

Rethinking The Offering

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Bible Text: Complete Jewish Bible (1998)
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The Offering

After hammering on the tithe and its meaning for the Christian, we now turn to the offering. Many books and internet articles have been published, so I will try to keep my contribution to that which has not been investigated.

The intention of this research is to study the offering. We will spend our efforts answering the following questions:

- (1) Why and when was the offering instigated?
- (2) What is the offering?
- (3) What is not an offering?
- (4) Who had the right to accept the offering, and under which conditions?
- (5) Who had the duty to pay the offering, and under which conditions?
- (6) For what was the offering used?

For clarity we note that the offering is distinct from the tithe, and therefore the tithe will not be attended to here. For more information on the tithe subject, see the document entitled "Rethinking the Tithe".

I use the Complete Jewish Bible as my handbook, which often uses words in the original language. When quoting the text, I leave the text as is. One of the words we shall find is "*tzedakah*". Out of the glossary one reads that "*tzedakah*" means literally, "righteousness", but since ancient times is also used to mean "charity".

In order to keep some balance, we mention this - the bible encourages giving, but at the same time cautions us to give *only* under certain conditions. Most teachings harp on the giving for giving's sake and the blessings that overtake us as an incentive, but fail to mention that fraudsters roam the world looking to relieve others of their belongings. Beware of wolves in sheep's clothing.

Another pitfall of giving, as we shall see, is that giving indiscriminately is not what the Bible demands. The act of giving, can be performed incorrectly. Giving to the wrong person happens all too often.

Giving initiated

The first appeal by God to the act of giving in the offering sense is

recorded in Exodus 35:4-36:6. Read the text very slowly and thoroughly. This was for the tent of meeting. The next record of large scale giving is found in 1 Chronicles 29:3-19. This was for the temple. Ezra 1:4 speaks again of charity to build the house of God.

In these texts it is plainly demonstrated that giving in the temple offering sense is when a person upon his own free will - not influenced by external sources - decides to transfer his own wealth to another.

Ephesians 2:21-22 is very straightforward in teaching that the Believer/Church is the building of the holy temple, and is being held together and built to be a spiritual dwelling-place for God. Taking this model from the Original Covenant, we see that the Church should be built with offerings.

Ephesians 2:21-22 In union with him the whole building is held together, and it is growing into a holy temple in union with the Lord. Yes, in union with him, you yourselves are being built together into a spiritual dwelling-place for God!

The idea "money at our disposal and awaiting our decision for use" is repeated in Acts 5:4:

Acts 5:4a Before you sold it, the property was yours; and after you sold it, the money was yours to use as you pleased.

Here are a list of verses concerning the benefaction. The reader is encouraged to meditate on these texts before continuing on.

- (1) *Matthew 6:1-4 Be careful not to parade your acts of tzedakah in front of people in order to be seen by them! If you do, you have no reward from your Father in heaven. So, when you do tzedakah, don't announce it with trumpets to win people's praise, like the hypocrites in the synagogues and on the streets. Yes! I tell you, they have their reward already! But you, when you do tzedakah, don't even let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. Then your tzedakah will be in secret; and your Father, who sees what you do in secret, will reward you.*
- (2) *Matthew 25:15-30 To one he gave five talents [equivalent to a hundred years' wages]; to another, two talents; and to another, one talent - to each according to his ability. Then he left. The one who had received five talents immediately went out, invested it and earned another five. Similarly, the one given two earned another two. But the*

one given one talent went off, dug a hole in the ground and hid his master's money. "After a long time, the master of those servants returned to settle accounts with them. The one who had received five talents came forward bringing the other five and said, 'Sir, you gave me five talents; here, I have made five more.' His master said to him, 'Excellent! You are a good and trustworthy servant. You have been faithful with a small amount, so I will put you in charge of a large amount. Come and join in your master's happiness!' Also the one who had received two came forward and said, 'Sir, you gave me two talents; here, I have made two more.' His master said to him, 'Excellent! you are a good and trustworthy servant. You have been faithful with a small amount, so I will put you in charge of a large amount. Come and join in your master's happiness!' "Now the one who had received one talent came forward and said, 'I knew you were a hard man. You harvest where you didn't plant and gather where you didn't sow seed. I was afraid, so I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here! Take what belongs to you!' You wicked, lazy servant!" said his master, 'So you knew, did you, that I harvest where I haven't planted? and that I gather where I didn't sow seed? Then you should have deposited my money with the bankers, so that when I returned, I would at least have gotten back interest with my capital! Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has ten. For everyone who has something will be given more, so that he will have more than enough; but from anyone who has nothing, even what he does have will be taken away. As for this worthless servant, throw him out in the dark, where people will wail and grind their teeth!'

