

*“Give and it shall be given to you good measure pressed down and shaken together and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal shall it be measured to you again.”*

The NET explains that the thought behind the good measure was preparing an exchange of dry measure by volume. A casual selfish person would seek to reduce the amount of grain they would have to provide by ensuring that the maximum amount of spacing and therefore air was included in the calculation. A more generous person who wished to maximise the benefit others received from their provender would literally press down the grain to fit more into the measuring container then shake it up to resettle the grain still more closely together. Finally, the container would be refilled to the maximum extent possible so it was literally running over!

The NET translates the next phrase as “will be poured into your lap” rather than bosom. This is similar to the RSV which also has lap. The Greek word “kolpos” is almost consistently translated as bosom; in the KJV has the meaning of “hollow place” hence lap. The only other way it is translated in the KJV is creek (or bay) in Acts 27v39 off the island of Malta. A creek is a hollow place, a bosom is certainly not, so the KJV is a poor translation.

There is a fairness in how God deals with His creation and this is often based upon cause and effect. God can also more directly intervene although He does prefer to use the mechanisms He has already instituted to effect His designs. When men are involved in the agency, as in this verse, there is a degree of understanding human nature as well.

Is this related to charity giving? Yes, it can be seen that giving to those in need is one of the intentions of this verse. One of the best ways of accomplishing this is seen in the book of Job, when all his relatives and

all his acquaintance... gave him a piece of money and everyone an earring of gold, thereby the burden was shared and distributed over many, so the cross support was able to accumulate into a significant sum. Job 42v11.

In the early times friends and family grouped themselves into funeral clubs whereby other members of the community would contribute towards the funeral costs of the first to decease, whereby the burden was shared. This is not an abandonment of trusting in the assistance of God but rather a recognition that God can work through human agency.

A useful cross reference is found in Proverbs 19v17 *“He that hath pity on the poor lendeth unto the LORD and that which he hath given will He pay him again”*. This carries the idea of God giving track of what we are doing and though His principles of justice there will be an appropriate recompense. What we must not do, is to demand of God what we think is our due! Be patient and let God determine that. It is foolish to try to hassle God and make unreasonable demands based upon our opinions rather than His standards of justice.

There does not seem to be a direct echo of this section in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5-7. Alms giving is covered in 6v1-4 but that deals with the need to avoid ostentatious show and instead to embrace confidentiality. Verse 4 seems to be the closest corresponding thought *“That thine alms may be in secret and thy Father which sees in secret himself shall reward thee openly”*. There is also 7v6 *“Give not that which is holy unto dogs”* where the act of giving is qualified.

The section in Luke’s gospel which parallels this is from 6v20–49, so 30 verses as opposed to 111 verses in Matthew. That it covers new material is therefore interesting. It demonstrates that Jesus talked about many things from different angles even as it says in John 21v25 as that gospel ends *“And there are also many other things which Jesus*

*did, the which, if they were written everyone, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written”.*

A Voice from the Altar

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