

03.14.10 / Exodus 35:4-29**Passage Insight**

This passage says so much about generosity. At first glance, we might think it speaks to the generosity of the people who gave their resources for the building of the tabernacle, but on closer inspection, it becomes obvious that it speaks instead to the limitless generosity of God.

From the outset of the passage, the people were called to participate in the building of the tabernacle, which was to house the glory of the Lord. The work and the physical structure of the tabernacle would be there to remind people of God's continuing presence with and care for Israel. In other words, it would be there to remind them of God's constant faithfulness.

We see early on that whoever was of a generous heart was to bring material goods for the cause, and every skillful craftsman and every skillful woman was called to utilize their skills for the work at hand. Where did these goods come from? Where did the opportunities to learn and hone such skills come from? The answer, clearly, is God. God alone had given them their material wealth, and God alone had allowed for the development of their skills. He had done so for this specific purpose. Quite simply, God had invested in His people to do a specific job, and now He asks them to do what they've been trained to do. For the people who were there on that that day, to answer the call was to honor God. To instead deny the call was to rob God. It is no different for us today. We are every bit as much God's creation as the nation of Israel, and we are every bit as indebted to God for all we have, do, and are, as the nation of Israel is in this passage. As such, when the Lord calls us to act, we must act. To do so is to honor God. To deny the call is to rob Him.

All people at all times are tempted to say one of two things: either 1) We have all we need without God, or 2) What we have is from God, but we don't have what we need. They are both lies. Where life exists is in this truth: as a people bought by the blood of Christ, heirs to King Jesus, temples of His Spirit, we have all that we need for every good work that we are called to do. What you have in being a son or daughter of the Father is sufficient for the task at hand because what you have comes from the one who has EVERYTHING. Consider 1 Chronicles 29:14: "But who am I, and what is my people, that we should be able thus to offer willingly? For all things come from you, and of your own have we given you." The question is this: how will the gifts and resources of God be put to use? In this passage, we see the mundane become the sacred – objects of normal, everyday, limited use were put to work as a way to draw people to God Almighty, and in doing so, became tools for honoring God. An earring becomes a bowl to house incense for the Lord. A wooden spoon becomes a decorative ornament that reflects God's creativity for all who see it. In the hands of the Lord, all things once imperfect and mundane are redeemed and given extraordinary purpose. The same is true for us as human beings. In the hands of the Lord, what is imperfect becomes God-like.

After the message was delivered, the people simply went away and prayed. Then they responded in obedience as their hearts were stirred. We too must pray, seeking the Lord, examining our hearts, asking for wisdom, creativity, and that we would all be "of a generous heart." A generous heart is a heart inclined toward God and His purposes, His joy. The word "blessed" means having God-like joy. In Acts 20:35, the words of the Apostle Paul tell us that this God-like joy is ours not in receiving, but rather in giving: "In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"

Let our lives reflect that of our lavishly generous God. Let us seek the Lord with all our strength and devote all things to Him, for it is solely in Him that we will find redemption for our possessions, our families, our friends, and ourselves. Let us devote all things to Him, for His purposes, so that others may taste that He alone is good. There is nothing better, period.

Application Questions (feel free to use the ones that best meet the needs of your group)**Answering / Denying**

- 1) What is the biggest stumbling block between you and the call to build God's kingdom?
- 2) What would the people in your Community Group say about you if they were asked this question?
- 3) What needs to happen for this stumbling block to be removed?

Praying

- 1) If we are to be people of a generous heart, what will your prayers look like?
- 2) When in your life have you felt moved by your heart and stirred by your spirit?
- 3) Who in your Community Group can help you discern what God is saying to you as you pray?
- 4) 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18 says this: "Rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you." What does look like for you as you search your heart?

Taking Inventory

- 1) What unique skills has the Lord given you the opportunity to learn and hone that could be utilized to further the kingdom?
- 2) Which of those are you using now for this sacred purpose?
- 3) Where are you instead committing your gifts to the mundane?
- 4) What would it look like to instead put them into the hands of the Lord and see them redeemed?
- 5) What material possessions / resources are you most afraid of parting with?
- 6) What are you expecting those possessions to give you that they can never give (what are you saying they can give you that Jesus can't)?

Sources

- ESV Study Bible Commentary
 - Tyndale
 - BST
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