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O. M. S. D.

Deacon/Elder Lecture Outlines

Lecture 5

Serving God With Your Substance

I. Introduction

- A. "Money makes the world go around" -- we have all heard that expression. And when speaking of this world's system of doing things, it is probably true.
- B. Of course, money is not the basis of God's system and should not "make our world go around," but nonetheless how we view and use this world's money goes a long way to determine how we will use the true riches of eternal life in God's Kingdom.
- C. Money can be dealt with and used either man's way (the way of this world) or God's way. As leaders in God's Church we must understand and apply God's way of handling our finances in the midst of a confused world that uses money wrongly -- so wrongly that it seems the entire world virtually turns on its financial system and principles.

II. SPS

This lecture will explain the principles involved in paying tithes and offerings.

III. Need

God is working out His purpose of bringing billions of children into His Family to share in the rulership of the universe. In this life we are developing the character and mind of God, which we need to fulfill our future responsibilities. We must learn to put God first in every area of our lives. How we handle our personal finances will, to a large degree, determine our position and reward in God's Kingdom -- and, for some of us, may even determine whether we will be in God's Kingdom.

Luke 16:10-11 -- What we do with the comparatively small amount of wealth God allows us in this physical life shows what we would do with the vast power, authority and wealth we would inherit as His children in ruling the universe. This is one of the major areas of our lives in which we are being tested, evaluated and judged every day by Jesus Christ (I Peter 4:17).

Matthew 6:21 -- Just as our faith is demonstrated by our works, we demonstrate whether or not our hearts are in God's Work by how we spend our money.

Managing our finances God's way will help us qualify for a position of authority in God's Kingdom. Failure to do so may disqualify us for any position.

IV. How Are You Handling Your Finances?

A. Don't Be Materialistic in Your Approach to Life

God wants all of us as His people to prosper (III John 2). He wants us to enjoy the physical things of this life (Ecclesiastes 5:18). But He doesn't want us to set our hearts on pleasures, pastimes and material pursuits. It is a matter of our attitude and approach.

I Corinthians 7:31 -- God allows us to use, but He does not want us to abuse, the physical things in this world. He wants us to realize they have a part in this physical life for character development, but then they pass away.

II Corinthians 4:18 -- That which we can see, taste, feel, hear and smell -- that which we can discern with our physical senses -- is not the reality. The physical things around us, which mean so much to us and appeal so strongly to our physical senses and pulls of the flesh, are only temporary. These things will eventually be destroyed with this world, when God has finished using this physical earth as a training ground for adding children to His ruling Family (II Peter 3:10-13).

Therefore no physical thing is of lasting value, and the pursuit of physical comforts and accoutrements, food, clothing and pleasures should not be our primary goal in life -- should not consume the majority of our time or fill the majority of our thoughts. What we will retain after this physical life is God's Spirit and the character we have built, not the physical possessions we have accumulated (I Timothy 6:6-10).

Matthew 6:19-23 -- God counsels us to lay up treasures in heaven -- to set our affections on things above, not on things on this earth (Colossians 3:2). We do this by putting our treasure -- our money -- into God's Work, rather than lavishing it on ourselves out of proportion. We must be single-mindedly seeking God's Kingdom (Matthew 6:24). It is impossible for us as carnal human beings to set as a major goal the attainment of material things -- the status symbols,

creature comforts and physical pleasures of this life -- and at the same time to wholeheartedly seek God's Kingdom and His righteousness.

The point is to focus on your motivation. Are you serving yourself or are you serving others? Of course, there is a balance to achieve. Everyone needs time to be alone with family, but consider the overall picture.

Isaiah 55:2 -- Have we been spending too much of our money for "that which is not bread" -- that which will be of no eternal value and profit? Have we been giving in to the pressures of this materialistic society in which we are living, or can we say honestly before God that we are seeking His Kingdom first in every way -- including the way we manage our finances?

B. God Knows Our Needs

Matthew 6:25-31 -- God doesn't want us to be anxiously concerned about our basic needs of food, drink and clothing. How much less, then, should we be concerned about other things in this physical life that aren't really needs?

