

THE OFFERING OF MATERIAL RICHES

Day 1

1 Timothy 6:17

Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high-minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches but on God, who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment;

3 John 2

Beloved, concerning all things I wish that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers.

2 Corinthians 9:10

Now He who bountifully supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed and cause the fruits of your righteousness to increase.

From the time that **man developed a problem with God** because of the fall and left the position where he took God as everything, material riches have **become** a critical matter in the life of fallen man. In his fallen condition, man fell into the darkness

- of acknowledging only material riches and not God,
- of trusting only in material riches and not in God, and even
- of serving material riches, taking material riches as God, and allowing material riches to replace God.

God's enemy, Satan the Devil, **exploited** the fallen condition of men to come in and **deceive** men to worship idols, such as the god of wealth, for riches and gain. By being behind these idols, he **supplants** men's worship and service that are due God. For this reason, the Lord Jesus told us that one "**cannot serve God and mammon**" (Matt. 6:24)

... Satan utilizes material riches to **seduce** people to worship him on the one hand, and **enslaves** people in material riches, as misers, on the other hand. However, we have **received** God's mercy and the Lord's salvation, which **delivered** us from the authority of Satan and turned us to God (Acts 26:18). After we have received God's salvation in this way, we are confronted with an issue in our practical living, that is, **what we should do with material riches ... What should our intention and attitude be toward material riches? How..., should we treat these material riches?**

I. GOD'S GIVING

1) "**Nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment**" (1 Tim. 6:17). This word exposes Satan's plot to delude men, showing us that all the material things and enjoyment in our living apparently come from the uncertain riches, but they **actually come from God's giving**. They are supplied to us from God's rich giving. Hence, we must not **set our hope** on deceitful and uncertain material riches but **on the very God who gives us all things for our enjoyment**.

2) "**Beloved, concerning all things I wish that you may prosper**" (3 John 2).

The **prosperity** here refers to material abundance and prosperity, pointing out that the material enjoyment of **those who are saved and belong to God** comes from God as a **result of His prospering** our material things. We ought to endeavor in our businesses. The Bible also requires that we learn to maintain good works for necessary needs (Titus 3:14, 8). Yet without God's blessing, all our labors, endeavorings, and painstaking enterprises will yield little. Therefore, in this matter of material supply, unlike the worldly people who trust only in their own abilities, we have to learn to set our hope in God.

3) “Now He who bountifully supplies seed to the sower...” (2 Cor. 9:10).

The Bible regards the offering of material riches as sowing. The seed is supplied by God and comes from God. This reveals that the material riches which the believers offer to God come originally from God and are given by God. We are thus offering to God what He has given to us. *(Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lesson Twenty-four)*

Day 2

Matthew 6:19-20

Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven

Luke 6:38

Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will give into your bosom

II. THE LORD'S CHARGE

1) **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on the earth...but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Matt. 6:19-20).**

We need to look at this word of the Lord from the viewpoint of laying up material riches. To lay up material riches is to save what is left of a man's gain after the needs of his living have been met. Here, the Lord charges us not to lay up these surplus riches on the earth but to lay them up in heaven, that is, to spend them on the heavenly Father, doing such things as **helping those in need**, thus making friends with them (Luke 16:9) and **advancing His gospel** (Phil. 1:5).

2) **“Charge those who are rich in the present age not to be high- minded, nor to set their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God who affords us all things richly for our enjoyment; to do good, to be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate, laying away for themselves as a treasure a good foundation for the future, that they may lay hold on that which is really life” (1 Tim. 6:17-19).**

This is the apostle's charge, which is simply the Lord's charge to us. The rich refers to those who have excess from their gain after the needs of their living have been met. To **do good and to be rich in good works** refer to distributing the surplus from one's living to the needy ones. To be rich in doing good and good works is to be **ready to distribute** and willing to communicate. This is also to lay up treasure in heaven, to lay up as a treasure a good foundation for the future. Doing this will enable one to **lay hold on**, that is, to possess, to use, and to enjoy, that which is really life, the eternal life of God. To save up the surplus riches from our living on the earth is to lay hold on and make use of our natural life; while to save up the same in heaven, spending it on God, is to lay hold on and employ the eternal life of God.

