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2 Corinthians

Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: 2 Corinthians 8:1

Having settled the issue of Chapter 7, Paul now turns to the subject of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem. It is a collection that he was personally coordinating and preparing to take, along with designated representatives, to Jerusalem. In order to spur on the Corinthians in their promised giving, he brings in what has occurred in the churches of Macedonia.

To set this up, he calls those in Corinth "brethren" again. He has and will continue to endear himself to them in order to keep the idea of brotherly affection alive throughout the epistle. Through sternness or through petition, he calls them "brethren" to remind them of their favored status in his eyes. After so addressing them, he says that "we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches in Macedonia."

Grace is unmerited favor. God had lavished this upon them and Paul will continue to explain it in the verses ahead. As God was graceful to them, then it would be right that they would turn and grant grace as well.

By bringing in the Macedonian churches in this way, it will allow for a little "healthy competition" between the Macedonians and the Corinthians. In this, Paul knows that the gift he will take to Jerusalem can only be increased. He is a wise and careful soul, doing the work of the Lord in a remarkable way!

Life application: There is nothing wrong with stimulating others to do their best and encouraging others through comparisons in order to do so. However, it is wrong to manipulate people to give. Unfortunately, many churches do manipulate their congregants through inappropriately handling the Bible or shaming them into giving. If you're in such a church, find another one which puts the highest value on what is right and proper, not on money.

...that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. 2 Corinthians 8:2

Speaking of those in Macedonia (as Paul continues from verse 1), he says the grace of God was bestowed upon them "in a great trial of affliction..." That seems contradictory, but it is not. John Chrysostom says that "They were not simply afflicted, but in such a way as also to become approved by their endurance."

Through their affliction, they were being molded. It is a theme which permeates all of Scripture. This affliction is partially noted in Acts 16:19, 20 and in Acts 17:5, 6. Further, Paul mentions the following to those in Thessalonica -

"For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God which are in Judea in Christ Jesus. For you also suffered the same things from your own countrymen, just as they *did* from the Judeans..." 1 Thessalonians 2:14

It is in this state of affliction that Paul continues with the words "...the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality." The deep poverty which permeated those in Macedonia came about for a couple reasons. The first is that in their persecution, they may have been denied suitable employment or even robbed of their goods. Although written to the Hebrew believers, the same principle may have applied to the Gentiles which is noted in Hebrews 10 -

"...for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven." Hebrews 10:34

Another reason is that "Macedonia and Achaia never recovered from the three wars between Cæsar and Pompeius, between the Triumvirs and Brutus and Cassius, and between Augustus and Antonius. Under Tiberius, they petitioned for a diminution of their burdens, and were accordingly transferred for a time from the jurisdiction of the senate to that of the emperor, as involving a less heavy taxation." Charles Ellicott

Despite these things, they gave in a great way to sustain the saints in Jerusalem. As the Pulpit Commentary notes, "Their joy overflowed their affliction, and their liberality overflowed their poverty." In this they had a singleness of purpose in providing a substantial donation for what they believed was a truly worthy cause.

Life application: It is often those who make the least who give the most. As wealth increases, the amount given percent-wise tends to drop. And so giving becomes less about what hurts than what will keep from hurting. Each should give as they feel is appropriate and without compulsion, but the wealthy who give large amounts should not look down on the poor who give small amounts. In the end, they may be giving more than the wealthy on a comparative basis.

For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing, 2 Corinthians 8:3

Speaking of the giving by the Macedonians, a group who had little to begin with, Paul says "I bear witness" about them. He knew them and he personally knew of the circumstances concerning the gift they had offered. It was "according to *their* ability." This means that they gave as they were able. It is a precept he will lay down in the next chapter for those in Corinth (and thus for us when we give) -

"So let each one *give* as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." 2 Corinthians 9:7

If this was all that was recorded of their giving, we would know that they had done well and that their gift was a sufficient one to represent them as a faithful flock. However, this is not all that is said about it. Paul continues by saying that they gave "according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability, *they were* freely willing." In the Greek, there is a stress which is lacking in the English. Paul briskly omits the verb and so the adjective stands alone. In this then, he shows the superlative nature of the gift.

