

Giving to Christ II Corinthians 9:6-7

Jim Elliot, martyred missionary to the Auca people group in Ecuador, is quoted as saying “He is no fool who gives up what he cannot keep to gain that which he cannot lose.”

This morning we come to the fourth and final component of our mission statement in our quest to understand our aim more fully as a church. From **Hebrews 10:24-25**, we reviewed the importance of **gathering with Christ** as a local body of believers regularly.

From **II Peter 3:18 and Colossians 1:9-14**, we considered the importance of **growing in Christ** as a local body of believers in becoming like Christ.

From **Matthew 28:18-20**, we studied the importance of **going for Christ** as a local body of believers, both globally and locally.

Today we turn to **II Corinthians 9:6-7** as we learn what it means to **give to Christ** as a local body of believers.

The phone rang on Thursday when I began working on the message. It was an advertisement for a company that helps businesses get IRS tax credits. The voice on the recording was rapper Snoop Dog telling me that if I went to their webpage, I could start the process and “see the magic happen because it’s all about getting what’s” mine. I have the Snoop Dog stamp of approval, baby – peace out.

I suppose a place to begin on a message about giving is for us to understand that none of what we have belongs to us. Oh, we have gone to work, earned a paycheck, shopped around, and made various purchases with the money we were given.

Interestingly, but not coincidentally, the topic of our last men’s study was on the difference between ownership and stewardship. We discussed how God is really the owner of all that we have, and how we are His stewards of those things.

Psalm 24:1-2 “The earth is the Lord’s and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell

therein, for He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.”

We see that stewardship when God created Adam and Eve on the 6th day and assigned them as caretakers of His creation.

Genesis 1:28 “God blessed them and said to them, ‘Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea, birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.’”

To rule and subdue doesn’t mean they owned it, but were to be stewards of it. The Creator owned it, he was giving them responsibility to care for it. **Psalm 24** stresses the fact that the earth and everything in it all belongs to Him. Everything we have is His and we steward it. And from early on in the book of Genesis we see the principle of giving back to the Lord. In the Old Testament it’s called the tithe. It first appears in **Genesis 14:20**. After Abraham rescued Lot from being taken captive along with others from Sodom, he gave a tithe of what was recovered to Melchizedek. The priest blessed both God and Abraham for restoring what was stolen.

Abraham established a practice that would become part of the Old Testament law given to the Israelites. Before we get to the principle of giving in the New Testament, I think it would be good to understand the practice of giving in the Old Testament. So let’s consider that first.

I. THE PRACTICE OF GIVING IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Even today there is a lot of debate about what the tithe means. It can be a struggle for Christians today to understand the difference between tithing and what is also called free will offerings. Are we in the New Testament era supposed to tithe? To help answer that, let’s see what the Old Testament has to say first about giving according to the law.

A. Giving According to the Law

Now the word tithe literally means tenth. In other words, 10% of their produce, flocks, and income was to be given to the Lord. Now keep in mind as I

said a moment ago that God owns it all. So to give 10% doesn't mean I get to keep 90% and God gets 10%. Instead, it means that God is letting me keep 90% of what really belongs to Him of which I am a steward. When we hear tithe, we think that all we're required to give is 10%, but the Old Testament actually speaks of three different tithes the Israelites were required to give from their resources.

Again, from **Psalm 24**, because God created everything, He owns everything. If we had a part in creating the world, then we could claim a part as our own, but since we didn't and He did, it's all His.

We live in a society that believes what we have is ours, because after all, we earned it baby. We have what's coming to us so we can give or keep whatever we want. But God's Word is clear that it's really all His.

What Scripture teaches about the tithe is a way of acknowledging that He owns it all and gave it to us. **Leviticus 27:30-33**

Tithing was an expectation that God's people would give back a portion of what He had blessed them with, what really He owned, but what He had so graciously given them.

One reason the tithe was required was to support the priests, the tabernacle, and the sacrificial system. **Numbers 18:21 "I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting."**

Tony Evans writes "Even though we might earn our salaries by the sweat of our brows, we are not the originators of our blessings. We must never forget that God's blessings are rewards for our labors in the sense that we are entitled to them."

