

Introduction: Stewardship for Life

Matthew 6:24

Pastor Ken Endean

February 2009

Introduction:

What we see depends on the cleanliness of the window through which we look. If the window is “clouded” it influences our perception.

Matt 6:22 The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.

Spiritual issue—it isn’t just a matter of **what** we see, but **how** we view it.

The foundational issue for proper vision is that you must have an undivided commitment to the Lord. This is essential in order to see clearly. You won’t have spiritual sight without spiritual focus.

The Israelites in Malachi's day didn't see it as God did.

The OT ends with a message of judgment. The first great sermon of the NT begins with statements of blessing—a series of blessings we know as the “Beatitudes.”

We find these in the Sermon on the Mount beginning in Matthew 5 and going through chapter 7.

Right in the middle of our Lord’s sermon, a similar concern to Malachi’s is raised—the Lord in essence asks, what do you treasure and who do you trust?

Matt 6:24 No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon [Aramaic for wealth]—money

- A. KEY: Matt. 6:24 is the key verse in this section:
1. In Matt. 6:16-18 the point is that genuine worship is devotion to God.
 2. Verses 19-23 flow to verse 24, and then verses 25-34 flow out of verse 24.
 - a) v. 25 – *Therefore...* i.e. “for this reason”
 - b) The rest of the passage focuses on where one places their trust.
 3. You must have an undivided commitment to the Lord. The emphasis is do not be distracted from God by wealth or worry because what you focus on is where your attention is.

4. The passage isn't so much about money as it is our heart. God wants our heart.

B. Content

1. **Competing Treasures**—v. 21-22
 - a) Word treasure is used as both a noun and a verb in this section.
 - b) The contrast is between treasure on earth that is passing and that in heaven which is permanent.
 - c) Treasure determines our priorities.
2. **Competing Visions**—v. 22-23
 - a) *If your eye is single...* what is meant here is the opposite of *if your eye is evil...*
 - b) A good eye has proper understanding. Sometimes we refer to that as 'discernment.'
 - c) *Matt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.*
 - d) A person with clear spiritual vision will pursue the spiritual over the physical.
 - e) The basis for this pursuit is who we serve.
3. **Competing Masters**—v. 24 God or wealth
 - a) Deals with issue of worry...
 - b) Worry damages our stewardship—i.e. our faithfulness in life.
 - c) Caution: don't doubt God's faithfulness like Israel did in Malachi.

Introduction to Malachi

A greater concern beyond insensitivity to others is **insensitivity toward God**. When it comes to thinking and pleasing God, many people think that sincerity is all that matters.

A good example of the insensitivity of selfishness that hides behind sincerity is found in the last book of the Old Testament, the message from the prophet Malachi.

While the Hebrew OT was organized differently, this book provides the final prophecy before the coming of the Messiah. This book closes the OT canon both historically and prophetically.

Malachi ushers in 400 years of silence with words of judgment.

Often attention is turned to Malachi when someone talks about giving. And chapter 3 has some important principles about giving. But those statements about giving are part of a bigger picture. Israel's problem didn't begin and end with their lack of faithfulness in giving; no, their approach to giving was just one more symptom of a much deeper problem.

A Biblical understanding of **stewardship** involves much more than just money, it involves all of life. It impacts your ministry, your mission, your worship, your family life, as well as your giving. The problem was such that it affected all aspects of their life and worship.

“Missions and materialism are opposite of one another.” The difference is between being self-centered or God-centered.

Malachi's Theme: *God's love for an insensitive people.*

I. Background

- A. The setting follows the Babylonian captivity, which ended about 536 B.C.
 1. Israel had been exiled because of disobedience. God had allowed them to return to the land and much had been done to rebuild.
 2. Under Ezra the priest reestablished the Temple worship. Nehemiah had come and rebuilt the walls around Jerusalem.
- B. Battles were won; the walls were rebuilt. The Temple had been rebuilt, and the sacrificial system restored. But all was not well.
 1. True worship had not been restored.
 2. The people had relaxed spiritually and were just going through religious motions, but they did not have a heart for God, as seen in the problems confronted.
- C. Nehemiah and Malachi were probably contemporaries.
 - The problems Nehemiah encountered became the basis for Malachi's message.
- D. Against this dismal backdrop Malachi delivers God's message.
 1. The promises God gave to Abraham over 2000 years earlier are still unfulfilled.

- a) The coming of the long anticipated Messiah was not in sight.
 - b) People had become disillusioned and doubtful.
2. And the people, although back in the land, had sunk to new depths of disobedience.
3. Thus this prophecy of judgment is a message of condemnation.
- a) Malachi is the only prophecy to end on a note of judgment.
 - b) The last of 929 chapters, over 23,200 verses in the OT speak of judgment.
 - c) Malachi’s words of condemnation will continue to resonate until another prophet appears with a message from God proclaiming...
 - d) “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (Mat. 3:2)
That prophet is John the Baptist.
4. It is important to understand because mankind’s sinful condition sets the stage for God’s solution. Recognizing this truth forces us to realize that sin must be dealt with, and God’s solution is Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

II. Introductory Information

A. Prophecy

1. The opening verse is similar to other prophetic books, and gives us the basic information for the book—it is the word of the Lord to Israel through the prophet Malachi.

Mal 1:1 The burden [oracle] of the word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi.

2. *The burden* – i.e. “oracle” sets the stage that this is serious.
- a) In prophetic books, this term introduces messages of a threatening nature 27 times.
 - b) It provides a sense of foreboding that what is to follow is a warning to be taken seriously.
3. *Of the Word of the Lord* – this revelation from God carries His authority.
- a) Here in Malachi, 47 of the 55 verses are spoken by God.
 - b) → The Word of the Lord is never inconsequential or light. It is always serious and substantial.

4. *To Israel* – the burden of this discourse is dealing with problems in the covenant relationship with Israel.
 - a) Since God is faithful and loyal to keep His covenant, the problem is with Israel’s unfaithfulness.
 - b) It is the Lord speaking to Israel through His prophet...
5. *Malachi* – His name means “my messenger.”
 - a) Malachi is the Lord’s messenger. The priests were supposed to be God’s messengers—Mal. 2:7, but according to 2:8, they had been unfaithful.
 - b) So even the priests are to listen to the Lord’s messenger.
 - c) This is the only time Malachi is mentioned in the Bible. Even when he is quoted in the NT, he is not named.
 - d) Malachi is the only prophet to use “burden” (oracle) and “word” together, intensifying the message.

III. Pattern

- A. Rather than making direct pronouncements alone, the style of this book is one of debate or dispute.
 - *Mal 1:2 I have loved you, saith the LORD. Yet ye say, Wherein hast thou loved us? Was not Esau Jacob's brother? saith the LORD: yet I loved Jacob,*
 1. **Declaration**—Assertion
 2. **Denial**—Argument
 3. **Refutation**—Authentication
- B. Important—some form of “ye say” is used 13 times in first 3 chapters.
 1. The Hebrew word, *awmar*, is not a question so much as a challenge.
 2. When God makes a statement, rather than responding in humility, these people respond with a challenge. It might not necessarily been an outright, verbal challenge, but it was certainly their heart response.
 3. The question is indicative of a heart attitude. These people had been so hardened by sin that God’s word didn’t bring conviction, but confrontation—*wherein* or “how.”

