

## 20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 32 (August 3-9, 2014)

Last week, I mentioned that many churchgoers get upset when the sermon topic is about giving. Over the next few weeks, I want to lead you on a study of God's promises and our responsibility in this area.

**Sunday**, August 3 (read Philippians 4:10-20)

*And my God will meet all your **needs** according to His glorious riches in Christ Jesus. (Philippians 4:19, emphasis mine)*

The promise in the printed verse above is a great starting point to our study. The entire text presents several challenges to the reader if he/she is to claim this wonderful promise from God. **First**, we need to learn "the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want" (v. 11-12). **Next**, we need to have confidence that "I (we) can do everything through Him who gives me strength" (v. 13). **Third**, we must swallow our pride and receive the help God offers from His people, because giving will be a blessing to them (v. 14-18). **Finally**, and perhaps the most important, we must learn to separate our legitimate **needs** from our **wants** (v. 19). If we learn to trust God's promises, giving to the Lord or to others will never be a burden again.

**Monday**, August 4 (read Haggai 2:1-9)

*The silver is mine and the gold is mine, declares the Lord Almighty. (Haggai 2:8)*

You may need the table of contents to find this marvelous book of Haggai, but it will be worth your time to read today's entire text. After 70 years of captivity in a foreign land, the Jews are allowed to return to their homeland to rebuild the temple. The building will not be as glamorous as the former temple (v. 3), but the **presence** and the **glory** of God will be even greater (v. 4-5, 9). Revival is on the horizon for the people of God who have enough faith to return to their ancient homeland (v. 6-7). How will the Jews who have been slaves to foreigners for 70 years finance this building project? Our printed verse gives the answer: "The silver is mine and the gold is mine" (v. 8). God's projects never get defeated for a lack of money, but many of them get thwarted for a lack of faith. Can you trust Him to supply all your needs?

**Tuesday**, August 5 (read Psalm 50:1-15)

*I have no need of a bull from your stall or of goats from your pens, for every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills. (Psalm 50:9-10)*

Everything on earth and in the heavens belongs to our God who created all things for His glory and for our enjoyment. The people of Israel are **required** to bring sacrifices to the Lord, but He makes it clear that it is only for **their** good, so that they can learn to open the hands that are tightly holding their possessions. Personally, I find some humor in my paraphrased version of today's printed verse above, "God owns the cattle on a thousand hills. He doesn't need our bull!" We are often guilty of giving "our bull" (our personal opinion) to others, but we need to learn to stay true to the context of His Word. God is teaching us to be open-handed with the material blessings with which He has trusted us so that we will feel free to call on Him in days of trouble and experience His deliverance (v. 14-15).

**Wednesday**, August 6 (read 1 Chronicles 29:10-20)

*But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to give as generously as this?*

*Everything comes from you, and we have given you only what comes from your hand. (1 Chronicles 29:14)*

Read David's entire prayer in today's text and you will see an example of the joy of worshipping God with your giving. It would be hard to quote this prayer and then gripe about giving to the Lord.

"Wealth and honor come from you; you are the ruler of all things. In your hands are strength and power to exalt and give strength to all" (v. 12). Have you learned to praise God like this in your personal prayers? If so, you have found that God doesn't need to hear our praise for His own ego, but rather, we need to express this kind of praise so that we will never forget the privilege we have in approaching the Creator of the universe. Knowing the fact that everything we have comes from Him should make it much easier to be a cheerful giver that God loves (see 2 Corinthians 9:7)!

**Thursday**, August 7 (read Ephesians 3:14-21)

*Now to Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us . . . (Ephesians 3:20)*

This is perhaps the most powerful prayer recorded in the epistles of Paul. From his kneeling position, Paul prays for the Holy Spirit to fill his readers with power from above (v. 14-16). He prays that our faith will allow us to experience the love of God in its fullness and that the Lord will supernaturally open our hearts and minds to help us understand His love for us (v. 17-19). Only then does Paul remind his readers that God "is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to His power that is at work within us" (v. 20). Isn't that an amazing promise? We know that He is able to supply all our needs (Philippians 4:19), but do we fully understand that He is able to do more than we can even "ask or imagine?" Have you asked the Lord to fill you with His Spirit so that you can experience this marvelous promise from God? Don't rest until you do!

**Friday**, August 8 (read 1 Peter 1:3-9)

*These have come so that your faith—of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire—may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. (1 Peter 1:7)*

The Apostle Peter is praising God for the **new birth** experience made possible by the death and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ (v. 3). He wants us to know that our personal salvation is more secure than any worldly possessions of silver or gold (v. 4-7). This is true because Jesus is interceding for us from His throne on high and is shielding us from Satan's attacks that go beyond our ability to withstand (see 1 Corinthians 10:13). Therefore, we can be confident "that He who began a good work in you (us) will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus" (Philippians 1:6). Do you have this confidence in Christ? His security is so much more valuable than our accumulations of silver and gold and stock!

**Saturday**, August 9 (read Revelation 21:15-21)

*The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. (Revelation 21:21)*

I want to close our first week's study of giving by reminding you of the treasures we have awaiting us in Heaven. You may not have accumulated much of this world's gold, but you have a home in Heaven where the streets are paved with it! The entrance gates consist of a single pearl to remind you of the price Jesus paid to purchase your soul from Satan (v. 21). The oyster can verify that a pearl, even though it is beautiful to behold, is painful to produce. As we begin our studies on your personal responsibilities in giving to God, do not lose sight of what the Lord has given to you!