

Stewardship: Giving Worshipfully for Eternity

DYG: Message Eleven (030216AM)

While we are here seated with songs of Heaven on our lips – something is happening in the place we have pointed our hearts. What we do, say, think, pray, and give rises above and enters into God’s presence. Do you realize how much what you do today and each day matters to the Lord?

So as we sing, give, and worship -- what is happening right now, at this very moment in Heaven? Often we think of Heaven in the past (when Christ left for earth and the angels came) or in the future (when Jesus comes as King of Kings) but forget that at this very moment the epicenter of the Universe, the Throne Room of God is very active. So what is going on right now?

God's Word can take us by angel wings to see the very center of the Universe, to the Throne of God in Heaven. A few moments there will get us in touch with what God is doing right now and how we can TODAY be in tune with Heaven.

Watch with me as God pulls back the veil. Through John’s eyes in Revelation we see Heaven as he seems to rise on the wings of angels to get his guided tour of Heaven. His inspired words portray for us a scene of angels—hundreds of millions of angels—“ten thousand times ten thousand”—all clustered about the smooth crystal sea that reflects awesome images from its mirror like surface. Our senses are besieged by so many different sensations. The colors of the materials surrounding God’s Throne are beyond description.

A cool, emerald-green hue dominates the multi-colored rainbow surrounding God’s throne; the city that surrounds us has thick walls of sparkling diamonds. To get the sensation hold up your diamond ring to a light and look through the stone and see dazzling flashes of light. Multiply that by diamonds large enough to built walls out of and then an entire city that is over 1500 miles high...looking down beneath your feet you see gold that is transparent so the overpowering radiance of God’s glory can refract and glisten through the entire city; everything is made of gems of such beautiful colors that they send forth the light of God’s glory.

These are the colors of Heaven, the colors God has chosen to surround Himself with – His Glory reflected in all these hues: sky-blue stones with translucent, colored stripes; parallel layers of red and white; orange-red to brownish-red to blood-red; a transparent, yellowish gold; light blue aquamarine; yellowish-green; apple-green gold-tinted green; deep blue; shining violet; and intense purple.

The sight is hard for us to take in, so much beauty, color, and brilliance overwhelms our eyes. One by one our eyes are riveted on the celestial scene before us.

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- First, ANGELS capture our attention. These countless white robed angels standing like living walls of pure white robes rising in circular rings reflecting the light of God. They rise and fall to the sounds of the four creatures crisscrossing the expanse on the four corners of the Throne. They move as one – falling down on their faces as they speak the wonders of God’s Glory.
- Next, the FLOOR if it can be called that, is an ocean of completely clear and reflective glass. In this crystal sea we can see all the colors, lights and objects are reflected and amplified.
- Then the THRONE. Central to Heaven is the Throne of God. Completely encircled by the emerald green rainbow that is over, around and beneath the Throne – we are overwhelmed by the massive rumble of power, as endless peals of thunder and flashes of lightning seem to radiate outward from within. Listening carefully we hear with John the loud voices like roaring waterfalls rolling past the seven blazing pillars of flame that burn in a circle around God’s Throne.
- Then the BURNING ONES, that is what seraphim means, capture our focus. As our eyes turn to follow the four glistening living beings each with four distinct faces – lion, calf, man, eagle – and completely covered with eyes as they move like flashes of light with fire passing between them, gliding through the expanse around the Ancient of Days in theocentric orbit always facing the Almighty One.
- Now 24 ELDERS rise and fall, under the awesome expanse of space over the Throne that sparkles like pure on the crystal blue pavement as it is called in Exodus we see a circle just beyond the burning pillars of fire, and the four living creatures that surrounds God’s Throne made up of 24 small thrones seated with white robed celestial men. Each man holds a harp, wears a crown, and holds a golden bowl. These golden bowls contain the worship offered by God’s saints on Earth. And repeatedly we see those twenty-four elders fall on their faces pouring out to the Lord, the collected worship of the saints as the hosts of Heaven loudly chant the Glory of God. With the mighty sound of seraph wings we hear the voices, thunders, and sounds of all the Universe blending into one crystal clear affirmation:

Holy, holy, holy
is the Lord God Almighty,
who was, and is, and is to come.
(Revelation 4:8)

- Finally, at a special moment every angel and every elder and every saint fall prostrate before him—those four great angels, those twenty-four elders, the hundreds of millions around the sea—and most of all, us! And we all join together to sing with them:
Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain,
to receive power and wealth
and wisdom and strength
and honor and glory and praise! (5:12)

Please stand as I read from Revelation 4-5.

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This morning you and I are God's priest's on earth, offering to Him our worship that He receives in Heaven.

