

The following sermon was preached at Redemption Baptist Church on Sunday, 1 October 2023. We encourage you to look up the Scriptures that are referenced and see the context for yourself. May the Lord speak to your heart as you study His Word.

The Cheerful Giver

For about 3 ½ years back in the early 2000's, I was on what we missionaries call the “deputation trail.” This means that I went around to local churches to preach, and to ask them to consider supporting me with their finances and prayers, so that I could do full-time missionary work in Ireland. I began the deputation process as a single man; but by the last year of deputation, I had found a wife (and had thus obtained “*favour from the Lord*”)! For the last whole year of deputation, my wife and I travelled together.

Now, as my wife and I travelled from church to church, we often encountered traditions that we had never seen before. (By “traditions” I mean “unique little ways of doing things.”) One of the more unique traditions that I observed was at a church in Ohio. When it came time to take up the offering that Sunday morning, one of the men prayed, and asked the Lord’s blessing upon the offering; and as soon as he had finished praying, the people began to whoop and holler, and to shout, “Praise the Lord!” I was startled for a second, since the uproar was so loud and sudden; but then, I realised that they were *cheering* about giving their tithes and offerings to the Lord!

I had to chuckle about that little tradition! It definitely seemed to promote an atmosphere of cheerful giving. However, as I thought about it later, I wondered, “Are *all* these folks truly cheerful in their hearts as they give? Or are there some who simply go through the *ritual* of cheering, because they feel that that is what they are expected to do?” As I pondered that thought, I couldn’t help but recall a little tradition in my own home church, which I had seen all my life. (In fact, I had seen it in many churches.) At a certain point during the service (usually while the choir is coming down from the choir loft to the sanctuary), the pianist plays a hymn; and while the pianist is playing, the people are encouraged to go around and shake each other’s hands, and greet each other. This, in itself, is a form of giving, because you are giving a few minutes of your time to encourage other believers in the Lord, and to let any visitors know that they are loved and welcome. This was a simple, golden opportunity to give to God. Yet, sad to say, it was always plain to see that there were some members who didn’t really want to give in this way. They may have ventured a few feet from their seat, and very half-heartedly shaken a few hands, without even smiling, or saying “hello,” or asking a newcomer what his name was; but they quickly returned to their seat.

Now, this begs the question: “What *is* ‘giving,’ anyway?” What makes giving “giving” in God’s sight? The Scriptures make it clear that true giving *must* be done with *cheerfulness*. As we are preparing for this year’s missions conference, “**Give of Your Best to the Master,**” we are focusing on this matter of “giving,” because giving to God out of a cheerful, loving heart *is* the very heart of the Great Commission. We may *claim* to love God; but what we do with our wallets (and *how* we give from our wallets) reveals where our hearts really are. Taking the Gospel to the uttermost part of the earth requires *sacrifice* on the part of God’s people! The Great Commission is not funded by church raffles or community charity drives; it is funded by *committed members* of *Bible-believing churches*, who cheerfully sacrifice in order to spread the Gospel throughout the world.

What, then, does it take to be a giver? Well, before you can be a giver who truly pleases God, you must first *receive* a gift—the **Unspeakable Gift**. The Unspeakable Gift is the gift that *God* wants to give to *us*. It is the gift of salvation from our sin. In fact, the Unspeakable Gift is Jesus Christ Himself! If you want to spend eternity with God in Heaven one day, you *must* receive *Him!* No gift that *you* try to give to *God* can earn you salvation: you must receive *His* gift, by repenting of your sin, and placing your complete trust in what Jesus did for you on the cross. The Bible says, **“But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name.”**

Now, once you *have* placed your trust in Jesus, God wants to start making you into a giver; and Christ Himself is your perfect Example! In His time on earth, Jesus gave of Himself freely. Even *before* He gave up His life for us on the cross, He freely gave of Himself, every day. No matter how busy and weary He was, and no matter how much His own soul was burdened down with grief, He always made time for people, and served them with all His might. He never thought of Himself. That is the way God wants *us* to be, brethren! He wants us to give to others freely, and cheerfully. Jesus said, **“Freely ye have received, freely give.”** The title of this message is ***The Cheerful Giver***.

