

2 Corinthians 8-9

Financial Freedom

In closing out this very brief and short study on [2 Corinthians 8-9](#), what we want to do is to try and define what financial freedom is and how someone can work towards it in their life. This is not a study on financial investments or how to make money or how to increase your personal financial portfolio – not at all. This is a study on how to be a good steward of what God provides for you – no matter what you may earn or have. In the previous study we saw that financial bondage is not caused by a lack of money, but rather a lack of contentment. Paul said that he had learned to be content in whatever state he found himself. [Philippians 4:11-12](#) says,

Php 4:11 Not that I speak in regard to need, for I have learned in whatever state I am, to be content: ¹² I know how to be abased, and I know how to abound. Everywhere and in all things I have learned both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need.

He said in [1 Timothy 6:6-8](#),

^{1Ti 6:6} Now godliness with contentment is great gain. ⁷ For we brought nothing into *this* world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. ⁸ And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.

So, when we use the term “financial freedom”, what does that actually involve? We want to begin by looking at six specific attributes of financial freedom. These are very simple attributes and should initially provide a kind of benchmark to help us see where our life and lifestyle may be on the financial freedom scale.

Six Attributes of Financial Freedom:

Attribute 1: Freedom from debt. This is when we do not owe more than we have in cash and assets that could be quickly liquidated if needed. It involves not having bills that are always past due. If we cannot pay our normal living expenses without it becoming very stressful, then we are most likely in financial bondage. The best goal would be to be completely absolved of all debt. The interest that people pay on compounding credit card debt is outrageous. [Proverbs 22:7](#) says,

Pr 22:7 The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is servant to the lender.

If a person is carrying a large balance on their credit cards or owe a lot of people money that they cannot repay, then they are in financial bondage.

Attribute 2: Freedom from financial pressure. This is related to the issue of always being afraid of having unexpected expenses because every dollar that you have is already budgeted to pay off existing expenses and / or past obligations. Many families live on the very edge of their income. I met someone recently who was a very generous person. They told me that what they have done over the years is to develop a methodology for their finances. With every paycheck that they earn they said that (1) they always give a minimum of 10% to their local church, (2) they put up 10% in what they call their “blessing fund” that they use to help other believers, and (3) they put another 10% in savings so that they will be able to give to critical needs that people may have when they arise. Now, I am sure that most people could not do that and probably do not have the discipline to do so even if they could. The tendency is to

generally spend most of what we make. If we make more, we spend more. This individual told me that his father taught him to manage his finances this way and that he had been doing this all of his life, and that he had never suffered any financial needs.

Attribute 3: Freedom from loving money. [1 Timothy 6:9-10](#) says,

^{1Ti 6:9} **But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and *into* many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. ¹⁰ For the love of money is a root of all *kinds of* evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.**

If we make earning a lot of money and all that it can buy as our goal, it immediately becomes the focus of our life. Everything else becomes secondary and the goal of making a lot of money becomes our main priority. The love for money re-orientes and consumes our affections. As Paul said in v10, it causes the believer to “**stray from the faith**” and to begin to experience “**many sorrows**” in their life.

Attribute 4: Freedom from financial entanglements. This happens very often where someone becomes so involved in investing in various business ventures or things such as the stock market that it invariably absorbs all of their time. They become so invested in their business or financial ventures that it crowds out their time to be able to concentrate on loving God and loving His Word. They generally work excessively hard and often excessively long hours to build up their business or investments and in the process Christ invariably becomes a very subordinate and secondary part of their life. [Matthew 13:22](#) says,

^{Mt 13:22} **Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.**

[2 Timothy 2:4](#) says,

^{2Ti 2:4} **No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier.**

Somewhere along the way we have to figure out what God really wants to do in our life, and it certainly is not that of making us wealthy so that we can live at a higher level.

Attribute 5: Freedom from get-rich-quick schemes. I am always staggered at how many people play the lottery. Every time that I pick up the ice at the Hotspot for the Wednesday night family meal, there are always several people in there who are buying some beer and a lottery ticket. It is just a large black hole. [Proverbs 28:22](#) says,

^{Pr 28:22} **A man with an evil eye hastens after riches, and does not consider that poverty will come upon him.**

The primary way to make money is to work hard and to make wise financial decisions and investments.

Attribute 6: Freedom from the guilt of financial unfairness. The goal is for no one to ever be able to point the finger at us and say that we were not upright in our financial dealings with them. We never want to be guilty of defrauding someone, especially when it concerns money. [James 5:1-4](#) says,

Jas 5:1 Come now, *you rich*, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon *you!* ² Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. ³ Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days. ⁴ Indeed the wages of the laborers who mowed your fields, which you kept back by fraud, cry out; and the cries of the reapers have reached the ears of the Lord of Sabaoth.

In [Matthew 6:19](#) Jesus provides three areas of our life where we can quickly see if we have actually made unwise investments. He calls them “**moths**”, “**rust**”, and “**thieves**”.

