

1. **Charity in the first century** - Righteousness and Treasures in Heaven<sup>1</sup>

- The term “**righteousness**” was used idiomatically for Charity.
- The phrase “**store up treasures in heaven**” was used for giving alms to the poor.
- **Charity** provided protection on the ‘day of disaster’ or even from death (Proverbs 11:4)

2. **Read** – Matthew 6:1-4 and 19-21

3. **Intertestamental Development** (450 BC – 30 AD):

<u>Old Testament</u>	<u>Apocrypha</u>	<u>New Testament</u>
Proverbs	Tobit (250 BC)	Matt 6
	Sirach (Ecclesiasticus) (200 BC)	Matt 19

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- As time progresses from the close of the Old Testament around 450 BC to the New Testament, there are significant – and diverse - developments within Judaism and theological ideas that accompany their religious worldview.
  - Based on the texts in Proverbs and many others from the Old Testament that emphasize God’s affinity with the poor and marginalized of society, in Jesus’ day, there was an increasing emphasis on charity toward those in need.

4. **Proverbs 10:2** – Hebrew poetic parallelism contrasts the same topic – **treasuries** - across the two lines. In the latter half of v. two, the noun treasury is omitted, but the reader is intended to carry it forward. A paraphrase of Proverbs 10:2 might read:<sup>2</sup>

“The treasuries (n.) of wickedness will not profit (i.e., provide you no future benefit)  
 But [**the treasuries** (n.)] of **righteousness** delivers from death”

5. **Proverbs 11:4** (paraphrase) -

“Wealth provides no benefit in the day of wrath,  
 but **righteousness** can deliver you from death”

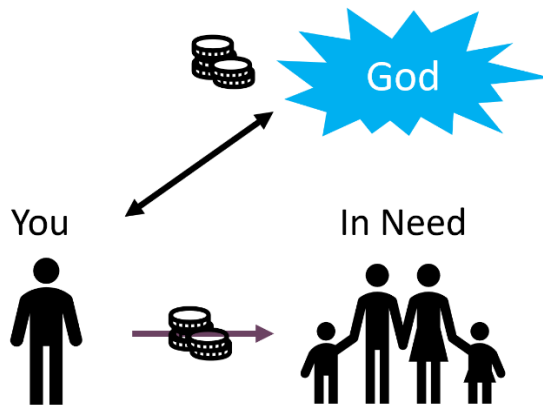
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<sup>1</sup> Jeffrey P. Garcia, “Treasure in Heaven – Examining an Ancient Idiom for Charity” [JerusalemPerspective.com](http://JerusalemPerspective.com). April 24, 2014.

<sup>2</sup> Gary Anderson, “A Treasury in Heaven: The Exegesis of Proverbs 10:2 in the Second Temple Period” in Hebrew Bible and Ancient Israel 1/3 (2012): 351-367.

6. **Proverbs 19:17** (paraphrase) -

“the one who has pity on the poor **lends to the LORD**,  
 and He (the LORD) will repay him for his good deed”



7. **Tobit 4:7-10** – NRSVACE – New Revised Standard Addition Anglicised Catholic Edition<sup>3</sup>

To all those who practice righteousness 7 give alms from your possessions, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from anyone who is poor, and the face of God will not be turned away from you.

8 If you have many possessions, make your gift from them in proportion; if few, do not be afraid to give according to the little you have. 9 So you will be **laying up a good treasure** for yourself **against the day of necessity**. 10 For **almsgiving delivers from death** and keeps you from going into the Darkness.

**Tobit 12:8-10**<sup>4</sup>

8 **Prayer** with **fasting** is good, but better than both is **almsgiving with righteousness**. A little with righteousness is better than wealth with wrongdoing. It is **better to give alms than to lay up gold**.

9 For **almsgiving saves from death** and purges away every sin. Those who give alms will enjoy a full life, 10 but those who commit sin and do wrong are their own worst enemies.

- notice that Matthew 6 is about righteousness, almsgiving, fasting, and prayer.

<sup>3</sup> [Tobit 4:7-10](#)

<sup>4</sup> [Tobit 12:8-10](#)

8. [Sirach 29:8-13](#)<sup>5</sup> -

8 Nevertheless, be patient with someone in humble circumstances,  
 and do not keep him waiting for your alms.

9 Help the poor for the **commandment’s sake**,  
 and in their need do not send them away empty-handed.

10 Lose your silver for the sake of a brother or a friend,  
 and **do not let it rust under a stone** and be lost.

11 **Lay up your treasure according to the commandments** of the Most High,  
 and it will profit you more than gold.

12 **Store up almsgiving in your treasury**,  
 and it **will rescue you from every disaster**;

13 better than a stout shield and a sturdy spear,  
 it will fight for you against the enemy.

9. **Review:**

1. righteousness = charity/almsgiving	Matt. 6:1
2. Lay up (store up) treasure in heaven	Matt. 6:20 and Matt. 19:21
3. rust under a stone	Matt. 6:20 and James 5:1-6
4. giving to the poor delivers from death/disaster	Matt. 19:16

10. Final thoughts:

- Jesus affirms the importance of giving charity to those in need.
- His call is much more radical than we would tell someone today. Jesus knows that if you were to sell everything and give to the poor, your faith would increase. Your faith that God will provide will be tested. Living on less will drive you to a life that relies heavily on God and His provisions.
- 1 Timothy 6:13-19 – Paul instructs Timothy and says in v. 13, “keep **this command** without spot or blame.” What is the command?
  - The command is to perform charity or almsgiving.
  - This verbiage is familiar to Sirach 28:9 (above) – “Help the poor for the **commandment’s sake**.”
- 1 Timothy 6:19 – Paul concludes that if they keep this command “in this way, they will lay up treasures for themselves.”
- When you give to those in need – with no expectation to be repaid – God becomes the guarantor on the loan and will repay you with blessings on their behalf.

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<sup>5</sup> [Sirach 29:8-13](#)