

Phil Ch 4 Vs 14-23

An acceptable sacrifice

As you may recall a couple of weeks ago as we were studying vs 10-12 I told you that from vs 10 throughout the remainder of this letter is Paul's thank you and commendation to them regarding an offering that they had sent him regarding his missions endeavors. and So now as we look finish the book of Philippians this morning it's important that we begin today's study by briefly establishing a couple of things regarding the difference between the tithe and the offering, because what this text deals with in reality isn't really a tithe, it's an offering. (Last time I broached the subject of giving our 2nd service was packed and several people were here that I had never seen before and I thought you know Lord this is kind of funny. Because you can probably count on one hand the times that we talk about giving in a year or maybe 2, but sure enough as the subject came up in the Word here came all these people, and I couldn't help but think that all of these people were probably thinking, "Oh great, another money grubbing church having another begathon.") But since I believe in divine appointments vs chance, I guess it was something that God wanted some people to be instructed on, because I realize that many people have been burned or ripped off and so they harbor bitterness and resentment.

The result is not only ripping off the Lord for what's His, but cheating themselves of eternal riches and benefits untold. So let me just file the disclaimer here once again that I don't know who tithes what here. and The reason I say that is because people have a tendency to get offended at the conviction of the Holy Spirit when it comes to their money, but if God stirs me to say something that hits home with you and begins to work you over a little bit, don't tell me about it, take it to the Lord. People often think that I must follow them around looking for examples to give in the bible studies, but believe me I don't have the edge on what's going on in your life things that happen like that are simply the moving and dealings of the Holy Spirit upon your life that you and I might repent and be drawn closer to the Lord. and So when it comes to the issue of what people do and don't do with their money, I just want you to know that I have no clue, I'm just teaching you what the word of God says so that you might lead a more full and rich life concerning what it is that God desires of His own. Now, regarding the tithe (with out being able to fully develop it, but I would encourage you to study it out) we need to realize that the tithe is God's.

Nowhere in the scriptures does it ever even allude to the fact that it's up to you whether or not as a believer you decide to tithe or keep it for whatever you want, or even give a percentage of it, the tithe is 10% of whatever your increase is. Now the debate over gross or net is easily resolved when you decide who comes first, God or the government, when the Lord put it like that to me, it became real clear which portion I should tithe from. But in the OT under the Law if a person for whatever reason didn't give the Lord what was His in the tithe, it was no problem, but God is a very shrewd business-man and so you would then owe the Lord the amount of the tithe plus 20%. So it was better just to keep things right in the 1st place or else instead of 10% you would owe the Lord 30%, there is no increase that we receive that is not from the Lord, so by the very nature of the debate understand that at it's root it all came from God.

The earth is the Lord's and the fullness thereof, but God only requires the tithe, it's His, it's not ours, so many people think they've "done their duty" once they've given a tenth. Well in a certain respect that's all they've done, they haven't given their tithe; they've given the Lord *His* tithe.

If you don't give the Lord what's His the bible tells us that we rob God, if we don't bring the tithe to the store house and give it to God. You find that in Malachi ch 3 Vs 8, you can't rob God of something that's yours; you can only rob someone of something that's theirs. But what I want you to realize is that tithing isn't simply an OT principal, many people say, "Well, tithing was of the Law, we're under grace." But when you study the scriptures you find that tithing was a principal that was established well before the Law. You recall in Gen ch 14 when Sodom and Gomorrah was attacked and Lot was taken captive, the bible tells us that one person escaped and came and told Ab what had happened and to make a long story short Ab went to war with the people who plundered Sodom and took His nephew back, along with everyone else. and On the way back he encountered Melchizedek; the king of Salem and he blessed Ab and we read in vs 20 of Gen 14 that Ab gave Melchizedek, "a tithe of all." and So before the Law was the tithe, in the time period of the Law, God continued to affirm the need for His people to tithe, giving Him what's His and when you get to Heb ch 7 we see this principal still in effect not through the Levitical lineage of Aaron because that was fulfilled, but through the order the priesthood of Melchizedek (Lets read it together) Vs1-10 Now look at vs 14-17

Jesus is our Great High priest, but not in the order of the Levitical priesthood, but rather in the order of Melchizedek making the Melchizedek of the OT a picture of the High priesthood of the New Covenant in Christ, the point being that our High priest Jesus Christ after the order of Melchizedek still receives tithes from His people. So don't think that tithing is an OT principal, it's God's principal period and we're still serving the same God of the OT, we're just in a new covenant after the order of Melchizedek, the covenant established through Christ, the dispensation of grace. So understand that the reason that tithing is brought up as much in the NT is because it should be the given.

