

"Honor the Lord From Your Wealth"  
(Proverbs 3:9-10)

Have you ever heard the expression, "You can't out give God"? Have you ever thought of what that means? Those of you here this morning that really love the Lord know that that love makes you want to give whatever you can to Him. Even if He had not commanded you to give anything, you would still not be able to restrain yourself from giving something to the One who has captured your heart. You do it because you want to, because it is something that your heart greatly delights in. But it is true that when you have given everything that you can, that you still cannot out give God. He is the One who has given to you everything that you have in the first place. You can only give Him what is already His. But whatever you do give to Him, the Lord will give back, in even greater measure than you could ever give. You cannot out give God.

The question that this text calls you to this morning is whether or not you have been faithful in the use of what the Lord has given to you, especially in that which He calls you to give back to Him. I was recently talking a man who said in passing that one of the churches he had attended in the past believed that you ought to tithe a tenth of your income to the church. He thought that this was ridiculous, that no one could afford to do that in today's world. It was no longer practical. Is that what you think? Do you find that you don't have enough money to give the Lord the tenth that He requires? Yes, it is expensive to live in this world. Yes, the cost of living is continually climbing and the income of the average person is not keeping up with it. Is the answer to stop giving to God, or to cut back on what you give to Him? Do you rob God in order to keep your head above water? Or is this way of thinking the reason why you don't have enough to give to Him in the first place. Well Solomon gives to us the answer to these questions in our text this morning, and the principle that he gives is that,

*If you will honor the Lord from your wealth, He will honor you from His. (The sermon in a nutshell is this: The Lord commands you to give Him a tenth of all He gives to you. And if you will do so, you will find that you cannot out give Him. He will so much more richly bless you.)*

I *First, the Lord Gives to You a Command in This Text This Morning: Honor Him from the Wealth Which He Gives to You.*

A. *Solomon First Says That You Are to Honor the Lord.*

1. *The word "honor" comes from a word in the Hebrew which means "to be heavy".*

a. *Sometimes it is used literally to refer to someone's weight, such as with Eli, the priest. When Eli heard that his sons were killed by the Philistines and that the ark of God had been taken, he "FELL OFF THE SEAT BACKWARD BESIDE THE GATE, AND HIS NECK WAS BROKEN AND HE DIED, FOR HE WAS OLD AND HEAVY" (1 Sam. 4:18).*

b. *It can also be used to refer to a hardened heart, such as when Pharaoh's heart was insensitive to the pleas of the Hebrews (Ex. 7:14); or it can refer to the burden of forced labor, such as the labor that he imposed upon the Hebrews (Ex. 5:9); or it can refer to the senses becoming dulled, such as the eyes of Jacob which had become dim from age (Gen. 48:10).*

