

What is Moving Our Heart?

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Exodus

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Bible Text: Exodus 25:1-8
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Would you please join me by taking your copy of the Scriptures and let's turn to the Old Testament book of Exodus. If you're using one of the Bibles that's provided for you at the bottom of the chair in front of you, you can turn to page 65. Page 65. We're going to be in Exodus 25, Exodus 25:1-8. God's word to God's people,

1 The LORD said to Moses, 2 Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. 3 And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, 4 blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, 5 tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, 6 oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, 7 onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. 8 And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst.

This is God's word.

Let me pray.

Father, we want to pause now to thank you right now while this service is going on, while we're sitting here and have the privilege to read your word aloud and to hear it expounded that our understanding of you may be improved and that our lives might be transformed. While we're doing this, there are others around the building that are serving, they're serving our children, they're teaching children in an age appropriated situation. There are good folks in the nursery that are taking care of babies so that parents can have a free uninterrupted time together of worship. There are those on the safety team, there are those working the sound and there's been the musicians and the ushers, there's people that are serving, they're giving, they're giving of their time. I think of the women's ministry, this was announced, a time to serve widows and ladies who are going through a difficult time. Lord, thank you for people that will lead this and will contribute and to make it a success, to serve other people, to give. Lord, they do it because their hearts have been touched. And so, Holy Spirit, we ask today that you would touch our hearts again, touch them today that they be touched tomorrow, each day may

we be moved and stirred because of what Christ has done for us. We pray this in his name. Amen.

Well, let's go ahead and state the obvious, let's go ahead and get it out in the open, this text is about giving. Now some of you might be a little nervous right now and say, "I've brought some friends with me today. Brother Van, we've got visitors here today," and we're really thankful for that, grateful for that but this text is about giving. Now I know you know and I know ministers and churches that swing to the far extreme and that's all they talk about is money and giving, right? That's true. We know that. But on the other hand, there is another extreme, there are ministers and churches that never talk about it, a little nervous maybe to do that. Now those of you who have been here, you come here regularly, you know, you know the environment here concerning that. You know, but some on the extreme, other extreme will say, "We just kind of avoid that. We just kind of stick with the Bible. We're gonna stick with the Bible." I think that's great. I am all for sticking with the Bible, amen? But if you stick with the Bible, eventually you're going to come across texts that speak about giving and money. If you stick with the Bible, you're going to and you're going to because more than 400 times in the Bible money and giving, stewardship are mentioned. That's not counting the many others that speak about the principles of giving and money and that's what we find in Exodus 25.

Now most of you know we have been working our way through the book of Exodus. I didn't wake up this morning and say, "Okay, I'm gonna go to chapter 25 and we're gonna preach on giving." No, we've been working our way through the book of Exodus. We've come upon chapter 25 and that's our next stop, so it's just natural, but we've been working our way through the book of Exodus and we've been beholding God's dealings with his ancient people Israel that have everything to do with us today. We've been observing that God has rescued the Israelites from Egyptian bondage, he bore them, he said, "I bore you on eagle's wings and brought you to myself," that vivid imagery of God just like an eagle bearing up his children and bringing them to himself. We've been observing God leading his people through the Red Sea and through the wilderness and he's brought them to Mount Sinai where they're at in Exodus 25. He's brought them into a relationship by grace and he gave them rules for that relationship which we looked at last week, all the 10 Commandments. But now in chapter 25 we are seeing God expose his heart. We've been watching all of his mighty acts but now we are seeing God expose revealing his heart.

You see it in verse 8. We read it, "And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." God exposes his heart to his redeemed people and said, "I want to dwell with you. I want to live with you." And for this to take place, God requires a sanctuary to be built along with its furnishings. You say what is a tabernacle? Well, you'll see a picture on the overhead that is a model of what we're talking about in chapter 25. You notice the part that's a tent, it looks like a tent. Well, it is, it's a portable movable tent where God's people would gather and worship their God and draw close to him. That's what it looked like. There was the outer court and there's the inner court but this tent part, this is something that the Israelites would travel with. They would set it up, tear it down, move, set it up again.

