

God's Blessings Are Unconditional

by David Ravenhill

Nothing makes my blood boil more than the purposeful misinterpretation of or adding to God's Word for man's own selfish gain. During the time of Martin Luther, the Roman Catholic Church was notorious for its widespread practice of selling indulgences. The people were taught to believe that by giving to the church, they could obtain God's favor, thereby enabling their dead relatives to be released from purgatory. Today we laugh at such a concept and wonder to ourselves how the people could fall for such false teaching. But during this time the common people were denied access to the Word of God, so they believed anything they were told, especially by the priests. Despite the fact that we now have the Word of God readily available to us, many still believe what the "priests" today tell them.

Take, for example, the latest twist on the "seed faith" teaching. It is based around Moses' instruction to Israel about their three annual feasts. The key phrase ministers emphasize is, "You shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed" (see Ex. 23:14-15; Deut. 16:15-17).

The teaching goes like this: In order to gain God's favor you have to bring Him an offering, and the larger the offering, the greater will

be His favor
toward you.

One prominent shyster teaches that on the Day of Atonement each year God decides how He is going to treat us during the year ahead. What influences His decision is whether or not we have given Him a sufficient offering.

No offering, no favors. The “favors” include angelic protection, the defeat of one's enemies, financial prosperity, healing and so on. According to this teaching, to appear before the Lord empty-handed is to sign your own death warrant. Hence, the popularity of the message.

What the teachers of this false doctrine don't tell you is the full context of the verse they are quoting. Moses actually tells the people, “The Lord your God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you surely rejoice.

'Three times a year all your males shall appear before the Lord your God in the place which He chooses: at the [Feasts] ... and they shall not appear before the Lord empty-handed. Every man shall give as he is able according to the blessing of the Lord your God which He has given you'" (Deut. 16:15-17, NKJV, emphasis added).

God's blessing was not conditional upon their giving to Him but upon His

having already given to them. They were not blessed because they gave; they gave because they were blessed. (It is also important to understand that these requirements are no longer valid under the New Covenant.)

Every spiritual first-grader knows that we cannot merit God's favor. God is not for sale to the highest bidder nor can we earn His favor by our own effort or works.

When Paul addressed the Stoic philosophers on Mars Hill and sought to describe the difference between the true God and their many idols, he told them this about God: "He gives to all life, breath, and all things" (Acts 17:25).

What sets God apart from all other gods is that He is a giver. What utter blasphemy, then, to suggest that God can be bribed to favor us by our giving to Him!

Ministers who teach this "give-to-get" doctrine and TV hosts who invite them on their telethons need to heed the warning of the apostle James, "Let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment" (James 3:1).

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