I. The place where Christians should give: the church

Before we can really understand what God has to say about giving, there is a truth that we must understand, and embrace. You see, there is a special institution that God commands every Christian to be a part of. This institution is a group of like-minded brethren, who all have a common goal. When this group of brethren meets together, they serve God, and *give* to God. When this group meets together, they make plans as to how they can take the Gospel to the uttermost part of the earth. This special group of people is called **the church**.

My friend, if you have placed your faith in Jesus Christ, then you are saved, and are a member of God’s family. However, now that you are saved, it is God’s will that you join a Bible-preaching church. And how do you join a church? By being baptised!

Read 1 Corinthians 12:12-13.

Read Romans 6:1-5.

Folks, I want to be extremely clear, so that no one misunderstands: *baptism does not save you!* It is *Christ* who saves you, when you repent of your sin and place your faith in Him. However, baptism *does* make you a member of a Bible-preaching church. Baptism is simply a picture of how Jesus died, was buried, and rose again. By being baptised, you are declaring to others that you have placed your faith in Christ’s death, burial, and resurrection; and you are also joining the membership of a local church, so that you can *serve* God in that church.

My friends, *this is* what the church is about: **service**. After you are saved, and have become a member of a Bible-preaching church, God wants you to *serve Him* within your church. He doesn't want you to float in and out of church as you please: He wants you to be committed to serving Him within your church. He wants you to give to God *through your local church*.

Now, there are many ways that we can give (and *should* give) to God. First, the Bible says that we should give God our **tithe (10%)**. Tithing isn't something you *may* do, if you so choose: it is a requirement. Contrary to what some may say, tithing is *not* something that was required of the nation of Israel in the Old Testament, but not for us today. How do I know this? Well, for one thing, **Abraham** gave tithes to God *before* there was any nation of Israel! (We read about this in **Genesis 14**, and **Hebrews 7**.) **Jacob** also tithed to God before there was any nation of Israel, or any Temple. (We read about this in **Genesis 28**.) Furthermore, after Christ went back to Heaven, the Lord revealed to the Apostles which parts of the Old Testament Law are still required of us New Testament Christians, and which aren't; but **tithing** was *not* one of the things that had passed away. *Other* things have passed away—such as the Sabbaths. We are not required to worship on the *last day* of the week anymore, but on the *first* day of the week—the day when Jesus arose from the grave. We are not required to follow the Jewish *kosher* diet, or to celebrate the seven feasts, or to bring animal sacrifices. Most parts of the Law have been done away. *Tithing*, on the other hand, was never done away with. Let's compare the Old Testament to the New Testament, and see what we find.

Read Malachi 3:8-11.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:1-2 / 9:7-14.

To this day, God still requires His people to bring their tithes into the "**storehouse**"; but the "**storehouse**" today is not the Jewish Temple: it is the *local church*. Look carefully at what Paul is saying in **1 Corinthians 9**. He says that the pastor of a New Testament church should be supported *in the same way* that the *priests* of the Old Testament were supported. And how were the priests of the Old Testament supported? By tithes!

Clearly, God requires that Christians tithe to their local church. And what are tithes used for? Well, as we've already seen, one of the purposes of tithes is **to support the church's pastor** (at least in part, as much as the church is able to do so). This enables the pastor to devote as much time as possible to prayer, study of God's Word, preaching, teaching, and evangelising. Of course, in the case of *this* church, I am not supported by this church at all, but by churches

in my home country; but, Lord willing, the day will come when this church *will* be able to support its next pastor, after I have moved on to establish another church.

What else are tithes used for? Obviously, a church's tithes are used **to pay the bills!** The light, heat, and building that we are enjoying this morning aren't given to us for free; we pay for these things with our tithes, so that we may have a place to worship God together—and also, so that lost people in our community may have a place where they can come to hear the Gospel preached! This brings us to the most important use of all. A church's tithes should be used to **support the evangelisation of their own community.** With our tithes, we pay for Bibles, literature, and for all the things that go into evangelisation outreaches, so that we can take the Gospel to the people of Athlone and surrounding communities.

However, this isn't the only way that Christians can give. Christians should also be involved in giving to their church's **missionaries.** The Apostle Paul himself was a missionary; and there were churches that supported him, so that he could devote as much time as possible to planting churches in regions beyond them.

Read Philippians 4:10-19.