Verse 32 -- The spiritual gentiles of this world -- those who don't know God and who don't have the goal of someday becoming God -- seek after material things. But we, as converted children of God, whose eyes have been opened and enlightened, should not be overly concerned about things pertaining to this physical life. We should realize that God will provide for us.

The point to remember here is not to seek materialism to the detriment of your budget. There is no need to go in debt to buy a boat or a new car just to maintain an image of prosperity.

C. Live by Faith

Matthew 6:33-34 -- God promises us that He will provide for our needs if we seek His Kingdom first. He wants us to learn to live by faith. We must trust Him to provide for our needs. It isn't natural to trust God and exercise faith, but that is what we must do if we set ourselves to manage our finances God's way. As a way of life, God wants us to look to Him and trust Him in everything. Our attitude must be that of faith and complete confidence in God.

This should be our attitude and approach in managing our finances. We must, first of all, set our hearts on God's Kingdom and His Work -- not the things of

this world. Second, we must have faith in God that He will provide all our needs and also any additional material blessings He decides we really should have (Psalm 34:10)

V. Obey God's Financial Principles

We have seen what our attitude and approach should be. Now let's look at some specific principles we must follow in managing our finances God's way.

A. Pay Your Tithes Faithfully

Malachi 3:8 -- Do individuals in God's Church steal first, second or third tithe? Sadly, some do. Every year before the Feast, we discover that some members have stolen from their second tithe, either by failing to save it or by borrowing from it. There are many more whom we don't discover, but God knows. Surprisingly, even some leaders in the Church -- even men being considered for ordination as deacons or elders -- have not faithfully paid even their first tithe. These, according to Malachi 3:9, are cursed with a curse. They will be cursed financially now, and if they don't repent, they will be cursed for all eternity.

Others pay their tithes, but grudgingly. With this kind of an attitude, they, too, probably cannot be fully blessed financially.

Job 41:11 -- Remember, God owns everything -- even you (I Corinthians 6:19-20). Your income and everything you own belongs totally to God. He requires you to pay the first tenth to Him through His Work. The second tenth He commands you to save in order to keep His feasts. A third tenth He requires you to pay every third year out of a seven-year cycle as a form of welfare to help widows, orphans, strangers and His ministers. Then, once you have discharged these obligations, God gives you the rest. However, God still has prior claims on part of it.

B. Remember the Poor

Leviticus 19:9-10 -- God made special provision in Israel for the poor and needy to acquire food. This was a command from God. He is just as concerned about the poor among His people today. Many places in Proverbs show God's concern for the poor (Proverbs 19:7, 21:13, 28:27).

How can we give to the needy today? One way is by faithfully saving and sending in our third tithe, if

applicable. If we are not in our third-tithe year, or if for some reason we are not required to save third tithe (as in the case of elders), then certainly some freewill offerings to the third-tithe fund would be commendable. Of course, we can and should help the needy directly on a one-to-one basis when that is wise under the circumstances.

Luke 14:12 -- There are other ways we can give to the poor. We can invite them to dinner on occasion. We tend to invite for dinner only those whose company we enjoy, or those who will return the invitation. That is not wrong, of course, but you'll be blessed if you also entertain the needy.

C. Lay Up Treasure in Heaven

After you have faithfully paid your tithes and even given extra to the poor, realize that you still may not have put your treasure into God's Work. The tithes are not yours, and the other, even though commanded of God, did not go into the Work of preaching the Gospel. In one way of looking at it, therefore, it is through our offerings that we lay up treasure in heaven.

Notice: In Malachi 3:8, God says He is robbed of tithes and offerings. This means regular offerings as well as the special offerings God commands for the Holy Days (Deuteronomy 16:16-17). Offerings are an absolute requirement, just as much as tithes are. The difference is that God sets the amount for His tithes, but He leaves the amount of the offerings up to us. This is one gauge that can indicate just how much our hearts are in the Work of God!

Those who do not have their hearts in the Work of God are not growing spiritually, while those who do have their hearts in the Work grow steadily and continuously. We saw the principle in Matthew 6:21 that where a man's treasure is, his heart will be also. Those who are not putting their treasure into God's Work do not have their hearts in it. God does not need our money, but He has given us the tremendous opportunity of being a part of this end-time Work, which is preparing the way for the return of Jesus Christ.