III. THE LORD'S PROMISE

1) **“Give, and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will give into your bosom” (Luke 6:38).**

This is a **promise** spoken from the Lord's own mouth. If we are willing to distribute our material wealth to the needy for God's sake, **He will surely give into our bosom** that which is rich and plenteous, a good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over. He will not give into our hands that which is scanty and limited. What a profitable deal this is!

2) **“Remember the words of the Lord Jesus which He Himself said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).** Concerning material riches, human beings, who are deceived by Satan, will only receive and not give. To want to receive and not give is Satan's ploy, which causes man to lose God's blessing. The best **way to be blessed** by God in material riches **is to give**, not to receive, just as the Lord Himself did for us. Thus, the Lord Himself promised us that it is more blessed to give than to receive. Myriads of believers throughout the ages who have believed in the Lord's word and who have practiced accordingly confirm the trustworthiness of this promise from their experience.

3) **“He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessings, with blessings also shall reap”** (2 Cor. 9:6). This is a **natural law** established by the Lord in the **biological realm**. This law contains His promise. **Offering material riches is like sowing**. Since sowing eventually brings in reaping, he who sows sparingly shall reap sparingly, and **he who sows bountifully shall reap bountifully**. In man’s eyes, the offering of material riches is to give away their riches. However, in God’s eyes, such offering is a kind of sowing that will result in reaping. He who offers little shall reap little, and he who offers much shall reap much. We ought to believe in the Lord’s promise in this law.

4) **“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it”** (Mal. 3:10).

The “tithes” are the legal amount of offering that God required from the harvest of the Israelites in the **Old Testament**. The “storehouse” refers to the place in the Old Testament temple where all the offerings to God from His people were stored. My “house” refers to God’s temple in the Old Testament. This word superabundantly displays the infinitely rich promise of God. **Although** it was spoken to the Israelites in the Old Testament, **in principle** it applies also to the **New Testament** believers. If we will fully offer to God what belongs to Him that the church may be richly supplied, God will open the windows of heaven for us and pour out a blessing to us, which there will not be enough room to contain. This is a solemn promise of the Lord of hosts. We can offer to Him according to His promise to prove Him. (*Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lesson Twenty-four*)

Day 3

2 Corinthians 9:6-7

He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessings, with blessings also shall reap; each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sorrow or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver

IV. THE USE

1) **For the need of the church**—In the Old Testament, God wanted each of His people, the Israelites, to offer to Him a ransom for his soul. This offering was for the use of God's dwelling place, that is, the tabernacle and the temple (Exo. 30:11-16). The church today is God's real tabernacle (dwelling place—Eph. 2:22) and real temple (1 Cor. 3:16-17). We, all the New Testament believers, also should **offer** to God to **meet the needs** of the different expenses in the church where we are.

2) **For the advancement of the gospel**—“For your fellowship unto the gospel from the first day until now” (Phil. 1:5).

Fellowship in this verse refers to **participation and enjoyment**. From the first day when they were saved to the time when Paul wrote this epistle to them, the Philippian believers continuously supplied the needs of Paul with material riches in his gospel preaching for the advancement of the gospel. Thus they participated and enjoyed with Paul in the advancement of the gospel. This tells us that once we are saved, we should **offer** to God the rich **surplus from our material riches**, which **He gives us** for the advancement of His gospel.

3) **Supplying the Lord's servants**—“Philippians...you sent both once and again to my [the Apostle Paul's] need” (Phil. 4:15-16). Those who serve the Lord with their **full time** have no time to make a living by a profession. Thus, there is a need for the believers to **supply them with the material riches** they offer to the Lord. First Timothy 5:17 tells us that the believers ought to supply material riches to the elders who take the lead well and those who labor in God's word and teaching (the local elders).

4) **Supplying the needy saints:**

1. “Communicating to the **needs of the saints**” (Rom. 12:13). This verse shows that we should **supply the lacking or needy saints** with material riches. This is also one of the uses of our offering of material riches.

2. “Only that we should **remember the poor**” (Gal. 2:10).

We should also remember the poor (with the stress on the poor among the believers), **supplying them** with the material riches we have received from God.

V. THE AMOUNT

1) “...according as any one of them was prospered, determined each one of them to send things for dispensing” (Acts 11:29); “Let each one of you lay aside by himself, storing up **as he may be prospered...**” (1 Cor. 16:2).

