Giving to the Lord's Work

I Corinthians 16:1-4
3-10-2024

Introduction: The Bible has much to say about money:
It teaches us to earn it honestly (Prov. 10:2, 4)
To invest it wisely (Prov. 10:5, 30:25)
To pay our debts promptly (Prov. 3:27-28, 22:7)
To view it soberly (Prov. 8:10-12, 16:16)
& To give it cheerfully (2Co 9:7)

**** How should Christians GIVE to the work of the Lord?***

I. Give UNSELFISHLY
("the collection for the saints" - v.1)

II. Give REGULARLY
("upon the first day of the week" - v.2a)

III. Give PERSONALLY (Individually)
("let every one of you..." - v.2b)

IV. Give DECISIVELY
("lay by him in store" - v.2c)

V. Give PROPORTIONATELY
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Bible Principles about Giving

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The Principle of the First Fruits (Prov. 3:9-10)
The Principle of Sowing and Reaping (II Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7)
The Principle of Cheerfulness (II Cor. 9:"7; II Chron. 24:f10)
The Principle of Faith (II Cor. 9:8-15)
The Principle of Sacrifice (Lk. 21:1-4)

VI. Give ANONYMOUSLY
("that there be no gatherings when I come" - v.2c)

VII. Give RESPONSIBLY
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Introduction: In light of the fact that "*your labor is not in vain in the Lord"* (I Cor. 15:58), how can you do your part in the Lord's work?

In this last chapter of I Corinthians, the Apostle Paul describes:

How to GIVE to the work of the Lord (16:1-4)
How to SERVE in the work of the Lord (16:5-24)

Whereas chapter 15 was doctrinal, chapter 16 is practical. Our doctrine should always affect our duty. Our beliefs will always influence our practice.

Because we serve a risen savior, nothing we do for Him is in vain.

Having exhorted the Corinthians to diligent service for Christ (15:58), Paul now gives some practical instruction as to how they might have a part in the Lord's work.

Give God YOURSELF, before you give Him your money

Paul gave this testimony of the churches of Macedonia:

And this they did, not as we hoped, but **first gave their own selves to the Lord**, and unto us by the will of God. (2 Cor.8:5)

Don't give him money thinking you can earn your salvation or appease Him with gifts (obedience is better than sacrifice).

The Bible has much to say about money:

It teaches us to earn it honestly

Proverbs 10:2
Treasures of wickedness profit nothing

Proverbs 10:4
He becometh poor that dealeth with a slack hand: but the hand of the diligent maketh rich.

To invest it wisely

Mt. 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

To pay our debts promptly (Prov. 3:27-28, 22:7)

Proverbs 3:27-28
Withhold not good from them to whom it is due, when it is in the power of thine hand to do it. [28] Say not unto thy neighbour, Go, and come again, and to morrow I will give; when thou hast it by thee.

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

To view it soberly (Prov. 8:10-12, 16:16)

Proverbs 8:10-12
Receive my instruction, and not silver; and knowledge rather than choice gold.
[11] For wisdom is better than rubies; and all the things that may be desired are not to be compared to it. [12] I wisdom dwell with prudence, and find out knowledge of witty inventions.

Proverbs 16:16
How much better is it to get wisdom than gold! and to get understanding rather to be chosen than silver!

Money will Buy:
A bed but not sleep.
A steak but not an appetite.
Books but not wisdom.
A house but not a home.
Medicine but not health.
Luxuries but not peace.
Amusement but not joy.
A crucifix but not Salvation.
A church pew but not heaven.

Proverbs 10:22
The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it.

Wisdom regarding money:

1. The Principle of <u>Ownership</u>
   You and your possessions are God's.
   Psalm 24:1
   The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. 1
   Psalm 50:12
   If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.
   Chron. 29:11
   Thine, O Lord, is the greatness, and the power, and the glory, and the victory, and the majesty: for all that is in the heaven and in the earth is thine; thine is the kingdom, O Lord, and thou art exalted as head above all.
   Isaiah 43:1
   But now thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and he that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not: for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by thy name; thou art mine.
   Isaiah 43:7
   Even every one that is called by my name: for I have created him for my glory, I have formed him; yea, I have made him.
   1 Cor. 6:19
   What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own?

2. The Principle of <u>Dependency</u>
   Your power to derive wealth comes from God.
   Deut. 8:18
   But thou shalt remember the Lord thy God: for it is he that giveth thee power to get wealth, that he may establish his covenant which he sware unto thy fathers, as it is this day.

3. The Principle of <u>Stewardship</u>
   You are God's manager/steward.
   (Lk. 16:1-13)
   1 Cor. 4:2
   Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.

Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive. (Acts 20:35)

All of us likes to receive gifts, presents, help, etc.
Receiving is a blessing!

Many times we have stingy hearts

However, Jesus said that the giver is more blessed than the receiver.

Ill. The dead sea (takes, takes & takes but never gives) it receives water from the Jordan river and other sources but because of its depth nothing flows out. Therefore, nothing can live in the dead sea.

When you give, you are <u>ACTING LIKE GOD</u>, who gives & gives
James 1:17 - Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning

God created the earth to give: The Sun gives of it's energy; Flowers give nectar to bees; the Clouds give rain; the trees give off oxygen; the ground produces crops etc.

We as Christians ought to be givers!

Nothing God expects of us is without instruction. God gives us a spiritual plan for how we ought to give.

**** How should you <u>GIVE</u> to the work of the Lord?***

I. Give <u>UNSELFISHLY</u>
("the collection for the saints" - v.1)

"<u>The</u> collection" - A particular contribution that both Paul and the Corinthians knew about.

"Order" - An express command. Paul, being an apostle, had the authority under God to command the church he had planted to take up a contribution for the needy saints at Jerusalem.

"Saints" - Holy ones; people set apart by the grace of God. Set apart from sin and its consequences and set apart unto God.

These saints were believers who lived in ***"Jerusalem"*** (v. 3). Because of <u>persecution</u> (Acts 8:1-3; I Thes. 2:14) and because of a <u>famine</u> that affected Palestine (Acts 11:27-30), many of God's people had great needs. These needs were met by themselves sharing any abundance some of them had (Acts 2:44-45, 4:32-37), and also by the gifts that came their way from others believers in Asia Minor, etc.

While we should *"do good unto all men,"* we are exhorted especially to do good *"unto them who are of the household of faith"* (Gal. 6:10). After all, we are family in the Lord, members one of another, joint-heirs with Christ.

For the Corinthians to give to the saints at Jerusalem would indeed be an act of love and unselfishness. Why? They would perhaps be giving to people whom they never met before and people who could never repay them. Of course, God in Heaven would repay (Mark 9:41 - *"For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink in my name, because ye belong to Christ, verily I say unto you, he shall not lose his reward.)* SEE: Matthew 25:34-40

One reason God gives us money is to help others in need.

> Prov. 19:17 - *"He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again."*
>
> Prov. 21:13 - *"Whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."*
>
> Prov. 22:9 - *"He that hath a bountiful eye shall be blessed; for he giveth of his bread to the poor."*
>
> Prov. 28:27 - *"He that given unto the poor shall not lack: but he that hideth is eyes shall have many a curse."*

The Athenian statesman Aristides wrote the following of Christians living in the second century: "They walk in humility and kindness, and falsehood is not found among them and they love one another. They despise not the widow and they grieve not the orphan. He that hath, distributeth liberally to him that hath not. If they see a stranger, they bring him under their roof and they rejoice over him as if he were their brother. For they call themselves brethren, not after the flesh but after the Spirit and in God. But when one of their poor passes away from the world and any of them see him, then he provides for his burial according to his ability. And if they hear that any of their number is in prison or oppressed for the name of their Messiah, all of them provide for his needs. And if it is possible that he may be delivered, they deliver him. And if there is among them a man that is poor and needy and they have not an abundance of necessity, they will fast two or three days that they may supply the needy with his necessary food." (MacArthur, p. 456-7)

Any giving which comes into a local church should by one way or another be funnelled to reaching <u>people</u> with God's Gospel.

If "things" are bought with the church income, these things must in some way help us minister to the needs of people.

(One look at a church's annual report will reveal if God's money is being invested in people or not.)

II. Give <u>REGULARLY</u>
("upon the first day of the week" - v.2a)

The ***"first day of the week"*** = Sunday, also called *"the Lord's day"* (cp. Rev. 1:10), in commemoration of Christ's resurrection triumph over death (Lk. 24:1ff) and the Holy Spirit's descent to begin the church on Pentecost (Acts 2).

Sunday became a regular day of worship as evident by Acts 20:7, which states: "*And upon the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul preached unto them, ready to depart on the morrow; and continued his speech until midnight."*

Paul's charge is that the Corinthians form a consistent practice of dedicating a portion of their income to the Lord each and every week.

"Giving should not be spasmodic, done only when we feel generous or "as the Spirit leads..." Our giving should not be based on periodic emotional appeals or feelings, or on bonus income, but on regular, willing, and grateful commitment of our possessions to the Lord, to His people, and to His work." (MacArthur, p. 451-52).

