

LOVE
THAT
GIVES

GODLY GIVING WITH GLADNESS

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by
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Steve Phillips

GIVING & LOVE

FOR GOD SO LOVED...HE GAVE
[Jn.3:16]

Nothing is greater than love. It is the necessary requirement in all of life. **Let all that you do be done in love** [I Cor.16:14]. Every thought, word, and action is to flow from love.

Love is the sure evidence of being born of God [I Jn.4:7]. It is the certain proof that we are true disciples of Christ [Jn.13:35]. Lacking this, we are no better and no different than any other sinful man [Lk.6:32].

Though you may have all faith, without love you are nothing [I Cor.13:2]. Possessing every spiritual gift will profit you nothing without love [I Cor.13:1-3]. In fact, love is the greatest commandment upon which all other commands depend [Mt.22:36-40]. To fail here is to fail in everything.

Love is what moved the Father to give His Son. **For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son** [Jn.3:16]. It is the pure motive behind all true giving.

The love that gives cannot be compelled. It is a voluntary decision of the heart to give of itself. It is a choice to be a blessing by giving to those in need with no thought of self-gain.

The love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us [Rom.5:5]. This was the reason that the first church immediately and freely gave to their brethren in need [Acts 2:44-46].

No one taught them to do so. No laws were established requiring this behavior. They were simply **taught by God to love one another** [I Thess.4:9].

It is what is needed in our own generation to restore us to a selfless life that glorifies God and benefits men; the love of God poured out within our hearts, the love that gives.

GIVING & SELF

AND NOT TO PLEASE OURSELVES
[Rom.15:1]

Love does unto men as it would wish to be treated itself [Mt.7:12]. The focus of love is upon others, not upon self.

Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with humility of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves;

Do not merely look out for your own personal interests but also for the interests of others. Have this mind in you which was also in Christ Jesus [Phil.2:3-5].

Concern for people's needs is possessing the mind of Christ. This is the example which He Himself has set. **For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich [2 Cor.8:9].**

He laid aside His own interests, emptied Himself, and gave of what He possessed for the everlasting good of many. This same selfless sacrificial spirit filled the hearts of the first Christians.

All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of his possessions was his own, but they shared everything they had [Acts 4:32].

A selfish man is interested in getting. A Christian man is looking to give without thought for himself. This selfless life is at the heart of true Christian living.

He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf [2 Cor.5:15]. This puts everything in its proper place. Living for self is God's description of a sinful life that one must be saved from.

All believers must deny self or they are not true disciples at all [Mt.16:24]. Serving self and serving Christ cancel each other. A man can do only one or the other but not both.

Selflessness is the principle of Christ which governs the hearts of all His people. They give with no thought of reward in this life [Lk.6:30-36]. They lend **expecting nothing in return** [Lk.6:35].

Christians are so free from thought of self-gain, that they even work so as to give to others. **He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need [Eph.4:28].**

Even the rich among true believers are not selfishly seeking their own gain. Their hearts are set, not upon riches, but on sharing with others [I Tim.6:17-19].

This type of selfless giving is a proof of the love of God within the heart of a man [2 Cor.8:8,24; 9:13]. It shows that self-seeking is not motivating their actions. They are **not affected by covetousness** [2 Cor.9:5].

Only a selfless man will do as Christ commands, **Sell your possessions and give to the poor** [Lk.12:33]. All that a Christian is and has is to be given for the blessing of others.

Self is sacrificed for the good of others. Money is viewed in terms of how it may be put to use for eternal purposes. This is what the Lord Jesus told us to do with our resources.

The parable of Lk.16:1-15 describes a self-seeking man who devoted himself for his own personal gain. He was a corrupt man who sought money for selfish and unjust ends.

Yet the man was wise according to the wisdom of this world. He looked ahead to coming days when he could no longer divert

funds from his employer into his own pocket. He acted in the present to ensure a future reward.

This is the point of the parable. It is the lesson to be learned from the unrighteous steward: Use what you have now for enduring benefits beyond this life.

Make friends for yourselves by means of the Mammon of unrighteousness, so that when it fails, they will receive you into the eternal dwellings [Lk.16:9]. Or, as the NIV translation says, Use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourselves, so that when it is gone, you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings.

