

## Jason Upchurch - Malachi 3.6-12 - Return to Giving - Part 2

This morning we return to the issue of giving to the Lord. This is a little bit of a rabbit trail from Malachi. If you remember in Malachi God says that Israel is robbing him in tithes and offerings and commands Israel to bring the full tithe into the storehouse.

So the context of Malachi is that God is rebuking Israel. So it seemed as good of a time as any to see what the Bible says about giving and tithing positively. What should we be doing?

A quick review from last time: We give for 4 reasons: As an act of thanks to the Lord, as an act of trust in the Lord, to participate in ministry, and the support those who are in full time ministry.

Those are the 4 basic reasons. And we saw that giving ten percent to the Lord was instilled in the people of God thousands of years before the Law of Moses. This is not just something that Moses cooked up for just the Jews. The people of God literally from the very beginning of creation gave to God. And from very early on the number was ten percent. That was an established pattern before the Law and we saw it is in the Law as well.

This morning we're going to see many of those same principles in the NT. There are a lot of people who want to make a big distinction between the OT use of tithing and the NT pattern of giving, but in the end there are no contradictions. If anything the people of God in the NT, being filled with the Spirit, are to be more generous than those under the Law.

And the big picture here is that you should joyfully give ten percent to the Lord by giving to the local church. But let's see some principles play out.

### 1. Giving now results in rewards in heaven. **Read Matthew 6:1-4**

Here Jesus addresses the issue of giving and righteous acts in general. And what's interesting is that his argument assumes that everyone knew that giving and acting righteously would result in rewards in heaven.

He assumed they knew there was eternal reward. If you do righteousness to be seen by others you have no reward in heaven. If you do righteousness for the glory of God in secret you have a reward. He doesn't say "Hey, it's wrong to want an eternal reward." No, he incentivizes righteous living with the reward. And he does that with giving to the needy as well.

One of the things we can look forward to in heaven is reaping some benefit from the Lord for helping those in need in our lives. Every time you've sacrificed to help a friend or family member or loved one or church member or whoever - and not tooted your own horn about it - you will receive a reward in heaven.

Or Jesus mentions giving in the synagogue - and I would argue that now is the local church - there is a reward. God rewards us for our work. In the very next section, humble prayer is rewarded. **Read 5-6**

### Fasting is rewarded. **Read 16-18**

And we see that giving for the Kingdom is rewarded as well - it's called laying up treasures. **Read 19-24**

That middle section is often difficult for us to understand. It's the difference between literally a "good eye" and an "evil eye." An evil eye was a greedy, malicious eye - someone who hates his neighbor and wouldn't give to help him. A good eye is a generous eye who wants to help his neighbor.

If you have an evil eye your whole life is tainted and your master is probably money and you're laying up treasure on earth.

If you have a generous eye, your life is light and you're serving the Lord and laying up treasure in heaven.

All that to say the Bible talks about God rewarding those who give. We'll see that a little later. It's not always a material reward in this life. It could be, but for sure it is a reward in heaven. And Jesus tells us this as a means to motivate us to give.

**1 Tim. 6:18-19:** [The rich] are to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, thus storing up treasure for themselves as a good foundation for the future."

There's reward for generous giving.

2nd Principle. Those who labor for the Lord should be paid. Turn Matt 10:5-15

This is Jesus sending the apostles out into Israel to go preach the gospel. They're instructed to preach and heal and not charge anyone for their service. They're not hirelings.

However, they're also not to bring their own money either. What they are to do is rely on the provision that the people give them along the way. It's like a free will offering. Or we'd often call it a love offering. **Read 5-15**

So Jesus is going to give these guys amazing abilities. But the goal isn't to get rich. The goal is to preach. However, the laborer is worthy of his wages. They're out laboring in ministry and it's okay for them to receive compensation. They don't demand it, but they are granted it as a right. And they go town to town in this manner.

Now this might seem to apply only to the apostles, but Paul turns it into a general rule for all those in ministry. **Turn to 1 Tim. 5.**

We just read Jesus, and Paul actually quotes Jesus here in **1 Tim. 5.** The issue here in this whole chapter is providing financially for people in the church. The church can provide financially for widows, but only if there are no other family members to take care of them, and only then if they are older and have been a stellar model of good works.

The other people the church should take care of financially are what Paul calls the ruling elders who teach and preach. **Read 17-18**

What is double honor? Well, singular honor is respect and deference. All elders should be worthy of respect and deference due to their qualifications for the office. You should give Andy and Chuck the exact same respect and deference you afford me. Unless there is some sinful way in them - which is what the next section addresses - they are just as worthy of deference and honor.