- ***Their devotion - a burnt offering:*** Mark 12:33 And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices. **Have we offered our devotion up to Him irretrievably, completely, and lovingly?**
- ***Their life is - a sacrifice:*** Romans 12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. Romans 15:16 that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit. **Have we recently renewed that offering of all we are to Him?**
- ***Their service - a drink offering:*** Philippians 2:17 Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. 2 Timothy 4:6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. **Are we pouring out what we cannot keep – to Him so we cannot lose?**
- ***Their gifts – a fragrant freewill offering:*** Philippians 4:18 Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God. **What is the aroma ascending from our living before Christ's eyes today?**
- ***Their worship- a praise offering:*** Hebrews 13:15 Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. **When is the last time we stopped and launched a wave of praise filled worship toward His Throne?**
- ***Their deeds-spiritual sacrifices:*** Hebrews 13:16 But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 1 Peter 2:5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. **What acts of kindness have we premeditated and carried out this week?**
- ***Their prayers-an incense offering:*** Revelation 8:3-4 Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar, which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. **What do we have in the bowl of our collected prayers? If God loves our prayers so much that He collects them all (like notes from my wife & kids) why don't we send more?**

Everything we do, everything we say, everything we pray, and everything we give – rises as offerings to the Lord. This morning we are concluding the giving part. How do we offer gifts that rise to His Throne, and get poured out before Him? The best answer would be giving like the Christians living as the New Testament was written, were taught to give!

1. **COMMANDED: Giving is commanded, and is not an option.** Paul instructed the Corinthian church, saying **Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders . . . so you must do also** (1 Corinthians 16:1). Also, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul directed the command to give in this way: **Let each one of you lay something aside.** Who was supposed to give? **Each one.** Paul wanted all to give. Giving should be individual. Every Christian should be a giver, because God is a giver (John 3:16). **Each one of you is all-inclusive. No Christian¹ is excepted or excused. We are stewards of whatever the Lord has given us, no matter how little it may be in economic terms. As Jesus observed different people putting their offerings in the Temple treasury, He did not discourage the widow from putting in her “two small copper coins, which amount to a cent,” nor did He chide Temple officials for accepting money from someone so destitute. His reaction was to use her generosity as a model of spiritual giving. “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on” (Mark 12:41–44).**
2. **PLANNED: Giving is to be regular.** Regarding the collection in Corinth, Paul said that it should be done every week: **On the first day of the week** (1 Corinthians 16:2). Paul wanted their giving to be systematic, not haphazard. When they came together for worship and the word, they were commanded to receive an offering. *The first principle² is that the most appropriate period for giving is weekly, on the first day of every week. This not only convinces us that the church met on Sunday, but that its worship included regular giving of money. God’s primary leading in giving, as in everything else, is through Scripture, and Scripture here mentions giving every week. Sunday giving appears as a mandated element of worship, part of the duty of a New Covenant priest offering up “spiritual sacrifices” to God (1 Pet. 2:5). Our giving should not be based on periodic emotional appeals or feelings, or on bonus income, but on regular, willing, and grateful commitment of our possessions to the Lord, to His people, and to His work. That forces every believer each week to consider the stewardship and sacrifice of giving. Weekly giving raises sensitivity to money, so that giving is seen as an ongoing, regular spiritual responsibility.*
3. **PREPARED: Giving is to be planned.** Paul wrote, **Lay something aside, storing up** (1 Corinthians 16:2). This has the idea of coming to church with your gift already prepared. This means that you should seek God about your gift at home, and prepare it at home. This causes us to seek the Lord more in our giving, and helps us resist any manipulation to give. *A more literal translation of each one of you put aside and save would be “each one of you by himself lay up, or store up.” The noun form of theσaurizου (from which we get thesaurus, a collection, or treasury, of words), rendered here as put*

¹ Quoted from sections of MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 16*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

² Quoted from sections of MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 16*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

aside and save, represents a treasury where valuables are stored. If we do not give properly we cannot worship properly. Jesus said, “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you?” (Luke 16:10–11).