The Lord told them before they entered the Land of Promise "You may say to yourself, 'My power and my own ability have gained this wealth for me,' but remember that the Lord your God gives you the power to gain wealth." (Deut. 8:17-18) In other words, what they got didn't come from them, it was given to them. We need to remember that.

A second tithe is found in **Deuteronomy 14:22-27**. It describes the tithe related to the sacred meal involving the giver and the Levite. A person would bring their sacrifice and the priest would get to take a portion of it.

The third tithe is in **Deuteronomy 14:28-30**. This was given every third year to help support the poor.

When we hear tithing, we generally think of 10%, when in reality it came to about 23% of their annual income on their flocks, herds, and crops.

An ambitious young man told his pastor that he had promised God a tithe of his income. They prayed that God would bless his career. At the time he was making \$40 a week, tithing \$4. After a few years of hard work his income had increased to \$500 per week. He called the pastor to see if he could be released from his promise because it had become too costly. The pastor said that he didn't see how he could be released from his promise, but he would ask God to reduce his income back to \$40 a week since he had no problem tithing the \$4.

Now the question comes up as to whether a person should give on the gross or the net. The Bible has some things to say about that.

Proverbs 3:9-10 "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the firstfruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim with new wine."

The principle of the tithe was, as Tony Evans again explains, "to be given first, to remind the Israelites that God would meet their needs if they honored Him. So returning God's portion before you pay any bills is a way of saying you know who the real owner is." And might I add, it is a way of trusting Him for all your daily needs.

One of the reasons God condemned Israel and sent them into exile was because they were giving God what was left over and second rate sacrifices.

Malachi 1:7-8

The law required that they give God the best from the firstfruits of crops and herds. In **chapter 3**, God then says that they had robbed God in their tithing.

They complained that they had been giving Him their tithe so how had they robbed Him? God said He was being robbed because they had withheld the tithe. God then challenged them with these words:

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. 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 3:8-10)

The takeaway for us is to ask ourselves if we will trust God in our giving that He will provide what we need. **Are we going to trust God’s bank account or our bank account?**

Along with the practice of giving according to the law in the Old Testament, there was also giving according to love.

B. Giving According to Love

This was called a freewill offering. While it was also regulated by the Mosaic Law according to the regulations set up by God, this offering was not a tithe, it wasn’t required, but was given voluntarily. **Leviticus 23:37-38**

These offerings were the fulfillment of vows made to the Lord, and while voluntary in nature, they were to follow the same strict guidelines for the other sacrifices and made in a place of God’s choosing. Unlike other sacrifices which were given at specific times of the year, the freewill offering could be given at any time, not just on special days.

Additionally, the freewill offering didn’t have to be just an animal sacrifice. The first occasion of a freewill offering is found in **Ex. 35:10-29**. When the Tabernacle was built in the wilderness, Moses told the Israelites what supplies were needed and they brought jewelry, yarn, skins, precious metals and gems, spices and oil. The Bible says they gave so much that Moses had to tell them to stop.

The same thing happened when David collected items for Solomon to build the Temple.

The freewill offering was God moving the hearts of

His people to give above what was required. It wasn’t to gain favor nor was it to be given out of guilt or by force. It was, in effect, a celebratory gift of gratitude for God’s abundant provision.

When Jesus came, He stated that He came to fulfill the Law. No more sacrifice was required. Hence, no more tithes were required. What remained and what we are still under is the freewill offering, giving as God moves. We don’t see any mention of tithing in the New Testament. So let’s turn our attention to the principle of giving in the New Testament.

II. THE PRINCIPLE OF GIVING IN THE NEW TESTAMENT – II Corinthians 9:6-7

As part of the New Testament era, we are not bound by the tithe. What we give is at the leading as the Holy Spirit directs us. Though that may be the case, Scripture still gives some guiding principles that help in determining when, why, and how much to give, but again it is at the prompting of God’s Spirit. To do anything less makes us just as guilty of disobedience as the Old Testament Israelites. Now, we often use 10% as a basis for giving.