So chapter 25 which we're looking at this morning so you'll understand, chapter 25 begins what's called the tabernacle story. The tabernacle story. Now again, we've been working our way through the book of Exodus, we're here now at 25, next week we're gonna be in chapter 32 looking at the episode of the golden calf, and what we're gonna do is on Wednesday nights here in a few weeks, we're going to take the tabernacle story and take about four Wednesday nights and look at that in a separate setting than on Sunday mornings. But today what I want you to think about is Exodus 25 is about the tabernacle story and the tabernacle story doesn't begin with a hammer and a chisel, it's a building project but it doesn't begin with a hammer and chisel and measuring line, interestingly enough it begins with an offering. An offering. I want to ask three questions this morning from our text. The first one will be this: who were the people being required to give an offering? 2. What was to be their motivation for giving? And thirdly, what does this have to do with Christians in 2019?

So the first question is who were the people being required to give an offering? Well, you know, right? You've been with us over the last few weeks, it's the Israelites, right? Of course. It's no surprise. You say, "Well, good grief, we can move on to question 2." Well, not so quick. Do you know why? Because we need to look a little closer. I want to ask who were these people being required to give? Now I know they were the Israelites but I want us to look closer, okay? I want us to look closer because when we first meet these people, when we first meet them in the book of Exodus they are slaves and captives in the land of Egypt. Let's remember that first. I mean, before we just jump into this, let's just run the tape back and remember when we first met these people they were slaves and captives in a foreign land and they were crying out, they were miserable, things were unpleasant for them, and they cried out after 430 years of slavery, they cry out to God and the Bible tells us that God heard their cry and that in his mercy he rescued them. They had nothing to contribute. They were in need of mercy, they were in need of grace and God in his grace and rich mercy rescued these people and they began to observe these mighty extraordinary miracles that he did, the 10 plagues and the parting of the Red Sea, all of these wonderful extraordinary events, they got to observe them, they were done for the glory of God on their behalf, but then also remember they were redeemed by the blood of a lamb. Remember Passover, the death angel was gonna go through one night and God warned his people, "Each family will have to take a lamb and slit the throat of the lamb and drain the blood and take some of the blood and put it over the doorposts and the lintels of your home." He said, "Then when I pass over or when I pass by, if I see the blood I will pass over you." In other words, the firstborn was allowed to live because someone died in their place, someone was a substitute on their behalf.

They were also people who were divinely led and divinely provided for. Over the last few weeks we've been looking at God providing water for them where there was no water, food where there was no food. God brought them to himself and when he did, he gave them an identity, he said, "You are my treasured possession." Now remember when he said that he said, "All of the earth belongs to me." Notice everything belongs to God but he said, "You, you redeemed people are my treasured possession," which meant, you

remember? "You are special above everything else to me. I own everything but you are special to me."

Then he told them their purpose, "You are to be a kingdom of priests. Now that you have been redeemed, now that you have experienced my love and my grace, go and represent me throughout all the world." These were a people – listen – these were a people who owed their very existence and their future to God. That's who these people are. That's the people that are being required to give. They owe their very existence, their redemption, their future, they owe everything to God. And by the way, they're also a people who will forget these extraordinary blessings very easily. Lesser things would gain priority and they would forget these things, they would forget the goodness of God, they would forget the blessings of God. They would get distracted very easily.

You might have heard this story. A man bought a ticket for the Super Bowl, the Super Bowl was last just this few months ago in Atlanta, Georgia. He bought a ticket and when he bought his ticket he found out that he was in the nosebleed section. Really disappointed and so he began to scout out and see if there was any empty seats at all and he finally saw one about the 50 yard line and he kind of wormed his way down through the crowd and he got in the seat and there was an elderly gentleman sitting next to him and he looked over at the older gentleman and he said, "Man, what a view! What a view! Why would anybody pass up this seat?" The elderly man spoke up and he said, "Well, it's my wife's. We've gone to the Super Bowl every year since we were married but she passed away." The young man said, "Oh, I'm so sorry, sir. But couldn't you find a friend to come with you?" He said, "No, they're all at the funeral."