- (3) Luke 3:11 He answered, "Whoever has two coats should share with somebody who has none, and whoever has food should do the same."
- (4) Luke 12:33 Sell what you own and do tzedakah – make for yourselves purses that don't wear out, riches in heaven that never fail, where no burglar comes near, where no moth destroys.
- (5) Luke 14:12-13 Yeshua also said to the one who had invited him, "When you give a lunch or a dinner, don't invite your friends, brothers, relatives or rich neighbors; for they may well invite you in return, and that will be your repayment. Instead, when you have a party, invite poor people, disfigured people, the crippled, the blind! How blessed you will be that they have nothing with which to repay you! For you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous."
- (6) Acts 11:29-30 So the talmidim decided to provide relief to the brothers living in Y'hudah, each according to his means; and they did it, sending their contribution to the elders in the care of Bar-nabba and Sha'ul.
- (7) Romans 12:13 Share what you have with God's people, and practice

hospitality.

- (8) 1 Corinthians 16:1-4 Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable for me to go also, they will accompany me.
- (9) 2 Corinthians 8:1-15 Now, brothers, we must tell you about the grace God has given the congregations in Macedonia. Despite severe trials, and even though they are desperately poor, their joy has overflowed in a wealth of generosity. I tell you they have not merely given according to their means, but of their own free will they have given beyond their means. They begged and pleaded with us for the privilege of sharing in this service for God's people. Also, they didn't do this in the way we had expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord, which means, by God's will, to us. All this has led us to urge Titus to bring this same gracious gift to completion among you, since he has already made a beginning of it. Just as you excel in everything – in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in diligence of every kind, and in your love for us – see that you excel in this gift too. I am not issuing an order; rather, I am testing the genuineness of your love against the diligence of others. For you know how generous our Lord Yeshua the Messiah was – for your sakes he impoverished himself, even though he was rich, so that he might make you rich by means of his poverty. As I say, in regard to this matter I am only giving an opinion. A year ago you were not only the first to take action but the first to want to do so. Now it would be to your advantage to finish what you started, so that your eagerness in wanting to commence the project may be matched by your eagerness to complete it, as you contribute from what you have. For if the eagerness to give is there, the acceptability of the gift will be measured by what you have, not by what you don't have. It is not that relief for others should cause trouble for you, but that there should be a kind of reciprocity: at present your abundance can help those in need; so that when you are in need, their abundance can help you – thus there is reciprocity. It is as the Tanakh says, "He who gathered much had nothing extra, and he who gathered little had nothing lacking."
- (10) 2 Corinthians 8:18-22 And with him we are sending the brother whose work for the Good News is praised in all the congregations; not only that, he has also been appointed by the congregations to travel with us, so that the way we administer this charitable work will bring honor to the Lord and show our eagerness to help. Our aim in this is to show that our conduct in dealing with these substantial sums is

above reproach; for we take pains to do what is right not only in the sight of God but also in the sight of other people. With these two we are sending another brother of ours, one whose diligence we have tested many times in many ways, but who is now all the more diligent because of his great confidence in you.

(11) 2 Corinthians 9 There is really no need for me to write you about this offering for God's people – I know how eager you are, and I boast about you to the Macedonians. I tell them, "Achaia has been ready since last year," and it was your zeal that stirred up most of them. But now I am sending the brothers so that our boast about you in this regard will not prove hollow, so that you will be ready, as I said you would be. For if some Macedonians were to come with me and find you unprepared, we would be humiliated at having been so confident – to say nothing of how you would feel. So I thought it necessary to urge these brothers to go on to you ahead of me and prepare your promised gift in plenty of time; this way it will be ready when I come and will be a genuine gift, not something extracted by pressure. Here's the point: he who plants sparingly also harvests sparingly. Each should give according to what he has decided in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. Moreover, God has the power to provide you with every gracious gift in abundance, so that always in every way you will have all you need yourselves and be able to provide abundantly for every good cause – as the Tanakh says, "He gave generously to the poor; his tzedakah lasts forever." He who provides both seed for the planter and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and increase the harvest of your tzedakah. You will be enriched in every way, so that you can be generous in everything. And through us your generosity will cause people to thank God, because rendering this holy service not only provides for the needs of God's people, but it also overflows in the many thanks people will be giving to God. In offering this service you prove to these people that you glorify God by actually doing what your acknowledgement of the Good News of the Messiah requires, namely, sharing generously with them and with everyone. And in their prayers for you they will feel a strong affection for you because of how gracious God has been to you. Thanks be to God for his indescribable gift!