If we begin anywhere with a discussion of giving, it would be this: the attitude of the heart.

A. The Attitude of the Heart

Our giving or lack thereof, is really a matter of the heart. Martin Luther once said, **“I have tried to keep things in my hands and lost them all, but what I have given into God’s hands I still possess.”**

There is a tale about how certain hunters in Africa catch monkeys. A small jar is placed at the base of a tree with a peanut inside. The opening of the jar allows the monkey to place his hand in, but when he tries to withdraw it, he is unable to do so without letting go of the contents of the jar. Some monkeys will stay there with their hand in the jar until the hunter comes back to trap them. They are trapped because they are unwilling to let go ultimately leading to their demise.

When we are willing to let go of what God already owns, giving Him back a portion of it, it is a matter

of the heart. And that's how Paul explains it to the church in Corinth. These two verses really sum up what Paul has been saying about giving that begins back in **chapter 8**. The Gentile churches heard that the church in Jerusalem was in need. They began to take up an offering, something the Corinthian church promised back in **Romans 15:26-27: "For Macedonia and Achaia were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem. They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews' spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings."**

Paul was saying that they should give to help meet physical needs, since they received spiritual blessings in Christ, through the Jews.

I think the first thing needed is to be humble in your giving.

1. Be humble in your giving

In other words, remember your roots, remember where your blessings, your provisions came from. It's like God told the Israelites in Deuteronomy to remember that when they came into the land not to think that what they were receiving had anything to do with their own efforts. God gave it to them. We need to keep that in mind as well, that everything we have comes from Him. That should humble us when we give. A heart that is humble gives with an open hand while a heart that is greedy gives with a closed hand. Don't let money trap you by refusing to let go of what really doesn't belong to us. Be humble in giving.

The second attitude is to be encouraging in your giving.

2. Be encouraging in your giving – II Cor. 8:1-6

The Macedonian churches were so overjoyed by the impact of the gospel in their lives that their abundant joy overflowed to generous giving. These churches were poor, yet we read that they were eager to give as they were able and even beyond their means. They weren't pressured to give. But what's more, it sounds like those taking the

collection tried to dissuade them from giving knowing of their own poverty, yet they pled for the privilege of giving. That's what the joy of Jesus will do in a person whose heart is humble before Him.

Most of you know my folks served as missionaries at Camp Barakel. On one occasion they had gone down to their home church to share about their ministry. After the service a man came up to shake Dad's hand and in it was some money towards their support. Dad knew this man didn't have a lot of money and tried to give it back for his own personal needs, but the man insisted and said he didn't want to be robbed of a blessing. Be encouraging in giving

When we give with the right heart, we encourage others.

3. Be excelling in your giving – 8:7-9

Paul uses a term that helps us better understand the heart attitude of giving. He calls it the **"grace of giving."** Grace must be the motivation for giving. Grace giving speaks to the gift that was given to us by God's grace when He gave us eternal life. **John 3:16 "For God so loved that He gave His only begotten Son that whosoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life."**

Grace giving comes from understanding that what God has given us comes from His grace, so we in turn respond by giving out of grace. We didn't do anything to deserve what God gave us. We didn't earn it, yet out of grace stemming from His love He gave it to us. He is our example of giving out of grace. And Paul says the Macedonian churches excelled in this kind of giving. They gave out of love for God and all He had given them. When we think of all that God has given to us, our attitude in giving should be one of grace out of love for God.

The story is told of a farmer who was known for his generous giving and whose friends could not understand how he could give so much and yet remain so prosperous. One day one of his friends said: "We can't understand you. You give far more than any of the rest of us and yet you always seem to have more to give." The farmer said it was easy to explain. "I keep shoveling into God's bin and God keeps shoveling back into mine and God has

the bigger shovel.”

God calls us to be generous givers, grace givers. This kind of giving is pleasing to him and advances the gospel. As we shovel into God’s bin, he shovels back into ours, and God has the bigger shovel.

