

Giving

- I. The first century Christians were a giving people
 - A. The early church was known for its close fellowship and sharing with those in need (Acts 2:44-47)
 - B. Christians sold properties and brought the proceeds to the Apostles for them to distribute to each as any had need (Acts 4:32-37)

- II. The Church is authorized to collect funds for a variety of needs
 - A. We are to help the needy (Acts 4:34-35)
 1. This certainly includes Christians (Gal 6:10) but it also includes those who have not yet obeyed the Gospel (II Cor 9:13)
 2. We are to perform useful work to earn our keep and to have extra for helping others (Eph 4:28; I Thess 4:11-12)
 3. If we have the means to help someone in need, we are expected to do so (I John 3:17)
 4. We are not to help the lazy, i.e., those who are able to work but choose not to work (II Thess 3:10)
 5. Benevolence is not to be the most important work of the Church (Acts 6:2-4)
 - B. We are to care for widows and orphans, i.e., those lacking other means of support (James 1:27; I Tim 5:3-10)
 - C. We are to support evangelists in preaching the Gospel (I Cor 9:13-14; Luke 10:7; I Tim 5:17-18)
 1. This includes support for evangelists in mission fields preaching in other locations (Phil 1:3-5; 4:15-18)
 2. Several congregations may send partial support to the same man as he labors in the gospel (II Cor 11:8)
 - D. Christians were directed to use the assembly as a collection point for giving (1 Cor 16:1-3)

- III. Why are Christians to give to the Church? What are the reasons for giving?
 - A. We are to do so as a manifestation of God's grace - a gracious work (II Cor 8:1-6)
 - B. To prove the sincerity of your love (II Cor 8:8)
 - C. To participate in good works (James 2:14-17)
 - D. As a means to provide for equality (II Cor 8:13-15) -
 1. Our current surplus can help those who now are lacking (in need)
 2. In the future, our shortfalls can be filled by those who have plenty
 - E. To show where our treasures are stored (Matt 6:19-21)
 - F. To glorify Christ and bring others to Christ (II Cor 9:13)
 - G. Jesus Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35)

- IV. What attributes do we observe in the giving of first century Christians?
 - A. Regularly (I Cor 16:1-2) - "on the first day of *every week*"

- B. Systematically (I Cor 16:2) - with a routine - “put aside and save”
- C. Individually (I Cor 16:1-2) - it is a personal obligation - “let each one of you”
- D. Liberally (II Cor 8:1-4)
 - 1. The Scriptures teach that we shall reap as we sow (II Cor 9:6)
 - 2. God will equip you for good works (II Cor 9:8)
- E. Purposefully (II Cor 9:7) - according to a plan - “as he has purposed in his heart”
- F. Cheerfully (II Cor 9:7)
 - 1. We are not to give under compulsion (II Cor 9:7)
 - 2. We must give out of love or it gains us nothing (I Cor 13:1-3)

V. What are we to give?

- A. During the Patriarchal Age, Abraham gave a tenth of all the spoils of victory (Heb 7:1-2; Gen 14:20)
- B. Under the Mosaic Age, Jews gave a tithe, which is a tenth, plus additional offerings throughout the year
 - 1. The fruits of the ground and cattle were subject to tithing
 - 2. Every tenth part of the herd or flock was holy to the Lord (Lev 27:30-34)
- C. In the Christian Age, Christians must first and foremost give themselves to the Lord in keeping with His will (II Cor 8:5)
 - 1. Your body is not your own; you were bought with a price (I Cor 6:19-20; 7:22-23)
 - 2. We are to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Rom 12:1)
- D. Christians are commanded to give as they have prospered (I Cor 16:2)
 - 1. Those who have more are to give more, i.e., progressive giving (Matt 25:14-30; I Cor 16:2; II Cor 8:12-13)
 - 2. We are not instructed to give beyond our means so as to put us in the proverbial “poor house” (II Cor 8:12-13)
 - 3. The absolute value of the gift is not to be the most important part of giving (Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4)
 - 4. Although the Bible does not specify a fixed giving percentage, it does teach that in the Christian dispensation God’s blessings (expectations?) are greater
 - a. As Christians, we partake in a superior covenant which was established on better promises (Heb 8:6)
 - 1) Jesus said that unless our righteousness exceeds that of the Pharisees, we shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven (Matt 5:20)
 - 2) Note that even the Pharisees tithed, i.e., were giving 10% (Matt 23:23)
 - b. Jesus repeatedly distinguished between the Law/Traditions and God’s intent (effectively raising the bar) during His Sermon on the Mount
 - 1) “You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not murder, and anyone who murders will be subject to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with his brother will be subject to judgment.” (Matt 5:21-22)

- 2) “You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. (Matt 5:27-28)
 - 3) “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for marital unfaithfulness, causes her to become an adulteress, and anyone who marries the divorced woman commits adultery.” (Matt 5:31-32)
 - 4) “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord. But I tell you, Do not swear at all: either by heaven, for it is God’s throne;” (Matt 5:33-34)
- c. On the basis of these expectations, it is difficult to imagine that God would not also expect more from us in our giving.
- E. We must be careful not to repeat the past errors of God’s people by robbing God (Mal 3:8-10)
- F. Christians must strive to lay up treasures in Heaven not on this earth (Matt 6:19-20)
1. Earthly treasures can be stolen and lost
 2. Our heart and focus should not be on the accumulation of physical wealth; when this life is over our possessions will mean nothing (Luke 12:16-21)
 3. Rather, we should treasure heavenly things (Matt 6:21) - growing in Godly spiritual attributes maturing in Christ so that one day we can reside with Him
- G. Wealth can corrupt us
1. It can be a barrier between us and God (Matt 19:16-26; Mark 10:17-27; Luke 18:18-27)
 2. “For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil. Some people, eager for money, have wandered from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.” (1 Tim 6:10)
 3. Paul learned to be content in all circumstances be it living in humble means or in prosperity (Phil 4:11-12)
- VI. The key to proper giving is to remember whose you are.
- A. A Christian is a bond-servant and slave of Christ Jesus (Rom 1:1; 6:22-23; Gal 1:10; Phil 1:1)
 - B. You were bought with a price - you are not your own - you belong to God (I Cor 6:19)
 - C. Everything you have is His - You are to be a good steward (custodian)