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Scriptural
GIVING



Scriptural Giving

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The failure of Christian people to practice scriptural giving is due, not so much to lack of knowledge, as lack of willingness. We know better than we do. We are like the farmer who was approached by an agent who was endeavoring to get him to subscribe to a magazine on farming. The farmer listened for awhile and then answered, "Stranger, there ain't no need for me to subscribe to your paper, for I ain't farming now as well as I know." It isn't more knowledge about scriptural giving that Southern Baptists need, but more willingness to practice what they already know.

I. THE BASIS OF SCRIPTURAL GIVING

1. *Scriptural giving is based on the truth of divine ownership of all things.* God owns all things by right of creation. "In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Gen. 1:1). "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein" (Psalm 24:1). God as owner has a sovereign right to say how these things shall be used.

2. *God owns Christian men and women by right of redemption.* "Ye are not your own, for ye are bought with a price" (1 Cor. 6:19-20). That price was the blood of Christ (1 Peter 1:18-19). We are not likely to practice scriptural giving until we come to realize, as did the early Christians, that not aught of the things which we possess is our own (Acts 4:32). We belong to God, and all that we have belongs to God.

II. SOME CHARACTERISTICS OF SCRIPTURAL GIVING

1. *A surrendered life.* "But first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Cor. 8:5). All true scriptural giving is accompanied by a surrendered life. God is not pleased with the gift without the life of the giver. Cain and Abel brought their offerings unto the Lord. "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering; but unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect" (Gen. 4:4-5). God doesn't respect any man's offering if he doesn't have respect for the man. There is no greater folly than for a person who is living an unworthy life to try to gain the favor of God with large gifts. He may gain the favor of men, but he will not gain the favor of God. A surrendered life is the first essential in scriptural giving.

2. *A definite plan.* God did not leave the question of giving to the whims and fancies of men. He has given us a definite plan. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor. 16:2). This plan of God is built around three words.

(1) *Regularity.* "Upon the first day of the week." Some people give once a year, and others give once a month. But God's plan calls for giving every week. He knew that men and women could and would give more by giving regularly than they could and would give by giving irregularly. And, too, God intends that our giving shall be a part of our worship. If we worship on the first day of the week, we ought to give on the first day of the week.

(2) *All.* "Let every one of you lay by him in store." In our last annual canvass a woman wrote this on the back of the card, "I am a widow, and have a son dependent on me, and I make only \$60 a month. Surely the church does not expect me to give anything." But God did not make any exception. He said, "Let every one of you lay by him in store." If God has put anything into our hands, whether it be little or much, we are to dedicate a part of it to the work of the kingdom.

(3) *Proportion.* "As God hath prospered him." A Christian's giving is to be in proportion to his income. God clearly designated one-tenth of all that a person gets to be set aside as holy unto the Lord. That does not mean that one is to take the other nine-tenths and spend it as he pleases. All that one has belongs to the Lord. The individual is only a steward to administer his possessions. One-tenth is to be set apart as holy unto the Lord, and the other nine-tenths is to be used for the glory of the Lord.

This is the scriptural plan for giving. Each person is to give at least one-tenth of his income regularly unto the Lord.

3. *A right spirit.* "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give: not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). It is the spirit that makes the difference in the gift. Nowhere in the Bible is it said that God loves a large giver, or that he loves a regular giver, but "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver." Many of our gifts are marred in the sight of God because there is a wrong spirit in the giving. We

give grudgingly, wishing that we didn't have to give. We give of necessity; it is an obligation we cannot well avoid. Scriptural giving emphasizes a right spirit.

4. *A worthy motive.* Christians are not to give for the glory of self, nor for the glory of their church, but for the glory of the Lord. Our giving is to be an expression of our love and gratitude to him who gave himself for us. When we give for that motive, two things follow:

(1) *We will put God first in our giving.* Our gifts to God will be first in time and first in quality. "And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord. And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof" (Gen. 4:3-4). "Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase" (Prov. 3:9).