The church of Philippi was established by Paul; and not long after he left Philippi to establish other churches, they voluntarily began to support Paul financially and materially. Paul didn't ask them to do this: they gave willingly! This is what *Redemption Baptist Church* does, as well. We voluntarily commit ourselves to support our missionaries faithfully, so that we can help them to take the Gospel to Honduras, to Hungary, to the Oranmore area, and to the addicted here in Ireland. No one compels us to do this: we do it *freely*.

Giving to missions is an extremely important way that you can give to God. Every Christian should be involved in giving to his church's missionaries. You know what, though? As important as it is to give your *money*, God wants you to give much more than money. God also wants you to give your **time** for Him. He wants you to have an attitude of wanting to jump in and help whenever you see a need, without even being asked.

Read 1 Corinthians 16:15-18.

Who was Stephanus? Was he a pastor? No, the Bible doesn't indicate that he was. Stephanus was simply a faithful member of the church of Corinth; and Paul described him as ***“addicted to the ministry of the saints.”*** (That's a strong word!) Stephanus couldn't get enough of

servicing his fellow believers. It was like an addiction. It wasn't just Stephanus who had this "addiction" to serving others, either. It was his *whole family*. They gave of themselves.

Christian, what about when *you* are at church? God designed church to be a place of fellowship for Christians; however, sometimes we can become so focused on fellowshipping with our brethren, that we overlook the needs around us. Perhaps a mess needs to be hoovered up, or a room needs to be tidied, or dishes need to be washed. This may not seem like a big deal; but to God, it *is* a big deal! Of course, we know that "God's House" is not a building, but rather the *assembly* of saved and biblically baptised believers. Yet, this assembly *does* meet in a building: and that makes this building important to God. You may be sure that the "little jobs" around this building, such as cleaning up a mess, or washing the dishes, are very important to Him! It's a way that we can tell God, "Lord, I love you; I love your house; and I even love the *building* in which your 'house' assembles together!"

What about telling other people about Christ, and salvation? Do you pick up some of these tracts when you're at church? Are you resolved, as you go through your week, to give out tracts to lost folks that you meet? Are you eager to go out knocking on doors, or to be involved in street preaching and tract distribution? What about going out of your way to do something kind for someone? It could be as simple as making a cup of tea for someone between Sunday School and worship hour. In **Matthew 10**, Jesus said that when a Christian gives even a cup of cold water to another Christian simply because he loves God, God will reward him for it!

How else can we serve God? Well, perhaps you have a **talent**—something that you can do. Maybe you have a bit of musical talent. If so, use it for the Lord! Sing or play a special for church, so that you can encourage other Christians. Maybe you like to write, or you are good at designing things on the computer. You could write or design a tract for church, or help to put together programmes and booklets when we have special conferences or outreaches. Maybe you're good at baking. You could make dishes for church, so that visitors feel welcome. Maybe you're just a sociable person. You can be an official greeter when people come in the door, so that our visitors feel welcome, and want to come back! Of course, *everyone* should take time to fellowship with other believers, and welcome visitors!

Giving should be the way you live your life, Christian. If you be saved, but are not a church member, you need to become a member! Should you be a member already, find ways that you can give and serve God in this church. If you can't think of any ways to serve, *ask your pastor* what ways you can serve. Give of your *best* to the Master!

II. The way in which Christians should give: cheerfully

Jesus said, ***“Freely ye have received: freely give.”*** God wants to make each one of us into givers, just like His Son. Yet, the mere *act* of giving is not what pleases God. A person may give, yet give for a completely wrong reason. In fact, you may be a *lost person*, and on your way to hell, yet be a “giver.” Many people give to charity, or even to a church, because they think that by giving, they are earning their salvation; but this is a totally wrong (and spiritually *deadly*) reason to give! My friend, you *can’t* earn your salvation! Jesus already paid for your salvation for you; thus, if you want to be saved from hell, and spend eternity with God, you must humble yourself, admit you can’t save yourself, and receive His salvation as a gift.