VI. Insure Your Future by Investing in God's Work

A. Give According to Your Blessings

Luke 21:1-4 -- God is not concerned with the amount, per se, of our offerings. He wants us to give an

offering that reflects the degree to which we have been blessed, that reflects our awareness and appreciation of His blessings. Most of us in God's Church have been blessed above measure in every way -- not just physically. But by nature we tend to be unthankful for most of the blessings we receive. Instead of naturally desiring to show our gratitude through our offerings, the more we get, the more we naturally tend to desire.

Deuteronomy 16:17 -- The principle of giving offerings is that we should give according to the blessings God has given us. As God increasingly prospers us, we should increase our offerings in proportion to the increase we receive, if not more. God is not asking us to give what we don't have. But often we can overlook what God has given us because our motivation has become oriented toward getting.

II Corinthians 9:6-7 -- Here is an important principle to understand with regard to our liberality in giving offerings. If we don't show God our gratitude and appreciation for our blessings by "sowing bountifully" -- by giving generous, liberal offerings -- then we'll reap sparingly. Or if we give grudgingly -- if we give liberally because we know we should but would prefer to spend it on ourselves -- or if we give in order to get blessings, we also "reap sparingly."

If a farmer has a bumper crop of wheat, sells it and lives it up on the profits, failing to invest in seed and machinery for the next year, he will fail. So it is with you. If you have spent your extra money lavishing physical things on yourself and have neglected to invest sufficiently in God's Work through your offerings, you will not prosper financially.

If you are not being blessed now as a result of not sowing generously in the past, you have to break the cycle. You have to begin to give more, realizing that you aren't being blessed because you have sowed sparingly. This may, for a time, require a sacrifice, but if your attitude is right, you have an absolute guarantee from God that He will prosper you.

B. Go Into Partnership With God

God is in the business of bringing children into His Family. He is carrying out this business through His Work on earth, and He has called us to have a part in it. He has called us to become partners with Him. It should be a source of real joy and pleasure to us each payday as we have the opportunity to invest in God's Work. It is the only concern on earth that will

really pay off. Investments in God's Work, which are our offerings, will pay off in blessings here and now, and for all eternity in God's Kingdom.

Don't make the mistake many make by figuring out their budget and then determining their offering on the basis of how much they have left over. This is not how God would have us determine the amount of our offering. Offerings are second in importance to our tithes. In order to give according to the blessings we receive, we must determine our offerings before we start planning on how much to spend on ourselves.

Many have found that a percentage basis is a good way to determine this. You could set aside a certain percentage for a Holy Day offering, and a certain percentage for your regular offering. In this way, as your blessings increase, the amount of your offerings will increase as well.

Then, as God continues to bless you, you may find that you can increase the percentage of your offerings. By putting your offerings first rather than last, you'll find that God will bless you increasingly, and you'll have the rewarding experience of continuing to increase your offerings.

VII. Put God and His Work First

We can't buy our way into the Kingdom of God. It is a gift of God. But by managing our finances God's way and by striving to invest as much as possible in His Work through our offerings, we are building character that will qualify us for a position in that Kingdom. By proving ourselves faithful in that which is least, we show that we will be faithful in much in the future.

This, then, is the crux of managing our finances God's way. God requires that we pay tithes, give to the poor and give offerings. In these matters, our only choice is whether we will obey God. But the amount of offerings we give in comparison to what we could give clearly shows our attitude and approach to managing our finances.

If we put physical things ahead of God's Work, our hearts are not in God's Work, but those physical things.

God plainly sees whether the emphasis in our lives is on acquiring and enjoying material things, or on putting our treasure into His Work as a type of investment for the future. He can clearly see whether we are living by faith and trusting Him to provide, not only our needs, but also any special blessings He might want to give us, or whether we are constantly "making provision for the flesh" in our approach to managing our finances.

Put God and His Work first and you'll truly "reap bountifully" -- in physical blessings here and now and, more importantly, in the everlasting spiritual blessings that come from developing character and qualifying for a high position in God's Kingdom.

VIII. Conclusion

Money does indeed "make the world go around." But we as leaders in God's Church need to step off the money merry-go-round of this world and stand instead on the solid footing of God's financial system.