**Give To God First**

Prepared by Nathan L Morrison for Sunday March 4th, 2018

Text: I Kings 17:10-16

### Intro

1. The Widow of Zarephath – I Kings 17:10-16
   1. The famine struck and she was preparing to die with her son after one last meal.
   2. Elijah asked her for water, and then to feed him first!
   3. In an incredible show of faith, she did it!
   4. She trusted in God and gave to Him first by taking care of His prophet!
   5. God blessed her and her family with food so they did not starve during the famine.
2. The widow’s example is a picture of what God asked of the Israelites: Give to God first!
   1. Israelites were to give to God the first of all they had! (Ex. 13:2; 34:19; Lev. 23:10, 17).
   2. Of all their many offerings, burnt offerings *(Lev. 1:10),* grain offerings *(Lev. 2:1),* fellowship offerings *(Lev. 3:1),* guilt offerings (*Lev. 5:15, 18),* and sin offerings *(Lev. 9:2-3),* each had their purpose but whatever was offered to the Lord had to be the best!
   3. *Mal. 1:6-14:* God, through Malachi, said they gave their leftovers to Him!
3. Lk. 4:25-26
   1. Jesus taught the Jews from this account of the widow that God blessed the Gentiles!
4. Mt. 6:33
   1. *Mt. 6:25-32:* Jesus taught that saints aren’t to be anxious for the necessities of life, that God knows what we need and wants to bless us!
   2. He asks of His disciples what God asked of the Israelites under the Old Law, to give to God first!
   3. He says to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you!” ***Setting priorities allows us to give to God first!***
5. By “seeking first the Kingdom of God” we give to God first in a variety of ways!

#### Give to God First: Time

* 1. Js. 4:14: Time in this life is short!
     1. Multitudes are using their time for selfish things.
     2. Saints, especially, can forget that their life is not their own, they are bought with a price, the precious blood of Jesus (I Cor. 6:20; I Pet. 1:18-19)
     3. Eph. 5:16; Col. 4:5: We are to be “making the most of our time.”
  2. We must give first to God of our Time:
     1. By praying: Mk. 1:35: Jesus prayed to God first thing in the morning! (I Thess. 5:17: Saints are to “pray without ceasing”)
     2. By studying God’s word daily: Acts 17:10-11: Bereans studied daily!
     3. By working for the furtherance of His kingdom: I Cor. 15:58: “Always abound”
  3. Our time should be devoted first to God then to other pursuits, and we will be blessed!

#### Give to God First: Talents

* 1. Jn. 6:27: “Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life…”
     1. Many Christians fail to give God first place with their talents (abilities).
     2. They’re too busy making a name for themselves and/or making money is their top priority.
     3. Many don’t use their talents because they feel they are not good enough, even though God gave them their talent. (“I can’t preach, or lead singing, or serve in some other way…”)
  2. Each one is given talents “according to his own ability” (Mt. 25:15; Rom. 12:6; I Cor. 12:11, 18; Eph. 4:7)
  3. We must give first to God of our Talents:
     1. There are many ways we can serve God and many abilities we can use to do it! (Rom. 12:4-15; I Cor. 12:4-31; Eph. 4:14-16).
     2. Some have the ability to encourage (be a Barnabas – Acts 4:36-37; Heb. 10:25), to motivate, to teach, preach, lead songs, publicly speak, pray, maintain the building in an orderly way, help others (Dorcas – Acts 9:36-42), etc.
     3. Your ability is God’s gift to you, what you do with it is your gift back to God!
  4. We must use them or lose them *(Mt. 25:28).*
  5. Our talents (abilities) should be used to glorify God, and to be a blessing to others.

#### Give to God First: Treasures

* 1. Lk. 12:15: “Beware, and be on your guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.”
     1. In today’s society the Love of possessions has captured the hearts of millions.
     2. People are selling their souls to get material wealth.
  2. Mt. 6:19-21: “Store up for yourselves treasures in heaven” and not on earth (Col. 3:1-3)
  3. We must give first to God of our Treasures:
     1. Saints should give freely to assist the less fortunate (II Cor. 8:1-5)
        1. In taking up the collection for the needy saints in Jerusalem, the Corinthians had pledged an amount (I Cor. 16:1-5) but had not yet given it (II Cor. 8:10-12), and Paul uses the example of the Macedonians, who like the widow of Sidon, had nothing, but “first gave themselves to the Lord” and gave more than expected!
     2. Saints ought to give “as he prospered” (I Cor. 16:1-2).
        1. The command is to give every week as one has prospered. If in between paychecks, then don’t have to give!
     3. Saints ought to give “as he has purposed in his heart” (II Cor. 9:7).
        1. Not “grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.”
        2. Based upon our monthly income (as we have prospered), we plan (purpose) what to give back to God who provided what we have in the 1st place (Js. 1:17)!
        3. Do we give God the leftovers? Or like the widow of Sidon (I Kings 17:10-16) and the widow who gave her last mite to God (Mk. 12:41-44), do we trust Him to take care of us?
  4. Sowing and reaping law applies to our giving (II Cor. 9:6)!
  5. We are pleasing to God when we give back from a cheerful heart as we’ve prospered!

## Conclusion

1. God is the Creator, the Giver of all good things – Js. 1:17 *(“For I am a great King.” Mal. 1:14)*
   1. What a privilege to be able to give back a portion of the blessings He bestows upon us!
2. Christ gave everything for us *(Acts 20:28),* and asks that we deny ourselves and follow Him *(Mt. 16:24),* and to give back cheerfully *(Acts 20:35)!*
3. Jesus said to “seek first His kingdom and His righteousness” and our physical needs will be supplied *(Mt. 6:33; II Cor. 8:5; Mk. 12:44).*
   1. Do we first give ourselves to the Lord like the Sidonian widow and the Macedonians?
4. Are we laying up treasures in Heaven or here on earth? *(Mt. 6:19-21;* I Tim. 6:17-19*)*
5. Let us purpose in our hearts not to rob God but to give back cheerfully and to give to Him first!
6. If you are not a Christian, you need to be! Repent and be baptized!
7. If a Christian in error, make the corrections necessary to return to God! Repent & be renewed.
8. Whatever your requests, let them be made known ***NOW*** while we stand & sing!