

**NEW
BIRTH IN
GIVING -
II**

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Dec. 1, 2013

Sermon in a sentence: God desires to give us great financial blessings through our faith-filled obedience to His instructions regarding giving.

Scriptures: Mal. 3:8-12; Matt. 23:23; 2 Cor. 8:1-5; 2 Cor. 9:6-11; Luke 6:38; Luke 16:10-12

Mal. 3:8 NASB “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. ⁹ “You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation *of you!*” ¹⁰ “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,” says the LORD of hosts, “if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. ¹¹ “Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast *its grapes,*” says the LORD of hosts. ¹² “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.

NEW TESTAMENT GIVING

By the time Jesus came along 400 years after Malachi, the Jews had amended their OT ways and were back into tithing. The Pharisees were especially meticulous. Money, herbs, seeds, food, it was all being tithed. Alms were being given to the poor. They had the monetary part covered 100%.

But, as we discussed in our last lesson, there is more to tithing and giving offerings than just money! There is thanksgiving; worship; sharing; rejoicing.

When Jesus addressed this situation with the Pharisees, it would be an understatement to say He was *not* pleased with them! He said:

Matt 23:23 NLT "...you are careful to tithe even the tiniest part of your income, but you ignore the important things of the law - justice (Mk. 7:9-13), mercy (Deut. 14:28-29), and faith (Mal. 3:10). You should tithe, yes, but you should not leave undone the more important things."

So, as Jesus specified, we still tithe in the New Testament Church Age. However, He has called us to a much higher level of understanding and performance of His will.

As we read through Matthew Ch. 5, Jesus' 'Sermon on the Mount', we hear Him refer to various points of Old Testament law with the words "You have heard it said...." In each case He follows up by saying, "But I say unto you...." Of course, most of the people were stunned as He was speaking, because here was a man, handling the Law as if he was the sole authority on the Law! None of them had a clue that this was actually God Himself in their midst, interpreting His own Law, taking them out of the letter and into the spirit of it! He wanted them to escape the nitpicking of legalism and enter into the joy of living according to the spirit of the Law. As Paul later stated, "...the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor. 3:6b)

Tithing is a righteous act, proper and godly, and the Pharisees knew well how to do that. However, in the same Sermon on the Mount discourse, Jesus made a very clear statement to those who felt they could please God by

simply fulfilling the letter of the law. “For I say to you, that unless your righteousness *surpasses* that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt 5:20 NASB). This is a very strong statement coming from the lips of Jesus, but His Word also gives us the understanding of how this can be accomplished.

We know it is totally impossible for us to please God on the basis of human righteousness. In His sight, it is all like filthy rags (Is 64:6). Abraham understood this and simply lived his life with faith in Jehovah who would *make* him righteous – through faith, not through works (Rom 4). Put into modern English, Jesus was saying: “You have to do a lot better than the Pharisees if you want to impress Me with your righteousness and get into My kingdom.” The truth is, it is impossible for us to be righteous enough, unless *He* becomes our righteousness!

So, what shall we do?

Well, **we *will* tithe, because Jesus said we should:**

Mt 23:23 NASB “ Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For **you tithe** mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but **these are the things you should have done** without neglecting the others.

We *will* give freewill offerings, because Jesus said we should

Luke 6:38 NASB “Give, and it will be given to you. They will pour into your lap a good measure — pressed down, shaken together, *and* running over. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.”

We will give because Jesus gave, as John 3:16 so eloquently reminds us.

John 3:16 NASB “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

However, tithing is just the beginning of NT giving! Randy Alcorn wrote an excellent book entitled *Money, Possessions and Eternity*, in which he describes tithing as “the training wheels of giving”.¹ The Law was never the end point. It was always just the beginning; the schoolmaster leading us to Christ (Gal 3:24). Our actions in this NT age are always meant to supersede the requirements of the OT Law.

With this in mind, let us take a look at New Testament giving in the Early Church:

Irenaeus, one of the early church fathers put it this way:

“The Jews were constrained to a regular payment of tithes; Christians, who have liberty, assign all their possessions to the Lord, bestowing freely not the lesser portions of their property, [i.e. tithing], since they have hope of greater things.”

We see how the saints in Macedonia responded to the needs of their brethren in Jerusalem in one of the most beautiful examples of New Testament giving. Here is the apostle Paul’s report of it:

¹ Randy Alcorn. *Money, Possessions and Eternity* Tyndale House Publishers, Wheaton, IL, © 2003, 173

2 Cor. 8:1-5 NASB Now, brethren, we *wish to* make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, ² that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality. ³ For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, *they gave* of their own accord, ⁴ begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints, ⁵ and *this*, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God.