- 1:2, 6, 7; 2:17; 3:7, 8, 13
- 4. The questions you ask, and how you ask them reveal a great deal about your spirit.
 - a) Israel was sin-hardened. The nation had hit rock bottom spiritually.
 - b) God's prodding didn't prick the conscience, but instead elicited an argument.
- 5. These are insensitive people.
 - a) When they were **challenged** they were **not convicted**. They were **charged**, but **not changed**. They were **confronted**, but **not converted**.
 - b) *Matt 15:8-9*
- Note: "Lord of Hosts"—This designation of the Lord is used 24 times in 55 verses.

Malachi 1—Insensitivity in Worship—warning, “don’t be calloused”

One of the best ways to cover sin is to attend a religious service and go through the motions of worshipping God. This provides a convenient approach to cast off any feelings of conviction, and avoid the necessity of repentance.

- I. Began by their denial of God’s Love—v. 1-5
 - A. These people were facing hard times, and because of that they assumed God didn’t care.
 - 1. They needed to understand that even in times of difficulty, God is still at work and in control. In fact, it is often in the storms of life that we see God’s grace bestowed.
 - We dare not doubt God’s love even in the face of trials.
 - 2. Malachi was speaking to people who, instead of rejoicing in God’s mercy, doubted His love. He had chosen them for a special intimate relationship.
 - B. Israel needed to consider what her fate would have been if God had NOT chosen her.
 - 1. Verses 3-4 are reminding Israel of God’s judgment on Edom.
 - 2. We need to consider where we would be if God did not save us. Yes we face trials and difficulties. Yes we live in a world full of injustice and things are difficult, but before you begin to doubt God’s care, imagine where you would be without Christ!
 - 3. Before we look at economic turmoil and conclude God doesn’t care about us, imagine the mess we’d be in without Him. And if God sees fit to bring us through difficulties, it would be so that we repent, not rejoice in ourselves.
 - 4. The Lord would be magnified beyond the borders of Israel (v. 5).
 - 5. When they understood God’s lovingkindness, in choosing them for an intimate relationship as His covenant relationship, that should have motivated them to loving service. Yet the priests, those leading the religious services, were the first to be indicted.
- II. Problem of disrespectful service— *Mal 1:6-7*
 - A. Offering worthless gifts profanes God’s name.

1. Danger with intimate familiarity with holy things is that we will treat them with indifference.
 2. What is your attitude toward God's Word and corporate worship?
- B. Offering worthless gifts profanes God's worthiness—His holiness.
1. These people claimed Him as Father, but lived apart from Him.
 2. There was no awe or reverential fear.
- III. Problem of offering disqualified sacrifices— *Mal 1:8-9*
- A. Problem in offering
1. They were treating God in a way they would never treat an earthly authority.
 - a) Their religion had ritual—they met what they thought was the “letter of the Law” but they “snorted” at the spirit of it.
 - b) They kept the outward form, barely, but despised the whole process inwardly.
 2. They brought to the Lord, what they didn't want. They brought the blind, crippled, maimed animals and somehow thought God would be not only satisfied, but pleased.
 3. The gift given reveals the attitude of the giver.
 4. Lord tells them, “Give it to your governor, and see how well He receives it.”
- B. Application:
- IV. Disdainful Spirit – *Mal 1:10-14*
- A. Problem in attitude
1. “Just shut the doors and don't light the fire!”
 2. Some churches SHOULD be shut down! The glory of the Lord is long gone.
 3. See their attitude in v. 13—*boring!*
 4. Do we HAVE to go to church AGAIN!

5. If your attitude is “do I have to?” or “**is it required?**” – Why ask THAT question?
6. You reveal your priorities and thus your god, by how you spend your time and treasure—look at your calendar and look at your spending.
7. Those who worship God callously must change their attitude or be cursed.
 - a) Verse 14— God is a great King.
 - b) His name will be feared and honored.

B. Problem of passivity

1. Honor is not passive, but active. Honor not expressed is not honor at all.
2. Because of their selfish attitudes that viewed worshipping God as boring, God warned them that they must change their attitude or be cursed (1:12-14).
3. This is the indictment that continues into the first part of chapter 2 as God addresses the priests, probably as the representatives of the people.
 - a) As a result of their contempt for the things of God, they will be humiliated and put to shame – 2:1-3.
 - b) The Lord points to the covenant that He had made with Levi— 2:4-9 (Mentioned in v. 4, 5, 8).
4. Israel was self deceived in that they wanted to **claim the privileges** of the covenant **while neglecting the conditions**.
5. They assumed God was bound to bless them while they rejected the obligation to honor and serve Him.

Malachi 2—Insensitivity in Walk—warning, “don’t be treacherous”

I. Introductory comments

- A. Their worship isn’t acceptable because they have been **dealing treacherously** with one another.
 - 1. Key term used in v. 10, 11, 14, 15, 16
 - 2. They were being faithless—and as such revealed a disloyalty to God.
- B. A covenant relationship with God establishes a covenant relationship with God’s people (OT—Israel; NT—Church).
 - 1. How you worship God involves how you treat others, and particularly, how you treat your family.
 - 2. Their unfaithfulness to God is illustrated by the betrayal of their closest neighbor, their spouse within marriage.

II. Issue is treachery regarding marriage

- A. **Treachery in marital choices** – v. 10-12
 - 1. Choosing a spouse affected their stance before God.
 - a) Worship includes forming ones family.
 - b) In fact, when they were choosing their spouse, whether they realized it or not, they were in part choosing what God they would worship.
 - 2. This was not an isolated problem, but one that was widespread in Israel.
 - 3. The prohibition of marrying those who did not follow the Lord was an issue of being set apart for God—v. 11 *daughter of a [foreign] god*.
 - 4. The NT indicates believers are to marry “in the Lord” (1 Cor. 7:39).
 - 5. In choosing their spouse, they were in part choosing what God they would worship.
 - 6. Christianity is invasive—the Lord expects you to choose Him above your spouse. The Lord of hosts will not share His throne, even with a spouse.

Transition: Not only does worship include forming our families, worship also involves keeping our families. Those who are married are to remain faithful.

