

WHAT GOD SAYS ABOUT GIVING

TEXT: II CORINTHIANS 9:5-11

INTRODUCTION:

1. My message this morning is entitled, "What God Says About Giving."
2. There are words found in our text that are not used much these days: bounty, bountifully, and bountifulness (9:5, 6, 11).
3. There is a prayer I remember from my childhood. It was a prayer said before people sat down to eat -- "Bless us, O Lord, and these, Thy gifts, which we are about to receive from Thy bounty. Through Christ, our Lord. Amen."
4. So as a little boy, I learned the meaning of the word "bounty."
5. The word means, "generosity or liberality."
6. The first time we see the word in the Bible is in I Kings 10:13, "And king Solomon gave unto the queen of Sheba all her desire, whatsoever she asked, beside that which Solomon gave her of his royal bounty."
7. The second time the word is found is here in II Corinthians 9:5.
8. Second Corinthians 9:5 refers to "bounty" (generosity) twice. To "make up beforehand your bounty," means to make up beforehand your generous gift. It means more than generosity. The word is often translated as "blessing."
9. That is why Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
10. Paul said in Romans 15:29, "I shall come in the fulness of the blessing (same word as "bounty") of the gospel of Christ."
11. Ephesians 1:3 says, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ."
12. "As a matter of bounty" (9:5) refers to their generosity. This is the best cure for covetousness, which is a terrible sin that affects everyone, even Christians (9:5).
13. The apostle Paul quoted our Lord in Acts 20:35 -- "Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive." The greater blessing is in giving, not receiving.
14. Paul said in I Timothy 6:10, "For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."
15. That is why Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."
16. That is why Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into

your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38).

17. "For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38b; cf. II Cor. 9:6). Measure for measure!

I. THE MOTIVE IN GIVING

II. THE METHOD OF GIVING

III. THE MIRACLE IN GIVING

I. THE MOTIVE IN GIVING

1. This is very important -- what is our motive in giving?
2. Last Sunday evening, we were considering our Lord's words in Luke 9:23, "If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow me."
3. This means death to self. I quoted the evangelist Charles Finney, "Self-denial is the denying of self, not for the sake of a greater good to self, but for the sake of doing good to others."
4. This certainly applies to our motives in giving. Some worldly-minded preachers (e.g., "prosperity preachers") teach that if you give, you will get back more in return.
5. Like all false doctrines, there is an element in truth in that teaching (cf. Luke 6:38). But these prosperity preachers appeal to the selfishness motives of men. They are wolves in sheep's clothing.
6. I often quote R.G. LeTourneau, the Christian businessman who made a fortune building earthmoving vehicles.
7. He went from giving 10 percent to where he reached the point of giving 90 percent of his income to the Lord. When asked how he did it, he'd say, "I shovel out the money, and God shovels it back — but God has a bigger shovel."
8. Mr. LeTourneau had the right motives. Our motives must be right. We do not give to get back -- we give to please God.
9. Mr. LeTourneau had the right motives, and the right priorities. He often said his life verse was, "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matthew 6:33).
10. R.G. LeTourneau founded and financially supported missionary ministries in Africa and South America.
11. It is a fact -- you cannot outgive God! But our motives must be right.

12. Consider Malachi 3:8-10. These "blessings" from heaven (3:10) are not necessarily financial blessings, but spiritual blessings -- the joy of the Lord, family members saved, prayers answered, etc.
13. Our motives in giving are important. Our motives must be right. A pastor once told me he had members who gave generously at the end of the year -- for tax purposes. Their motive in giving was wrong.
14. I heard about a worldly fellow who accidentally put a \$100 bill into the offering basket as it passed by. He meant to put in \$5 and when he realized his mistake, he tried to snatch it back but it was too late.
15. His wife saw the whole thing and she was very embarrassed. On the drive home he said, "The Lord is going to bless me now for putting that \$100 bill in the offering."
16. The wife told him, "No He won't, because God knows you intended to give just \$5 so you should not expect any blessing."
17. Many people are missing God's blessings because of stinginess.
18. I heard some paper currency were hanging out together at the bank. A \$1,000 bill was bragging, "I have been to the opera house and some of the best restaurants in town."
19. A \$100 bill said, "I have been to Carnegie Hall and Rockefeller Center."
20. A \$50 bill said, "I have been to Yankee Stadium and Madison Square Garden."
21. A \$20 bill and a \$10 bill were discussing some of the various delis and diners they visited.
22. Someone then said to the \$1 bill, "Hey, where have you been?"
23. He looked very sad, and said, "Church, church, church."
24. What is your motive in giving?
25. First and foremost, we should want to please God. Second Corinthians 9:11 says we will be "enriched in every thing to all bountifulness" (generosity or liberality).
26. "Which causeth through us thanksgiving to God" (9:11b).
27. God is pleased when His people give sacrificially. Hebrews 13:16 says, "But to do good and to communicate (share with others) forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased."
28. I recently read a nice story by Dr. Paul White. Dr. White was an Australian missionary, doctor, evangelist, radio program host and a prolific author. He wrote many books about his work in Tanzania, including, *Jungle Doctor* (1942), *Jungle Doctor on Safari* (1943), *Jungle Doctor Operates* (1944), *Jungle Doctor Attacks Witchcraft* (1947), *Jungle Doctor's Enemies* (1948), *Jungle Doctor Meets a Lion* (1950), etc.

