

ESCAPING BONDAGE TO PRESENT-DAY PHARISAISM
"Part I: Liberated Financial Giving To God's Causes"
(2 Corinthians 9:6-10)

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

(1) A nationally known Christian author has written in his recent work, Money Smart (Moody Press, 1995, p. 104) the following view on contributing to the Lord's work: "Those who give less than a tenth of their income limit what God can do for them according to His own Word: 'Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing me . . . of tithes and offerings' (Malachi 3:8)."

Lest we think that such obligated giving is only for those under the Mosaic Law, he continues: "And Paul said, 'He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully' (2 Corinthians 9:6)"

Some who promote such tithing for Christians refer to **pre-law** Abraham in Genesis 14 who paid tithes to Melchizedek. The argument goes that if Abraham paid tithes **before** the Law, so should Christians who are **after** the Law pay tithes to support God's work!

Well, MUST a Christian give 10% of his income since God commanded such a "tithe" in Malachi and since this renowned Christian author implies that Paul preserved the tithe for today?

(2) A pastor in Connecticut once urged his congregation to give 90% of their income to meet a huge church building debt! He reasoned that since the people normally **kept** 90% of their income when they **tithed** the other 10%, they should be **selfless** at least **once in a while** and give **GOD** the **90%** for a change!

Should parishioners give 90% of their income to the church once in a while, or push the phrase "give 'til it hurts, and then give some more" as other Pastors teach?!

(3) While I visited a pastor in another Connecticut church several years ago, he opened the computer program "Quicken" to the church giving records to illustrate its capacities. In doing so he found that the giving went down the Sunday before, and remarked, "Well, well, it looks like I'm just going to have to get on the people this next week about that!"

Well, have I as your pastor been wrong in not pushing giving if the Church has had a "down" week? Am I supposed to put the "spiritual squeeze" on you to keep the giving up to par?!

(We turn to the sermon "Need" section . . .)

Need: *"Having heard from reputable Christians that I should give 10% or even 90% off of the top of my income to Christian ministries, or 'give 'til it HURTS, and then give some MORE', I don't know whether to feel guilty, glad, angry or confused! Any suggestions?!"*

I. **A viewpoint exists in some Christian circles that wrongly adheres to man-made, burdensome rules on contributing to God's works:**

- A. Some teach Christians should give 10% of their income to God's work.
 1. Malachi 3:10 says that if we "tithe" (namely, give 10% of our income to God's work) that God will provide for our livelihoods.
 2. Thus, some groups promote tithing for the Church today.
 3. Such groups may counter charges that Malachi 3:10 applies **only** to those **under** the Mosaic Law: they point to **pre-Law Abraham's** tithe in Gen. 14:18ff as proof that **post-Law Christians** must tithe.
- B. Others teach we should "give until it **hurts**, then give **some more!**"
- C. Some have taught an occasional giving of **90%** of one's income!
- D. However, God's Word **candidly** states that **Church era Christians** are to contribute **free** from **ALL** such contribution dictates and pressures:
 1. 2 Corinthians 9:7 states that the believer in the Church era is to contribute of his income at an **amount** that **he ALONE** sets.
 2. To emphasize this giving as a **freewill** offering, the Apostle Paul **negatively** asserts that **no other pressure** should set the amount:
 - a. In 2 Corinthians 9:7b, two adverbs describe how one is **not** to give: the NIV renders them "reluctantly" & "under compulsion" while the KJV treats them as "grudgingly" and "of necessity."
 - b. The former word, *lupays* in the Greek New Testament reflects a **personal** grief where the latter word, *anagkays* is an **obligation** placed upon one from an **outside** source, Moulton & Milligan, The Vocabulary of the New Testament, p. 382, 31-32.
 - c. Thus, the **Christian** is **not** bound to give an amount that **he** does not feel comfortable giving, nor **must** he give what **another** dictates for him! He is to give what **he joyfully chooses** to give!
 3. This truth agrees with the following doctrine on Christian liberty:
 - a. Jesus taught us to avoid obeying rules made by the Pharisees that countered God's Word, Matthew 15:1-3, 9 (Isa. 29:13).
 - b. He urged rejecting teachings that put men under oppressive religious obligations (*barus*), Mtt. 23:4, T.D.N.T., v. 1, p. 557.