We have seen previously that, according to 3 John 2, **prosperity is God's blessing to prosper us**. We should determine the amount of our offering to God **based upon** the condition **of our being prospered** due to His blessing. Each person should **determine his own amount** according to whatever he has, not according to what he does not have (2 Cor. 8:12).

2) “He who sows sparingly, sparingly also shall reap; and he who sows with blessings, with blessings also shall reap; each one as he has purposed in his heart, not out of sorrow or of necessity, for **God loves a cheerful giver**” (2 Cor. 9:6-7).

In our offering of material riches, we will reap little if we sow little, and we will reap much if we sow much. Each person should **purpose in his own heart** how much he should offer without sorrow or necessity, since God loves him who is a cheerful giver. (*Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lesson Twenty-four*)

Day 4

2 Corinthians 8:4-5

With much entreaty they besought of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints; And *this*, not as we had hoped, but they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God.

2 Corinthians 9:9

Even as it is written, “He has scattered abroad; he has given to the poor; his righteousness abides forever.”

VI. THE WAY

1) “With **much entreaty beseeching of us the grace and the fellowship of the ministry to the saints; and...they gave themselves first to the Lord, and to us through the will of God**” (2 Cor. 8:4-5).

The churches in Macedonia supplied their material riches to the needy saints in Judea, on the one hand, by beseeching the apostles for a **share in the grace and the fellowship of such ministry**, and on the other hand, by **giving themselves first** to the Lord and **then** to the apostles **through** the will of God. This shows us that the offering of material riches which is most acceptable to the Lord is the offering of ourselves first to the Lord and then to the apostles, who are concerned for us, eventually asking them for a share in such grace and fellowship.

2) “But take heed **not to do your righteousness [giving alms] before men to be gazed at by them; otherwise, you surely have no reward with your Father who is in the heavens. When therefore you give alms, do not sound a trumpet before you as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets that they may be glorified by men. Truly I say to you, They have their reward. But you, when you give alms, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your alms may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret shall repay you**” (Matt. 6:1-4).

For whatever use we offer our material riches, we must **not do it intentionally for others to see** in order that we may be glorified and rewarded by men; otherwise, we will not be rewarded by the Father, who is in the heavens. Therefore, we should not let our left hand know what our right hand is doing. We should **offer in secret** that the heavenly Father, who sees what we do, may repay us, recompensing and rewarding us according to His promises to us mentioned earlier.

According to the Lord’s charge in these words, we should do our best not to let others know of our offering of material riches. Either named donations or open contributions must be avoided. For this reason, we have set up offering boxes in the meeting places in order to allow the saints to drop their offering into these boxes in a secret way. This matches the way God’s people in the Old Testament put their money into the chest (2 Kings 12:9).

VII. THE SIGNIFICANCE

1) **Fellowship with the receiver—“the fellowship of the ministry to the saints”** (2 Cor. 8:4).

Supplying the saints with material riches is a fellowship which brings **mutual grace** to both the giver and the receiver.

2) Righteousness toward men before God—“He gave to the poor, his righteousness abides forever” (2 Cor. 9:9).

Giving material riches to the poor is righteousness toward men before God. God cares for the poor and wants His people also to care for them (Deut. 15:7-8). “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the Lord” (Prov. 19:17). This is a law established by God which regulates the relationship between human beings. Thus, if we practice according to this law of God, our righteousness toward men before God will abide forever. In the constitution of the kingdom, the Lord Jesus also considered **our giving of alms as righteousness** (Matt. 6:1- 4). If we who live in the Lord’s kingdom of the heavens do not give alms and do not give our material riches for God’s use, we are breaking the highest law of the kingdom. Giving to the poor the material riches that God has given to us is not only **goodness** (Heb.13:16) but also **righteousness**. We may or may not do good, but it is imperative that **we do righteousness since it is our duty**. If we fail to do righteousness, we are unrighteous toward men before God.

3) A sacrifice well pleasing to God—“But do not be forgetful doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Heb. 13:16); “Receiving...the things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).

Here doing good refers to the distribution of material riches to others, which before God is a well-pleasing sacrifice to God. Our offering of material things to God’s servants is also an **acceptable sacrifice** which is well pleasing to God.

4) A fragrant odor well pleasing to God—“Receiving...the things from you, a fragrant odor, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God” (Phil. 4:18).

