

An Exegetical Study of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9 and its Implications for Contemporary Christian Missions

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Abstract

The article poses as a response to cold reception with which the business of Christian mission and its funding is handled at the present time. Apostle Paul devoted most of the closing period of his mission career for fund generating purpose. The fund collection was meant for the poor in Jerusalem and a further means of identifying with the Jerusalem church on mission related purposes. By means of analytical study of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9, the article argued that God is interested in Christian mission works since it is the express means of reconciling the entire humanity with him. The writer posited that fund unification remains the best approach to funding Christian mission business. The article recommended for seasonal emphasis on the need for Christian mission works and its funding, since it is one of the hallmarks of a living church.

Introduction

I consider my life as worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me- the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace Acts 20:24. No event in the history of humanity is more glorious than the coming of Jesus Christ in the form and nature of man. What a story, God among men, living and operating in the bodily form in the created world. Of all the stories that are credited to human history, no one is more fascinating than this. That Almighty and self-sufficient God emptied himself of

his glory and took the form and nature of a man. He came and dwelt in the world of man, laid down His life and picked it up at will, all for his consuming love toward humanity.

The grace to be part of the vehicles for carrying this historic event round the whole world means the greatest privilege that would be accorded to anyone. Sharing the message of the climax of God's salvific plans for humanity as got championed by the work of Christ on the cross, means the highest level of expression of love from man to a fellow man. Every other means of expression of love among mankind would certainly depreciate with the change in the changing world. Only the love that is expressed in sharing the story of Christ's salvific work on the cross does appreciate endlessly.

For one to go about mission work faithfully and passionately, such must seek to come to God's level of love and passion to save the lost. According to the Bible, it is not easy to see one that would want to sacrifice his life, not even for a good man. Well, because such is a good man, perhaps, someone may dare to die. Notwithstanding, God's love for humanity became this heightened in that, he laid down his life even while we were yet sinners.

To do mission work means to assume consuming passion to save the lost. It means a business one goes into without counting or minding the potential risk involved. No matter the cost, even at the cost of one's life, if need be. Interestingly, mission work was and is the major, if not the only purpose Jesus thought it reasonable to leave the church behind for some time. So that his salvific ministry on the cross could be told around the world before the end begins. For this great and noble assignment to be accomplished, all hands must be on deck in synergy and partnership. The church must invest all at her disposal, both material and human resources, to see to the actualization of the great commission. This should be a major concern to the church because it has a direct bearing to activating the clause of Christ second coming.

At this point, a mention of the place of financial implication to mission work accomplishment becomes imperative. The financial necessity to mission work actualization cannot be overstressed. From the moment of mission business institution, the emphasis had been on who shall we send and what must the messenger be sent with. After human instrument, the concern of what and how to go about mission business is directly answerable to fund availability. Money had been a vital aspect of mission business from immemorial time. The challenge had always been to either go or invest your money. To be completely counted out of the business becomes the very height of manifestation of ignorance and folly. Understanding what grace of rare privilege it means to play a part in God's salvation plan for entire humanity would humble one forever.

The Perspective of Christian Mission

The emphasis on the mission thesis 'I am shaped for evangelism' stresses the expected part of the church, the saved ones are to play toward saving others. It means participation in the dynamics of God's being and actions. The church becomes sent out into the world by the Triune God as an extension of the divine mission, the eternal life of the Triune God and the revelation of that life in the Son's sending into the world.⁵⁸⁶ The understanding of divinely approved partnership as man partners with God to reconcile the whole world with the Creator should mean humbling and honoring to man.

Theologically speaking, God himself is a missionary. Of course, it takes a missionary to institute one. God is the architecture of everything the church is ordained to do. In this sense, to be a Christian means to be an agent of change and instrument for advancing the work of Christ, the model he set while here on earth in bodily form. The goal is until the whole world becomes filled with the knowledge of the person and Christ as the waters cover the sea. Hence, mission

⁵⁸⁶J. R. Franke, *Missional Theology*. In *Evangelical Dictionary of Theology* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2017), 555.

describes the church as God's sent and this is or should be at the heart of its reason for existence. As such, the mission should shape all that the church is and does. In essence, the challenge becomes to grow from church with a mission program to a fully missional conception of the church.⁵⁸⁷

Hence, in the context and interest of the research, the idea of 'mission' is not general but specific and, that of Christian mission. It connotes the understanding of the place of individual Christian and the church at large in turning the world upside down for Christ. It should be not just a part of Christian life; it means the very livewire of the church. It should be not what part of the church fund should be channeled to, it ought to be all the church fund is meant for. No matter the diverse approaches to church ministry, everything should be pointing to Christian mission when critically examined. In the opinion of Beward, *mission* is the joyous and loving response of the Christian community to the universal and exclusive claims of the Triune God that has revealed himself definitively in Christ Jesus.⁵⁸⁸ It involves crossing all human boundaries, by Christians who are called individually and corporately to proclaim God's purposes. Through their witness and service, they summon sinners to turn to God and share in his promised kingdom. The right response to God is inseparable from the calling of the nations and offer of new life to all who will hear.⁵⁸⁹

By implication, it goes without much argument to assert that, Christian mission is and should be the very nature of Christianity both individually and corporately. To a Christian or Christian corporate body, living as mission-minded should not be negotiable. More than that, the attitude or approach to Christian mission enterprise is of major emphasis. The first step toward real reconciliation may have to

⁵⁸⁷Ibid.

⁵⁸⁸IAN Beward, Christian Mission. In *The New International Dictionary of the Christian Church* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1978), 664.

⁵⁸⁹Ibid.

be a raising of consciousness on the part of the victims of oppression. This would enable them to see and name the injustice under which they have been suffering. Such conscious raising can easily look like trouble-making. This becomes truth especially to those who are benefiting from the oppressive situation. It is clear then, to engage in genuine Christian mission work, one must avoid taking the easy option.⁵⁹⁰ From the religious point of view, reconciliation is a grace. The initiative was first from God. He calls the oppressor to repentance and calls the victim to forgiveness.⁵⁹¹

To be mission-minded means to release oneself for the benefit of others. It becomes modelled in the salvific work of Christ. To release oneself for the task requires one to deny oneself for such a project. This is because the right spirit for the mission requires holistic self-involvement. Anyone that releases oneself for a particular course will not find it difficult releasing every other thing of his or her life. To live a mission minded life means the very height of expression of love for the lost. The essence and purpose of mission may be defeated if it becomes championed on the account of coarse mind-games and manipulation. A Christian should be not spoken to coarsely before such becomes mission minded. A truly and genuinely saved Christian should be spurred to contribute to the saving project of others. The Macedonian churches modelled a good example of the right and would be the attitude of every Christian toward mission project. They intervened on their own even without formal appeal from anybody. They were eager to be part and contribute to the believers' mission business. They have a good excuse to be exempted because they were going through severe persecution. Yet, they understood that it means witchcraft if they are left out of the Christian mission business. They gave to their ability and even went ahead to give above their ability. It becomes possible because they had first released themselves for the kingdom business. This becomes worthy of commendation and emulation. To be mission-minded is to be ready to lose oneself for

⁵⁹⁰Donald Dorr, *Mission in Today's World* (New York: Orbis Books, 2000), 130.