Money is to be used as a means of blessing to the eternal well-being of men. It is not to be wasted upon self. Wealth is to be given freely and devoted to the purposes of the kingdom of God.

All that we are and have is to be for the good of others. One day, riches will have finished their purpose in this life. What will we have done with what has been entrusted into our hands?

How have we used the means at our disposal to influence men for the kingdom of heaven? Will there be anyone in the eternal dwellings who will welcome us there due to our sacrifice here on earth for their salvation? Will anyone bless the Lord forever that we gave of our wealth here on earth so that they might hear the gospel?

I think we would all be happy with such a welcoming committee.

IT IS MORE BLESSED TO GIVE THAN RECEIVE
[Acts 20:35]

GIVING & OTHERS

YOU SHALL FREELY OPEN YOUR HAND TO YOUR BROTHER...
NEEDY AND POOR
[Deut.15:11]

Giving is to be a purposeful and responsible act of love. We are not to just give to anyone, anyhow. We are warned about giving without proper consideration of whom we are giving to.

Those who give to the rich will only come to poverty [Prov.22:16]. We should not give to the rich. Neither are we to give to so-called gospel workers who do not teach truth about the Lord Jesus. If we do, we are participating in their evil deeds [2 Jn.7,10,11].

We are not to give to disobedient lazy people who will not work to supply their own needs. Those type of people we are not to associate with [2 Thess.3:7-15]. **If anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either** [2 Thess.3:10].

Clearly, the rich are not in need. Without a question, contributing to religious deceivers is doing nothing for the kingdom of God. Surely, supporting a lazy man is not right in God's sight.

We are to give to two types of people. They are [1] the Poor and [2] Gospel Workers.

Jesus said, **The poor you have with you always** [Jn.12:8]. These ever-present ones are to be the objects of our compassion and giving. This concern for the unfortunate is a sign of having true religion in the sight of God [Jas.1:27].

The poor have been a major concern of the most spiritually-

minded Christians of every generation. All the Apostle are in agreement with this emphasis. Listen to their statements to the Apostle Paul in Gal.2:10. **They only asked us to remember the poor – the very thing I also was eager to do.**

How we treat the poor indicates whether we love the Lord Jesus. According to His own words in Mt.25:34-46, if we shut our hearts and our hands to the poor, we have done so to Christ. When we see a real need and give to meet that need, it is as if we have given to Christ Himself.

True Christian giving is seen in sharing food, drink, clothing, and shelter with the poor. **The righteous will answer Him, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You something to drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You?” The King will reply, “Truly I say to you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of Mine, you did for Me” [Mt.25:37,38,40].**

Righteous Job was a blessing to many in need. He is a worthy example for all to follow. This is his own true testimony, **I delivered the poor who cried for help, and the fatherless who had no helper. The blessing of the one ready to perish came upon me, and I made the widow’s heart to sing for joy [Job 29:12,13].**

He was obeying the Lord’s commandment about the proper and godly use of money. The Word of God directs us in this way:

If there is a poor man with you...you shall not harden your heart, nor close your hand from your poor brother; but you shall freely open your hand to him...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.

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” [Deut.15:7-11].

Meeting the needs of the poor can be done in different ways.

We may give, lend, or pay them for work they do for us. If the Lord leads you to give, it must be willingly and without complaint [Deut.15:10; 2 Cor.9:7].

God may direct you to lend in order to help the needy. Someone who borrows must surely repay when he is able to do so. **Only the wicked borrows and does not pay back, but the righteous is gracious and gives [Ps.37:21].**

Even so, the Lord Jesus says that a Christian should consider loaning to a man the same as if he had given. He commands us to **lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men [Lk.6:35].**

Or it may be that a poor man’s need can be met by providing some work for him to do. In this way he will show that he is not merely a lazy beggar, but a serious man, though having need. This method of helping the poor is seen in passages such as Lev.19:9,10.

When you reap the harvest of your land, do not reap to the very edges of your field or gather the gleanings of your harvest. Do not go over your vineyard a second time or gather the fallen fruit of your vineyard. Leave them for the poor and the stranger. I am the Lord your God.

