

# *THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*

SPREADING THE SOUL-SAVING MESSAGE OF JESUS

## WORSHIP “Giving”

### **Introduction by narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

*THE GOSPEL OF CHRIST*. Spreading the soul-saving message of Jesus. And now, Ben Bailey.

“God loves a cheerful giver” (2 Cor. 9:7). Welcome to our study of giving as an act of worship. The Scriptures teach us that we are to give to God on the first day of the week (1 Cor. 16:1-2). Thus, giving is one of the ways that we honor the name of God and worship Him. Today we are not requesting any type of gift from you beyond what the Scriptures command you to give on the first day of the week in your local congregation. We are not asking you to send in a “love donation.” Nor are we promising you any benefits or blessings that the Lord has not promised you in His Word. Rather, we simply want you to understand what God has said on the subject of giving so that you can worship Him the way He wants you to.

The heart and core of giving is found in conviction and conversion. True giving always begins with giving oneself to God. Examine with me 2 Corinthians 8:5 in this regard. If we are going to solve the problems associated with giving, and if we are going to learn to give in a God-oriented way, we must begin by giving ourselves to God. In 2 Corinthians 8:5 Paul said concerning the Macedonian Christians’ giving, “[They gave] not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” Paul had been discussing giving, and how giving was necessary in order for the Gospel to be spread. He then said, “Not only had the Macedonians given as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” All true giving begins by giving of oneself. If we are going to be good givers, it must begin in our hearts. In Romans 12:1 Paul wrote, “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service.” When we give our lives to God, then we will have no problem putting money into the collection plate. In Luke 9:23 Jesus said, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.” If we have the attitude that allows us to deny ourselves and be fully convicted and converted, then we will have no problem giving liberally and cheerfully to the Cause of Christ. Every person who has a problem with giving, who is greedy, or who gives to the Lord grudgingly, has a problem in conversion. Such a person has a problem in first giving himself to the Lord, and then giving to the Cause of Christ. We need to ask ourselves if we have **really** given our lives to the Cause of Christ. In Galatians 2:20 Paul wrote, “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” Have we really given ourselves to God? If so, then we will be good givers.

Now, let’s think for a moment about some negatives concerning giving—that is, what giving **is not**. There are some misconceptions in the world today about giving. We need to understand that in giving to God, we must not give Him our leftovers. God is not going to be pleased if, when the collection plate is passed during worship, we reach in our wallets and give Him our leftovers. Look at what happened in Malachi 3. The people **were** giving God their leftovers. In Malachi 3:8 the Bible says, “Will a man rob God? Yet you have rob-

bed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings." In Malachi 1:8 we find the context for what is said two chapters later. The people were giving their governor the very best. God therefore said to them, "When you offer the lame and sick, is it not evil? Offer it then to your governor! Would he be pleased with you? Would he accept you favorably?" The people were giving lame and sick animals to God. How foolish that was! God does not want our leftovers; He wants our firstfruits. **Jesus** was the best **God** had to give. In fact, from Colossians 1:15 we learn that He was "the firstborn over all creation." God expects us to give Him our very best as well. We must not give God our leftovers. When it comes time for us to give to God, we need to think about what we are doing.

Giving is not an option; rather, it is a command of God. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 Paul wrote, "Concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." We are commanded to give to God on the first day of every week. If someone has hurt your feelings, or if you are not happy with everything that is going on, that does not give you the right to hold back your contribution. God expects you to give—and, in fact, has commanded you to do so. Your failure to do that is no different than breaking any other command in the Scripture. Giving is not just something we do to meet budgets. Sometimes churches put in place a budget in order to get an idea of how to carry out the work of the church in the future. But if our giving is simply "to meet the budget," then shame on us! We ought to give because it is something that we are commanded to do, because it is something that is worthwhile, and because we love God. In Luke 6:38 we see what giving is all about. Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom." I am not suggesting that if you give, then God will give you more so that you will become rich. But the good giver who lives his life in accordance with the Word of God will have riches far greater than you could ever imagine. We give because we love the Lord. We give because we see all that God has done for us, and want to do something in return for the Cause of Christ.