B. Treachery to their marital covenant—v. 13-16

1. It appears that men in Israel were divorcing their faithful wives to marry pagan women.
2. Your standing with your spouse reveals a lot about your standing toward God.
3. Marriage is a covenant of companionship that is established by God and witnessed by God.
 - a) Verse 14 – *Because the Lord hath been witness...*
 - b) Verse 15 – *Did He not make them one?*
4. Unfaithfulness toward their spouse was also unfaithfulness toward God.
 - a) Because of their unfaithfulness, God refuses their worship.
 - b) Disregard for the faithfulness of your marital covenant will ruin your worship.
5. God's view of marriage is that of a covenant.
 - a) Faithfulness to God's plan for marriage is not based on cultural perspectives of what is acceptable, but seeing God made you one.
 - b) Your marriage is made before God, for His glory, to reflect Christ's love for His bride the Church.

C. Consequence of faithfulness

1. One reason God makes the two one is to raise up godly offspring (v. 15).
2. God is seeking offspring that are godly.

D. Guard your spirit.

1. Malachi 2:17 warns against becoming bitter, questioning God's justice.
2. God cares more about justice than those who object could ever understand.

Malachi 3—Insensitivity with Wealth—warning, “don’t be a thief”

- I. Overview of chapter 3
 - A. Israel’s frustration was that the wicked were prospering and God didn’t seem to be dealing with them.
 - 1. Those who rebel against God, don’t always experience consequences immediately.
 - 2. This causes people to question God’s love and justice – 2:17.
 - 3. The problem is that Israel was rather selective in the wickedness they wanted to be judged.
 - B. God makes it clear that judgment is coming—3:1-5.
 - 1. Judgment will come, but it will begin with Israel because of THEIR disobedience.
 - 2. The root problem, according to v. 5, i.e. they didn’t know who God was!
 - C. It is because of who God is—His character, that they weren’t destroyed! (v. 6f)
 - 1. Because God is changeless, if they will truly repent, He will forgive them and bless them (v. 7).
 - 2. But they don’t even see that they’ve wandered away from God’s way.
- II. God punishes ingratitude—3:8-12.
 - A. The indictment—they were stealing from God!
 - 1. In their insensitivity they were specifically violating God’s covenant by robbing God.
 - 2. This issue was probably more widespread than the other sins listed in v. 5. Apparently the nation taken as a whole was violating the Law concerning the tithe.
 - B. Emphasis
 - 1. Perpetual—you *are* robbing me
 - 2. Personal—you *are* robbing *me*—v. 8 & 9

C. Result

1. They hadn't given God what was rightfully His, and as a result, not only did they not have God's blessings, they were experiencing the curses that were part of Law.
2. The Law not only listed blessings that came with obedience, but also curses that came with disobedience.
3. Why did God take this personally? *The tithe belonged to God.*
 - a) They were to bring the tithe TO the owner of it, God.
 - b) They seemed to think THEY owned it, and could give what they wanted to God.
 - c) God said, "you are robbing ME!"

D. God deserves our best and He deserves our all.

1. But not only were they not giving their best, they also weren't giving their all- 3:8
2. Love of money is idolatry and causes a person to steal from God.
3. God's Word says that if a person is unfaithful in the area of their giving, it is likely they are unfaithful in many other areas too. (Parables in Matt. 25 make this point).

E. Tithing was required under the Law.

F. Issue of giving

1. Attitude in giving is vital when considering the issue.
2. The tithe mentioned in the Bible BEFORE the Law—Abraham tithed to Malchizedek (Gen. 14:20).
3. Jesus commended the Pharisees for their faithfulness in tithing—He also condemned them for their ignoring other aspects.
4. Tithing symbolized giving the best and giving all.
5. The NT pattern goes beyond the tithe.
6. The churches at Macedonia (2 Cor. 8:2) were in deep poverty and yet gave abundantly.
7. Do you treasure earthly possessions more than your relationship with God?

- *Haggai 1:3-7*
 - a) They had time and money to fix up their houses, but left the Lord's house desolate.
 - b) They put their comfort and prosperity before God's worship and work.
 - c) And the Lord says they are paying the price for it.

- G. A person couldn't keep what was God's and expect God's blessing.
 - 1. There is a danger of forgetting that it isn't 10% that belongs to God, but 100%.
 - 2. In fact for Israel, when they were faithful, God promised to increase their income and decrease their outgo (*Mal 3:11*).
 - a) But when Israel was unfaithful, the entire nation suffered. When there wasn't food in the storehouse, legitimate needs could not be met.
 - b) *Bring ALL [the whole] tithe into the storehouse... (v. 10).*
 - c) All of it was to go to the Temple where it would be stored; then there would be what was needed.
 - 3. Application in a New Testament context

 - 4. When a person steals from God, God takes it personally.
 - a) What we treasure is determined by what we think is of real value.
 - b) Treasure determines pursuits and priorities.

- H. Faithfulness brings joy
 - 1. Step out by faith and see how He provides and blesses.
 - 2. "Test Me," says the Lord... (3:10)

- a) Be clear—if you've been a poor steward and squandered what God has given you, don't expect there NOT to be consequences.
 - b) If today you are having to pay for today and yesterday, don't assume that God will remove that pressure.
 - c) Some people have poor stewardship habits so they need that pressure to help them make God-honoring changes.
3. God shows Himself faithful to those who are faithful.

Don't Be Frustrated or Short-Sighted

Malachi 3:13-4:6

Introduction:

At times we are tempted to *call the arrogant blessed*; to say *evildoers not only prosper but they put God to the test and they escape* (ESV). That was exactly what the people in Malachi's day said—in fact that is v. 15 of chapter 3.

Mal 3:15 And now we call the proud happy; yea, they that work wickedness are set up; yea, they that tempt God are even delivered.

They were frustrated that those who rejected God's way prospered. We can struggle with the same thing. We see the same: the wicked prospering and Christians struggling.

This is the final section of the final book of the OT canon.

Overview:

- Final Complaint of Israel – 3:13-15
- Contrast between those who fear God and the wicked—3:16-18
- Future Coming of the Messiah—4:1-6

At each of these points there is a warning we should heed...

I. Complaint—3:13-15

→ Warning—people with **selfish expectations** will be frustrated with God.

A. Speech- v. 13

B. Spirit- v. 14-15

1. They saw serving God as of no benefit; it didn't do any good.
2. They also assumed that those who didn't serve God suffered no harm for their waywardness.
3. But imagine being a faithful believer in a nation of unfaithful people. You seek to obey the Law and serve the Lord.
4. Guard against **selfish expectations** so as to not become frustrated with God. He does know the faithful from the disobedient.

II. Contrast – 3:16-18

→ Warning—people with **superficial evaluation** will be frustrated with God

- A. Those who fear the Lord encourage one another—v. 16a.
 - 1. Contrast of two distinct groups—those who fear the Lord and those who don't.
 - 2. Those who feared the Lord began to talk with one another; they encourage one another.
- B. Those who fear the Lord are remembered by Him – v. 16b-17.
 - 1. The Lord hears and remembers.
 - 2. The Lord draws their attention to the future.
- C. Those who fear the Lord are distinguished from those who do not serve Him (v. 18).
 - 1. The Lord knows the righteous from the wicked and will enable others to discern between them when He judges.
 - 2. The contrast here is between those who fear the Lord and those who are arrogant.
 - 3. The “proud” (v. 15, 4:1) are those who think they do not need God. They live independently of God.

