

Eternity Daily Bible Study - No. 386

Series: The Primal Church - Acts Chapters 1-8

Verses: Acts 18:18-25

Topic: God Cannot Be Bought

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Acts 8:18-25 MKJV And when Simon saw that the Holy Spirit was given through laying on of the apostles' hands, he offered them money, (19) saying, Give me this power also, that on whomever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Spirit. (20) But Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money. (21) You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. (22) Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. (23) For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity. (24) And answering Simon said, You pray to the Lord for me that none of these things which you have spoken may come on me. (25) Then, indeed, having earnestly testified and having spoken the Word of the Lord also having preached the gospel to many villages of the Samaritans, they returned to Jerusalem.

Can God be bought? Can salvation be purchased with silver and gold? Can anointing or healing or the power of the Holy Spirit be given for cold hard cash?

“Peter said to him, May your silver perish with you, because you have thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money.”

This is an incredibly important spiritual principle – God cannot be bought! God responds to faith, and to what is in the heart, not what is put in the offering plate. This may seem obvious but even today we see:

1. In the Philippines Catholics are paying to have masses said for the dead – so many \$ buys so much salvation and so many years off purgatory.
2. The prosperity gospel teaches that blessing comes from a financial “seed” and that the more you “sow” in money the more God will respond to your prayers!
3. In some churches tithing has become a form of justification apart from Christ: “now I have put the whole ten percent in I am right with God.”
4. The term blessing is now almost totally synonymous with material blessings e.g. when you hear “the Lord blessed me” you now expect to hear it followed with something like “with a new car.”

5. In Roman Catholic weddings in the Philippines the bride and groom are given symbolic gold coins called arrastare and the priest says “use these coins to buy eternal life”. (my wife and I personally witnessed this on two different weddings in two different churches on the same day.)

God cannot be bribed or flattered. God is the impartial judge of all the earth and is incorruptible. God has no need of our money or any desire for it except as an act of faith or a demonstration of love. Money in and of itself is meaningless to Him and useless to Him and is regarded as “filthy lucre” and “the Mammon of unrighteousness” and is “detestable in the sight of God”. (Luke 16) Peter showed the apostolic view of money when he said “May your silver perish with you”. Money has zero intrinsic value to God.

The whole of God’s system operates without money. The birds fly without needing an air ticket, the lions are fed without a bank account, the sun and moon and stars do not have to be paid to go about in their orbits and the lepers are cleansed, the dead are raised, and the blind see without the need of silver or gold.

Neither is money the “power” in ministry. The power in ministry is the name of Jesus, the word of God and the power of the Holy Spirit – not how much we have in the bank account! In fact some of the greatest ministry was done without any money at all! God created the heavens and the earth without money, God redeemed Israel without money, God saves us for free, Peter and John healed the lame man without silver or gold, Jesus fed the five thousand without money, Elijah lived for three and a half years without money then vanquished the prophets of Baal - and so forth.

Corrupt clerics have told us that money in the plate equals favor with God. In fact it only buys favor with the clergyman!

The gifts of God are not for sale and the Holy Spirit cannot be purchased with silver and gold. Peter takes up this theme of redemption without money in his epistle:

1 Peter 1:17-19 MKJV And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to the work of each one, pass the time of your earthly residence in fear, (18) knowing that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers, (19) but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot;

And James shows how much money will help the unjust rich on the Day of Judgment:

James 5:1-5 MKJV Come now, rich ones, weep and howl for your hardships coming on. (2) Your riches have rotted, and your clothes have become moth-eaten. (3) Your gold and silver have corroded, and their poison will be a witness against you, and will eat your flesh as fire. You heaped treasure in the last days. (4) Behold, the hire of the laborers reaping your fields cry out, being kept back by you. And the cries of those who have reaped have entered into the ears of the Lord of hosts. (5) You have lived luxuriously on the earth, and lived wantonly. You have nourished your hearts, as in a day of slaughter.

Christian ministry cannot be bought, anointing cannot be bought, salvation cannot be bought and the gifts and favor of God cannot be bought. Christianity is of the heart and not of the bank account. God does not look for wealth rather He looks for faith and righteousness and a pure heart. And on the other hand it was Simon Magus's bitter heart is what cut him off from being involved in ministry.

“You have neither part nor lot in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. (22) Therefore repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. (23) For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of iniquity.”

Now, by way of balance, ministry needs some money – wages and electricity bills and so forth have to be paid. But money is no more than “petrol in the car” - you put it in and you can go a certain distance in ministry. But you don't live for petrol! Money is good servant but a bad master. I have to do fundraising, but I do so reluctantly. I have determined that my ministry will never be directed by the budget or centered around financial concerns.

A faithful but poor national missionary in India is not hindered by his poverty, he (or she) can still be anointed and heal and do miracles and preach the gospel and announce the name of Jesus.

Giving is commanded as an act of love and of social responsibility within the Christian community. But the acceptability of the gift depends on the heart of the believer: If a person gives cheerfully and faithfully to sustain the servants of God, that is a good thing. That giving is from the heart, from obedience, from faith and from love and because the heart is right the giving is right. On the other hand giving with a wicked heart, to buy indulgence of sin, or an easier path to heaven, is to try to bribe the justice of God. And God cannot be bought.

Blessings,

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