

PRINCIPLES OF CHRISTIAN GIVING

by
Dr Charles L. Feinberg

Message No.1

We are eager to consider and discuss the important and vital subject of Christian giving. It is true that the Christian public is often in confusion and doubt on this vital matter of giving, yet the Word of God is unusually clear on this important theme. Some general principles are in order here. First of all, we need to remember that giving is part of a larger and all-comprehensive subject, namely, that of stewardship. Biblical stewardship recognizes the Lord's ownership of all, whether it be time, talents or money; agreement by us to that commitment, and then the use of the same in conformity to the will of God. The Apostle Paul tells us, through the Spirit of God, speaking to the Corinthian believers, in I Corinthians 4:1-2, "Let a man so account of us, as of ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Here, moreover, it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful." In our stewardship God wants us to be faithful.

Secondly, the basis of all stewardship lies in the fact that God is the Maker, the Creator, and the Giver of all. There is no more important Scripture in all the Bible on this theme than Genesis 1:1, "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth." All is made by Him. God is the Maker and the Creator. Psalm 24:1 tells us the earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, the world and they that dwell therein. He is the Maker and Creator of all and in the first chapter of James the 17th verse we read, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom can be no variation, neither shadow that is cast by turning." So, friends, from these Scriptures we see that God is the Maker, the Creator, and the Giver of all. And you and I as believers are God's agents. Romans 14:12 reads: "So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God." He is speaking to believers in this passage. The accounting will include our entire stewardship in this life. We are told in I Corinthians 6:19-20, "Know ye not that your body

is a temple of the Holy Spirit which is in you, which ye have from God? and ye are not your own; for ye were bought with a price: glorify God therefore in your body." Friends, we are accountable to Him alone.

The third principle is this. Covetousness is to be guarded against. One great man of God in the early church said, he heard men confess to all manner of sin, but rarely, if ever, did he hear anyone confessing that he was guilty of covetousness. Covetousness, we are warned, is a very serious thing. Covetousness is to be guarded against. Our Lord Himself said in Luke 12:15, "Take heed, and keep yourselves from all covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth." That's a profound truth, and the reason for the warning is given by Paul in Colossians 3: 5, "Covetousness, which is idolatry." God placed covetousness in the same class, the same category as idolatry. It was Dr Dewitt Talmage who once said, "Ransack the whole earth and show me one man that has been happy by temporal success. You cannot find one out of the millions and hundreds of millions, not one. First a man wants to make a living. Having made a living, he wants to make a competency. Having made a living and a competency, he wants to make a superfluity. Having made a living, a competency, and a superfluity, he wants more, more, more." The husks of this wilderness can never satisfy the hunger of the soul. Proverbs 27:24 rightly declares, "For riches are not forever." A magazine made this statement some years ago. It said of Christ's 29 parables, 13 of them referred to the right use of possessions. Jesus said more about money than He did about heaven. He talked more about money than He did about hell. He said more about money than He did about prayer, Scripture reading, church attendance, moral living, baptism, or the other doctrines that have divided Christendom. How important that is then, friends, this subject of Christian giving, when our Lord Jesus Himself has placed so much emphasis and so much stress upon it.

Better than 40 years ago, Dr C.I. Scofield of the Scofield Reference Bible fame, set forth in a wonderful series of Bible studies some significant principles of Christian giving that we shall refer to here. A timeless example of Christian giving