(12) Philippians 4:18-19 I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.

(13) Galations 6:6 But whoever is being instructed in the Word should share all the good things he has with his instructor.

(14) Ephesians 4:28 The thief must stop stealing; instead, he should make

an honest living by his own efforts. This way he will be able to share with those in need.

- (15) *1 Timothy 5:5-16* Now the widow who is really in need, the one who has been left all alone, has set her hope on God and continues in petitions and prayers night and day. But the one who is self-indulgent is already dead, even though she lives. And instruct them about this, so that they will not be open to blame. Moreover, anyone who does not provide for his own people, especially for his family, has disowned the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Let a widow be enrolled on the list of widows only if she is more than sixty years old, was faithful to her husband, and is known for her good deeds – as one who has reared her children well, showed hospitality, washed the feet of God's people, helped those in trouble, and engaged in all kinds of good work. But refuse to enroll younger widows, for when they begin to feel natural passions that alienate them from the Messiah, they want to get married. This brings them under condemnation for having set aside the trust they had at first. Besides that, they learn to be idle, going around from house to house; and not only idle, but gossips and busybodies, saying things they shouldn't. Therefore, I would rather the young widows get married, have children and take charge of their homes, so as to give the opposition no occasion for slandering us. For already some have turned astray to follow the Adversary. If any believing woman has relatives who are widows, she should provide relief for them – the congregation shouldn't be burdened, so that it may help the widows who are really in need.
- (16) *1 Timothy 6:18-19* Charge them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, to be generous and ready to share. In this way they will treasure up for themselves a good foundation for the future, so that they may lay hold of the real life.
- (17) *Hebrews 13:16* But don't forget doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

Here we provide a quick reference summary concerning the benefaction:

- (1) Shall be done according to means (side of the giver).
- (2) Occurred according to need (side of the receiver), **provided** he lives a godly life.
- (3) Shall be done to those who work as ministers.
- (4) Shall be done in joy.
- (5) Shall be done **without** the expectation of a pay back.
- (6) Those who give much (little) shall receive much (little).
- (7) A servant has, in the spirit of the New Testament, no right to demand or lay claim to an offering or payment of any sort!
- (8) The same is said for the needy. The needy have no right to insist on alms.

To provide the proper weighting, the giving to servants only appears one single time, where donating to meet the needs of God's people is found over and over again. The collecting of sacrifices was done prior to arrival of the apostle, **so as to avoid creating pressure**. The reader is requested to compare this method to what he sees in the run-of-the mill church or conference.

The author cannot emphasize enough that the reader should meditate on the summary. If one is not saturated with the Bible verses above, he should know full well that he will be fleeced. The devil will get him.

Offering in obedience

Should God provide detailed instructions on giving a certain amount to a certain person, and we do so, then this is not giving in the temple free will sense, but rather in the obedience sense. This seemingly minor point can cause great confusion if not noticed.

The administrators

Money was administered only by apostles and elders in the Bible. This does not prove that others should not do so. But one perceives that much emphasis was placed upon ensuring that the money was handled correctly. We must not forget that Judas was the money administrator.

Money was usually transported by apostles, but *only* by those with whom there existed a great degree of trust.

Why of giving and receiving

Those who are ministers produce work. This consumes time and effort. God has always expected that those who work be paid. We understand this from the tithe law for the priests (Numbers 18), in the taxes for secular authorities (Romans 13) and in wages for the farmer (2 Timothy 2:6). This is an easy concept to grasp. Through scriptures shown here, we have the same line of reasoning with the ministers.

Ministers are spiritual, but at the same time do not sleep under the stars, and don't eat air. They have living costs just like everyone else. True ministers deserve to be supported financially.

But the giving to ministers is different than the tithe, for the tithe was a set amount, dictated by God. Ministers today have no

equivalent. They are, so to say, left to the mercy of the served.

Giving of yourself

Some support their own ministries. This is to provide an example to others, that all should produce their own bread. But it also appears to me, that everyone has the "opportunity" to experience this method of giving, at least in the beginning stages of a ministry. Paul, it seems, for the most part, funded his own ministry.