Even if you have forgotten a bundle of grain in your field during harvest, **Do not go back to get it. Leave it for the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands [Deut.24:19].**

It is true that in West Africa people may not understand that forgotten grain can be taken by the poor without being thought of as theft. But the point is, that God had His people Israel provide for the poor by allowing them to work to satisfy their needs. The book of Ruth is a wonderful story of kindness to the poor in this way.

True love is evidenced by providing the needful things of life to those who lack. It is the type of giving that the Lord approves of.

Whoever has the world's goods, and sees his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? [1 Jn.3:17]. If you see the need and have something to help with but do not give, you have a faith which cannot save you.

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? [Jas.2:15,16].

To do this is nothing more than disobedience, selfishness, and unloving rejection of those we ought to love. Do not withhold good to those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it. Do not say to your neighbor, "Go, and come back, and tomorrow I will give it," when you have it with you [Prov.3:27,28].

In fact, the Lord is provoked to wrath if we neglect the poor, but blesses those who care for them. He who gives to the poor will never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses [Prov.28:27]. He who oppresses the poor shows contempt for their Maker, but whoever is kind to the needy honors God [Prov.14:31]. If a man shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, he too will cry out and not be answered [Prov.21:13].

As well as the poor, the needs of genuine gospel workers are to be supplied by loving giving. Even the Lord Jesus had the physical needs of this life provided in this way. And many others were contributing to their support out of their private means [Lk.8:3].

Those who benefit in spiritual things, are indebted to minister to them also in material things [Rom.15:27]. Paul was helped many times in this way so he could continue his good work of teaching the Word of God. You have done well to share with me in my affliction. You sent a gift more than once for my needs [Phil.4:14,16].

Believers must not neglect the work of God or those doing it. True servants of God are depending upon God alone to direct His

people to care for their needs. The laborer is worthy of his wages [Lk.10:7].

Dear friend, you are faithful in what you are doing for the brothers, even though they are strangers to you. They have told the church about your love. You will do well to send them on their way in a manner worthy of God.

For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the pagans. Therefore we ought to support such men, so that we may be fellow workers with the truth [3 Jn.5-8].

Since the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel [1 Cor.9:14], it is left for believers to supply their needs. But we must do so, not by force or unwillingly, but out of love for God, His kingdom, and His people. In this way, God is glorified and the gospel workers are encouraged and blessed by the love that gives.

GIVING & LAW

CHRIST IS THE END OF THE LAW

[Rom.10:4]

Giving is a work of mercy, compassion, and love, not of obligation by law. Love moves a man from within, filling his heart with goodwill towards others. Law only regulates from without by placing demands upon a man whether he is full of love or not.

Obligation through law can never be a worthy substitute for the delight of giving from a loving heart. True Christian giving is never by compulsion. It is a voluntary response of the heart to the love of God and out of love to men.

This principle of love governing godly giving is summarized in 2 Cor.9:7. Consider this verse well as it is stated in these Bible translations:

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver [NIV].

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: For God loveth a cheerful giver [KJV].

Each one must do just as he purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver [NASB].

So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver [NKJV]

Each one should give, then, as he has decided, not with

regret or out of a sense of duty; for God loves the one who gives gladly [Good News].

The words “compulsion,” “necessity,” and “duty” all result from the demands of a law requiring a man to give. Law makes no allowance for what a man may have decided in his own heart. No one who feels forced to do something does it cheerfully. Obligation can never be a reason for giving that is approved by God in a Christian.

No law can regulate love. Law rather cancels what would otherwise **overflow in the wealth of their liberality** [2 Cor.8:2]. It restricts the workings of love through the Spirit of God in a man’s heart.

Love poured out generously cannot be limited to a demand to give 10% of one’s resources. The law of tithing that obligated the nation of Israel to give a tenth to the priests of Levi is not a requirement for Christians.

When the priesthood changed from that of Aaron and the Levites to that of Christ and the church, that law was cancelled. It has no relevance for a Christian under the New Covenant. The law of tithing for Israel does not apply to the church.