Regardless of the size of it, it was one which actually exceeded the normal ability of these people to give. In other words, they would have to do with less in their normal lives in order to be able to afford this gift given according to the call on their spiritual lives; they exceeded the budget for any normal operating of their day-to-day life. And not only that, but they did it without compulsion of any kind. The gift was mentioned, the reason for it was given, and without any external pressure, they simply were moved to act.

Life application: How willing are you to tend to the church, pastor, or Bible teacher who ministers to you? Have you given according to your means in order to ensure that their needs are met? They are working in the most important matter of human existence in order to bring God's revelation of Himself to you. Be sure to act in a manner which is in accord with that by gratefully returning care and provision to them.

...imploing us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. 2 Corinthians 8:4

The idea in this verse is that the Macedonians almost begged to be allowed to participate in adding to the gift which was being collected for the Jerusalem saints. It is as if Paul said to them, "I'm gathering together a gift for the saints in Jerusalem because they are really in dire straits." On hearing this, the

Macedonians - without any prompting - then said, "Well let us help!" From there, Paul may have said, "Listen, you all are almost in the same condition as them." In response they would then have begged, "Please, please allow us to give this gift."

Although that is only a possible scenario for what occurred, it shows the general tenor of Paul's words. The Macedonians prayed that they could be a part of what was going on. It shows a true, heartfelt attitude that excluded any sense of compulsion on Paul's part. He simply said what he was doing and they immediately desired to participate.

Life application: When people feel giving is necessary, they will give. If they are the stingy sort and are placed under a guilt-trip, the only thing that will happen is that resentment will build up in them. Begging for, or mandating, something that should be voluntarily given is not a sound approach to meeting the needs of the saints. It may take care of the immediate need, but it is bound to cause other problems down the line.

And not *only* as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and *then* to us by the will of God. 2 Corinthians 8:5

Paul is still speaking of those in Macedonia concerning their determination to give a gift for the benefit of the saints in Jerusalem. In the previous verse, he said they were "imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Adding to that now, he says that this was "not *only* as we had hoped."

Having learned of their zeal to give, they expected this poor congregation to put forward a small amount as an offering. Instead they had far exceeded what they thought would be given. And more than that, "they first gave themselves to the Lord." The congregation as a whole consecrated themselves to the matter, determining that what they had was set apart to the Lord and therefore everything about the gift was sacred. They put their energy, their time, and their ability into preparing the gift. The entire process was considered as to the Lord.

But Paul goes further and says that they gave themselves "to us by the will of God." In this gift, they deferred to the directions and wishes of the apostles for how it was to be gathered and administered. Instead of insisting that they handle the process as if out of fear of it being mishandled, they trusted the apostles and their authority in the matter, knowing that they had been ordained by the will of God.

In this, those in Macedonia had followed a sound pattern of yielding themselves to God completely and wholly, understanding that it all came from Him. They trusted that it would be handled appropriately because it was He who selected the apostles and therefore they knew they would be acting in accord with His will.

Life application: The amount of the Macedonian's love for the Lord and their trust for the apostles is evident in this verse. However, it needs to be understood that not all who claim they are appointed by God actually are. There are no apostles today. Anyone can get ordained as a minister and act in a pious manner. Christians, individually and collectively as a congregation, need to carefully evaluate each individual who seeks to obtain money from them. In all things, be willing to give heartily, but do so cautiously.

So we urged Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well. 2 Corinthians 8:6

The idea of Paul's words here is that because of the immense generosity of those in Macedonia, the apostles were greatly encouraged in the idea of gathering the gift for the saints in Jerusalem. They may not have expected such an immense outpouring of generosity. However, if the poor churches of Macedonia could give such a marvelous gift, then perhaps it would be an exceedingly great one when the other offerings of other churches were added into it.

With this renewed sense of vigor, it says, "...we urged Titus." As in other instances, Titus has been the "front man" for such things. He is sent with the desires of the apostles, or with their instructions for various things. As he was the one who

brought back the report from the Corinthians which precipitated the writing of this epistle, he would be the logical choice to go back and finish the front work for the offering. As it says, "...that as he had begun, so he would also complete this grace in you as well."