is found in the case of the Macedonian churches, churches in Greece, of which the Apostle Paul wrote in II Corinthians 8:1-11. Those words are so important, friends, that you must take time to read them. These words are more precious than gold and diamonds. "Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God which hath been given in the churches of Macedonia; how that in much proof of affliction the abundance of their joy and deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For according to their power, I bear witness, yea and beyond their power, they gave of their own accord, beseeching us with much entreaty in regard of this grace and the fellowship in the ministering to the saints: and this, not as we had hoped, but first they gave their own selves to the Lord, and to us through the will of God. Inasmuch that we exhorted Titus, that as he had made a beginning before; so he would also complete in you this grace also. But as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all earnestness, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by way of commandment, but as proving through the earnestness of others the sincerity also of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that ye through His poverty might become rich. And herein I give my judgment: for this is expedient for you, who were the first to make a beginning a year ago, not only to do, but also to will. But now complete the doing also; that as there was the readiness to will, so there may be the completion also out of your ability." This is a wonderful portion of God's Word. In fact, we made bold to say it is one of the most important passages in all the Bible on this matter of giving, especially Christian giving. We will continue this subject, Lord willing. Shall we lift our hearts in prayer? Our God and our Father, we have been handling just this moment, not the word of man, but the Word of God in truth; and as we look into the important teaching of Thy Word upon Christian giving, may we have a heart that will seek to learn and to put into practice obediently what Thou dost show us by Thy Spirit in Thy Word concerning Christian giving, Christian stewardship of all our time, of all our efforts, of all our means, of all our talents. Oh, God our Father, bless richly the truth of Thy Word to hearts throughout the Institute Hour. We pray in Christ's Name. Amen.

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Message No.2

Good morning, friends of the Bible Institute Hour. In a previous broadcast, we quoted, with regard to general principles of Christian giving, the example of the Macedonian Churches as found in II Corinthians, the eighth chapter, the first eleven verses.

Now, if you have your Bible handy, please turn to that eighth chapter of II Corinthians. If you haven't your Bible handy, you can get it, and then it will make this particular portion of the study more meaningful. That's II Corinthians the eighth chapter, the first eleven verses.

Notice these forceful facts given in these eleven verses. First of all, the Macedonian believers (and remember Macedon was in Greece, and these Macedonian churches were local congregations of believers in Greece) gave themselves to the Lord (II Cor. 8:5) "and this...not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." That's the secret of Christian giving all through the centuries, giving oneself first and foremost and pre-eminently to the Lord.

And notice secondly, they did not make poverty any excuse for not giving. Hallelujah for that! So many folk do make poverty an excuse for not giving. But these folk didn't hide behind poverty. And there was not an assumed poverty; it was not something pretended. They were really poor. (II Cor. 8:2) "How that in great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." As poor as they were, that's how liberal they were.

And then, in the third place, we read that they didn't wait to be urged. Oh, what a blessing that would be to pastors. That would be a great blessing to pastors all over the world, if they didn't have to entreat and beseech. Notice, they didn't wait to be urged, but these folk wanted to give, so they plead with Paul to take it. "Beseeching us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." They wanted their offering to go to the poor saints in Jerusalem.

And notice in the next place, they were not content with good resolutions, because they made a pledge. Some folk think pledge-making is not scriptural; but these folk had made a pledge. They were not content with good resolutions, but they went on from that to perform the giving. In the eleventh verse we read: "Now therefore perform the doing of it; that as there was a readiness to will, so there may be a performance also out of that which we have." You Corinthian believers, do what the Macedonian believers did. They were not content with good resolutions, with what they had covenanted, pledged or promised last year or some time before, but they wanted to perform that which they had promised the Lord.

And then notice, in the next place, the spirit in which we should give. That's in II Corinthians 9:7: "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart," let it come out of the heart, "not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful," a hilarious "giver."

And the reason we should give, the highest reason in all the universe is given in Corinthians 8:9. I trust that you are taking these Scriptures down or that you have them before you, because they are so meaningful as we view them for ourselves in the Scripture of God. II Corinthians 8:9: "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich." What an infinite reason to give: because the Lord Jesus Christ gave Himself; He gave all.

