

17.02.2018 HONESTY WITH GOD

“But that on the good ground are they, which in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience.” Luke 8:15.

The word ‘honest’ in the verse above is the same word as ‘good’ (good ground) in the original Greek ‘*kalos*’. Most of the time, the word ‘*kalos*’ is translated as ‘good’ in the New Testament.

Honesty is the fruit of a good heart. Before we were converted, we were unrighteous, unable to produce any righteousness that was acceptable to God. *“Who can bring a clean thing out of an unclean? Not one.” Job 14:4.* But when we recognised our need of God’s righteousness and came to God in faith, we received a new heart in which the Spirit of God dwells; we have received God’s righteousness as a gift. As we live in a faith relationship with God (2 Timothy 1:13, 14) as Jesus did, we will produce the fruit that comes from an honest and good heart. This includes being honourable in all things; honest in our witness, honest with our money, honest in our dealings with our fellow men.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith...Galatians 5:22.
For the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth. Ephesians 5:9.*

The Spirit-filled Christian does not live by the principle of 10% (the obligation of tithe).

He lives by the principle of 100%.

His life is a reflection of God the Lover and God the Giver. God loves us to the uttermost and gives us every good and perfect gift.

A Spirit-filled Christian recognises he has been bought with a price and therefore glorifies God in every aspect of his life (1 Corinthians 6:20).

A Spirit-filled Christian recognises that everything he possesses belongs to God... *‘Every loaf of bread is stamped with the Cross of Christ’*; therefore, all he possesses is available always for God’s use.

This way of life is true honesty with God. Not just mindful of our duties and obligations, but to be always available for whatever God requires of us.

The Life of Faith – Abraham

Abraham was a 100% servant of God. God called him from a comfortable, built up city to go to a place he did not know. Abraham obeyed. He was a wealthy man, but everywhere he journeyed (see Genesis 12:7-9), he first built an altar and then pitched his tent. What he had taken out of his world, he first consecrated to the Lord; himself, his family and his possessions. But all Abraham ever did after he consecrated his possessions was to live in tents; he built no house with foundations. He was willing at any time to move on, to follow God’s will, to give God whatever God had given him in the first place; to live as a consecrated pilgrim on earth. One day God asked him to put his promised son on the altar, and he did so without hesitation, without bargaining.

Today God calls us to offer our converted selves as living sacrifices to Him (Romans 12:1, 2). If we do this with a willing heart, as Abraham did, there will be no talk of duty or obligations. Our treasure will indeed follow our hearts (Matthew 6:21) for we taken it out of the world and it is fully available for God’s use.

Of the Macedonians, Paul said, *“They first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” 2 Corinthians 8:5.*

During King Hezekiah’s reign, he destroyed pagan idols and worship and called his people to reformation and revival. This they did with gladness and once they had consecrated themselves to the Lord, they brought in tithes and offerings with gladness of heart (2 Chronicles chapters 30 and 31). The same was true of the reformation during Nehemiah’s time (Nehemiah 9:2, 3; 13:4).

Jacob

Before he became Israel, a Prince of God, Jacob was like many of us. He lived by the 10% principle. Despite deceiving his father, Isaac still gave him the blessing of Abraham (Genesis 18:3, 4). Forced to flee because of his brother, he sleeps at Bethel and God meets him there and gives him an unconditional promise:

"I am the LORD God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac; the land on which you lie I will give to you and your descendants. Also, your descendants shall be as the dust of the earth; you shall spread abroad to the west and the east, to the north and the south; and in you and in your seed, all the families of the earth shall be blessed. Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you." Genesis 18:13-15.

How does Jacob respond? He makes a bargain with God. If God will keep His promise to Jacob, then Jacob will acknowledge that the Lord will be his God; and if God blesses him materially he will give God a tithe of what God has given him.

Then Jacob made a vow, saying, *"If God will be with me, and keep me in this way that I am going, and give me bread to eat and clothing to put on, so that I come back to my father's house in peace, then the LORD shall be my God. And this stone which I have set as a pillar shall be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth to You." Genesis 18:20-22.*

Are we like Abraham or Jacob in our dealings with God? God is patient with us as He was with Jacob. He was the perfecter of Jacob's faith and He has promised that His Son Jesus will perfect our faith as we live in daily relationship with Him (*Hebrews 12:2*).

The Tithe: Holy to the Lord

And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's. It is holy to the LORD. If a man wants at all to redeem any of his tithes, he shall add one-fifth to it. And concerning the tithe of the herd or the flock, of whatever passes under the rod, the tenth one shall be holy to the Lord. Leviticus 27:30-32.

The word 'tithe' means 'a tenth'. While this was an obligation in Old Testament times, the principle still holds true today. It was then, and still is a formal recognition of the fact that God is the Owner and Giver of all that we possess.

The tithe was for the support of the Levites and their families and today it is to be used for ministers of the gospel and their families. (In the early church there is reference to collection for the poor saints, but no specific reference to tithe for the ministry, perhaps because most leaders like Paul supported themselves financially).

It would be better though to have a heart that is totally consecrated to God; a heart that considers 10% the minimum we can give to God. A heart that asks God, 'Lord what do you want me to give to you this week, or this month?'

The widow at the Temple didn't just give God 10%. Jesus said of her that *"she, out of her poverty put in all the livelihood (Greek 'bios' – life) that she had."* Luke 21:4. She lived by the 100% principle.

"She did what she could," and her act was to be a monument to her memory through all time, and her joy in eternity. Her heart went with her gift; its value was estimated, not by the worth of the coin, but by the love to God and the interest in His work that had prompted the deed. Jesus said of the poor widow, She "hath cast in more than they all"... It is the motive that gives character to our acts, stamping them with ignominy or with high moral worth... A heart of faith and love is dearer to God than the most costly gift. So with every gift bestowed and every act performed with a sincere desire for God's glory. It is linked with the purposes of Omnipotence. Its results for good no man can measure. *Desire of Ages: p. 614-616.*

The Macedonians are another great example of giving from the heart:

“Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia: at in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded in the riches of their liberality. For I bear witness that according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability, they were freely willing, imploring us with much urgency that we would receive the gift and the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And not only as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord, and then to us by the will of God.” 2 Corinthians 8:1-5.

Another principle of giving is laid down by Paul:

“On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper.” 1 Corinthians 16:2.

Conclusion:

Let us be cheerful givers, recognising the supreme Gift that God has given us in His Son, Christ Jesus. Like Abraham our spiritual father, who left the world and its ways, may we too, who have died to the world in Christ Jesus, consecrate ourselves and our possessions solely to God’s use.

“But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” 2 Corinthians 9:6-8.

When we talk of a man doing anything for God or giving anything to God, I will tell you what it is really like. It is like a small child going to its father and saying, "Daddy, give me sixpence to buy you a birthday present." Of course, the father does, and he is pleased with the child's present. It is all very nice and proper, but only an idiot would think that the father is sixpence to the good on the transaction. *CS Lewis: Mere Christianity.*

*Take my silver and my gold,
Not a mite would I withhold...*

*Take myself and I will be
Ever, only, all for Thee.*

Frances Ridley Havergal

God Bless!
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