

MCLEAN BIBLE CHURCH  
JUNE 3, 2012  
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>> LON SOLOMON: Today as we continue on our series of the book of Genesis, we're going to be talking about money. And I know how sensitive this topic is, namely the church talking about money. And you say, well, Lon, if you know that, then why are you doing it?

Well, good question. And the answer is because when we look in the Bible, we find is that God talked more about money than he does any other single subject. More about money than he does prayer or salvation or heaven or hell, or evangelism or anything. You say, well, that may be true, but why are you going to talk about money right now?

I mean, June 2012.

Well, that's another good question. And the reason is because in Genesis 14, which is where we are in our ongoing series in the book of Genesis, here in this chapter we see for the very first time in the Bible money being used as a tool for worshipping God.

So it seemed logical to me that this would be a good time for us to talk about it. But it's more than that. It's also -- one of our primary goals here is to turn you into a seasoned, mature follower of Jesus Christ. And there's no way that you and I can become this unless we have a biblical world view on money. And so today I'm going to start a two-part series entitled "giving to God."

And I want to make it absolutely clear that the purpose of this series is biblical education, it is not fund raising. In other words, we're going to talk about money for two weeks, but I'm not going to ask you for a dime. Is that fair? That fair?

Okay. Well, it's got to be, because this is the only message I've got today. So that's what we're going to do.

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: And we're going to get ready to start. But before we dig in, two preliminary comments: number one, I think it's obvious that in a two-part series there's no way I can cover everything the Bible teaches about money. And so if you want to follow up on this series and get more information, either go on our website or go over to our book store and get the CD set entitled "handling money God's way." It's a series I did several years ago. And it's much more -- well, just much more inclusive and expansive in terms of what the Bible says about money.

The other thing I want to say before we start is that if you've been coming to McLean Bible Church for a long time, you may have heard some of the Biblical information before that I'm going to be sharing over the next two weeks.

Well, that's okay. I love what Paul said to the Philippian believers, chapter 3, Verse 1, he said it is no trouble for me to write the same things again, and it is a safeguard for you. And I like how John MacArthur put it, he said, and I quote, spiritual growth does not always involve learning something new. Our most important growth is often in regard to truth we have already heard, but have not fully applied. So with those two preliminary comments, are you ready? Let's dig in. Ready?

All right. Here we go. Let's go back and review just a tiny bit of what we've learned last week in Genesis 14. Remember, last week we saw that there were four kings from the east that put together an army and they invaded the southern Jordan valley around the cities of Sodom and

Gomorrah. They defeated the armies of Sodom and Gomorrah and carried away the people and the wealth of Sodom and Gomorrah. Included in this group was Abraham's nephew, Lot. And when Abraham heard about it, he took his army and went after these invaders, he defeated them, Verse 16, Chapter 14, and Abraham recovered all the goods that had been taken as well as his relative Lot, and all Lot's possessions along with all the people.

So Abraham now heads back home with all the people of Sodom and Gomorrah, and Lot, and all the material wealth, all the booty, all the spoil that he's captured.

So let's pick up. Here we are in Chapter 14 of Genesis, Verse 18.

Then Melchizedek, the king of Salem, brought out bread and wine.

Now, he, Melchizedek, was a priest of the most high God. The word that's used here for most high God in Hebrew is the word El he will I don't know, and it's the very same term for God that Abraham uses a few verses later in Verse 22. What this tells is Melchizedek knew, Melchizedek worshipped and was a priest of the very same God as Abraham.

Verse 19, and Melchizedek blessed Abraham, saying, blessed be Abraham by God most high, El Elyon, and blessed be God most high who deliver your enemies, Abraham, into your hands.

Then Abraham gave him -- Melchizedek -- a tenth, a tithe of everything, that is, of all the material wealth, the spoil, the booty, that he had captured.

