

# GIVING

JULY 15, 2018

Giving is an act of worship. In contemporary church lingo, *worship* is synonymous with *singing*. I've heard preachers say of a given service, "we had powerful preaching, encouraging fellowship, and good worship." When I hear this, I chuckle, for worship isn't limited to the song service. Worship is defined and acted out through anything we do that honors and ascribes to God His worth to us.

**Definition**, *worship* (v.) - To honor with extravagant love and extreme submission; To adore; to pay divine honors to; to reverence with supreme respect and veneration. (Webster's 1828)

Therefore, when we gather with our church with the right motives, we worship. When the Scriptures are opened and we listen with an intent to obey, we worship. When we bow in prayer individually or corporately, we worship. When we open the Bible and sing Psalms, or we open the songbook and sing hymns, from the heart, we worship. And when we give of our resources in such a way that we are ascribing to God His worth to us (with *extravagant love* for what He's done, with *adoration* of Who He is, and with *supreme respect* for what He can do), we worship. I give to God because I desire to worship Him. I worship Him through giving. It is interesting to note that, throughout Scripture, the word *worship* is used more 102 times. Of these, *worship* is used more times in relation to giving and sacrificing than it is to music (with the exception of Daniel 3, where it is used 5 times in 10 verses in relation to improper *worship*).

This principle of worship is important. If we don't understand that giving is and should be an act of worship, we may have the wrong approach to giving. But if we give because of Who God is, and because of what He's done, and to demonstrate His worth to us, our perspective on giving will be radically different. We'll give generously and willingly.

Ironically, however, our lesson today is not on worship through giving. Our lesson is more on the practical "why's" of giving. Pastor Esposito often reminded us that, "People are motivated by two factors: Fear of loss, or desire of gain." God knows this, and that's why much of His Word consists of principles that state, "do this, and you'll be blessed," or, "don't do this, or you'll lose the blessing" (Deuteronomy 11:26-28). This is more so the direction we are going. There is loss experienced when we don't give. There is gain expected when we do give. There is nothing wrong with obeying on this basis. But if our lives are lived and our resources are given out of a spirit of worship, this stuff will merely be a cherry on top (or whipped cream for those of us that don't like the cherry!). With these thoughts in mind, we will look at some motivating factors for Christians to give.

## 1. We are commanded to give

The first motivation regarding giving is that giving is not an option to be considered, but a command to be obeyed. Simply put, God commands us to give. Notice the underlined phrases in the Scriptures below:

**Luke 6:38** Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.

**Proverbs 3:9** Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

**Malachi 3:8-10** Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house...

These verbs and phrases are not in the subjective or subjunctive mood. They're not even in the indicative mood (for you English majors). They're in the imperative mood. *Give... Honour... Bring ye all the tithes*- these words show us that this is something that we, as Christians, ought to obey.

One thing we notice is that, our not giving isn't simply violating a command. If we took note of that last passage, God equates not giving the tithe as robbing Him. That's some heavy-duty stuff! There are some commands in the Bible we might break from time to time and have to get right. We might allow the sun to go down upon our wrath, and then have to pick up the phone the next morning and apologize to our spouse (Eph 4:26). We might gossip (Lev 19:16). We might speak a froward word to a coworker, or family member (Prov 3:32). We might answer our child in anger (Prov 14:17). Those things have happened and may happen (though I'm not comparing or justifying or minimizing any sins, and we should try not to do any of them). But if there's one command I do not want to break, it's the one we're speaking about right now. I don't want to be guilty of robbing God!!

**Definition**, *rob* (v.) To plunder; to strip unlawfully; To take from; to deprive. To withhold what is due.

We spoke of motivation by the fear of loss. I don't want to lose out by robbing God of that which is His. When God's people robbed Him, Malachi gives three consequences of what happened.

- Consequence #1 – Distance due to disobedience.

**Malachi 3:7-8** Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

God equated their distance from Him with the fact that their generation had stopped tithing. One motivating factor in tithing is that I want to be close to the Lord. I don't want to grow distant. One way I can close that gap is by giving to God what He says is His.

- Consequence #2 – A curse.

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I'd much rather experience God's blessing than His cursing. However, God makes it clear in Deut. 11:28 that the choice is ours. These people were cursed because they had forsaken God's law- specifically tithing here. We can keep His Word and experience a blessing, or we can break His commandments and lose that blessing, and experience consequences associated with it.

**Deuteronomy 11:26-28** Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if ye obey the commandments of the LORD your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if ye will not obey the commandments of the LORD your God...

- Consequence #3 – A devourer.

If we are saved, there is a devourer, the Devil. The Bible says in 1 Peter 5:8 (addressed to Christians) that he is "seeking whom he may devour." In Malachi 3, we see that if they tithed, God would rebuke this devourer for their sakes. But if they did not give the tithe, there was a very real possibility that they'd not be fruitful in their land, or successful in their business.