Ephesians 2:8-9 says, ***“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.”***

There are many wrong reasons to give. Many people give because they want other people to notice their giving, and talk about how grand they are. Lost people practice this kind of “giving” every day; but to God, it is an abomination. **What about Christians, though?** Can Christians give for the wrong reason? They certainly can! For example, many Christians give merely out of a sense of duty. They don’t really want to give; but they give anyway, with a bad attitude in their hearts. Christian, to God, this is not giving at all! He wants you to give *cheerfully*, simply because you love *Him*.

Read 2 Corinthians 9:6-7.

Christian, whether you’re giving your tithe, or to missions, or to another special offering, or to someone who is in need, give cheerfully! Do we really think God would be pleased with our giving otherwise? God doesn’t want a bunch a sour-faced, stingy givers; He wants us to give with cheerful, grateful hearts. The best part about giving cheerfully is that as you give cheerfully, the cheer multiplies. Giving cheerfully to God *always* brings joy to our hearts. I could spend a month of Sundays simply telling the testimonies of Christians I know who are the most joyful people you could ever meet: and the thing they all have in common is that they are the most *cheerful givers* that you will ever meet! I can testify, from my own experience, that whenever I give to God out of a cheerful heart, it brings me great joy. I could give *many* testimonies of cheerful givers; but this morning, I would like to examine someone in the Old Testament who was a cheerful giver. Her name was **Ruth**.

Read Ruth 1:1-22 / 2:1-12 / 4:1-2, 9-11, 14-22.

The story of Ruth is one of the most beautiful accounts in Scripture. It all began when a couple named Elimelech and Naomi failed to trust God during a time of famine; and instead of

staying in God's land, they went to the heathen land of Moab, where their sons ended up marrying women who had no knowledge of the true and living God. Yet, in spite of Elimelech and Naomi's small faith, God used them to reach the heart of their daughter-in-law, Ruth; and she became a true believer in the God of Israel. Years later, when Naomi's husband and two sons were dead, and Naomi finally realised that it was time to go back home to Judah, Ruth refused to part with her mother-in-law. By faith, she went to Judah, and embraced the people of God; and God brought a godly man named **Boaz** into her life.

For two thousand years now, Christians have recognised Boaz as a type of Christ. Boaz was the great-grandfather of David, and was a direct ancestor of the Lord Jesus Christ. He was from Jesus' own birthplace of Bethlehem. Most importantly, Boaz was Ruth's "kinsman-redeemer"--the relative who bought back the family inheritance of Naomi. As part of that transaction, Boaz took Ruth to be his bride; and in this, Boaz is a wonderful type of Christ. Christ is the one who "bought back" our eternal life, which had been forfeited because of our sin. In so doing, He redeemed *us*, and made us His bride.

With this in mind, please notice what Boaz said to Ruth when she came to his field to gather grain. (You can follow along with me in **Ruth 2:11.**) First, he commended her because of her faithfulness to her mother-in-law, and because of her decision to leave her own nation, and to join herself to the nation of Israel. Secondly, he assured her that the LORD would richly reward her for the kindness that she had shown to her mother-in-law. Most importantly, he finished his blessing with these words: "***A full reward be given thee of the LORD God of Israel, under whose wings thou art come to trust.***"

Brethren, the key word here is "***trust***"! The virtuous *works* that Ruth did were the product of her new-found *trust* in the God of Israel. She had left her family in Moab not simply because she loved her mother-in-law, but because she had truly renounced her old gods, and had placed her faith in the true God. The other daughter-in-law, Orpah, loved her mother-in-law—but not enough to leave her pagan gods, and to place her faith in the true God. Ruth's *faith* in God was what made all the difference. Her cheerful giving to her mother-in-law was the product of her salvation, into which she had entered by *faith*. Such it always is in the lives of true believers. True faith in Christ is always accompanied by a *turning* of the heart and mind from sin to God. This is called "repentance." Faith and repentance result in salvation; and from salvation springs a life of cheerful giving to God, and to others. If there is any quality in Ruth's life that stands out, it is that of **cheerful giving**.