- c. Paul taught that **Christians** were *not* to submit to **man's** rules that were **not** under **Christ's** authority, Col. 2:13-14, 20-22.
 - 4. Since all pressures for Christians to tithe 10%, to give 90% or to "give until it hurts and then give some more" contradict these Scriptures, they are **wrong!** They are errant Pharisaical pressures, whether they arise from one's *own heart* or from **another** source!
- II. **Rather, the Bible teaches LIBERATED giving for Christians:**
- A. As we have seen, the Christian is free to select the *amount* he gives to God **free** from **internal OR external** Pharisaical pressures, 2 Cor. 9:7.
 - B. Yet, *wasting* one's **excess** income on *vain* pursuits leads God to *limit* income reimbursement where *using* that **excess** to give to God's works leads to His blessing the giver by **boosting** his income, 2 Cor. 9:6, 10.
 - C. Accordingly, here is a summary of Bible directives on giving for today:
 - 1. The Christian should use the **TOP** of his income to meet his own livelihood needs, 2 Cor. 9:10, or "bread for food (lit. "for eating")".
 - 2. Then **in a desire to broaden his OWN outreach** (2 Cor. 9:10b), from the income that exceeds his living needs, the Christian can give what **he gladly chooses** to further God's works, 1 Cor. 16:2b.
 - 3. [To minimize budgeting problems in organized groups like churches and missions, we should *try* giving a **set** amount on a **regular** basis, whether it be weekly, monthly, etc., see 1 Corinthians 16:2a.]
 - 4. God then reimburses the believer with income, and an **increased** amount of **excess** of living expenses as a blessing, 2 Cor. 9:10.
 - 5. The believer can take that new income and **again** disburse it **first** to meet his living needs and **then** to give even a **greater** amount to God's work, 2 Cor. 9:10. (*Note* the following **qualifying** factors: (a) God may let trials block one from **always** being able to increase his giving (Phil. 4:12); (b) due to cash flow issues, it may take **time** for income increases to rise for one to afford to increase his giving.)
 - 6. In knowing **where** to give, (a) Scripture offers two clear directives: (+) the **Biblical** local church is God's **key** ministry, 1 Tim. 3:15-16; Rev. 1:12, 20, and (+) God has ordained that disciples support those who disciple them, 1 Cor. 9:9-14. (b) So, give to works that **proportionally most** help good churches and have **best** disciplined us!

Application: (1) To overcome Pharisaical bondage regarding giving, (a) believe on Christ as Savior to be rescued from man's errant rules (Jn. 3:16; Rom. 7:4; Gal. 5:1) and (b) accept God's invitation to invest by freewill giving in His worldwide ministries. (2) We will see our own needs met and eternally rejoice in the fruits of our giving!

Lesson: God does not enslave us re: our income, but invites us through sensible stewardship to bear eternal fruits as measured in men's souls.

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

Dave Green, a dairy farmer I knew in a church I once pastored in Nebraska returned from a Christian seminar one day convinced that God had given him the spiritual gift of giving (Romans 12:8). His wife, Linda was a bit nervous about his "discovered" gift, but followed his lead in faith anyway!

Since our little Church of 35 people had started a Building Fund, and Dave felt compelled to contribute to that fund, he made a pledge to the Lord! He asked God for the income opportunity to **double** his giving into the Building Fund the next year!

Shortly after his commitment, the milk company's truck driver told Dave that his milk tested so low in the bacteria count that he might consider switching from his current Grade "B" production to Grade "A". It would mean a lot more income!

Dave investigated and found that by replacing his milk tank and by putting up sheet rock on the tank storage room walls, he could move to Grade "A". When Dave made these improvements, his salary jumped **\$7,000** that year! Much to his Linda's surprise, they doubled their gifts to the Building Fund!

Feeling on a roll with the Lord, Dave made another promise for the next year. He pledged that every male calf born the following year would be sold and its proceeds directed into the Building Fund! Well, God must have wanted that Fund to grow quickly, for the **ONLY** calves born to Dave **ALL** that next year were **males!** In the late Fall, Dave got a little worried and asked the Lord to let him **out** of the "male calf" pledge for the **following** year as he needed more females for his herd!

David Green's dairy business continued to expand until he installed one of the first fully automated barn feeding systems in the state! The O'Neill Berean Fundamental Church Building Fund to which he had contributed grew to \$80,000, and then was used as a down payment in the formation of the new building. That work has now been renamed the O'Neill Bible Church, and it has grown from ministering to 35 to serving **four hundred** people!

As missionary to China, Hudson Taylor once said, "God's work, done in God's WAY, will not lack God's SUPPLY!" God's WAY of stewardship is NON-PRESSURED, a way He soundly blesses, and I've seen it happen that WAY to God's glory!