III. Coming—4:1-6

→ Warning—people with **short-sighted examination** will be frustrated with God.

- A. Believers will be delivered in the day of judgment.
 - 1. God's judgment is pictured as a burning oven that consumes – judgment of fire.
 - 2. This consuming fire is not speaking of annihilation, but rather the complete exclusion of the wicked from God's kingdom.
- B. Believers must heed the Word—v. 4
 - 1. Malachi calls the righteous to “remember” – i.e. they are to act on what they know.
 - 2. Believers must be determined to read and hear God's Word.
 - 3. Moral values are measured by the objective standard of God's Word.

- C. Preparation for the “day of the Lord”
1. From an OT perspective, it was difficult to distinguish Christ’s first coming as the Suffering Servant from His second coming as the Conquering King.
 - a) Israel expected the Messiah to immediately establish His Kingdom—that is why the confusion when Christ came.
 - b) They didn’t see this period in which we live, where God is calling out a people from the Gentiles.
 2. The message that God’s final judgment is coming.
 - a) That ought to motivate us to be faithful—it should be the ground for our faith and obedience.
 - b) Don’t be frustrated with God because of **selfish expectations**.
 - c) Don’t be frustrated with God because of **superficial evaluations**.
 - d) Don’t be frustrated with God because **short-sighted examinations**.
 3. At the close of the OT canon is the call to repent and wait for the coming of the Messiah.

What Do You Treasure?

Matt. 6:19-21

Theme: The Lord desires and deserves our undivided commitment.

I. Context

A. Setting

1. The last divinely inspired sermon preached to these people that we have recorded was one of judgment.
 - a) While the OT ends with a message of judgment, the first great sermon of the NT is one of blessing.
 - b) The OT ends with a warning of a curse, the NT begins with a promise of blessing.
2. The key verse in understanding this section is v. 24.
 - a) Genuine worship is devotion to God; it is done for God, not for the approval of men—vv. 16-18.
 - b) Verses 19-23 flow TO verse 24 and verses 25-34 flow OUT of v. 24.

B. Significance—You must have an undivided commitment to the Lord.

1. Jesus moves the discussion out of the theoretical realm to where we live practically.
2. In emphasizing the need for undistracted commitment to God, He pinpoints two key issues that every one of us will have to wrestle with—wealth and worry.
3. This passage isn't so much about money as it is the heart.

II. COMMENTARY – COMPETING TREASURES—v. 19-21

A. Language

1. These verses focus on “storing up” treasure.

2. In these verses the word “treasure” is used in both noun and verb form...
- B. LOCATIONS— (2 types of treasure)
1. Treasure on earth or treasure in heaven
 2. We can use material things for things on earth or heaven.
 3. The religious leaders of Jesus’ day were preoccupied with things—they were materialistic, greedy, covetousness, and manipulative.
 4. Where we invest is where our heart will be—Jesus isn’t so concerned with where the money goes, but where the heart goes.
- C. NATURE OF THESE TREASURES
1. Earthly treasure is temporal—PASSING.
 2. Heavenly treasure is lasting—PERMANENT.
 - You can’t hold on to the treasures of this world, so use them for God and His glory.
- D. Central issue is about heart loyalty.
1. This is the point—the issue is our Master, not primarily our money.
 2. We need to make sure that we love God with all our heart.
 3. A person’s most cherished possessions and his deepest motives and desires are inseparable.
- E. Passage doesn’t just condemn us, but challenges us—
1. People tend to live for what gratifies them. We fight to live by faith.
 2. This isn’t based on some kind of feeling, but obedience.

How is Your Spiritual Sight?

Matt. 6:22-23

I. INSTRUCTION ABOUT OUR VISION

A. Manner of looking at things

1. If we are going to lay up treasure in heaven so that our heart is directed toward heaven, then we must have the right vision.
2. There are two ways of looking at things—that is what we see in Matt. 6:22-23.

B. Meaning of “if your eye be single”

1. The opposite of *full of light* is *full of darkness*—and so the word that contrasts with *single* is the word *evil*.
2. The opposite word would be *good*.
3. The more a person invests in the world, the less he treasures the things of God.
 - a) Like Christian, in Bunyan’s *Pilgrim’s Progress*, one need to be careful not to linger too long on the streets of Vanity Fair.
 - b) *Colossians 3:2*

II. IMPORTANCE OF YOUR VISION FOR LIFE

- Jesus directs our attention from the heart in v. 21 to the eye in v. 22-23.

A. The perception that floods our souls comes what we perceive through our vision.

1. Jesus is using a physical illustration, saying the eye is like a window—if the window is clean and clear, light floods the body. But if the window is blacked out, no light enters.
2. Blindness impacts the whole body.

III. INTENTION OF YOUR VISION

A. Consideration— “SINGLE EYE”

1. *James 1:5; 2 Cor. 8:2; 9:11-13*
2. The verse in Matt. 6 appears to be saying that if you have a heart that has a generous focus, your whole spiritual life will be flooded with spiritual understanding.
3. A good eye has proper understanding.

B. Contrast – EVIL EYE—v. 23

1. Blurred and distorted vision means we don't see things as they truly are. But the problem is that a person who isn't seeing things properly usually doesn't recognize he has a problem.
2. This was a Jewish expression that spoke of being miserly, grudging, or selfish.
 - a) *Deut. 15:9*
 - b) *Prov. 23:6*
3. A person with an evil eye hastens after wealth and riches and doesn't consider the final result. He lacks clear spiritual vision.

IV. IMPACT OF YOUR VISION ON LIFE

A. It is a mind that properly evaluates treasure and sees things clearly and truly.

1. The heart that is preoccupied with material concerns becomes blind and insensitive to spiritual concerns—“is full of darkness.”
2. An earthly focus blinds.

B. Exclamation— *How great is that darkness!*

C. Conclusion: *2 Cor. 4:16-18*

What Do You Trust? *Matt. 6:25-34*

I. PERSPECTIVE

- A. Your outlook toward material possessions is one of the most reliable marks of your spiritual condition.
 - 1. A prosperous person may be tempted to trust in his prosperity and devote his life to acquiring more—v. 19-24.
 - 2. A poor person may be tempted to doubt God’s provision—v. 25-34.
- B. The primary focus here isn’t simply dealing with the issue of worry, but the greater issue of worship.
 - 1. The concern in the minds of Christ’s listeners may be that IF I devote my self to serving God, how will I deal with the ordinary needs of life?
 - 2. When a person is preoccupied with the things of God, the true Master, then he doesn’t have to be anxious.