However, elders who rule well - especially the main teaching elders - are worthy of double honor. Double honor in the ancient world was payment. This is a pay your preacher verse.

So theoretically all elders who rule well could be paid. If there was money for that and it made sense, that's a good thing. But we are to especially pay those who labor in preaching and teaching. So that's the reason I get paid - and most preaching pastors get paid - is that they labor in preaching and teaching and counseling and in other various matters. This is a biblical principle.

The Scriptural ground for this is in **Deut 25:4** as Paul says where we don't muzzle the ox while it treads out the grain. When oxen are going round and round on the threshing floor, it's right for them to lean down and take a bite. To get some food. The verse is a general principle from God that the one who works in an area should get paid from it. Oxen should eat the grain, Levites should eat the sacrifice, pastors should get paid from tithes.

And you'll notice he quotes Jesus, that the laborer is worthy of his wages. This is a consistent pattern.

**Gal. 6:6:** Let the one who is taught the Word share all good things with the one who teaches. Literally, it's "share your goods" with them.

Just a little side note: Maybe you know this or not, but whenever there's a guest preacher we pay them an honorarium. It's usually \$150 for their work. We do this - and most churches do this - as a way to honor this very idea. They've labored for our spiritual good, so the least we can do is supply them with material goods.

And this is a big reason I believe that the tithe you give should be primarily given to the local church. You're feeding your shepherd material food, while they feed you spiritual food. In the OT they gave to the local Levites, in the NT we give to our local church.

We should do this. If I get hit by lightning and die, and you guys go hire someone else, you need to pay them well. You need to take care of them financially so that their labor is not a drudgery. And in the interim you need to pay Chuck or Andy or Ellis or Tim or Jordan or whoever else is preaching and teaching a good amount for feeding you. They are worthy of their wages.

So giving now results in rewards in heaven. Those who labor should be paid.

### **3. The God's principle of material goods in exchange for spiritual goods is unchanged. Turn to 1 Cor. 9:3-14**

Here Paul is talking about this same general principle. As an apostle of God he had the right to be fed by the gospel. He's going to make a lot of the same arguments we just saw.

But what Paul did while he was in Corinth was work for a living. What was his job? He was a tent maker. And he did this specifically so the Corinthians could never accuse him of preaching just for the money. He never wanted them to claim that. So he gave up that right. But notice he makes a strong case for it. **Read 3-14**

Okay, so we see many of the same principles, he even uses the same passage that he did earlier to make his case. Everyone eats from the work they do. Farmers eat their grain, Vintners drink their wine, soldiers get paid for battle. The Lord commanded that ministers get paid for proclaiming the gospel.

Here, the specific verse we're focusing on is **Vs 11. Read**

This is really the same thing we saw last week. The Levites gave spiritual provision, the Israelites gave them material provision. Round and round it goes. And whatever the material provision is, it should be enough to support the family. Notice that Cephas should be able to take along his wife when he travels and expect to be supported. **Read 3-5**

Cephas - Peter - could expect to be paid for preaching and his apostolic ministry enough to eat and support his wife along the way as well.

So to make this practical: when we are thinking about missionaries, we think about them as a family. It's not just Dave Robison we're supporting. Or just Dirk. It's their entire family they're supporting.

And their family needs medical care and cars and braces and vacations and iPhones and bikes and homes and the things that normal families have.

The same thing is true with pastors. It's easy sometimes to judge what missionaries or pastors have because it's like "Well, is that spiritual for them to have?" And we're all going to have some differences in judgment with what is good stewardship, but I think the general rule is that if it's okay for other Christians to have and for all of us to have, it's good for those in ministry to have.

Little Story: I don't know if it's true or not but there's an infamous scenario where a pastor is being interviewed by the hiring committee of a church and they say "How much do you want to be paid?" And he says "Well, why not do this: let's go around the table and write down what they make and I'll just take the average of that amount and we'll call it good." And so the story goes, he was told to leave and not come back. That would be paying him too much.

I don't know if that's true story or not but I think to most reasonable people that would be a fair amount. I don't think the average wages in a congregation is the only factor - but I think we should be reasonable and generous.

We should want to have those we support to enjoy the bounty of life.

