

Call to Obedience #470
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Let Us Talk About Church Giving

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Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury (Mark 12:41). It says here that Jesus sat—He took time studying how people gave to the church. And Jesus still closely observes how much you give to Him for His mission because how you spend your money is a reflection of what you think of Him and His cause. You can fool people with your words, but you cannot fool them with what happens in your checking account. On the Day of Judgment, all the books will be opened including the checkbooks. Now let us talk about tithing.

Tithing is one of the oldest institutions of the church. It is first mentioned with Abraham. Abraham tithed when he gave 10% of his wealth to a priest called Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). Later on, people were instructed to give tithes and offerings to the Levites and priests so they could be fully engaged in the work of God (Num. 18:24). This principle of having a full-time ministry was also confirmed in the early church where it says that ministers are to give themselves *...continually to prayer and the ministry of the word (Acts 6:4).*

Jesus sat at the treasury and watched. He watched because He wanted to know how much He could bless the givers. Jesus loves to bless His children. And the degree to which He will bless His children is in proportion to how much they give to Him. And with this, we introduce the new principle of giving under the government of Christ as it is given to us in Luke's account of the Sermon on the Mount. *Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you (Luke 6:38).*

This is absolutely revolutionary. Here, Jesus, by relegating the old kingdom to antiquity making room for His new kingdom, directs us to move from a 10% tithe to a 100% tithe. Here, we come to Jesus' repetitive words: *It has been said of old...But I say unto you...*, and to Paul's words: *...all things have become new (2 Cor. 5:17).* Everything changed with His new kingdom which marked the end of armies, chariots, taxes, clashing swords and human

ambition. Jesus' new kingdom elevates the internal over the external, suffering over prosperity and dying over living. It favors servants over kings and calls for giving all, instead of a little so that we may receive ...*good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over.*

Again, Jesus will bless us according to our giving. Yet, His blessings do not always translate into money. Indeed they could include advancement on the job, health and protection for the family, the restoration of relationships, empowerment and enrichment in ministry, etc., but they can also include great hidden treasures beyond measure that come to us through special God ordained sufferings as was the case with Paul's thorn in the flesh (2 Cor. 12:17).

Remarkably, in our Lord's new kingdom, the measured and often reluctant giving of tithes and offerings is replaced by reckless, enthusiastic giving out of passionate love (2 Cor. 9:6-8). The question is no longer: "How much do I have to give," but now it is: "How much can I possibly give" for the advancement of the gospel. From now on, you no longer close your checkbook to God on Sunday and do not open it again to Him until the following Sunday. Instead, you leave your checkbook open to God all week long; and all that is yours is His and all that is His is yours. That is the bigger picture. Until He has your checkbook, He does not have you.

Further, in His new kingdom, prosperity takes on an entirely different meaning. It is no longer measured by how many things you have, but it is now measured by how much of His spirit you have and by how much He has of you. It is no longer a matter of how many oxen, sheep, goats and land you have, as was the case with Job and Jacob (see Job 1:3 and Gen. 30:43). It is no longer a matter of the size of your home or the brand of your automobile. In fact, the whole theology of Jesus teaches the opposite of this Old Testament concept of prosperity, namely that the richer you are in the things of the world, the more likely you are caught up in its whirlwind.

Jesus tells us that the more things we have, the more hindrances we must overcome to be rich in Christ. For example, in the parable of the sower, Jesus tells us what we see so often when someone rich gets converted. He starts being fruitful but becomes unfruitful. Here are our Lord's own words: *Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful* (Matt. 13:22). The things of the earth have a tendency to make us lukewarm. Now look at this warning of Jesus: *Do not lay up for*

yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal (Matt. 6:19). And here are the most sober words of Jesus against worldly prosperity: And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God (Matt. 19:24).

Now let us raise the question: “How much stuff does it take for you to no longer fit through the eye of a needle?” It is the same in any culture. The Apostle Paul helps us here by saying: *And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows (1 Tim. 6:8-10).* What Paul is saying here is that once you go beyond your necessities in life, the eye of the needle is likely to become too small for you to pass through anymore. You are apt to become deceived, choked and unfruitful; yet not knowing it by maintaining a form of religion but denying the power thereof. That is dangerous. The Laodicean Christians fell into that trap. They thought they were rich, but Jesus said: *...you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked (Rev. 3:17).* There is nothing in the New Testament that encourages you to go after stuff, after things. But there is certainly a lot in it that encourages you to become rich in Christ. Here is the advice that Jesus gives to you on how to handle your domestic economy: *But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you (Matt. 6:33).*

As you seek His righteousness and His will, He will do the adding to what you need, or what He wants you to have beyond that. If He decides you need another pair of shoes, fine; if two or three pairs of shoes, fine. But be sure the Lord is doing the adding and not you. Remember again the division of labor: you do the seeking; He does the adding. A lot of shoe money should have gone to India or Africa, winning souls to Christ. And besides, who wants to walk around in un-anointed shoes anyhow. Man-made prosperity carries no blessing.

Now, here is another reason why Jesus wants you to give *...good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over* (the same way He gives). There is more to be conquered now. In the Old Testament, God gave His people only a tiny piece of the world. But when Jesus came, He gave His disciples the whole world to conquer with His Love. That takes a lot of money

and He wants every Christian to be financially involved in it. So, in the light of this, it is: “No, no, no” to the old tithe. It is no longer enough. It is only a beginning for those weak in faith. But once you see God’s faithfulness, it will spur you on to give more and more. In this, you will find thrills, romance and adventure.

Finally, some of you say: “I am too poor to even give 10%. I have no money.” It does not have to be money. Throughout history, tithes often included vegetables, grains or meat. If your chickens lay 10 eggs a week, give one to Jesus and He will give more back to you. No man is too poor to tithe—rather most men are poor because they do not tithe. Let us look where this is validated in your Bible: *Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, For you have robbed Me, Even this whole nation. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, That there may be food in My house, And try 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 such blessing That there will not be room enough to receive it (Mal. 3:8-10).*

Since Jesus came, you are no longer to keep 90% for yourself and only give 10% to Jesus. It is not fitting in His kingdom. You give your all to Him and He will give His all to you and then you will always have what He wants you to have—neither more nor less. To God be the glory.

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