⁵⁹¹Ibid.

Christ sake if the need be. Life is the most precious of all gifts from God to mankind. When one becomes defiant to losing oneself over a particular course, nothing else will be too much to let go on account of the same course. In contrast, when individual Christian finds it difficult to give and participate in Christian mission business, it becomes a manifestation of the point that such life is yet to be surrendered for the kingdom business. Except for one's life or self is given first, releasing of one's material possessions for Christian mission enterprise may be very difficult if not impossible.

Analytical Study of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

The section takes a swipe at the sampled Bible passage vis-à-vis concise introduction to the book of 2 Corinthians and exegetical analysis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9.

Concise Introduction to the Book of 2 Corinthians

The section surveys critical literary issues that are associated with the writing and canonicity of 2 Corinthians. This is done under four different sections namely: the authorship, recipients, date and purpose of writing the book of 2 Corinthians.

Authorship of the Book of 2 Corinthians

Both traditional position and modern scholarship credited the authorship of the letters to the Corinthian church to apostle Paul. Unlike the case with its unity, its authorship right or authenticity does not draw many arguments or scholarly critics. In essence, writers such as Edmond Hiebert does not think it is necessary or needful to contend against Pauline authorship⁵⁹². He viewed 2 Corinthians as the most autobiographical of all of Paul's Epistles. This he explained in

⁵⁹²Edmond D. Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1954), 135.

his argument that Paul bares his heart and life in the letter as in none of the other writings that are credited to his authorship.⁵⁹³

In the view of Norman Geisler, the evidence, both internal and external, is true and very strong that 2 Corinthians was written by the apostle Paul⁵⁹⁴. Chapter one verse one and chapter ten verse one are among the internal evidence in support of Pauline authorship. In the opinion of Henry Mahan, it is evident from the salutation that apostle Paul is the author of the epistle.⁵⁹⁵ To James Scott, the piece is part of the lively correspondence between the apostle Paul and the congregation he founded on the Peloponnesian coast of Greece. It reveals much about Paul's conception of himself, as he vigorously defends his apostolic claim in Corinth against internal dissension and external intrusion.⁵⁹⁶

According to Robert Gundry, the piece is Paul's apologia regarding his understanding of himself vis-à-vis his apostleship and personal ministry.⁵⁹⁷ As for D. A. Carson, Douglas Moo, and Leon Morris (1992: 262), attempts to discredit Pauline authorship is unnecessary since various sections of the partition theories are nevertheless ascribed to Paul.⁵⁹⁸ The current writer is aware that almost every Bible book is with either a major or minor authorship dispute. In the case of the book under review, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1 had been judged to be a later interpolation written, perhaps, by someone in the Pauline school.⁵⁹⁹ Head or tail, the position of the current researcher

⁵⁹³Edmond D. Hiebert, *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 135.

⁵⁹⁴Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2014), 156.

⁵⁹⁵Henry T. Mahan, *Bible Class Commentary 1 & 2 Corinthians* (Watford: Evangelical Press, 1985), 97.

⁵⁹⁶James M. Scott, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series: 2 Corinthians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 1998), 1.

⁵⁹⁷Robert H. Gundry, *A Survey of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1970), 285.

⁵⁹⁸D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo et al. *An Introduction to the New Testament* (Leicester: Apollos, 1992), 262.

⁵⁹⁹D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo et al. *An Introduction to the New Testament*, 263.

is that it serves a great deal concerning for Pauline authorship than somewhat of a dizzying exercise trying to discredit it. Hence, the work adopts and endorses Pauline authorship right of the Book of 2 Corinthians.

Recipients of the Book of 2 Corinthians

The section seeks to establish the first audience of the epistle. As a sectional task, it seems very easy to do. One of the major differences between Pauline corpus and general epistles is that, while Pauline epistles are designated by the recipients, the general epistles, excepts Hebrews, are designated by the writers. This informs the trend of Paul's epistle as written to the: Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians and so on. This is in sharp contrast to the epistle of Peter, James, John and Jude.

That way, there seems no academic harm in affirming that first recipients or audience of the epistle in question are the believers in Corinth. The church in Corinth was founded by Paul. He knew them very well and vice versa. Norman Geisler would conclude that the epistle was written to the Corinthian church which was founded during Paul's second missionary journey (Acts 18:1-17).⁶⁰⁰ He identified two groups in the church at Corinth that Paul addressed: (i) Majority (chapters 1-9) "you all, jubilant in tone" (2:3-5 ; 3:1-2 ; 5:10 ; 7:13). (ii) Minority (10-13) "some, sad and sever in tone"(10:2, 12 ; 11:4 ; 12:21).⁶⁰¹ It is believed that an interval of not more than a year separates Paul's two letters to the Corinth.⁶⁰²

Date of Writing the Book of 2 Corinthians

There seems to be that scholar's consensus about the date of writing the second epistle to the Corinthians. A number of consulted authors

⁶⁰⁰Norman L. Geisler, *A Popular Survey of the New Testament*, 157.

⁶⁰¹Ibid.

⁶⁰²Pat and David Alexander, Edits. *The Lion Handbook to the Bible 5th Edition* (Wilkinson: Lion Books, 2017), 706.

placed the date of writing the epistle in the early second half of the first century. Authors such as J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney edits. (1987:235), James Scott (1998:1), Pat and David Alexander edits (2017:706), Norman Geisler (2007: 157), D. A. Carson, Douglas J. Moo and Leon Morris (1992:283), Edmond Hiebert (1977:147), all place the date of writing the epistle at A.D.56-57. Since the first epistle to the Corinthians is said to be written while Paul was in Ephesus, sometime before Pentecost (Acts 16:8), in around A.D. 55, the second epistle would have been completed within the next few months.⁶⁰³

Purpose of Writing the Book of 2 Corinthians

Several reasons informed the setting for writing the epistle under review. At the time, Paul had been under attack from the church in Corinth for various reasons. Longing for a better relationship, he wrote to explain himself and his calling as an apostle.⁶⁰⁴

There seems to have been a dramatic change of situation in the Corinthian church between the periods of writing what is known today as first and second epistles to the Corinthians. There was no basis to question Paul's apostolic authenticity by the time of writing the first epistle. The problem as at the time of writing the first epistle seems more within the church, rather than between the church and the apostle.⁶⁰⁵ However, as at the time of writing the second epistle, Paul's legitimacy as an apostle was itself being called into question, probably because of his weakness and suffering. Under the influence of "false apostle" (2 Corinthians 10:4, 13-15), some within the church were interpreting Paul's apostolic lifestyle of suffering and weakness

⁶⁰³D. A. Carson, 283.

