

## **BIBLICAL ECONOMICS**

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

#### **B. The Motives for Giving Generously and Sacrificially, 2 Corinthians 9:8-15**

##### **The Path to Prosperity (2 Corinthians 9:6-15)**

**2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (NASB)**

**<sup>6</sup> Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.**

**<sup>7</sup> Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.**

**<sup>8</sup> And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;**

**<sup>9</sup> as it is written, “HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER.”**

**<sup>10</sup> Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;**

**<sup>11</sup> you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.**

**<sup>12</sup> For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.**

**<sup>13</sup> Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for *your* obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,**

**<sup>14</sup> while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.**

**<sup>15</sup> Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!”**

To the three American “unalienable Rights” of “Life, Liberty, and the pursuit of Happiness” proclaimed in the Declaration of Independence our society would add a fourth: **the right to the pursuit of prosperity.**

The headlong pursuit of wealth is the consuming passion of the age. Self-styled financial gurus churn out a bewildering plethora of books, infomercials and other TV programs, Web sites, newsletters, and magazines. Some offer sound advice; most promote dubious get-rich-quick schemes. But they all claim to have the road map to the modern-day El Dorado—the mythical city of gold the Spanish Conquistadors so eagerly sought. People today pursue their own El Dorados with the ruthless single-mindedness that characterized the Conquistadors—and often just as unsuccessfully.

Sadly, the church has fallen prey to the world's relentless pursuit of materialism. Some Christians view wealth as a sign of God's blessing, and thus consider financial success to be an essential qualification for church leaders.

The most outrageous example of materialism in the name of Christianity is, unquestionably, the heretical Word of Faith movement, or Health and Wealth Gospel. Its proponents unabashedly proclaim that God's will is for all believers to be rich. If they claim riches by faith and speak positively of them, that verbal confession itself creates the wealth. Word Faith teachers insist that God is obligated to deliver the goods believers request. They are so bold as to replace the sovereign God of Scripture (cf. [Psalm 103:19](#); [1 Timothy 6:15](#)) with the sovereignty of the believer who wields creative power to make himself healthy and wealthy by his own faith. God becomes a utilitarian genie who grants believers' every desire. (For a critique of the Word Faith movement, see John MacArthur, *Charismatic Chaos* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992]; D. R. McConnell, *A Different Gospel* [Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson, 1988].)

**[Psalm 103:19 \(NASB\)](#)**

<sup>19</sup>“The LORD has established His throne in the heavens, And His sovereignty rules over all.”

**[1 Timothy 6:15 \(NASB\)](#)**

<sup>15</sup>“Which He will bring about at the proper time—He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords.”

But believers cannot, in spite of what Word Faith deceivers shamelessly proclaim, create their own reality for their own indulgence. Such a self-centered, prideful desire does not ever characterize genuine believers. It is true that some godly men, such as **Job** and **Abraham**, were very wealthy.

Yet Paul described himself as “**both hungry and thirsty,... poorly clothed,... roughly treated, and... homeless**” ([1 Cor. 4:11](#)).

**[1 Corinthians 4:11 \(NASB\)](#)**

<sup>11</sup>“To this present hour we are both hungry and thirsty, and are poorly clothed, and are roughly treated, and are homeless.”

While Jesus said of Himself, “**The foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head**” ([Luke 9:58 NASB](#)). The church has always consisted of both rich (cf. [Matthew 27:57](#); [Acts 4:36-37](#); [Acts 8:27](#); [Acts 10:1-2](#); [Acts 16:14-15](#); [Acts 17:4](#); [1 Timothy 6:17](#)) and poor (cf. [Acts 6:1](#); [1 Corinthians 1:26](#); [2 Corinthians 8:2](#)) people, because according to His own sovereign purposes “**the Lord makes poor and rich; He brings low, He also exalts**” ([1 Samuel 2:7](#)).

**The Rich:**

**[Matthew 27:57 \(NASB\)](#)**

<sup>57</sup>“When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus.”

**Acts 4:36-37 (NASB)**

<sup>36</sup> “Now Joseph, a Levite of Cyprian birth, who was also called Barnabas by the apostles (which translated means Son of Encouragement),

<sup>37</sup> and who owned a tract of land, sold it and brought the money and laid it at the apostles’ feet.”

**Acts 8:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> “So he got up and went; and there was an Ethiopian eunuch, a court official of Candace, queen of the Ethiopians, who was in charge of all her treasure; and he had come to Jerusalem to worship.”

**Acts 10:1-2 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> “Now *there was* a man at Caesarea named Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian cohort,

<sup>2</sup> a devout man and one who feared God with all his household, and gave many alms to the *Jewish* people and prayed to God continually.”

**Acts 16:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup> “A woman named Lydia, from the city of Thyatira, a seller of purple fabrics, a worshiper of God, was listening; and the Lord opened her heart to respond to the things spoken by Paul.

<sup>15</sup> And when she and her household had been baptized, she urged us, saying, “If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come into my house and stay.” And she prevailed upon us.”

**Acts 17:4 (NASB)**

<sup>4</sup> “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 women.”

**1 Timothy 6:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> “Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy.”

**The Poor:**

**Acts 6:1 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup> “Now at this time while the disciples were increasing *in number*, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic *Jews* against the *native* Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving *of food*.”

**1 Corinthians 1:26 (NASB)**

<sup>26</sup> “For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble.”

**2 Corinthians 8:2 (NASB)**

<sup>2</sup> “That in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.”

Rich or poor, however, the Bible warns against “the deceitfulness of riches” ([Mark 4:19](#)), and exhorts, “Do not weary yourself to gain wealth, cease from your consideration of it. When you set your eyes on it, it is gone. For wealth certainly makes itself wings like an eagle that flies toward the heavens” ([Proverbs 23:4-5](#)).