29. In one of his books he tells the story of two lepers who, despite badly disfigured hands, worked diligently sawing logs into boards for an extension on a mission hospital.
30. When they were paid, they set aside half their money for the Lord. Dr. White explained to them that God only asked for a tenth, but one of them replied, "But Bwana, we love God far more than that!"
31. How much do you love God?
32. God says we are to honor Him with our giving. Proverbs 3:9 says, "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." "Substance" refers to our possessions and our money."
33. "Increase" means any income we receive, not just a paycheck. In Bible times it referred primarily to crops, but today it could refer to pensions, bonuses, and any income received.
34. "Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase." Giving generously honors God. Not giving generously dishonors God.
35. First Samuel 2:30 says, "Them that honour me I will honour, and they that despise me shall be lightly esteemed."

II. THE METHOD OF GIVING

1. Every once in a while, some new member or even a visitor, will approach me with some gimmick for fundraising.
2. I always tell them I am going to stick with God's method -- "tithes and offerings." We cannot improve upon God's way of supporting His work.
3. Malachi 3:8 says, "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."
4. This is God's method -- "tithes and offerings."
5. Not paying tithes and offerings is tantamount to "robbing God."
6. Some people chafe at this and they claim that since the tithe was part of the law, and Christians are no longer under the law, we no longer need to tithe.
7. But this is a fallacious argument. First of all, tithing was practiced long before God gave the law to Moses. Abraham lived hundreds of years before the law was established, and in Genesis 14:20 we see that Abraham tithed.
8. Genesis 28:22 says Jacob tithed. Jacob was a conniver, and he had some bad habits but at least he was a tither!
9. The LORD introduced the principle of tithing right from the beginning, just as He introduced the principle of one day of rest.
10. One day out of seven belongs to God, and at least one-tenth of our income belongs to God.

11. Some teach that tithing is an Old Testament doctrine, but there is nothing in the New Testament that abrogates it.
12. Our Lord said, "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).
13. "These ought ye to have done" means they were right about tithing, but they were wrong in leaving the other (justice, mercy, and faith) "undone."
14. Grace does not remove the law of tithing. Grace strengthens it, because grace enables us to give.
15. If the Jew, under the law, gave ten percent, Christians under grace ought to give more.
16. God's method for giving is taught in I Corinthians 16:1, 2. "Upon the first day of the week (the Lord's Day) let every one of you (not a few generous Christians, but "every one of you") lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him..."
17. People sometimes tell me they are ought of work and cannot give. I remind them they can still give "as God hath prospered" them.
18. What is wonderful about tithing is everyone can give ten percent of whatever they have. And if God has blessed them financially they can increase their tithes and offerings accordingly.
19. God prospers us not to raise our standard of living, but to raise our standard of giving (II Cor. 9:11).
20. John Wesley used to say: "Earn all you can, save all you can, invest all you can, and give away all you can."
21. A pastor used Wesley's philosophy for his three-point outline: "earn all you can, save all you can, and give all you can."
22. A member walked up to him afterwards and said, "Preacher, I loved your message till you got to your third point, and then you ruined everything!"
23. Because of our sinful nature, man has a bent towards selfishness and covetousness and materialism. The best cure for this is to be a good giver. That is why Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).
24. In our lazy and sloppy day and age, many people lack discipline. May I encourage you to be disciplined in your giving? If you are disciplined in your giving, you will be disciplined in your finances.
25. And if you learn to be disciplined in giving, you can easily learn to be disciplined in prayer, Bible study, soulwinning, etc.

