

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, Timothy Sparks and Ben Bailey.

Ben Bailey:

"They first gave themselves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). I'm Ben Bailey.

Timothy Sparks:

And I'm Timothy Sparks. Welcome to our study of giving. This lesson is being brought to you by individual members and congregations of the churches of Christ. We invite you to visit the church of Christ in your area. You will be a welcome visitor there. If you have a Bible question, the members of the church of Christ would be glad to try to help you with it. We, too, would like to help. We are making these broadcasts available completely free of charge on CD or DVD. If you would like a copy of this lesson or any other lesson, you may log on to our website at www.thegospelofchrist.com, fill out the request form you will find there, and we will be happy to send to you whatever you need. We also have available on our website streaming video and audio of these lessons, as well as a free Bible correspondence course. Plus, written transcripts of these lessons are available as well (accompanied by study questions). These can be obtained either online from our website or as bound volumes (which are available from our offices). We want to help you in your study of God's Word in any way that we can.

Ben Bailey:

In this study, we want to make it clear from the outset that we are talking about giving in a local congregational setting on the first day of the week as designated within the Scriptures (1 Cor. 16:1-2). As we consider what giving is, we need to recognize that giving first begins with me. If I am ever going to come to the point where I truly give as God has commanded me to do, then I first must learn to give of myself. We learn from 2 Corinthians 8:5 that the Christians in Macedonia had given generously, but that they first gave of themselves! Before they gave of their money or possessions, they decided to first give themselves to God. The same principle applies to us today. Before we give to God in a financial manner, we first need to give ourselves to Him. In Romans 12:2, Paul said, "Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God." Giving does not begin with our pocketbooks. Giving begins with us first deciding to dedicate our lives to God.

Timothy Sparks:

In 2 Corinthians 8:3-5, we notice that the Macedonian Christians gave even beyond their ability, and that they were “freely willing.” These Christians gave generously—even beyond what they should have been able to do. This is the type of giving we see repeatedly in the New Testament. Giving does indeed begin with the individual. We cannot rely on parents, siblings, or anyone else to give for us. There is no such thing in New Testament Christianity as “proxy giving.” We cannot allow someone else to do what we should be doing, thinking that “they will pick up the slack.” What if everyone thought like that? Have you ever asked yourself, “What if everyone in the congregation gave as I give?” Would the work of the church be able to flourish and grow? Each of us needs to carry out an introspective self-examination in regard to how well we give. And we need to realize, “giving does indeed begin with me giving of myself.”

Ben Bailey:

To understand how to give properly, we must come to grips with what the Bible has to say on this important subject. Giving to God dictates that we give the firstfruits, not the leftovers. In Malachi 1 and 3, we find a discussion about this very thing. God’s people were giving Him the leftovers. For example, when it came time to offer to God an animal, they would give Him one that was lame or sick. In essence, Malachi says to the people, “Try offering that type of animal to your governor, and see if he will accept it. Do not give God the leftovers. Give Him your very best.” The principle for Christians is that we are not to wait until all of our bills have been paid and then give God what we have left. God does not want, and will not accept, our leftovers. He demands (and is due, considering all that He has done for us) our very best—and the firstfruits of our labors. So, when we give, we must make up our minds to factor into our giving that which is right and holy. God must come first.

Timothy Sparks:

In Malachi 3:8, God asked His people, “Will a man rob God?” He then said, “Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, ‘In what way have we robbed You? In tithes and offerings.’ Are we today sometimes guilty of robbing God? Yes, we are. We can rob God in regard to what we give Him in our money, our time, and our service. Jesus said, “Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s” (Mk. 12:17). For the faithful Christian, it is never a matter of what I “have” to give. Rather, it is a matter of what I “get” to give.

Ben Bailey:

When it comes time to give, we are not supposed to reach into our pockets and give what is left over. We are to purpose ahead of time in regard to what we plan to give. This principle should apply to every area of our lives as we factor God into all the decisions we make to ensure that He always occupies first place. Giving to the Lord is not an option; it is a command. 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 the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come” (1 Cor. 16:1-2). We are commanded by God to give back to Him as He has blessed us and as we have prospered. I repeat: this is not an option; it is a command. God has given freely to us. We, then, should want to give back to Him just as freely, considering how much He has done for us. Giving is no less a command than such things as assembling on the first day of the week to worship, praying, observing the Lord’s Supper, etc.

