

THE BIBLE VIEW

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Give and Give

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God had just given Moses the instructions for the construction of the first “church”, the Tabernacle. It was to be a beautiful place. It would be a “tent” and very portable; as it would be taken up and down as the people of Israel followed God through the wilderness. Although it was a tent, it would be a holy dwelling place for God. It would be richly laden with gold, silver, weavings, and precious stones. It would truly be a monument honoring God.

“Take ye from among you an offering unto the Lord: whosoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it, an offering of the Lord; ... (Exodus 35:5)” commanded God of His people.

The people of Israel had been delivered from the cruel clutches of the Egyptians. They had seen God open the sea; so that they could walk through the sea on dry ground! They had seen the pursuing enemy drowned by the waters that had been an escape route for them. They had seen the sky darken, and the earth shake as their leader, Moses, ascended into a mount to meet with God. They saw and felt the earth tremble as Moses talked with

God. They felt the fury of God when they displeased Him. God was very real and wonderful to them. What a wonderful opportunity they had to obey God and give back to Him!

So, the people gave, and they gave. Animals were skinned and the hides were prepared for the Tabernacle's outer coverings. Oil was prepared for the tabernacle's lighting. Wood was hewn. Gold and silver were collected and crafted. Furniture was constructed. Women labored over weaving looms. Men collected precious stones and polished them. The people had a mind to work. All continued to give and give of themselves and their possessions with which God had richly blessed them.

Rich men gave. Leaders gave. Socially important men and women gave. Families sacrificially gave. Poor men and women gave. What a sight it must have been to see the pile of goods given to the service of God continue to grow. How it must have felt to feel the air of unselfishness and zeal amongst God's people.

One day, Moses stepped out amongst the people and commanded their attention. "... Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary ... for the stuff we have is sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much." (Ex. 36:6) The people were restrained from their giving, because they gave too much!

Oh Christian, if only we would have the same spirit of giving today. Many today, stop short when giving has

anything to do with their pocket books. There is not one person that has anything that God has not given or allowed them to have. Still, it is hard for people to give.

“Well, God had nothing to do with the new car I have sitting in my garage,” retort some. Not true. God blessed them with the job to earn the money to buy it. God blessed them with the health to be able to go to work. God blessed them with the intelligence to learn the skill that enabled them to earn money.

There was a king, Nebuchadnezzar, who once said almost the same thing. He was proud of what he had done and gave God none of the credit for all the things he had accomplished. God removed his intelligence, and within one hour, high and mighty King Nebuchadnezzar was not so high and mighty. He was eating grass and crawling on all fours like cattle. He stayed that way for four years. When he recognized it was God that had used him in doing all the marvelous things, God restored his sanity, and he became the king again.

Do not learn the hard way, as did Nebuchadnezzar. If you have anything, it is through God’s blessing. Be a cheerful giver and give unto the Lord. The most you can possibly give is only part of what He has given to you anyway.

We have a responsibility to be good stewards with our money, to help others, to see that the gospel is carried throughout the country and world. You can give of yourself, talents, time, and money to see that God’s will and way are accomplished. He could do it Himself, but he

chose to allow us. We also have the opportunity now to give and give. Would it not be wonderful for our spiritual leaders to have to get us to stop giving, because we had given too much? Oh, for giving hearts; as Israel once had.

“It is possible to give without loving, but it is impossible to love without giving.” — *Braunstein*

Before Anyone Gave

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After fleeing Egyptian slavery, one of the biggest accomplishments of Israel, was the building of the Tabernacle. This portable tent was a God-designed place of worship for the over two million refugees seeking a new land God had promised them.

All gave to support this monumental task that was to be laden with gold, silver, woven materials, and other materials (Exodus 35:5-19). However, giving did not come naturally to these people. Before they would give, a change had to be made in their hearts.

Their leader, Moses, gathered the people together and pronounced that they would head to a new land of great wealth and opportunity, but God would not be leading them. Moses highlighted their sin as a reason for God's not leading them. He said they were a “stiffnecked people” (Ex. 33:3, 5, 34:9).

Their stubbornness and hard-heartedness cost them God's protection, provision, and other blessings. They immediately knew what it was that angered God so; it was

their clinging to ornaments (jewelry) they had brought with them from their bondage in Egypt. What in particular about their personal adornments was sin is not clear. The decorations were somehow tied to Egyptian idolatry and false worship.

It was God that had had them gather these treasures from Egypt in the first place for His pre-known purpose of decorating the Tabernacle. Most likely the pagan etchings and engravings on the rings, earrings, bracelets, and necklaces depicted idolatrous images they were to flee from; not covet. They removed their jewelry (Ex. 33:4,6), which was a remnant of their ungodly past. The realization that they were still hanging on to the old world and life they had been delivered from broke their hearts (they “mourned” – Ex. 33:4). It was their turning from their sin, that changed their heart about giving. These “treasures” of ungodliness lost their luster and value. Those things became only a tool to glorify God.

People then gave so willingly that Moses did what every pastor dreams of doing; he commanded Israel to stop giving as what they had given was “sufficient” (Ex. 36: 5-7) for the task God had for them. It is also recorded that they not only gave the valuables they were allowed to have while in Egypt, but many gave themselves to the task of building the place of worship.

This great change in heart was all because of their realization of their sin and desire to flee from its clutching grasp on their lives. When they truly repented, their giving and service to the Lord was given more willingly (Ex.

35:21, 22, 29). Hearts were changed as their selfish priorities changed. They were more united, because they now had one important goal; and they accomplished what God had for them to do.

Too many today also have barriers in their lives that will keep them from living for God and serving Him. They may have moments of “religious” activity, but down deep in their lives there is a missing relationship between them and the Lord. It may be the pull on their lives of coveting, idolatry, dishonesty, or another sin.

Unless sin is recognized, confessed, and repented of they will not have the Lord’s leading in their lives. Not until they too get to the place Israel found themselves where they grieved over the waywardness from obedience to God will anything change. It is never too late to have the right change of heart! It will change many things, including one’s giving.

“The manner of giving is worth more than the gift.”

— *Corneille*