- c. But it can also refer figuratively to someone who is heavy in the sense of being noteworthy or impressive. There is a weightiness about him.
- (i) When Balaam refused to return with the first group of messengers from Balaak, Balaak "AGAIN SENT LEADERS, MORE NUMEROUS AND MORE DISTINGUISHED/HEAVY THAN THE FORMER" (Num. 22:15).
  - (ii) Those who have an office of authority makes them weightier than others. So the Lord tells us in the Second commandment, "HONOR YOUR FATHER AND YOUR MOTHER, THAT YOUR DAYS MAY BE PROLONGED IN THE LAND WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD GIVES YOU" (Ex. 20:12), and through Malachi the prophet, "A SON HONORS HIS FATHER, AND A SERVANT HIS MASTER. THEN IF I AM A FATHER, WHERE IS MY HONOR? AND IF I AM A MASTER, WHERE IS MY RESPECT?" (Mal. 1:6). One who holds an office of authority is weightier than one who doesn't.
2. What this means is that one who has this weightiness is worthy of being honored in some way.
- a. Sometimes honor is given in the way of praise or exaltation, sometimes in the way of obedience.
  - b. Often, honor was shown by the giving of something of value to proclaim the worth of the one being honored.
    - (i) When the messengers of Balaak came to Balaam, they said, "THUS SAYS BALAAK THE SON OF ZIPPOR, 'LET NOTHING, I BEG YOU, HINDER YOU FROM COMING TO ME; FOR I WILL INDEED HONOR YOU RICHLY, AND I WILL DO WHATEVER YOU SAY TO ME'" (Num. 22:16-17). To which Balaam replied, "THOUGH BALAAK WERE TO GIVE ME HIS HOUSE FULL OF SILVER AND GOLD, I COULD NOT DO ANYTHING, EITHER SMALL OR GREAT, CONTRARY TO THE COMMAND OF THE LORD MY GOD" (v. 18). Here the honor that Balaak was to give Balaam was in the form of riches.
    - (ii) Why did the queen of Sheba give to Solomon such a tremendous amount of gold, spices and precious stones? especially when you consider that he was already the richest man in the world? It was to honor him.
3. And Solomon, through the Spirit of God this morning, is calling you to give honor to God.
- a. God is honorable above all. Are there any who are powerful? God far more. Are there any with authority? God has all authority? Are there any with personal worthiness? God is infinitely worthy.
  - b. He is the most weighty and respectable, and worthy of honor.
- B. And Seeing that Honor Is Often Shown in the Form of Giving Something of Worth to the Worthy Receiver, You Should Not Be Surprised that Solomon Speaks of Giving Honor to God from Your Wealth.
1. First, you are to honor Him from what you already have.
    - a. Your wealth is what you possess. It is all that you own. It is all that the Lord has given to him.
    - b. And you must recognize that you wouldn't own anything, except for the goodness of God. James says, "EVERY GOOD THING BESTOWED AND EVERY PERFECT GIFT IS FROM ABOVE, COMING

DOWN FROM THE FATHER OF LIGHTS, WITH WHOM THERE IS NO VARIATION, OR SHIFTING SHADOW" (1:17).

- c. *Everything that you have, you have only because the Lord gave it to you. When David made preparation for the Temple which his son was to build, and saw all that the people had contributed for the work, he blessed the Lord, and said, "BUT WHO AM I AND WHO ARE MY PEOPLE THAT WE SHOULD BE ABLE TO OFFER AS GENEROUSLY AS THIS? FOR ALL THINGS COME FROM THEE, AND FROM THY HAND WE HAVE GIVEN THEE" (1 Chr. 29:14).*
  - d. *And recognizing the truth of this, we sung in our hymn of preparation, "We give thee but thine own, what e're the gift may be: all that we have is thine alone, a trust, O Lord, from thee."*
  - e. *And so realizing that what we have is from the Lord, we must do Him honor by being willing to give from that trust to His work, whenever He calls us so to do. Even as the saints of old often parted with their goods to do the work of the Lord and to meet the needs of His people.*
2. *Second, you are also to honor Him from the first of what He continues to give you.*
- a. *The word Solomon uses here refers to the increase of the produce of the ground, of their crops of grain and fruit.*
  - b. *They knew that it was the Lord their God that enabled them to gather in an increase. The psalmist wrote, "HE CHANGES A WILDERNESS INTO A POOL OF WATER, AND A DRY LAND INTO SPRINGS OF WATER; AND THERE HE MAUES THE HUNGRY TO DWELL, SO THAT THEY MAY ESTABLISH AN INHABITED CITY, AND SOW FIELDS, AND PLANT VINEYARDS, AND GATHER A FRUITFUL HARVEST. ALSO HE BLESSES THEM AND THEY MULTIPLY GREATLY; AND HE DOES NOT LET THEIR CATTLE DECREASE" (Ps. 107:35-38).*
  - c. *The Lord is also the One who gives you the power to increase your wealth daily, and so you are commanded to give to Him from that gain.*
  - d. *And He doesn't leave you in the dark as to how much He wants you to give back to Him in obedience.*
    - (i) *As early as the sacrifices of Cain and Abel, we see the people of God giving to the Lord.*
    - (ii) *And very early on it was apparently revealed to them that a tenth, or a tithe, was what the Lord required.*
    - (iii) *Remember when Abram returned from the slaughter of the kings, he met Melchizedek, and gave to him a tenth of the spoils. The author to the Hebrews writes, "NOW OBSERVE HOW GREAT THIS MAN WAS TO WHOM ABRAHAM, THE PATRIARCH, GAVE A TENTH OF THE CHOICEST SPOILS. AND THOSE INDEED OF THE SONS OF LEVI WHO RECEIVE THE PRIEST'S OFFICE HAVE COMMANDMENT IN THE LAW TO COLLECT A TENTH FROM THE PEOPLE, THAT IS, FROM THEIR BRETHREN, ALTHOUGH THESE ARE DESCENDED FROM ABRAHAM. BUT THE ONE WHOSE GENEALOGY IS NOT TRACED FROM THEM COLLECTED A TENTH FROM ABRAHAM, AND BLESSED THE ONE WHO HAD THE PROMISES" (Heb. 7:4-6).*
    - (iv) *When Jacob fled from his home to go to the land of his father's relatives, he said, "IF GOD WILL BE WITH ME AND WILL KEEP ME ON THIS JOURNEY THAT I TAKE, AND WILL GIVE ME FOOD TO EAT AND GARMENTS TO WEAR, AND I RETURN TO MY FATHER'S HOUSE IN SAFETY, THEN THE LORD WILL BE MY GOD.*