⁶⁰⁴Pat and David Alexander, Edits. *The Lion Handbook to the Bible 5th Edition*, 706.

⁶⁰⁵James M. Scott, *Understanding the Bible Commentary Series: 2Corinthians*, 2.

as a sign that his claim to be a true apostle of Jesus Christ was fraudulent.⁶⁰⁶

Beyond the case with Paul's apostolic authenticity, the epistle was written to commend the Corinthians for their positive response to Titus' mission. More to that, it was written to further shed more light on the nature of Paul's ministry, to encourage them to participate in the collection to alleviate the pain of other believers in need and to admonish a rebellious group in the church.⁶⁰⁷ Notwithstanding, Edmond Hiebert postulates that the one predominant purpose of Paul in writing the entire epistle is to re-establish fully his apostolic authority in the Corinthian church.⁶⁰⁸ He viewed other apparent purposes in the epistle as sub-servient to this one predominant purpose. He showed no interest in presenting the various purposes equally. To him, the major calling for the writing of the epistle was for Paul to vindicate his apostolic position and authority. In a bid to consolidate his argument, Hiebert quoted Meyer who stated thus:

The aim of the epistle is stated by Paul himself at 13:10, viz. to put the church before he arrives in person into that frame of mind, which it was necessary that he should find, so that he might thereupon set to work among them, not with stern corrective authority, but for their edification. However, to attain this aim, he had to make it his chief task to elucidate, confirm and vindicate his apostolic position and authority, which, in consequence of his former letter, has been assailed still more vehemently, openly and influentially by opponents. For, if that were regained, his whole influence would be regained; if the church were again confirmed on this point, and the opposition defeated, every hindrance to his successful personal labor among them would be removed. With the establishment of his apostolic character and reputation he becomes chiefly occupied in the whole

⁶⁰⁶James M. Scott, 2.

⁶⁰⁷J. D. Douglas and Merrill C. Tenney Edits. *2Corinthians*. In *Zondervan Illustrated Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1967), 310.

⁶⁰⁸Edmond D. Hiebert, 147.

epistle, everything else is only subordinate, including a detailed appeal in respect of the collection.⁶⁰⁹

Norman Geisler is among writers that frowned at the promotion of the apostolic vindication as the major or predominant purpose of writing the epistle.⁶¹⁰ According to Geisler there is no doubt that Paul wrote 2 Corinthians: (i) to answer the false teachers who had entered the church at Corinth (11: 13-15), (ii) to defend his apostleship and message (12:12), (iii) to reveal his trials and triumphs as an apostle of Christ (4, 11), (iv) to show the consolation provided in the service of Christ (1:3-7; 4:17), (v) to encourage their giving for mission purpose (8, 9), (vi) to encourage the Corinthians to be jubilant and triumphant in their Christian faith (2:14).⁶¹¹

Head or tail, the researcher is not motivated to dig deep into the argument respecting the order of importance or necessity of the epistle's purpose of writing. This is because the current writer is convinced that detailed work on this direction will not add any additional flavor to the concern or purpose of the research. It is enough to note that it will be very difficult if not impossible to find a Bible book that was written clearly for just a particular purpose. Bible books are known to be written out of various callings, though some may be promoted as the major purposes for the work in the first instance. To the current writer, it should be enough to note that one of the purposes for writing the epistle under consideration was to promote and encourage the goodwill of liberal and selfless giving for Christian mission business.

Exegetical Analysis of 2 Corinthians 8:1-9

Most of the third missionary journey of Paul before his last return to Jerusalem was devoted to mobilizing the churches, he planted for

⁶⁰⁹Heinrich A. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians* (n.p.p: n.p.n., 1884), 411.

⁶¹⁰Norman L. Geisler, 157.

⁶¹¹Ibid.

fund generating purpose. The fund collection was meant for the poor in Jerusalem. He had intimated the Corinthian church about the subject matter before now (1 Corinthians 16:1-4). The unhealthy relationship between Paul and the Corinthian church must have halted the whole process. The apostle knew the import of further efforts to get reconciled with the Corinthians and restore the cordial relationship. Without which, it may be very difficult if not impossible to get them to benefit from this great grace of expression of Christian sincere and genuine love to others. The latest situation, the Corinthians warmth reception of Titus, their confession of loyalty to the apostle and declaration of war against those working him, may have contributed to reasons Paul reignited the passion and desire to revisit the subject matter. The letter to the Romans was written from Corinth and a reference to the collection in Romans 15:26ff attests to the fruitfulness of the apostle's efforts.

The motive for the collection was not obscure, the apostle had a sincere concern for the people described as 'poor' in Jerusalem. Their poverty could have been occasioned by famine or other natural hazards. The apostle himself was once involved in a famine relief fund (Acts 11:27-30; Galatians 2:1-10). Beyond giving for the relief of the poor, Paul also saw spiritual significance in giving for the Saints. It was a way to consolidate on the synergy between the Gentiles and more Jewish believers' congregations in Jerusalem. It further serves to express gratitude to God for the gift of salvation that reached the Gentiles through the Jewish instrumentality. The work attempts a brief but concise exegetical analysis of the Bible passage, using the structure already drawn at the structural analysis section.