Now, in a couple of weeks we're going to talk all about who this person Melchizedek is. But for our purposes today, it's enough for us to know that he was a priest of the most high God, that he blessed Abraham, and that he reminded Abraham that God deserved the glory for Abraham's recent victory.

And then, as we just saw, look what Abraham does. Verse 20 again, that Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth, a tithe, of everything he had captured.

Abraham used money as a worship offering to God to express thanks giving to God for the great victory that he had just won.

Now, as I said a moment ago, this is the very first time in the Bible that we see money being used as a tool for worshipping God; as a means of worshipping God. But it is certainly not the last time.

Because in fact, the Bible repeatedly teaches that using money to express worship to God is one of the cardinal principles of giving to the Lord.

And I want to take us into the New Testament now and show us the apostle Paul teaching this very same truth New Testament in the. We're going to the book of Philippians Chapter 4:18, and here's what Paul said. He said, but I have received everything you sent in full -- talking to the Philippians and I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gift you sent. The Philippians had sent a monetary gift by the apostle Paul by the hands of this man named Epaphroditus, and they had done it to support his missionary work; and how the apostle Paul describes this offering. Verse 18 continues, your gift, Paul says, is a fragrant aroma, and acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

There's imagery here that Paul is using, a fragrant aroma, and acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God; imagery that comes out of the Old Testament, sacrificial system. And we need to understand just a little bit about the Old Testament sacrificial system so the imagery that Paul is using here in Philippians 4 to make sense.

So let me tell you a little bit about the Old Testament sacrificial system. In the Old Testament, the Bible prescribed two categories of animal sacrifices. Category number one were sacrifices that dealt with the issue of sin. When a person sinned against God, they would bring a sacrificial animal to the temple in Jerusalem, a lamb, a goat, a pig, a bull, or a sheep. And the priest would kill this animal, put its blood on the altar, and in response to that, God promised to forgive the offerer's sin and to repair the breach in their relationship.

But there was a problem with this. And the problem is that it was only a temporary fix. Meaning that every time a person sinned, they had to go back and repeat this process again and again.

Now, today under the New Testament, under the new covenant that God has made with the human race, there is no longer any need for these animal sacrifices for sin. The need has been eliminated forever because of what Jesus did on the cross for us.

Listen, Hebrews 10:12. He, Jesus, offered one sacrifice for sin for all time. Where? On the cross. And by his one sacrifice he -- Jesus -- has made perfect for all time those of us who believe in him.

Verse 18, Hebrews 10, now, where there is forgiveness like this -- say the rest of it with me nice and loud -- no further sacrifices for sin are needed. No further sacrifices for sin are needed. Friends, the reason as followers of Christ today, that when we sin against God, we don't go take a goat or a bull or another animal and go up on the temple mount and kill it and spread its blood over the temple mount. The reason we don't do that is because our sin has been paid in full once and for all, forever and ever, indelibly and remember reversibly, unconditionally and unequivocally by the sacrifice on the cross, huh?

Praise the Lord for that. If you're here today and you have never trusted what Jesus did on the cross for you as your one and only payment for sin, this is something you really need to know. You need to know that there are no other offerings that God is accepting anymore for forgiveness of sin except the sacrifice of Jesus himself on the cross.

God's not accepting good works, sacrificial animals, not accepting trying to keep the Ten Commandments, not accepting religious activity, not accepting trying to be a good person, bar mitzvahs or confirmations. The only thing God accepts now for forgiveness of sin is the death of Christ on the cross and our full reliance on that as our only remedy for sin.

So if you're here, please, I'm begging you, don't keep depending on something that doesn't have a chance of working. Transfer your trust off of all that other stuff and onto the one remedy that will work, the blood of Jesus shed on the cross.

