

Renewing Generosity 1-26-14

In Psalm 49, David taught how it is that we ought not to envy those with wealth, because they lose sight of their spiritual perspectives. Jesus taught a great deal about the need of trust, and how wealth can get in the way of this trust. He said in Luke 16:10-13 that we need to be responsible with our monetary blessings now to ensure our eternal reward. How is it that we are to be responsible? Perhaps it is summed up in Luke 12:21: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

We are looking primarily at two passages that pertain to Christian Giving & the Church. In 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 we are given the command to lay aside on the first day of the week. In 2 Corinthians 9:6-15 we are told how to conduct ourselves in doing so. Finally, Jesus taught in Acts 20:35b "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Let us consider three points these passages teach us:

- #1 No one can tell you what to give
- #2 Giving comes from first fruits
- #3 Giving grows faith

We often ask ourselves "how much should I give"? Of course, there is no amount ever mentioned in the New Testament. Even the Old Testament tithe is not spoken of in the New Testament. We are told that we give "neither grudgingly or by compulsion"; "according to ability" – Acts 11:29; "as you have prospered" – I Cor. 16:2; "as you purpose" – II Cor. 9:7. These passages make it clear that the amount we give is based solely on our discretion. The collection we take up is not for the purpose of maintaining the church; we are authorized to use it for that reason, but we all know that God does not need the money. We need to remember that the church is designed to operate without zero funds if need be. So why take up a collection? We need to understand that if it is not for God and not for the church, then it must be for us the givers.

Another question we ask is whether giving is an act of worship? Consider that it is done on the Lord's Day, the first day of the week. This suggests it is an act of worship. Digging deeper, we see that it is foreshadowed in the First Fruits worship of the Old Testament.

Deuteronomy 16:10 " you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the LORD your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the LORD your God blesses you."

Deuteronomy 16:17 "Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD your God which He has given you."

Let us consider for a moment what it means for giving to be an act of worship. If it is worship: false worship can condemn us; we can be condemned for ignorance; evil thoughts would condemn us; "spur of the moment" offerings are unacceptable. We may too often see giving as simple a process to supply the church, not the spiritual act it is meant to be. By giving with the wrong heart, we condemn ourselves.

With these principles in hand, let's re-examine the question: How much? Simply put, you should give until you trust! A great example of this is in Luke 21:1-4; there a widow was singled out by Jesus as being a great giver because it implied her total gift and trust in God. Giving ought to encourage trust in God.

One last thought: in Matthew 19:16-24 we meet a rich ruler who could not find the heart to trust God over his wealth. Giving can reveal this condemning attitude in us. We live in a wealthy nation; does your wealth ruin you?