

Ancient Truths for Modern Times
Biblical Principles to Guide Your Giving (Part 1 of 2)
Malachi 3:7-15

Intro

Heard a story last week from a couple who had been attending church for a while, and they were just starting to learn and understand what it was that God desired and required from them when it came to finances and giving
But they weren't confident that they knew the full teaching of Scripture, so they went to their pastor to inquire
They told him what they understood thus far and eventually asked the question
"How much does God want us to give to the church we belong to?"
To which he replied, "Whatever you want"
I said, that's it?! He didn't tell you what the Bible says, or anything? No. Nothing.
Guarantee you that's not what God says about giving

He could have opened up to just about any page of the Bible and found something on money or possessions
16 of the 38 parables talk about money and possessions
1 of 10 verses in the gospels deal directly with money
The Bible as a whole contains some 2350 verses on money and possessions

If you're operating according to that advice, that's a problem
Because if you're not *giving* according to God's word, you're not *living* according to God's Word

That's why I want to lay out for you over the next two weeks, biblical principles to guide your giving
That's the issue at hand in our passage from Malachi this morning as we continue to discover Ancient Truths for Modern Times
Start with foundational principles – move to specifics next week

Read Mal 3:7-15

This passage is part of a larger section within which God is still responding to the whining of his people that . . .
Living for him makes no difference in life because the wicked prosper right along with every one else
He starts the section in 2:17 with it, and refers back to it in 3:13-15 when he's all done
In between he says –
Trust me, justice WILL be served
Trust me, the righteous will be saved and the wicked punished
Trust me, in your giving

That's the first biblical principle to guide your giving . . .

Trust God (v13-15)

God is saying – you don't trust me
13 – *Your words have been . . . 'How have we spoken against you?'*
How have we not trusted you?
That I will serve justice in due time
And provide for you if you give what I expect
They showed their lack of trust by the fact that they . . .

- Had given up, thrown in the towel, you've quit
It is vain to serve God. What is the profit . . . ? (14)
If it's no good to me; If I don't see the results – I'm done

Not only that, but they showed their lack of trust by the fact that they . . .

- Had twisted the truth – calling evil good (*the arrogant blessed* – 15)
And implying that God is powerless to act, or doesn't care
Evildoers not only prosper . . . (15)

Bottom line – they weren't trusting God's commands/guidelines for giving and living
How much do we do that? A lot!

We think that if we give like God wants us to, we'll be destitute, out on the street
We think he won't replace what we give and supply even more to meet our needs
We think we know *when* to give better than God, so we withhold our money and wait until it suits us or *feels* right
Where's the trust in that?

Do you not think that God will sustain and supply your needs if you trust and abide by his way of giving and living? He will

The rubber meets the road in this as you give to your local church
Because you're trusting the pastors and elders that God has raised up and put in positions of spiritual leadership
You're trusting they will use and leverage that money wisely, for kingdom purposes

All of us need to be careful of attitudes like . . .

"I'll give to God but I'm not giving to this church while *he's* the pastor"
Fine, then find another Bible believing, whole-Bible preaching, Christ exalting, prayer practicing church, and trust God there by trusting his leaders, and giving to his work
But don't hide behind some *lame* excuse just so you can rationalize your greed, or your lack of trust in God's provision for your life

Take some time, yes, to ensure that the church you're going to, is home, and is worthy of your trust

Do that, but be proactive in it – don't stay in that place of limbo forever . . .
And in the meantime, make sure you're setting aside a biblical portion of your income during those days, to be given when you've made a decision & found a church home

Trust God – it's the first biblical principle to guide your giving
And the second is . . .

Don't shortchange God (v7-9)

Will man rob God? (8) – Are you kidding me? Nobody does that!
Yet you are robbing me . . . in your tithes and contributions

The law stated that they were to give a *tithe* or tenth of their grain or income
And offer *contributions* or offerings over and above their tithes as God prompted them, and the need arose

You're shortchanging me; You've robbing from me
You're withholding from me what I gave you in the first place, and is still mine

Imagine that this **\$20 bill** represents all that God has given you in life
Talents/gifts, time, job, possessions, money

Imagine God saying – Give \$2 of that back, and don't worry I'll take care of you

Would you pull out your billfold with plenty of money in it and say . . .

“Can't give *that* much, what if I need it?”

“I have bills to pay, family to feed, vacations to take, house to maintain”

Or, would you say – “Boy, I'm just not sure. I'll have to pray about it”

Or, would you say – “It's the end of the month and I really want to keep my last dollar to go out Friday”

I think we do that, and even worse we insult God by digging in our pockets for some left over change, pull out a **nickel**, put it in the offering and say . . .

