**FAITH PROMISE GIVING**

***I Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8-9***

Sunday School Lesson

*Understanding Missions*

Week 2 – 4/29/2018

**Introduction:** When the conversation of giving to missions is brought up, the term *faith promise giving* is usually connected to it. As with missions and missionaries, this is not a specific Bible term. When churches mention faith promise giving, they are referring to the practice of each member making a weekly commitment to give specifically to the furtherance of the mission. These commitments are then used by the church to form what we typically call a missions budget. As with missions, there are often some misunderstandings when it comes to the practice of faith promise giving. The basis for faith promise giving comes from 1 & 2 Corinthians, but we will look throughout the New Testament to ensure that we are following Bible principles in our giving.

1. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT ALL GIVING SHOULD BE DONE IN FAITH. (MATTHEW 6)
2. **Notice that the faith in giving is not faith of earthly prosperity (Matthew 6:25; Revelation 2:9; 2 Corinthians 8:2).** We must be careful to have the right mindset of giving in faith. Too often, we draw too much attention to wealth that we experience after giving to God. I’ve seen people stand up and tell the church how they were able to buy a brand-new car because of their faith promise giving. The underlying statement they are making is that those who do not have a new car must not be giving in faith. Our faith is that God has a plan for our lives. Our faith is that the life after death is much more important than the life that we have here on earth. The churches in Smyrna and Macedonia were commended for their faithful giving, yet the Bible tells us that they were living in poverty. Their faith was in counting this world’s riches as nothing compared to the fulfillment of the work of God.
3. **Notice that the faith in giving is not distinguished by its designation (Acts 4:35-37; Mark 12:42).** One danger with faith promise giving is that it insinuates a special level of faith compared to your standard tithes and offerings. It has a way of overemphasizing “missions” giving over other giving in the church. As we discussed last week, missions means more than just foreign missions. The reality is that all of the money in the church should be going to the mission. The electricity bill being paid keeps the mission going. The church being well kept keeps the mission going. When the members of the early church gave, they did not designate their giving. They just simply placed the money at the feet of the apostles. While there were times for special offerings for specific purposes, these were given in faith just as their tithes and offerings were given.
4. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT FAITH GIVING IS NOT FOOLISH GIVING. (2 CORINTHIANS 8)
5. **Notice that faith in giving is not giving of that which you do not have (2 Corinthians 8:12; Proverbs 3:9).** Some Bible teachers look at 2 Corinthians 8:3 and use it to form a foolish definition of faith promise giving. In verse 3, the Bible tells us that the churches of Macedonia were willing to give of themselves beyond their power. Essentially, if they could have done more, they would have been more than eager to do more for Paul, Titus, and the work of God. The verse is simple and easy to understand. Paul was commending them for their eagerness to see the mission accomplished. Yet, there are some who use this verse to promote a faith promise commitment as a commitment to give above what you have. The Bible does not teach this. In verse 12, the Bible says that we are to give only of that which we actually have. Proverbs 3:9 tells us that every man is to give of his substance. God is looking for us to give back of that which He has already given us. Making a commitment to give that which we do not yet have is both foolish and dangerous.

1. **Notice that faith in giving is giving with a sacrificial heart (Mark 12:42; Deuteronomy 26:10).** While faith in giving is not giving of that which you do not have, it is giving sacrificially of that which you do have. In Mark 12, we see Jesus commend the widow who gave her two mites. He approved of her giving because it was sacrificial. She gave all that she possibly could. The Bible teaches the firstfruits principle throughout the Old Testament. This is the principle of giving to God first of what we have. Some people take the idea of foolish giving to the opposite extreme. They wait to pay all of their bills first and then offer God some of their leftovers. The issue with this is that we all could probably find some bills that we have that are a result of things that we do not actually need. As mentioned before, our faith is not that God will give us back the extra that we give Him. After all, would it really be sacrificial if we did it because we expected to get it back? No. We give sacrificially to God because we love Him.
2. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT *FAITH PROMISE GIVING* IS NOT A COMMAND. (2 COR. 8:8)
3. **Notice that we should be wary of making vows or promises to God (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5; James 5:12; Matthew 5:34).** On more than one occasion, I have heard a preacher say that you can expect to receive 75% of whatever a church promises to give through faith promise giving. This means that most churches do not fulfill their commitment that they have made to God regarding this area of giving. The Bible tells us that it is better not to make a vow to God than to make a vow and not keep it. While we are commanded to give abundantly in faith, we are not specifically commanded in Scripture to take an annual commitment in advance of our giving. Paul only told the church at Corinth to have a collection each week. He did not encourage them to make commitments regarding that giving. As a pastor, it is my desire to keep our church away from sin. It would be much better not to make a faith promise commitment than to make one and not keep it.
4. **Notice that not fulfilling our commitments is a serious offense to God (Acts 5).** When we do not fulfill our promises, it makes us a liar before God. In Acts 5, we see that Ananias and Sapphira made a commitment to give the money from their house sale to the Lord. When it came time to give the money, their flesh got the better of them. Perhaps their home sold for more than they expected, or maybe they had some unanticipated bills arrive? Whatever the reason, they had to deal with the consequences. They lost their lives as a result of their sin. While God may not deal with each of us in that same manner today, sin still has consequences. Sin hinders the work of the Lord.
5. **Notice that not fulfilling our commitments causes us grief and bitterness (Matthew 26:75).** When Jesus told Peter that he was going to deny Him, Peter firmly promised that he definitely would not. Peter was confident that he would not falter in his service to Christ. Unfortunately, his flesh got in the way, and he gave in to temptation. As a result, he was greatly distressed and wept bitterly. He had made a promise, but he had let God down. We must be cautious that our promises are not based in our own abilities, because we will let God down every time.
6. **Notice that our giving should be based in cheerfulness and not out of necessity (2 Corinthians 9:7).** One danger of faith promise giving is that we rush into it without truly considering what we are committing to do. When it comes time to fulfill that obligation, we find ourselves doing it more out of necessity than out of a cheerful and willing heart. Again, it would be better not to make a vow and give each weekly cheerfully of your substance than it would be to make a vow and give of it grudgingly every week.

IV. WE MUST UNDERSTAND THAT A *FAITH PROMISE* SHOULD NOT BE NEEDED. (ACTS 2:45-47)

A. **Notice that the expectation is that the needs will be met (2 Corinthians 9:3).** When Paul writes to the church at Corinth, he does not ask them to promise him that they will give. There is a general expectation that they will do their part for the work of the gospel. This was faith on Paul’s part. He was doing his work, and he just expected that God would make sure he had what he needed. If the church didn’t provide, he was prepared to take up an offering and keep the work going. It is interesting that we expect members in the church to exhibit faith in making these commitments, yet we do not have the same expectation for those to whom the commitments are made for.

B. **Notice that the expectation is that growth will lead to greater giving (Acts 2:42-45).** As the members of the early church grew in their knowledge of the Lord, they became more and more eager to give all that they had. Notice that the Bible says that they sold their possessions after they had continued steadfast in the doctrine and faith. A pastor can expect the church to be faithful in their giving as they are taught the Word of God. While a church can receive a financial pledge from its members, that pledge will not be followed through on to its potential if the people are not where they need to be spiritually. Consequently, the pledge becomes of little usefulness to the church, as it is not reliable.

**CONCLUSION**: While conducting a faith promise giving program in the church is not a command or necessity, that does not diminish the overall need for the church to give to the mission. The point of the lesson was to show that our greater emphasis should be on giving in true faith and with a cheerful heart. If we have the right mindset in our giving, we will give abundantly and sacrificially of all of our substance.