(2) *We will make of our giving an act of worship.* The offering is not a necessary evil which has been forced into our religious services, but an act of worship whereby we give expression to our love and gratitude to God.

III. SOME REASONS FOR SCRIPTURAL GIVING

1. *Loyalty to God demands it.* We have no more right to set aside scriptural giving than we have to set aside any other scriptural truth or doctrine. We Baptists have always prided ourselves on our loyalty to the Word of God. We hold up our hands in horror because some so-called Baptist churches have abandoned

God's plan for baptism and have adopted man-made plans. But is it any worse in the sight of God for his people to abandon scriptural baptism than it is for them to abandon scriptural giving? In scriptural baptism we are obeying the Lord and symbolizing gospel truths. In scriptural giving we are obeying the Lord and providing a way by which these gospel truths can be proclaimed throughout the earth. Loyalty to God demands that we return to scriptural giving.

2. *The scriptural welfare of Christian men and women demands it.* Whether we realize it or not, our spiritual development is dependent in part upon our fidelity in following God's plan of giving. Peter exhorts us to "Grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Peter 3:18). And Paul reminds us that giving is a grace. "Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also" (2 Cor. 8:7). There can be no symmetrical Christian life apart from the grace of giving. A person may have every other Christian grace, but if he is lacking in the grace of Christian giving, his life is marred in the sight of God.

Jesus exhorts us to "lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven" (Matt. 6:20). And he reminds us that "where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). Our interest in the work of the kingdom is in proportion to our giving to that work. The treasures that abide are treasures we put into the work of the kingdom. The spiritual welfare of Christian men

and women demands that they follow God's plan of giving.

3. *The work of the kingdom demands it.* Nineteen hundred years have gone since Jesus commissioned his church to evangelize the world, and yet more than half of the people of the world have never heard the gospel. Just when the world is ripe for a great forward movement in Christian missions we are forced to keep mission volunteers at home because of lack of money. These conditions would not be true if our people as a whole had followed the scriptural plan of giving. And these conditions will never be fully removed until there is a spiritual revival in scriptural giving among our people. The work of the kingdom demands such a revival.

4. *The value of our testimony demands it.* Nothing discredits the Christian religion in the eyes of the world more than stinginess and covetousness on the part of Christian people. We profess to love the Lord and his cause supremely, and yet we often appear in the eyes of the world to love our material possessions more than we love the Lord.

5. *The honor of our Lord demands it.* In the long ago God rebuked his people with these words, "A son honoureth his father . . . if then I be a father, where is mine honour?" (Mal. 1: 6). And the occasion of this rebuke is found in the blemished gifts which the people were bringing to God's altar. "Ye offer polluted bread upon mine altar" (Mal. 1:7). "And ye brought that which was torn, and the lame, and the sick; thus ye brought an offering" (Mal. 1:8).

As our Lord looks down upon the gifts of his people today, I wonder if he is not putting that same question to us, "If I then be a father, where is my honor? You profess to love the Lord your God with all your heart. Are these gifts the expression of your love?"

A Searching Question

It was a searching question which a poor woman in Africa put to the missionaries, a question which ought to ring throughout our land and call us to our knees. When those missionaries were sending out calls for help and re-enforcements, and the calls were not heeded, this woman asked the question, "Why do not more come to tell us the story of Jesus and his love? Is it because they do not love us, or is it because they do not love Jesus very much?"

Love holds nothing back. When we love the Lord with all of our heart, we will not only bring our tithes into the storehouse, but we will lay our all on the altar.

Surely the Spirit of God is calling us back to a revival in scriptural giving. Loyalty to the Lord demands it, our scriptural welfare demands it, the work of the kingdom demands it, the value of our testimony demands it, and the honor of our Lord demands it.

This tract may be obtained free of cost from your Baptist state secretary.