

“We cannot consider Calvary and, at the same time, lay down qualifications about our own giving. We cannot be grudging or reluctant and still sing with sincerity:

Love so amazing, so divine,  
Demands my soul, my life, my all.”

Thus writes Herbert Carson in his book on Christian worship entitled *Hallelujah!*

Yet in considering our giving to the Lord’s work, how often do thoughts of Christ and of His sacrifice upon the cross enter our minds? More often the giving of our money is seen simply in terms of supporting the local congregation, enabling it to have enough cash to meet its bills, maintain its property and pay its minister. Thus many view their financial giving as simply a duty to the church, an obligation that any loyal member should fulfil, and the more so if their name and contributions get published for everyone to see.

However, this matter of giving is fundamentally about our response to the Lord and our relationship with Him. We glorify God when we take seriously the counsel of Proverbs 3:9 to “honour the Lord with your wealth...” And we get the Lord and our giving into proper perspective when we can affirm with King David – “Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand...” (I Chronicles 29:14) So let us consider three key questions.

### Why should we give?

(a) **Because God’s word commands it.** It is clear from the Old Testament law that specific provision was made for the support of the priestly tribe of Levi and for the services of the Temple, (Numbers 18:8-14., Deuteronomy 18:1-8). Also, in the New Testament, Jesus recognizes that the disciples whom He sends out to preach in His name should be provided for by the gifts of the people, “for the worker

*deserves his wages”* (Luke 10:1-7). And in Paul’s first letter to the Corinthians we see him requiring a regular setting aside by Christians of a sum of money for the Lord’s work in keeping with their income. (I Corinthians 16:2)

(b) **Because the grace of Christ commends it.** Again, writing to the Corinthians, Paul urges that like others they should excel in the grace of giving, their role model being the Lord Jesus Himself. “For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.” (II Corinthians 8:9) The self-giving love of the Lord Jesus who gave up everything to save us from our sins should be a main motivation for us to give to the work of His Kingdom.

(c) **Because the reality of a lost and needy world demands it.** Every Christian has a calling from God to bring the light of the gospel into the spiritual darkness of the



community in which they live (Matthew 5:14-16), but it is when Christians live and witness as a community of God’s people in the life of the church, sharing their resources that their witness is most potent. It is also from fellowships of witnessing Christians that God calls out some to commit full-time to reach the lost across the world with the Gospel. For that to happen the generous support prayerfully and financially of the local church is essential. Indeed not only should Christians be motivated in giving by the crying need of spiritually lost people but also by the painful poverty of millions who live in hunger, in social deprivation and as homeless refugees – some our brothers and sisters in Christ. We cannot possess Christ’s love and ignore these needs (I John 3:17)

### With what Attitude should we give?

The Apostle Paul’s words in II Corinthians 8 & 9 give clear answers to this question. Commending the sacrificial giving of the Macedonian churches he notes that “they gave themselves first to the Lord...,” (II Cor. 8:5). The offering up of their lives as an act of worship to the Lord (Romans 12:1) was the attitude that underlay their generosity with money and material things. So Paul offers the following counsel to the Corinthians regarding their giving: “Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” (II Corinthians 9:6-7)

Christian giving must be glad and willing with a desire both to be a blessing to others and to trust the Lord to provide for all our needs (v. 8). Sometimes it is simply our lack of faith in God’s gracious provision that has us wishing to hold

back rather than give out from the abundance that God has given us. Surely one of the best ways to counter our own sinful tendency to covetousness and to be free from the love of money is joyfully to give it away to the Lord's work and to rejoice with thankfulness when we see what He accomplishes for His glory in other people's lives. (II Corinthians 9:12-14)

### **How much should we give?**

Clearly principles of generosity and sacrifice underlie our whole thinking about this matter, but in II Corinthians 9 Paul avoids stipulating fixed amounts or proportions of income. Nonetheless, the Lord Jesus clearly endorses the correctness of the Old Testament principle of the tithe (or tenth) given to support the Lord's work, (Matthew 23:23). He rebukes the Scribes and Pharisees for being meticulous in tithing but neglectful of the more important matters of the law – justice, mercy and faithfulness, when in fact they ought to have attended to both. So the principle of tithing is a good guide for Christian giving, but it ought not to be the only consideration.

A person on a low income who tithes may be engaging in a very sacrificial act of giving, whereas those with two significant incomes to the family home might tithe and still have plenty left to spend on themselves. The latter will need to be prepared for offerings on top of the tithe if their giving is to be in any sense sacrificial and a generous, self-giving act of worship. It took great faith for the widow in Mark Ch.12 to put her only two remaining coins in the temple treasury, but much less faith for the rich to throw in large amounts and still have plenty.

One thing is certain - to neglect generous giving to God's work is not only to rob God of what is rightly His but also to rob ourselves of God's blessing. When the prophet Malachi rebuked the neglect of God's people in these matters he also brought this promise from the Lord – *"Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse... Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, 'and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.'"* (Malachi 3:10)

### **LET US GIVE –**

- ✦ **To glorify God and honour His word**
- ✦ **In response to Christ's great love for us**
- ✦ **Out of love for a lost and needy world**
- ✦ **With sacrificial generosity**
- ✦ **Renouncing covetousness and greed**
- ✦ **In expectation of God's blessing**

# **Giving**

