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What Happens in Heaven as We Give?



Part 8 (030223AM)

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Let us turn our attention to what happens on Earth when we give. Are you enjoying the joyfulness and blessedness of giving for eternity today? That is our theme as we study the discipline of stewardship.

What does God need? Our all sufficient Lord needs nothing.

Then what does God want? God's Word tells us He seeks only two things: to save the lost and for them to worship Him!

So as believers, found by our Savior, what does God want from us? He wants us to willingly offer Him our WORSHIP.

We know that on Earth worship is two-fold: personal and corporate. Here this morning the Lord has invited us to offer Him worship. As we saw last week our worship rises before Him through our prayers, our words, our songs, and our gifts. Now for a moment think about this, "How important are the willing gifts of love we can offer to the Lord?" To answer that, join me in the illustration guide to spiritual truth known as the Old Testament. In the pages of the first half of God's Word we find pictures from the lives of God's people that illustrate nearly any spiritual truth you and I would ever need to know.

A quick reading of Exodus and Numbers would yield one clear observation – there aren't many happy times in the Exodus and Wilderness wanderings. In fact 22 times the same word is used to describe their condition: "murmuring".

Exodus 15:24 And **the people complained** against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?"

Exodus 16:2 Then the whole congregation of **the children of Israel complained** against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness.

Exodus 16:7-9 And in the morning you shall see the glory of the Lord: for **He hears your complaints** against the Lord. But what are we, that you complain against us?" 8 Also Moses said, "This shall be seen when the Lord gives you meat to eat in the evening, and in the morning bread to the full; for the Lord **hears your complaints** which you make against Him. And what are we? **Your complaints** are not against us but against the Lord."

9 Then Moses spoke to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the children of Israel, 'Come near before the Lord, for **He has heard your complaints.**'"

Exodus 16:12 "I have **heard the complaints** of the children of Israel. Speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread. And you shall know that I am the Lord your God.'"

Exodus 17:3 And the people thirsted there for water, and **the people complained** against Moses, and said, "Why is it you have brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?"

Also: Numbers 14.2, 22, 27, 29, 36; 16.11, 41; 17.5, 10.

However, in those 76 chapters covering more than 40 years of Israel's life – there is one bright spot: when the Israelites responded to the request of the God of Heaven.

The Lord wanted to have a place of worship built. God wanted them to have a portable tent to take everywhere they went. It was, as we have seen over the last few months, a vivid reminder to all of them of the Lord God Almighty.

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But God wanted them involved in giving to that worship. Think of that. God wanted THEM to give something? Why would He need any help? Of course the Lord didn't need their treasures. He was the Lord God of the Universe, who can supply all the physical needs of those 600,000 traveling families daily for 40 years.

Remember how powerful He is? The Lord who made water flow from rocks, bread to fall from Heaven, clouds to shade their 81 square mile camp from the 120 degree daytime heat, and produced an outdoor heating/lighting system consisting of a flaming pillar that kept the darkness of 30 degree desert nights from too badly affecting those 600,000 families ... That All Sufficient One asked them to participate in the construction and maintenance of a public, corporate worship place. Why? So that He could receive their voluntary, willing gifts of love.

The Lord desires the gifts of His people, given in love, for the worship of their God. For me, Exodus 25.1-9, 35.20-29, and 36.2-7 are about the only beautiful days in the forty years of mostly gloom. In those 25 verses we find the love of God's people is stirred, and many respond with gifts of love to their God.

The Lord asked for the people to give to Him 15 different commodities needed to build the Tabernacle. One item is particularly interesting in verse 5. Badger skins were to be used to make the fourth curtain of the Tabernacle, the outermost protective cover of the tent.

These badger/porpoise (Hebrew *dugong*) skins were very special materials needed for the protective outer covering of God's worship place. The offer the Lord makes is, you can participate

GOD ASKED THEM FOR WHAT WAS PRECIOUS: The porpoise hides were treasured by desert peoples because they could be made into foot protection from the sharp rocks and scorching trails of the Sinai. **Ezekiel 16:10** I clothed you in embroidered cloth and gave you sandals of badger skin; I clothed you with fine linen and covered you with silk.

GOD INVITED THEM TO SACRIFICE: God asked them to invest their treasures with Him. **Exodus 25:3-5** And this is the offering which you shall take from them: gold, silver, and bronze; 4 blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; 5 ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; **Exodus 35:5-8** 'Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze; 6 blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, and goats' hair; 7 ram skins dyed red, badger skins, and acacia wood; 8 oil for the light, and spices for the anointing oil and for the sweet incense; 35:23 And every man, with whom was found blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, goats' hair, red skins of rams, and badger skins, brought them.

