

## BIBLICAL ECONOMICS

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

## 2. ([2 Corinthians 9:3-5](#)) Stewardship— Giving: givers who please God are not caught unprepared to give.

[2 Corinthians 9:3-5 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup>“But I have sent the brethren, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared;

<sup>4</sup>otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence.

<sup>5</sup>So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.”

## THE EMISSARIES’ MISSION—[2 Corinthians 9:3](#)

[2 Corinthians 9:3 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>3</sup>“But I have sent the **brethren**, in order that our boasting about you may not be made empty in this case, so that, as I was saying, you may be prepared.”

When **Paul** says here that he has sent the brethren, he really means he is sending them. The past tense views it from the perspective of the readers rather than the writer. The “**brethren**” are the three mentioned in the previous chapter: **Titus and two unnamed Christians**. They were being sent so that Paul’s boasting concerning the **Corinthians** would not be in error with regard to the collection. The mission of the three brethren would be to ensure that the love offering was **organized, prepared, and secure** as **Paul** had already stated to the **Macedonians**. He didn’t want to be mistaken about their gift and wanted to make sure that it was ready when he arrived.

**Paul** was applying a basic principle of leadership that is used today. **Inspect what you expect**. He did not take for granted that this project would be completed. He wanted to make sure that before he made the journey, everything was completed and all was in order. They pledged to give and **Paul** expected them to keep their word.

It would have been very awkward for everyone if he arrived and the offering was not ready or had not even been taken up in the churches. The **Corinthians** would have been embarrassed by **Paul**’s arrival and would have egg on their face because the offering was not ready. Their integrity would have been in question or they would have looked disorganized.

If you want to avoid having egg on your face, don’t procrastinate. Get the job done and get it done right and on time. When it comes to the matter of putting your faith in

Christ, don't procrastinate. Do it today! We really do not have the luxury to procrastinate about the salvation of our soul.

**Proverbs 27:1 (NASB)**

**<sup>1</sup>“Do not boast about tomorrow, For you do not know what a day may bring forth.”**

**2 Corinthians 6:2 (NASB)**

**<sup>2</sup>“For He says, “AT THE ACCEPTABLE TIME I LISTENED TO YOU, AND ON THE DAY OF SALVATION I HELPED YOU.” Behold, now is “THE ACCEPTABLE TIME,” behold, now is “THE DAY OF SALVATION.”**

If the love offering at Corinth was not ready, these believers also would have been under pressure to produce something. **Paul** did not want that at all. If the offering had not been prepared, **Paul** would have egg on his face because he had been boasting to other churches of their desire to give to this project. The apostle avoids this predicament by sending these three men to make sure everything was organized and done decently and in order. If you want to avoid egg on your face, inspect what you expect. Double-check circumstances or facts to make sure they are accurate or completed. This is what **Paul** did to avoid an embarrassing situation. He further addresses this issue of embarrassment in verse four.

**EMBARRASSMENT IS AVOIDED—[2 Corinthians 9:4](#)**

**2 Corinthians 9:4 (NASB)**

**<sup>4</sup>“Otherwise if any Macedonians come with me and find you unprepared, we—not to speak of you—will be put to shame by this confidence.”**

When Paul wrote this letter, he was in **Macedonia**. When it was time to depart **Macedonia**, some of the Macedonian believers, would no doubt, come with him. The apostle did not want to arrive and find that the **Corinthians** were unprepared and had not completed the project or had given meagerly. This would have left egg on **Paul's** face and on the faces of the **Corinthian** believers because they claimed to be eager to give to this cause a year earlier.

**Paul's credibility, integrity, and judgment** would have been called into question if they were not prepared or had given little. He could be accused of trickery and fraud in inducing these Christians to give because **Paul** used their example to stir and motivate the other churches to give sacrificially. This is what the **Macedonian** churches did. If the **Corinthians** were not prepared, it would have made **Paul** look foolish. **Paul** would also have felt foolish by claiming something to be true when in reality it was not.

This is why the men were sent in advance so that no one would be taken off guard and that there would be no surprise. If **Paul** showed up and there was no offering because of

their neglect, the **Corinthians** would have egg on their faces too. **Paul** was trying to prevent this from happening.

There is another insight we will address here. If you want to avoid having egg on your face and being embarrassed, then keep your promises, fulfill your obligations on time, and do your best.