AND THIS STONE, WHICH I HAVE SET UP AS A PILLAR, WILL BE GOD'S HOUSE; AND OF ALL THAT THOU DOST GIVE ME I WILL SURELY GIVE A TENTH TO THEE" (Gen. 28:20-22).

- (v) The Lord required a tenth of all which He gave to His people. Moses writes, "THUS ALL THE TITHE OF THE LAND, OF THE SEED OF THE LAND OR OF THE FRUIT OF THE TREE, IS THE LORD'S; IT IS HOLY TO THE LORD. . . . AND FOR EVERY TENTH PART OF HERD OR FLOCK, WHATEVER PASSES UNDER THE ROD, THE TENTH ONE SHALL BE HOLY TO THE LORD" (Lev. 27:30, 32).
  - (vi) We see this continued into the NT dispensation. Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, saying, "WOE TO YOU, SCRIBES AND PHARISEES, HYPOCRITES! FOR YOU TITHE MINT AND DILL AND CUMMIN, AND HAVE NEGLECTED THE WEIGHTIER PROVISIONS OF THE LAW: JUSTICE AND MERCY AND FAITHFULNESS; BUT THESE ARE THE THINGS YOU SHOULD HAVE DONE WITHOUT NEGLECTING THE OTHERS" (Mt. 23:23). They were tithing, but they were not doing the weightier things. They should have done these more important matters without neglecting to tithe of the smallest.
  - (vii) You see then that the Lord has shown you what is appropriate for you to give to Him, namely a tenth or a tithe of all of your increase. This is why when we as a congregation lift up thanksgiving before we give to the Lord, we ask Him to bless HIS TITHES, for they are His by divine command. This was practiced before the giving of the Mosaic Law by the patriarchs, during the Old Covenant, and even in the New.
  - (viii) You are to give to the Lord a tenth of all He blesses you with.
- e. And notice as well that He also tells you on what amount you are to tithe: from the FIRST of all of your increase.
- (i) I have had individuals ask me whether they should tithe on their income before or after taxes. Some say that this depends on whether you want a gross of a net blessing.
  - (ii) But that isn't true. The Lord tells you that you need to honor Him from your wealth, and from the first of your produce. He gets the first portion from the whole. He does not want the tithe from what you receive after the government has taken their portion, but a tithe from the whole amount.
  - (iii) Even if the government does take some of your money, it was still your money they took. It is a part of the whole amount which the Lord has given to you. And so you must give a tenth of the whole to the Lord, the first of all your increase.
  - (v) If you say, I can't afford to do that, can you afford not to? If the Lord commands it, do you have any other option, except to obey? Again, if your heart is right, you will receive this command with joy, and do it cheerfully, knowing that the Lord loves a cheerful giver. But whether you offer Him cheerful obedience or not, it doesn't change the command. Can you afford to do it? You can't afford not to!