The whole counsel of the Word of God makes it emphatically clear that the tithe belongs to God. Billy Graham, in his sermon "Partners with God," says: "One of the greatest sins in America today is the fact that we are robbing God of that which rightfully belongs to Him. When we don't tithe, we shirk a just debt. Actually we are not giving when we give God one-tenth, for it belongs to Him already (Lev. 27:30). This is a debt we owe. Not until we have given a tenth do we actually begin making an offering to the Lord!"

You see In reality we have been called through the new covenant to a higher standard, because the grace of God is to free us from sin and empower us to lead lives of holiness, not allow God to sort of wink and dismiss compromise and sin in our lives. and So when the NT refers to giving, by and large it's in reference to what we call the offering, that which is above the tithe, you don't offer a tithe, that's simply rendering to God what is already His. and Don't get me wrong, I know the bible says let each man give as he so purposes in his heart because God loves a cheerful giver. and I believe what you can't give with out griping about you should keep, however if you study the context of that statement, again it's not in reference to tithing, but to giving over and above.

It's talking about making a liberal offering and if you sow generously, you'll reap generously, sow sparingly, reap sparingly. and So understand in our text this morning that as Paul is speaking of giving and receiving, and the gift that he's received from them as their missionary, the one who established them in the Word and ways of God, that he's in reference (not to them tithing to him) but giving him an offering. and He's stated already that he's blessed through their generosity, but not because of his need, but rather as we'll see because of the fruit that will abound to their account. He's learned to be content whether he's abased or abounding, he's content, therefore his has content, so many peoples lives lack contentment because theirs no real content to their lives.

Whoever you've married, be content with them, wherever you're working be content until God should move you on or show you different opportunities, it will add content to your lives. and Paul says I've learned the secret of contentment; it comes through Christ Jesus who strengthens me. But he doesn't want them to think that he's ungrateful and so we read in vs 14.

Vs14

Paul says, you've "shared" in my distress, and this is a good thing, it's an encouraging thing, the word shared means to partner in, in other words you've done more than just send me a check, you've sent me Epaphroditus, you've come along side and supported me in the truest of fashions. During my distress, my afflictions and persecutions, believe me you guys when I say that anytime any missionary or pastor gets support financially it's incredibly encouraging and appreciated.

But sometimes a physical person being there to help sort of shoulder a burden goes so far and Paul is saying this has been so good, you guys have supported me in every sense of the word. The bible says, “*Let him who is taught the word share in all good things with him who teaches.*” Why, to encourage that person, trust me it means a lot to them, and again we read, “*Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.*” and Paul is saying you’ve done this; you’ve shared in my distress.

Vs15

You see now he starts to get into further commendation regarding their liberality in that they gave so freely to the work of the ministry, the missions endeavors and all. and If you remember right I pointed out a couple of weeks ago the fact that this was not a rich church, in fact the bible records them as being a people who were in deep poverty. But that really doesn’t matter to them because they’ve caught kingdom vision; they understand the validity of the spiritual investment that they’re making in Paul’s life. and When he speaks of the “beginning of the gospel” he’s in reference to that pioneer advance of the gospel that he made mention of back in vs 3-6 of the 1st ch of this epistle, he refers to their “fellowship in the gospel”, so it’s not that no one else ever supported Paul, nor was he implying that. But it would seem as though this was one of the churches that definitely was prominent in their support of him, and according to this there were times when they would give that no one else had. and Notice it’s the word “giving” not “tithing” this is in reference to that which went beyond the tithe.

Vs16

So even though I wasn’t near by you sent aid, Thessalonica if you look in your map at the back of your book you realize that it wasn’t real close 100 miles or so, which was no quick trip back then. and In the book of Acts ch 17 you find that Paul was there for only about 3 weeks, and so in a 3 week period of time this little church in Philippi sent aid to Paul twice, and Paul never forgot that. But not because of how it really helped him, though I’m sure it did, but Paul had learned to be content either way, and to be honest the gift that they sent probably wasn’t much. Because even though he was only there for 3 weeks when you read 2nd Thess you find out that the entire time he was there he had to labor with his own hands to provide for himself so these gifts couldn’t have been that big. But that wasn’t the point, Paul was excited for them because he knew that it was acquiring them radical heavenly dividends, notice.

