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Service Times

Sunday

Bible Class: 9:30 A.M.
Worship: 10:30 A.M. & 5 P.M.

Wednesday

Bible Study: 7 P.M.

Preacher:

Russ Earl

AM Sermon:

Fundamentals of the Faith
Lesson 12 – Avenues of Worship –
Giving (**2 Cor 9:6-8**)

PM Sermon:

Give Anxiety Away

Sunday AM Bible Class:

Daniel – D. Jackson

Wednesday Bible Class:

Acts 13:44 – V. Smith

In SEARCH of the Lord's Way

On Channel 6-2 Sundays @ 7:30 am

The Truth in Love on Channel 47

Sundays @ 8am

Oologah Podcast Network

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The Oologah Informer

December 18th, 2016

Worship

The Avenue of Contribution

By Randy Watson
Part 1 of 2

The freewill offerings of Christians are usually considered to be an act of worship. In these modern times, or so it seems, many have lost sight of the real purpose for Christian worship and these offerings. Worship has become a thing of convenience, and many seem to view their giving as a traditional obligation or fee for membership in the church. Others view their giving as a huge burden and are unwilling to part with more than a token offering.

Worship and the One Body

When Christians assemble on the Lord's day, we offer homage to God. This is Christian worship. However, unlike what many have assumed in their ignorance, the general assembly of Christians to worship includes much more than what we see or hear. When the true and knowledgeable Christian worships in this assembly, he is acting not as an individual but as a part of the whole body. Christians join their voices in common singing. Jesus joining together with us as the one body offering praise to the name of God (Hebrews 2:11-12).

Christians join as one body in singular prayer to God offered through Jesus as head of that body. Christians join in communion as a reminder and symbol of our fellowship with one another, Christ and his sufferings (1 Corinthians 10:16-17). When Christians join their minds and hearts in study and meditation upon God's holy word, they grow together in understanding, and as one body move closer to the perfection and unity of the one body in Christ (cf. Ephesians 4:1-16). Similarly, the freewill offering of Christians is nothing more than the church pooling her funds together to increase her ability to supply the needs of those she helps. Each act of worship in some way expresses the unity of the body, individuals joining together as one body. No part including only one member nor a small percentage of the whole body.

The Christian Offerings in the Bible

One of the most impressive characteristics of the church in the first century was her generosity and hospitality. From her beginning, we can read of Christian fellowship and common devotion to the apostles doctrine (Acts 2:42). The result of this fellowship in spirit was an unprecedented demonstration of selflessness and sharing.

Acts 2:44-45 “And all that believed were together, and had all things

common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all, as every man had need.”

Hence, we see the beginning of free-will offerings made by the church. The motivation for this generous giving as described more fully in Acts 4, was not one of commandment but one of a loving spirit.

Acts 4:32 “And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any that ought of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common.”

Furthermore, it should be noted that this giving was in response to a genuine need. They weren’t giving just to be giving; simply because they were supposed to give. Oh no! That sort of giving is never so generous, so impressive or overwhelming. Hear the Holy Spirit describe their generosity.

Acts 4:34-35 “Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.”

More specific information is given about one particular need regarding the care of Christian widows (Acts 6:1). The ministering to their needs was “daily” and the church, following the apostles teaching, developed a plan to help carry out that ministry (verses 2-6). The seven men selected were performing a duty for which “deacons” (meaning servants) would later be appointed (cf. Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8-13). In the new Testament, the care of widows and orphans was a common work of the early church, and specific Contributions were given as to which widows the church should care for (James 1:27; 1 Timothy 5:3-16).

As the church grew and Christians were scattered, this fellowship of giving and receiving extended beyond the local congregation. Acts 11 describes events which took place in Antioch, including the prophecy of a “great dearth throughout all the world” (verses 27-28) (a “dearth” is a “shortage” or “lack”). Listen as the Bible describes the response of the Antioch church of Christ.

Acts 11:29-30 “Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea: which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.”

Here we learn several interesting facts which are characteristic of all Christian free-will offerings in the Bible, and indeed even today among those who hold true to the word of God.

1. “The disciples . . . determined.” It truly was a free-will offering. They were not coerced but were driven by love for their brethren.
2. Their giving was “every man according to his ability.” Those who had more, gave more simply because of ability. The poor gave what they could and no less honor was bestowed upon them than upon the rich. (This illustrates that which was mentioned above—about the church working as a collective body instead of individually. The emphasis here is on what the whole church at Antioch did, not upon any individual.)
3. Their giving was in response to a specific need, “to send relief unto the brethren . . . in Judea.”
4. Their offering was sent to elders of another congregation for distribution as needed.
5. Their offering was not sent to some charitable organization but to “brethren.” No Biblical example can be given of a church of Christ as the church joining with non-believers to accomplish her work. (This is not to exclude the possibility of individual Christians joining with non-religious efforts in the community, national or international efforts to do good works [cf. Galatians 6:10]).

Truly we can see the love, the compassion, the generosity of the early Christians as they made sacrifices to help other brethren whom they had never met. This sacrificial compassion is generated even today where people understand the fellowship of the one body in Christ. For the Christian, who has received so much from God, it is difficult to ignore the pain of others, and especially those who are also a part of Christ’s body.