II. PROBLEMS

A. **Worry DISTRUSTS YOUR FATHER—v. 25-26**

- 1. Clarification—“take no thought” doesn’t mean be apathetic, or mentally passive.
- 2. But concern over the future and assuming responsibility for things we can’t control IS wrong.
- 3. Two Arguments
 - a) **FIRST**— from greater to lesser – (v. 25)
 - (1) If God has given us life and a body, both of which are more important than food and clothing, then don’t you think He can take care of the lesser issues?
 - b) **SECOND**— lesser to greater – (v. 26)

(1) If God provides for birds, which are not made in His image, don't you think He'll care for His children?

(2) "The heirs of heaven are much better than the fowls of heaven." Matthew Henry

4. But the root of anxiety is unbelief—distrusting the Father.

B. Worry DAMAGES YOUR FAITHFULNESS— vv. 27-30

C. Worry DENIES YOUR FAITH – i.e. Uniqueness of salvation – vv. 31-33

1. Characteristic of the pagans—*the gentiles seek...*

2. Worry is really a form of unbelief—that is what v. 30 said, "you of little faith."

D. Worry is DISQUIETING BECAUSE OF YOUR FUTURE—v. 34

1. Today's needs are enough to occupy our attention.

2. If tomorrow brings new trouble, there will be new grace to meet it.

Stewardship: Checking Your Spiritual Health

Luke 19:1-27

Introduction:

Many times we live our lives under the mistaken impression that they belong to us. Paul tells us we were “bought with a price.” We must live as those who know that God will call us to account for the ways we have used this life entrusted to us.

I. STEWARDSHIP CONSIDERED

- A. Stewardship of **time**
- B. Stewardship with **talents**—serving the Lord through His church
 - 1. Doctrine of the church must be grounded in the doctrine of salvation. It isn't all about us, but about God.
 - 2. The church is a key piece of God's discipleship program, and the health of the local church will be determined by the health and service of the members.
- C. Stewardship of the **truth**
- D. Stewardship of **treasure**— money

II. STEWARDSHIP IN SCRIPTURE

- A. I say that because we need to realize that the Bible has much to say about money.
 - 1. 10% of Proverbs deals with money.
 - 2. 25% of Jesus teaching dealt with giving.
 - 3. 16 of 38 parables spoke of how people should handle earthly treasure.
 - 4. 1 out of every 10 verses in the Gospels deals with stewardship.
- B. Jesus taught more about stewardship than about heaven and hell combined.
 - 1. There are 2000 references to wealth and poverty, twice as many as the total references to faith and prayer.
 - 2. That shouldn't surprise us since it is such an important and consuming topic for many people.
 - 3. It is said that people spend 50% of their waking time thinking about money – how to get it, spend it, save it, invest it, or borrow it.

- C. But stewardship also involves knowing how to give, where to give, and how much to give.
 - 1. Stewardship isn't simply about what we do with our money, but what we do with our lives.
 - 2. We are challenged to make the most of spiritual opportunities provided for us.
 - 3. Stewardship involves everything God has entrusted to us, and whether or not we are faithful to that trust.

- D. How a believer handles his finances and possessions communicates much about his or her spiritual condition.
 - 1. The Word of God says that if a person is not being faithful in the area of their giving, it is likely that they are becoming unfaithful in many other areas as well.
 - 2. An all-consuming concern for money is what drives most people in the world.

- E. Where do we worship?
 - 1. The question is NOT how much do we have, but where our heart is.
 - 2. Sometimes Christians start to view wealth as evil or wrong. That isn't biblical thinking.
 - a) When you read the Bible regarding money and wealth, and Proverbs in particular, you find 4 groups of people divided into two categories.
 - b) There are unrighteous rich people, and unrighteous poor people. And there are righteous rich people and righteous poor people.

III. STEWARDSHIP AND SALVATION

- Christ, in His teaching, linked a person's attitude toward money to his most fundamental spiritual condition – his salvation.

- A. Luke 19:1-10 – story of Zacchaeus
 - 1. Zacchaeus was a wealthy tax collector – chief among tax collectors— v. 2.
 - 2. If Zacchaeus was a reasonably honest person, he could do well. If he were dishonest, he could accumulate vast wealth.

3. Plenty of people would have been willing to help point out that Zacchaeus was a sinner. Verse 7 tells us people were already grumbling about the fact that Jesus had gone to eat with a sinner.
4. Zacchaeus saw his unrighteousness and saw Jesus as the way of salvation – “behold Lord...” v. 8.
5. But when his life changed spiritually, when he was saved, the result was a transformed attitude about money.
 - a) Zacchaeus pledged half of his possessions to the poor and promised to reimburse four-fold anyone he had defrauded.
 - b) When Zacchaeus got saved his life was transformed, and it was evident in his attitude toward money. As a tax collector in the Roman Empire, he was totally focused on accumulating wealth.
6. He loved money.
 - a) When a person loves money, he tends to be bent on making it any way possible.
 - b) When a person loves money, he never seems to have enough – Prov. 30:15 *the leech has two daughters, Give and give*. He is never satisfied.
 - c) When a person loves money, he usually hates to give it to others.
 - d) When a person loves money, he is often willing to sin to get more and keep what he’s got. He will compromise principles for riches.
 - e) He loves riches more than righteousness, treasure more than truth, gold more than God.
7. Zacchaeus was transformed in such a genuine and dramatic way that Jesus made this clear-cut declaration in v. 9 – this day, or *Today salvation is come to this house*.
 - a) The reality of Zacchaeus’s salvation was evidenced by his cheerful eagerness to part with his money for the glory of God and the good of others.
 - b) He didn’t earn salvation by his generosity; he was generous because of salvation. The object of his worship had changed.
8. Sadly, that wasn’t the case with every encounter Jesus had with people.

B. Luke 18:18ff – story of the rich young ruler

1. The story tells of a young man who comes to Jesus asking about eternal life.

2. He is called a ‘ruler’ – he had some level of authority and rank. He was a devout Jew who knew the law and was conscientious.
 3. He also knew something was missing from his life. So he comes to Jesus asking how he can obtain eternal life.
 4. Jesus touched the point of his true affection and trust – his wealth. Jesus picked a command that would reveal if there were a true repentance to salvation.
 5. *Luke 18:22-23*
 - a) We know him as the rich young ruler; but his financial status isn’t revealed until the end of the discourse with this man. It is the climax that reveals why he was unwilling to obey God.
 - b) Treasure on earth meant more to him than treasure in heaven.
 - c) He loved money so much he’d rather walk away from Jesus than follow him. He couldn’t bring himself to part with his wealth and obey God.
- C. Jesus then gives a rather startling commentary on the incident.
1. It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, which is impossible, than for a rich man to enter heaven while trusting in his riches.
 2. Love of wealth presents an impassible barrier to regeneration because the desire for riches is greater than the desire for forgiveness and heaven. Treasure in heaven wasn’t nearly as desirable as treasure on earth.
- D. Earlier in Luke 12:15-21 we find the parable of the rich fool who focused on building temporary wealth but ignored eternity.
1. God calls him a fool – he is not to be our role model.
 2. The issue is not “how much money you have” but where your heart is and what you do with what you have.