The Passionate Appeal Toward Generous Christian Giving

2 Corinthians 8:1 Γνωρίζομεν δὲ ὑμῖν, ἀδελφοί, τὴν
 χάριν τοῦ θεοῦ τὴν δεδομένην ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις
 τῆς Μακεδονίας,

**2 Corinthians 8:1 Now, brethren, we *wish to make*
known to you the grace of God which has been
given in the churches of Macedonia,**

The region of Macedonia holds a significant position in the testimony of Paul's Christian mission work. There he made converts of various social status: slave, rich and influential people in the city. The churches which are resulting figures of his missionary work in the area are always of good mention. They include churches in Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea and so on. Apostle Paul sought to inform, make known or to give knowledge of these churches that have availed themselves of God's grace for the ministry of generous Christian giving.⁶¹²

Paul often uses the verb *δίνω* to give with *Χάρις* grace (Romans 12:3,6; 15:15; 1 Corinthians 1:4; 3:10; Galatians 2:9; Ephesians 3:2, 8; 4:7). The perfect tense (has given) makes the reading in the verse very unique. The Macedonian churches had already received a deposit of the grace of God.⁶¹³

Introduction to the admonishment on Christian giving is that of example and exhortation. While the apostle makes a passionate appeal and exhorts the Corinthian church on the subject matter, the Macedonians are on hand for a good example of the case study. He uses the example of the generous Macedonian churches in demonstrating or illustrating the grace for Christian giving.⁶¹⁴ In so doing, the apostle argued that to be a complete Christian that excels on all fronts, all one needs is the sufficiency of God's grace. The good news becomes that, the grace for accomplishing this great task in the life of individual Christian is not peculiar to certain people. For the

⁶¹²Heinrich A. Meyer, *Critical and Exegetical Handbook to the Epistles to the Corinthians*, 138.

⁶¹³Wick Broomall, II Corinthians. In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 1275.

⁶¹⁴Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Handbook* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1998), 508.

grace of God that brings salvation has appeared unto all men. It teaches everyone to say no to all manners of ungodliness (Titus 2:11).

It implies that grace is a teacher, it does teach. Therefore, for one to not excel in all manners of godliness does not suggest on the account of lack of God's grace. Rather, it could be attributed to lack of self-avail to the available God's grace for accomplishing all for Christ. Thus, the apostle opened the chapter with an emphasis on the availability of God's grace for doing exploits. That goes before the appeal to the Corinthians to emulate or follow after the Macedonians example in generous Christian giving.⁶¹⁵

3.4.2 Hardship and the Ministry of Christian Giving

2 Corinthians 8:2 ὅτι ἐν πολλῇ δοκιμῇ θλίψεως ἡ περισσεΐα τῆς χαρᾶς αὐτῶν καὶ ἡ κατὰ βάθους πτωχεΐα αὐτῶν ἐπερίσσευσεν εἰς τὸ πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος αὐτῶν·

2 Corinthians 8:2 (NIV) In the midst of a very severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.

The Jerusalem church is the mother church of the Christian churches in the world. The discussion for the collection in favor of the Jerusalem church continues. In verse two, apostle Paul improves on his credit to the Macedonian churches. It seems not enough to refer to them as good examples, there is a need for expatiation on the claim. This Paul did by arguing that, they had good reason to decline their participation on account of the severe persecution they were going through. Yet, even in such hostile circumstances, they were very hungry to be part of the ministry of Christian giving.

⁶¹⁵Mark Water, Edit. *AMG's Encyclopedia of Bible Facts* (Chattanooga: AMG Pub., 2004), 949.

The Macedonians' joy combined with their poverty has welled up in rich generosity. Perhaps, it could not reflect a great or huge amount of money, the amount was never mentioned. More than the amount, it was their spirit of generosity that Paul is urging the Corinthians to emulate.⁶¹⁶ The extreme poverty of the Macedonians becomes reflected on the point that Paul never finds it necessary in his letter to Thessalonica and Philippi to warn these believers against the danger of wealth or to address an exhortation to the rich.⁶¹⁷ To be on a safer side, at least, not in the manner with his exhortation in 1 Timothy 6:9ff.

Joy in affliction may not be appealing as a topic to certain individual believers. Yet, here apostle Paul postulated the Macedonians example as should be an ideal Christian response to trials, suffering and hardship. The apostle himself has personal experience of smiling through hardship. He has always been on the defense of hardship on account of one's Christian faith as worthwhile. He prominently features accounts of the hardships he has suffered and endured in his service to (2 Corinthians 4:7-12; 6:3-10; 11:21-33). By so doing, he introduced a common topic of Greco-Roman philosophical texts into the defense of his ministry. These hardship catalogues served several ends. Often, they reinforced the core value of the Stoic philosophy namely, imperturbability in the face of extreme circumstances (Seneca, *Constant* 10.4; 15.1-3; Epictetus, *Diss* 4.7.1-18).⁶¹⁸ To the Stoics, no external circumstance should be worthy of denying one a state of tranquility or ataraxia, the state of absence of pain in the mind. Their principal teaching encourages one to maintain the state of happiness irrespective of seeming challenges such as sickness, danger, death threat or disrepute (Epictetus, *Diss* 2.19.24).⁶¹⁹ In this

⁶¹⁶David J. A. Clines, 2Corinthians. In *The International Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1986), 1403.

⁶¹⁷Ibid.

⁶¹⁸David A deSilva, *An Introduction to the New Testament 2nd Edition* (Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2018), 517.

⁶¹⁹Ibid.

sense, the Stoics believe that hardships prove the true worth of a person, the inner strength, the determination of the will, the moral fortitude, Dio, *Or.*8.⁶²⁰

Thus, Apostle Paul may have been influenced to some extent by world view, in his understanding and theology of joy in affliction. In his presentation of the Macedonian churches example, he postulates that one who maintains moral character and determination in the face of severe hardship or affliction is worthy of commendation. This is just what the Macedonian churches have demonstrated about the collection project. In the face of hardship, instead of building excuses to abandon the kingdom business, one should be motivated to allow God the opportunity to prove His supremacy. Ultimately, hardship ought to bring one to the point of seeking after God and wholeheartedly depending on Him. God is happy when a man seeks after Him. That way, situations that can promote man's search for God's intervention may be permitted by God.

One important point of connection between Paul and philosophical interpretations of enduring hardship is their probative value. Paul's endurance of hardship proves his fidelity to God's commissioning him as a servant (2 Corinthians 11:23-29) and gives evidence of courage, commitment, and sincerity.⁶²¹ The positive stance promoted by the Stoics on understanding severe and hard times may not be too appealing to the uninitiated. However, the emphasis could probably have helped Paul to present his defense of the genuineness of his apostleship even in the face of severe hardship. That he was known for poor health and a claim of though poor but making people rich, may have been promoted negatively by those campaigning against his genuine apostolic position. In his defense, Paul argued that maintaining moral character and steadfastness in the face of the threatening situation is and should be the hallmark of a true soldier of

⁶²⁰Ibid.

⁶²¹John T. Fitzgerald, *Cracks in an Earthen Vessel* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1988), 206.