"This grace" is certainly speaking of the gift which those in Corinth had promised. With the great show of giving in Macedonia, Paul was truly encouraged to get about the business of a collection from the Corinthians. In addition to the gift itself, the words "this grace" may also be hinting at the other principle tenets of the letter as well. In combining the gift with the doctrinal instruction, there would be a smoothing over of both as they were being worked on at the same time.

What is implied in the coming verses is that the Corinthians had talked openly and in a large way about helping out in the offering Paul is discussing. By sending Titus along with this letter, he would be preparing them ahead of time for his arrival and keeping them from any embarrassing shortfalls in the actual gift compared to the grand promises of the past.

Life application: Paul's use of Titus as a front man for handling the issues which have arisen in Corinth is a wise one. It avoids confrontation by having the issues settled without his personal intervention. Keeping such matters at the lowest level possible will normally avoid hierarchal conflicts which may otherwise arise.

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.

2 Corinthians 8:7

Paul has been speaking to the Corinthians in a narrative fashion, explaining the events which have occurred concerning the giving of those in Macedonia. He now turns to exhortation in his address to them in order to spur them on to giving. In his words, he gives them hearty acknowledgments of their strengths in Christ.

He says first, "But as you abound in everything..." It is a way of saying that they have been richly supplied in so many ways. Though the list he will give includes spiritual gifts, he is certainly making a contrast to the "deep poverty" of the Macedonians which he previously mentioned. Due to their abounding (which surely included physical blessings as well as spiritual blessings), they should be able to supply a great gift to the saints in Jerusalem, just as those in Macedonia did.

He notes their "faith," "speech," "knowledge," "diligence," and "love." He has addressed these attributes in one way or another already, and now he combines them to show how greatly God has lavished His grace upon them. Now he turns and exhorts them to "see that you abound in this grace also" when speaking of giving. It would be contrary for them to possess so many wonderful abilities and yet fail in the ability to share their material wealth with those who had less than they did.

God had supplied their every need, and now they were being shown a need in others that they could participate in alleviating. Paul has carefully tied all of these things into one summary exhortation to show them that they were in fact blessed in a marvelous way, and so they should be able to respond out of their abundance.

Life application: How much do you feel you have been blessed by the Lord? Have you considered that the gifts which have been lavished down upon you have been provided so that you could turn and help others? One can demonstrate their gratefulness to God by returning a portion of that to help in the needs of others.

I speak not by commandment, but I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others. 2 Corinthians 8:8

Paul adds in a caveat to his words of the previous verses concerning the giving of a gift to the saints in Jerusalem. He had shown how great the gift of the Macedonians was despite their immense poverty in order to spur them on to

giving as well. Also, in the previous verse, he challenged them to exceed in the gift of giving, just as they had exceeded in other gifts.

However, this was a challenge or even a plea, but it was "not by commandment." The implication is that he had no instructions from the Lord concerning such a collection and he also had no desire to use his apostolic authority in a manner which would impose a collection on them. Rather, he made it a challenge in "testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others."

The word for "sincerity" here is *gnésios*. It is a word used only by Paul in the New Testament and it is only used four times. It is the contracted form of the word *genesios* which means "legitimately born" and thus "genuine." For example, he calls Timothy his lawful son in the faith in 1 Timothy 1:2. Paul is testing the "genuineness" of their love in this challenge by comparing it to the earnestness of others, meaning those such as the Macedonians.

He has tactfully used his words about the Macedonians to spur the Corinthians on as if in an athletic challenge. In essence, "Who will prevail in this great challenge?"

Life application: There is nothing wrong with spurring the members of a congregation on to greater giving. However, to do so with implied or actual commands which do not exist is inappropriate. New Testament churches have no standing orders concerning giving other than a subjective "give as you have prospered." Tithing is not something mandated in the New Testament. Instead, it was annulled along with the entire Old Testament law.

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.
2 Corinthians 8:9

Context is important to understand Paul's introduction of this verse. He has been speaking to the Corinthians about giving for the collection of the saints in

Jerusalem. He has mentioned the extreme poverty of those in Macedonia, but that they gave in an immense way out of their poverty. Now, to show the highest form of giving ever known, he turns to the greatest example of it; that of Christ Jesus.