GOD PROVIDED FOR THE GIVERS: When they gave up this treasure they gave their necessities for God to use and He took care of them. **Deuteronomy 8:4** Your garments did not wear out on you, nor did your foot swell these forty years. **Deuteronomy 29:5** And I have led you forty years in the wilderness. Your clothes have not worn out on you, and your sandals have not worn out on your feet. **Philippians 4:6-7** Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; 7 and the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ **Jesus. 4:13** I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me. **4:19** And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Please turn with me to I Corinthians 16.

Remember the scene last week in Heaven?

First, these countless white robed angels standing like living walls of pure white robes rising in circular rings reflecting the light of God.

Then the THRONE, completely encircled by the emerald green rainbow that is over, around, and beneath the Throne – we are overwhelmed by the massive rumble of power, as endless peals of thunder and flashes of lightning seem to radiate outward from within.

Then the BURNING ONES, the four glistening, living beings, each with four distinct faces – lion, calf, man, eagle – and completely covered with eyes as they move like flashes of light with fire passing between them, gliding through the expanse around the Ancient of Days in theocentric orbit always facing the Almighty One.

Now 24 ELDERS rise and fall, holding golden bowls containing our worship offered by God's saints on Earth.

We are the priests of God on earth offering to Him our worship that He receives in Heaven.

- **Our devotion as a burnt offering:** **Mark 12:33** And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as oneself, is more than all the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices."
- **Our life as a sacrifice:** **Romans 12:1** I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. **Romans 15:16** that I might be a minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering of the Gentiles might be acceptable, sanctified by the Holy Spirit.
- **Our service as a drink offering:** **Philippians 2:17** Yes, and if I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith, I am glad and rejoice with you all. **2 Timothy 4:6** For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand.
- **Our gifts as a fragrant freewill offering:** **Philippians 4:18** Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.
- **Our worship as a praise offering:** **Hebrews 13:15** Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.
- **Our deeds as a spiritual sacrifice:** **Hebrews 13:16** But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. **1 Peter 2:5** you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.
- **Our prayers as an incense offering:** **Revelation 8:3-4** Then another angel, having a golden censer,

came and stood at the altar. He was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. 4 And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand.

Everything we do, everything we say, everything we pray, and everything we give – rises as offerings to the Lord. How do we offer gifts that rise to His Throne and get poured out before Him? The best answer would be, giving, like the Christians living as the New Testament was written, were taught to give!

COMMANDED: Giving is commanded, and is not an option. Paul instructed the Corinthian church, saying **Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given orders . . . so you must do also** (1 Corinthians 16:1). Also, in 1 Corinthians 16:2, Paul directed the command to give in this way: **Let each one of you lay something aside**. Who was supposed to give? **Each one**. Paul wanted all to give. Giving should be individual. Every Christian should be a giver, because God is a giver (John 3:16). **Each one of you is all-inclusive**.

PLANNED: Giving is to be regular. Regarding the collection in Corinth, Paul said that it should be done every week: **On the first day of the week** (1 Corinthians 16:2). Paul wanted their giving to be systematic, not haphazard. When they came together for worship and the word, they were commanded to receive an offering.

PREPARED: Giving is to be planned. Paul wrote, **Lay something aside, storing up** (1 Corinthians 16:2). This has the idea of coming to church with your gift already prepared. This means that you should seek God about your gift at home and prepare it at home. This causes us to seek the Lord more in our giving and helps us resist any manipulation to give.

PROPORTIONED: Giving is to be proportional. Paul wrote that each one should give **As he may prosper** (1 Corinthians 16:2). This means that believers who have more should give more. We should give proportionately. In other words, if you give \$10 a week when you make \$100 a week, you should give more when you make \$200 a week. Jesus said that if we are not generous when we have little to give, we will not be generous when we have much. The dollar amount of our giving may increase, but our generosity will not. "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much" (Luke 16:10).

REASONED: Giving should never be Humanly Prompted. Paul told the Corinthians: **That there be no collections when I come** (1 Corinthians 16:2). This means Paul didn't want to manipulate anyone! He wanted giving to be from the heart, as the heart heard from God, not in response to a high-pressure fundraiser. This is a very important principle. The Apostle Paul tells us that we should make a decision and have a definite objective in view.