Christ. There are, however, some notable points of difference between Paul's theology of joy in affliction and the Stoics teaching on moral values in the face of hardship. Paul speaks candidly of the impact his hardship has had on him. He experiences their crushing weight quite fully (2 Corinthians 1:8-9). Moreover, his ability to endure hardship is not ultimately a proof of his own accomplishment in putting philosophy into practice or promotion of his moral determination. Although Fitzgerald believes that he did make such a claim in Philippians 4:11-12: I am not saying this because I am in need, for I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances... I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want.⁶²² Head or tail, the apostle usually credits his ability to endure hardship to the surpassing power and grace of God, the One who raises the dead and emboldens the afflicted, 2 Corinthians 1:9; 4:7.⁶²³

3.4.3 The Macedonian Churches Manner of Generosity

2 Corinthians 8:3 ὅτι κατὰ δύναμιν, μαρτυρῶ, καὶ παρὰ δύναμιν, ἀθθαίρετοι

2 Corinthians 8:4 μετὰ πολλῆς παρακλήσεως δεόμενοι ἡμῶν, τὴν χάριν καὶ τὴν κοινωνίαν τῆς διακονίας τῆς εἰς τοὺς ἁγίους

2 Corinthians 8:3 NIV For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own,

2 Corinthians 8:4 they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the Saints.

As the discourse progresses, it becomes pertinent that Paul appreciates the manner with which the Macedonian churches

⁶²²Ibid, 205.

⁶²³Victor P. Furnish. *II Corinthians* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1984), 280-83.

participated in the collection project. Beyond giving abundantly, they gave cheerfully as well. By arguing that they gave both according to their ability and well beyond their ability, Paul believed that they gave sacrificially. The place of a heart of sacrifice in living an effective Christian life cannot be overstressed. To do something sacrificially is to let go of something of great value for another of greater worth. Beyond their demonstration of sacrificial giving, they did so voluntarily and willingly. They were not told to give or how much to give, rather, they begged to be allowed to participate; freely and cheerfully they gave. Such and what a demonstration of love for Christ and other brethren.⁶²⁴

The Macedonians refused to allow their slender means of income and adverse circumstances to debar them from the great feeling of privilege to identify and have fellowship (*koinōnia*) with the Saints in Jerusalem. It does not suggest a budget imbalance, however, their eagerness to contribute or participate led them to surpass all expectations.⁶²⁵ Weiss suggests that perhaps, their request for allowance to participate was conveyed by the Macedonians namely: Gaius and Aristarchus, whom Luke describes as Paul's travelling companions in Acts 19:29.⁶²⁶ That they were willing of themselves implied that Paul needed to not do with them as he is currently doing with the Corinthian church. Instead of the apostle looking for how or who to use as an example to plead or admonish them, it was the Macedonians entreating him to please accept their heart of fellowship.

Beyond what is given, giving cheerfully or willingly is of much importance. In Deuteronomy 15:14 and Ezra 2:6, 9, giving is encouraged to be within one's ability. The Macedonians surpassed this idea. The Greek word translated as participation, sharing or fellowship is *koinōnia*. It was used technically in business documents

⁶²⁴Henry T. Mahan, *Bible Class Commentary 1 & 2Corinthians*, 139.

⁶²⁵Murray J. Harris, *2Corinthians*. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 10* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976), 366.

⁶²⁶J. Weiss, *Earliest Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1959), 366.

of Paul's day for a partnership. Whether Paul conceives of this partnership officially or unofficially, it is clear that the Macedonians saw support, like hospitality, as a privilege.⁶²⁷ In Judaism, the term is used technically for distributing alms for the poor.⁶²⁸ The privilege of sharing or fellowship alludes both to a brotherhood of contributors and to a fellowship between donors and recipients. As contributors to the collection, the Macedonians were demonstrating evidence of their oneness with other contributing Gentile churches and with the parent body in Jerusalem with whom they have an affinity.⁶²⁹

3.4.4 The Macedonians Method of Generous Christian Giving

2 Corinthians 8:5 καὶ οὐ καθὼς ἠλπίζαμεν ἀλλ' /
ἀλλὰ ἑαυτοὺς ἔδωκαν πρῶτον τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἡμῖν διὰ
θελήματος θεοῦ,

2 Corinthians 8:5 NIV And they did not do as we
expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord
and then to us in keeping with God's will.

The main element in the approach of the Macedonian churches to the ministry of generous Christian giving is the point that they gave themselves first. Their spirit of giving was miraculous for its rich liberality out of deep poverty. Notwithstanding, the reason was basic, they first gave themselves to the Lord. All acts of charity and Christian giving should begin from where the Macedonian believers began. It was the point at which the Corinthian believers were exhorted to begin. Giving oneself to the Lord should always come

⁶²⁷Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament* (Downers Grove: Inter-Varsity Press, 1993), 505.

⁶²⁸Ibid.

⁶²⁹Murray J. Harris, 2Corinthians. In *The Expositor's Bible Commentary Vol. 10*, 367.

first. Until God is fully in possession of one's life, He may never own all that one has, including the person's pocketbooks.⁶³⁰

To give oneself connotes to surrender or release oneself toward the success of a particular course. Their liberality becomes expanded thus: they gave sacrificially, that is, they gave well beyond their means. They gave willingly, that is, they did of their own free will. They gave eagerly, that is, they beseeched with much entreaty for the opportunity to be part of the collection project. They gave spiritually, that is, first, they gave their own selves to the Lord.⁶³¹ Thus, the Macedonian believers stand a great deal of example of would-be an attitude toward Christian giving. Their dedication to God and His work accompanied their giving of money.⁶³²

Their charity was founded on true piety. They solemnly made a fresh surrender of themselves and all they had, unto the Lord Jesus Christ. They sanctified their contributions to God's honor, by first giving themselves to the Lord.⁶³³ By acting in the spirit of genuine Christian charity, the Macedonian believers well and far exceeded the apostle's expectation. By giving themselves as well as their alms, they staged strong claim of themselves as people who were consecrated to the Lord, and who are ready to share in the toils of other Saints or share in the cost of winning over those that are without.⁶³⁴

Indeed, one can argue that without the surrendering of oneself first, it may be very difficult if not impossible that one gives out material resources in his/her possession for the kingdom business. Anyone that

⁶³⁰Merrill F. Unger, *The New Unger's Bible Handbook*, 508.

⁶³¹Wick Broomall, II Corinthians. In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1962), 1275.

⁶³²Fred L. Fisher, 2Corinthians. In *The Teacher's Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Broadman Press, 1972), 737.

