

LESSON 5- GODLY GENEROSITY

MAY 3, 2020

Background Scripture: Exodus 35, 36

Lesson Passage: Exodus 35:1-9; 20-29; 36:4, 5 (NIV)

Introduction: There is a wide-spread attitude among Christians that the Old Testament concept of giving differs from that of the New Testament as day differs from night. This is only partially true. It would be more accurate to think of Old Testament giving as differing from New Testament giving, as Old Testament salvation differs from New Testament salvation. While there are distinctions between the old dispensation and the new, also, there is continuity. In this account of the generous, free-will offerings of the Israelites, we will seek to identify those points of continuity with the New Testament teaching on giving. In this way we will focus on the application of this text to our own lives.

Scripture Reference: Exodus 35:1-8; 20-29 (NIV)

1 Moses assembled the whole Israelite community and said to them, "These are the things the Lord has commanded you to do: 2 For six days, work is to be done, but the seventh day shall be your holy day, a day of sabbath rest to the Lord. Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death. 3 Do not light a fire in any of your dwellings on the Sabbath day." 4 Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the Lord has commanded: 5 From what you have, take an offering for the Lord. Everyone who is willing is to bring to the Lord an offering of gold, silver and bronze; 6 blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; 7 ram skins dyed red and another type of durable leather; acacia wood; 8 olive oil for the light; spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense; 9 and onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. 20 Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, 21 and everyone who was willing and whose heart moved them came and brought an offering to the Lord for the work on the tent of meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments. 22 All who were willing, men and women alike, came and brought gold jewelry of all kinds: brooches, earrings, rings and ornaments. They all presented their gold as a wave offering to the Lord. 23 Everyone who had blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen, or goat hair, ram skins dyed red or the other durable leather brought them. 24 Those presenting an offering of silver or bronze brought it as an offering to the Lord, and everyone who had acacia wood for any part of the work brought it. 25 Every skilled woman spun with her hands and brought what she had spun—blue, purple or scarlet yarn or fine linen. 26 And all the women who were willing and had the skill spun the goat hair. 27 The leaders brought onyx stones and other gems to be mounted on the ephod and breastpiece. 28 They also brought spices and olive oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense. 29 All the Israelite men and women who were willing brought to the Lord freewill offerings for all the work the Lord through Moses had commanded them to do.

Memory Verses: *4 So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done" (Exodus 36:4, 5). NIV*

Topic Explored: "Godly Generosity" ~ In God's economy, giving large offerings without a willing heart, will be abhorred; with a willing heart, the smallest will be accepted. Our hearts are willing

when we cheerfully assist in promoting the cause of God. Our wisdom and duty consist in giving God the glory and use of our talents, gifts and resources, be they many or few.

Lesson Focus: Exodus 35:1-9; 20-29

Verses 1-3 ~ The Israelites constructed the tabernacle as God so prescribed in Exodus 25:1-31:18. This time, however, an extra admonition forbids the making of a fire on the Sabbath. Starting here and continuing through the rest of the book, the people begin to prepare for the presence of the Lord dwelling with them in the tabernacle. Moses also begins to prepare the people for the completion of the tabernacle work; but on the seventh day work must cease. The honor of the Sabbath was above that of completing the sanctuary. The kindling of fire in early times involved considerable labor. It was ordinarily affected by rubbing two sticks together or twisting one round rapidly between the two palms in a depression upon a board. Fire only came after a long time. Moreover, as in the warm climate of Arabia and Palestine artificial warmth was not needed, fire could only have been kindled there for cooking purposes, which involved further unnecessary work, and had already been forbidden (Exodus 16:23). We see that Moses had brought the exact message that God had given him for the people. It appears this "ye shall kindle no fire", probably was an explanation of how far the keeping of the Sabbath was to go.

Verses 4-9 ~ Exodus, Chapter's 25-27, gave the blueprint for the tabernacle. Here is the "budget." God had already prepared the people for this "freewill offering to the Lord" when they left Egypt (11:2-3; 12:35-36). Those who give from a "willing heart" will be stirred to keep giving. Moses continued his speech to them. Saying: This is the thing which the Lord commanded. That is, they were to take a part of their substance, of what they possessed. Every man according to his ability, out of what he had in his hand that was suitable and present it as a freewill offering to the Lord, for the use of the tabernacle to be built, and the service of it. "Whosoever is of a willing heart": That is, of a generous and liberal disposition. "Let him bring it, an offering of the Lord": If brought miserably and grudgingly, it would not be acceptable, for God loves a willing and cheerful giver.