Now, remember I said that there were two categories of sacrifices in the Old Testament. This first category for sin, gone. Gone forever. We don't do this anymore. But there was a second category. And these were sacrifices that were brought for worship. They were brought to express loyalty to God and love to God and Thanksgiving to God. And here too, a worshipper would bring a sacrificial animal to the temple, and here too the priest would kill this animal, but instead of putting its blood on the altar, what the priest would do is take its meat and roast it, cook it, burn it on the altar and the smell of this cooking meat would ascend into the heavens as a fragrant aroma to God. Isn't that what Paul said in Philippians 4:18, your offering was a fragrant aroma. He is drawing on the image of these worship sacrifices. And friends, we all know what

that's like. I mean there is nothing in the world that smells better than hamburgers cooking on the grill, right?

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: You do that outside. You have people from hundreds of yards away coming to want to eat at your house. Because the aroma is amazing. This is what the Bible is talking about. Today in -- under the new covenant, under the New Testament, we as followers of Christ, we still make worship sacrifices to God, it's just that their format has changed. Peter says, 1 Peter 1:5, that we are to offer up spiritual worship sacrifices, not animal worship sacrifices anymore. Spiritual sacrifices which are acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. And how do we do this?

Well, we do it among other ways, with money. That's exactly what Paul said. Philippians 4:18. He said, your giving to God was one of these spiritual worship sacrifices that was a sweet aroma to God mirroring the Old Testament sacrifice, acceptable to God as Peter said.

And you know why giving to God is a worship sacrifice?

Think about it. It's because worship simply means doing those things that tell God he's number one in our life. That he's preeminent in our life. And there's no better tool to do that with than money. Because every dime we give to God -- follow me, now -- we could use -- yeah -- to buy something for ourselves instead if we hadn't given it to the Lord, right?

Isn't that right?

Hello?

Yes, that's right. Okay.

But instead we gave it to the Lord. And in giving it to the Lord, we're telling him, Lord, I may love money, and I may love what money can buy, but Lord, I want you to know that I love you more.

And that's why I'm giving this to you.

And that's worship. Pure and simple.

Now you say, all right, Lon, I think I got it.

But are you sure that you're not pulling way too much out of Philippians 4?

I mean, you took this thing, made it walk on all fours. I mean, you sure all that's in there?

Oh, I'm positive. And let me show you the same principle elsewhere in the New Testament. Matthew 2:11, the story of the three wise men coming to see baby Jesus. You remember this story, right?

I know it's not Christmas, but you remember this story, right?

Yeah, yeah. Watch. It says when they saw the child, the three wise men, with his mother Mary, they bowed down and they -- say the next word with me -- they worshipped Him. How did they worship Him?

They all stood around the manger and sang how great thou art. No, that's not how they worshipped him. The Verse goes on, they opened their treasures and presented Jesus with gifts of gold and frankincense and Myrrh, they gave valuable things from their own personal fortune, their own personal possessions. And the Bible calls that what?

Worship. One more example.

Mark Chapter 14:3. And while Jesus was in Bethany, a woman came with a vial of expensive perfume, and she broke the vial and poured it all over Jesus' head. But some of those present were saying, why this waste of perfume, it could have been given -- it could have been sold for a year's wages and given to the poor.

Now, let's stop for a second. You think these critics really cared that much about the poor?

No. I don't think so. But let's go on.

And they rebuked her sharply. But Jesus said, leave her alone. Why are you bothering her? For she has done a beautiful thing for me. For the poor will always be with you, and you can help them whenever you want. If that's your motive.

But you will not always have Me here.

Now, certainly this vial of perfume was the most expensive earthly item this woman owned. The Bible says it was worth a year's wages. Meaning today it was worth 40,000, 50,000, 60,000 dollars, maybe more. And yet she gave it to Jesus freely. She gave it to Jesus excitedly. And the people grumbled and said, why is she wasting this perfume?

And what did Jesus say?

He said, folks, you got it all wrong. She's not wasting, she's worshipping.

Because she is showing me that I mean more to her than the most costly thing she owns. Got it? You got it? All right.