ENCOURAGED: True examples of giving are found in giving **according to their ability, beyond their ability**, and giving in a **freely willing** manner (2 Corinthians 8:3). Speaking of the churches of Macedonia, Paul wrote, "In a great ordeal of affliction their abundance of joy and their deep poverty overflowed in the wealth of their liberality" (2 Cor. 8:2). The reason for their generosity was that "they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God" (v. 5). They gave because they loved God and His servants. Biblical generosity is only possible by the Spirit's work in His people. But with Christ's love, generosity not only is possible but it becomes inevitable.

DEDICATED: True giving comes as we first give ourselves to the Lord, then we will give our financial resources to the Lord (2 Corinthians 8:5). In giving, the real issue isn't giving money. It is giving ourselves to the Lord. If we have really given ourselves to the Lord, then the right kind of giving will naturally follow.

COMPLETED: Giving must be actually completed. Paul told the Corinthians regarding their giving, that they must **Complete this grace** (2 Corinthians 8:6). The Corinthian Christians may have intended to give. They may have thought about giving. They may have been favorable to the idea of giving. Yet all of this was useless unless they did in fact **complete this grace**. Often, intentions, vows, and resolutions are useless without action. *The basic principle for voluntary giving in the Old Testament is reflected in Proverbs: "Honor the Lord from your wealth and from the first of all your produce; so your barns will be filled with plenty, and your vats will overflow with new wine" (3:9-10). The idea was to give to the Lord generously and to give to the Lord first. Again we are told, "There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want" (Prov. 11:24). In other words, if you want to increase your money, share it generously; if you want to lose your money, hoard it. To raise money to build the Tabernacle, the Lord told Moses, "Tell the sons of Israel to raise a contribution for Me; from every man whose heart moves him you shall raise My contribution" (Ex. 25:1-2; cf. 35:5, 21). The standard was heart-directed generosity, based on thankfulness to the Lord for what He had done and given. Based on that principle the gifts for the building of the Tabernacle were so great that Moses had to tell the people to stop giving (36:6)! Required giving was taxation; freewill giving was to be from the heart, with the amount left up to the worshiper. David had the key idea when he said that he would not give God that which cost him nothing (2 Sam. 24:24).*

GRACED: I speak not by commandment (2 Corinthians 8:8) shows that no individual Christian can be commanded to give at any particular moment, even by the apostle Paul. This is because commanded giving is not Biblical giving at all. Paul knew that giving from commandment isn't giving at all; that kind of giving under the illegal use of one's official position or powers to obtain property, funds, or patronage is called extortion. *No amount or percentage is ever required in the New Testament. Rather, each believer is to give from his heart. "Give," Jesus said, "and it will be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by your standard of measure it will be measured to you in return" (Luke 6:38). Paul expressed the same principle as, "He who sows sparingly shall also reap sparingly; and he who sows bountifully shall also reap bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). The benefits of our willing, cheerful giving to the Lord will produce both spiritual and material blessing. "And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed" (v. 8).*

PROVED: Our giving is a valid test of the sincerity of our love for God and others. Paul told the Corinthians, **I am testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others** (2 Corinthians 8:8). Paul makes two important points here. First, giving can measure the **sincerity of your love**. Second, Paul openly compared the giving of the Corinthian Christians to the giving of the Macedonian Christians (**testing the sincerity of your love by the diligence of others**).

REFLECTED: God expects us to give out of what we have. Paul told the Corinthians to give **out of what you have** (2 Corinthians 8:11). We can't give what we don't have. God judges our giving against what resources we have been given. But the issue of what and how we spend is relevant to **what you have**. **True giving is measured by obedience, proportion and need, never by amount.** When the issue of giving is brought up, many ask **"How much am I supposed to give?"** Paul's principles throughout this letter, and other letters, remind us that there is no one answer to that question for every believer. In giving, many go back to the Old Testament law of the tithe, the giving of ten percent unto the Lord. This is a good principle for giving, and perhaps a broad benchmark, **yet nowhere is tithing specifically commanded in the New Testament**. But it certainly does speak of it in a positive light, if it is done with a right heart (Luke 11:42). Since giving is to be proportional, we should be giving some percentage - and **ten percent is a good benchmark - a starting place!** For some to give ten percent is nowhere near enough; for others, at their present time or level of spiritual maturity, one percent may be a massive step of faith. But if our question is, How little can I give and still be pleasing to God? our heart isn't in the right place at all. We should have the attitude of some early Christians, who essentially said: We're not under the tithe - we can give more! **Giving and financial management are spiritual issues, not only financial issues** (Luke 16:11). Some have the idea that God wants ten percent and you can do what you like with the rest, you can indulge yourself to the full. That, of course, is entirely contrary to the principle the New Testament is teaching. No, if God has richly blessed you, then increase the percentage of your giving so that it is ten, twenty, thirty, forty, fifty percent.