When we excel in giving, we reflect God’s own lavish nature. God so loved the world He GAVE – His only begotten SON for our salvation.

4. Be eager in your giving – 8:10-15

Paul reminded the Corinthian churches that a year earlier they had been the first to jump on board in committing to the need in Jerusalem. But, in **verse 11** we read that their eagerness lacked execution. A year had gone by and they still hadn’t collected the offering. The head was willing, but the hand was lagging behind. It came down to a matter of having the proper heart, the right attitude.

Sometimes we say we are going to give to a certain need or at a certain time and then something comes up that questions our follow through. It comes down to a matter of the heart trusting the Lord, doesn’t it?

Paul boils it all down in **II Corinthians 9:6-7** with the kind of attitude we should have in giving.

5. Be exceptional in your giving – 9:6-7

People were coming to receive the collection they had promised, and they weren’t ready. Paul wanted them to make good on their promise without embarrassing them or him by not being prepared with the promised gift in hand ready to turn it over to those coming for it.

He uses the analogy of sowing and reaping. We all know the principle. The more you sow, the more you get in return when the harvest comes in. Paul uses the analogy to say the same thing about giving. It seems paradoxical, but it’s true, when we trust the Lord. The more we trust Him, the more He blesses.

When we give with the right heart attitude, we can never outgive God. The farmer who is stingy in his sowing will receive a comparatively meager harvest compared to the farmer who sows generously. It’s the same with giving. The world says if I give more, I’ll have less, but God says if you give more, you

will get more to give. But let me just say that when you get more from God isn’t for you to keep, it’s so you can give more.

Paul lays out the principle for our giving.

First, what you give needs to be a matter of prayer.

“Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give.”

Second, your giving should be predetermined.

There are times when giving is spontaneous. You hear about a need and you are compelled to give, but Paul is saying pray about what you will give.

Paul then says our giving shouldn’t be out of reluctance or compulsion. Giving should never be done unwillingly or with hesitancy as if we were guilty into giving and neither should we feel forced to give. We aren’t the school bully squeezing you out of your milk money.

Sometimes we can feel pressured into giving as these cartoons depict.

When it comes to the principle of giving, what is the attitude of your heart? The Corinthians had the right heart attitude, they just hadn’t yet followed through with the hand. Paul reminded them that there also needs to be the action of the hand.

B. The Action of the Hand

1. Be cheerful in your giving – v. 7

God loves a cheerful giver. A person who is not a cheerful giver will always be a reluctant giver, a hesitant giver, a meager giver.

For many years Sadie Sieker served as a house-parent for missionary children. She loved to read and loaned out many of her books but she kept those she treasured in a footlocker under her bed. One night she heard a faint gnawing sound. After searching her room, she discovered that it was coming from under her bed inside the footlocker. When she opened it up, all her treasured books were a pile of dust eaten by termites. What we give away, we keep. What we hoard, we lose.

J. L. Kraft of the Kraft Cheese Corporation gave approximately 25% of his income to Christian ministries. He once said “The only investment I

ever made which has paid consistently increasing dividends is the money I have given to the Lord.”

Now, I’m not suggesting a prosperity gospel that God wants you all to be rich so if you give some seed money in faith, He’ll bless you with greater riches. What I’m saying is that when we have prayed about what we will give, God will bless in some way, and that way may not be monetary. God loves a cheerful giver and blesses that attitude so you can give more. Our giving isn’t so we get more to spend on ourselves. It’s so we can give more.

2. Be consistent in your giving – I Cor. 16:1-2

Paul’s advice was to set aside something each week according to your income. Some weeks you might be able to give more. Other weeks you might not be able to give as much. Again, the principle from his second letter is to pray and cheerfully give what you have determined in your heart as led by God’s Spirit who directs you in how much to give.

Someone I know used to figure out what he would make in the year and would give all his offering in the first month. I think he missed out on the worship of giving each week.

3. Be compassionate in your giving – Acts 2:44-45; 4:32-37

The early church in Jerusalem had compassion for the needs of others and sold possessions in order to provide for the needs of others. Paul says in **Galatians 6:9-10** that our first priority is to do good to those who are believers but then adds that we are also to be compassionate to everyone.