The fragrant odor here refers to the sweet savor of the burnt offering (Gen. 8:20-21; Lev. 1:9). The offering we give to God’s servants is **not only** a sacrifice to God, **but also** a fragrant odor of a burnt offering that is well pleasing to God. This reveals that the sacrifice here is like a burnt offering that is satisfying and well pleasing to God.

The **four significances** of the offering of material riches mentioned above should show us the importance and value of such offering. By being offered to God for God’s use by us who are of God, what was considered by God as “mammon of unrighteousness” (Luke 16:9), that is, as deceitful riches (Matt. 13:22) and uncertain riches (1 Tim. 6:17) which will “fail” (Luke 16:9), **can actually become** our “**fellowship**” with the saints, our “**righteousness**” toward men before God, an acceptable “**sacrifice**” to God, and a well pleasing “**fragrant odor**” to Him. Riches that deceive men, corrupt men, and destroy men can actually **become** such **transcendent blessings** that we have before God! This is all a result of our offering of material riches.
(Life Lessons, Vol. 2, Lesson Twenty-four)

Day 5

Luke 3:11

And he answered and said to them, He who has two tunics, let him share with the one who has none; and he who has food, let him do likewise.

1 Timothy 5:8

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of *his* household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

PRINCIPLES OF OFFERING

Material Offerings— Not a Matter of Amount, but a Question of Where the Heart Lies

... There is no set principle as to the amount one should offer. Some offer more; others offer less. ... There is no set principle to offering. Some offer everything they have.

- Christ says that a man must **sell everything** to follow Him.
- John the Baptist said that those who have two tunics should **give one away** (Luke 3:11).
- The Gospels tell us to **care for the poor**.
- In the Epistles we see that the church should **care for the widows** among us.

However,

- a person must **first care for his own household** (1 Tim. 5:16, 8).

Second Corinthians 8:15 says, "*He who gathered much had no excess, and he who gathered little had no lack.*"

The problem today is not how much a person should offer, but the fact that money has laid hold of man's heart. In God's work no one can keep his money on the one hand and say that his heart loves the Lord on the other hand. The Bible says that **where our treasure is, there our hearts are also** (Matt. 6:21). In order for our hearts not to be ensnared by money, we have to **let money go**. If **money** goes out of our pocket, the **heart** goes out with it. If a man loves the Lord, he will be able to choose voluntary poverty. Voluntary poverty is the way for the heart to be released. Sometimes God will ask a person to sell all he has. Sometimes He will only ask a person to give what he has in excess. Whatever it may be, **the heart has to be released**. In Acts the apostle rebuked Ananias for keeping back what he had in excess (5:3- 4). ...

... We need to **take care of our livelihood**, and we need to **take care of our family**. But that is not the issue today. As long as we set aside a portion from our income and lower our standard of living a little, we will be able to give away our excess.

Today, when we speak of handing ourselves over, we are not talking about what we have to do to take care of our money. Rather, we are saying that a person has to **offer himself up for the Lord and for the gospel**. Brothers and sisters who are engaged in an occupation, the Lord needs your ministry in your job! ... Some should go to make money and offer their money to the Lord's service. They should **consecrate themselves to make money** for the Lord's service. ... If you are only a spectator here, nothing will happen to you. But if you want to give yourselves for the co-workers' needs, it demands your life.

Of course, God does not want us to go to extremes. He wants us to be in moderation. **First** He wants us; **then** He wants what is ours. We have to come to Him first before we can bring what we have to Him. If we do not come, God will not accept what we have. All the brothers and sisters have to see that **everything is for the Lord** and that **everything has to center around the Lord**. We must have the same center. Although some function in their money-making ministry while others function in their ministry of the word, the center for both must be the same.

Offering Up Our Occupation— Taking Up Occupations Approved by God

Other than material offerings, the Bible also speaks of the **offering up of our occupations**. The Bible shows us that many occupations are **not suitable** for a Christian to engage in. It is true that we have to make money, but we have to **consider how our money is made**. Some means of making money are not approved by the Lord. We can only **keep the occupations that God approves**, and we can never engage in works that God does not approve. Today some leading ones in some localities have wrong concepts about occupations. They bring these wrong concepts to the church. As a result, the church is ill-affected. May the Lord be merciful to us.
[The Resumption of Watchman Nee's Ministry CWWN, vol.57 Chapter 7 - God' Work of Recovery (2)]

Day 6

Deuteronomy 8:18

But you shall remember Jehovah your God, for it is He who gives you strength to gain wealth, so that He may establish His covenant, which He swore to your fathers, as *it is* this day.