4. **PROPORTIONED: Giving is to be proportional.** Paul wrote that each one should give **As he may prosper** (1 Corinthians 16:2). This means that believers who have more should give more. We should give proportionately. In other words, if you give \$10 a week when you make \$100 a week, you should give more when you make \$200 a week. *Jesus³ said that if we are not generous when we have little to give, we will not be generous when we have much. The dollar amount of our giving may increase, but our generosity will not. “He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much” (Luke 16:10).*
5. **REASONED: Giving should never be Humanly Prompted.** Paul told the Corinthians: **That there be no collections when I come** (1 Corinthians 16:2). This means Paul didn’t want to manipulate anyone! He wanted giving to be from the heart, as the heart heard from God, not in response to a high-pressure fund-raiser. This is a very important principle. The Apostle Paul tells us that we should make a decision and have a definite objective in view.
6. **ENCOURAGED: True examples** of giving are found in giving **according to their ability, beyond their ability**, and giving in a **freely willing** manner (2 Corinthians 8:3). *Speaking⁴ of the churches of Macedonia, Paul wrote, “In a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality” (2 Cor. 8:2). The reason for their generosity was that “they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God” (v. 5). They gave out of love for God and for His servants. Generosity is impossible apart from our love of God and of His people. But with such love, generosity not only is possible but inevitable.*
7. **DEDICATED: True giving** comes as we first give ourselves to the Lord, then we will give our financial resources to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5). In giving, the real issue isn’t giving money. It is giving our selves to the Lord. If we have really given ourselves to the Lord, then the right kind of giving will naturally follow.
8. **COMPLETED: Giving must be actually completed.** Paul told the Corinthians regarding their giving, that they must **Complete this grace** (2 Corinthians 8:6). The Corinthian Christians may have intended to give. They may have thought about giving. They may have been favorable to the idea of giving. Yet all of this was useless unless they did in fact **complete this grace**. Often, intentions, vows, and resolutions are useless without action. *The basic⁵ principle for voluntary giving in the Old Testament is reflected in Proverbs: “Honor the Lord from your wealth, and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine” (3:9–10). The idea was to give to the Lord generously and to give to the Lord first. Again we are told, “There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want” (Prov. 11:24). In other words, if you want to increase your money, share it generously; if you want to lose your money, hoard it. To*

³ Quoted from sections of MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 16*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

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raise money to build the Tabernacle, the Lord told Moses, “Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution” (Ex. 25:1–2; cf. 35:5, 21). The standard was heart-directed generosity, based on thankfulness to the Lord for what He had done and given. Based on that principle the gifts for the building of the Tabernacle were so great that Moses had to tell the people to stop giving (36:6)! Required giving was taxation; freewill giving was to be from the heart, with the amount left up to the worshiper. David had the key idea when he said that he would not give God that which cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).

9. **GRACED: I speak not by commandment** (2 Corinthians 8:8) shows that no individual Christian can be commanded to give at any particular moment, even by the apostle Paul. This is because commanded giving is not Biblical giving at all. Paul knew that giving from commandment isn't giving at all; that kind of giving under the illegal use of one's official position or powers to obtain property, funds, or patronage is called extortion. *No amount or percentage⁶ is ever required in the New Testament. Rather, each believer is to give from his heart.* “Give,” Jesus said, “and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return” (Luke 6:38). Paul expressed the same principle as, “He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully” (2 Cor. 9:6). The benefits of our willing, cheerful giving to the Lord will produce both spiritual and material blessing. “And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed” (v. 8).
10. **PROVED: Our giving is a valid test** of the sincerity of our love for God and others. Paul told the Corinthians, **I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others** (2 Corinthians 8:8). Paul makes two important points here. First, giving can measure the **sincerity of your love**. Second, Paul openly compared the giving of the Corinthian Christians to the giving of the Macedonian Christians (**testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others**).
11. **REFLECTED: God expects us to give out of what we have.** Paul told the Corinthians to give **out of what you have** (2 Corinthians 8:11). We can't give what we don't have. God judges our giving against what resources we have been given. But the issue of what and how we spend is relevant to **what you have**. **True giving is measured by obedience, proportion and need, never by amount.** When the issue of giving is brought up, many ask “**How much am I supposed to give?**” Paul's principles throughout this letter, and other letters, remind us that there is no one answer to that question for every believer. In giving, many go back to the Old Testament law of the tithe, the giving of ten percent unto the Lord. This is a good principle for giving, and perhaps a broad benchmark, **yet no where is tithing specifically commanded in the New Testament.** But it certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (Luke 11:42). Since giving is to be proportional, we should be giving some percentage - and **ten percent is a good benchmark - a starting place!** For some to give ten percent is nowhere near enough; for others, at their present time or level of spiritual maturity, one percent may be a massive step of faith. But if our question is, How little can I give and still be pleasing to God? our heart isn't in the right place at all. We should have

⁶ Quoted from sections of MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 16*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.

the attitude of some early Christians, who essentially said: We're not under the tithe - we can give more! **Giving and financial management are spiritual issues, not only financial issues (Luke 16:11).** Some have the idea that God wants ten percent and you can do what you like with the rest, you can indulge yourself to the full. That, of course, is entirely contrary to the principle the New Testament is teaching. No, if God has richly blessed you, then increase the percentage of your giving so that it is ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty percent.