⁶³³Leslie F. Church, Edit. *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary in One Volume* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1960), 1833.

⁶³⁴C. H. Irwin, Edit. *Irwin's Bible Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1928), 504.

surrenders him/herself for the actualization of a particular project is ready to lose his/her life on that account. To operate at this point, there is a need to avail oneself of the special grace of God. The point remains that, no matter what may be given, if the life of the one giving is not given first, it will not be acceptable by God. The highest sacrifice anyone can make for the kingdom business is the presentation of oneself as a living sacrifice unto God. It means the basis for establishing individual Christian spiritual ministry. To be a Christian does not mean to have Christ on board of one's life journey, it is rather to allow Him take over the driving seat of one's life journey. Poor enough, many only want to enjoy his presence by having Him on board while they do the driving, just few can trust Him to take over the driving seat.

3.4.5 Appeal to Abound also in the Grace of Generosity (2 Corinthians 8:6-7)

2 Corinthians 8:6 εἰς τὸ παρακαλέσαι ἡμᾶς Τίτον ἵνα καθὼς προενήρξατο οὕτως καὶ ἐπιτελέσῃ εἰς ὑμᾶς καὶ τὴν χάριν ταύτην·

2 Corinthians 8:7 ἀλλ' ὥσπερ ἐν παντὶ περισσεύετε, πίστει καὶ λόγῳ καὶ γνώσει καὶ πάσῃ σπουδῇ καὶ τῇ ἐξ ἡμῶν ἐν ὑμῖν ἀγάπῃ, ἵνα καὶ ἐν ταύτῃ τῇ χάριτι περισσεύητε

2 Corinthians 8:6 NIV So we urged Titus, just as he had earlier made a beginning, to bring also to completion this act of grace on your part.

2 Corinthians 8:7 NIV But just as you excel in everything- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us- see that you also excel in this grace of giving.

At this point, it becomes more needful that Paul recognizes and appreciates the good things about the Corinthian church. Giving credit to people's positive impact will propel them to bridge the gap that is created by their weakness. As the apostle persuades the Corinthians to this good thing, he commends them for other good things. Most people love to be complimented, especially when they are expected to part with certain of their possessions. It means a justice that must be done to those in whom God's grace shines, to give them their due commendation.⁶³⁵

Undoubtedly, Titus must have begun discussing the collection project with the Corinthian believers in his previous visit, 1 Corinthians 16:1.⁶³⁶ There could be two positions as to why Paul has to revisit the discussion in person. First, it could be that the believers in Corinth did not yield or respond to Titus appeal as expected. Hence, the need for the apostle to buttress on the issue. Second, it could be that Titus effort was only a step to prepare their minds for the meeting with the apostle. This will ensure the believers in Corinth are not hearing about the collection project for the first time at the time of Paul's emphasis. They are ensured to be ready for the project beforehand of the apostle's arrival. The researcher thinks that the first assumption will not represent the believers in Corinth well. There appear grounds to believe that it is safer to project the probability of the latter assumption.

In a similar development, there appear grounds to believe that believers in Corinth were once eager to begin this good work. It becomes expedient that they finish what they had begun. Indeed, good purposes are nice, like buds, they blossom. They are pleasant to behold, and they give hope of good fruit. However, they become lost and insignificant without performances, this is not acceptable. Good

⁶³⁵Leslie F. Church, Edit. *Matthew Henry's Bible Commentary in One Volume*, 1834.

⁶³⁶Daniel R. Mitchell, II Corinthians. In *King James Bible Commentary* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson, 1999), 1520.

intent or purpose should be followed up with the endeavor for performance. Certainly, God judges one in accord with what one is potentiated to do, not otherwise, no one is rejected on account of what he/she is not potentiated to do.⁶³⁷ Paul would have argued that to every cheerful and generous giver, God will not owe anyone nothing. There is a bountiful reward for every cheerful and generous giver.

Paul sent to the believers in Corinth an advance team that included Titus and other Christian brothers from Macedonia, to help the church complete its fund drive before his arrival.⁶³⁸ Since the Macedonians who teamed with the apostle on the collection project have performed so credibly, those who were early supporters should not be pushed to the sidelines, 2 Corinthians 8:10. Thus, Paul encouraged Titus to follow through and see to the completion of this act of grace on the part of the Corinthian believers.⁶³⁹

In a bid to persuade the Corinthian believers to do that which is needful, Paul reminds them of the great and various opportunities at their disposal unlike if compared to the Macedonians. Almost every ugly situation of the Macedonian church is opposed to the Corinthians. If out of severe poverty the Macedonian believers excel in the grace of Christian giving, the Corinthians, out of their richness, should do even more. Opportunities that come one's way should be utilized and harnessed for furthering the kingdom business.

This becomes achievable by being a source of blessing to humanity and glory to God Almighty. Following Titus' commission comes Paul's expression of his expectations on the part of the Corinthian believers. The expression of 'as you abound in everything' does two things namely: first, in addition to recognizing and appreciating the positive side of the Corinthian believers, it stands in contrast to the

⁶³⁷Leslie F. Church, 1834.

⁶³⁸Michael B. Thompson, 2Corinthians. In *The Eerdmans Companion to the Bible* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans, 2011), 663.

⁶³⁹Issiaka Coulibaly, 2Corinthians. *Africa Bible Commentary* (Nairobi: Word-Alive, 2006), 1406.

poverty of the Macedonian church with obvious implications. Second, from the outset, it expresses to the Corinthians exactly what Paul expects of them.⁶⁴⁰ There is no doubt that Paul felt it was appropriate to engage them in the collection project for financial relief of the church in Jerusalem.⁶⁴¹

In essence, there is the privilege of expressing a heart of devotion through one's giving to God, and of expressing concern for God's people by lending to the needy. The New Testament emphasizes a deep concern for the poor and needy, especially those within the family of faith. Paul and other apostles did organize offerings to be taken up for those in hunger-ridden foreign lands.⁶⁴² In the early NT church, there were no buildings or structures to finance, no curricula, or programs to support, at least, not in the manner as with contemporary church situation. Yet, there were needs within the body of Christ which was chiefly on alleviating the poverty or hunger-ridden areas. This means that collections at this time were chiefly directed to helping and empowering humanity. Also, funds were made available to the apostle and other travelling missionaries. In some special cases, local elders would be supported by the congregation. The fund collection spoke of here and indeed in other NT passages (cf. Acts 11:27-30), were, however intended for the support of Christian brothers and sisters in lands struck by famine or some other natural disaster.⁶⁴³

The argument suggests that in the body of Christ, one should not be burdened while another is eased. There should be a genuine willingness to share abundance with the needy.⁶⁴⁴ It becomes not surprising as to why the term used for 'giving' in this NT context is

⁶⁴⁰Daniel R. Mitchell, II Corinthians. In *King James Bible Commentary*, 1520.