Now, for many of us, as followers of Christ, this is a whole new slant on giving. Many of us have been taught to see church offerings as the way we pay the bills, we pay salaries, send out missionaries, the way we keep our parking lot free of snow or whatever. And when we see an offering like that, it means that the focus of our giving becomes a building, a parking lot, a program, a staff, the bills of the church, whatever. And friends, there is no joy at all in giving like that.

Because the reason we're giving for all the wrong reason. In Exodus 35 -- I love this chapter, where they're building the tabernacle there at Mount Sinai, Moses takes up an offering from the people to build this tabernacle. And six times in that chapter, check it out, Chapter 35, the book of exodus, he referred to this offering. And something interesting, not once does he call it an offering for the tabernacle. All six times he calls it an offering for the Lord.

Because Moses wanted the people not to be giving to this building. He wanted them to be giving to the Lord. The building was inconsequential. The tabernacle was inconsequential. He wanted their motive to be worship of the Lord. What they did with the money didn't really matter. It was a gift to the Lord and in the same way, today as followers of Christ, our attitude should be, Lord, I am giving this to you whether we're writing a check and putting it in a church offering plate, sending a check to missionaries, giving to the benevolence fund or paying off our final rock pledge, whether we're giving to the house or to daybreak or to Jill's House or whatever we're doing, Lord, I am giving this to you. As an act of worship. From my heart to your heart. As a way of telling you, Lord, that you mean more to me than money or anything money can buy.

That's how I'm giving this.

And the actual place I'm giving it doesn't matter. Because wherever I give it, it's the same thing. I'm giving it to you, Lord. Now, friends, that's a fragrant aroma. To almighty God. That's acceptable to almighty God. And let me tell you, you give like this, you'll find joy in it. Give like this, you'll find excitement in it. This is not drudgery, this is not duty, not obligation. This is worship to the living God of the universe. And when we do this, man, there is excitement in it.

Now, that's as far as we're going to go in our chapter, Chapter 14. But we have to stop and ask now our most important question.

So, everybody out at Loudoun, and everybody out at Prince William, and everybody out at Bethesda, and all of you down in the edge and around the world in the Internet community, are you ready?

I heard that. Are you ready at Tysons? Yes.

>> LON SOLOMON: And this is a so what unto the Lord. All right?

Why not. Let's do it. Here we go. 1, 2. 3.

>> ALL: So what?

>> LON SOLOMON: That was a fragrant aroma. It was. You say, Lon, I got what you're saying here, but not really sure how all of this impacts my life. Well, let's see if we can close up by helping with that.

You know, one of my favorite television shows is "the price is right" you like the price is right?

I love the Price Is Right. And I think Drew Carey does an okay job but I'm a Bob Barker man. I am. And you say how often do you watch this thing during the middle of the day?

Not much. I'm busy. But every once in a while I'm sick. A few years ago I was sick in bed, and I turned on television and I watched the Price Is Right. So you know, during -- how the big wheel works. Right?

You know how the big wheel works, if you spin it and you get a dollar on your first spin or a total of a dollar on your two spins, you win \$1,000 and you get a bonus spin. If you hit the dollar on the bonus spin, you win \$10,000 more for a total of \$11,000. You know this, right?

How can you be an American and not know this?

You know this, right?

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: Okay. All right. There were three contestants there getting ready to spin. And Bob Barker turns to them and says, now, if you win \$11,000, what are you going to do with it?

And the first was a young lady, and she said, I'm going to travel around the world.

All right. That's okay.

The second was a young man, and he said I'm going to buy a Corvette. I hate to tell him this, but...

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: I don't think you can buy a Corvette for \$11,000. But he didn't win anyway, so it doesn't matter. And then there was a middle aged lady who was third, and she said, I'm going to put it away for my children's education.

And I lay there, and I thought, wow, isn't this interesting. By telling us how they would spend their money, these three people have just revealed to us where their priority and focus in life is. Huh?