12. **ENJOYED: The goal of giving** is not to afflict or hurt the giver. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, **For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened** (2 Corinthians 8:13). The Corinthian Christians were not giving so that the Jerusalem Christians would get rich and lazy at their expense. Paul was taking the collection so the Jerusalem Christians could merely survive. The goal was not to burden the Corinthian Christians, nor was it to make it all easy for the Jerusalem Christians. **Giving should be Not grudging or of necessity** (2 Corinthians 9:7). God does not want our giving to be **grudging** (reluctantly, regretfully given with plenty of complaining) or **of necessity** (given because someone has made us or manipulated us into giving). This is more the spirit behind taxation, not Biblical giving! Instead, **God loves a cheerful giver** (2 Corinthians 9:7). Instead of giving in a **grudging** way or out **of necessity**, God wants us to give cheerfully. The Greek word for **cheerful** (hilaros, used only here in the New Testament) is the root for our English word hilarious. God wants us to give happily, because that is how God Himself gives!
13. **INVESTED: Giving can be viewed as investing money, not as spending money.** Paul compared giving to sowing seeds: **He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly** (2 Corinthians 9:6). A farmer sowing seed may feel he is losing seed as it falls from his hand to the ground, and we may feel we are losing when we are giving. But just as the sower gives the seed in anticipation of a future harvest, we should give with the same heart. If a farmer were to sow few seeds because he wanted to "hold on" to as much seed as he could, he would have more seed in his barn after sowing time. But at the harvest, the one who sowed more seed would have much more grain in his barn. This means that no one should fear giving generously. Proverbs 11:24 is a great commentary on this idea: There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. No one thinks a farmer is "wasting" grain when he scatters it as seed; the more he plants, the more he will harvest. The promise is also that the giver **Will also reap bountifully** (2 Corinthians 9:6). Spiritually, we can trust that God will reward the giving heart both now and in eternity. Jesus spoke of this in Matthew 19:29: And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.
14. **PURPOSED: Giving should come from a right heart.** Paul wrote, **So let each one give as he purposes in his own heart** (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving should be motivated by the **purposes** of our **own heart**. It should never come through manipulation, intimidation, or domination. We should give because we want to give, because God has put it in our own heart to give. The way we spend our money shows the **purposes** of our **own heart** more accurately than our words do. Jesus said it simply: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (Matthew 6:21)
15. **FOCUSED: Giving must always include giving to the ministries that directly feed us spiritually.** Paul established that he, as one who fed the Corinthians spiritually,

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had the right to be supported by them materially (1 Corinthians 9:7-13). His idea is expressed in 1 Corinthians 9:11: **If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?** In this passage, Paul also drew on the principle of Deuteronomy 25:4, where God commanded **You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain.** God is establishing the principle that a minister has the right to be supported by the people he is ministering to. This principle is also clearly expressed in 1 Timothy 5:17-18. Elders who govern and feed the church are to be given the double honor of office and suitable salary comparable to other positions commensurate with their experience, maturity, and life. Those who preach and teach should be honored above those who serve in administration.

16. **MINISTERED: Giving has many aspects.** Sometimes Paul calls giving a **gift** (1 Corinthians 16:3). In this, Paul literally calls giving a grace, a gift freely given. Our giving should be like God's grace.
- Our giving should be like God's giving of grace to us: giving freely, generously, because we want to give. When God gives to us out of grace, the motive for His giving is in Him, not based in the one receiving. That is how we should give; because the motive of the love and generosity of God is so big in our heart that we simply must give.
 - Sometimes Paul called giving a *koinonia*, which means "fellowship, sharing" (2 Corinthians 8:4, 9:13, and Romans 15:6). Our giving is a tangible demonstration of fellowship and participation with the body of Christ.
 - Sometimes Paul called giving a *diakonia*, which means "a practical service or ministry" (2 Corinthians 8:4, 9:1, 9:12-13).

2 Corinthians 8:4 imploring us with much urgency that we would receive **the gift** (*charis*) and **the fellowship** (*koinonia*) of **the ministering** (*diakonia*) to the saints. Praying ¹¹⁸⁹ ⁵⁷⁴⁰ us ²²⁵⁷ with ³³²⁶ much ⁴¹⁸³ intreaty ³⁸⁷⁴ that we ²²⁴⁸ would receive ¹²⁰⁹ ⁵⁶⁶⁴ the gift, ⁵⁴⁸⁵ and ²⁵³² *take upon us* the ²⁸⁴² fellowship ²⁸⁴² of the ministering ¹²⁴⁸ to ¹⁵¹⁹ the saints. ⁴⁰

⁴meta; pollh`" paraklhvsew" deovmenoi hJmw`n th;n cavrin kai; th;n koinwnivan th`" diakoniva" th`" eij" tou;" aJgivou"

With all that in our hearts and minds, is it⁷ fair to ask,
 Lord do You really expect less of me?
 Your Holy Spirit lives within me guiding me as I live in the wealthiest society in human history.
 Do you expect less than You demanded of the poorest Israelite?

⁷ Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.61.