

“Giving” Should Not Be Seen Only As Part of “Our Good Works!”

*21 “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **only the one who does the will of my Father** who is in heaven. 22 Many will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?’ 23 Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!’” - Matthew 7:21-23*

There is a common belief that our “good works,” or “righteous deeds”, including giving to others, will get us into heaven. We may think that once we do ‘good works’ then God will overlook our sins, and usher us into His heavenly sanctuary. There is nothing further from the truth. Matthew 7:21-23 above is helpful in this regard. First, we cannot say that we give to others and therefore this is our ticket into heaven. If our lifestyle is still sinful, then our ‘good works’ will not cause us to enter into the kingdom of God.

Second, whatever we do as a believer should be in accordance to the will of God for our lives. Therefore, our good deeds should not be occasioned by ‘feel good’ moments. ‘Giving,’ and every other thing that we do, should be prompted or inspired by the Holy Spirit, and should be part of God’s will. We can only know God’s will if we spend time studying His Word, and building our relationship with Him and His Son Jesus. Our giving therefore will reflect the character of God, and His love towards others. It is then that ‘giving’ becomes a very humbling experience. Why? Because, in giving, we should remember how God demonstrated the ultimate sacrifice when He gave His only Son, Jesus, to be a sacrificial Lamb for wretched sinners like me and you. So every act of giving should cause us to reflect on the mercy of God towards us, and keep us in that place of His eternal grace. If Jesus did not give up His life for us, where would we have been today?

Again, I can see why God loves a cheerful giver. The person who willingly gives of his own substance to positively impact the lives of others engages in a very humbling, noble, loving and selfless act indeed.

Do not be like those false disciples in Matthew 7:21-23 above who argued with God, and plead their cases before the Almighty Judge, and who wanted to remind an all-knowing God of their “good works.” ‘Giving’ should never be seen solely as another part of our ‘good works.’ To me, giving is an outward expression of an inward love for God and His Son Jesus. Each time we give, we are declaring God’s love for us, because He first loved us while we were yet sinners, and His Son gave up His life for us. Each time we give we are expressing our thanksgiving towards God for His love, and for blessing us with the gifts to give. Each time we give we are demonstrating to the receivers of our gifts that God is real and merciful, and that His love towards them is everlasting. Each time we give we are saying “God, thank You for using me as Your instrument of love to help those in need.” That is why our giving is more than just “good works.” Each time we give, we are like the good stewards on whom God can depend, and through

whom He can channel His resources to touch the lives of others, and to fulfil His divine purpose here on earth. This can only be achieved if we are living according to the will of God, and we understand His ways through a relationship with His Son Jesus. Giving, therefore, is an outward expression of an inward love for God, and His Son through the cultivation of a healthy relationship with the Divine.

In short, our giving is a means to an end:

1. An expression of our relationship with God and His Son;
2. An expression of our understanding of the will of God as a result of 1 above;
3. An expression of the love of God to others so that they, too, can be saved.
4. Once 1, 2 and 3 above are satisfied then we can happily enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Third, we cannot serve two masters. Either you will love one or hate the other. We cannot serve God and money. Our attitude to giving usually tells us which of the two is our master. If money is one's master, then we are simply doing "good works." But if we serve the "I Am that I Am," (Exodus 3:14) then our giving should be an expression of the sacrifice that Jesus made on the cross. selfless giving is an expression of the love of God. Why don't we give love today by our thoughts, words and deeds, and make a difference in the lives of others. In the end, the choice is ours. Either we give in accordance with the will of God as an expression of His love to others, or we serve the god of this world through 'our good works' but with a sinful heart.

In expressing God's love, our focus should not be in the 'act of giving,' but should rather be in 'our being' – being a child of God, and a believer in Christ Jesus. If we are only about doing "good works" we are reminded in Isaiah 64:6 that *"all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags."* Even the gift of salvation is priceless and could not have been bought by "our good works." Salvation result from grace of God – which He gave freely because of His love, not His "good works," towards us.

I am not saying that we should not do good works. However, it is the attitude of the heart that determines whether it is as a result of our love for Jesus, or just for "show." The question again centres on "Whom do you serve?" Colossians 3:23-24 instructs us:

*"Whatever you do, work at it with your whole being, **for the Lord and not for men**, because you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as your reward. **It is the Lord Christ you are serving....**"*

So in your giving, give for the Lord unto man, and He will reward You with divine increase in due season. Matthew 25: 2 summarizes our discussion that giving is more than just our good works. Giving is an expression of our relationship with Jesus Christ, and it is the Lord Jesus that we are serving when we give to others:

37 "Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink? 38 When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You? 39 Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?' 40 And the King will answer and say to them, 'Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.'" - Matthew 25:37-40.

Be blessed.

"Heavenly Father,

Help me to recognize that my giving is service unto You, O Lord. It is the Lord Jesus Christ that I am serving, and not just works that I do for men. Father, help me to strive to work hard at building my relationship with You, so I can further understand Your heart, and the mind of Christ. Teach me how to be more dedicated in my daily devotion, prayer and the study of Your Word, so I can better understand Your will. I thank You for Your mercy, grace and goodness towards me, and for the many blessings that You continue to bestow upon my life. In Jesus' name I pray with thanksgiving. Amen."

Memory Verses:

"... all our righteous deeds are like filthy rags." - Isaiah 64:6