ENJOYED: The goal of giving is not to afflict or hurt the giver. Paul wrote to the Corinthians, **For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened** (2 Corinthians 8:13). The Corinthian Christians were not giving so that the Jerusalem Christians would get rich and lazy at their expense. Paul was taking the collection so the Jerusalem Christians could merely survive. The goal was not to burden the Corinthian Christians, nor was it to make it all easy for the Jerusalem Christians. **Giving should be Not grudging or of necessity** (2 Corinthians 9:7). God does not want our giving to be **grudging** (reluctantly, regretfully given with plenty of complaining) or **of necessity** (given because someone has made us or manipulated us into giving). This is more the spirit behind taxation, not Biblical giving! Instead, **God loves a cheerful giver** (2 Corinthians 9:7). Instead of giving in a **grudging** way or out **of necessity**, God wants us to give cheerfully. The Greek word for **cheerful** (hilaros, used only here in the New Testament) is the root for our English word hilarious. God wants us to give happily, because that is how God Himself gives!

INVESTED: Giving can be viewed as investing money, not as spending money. Paul compared giving to sowing seeds: **He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly** (2 Corinthians 9:6). A farmer sowing seed may feel he is losing seed as it falls from his hand to the ground, and we may feel we are losing when we are giving. But just as the sower gives the seed in anticipation of a future harvest, we should give with the same heart. If a farmer were to sow few seeds because he wanted to "hold on" to as much seed as he could, he would have more seed in his barn after sowing time. But at the harvest, the one who sowed more seed would have much more grain in his barn. This means that no one should fear giving generously. **Proverbs 11:24** is a great commentary on this idea: There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty. No one thinks a farmer is "wasting" grain when he scatters it as seed; the more he plants, the more he will harvest. The promise is also that the giver **Will also reap bountifully** (2 Corinthians 9:6). Spiritually, we can trust that God will reward the giving heart both now and in eternity. Jesus spoke of this in **Matthew 19:29**: And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life.

PURPOSED: Giving should come from a right heart. Paul wrote, **So let each one give as he purposes in his own heart** (2 Corinthians 9:7). Giving should be motivated by the **purposes** of our **own heart**. It should never come through manipulation, intimidation, or domination. We should give because we want to give, because God has put it in our own heart to give. The way we spend our money shows the **purposes** of our **own heart** more accurately than our words do. Jesus said it simply: For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. (**Matthew 6:21**)

FOCUSED: Giving must always include giving to the ministries that directly feed us spiritually. Paul established that he, as one who fed the Corinthians spiritually, had the right to be supported by them materially (1 Corinthians 9:7-13). His idea is expressed in **1 Corinthians 9:11: If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?** In this passage, Paul also drew on the principle of **Deuteronomy 25:4**, where God commanded **You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain**. God is establishing the principle that a minister has the right to be supported by the people he is ministering to. This principle is also clearly expressed in **1 Timothy 5:17-18**. Elders who govern and feed the church are to be given the double honor of office and suitable salary comparable to other positions commensurate with their experience, maturity, and life. Those who preach and teach should be honored above those who serve in administration.

MINISTERED: Giving has many aspects. Sometimes Paul calls giving a **gift** (1 Corinthians 16:3). In this, Paul literally calls giving a grace, a gift freely given. Our giving should be like God's grace.

Our giving should be like God's giving of grace to us: giving freely, generously, because we want to give. When God gives to us out of grace, the motive for His giving is in Him, not based in the one receiving. That is how we should give; because the motive of the love and generosity of God is so big in our heart that we simply must give.

Sometimes Paul called giving a koinonia, which means "fellowship, sharing" (2 Corinthians

[8:4](#), [9:13](#), and [Romans 15:6](#)). Our giving is a tangible demonstration of fellowship and participation with the body of Christ.

Sometimes Paul called giving a diakonia, which means "a practical service or ministry" ([2 Corinthians 8:4](#), [9:1](#), [9:12-13](#)).

With all that in our hearts and minds, is it fair to ask, Lord do You really expect less of me?

Your Holy Spirit lives within me guiding me as I live in the wealthiest society in human history.

Do you expect less than You demanded of the poorest Israelite?

- Quoted from sections of MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 16*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.
- Quoted from sections of MacArthur, John F., *The MacArthur New Testament Commentary: I Corinthians 16*, (Chicago: Moody Press) 1983.
- Randy Alcorn, *The Treasure Principle*. Sisters, OR: Multnomah Publishers, Inc., 2001, p.61.

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