III. Give <u>PERSONALLY</u> (Individually)
("let every one of you..." - v.2b)

"Every one" - Giving to God is <u>not</u> merely for <u>some</u> of God's people, but for <u>all</u>.

From the youngest to the oldest, male and female, saved Jew and Gentile, black or white, upper class or lower class, rich and poor. Every blood-bought child of God should desire to give to the God who gave you eternal life.

Parents should teach their children at a very early age about the importance of giving to God's work.

IV. Give <u>DECISIVELY</u>
("lay by him in store" - v.2c)

Unless you determine what you will give and set it apart as "*holy unto the Lord,"* you will not give much, nor will you give consistently.

"Lay by him in store" - to put aside and save. This statement conveys the idea of a deliberate decision to save a portion of one's income so as to not spend it, but to give it to God.

"If paul were here referring to Christians storing their offerings privately at home, what he says at the end of the verse--*"that no collections be made when I come"*--would not make sense" (MacArthur, p. 453).

V. Give <u>PROPORTIONATELY</u>

("As God hath prospered him" - v.2d)

"As God hath prospered him" - Our giving should be proportionate to our income. The more God blesses us with, the more we should bless others with.

What proportion of our income should we give to God? I believe this is a matter of Christian liberty. However, God gives some principles to help us to determine what percentage of our income should be voluntarily given.

1. The Principle of the <u>Tithe</u> (10%) and <u>Offering</u>

   Gen. 14:18-20 - *"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine; and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thine hand. And he gave him tithes of all."*

   Lev. 27:30 - *"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD."*

   Mal. 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, 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 root enough to receive it."*

   Matt. 23:23 - *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint nd anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done and not to*

leave the other undone."

2. The Principle of the First Fruits
Prov. 3:9-10 - *"Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine."*

3. The Principle of Sowing and Reaping (II Cor. 9:6; Gal. 6:7)

4. The Principle of Cheerfulness (II Cor. 9:7; II Chron. 24:f10)

5. The Principle of faith (II Cor. 9:8-15)

6. The Principle of Sacrifice (Lk. 21:1-4)
The Old Testament Israelite gave 10% proportionate to his income for the support of the Temple and Levites.

We ought to give *"better"* than the Old Testament saints. A key word in Hebrews is "better." God's expectations of us are higher than the Old Testament. God does not say, "Get out a calculator and limit yourself right down to the penny!" What if God gave to you the same way you give to Him?! Does He get out a calculator and say, "I need to stop pouring out blessings because this one has received over 10%?" NO

Becoming rich should never be the goal of a believer (SEE: I Tim. 6:6-10, 17-18).

VI. Give ANONYMOUSLY
("that there be no gatherings when I come" - v.2c)

Paul did not want collections to be made in his presence, lest people give to impress him. He wanted their giving to be noticed only by God (SEE: Matt. 6:1-4).

NOTE: To give in an offering envelop for tax write-off purposes does not violate this principle.

VII. Give RESPONSIBLY
("whomsoever ye shall approve...them will I send" - v.3-4)

"Whomsoever ye shall approve" - Not just anyone can be trusted with a church's finances.

Only faithful men can act as treasurers or deacons. Men whose life and character has been tested and proven to be gold (Note: the deacons chosen in Acts 6).

In Paul's day, money could not be "wired" via Western Union. A certified check could not be sent overnight via Fed-Ex or Express mail. The heavy coins had to be hand-delivered by faithful people.

Paul here is not talking about how the money would leave Corinth, but how it would be transported safely and efficiently to Jerusalem.

How would the money be brought to Jerusalem and would all of it (right down to the last shekel) arrive?

II Cor. 8:16-24 gives more information on the "finance committee" which assisted Paul. The offering did eventually make it (Acts 24:17).

The New Testament teaches ecclesiastical giving. The Corinthians' giving was through the local church (when they assembled on the first day of the week) and was via officially designated church representatives (money handlers had to have spiritual credentials).

Before a Christian gives to any charity, they ought to agree with that charity's or church's:

--doctrine and practice
--financial management practices
--do they supply the giver with a receipt if requested?
--do they have a budget and spend wisely?
--do they report on their income and expense?
--how much of their income goes to actually meet the need they are requesting help for, and how much goes for "overhead" (salaries, promotion, etc.)?

In other words, is there financial integrity and accountability?

Beware, there are many rip-off artists who deceptively come dressed in Christian garments.

CONCLUSION:

Before God wants any of your money, He wants you.

Don't give him money thinking you can earn your salvation or appease Him with gifts (obedience is better than sacrifice).