III. THE MIRACLE IN GIVING

1. Second Corinthians 9:8 illustrates the miracle in giving -- "And God is able..." "For God so loved the world, that he gave..."
2. Second Corinthians 9:15 says, "Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift."
3. There are many examples of miracles in giving in the Bible. The widow woman in Zarephath only had a handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse, but she gave it all to God, and the Bible says, "And the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah" (I Kings 17:16).
4. In John 6:9, we read of the little lad with five barley loaves, and two small fishes. He gave it to the Lord, and over five thousand people were fed.
5. After everyone ate, they gathered up the fragments that remained, and "filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten" (John 6:13). This is the miracle in giving.
6. "Having all sufficiency" (II Cor. 9:8) means "perfectly content."
7. First Timothy 6:8 says, "And having food and raiment let us be therewith content."
8. One day a fiddle-player's father-in-law asked him who he thought the richest man in the world was, and he mentioned a few names. His father-in-law said, "You're wrong, it is the man with a satisfied mind."

So the fiddle-player sat down and wrote a song called "A Satisfied Mind."

*How many times have you heard someone say
"If I had his money, I could do things my way?"
But little they know that it's so hard to find
One rich man in ten with a satisfied mind.
Once I was waiting in fortune and fame
Everything that I dreamed for to get a start in life's game
But suddenly it happened, I lost every dime
But I'm richer by far with a satisfied mind
Money can't buy back your youth when you're old
Or a friend when you're lonely, or a love that's grown cold
The wealthiest person is a pauper at times
Compared to the man with a satisfied mind
When life has ended, my time has run out
My friends and my loved ones, I'll leave there's no doubt
But there's one thing for certain, when it comes my time
I'll leave this old world with a satisfied mind
(Joe "Red" Hayes and Jack Rhodes)*

9. The apostle Paul said in Philippians 4:11, "For I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."
10. In the Christian life, all things must be done God's way (II Cor. 9:6-8).
11. William Colgate was the founder of the Colgate -- Palmolive Company, maker of soaps and dental-care products. Their international headquarters is here in Manhattan.
12. William Colgate was born in England in 1783 and came here to New York City when he was sixteen-years-old to find employment in the soap manufacturing business.
13. On the way over here from England he had a nice talk with the captain of his ship, and when he told the captain that he planned to make soap in New York City, the man gave him this good advice: "Someone will soon be the leading soap maker in New York. You can be that person. Give your heart to Christ. Begin by tithing all you receive. Make an honest soap. Give a full pound, and you will be a prosperous and rich man."
14. William Colgate finally arrived in NYC and started attending church. He was baptized by the pastor of the First Baptist church of New York City in February, 1808.
15. He started working as an apprentice to a soap-boiler, and he quickly learned the business. As his business prospered, he increased his giving from ten percent to twenty percent to fifty percent, and so on.
16. After his children were educated, he gave practically all his income (millions of dollars) to the Lord.
17. In 1823, Baptists in New York City, William Colgate among them, consolidated their Baptist seminary with Hamilton College in upstate New York to form the Hamilton Literary and Theological Institution.
18. William Colgate was a generous supporter and a trustee, and in 1890, Madison University changed its name to Colgate University in recognition of the Colgate family's gifts to the school.
19. Colgate University used to be a strong Baptist university, but unfortunately, that has changed and it is no longer a Christian school.

CONCLUSION:

1. The Baptist convictions and standards of Colgate University may have changed, but God's method for giving has not changed.
2. A Christian man had been appointed the executor of a woman's large estate and he was instructed to give her money to Christian ministries after her death.
3. Instead, the man encouraged the woman to give the money away while she could see first-hand the benefits of her investments.

4. There is an old saying, "Do your giving while you're living, so you're knowing where it's going."
5. They prayed together, and with his wise counsel and the help of others, she began to give her money to many worthy Christian projects -- to her local church, to various missionaries and mission organizations, struggling churches, and Christian schools, and so on.
6. As she gave generously, God blessed her abundantly and made the final years of her life the most exciting and fruitful of all.
7. Missionary to China Hudson Taylor said, "Depend on it. God's work done in God's way will never lack God's supply. He is too wise a God to frustrate His purposes for lack of funds."