⁶⁴¹John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament 3rd Edition* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2011), 318.

⁶⁴²Lawrence O. Richards, *The Teacher's Commentary* (Wheaton: Victor Books, 1987), 887.

⁶⁴³Ibid, 888.

⁶⁴⁴Merrill F. Unger, 508.

not the typical Greek word for ‘giving a gift.’ Instead, the NT writers adopt the Greek word *koinōnia* which means ‘sharing or fellowship.’ As Christians shared life in Christ, their family relationship becomes expressed by a sharing of financial and material resources.⁶⁴⁵

The Purpose of the Admonishment

2 Corinthians 8:8 Οὐ κατ' ἐπιταγὴν λέγω, ἀλλὰ διὰ τῆς ἐτέρων σπουδῆς καὶ τὸ τῆς ὑμετέρας ἀγάπης γνήσιον δοκιμάζων·

2 Corinthians 8:8 NIV I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others.

In verse 8, the apostle clearly states the purpose of the earnest appeal to the Corinthian believers. It is not as though he is commanding them, rather, he needs proof of the sincerity of their love to other members of God’s family. It becomes clear that God does not give a command fixing certain sums and times when believers are to give. The Lord has certainly revealed His will concerning giving, which is, there must be a willing mind (2 Corinthians 8:12), everyone is to have a part (2 Corinthians 8:13), and that part is to be as God has prospered or enabled one (1 Corinthians 16:2).⁶⁴⁶

Thus, the apostle did not speak by commandment. Rather, he was just advising while using the example of the Macedonian believers. It becomes very clear that apostle Paul believes much in the ability of the Corinthian church. Beyond the Macedonians’ example, Paul had been boastful of the Corinthian believers too, even before the latest appeal to them to be part of the collection project. By making it very clear that he was not commanding them, Paul took care to prevent any misapprehensions.⁶⁴⁷ This becomes better understood in the light of

⁶⁴⁵ Richards, 888.

⁶⁴⁶ Henry T. Mahan, 140.

⁶⁴⁷ Church, 1834.

reading chapter 9:1-5: there is need for me to write to you about this service to the Lord's people. For I know your eagerness to help, and I have been boasting about it to the Macedonians, telling them that since last year, you in Achaia were ready to give; and your enthusiasm has stirred most of them to action. However, I am sending the brothers in other that our boasting about you in this matter should not prove hollows, but that you may be ready, as I said you would be. For if any of the Macedonians should come with me and finds you unprepared, we -not to say anything about you- would be ashamed of having been so confident. So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one that is grudgingly given (2 Corinthians 9:1-5 NIV)

In essence, no matter what may be given, it means nothing if it is not cheerfully and generously given. Apostle Paul was conscious to draw the line between encouragement and persuasion. It is good that people are encouraged to do the needful, like in the context of Christian giving. However, all the purpose becomes lost when people are coarse or manipulated to give. It becomes arguable that such situation attracts no blessing from God. Paul understood that liberality, which is an expression of love, must be spontaneous and nothing less.⁶⁴⁸ Church proliferation in the contemporary age and adulteration of the theology Christian giving is affecting the ministry of giving for Christian mission-related purposes. In the present age, many people would give not because they willing to do so, but on account of what could happen if they fail to do so. This should not be a pattern for promoting the theology of Christian giving, God loves a cheerful giver.

Paul asks the Corinthians to see the collection project as another area in which they excel. Above all, he admonishes them to do so not for any other reason, but as a proof of their sincere love to Christ. By extension, to the missionary team that brought the Gospel to them and

⁶⁴⁸David J. A. Clines, 2Corinthians. *The International Bible Commentary*, 1404.

indeed, to the entire Christian body that is represented by the Jerusalem church. Jerusalem becomes a typology of both the present church and the heavenly believers' fellowship of all Saints of the age to come. It becomes noteworthy that Paul was very careful to distinguish between the commands of the Lord (1 Corinthians 7:10), words that come with apostolic authority (1 Corinthians 7:12) and his advice (1 Corinthians 7:6).⁶⁴⁹ By implication, willingness in giving becomes a prime requisite. Spiritual giving is done willingly based on what one has and not on what one has not.⁶⁵⁰

The Greek word ἐντολή translated 'commandment' is used in the NT exclusively by Paul (Romans 16:26; 1 Corinthians 7:6, 25; 1 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:13; 2:15). An 'order' could not do what the eagerness, earnestness, diligence' of the Macedonians would do, for the Corinthians to prove whatever is genuine in their love to other believers in Christ Jesus.⁶⁵¹ Although vested with full apostolic authority, Paul declined to issue directions, preferring rather request, suggest, encourage or appeal. Spontaneity and warmth would be absent from the Corinthians' giving if coercion were present. Notwithstanding, the apostle did see in the enthusiastic generosity of the Macedonian believers as a convenient standard for assessing the genuineness of the Corinthians' professed love for him and all believers. It further serves as a compelling incentive to arouse them to action.⁶⁵²

On the basis that forcing someone to support a fund collection project could bankrupt someone less well-to-do than the project indicated, Paul was careful to stress the voluntary nature of the contribution. Not having what to give is not sinful, what is sinful is having what to give and refusing to give it out. Emphasis on Christian contribution should not promote the event where the strong is weakened to strengthen the

⁶⁴⁹Issiaka Coulibaly, 2Corinthians. *Africa Bible Commentary*, 1406.

⁶⁵⁰Unger, 508.

⁶⁵¹Wick Broomall, II Corinthians. In *The Wycliffe Bible Commentary*, 1275.

⁶⁵²Murray J. Harris, 368.

weak. Rather, it encourages that one who has more than what is required should release part of it so that those who have none should have something. That way, everyone has enough; the desire to give is greater than the gift itself.

The Unmatchable Christ's Example of Sacrificial Giving

2 Corinthians 8:9 γινώσκετε γὰρ τὴν χάριν τοῦ κυρίου ἡμῶν Ἰησοῦ Χριστοῦ, ὅτι δι' ὑμᾶς ἐπτώχευσεν πλούσιος ὢν, ἵνα ὑμεῖς τῇ ἐκείνου πτωχείᾳ πλουτήσητε.