We also need to understand that "giving" is not the same as "tithing." Under Old Testament law, the Israelites were commanded to give to God one-tenth (a tithe) of everything they had. They gave one-tenth of their crops, and of everything else. We today do not give a tithe because we no longer live under the Old Testament. Our giving is not based on the idea of offering one-tenth of our goods. That was for the Israelites under the Old Law. Today, however, the Old Law has been done away with. Look at Ephesians 2:14-16, where we read,

"For He Himself [Jesus] is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation [the Old Law], having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity."

The Scriptures clearly say that Jesus broke down that middle wall, and abolished in His flesh the Old Covenant system. Hebrews 8:13 says, "In that He says, 'A new covenant,' He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away." Since we do not live under the Old Testament system, we no longer have to give one-tenth of our possessions. In fact, we are commanded to give "as we have prospered" (2 Cor. 9:6-7). We are commanded to purpose in our hearts and to lay by in store as we have been prospered (1 Cor. 16:1-2). So giving is not tithing.

The Bible teaches that the person who gives must have the right attitude. Attitudes determine a lot when it comes to giving. The way we think about God is often reflected in the way we give to the Cause of Christ. The giver, for example, should not be greedy. Greed is not something with which God has ever been happy. Colossians 3:5 offers a list of things that Christians are to “put off.” One of those things is covetousness (or greed). In Acts 5 we read of a greedy couple. Ananias and Sapphira owned a piece of land, and while it was theirs they could have done whatever they wanted to do with it. But they concocted a story to make themselves look good in the sight of others. Ananias lied to Peter by claiming that he had sold the land for a certain amount of money. He dropped dead on the spot. Sapphira later came in and said the same thing—and also dropped dead on the spot. What was wrong with those two people? They had greed in their hearts. They lied to the Holy Spirit in order to keep back part of the proceeds of the land sale for themselves. God was not happy with that. God knows if we are greedy. Greed is something that we must not allow in our lives.

Givers also should not try to lay up for themselves treasures on Earth. Ask yourself today: “Where is **your** real treasure located? What are your treasures in this life? Are your treasures wrapped up in money and other worldly good?” Where **are** our treasures? In Matthew 6:19-21 Jesus taught us about true treasures when He said,

“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

If you have your heart set on a big mansion on a hill, or if you have your heart set on having a big bank account, and if you have to have a lot of nice things before you can give to God, then you will never be a good giver. You must realize that your **true** treasures are not found on Earth, but are in Heaven. The things that we now possess in this life are things over which we are stewards on God’s behalf. God expects us to deal with those things properly.

Another attitude that givers ought not to have is a grudging heart. We are told in 2 Corinthians 9:6 that if we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly. God does not want us to give with a grudging heart, which is the idea that, “I really don’t want to pull this money from my wallet and put it in the collection plate” or “It just hurts so much to give that I can barely let go of my money.” That is giving grudgingly. It is as if we are upset because we **have** to give back to God. If that is your attitude, then you have a genuine heart problem that needs to be addressed by the Scriptures. Our giving ought not to be done grudgingly, but with joy.

When we give, we should not do so in order to be seen by those around us. We see an example of this in Matthew 6:1-4, where Jesus addressed the hypocrites who were doing this very thing. Jesus said, “

“Take heed that you do not do your charitable deeds before men, to be seen by them. Otherwise you have no reward from your Father in heaven. Therefore, when you do a charitable deed, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory from men. Assuredly, I say to you, they have their reward. But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.”

These people were doing their “good works” when crowds were on every street corner so that everyone could see them. Their giving was simply to make themselves look better. We must not give so that others can look at us and say, “Wow! Look how much so-and-

so gave” or “Wow! Look how much so-and-so loves the Lord.” Although giving is a command of God, it is not the only indicator of true faithfulness. Yes, it is a command, and as such is something we must do. But just because a person places a sizable amount of money in the collection plate does not mean that his life is right with God. We also must live our lives faithfully for Jesus—and that does not include giving to be seen by others.