For when the priesthood is changed, of necessity there takes place a change of law also [Heb.7:12]. There is a setting aside of a former commandment because of its weakness and uselessness [Heb.7:18].

The law of tithing has been changed because it is unable to produce that glad giving out of love which God delights in. The laws of the Old Covenant do not apply to Christians under the New Covenant. The New has replaced the Old. **When He said, “A New Covenant,” He has made the first obsolete [Heb.8:13].**

Christians do not have an earthly temple building in Jerusalem. There exists no special priestly tribe of Levi within the church. No animal sacrifices are burned on the altar by Aaron’s sons.

Not an earthly building, but believers in the Lord Jesus

themselves are the **holy temple in the Lord, a dwelling of God in the Spirit** [Eph.2:21,22]. No special priestly tribe exists in the church because every single Christian is called a **royal priesthood...a people for God's own possession** [I Pet.2:9]. No sons of Aaron are found in the church who offer up animal sacrifices. Rather, every Christian offers up **spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ** [I Pet.2:5].

What then was the law of tithing for? Why did God require it in the OT? How could they be obligated when Christians are not? Let us consider the teaching of the Word of God about these things.

God spoke to Aaron and the tribe of Levi that, **you shall have no inheritance in their land nor own any portion among them; I am your portion and your inheritance among the sons of Israel** [Num.18:20]. The reason for this was because of the special priestly duties the Lord assigned to them among all the tribes of Israel.

The Lord set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord to serve Him and to bless in His name until this day. Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers [Deut.10:8,9].

It was because they had no land of their own as did the other eleven tribes that God made the provision of a tithe for them. They did not farm as did the rest of Israel and thus could not supply their own food.

The tithe was designed to provide food for the priests of Levi in exchange for their work in the Temple. **I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting** [Num.18:21].

Tithing was to supply needed food for the Levites that they might continue to offer the required animal sacrifices in behalf of Israel. The tithe was always 10% of a person's farm produce. **You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year** [Deut.14:22].

Tithes are described as grain, new wine, and oil in Deut.14:23. Ten percent of one's oxen and sheep are mentioned as among the tithes of Israel in 2 Chron.31:6. Honey [2 Chron.31:5], ground meal and fruit [Neh.10:37], and garden herbs [Lk.11:42] were also to be tithed.

In every reference throughout the entire Word of God, tithing is always food items and nothing more. Azariah, the chief priest, rejoiced that **since the contributions began to be brought into the house of the Lord, we have had enough to eat with plenty left over** [2 Chron.31:10].

There is not even one verse in all the Scriptures where tithing was money. The people of God were never required to tithe money. God has never demanded of any man to bring 10% of his money. Tithing was always food items.

Even when Israel's self-appointed king began to rule over them, the tithe he forced them to bring was of seeds, fruit, and flocks [I Sam.8:15,17]. Tithing, even in this second demanded 10% beyond the one God required for Levites, was food items.

You may see for yourself that this is so. Tithing was never of money. All references to tithing in the Scriptures are listed here: Gen.14:20; Lev.27:30-32; Num.18:21,24,26,28; Deut.12:6,11,17; 14:22,23,28; 26:12; 2 Chron.31:5,6,12; Neh.10:37,38; 12:44; 13:5,12; Amos 4:4; Mal.3:8,10; Mt.23:23; Lk.11:42; 18:12; Heb.7:5,6,8,9.

Israel's tithe of food for the priests of Levi were to be brought to the Temple and placed in storerooms. **All Judah then brought the tithe of the grain, wine, and oil into the storehouses** [Neh.13:12]. There they were kept and distributed to the priests according to their needs [Neh.13:13].

Malachi 3:8-10, though one of the most often abused passages in the Bible on this subject, teaches nothing else than what we have already seen. Tithes are of food items required of Israel to feed the

priests in the Temple. They were that, and nothing more.

It was the nation of Israel that was obligated by Old Covenant law to bring their tithes. **You are robbing Me, the whole nation of you!** [Mal.3:9]. The tithe they were to bring was not money, but food items, **so that there might be food in My house** [Mal.3:10].

It was not to a church collection plate that tithes were brought, but into the storerooms of the Jewish Temple in Jerusalem. **Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house** [Mal.3:10].

