



Baptist Hour Messages

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"DOING IT GOD'S WAY"

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Jesus said, "Lay not up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal. . . ." Then He said, "Where your treasure is there will your heart be also." I want to speak to you now about the most popular subject in our world . . . when it is spoken by laymen, but the most unpopular when it is spoken by ministers. Our best conversation piece six days a week . . . our most unpopular piece on the seventh day. Money is not a supreme necessity but it is an imperative necessity. To face the claims of God fairly and honestly is incumbent upon everyone of us: professing Christians and those who know Him not. The day is far past when the church should take a hush-hush attitude toward this vital phase of our lives. The history-old excuse that my religion is a little private affair between God and me and has nothing to do with a Biblical guide as to quantity and placement . . . that kind of thing is much out of date. It never had a leg to stand on except selfishness.

Few professing Christians have ever really faced this great issue and patterned their lives accordingly. Will you hear me in the spirit of love and helpfulness for just a few minutes?

BEING CHRISTIAN

The first chapter of discipleship is the act of obedience and submission. It readily concedes that God must be God of all or He will not be God at all. It says that this universe belongs to Him and He can do with His own what He likes. The proof that we are His consists in the fact that we have no power over life or death. At will He can claim His own.

STEWARDS OF GOD

"To everyone He gave according to his ability." Within the province of this word we all come. The Bible was not written for just a handful of devout people . . . but for us all. There are no two Bibles . . . one for the obedient and another with easier consequences for the rest. It doesn't say that a few are to handle their money for God and the rest to waste in on themselves. All are accountable to God. There is no special judgment for Americans and another for Europeans. No dispensation of leniency for church folks and another for the unhurched and lost. God's word is for everybody and everybody must answer to God: the generous and the stingy, the deacon and the elder, the preacher and the child, the rich and the poor, the miser and the freespender, white, black, illiterate and educated. So my message is to re-define to each of you that Divine principle of how you are to handle your money. If you disagree, remember your argument is not with this minister, but with the timeless word of God.

MOTIVE FOR GIVING

Nothing is of more importance to determine what and where and how I shall give than the motive for my giving. Shall I give because I am expected to give? Shall I give because of the need? Or the fact that I would be embarrassed if I did not give? Give because I have been prospered? Hardly. These are not the motives. Moreover, a real Christian does not give because of legalism. That is like saying to my son, "Love me." Then he comes and puts his arms about my neck only because of an imperative demand . . . not because of his own spon-

taneity. God wants no forced affection. He is not a glorified tax office. God needs nothing that we little mortals possess. The whole idea is not that God needs it but that we need to give.

There is only one true motive for giving—the motive in John 3:16. "For God so loved that He gave . . ." And that is to be the motive of our giving . . . only because we love Him. Every time love is genuine, giving is a natural rejoinder. To say that I love and do not give is a contradiction.

ON TITHING

But how much should I give is an honest question? Obviously, our circumstances differ. There are many extenuating circumstances. The principle of tithing is one that is worn slick by pronouncement but not by practice. It says in simple fashion that one-tenth of what I earn belongs to God. The giving of it is a sacred rite which consecrates and blesses the nine-tenths. It is a fine norm of generosity, expected of the Jews by the Mosaic law, but expected by Christ under the spontaneous grave of love. The age-old argument did Jesus tithe? Are we under the law, etc.? This is often nothing but a person's effort to rationalize his own unwillingness. The simple answer is yes, Jesus tithed. He gave not only the tenth, but gave His all. You cannot explain Gethsemane nor Golgotha any other way than in the light of living. He was free to withhold but this freedom prompted His giving.

The ugliest picture in the church of Jesus Christ is that of millions who take God at His word on a few things but glibly ignore Him on the matter of stewardship. It is a well-known fact at this time of the year when thousands of churches are praying over their projected budgets that fewer than 20 percent of the members pay 90 percent of the church financial commitments. Why? It isn't that we do not know better . . . nor that we are so hard up.

GOD'S WAY

There is more money on deposit in America today than ever before in the history of our people. God is shown about the same deference in many cases as a shoeshine boy . . . just a tip, not a tithe. Merely the leftovers after everything else has been satisfied. It is tragic to admit that many members of the church of Jesus Christ spend more money in one night of sinful living than

they give to the cause of missions in a whole year! This is what Jesus called straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel. But some will say, "The church is always talking about money." This isn't half so much a way of raising money as it is God's way of raising men. The only people I have ever known who had an argument to raise about tithing were those who did not tithe. Nor have I ever found an unhappy tither. Still others say, "I can't afford it. Why, in these days of spiraling prices ten percent would seem absurd. I can't afford it." The simple facts in this case are that we can't afford not to! My grandad said he could not afford to give a tenth to God. How much is now being taken by the obligations of government, etc., from individuals? Ten percent? No. Thirty percent! Sin always has a price tag. . . . war's price tag, the price tag of graft, and greedy and wasting governments . . . you are paying for these.