Let us consider some quotes regarding giving and tithing:

- *"I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God's hands I still possess." – Martin Luther.*
- *J.D. Rockefeller said, "I never would have been able to tithe the first million dollars I ever made if I had not tithed my first salary, which was \$1.50 per week."*
- *W.A. Criswell tells of an ambitious young man who told his pastor he'd promised God a tithe of his income. They prayed for God to bless his career. At that time he was making \$40.00 per week and tithing \$4.00. In a few years his income increased and he was tithing \$500.00 per week. He called on the pastor to see if he could be released from his tithing promise, it was too costly now. The pastor replied, "I don't see how you can be released from your promise, but we can ask God to reduce your income to \$40.00 a week, then you'd have no problem tithing \$4.00." Give according to your income, lest God make your income according to your giving.*

The first motivating factor for giving is that it is commanded, and that there are consequences for not doing so. However, I'm glad that the Lord doesn't only give us commands and consequences. As we saw in Deuteronomy, there are great blessings associated with keeping God's Word, which leads us to our next thought.

## 2. We are blessed when we give

The blessings associated with honoring God through giving are great! Let us some of these blessings in the passages below:

**Malachi 3:10-11** *...and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.*

**Luke 6:38** *Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

**Acts 20:35** *I have shewed you all things, how that so labouring ye ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*

Books have been written on this topic. Month-long series' have been taught on these truths. We cannot do justice in a week, or one lesson, to the physical and eternal blessings that come through giving. However, this morning, let's briefly look at the kind of giving that God blesses and some of the blessings.

- #1 - God blesses tithing

First, God blesses our obedience to Him in giving the tithe. As He said in Malachi, God invites us to test Him, to prove Him in our tithing, and to see if He doesn't bless us with much more than we could bless ourselves with that 10%, should we hang onto it.

*"...prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."*

**Definition, prove (v.)** - To try; to ascertain some unknown quality or truth by an experiment; To experience; To ascertain the genuineness or validity of; to verify.

As we saw earlier, this "window of heaven" blessing is just the beginning. When we tithe, our relationship with the Lord is better (Malachi 3:7-8). When we tithe, the Lord will rebuke the devourer. When we tithe, we are aligning our lives with God's Word- and a life aligned with God's word always results in blessing. Oh, that God's people would take Him at His Word concerning tithing! God's work would be done. The needs around the world would be met. And God's people would be blessed.

*"It's not what you do with the million if fortune should ere be your lot, but what are you doing at present with the dollar and quarter you got."*

- #2 - God blesses generous giving

We've heard before, and it's true – we cannot out give God. Those of us who have tried God know that the more we give, the more we *prove* this to be true. Luke 6 shows us that the extent of this blessing is *measured* (it is measured) and returned according to the measure it's given, and 2 Corinthians says the same:

**Luke 6:38** *Give, and it shall be given unto you: good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.*

**2 Corinthians 9:6** *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.*

Understanding these things then, let's seek not just to obey in that which is commanded, but to be *bountiful*, generous givers!

**Captain Levy**, a believer from Philadelphia, was once asked how he could give so much to the Lord's work and still possess great wealth. The Captain replied, "Oh, as I shovel it out, He shovels it in, and the Lord has a bigger shovel."

**J.L. Kraft**, head of the Kraft Cheese Corporation, who had given approximately 25% of his enormous income to Christian causes for many years, said, "The only investment I ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord."

Someone else said, "He who gives what he would as readily throw away, gives without generosity; for the essence of generosity is in self-sacrifice."

Not only are there blessings, joy, and fulfillment to be found in a generous life. Generous giving is where a true spirit of worship is found. Our "over and above" giving to the poor and needy, to the local church, and to the needs of the Lord's work– such as a building project, missions, a special offering, or meeting a need that the Holy Spirit lays on our heart – gives us a chance to show God's worth to us.

God desires to bless us bountifully. God desires to give a good measure. God desires our worship. This can all be found through generous giving!

- #3 - God blesses cheerful giving

**2 Corinthians 9:6-9** *But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work:*

I love the spirit of our church on offering Sunday. There's a great spirit. There's a buzz. People are excited to give. When I think on it, I think of the verse above. The word cheerful here actually means *hilarious*, or *merry*.

**Definition**, *ἡλαρός* (adj., pronounced, *hil-ar-os'*) - propitious or merry, hilarious.

When I think of the word hilarious, I think of gladness, laughter, and mirth. I think of a group of people sitting together having a good time. In 2 Cor. 9:6-9, we see that God loves and blesses the person that gives with this spirit. Let's be cheerful givers!

In conclusion: Giving is near to the heart of God, because He knows that it's near to our heart. When we think upon all God's done for us, when we understand the command to give, and the great blessings associated with giving, and the impact our giving can make for the cause of Christ, how can we not give both generously and cheerfully? Let's be a church that God chooses to use greatly because we have the proper perspective on giving.