Timothy Sparks:

We have an obligation to give—and to give cheerfully. Paul wrote, “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” (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

Ben Bailey:

Paul, as an inspired apostle, spoke for God. He was not speaking for himself or on his own. In fact, in 1 Corinthians 14:37, Paul wrote, “If anyone thinks himself to be a prophet or spiritual, let him acknowledge that the things which I write to you are the commandments of the Lord.” While the collection mentioned in 2 Corinthians 9 was taken up for a specific case of evangelism, the fact is that the church is still carrying out the same work of God today. Giving is a command of God that we must obey if we hope to be pleasing to Him. While we are giving, we need to remember that this is not something we do “just to meet a budget.” Budgets and goals are important, of course. But they are not the “be all, end all” of our giving. Jesus taught in Luke 6:38, “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.” Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 8:3 that the Macedonian Christians actually gave more than they were able to give. They gave until it hurt—and went lacking in other areas because they wanted to make certain that the Cause of Christ was taken care of first. Our giving is not to meet some predetermined budget figure. Rather, we give because we realize how much the Lord has blessed us.

Timothy Sparks:

Some people seem to have the impression (probably due to Old Testament teaching) that giving is tithing. But is it?

Ben Bailey:

Not at all. Tithing simply refers to giving 10 percent. Under Levitical law, God’s people were required to give 10 percent. Whatever they had, they were required to give the first 10 percent to the Lord. But we must understand today that we do not live under Old Testament law. Tithing was an Old Testament command given to the Israelites. As such, that command ended at the cross of Christ (Eph. 2:14-15; Rom. 7:1-4). We are not commanded to tithe; rather, we are commanded to give as we have been prospered (2 Cor. 9:6-7). The same principle applies to why we do not do other things found within the Old Law. We no longer live under that law.

Timothy Sparks:

Giving, therefore, is not tithing. However, let’s now look at some things that a giver should **not** be. A giver should not be covetous. We learn from the New Testament that if we are greedy or covetous, the Lord will not be pleased with us. From 1 Timothy 6:6, we learn that “godliness with contentment is great gain.” Later in that same chapter, in verse 10, Paul said, “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.” We must not be greedy or covetous. The writer of Hebrews said, “Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have” (Heb. 13:5). We are to be

people who are content with Christ. If we are, then we will be very generous givers. Jesus said, “Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses” (Lk. 12:15). People who are greedy and covetous are not those who are seen as generous givers.

Ben Bailey:

Jesus also 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” (Mt. 6:19-21). We must not place our hope in things that can corrode, break, or be taken away. Our treasure must be in the unsearchable riches of Christ and the hope of Heaven—things that are not physical or temporal. Think about all the things we have in this life. One day, when this life ends, all those things will cease to exist. If we put so much stock in those treasures that we cannot give to God as we should, and then one day those treasures cease to exist, we will have lived a life that cannot lead us to Heaven. “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

Timothy Sparks:

Paul told Timothy, “Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy” (1 Tim. 6:17). I find it interesting that on our money here in America we find the phrase, “In God We Trust.” Yet it seems that so many have put their trust in the almighty dollar instead of the almighty God. In Matthew 6:24, Jesus said, “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [earthly riches].” In 1 John 2:15-17, the apostle gives a lesson concerning worldliness when he says,

“Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.”

When we come to understand that we must not put out trust in earthly wealth and treasures, then we will become the kind of givers that God wants us, and expects us, to be.

Ben Bailey:

Coming to such an understanding will help us to be a cheerful giver. We know from 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 that a person who gives grudgingly is not the person with whom God is happy or pleased. If we sow sparingly, we will reap sparingly. If we give grudgingly, then we will not have the joy that God intended for us to have in this life. The person who gives grudgingly is the person who, when the collection plate comes around on Sunday morning, knows in his heart that he ought to give a certain amount cheerfully, but he just cannot bring himself to do it. That type of giver is not at all pleasing to God, and we must never be like that. We need to ask ourselves, “What is it that really motivates us and compels us to give as we ought to give?”

Timothy Sparks:

There are a number of things that should compel us to give. Paul, in 2 Corinthians 5:14, mentioned that “the love of Christ compels us.” We love because God first loved us (1 Jn. 4:19). If we truly love God, then we will give back to Him in return. Paul said, “Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!” (2 Cor. 9:15). That gift is the Son of God Who brought salvation to us. There are other motivating factors as well that should cause us to give.

Ben Bailey:

Among those things would be eternal life and the hope of Heaven. Think about such passages as John 3:16, “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” When God gave, He gave us His very best. It is things such as this that show us the giving nature of God. It also is things like this that should cause us to want to give our very best to God. The self-emptying nature of Christ ought to cause us to want to truly give back to God. Consider 2 Corinthians 8:9—“For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich.” Jesus had it all. He lived in Heaven. But He left that, came to Earth, and lived as a pauper so that we could go to Heaven. As we think about the sacrifice that God made in sending Jesus to Earth, and as we think about all that Jesus gave up by coming to Earth, it should remind us of the many blessings that we now have. James 1:17 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.” As we consider how much God has done for us, and how much He has given to us, it ought to make us want to be a good giver. As we give, we should think about the intent and purpose of our giving.