And then, in the last place, in this wonderful context, we have the reward for giving in II Corinthians 9:6. Verse six tells us that "He that soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully." There is going to be a bountiful reaping for bountiful sowing, a wonderful reward. And the eighth verse states that "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." (II Cor.9:8) Three things, friends, need to be remembered in Christian giving. First, the person, or to whom we give: it is to the Lord. Throughout the Old Testament it's unto the Lord. In Philippians 4:18 Paul says they gave an offering, "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Let's remember we're not giving to some project, let's not give to some worthy cause, let's not give to some wonderful objective, but let's give to a Person, to the Person, to the LORD.

And then, secondly, let's remember that in Christian giving there is a principle, or how to give, and first of all it must be systematically. Not hit or miss, not hap-hazardly, not off and on, but I Corinthians 16:2 says: "Upon the first day of the week"...every week of every year and every week of every month..."The first day of the week"...it's to be systematically. You'll never have real joy in your exercise of Christian stewardship in giving until you do it systematically, and I'm speaking from experience, as have so many thousands of thousands of others. Systematically, let your giving not only be systematically, but individually. (I Corinthians 16:2) "let every one of you lay by him"...it has to be an individual matter. And then we are to give sacrificially. In Luke 21 verses 3 and 4 we read about the widow's mite...she gave all the living that she had...she gave sacrificially. Some folk say..."give until it hurts"...that's not a proper principle because giving hurts some people too soon. No, let's give sacrificially, let's give by way of sacrifice, sacrificially, in a sacrificing manner. In II Corinthians 8:2 the Macedonian churches gave out of "their deep poverty, their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality." That was giving, not from the top of the purse...so many people try to give from the top of the purse...they should give rather from the bottom of their hearts.

And then notice the reward of giving (Acts 20:35). "It is more blessed to give than to receive." II Corinthians 9:7 - "God loveth the cheerful giver." Hebrews the thirteenth chapter, the sixteenth verse - "God is well pleased" - and he had been talking about communicating of our means. In Matthew 6:20 we read that when we do give, we are laying up, literally so, "treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:" Treasures in heaven, better than any First National Bank, or Federal Bank in the world -- treasures in heaven. Two friends were talking. One told the other of a good man who died and left thirty thousand dollars. Said the other one: "What a pity that was that he left it behind, when he might have sent it on ahead. He's not likely to ever hear of it again." Oh, may God grant that that shall not be true of either you or me. May we never be said to have left anything behind. Let's use it for God, and then we shall have been sending it on ahead, laying up treasures in heaven. May God grant it.

Our God and Father, bless all along the broadcast of the Bible Institute Hour. Bless our schools here, all our alumni, our prayer helpers, those who do give sacrificially, or we would never have been able under thy hand to carry on this great testimony through these almost fifty years. Bless every home into which the broadcast has come, and if there is any heart out of Christ, may that one give Christ the warm room of the heart, receive Him by faith, and then give Him all. We pray in Christ's name. Amen.

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by

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Message No.3

Good morning friends, in two previous broadcasts we looked into the Word of God to study together the Scriptural teaching on Christian giving, our stewardship before God in the matter of giving. I should like to think this morning on a very timely subject which we are entitling, "Storehouse Tithing." How does this matter of "Storehouse Tithing" fit in with what we've been talking about these previous broadcasts? Well, in recent years we've been hearing much of what is called, "Storehouse Tithing." Is it Scriptural? Is it applicable to believers today? We get so many letters asking us personally what the Scripture says on this matter of "Storehouse Tithing," because certain ministers and other Christian leaders are stating that storehouse tithing is for our day and time and is absolutely binding, obligatory on every believer. Well, is it Scriptural? Is it applicable to believers today? In the first place the phrase storehouse tithing is not found anywhere in the Bible and is of recent origin. The theory holds that the child of God owes a tithe of his income to the Lord, but this tithe must be paid to the local church where he belongs. The church, according to this view, is to be the sole distributor and dispenser and sole channel of all the funds of its members. Now, what's wrong with this view? Will you remember that we mentioned in I Corinthians 16:2 that Christian giving is individual..."let every one of you lay by him in store." It's not something that someone else can do for you. And, first of all, to acquiesce in this practice is for the believer to surrender his right and duty to determine under God, for himself, where his stewardship of money is to be used in the Lord's work. Secondly, if the Scripture is searched, it will be found that this whole theory, the entire theory, lock, stock and barrel, is built on Malachi 3:10. And this is the way that verse reads: "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 room enough to receive it." Friends, the storehouse of the Old Testament was certainly not the Church of Christ, nor a local body of believers in the New Testament sense, for the Church was not yet in existence. The Church was born at Pentecost, and nowhere in the Bible is the Church designated as a storehouse of any kind. But actually in Israel these storehouses were the repositories for the tithe that went for the support of the Levites and the Priests. They had no land of their own, these Levites, they lived off the tithes of the rest of the nation. There had to be distributing points throughout the land for this process. The New Testament principle, as I have said, is I Corinthians 16:2..."lay by him"...not in a storehouse, but "lay by him in store," not where someone else conceives it should go. Each is responsible for his own money.