Mt 6:19 "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal;

Three Witnesses of Unwise Investments:

Witness 1: Moths. “**Moths**” represents not taking care of the basic necessities of our life – our home, our vehicles, our property. We have to do maintenance and upkeep on all that we have. We have to put oil in our engines, cut the grass, and fix things that break. To not do so is just a matter of being lazy.

[Proverbs 24:30-34](#) says,

Pr 24:30 I went by the field of the lazy *man*, and by the vineyard of the man devoid of understanding; ³¹ And there it was, all overgrown with thorns; its surface was covered with nettles; its stone wall was broken down. ³² When I saw *it*, I considered *it* well; I looked on *it* and received instruction: ³³ A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest; ³⁴ So shall your poverty come *like* a prowler, and your need like an armed man.

Witness 2: Rust. “**Rust**” represents purchasing very high depreciating items that quickly lose their initial value. Some things appreciate in value, but others lose their value almost immediately. There is nothing wrong with purchasing quality items. In fact, I would much rather wait and pay more for a quality tool than to buy something that will not last very long. The owner of the place where I buy all of my yard equipment and tools has taught me a lot about the classification of motors. Most motors are Class 1 which sounds like they would be the best, but in reality that die the quickest. Why? It is because the compound that they put in their gears is designed to wear out after so many hours of use. They build the engines to not last so that you will have to buy another one. The better engines that you pay more for, however, generally last 4 times longer because of the hardening compounds they place in the motor spindles and gears. Example: John Deere weed eaters – 70 hours max.

Witness 3: Thieves. “**Thieves**” represents purchasing extravagant possessions that cause other people to desire them.

Now, if we are truly going to be able to experience God’s freedom with our finances, then there are certain basic steps that most people will need to take. This is not a methodology for getting rich, but rather a guide on how to have greater financial freedom in your life. I am going to give you nine steps to take to help you achieve this in your life. [Luke 16:11](#) says,

Lk 16:11 Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true *riches*?

It is very important that we develop the right priorities for our life so that God can commit the true riches of His kingdom to us. That is the obvious goal.

Nine Steps to Financial Freedom:

Step 1: We must establish God's Word as the final authority in all financial matters. It is important that we sincerely dedicate all that we have to God. It involves our money, possessions, time, and our earning power. Some people can make much more money than others, but the amount of the money is not the issue, but our faithfulness with what God has given to us. The world has a way in which it pulls us into its financial system, but normally it is not how God would approach financial freedom. I have been reading some in recent months about how both the government and the banks can legally confiscate all of your account and retirement accounts under certain conditions. How will that be for those who are not really looking to God and depending on Him as their ultimate resource.

Step 2: We must establish our gifts as an expression of worship and as a regular reminder that all we have belongs to God. We are simply stewards. We want to assume responsibility for the work that God may want to do through our church, other believers involved in meaningful ministries, widows and orphans, and very often those who are poor and impoverished. However, we cannot do that if we are continually in financial bondage.

Step 3: We need to evaluate all of our expenditures on how they will aid us in developing spiritual maturity in our life. Will our expenditures make us more effective in God's work? Will they help increase our love for God? Has God actually provided us the money for using it a certain way? This is not trying to make life miserable for everyone, but simply trying to help us evaluate our lives from God's perspective – which we often fail to do. Too often we become so absorbed in what we want and what we want to do that we lose sight of what God may desire.

Step 4: We need to get out of debt as quickly as possible. If a person has made a lot of bad investments and financial decisions, it may take years of extra discipline to get out of debt. It may be necessary to replace high depreciating items if they cannot afford them. They may need to supplement their income in some way. Ultimately I got out of my architectural firm because I did not believe that my partners made good financial decisions. Ultimately they declared bankruptcy, but one of the partners stuck it out and made restitution for all of their past debts. I deeply admired his willingness to do so.

Some 30 years ago Brenda and I got into credit card debt. The road to financial debt is buying things that you do not need and cannot afford with money that you do not have. The interest we were paying on our credit card each month was awful and it never got any better. We determined that we would get out of debt as quickly as possible. It took about a year or longer to do so, but we have never been in debt since that time. Even today we do not have any debt whatsoever – nor will we go into debt. We learned our lesson the hard way, but what we learned along the way is that God is more than willing to bless our desire to be financially responsible. He has always honored and provided our efforts to not be in debt. This will not be a quick fix, short term sanctification when God is involved in teaching us His lessons. It is a long-term process, so be prepared for the long haul.

Step 5: Purpose not to borrow or loan money for depreciating items. Within Scripture there are many verses warning believers not to borrow, and especially outside of their means. Scripture also warns

believers not to co-sign and become surety for someone else. For instance, [Proverbs 17:18](#) and [Proverbs 22:26](#) say,

Pr 17:18 A man devoid of understanding shakes hands in a pledge, and becomes surety for his friend.