Besides the obvious misuse of verses about tithing in the church, there is much confusion about how Christians are to give. In our thinking, giving has been reduced to putting money into a Sunday morning offering. But in the NT, it was not this at all.

In the Scriptures, much, if not most, of the giving took place outside of the church meeting. The NT church had no buildings or institutions to maintain and collected no money for those purposes. Their giving was directly for the poor and the work of the gospel.

Most of this giving passed directly from the hand of the giver to the hand of the receiver. We are not to send away a needy person until a later time, but are to give to him directly and immediately [Prov.3:27,28].

If you see a brother or sister in need and do not give to them, the love of God does not dwell in you [I Jn.3:17]. It is to pass from our hand to theirs directly. When a person is in need of daily food, it does no good to tell them to wait until next Sunday and ask for something from the church then.

Jesus speaks about **when you give to the poor** [Mt.6:2], not about when you drop money into a church collection. When asked about how people should show their repentance, John the Baptist said this:

The man who has two tunics is to share with him who has none; and he who has food is to do the same [Lk.3:11]. In this way

Christian giving can be with **simplicity** [Rom.12:8] and **in secret** [Mt.6:4] in contrast to our modern man-made traditions and regulations.

When the gift passes directly to the receiver, we know that we have done a good work according to the leading of the Spirit. When we place money in a church offering plate, we have no idea where that money ends up.

From your hand into another's makes giving a purposeful and responsible act. Blindly placing money in an offering is irresponsible. In that way, you have no idea whether you have done a good deed or not.

Much of the money that comes into the hands of the church is misused. It is spent on things that have little or no relation to helping the poor or of supporting gospel workers.

When we place money into another person's hands, we ought to know what that money is being used for. If we do not, then we do not know if our gifts are being used for godly purposes or not. We do not know if we have been responsible and obedient in our giving.

There are times, due to distance or convenience, that a gift can be given to a faithful man to deliver to another in our behalf. But the man must be faithful and the gift designated for a specific stated purpose. The churches did this to assist the poor brethren in Jerusalem, sending it by the hand of the Apostle Paul.

The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul [Acts 11:29,30].

A faithful servant of God may also be entrusted to deliver your gift to a gospel worker in a distant place. **But I have received everything in full, and have an abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent** [Phil.4:18].

But note it well. He received everything in full. Funds were not diverted for another purpose other than the reason they were

given. The messenger must be faithful with what has been entrusted to him. And the believer must know that his gift is actually being used for a God-honoring purpose.

We are not to entrust the Lord's money into the hands of just anyone to be used for things we do not know about. To do so is wasteful, foolish, and disobedient on the part of the one we have trusted when it is used for other purposes. This is an evil which must not be done. Rather we should do as was done by the responsible and honorable Apostle.

We are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord Himself and to show our eagerness to help.

We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord, but also in the eyes of men [2 Cor.8:18-21].

As was the case with this gift for the needy brethren in Jerusalem, the only collections taken in the NT church were for specific designated purposes. Weekly "offerings" at church meetings were not a NT practice. The only time a group collection was mentioned was for the relief of the believers affected by famine.

Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that no collections be made when I come. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem [I Cor.16:1-3].

From this passage, the modern church has established its own "law" of offerings by taking up collections at their meetings. But these verses clearly instruct God's people not to blindly put money into a

collection plate. Rather, they are to save their own money for the specific purpose of helping the poor and unfortunate.

If anything, this tells us that no collections should be taken at all unless they are for the express purpose of helping the poor and supporting gospel work. It shows that the believers must be agreed on the specific use of money collectively entrusted to another. It informs us that Christian giving is to be a voluntary individual matter motivated by love, not by man-made laws and procedures.

Love fills the heart of a man with good will to relieve the sufferings of men, both in this life and in the next. It gives willingly to help both the body and soul of fellow men.

Law can only threaten, intimidate, or obligate the one whose heart is lacking love. The love that gives hears no threats and is not subject to man-made regulations. It gives freely to bless others physically and spiritually apart from any law.

Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver [2 Cor.9:7].

No law can produce such a result.

