

saints" (v.1). Word had come to them that the saints in Jerusalem were lacking and the charitable response was to help them as God had prospered each one of them. Another time the saints were aware of a great famine in Judea and "the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwell in Judaea" (Acts 11:28-29). Those whom God had prospered greatly also "sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need." (Acts 2:45) They were "rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1Tim. 6:18).

So we see that the giving in the early church was not to some organization, but rather to those people who had a need. "He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise." (Luke 3:11) Jesus would say, "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me." (Mt. 25:40) This is how our love for God is manifested. "But whoso hath this world's good, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him? ... He that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?" (1 John 3:17, 4:20)

The result in the early church of their charitable giving was that "Neither was there any among them that lacked" (Acts 4:34-35). These were the "things that accompany salvation ... in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister." (Heb. 6:9-10) There is great reward in helping the needs of others for "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love". "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again." (Proverbs 19:17) This is a most wonderful principle in the Bible "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38). Giving to the poor results in "treasure in heaven" (Mt. 19:21). "Blessed is he that considereth the poor" (Psalm 41:1).

"If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother: But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth ... Thou shalt surely give him, and thine heart shall not be grieved when thou givest unto him: because that for this thing the LORD thy God shall bless thee in all thy works, and in all that thou putteth thine hand unto. For the poor shall never cease out of the land: therefore I command thee, saying, Thou shalt open thine hand wide unto thy brother, to thy poor; and to thy needy, in thy land." (Deut. 15:7-8, 10-11)

"But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful." (Luke 6:35-36)

Instruction was also given that "they who labour in the word and doctrine" (1Tim. 5:17-18) should be given reward. Supporting financially those who devote themselves full time to God's work is not "charitable giving" but compensation for services rendered, with the pay to be provided by those who receive the benefit of their labors. "The labourer is worthy of his hire" (Luke 10:7). Paul told the Corinthians "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." (1Cor. 9:13-14) "The scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The labourer is worthy of his reward." (1Tim 5:18)

When we think of giving and receiving, we must think of the One who has provided for us in salvation, when we had no means of redeeming neither our self nor others from the slavery of sin. "They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches; None of

them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him: (For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:) That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption." (Psalm 49:6-9)

The One who was infinitely rich paid all that He had to set us free. This was the Lord Jesus Christ who paid for our sins with His own blood. He knew that we had nothing to pay for we were dead in our sins, but this was His principle of Love.

He would tell us, "when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee" (Luke 14:13-14) Is He not blessed above all, when we were miserable and poor and blind and naked, He took off His very own robe of righteousness and covered all our sins. How could we ever repay Him?

Not only has He provided us with salvation, but He has provided us with all things. The fact that you have anything to offer, is it not because you first received it? David acknowledged, "for all things come of thee, and of thine own have we given thee" (1Chron. 29:14). The apostle Paul recognized this and asked the question "who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of him, and through him, and to him, are all things" (Romans 11:35-36). Paul knew who was his provider saying "he left not himself without witness, in that he did good, and gave us rain from heaven, and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness." (Acts 14:17) Paul could tell the Philippians with the utmost confidence that "my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." (Philippians 4:19) He said it is "the living God, who giveth us richly all things to enjoy" (1Tim. 6:17). The Psalmist could sing, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want" (Psalm 23:1).

James would say, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning." (James 1:17) Peter said He "hath given unto us all things that pertain

unto life and godliness" (2Peter 1:3). What really can we give to Him, seeing He is the Creator of all things and therefore the giver of all things? "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" (Job 35:7) He is neither "worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25). And His giving is without partiality "for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil" (Luke 6:35). "He maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust" (Mt. 5:45).

Tell me, is there anything that you have that you did not first receive? If you think hard on this, you will have to acknowledge that everything you have you did receive, whether it be children, it is God who opens and closes the womb, or a kingdom, it is God who makes kings to rise and fall, and gives the kingdom to whomsoever He wills. What about your job? Is it not there because God has provided it for you, and gave you the ability to do it? What about any talents you may have? Do you not know that all good gifts come from God? What about the food or shelter you have? Who made the trees? Who made the abundance of foodstuffs that we have to feast on?

Are not all these things God's seeing He is the Creator of all things? "Hath not my hand made all these things?" (Acts 7:50) "The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein." (Psalm 24:1) The Lord says "all souls are mine" (Ezekiel 18:4), and that by creation, hence He is called "the Father of spirits" (Hebrews 12:9) and all men the "offspring" (Acts 17:29) of God. In Him "is the soul of every living thing, and the breath of all mankind." (Job 12:10) "For in him we live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine" (Psalms 50:10-11). "The silver is mine, and the gold is mine, saith the LORD of hosts." (Haggai 2:8) The Lord sums it up like this, saying

"whatsoever is under the whole heaven is mine" (Job 41:11).

Paul knew who was the great giver and tells us of his blessing. "Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God." (2Cor. 9:11)

How then should we give? "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." (2Cor. 9:7) When the Israelites brought forth their offerings for the building of the temple they did it willingly. "Then the people rejoiced, for that they offered willingly, because with perfect heart they offered willingly to the LORD: and David the king also rejoiced with great joy." (1Chron. 29:9) Cheerful giving is usually the result of the individual who "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2Cor. 8:5). Yes perhaps there is but one small thing that I might give to Him. Since my life has been returned to me, myself I have to give, to serve and walk and live for Him.

GNC

What Saith the Scripture?

www.geocities.com/cleon11

"Giving and Receiving"

(Philippians 4:15)

In the Old Testament, the nation Israel was told "Three times a year ... Every man shall give as he is able, according to the blessing of the LORD thy God which he hath given thee." (Deut. 16:16-17) These three times were the "feast of unleavened bread", the "feast of weeks", and the "feast of tabernacles". These were the times that all the males were required under the Law to gather together and bring their offerings to the Lord. In the New Testament, we do not observe these holy days as they were so called, for they were a shadow of things to come (Colossians 2:17-17), but the substance is of Christ.

In the New Testament, we find but one feast that the Lords people would gather together on a regular basis, and that was on the first day of the week (Acts 20:7). The purpose for gathering together on that day was to break bread in remembrance of the Lord. This is the only "feast" (1Cor. 5:8) that we find mentioned in the New Testament that was ordained of God, to which the church would "gather together" (1Cor. 5:4), and the church was instructed not to forsake "the assembling of ourselves together" (Hebrews 10:25).

Paul gave other instructions for this day. He told the Corinthians as well as the Galatians, "Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. **Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.**" (1Cor. 16:1-2) They were to bring their offerings not on any day, but were to set their offering aside until they gathered together on the first day of the week.

Paul said "let every one of you" give. So as God had prospered each individual that week, they were to set it aside for that day. We will notice that the offerings were not for to build a mega-church or for the support of some hierarchy, but was "for the