The needy

It would be impossible to stress this issue too much. The absolute majority of verses concerning the benefaction center on meeting the needs of God's people. By far, most charity should be funneled in this direction.

Here, I would like to make a suggestion. Instead of paying someone to determine for you who is needy, and give to him, try doing it yourself. Cutting out the middle man does two things: (1) more assistance goes to the intended beneficiary, and (2) one becomes an active carrier of the Gospel. One could start with the immediate, and then expand to cover extended family.

Being like the Father

The Father's nature is a giving one, we should be the same. He rains on the just and unjust alike.

The verses on sacrificial giving are extremely straight forward. Not much commentary is required. What does command attention is the twisting of the truth - the false offering. In the next section, we turn our attention to this topic. Giver beware.

The bogus offering

Summing everything up, God has ordained the benefaction as a method of meeting needs. But listen to the following story.

Recently pulling into a shopping center, I was approached by a woman who said she needed help (read money) for she ran out of gas. She pointed to a car and remarked that it belonged to her, and in passing mentioned she had recently had an accident, but did not want to show us the scar, for it was unsightly. I replied that I did not feel comfortable with giving her money. She turned, marched to a car (not the same she indicated), slipped through the passenger door, and was driven off in haste.

The devil is a master in packaging poison as if it were medication. That is his occupation. Our giving is very important to God, so the devil also has his counterfeit ready to provide "givers" the impression of giving, but in reality he has manipulated the situation such that the gift is not really a gift. And here, the kingdom of God is robbed.

In all, it is wise to consider the following: swindlers gravitate to where money flows. This fact will never change. The devil is smart. Some are swindlers without knowing it. I have listed four popular methods here.

- (1) Pretend to be a minister.
- (2) Pretend to be collecting for a godly project.
- (3) Pretend to be in need.
- (4) Administrate one's life such that one is in (perpetual) need.

Giving in Faith

The charismatics would have us believe that anything and everything can be done in faith. Some even preach that we can "sin in faith" (one can do what one wants, as long as one has Jesus ...). There exists a limit to what one can do in faith. Reference the famous faith verses defining the term. They set the framework in which faith/trust is possible.

- Romans 4:21 for he was fully convinced that what God had promised he could also accomplish.
- Hebrews 11:1 Trusting is being confident of what we hope for, convinced about things we do not see.

Faith: God makes us a promise, and we trust (have faith) that God will make it happen, even though we do not yet see it. The

prerequisite of faith is hearing the promise of God. The 3 alternatives for so-called "giving in faith" are:

(1) The fact that free will giving is decided by me dictates that God has not spoken to me, and this in turn necessitates that He has not promised me anything. But trust is always bound up in a promise by God.

(2) "Giving" with the motive of getting something back from God, is not "giving", but rather "investing". As far as I can tell, this is what "giving in faith" really implies to those using it - pressed down, rolling over, shaken together Giving "it" in order to get "it" back, is inherently not giving.

(3) It can happen that God tells us to "give" (as a command), but this is done "in obedience", not "in faith".

For these reasons I believe it is impossible to "give in faith".

The anointing

Circulating among the charismatic is a "give into the anointing in order to receive the anointing power" lie. This is taken to mean, "sow into the person having an anointing, and the giver can own it too". Of course, the amount given determines how much anointing is imparted!

Acts 8:18-25 Shim'on saw that the Spirit was given when the emissaries placed their hands on them, and he offered them money. "Give this power to me, too," he said, "so that whoever I place my hands on will receive the Ruach Hakodesh." But Kefa said to him, "Your silver go to ruin - and you with it, for thinking the free gift of God can be bought! You have no part at all in this matter; because in the eyes of God, your heart is crooked. So repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord. Perhaps you will yet be forgiven for holding such a thought in your heart. For I see that you are extremely bitter and completely under the control of sin!" Shim'on answered, "Pray to the Lord for me, so that none of the things you have spoken about will happen to me." Then, after giving a thorough witness and speaking the Word of the Lord,...

No, there is nothing new under the sun.

Judas and the money bag

John 12:4-6 But one of the talmidim, Y'hudah from K'riot, the one who

was about to betray him, said, "This perfume is worth a year's wages! Why wasn't it sold and the money given to the poor?" Now he said this not out of concern for the poor, but because he was a thief – he was in charge of the common purse and used to steal from it.

Just because one professes to love the poverty-stricken, feeble, elderly, uneducated and missions does not prove that this is indeed accurate. See how much concern he has for the needy! We must keep our eyes wide open. Even one of the twelve, who healed the sick and cast out demons under the authority delegated by Jesus, fell for the love of money. Read the passage out of John a few times and let each word sink in so that you yourself do not become a victim by fakes.