2 Corinthians 8:9 For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.

Before now, the apostle had tried to stimulate the Corinthian believers and spur them to action. This he tried doing by using the Macedonian model of the grace of generous giving, that is, a disposition wrought in the heart by the Holy Spirit.⁶⁵³ Having done so, he took his appeal to a higher level by referring the Corinthians to the matchless example of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Paul projected Christ model as unmatchable demonstration and expression of genuine love.⁶⁵⁴

At this point, Paul turns to the supreme example of Christ's sacrificial and salvific death on the cross. The transition from verse 8 to 9, denoted by the Greek word gar 'for' becomes illuminating on the ground of supremacy that Paul accords to the latest example. He sees in Christ the finest example of one that demonstrates eagerness and generosity in giving, as a manifestation of one's true love for others. If the sacrificial giving of the Macedonian believers did not stimulate emulation, that of unmatchable example of Christ's selflessness

⁶⁵³Unger, 508.

⁶⁵⁴C. H. Irwin, Edit. *Irwin's Bible Commentary*, 504.

certainly would do. Such doctrinal buttressing of ethical injunctions is typical of Paul (Romans 15:2, 3; Ephesians 5:2; Colossians 3:9,10).⁶⁵⁵

Indeed, greater love has no one than this, one lays down his life for the sake of his friends. It does not suggest just another example to follow, it is quite an example in the world of its own, not on the same level as any other. It is not first or best to that of the Macedonians, it is frankly not comparable. The riches of Christ as portrayed in this Bible passage are not exclusively or even chiefly material riches, as some preach today. Paul's repeated use of 'you' and 'your' in this verse emphasizes the point that Christ gave away that which belonged to Him for the benefit of the Corinthians in person. In response, they should be willing and eager to do good in the same fashion to others.⁶⁵⁶

There seems no need to read more meaning into this verse than is warranted by the context. The intent of Paul's argument is not unlike that of verse 8. Sacrificial love was exemplified by the Macedonian believers. However, the same becomes personified in Jesus, the supreme example of sacrificial love.⁶⁵⁷ Here, the apostle provides the finest example of self-giving love. By the reason of reading 'that of our Lord Jesus Christ,' Paul adds to the impressiveness of the appeal, placing 'for your sake' in an emphatic position.⁶⁵⁸ Jesus became poor by becoming a man (Philippians 2:5ff). However, His earthly poverty is not directly in view here. In what other ways Christ became poor Paul did not specify, perhaps, because his interest here is not on the theology but in the ethics of the incarnation.⁶⁵⁹ That Christ, though rich but became poor so that the Corinthians might be made rich; rich in the love of God, rich in the blessings of the new covenant and rich

⁶⁵⁵Harris, 368.

⁶⁵⁶Issiaka Coulibaly, 1407.

⁶⁵⁷Daniel R. Mitchell, 1520.

⁶⁵⁸David J. A. Clines, 1404.

⁶⁵⁹Mitchell, 1520.

in the hope of eternal life.⁶⁶⁰ It becomes more meaningful to argue that man's life should be characterized by a charitable act with the poor out of one's God-given possessions. This seems like the only way to appreciate the grace of charity of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, upon which everyone lives and exists.

The reading through verse nine projects a feeling as though Paul was arguing that the Macedonians were not themselves the prime example of the grace of giving, Jesus is. There is no appeal here to the tithe as a standard against which to measure what should be given. Instead, Paul pointed to other believers and to the Supreme Jesus' example, whose love expression ought to move and spur the Corinthian believers to give first themselves and then, their money.⁶⁶¹ One needs not to be a millionaire for his/her contribution to be significant. Even the gifts of those that have little and can give the little are acceptable. What is of most emphasis is the willingness, the love that motivated the believer to share with others.⁶⁶² Paul's admonition to the Corinthian believers to show the spirit of generosity is not just a matter of duty, it is more like a loving response to what God had done for them. The coming of Christ in their lives had been an unmerited act of God's generosity and love, they ought to meet the needs of others in the same spirit.⁶⁶³

More than this, in the view of Drane, apostle Paul must have believed that by engaging the churches he planted with the fund collection project, the relationship between purely Gentile churches and the more traditional congregations of Jewish believers back in Palestine would improve.⁶⁶⁴ Moralists often appeal to role models. In the view of Keener, here, Paul uses the Supreme One, insisting that Corinthian believers should do good to follow Christ's example of using their

⁶⁶⁰Church, 1834.

⁶⁶¹Fred L. Fisher, 2Corinthians. In *The Teacher's Bible Commentary*, 888.

⁶⁶²Ibid.

⁶⁶³John Drane, *Introducing the New Testament 3rd Edition*, 318.

⁶⁶⁴Drane, 318.

prosperity to enrich the poor.⁶⁶⁵ Like both Jewish and non-Jewish writers of his day, Paul could use the language of wealth figuratively as well as literally. However, his emphasis here may buttress on Christ's enrichment of believers literally, as provided through one another.⁶⁶⁶ In essence, Paul seems to have used three measures to motivate the Corinthian believers namely: first, the example of the generous giving of the Macedonians. Second, the need for proof of their genuine and sincere love for Christ and indeed for other believers. Third, the unmatched example of the marvelous grace of our loving Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

Conclusion

God is interested in the Christian missions business. He was first the God of missions. From the moment after pronouncing the verdict on the man with his wife, and the serpent, God initiated a mission strategy for reconciling man with him. From the point of expression of special grace to Noah's household to that of Jesus' coming into the world in human form, God was working toward the time when the offspring of the woman will become victorious over the Serpent. While the reconciliation is by choice on man's account, it appears that God is leaving no stone unturned toward achieving this fit. There could be obstacles in diverse areas, notwithstanding, there is a divine intervention in every Christian mission endeavor.

Let me reiterate that the practice of unification of funds for mission-related purposes is biblical. The focal Bible passage has shown that the practice is from immemorial time. Since the practice is biblical, undoubtedly, it is Godly. Paul's resolve to engage as many churches as possible for the fund generation project points to the fact that very little or nothing can be done individually with regard to Christian missions work. Even at the time when there were no cathedrals, mission hospitals and mission schools to be built, no nothing of

⁶⁶⁵Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary New Testament*, 506.

⁶⁶⁶Ibid.

capital projects to execute, the early church was engaged in mission fund generation project. Perhaps, the two major mission concerns of the biblical time were social ministries and financial aid to itinerant missionaries. I will like to posit that unification of fund remains the best approach to funding Christian mission business. There is need for seasonal emphasis on mission and its funding. Giving to support Christian mission business is the express way to banking with heavens.

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