**Romans 12:11 (NASB)**

**<sup>11</sup>“Not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord.”**

**Paul** tells us here that we are not to be lazy or lagging in “**business.**” This word is derived from the Greek word *spoude* {*spooday*} which means “**diligence, earnestness in accomplishing a task, or striving after anything.**” We are to be fervent or “**on fire**” in our spirit. This is the idea behind the word “**fervent**” which comes from the word *zeo* {*dzeh'-o*} meaning “**to boil with heat, to be hot, enthusiastic, or to be zealous.**” The opposite attitude would be to be cold, dead, or apathetic. This is what happened at Laodicea.

**Revelation 3:15-16 (NASB)**

**<sup>15</sup>“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I wish that you were cold or hot.**

**<sup>16</sup>So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.”**

Beloved, **diligent**, **careful enthusiasm** and **zeal** will help you to keep the eggs off of your face. It will enable you to accomplish what God is leading you to do and bring glory and honor to Him. Such was the case with **Samuel Morse**.

Today's “**Information Superhighway**” began with a young artist named **Samuel Morse**. The son of a preacher, **Morse** sailed to London at age 19 to study art. He was acutely homesick. “I wish that in one instant I could tell you of my safe arrival” he wrote, “but we are 3000 miles apart and must wait four weeks to hear from each other.”

**Morse** became a respected artist and portrait painter, but his life took a sudden turn in **1832**, as he traveled back to America aboard the *Sully*. One night, the conversation at his dinner table turned to the sending of electric messages along a length of wire.

**Morse** was seized by the idea, and, arriving home, took a room atop his brother's newspaper building and spent every spare moment slaving over his “**Tele-Graph.**” After years of trial and error, **Morse** prepared a dramatic demonstration. He laid two miles of water-proofed wire under New York Harbor. Unfortunately, a ship's anchor caught the wire and destroyed it, and the crowds left, muttering.

But **Morse** planned an even more dramatic demonstration for the United States Congress. On **May 24, 1844**, before assembled dignitaries, he sent a message from the

U.S. Capitol to the railroad depot in Baltimore. The first telegraph message consisted of four words from **Numbers 23:23**: “*What Hath God Wrought!*”

All America and Europe were soon linked by telegraph poles and wires. “It is all of God,” **Morse** later said. “He used me as His hand in all this. I am not indifferent to the rewards of earth and the praise of my fellow men, but I am more pleased with the fact that my Father in Heaven has allowed me to do something for Him and for His world. Not unto us, but unto God be all the glory. Not what hath man, but what hath God wrought!”

Beloved, this should be the goal of every believer. Bringing glory to the Lord with your life will help you to avoid getting egg on your face. Living for yourself will eventually lead to embarrassing behavior.

We have examined four areas in this chapter thus far.

- *The Eagerness of the Corinthians* **2 Corinthians 9:1-2**
- *The Enthusiastic Example* **2 Corinthians 9:2b**
- *The Emissaries Mission* **2 Corinthians 9:3**
- *Embarrassment is Avoided* **2 Corinthians 9:4**
- *Next, the Exhortation to the Brethren* **2 Corinthians 9:5**
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## **THE EXHORTATION TO THE BRETHREN** **2 Corinthians 9:5**

### **2 Corinthians 9:5 (NASB)**

**<sup>5</sup>“So I thought it necessary to urge the brethren that they would go on ahead to you and arrange beforehand your previously promised bountiful gift, so that the same would be ready as a bountiful gift and not affected by covetousness.”**

For the reasons noted above, **Paul** thought it necessary to urge the brethren (**Titus and the two unnamed brothers**) that they would go on ahead to **Corinth** and arrange beforehand the Corinthians’ previously promised, bountiful, gift for the Jerusalem saints. Evidently, they had promised a large amount, and **Paul** wanted to make certain they had it ready when he arrived.

The word “**bounty**” is from the Greek word *eulogia* {*yoo-log-ee’-ah*} which means “**blessing or praise to God.**” It forms our English word eulogy. The **Corinthians’** gift would be a blessing to the Judeans. It would be an occasion for the Jerusalem Christians to bless or thank God for their gift. The word also implies a sizable blessing. **Paul** assumed that his readers would collect a substantial sum of money, and that generosity, rather than covetousness, would motivate them.

