

## Fiscal Fitness Part 2: A Biblical Model for Giving 2 Corinthians 8:1-10

### INTRODUCTION

Please turn in your Bibles to **2 Corinthians 8:1-10**. Now in the chapter before us, **2 Corinthians 8**, we're going to see marvelous teaching about this matter of giving. In fact, this is going to be a model for Christian giving, a theology of Christian giving. **We're going to meet some believers who both believed God and obeyed God.**

We should view our giving as an instrument God uses to minister to the hurting in our midst and in our communities. Our giving does include paying for the facilities we have. Of course, the early church didn't have that. They met outdoors. They met at various homes. They met in the temple ground, in public places. We give for the support of the life of the church, and we give to care for those who have needs. The principles for giving then have to do with those 2 areas: give for the support of the church and the meeting of the needs of God's people in the church. Now as we come to the text of **2 Corinthians 8** the issue here is meeting the needs of poor saints. The issue here is not supporting the leadership; the issue here is meeting the needs of the poor saints. And, in fact, it has to do not with the Corinthians meeting the needs of poor saints in their own church, apparently, they were already doing that, but the Corinthians meeting the needs of poor saints in other churches. In fact, it's the needs in one particular church, namely the church at Jerusalem. In **chapters 8 and 9** Paul is endeavoring to get the Corinthians to make significant generous gifts toward the poor saints in the Jerusalem church. That's the issue here. But what comes out of this is a general pattern for all Christian giving. It wouldn't matter what the issue was, or what the request was, or to what church the money was directed, or for what purpose. These verses provide for us a biblical model for giving. Now as we go through these ten verses, we're going to find a list of the characteristics of the giving of devout Christians. This is how devout Christians give. This is how committed, dedicated, selfless Christians give.

*Let's begin by noting that...*

### **I. Their giving is motivated by God's \_\_\_\_\_ (8:1)**

He doesn't even mention their giving, really. He just alludes to it in **verse 3**, they gave of their own accord. He doesn't make any direct word reference to their giving. But he's referring to their giving all the way along and he begins by **identifying it as the work of the grace of God** given in the churches of Macedonia. **What motivated them was the grace of God at work in their hearts producing this generosity.** And listen, this kind of giving which we will see the Macedonians did is not normal. It is not just human giving. It is prompted by something far beyond anything that you can find in the character of the human heart made in the image of God. **In the opening verse, Paul sets forth that foundation: we give in light of God's grace!**

*Next, please note...*

### **II. Their giving transcends difficult \_\_\_\_\_ (8:2a)**

Paul defines their circumstance as *"a severe test of affliction"*. He loves to pile up words to fill out his description. *The phrase refers to a 'mega' or 'massive' testing.* The phrase refers to the test used of putting metal in the furnace to test it. So here you have a severe test by fire, suffering-- suffering. The phrase refers to *"the crushing of grapes."* These believers were experiencing the crushing mental, physical, and spiritual pressure from poverty and persecution. And yet in the midst of this there is no *"poor me"* mentality. There is no *"why are you asking us, we've got our own problem"* mentality. In the midst of prolonged intense suffering and deprivation they gave. That's what devout believers do. **Devout believers live above their circumstances.** They had never even met the saints in Jerusalem, they didn't even know them personally, and yet they would selflessly out of their own terrible distress sacrifice for folks they had never even met who were part of the body of

*Next, please note...*

**III. Their giving is with \_\_\_\_\_ (8:2b)**

One Bible commentator says, "*They made a joy of robbing themselves.*" They were happy to rob themselves. That's how deep their devotion to the Lord, to the kingdom, to the church, to their brothers and sisters they had never even met. **Their joy rose above their pain, it rose above their sorrow, it rose above their circumstance.** It was joy in spite of not because of comfortable circumstances. Their joy was deep; it was untouched by their sufferings. It was their joy to strip themselves of what little they had. They had joy in laying up treasure in heaven. Joy in seeking the kingdom. Joy because they were more blessed to give than receive. Joy in knowing that God would give back in greater measure. And so they gave. That's the attitude that God wants.

*Next, please note...*

**IV. Their giving was \_\_\_\_\_ &  
\_\_\_\_\_ (8:3)**

**Their giving was proportionate.** That is, they gave according to their ability (*dunamis* - according to their power, according to their ability, according to their capability). Each gave as he or she was able.

God does not expect you to give what you don't have. He expects you to give what you have. That's all God asks is that you give according to your ability. **Giving is to be proportionate.** You're not responsible to give according to what *I* have; you're responsible to give according to what *you* have.

The Macedonians gave "*beyond their means (ability).*" Their giving was beyond what could or would be expected of such poor Christians. In fact, their giving would be a contradiction to their condition.

*Next, please note....*

**V. Their giving was viewed as a \_\_\_\_\_,  
not an \_\_\_\_\_ (8:4)**

This is a wonderful reality. The apostle Paul says of the Macedonians that they were "*pleading (begging)*" for the privilege of participation. Pleading/begging is a very strong word. It's used in **Luke 8:28** of the words of the demoniac who was pleading with Jesus. The Macedonians plead with Paul in allowing them to participate. They viewed giving as a privilege, not an obligation. They viewed giving as a way to express their generosity on behalf of the fellowship, their love of the brotherhood that they'd never even met. They viewed giving as a way to be partners in a shared life.

*Next, please note...*

## **VI. Their giving was an act of \_\_\_\_\_ (8:5)**

*"They first gave themselves to the Lord."* In other words, it was total dedication. We were hoping for an offering, they gave themselves. They made it all disposable. They made it all available because when you give yourself, you include giving to the Lord's work.

## **CONCLUSION**

Martin Luther said, *"When a person is converted, 3 conversions are necessary: Head, heart, and purse. And then he concluded: "Purse is the hardest."* The real secret to giving is found when we give ourselves totally to Christ. Once we sell out to Him, He has the rest of us—our wallet, our investments, out time and our abilities.

We were created to serve the Lord. Wealth is created to serve us. Tragically, we lose sight of these truths and end up losing sight of what's eternal and lasting. **Nothing dethrones King Money better than giving it to King Jesus' priorities.** This is why giving should be the first priority of the citizen's budget. Not the last. Not the leftovers. Do that and King Money stays on the throne. Make it the first priority.

**How much? How much would you need to give to show that your loyalty is to Jesus?** To be practical, it's helpful to think of your budget in terms of giving, saving, and living. One person puts it this way...here are some training wheels for personal finances in the kingdom of God. 10-10-80.

**Give God the first 10%**

**Save the second 10%**

**Live on the 80%**

Why? ***Giving first honors God. Saving builds wisdom. Living on the rest builds contentment.*** These are merely starting points. God may call or enable you to give at a higher rate and I suspect the more mature Christians among us are likely doing that.

Here's the real question, *do you want to?* People say, *"If I made more money I would give more."* All the studies say that doesn't happen. The more people make the less they give. So the question isn't how much you make but how you steward what God gives you.

Someone has said:

**"It's not what you'd do with a million,  
If riches should ever be your lot,  
But what you are doing at present  
With the dollar and quarter you've got."**