They gave in the midst of their affliction!

They gave with an abundance of joy!

They gave in spite of their deep poverty!

They gave liberally!

They gave beyond their ability!

They gave with great willingness!

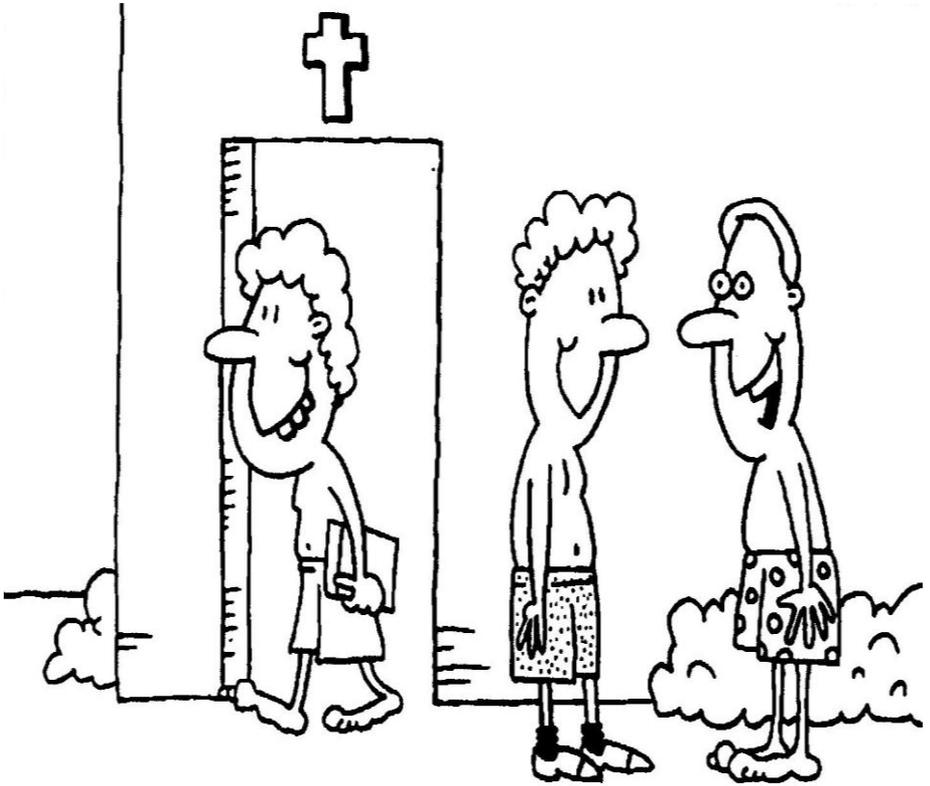
They begged Paul to receive the offering from their hands!

But best of all, first and foremost, they gave themselves to God!

To summarize, here is Paul's analysis and exhortation regarding NT giving:

2 Cor. 9:6-11 NASB Now this *I say*, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷ Each one *must do* just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. ⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed; ⁹ as it is written, "HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR, HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER." ¹⁰ Now He who

supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; ¹¹ you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.



“WOW!! ... That was the best sermon on tithing I’ve ever heard!”

**Let us get in on the blessing of joyful giving.
God wants to make His grace abound toward us.
He wants us to live in abundance.**

He is not trying to strip us like the characters in the cartoon.

He wants to enrich us as a result of our liberality.

He wants the fruits of our righteousness to increase.

When we give ourselves to God FIRST, our whole perspective changes.

We no longer see ourselves as our own masters. Jesus becomes our Master.

We no longer see ourselves as owners of our goods. Jesus owns all our goods.

Our mindset changes from that of an owner to that of a steward.

We deploy His treasures as *He* sees fit, not as *we* see fit.

Over time, as we demonstrate that the Lord can trust us to listen to His voice and do His will as stewards of His treasures, He will be free to actually give us treasures of our own.

Luke 16:10-12 NASB “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. ¹¹ “Therefore if you have not been faithful in the *use of unrighteous wealth*, who will entrust the true *riches* to you? ¹² “And if you have not been faithful in *the use of that which is another’s*, who will give you that which is your own?”

So, let us put first things first. Let us FIRST give *ourselves* to God with the understanding that giving to God never takes a blessing from us. It always gives a blessing to us!