I mean just to really blunt: I've talked with many of you guys about your finances. And I think those who I have talked to would agree that I want you to succeed financially. I want you to make a great living at what you're doing and enjoy the bounty God has given you. Why wouldn't I? I want you to be wildly successful in the Lord and give to your children's children and enjoy the fatness of the earth and I also want you to give generously and enjoy when I get to share in that bounty.

None of those things are at odds. And I think most of you want success for those we support in ministry, which is good, but sometimes we just have to say it out Loud.

So the principle of material goods in exchange for spiritual goods is unchanged.

So we've seen that giving results in rewards in heaven, those who labor should be paid.

#### 4) God wants cheerful givers. Turn to 2 Cor. 9:6-15

This is an important principle. God doesn't want us to give begrudgingly. Or bitterly. He wants cheerful givers. Every act of worship we do should be done with a cheerful heart: singing, serving, reading the Word, praying, the Lord's Supper, so on should all be with a glad heart and giving is no different.

In 2 Corinthians Paul is writing to the church about taking up a special offering for the Christians in Jerusalem. The Christians in Jerusalem were suffering and the churches in Macedonia - in modern day Turkey - felt a desire to bless them financially. And even though the Macedonian Christians were poor they still desired to help. And so they did.

Their giving was an expression of the gospel. Paul says in **chap 8** that just as Jesus became poor to make us rich, so too they were becoming poor to enrich the lives of the believers in Jerusalem. And it turns out that the Corinthians wanted to join in on the offering. But Paul was a little nervous. It seems he was concerned that he'd show up to Corinth to collect the money for the saints in Jerusalem and the Corinthians wouldn't actually have anything ready to give. That would be awkward and embarrassing.

So he sends a team ahead to get their gift ready. Which is a great little side application that if you want to be generous in life you need to plan out a space in your budget to be generous.

So this is a special offering the Corinthians are going to give the saints in Jerusalem and in the midst of all of that situation he talks about the proper attitude of giving. **Read 6-15**

This is our attitude. Many things we could say, but let me hit some highlights:

1. If you sow sparingly, you reap sparingly. This is the reward principle we saw earlier. You want a big reward? Then be very generous.
2. You should have a decided amount in your heart to give. I've been to places where they pass the plate and people pull out their wallet and throw in some money - sort of whatever they have in their billfold. Well, that's not really planning. What you give on a regular basis or as a special offering should be a planned out decision. You should weigh your situation carefully, not randomly.
3. God loves a cheerful giver. Whatever you give you should give cheerfully. "Thank you God for allowing me to dispense your money for your glory!" If you're not cheerful you might need to rethink your view on giving. "Well, I'm never happy when I give so I'll just give nothing." Well, then we should probably have a talk about that too.

But all giving, special or regular should be cheerful. We've done several special giving things over the years for missionaries here and I love the attitude particularly of the kids when they give. A few bucks here, \$20 there. They view it as a privilege to take part in this ministry and bless people. It's really quite sweet.

#### 4. When you give to God, he gives to you. **Read 8-11**

God promises to enrich you when you give. But not necessarily in money. But in grace and sufficiency.

This is where the prosperity gospel - the false gospel of TD Jake's, Copelands, Joyce Meyers, Joel Osteen - go off the rails. God does not promise financial riches because we give. He promises grace and provision and joy because we supply the needs of the saints and the work of the ministry.

#### 5. When you give, God is thanked and praised. **Read 12-13**

Isn't that interesting. When you give generously someone is benefitting. Someone is saying "Thank you Lord for providing for me." In a very real way you are purchasing the praise God. But it's real praise, real thanks.

This isn't like purchasing Catholic indulgences or buying God's favor like we're buying God off. Not at all.

Truly when we give, someone thanks and praises God genuinely because you are the means by which God has supplied them. Have you ever received a financial gift in a time of real need? Did you thank God for it? Yes. That gift produced thanks and praise and glory to God.

Brothers, that should make you happy. Not that you're someone great and that you're some great benefactor. But that God has blessed you to be the source of God's generosity in someone else's life.

Now, I want to talk about the specific issue of tithing for a few minutes. Ten percent.

Hopefully, you're convinced you should give, you're rewarded for it. You should do it cheerfully. But what amount? What is the Christian's responsibility in giving? And I think the weight of Scripture indicates 10% is what we should give.

Now, many will push back and say that the NT doesn't say 10%. Which is true, there's not verse that says "thou shalt give 10%" like the OT did. But I think we should still give 10% and I'll give you several reasons why.

First off, the argument that there's no clear verse isn't convincing as we'll see in a minute. The Jews who came to faith in Jesus in apostolic time would immediately know how much to give. It was easy for them. Why would it change? We have no passages that say it's changed.

