

Series: Acts

Lesson #74

Title: GOD GIVETH TO ALL

Scripture: Acts 17: 25

Date: June 25, 2009

Place: Sovereign Grace Baptist Church in Princeton, New Jersey

The Athenians imagined that God depended upon their strength to build him a temple. The Stoics imagined that God depended upon their strength to worship him while the Epicureans would say that God could not be worshipped at all. But in doing so they all made man to be the one on whom God depends.

This is the heart of all idolatry. It is alive and well in our day.

"God has no hands but your hands and no feet but your feet"

"God wants you to be saved"

"God has done all he can do now it is up to you"

"If you will take the first step God will do the rest"

Then there are those who profess to believe the sovereign grace of God who yet place more emphasis on the believer's moral living rather than the irresistible, sovereign grace of God which is able to work that which is well-pleasing in his sight within his saints. Theirs is one with the will-worship of those who claim that Christ needs the sinner to make a decision for him in order to make Christ's blood effectual.

We must never put ourselves on a pedestal so as to imagine that God is benefited or somehow dependent upon us in any aspect of our worship, as though he is powerless to work it in us or as though God is benefited by something you or I do ourselves. Such conceit leads sinners to exalt themselves above God and to imagine that God owes the sinner a reward for serving him. It is called works, and is opposed to grace. It is as much idolatry as when the Athenians built a physical temple and claimed worship was in those material trinkets which they made by their own hands.

God does not need men's hands to build the temple he dwells in. Nor does God need the strength of man to make his elect truly worship Christ in righteousness and true holiness. Nor is God benefited by those he brings to worship him.

Acts 17: 24: God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25: Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

The Athenians were literally building temples and literally worshipping with idols created by their own hands. But in this mention of a temple made with hands and of worship with men's hands, Paul marks out the two ditches of depraved minds.

We saw last week that God builds the house he dwelleth in. God created the heaven and the earth and the Spirit moved upon the face of the deep and God said let there be light and there was light. God created a body for the Son of God to dwell in as the Spirit moved over the virgin. So it is that God creates the body of Christ, as Paul said, "God who said there be light hath shined in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ Jesus." When Christ is formed in a sinner the body becomes the temple of the living God. Christ the Governor builds up each living stone--each believer in whom he dwells--into a holy temple--which is the habitation of God through the Spirit. When John saw the celestial city he said, Revelation 21: 22: And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it. This is how every elect child of God is delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of his dear Son (Col 1: 13.)

Idolatry, false prophets, philosophers, anti-christ religion, presents God as though God needs the sinners' strength in order for the sinner to be made the temple of the living God. False religion presents God as though God lacks the power to make a sinner repent and believe on Christ, as though God will lack something if you do not repent.

This is the heart that all men must be saved from; this will merely lead sinners into more spiritual death. Because in such a sham of religion they become confident in their religious idolatry and have only covered their sin with the worst of all sin. Now they imagine that God owes them because of what they have done for him. It is called works, not grace. That is the first ditch of depravity.

Next comes this word "worship." Not only can you not build the temple God dwelleth in but you can not worship God with your hands either.

Acts 17: 25: Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

I. TRUE WORSHIP

First, let's look at what true worship is not.

Acts 17: 25: Neither is worshipped with men's hands

Just as false religion begins with men building the temple of God by their own hands, all false religion continues with men's hands worshipping God. That is why so much emphasis in matters of sanctification and holiness is placed upon men's hands rather than Christ our

Sanctifier and the work of the Spirit in the heart which results in a zeal for that which is holy and good.

Worship is not the things we do when we come here--our singing, our reading, our praying, hearing of preaching. Neither is worship outward morality whereby you touch not, taste not or handle not. Believers sing, read, pray, delight in the gospel of Christ. But those things are the means whereby we enter into true worship by the power of the Holy Spirit. Believers are zealous for good works, and strive to mortify the deeds of the flesh. But those things are the result of true worship given by God in the spirit. Our confidence is not in those things, but in Christ alone.

Philippians 3:3: For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh.

True worship is of God. We not only are created to newness of life by God, made the temple of God, built up a habitation of God through the Spirit, but the believer worships God by the power of the Holy Spirit in spirit and in truth.

In John 4: 20-24 the word "worship" is used eight times. One use is how the woman at the well considered worship. She was focused on an earthly mountain in Samaria. She thought the Lord was speaking of that earthly city of Jerusalem. Her emphasis for worship was on the temporal. The other use of the word is what Christ the Son of God says is true worship.

John 4:20: [She said] Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. 21: Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when ye shall neither in this mountain, nor yet at Jerusalem, worship the Father. 22: Ye worship ye know not what: we know what we worship: for salvation is of the Jews. 23: But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. 24: God *is* a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship *him* in spirit and in truth.

