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Biblical Giving

Lesson 5
GIVING AND THE OFFERING PRINCIPLE AS TAUGHT BY APOSTLE PAUL

Before the Mosaic Law was given, Abraham and Jacob gave 10% of all they had to the Lord's work. When the Mosaic Law was given, the Jew was required to give three tithes that amounted to about 23% per year over a three-year period. The Lord Jesus tithed as a Jew and gave approval to the tithing system. However, when Christ came and died, He did away with the Mosaic Law as a way of life. This, however, did not change the moral law of God in giving for the church which I believe is 10%. The New Testament silence on the tithe is really a proof that it continued rather than it was discontinued. However, the Christian is no longer required to give the festival tithe or the charity tithe because these were essential to the survival of the Jewish religion and nation. Instead of 23%, the Christian is required only to give 10%, following the pre-Mosaic example and according to the moral law of God that never changes. A tenth rightfully belongs to God. Yet, the motivation seems to be a little different in the New Testament. It is not just, "Give and you will be blessed," but "You have been blessed, now give."

In the New Testament epistles, it is basically only the Apostle Paul who gives thorough instructions on how to give in 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. *The important thing to note is that these chapters have nothing to do with the tithe but are dealing with a special offering that was being taken up by the Gentile Christians to help the needy saints in Jerusalem.* The churches were undoubtedly already tithing 10% to the Lord through the local church to support the ministry. To make this special offering to the Lord for the saints in Jerusalem, it would be a great sacrifice for these poor Gentiles. ***For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even beyond their ability. Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints (2 Cor. 8:3-4).*** They gave this special offering over and above their 10% to the local church.

While 1 Corinthians 16 and 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 have nothing to do with the tithe, they do set forth some giving principles that may be applied to both the tithe and offerings.

INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE OFFERING 1 Corinthians 16:1-3

The church of Jerusalem was passing through some difficult times. Those Jews who came to Christ were being persecuted. Because they chose to follow Christ, they lost family, friends, position and jobs. Many of the more wealthy Christians fled Jerusalem to avoid the persecution. The poorer Christians had to stay and the result was they were in dire financial straights.

The Apostle Paul, while traveling around to different local assemblies, suggested that the Gentile churches take up a special offering to help the Jerusalem church. One of these local churches, the Church of Corinth, had promised to help the poor brethren in Jerusalem. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, Paul gives the instructions for taking up this collection. It appears the Corinthians had fallen behind in meeting their financial promise to Jerusalem, so Paul exhorts these Corinthians to follow through on their commitment.

Giving applies to all Christians. ***Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do.*** The same principles and rules for this offering applied to all

the churches. It was a total effort of all the churches using the same biblical rules. All giving principles come from the Bible not from man-made fund raising techniques and schemes.

Giving is to be systematic. ***On the first day of the week.*** Every Lord's Day (Sunday) the Christians at Corinth were to give a portion of their substance made that particular week to meet this offering to the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem.

Economic changes in our day make weekly giving tedious for most, but the principle of systematic giving for the tithe and offerings whether weekly, monthly or yearly is taught in this verse. Giving is not to be haphazard or on the spur of the moment. It is to be prayerfully planned. Emotional giving is not scriptural.

Giving is to be personal. ***Each one of you.*** Each person in the Corinthian church was to make some contribution towards this need no matter how poor he or she might have been. The amount given was not so important to Paul, but the spiritual effect of collective giving was all-important. This offering was promoting the fellowship of the churches and Paul desired every Christian to take part to receive a spiritual blessing.

Whenever an offering is taken, over and above the tithe to the church, every Christian should participate even if it is for only a small amount of money.

Giving is a command. ***Set aside.*** This is a command in the present tense in the Greek language. A Christian is commanded to be continually laying aside his monies to the Lord.

Stewardship is the responsibility of every Christian. Willful neglect of stewardship is disobedience to God.