I Peter 4:10 “Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God’s grace in its various forms.”

Sometimes our giving may be in our **treasures**. A need may require monetary assistance. We have a benevolent fund that we collect each month following communion as a means of helping meet needs within our fellowship. Sometimes there are needs outside the church family that we assist with from those funds. A benevolent gift doesn’t have to be given only on communion Sunday. It can be given at any time as the Lord leads you to give.

At other times it may not be our treasures that give, there may be a need that requires our **time** which may also include a **talent**. If someone is a caregiver and needs to run errands or who is exhausted from all the time spent in care giving, you may go over just to allow that person to get out or get rest. You may babysit for someone’s children so that the parents can go out and have an adult conversation without being interrupted by little ones who need their attention. And giving your time may also include a talent you have. You may do something they may not be able to do.

The point is, be compassionate in giving.

4. Be careful in your giving – Matthew 6:1-4

It’s really a simple principle that Jesus gives here, don’t give to be noticed by others. If possible, do your acts of giving in secret. Don’t be like the Pharisees who wanted everyone to see what they were giving. When the Pharisees put their offering in the collection box, they liked to jingle their bag so everyone would look while they dropped their offering in or they would put it in with a little more force so that others could hear the big plop. Be careful in your giving.

Ray Stedman writes “If you give in order that you might have more to give, you are right in line with God’s program. Yet your motivation should not be to spend on yourself. If you give so that there will be more for you to enjoy, then you are giving for wrong reasons.”

Our giving to Christ is a way of providing for the needs of the church and its people, both at home through the ministries to the people in our church, to our community as we seek to meet those needs by showing them the love of Christ, and to the missionaries we support. You have been so faithful in your generosity and we can’t do ministry without your giving to the Lord.

We are given sound principles for giving in the New Testament that guide our giving. **What is our attitude and our actions? Do we trust the Lord?**

Let me leave you with a final thought by closing

with the purpose of giving for the believer.

III. THE PURPOSE OF GIVING FOR THE BELIEVER

A. Our Giving Demonstrates God's Character – John 3:16

As I said earlier, God's grace led Him to give generously. So when we give generously and cheerfully, we demonstrate His gracious heart.

B. Our Giving Deepens Our Faith – Proverbs 3:5-6

When we give generously, we are trusting the Lord to take care of our needs. Jesus says all we have to do is consider the sparrows whom God provides for and be reminded that if He cares for them, He will care for us as well so that we have nothing to worry about. Giving deepens our faith in His provision.
Can we trust God to provide for our needs as we give back to Him or will we worry?

C. Our Giving Declares God's Glory – II Corinthians 9:12-15

We are reminded by the words of Jesus who said that when we let our light shine before others, they will see our good works and give God the glory.

Ray Stedman says that when we give according to the law of the harvest, God will give back and it will awaken gratitude in those to whom you give.

God isn't concerned with how much we give. He is more concerned about our heart of obedience. He doesn't need our resources to accomplish His plans, but He does want our heart, a heart that is overflowing with gratitude for all He has given us, especially the gift of salvation. Our response whether giving or receiving is to give Him all the glory.

We don't give to get our name plastered on a building or a room, or to have our name etched on some plaque or printed in some newspaper. We don't give to make a name for ourselves. We give for the good of others and for the glory of God.

Before we give to Christ any tangible goods, we need to take a lesson from the Macedonians who gave themselves first to the Lord (**II Cor. 8:5**) and then gave according to God's will that they should give. If we don't first give our heart, then it will be difficult to give from the hand.

It's like what Warren Wiersbe said: **"Giving isn't something we do, it's something we are."**

Let's remember that we aren't saved because we give, we give because we are saved. As someone said, it is possible to give without loving, but it is impossible to love without giving. If we truly love the Lord, then we will be cheerful and generous in our giving. There is much work to be done for Christ and it requires God's people praying about how we can invest in His kingdom work here.

Hudon Taylor stated that **"When God's work is done in God's way for God's glory, it will never lack God's supply."**