understanding of economics must do.

1. It must have God’s glory as its greatest aim.

For Christians, all economic theory begins with an aim to glorify God (**1 Corinthians 10:31**). We have a transcendent economic authority.

1 Corinthians 10:31 (NASB)

³¹ “Whether, then, you eat or drink or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.”

2. It must respect human dignity.

No matter the belief system, those who work show God's glory whether they know it or not. People may believe they are working for their own reasons, but they are actually working out of an impulse that was put into their hearts by the Creator for His glory.

Ephesians 2:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.”

3. It must respect private property and ownership.

Some economic systems treat the idea of private property as a problem. But Scripture never considers private property as a problem to be solved. Scripture's view of private property implies that owning private property is the reward of someone's labor and dominion. The eighth and tenth commandments teach us that we have no right to violate the financial rewards of the diligent.

Exodus 20:15 (NASB)

¹⁵“You shall not steal.”

Exodus 20:17 (NASB)

¹⁷“You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife or his male servant or his female servant or his ox or his donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor.”

4. It must take into full account the power of sin.

Taking the Bible's teaching on the pervasive effects of sin into full account means that we expect bad things to happen in every economic system. A Christian economic understanding tries to ameliorate the effects of sin.

Galatians 6:7-10 (NASB)

⁷Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

⁸For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

⁹Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

¹⁰So then, while we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of the faith.

5. It must uphold and reward righteousness.

Every economic and government system comes with embedded incentives. An example of this is the American tax code, which incentivizes desired economic behaviors. Whether they work is an issue of endless political recalibration. However, in the Christian worldview, that recalibration must continue to uphold and reward righteousness.

Galatians 6:7 (NASB)

⁷“Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.”

6. It must reward initiative, industry, and investment.

Initiative, industry, and investment are three crucial words for the Christian’s economic and theological vocabulary. Initiative goes beyond action. It is the kind of action that makes a difference. Industry is human work done corporately. Investment is part of the respect for private property found in Scripture. Investment, as it turns out, is as old as the garden of Eden. That which accrues value is honorable, and the impulse to accrue that value is honorable. Thus, a Christian economic theory indicts any able-bodied person who won’t work and anyone who won’t respect private property or reward investment.

2 Thessalonians 3:10 (NASB)

¹⁰“For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either.”

7. It must seek to reward and incentivize thrift.

In a fallen world, money and investments can quickly be distorted to idolatrous ends. For that reason, thrift is a very important issue in the Christian worldview. In a fallen world, abundance one day can turn into scarcity the next. Thrift may be what provides survival in times of poverty.

Proverbs 6:6-11 (NASB)

⁶“Go to the ant, O sluggard, Observe her ways and be wise,

⁷ Which, having no chief, Officer or ruler,

⁸ Prepares her food in the summer *And* gathers her provision in the harvest.

⁹ How long will you lie down, O sluggard? When will you arise from your sleep?

¹⁰“A little sleep, a little slumber, A little folding of the hands to rest”—

¹¹Your poverty will come in like a vagabond And your need like an armed man.”

8. It must uphold the family as the most basic economic unit.

When thinking about economic theory embedded in the beginning of the Bible, the dominion mandate is central, but so is the divine institution of marriage. The pattern of leaving and cleaving described in [Genesis 2](#) is fundamental to our economic understanding. Adam and Eve were the first economic unit. The result is that the family, biblically defined, is the most basic and essential unit of the economy.

Genesis 2:24-25 (NASB)

²⁴For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

²⁵And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed.

9. It must respect community.

Most secular thinkers and economists begin with the community and then move to the family. However, thinking from larger to smaller economic units not only does not work in theory, it also fails in practice. Beginning with the family unit and then working out toward the community is a much smarter option. The doctrine of subsidiarity—which emerged out of natural law theory—teaches that meaning, truth, and authority reside in the smallest meaningful unit possible. If the family unit is deficient, no government can meet the need of its citizens. When the family is strong, government can be small.

When the family is weak, however, the government must compensate for the loss. By focusing on the family, we respect and better the community.

1 Timothy 5:8 (NASB)

⁸“But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.”

10. It must reward generosity and proper stewardship.

Christians who are committed to the economics of the kingdom and to the good of the next generation must live with a future-oriented financial perspective. We each have the responsibility, whether we own a lot or a little, to see that our generosity endures far beyond our lifespan. Spirited generosity, which is so clear in Scripture, is essential to a Christian economic worldview.

2 Corinthians 9:6 (NASB)

⁶“Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

11. It must respect the priority of the church and its mission.

Christians must embrace economic priorities that the rest of the world simply will not understand. Christians must invest in churches, seminaries, and international missions. These are distinctive Christian financial commitments. Our ultimate financial commitment is not to ourselves or to our own investments but to the kingdom of Christ. Thus, Christians should always be ready to experience upheaval in economic priorities and arrangements because urgent kingdom issues can intervene at any moment.

Matthew 28:18-20 (NASB)

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

¹⁹ “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

12. It must focus on eschatological judgment and eschatological promise.

This life and its resources cannot deliver ultimate joy. The Christian worldview reminds us that we must live with the recognition that we will give an account to the Lord for our stewardship of our resources. At the same time, Christians must look to the eschatological promise of the new heavens and earth as our ultimate economic hope. We must lay up treasures in heaven and not on earth.