Giving is to be done to the local church. ***Set aside a sum of money.*** This actually says, "Lay by in store" or "Put into treasury" and would seem to indicate a definite place of deposit or treasury. It most likely refers to the giving of the money to the local church treasury, so the collection would be completely taken when Paul arrived to pick it up. If money was kept at home, this would ultimately involve a collection, the very thing Paul did not want.

Special offerings like missions, deacon's fund, building fund should be done through the local church. However, not all offerings must pass through the local church.

Giving is to be proportionate. ***In keeping with his income.*** This literally says, "As God has prospered him." Paul indicates no definite amount for this offering; no exact proportion of one's income was to be designated. This was a free will offering that is left to the conscience of the individual as to the amount.

God in His grace has prospered some Christians more than others, and, after the tithe, God expects each Christian to give offerings as he has been prospered. Some Christians will be able to give offerings in the thousands, others in the hundred and others hardly anything.

Giving is never to distract from the spiritual. ***Saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made.*** – Paul was coming to Corinth to minister to them not to beg for and bleed them of money. He was coming to give them spiritual blessings and did not want the collecting of money to distract from the spiritual ministry. All the collection of money was to be taken care of before Paul got to Corinth.

Money should never detract from the spiritual ministry. If pastors and churches are constantly begging for money, people get turned off spiritually. Before taking an offering in the church service, it should be made clear that money is not the issue for non-Christians, and for Christians, they must be reminded to give tithes and offerings with a right attitude. A constant hounding for money will destroy the ministry of a local church and cause the people to lose confidence in their leadership.

The local church is to distribute the gifts of the givers. *Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift.* Paul was arranging the collection, but he did not plan to take the money to Jerusalem in person. The Corinthians would raise the money, keep it until Paul came and send it by messengers of their own choosing. The leaders of the local church were responsible to get the money to Jerusalem. There was to be a wise handling and administration of the money.

All money is to be handled by more than one person to avoid the appearance of evil. The local church leadership is responsible to give an accurate accounting of all monies given and dispersed.

Giving involves making needs known. *To Jerusalem.* There was an actual need to help the impoverished Christians in Jerusalem. Paul made this need known to the churches without forcing them to give. To relieve the necessity of the saints is a ministry of the local church.

All giving should be based on intelligent needs. Needs should always be made known but no pressure should be applied to get Christians to give. While it is not absolutely necessary, when giving to various Christian organizations, it is wise to have the local church recommend these organizations or at least approve them so believers will be putting their offerings in the right places.

ATTITUDES ABOUT THE OFFERING 2 Corinthians 8:1-5

In 2 Corinthians 8, Paul uses the Macedonian churches (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea) as an example for the Corinthians. The Macedonian churches agreed to give to the needy saints of Jerusalem, as did the church at Corinth. It appears the Macedonians wanted to give when they heard of the Corinthian's desire to make the gift. The irony is that the Corinthians stopped their initial eagerness but the Macedonians went on in their giving and the result was the Macedonians became an example to the Corinthians.

Giving sacrificially brings inner joy (8:1-2). *And now brothers, we want you to know about the grace that God has given the Macedonian churches. Out of the most severe trial, their overflowing joy and their extreme poverty welled up in rich generosity.* The Romans had plundered the Macedonians and they were as a whole a very poor people. They were in "extreme poverty" (down to the bottom) but they still gave liberally of their monies to the Lord's work and joy filled their hearts. The Corinthians, on the other hand, were a Roman colony and much better off financially than the Macedonian churches. Yet, the Corinthians were stingy compared to the Macedonians who had nothing.

It is easier for a poor man to give than a rich man because the poor man does not miss what he never had. The Lord's work would fold up immediately if it depended entirely on the rich Christians to support it.

Giving can never be forced (8:3). ***For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, even beyond their ability.*** These Macedonian Christians gave beyond what they were able to give and beyond what Paul expected them to give. They gave this offering because they wanted to, not because they had to.

Giving under pressure is wrong and it contradicts Scripture, making a mockery of God. Any “slick tricks” and deception to get people to give are not of God but the devil.