Just like this man, just like this man the Israelites would lose sight of what was really important. We see it time and time again. We've already seen in the book of Exodus there will be more. I mean, next week we're gonna look at chapter 32, they build a golden calf. I mean, how much more forgetful can you get? But God would graciously and patiently build structure into their lives to help them remember. I mean, we just experienced part of God building structure into our lives, the Lord's Supper, to help us to remember the most valuable things in our lives.

So these are people, these are the people who are being required to give. These are the people that are being required to cheerfully, generously, freely give an offering. But secondly, what was their motivation to be forgiving? We know, hopefully you're thinking with me, these are tremendously blessed people, tremendously graced people. They did not earn it, they did not deserve it, yet God freely gave to them. They're the ones that are being required to give but what was to be their motivation for giving? Well, look at verse 2 with me, "Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man," notice, "whose heart moves him." Oh, please listen, please listen. What is the motivation that God gives? Not that the church gives, not that preachers give, what is the God-given motivation that God gives for us to give? He said, "every man whose heart moves him."

Now a little later in the book of Exodus in chapter 35, this subject, this whole project's gonna come up again and notice what he said later, "Take from among you a contribution to the Lord, whoever is of a generous heart let him bring the Lord's contribution." Then a few passages later in chapter 35 and verse 21, "And they came, everyone whose heart stirred him, and everyone whose spirit moved him." And then finally in chapter 35, verse 29, "All the men and women, the people of Israel, whose heart moved them to bring anything for the work that the LORD had commanded by Moses to be done brought it as a freewill offering." Now just stop right here. You do realize that God is giving a command to Moses to give to the people and so on one hand you have a command, but then on the other hand you have a freewill offering. Command yet freewill offering, now how is that gonna work?

Well, let's think about it for a moment. Notice here these passages speak a lot of the heart, the heart. Now what does the Bible mean when it speaks of the heart? And then secondly, we're also gonna ask what is a freewill offering? This is the first time in the Bible that you read of a freewill offering. So here you have all these things merging together, you've got God commanding, you've got the human heart, and then you've got freewill offering. So how is all this put together? Well, first, let's look at a definition for heart. The Bible speaks of heart again and again in the Bible, it's important we understand what it means. The heart is the repository of one's core commitments, deepest loves and those foundational hopes that control our feeling, thinking and behavior. Repository where you put something in, okay? What's in this repository. The human heart, the repository of our, what? One's core commitments, our deepest commitments, the thing that we are committed to firmly.

Our deepest loves. We love a lot of things. You know, I often officiate funerals and people will talk a lot about the deceased, "Well, they loved this and they loved this. They loved to garden." But I always try to make a distinction and say, "You know, they loved gardening and they loved fishing but their deep love was for the family." You see? There's a difference. We love but our heart has our deepest loves, our most foundational hopes. Notice that control our feelings, our thinking and our behavior. No wonder the Bible says guard your heart with all diligence. Guard it.

Now you've probably said things, I know I have and you probably heard this and said it yourself, "Wow, that really touched my heart." Have you ever had that happen? "That really touched my heart," and what you're saying is the deepest part of your being was moved. The deepest part of your being was stirred. I looked for an example this week and I hope this is helpful. You see a picture of these two boys, these two African American boys are out playing, they're on their scooters, notice they have their hands over their heart. What's going on here? Well, right across the street they are looking at a firehouse and at that firehouse the chaplain is raising the American flag and as he's raising the flag, these two boys stop their playing and they instinctively put their hand over their heart and they start doing the Pledge of Allegiance. The chaplain saw this and he said these words, "That moved my heart. That touched my heart." And what he did was it touched him so deeply that he could not help but get a picture of this, and then shared it on Facebook for millions of people to see. Why? Because it touched his heart. He could not not respond.