STEWARDSHIP PRESENTED – Parable – Luke 19:11-27

E. Preparation

1. Lord passed through Jericho on His way to Jerusalem. As He approaches some people thought He would immediately establish His kingdom and overthrow Roman rule.
2. The Lord deals with false expectations and indicates He would be going away before His kingdom would be established.

F. Historical Perspective

1. He tells a parable based on an historical incident that had taken place when Jesus was a child. When Herod died, he decreed in his will that Archelaus should take his place.
2. But the Jews hated Archelaus. So he left for Rome to secure approval to reign.
3. But before he left, he entrusted large sums of money to his friends with instructions as to how they should use the money to help establish his government.
4. But the Jews who hated him sent word to Caesar that they didn't want him to reign. He was cruel, and they hated him.
5. When Archelaus did secure the Caesar's approval and returned, he sent for his servants and asked what they had done with the money he had entrusted to them.
 - a) He then rewarded those who had been faithful to his interests.
 - b) He then summoned his enemies and put many of them to death.
6. That is the historical context in the minds of those who heard this parable.

G. Parable

1. The king calls for 10 servants, or slaves, and gives each of them an amount of money. The Greek word, comes from the Latin is "mina."
 - a) A mina was about 3 months' wages.
 - b) They were to invest it while he was gone, and when he returned he would call for an accounting.
2. There was a group that sought to reject His authority and resisted His reign.

3. When the king returns, he calls for an accounting of what had been done with the money he had entrusted to his servants. He rewards the productive servants according to their ability.
4. One servant had done nothing.
 - a) The implication is he didn't expect the king to come back.
 - b) He certainly wasn't concerned with the king's business.
 - c) He had no heart for the king, and Matthew tells us that the 3rd servant was thrown out of the kingdom.
 - d) He really belonged to the group of people who didn't want the king to reign over them.

IV. STEWARDSHIP APPLIED –

A. God owns everything.

1. If you only grasp one point today, get this: Everything belongs to the King.
 - a) *Hag 2:8*
 - b) *Ps 104:24*
2. Because God is creator of the earth, He owns everything anyway.
 - a) *Deut 8:18*
 - b) *1 Cor 4:7*
 - c) If all the money belongs to God, the question isn't how much is God going to TAKE from me, but rather how much will He give. If you view it as YOUR money, you will struggle with giving. But if you view it all as God's and He lets you keep 85-90% you are thankful.

B. God entrusts me with what I have.

1. When we recognize our stewardship, we don't disrespect it.
2. These servants were given a certain amount of the king's money. Even though it wasn't their own, they had a responsibility to use it for the King to help further His kingdom.
3. What do we do with our gifts, talents, abilities, and time? Are you furthering God's purpose?

C. God expects me to increase what He has given me.

1. v. 13 "occupy" or "*do business until I come.*"
2. Servants have a responsibility to work for the Master.

- D. God will call for an accounting. – v. 15ff
1. Two had been faithful.
 2. One had not – he produced nothing.
 - a) Note – He recognized the master as the legitimate owner – v. 20 “thy pound” – “your money.”
 - b) He ran down his master’s character – “you are an austere man” – hard, uncaring.
 - c) Implies the king exploited laborers – you take up what you did not lay down, you reap where you did not sow.
 - d) Note, the wicked servant wasn’t concerned about doing an excellent job, but only about himself.
 3. Are you working to please God or for yourself?
 - a) *Eph 6:5-7*
 - b) *Col 3:22*
 4. Oh, he didn’t steal it or spend it, but he didn’t invest or serve either.
 5. He just disregarded His stewardship.

Conclusion:

Sometimes when you go to the doctor he will press in different places and ask, “does this hurt?” Usually you say, no, but sometimes he touches a spot and it does hurt. That can mean one of two things:

Maybe he was insensitive and pushed too hard.

Maybe something is wrong and the pain indicates that problem.

I’ve tried to be careful this morning, but did I touch a spot that hurt? Maybe you need to do some deeper tests. Ponder these passages and examine your life.

Are you faithful with your time, service, sharing the truth, and giving to God? Is the King’s purpose advanced by you?

Don't Misuse God's Gifts

Proverbs 3:1-12

Introduction:

A *Time* magazine (September 18, 2006) cover story asked the question, “Does God want you to be rich?” Interesting read, and for the most part, appeared to be accurate. What really surprised me was to find over 20 verses of Scripture quoted in *Time*. I thought, ‘you don’t see that every week.’

But the article did make a couple of significant statements and bring out a few note-worthy points.

One such statement was this: “[T]he relative absence of sermons about money—which the Bible mentions several thousand times—is one of the more stunning omissions in American religion...” (p. 52).

Which may account, at least in part, for the response to the poll question, “How much influence does [the Bible] have on how you think about money and finances in general?” Only 47% of Protestants said, “a great deal.”

I hope that we think Biblically about such an important area. Jesus said, in Matt. 6:24.

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be [devoted] to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon [money, wealth].

How you view money and material possessions really does indicate “The God/god you serve.”

Are you going to worship the right God or the wrong god?

One person quoted in the *Time* article points out that one of the dangers of the ‘prosperity gospel’ is that “God becomes a means to an end, not the end in himself” (p. 55).

Text:

Proverbs 3:1-12

Honor the Lord with your ‘substance’ – i.e. wealth or possessions.

- Honor speaks of worship.
- To honor and worship God is to enjoy Him for who He is, not for what He gives.

I. Enjoying God is not a means to an end – enjoying God is the end.

A. What is the chief end of man?

1. *The chief end of man is to glorify God AND enjoy Him forever.*

2. That is ONE goal, not two.

3. God is more valuable than His gifts, and all things are dependent on Him.
- B. The warning of Proverbs 3 is a warning not to misuse the gift of God.
- Isn't that what stewardship is all about?
1. Don't misuse human comprehension—*do not lean on your own understanding* (v. 5-6).
 2. Don't misuse confidence—*be not wise in thine own eyes...* (v. 7-8).
 3. Don't forget to honor the Lord with your possessions (capital) – *honor the Lord with your substance* (i.e. possessions, wealth) *and with the firstfruits of all thine increase* (v. 9-10).
 4. Don't reject God's correction – *despise not the chastening—i.e. discipline, of the Lord...* (v. 11-12).
- II. It is one thing to say we 'trust in the Lord' but do we really do it with 'all our heart'?
- A. That speaks of the total inner being—the emotions, thoughts, and will.
1. What impact will such a trust have on worry? Anxiety? – v. 5
 2. How does it impact our planning? – v. 6
 3. Pursuit of pleasure and enjoyment? – v. 7
 4. How we respond to trials and difficulties? – v. 11
 5. And how we give? – v. 9
- B. Are you going to worship the right God or wrong god?
1. It is important that we not misuse God's gifts or pursue the gifts and neglect the Giver. Trust in the Lord with all your heart.
 2. But the truth is that people trust in the tangibles, the things they can see, rather than in the God they can't see.
 - a) I'd give to the Lord, but I don't see how I could meet my obligations?
 - b) Rejoicing in God isn't about what we have or don't have, but about where we put our confidence.
- C. The truth is, if you have wealth but not wisdom you will have problems.
1. Just because someone says they are trusting God doesn't mean they are operating with biblical wisdom.