He begins with "For you know." The message of what Christ did was known to the Corinthians, but now Paul will explain it in a new way to them, unpacking the mystery of Christ in a way which will hopefully spur them on to a great demonstration of giving as well. Expanding on his words we read, "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ." In verse 7, he said this to them -

"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."

In order to show them how to conduct themselves "in this grace also" he reminds them of the same type of grace seen in the Lord. This then is speaking less of the theological idea of grace and more of the act of generosity and giving which he mentioned to the Corinthians in verse 7. And so we could paraphrase this, "For you know the generous giving of our Lord Jesus Christ."

In explanation of this, he says "that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor." This is something that we often think about when considering Christ, but not in any specific sense. And so Paul says it directly to help us think it through directly. He possessed all of heavens riches, power, and authority, and yet he voluntarily gave it all up for our sakes.

The Greek word for "He became poor" is in the aorist tense and it therefore refers to the very moment when He became a Man. He set aside all of the glory and splendor of heaven and united with the dust which He created. He became weak and poor in order to demonstrate His love for us. The word "poor" is defined by HELPS Word Studies -

"...to become utterly poor (destitute); hence, to become extremely *vulnerable* ("*helpless*")."

As a human baby, He lay utterly helpless. As a child of Joseph and Mary, He was in such poverty that the sacrifice recorded in Luke 2, which is offered for purification according to the law, was "two turtledoves." Such a sacrifice was allowed for the very poorest people of the land who could not afford a lamb offering (see Leviticus 12:8).

From His entrance into the world, and for the rest of His life, He remained completely poor, even as a beggar would live. In Luke 8:3, it says that there were certain women "and many others who provided for Him from their substance." This state of abject poverty was the state of His life and yet in John 16:15, He told the apostles that "all things that the Father has are mine." In His earthly life, heaven's riches were set aside in order to accomplish His mission for the very creatures who had continuously shunned Him. His state of going from heaven's throne to the footstool of the earth is well summed up in Philippians 2:6-8.

Paul finishes his word to them showing that all of this was accomplished so "that you through His poverty might become rich." Those at Corinth may have wondered what type of giving would be appropriate. Paul showed them that the ultimate example of giving is found in Christ who had redeemed them. There is no amount they could give that would ever be truly exhausted. They had been raised to heaven itself and to all of its riches because of Christ Jesus. Their true wealth would never end and so whatever they gave would not affect them in any permanent sense.

Life application: Paul wrote to the Corinthians concerning giving. In doing so, he wrote to us also. We are included in that epistle if we have called on Jesus Christ. Therefore, we should remember that Christ gave up everything for us in order to live in this temporary world. As this is so, we should have no problem giving up any part of this temporary world because He has given all things to us. We have an eternal future with an everlasting fount of riches ahead of us.

And in this I give advice: It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago; 2 Corinthians 8:10

Paul is very careful to make a distinction between his advice and the Lord's commands. This follows the same line of wording then as verse 8 which said, "I speak not by commandment..." Despite being an apostle, he never wanted to overstep his bounds of authority. However, he also was one wise in the way of conducting such affairs and so he voluntarily continues with his advice.

In his counsel he says, "It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago." Though the idea won't be finished until the next verse, we get enough sense of what Paul means now. The Corinthians had made it known a year earlier that they desired to assist in this offering. Because they had so spoken, he desired that they now fulfill what they indicated.

However, Paul inverts what we would naturally consider the normal line of reasoning. It would be more expected for him to say, "What you desired to do, you should now do." Instead, he puts the doing ahead of the willingness to do. He may be making an ironic statement to them that they are the ones who now have their priorities out of order. Why should they be prompted to do what they had said they would do?

Another option is that their willingness to make a collection should now be turned into an even greater collection than originally intended, adding a year of willingness to a moment of promise. Paul will tell them in the next chapter that God loves a cheerful giver. In their cheerfulness to promise, they should also be cheerful in the fulfillment of the promise.

In his advice, there is always the notion that even if the advice is personal, he is still an apostle who is speaking the words that God intends for His sheep. Paul has been given care of those sheep, and therefore his words should be trusted and acted upon.