Yet, cheerful giving to God and others doesn't come by default. It comes only as we continually *surrender* our hearts to the Lord. When a Christian is *not* surrendered to the Lord, a cheerful spirit is quickly replaced with a *bitter* spirit. Consider Naomi and Ruth. When Naomi and Ruth returned to Bethlehem, both of them were believers in the God of Israel: yet, Naomi's heart was filled with bitterness. She was so angry with God, that she even tried to

push away her own daughter-in-law, and send her back to her old gods! Ruth was hurting inside just as much as Naomi was; yet, she had a cheerful heart. Why? Because Ruth saw God's loving hand in her life, despite the tragedies. Naomi, on the other hand, did not. She failed to see how God could love her, when He had allowed her husband and sons to die; and in bitterness, she told all her old neighbours, "***Call me not Naomi, call me Mara.***" Her birth name, Naomi, means "pleasant"; but Naomi wanted people to call her "Mara," which means "bitter"! The problem wasn't with Naomi's circumstances; the problem was with her heart.

Yet, God wasn't done with Naomi. God used Naomi's own daughter-in-law to strengthen her faith, and to restore her joy in the Lord. As Ruth cheerfully went out into the fields to serve Naomi, God rewarded her in such a way, that it soon became obvious to Naomi, and to everyone in Bethlehem, that God was with her; and her cheerful spirit spread to others!

III. The reward for giving cheerfully: Treasure in Heaven

If Ruth had had a bad attitude about her poverty, and about the lowly, back-breaking work that she had to do, Boaz probably wouldn't have wanted to marry her: but because she was a cheerful giver, God rewarded her. He rewarded her with a loving, godly husband, *and* with the honour of being a great-great grandmother of Jesus Christ. However, this wasn't the only reward that Ruth received. She also received treasure in Heaven!

Read Matthew 6:19-21.

Jesus says that when you give to God and to others with a cheerful heart, simply because you love God, you are laying up treasure in Heaven. The "***treasures in heaven***" that Jesus is talking about are the *rewards* that God will give to His people for their faithful service to Him *after* they were saved. Christ has promised us **crowns**, and **positions of authority** in His coming Kingdom, based upon our faithful service to Him in this life on earth. He also promises us the **eternal joy** of having *living gems* to lay down at His feet. When we use our *earthly treasures* as a tool to reach souls for Christ, those souls will greet us in Heaven one day; and their eternal friendship will be a treasure that will never pass away!

You know what, though? Even though we Christians know all these things about treasure in Heaven, we often have a hard time believing it, and practicing it. There are all kinds of things of this world that we are tempted to invest in, instead of giving it to God. Perhaps you know, in your heart, that God wants you to give a certain amount to missions; yet, you are tempted to spend the money that you could have given to missions on a nice jacket, dress, or suit that you didn't need, or on a new, jumbo-sized telly that you could have done without. What happens

when Christians invest in themselves, when they *know* they should have given to the Lord? That money that they spent on themselves instead of on God is lodged into the “Worldly Treasure Bank”; and at the Judgment Seat of Christ one day, all the assets in Worldly Treasure Bank will be “burned up.” The Bible says that at the Judgement Seat of Christ, ***“Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is. If any man's work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire.”*** Whenever you spend your money, your time, and your talents on yourself instead of God and others, you are laying up treasure in this world, which will pass away.

Conclusion: If you know Christ as Saviour, you have a choice to make every day. You can choose to give to *self*, or to give to God and others. You can choose to give with a bad attitude, and get no treasure in Heaven for it; or, you can give to God cheerfully, and get treasure in Heaven for it. You don't lose your *salvation* when you selfishly cling to things of this world, or when you give with a bad attitude; but when you do lose rewards in Heaven. Christian, draw near to Christ today, and allow Him to make you into a *cheerful* giver! As we close, **I would also appeal to those who are not saved.** My friend, if you have not received Christ as your Saviour, you cannot even begin to lay up treasure in Heaven. You do not *have* an account in the Heavenly Treasure Bank, because you do not even have a *reservation* in Heaven. The only “treasure” that you are currently treasuring up (other than the things of this world, which will pass away) is the “treasure” of God's wrath. The Bible says, in **Romans 2**, that those who do not know Christ are treasuring up unto themselves ***“wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God.”*** Every day, you are continually sinning against God, and racking up a bigger and bigger sin debt—and with it, greater condemnation. However, you don't *have* to have that debt of sin upon you any longer. Jesus paid your sin debt *for* you, on the cross. If you will turn from your sin, believe in your heart that Jesus paid the complete price for your sin, and ask Him to save you, He will forgive your sin, and put you on the path of life. Please come to Christ for salvation today!