

Stewardship and Missions

Acts 1:6-8; 2 Cor 8:3-9
SS Lesson for 02/22/2026

Devotional Scriptures: Acts 10:36-41

OUTLINE

LESSON BACKGROUND AND KEY VERSE

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

Key Verse: 2 Cor 8:9

Commentary from the Bible Knowledge Commentary

MAJOR THEME ANALYSIS

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Witnessing that one must be born of water and Spirit (John 3:5)

Witnessing that it is an eternal kingdom (Dan 4:3)

Witnessing that repentance is necessary because the time has come (Mark 1:15)

Witnessing about being prepared (7)

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Prepared because no one knows when Jesus will return (Matt 24:44)

Prepared because the end time is nearer than we think (Rom 13:11-12)

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Lesson Background and Key Verse

Background from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The two texts for today's lesson are dated almost three decades apart. Jesus was crucified during the Passover observance of AD 30, rose from the dead, and appeared physically to his followers for some 40 days thereafter (Acts 1:3) before his ascension. A few years later, Saul (also named "Paul"; see 13:9) met the resurrected Jesus on the road to Damascus (9:1-19). That interaction led to Paul's mission trips across the Roman Empire as an apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Romans 11:13; Galatians 2:8; 1 Timothy 2:7). Paul was a native of the commercial hub of Tarsus of Cilicia. That city was the capital of a Roman province; therefore, Paul was a Roman citizen by birth (Acts 22:22-29). At some point in his younger days, he decided to move to Jerusalem to study under Gamaliel (22:3). After Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, he founded churches in various Roman cities. As people responded to his gospel message, Paul found himself continually needing to bridge the cultural gap between Christ-followers of Gentile background and those of Jewish descent. We might say, then, that as the first chapter of the book of Acts features the apostles being given their mission and preparing for it, the chapters that follow reveal how that mission was carried out. There were issues regarding aspects of the Law of Moses concerning doctrine and practice as Jews and Gentiles came together. This struggle is most evident in the famous Jerusalem Council in about AD 51 (Acts 15). The consensus reached at that council served to welcome believers of Gentile background into the church on the basis of the grace of Jesus Christ, not on adherence to the Law of Moses (Acts 15:5-11). This acknowledgment of God's plan was vitally important for establishing the inclusive nature of the church. The importance of that acknowledgment became apparent as certain events unfolded over the following years. One such event is the subject of today's lesson.

Key Verse: 2 Cor 8:9

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich

Major Theme Analysis

(Scriptural Text from the New King James Version; cross-references from the NIV)

The Mission to be Witnesses (Acts 1:6-8)

6 Therefore, when they had come together, they asked Him, "Lord, will You at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority.

8 But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Witnessing of the kingdom of God (6)

Witnessing that one must become like a little child to enter (Matt 18:3)

3 And he said: "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.

Witnessing that one must be born of water and Spirit (John 3:5)

5 Jesus answered, "I tell you the truth, no one can enter the kingdom of God unless he is born of water and the Spirit.

Witnessing that it is an eternal kingdom (Dan 4:3)

3 How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation.

Witnessing that repentance is necessary because the time has come (Mark 1:15)

15 "The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

Witnessing about being prepared (7)

Prepared to give an answer for hope in God (1 Peter 3:15)

15 But in your hearts set apart Christ as Lord. Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have. But do this with gentleness and respect,

Prepared because no one knows when Jesus will return (Matt 24:44)

44 So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him.

Prepared because the end time is nearer than we think (Rom 13:11-12)

11 And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. 12 The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light.

Prepared because the day of the Lord is coming (2 Peter 3:11-13)

11 Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives 12 as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. 13 But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness.

Witnessing through the power of the Holy Spirit (8)

Power of hope (Rom 15:13)

13 May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Power to rest faith on (1 Cor 2:5)

5 so that your faith might not rest on men's wisdom, but on God's power.

