

Solid Rock Christian Church Manassas, Virginia

Bible Study - August 18, 2022

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Ten Steps to Spiritual Renewal

Part VI - Step 6

Title: "Taking A Pledge To Give"

Scripture Reference: Nehemiah 10:32-39

Outline

It has been said that a person's checkbook will reveal what is most important in that person's life. Jesus said that one's heart and treasure can be found in the same place. The Jews who returned from Babylon to Jerusalem made a commitment to put God first with their resources.

Here are the areas we will cover in this lesson:

1. A Priority
2. A Plan
3. A Proportion
4. A Purpose
5. A Place
6. Conclusion

I. Overview

- A. Throughout church history, spiritual renewal and revivals have always touched on the subject of financial stewardship. Why?
- B. Because our attitude toward money is usually the clearest measure of our attitude toward God. It was Jesus who said - "For

where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." (Matthew 6:21)

C. When the Jews in Jerusalem, under the leadership of Ezra and Nehemiah recommitted themselves to walk in covenant with God, they committed their material possessions as well.

D. They were operating under the Old Testament Law and so they had specific responsibilities to fulfill with regard to their money.

E. Although we do not live under the Law today, there are still many principles of the Law that can inform our spiritual practices today. And that is true with regard to being good stewards of our finances.

II. A Priority

A. Reading through Nehemiah 10:35-37, you find the terms "**firstfruits**" and "**firstborn**" used several times. The word "**first**" is used intentionally - the Israelites gave the first portion of everything to the Lord.

B. Rather than doing something else with the first of the harvest (pay debts, spend it on themselves), God was the priority. God got the first of everything!

Questions:

(1) Is God the priority in your life when it comes to how you use what He has given to you?

(2) Is He first in every area of your life?

C. Christians in modern economies become so burdened with debt

and monthly financial obligations that God gets pushed to the bottom of the stack. When God ceases to be a priority, the burdens become even greater.

Comment: To neglect God with material possessions is to, as the expression goes, "cut off the hand that feeds you."

D. Whether in the Old Testament or the New, God must be the priority among His people. He must get the first of everything: time, talent, and treasure.

E. The pressure is always there to ask God to wait until other things are taken care of. But, when there is a commitment to put Him first, the negotiations end! That is the commitment the Israelites included in their renewal covenant with God.

III. A Plan

A. Notice the time markers in verses 32-35: "yearly," at the appointed times year by year, year by year."

B. The Israelites' agricultural economy worked on an annual cycle and they made plans to gear their giving accordingly. In other words, they had a plan by which they expressed their material commitment to God.

Comment: Far too many Christians today don't have a plan - they give on an emotional or funds-available basis. As a result, their blessings are just as sporadic and undependable as their giving.

C. First Corinthians 16:1-2 contains instructions from the apostle Paul to the church at Corinth, to set aside their monies for the Jerusalem relief fund "Upon the first day of the week" so that they were not scrambling for money to donate when Paul arrived.

D. The first day of the week was our Sunday - the day the church met. So, the plan was to give each Sunday in anticipation of Paul's visit.

E. We give by grace, not by the law, in this dispensation of Grace. But that does not mean sporadically or haphazardly.

Comment: Near the end of this lesson, I will lay out the complete biblical pattern for our giving in this Age of Grace.

F. While the instructions to give "on the first day of the week" was tied directly to the Jerusalem relief fund, the principle of planned, systematic giving is thoroughly biblical.

G. Whether the cycle was based on the harvest or preparation for a one-time relief gift, making God the priority means that we give to Him just as consistently as He gives to us.

H. In 2 Corinthians 9:7, we are told to give as we "purpose in our Heart" - "**purpose**" meaning "to choose beforehand."

I. Our giving is to be consistent and intentional, not impulsive and occasional. We should develop a plan for our giving - an annual plan is probably a good idea for the average person - and then stick to it.

IV. A Proportion

A. There are proportions mentioned in the Israelites plan for giving: "One-third of a shekel" in verse 32 "for the service of the house of our God." (This was for the temple tax); 10 percent (the tithe) in verse 38 for the Levites; one percent (a tenth of the tithes) in verse 38 for temple service.

B. This was not hit-or-miss giving. They knew exactly how much to give and when to give.

C. A tithe is 10 percent, and there were three tithes in the Old Testament. First was the temple tithe, supporting the Levites in their ministry in the temple.

D. Then there was the festival tithe to support the annual feasts of the Jews. Then there was a benevolence tithe that was collected every third year (equaling 3.33 percent annually). So, the total giving for the Israelites was 23.33 percent of their income annually.

