

Giving What We Have Been Given

Ron Roberts

When Peter and John came to the temple we are told of a lame man " *Who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. And Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed unto them, expecting to receive something of them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but **such as I have give I thee**: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk*" (Acts 3:3-6).

Peter did not have money. Some think they cannot give anything if they do not have cash, but this Apostle gave more than the lame man expected. Peter said, "*such as I have I give thee.*" What a tremendous idea! I do not have what men expect, but what I have I am willing to share with them. I think of this when someone stops by the church building seeking money. I do not have any, but I offer something I do have that is much more valuable. I offer to teach them the Gospel.

Unlike Peter, we do not have miraculous powers. But like Peter, we can give what we have. God has blessed us with gifts that we can use. We should use them to bring glory to God and to benefit others. 1 Peter 4:9-11 commands, "*Use hospitality one to another without grudging. As every man hath **received the gift**, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which **God giveth**: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.*"

When Jesus sent the Apostles on the limited commission He instructed them to share their gifts. *Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give* (Matt 10:8). Part of our resistance to sharing is that

we feel we own what is in our possession. Actually what we have we have received from God to be used for others.

Paul said in Rom 12:6-8 "*Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is **given to us**, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry, let us wait on our ministering: or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortation: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity; he that ruleth, with diligence; he that sheweth mercy, with cheerfulness.*"

We should give without complaint. Peter said to practice hospitality without grudging. Paul gave a similar admonition of generosity in 2 Cor 9:7. *Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.* This is not limited to monetary gifts.

To please God we must use the gift He has given in the proper way and with the proper attitude. 2 Cor 8:12 *For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not.*

Sometimes our giving is hindered because we only think to give what a person expects. If we do not have money we feel we can do nothing. At other times we do not give because we do not consider our abilities to be worth anything. But many times we do not give because we are selfish. We do not see the gifts God has given us as something to share. We act as if we have gained the talents without input from God.

When the Corinthians became proud of their miraculous gifts Paul asked them a question. 1 Cor 4:7 *For who maketh thee to differ from another? and **what hast thou that thou didst not receive?** now if thou didst receive it, why dost thou glory, as if thou hadst not received it?* There is one thing that we have all received from God, and we should be sharing it with others.

God has given us time. This is a precious gift because it is in limited supply. It cannot be replaced once used. It can only be used one time and in one way. It is a tremendous thing to give. Many parents have trouble with their children because they give them too many things in an attempt to make up for the lack of time they spend with them. The child only enjoys the gift if the parent will take the time to share it. Children want their parents to play with them and to teach them how to use the gift.

We need to spend time with our brethren. Perhaps they are discouraged or ill. We can drop by and talk with them. We show that they are important to us. Perhaps we do not have the money to buy them a gift or the ability to bake them a batch of brownies. We give them what we have, time. It increases in meaning if we do not allow our cell phone to interrupt us. We give them time that is just for them.

As we increase in years we recognize our time is limited. We never thought about dying when we were a teen. The thought of turning 80 was not a conscious thought when we were 20. Time was a never ending commodity in our youthful view. But as we grow older we see how precious time has become to us. We see what a treasure we share when we give someone an hour or a day. We see what a waste it was to have a misspent youth and we are resolved not to waste any more time on useless ventures.

When Solomon wrote, "*Remember now thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while **the evil days come not**, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, **I have no pleasure in them;**" (Eccl 12:1) he was referring to the painful process of aging that proceeds death. The days of feeling well will pass. We will find we are incapable of doing things we once took for granted. How joyful it would be to know you spent your youthful strength and time in the service of the Lord.*

"Take time to be holy". Pray, study, attend, visit, call, learn, share, teach, and give time to God, brethren, and the lost.