**Paul** sent **Titus** and his companions to ready this gift because he wanted no impression that these funds should be wrung out of the saints as by extortion, intimidation, or high-pressure tactics, but that this love offering should be a manifestation

of their **willing, voluntary, generosity** and **sacrifice**. This love offering was to be a blessing, a thank offering to the Lord, not a burden or source of despair. The gifts were to come from yielded, grateful hearts to the Lord, not hearts that were bitter and resentful about this offering.

This is what true biblical giving is all about. Believers are not to be intimidated or pressured to give by strong-arm tactics. Such methods make me sick. It is wrong! Present the need, put it on the table, and let God's people privately do what He leads them to do. Challenge them to live by faith and trust God at His Word, and then let the Lord work in each heart. God does a better job at motivating His children to give than you. When they do give, it is from a heart of love not loathing.

**Paul** addresses one of the key reasons why God's people do not give to the Lord. It is the problem with covetousness. This word "**covetousness**" is from the Greek word *pleonexia* {*pleh-on-ex-ee'-ah*} which means "**the greedy desire to have more, avarice, covetousness, or greed which leads a person to defraud other people.**" **Paul** warned that this problem could be the one sin that could keep the **Corinthians** from meeting their commitment. He was right.

The struggle with covetousness or greed is probably the greatest hindrance to giving to the Lord. The believers in Corinth knew the purpose for this love offering. They knew this project was part of the work of Christ. It was being conducted in a biblical manner. Since they promised to be involved in this project, any failure to keep their promise to the Lord would be the result of a spirit of covetousness. The roots of covetousness are found within our depraved heart. It is easy for us to be greedy and selfish.

**Mark 7:21-23 (NASB)**

<sup>21</sup> **"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries,**

<sup>22</sup> **deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.**

<sup>23</sup> **"All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."**

**2 Peter 2:14 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> **"Having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed [covetous], accursed children."**

Covetousness is so despicable that it is labeled as idolatry in the Scriptures. The idol is us or some possession.

**Ephesians 5:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup> **"For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God."**

**Colossians 3:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup>“Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.”

When a person gets gripped by greed and covetousness, he will trample people in his path or spurn the Lord because his heart is consumed with the idols of money or materialism.

**Micah 2:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup>“They covet fields and then seize *them*, And houses, and take *them* away. They rob a man and his house, A man and his inheritance.”

**Psalms 10:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“For the wicked boasts of his heart’s desire, And the greedy man curses *and* spurns the LORD.”

A greedy attitude is so destructive that the Lord instructs us to not fellowship with people who behave this way.

**1 Corinthians 5:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup>“But actually, I wrote to you not to associate with any so-called brother if he is an immoral person, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or a swindler—not even to eat with such a one.”

The person consumed with greed or covetousness will indulge in behavior that ends up destroying his life.

**Proverbs 28:22 (NASB)**

<sup>22</sup>“A man with an evil eye hastens after wealth And does not know that what he wants will come upon him.”

**Proverbs 15:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup>“He who profits illicitly **troubles** his own house, But he who hates bribes will live.”

The word “troubles” is from the Hebrew word ‘*akar* {aw-kar}’ which means “to stir up, disturb, bring calamity, to trouble.” Greed will disturb your home. It will unsettle your family because they are stirred up by your neglect and passion for possessions at their expense.

The story of a butterfly named *Maculinea Arion* is most instructive. The creature lays its eggs on a plant, and after feeding on the plant for several weeks, the young caterpillar makes its way to the ground. In order to complete its development, it must meet a certain

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kind of ant. When such an ant meets the caterpillar, the ant strokes it with its antennae, and the caterpillar exudes a sweet fluid from a special gland on its tenth segment.

Apparently, the ant likes this substance, because it then carries the caterpillar home to its nest. There the ants drink the sweet fluid exuded by the caterpillar, and the caterpillar feasts on larval ants. The caterpillar spends the winter in a special cavity of the ant's nest, and in the spring, it continues eating young ants. Eventually it emerges as an adult butterfly and flies away to establish more of its kind, and the cycle starts all over again.

Some people are not much different from the ants. For you see, they are greedy for a luxury item which leads to the injury of themselves. If you want to avoid shame, embarrassment, or egg on your face, then get a grip on greed or covetousness that can cause you to desire or make choices that can destroy your own life.

**Proverbs 28:16 (NASB)**

**<sup>16</sup>“A leader who is a great oppressor lacks understanding, *But* he who hates unjust gain will prolong *his* days.”**