- a) The wisdom spoken of in Proverbs provides moral skill, (discretion) and mental shrewdness (discernment) (1:2-6).
 - b) And it begins with a biblical, reverential trust, respect, and fear of the Lord (1:7).
 - 2. Wealth without wisdom leads to problems. All things are dependent on God and less valuable than God.
- III. Our delight in God overflows in acts of sacrificial love.
 - A. What should be our response? *Honor the Lord...*
 - B. WHY?
 - 1. Because God owns everything!
 - 2. All things are dependent on God and less valuable than God.
 - 3. We are to be stewards, not just with what we give, but what we keep.
 - 4. So I have a responsibility to be investing for His glory.
 - C. For what reason?
 - 1. Giving is tied to our relationship with God.
 - 2. The enjoyment of God in Christ will overflow in visible acts of love – self-denying, sacrificial love that displays to others the worth of God in our lives.
 - D. What does it mean to “honor the Lord”?
 - 1. The word ‘honor’ has the idea of weighty or heavy.
 - 2. To treat something ‘lightly’ is to view it as not important. God is to be treated as weighty, important.
 - 3. Our temptation is to treat ourselves as important and honor ourselves by indulging ourselves with our possessions.
 - E. How does the father in Proverbs instruct his son to honor the Lord?
 - 1. *With thy substance* – i.e. possessions and wealth, *and with the firstfruits of all thine increase.*
 - 2. To give the firstfruits indicated a trust and gratitude. To give the Lord the *firstfruits* was a sacrifice.
 - F. How does that apply to us?

1. Does God get the *leftovers*? Leftovers don't shout, "Honor."
 2. It is interesting that in the OT there were 3 times a year that all men were to appear before the Lord, and they could not come empty handed.
 - a) Giving was part of their worship.
 - b) They weren't to bring the lame, the sick, or the leftovers. But I'm sure they could have justified it in their minds *Mal 1:8*.
 - c) How we give to God reveals our heart.
- G. What is the result of giving? *Prov 3:10*
1. God's blessing will follow honoring Him. This passage anticipates God's blessing upon faithfulness.
 2. The verses after that talk about how wealth of wisdom is better than silver, gold, rubies, or treasure (v. 14-16).
- H. Are there consequences for not giving? *Yes*.
1. Don't expect the blessings without a heart overflowing in self sacrifice.
 2. We can use it to either worship Him, or worship something else.
 3. He has made us so that our enjoyment of Him overflows in visible acts of love and demonstrations that are seen by others.
 4. In Philippians 4 Paul is writing to the church at Philippi and mentions that they were the only church that shared with him in the matter of giving and receiving. And in v. 18 he refers to their gift as "a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God."

Conclusion:

Glorifying and enjoying God is the end, not a means to an end. His gifts are the overflow of His grace. But even if He didn't bring us something, we still have Him, and God is always enough.

Giving with a Generous Spirit

2 Corinthians 8

Introduction:

At the close of World War II, as part of the effort by the Allied forces to rebuild Europe, relief officials built various camps to take care of millions of orphans. Vast numbers of children were brought to these facilities. The orphans received the best care available – healthy food and drink.

But the camp administrators became very disturbed because the children, after just a few weeks, were no longer sleeping. Even though they received 3 meals a day, were clothed and bathed, and had beds to sleep in, the children began staying awake all night.

The perplexed officials interviewed the boys and girls to try to learn the source of the problem. These interviews led to a solution.

Each night before bed, the dormitory attendants would place a small loaf of bread in the hand of each child. So that before falling asleep, the last thing each boy or girl would experience was the feel of bread in their hand. In a matter of days the children were sleeping through the night. They were reassured that they would have food for tomorrow.

Because of past experience they had become anxious. Life had taught them that having food one day didn't necessarily guarantee anything the next. But now, as they fell asleep with a small loaf in one hand, their fear was dispelled.

Philippians 4:19 is like the loaf of bread that God places in our hand: *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

We have no reason to fear tomorrow because God will meet all our needs.

This wonderful promise was given to the church at Philippi, a city in a region known as Macedonia. Paul introduced the church at Corinth to some believers with a Philippians 4:19 confidence. The example of these believers provided God-centered principles for giving.

Looking at Biblical stewardship:

- Foundation for giving – Giving ourselves to God.
- Focus of giving – Bringing glory to God – Our generosity reflects on the Lord.
- Fun of giving – “Giving with a generous spirit” – God’s grace enables our giving.

→ It is easy to surrender part when we've already given the whole (Romans 12:1).

We find a wonderful example of this truth in 2 Corinthians 8 where Paul praises the Macedonians' generosity and instructs the church in Corinth to complete what they started.

It is also important for the church to grow spiritually. Paul has been addressing some serious problems in this church. There have been cliques, self-indulgence, and various other sins.

It appears that the Corinthians had lost heart for the financial project they had begun (v. 10).

Paul has addressed these problems; they have repented; and now he is discussing a practical evidence of their change in life and focus. Instead of focusing on themselves they had a wonderful opportunity to serve others. They could complete the project they had begun.

Paul introduces them to the Macedonian churches. These folks were involved in incredible generosity: folks at churches like Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica. The church at Philippi seems to have stood out in their pattern of giving from the beginning.

- After coming to a saving faith in Christ, Lydia, a business woman in Philippi, virtually insisted that Paul and his companions accept her hospitality (Acts 16:15).
- The Philippian jailer, when saved, immediately showed hospitality to Paul and Silas.
- When Paul left Macedonia, the church at Philippi was the only one to send a gift to help his ministry (Phil. 4:15).
- And when Paul was ministering at Thessalonica they sent a gift more than once for his needs (Phil. 4:16).

It doesn't appear to be the size of the gift from Macedonia that impressed Paul. We aren't told how much they gave, but the generosity of the gift—i.e the spirit. They gave when circumstances were such that their giving could have been greatly reduced.

