

# The Church

## Giving - Part 1 - Introduction

### The Characteristics Of Godliness And Christlikeness

Two of the great evidences of Godliness and Christlikeness are thankfulness and thoughtful consideration of others. These are tightly bound together for thankfulness results from that which God has given. Thoughtful consideration is one of the ways gratitude is shown, by giving to others. It is on these very points which Paul ends his great treatise on giving. When having dealt with giving he ends with, "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift" (2 Cor. 9:15). In other words, when giving to others, think of what God has bestowed on us as individuals. This truth was illustrated by the Lord in the parable of the two debtors (Matt. 18:23-33), and by Paul when writing to Philemon (Phil. 1:19).

When it comes to giving it is easy to only see it in the lower level of putting money on the collection plate, bag, or box, and that is it. Every so often we get a report of how the money was used but fail to see that when giving money for the work of God, we are giving to the Lord. It is as if He was standing there with His nail pierced hand outstretched, waiting to receive from us the token of our gratitude. Seeing giving on this level lifts every act of giving to a higher level. Of course giving is not restricted to Sunday morning at church, for there are six other days of the week. We can provide hospitality, clothes, gas, or meals at any time when we see a need. One can be sure all the works of giving health, instruction, and life to the dead, were not all done on the Sabbath. Nor did the works of Dorcas in supplying needs wait until a Sunday (Acts 9:39).

It is so easy for we who are children of God, due to our familiarity with the Bible, to lose sight that they are the scriptures of truth (Dan. 10:21), and not a collection of historical events and data for study and consideration. They are the written manifestation of Divine wisdom and love for our instruction and learning. It is only by them an individual of God will be fully furnished (2 Tim. 3:16).

Before our Lord went to Calvary He told the disciples about the coming Holy Spirit. He also told them five reasons for His coming:

- a) "To bring all things to your remembrance" (Jn. 14:26)
- b) "Teach you all things" (Jn. 14:26)
- c) "He shall testify of me" (Jn. 15:26)
- d) "He will guide you into all truth" (Jn. 16:13)
- e) "He will show you things to come" (Jn. 16:13)

In reference to "guide you into all truth", He would guide the writers of the epistles concerning instruction to impart to other saints due to arising situations. For this, they were given the gift of knowledge, and part of that was on the subject of giving. (An illustration of this imparted knowledge was when Moses and the man gathered sticks on the Sabbath, Num. 15:32-35). In Corinthians the background for the giving was a famine in Judea, and the Holy Spirit used this situation to cause Paul to write on this subject. When instructing the saints the Spirit also included information on how to give, what amounts to give, and the character of those who convey the offerings.

Another, and perhaps often ignored, is the instruction of the Lord regarding giving. He taught: "If thy brother hath ought against thee; leave there thy gift . . . and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23-24).

I am also very aware that some say ministers of the gospel who live by faith ought not to speak about this. However, such is contrary to the scriptures? Was Paul not a full time evangelist and teacher, and he speaks of it to the elders of Ephesus (Acts 20:35), the churches in Galatia, and to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 16:1-2). It all depends on the motives the individual speaks of money, and only God can judge the motives (Jer. 17:10; 1 Cor. 4:5; Rev. 2:23).

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### God Gives So That We Can Care For Ourselves And Give To Him

To my thinking, the greatest personal and collective illustration of giving was with David (1 Chron. 22:5; 29:3-5), the “chief of the fathers and princes of the tribes of Israel, and the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the rulers” (1 Chron. 29:6-8), and possibly the people who rejoiced (1 Chron 29:9, 14). The first superb illustration of God’s giving, and collective giving to God, was the materials given for the construction of the Tabernacle and the priests clothing (Ex 25:1-7). For 400 years the children of Israel laboured under the Egyptians (Gen. 15:14), and the day for their release only a matter of hours away. Through Moses, God instructed His people to “borrow” things from the Egyptians (Ex. 3:22, 11:2). We further read: “the people found favour in the eyes of the Egyptians and they ‘lent’ unto them such as they required” (Ex. 12:36). Here we find a question: “Was it right for God to deceive the Egyptians by having the children of Israel borrow things which they would never give back?” Let it be clear, God is never unrighteous and never does things covertly.

When we use the word “borrow” it indicates the intention to give it back, but this is not how the Egyptians and Israelites understood the word. The words translated “borrow” and “lent” are the same Hebrew word “sha’al”, which means “to ask”. It is used this way when the servant asked: “Whose daughter art thou? (Gen. 24:47), or when David “earnestly asked” (1 Sam. 20:6). To the ancients the word translated “borrow “ or “lent” would never mean “to lend to get back”. With this in mind, the Israelites simply went into the homes of the Egyptians and asked things. For instance: gold bracelets, copper looking glasses, silver coins, etc., and they were freely given. This was no sudden impulse by God. Hundreds of years before, God had promised that he would judge the nation that they served, and would bring them out with great substance (Gen. 15:14).

It could be argued that this was God’s repayment to them for the many years of labour, and that would have been right, but is that not where God wanted it to end? Applying this to ourselves, every week or month we receive wages because of working at a job the Lord has given to us. The question is, “Are the wages given with no other reason than because we have worked for “x” number of hours, or is there a spiritual dimension?” Does life consist of nothing more than eat, sleep, to get money to buy the necessary items for living, a better car, the newest computer gadgets or new appliances? Is there a spiritual dimension why God gave to the Israelites and to us that which we earn? There is!

It was the intention of God for those who were redeemed by blood and delivered from the great Prince to build Him a dwelling in the wilderness, a place where He could “sojourn” with them as they travelled the waste howling wilderness (Deut. 32:10). These people were slaves in Egypt but God had plans for them, not just their liberation, but to build a dwelling place for Him. Understanding that God never asks us to do a work for Him without giving the means to do it, then the question comes: “What would they build the dwelling place with?” The answer is, the materials given to them by God from the Egyptians.

- a) The wise hearted were going to take from that which they had received, and give to the Lord. From the Egyptians they had received gold, silver, and raiment, presumably various cloths and skins. (Ex. 3:22)
- b) Does this mean God is a taker who gives things only to ask for them back? Not in the slightest. God had given abundantly, and when they gave to Him it was not just an opportunity showing gratitude, but was also an act of faith depending on God to give the necessary skill needed to do the work. Furthermore, God is never a debtor, and when they gave to him, they lacked nothing. Rather, they received great spiritual blessings for their material givings.
- c) Again, the opportunity to give was a test of their attitudes to material things against the background of always having very little, if anything at all. Now they had lovely things. Would they give them up for the greater glory of God and in thankfulness? How much should they give to the Lord and what should they keep for themselves? The reality was that had God not given it to them, they would not have had any of these things, but the human heart can rationalise saying, “It is ours”. It is so easy to say, “this is my home”, “I have so much money in the bank”, or “this is my car”. We can so easily miss the reality that all

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we have is from God. It is He who gives us health, strength, and all our faculties (Acts 17:28), as well as every spiritual blessing (Eph. 1:3). God gave Nebuchadnezzar great knowledge but he made the costly mistake of attributing all the ability to himself. He said: "Is not this great Babylon that I have built?" (Dan. 4:30). What a hard lesson he learned.

- d) Because they gave the materials, God permitted them to build Him a tent to dwell in, and as they journeyed the wilderness pathway they had His continual presence. That building was not only a shadow of things in Heaven (Heb. 8:5); the pattern which was shown Moses on the mount (Heb. 8:5), but it became a figure of the body of the Lord in His early pilgrimage (Jn. 1:14). This was the spiritual dimension!

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**May God grant us good understanding as He, by His Holy Spirit, deigns to guide us into all truth.  
John 16:13**

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