Now let us now turn our attention to what real giving is all about. What is our motivation for giving? What should cause us to **want** to give to the Cause of Christ? I want us to look at three motivations for giving. First, we need to consider the giving nature of our God. All good giving begins by our coming to an understanding of how giving God is. The words of John 3:16 express God’s giving attitude: “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” God motivates us to be good givers because He gave the very best He had to give—His precious Son. God offered up Jesus for humankind’s salvation. Jesus was laughed at, mocked, and beaten. Then He was crucified on a cross. God knew all that was going to happen, but He still gave His best for us. Romans 5:6-8 illustrates this when it says,

“When we were still without strength, in due time Christ died for the ungodly. For scarcely for a righteous man will one die; yet perhaps for a good man someone would even dare to die. But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us.”

God’s giving nature—and the fact that He gave His very best—should motivate us to be good givers. If we are going to give like God, then we have to give our best to God first. Then we can think about other things we need to do in this life.

Another motivation for our giving should be the sacrificial nature of Jesus, God’s Son. When we think of what Jesus gave up to come to this Earth in order to suffer and die for humankind, we should be reminded of what giving is all about. In 1 Peter 2:24 we read that Jesus “bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness.” **That** is giving! Jesus died on the cross bearing the sins of the world—including my sins and your sins. And He did it freely. In 2 Corinthians 5:14-15 we read, “The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.” Notice 2 Corinthians 8:9, which should help us compare Christ’s depth of giving with our giving today. Paul wrote, “You know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that although He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Think of all that Jesus once had. In John 17:5 Jesus prayed, “O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.” In the beginning, God said, “Let us...” (Genesis 1:26-27). That “us” was indicative of God the Father, the Holy Spirit, and Christ. They were all One. Jesus left Heaven, and gave it up to come to Earth to live without even having a place to call His own. He sacrificed His life for us. That should be our motivation for giving today. In Matthew 27, Jesus was taken into Pilate’s Praetorium. He was laughed at, beaten, and spit upon. He suffered horribly on Calvary, and was laid on a cruel cross where nails were placed into His hands and feet. He endured all of that because He loved us and was willing to give Himself for us. That should be our motivation for giving.

Another motivation for giving should be the care that God exhibits in providing for us. The care that God continually exhibits for His people should constantly challenge us to give. In Matthew 6:33 we are told, “Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” God was saying, “If you will put Me first, you will not have to worry about the physical necessities of life.” In Philippians 4:19 we are told, “My God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” In Psalm

37:25 the psalmist wrote, "I have been young, and now am old; yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his descendants begging bread." Righteous people do not stand on a street corner with a sign that says, "WILL WORK FOR FOOD." God has promised to take care of them. James 1:17 teaches us about God's giving nature when it says, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning." God provides us with the physical things we need in this life. But He also provides us with the spiritual blessings we need. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ." Look at the giving nature of God, the sacrificial nature of Jesus, and God's constant care for us. That is the motivation we need for our giving today.

However, we also need to think about the intent of our giving. Real Christian giving has both intent and forethought involved in it. Giving is not something we do on the spur of the moment. By its nature, giving is not impulsive. True giving is something we **intend** to do because we have purposed in our hearts to do it. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 we read, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver." From this passage we learn that giving is something we "purpose to do." We are to think about all that God has done for us, and about all the physical and spiritual blessings He has given us, and we are to purpose (intend) to give back to God.

Giving itself demands that we have a certain nature. We are to give "as we have prospered," just as 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 teaches us to do. Paul wrote, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of every week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." We are to give as we have prospered, which means that we factor God into our budgets. We are not to give God the leftovers. Rather, we are to give back to Him as we have been prospered. God expects us, of course, to provide for ourselves and our families the necessities of life such as food, shelter, transportation, and clothing. But we also are to factor God into all of that. As God has allowed us to prosper, we must give back to God so that His message, the Gospel, can be sent around the world.

Giving also is reciprocal in its nature. In Luke 6:38 we are told, "Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom." Again, we are not teaching a social Gospel that suggests if you give, then tomorrow you will receive a check for a million dollars in the mail. That is not what we are saying. But we are saying that giving is reciprocal in nature. God gives to those who are good givers so that they can give more, and so that the Gospel of Christ can be spread around the world. Sure the real nature of biblical giving is seen in the widow mentioned in Luke 21:1-4, where we find a powerful example of what real giving is.

"And Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the treasury, and He saw also a certain poor widow putting in two mites. So He said, 'Truly I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all; for all these out of their abundance have put in offerings for God, but she out of her poverty put in all the livelihood that she had.'"