Bowing at Christ's feet like Mary and hearing of what great things Christ has done, of hearing what we are in Christ, of being brought to adore the Savior, this is true worship. And this is true obedience. It is created by God in those Christ has perfected.

Consider this: when you have been fully obedient, fully separated from sin, fully capable of following after holiness in perfection what will you be doing? You will be seated at the feet of Christ Jesus the Lord in glory. Why would men think following after holiness is anything less in this life?

Sanctification is not merely being separated from outward sins. It is being separated unto Christ who is our Sanctification. And as God first separated you to faith in Christ in that first

hour through the gospel of Christ, so through the knowledge of Christ Jesus he keeps you from the evil.

2 Peter 1: 1: Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ: 2: Grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord, 3: According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that *pertain* unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: 4: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

So we preach Christ and him crucified whereby God draws us into true worship in spirit and in truth.

II. GOD IS THE GIVER AND WE ARE THE RECEIPIENTS

Acts 17: 24: God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands; 25: Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

Anytime that we imagine that we accomplish some aspect of our salvation whether it be by our wisdom, by our righteousness, by our sanctification, then we most surely will glory in ourselves. When a man glories in himself for what he has done in religion he is saying that he has perfected that which God could not accomplish. Such a thought, makes man to be the giver to God rather than God the giver to man.

God does not need any thing from man nor can he receive anything from man's worship of him, as though he needed any thing, because God is all sufficient. We must have all things given to us by God. God declares this in the natural realm.

Acts 17: 25: Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things.

Did you give yourself physical life? What about physical breath? Can you maintain your physical life and breath? What do you have in the natural realm that you did not receive? Even so, can you give yourself spiritual life? Can you give yourself all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus? Can you persevere in faith unless God preserve you in Christ?

If you can build God's temple and give something to God by your religious works then God needs you instead of you needing God. But if you will cease from blaspheming the Spirit of God then you must answer this final question, "why boast ye as if you did not receive it?"

When God gives a sinner all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus he is brought to behold that salvation is the gift of God in his Son. God's goodness extends to me in the gift of his dear Son. His goodness has made me complete and not my goodness to him. Man does not profit God, God profits men. It is to MY advantage to worship God, but my service to God does not add one thing to God.

Eliphaz applied this wrongly to Job but what he says is true in itself:

Job 22: 2: Can a man be profitable unto God, as he that is wise may be profitable unto himself? 3: *Is it* any pleasure to the Almighty, that thou art righteous? or *is it gain to him*, that thou makest thy ways perfect? 4: Will he reprove thee for fear of thee? will he enter with thee into judgment?

Elihu was wrong to say this to Job but what he says is true in itself:

Job 35:6: If thou sinnest, what doest thou against him? or *if* thy transgressions be multiplied, what doest thou unto him? 7: If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand? 8: Thy wickedness *may hurt* a man as thou *art*; and thy righteousness *may profit* the son of man.

Did you know that even the goodness of Christ Jesus did not add to God? Psalm 16 is that great Messianic psalm--the Michtam--the Precious Jewel of Christ our David. Here the Lord Jesus Christ in his mediatorial office communes with Jehovah. Try to forget about David and hear Jesus praying to the Father.

Psalm 16: 1: Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust. 2: *O my soul*, thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord: my goodness *extendeth* not to thee; 3: *But* to the saints that *are* in the earth, and *to* the excellent, in whom *is* all my delight.

Our Lord Jesus Christ glorified God when he fulfilled all that he was sent to perform. He glorified the righteousness of God. In Christ God is both just and the Justifier of all who believe.

Yet, Christ was not adding to the righteousness of God. The goodness of Christ did not extend to God, as though goodness was added to God. Instead, the goodness that God is, toward his elect, is extended in Christ to the saints that are in the earth, to the excellent, in whom is all Christ's delight.

2 Corinthians 5: 19: To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.

What was it that the shepherds heard when Christ was born?

Luke 2: 14: Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.

Not only this, but Christ Jesus in his office as mediator, declared that it is God who is the believers portion and maintainer.

Psalm 16: 5: The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.

This word inheritance points us to the Levite priesthood. The Levite priests had no inheritance in the land of Canaan with which to even fill their cup to sustain their lives, must less anything to offer God. They are set before us as an example of those whom Christ makes kings and priests in the earth. God was their inheritance, God filled their cup and maintained their lot in life even as he did his Righteous Servant and even as our King Priest does for us whom he laid down his life and rose again.

Be sure you understand this: the Son of God is God. It is not as though he needeth anything. He is the all-glorious Son of God. But in the person of Christ Jesus, in his office of mediator, he stands here as one who is not giving to God an inheritance and filling God's cup but he says, "The LORD *is* the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot."