GIVING & LUST

MEN OF CORRUPT MIND...THINK THAT GODLINESS
IS A MEANS TO FINANCIAL GAIN
[1 Tim.6:5]

Love has as its focus the good of others. Lust is intent only in satisfying its own unholy desires. Love wishes to give. Lust wants to gain.

Giving in the church too often has become a lustful affair to get something for self. We have turned giving into a commercial enterprise to generate funds for our own ends. Ministers threaten congregations to tithe and give very well so that money will continue to come into their own pockets. Congregations do so many times expecting that God will give them much more than they have “invested.”

The church has once again become a **house of merchandise** [Jn.2:16]. This shameless use of religion to gain for one’s self is hated still by the Lord Jesus. He overturned their money tables then and drove them out of His Father’s house. He will do the same today.

Giving has become, not a means of blessing to others, but a greedy way to enrich one’s self. Praise to Jesus is upon our lips, but we really only lust after His bread and fish while trying to use Him to get what we want [Jn.6:25-27].

There are many who **peddle the Word of God for profit** [2 Cor.2:17]. The things of God are employed in order to get wealth and prosperity in earthly things. It is no different than Balaam **who loved the wages of unrighteousness** [2 Pet.2:15].

Though he knew that the Word of God opposed his desperate

lust for riches, he continued to seek gain for himself. He wanted by all means to find a way to get Balak’s promised reward by “using” God to obtain it. Thus he was for hire and prophesied for a price.

The Scriptures speak about Balaam’s way [2 Pet.2:15], his error [Jude 11], and his doctrine [Rev.2:14]. These give us sober warnings about following in his footsteps.

The way of Balaam is that motivating greed for self-enrichment. Love of money filled his heart. He cared nothing for the Lord or the Israel of God. That God would judge fornicating Moabite women and Balak himself did not disturb him in the least. Money was his one concern.

His error was imagining that God can be manipulated by repeated religious activities. He thought that if God did not approve of his prophetic ravings today, He may yet be persuaded tomorrow.

“Noise and religious acrobatics ought to eventually gain my own desires,” was the warbled error of his thinking. Balaam believed that God could be convinced to adjust His Word to grant his own. It is error indeed.

He taught Balak and all men thereafter the doctrine which bears his name. The doctrine of Balaam is that truth can be compromised to get what I want. His message is that the end justifies the means.

“As long as my purpose is achieved, it does not matter how it is accomplished,” was his deluded teaching. Truly, a doctrine of demons **whose condemnation is just** [Rom.3:8].

Balaam has millions of disciples faithfully following in his way. Of this modern church it truthfully must be said that **they have rushed for profit into Balaam’s error** [Jude 11]. Following these shameless ways brings **the way of truth into disrepute** [2 Pet.2:2]. Even though we’ve been repeatedly warned about the **destructive heresies** [2 Pet.2:1] of these false teachers, we continue to follow.

They continue to demand and we continue to pay what they

insist on. We are as foolish and wicked as these false teachers themselves. Teachers and congregations alike walk in the way of Balaam; greed for self-enrichment.

Through covetousness they will make merchandise of you with false words [2 Pet.2:3]. Yet this could never be if we refused to pay what they require. We would never be taken advantage of by false words if we ourselves loved the truth.

But we do not. We love money and thus continue to tithe and give according to demand. We imagine that God *must* bless us with multiplied financial rewards because we gave according to the law of our self-made religion. It is not like that at all.

Rather, we fall under the condemnation of those who **think that godliness is a means to financial gain** [I Tim.6:5]. This same verse says that it is only those who are **of depraved mind and deprived of the truth** who think this way. This reproves the wayward church of today who gives in the expectation of getting.

It is what Simon the sorcerer did. He gave his money in order to spiritually benefit thereby. He saw what he wanted and brought his offering in order to get it. This is lust.

He thought that if he gave money to Men of God, he would get what he wanted in return. He imagined that if he sowed his “seed of faith,” he could get things from God. If he paid the price, he would obtain the same “prosperity” as the Apostles.

