

20:20 Vision Ministries – Devotions by Roger Browning Week 33 (August 10-16, 2014)

This week, we will turn our attention to the Bible's teachings about personal giving. We will find out that motives and attitudes are more important than amounts.

Sunday, August 10 (read Matthew 6:1-4)

But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, so that your giving may be in secret. (Matthew 6:3-4a)

The first concept we will learn about **giving** is that our gifts should be contributed in **secret**. This does not mean that the treasurer of the church should not know what we donate, because we will need a record of our giving for the IRS. Instead, it means that we should not make a public display out of our gift and we should not demand that the church approve a pet project just because we will finance it. This kind of giving allows the donor to have too much control over church policy and it is seldom a good idea. God rewards those who contribute for His glory and His recognition alone (v. 4). Examine your **motives** in your giving! Make sure you are not seeking men's applause (v. 1).

Monday, August 11 (read 2 Samuel 24:18-25)

But the king replied to Araunah, "No, I insist on paying you for it. I will not sacrifice to the Lord my God burnt offerings that cost me nothing." (2 Samuel 24:24)

The second concept we will consider is that our giving should be done **sacrificially**. In today's text, King David is told to build an altar to the Lord on the threshing floor of Araunah the Jebusite so that the plague upon the Jews will stop (v. 18, 25). The frightened owner of the property inquires as to the reason for the king's visit and is told that David wants to purchase his threshing floor to offer sacrifices to God (v. 21). Araunah offers to **give** David whatever he needs for the project, but the king wisely refuses to offer a sacrifice to his God that personally costs him nothing (v. 24). This location later becomes the site of Solomon's temple (see 1 Chronicles 22:1). David did not want the family of Araunah to have an unfair advantage over all the other Jews who would come to the temple to worship. This often happens today when a family makes a large donation, but then they want to control the purse strings later on when it comes to decision-making. Many churches and pastors have experienced this difficult problem.

Tuesday, August 12 (read 2 Corinthians 8:1-4)

*For I testify that they gave as much as they were able, and even **beyond their ability**. (2 Corinthians 8:3a, emphasis mine)*

It is not so hard to give out of our abundance, when it does not affect our lifestyle. However, the Macedonian churches are experiencing a severe trial, and yet they plead with Paul for the **privilege** of giving to his missionary ministry (v. 2-4). As a result, they experience God's grace (v. 1) and the joy of giving out of their poverty to an important mission (v. 2). I have had people in my ministry who insist on giving a tithe of their meager income even though they barely had enough left over to buy food for their family. As a pastor, I want to tell them to keep their money because they need it much more than the church does. I do not do this, however, because I know that those who give **sacrificially** will receive a tremendous blessing from God. Have you learned this important concept? You will receive a blessing when you do!

Wednesday, August 13 (read Acts 4:32-37)

There were no needy persons among them. For from time to time those who owned lands or houses sold them, brought the money from the sales and put it at the apostles' feet, and it was distributed to anyone as he had need. (Acts 4:34-35)

Sacrificial giving financed the ministry of the early church. Many new believers may have lost their means of making a living by joining this new church because it was detestable to the rich religious leaders of the established temple who employed them. "All the believers were one in heart and mind" (v. 32a). Wow! Wouldn't it be great to say that about your church? That would bring about a volunteer **redistribution of wealth!** The apostle-led congregation experienced the power of God and the grace of God (v. 33). The needy were taken care of by the **sacrificial gifts** of those who owned property (v. 34-35). Leading the way is a Levite named Joseph (v. 36-37) whom you may know by another name, Barnabas (which means Son of Encouragement). We will see in tomorrow's devotion what can happen to those who give for their own recognition and glory.

Thursday, August 14 (read Acts 5:1-11)

Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God. (Acts 5:4)

The story in today's text is not about the percentage we give to God, but rather it is all about seeking recognition from other believers for our gifts. No one told Ananias and Sapphira to sell their land and make a donation to the church (v. 4). However, they had seen the response to the **sacrificial** giving of Barnabas (yesterday's devotion) and they wanted the same recognition. Don't miss the fact that by lying to the Holy Spirit, this couple is lying to God (v. 3-4) They want others to believe that they gave the entire amount received from the sale of their land. It is dishonest to take credit for a gift you haven't given, particularly when you do your taxes! Also, God is not pleased when we donate for our own recognition and glory!

Friday, August 15 (read Acts 2:42-47)

Selling their possessions and goods, they gave to anyone as he had need. (Acts 2:45)

The early church increased from 120 (Acts 1:15) to 3,120 (Acts 2:41) following Peter's first sermon. They needed to get organized quickly to meet the needs of this first church body. Note the four imperatives for **any** growing church in v. 42 (teaching, fellowship, communion and prayer). Miracles became commonplace (v. 43) and the church was united (v. 44). How could they meet the needs of the poor without becoming a welfare church? They had a rule that you will find in 2 Thessalonians 3:10b: "If a man will not work, he shall not eat." Of course they made provisions for those who **could not** work because of a disability, but all able-bodied men were required to participate in the tasks. They won new converts daily (v. 47) as they performed God's work in God's way!

Saturday, August 16 (read James 2:14-18)

What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? (James 2:14)

No one can be saved by works, but instead, we are saved by **faith that works!** Today's text says it better than any place in Scripture. The question becomes, "Can you be truly saved and still have no regard for a **Christian** brother/sister who is going without the daily necessities of life? Again allow me to point out that the text is talking about **believers**. God's Word doesn't say how we can meet all the needs of **unrepentant** sinners whose choices and lifestyles have plunged them into poverty. God does command us to make sure that our faith is strong enough to give **sacrificially** to those fellow **believers** who have legitimate needs. How are you and your church doing in that area?