Pr 22:26 Do not be one of those who shakes hands in a pledge, One of those who is surety for debts;

Someone is going to ask the obvious question as to whether or not believers can borrow money for necessities like purchasing a home. Since land and a home should be an appreciating item, my opinion is that you are making an investment and as long as the payments do not burden your budget financially, it would be okay. That is only an opinion. The best investment would be to buy something that needed some work, put some “sweat equity” into it, and then sell it for a profit that you can in turn use for making a larger down payment on another home. I actually built my house about 35 years ago and never borrowed any money. Our land cost was free since it was on Brenda’s parents property. We almost doubled our investment on the small house we had purchased on South Boundary, my in-laws gave us \$5000, and I sold a motorcycle that I did not need. When we moved into our current home nothing was finished, so I had to continue working on it for a good number of years as I had the money to do so. However, we never went into debt. In Romania, for instance, people generally do not borrow money. Banks do not lend it, so they have to pay for their home construction as they go and often times it takes years and years to complete the construction. The House of Joy has been built only as they had the monies to do so. Several years ago one of the major church ministries that was helping build the House of Joy wanted to actually own it, which Ovidiu was not willing to do. So, they simply withdrew their financial gifts and construction basically stopped. They do a little bit here and there as the gifts are provided.

Step 6: Give God an opportunity to demonstrate His love and power by providing an item before you purchase it. I am not trying to be ridiculous here, but often times we simply leave God out of our financial equation. Many times we do not need something immediately, so we have the opportunity to commit what we are purchasing to the Lord and allow Him to provide it for us in a supernatural way – if He so chooses. If He does not provide it, then that gives us time to save for the item, if possible earn some extra income, or maybe even decide that we do not actually need it.

The problem that most people have is that we live in a culture that makes getting into debt very easy and attractive. Credit cards, refinancing, home equity loans, balloon notes – the list is endless. Divorce, poor money management, gambling, underemployment, medical expenses, not saving, hoping for a windfall, financial illiteracy, unsecured personal loans, leasing a car, expensive hobbies, rent to own furniture, overspending, unexpected repairs, expenses, college loans, taxes – the list is endless. Example: couple going to Liberty – over \$200,000 in debt.

On top of that, we have developed the mentality that if we want something, then we simply go out and get it. Just give them the credit card. It is available and we want it, so we go purchase it. In that kind of lifestyle, we simply make no room for God to provide what we may need, we make no room for paring down our desires for what we may want, and we have no patience to wait. All of that is a financial disaster waiting to happen. On top of that, our culture is one where women are encouraged to work outside of the home. The more income that couples generally make, the more it increases their desire to

have more. I have always said that the three best decisions that I ever made in my life was (1) to receive Christ, (2) to marry my wife, and (3) that she would not work outside of the home. It is not my intent in saying all of that to disparage women who do work outside of the home, but simply to draw attention to [Proverbs 31](#) where the wife that is mentioned was very productive within her home and was there for her children. She certainly helped supplement her family's income.

Step 7: Develop sales resistance. Something is always on sale, and they are new and shiny and well packaged to lure us into buying it. In fact, business have what they call "loss leader" items that entice people into their stores so that they will buy other things once they are there. So we have to ask several strategic questions. "Do I really need it? Am I buying more than I need? Will it do for me what it claims to do? Does my limited use justify me buying it?" About a year ago I needed to purchase a pressure washer for my home – and of course they were on sale at Lowe's. After looking at them for about \$300, I decided to buy a rebuilt one from Laid Back Services for \$100. After doing the research, I learned that the new ones have a very short life span because of the composition of the gears in the motor. The used one is still operating fine for only 1/3 of the cost. That is not always the right approach, but the issue for me was that I did not want to buy something that would not last me that long. At times, I have gone in with others to purchase items. Tim Blank and I went together and bought a dump trailer from Larry Kuhn that he had used in his business. We do not use it that often, but Tim and I split the cost so it was much more affordable than buying a new one or buying it by myself, yet it serves the same purpose.

Step 8: Develop home maintenance skills. Learning basic home maintenance skills like carpentry, plumbing, electrical, and working on vehicles is very important and can save a lot of money for a family. For plumbing, all you need to know is that water runs downhill and cold is on the right. For electrical, just call Tim Blank. I feel like I can build anything. About 8 or 10 years ago, Brenda and I took two weeks at Christmas and built a barn for my tractor. It was a 30 x40 metal building and had 12 foot high doors (which Andy and Chris came and helped me install). What would have cost me \$15000 to have built cost me half of that. I only had to pay for the materials since Brenda's labor was free. We did a great job, though. My opinion is that personally I am not in favor of purchasing cheap tools. It is worth the wait to be able to afford good maintenance tools. They will last much longer and most will service you for a lifetime if you take good care of them. I still have all of the tools that I purchased to build my home and continue to use them all the time.

Step 9: Evaluate the reason for a lack of funds. This may be the most important step of all. If we simply cannot afford something, we have to ask these strategic questions. "Is God testing my faith? Have I violated God's financial principles for my life and have not been a good steward of His resources in my life? Have I misspent money?"

It is always good to be willing to do a biblical assessment of where we may be in our spiritual life, and especially in the area of our finances simply because this one area so often reveals attributes about our life that may need some major adjustments at time. I would close out this study by simply repeating that the basic cause of financial bondage is a lack of contentment in our lives. I do not have to have everything that I may want or go everywhere that I want to go or do everything that I want to do. "**Godliness with contentment is great gain**" and yields God's blessing in a person's life.