RESULTS OF TITHING

Now note what happens when man takes God at His word. The two become partners. Think of it! Partnership with God. The picture of a billionaire coming into a little failing business and bolstering it up with all his resources. God does not promise wealth as a result of obedience, but His promises something better — partnership with the Creator and the inevitable flow of blessings. One of the Syriac versions of Malachi says, "Now prove me saith the Lord, and see if I will not open the doors of heaven and pour out a blessing upon you until you cry, 'Enough, Lord, I cannot receive more.'" Much of our poverty then in the light of this promise may be considered criminal.

ACCOUNTING AHEAD

This message would never do justice to the nature of Divine promise if it did not sound the note that there is a day of accounting ahead for us all. A day when a trial balance is run on the ledgers of God and the red line drawn under every personal account. This is not a threat . . . this is certain judgment. The day when we give account of the deeds done in the flesh. What will your giving record look like? Will I have spent more for the stomach than the mind? More for the flesh than the spirit, more for entertainment than for instruction, more for sin than salvation, more for self than others? What will your record look like?

SIX FEET

Harvey Cushing wrote the life of Sir William Osler. Osler's two passions were medicine and religion. About him Cushing wrote, "You can tell the greatness of the man by the kind of entries on his check stubs."

In this closing moment the tragic spectacle about which Tolstoi wrote comes before us. The greedy character rising at sunup standing before the black earth ready to run his race. The

terms: all the land he could run over and return to the given stake by sunset was his for 1,000 rubles. Bright and early he was there to go. He ran over the many acres, thrilling at the thought of his new-found wealth. But late in the evening as he came within a few feet of the stake, he fell dead. The judges took a shovel and stepped off six feet of all the land he had run over and buried him. That is all . . . six feet. That is what he really needed.

"A GOOD GOD AND AN EVIL WORLD"

November 14, 1954

Just before plunging from the tenth-floor window, a young man scribbled this suicide note: "God is a myth, life a contradiction and death is but dust. I am glad it is all over; I never found anything here really worth living for."

That fatal note expresses in extremity what millions believe in lesser degree: How to reconcile a good God and an evil world. If God is love why is God's world so full of hate? God is light, but behold, what darkness! A heavenly Father of justice, yet his creation a sphere of cruel injustice. If God is a God of power, why are the good people so helpless?

Despite the sour cynicism of the masses, the church of Jesus Christ must face this bare-fisted realism and give God's answers from His Word. We know quite well that God is in his heaven, but all is not right with the world.

Now let us in reverence seek God's inspired answers to these searching problems.

GOD AND MEN'S AFFAIRS

Many people are asking, "If God is all powerful, why doesn't he end the evil in our world? Why doesn't he stop the Communists, the drought, the ravage of war?" My, how foggy is our thinking right here! As I see it, there are three brief reasons why he does not step in and stop it. For one thing, he isn't stopping the evil because he did not start it. This ugly strife is of our own doing. We planted the seed of this harvest. And if God stepped in with a miraculous power he would be but a dictator.

He gave us the power of choice . . . and said, "Whatever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." This applies as much to nations as to individuals. Sow

in greed and gluttony and reap in tears and toil. Sow in international secret agreements and reap international heartbreak and loss of face. Sow the seed of self first, pleasure second and God last or not at all, and inevitably, we will have this kind of world. He isn't stopping it because he didn't start it!

There's another reason why God isn't bringing a halt to all this misery. Namely, all the sin isn't on one side and all the right on the other. Man's oldest scheme has been to try to draft Christ and put him in the uniform of some unholy cause. Never has there been a more subtle line to receive mankind than godless communism. Any man who is not admittedly a fool can see that. Yet, in our national witch-hunts we are overlooking one salient factor: we need to sweep our own doorsteps clean.

Pharasaism is as ugly in on Occidental face as it is in an Oriental. The blind cannot lead the blind. No, not even in America! My, how we strain at the gnat and swallow the camel. We are fast giving rise to a strong rival of atheistic communism—a godless sectarianism which enthrones things and insults God. On whose side is God in this struggle? Is he on our side? That depends upon the nature of "our." A good honest answer is that God doesn't take sides. But he is always on the side of the man or nation who is on his side!

THE END OF TIME

But hear the other reason why God isn't intervening: He doesn't necessarily punish people in time but at the end of time. He permits the sheep and goats to graze on in the same pasture; the wheat and tares to grow in the