

The Sacrifice of GIVING

INTRODUCTION

Today we will consider how giving financially to the Lord's work is a tangible, practical and beautiful offering up to God. In Philippians 4:14-20, Paul is wrapping up his letter to the church there in Philippi and in his closing comments he says this:

¹⁴ Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. ¹⁵ Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except you only; ¹⁶ for even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid more than once when I was in need. ¹⁷ Not that I desire your gifts; what I desire is that more be credited to your account. ¹⁸ I have received full payment and have more than enough. I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. ¹⁹ And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.

²⁰ To our God and Father be glory for ever and ever. Amen.

This passage reminds me of the one-liner in Hebrews where the writer says something very similar:

¹⁶ And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.

Hebrews 13:16

In this passage Paul describes it as a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. The picture here is again from the Old Testament, perhaps when Noah offered up sacrifices before the LORD after the flood and it says that the LORD smelled the pleasing aroma coming up before Him. Or perhaps it is a picture of the incense that was commanded of the LORD to come up before His presence in the Tabernacle. But regardless of the exact imagery, there is presented here this idea that when you and I give financially to the Lord's work, and specifically when we share with those in need, it comes up as a fragrant offering to the Lord, pleasing to Him.

It is worship. It is a significant way of expressing worship and love and adoration to God. It is received by Him as a fragrant offering, pleasing to Him.

As best as I can tell, everything in the New Testament are free-will offerings. That is, I would not hold to the idea that a tithe is prescribed in the NT

Now, having said that is there some level of obligation in the NT described? Yes, I think specifically to give to the local church in order to support the elder or elders who give of their work week to preach.

Paul said this in 1 Corinthians 9:7-11

⁷ Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat its grapes? Who tends a flock and does not drink the milk? ⁸ Do I say this merely on human authority? Doesn't the Law say the same thing? ⁹ For it is written in the Law of Moses: "Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading out the grain."¹⁰ Is it about oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰ Surely he says this for us, doesn't he? Yes, this was written for us, because whoever plows and threshes should be able to do so in the hope of sharing in the harvest. ¹¹ If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you?

Paul's Principles For Giving (2 Corinthians 8:1-15; 9:7-15)

- Ask God for the Grace of Giving (8:1-3a)
- Giving Generously, Even Beyond Your Ability, is a Privilege (8:3b-4)
- Give First of Yourselves, Then Your Finances (8:5)
- Seek to Excel in the Grace of Giving (8:6)
- This Kind of Giving is Not Commanded, But Exhorted (8:8-9)
- Give According to Your Means (8:11; Deuteronomy 16:17)
- We Give That There Might Be Greater Equity Among Believers (8:13-15; James 2:14-17)
- Give Generously, Reap Generously (9:6; Proverbs 11:24)
- Be Intentional (9:7a)
- Be a Cheerful Giver, Not Reluctant (9:7b)
- Know that God Will Supply Your Needs As You Give (9:8-9)
- Your Giving Will Lead to a Harvest of Righteousness (9:10-15)

CONCLUSION

Remember the Treasure Principle—Matthew 6:19-24/Acts 20:35

Discern a Giving Goal

Love Offering for Uganda