Life application: We have Paul's words as doctrine for the church age. Let us pay heed to them as if we believe that they are exactly what the Bible reveals they are - the very words of God which are intended to guide us in holy and right living.

...but now you also must complete the doing *of it*; that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it*, so *there also may be* a completion out of what *you* have.

2 Corinthians 8:11

Paul's last verse, which continues on in this one said, "It is to your advantage not only to be doing what you began and were desiring to do a year ago." He completes the thought beginning with "but." There was a desire to act, but then action went no further. Now he admonishes them to act, spurring them on as the time for the collection drew near. In essence, "Now is the time that 'you also must complete the doing *of it*.'"

Words of action without follow-up are simply vapor that disappears into the air. Nobody is helped through them and people will gauge another's quality of their character, at least in a large measure, from the action or the lack of action which arises based on the words spoken. In order to ensure that the Corinthians will be viewed in a positive light in this respect, he continues with "that as *there was* a readiness to desire *it*, so *there also may be* a completion of out of what *you* have."

The Corinthians, about a year earlier, eagerly spoke their intentions to help the saints in Jerusalem. However, nothing further had come about from their words and a year had slipped by. The time for finally proving their intent had come. Should they not fulfill their words, the gift taken to Jerusalem would be smaller and there would be no commendation for those in Corinth, no letter of thanks, and no gratitude for their loving assistance. The words they spoke would turn out to be that disappearing breath which merely faded away.

Concerning the words "out of what you have," Vincent's Word Studies notes that "Meyer justly remarks that it would be an indelicate compliment to the inclination of the readers, that it had originated from their possession. Render, according to

your ability." In other words, translating this "out of what you have" makes it sound like anything given from them excluded God's hand of grace in it. But all things originally come from God and therefore by restating it to say "according to your ability" allows for the hand of God to be seen in what was given to them as being passed on from them. This then would be perfectly in line with Paul's note concerning the giving of the Macedonians in verses 1-5.

Life application: If you are going to boast about doing something, it is right that you follow up by doing it. Better yet, don't boast at all. Just do.

For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have. 2 Corinthians 8:12

Paul now makes a point to the Corinthians not unlike that made by the Lord in Luke 21:1-4 -

"And He looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, ² and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. ³ So He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; ⁴ for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.'"

The NKJV here follows after the KJV by indicating that if there is "first" a willing mind. This is in error regarding Paul's intent. He is not saying this as if indicating a sequence of events in time. Instead, he intends to convey the matter in a positional way. Most other translations rightly say something to the effect that, "...if the willingness is there," or "...if the eagerness is there," etc.

Paul is saying that the disposition of the individual is what makes an offering acceptable or not, regardless of the size of the gift. If one eagerly, and with a right heart, gives just thirty cents, they are doing well. However, if someone gives one million dollars with the wrong intent, why would they be credited with an

acceptable gift? The world focuses on the size of the gift, but God focuses on the intent behind it.

Understanding this, we can see that a gift is based on the heart of the giver and it is "according to what one has." The poor man with little can still give a grand gift out of his few possessions. It is accepted then "not according to what he does not have." If it was, then only the gifts of the wealthy would be acceptable regardless of the amount given in comparison to the amount they possess.

Life application: If your heart is right in your giving, then you will be blessed as you give.

For *I do* not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;
2 Corinthians 8:13

This is in line with the previous verse which said -

"For if there is first a willing mind, *it is* accepted according to what one has, *and* not according to what he does not have."

Paul's logic is that when one gives, it should be according to what one has. However, in verse 3 he said this about those in Macedonia -

"For I bear witness that according to *their* ability, yes, and beyond *their* ability..."

He has shown that the Macedonians gave even beyond their ability, in a manner that would cause them to have to give up on their own necessities in order to assist those in Jerusalem. However, he explained that they did it freely and without being persuaded. Understanding this context, he now says, "For..." This is based on the preceding verse and his thought of giving out of what one has. He is

not trying to persuade them to do what those in Macedonia had done willingly. Instead, he simply means that they should give in order to help those in need, but "not that others should be eased and you burdened."