Power that is not just words (1 Cor 4:20)

20 For the kingdom of God is not a matter of talk but of power.

Power to strengthen the inner being (Eph 3:16)

16 I pray that out of his glorious riches he may strengthen you with power through his Spirit in your inner being,

The Stewardship of Giving (2 Cor 8:3-9)

3 For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing,

4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

5 And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.

6 So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well.

7 But as you abound in everything — in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all diligence, and in your love for us — see that you abound in this grace also.

8 I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others.

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

Giving according to ability (3-5)

Ability based on willingness (2 Cor 8:12)

12 For if the willingness is there, the gift is acceptable according to what one has, not according to what he does not have.

Ability based what one could give (Mark 14:8)

8 She did what she could. She poured perfume on my body beforehand to prepare for my burial.

Ability based on the needs of others (Acts 11:28-29)

28 One of them, named Agabus, stood up and through the Spirit predicted that a severe famine would spread over the entire Roman world. (This happened during the reign of Claudius.) 29 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea.

Ability based on godly planning (1 Cor 16:2)

2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.

Giving based on grace (6-7)

Abundant grace through sufficiency (2 Cor 12:9)

9 But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me.

Abundant grace through God's will and pleasure (Eph 1:5-6)

5 he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will, 6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.

Abundant grace through mercy (1 Tim 1:13-14)

13 Even though I was once a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent man, I was shown mercy because I acted in ignorance and unbelief. 14 The grace of our Lord was poured out on me abundantly, along with the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Abundant grace through justification (Titus 3:3-7)

3 At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. 4 But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, 5 he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, 6 whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life.

Giving out of joyful love (8-9)

Giving with joyful love because of sins forgiven (Luke 7:36-38)

36 Now one of the Pharisees invited Jesus to have dinner with him, so he went to the Pharisee's house and reclined at the table. 37 When a woman who had lived a sinful life in that town learned that Jesus was eating at the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster jar of perfume, 38 and as she stood behind him at his feet weeping, she began to wet his feet with her tears. Then she wiped them with her hair, kissed them and poured perfume on them.

Giving with joyful love to compensate for sin (Luke 19:1-8)

19 Jesus entered Jericho and was passing through. 2 A man was there by the name of Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was wealthy. 3 He wanted to see who Jesus was, but being a short man he could not, because of the crowd. 4 So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore-fig tree to see him, since Jesus was coming that way. 5 When Jesus reached the spot, he looked up and said to him, "Zacchaeus, come down immediately. I must stay at your house today." 6 So he came down at once and welcomed him gladly. 7 All the people saw this and began to mutter, "He has gone to be the guest of a 'sinner.'" 8 But Zacchaeus stood up and said to the Lord, "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount."

Giving with joyful love to meet the needs of others (Matt 5:40-42)

40 And if someone wants to sue you and take your tunic, let him have your cloak as well. 41 If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two miles. 42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Giving with joyful love for support of the Church (2 Chron 31:6-10)

6 The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the Lord their God, and they piled them in heaps. 7 They began doing this in the third month and finished in the seventh month. 8 When Hezekiah and his officials came and saw the heaps, they praised the Lord and blessed his people Israel. 9 Hezekiah asked the priests and Levites about the heaps; 10 and Azariah the chief priest, from the family of Zadok, answered, "Since the people began to bring their contributions to the temple of the Lord, we have had enough to eat and plenty to spare, because the Lord has blessed his people, and this great amount is left over.

Conclusion and Other Thoughts

Commentary Thoughts from Bob Deffinbaugh

The Marvelous Macedonian Model of Generosity (8:1-7)

In these first verses of chapter 8, Paul introduces the subject of the Corinthians' pledge to give a gift to the poor by describing the incredible generosity of the Macedonians, who gave liberally to the need in Jerusalem. The Macedonian churches included the churches at Philippi, Berea, and Thessalonica. The Philippian church seems to stand apart from all the rest in its generosity. From the very beginning, this was so. After coming to faith in the Lord Jesus, Lydia virtually insisted that Paul and his companions accept the hospitality of her home while they are in Philippi (Acts 16:15). Shortly after, the Philippian jailer begins to show Paul and Silas hospitality after he and his family come to faith in Christ (Acts 16:32-34). Not only do the Philippian saints participate in making a generous contribution to the poor in Jerusalem, they are also generous to Paul after he departs from them. Even while he is in prison, they send Epaphroditus to minister to Paul, along with a gift of money he carries:

25 But I thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus, my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, who is also your messenger and minister to my need (Philippians 2:25).