I. Situation in Macedonia:

A. Giving in spite of difficult circumstances

- *2 Cor. 8:2 How that in a **great trial of affliction** the abundance of their joy and their **deep poverty** abounded unto the riches of their liberality.*

1. “Great trial of affliction”

- a) *1 Thes. 1:6-7 And ye became followers of us, and of the Lord, having received the word in **much affliction** [tribulation, severe suffering], with joy of the Holy Ghost. ⁷ So that ye were ensamples to all that believe in Macedonia and Achaia.*
- b) *2 Thes. 1:3-4 We are bound to thank God always for you, brethren, as it is meet, because that your faith groweth exceedingly, and the charity of every one of you all toward each other aboundeth; ⁴ So that we ourselves glory in you in the churches of God for your patience and faith **in all your persecutions and tribulations that ye endure:***

2. Believers from Macedonia could have easily excused themselves saying, “We can’t give right now. This is a bad time. We aren’t sure what is going to happen with the economy, and our financial situation particularly.”
3. *Heb. 10:32-34 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions;*³³ *Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock [public spectacle] both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.*³⁴ *For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods [seizure of your property], knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance [possession].*
 - a) Physical suffering and public ridicule
 - b) Why? They showed sympathy to folks who had been arrested for the sake of the gospel.
 - (1) For those in prison, little provision was made for them, so they were dependent on family and friends to supply their needs and to bring them food.
 - (2) But those who visited someone in prison became identified with them. Once these people were so identified, their property was seized.
 - c) So they had a choice – “Do we keep quiet and protect ourselves and our belongings while other believers starve, or do we, by giving aid, go public and face persecution?”
 - d) After consideration, they went public, identified with the imprisoned believers, and as a result their property was taken.
 - e) How did they respond? *Joyfully!*
 - f) They knew they had a better possession in heaven. *Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...*

B. Deep, extreme poverty

1. The Greek word used here is “bathos.” It describes their “deep down” poverty. One commentator referred to it as “their down-to-depth poverty.”
2. These folks were at the bottom.
3. And in the depths of this poverty they’re begging Paul to let them give!
 - a) Verse 4: “praying with us” – begging us to receive their gift.
 - b) “I hope when I go to church today Paul will take a special offering!”

- c) They pleaded with Paul to let them give. The only “begging” taking place at this offering was from those who wanted to have part in it.
4. They are giving out of oppressive poverty and persecution. So what explains this attitude?

II. KEY: Giving is motivated by God’s grace.

A. “Grace” is a key word in this passage. The Greek word for “grace” is used at least 7 times in this chapter

1. Verse 1: We wish to make known unto you *the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia.*
2. Verse 4: Paul says they begged us that *we would receive the gift* – word for “gift” is *καρις* – “grace”
3. Verse 6: ... *he [Titus] would also finish in you the same grace also* – complete the gracious work.
4. Verse 7: ... *see that ye abound in this grace also.*
5. Verse 9: *For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich.*
6. Verse 16: *But thanks be to God ...* (*καρις*)
7. Verse 19: ... *who was also chosen of the churches to travel with us with this grace...*

B. Biblical giving is motivated by the grace of God.

1. The primary motivation for the Macedonians was not a man-centered desire to perform good works. It wasn’t guilt.
2. The grace of God is the primary stimulus for Biblical giving. There is an earnest desire to give generously and sacrificially.
3. Giving is another effect of transforming grace, and we see it as we grow spiritually.
4. That is why Paul is addressing it here to the church at Corinth. While it may appear “out of place” or just dropped into the text, nothing could be further from the truth. He has just addressed the results of a godly sorrow and the change it brings.

III. CHARACTERISTICS— of Grace Giving

A. Personal Characteristics – verse 5

1. Gave themselves to the Lord
2. Gave themselves to believers – v. 5b “unto us”
 - a) Without self giving there is no profound sacrifice
 - b) When they gave themselves to the Lord and to Paul, God’s servant, they had no problem giving to the Lord’s people.
 - c) You see this throughout Scripture as God’s work is communicated through His servants, those who have renounced claim to themselves humbly and cheerfully get involved in God’s program.
 - d) Emphasis here is on them giving themselves first.
 - e) Paul makes it clear that he is not commanding them to give, but encouraging them to demonstrate their love.
 - f) Their sincerity is seen in their sacrificial generosity.

B. Practical Characteristics

1. **Joyful** – v. 2a
 - a) Unless our giving comes from a sincere heart of joy it isn’t really righteous. Joy doesn’t come when we are motivated by guilt, fear, pressure, duty, or because we expect something in return.
 - b) “Give and it will be given unto you...” Luke 6:38.
 - c) When you understand that the offering is a pipeline to spiritual blessing we ought to be excited and give generously and sacrificially.
2. **Generous** – v. 2b
 - a) Humanly speaking, the Macedonians faced insurmountable difficulties that should have discouraged them from even considering giving.
 - b) Yet their giving “overflowed in the wealth of their liberality.” This was a heart attitude. The word “liberality” is the opposite of being duplicitous, or double-minded.

- c) It is also translated “sincerity.” The idea is that of single-mindedness. Double-minded giving worries too much about self and one’s own wants, desires, and needs.
 - d) Sincere, generous giving believes “*my God shall supply all [my] need according to His riches in glory [in] Christ Jesus*”
3. **Able** – v. 3a “for to their power” – according to their ability
- a) God does not prosper His people so they can indulge themselves; He prospers some so that they may share with those in need.
 - b) Paul doesn’t measure the church by its size, but by its sacrifice.
4. **Voluntary** – v. 3 “were willing of themselves” – They gave of their own accord.
5. **Worship and submission** – v. 5
- a) “first gave of their own selves to the Lord.”
 - b) Such an act of worship will also have a proper spirit of submission to God ordained authority. *Romans 12:1*
 - c) Submission to God led them to submit easily and eagerly to those God established as “undershepherds of Christ.” *1 Thes. 5:12-13*
 - d) Titus is the one there in Corinth guiding them in this endeavor (v. 6).
6. **Service** – v. 4, 5b
- a) The word for fellowship (v. 4) is the same word from which we get “communion.”
 - b) Word for ministering here is the word *διακονια*, from which we get “deacon,” meaning to serve.
 - c) Same word used in vv. 19, 20 “administered” – how they are serving, ministering with the offering.
 - d) So the Macedonians were begging Paul to take their gift so that they could have the “communion,” or fellowship, of serving believers they had probably never met!
 - e) There is a Biblical definition and demonstration of Biblical “fellowship.” Do you think of “fellowship” as serving the saints?

- f) Selfishness wants to be served; Christlikeness wants to contribute.
- g) “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve.” He came not to be ministered to, but to minister.

7. **In love – v. 8**

- a) This giving wasn’t done in a vacuum. Their lives were overflowing.
- b) True affection results in generosity. Biblical giving may be the surest way to demonstrate genuine love for others.
- c) By the opportunity (*occasion*) proving their earnestness and “proving the sincerity of your love.”

C. Conclusion–

1. The immature Corinthians needed to take baby steps. And grace giving was vital to their spiritual growth.
2. All the small competitive cliques and factions, the sin problems, the self exaltation in abusing spiritual gifts, the insensitivity in coming to the Lord’s Table (communion), were signs of consumers – seeking self.
3. They needed to follow the example of the Macedonian churches who first committed themselves to the Lord and His servant, and then to the Lord’s people. It was demonstrated in their giving.
4. Here is a great step in the direction of maintaining Christian unity.
5. This is a battle of faith – faith to believe what God says He will do. “My God shall supply ALL of your need according to His riches....”