

# Day 106, 2 Corinthians 8

by David Servant

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*Paul teaches us about Christian stewardship, encouraging us to give generously and accountably, just like the Macedonian Christians, and to understand that Jesus' poverty provides us with spiritual and eternal riches.*

**Scripture:** 2 Corinthians 8:9

**Topics:** "Christian Stewardship", "Financial Accountability"

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## Description

David Servant preaches on Christian stewardship, emphasizing the importance of giving generously to support poor believers in need, as seen in the churches of Macedonia who gave beyond their ability. He highlights the principle of equality in giving, where those with abundance should help supply the needs of others, reflecting the love for neighbors and the golden rule. Paul reminds the Corinthians of the sacrificial example of Jesus, who became poor so that believers might become spiritually and eternally rich, not just materially. He stresses the need for financial accountability in benevolence projects to ensure offerings are used for their intended purpose.

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## Transcript

This and the next chapter of 2 Corinthians beautifully reveal a full and balanced picture of Christian stewardship. Note that the occasion was not the receiving of an offering by Paul for his ministry, or for a church building program, but rather, for poor believers in Jerusalem.

Paul began by informing the Corinthians of what had recently happened among the churches of Macedonia. Even though they were suffering "an ordeal of affliction" as well as "deep poverty" (8:2), they had given liberally. In fact, by God's grace, and without being pressured, they had given even "beyond their ability" (8:3), "begging...with much entreaty for the favor of participation in the support of the saints" (8:4). The Macedonian Christians were the ultimate cheerful givers. Paul expected that the Corinthian believers would follow their example.

Paul then stressed that one's giving is limited by his resources, but that one's responsibility is also determined by his resources, twice using a word that is almost anathema in materialistic culture, the word equality (8:12-15). If one Christian has abundance, he should use it to supply another Christian's need. And if that formerly-poor Christian prospers while the formerly-prosperous one becomes needy, their roles should then be reversed (8:14). It amounts to nothing more than "loving our neighbors as ourselves" and "doing unto others as we would have them do unto us" (Mark 12:31; Luke 6:31).

In 8:9 we read, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."

Prosperity preachers often claim that it is material poverty and material wealth that Paul had in mind throughout this entire verse. That is, they say that Jesus was materially rich in heaven, but He became materially poor during His incarnation, so that we can now become materially rich. Bigger houses and more expensive cars are now ours to be claimed by faith because Jesus became poor that we might become rich.

There is little doubt that Paul was speaking of material wealth when he wrote that Jesus was rich but became poor. There is good reason to doubt, however, that earthly, material wealth was the benefit Paul had in mind when he wrote of our becoming rich because of Christ's poverty. Such an interpretation stands in contradiction to the immediate biblical context. If Jesus became poor so that Christians might become materially rich on earth, why were there any poor Christians in Jerusalem who needed an offering? Why did Paul, in this same chapter, say that the Macedonian Christians were suffering "deep poverty" (8:2)? Why did Paul describe himself as being poor in 6:10? Why didn't he just claim his rightful, earthly, material wealth that Jesus made possible?

In spite of what prosperity preachers claim, just because Paul was writing about material wealth in one part of a sentence, that doesn't prove that he was talking about material wealth in another part of the same sentence. For example, Jesus Himself said to the poor believers in Smyrna, "I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich)" (Rev. 2:9). Who could intelligently claim that Jesus was saying that the Christians in Smyrna were material poor but also materially rich? No, Jesus was obviously saying that they were materially poor but spiritually rich, and He said it all in one sentence.

Jesus, because of His incarnation and death on the cross (during which He lost even His clothing, the ultimate poverty), has provided spiritual and eternal riches for us beyond our dreams. Praise God that He has also promised to supply all our material needs (not "greeds") as well!

Paul understood the need for accountability in the administration of benevolence projects, and he was careful to ensure that the offering he received would be used for the purpose for which it was collected. A number of men who had proven their trustworthiness would be involved in the project (8:16-23). Financial accountability is of utmost importance in corporate offerings to the poor, otherwise people are given an excuse to cling to their treasures, claiming that their potential gifts might be mishandled. And who can blame them?

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