Philippians 4:19

And my God will fill your every need according to His riches, in glory, in Christ Jesus.

BECOMING A USEFUL VESSEL IN THE LORD'S HAND

Learning to spend money properly

Finally, we have to learn how to **spend our money properly**. When I was young, I read an article written by Benjamin Franklin of the United States in which he said *that making money is easy and that spending money is hard*. At first I did not agree with what he said because I believed that it is very hard to make money but not very hard to spend money. However, after reading through the article, I was deeply touched and greatly benefited. The article says that if a person does not spend his money properly, he will buy himself disaster. Very few people, however, know how to spend their money rightly.

Concerning the matter of financial support for the carrying out of the entire move of the Lord here, the need is extremely great. For example, the needs include the producing of...full-timers, the propagation to the towns and villages, and the building of a big meeting hall... We must be in one accord and offer as much as we can...

Let me give you a little personal testimony. We all know that the Lord is our riches, yet we also love money. In **January of 1937**, together with some co-workers from the northern part of China, I went to Shanghai to attend Brother Nee's conference in which he released the messages, *Concerning Our Missions* (later republished as *The Normal Christian Church Life*). After the conference I was invited to visit Hangchow and Nanching. While I was holding a conference in Nanching, a brother from Hankow who was attending the conference received a telegram asking him to go home immediately because his wife was seriously ill. Upon hearing the news I was **burdened** in my spirit to give him some money. However, inwardly I was unwilling to do it. I said to myself as well as to the Lord, "Before I return to Tientsin, I still have to go to Tsinan, Tsingtao, and Chefoo. The money that I have is just enough to cover my traveling expenses. Thus, if I give away some of my money, I will have a lack. Then what shall I do?" Furthermore, I considered the fact that I had neglected the care for my wife and my three children since I had been away from home for several months. I was really in a dilemma.

The Lord, however, would not let me go. Finally, when that brother was about to board the car for departure, I gave him **three-quarters of the money** that I had with me. As soon as I gave away the money, I was relaxed and happy, feeling relieved in my spirit. However, I was still concerned about my own immediate expenditures. Then something wonderful happened; right after I saw that brother off, I went back to my lodging place and locked the door. As I was about to retire for the night, suddenly there was a brother knocking on my door. Right away I knew within that it was the Lord's provision. After opening the door, I received an amount that was **five or six times more** than what I had given away. At that moment I had a real **sense of shame** and felt that **I had really offended the Lord**.

Brothers and sisters, this is truly my testimony. I was in one kind of situation while I was traveling, and my family was in another situation at home. The Lord took care of all of us. Therefore, we should **not worry about our future**. Rather, we should **believe that we are in His hands** and that **He will take care of us** and sustain us in a practical way. If the support you receive from the church is scanty, do not complain, but rather look to the Lord. ...

Our living on the earth is entirely for the Lord... we should live a normal and proper life, being regulated in our daily activities at home, including our eating. When we need to **spend**, we would **spend wisely**; when we need to **eat**, we would **eat properly**. On the one hand, we should **never sacrifice our health** for the sake of saving money, for this would be an offense to the Lord. On the other hand, we should **not waste even one penny**. For the necessities of living, we should spend on the crucial things we need according to the rules of health, eating nutritious food and using suitable things, but **we should not spend money for any unnecessary things...** We must learn to spend within the appropriate bounds.

What I have said is not a small thing. Rather, this is for the **building up of our proper living**. Please remember that one day **we all will stand before the judgment seat** of the Lord to give an account of everything. We will have to explain to Him concerning how we spoke, how we spent our money, and how we dealt with others. ...

Therefore, I hope that we would all remember these few matters and apply them in our daily life, **practicing every single item**. We should **not just talk and then not practice**. We are different from Christianity. Not only do we acknowledge the truth and endeavor to be built up in the truth so that we have both depth and height, but we should also **be right and proper in our practical living**. I am convinced that if we practice all these things, we will be those whom the Lord desires and who can be used by Him to send His truth to the whole world so that **the gospel of the kingdom might be spread to the whole inhabited earth** (Matt. 24:14) for the discipling of all the nations (28:19). (*The Economy of God and the Mystery of the Transmission of the Divine Trinity; CWWL, 1986, vol. 2; Chapter 12*)