

Welcome...and Thank You
Ron Robinson

Quotes about Giving

“Each one must do just as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.” 2 Corinthians 9:7

“One who is gracious to a poor person lends to the Lord, And He will repay him for his good deed.” Proverbs 19:17

January Birthdays

14 Juanita Small

January Anniversaries

8 Bob & Debbie Pescador

Regular Meeting Times

Sunday.....9:45 a.m.

Sunday.....10:45 a.m.

Wednesday.....7:00 p.m.

Website:
indiochurchofchrist.com

Preacher:
Jack Critchfield

Church of Christ
81-377 Ave 46
Indio, CA 92201
(760) 342-1859

(Address Service Requested)

Indio Informer

Vol. 34 No. 3

January 15, 2023

What Do We Offer to God?

John M. Buttrey II

The account of Cain and Abel, and their respective offerings to God, has been discussed and debated many times through the years. The debate revolves around why Abel's offering was accepted, and why Cain's was rejected. Some have reasoned that Cain's was rejected because it was bloodless. However, years later, when the Law of Moses came, we see that not all offerings to God required blood. There were grain and drink offerings (Lev. 2:1-16). These did not require blood.

Often in our discussions of their offerings, we turn to the book of Hebrews for the answer. It is there we read: *“By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous, God testifying about his gifts, and through faith, though he is dead, he still speaks.”* Hebrews 11:4 (Emphasis Mine)

From this text, we can see that Abel's sacrifice was offered by faith. The same is not said of Cain's offering. That Abel offered his by faith speaks to the fact that he did it according to God's instruction (cf. Rom. 10:17). Herein is one difference between the two offerings. The text says nothing regarding Cain's offering being bloodless. All it tells us is that his offering was not by faith. In some way, Cain failed to follow the instructions God had given for offerings.

We are certainly blessed to have the text in Hebrews and the information it gives us. However, how did the people of Israel understand this event in the 1500 plus years prior to its writing? Is the account in Genesis solely dependent upon the book of Hebrews for an explanation? I don't believe so. There must have been something in Genesis for them to understand, for it to have meaning in their life. Let's go to the text in Genesis and see what we can find.

“So, it came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering to the Lord of the fruit of the ground. Abel, on his part also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. And the Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering; but for Cain and for his offering He had no regard. So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell.” Genesis 4:3-5 (Emphasis Mine)

Right away we can see the difference between the two offerings. The emphasis in the text seems to be placed on Abel bringing of the firstlings of his flock. In contrast, it says that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground. Nothing is said about the first fruits of his field. When the Law came along, such was a requirement for grain offerings: *“As an offering of first fruits, you shall bring them to the Lord, but they shall not ascend for a soothing aroma on the altar.”* Leviticus 2:12 (Emphasis Mine)

The Hebrew word rendered "first" means first, beginning, or best. The idea is that any offering made to God should be the best that one can give. David expressed the principle very well when he said, *“I will not offer burnt offerings to the Lord my God which cost me nothing”* (2 Sam. 24:24).

Putting this all together, we can see that the problem with Cain's sacrifice was that it was not his best. In not offering his best, his sacrifice was not by faith. Hence, as Hebrews tells us, Abel's, by faith, was better (his best). Giving our best to God is a principle seen throughout Scripture. Notice how God, through the prophet Malachi, rebuked His people for failing to offer Him their best: *“But when you present the blind for sacrifice, is it not evil? And when you present the lame and sick, is it not evil? Why not offer it to your governor? Would he be pleased with you? Or would he receive you kindly?”* says the Lord of hosts.” Malachi 1:8 (Emphasis Mine)

Of course, all of this begs the question: Are we giving our best to God? Do we give Him the best of our time? The best in our efforts to serve? The best of our love? Let us not make the mistake of Cain, and many others, by thinking that what we offer to God really doesn't matter, just as long as we offer it. God deserves our best in all things.

Tears of the Poor

By Al Behel

Thomas Carlyle once said, “The tears of the poor are the best epitaph of the dead.” Long ago King Solomon stated, *“The righteous considers the cause of the poor”* (Proverbs 29:7) and *“He that has compassion on the poor lends to the Lord, and that which he has given He will pay to him again”* (Proverbs 19:17).

One of my college professors was walking across a parking lot with another student when they were approached by a man asking for financial help. The student reached in his pocket and gave the beggar some money. The professor, a bit taken back by the unquestioning generosity of the student, asked, “Do you always do that?” The student answered affirmatively. When asked why he would give to a beggar who might misuse the funds without questioning him, the student replied, “I would rather err on the side of mercy than on the side of justice.”

Giving to the poor is like “lending” to the Lord. God will repay what the poor cannot repay. The story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37) outlines three possible attitudes toward those in need. First, we may actively hurt or oppress them. Second, we may actively help them. And third, we may completely ignore them. The robbers inflicted harm upon the traveler. The Samaritan showed active compassion in helping the man. But the priest and Levite were simply indifferent toward him.

Few of us would inflict harm on the poor or needy, but ignoring them is easy to do. But it is not the spirit of Jesus who said He had come to preach good news to the poor. Solomon commended the “virtuous” woman as one who *“stretches out her hand to the poor...she extends her hands to the needy”* (Proverbs 31:20).

God does not bless me so I can be rich. He blesses me so I can be a servant. Each gift is a sacred trust. The extended hand is filled with compassion for the needy. Many around us are suffering. We are the body of Christ. That means we are his eyes that see their needs, his heart that feels compassion, and his hands that serve their needs. Many of those needs are for emotional and spiritual support as well as physical.

God has no other hands, no other eyes, no other hearts, no other servants to make a difference to our world. He is counting on us to deliver a message of redemptive love and grace, and to lift hearts and lives that are struggling around us.