Witchcraft employs such methods, but not Christianity. The ministers of today have raised multitudes to follow Simon Magus while quite willingly receiving the money which Peter refused. Peter’s rebuke rightly falls upon these sons of Simon as they originally did upon the deluded sorcerer of Samaria.

May your silver perish with you, because you thought you could obtain the gift of God with money! You have no part or portion in this matter, for your heart is not right before God. Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours [Acts 8:20-23].

It is this shameless and deluded love of money which will condemn Simon and his children of today’s church. **Those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful lusts which plunge men into ruin and destruction** [I Tim.6:9].

The desire for money itself is enough to send this generation of church-goers into everlasting judgment. This verse calls wanting riches, **foolish and harmful lusts**. With this longing in the heart, already one has fallen. Temptation has overcome you in the snare of **the deceitfulness of riches [which] choke the Word** [Mt.13:22]. No reward but ruin and destruction awaits you.

Love of money is the root of all evil [I Tim.6:10]. It will cause you to wander away from the faith [I Tim.6:10]. This coveting will change you into an idolater, far from being a Christian at all.

This you know with certainty, that no covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God [Eph.5:5].

Lust for money masquerades as giving in the church of our generation. We pretend that we are giving for the glory of God and good of others, but it is really for our own benefit.

Greed has deceived us into thinking that we can give to God as a means of having Him repay us for our “service.” The Word of God absolutely reproves this misguided thinking. **Who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again?** [Rom.11:35].

We want it to be true that God will reward us with treasures upon earth. But Jesus has already warned us to not store up treasures upon earth or fix our eyes upon it [Mt.6:19-24]. **You cannot serve God and Mammon [wealth]** [Mt.6:24].

Nevertheless, we pursue riches as if this was our God-given heritage. But only **a man with an evil eye hastens after wealth** [Prov.28:22]. And thus we show who we really are; idolaters [Col.3:5] who serve **the Mammon of unrighteousness** [Lk.16:11], but not the

God of heaven.

Jesus' own words rebuke our lustful giving in order to gain. **Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" [Acts 20:35].**

SUMMARY

THEY BEGAN SELLING THEIR PROPERTY AND POSSESSIONS AND WERE SHARING THEM WITH ALL AS ANYONE MIGHT HAVE NEED
[Acts 2:45]

Love does what no system or law can do. It makes self-centered men gladly abandon their own interests and comforts for the good of others. Love leads to selflessness. Nothing but love can produce such results.

Now brethren we wish to make known to you the grace of God which has been given in the churches of Macedonia, that in a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their generosity.

For I testify that according to their ability, and beyond their ability, they gave of their own accord, begging us with much urging for the favor of participation in the support of the saints.

And this, not as we had expected, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God [2 Cor.8:1-5].

Several things are to be noted about these loving brethren. First, it was the work of God's grace in their hearts that made them give as they did. Paul himself was amazed at this gracious work of love which went beyond his own expectations.

Secondly, they did not give out of a sense of obligation. No law prompted their actions. No command from the Apostle compelled them with a sense of duty.

Thirdly, tithing had nothing to do with their generosity. Ten

percent of their deep poverty would never have even approached the amount that they freely gave. If tithing were their standard, they would have given far less than they did.

Fourthly, their love could not be discouraged or turned aside. Love made them insistent on giving from their own accord.

Fifthly, they did not give because the economy was good. Neither the amount of money in their hand nor their own level of comfort determined how they gave.

Sixth, gladness and joy flowed from their heart for the great privilege of helping others. It was the kind of giving that God loves.

Seventh, complete devotion to the Lord Jesus and His people was the underlying source of their sacrifice. Love motivated all.

The Macedonians were full of the love that gives. The people of God were blessed because of it. They themselves were blessed and the Father in heaven was delighted and glorified. It is how it should be.

We are tested by our use of money. God watches to see how we use what has been entrusted into our hands. If we are faithful to use it for godly purposes, the Lord will see that we are trustworthy. And if we are faithful in this very little thing, we will be faithful also in much.

**So if you have not been trustworthy in handling worldly wealth,
who will trust you with true riches?**

[Lk.16:11]

IF YOU KNOW THESE THINGS,
YOU ARE BLESSED IF YOU DO THEM

[Jn.13:17]