The Return Measure

Luke 6:38 Give, and you will receive gifts – the full measure, compacted, shaken together and overflowing, will be put right in your lap. For the measure with which you measure out will be used to measure back to you!"

Malachi 3:10-12 Bring the whole tenth into the storehouse, so that there will be food in my house, and put me to the test," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. "See if I won't open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing far beyond your needs. For your sakes I will forbid the devourer to destroy the yield from your soil; and your vine will not lose its fruit before harvest-time," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot. "All nations will call you happy, for you will be a land of delights," says ADONAI-Tzva'ot.

Contributions to good causes, by their very nature, do not expect a yield as prescribed by Luke in 14:12-13. Be that as it may, many are fond of "giving" with the incitement that the windows of heaven will be opened and that the gift will be reciprocated, typically larger gifts. But giving to others with the intention of receiving a 30, 60, 100 fold return is not benefaction, but rather investing. This is a very important concept to acknowledge. Otherwise we will be very easy prey for the vultures.

The 10% Bottom Limit

Some say that 10% is the bottom limit and has biblical importance, often referring to Abram. First, no one has the right to determine for me how much I should give; for this is patent manipulation, and therefore breaks the spirit of giving. Two, Abram was very rich at the time. He gave a 10% offering only once, did not pay taxes to any government, and had enough wealth to field an army of 318 men who took out 4 kingdoms at once (no wonder he paid no taxes). Warring is

not a cheap hobby. The 10% offering was not his in the first place, but were recaptured goods belonging to others. Abram was mathematically speaking no "worse" off after his 10% offering. Seen in this light, a 10% offering is a *huge* amount, not a bottom level value for stingy faith-wimps.

If we are to comply with the "give as we are capable" idea, it is easy to see with the above example that one could donate much less than 10% and still be giving much.

God has nowhere at anytime indicated that giving less than 10% is not enough.

Administrators

2 Corinthians 8:18-19 And we are sending along with him the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel. [19] What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us **as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help.**

ACTS 11:29-30 The disciples, each according to his ability, decided to provide help for the brothers living in Judea. This they did, **sending their gift to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.**

The only officers named concerning the rights of receiving, transporting and administrating money found in the Bible were Apostels, Elders (mark very well the plural version of the term "elder") and churches (as a whole living in a city). Never, ever does one see the office "Pastor" in association with money. Our anti-biblical standard to the contrary of the Word no doubt has dire consequences. Most pastors take to the extreme and claim that **only** pastors are allowed to administrate Kingdom finances. Our anti-biblical traditions are deadly.

The destitute

For this topic, we add a few verses. Much mischief is tolerated here in the name of "giving to those in need".

Some try to say, those who have much should automatically in every case give to those who have little. While at the surface, this seems correct, there exist situations however, where this is not true. What if the one who has little wasted his resources [by refusing to work with full energy for example], and the one who has much, has much because he administered his resources wisely? See Matthew 25.

It is clear that giving to the one with little is foolish, for he has proven that he will waste it. We can then ask the question, "who has the problem with money, those who sell their services (work), or those who rebuff the idea of doing so?". Certainly not the one who refuses to fritter away his resources on the wasteful. He who reinforces the other's sin is doing no one a favor.

Ephesians 4:28 The thief must stop stealing; instead, he should make an honest living by his own efforts. This way he will be able to share with those in need.

1 Thessalonians 4:11-12 Also, make it your ambition to live quietly, to mind your own business and to earn your living by your own efforts – just as we told you. Then your daily life will gain the respect of outsiders, and you will not be dependent on anyone.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12 For even when we were with you, we gave you this command: if someone won't work, he shouldn't eat! We hear that some of you are leading a life of idleness – not busy working, just busybodies! We command such people – and in union with the Lord Yeshua the Messiah we urge them – to settle down, get to work, and earn their own living.

1 Timothy 5:4-14 builds on a general rule of giving. Only those who have lived godly lives are entitled to receive aid. And 1 Timothy 5:8 shows us that those in the immediate family must look after their own. So, before giving to anyone, approach his family first. We realize that there are prerequisites to be fulfilled by the would-be receiver before we are allowed to begin contemplating a gift.

Often, financial misery is the fruit of poor decisions, sin, punishment, or a case of pruning (John 15). Giving to this person is only thwarting the work of righteousness.