15 And you yourselves also know, Philippians, that at the first preaching of the gospel, after I departed from Macedonia, no church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving but you alone; 16 for even in Thessalonica you sent a *gift* more than once for my needs (Philippians 4:15-16).

It is noteworthy that the actual amount of the Macedonian contribution is not mentioned. I can recall only one instance where the amount of any gift is specified in the New Testament.⁵¹ The size of the Macedonians' gift did not impress Paul as much as the liberality of that gift, since many other factors could have substantially reduced their giving. *First*, the Macedonian saints were facing a **"great ordeal of affliction"** (verse 2). Not only was Paul having a hard time in Macedonia (see 2 Corinthians 7:5), the Macedonians were also (8:2). They were facing a great deal of affliction as seen in Paul's words to the Thessalonians:

6 You also became imitators of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much tribulation with the joy of the Holy Spirit, 7 so that you became an example to all the believers in Macedonia and in Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:6-7).

3 We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is *only* fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows *ever* greater; 4 therefore, we ourselves speak proudly of you among the churches of God for your perseverance and faith in the midst of all your persecutions and afflictions which you endure (2 Thessalonians 1:3-4).

In such times, one may suffer great financial losses due to one's faith in Jesus Christ:

32 But remember the former days, when, after being enlightened, you endured a great conflict of sufferings, 33 partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and tribulations, and partly by becoming sharers with those who were so treated. 34 For you showed sympathy to the prisoners, and accepted joyfully the seizure of your property, knowing that you have for yourselves a better possession and an abiding one (Hebrews 10:32-34).

Second, the Macedonian saints were poor, a poverty so great Paul calls it “**deep poverty**” (verse 2). Paul does not need to warn this church about trusting in riches as he had the Ephesians through Timothy (1 Timothy 6:17-19). The Macedonians’ “**great ordeal of affliction**” and their “**deep poverty**” could have served as excuses for not giving to the “**poor**” in Jerusalem at all. I can hear someone saying in such circumstances, “Charity begins at home.”

Because of these circumstances, Paul does not expect much from the Macedonians in terms of a contribution for the poor in Jerusalem. It is clear that Paul's expectations are considerably exceeded as he indicates in verse 5. I believe that here Paul provides us with the underlying basis for the Macedonians' generosity. *First*, they gave themselves to the Lord. The Macedonian saints have been gloriously and graciously saved through the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ gave Himself for their salvation; how could they not give themselves to Him? They are His servants, eager and willing to walk in His footsteps. If “**God so loved the world that He gave ...**,” how can they refuse to give to those in dire need? *Second*, the Macedonians have given themselves to the apostles, as our Lord's earthly spokesmen. The apostles are deeply concerned about the poor, and rightly so (see Acts 2:43-47; 4:32-37; 5:1-11; 6:1-7; Romans 12:13; Galatians 2:10; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Hebrews 13:16; James 1:27-2:26). And so when the Macedonians gave themselves to the apostles, they were responsive to the needs of others, as the apostles point them out.

The Macedonians' giving is exemplary in several regards. *First*, as we have seen, they gave generously at a time when they were poor themselves. *Second*, the Macedonians gave voluntarily. The term “**voluntarily**” fails to adequately express the spirit of the Macedonians. These people who were in “**deep poverty**” plead with Paul for the privilege of giving generously. One of the ancients observes that the only “begging” which took place here was the “begging” of the poor Macedonians, pleading with Paul for the privilege of sharing what little they had with those who had even less.

Third, the Macedonians gave gratefully. These folks gave generously to people whom they had never seen and likely would never meet. It would be one thing for someone in their situation to give to a relative in deep need, but to give to a stranger is something even more amazing. The gift of the Macedonians evidences their gratitude to God for saving them through the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Fourth, these Macedonians gave to those in Jerusalem who were their brothers and sisters in Christ. They gave to fellow-believers as an evidence of their unity in Christ.

