

2 Corinthians 8:2

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

Analysis

In a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality—Paul presents a divine paradox: *thlipsis* (θλίψις, 'affliction/tribulation') plus *ptōcheia* (πτωχεία, 'beggarly poverty') produced *ploutos tēs haplotētos* (πλοῦτος τῆς ἀπλότητος, 'wealth of liberality/generosity'). The Macedonians were *ptōchoi*—destitute beggars, not merely poor—yet they gave richly. The preposition *kata* ('into/unto') suggests their poverty didn't limit but somehow energized their giving.

This verse demolishes the worldly equation that prosperity produces generosity. Instead, Paul argues that suffering plus joy (notice 'abundance of joy' coexisting with 'deep poverty') produces supernatural generosity. The Macedonians possessed nothing yet gave everything—a pattern reflecting Christ himself (v. 9). Their *haplotēs* (simplicity, sincerity, generosity) came not from surplus but from hearts transformed by the gospel.

Historical Context

The Macedonian churches had recently endured severe persecution (Acts 17:5-9, 1 Thessalonians 2:14). Thessalonica experienced mob violence; Philippi had imprisoned Paul and Silas (Acts 16:19-40). Yet these congregations, economically devastated by Roman taxation and local hostility, gave sacrificially to Jerusalem

believers they'd never met—a stunning demonstration of Christian unity transcending ethnic and economic barriers.

Related Passages

Romans 1:17 — The righteous shall live by faith

Hebrews 11:1 — Definition of faith

1 Corinthians 13:4 — Characteristics of love

John 15:13 — Greatest form of love

Study Questions

1. Why does suffering plus gospel joy produce generosity, while prosperity often produces hoarding?
2. How does the Macedonian example challenge the excuse 'I'll give more when I have more'?
3. What 'abundance of joy' in Christ might free you from anxiety about material security?

Interlinear Text

ὅτι	ἐν	πολλῇ	δοκιμῇ	θλίψεως	ἡ	περισσεία	τῆς
How that	in	a great	trial	of affliction	G3588	the abundance	G3588
G3754	G1722	G4183	G1382	G2347		G4050	
χαρᾶς	αὐτῶν·	καὶ	ἡ	κατὰ	βάθους	πτωχείας	αὐτῶν·
joy	of their	and	G3588	poverty	deep	G4432	of their
G5479	G846	G2532		G2596	G899		G846
ἐπερίσσευσεν	εἰς	τὸν	πλοῦτον	τῆς	ἀπλότητος	αὐτῶν·	
abounded	unto	G3588	the riches	G3588	liberality	of their	
G4052	G1519		G4149		G572	G846	

Additional Cross-References

James 2:5 (Parallel theme): Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?

Proverbs 11:25 (Parallel theme): The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that watereth shall be watered also himself.

Deuteronomy 15:4 (Parallel theme): Save when there shall be no poor among you; for the LORD shall greatly bless thee in the land which the LORD thy God giveth thee for an inheritance to possess it:

Revelation 2:9 (Parallel theme): I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan.

2 Corinthians 6:10 (Parallel theme): As sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich; as having nothing, and yet possessing all things.

2 Corinthians 9:13 (Parallel theme): Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men;

Romans 12:8 (Parallel theme): Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.

1 Thessalonians 1:6 (Parallel theme): And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost: