

# Money and the Bible, Pt. 3

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(Continued from last month)

**Psalm 112:9 (NKJV) says, "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever; His horn will be exalted with honor."**

The love of money hinders our willingness to give. In Acts 20:35 Jesus said it is more blessed to give than to receive. It is hard to believe this if our heart is set on earthly things.

Why don't more people give what they ought to give? Some don't give because they don't love the Lord's Kingdom enough. They have no desire to give. Some don't give because they don't believe they can afford to give. They are afraid to give. Some don't give because they're too deeply in debt. They are restricted in their giving. Some don't give because they're spending what money they have on themselves. These are too self-centered to give. Some don't give because they don't understand what they are to give. They don't know how to give. Finally, some don't give because they don't understand stewardship. They think like owners rather than stewards.

Some give but reluctantly and begrudgingly. They give as little as possible. In Matthew 6:22-23 Jesus warned of having a "bad eye." A bad eye refers to a stingy heart. Because of sin, every human being is selfish and stingy by nature. The opposite of a stingy heart is a generous heart. Paul applauded the generous heart of the Macedonian believers: *"Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: <sup>2</sup> that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. <sup>3</sup> For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, <sup>4</sup> imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. <sup>5</sup> And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God."* (2 Corinthians 8:1-5 NKJV)

Notice the kind of generosity exhibited by the believers in Macedonia. They gave generously even in the midst of a great trial of affliction. They gave in the abundance of their joy. They gave in the midst of deep poverty. They gave according to their ability. They gave beyond their ability. They gave willingly. They gave with rich liberality in the midst of their deep poverty. They insisted with great urgency that Paul receive their gift so that they might join in the fellowship of ministering to the saints. They begged Paul for the opportunity to give. How was such generosity possible? It was because they first gave themselves to God and to His will. This kind of generosity was also modeled in the early days of the church in Jerusalem: *"Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. <sup>33</sup> And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all."* (Acts 4:32-33 NKJV) This model of generosity came from Jesus Christ Himself: *"For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, that you through His poverty might become rich."* (2 Corinthians 8:9 NKJV)

Money controls us when we think like owners instead of as stewards. The Bible teaches that God owns everything: *"The earth is the LORD's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein."* (Psalm 24:1 NKJV) God says in Haggai 2:8 (NKJV), *"The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the LORD of hosts."* Men, on the other hand, are stewards of God: *"For who makes you differ from another? And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?"* (1 Corinthians 4:7 NKJV) 1 Timothy 6:7 (NKJV) states, *"For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing*

out." Whatever money and possessions that men acquire on earth was here before they got here and will be left when they die. It belongs to God. There will be no U-Haul trailers following the hearse!

Men will give account to God on judgment day of their stewardship. Jesus taught this in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 25:14-30) and in the Parable of the Ten Minas (Luke 19:11-27) If believers were executives in a business or corporation and handled company funds like they handle God's funds, most would be in jail for embezzlement. If believers realized that they will one day stand before God to give account, they would be much more careful about how they handle what God has entrusted to our care.

Our stewardship goes beyond just money. Basically God has placed three things under our stewardship: time, talent, and treasure. How are we investing our time in doing the will of God? How are we investing our talents or abilities in fulfilling the will of God? How are we investing our resources in doing the will of God?

Stewardship is known by how we handle the little things. Stewards are to be faithful, even in the little things. 1 Corinthians 4:2 (NKJV) says, *"Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful."* Some say, "Well, if I just had more I'd give more" or "If I had a million dollars then I would give" or "If I could just win the lottery, I would give to the work of God." The question is not what would you do with a million dollars but what are you doing with the four dollars you've got in your pocket? What are you doing with the ten? What are you doing with the twenty? Or the sixty? Are you faithful to give now? That's the issue. Jesus said, *"He who is faithful in what is least is faithful also in much; and he who is unjust in what is least is unjust also in much."*<sup>11</sup> *Therefore if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?*<sup>12</sup> *And if you have not been faithful in what is another man's, who will give you what is your own?"* (Luke 16:10-12 NKJV)

Apart from God we would have nothing. It is God who gives us the ability to gain wealth. Deuteronomy 8:18 (NKJV) says, *"And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day."* (see also 2 Corinthians 9:8) When we give as the Lord commands, we honor God as our Source and gain His continued blessing. Proverbs 3:9-10 (NKJV) says, *"Honor the LORD with your possessions, and with the firstfruits of all your increase;"*<sup>10</sup> *So your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine."*

What are Biblical ways we can we honor God through our giving? It starts by always putting Him first ahead of our own needs and desires: *"Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness"* (Matthew 6:33) We can bring an offering of firstfruits—the first profits made on an investment. We can bring our tithes (ten percent) to support God's house. We can give freewill offerings above the tithe to supply special needs in the kingdom. We can also give alms which are freewill charitable giving to the poor or those in special need.

How we regard money will determine the course of our life. God wants us to serve Him and not money. Whether we are blessed with little or much, God wants us to be faithful in what He has entrusted to us. May each of us experience the joy of hearing our Lord one day say, "Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful in little. I will make you ruler over much!"

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