"Gold, silver, and brass" are particularly mentioned. The tabernacle was to be of such quality and craftsmanship that it would befit the God who was to dwell within it. Thus, the materials used in building it were the finest that were available. All that were skillful must work. God dispenses his gifts; and as every man hath received, so he must minister (1 Peter 4:10). Those that were rich must bring in materials to work on. Those that were skillful must serve the tabernacle with their skill. As they needed one another, so the tabernacle needed them both (1 Cor. 12:7-21). Moses gave them a list of things that they could bring as an offering unto the Lord for the tabernacle. These people had repented of their sins they committed while Moses was on the mountain with God the first time. We will find that they not only did what Moses told them was God's wishes about the offerings, but actually freely gave more than was needed to furnish the tabernacle and outer court.

Verses 20-29 ~ After Moses had given God's instructions to the people, explaining the opportunity that each had to contribute, he dismissed them. Moses dismissed the people, so that they had time to themselves, apart from outside pressure, to determine what they could and should contribute. This insured the fact that the gifts were indeed voluntarily donated, and not obtained under emotional or psychological duress or pressure.

Israel's gifts were willingly, joyfully given. God instructed Moses to collect an offering from "whoever is of a willing heart" (Exodus 35:5), and the text frequently informs us that this was the case (Exodus 35:21, 22, 26, 29). Every indication of our text is that the people gladly gave their gifts so that the tabernacle could be built. The excitement and enthusiasm of the Israelites is evident by the abundance of their gifts. In fact, the text informs us that the gifts exceeded the need, so that Moses was requested by the workers to command the people to stop giving (Exodus 36:2-7). This is the first time in the history of mankind that we know of that people were told to stop giving because all that was needed was given. Today, there might have been a proposal to enlarge the tabernacle, so that donations would keep coming in. How wonderful it would be, just once, to be told not to give.

Verses 23-28 ~ The giving of the Israelites was unanimous. While all were free to give or not to give, the text strongly suggests that there were few, if any, who refused to have a part in contributing toward the construction of the tabernacle (35:23-28). The Israelites' giving was to be proportionate. While virtually everyone gave something for the tabernacle, each one gave in accordance with what he or she had to give. Everyone who could contribute of silver and bronze brought the LORD'S contribution; and every man, who had in his possession acacia wood for any work of the service, brought it. And all the skilled women spun with their hands, and brought what they had spun, in blue and purple and scarlet material and in fine linen. And all the women whose heart stirred with a skill spun the goats' hair. And the rulers brought the onyx stones and stones for setting for the ephod and for the breast-piece, and the spice and the oil for the light and for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense.

Verses 24-29 ~ The Israelites, all the men and women, whose heart moved them to bring material for all the work, which the LORD had commanded through Moses to be done, brought a freewill offering to the LORD. Those who were wealthy gave what only the wealthy would possess—the finest stones and gems, the most precious oils and fragrances. Those who had lesser means gave what they had.

The giving of the Israelites included both material goods and technical services. The building of the tabernacle required two essential elements: goods and services. There were the raw materials from which the tabernacle and its furnishings were to be constructed. This included gold, silver, precious stones, animal skins, spices and ointments, and fine cloth. Then there must be skilled workers, both men and women, who would fashion these raw materials into objects of beauty. Some of those who gave to the tabernacle gave of their goods, while many others gave of their skilled abilities, to create a place of great beauty and worth.

The tabernacle was the means of God's personally dwelling among His people (Exodus 25:8). This was a one-time need, for which the people had been amply enabled to contribute. There was an on-going need for the support of the priests and Levites, who devoted themselves to the service of God in the tabernacle. Once in the land of Canaan, these servants of God would not be able to serve God and support themselves and their families at the same time. God, therefore, prescribed a set "contribution" at a stipulated interval, so that the tabernacle services could be constant.

Exodus 36:4-5 ~ *4 So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done."*

Lesson Focus: Exodus 36:4, 5

Verses 4, 5 ~ By the calculations, which the practiced eyes of the workmen enabled them to make, they were unanimously of the opinion that the supply already far exceeded the demand and that no more contributions were required. Such a report reflects the highest honor on their character as men of the strictest honor and integrity. What a wonderful problem to have. The people (congregation), had brought more than they could possibly use. Many small churches have a problem of having enough offerings to even keep the doors open. If members of churches everywhere had the zeal in giving that these people did, God's work could be carried on. Some have abused the gifts God's people have given for the work and they make it difficult for the people to know just where to give. Moses felt it necessary to interfere and forbid further offerings. When will Christian liberality be so excessive as to require to be "restrained"?

Let's talk about it. . .

Making it personal:

- The women who spun the goats' hair were wise-hearted, because they did it heartily to the Lord. Thus, the laborer, mechanic, or servant who attends to his work in the faith and fear of God, may be as wise, for his place, as the most useful minister, and he equally accepted of the Lord. Our wisdom and duty consist in giving God the glory and use of our talents, be they many or few.

Closing Prayer: *"Dear Merciful Father, help us to grow in the grace of giving, giving to others as much as we are able, willing to give even beyond our ability because we trust in You. Help us to always be generous, always willing to reach out to the need. In Jesus Name, we pray. Amen!"*
