

Giving as We Have Prospered

"Giving to the Lord's church is not a burden; it is a privilege. What a great honor it is to be able to help support the Lord's work here on earth!

But the question often arises: How much should we give in the support of the church? It is tempting to go back to the Old Testament for an answer. When Abraham returned from the defeat of his enemies (**Genesis 14:1-16**), he was greeted by Melchizedek, the priest of God at Salem. We read in **Genesis 14:20** that Abraham gave 10% of the spoils of the battle to this priest of the Most High God. For the rest of the Patriarchal Age and throughout the Mosaic Age, we read that God expected His people to give 10% of their belongings to support His work.

For example, in the Law of Moses we read: "Thus all the tithes of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord ... For every tenth part of the herd or flock, whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord" (**Leviticus 27:30, 32**). Many have therefore assumed that under the New Covenant, we are also required to contribute 10%. Instead, we read of four other principles of giving.

First, we read that we are to give as we are prospered: "*Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I directed the churches of Galatia, so do you also. On the first day of every week each of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come*" (**1 Corinthians 16:1-2**). In other words, the amount is left up to the individual and is to be based on the prosperity of that person. As we consider our prosperity, let us remember not just the gross income of our salary, but let us keep in mind any money that we might inherit, and increases in salary that we receive from time to time, and part time jobs that other members of the family might have. In other words, let us keep in mind all the ways God prospered us over the last week. When we think of giving as we have prospered, we need to think about three men who showed up to move a piano. One weighed 100 pounds soaking wet. The second weighed 180 and was in pretty good shape. The third weighed 250 pounds and was all muscle. We know that they did not all carry the same amount, but each did what he could to help move the piano. So it is with giving in the body of Christ.

A second principle is that we are to sow bountifully in our giving: "*Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver*" (**2 Corinthians 9:6-7**). Imagine a farmer who might say this: "I am going to save money this year by planting only one-quarter as many seeds as I planted last year." We would be correct in saying that farmer was very foolish. The size of the **harvest** is based on the size of the **planting**. Giving thus becomes a test of our faith. If we truly believe that God will take care of our needs, then we will be generous with our giving and "sow bountifully".

The third principle in **2 Corinthians 9:7** is that we are to purpose in our hearts how much we are going to give. Sometimes as the contribution plate is passed, there are Christians who are scrambling for their money. They look in the bottom of their pocketbooks and wallets, searching for something to put into the plate. How sad that is! The Lord will not accept our leftovers; He wants the first fruits. In fact, He **demands** them! "*Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with*

the first fruits of all thine increase" (Proverbs 3:9). We are to plan what we are going to give long before we get to church on Sunday. In our homes, dinners are planned and the scraps are given to the family dog. Will we treat God as a dog? Will we satisfy ourselves and give God the leftovers? Such will cause our souls to be lost!

The fourth principle found in **2 Corinthians 9:7** is that we are to give with the right attitude, *"...not grudgingly or under compulsion."* Many cults examine the income of the members and demand that they give a certain amount. How tragic! It is not to be given "under compulsion." Once we understand the nature of giving, we will want to give to the limit of our ability, but that should never be an amount that is dictated by others. When we think about giving without a grudging attitude, we can recall seeing little children put a few pennies in the plate. They hold their hands above the plate and relish every last second of turning loose of the money. They are proud to be able to help in the work and want the pleasure of helping to last as long as it possibly can. They enjoy giving! So should we.

We find therefore in the New Testament that God wants us to give as we have prospered, to give just as the farmer sows his seeds, to purpose in our hearts how much we are going to give, and to do so without compulsion.

May God bless us to the extent that we trust His promises concerning our giving!