This was one of those moments, you know? It's like when you see a movie maybe and you go, "Man, that moved me." Or you hear a special song and you listen to the lyrics real close and it touches your heart. Or someone comes to you and they share something with you and say, "Look, I've been meaning to talk to you about this and I want to talk to you." And their words move your heart, they touch you, they stir you at the deepest part of your being. Or, or they act.

I couldn't tell you how many times that I've noticed that people kind of move through life and they're kind of, they lack a sensitivity to certain things and then all of a sudden someone in their family will die and then at the visitation, at the funeral people in the church will bring food and they'll come and they'll serve and I've seen this over and over again, people who were very insensitive to these things, it moved their heart in such a way that they were never the same. From that point on they began to be sensitive. Their heart was touched and they began to give back in that same kind of way. I've seen it over and over again.

We're being told in this text, God is saying, "The motivation that I'm looking for, I'm calling for an offering and the motivation I'm looking for, I'm looking for men and women whose hearts have been moved, hearts who have been touched, hearts that have been stirred to generosity." Now let's apply this to our text. What God is saying, and I want you to hear this very clearly, God is expecting that what he has done for them, God is expecting that what he has done will have touched their heart, that it will have moved their heart, it will have stirred their heart in such a way that they give. God is expecting that, in fact, that based upon what he has done, they cannot respond in any other way. It would be like those two boys seeing that flag go up, no one had to tell them, "Put your hand over your heart. Say the Pledge." They instinctively did it. God is saying to his people that have been redeemed and graced, this instinctively, "Now that your heart has been touched, this is what you should do." And therefore – listen – therefore their offering will have been a freewill offering because their heart has been changed, their heart has been touched, it's been moved by the wonderful grace of our Lord and it motivates them to give and that is the motivation that pleases God. That's the motivation that God gives and that is the motivation that pleases God. When we began our service this morning, what are we told? God loves a cheerful giver.

Third question. We've asked who are these people. Wow, they are graced people. They are graced people. They are people that owe their very life and future to God. What is their motivation? What is their motivation to be for giving? It is because their heart has been touched by God, by God's grace and his goodness. And so finally what does this text have to do with Christians in 2019? I think you can anticipate the answer, can't you? I mean, if you're paying any attention at all, if you're not daydreaming, if you haven't already checked out, I think you can kind of anticipate the answer, can't you? Does this have anything to do with us? I mean, we're looking at the Old Testament and here we are living in 2019, does this have anything to do with us? Yes, it does.

"In what way, pastor?" Think with me. As Christians if you're here this morning and you've been saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ, let's run the tape back on you.

You, I was enslaved to sin. That's the way the Bible describes it. We were slaves to sin with no ability to save ourselves yet God in his grace came for us. We did not go after him, he in his mercy came for us. The Bible says while we were yet sinners Christ died for us and we were not redeemed by the blood of a fluffy lamb. Oh no, we're told that we were redeemed by the precious blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the sinless Son of God. He died the death that we deserved. He was our substitute. He took our place and in doing so through faith in him we were reconciled to God and adopted into his family. We were brought into a special relationship with God. Listen, do not drink the poison that everybody in this world are children of God. We are told clearly that those who receive Christ are given the privilege, the power to become sons and daughters of God. Christians are brought into a special relationship with God where we are given an identity, the same thing that God told the Israelites he tells the church today, "You are my treasured possession. I own everything in the world but you, church, are special to me."

We're not special to this world. No, but we are special to God and we have a purpose. The same purpose that he gave Israel, we have, to be a kingdom of priests, to go and represent God in this world. We are people, friends, we are a people who own our very existence and our future to God and all that God has done for us in Christ is all designed and calculated to move and touch and stir our heart.

So let me stop here. Has it? Has what God has done for you in Christ, has it touched your heart? But that's not all, does it still touch your heart? Oh, I know that many will be inclined to say, "Oh, praise God! Yes, sir, preacher! Woo, 20 years ago." Wonderful. Wonderful. But what about today? What about today? Is your heart still moved and touched by what God has done for you in Christ? Oh, you might say, "Well, oh my goodness gracious, how could you insinuate that it couldn't?" Very easily.