Fifth, the Macedonians gave joyfully. Paul did not have to wrench the money from their hands; they readily and joyfully insisted on giving. They found great joy in what they were doing. In their affliction, the Macedonians experienced joy; in their deep poverty, they exhibited great generosity (8:2). This is truly an amazing group. Paul therefore points the Corinthians to the Macedonians as a model and standard for their giving. Let the Corinthians follow in the footsteps of their Macedonian brethren. To facilitate this, Paul will send Titus, who has already helped the Corinthians set up a system for giving to the needy in Jerusalem early in the life of that church (or so it seems). When Titus returns, the Corinthians are urged to finish up what they have purposed and promised to do in this matter of making a contribution to the saints. They have excelled in many ways—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in earnestness and zeal, and in love. Let them now excel in this gracious work of showing charity.

The Master Model: Jesus Christ (8:8-9)

The “**false apostles**” at Corinth are able to achieve their goals only by using a heavy hand with the Corinthian saints. They “use their authority” to get the results they want (2 Corinthians 11:20). Paul is not this way. He does not want to resort to his authority as the basis for the Corinthians' giving. Paul makes it clear that he is not commanding them to give, but rather encouraging them to give as a proof of their love. Paul seems to be saying that the Macedonians have demonstrated the sincerity of their love by the sacrificial generosity of their gift to

the needy saints in Jerusalem. That establishes a kind of human benchmark against which the Corinthians' love can be measured. The earnestness of the Macedonians helps set the standard by which the Corinthians may prove the sincerity of their love.

There is, however, a much higher standard than this. The human benchmark of the Macedonians' love and generosity is far surpassed by the divine benchmark for love and sacrifice to those in need. *The ultimate example of gracious giving is our Lord Jesus Christ, by His sacrificial atoning work on the cross of Calvary.* He was infinitely **"rich"** in the presence of His Father (see John 17:5; Philippians 2:6). He willingly **"became poor"** in His incarnation (Philippians 2:5-8). He was born in a very humble setting, having a cattle trough as a bed, and being born to parents who were far from rich. He left the "wealth" of heaven and took on the "poverty" of this earth in His incarnation. *He who was rich became poor for the sake of those of us who were spiritually "bankrupt" in our sins. Through faith in His sacrificial work on the Cross of Calvary, He has made all those who trust in Him exceedingly rich.*

Whatever we might do for those who are poor can never compare with the work of Christ on the cross. Our material wealth can never compare to His heavenly glory; and our sacrificial poverty can never compare to the "poverty" He endured in His incarnation. *The person and work of Christ is the basis for our motivation, and it is the standard for our ministry.* The cross of Christ, that message which seems foolish to the unbelieving (1 Corinthians 1:18-25), and certainly to the unbelieving **"false apostles"** (see 2 Corinthians 11:4), is the unending theme of all of Paul's teaching. As he can never speak enough of the cross, we should never hear enough of the cross of Christ (see Colossians 2).

(Adapted from URL:<https://bible.org/seriespage/learning-be-liberal-2-cor-81-15>)

Concluding Thoughts from the NIV Standard Lesson Commentary

The Bible reveals God's expectations regarding how people are to treat each other. One such expectation concerns meeting the needs of the poverty-stricken. The Law of Moses had clear rules in this regard (examples: Leviticus 19:10; Deuteronomy 15:11). And the issue is no less present under the new covenant (examples: Matthew 25:34-46; Galatians 2:10). Even so, money and its giving are touchy subjects at church, causing many to avoid discussing the topic. The oft-heard complaint, "They're always asking for money!" has soured many people away from church. Perhaps we should take a different approach to giving, one that acknowledges financial generosity as, first and foremost, a privileged response to God's grace. Our generosity results from first acknowledging the generosity of God. Our God is a giving God, demonstrated through his gift of salvation. When we show generosity to others, we are following God's lead. Our acts of generosity are acts of worship, bearing witness to our testimony of Christ and his great love for us.