Now, thirdly, if the Old Testament practice in Malachi 3:10 is insisted on, then are the advocates of this erroneous theory prepared to go all the way with what was done with the tithe in the Old Testament? Let us look at Deuteronomy 14, verses 22-26: "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the Lord thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the Lord thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou are not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the Lord thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the Lord thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the Lord thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink,

or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the Lord thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household." Do you see what that passage states, beloved? Why the man actually ate up his own tithe. He bought with it whatever he wanted, just so he ate it before the Lord. Would these advocates of this erroneous theory indicate that the tithe should be used for wine? Would they hold that it should be used for strong drink, or whatever the offerer wished, or is that too much to swallow?

Fourthly, let us speak plainly and truthfully. Actually this theory proposes what is a form of totalitarianism in the Church. Men and women are being asked to give up their liberty and right to give as the Lord leads them. No one can hand over this right, delegating it lock, stock, and barrel to others. We shall be held accountable; every man shall give an account in this matter to God Himself.

Fifthly, the very reason given for the proposal of this practice, the building up of individual institutions, is not Scriptural, neither in basis, nor in ultimate intent. And, finally, if the storehouse tithers had their way, there would be no independent testimonies whatsoever, no Salvation Army, no Gideons, no Christian Business Men's Committee, no American Council of Christian Churches, no National Association of Evangelicals, no inter-denominational Bible Institutes, or Colleges, or Seminaries, no faith missionary societies, no Pacific Garden Mission in Chicago where Billy Sunday was saved, no Union Rescue Mission in Los Angeles, where many are being saved daily, no Jerry McAuley's Water Street Mission in New York, no International Child Evangelism, no Youth for Christ, no Billy Graham Campaigns, and many other worthy works and causes for Christ. Why some of the very advocates of this recent theory, storehouse tithing theory, were themselves trained originally in institutions supported by the free-will offerings of God's people, from all branches of the Church of the Living God. Oh, may God keep us in the Scriptural path of Christian giving, and from the error of this storehouse tithing, so-called, which is not found in the Bible at all for this age. It is not there for you and me. May we give ourselves, as the Macedonian believers did, first unto the Lord, and then for every worthy cause the Lord lays upon our hearts. We shall be so grateful when God shall get the glory in our giving.

Our God and Father, again we thank thee for many who have given in radio land for the ongoing of this testimony, and for our four schools--The Bible Institute, the Bible College, the School of Missionary Medicine, and The Talbot Theological Seminary, and we thank thee for the giving to the work in Hong Kong, and the work in many other phases of our testimony. Oh, our God and Father, we praise thee for what has been done. Incline hearts this hour to resolve before thee that each one shall be obedient, submissive to thy leading in his and her place, as thou dost lead with regard to the funds entrusted to us; and if there be any one in radio land that has never given thee the door to the heart so that Christ can come in and save and redeem eternally, we pray that one may make the decision now, and believe on the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal salvation. In Christ's Name we pray with thanksgiving. Amen.