Just be heedful to not be scammed. Test their lifestyles and give (or don't give) appropriately.

Destitute?

Somehow it seems unfitting that those wearing heavy gold necklaces hanging under their Italian suits are "from the Word of God" imposing the financially challenged sheep "give" to them. The Bible is clear that we are to assist those in need. Obviously, a gold studded teacher holed up in a million dollar house, staying the night in 5 star hotels and travelling in his private jetliner is not

suffering lack.

Communisim

Acts 4:34 is intersting. Some claim this is a general rule, not an exception. I claim the opposite.

Acts 4:34-37 No one among them was poor, since those who owned lands or houses sold them and turned over the proceeds to the emissaries to distribute to each according to his need. Thus Yosef, whom the emissaries called Bar-nabba (which means "the Exhorter"), a Levi and a native of Cyprus, sold a field which belonged to him and brought the money to the emissaries.

- (1) All those espousing such refuse to lead by example in that they fling open their doors for any and all who wish to make use of *their "community" belongings.*
- (2) If this were a rule, we would have socialism / communism, which runs contra to everything the Bible teaches on the subject of economics and government. The results are stealing, killing and destroying. The Bible very plainly teaches that we work for, own and administrate privately held property, and that this is good. A public treasury for Christians only leads to lethargy and crime of all sorts.
- (3) Later historically, the Christians' property was confiscated in Jerusalem. Perhaps the Holy Spirit warned them to sell prior to the expropriation.
- (4) Later historically, an offering was held to supply the Christians' needs in Jerusalem, the logical result of my comments (2) and (3).

Demanding the offering

*2 Corinthians 8:8-9 I am **not** commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others. For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich.*

The author of 2 Corinthians evidently understands the delicate nature of the free will gift. It is manifest that God's people should free will give, but by the nature of the free will gift, it cannot be *commanded*. Notice how it is written, "I am not commanding

you".

*Philippians 4:14-19 Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. **Not that I am looking for a gift**, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.*

Pay special attention to "Not that I am looking for a gift". No prophetic gift is necessary to see that many offering collectors are desperately seeking, even begging for, a gift. Stay away from these.

It is unlawful for any person, regardless of stature, to **command and plead** for a gift; for commanding a gift is inherently manipulative! Don't put yourself in a position that you will be taken for a ride.

Need

It is indisputable that God's institution of giving is to satisfy the needs of God's people (the proven ones) and supporting those who are servants of the Most High. These are the *only* justified uses for giving (and perhaps social works for the unbelievers). Outside of this, there is nothing. But how much of the money stockpiled is truly used as such. By far the lion's share of "giving" is siphoned off to real estate property and salaries.

Giving while in need

Luke 3:11 should screen out a lot of "giving". If one has 2 tunics, give. Alternatively, if one has 1 tunic, then he should presumably not give. Those who are themselves destitute, should not concern themselves with giving. They should rather expect to receive, if the church is paying attention to God's opinion on this matter.

One thing a person who is poor should not partake in is certainly the "give to get out of debt", or "give to get out of poverty" fraud. Surely, there maybe times and places for this, but one should wait on a very strong Word of the Lord, and not be prodded by emotions inspired by a rhetorically perfect offering preacher during a hyped conference or Sunday "service".

Giving when one should not is an *autobahn* to poverty. It is also proficient in chaining persons to this state of affairs.

My business

Beware of persons not willing to let you prove to yourself what they are doing with the sacrificial gifts. If he is doing well, he has nothing to hide, right? If he replies with, "what I do with the money is my business", then my strong suggestion is to look elsewhere.

Conclusion

I can only accentuate that we live in a world that is beguiled - and the church is in the world. The devil is a master at misrepresentation. He does not forewarn you. Remember above all the principle that there are prerequisites to be met before one should give, both on the part of the beneficiary, and on the part of the benefactor.

If one is able to pick up a few tips here and there from this document, I can assure you, dear reader, that you will avoid unnecessary shenanigans. And you will be more apt at sifting the wheat from the stubble.

1 Corinthians 3:12 Some will use gold, silver or precious stones in building on this foundation; while others will use wood, grass or straw.

Don't be caught paying gold prices for straw. Beat the waters. Ask questions. Perform due diligence. If you haven't evaluated thoroughly what the person does, don't give.

It is my sincere hope that all who read this are assisted in avoiding financial manipulation. May you be blessed in being good stewards of your resources; and I am not limiting that wish to money. Whosoever will be faithful in little, shall be made master over much.