Would it make sense that the gift to those in Jerusalem be so large that they could then live lavishly while the givers of the gift had to sacrifice? In that case, a collection from Jerusalem would be needed for the Gentiles who gave! It would make no sense. Paul is simply asking them to give in a manner by which none would become impoverished, but that all would be comforted. His next verses will explain this.

Life application: Sometimes in our zeal to give for a worthy cause, we may promise more than we actually intended to. In such a case, it is appropriate that we give according to the promise. We are to pay our vows. Think carefully about what you intend to do before you do it so that you don't later regret what you have done.

...but by an equality, *that* now at this time your abundance *may supply* their lack, that their abundance also may *supply* your lack—that there may be equality. 2 Corinthians 8:14

The last words that Paul said concerned the state which existed between those in Corinth and those in Jerusalem. It was not Paul's intent that one party should be burdened while another party was eased. Instead, he now explains that he is looking for a state of equality. If equality exists, then neither is burdened. As the Corinthians were not in a state of need, as shown in the words "now at this time your abundance," they would be able to supply in the lack (the state of need) of those in Jerusalem.

Noting that this is appropriate, he further explains "that their abundance also may *supply* your lack." Although unstated, it may be that he was thinking on the lines of material blessings from one and spiritual blessings from the other. This idea is nicely stated in Romans 15 -

"It pleased them indeed, and they are their debtors. For if the Gentiles have been partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister to them in material things." Romans 15:27

As those in Jerusalem had supplied spiritual blessings to those in Corinth, it was only right that those in Corinth therefore supply material blessings to those in Jerusalem. Whether this is his thought, or whether he was looking forward to a time when the tables were turned and Corinth would be in material need cannot be stated with certainty, but Paul is giving a summary of what is right and proper between brothers when needs exist. He is writing in hopes "that there may be equality."

It is important to understand that he is writing about equality *within* the Christian community. He is not writing about global equality where the hard work of those who are diligent to get up and produce each day is robbed from them in order to pay for those who are indolent. He is also not writing about Christians being forced to pay for muslims who have evil intent towards those who would help them. The state of today's world, where leaders of both governments and religions are purposely robbing from Mike to pay for Manuel or Muhammed, is unbiblical and harmful to the proper functioning of a society.

Life application: Don't be fooled by pope or president that you have no right to what you have earned. Tell them to go earn their own money and pass that on to those they wish while you will be willing to help your Christian brothers or whoever else you feel it is appropriate to tend to.

As it is written, "He who *gathered* much had nothing left over, and he who *gathered* little had no lack." 2 Corinthians 8:15

Paul now cites Scripture to demonstrate that what has occurred among the early church was not unlike what occurred among the early redeemed congregation of Israel. Shortly after departing from Egypt, the Lord provided the people Manna for

their sustenance. The account encompasses Exodus 16, but the portion which Paul cites is to be found in these verses -

And Moses said to them, “This *is* the bread which the LORD has given you to eat. ¹⁶ This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, *according to the* number of persons; let every man take for *those who are* in his tent.’”

¹⁷ Then the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less. ¹⁸ So when they measured *it* by omers, he who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack. Every man had gathered according to each one’s need. Exodus 16:15-18

The gathering of the collection for the saints in Jerusalem was a collection of love intended to meet their needs just as the Manna from the Lord was an act of love towards His people. The people went out and gathered each morning and brought it into the camp. When it was divided up between them, it was found that the exact amount needed for all of the people had been gathered.

In this, Paul is not demonstrating a socialist or communist attitude. Rather, he is citing the Scripture in order to show that what the people possessed ultimately came from God and it would be inappropriate for other brothers to lack while they had an overabundance. These verses cannot be used to justify government robbing of one group in order to pay for another.

First, this is a collection based on free-will giving. Secondly, it is intended only for Christians in need, not the society at large. Third, those in Corinth were not asked to sell any possessions or land in order to make contributions. They were asked to provide willingly out of whatever they possessed. Fourth, the account of the Manna in the wilderness ended when Israel came to the Land of Promise and a new economy was introduced.

Life application: If you hear a socialist or a commie use the Bible to justify their ungodly stand, ignore them. They are manipulators of God's word with evil intent. Tell them to get to work and earn their own keep.