Second, think every Christian knows they should give something - but how much? Well, like I mentioned last week, tithing was happening long before Moses wrote the Law. There was an ingrained God-given principle of 10% thousands of years before the Law and then 10% was codified in the Law. He made it explicit.

So there is there seems to be a timeless principle of 10% built into the economy of God and his people.

I think it's a fair argument that if Israel under the lesser covenant was giving 10%, then we who are under the new and better covenant of Jesus should give at least 10%. Our covenant is greater, promises are greater, frankly the demands are greater and so it makes no sense to give less than the saints of the OT.

Now, stay with me here for a minute. Let's say someone did say "There's no 10% in the NT, but I still want to give." What would they give? What other number do we see that would be a biblical principle or pattern? We don't see 1% or 5% or 13% a specific dollar amount?

So I think if we're honest, the only real precedent or principle we see throughout Scripture is 10%.

Let me take you to 2 passages that I think give us direction. **Turn to Matt 23:23-26**

This is Jesus condemning the Pharisees. These are called the 7 woes. And here Jesus condemns their outward displays of righteousness because their hearts are dead. And he mentions tithing here. Notice what he says though. **Read 23-26**

Jesus says the Pharisees tithe mint and dill and cumin. Jesus says they're tithing from their crop - that's **Deut 14:22** - it was right for them to do that. He's not condemning the amount or the principle. The problem was that they weren't just or merciful or faithful.

And interestingly, Jesus makes the point that the more important thing - the weightier matter - was the justice, mercy and faithfulness. But he doesn't say stop tithing. What does he say?

"These you should have done without neglecting the others." He doesn't say stop tithing. He says do both. Tithe **and** be just and merciful and faithful. The word for tithing there in the Greek is literally "from the tenth."

So even Jesus affirms this pattern of giving a tenth is good and this pattern is never rescinded in the NT. So while they're may not be a repeat of the command, this is Jesus on giving and it's never done away with.

So there's a biblical pattern of 10%. Jesus affirms 10%.

I want to make one other connection. It's a little heady, but stick with me, okay?

Remember last week I showed you **Genesis 14?** That's where Abram rescued Lot and gave a tenth of the spoils to the high priest. Abram tithed. Do you remember the name of the high priest? Melchizedek.

Here's what I want to connect: Since Abraham gave Melchizedek 10% and that was right, it's right for us to give Jesus 10% because he's from the priestly line of Melchizedek. Since he's the same priesthood, he gets the same gift. **Turn to Heb 6:19-7:10.**

This is a long section but the point is that Jesus can be a priest even though he's not a Levite. How? Because he's from the priestly order of Melchizedek. And the order of Melchizedek is greater than the order of Levi. How do we know that? Tithing.

Abram - who was Levi's great grandfather - tithed to Melchizedek. Which means Melchizedek is greater than Abram who is greater than Levi.

Now, the argument that Hebrews makes is that Jesus's priesthood is better. The argument I want to make is that since Jesus is from the order of Melchizedek - we should tithe to Jesus just like Abram tithed to the original Melchizedek. Since they're the same priesthood, they should receive the same offering. Watch this. **Read 6:19-7:1-10**

Do you follow his argument? Melchizedek is a greater priest than Levi because he received tithes from Abraham, Levi's grandfather. It's like Levi was still in the loins of Abraham when Abraham gave the tithe.

Over and over the argument that Melchizedek is better comes because tithes were paid. The whole argument is from tithing. Giving ten percent.

Now, watch this. He's going to argue that the priesthood changed with Jesus. We're no longer under Levi. But Jesus. **Read 11-19**

What's the point? The point is that Jesus is from the line of Judah but priests don't come from Judah. So how is Jesus a better priest? Because God made him a priest after the line of Melchizedek. And he is our priest forever. We have a better hope, a better promise.

What does that have to do with tithing?

Well, if Abraham was right to give a tithe to the priest Melchizedek, then it is right for us to give a tithe to Jesus because he's from that same priestly order. An order that is better than Levi and an order that never ends.

And what we see then is that consistently throughout the Bible 10% is the number the saints give to God.

Melchizedek got 10% before the Law of Moses.

The priests of Levi got 10% during the Law of Moses.

And the Great High Priest, Jesus, affirms 10% and I think should get 10% because his priestly order is greater.

Brothers and sisters, may you be blessed as you cheerfully give tithes and offerings to our great High Priest, Jesus, to the glory of God.

**Pray**