E. There were also other forms of giving in the form of sacrificial offerings, the one third of a shekel temple tax (verse 32), lost income from the land during the Sabbath rest year, lost repayment of loans every seven years when debtors were forgiven, and so on.

F. The point is this: The Israelites knew exactly what their material obligations to the Lord were.

G. Consider the following perspective from St. Augustine, one of the esteemed fathers of the church: "Our forefathers abounded in plenty because they gave God tithes, but now because our devotion toward God has receded, the imposition of taxes has advanced. We were unwilling to share with God, giving Him the tenth, and now the whole is taken from us. The tax gatherer takes from us that which Christ was not able to gather." Hummmm.....

V. A Purpose

A. The purpose for all this planned giving was for the Israelites to conform themselves to what was "written in the Law" (verse 34) - the Law they had neglected for generations.

B. The Jews had just returned from seventy years of exile in Babylon for neglecting God's statutes, and exile that had been

predicted by Moses (Deut. 28:36).

C. Their motivation for obeying God's Law was high! So, they purposed to make their commitment to God and His Law to avoid a similar circumstance again.

VI. A Place

A. Another phrase that appears throughout the passage - eight times - is "**house of our God**," referring to the temple in Jerusalem.

B. God has always had a place throughout redemption history to which the people of God brought their sacrifices, gifts, and offerings.

C. The temple was the place in the Old Testament and the local church is the place in the New Testament. God's people were to meet together and offer to God their gifts and offerings in a central place.

D. The local church can only carry out its ministry as God's people give faithfully to it. Outreach evangelism that touches the lives of others also requires support and giving for this purpose through the local church pleases the Lord.

VII. Giving in This Age of Grace

A. As I promised, I want to lay out for you the New Testament method of giving. Our giving should be done under three very clear biblical guidelines.

1. **First**, our giving should be done systematically. "Upon the first day of the week (for us that is Sunday). (1 Cor. 16:2)
2. **Second**, our giving should be done proportionally - "as God hath prospered him" (1 Cor, 16:2).

Note: No where in the New Testament are we commanded to pay a tithe. The word pay implies that something is mandatory. If you desire to **give** a tithe, it certainly is a wonderful way to give to the Lord through your local church.

3. The third area of our giving in this Age of Grace is **voluntary** giving. "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7).

Question: Did you notice the last part of the verse in 2 Cor. 9:7? It speaks to our attitude when giving to the Lord - "For God loveth a cheerful giver."

VIII. Conclusion

- A. When we put God first financially out of obedience to Scripture, we find that God blesses that obedience, and we have what we need.
- B. Our faithfulness in putting God first might be what He uses to spark a renewal in not only our own lives, but also in the lives of others. Think on these things!

It is once again interactive time. Please complete the passages below by filling in the blank spaces. Each passage has been taken from the King James Version (KJV) of the Holy Bible.

"_____, and it shall be given unto you; good _____, pressed down, and _____ together, and _____ over, shall men give into

your _____. For with the _____ measure that ye mete withal it shall be _____ to you again."

[Luke 6:38]

"Who _____ thee in the wilderness with _____, which thy fathers knew not, that he might _____ thee, and that he might _____ thee, to do thee good at thy _____ end; and thou say in thine _____, My _____ and the _____ of _____ hand hath gotten me this _____. But thou shalt _____ the Lord thy God: for it is _____ that giveth thee _____ to get _____, that he may establish his _____ which he _____ unto thy _____, as it is this day."

[Deuteronomy 8:16-18]

"But my God _____ supply all your _____ according to his _____ in glory by Christ Jesus. Now _____ God and our Father be _____ for _____ and _____. Amen"

[Philippians 4:19-20]

"_____ in the Lord with all thine _____, and _____ not unto thine own _____. In all thy _____ him, and he shall _____ thy paths."

[Proverbs 3:5-6]

"I love them that _____ me; and those that _____ me early shall find me. _____ and honor are with me; yea, durable _____ and

righteousness. My _____ is better than _____, yea, than fine
_____; and my revenue than choice _____."

[Proverbs 8:17-19]

"Better is a _____ with righteousness, than great _____ without
right. A man's _____ deviseth his _____: but the Lord _____
his steps."

[Proverbs 16:8-9]

I pray that you have been enlightened and encouraged from this study
and may you be bountifully blessed by the Lord. May He also shower
you with the peace that only He can give.

Jude 3

Pastor Austin