In Mark 12:41 Jesus not only saw **what** the people were giving, but also saw **how** they gave. The rich people were giving out of their abundance, while the widow gave only two mites (the equivalent of two pennies). This was her entire livelihood. Yet she gave it all to God, and Jesus observed that she had given more than anyone else because she gave all that she had. She gave "until it hurt." In 2 Corinthians 8:2 we are told that the Mace-

donians gave to the Cause of Christ out of their deep poverty. That is the nature of biblical giving. Have you ever given to the Cause of Christ until it hurt? Have you ever skipped a meal because you were so concerned about giving to the church in order to spread the Gospel? That is the type of focus on spiritual matters that we ought to have.

Giving also is something that is regular. It is something we do on a regular basis. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 (ASV) we are told, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders to the churches of Galatia, so you must do also: On the first day of every week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come." In the original language, the idea is that we are to give **every** first day of the week—which means "on a regular basis." In Acts 20:7 we are told that we are to partake of the Lord's Supper on the first day of the week. In Exodus 20:8 God told the Israelites, "Remember the Sabbath." Every Saturday that came around, the Jews understood that they were to "remember the Sabbath." Giving is something we are to do every first day of the week because we love the Lord.

However, I do not want to close this lesson without thinking about the proper attitude that we are to have when we give to the Lord. The Bible teaches us that our attitudes determine a lot. In Proverbs 23:7 we read, "As a man thinks in his heart, so is he." What ought to be our attitude in giving? Shouldn't we have the same attitude that Jesus had? In Acts 20:35 Paul wrote, "I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" We need to remember what a **blessing** it is to be able to give! Sure, at times it is nice to receive gifts. But isn't it always better to give? Jesus felt that way **about His own life**. He gave **Himself** for us. So, our attitude in giving should be that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. We receive so much from God—the home in which we live, the cars we drive, our family, our friends, and the spiritual blessings that we possess. Look at all we have in this life! Yet we are merely stewards of these things. God expects us to give back to the Cause of Christ.

God did indeed give His very best for you. He gave His only begotten Son so that you could have an opportunity to have eternal life. Christ left Heaven, came to this Earth, lived a perfect life, and gave Himself on the cruel cross of Calvary for your salvation. Have you given yourself to the Lord? Have you really dedicated your life to the Cause of Christ? If not, you can do so today. If you believe that Jesus is the Son of God, repent of the things in your life that you know are not right, confess Christ before men as the Son of God, and are baptized for the remission of your sins, then you can become a child of God. In Mark 16:16 Jesus said, "He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." We would like to encourage you today to give yourself to God first, and then you will truly understand what giving is all about.

### **Narrator accompanied by a cappella singing:**

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## STUDY QUESTIONS FOR “GIVING”

1. What is significant (in regard to the topic of giving) about 2 Corinthians 8:5?
2. According to the apostle Paul's command in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, when are Christians supposed to give to the Lord of their financial means?
3. According to 2 Corinthians 8:3-5, there were some Christians in Macedonia who had given of their finances to help spread the Gospel. How much had they given, according to verse 3?
4. According to Malachi 1:8, what had the people of Malachi's day done that resulted in a divine condemnation from God?
5. According to Malachi 3:8, what had the people of Malachi's day done that resulted in a divine condemnation from God?
6. Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 that God loves a certain type of giver. What type?
7. What principle is contained in Luke 6:38?
8. What is tithing?
9. Is tithing commanded or authorized in the New Testament?
10. According to 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, how are Christians to give?
11. What is the main point of Christ's statements in Matthew 6:19-21?
12. What point was Jesus making when He said, "For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Lk. 6:38)?
13. According to Paul's statement in Romans 12:1, what must we first give to God?
14. In this lesson the statement is made: "When it comes time to give, we are not supposed to reach into our pockets and give God the leftovers." What **are** we supposed to give?
15. What specific item is listed in Colossians 3:5 as something that would adversely affect a Christian's giving to the Lord?
16. For what specific action did Jesus call people "hypocrites" in Matthew 6:1-4?
17. What impact should 2 Corinthians 8:9 have on our giving today?
18. What principle did Jesus express in His comments in Matthew 6:33?
19. What point was Paul striving to get across in 1 Timothy 6:17?
20. According to 1 Timothy 6:10, what is the love of money?