

## **Penny For Your Faith?**

### *Seed Faith Giving*

May 2008

I would like to think through a few popular theologies swimming around in Christian space. I have always been disturbed by these theologies for good, biblical reasons. But I am not one for dogmatically declaring them complete heresies. I do not believe they adequately adhere to reality and biblical thought. Many times, these are proclaimed with the underlying intention that people understand them to be fully true, whereas they may be only partly true or much more complicated matters than preachers are willing to admit.

I am speaking mainly of the idea of "seed faith money" which is the proposition that if you send money (preferably in large quantities) to ministers and ministries, then God will heal you, bless you, give you your heart's desire, give you a pony, a Ferrari, or whatever else you want in life. The problem comes in the inability of such propositions to hold any biblical truth behind them. Sure, the Bible says that people will be blessed by God, but it does not say that God will bless only in the area of finances. Why do we seem to think that God works like the government, that if we give money we'll get money, that if we give time we'll get time, that if we give grace we'll get grace?

More biblical is the idea of sacrifice, where you give expecting absolutely nothing in return. This is essentially how Christ gave. Sacrificially. He gave His own life so that we would see His love and love Him back. But much of the world does not love Jesus back even when faced with His

sacrificial love. Christ was not guaranteed going to the cross that all of humanity for which He died would jump at the opportunity for eternal life. It did not play out this way in reality. So also, this idea that God blesses in the same category in which we give does not maintain reality.

A small and inadequate god gives only in the means given. God is so great and powerful that He can bless in ways we wouldn't even have thought of, because we're so finite. For instance, if you give people your time and your talents, God might bless you with His presence or with others who give money so that you can continue to give of yourself. The point is that the Bible never specifies how you will be blessed or in what areas. So why do we expect God to bless us in a specific area for a specific gift? Do we know better than God what we need in a future we have yet to enjoy?

I am above all thoroughly convinced that God has abundant blessings for every Christian and that He willingly and lavishly pours out His blessing upon us pre-eternity and post-eternity. But I am not so thoroughly convinced that He uses the same measurements, the same categories, the same methods, that we think He uses. No, I think God blesses more than we'll ever know right here and now in every area of our life. Why short-change God by expecting Him to bless you only in one way? Besides, it is so exciting to discover the wide range of God's blessings throughout your life. Christianity

should be an adventure, not a pre-planned vacation.

So God does bless. There's no question about that. But God blesses in ways we may not realize. The true gift is the unexpected gift, the one you didn't even know you needed and it shows up on your doorstep right at the time you need it. God's big enough to do that for you and He does it all the time. Even your next breath, thought, heartbeat, is a gift. We aren't guaranteed anything in this life, but God blesses us in such a wide range of areas that we need to re-learn how to be thankful and generous with what He gives us because the only way to truly thank the Giver is to learn the craft of His trade: to become generous as your Heavenly Father is so generous. I think that learning to be like God in our outflow of generosity pleases and blesses God. Now there's an interesting thought: Blessing the Blesser. You know we can bless God with our whole being when we are trying to be like Him.

Aside from this, when we expect God to give to us in a certain area, like healing for sending "seed faith money" in to a ministry, we begin in our frail minds to equate God with someone who does what I pay for. Now that's backwards theology if ever I heard of it. But think about it. If we were told by a "man of God" that if we gave money to his ministry that God would heal us of some terminal illness, and then God didn't do that, what would we think? We might think that our faith is lacking. We might think that God doesn't care about us at all. Try finding that pagan idea in Scripture. It isn't there. In fact, God cares so much about each and every one of us that the Bible says He knows the number of hairs on our heads! Does that sound like a God who doesn't care, a Father who isn't jumping up and down and salivating with excitement at our victories, a Father who doesn't weep and

hold us in a tight, warm embrace when we have trials? Worse than all of this, we may come to believe that God owes us or that He does not exist. Such practices are so dangerous to Christians.

So God blesses us in ways we cannot imagine and the fun of life is discovering His blessings in the right place at the right time, just what you needed when you needed it! Sure it's fine to send money to ministries, because God uses that money to further His kingdom. But when will we think about it as sacrificial with no strings attached? When will we give out of love instead of a business deal or to get back something. The Bible promises us that we will be rewarded for our generosity. But the reward is the surprise gift you didn't even expect from God in an area of life that you would have never imagined. God is just waiting to lavish His riches all over us. Can you see those blessings and rewards in your life? If we stopped long enough to look around instead of moaning about what God owes us or what God hasn't done for us, we may find it quite a surprise when we count all the blessings that are in our lives direct deposit from a lavish and loving Father who's watching your every move as an eager father eavesdrops on his own kids and experiences life with them.