(vi) Just think of the poor widow who put her two cents into the treasury. Jesus said of her, "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 12:43-44). Do you think that you can't give a tenth of what you own? This poor widow, who didn't have a husband to provide for her, put in everything she had. And do you think that the Lord did not provide for her? If you said yes, then you do not know the faithfulness of the Lord. He has commanded a blessing to all who obey.

II. And This Brings Us Secondly, To the Promise Which the Lord Gives You: If You Will Honor Him in This Way, He Will Return a Larger Blessing to You.

A. To the Israelites, This Blessing Came in the Form of Fuller Measures of Grain and Wine.

1. He promised to fill their barns with plenty.
  - a. Their storehouses or granaries, would be filled to capacity.
  - b. The Lord told His people that if they would obey Him in all He commanded, that they would be blessed. Moses wrote, "THE LORD WILL COMMAND THE BLESSING UPON YOU IN YOUR BARNES AND IN ALL THAT YOU PUT YOUR HAND TO, AND HE WILL BLESS YOU IN THE LAND WHICH THE LORD YOUR GOD GIVES YOU" (Deu. 28:8).
2. He promised as well that their vats would overflow with new wine.
  - a. The wine vat was the lower part of the press that caught the wine as it was squeezed from the grapes.
  - b. Solomon is literally saying that not only would their barns be filled and overflowing with abundance, but also their wine vats would be bursting forth with an overflow of wine.

B. Translating This into Today's Terms, This Would Mean an Increase of Wealth and Possessions.

1. The Lord is promising to you a rich blessing, the increase of your physical prosperity.
  - a. This does not mean that it is divorced from the spiritual, as though you could possibly prosper materially apart from spiritually.
  - b. But it does mean that if you are spiritually mature, and fear the Lord and obey His voice in giving, He will richly bless you for your obedience. The physical blessing grows out of the spiritual.
  - c. And this is why the health and wealth gospel is so dangerous, for it divorces the spiritual from the material. The emphasis is on giving to get, not on giving out of obedience. They make wealth the end in itself, rather than as a byproduct of true spirituality.
2. But you don't want to overreact to this error. There is still a blessing promised of God to the giver.
  - a. Remember, you are not giving to an organization. You are not giving to a cause. You are not giving to a minister, or to any group of men.
  - b. When you give, you need to realize that you are giving to the Lord. He is the One who receives it from you, and He is the One who will bless you.
  - c. The Lord will use it the way that He pleases. In the Old Covenant, He gave the tithe to His priests to sustain them

*in their labors.*

- d. *In the New Covenant, He gives His tithes to sustain the work of His ministers, in whatever field they are laboring. Paul wrote, "SO ALSO THE LORD DIRECTED THOSE WHO PROCLAIM THE GOSPEL TO GET THEIR LIVING FROM THE GOSPEL" (1 Cor. 9:14), and "THE LABORER IS WORTHY OF HIS WAGES" (1 Tim. 5:18).*
- e. *And so, people of God, can you afford to give as the Lord requires? Rather you should ask, if the Lord commands you to give can you afford not to? Remember, the Lord will not be a debtor to any man. You need not fear that you will not have enough. You will find that as you obey God, you will have all that you need to give, and what you have left over will be so multiplied as to provide abundantly for all of your needs. Listen servants to what your Lord says. Obey Him and be blessed. Amen.*