The first two, hey, they were going to spend it on themselves, travel around the world, buy a Corvette. Tells me their focus in life is on themselves. The third, this lady, was going to put it away for her children's education. Tells me her focus is not on her, her focus is on somebody else, her children.

What they -- how they were going to spend their money revealed where their heart is. And I lay there in bed and I thought, praise God, the Price Is Right just confirmed the Bible.

This is great.

Because the Bible's been saying this for centuries, friends. That how we spend our money reveals the value system of our heart. Money is like a barometer of the heart.

And what this means is if you want to really see where a Christian's love affair with Jesus stands, don't look at how many hymns they sing, don't look at how many prayers they pray, don't look at how many Bible verses they have memorized, don't look at how many times a week they attend church, and don't look at how many times a day they say praise the Lord. Praise the Lord. Oh, praise the Lord for you too.

No.

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: No, don't do that. Look at how they spend their money. And I'll tell you why. Because all these other things, saying praise the Lord, memorizing verses, going to church, it's so easy to paste the plastic on and just go through the motions and do that. But folks, the level of our financial giving to God is one area where most of us fake it the least.

And that's why I often say, show me a Christian's financial statement, and within about five minutes, I can pretty well tell you where that Christian stands in their love and devotion to Jesus Christ. You said, Lon, that is without a doubt one of the most judgmental statements I have ever heard in my life. Maybe. Maybe so. But I believe it's true.

And so I want to leave you with a question, a very piercing question, a question I ask myself. And it's a very convicting question. Here's the question:

If the IRS was arresting people and putting them in jail for being deep and dedicated followers of Christ, would there be enough evidence on schedule A of your 1040 to convict you?

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: That's a convicting question, isn't it?

At least it is for me.

That's a question we should all ask ourselves, my friends. Because if we're giving truly from our heart as worship, there ought to be enough evidence right there that as soon as an IRS agent looks at it, they go uh-huh, this person's in love with Jesus. Nobody would give like that if they weren't.

So listen, let me close and say I hope today I've given you a whole different perspective on giving to God. A Biblical perspective. That will transform your giving and my giving from an act of duty and an act of obligation, and an act of guilt, into an act of worship and an act of joy and an act of excitement.

You say, well, Lon, I got your point for the day, but it leaves me with a lot of questions. Like, how much does God want me to give? I mean, Abraham gave 10 percent, a tithe to Melchizedek. Is that enough? Should I give more, should I give less? And when should I give? And should I give of my gross or my net I got all these questions you left unanswered. Oh, we're going to answer them. Next week.

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: In part 2. And I hope you'll be here.

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: After today.

(Laughter)

>> LON SOLOMON: God bless you. Let's pray. Okay?

(Applause)

>> LON SOLOMON: Let's pray. Lord Jesus, you know that what we've dealt with today is a touchy subject. But Lord, as a church family, we cannot avoid biblical teaching just because it's a touchy subject. We have to teach it correctly and respectfully. And Lord, we have to teach it.

And so I pray today that people would understand my heart. I'm not out to convince them to give any more money to McLean Bible Church or anywhere else. Lord, I'm out to educate us all as to what biblical giving looks like and how we can use it as worship and turn it into something that brings joy and excitement to our life. The way you intended.

And so, Lord Jesus, use what we've talked about today deeply in our hearts. And I pray that every one of us would be giving in such a way that if the IRS were arresting people and putting them in jail for being lovers of Christ, that the minute they looked at our tax return they'd say, yep, this is surely one of those folks.

God, help us -- help us, I pray, to let you know in the way we handle the money you give us that no matter how much you give us, it doesn't matter; you are still number one preeminent over everything in our life.

So use the word of God in a mighty way in our hearts today, and we pray this in Jesus' name. And what did God's people say?

>> ALL: Amen.

>> LON SOLOMON: Amen. Hey, good to see you. Hope we see you next week. God bless you.

(Music)

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