Timothy Sparks:

In 2 Corinthians 9:7, Paul says, “Let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.” Our giving must be carried out with the correct intent and purpose. This is not something that we “just quickly do” on Sunday morning when the collection plate passes by us. Rather, we have planned out what we are going to give. It is true, of course, that whatever we **have** to give is all that we **can** give. In Acts 3:6 Peter told the lame man, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” If we have no money, then we cannot give money. But whatever we do have, God expects us to give cheerfully.

Ben Bailey:

Paul’s command on behalf of the Lord, found in 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, instructs us to give as we have opportunity on the first day of the week. As we have been prospered, so we are to give to God. In the Bible, the focus on giving is not on the amount, but on how much we are able to give. In Luke 21, we see people placing money into the temple treasury. Then a poor widow comes by. She dropped into the treasury two mites—just two copper coins. Yet the Lord 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.” She gave what she had to the Lord. And she gave until it hurt. Our giving should be based on how we have prospered, and on the ability we have as a result to give back to God.

Timothy Sparks:

When we read in the New Testament that we are to be cheerful givers, we are left with the impression that we are to be grateful that we have the opportunity to give back to God. We should give, not because we **have** to give, but because we **want** to give. We should be grateful that we **can** give. If we are thinking, "Lord, how **little** can I give and still be pleasing to you?," then we have the wrong attitude. 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. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you" (Lk. 6:38). When we give, God then gives us **more**—which means that **we** can give more in return. God's gifts back to us may not always be financial in nature. In fact, many times His blessings to us will be spiritual in nature. Such blessings are far more important than any physical blessings we might receive. When people do not give as they should, it is because their attitude is not right. If our attitude is not right, we will not get anything else right.

Ben Bailey:

Giving is related to the condition of our hearts. If our hearts are not right before God, then it stands to reason that we will not give as we should. The words of Christ in Acts 20:35 provide great insight for us. Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." We can all understand this. Giving back to God should provide us with great happiness because of the good we know that we are doing when we give generously. Think about the immense good that can be accomplished by our giving. We can reach the lost with the Gospel, and we can help those who are in need. Giving affects people physically, but more important, it helps them go to Heaven. Think about this. If our giving can help someone go to Heaven, what can our **lack** of giving do? It could hinder the spread of the Gospel into areas where people have not heard it and therefore remain lost in sin. Thus, giving is directly linked to evangelism. If we want to do more evangelism, then we must be prepared to give more. What is the number one hindrance to evangelism? It is not a lack of people who need to be saved. It is not a lack of workers who are willing to take the Gospel to the lost. It is a lack of funds needed to reach the lost. We need to give in view of eternity.

Timothy Sparks:

There are many religious people who have no trouble at all giving on the first day of the week. They do that every Sunday. But the question needs to be asked: "To what **cause** are they giving?" If they are not giving to the church that Jesus established, then their giving is in vain. This shows us how important it is for a person to first give himself or herself to the Lord. Then that person can give to the Lord financially. Have you given yourself to the Lord? If not, you can do that if you will believe in Him as the Son of God, repent of your past sins, confess Him as Lord and Savior, and be immersed to access His cleansing blood, whereby you are forgiven of our sins. If you are faithful even unto death (Rev. 2:10), then He will give you the crown of life."

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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. In this lesson, the statement is made, “Giving does not begin with our pocketbooks.” Where, then, does giving begin?
4. 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?
5. What is “proxy giving”? Is it authorized in the New Testament?
6. What were the people of Malachi's day doing that drew a divine condemnation from God?
7. In this lesson, the following statement is made: “When it comes time to give, we are not supposed to reach into our pockets and give what is left over.” What, then, are we supposed to give?
8. In this lesson, the following statement is made: “For the faithful Christian, it is never a matter of what I ‘have’ to give.” Then what **is** it a matter of?
9. According to 1 Corinthians 16:1-2, what is giving—an option or a command?
10. Paul taught in 2 Corinthians 9:6-7 that God loves a certain type of giver. What type?
11. What principle is contained in Luke 6:38?
12. What is tithing?
13. Is tithing commanded or authorized in the New Testament?
14. According to 2 Corinthians 9:6-7, how are Christians to give?
15. What point was Paul striving to get across in 1 Timothy 6:17?
16. What is the main point of Christ's statements in Matthew 6:19-21?
17. According to 1 Timothy 6:10, what is the love of money?
18. According to 2 Corinthians 5:14, what should compel us to give?
19. 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)?