

Today is the last of a three part series regarding New Testament worship. As a review, we established that Jesus promised to build a church and that it came into existence on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2. The church belongs to Christ. It is His church and he is the head and as such he put in place how he wanted worship to be. We also noted that worship **MUST** be done in spirit and truth. Spiritual worship is your attitude and inward emotions while in truth relates to doing it according to biblical authority. Notice again what Jesus said to the Pharisees. ***Matt 15:8-9 This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. (9) But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.*** What made their worship vain was that they worshiped according to man's tradition and not according to truth.

This morning I'm going to talk to you about giving. Before I do, I want to make a disclaimer, particularly to our visitors, I've been preaching here for over twenty years and I rarely preach a lesson on giving. I feel if the heart is right, then giving will take care of itself. I don't want you to leave here this morning saying all we are interested in is giving or getting your money. But giving is a Biblical subject and needs to be mentioned from time to time. Now I realize that giving can include other things like time and self; but for the next few minutes I want to consider giving of your money.

We want to begin in the last OT of Malachi. Here we see the prophet dealing with this matter of giving sacrifices to God. It seems the people were going through the motions but that was about all. They were satisfying their consciences by offering animal sacrifices as they had been commanded, but the problem was that they were offering their culls. They were bringing their sick and unhealthy animals to the altar. ***(Mal 1:7) Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar; and ye say, Wherein have we polluted thee? In that ye say, The table of the LORD is contemptible. (8) And if ye offer the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? and if ye offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? offer it now unto thy governor; will he be pleased with thee, or accept thy person? saith the LORD of hosts.*** A few verses later Malachi said, ***(Mal 1:13) Ye said also, Behold, what a weariness is it! and ye have snuffed at it, saith the LORD of hosts; and ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering: should I accept this of your hand? saith the LORD.*** The Lord did not accept their offering because they had a stingy attitude about giving. ***(Mal 3:8) Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? IN TITHES AND OFFERINGS.***

God saw their poor giving habits as robbery. It's safe to say that God was displeased with such giving as in the next verse He said that they would be cursed. So we learn that even though we put money in the collection plate, it might not be pleasing to God.

**It's a matter of Choice.** The greatest benefactor of a contribution is the one who gives it. The Apostle Paul quote Jesus concerning giving by saying: *Acts 20:35, "I have showed you all things, how that so laboring 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."* We should feel good in having a part in the greatest work in the world—the salvation of souls. The Apostle Paul commended the brethren at Philippi for supporting him when no other church did so. He placed emphasis on their support of him brought fruit to their account. *Phil. 4:15-16, "Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity."* Here we see from Paul's perspective how the church in Phillip, a church in the region of Macedonia gave him financial support. The impressive thing about this is that they were in poverty – they didn't have much. This must have been a real sacrifice for them. *(2 Cor 8:1) Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; (2) How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.* They gave while it hurt.

Listen further as the Apostle Paul spoke of those who contribute are the ones especially blessed in doing so. He outlines a principle of life that also applies to giving. You reap what you sow. *I Cor. 9:6-7, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully."*

*(7) Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."* Liberal givers are blessed in knowing that their sacrificial gift will reap more than if they gave sparingly. Notice the attitude should be "cheerful giving." If you begrudge giving, then it's not worship in spirit and truth. In fact the verse says to give without grudging or feel that it is necessary. God can function without your money. You see, the world belongs to the Lord with or without your money. *Psa 50:12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fulness thereof.* Or perhaps a more familiar passage. *Jas 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.*** Don't feel like "you have to give." You give because you want to give. You give cheerfully. It's a matter of choice.

Let me give you an example that recorded in Acts 5. Here we have a couple that wanted to impress the people by claiming that they gave all that they had to feed the poor when in reality they kept back part of it and lied about it. This displeased the Lord and he stoke them both dead. So don't consider this matter of giving an insignificant part of worship. It's something the Lord considers very serious.

**It a matter of commitment.** What Does the Lord Expect of Us in the Matter of Giving? The Apostle Paul addressed our responsibility in the matter of giving. ***1 Cor. 16:2, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come."***

***2 Cor. 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."***

Now let's analyze these two passages. First note this is the responsibility of the Christian - ***let every one of you lay by him in store.*** Paul was writing to Christians at Corinth so this was a command to the church. We do not solicit money from none members of the church. This is a work of the members of the body of Christ. Notice too that you are to "lay by in store." This coupled with ***Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,*** teaches us that what you give should be planned ahead of time. You don't start digging in your purse and/or pocket to see what you can scrape up just to have something to give.

***Upon the first day of the week.*** Here we learn the time to give. It's on the first day of the week – Sunday. If you come to a service on some time OTHER than Sunday, you will not find the collection plate being passed because there is no authority to do so. For the same reason, we do not have car washes, or raffles, or bake sales as fund raisers. Christ's church is to be funded by free-will contribution on the first day of the week.

***As God hath prospered him,*** We also learn that this contribution to be proportional to your prosperity; how much you made. If you have a steady pay check that is the same every week, then your contribution would be about the same each week. But if you had

a job where your income was based on your performance, like commission sales, then your weekly income should fluctuate and so might your giving. Notice nowhere in these instructions are you commanded to give 10%. Tithing was an OT command given to the people of Israel to provide for the tribe of Levi. ■ ***Num 18:21-24 And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.***

***(23) But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, ... that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance. (24) But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance.*** The tithing was to support the Levites which had no inheritance. When the Old Law was replaced by the New Law of Christ, then the command to tithe was also removed.

While an amount was not specified, the attitude is. Our giving is to be from the heart without grudging. Our giving is to be a cheerful experience. We should want to give to the Lord's work. The Lord doesn't want us to feel as though we need to give because he needs our money. We don't need to feel the necessity of giving, but we give because we want to give. Keep in mind the Words of Jesus: ***"If it is more blessed to give than to receive."*** Mature Christians give cheerfully unto the work of the Lord.

We will be considering next year's budget over the next few weeks. A large part of our budget goes toward foreign missions, local missions, benevolence, etc. None of these things could be accomplished without your giving.

Are you robbing God? I want to challenge each of you to examine what you are giving and to insure that you are giving in a way that is pleasing to the Lord and not in such a way that he considers it robbery like in the days of the prophet Malachi. You see, giving is a heart issue. It's been said that you can't out-give God and that's right. This is why he said ***(2 Cor. 9:6) But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.***

How committed are you in supporting the work of the Lord? It begins by obeying the gospel.