[Mark 4:16-20 \(NASB\) Esp. v.19](#)

<sup>16</sup>“In a similar way these are the ones on whom seed was sown on the rocky *places*, who, when they hear the word, immediately receive it with joy;

<sup>17</sup> and they have no *firm* root in themselves, but are *only* temporary; then, when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately they fall away.”

<sup>18</sup>“And others are the ones on whom seed was sown among the thorns; these are the ones who have heard the word,

<sup>19</sup> but the worries of the world, **and the deceitfulness of riches**, and the desires for other things enter in and choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”

<sup>20</sup>“And those are the ones on whom seed was sown on the good soil; and they hear the word and accept it and bear fruit, thirty, sixty, and a hundredfold.”

In [Matthew 6:24](#) Jesus declared, “You cannot serve God and wealth,” while in [Luke 12:15](#) He warned, “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed.”

[Matthew 6:24 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>24</sup>“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. **You cannot serve God and wealth.**”

[Luke 12:13-15 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>13</sup>“Someone in the crowd said to Him, “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the *family* inheritance with me.”

<sup>14</sup> But He said to him, “Man, who appointed Me a judge or arbitrator over you?”

<sup>15</sup> Then He said to them, “**Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed**; for not *even* when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”

Greed characterizes unbelievers ([Psalm 10:3](#); [Romans 1:29](#); [1 Corinthians 6:10](#); [Ephesians 5:3](#)).

[Psalm 10:3 \(NASB\)](#)

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

[Romans 1:29 \(NASB\)](#)

<sup>29</sup>“Being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; *they are* gossips.”

**1 Corinthians 6:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup>“Nor thieves, nor *the* covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God.”

**Ephesians 5:3 (NASB)**

<sup>3</sup>“But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints.”

Greed characterizes especially false teachers ([1 Timothy 6:5](#); [Titus 1:11](#); [2 Peter 2:1-3, 14-15](#); [Jude 11](#)), and

**1 Timothy 6:5 (NASB)**

<sup>5</sup>“And constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.”

**Titus 1:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup>“Who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not *teach* for the sake of sordid gain.”

**2 Peter 2:1-3 (NASB)**

<sup>1</sup>“But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves.

<sup>2</sup>Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;

<sup>3</sup>and in *their* greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep.”

**2 Peter 2:14-15 (NASB)**

<sup>14</sup>“Having eyes full of adultery that never cease from sin, enticing unstable souls, having a heart trained in greed, accursed children;

<sup>15</sup>forsaking the right way, they have gone astray, having followed the way of Balaam, the *son* of Beor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness.”

**Jude 1:11 (NASB)**

<sup>11</sup>“Woe to them! For they have gone the way of Cain, and for pay they have rushed headlong into the error of Balaam, and perished in the rebellion of Korah.”

Greed is a form of idolatry ([Ephesians 5:5](#); [Colossians 3:5](#)).

**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.”

In sharp contrast to the materialism promoted by prosperity teachers, Jesus commanded,

**Matthew 6:19-20 (NASB)**

<sup>19</sup> “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal.”

<sup>20</sup> “But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal.”

God has a very different plan for financial soundness than that of worldly or pseudo-Christian materialism. Instead of trying to speak wealth into existence, God’s plan involves hard work, wise investment, and careful saving. But in contrast to man-centered self-indulgence, the means for prosperity is not greedy accumulation—but the opposite, generous giving:

**Proverbs 3:9-10 (NASB)**

<sup>9</sup> “Honor the LORD from your wealth And from the first of all your produce;

<sup>10</sup> So your barns will be filled with plenty And your vats will overflow with new wine.”

**Proverbs 11:24-25 (NASB)**

<sup>24</sup> “There is one who scatters, and *yet* increases all the more, And there is one who withholds what is justly due, *and yet it results* only in want.

<sup>25</sup> The generous man will be prosperous, And he who waters will himself be watered.”

**Proverbs 19:17 (NASB)**

<sup>17</sup> “One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, And He will repay him for his good deed.”

**Proverbs 28:27 (NASB)**

<sup>27</sup> “He who gives to the poor will never want, But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.”

**Malachi 3:10 (NASB)**

<sup>10</sup> “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.”

**Luke 6:38 (NASB)**

<sup>38</sup> “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure—pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

The point of those verses is clear: The more one gives, the more God gives back in return.

**2 Corinthians 9:6 (NASB)**

<sup>6</sup> “Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.”

In this passage Paul expressed that principle using familiar agricultural imagery: **Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.** Every farmer recognizes that the size of the harvest is directly proportionate to the amount of seed sown.

The farmer who **sows** seed **sparingly** will **reap** a meager harvest; the one **who sows bountifully will... reap** a great harvest. In the spiritual realm, the principle is that giving to God results in blessing from God; **bountifully** translates *eulogia*, which literally means “**blessing.**” Generous givers will reap generous blessings from God, while those who hold back selfishly fearing loss will forfeit gain.

In **chapters 8** and **9**, Paul sought to motivate the **Corinthians** to complete their giving for the needy members of the Jerusalem church. First, he reminded them of the example set by the **Macedonians** (**2 Corinthians 8:1-9**), then he gave them a direct exhortation (**2 Corinthians 8:10-9:5**), and in this section he pointed out the potential benefits. God graciously promises a harvest in accord with what believer’s sow. The appeal is not, of course, to self-interest. The promise is not that God will reward generous givers so they can consume it on their own desires. The real purpose of God’s gracious rewarding of believers will become evident as the passage unfolds.

To motivate the Corinthians to give, Paul gave a **fivefold description** of the harvest that would result: **1) love from God, 2) generosity from God, 3) glory to God, 4) friends from God, and 5) likeness to God.**