Buck Parsons is a pastor down in Florida and just this week he had a little pamphlet and I was looking through it, wasn't expecting to find this little gem but I've got it for you this morning and I want you to read it with me. "One of my greatest fears for the church today is that we will become bored with the cross of Christ. I am concerned that any mention of Christ and him crucified is leading many professing Christians to say to themselves, 'Yeah, I know all about Jesus dying on the cross for my sins. Let's move on to something else.'" Then he continues, "I firmly believe that Satan is set on trying to destroy us but he'll settle with just getting us to lose our astonishment of Christ and him crucified." Is that right on? Yes. I fear that same thing. I fear that for me. I fear it for you, that I'll get bored with the cross. May we never. I fear for you, I fear for me. As Paul said to the church at Corinth, "I fear that as Satan beguiled Eve that he'll lead you astray from a sincere pure devotion to Christ." You can be sure that the enemy of your soul has that bull's eye on your back, on your heart. You can be sure of it.

If the Gospel – listen – if the Gospel of the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ is not moving your heart, you are in danger of what the Scriptures call the hardening of your heart. "Oh, preacher, I thought that was for really really bad people." No, it was written in the book of Hebrews to the church. Don't harden your hearts through the deceitfulness of sin, speaking to Christians. Friend, I can promise you this, if the Gospel of Christ is not

moving and stirring your heart in such a way to give and to serve and to represent God well in this world, then the chances are you're in danger of what the Scriptures call hardening of the heart. It doesn't mean – listen – it doesn't mean that you don't feel for certain things, in fact, as we'll see next week – listen – as we'll see next week in Exodus 32, the golden calf. Remember Aaron had to go through the crowd and start collecting all the gold and people willingly gave it up. Freewill. Freewill. "Here you go. Here you can have it so we can build an idol." You see, there are Christians today that are more than willing, they're more than willing to give it up, give it up for the things of this world but particularly harden their heart against giving for the advancement of the kingdom of God and for Christ's church. Generosity, cheerful, freewill giving comes from a heart transformed and moved by the grace of God in Christ, not a hard heart.

So let me ask you: what is moving your heart? What's moving your heart? This would be a good place to stop and examine because, again, the Bible says guard your heart. You'd better, you'd better be concerned about what's moving your heart, what's touching it. I mean, I know of many people that, you know, have said, "Well, I just couldn't help it. I just love her. My heart was moved by her," but no longer moved by your wife. You've got to be careful what's moving your heart, what's touching, what's stirring you at the very depth of your soul. So I ask you what's moving your heart? You say, "Well, how can I know?" If you want to know, here's one way, at least one way, if you want to know look at your bank statement. Sit down with your spouse, sit down with your spouse and just start following the trail. You say, "Brother, how dare you?" No, this is Jesus. Jesus said in Matthew 6:21 as a warning to us, "For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." What he means is our treasure will follow what moves our heart.

But you know, we're asking what does this have to do with Christians in 2019? Tabernacle? Furnishings? They were being asked to build a tabernacle, man, that doesn't have anything to do with us? Well, in the days of Moses God's building project was the tabernacle but today God's building project is the church. Jesus said, "I will build my church." As the tabernacle was once the place God lived with his people, today his dwelling place is the church. In Ephesians 2 we see this, "In whom the whole structure being joined together grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in him," in Christ, "you," you, who is that, you the church, you who have answered the gospel call, you have been redeemed, you who owe your life to God, your future to God, your everything to God, "you also are being built together into a dwelling place," there's the heart of God, "a dwelling place for God by the Spirit." What does this mean? It means if you are part of Christ's church today, Exodus 25 calls you to contribute to the building, to building the means of God's dwelling place today willingly, generously motivated by what Christ has done and continues to do for you.

So yes, this text is about giving but it's about more, isn't it? I told you it would be. It's about giving but it's about something else, right? It's a call to examine what is moving my heart, what is touching my heart, what is stirring my heart. May God by his Spirit help us to do that today.