Here God, I'm giving back to you – Go ahead, bless me; Make me feel good

That's abusing God's mercy and goodness, and shortchanging him

Let me give you 3 reasons from you should never do that from 1 Chron 29:10-14

3 Reasons You Shouldn't Shortchange God (1 Chron 29:10-14)

Other than the fact that it's dumb

- **God owns everything anyway (11)**

11- *All that is in the heavens and in the earth is yours*

David says the same thing in . . .

Ps 24:1-2 – *The earth is the LORD's and the fullness thereof, the world and those who dwell therein, for he has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers.*

God owns everything and everyone, including your bank balance, house, and car –

Because he created everything there is

Ludicrous to think that you would shortchange the bank or the landlord on your mortgage or rent – they own it; what you pay them is rightfully theirs

It's equally ludicrous to shortchange God because he owns all that you have and rightfully deserves whatever he asks of you

- **God gives you everything you have (12,14)**

Both riches and honor come from you (12)

In your hand it is to make great and to give strength to all (12)

All things come from you (14)

God gives you . . .

Money and possessions – *riches*; The praise of man – *honor*;

Position and influence – *greatness*; Strength to persevere and press on

God gives you everything you have

So don't shortchange him when it comes to what he requires and desires for you to give back

- **God rules, you manage (12)**

You rule over all (12)

If God rules over all, that means you're his manager

Hate to burst your bubble, but you're not the top dog in God's organization

Any greatness, position, power, possessions you have are given to you to manage

Which means that everything you do with your money and possessions should be for the advancement of his kingdom – *everything*

Whatever you *give*, should be used for his glory and purposes

Whatever you *keep*, should be used for his glory and purposes

But neither one are yours – as God's manager, you are to leverage and maximize to the greatest extent possible, all that God entrusts to you

Jesus talks about that in a parable found in Luke 19:11-27

My grandfather used to own a pool hall and every now and then he would have someone working for him behind the counter

Can't imagine him coming in some evening to pick up the money bag, and seeing a note on it from his employee saying . . .

“Mr Mann – I know you own the place, but I'm going to keep a little of the profits this week; I could use a bit more, and I just don't feel like giving it all to you right now – Johnny”

I don't think that would've gone over very well

But that's what we do with God ALL the time – and it doesn't go over very well with him either

9 – *You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me, the whole nation of you.*

You struggle when you shouldn't; you lack what you need

Instead of joy, you have sorrow; Instead of peace, hostility

Instead of contentment, unrest

Not only that, but I consider you sinful just like all the other pagan people who don't worship me

Indicated by his use of the word *goy* for *nation*

Derogatory and demeaning word for pagan/heathen – the whole sinful nation of you

Prov 11:24 – *One gives freely, yet grows all the richer; another withholds what he should give, and only suffers want*

Shortchanging God doesn't go over very well – there *are* consequences

Because . . .

He owns everything anyway; He gives you everything you have

He allows you to manage all that is his

That is no small thing in God's eyes

The other side of the coin is that . . .

Ancient Truth #9 – Obedience brings blessing (v10)

10 – Obey me and I will bless you by providing for your needs

Prov 3:9-10 – *Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the firstfruits of all your produce; then your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will be bursting with wine.*

OT imagery and language to convey the blessing, in whatever form it takes, that comes from obedience in giving

Ps 31:19 – *Oh, how abundant is your goodness, which you have stored up for those who fear you and worked for those who take refuge in you, in the sight of the children of mankind!*

God stores up his goodness/blessing, and works it out in the sight of all, for those who honor him and trust him as shown by their obedience

If you don't honor the Lord with your money, you miss out on the abundance of his goodness that he's waiting to work out for you

Goodness like . . .

The *joy* of participating in God's work

The *surprise* of God's blessing in your life

The *bond* with others who do the same

This does not mean that if you . . .

Give a buck, God will give you 10 more

Give your land and he'll expand your territory

Give like you should – money cometh

That's wrong

But it does not negate the ancient truth for modern times, that obedience brings blessing

God may in fact bless you financially because you're obedient financially

He may expand your territory because you gave of it

He may increase your ability to make money because you use it for his purposes

But if he does, it's not for you to get fat on

God never intended for Christians to hoard their money

He blesses you materially and financially so you can –

Give that much more; Be even more of a blessing to others

Advance the kingdom of God by spreading the gospel, planting churches

Discipling the believers even more

That's why we made the decision last week to begin giving to missions and CO's ahead of
schedule – because as God blesses us, we want to be a blessing to others

We're not going to hoard our money as a church

Obedience brings blessing while disobedience brings hardship and punishment

Don't shortchange God; Trust him – He will be faithful

And as he is, you'll know the blessing of his peace, joy, contentment, and provision