Giving is a privilege (8:4). ***Entirely on their own, they urgently pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service to the saints.*** These Macedonian Christians begged Paul to give. They did not wait to be asked. They asked to be allowed the privilege to give.

When a Christian has to be begged to give, his heart is not right with God.

Giving begins with a personal devotion to Christ. ***And they did not do as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then to us in keeping with God’s will.*** The Macedonian Christians gave themselves unreservedly to the Lord as a living sacrifice. They were willing to sacrifice for the Lord and His work.

Personal commitment to Christ must precede a person’s commitment of his pocketbook or giving will always be a chore rather than a blessing. All giving is really a matter of the heart.

PROFIT FROM THE OFFERING 2 Corinthians 9:1-11

In 2 Cor. 9:1-5, Paul tells why he is sending a delegation to the Corinthian church. He knew of the original willingness of the Corinthians to give and boasted to the Macedonians about their willingness to help the needy in Jerusalem. The Corinthians began strong but failed to carry out their promise to give. Therefore, Paul sent this delegation to get them ready to complete their giving to the Jerusalem saints. Then in 2 Corinthians 9:6-11, Paul tells the Corinthians about the personal method and attitude they should have in the offering.

Giving sacrificially will bring increased material blessing. ***Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously.*** Paul tells the Corinthians who were financially wealthy that stingy persons will receive very little in material gain. But the person who gives liberally will receive more in return.

A general rule for a Christian is the more one gives, the more he will receive in return. Sometimes God does not bring financial blessing to the Christian who gives sacrificially, but He always blesses spiritually.

Giving involves an act of the will (9:7a). ***Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give.*** The Corinthian believers had determined beforehand that they were going to give sacrificially to the saints in Jerusalem.

The Christian by an act of his will should determine he is going to give back to God that which is rightfully His whether it is the tithe or the offerings.

Giving is not to be done reluctantly (9:7b). ***Not reluctantly.*** The Corinthians were to have a positive attitude towards giving. They were not to fight and argue with God over giving nor were they to give with a grudging attitude.

Giving is not extortion but a privilege because God has given us everything. A reluctant heart towards giving shows a person loves his money more than his God.

Giving is not to be done under compulsion (9:7c). ***Or under compulsion.*** The Corinthians were not to give this offering because they felt they had to, but because they desired to give in obedience to Scripture.

The Christian is not to give with the idea he is being forced to do so, or that has to give because everybody else is doing it. God wants the heart of a person; the money will come later.

Giving is to be done with a proper mental attitude (9:7d). ***For God loves a cheerful giver.*** Paul wanted the Corinthians to know that God is well pleased with sacrificial givers.

God loves the believers who give with a cheerful mental attitude whether it is the tithe or the free will offering. In the matter of offerings, God is far more concerned about the Christian's attitude than the amount given. If a believer finds it hard to give, then he has a wrong mental attitude. He has a spiritual problem.

Giving involves an understanding of who God is (9:8). ***And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.*** The Corinthians had to come to the place where they understood God could take care of them when they gave sacrificially. They had to learn that God is powerful to make all grace abound towards them so that their basic needs would be met in order for them to do good works.

Christians often do not give because they do not understand the character of God. Therefore, they do not trust Him. God will meet every physical and spiritual need of the Christian who gives liberally. This is a very hard lesson to learn. But when we learn it, we find joy in our God.

Giving sacrificially will lead to more sacrificial giving (9:10). ***Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness.*** – God who provides seed for the farmer is also the God who will supply the Christian's daily needs. God who supplies will “increase your store of seed.”

God will increase the Christian's substance who learns to give tithes and offerings. The more a person gives the more he will receive that he may in return give more.

Giving brings enrichment (9:11). ***You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion, and through us your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God.*** – The Corinthians would become more enriched, spiritually and financially, by sacrificial giving. As God provided more money this would produce a spirit of thankfulness.

The more faith a Christian exercises in giving, the more enrichment he will receive. As God prospers the faithful giver, he will be even more thankful.