

Wasting Our Opportunity

Please take a small portion of your life to read this article. It may change your perspective of life and of your purpose for still being in this world.

“Do this, knowing the time, that it is already the hour for you to awaken from sleep...” Romans 13:11

“While we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.” Gal. 6:10

“Therefore be careful how you walk...making the most of your time, because the days are evil. So then do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Ephesians 5:15-17

Anyone reading these Scriptures carefully can see that in all 3 of these passages, the Lord is exhorting His people to understand that time is short and that it is not time to be casual or indifferent. The world is lost, people are hurting, and yet so many of God’s people are oblivious to the pain! My friends, we don’t have time to waste. Even the devil knows “*that he has only a short time*” (Rev. 12:12), and he’s not at all lazy or casual about his mission. He’s out to kill, steal and destroy, and he’s doing a very good job! While the Church is comfortable and asleep! (Rom. 13:11), satan doesn’t have any problem with letting other priorities distract him from his mission; he is very focused. Can we take just a few minutes to see where many of God’s people ARE distracted and DO have wrong priorities?

God has called His people to be givers. What is to be the motivation of our giving? In Deuteronomy 15:10-11, the Lord is giving instructions in regard to meeting the needs of the poor and says, “*You shall generously give to him, and your heart shall not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.*” For those looking for an excuse to place the responsibility on others, look at what He says in v.11, “*For the poor will never cease to be in the land; therefore I command you, saying, You shall freely open your hand to your brother, to your needy and poor in your land.*” Meditate on these words: “*You...your hand...your brother...your needy...your land.*” Lord, help us to have Your concern for each other and for the needy in the Body of Christ, wherever they are!

The 2nd letter of Paul to the Corinthian church includes some of the best teaching in regard to giving that can be found for the New Testament Church. The church in Corinth was apparently more able to give financially than many of the other churches of that day. Whether we like it or not, the Church (Body of Christ) in the United States and other western countries are more able to give financially than most of God’s people in other places of the world. So as the Lord was speaking to the Corinthians, let see if He also wants to speak to us. Paul starts his teaching on giving by telling the Corinthians about “*the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia.*” He’s not talking here about God’s grace that brings salvation, but God working in their hearts in regard to giving. “*For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability they gave of their own accord (from a willing and loving heart!), begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints...” 2Cor. 8:3-4. Wow! How often do we see anyone begging to be able to support the saints or work of the ministry? And v.2 says these were people in “*deep poverty*”!! Paul was not writing chapters 8 and 9 to force the Church into giving to the poor saints. He was trying to teach them about the heart of Jesus, which would inspire them*

to give out of the right motivation, from the heart of Jesus living within them. Verse 8, “*I am not speaking this as a command, but as proving through the earnestness of others (the Macedonian church) the sincerity of your love also.*” THERE is the proper motivation for giving: sincere love, not compulsion, not feelings of guilt or relieving our guilty conscience, but the love of Christ. Then comes one of the most disgracefully misused Scriptures in the Bible—2Cor. 8:9, “*For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich.*” Folks, Paul’s not teaching us how to get rich, but instructing those who have more wealth than others to follow the example of Jesus Christ! He left His riches and became as a lowly man, so that lowly mankind could be lifted up to higher ground. PTL!

Compare 2Cor. 9:7 with Deut. 15:10, which we looked at earlier. “*Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.*” Our Father is looking at the motivation of our hearts as we give—“*because for this thing (the right motivation for giving) the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all your undertakings.*” If we could get filled with His Spirit and with His love, then we wouldn’t have to worry about 10%, but would move closer to the early Church in the Book of Acts, giving everything for the sake of the Gospel and for meeting the needs of believers.

This might seem strange, but can we look at the concept of the “tithe” in the New Testament Church? Can someone find a Scripture in the New Testament that clearly teaches us that His people are supposed to tithe? Don’t misunderstand, when Abraham gave a tenth to the priest Melchizedek, it shows that it should be instinctive to give a portion of what God has given us back unto Him. But there are a multitude of Christians today who feel they have done their duty once they meet the 10% requirement, not realizing that we are not to be motivated by percentages, but by the love of Christ working within our hearts! When His love burns within, we desire to do much more than 10% (or any other percentage), but we want to touch lives, to heal the broken-hearted, to save the lost, care for the orphans and widows, etc.

In Matt. 23:23 and Luke 18:12 we can see that the scribes and Pharisees (those under the OT Law) practiced tithing. In Hebrews 7:5 we see that “*the sons of Levi...have commandment IN THE LAW to collect a tenth from the people*”, but we find absolutely no clear instructions from Jesus in His New Testament that we are to tithe. Of course, the Scriptures commonly used to support tithing in the NT Church are Malachi 3:8-10, describing how the people had robbed God by not giving their tithes faithfully. If we’re going to teach the Lord’s people to keep the OT tithe, then why do we not teach them to give their tithes according to the Law, being careful to give 10% of our fruit, produce, flocks & herds, bringing it into the “storehouse”, which were apparently large rooms or chambers in the temple? They also were commanded to give their tithes every third year for the sake of the Levites, aliens, orphans and widows. May we ask where the term “local storehouse” (which is supposed to represent the local church where the tithe goes) is found in the Bible? When we can so easily swallow a doctrine without any real Scriptural evidence, what other traditions of man might we be swallowing? My friends, we are to be motivated by a higher law, the law of LOVE that “*is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit*” (Rom. 5:5). To quote Amy Carmichael: “You can give (or tithe) without loving, but **YOU CANNOT LOVE WITHOUT GIVING.**”