

Things We Need To Know About Giving

One day, a minister got into a conversation with a man he had met on the street. The man was uninterested in anything the minister had to say about faith or religion. So the man said to the minister, "Look! The biggest problem I have with Christianity is that it's always give, give, give!" The minister replied, "Thank you, you've just given the best definition of Christianity I've ever heard!"

When we come to the house of worship each Sunday, we are given an opportunity to give our money to the work of God. Of course, it is not our money; it is His. It's only ours in the sense that God has given it to us for our use. Someone once said, "The question is not how much of my money will I give to God, but how much of His money will I keep for myself?"

There are other ways of giving to the work of the church, but it's fairly certain that Paul had something of monetary value in mind when he said (1 Cor.16:1-2): "*Now concerning the collection for the saints...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.*" Paul had a specific need in mind when he wrote this. He was taking up a collection for needy saints in Jerusalem and Judea! Yet the work of the Lord continues today, and thus the need for Christians to support this work continues as well.

Before God asks us to give, there are a few important things we need to know about God's own willingness to give! Here's a great statement for us to think about along these lines: "*Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights...*" (James 1:17) That inspired statement always reminds me of the words to "Count Your Blessings": "*Count your many blessings, name them one by one; Count your blessings, see what God hath done.*"

Have you ever thought about doing that (seriously)? It wouldn't hurt us you know. We don't attribute the good things we enjoy to God like we should. The sun comes up every day, the refrigerator is full, and there's a roof over our heads. The idea for so many people is that these things just happen, or, that they happen because of things we have done. What a sad mistake to make! And because we make this mistake, we fail to appreciate that God gives to us so freely. We are more prone to think God begrudges us; or that He holds back! But James leaves us with no doubt. Every good gift and every perfect gift is from God!

Yet the value of these things cannot even begin to compare with God's gift for overcoming sin. Regardless of what the world may say (or maybe what you have believed all your life), your greatest need is not food, or clothing, or shelter, or even the love of your family. Your greatest need is a remedy for sin! All who believe in Christ, repent of their sins, confess His wonderful name, are baptized into His death, and walk faithfully with the Lord may have access to all spiritual blessings in Christ. One of these blessings is the remedy for sin. And if you're wise, you'll accept God's gift for your soul at once!

We ought to thank God every day for this gift. When Jesus died for our sins, it was Heaven's greatest gift. His sacrifice enables us to enjoy the blessings of Heaven. And it was all because of His love. Jesus said (John 15:13): "*Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.*"

But this is not all that God wants us to know about giving. God has given us the gift of salvation at great cost to Himself. Now it's our turn to give. Here are some of the serious things God wants us to know about money and giving:

(1) **God wants us to know the dangers of riches!** Money is a necessity of life, and, money buys lots of things. So it makes sense, that the more money you have the more things you can buy. And therein lies the danger! Obtaining more and more money in order to have more and more things can easily become the goal of life, and that to our condemnation. When money and things become the focus of life, then we become guilty of covetousness. Covetousness will "do us in" eternally! Covetousness is a great evil because it does at least three things: (a) It robs us of contentment! Ecclesiastes 5:10: "*He who loves silver will not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase.*" (b) It destroys relationships! James 4:1-2: "*Where do wars and fights come from among you? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You*

murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war..." (c) It obscures the spiritual and blinds us to God! 1 Timothy 6:10: "For the love of money is the root of all evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows."

(2) God wants us to know that He loves a cheerful giver!

2 Corinthians 9:7: "*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*" The cheerful giver gives out of the purpose of His heart because God is at the center of His heart.

(3) God wants us to know that it is more blessed to give than to receive! Paul said: "*I have showed you all things, how that so laboring you ought to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive.*" (Acts 20:35) So many people are out to be on the receiving end of things. No wonder there is so much discontentment and loneliness in the world. Jesus said that when it comes to gift-giving, the highest privilege is to be the giver. Paul said that we should support the weak (1 Thess.5:14). Jesus said, if we do, we will receive the greatest reward imagineable in Heaven (Matt.25:34-36)!

God wants you to know and appreciate what He has given to you. And that's no small thing. But when we do so, He expects us to give in response to Him (just as He expects us to love Him because He first loved us; 1 John 4:19). Now that you know, I encourage you to act on what you know. Every week, you have the opportunity to give to the greatest work on earth (1 Cor.16:2)! Make the most of it! Remember what God has given to you.

It's true! Christianity is nothing but give, give, give! What does giving prove about your Christianity?

Brian