Now if the goodness of God's righteous Servant did not extend to God, can any goodness of yours extend to God? Christ Jesus is God's goodness extending to his people.

I John 5: 10: He that believeth on the Son of God hath the witness in himself: he that believeth not God hath made him a liar; because he believeth not the record that God gave of his Son. 11: And this is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in his Son.

Our best works of righteousness are not gifts whereby God is benefited; they are the gift of God to us whereby he benefits us. He may be glorified by our works but the glory is his own. He foreordained every good work; he sovereignly works all things together to bring the believer to perform those works. He is the wisdom and strength by whom the believer performs every good work.

Therefore if you believe him, if you turn from your idolatry, if you separate yourself from that which is unclean and unholy, what givest thou him? He giveth to all to do so. We give God nothing.

HE GIVETH TO ALL....Every saved sinner who enters into God's presence holy, unblameable, unprovable in God's sight will do so because God giveth to each one what he requires.

How does one sinner among a generation of vile God-haters become the apple of God's eye? God giveth, he chooses that sinner according to his mercy and grace.

How does one sinner who hates God yet fall in love with Christ? God giveth the Holy Spirit and gives that sinner all things so that he beholds the beauty of holiness in Christ Jesus.

How does one sinner among a sea of foaming and raging sinners against God become holy and unblameable in God's sight? By Christ the Satisfaction whom God set forth on that sinners behalf.

Complete justification, complete holiness, complete obedience, complete righteousness, complete wisdom--ALL THINGS--which God requires of that sinner has been freely given to that sinner in the person of Christ Jesus and that sinner is complete in Christ.

Psalm 50: 21:...thou thoughtest that I was altogether *such an one* as thyself: *but* I will reprove thee, and set *them* in order before thine eyes.

At your job you have folks working under you. You tell them what to do and what not to do. The glory you will receive depends upon them doing what you told them to do. Do you think God is that way?

God is not wanting, wringing his hands, issuing out commands and hoping the job gets done. Christ came and finished the work of righteousness for all his people. And through the irresistible grace of God, through the gospel that declares Christ the Wisdom, Righteousness, and Sanctification, and Redemption of his people, Christ our King reproves his people and sets them in order.

He is not depending upon me as your pastor to make you obedient. We have this treasure in earthen vessels that the power might be of God and not of us. He is not depending on any man to set his people in order, to set his people so that they trust no one else, but of God are ye in Christ Jesus, who of God is made, IS MADE, IS SET IN ORDER BEFORE THINE EYES, WISDOM, RIGHTEOUSNESS, SANCTIFICATION AND REDEMPTION.

Well, if God is not like us, if God reproves and sets in order, if God makes his people dispose of their way and follow after Christ then what is left for the believer to do? "As it is written, he that glorieth let him glory in the Lord!" (I Cor 1: 30, 31.)

If you came here because you desire to see Christ it is because God giveth; if you are able to worship Christ through this gospel it is because God giveth; if you are not rebellious to this instruction but happy and content to live by faith in Christ it is because God giveth; if you leave here and tonight when you are alone you pour out your heart to God in thanksgiving it is because God giveth; if you go to work tomorrow and work an honest day as unto the Lord it is because God giveth; if you do not rob a bank or commit adultery it is because God

giveth; if you behold that even though he enabled you to avoid certain outward sins you are still totally trusting in only the holiness of Christ then it is because God giveth; if your desire is for Christ and your brethren in this world, it is because God giveth; if you enter into the trial and are made to see the sufficiency of his grace more and more it is because God giveth; if your desire to turn from all ungodliness grows the more you behold Christ it is because God giveth; and in that day when you stand before the throne of God your song will be, "I am what I am because God giveth!"

EVERYTHING THAT GOD REQUIRES OF A SINNER GOD GIVES IN CHRIST JESUS THE SON OF GOD. THOSE WHO ARE BORN OF THE PRINCE OF PEACE ARE PEACEMAKERS WHO FOLLOW AFTER PEACE WITH ALL MEN BY DECARLING TO THEM WHAT THE PRINCE OF PEACE HAS DONE FOR UNRULY SINNERS. THOSE WHOM CHRIST OUR SANCTIFIER HAS PERFECTED FOREVER BY HIS ONE OFFERING FOLLOW AFTER HOLINESS BY FOLLOWING AFTER CHRIST WHO IS MADE UNTO US SANCTIFICATION.

WOULD YOU FOLLOW AFTER PEACE WITH ALL MEN? THEN CAST YOUR CARE ON THE PRINCE OF PEACE. WHOULD YOU FOLLOW AFTER HOLINESS? THEN CAST YOUR CARE ON THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL.

Acts 17: 29: Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device. 30: And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: 31: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by *that* man whom he hath ordained; *whereof* he hath given assurance unto all *men*, in that he hath raised him from the dead.