Vs17

So Paul says, I’m not so exciting because I’m seeking your gift, he makes that clear, much like earlier when I filed the disclaimer regarding the fact that I don’t teach on giving so that I can manipulate you to give big. But I want you to receive and be learned in the whole counsel of God’s Word so that you might lead a blessed and eternally rewarding life. and This subject might make you uncomfortable now, but believe my when I say that when you get to the other side, you’ll be glad that you were told, if you respond accordingly.

But Paul makes his point clear, because in the ministry there are a couple of things that I find to be very difficult to deal with in regards to being faithful to teaching God's Word. 1 of those things is exposing and pointing out false teachers, and I'm not speaking about people who have a couple of different takes on various points of doctrine that have nothing to do with salvation.

I don't expect you (necessarily) to agree with me on everything I teach as long as you hold a firm conviction that you can support with scripture. But I'm talking about guys whose entire lives seem to be a mistake, people who are fleecing God's flock, taking advantage of them for personal gain, the type that the bible says we're to avoid. Because inevitably when you do that you have those people who come up to you and say, "Hey, I really appreciate that fellow, what are you doing bagging on God's anointed." But if I thought they were God's anointed I wouldn't expose their heretical teachings and false doctrines, but it's tough to do that. But here's the deal, as a shepherd if all you ever do is feed the flock, but you never warn the flock, all you're doing is fattening them up for the kill, and it's my biblical responsibility to warn you. To warn you regarding sin issues, false doctrines, false teachers, people who lead disciples away after themselves and anything else that might impair you or even destroy you spiritually.

There are wolves in the body, the bible teaches that emphatically, and it's hard because people get offended. But one of the other issues that's hard to deal with as a pastor is when it comes to telling people how important that it is that they give, not only of their time efforts and energies, but of their finances. Because right away people say, "You're not fooling me, you're just wanting a new house, or a swimming pool in your back yard." and You can just sense people squirm a bit when the issue is addressed, but Paul tackles it head on, he doesn't back off a bit, it's not that I'm wanting a gift, I'm wanting you to do well and flourish when it comes to your heavenly account.

Let me make a promise to you that you can take to the bank, no pun intended, literally your heavenly account; any money that you give (which is what Paul is talking about) if you're giving that 10% or whatever, if you're making offerings to the Lord above that. Any money that you put in the offering and just say, "Lord, this is to you, I get no glory from it, no applause for it, no one notices me, I don't get a plaque or certificate, I can't even direct where it's going, I'm just giving it to You." and By doing so you're making an eternal investment, when you get to heaven I promise you, that you will not be disappointed. You won't look around at what that's done for you eternally with regret and say, "Man, what a bummer, if I hadn't tithed faithfully, I could've enjoyed brand new patio furniture. If I hadn't given that offering I would've got to get that barbeque grill, and just think of the times I could've had if I'd have just kept it for myself, it would've been so cool." No one will do that, believe me, you will never regret that which you give to the Lord, and the old adage is true what I told you a couple of weeks ago and that's that you can't take it with you but you can send it there before you.

That's what Jesus taught, I'm going to say something at the risk of offense, so forgive me for my brutal honesty, when you give Christ your life, that includes your wallet. If God has your heart, He has your treasure, however if He doesn't have your treasure, then He doesn't have your whole heart (you guys that's the painful truth you can argue it all you want). Look at Matt ch 6 Vs 19-21

Notice it doesn't say where your *heart* is your treasure will be, it says where your *treasure* is, there your heart will be also. The heart follows after the treasure, and you can tell where the priority of a person's heart is by the investments they make with their treasures. Not that we're not to eat or even seek to make a good living don't miss understand me. But the bible shows us that giving goes deeper than our pockets, it's a spiritual issue, it deals with the heart of a man, the position of surrender to the Lord, because we want so bad to hang on to our finances. But that's really evidence against us of our lack of surrender, our lack of trust in the Lord. James teaches us that faith is revealed in giving, and 1st John teaches us that true love is manifested in giving as well.

As you read through the scriptures you begin to realize that anytime you begin to read of the love of God it will find itself in the context of Him giving. For God so loved the world that He *gave* His only begotten Son. "*And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us*" and Again, "*the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.*" and Whenever the Love of God is talked about, the gift of God is talked about which is the giving of His Son, Jesus laying down His own life, giving of Himself to us, that's how the Love of God is demonstrated to us, that's how we know the Love of God and that God loves us, through His gift. and So with us understand that giving isn't God's way of raising money, He doesn't need our money, it's God's way of raising us, of raising His kids, discipling us and teaching us His heart. Listen, you guys God is all about sacrificial giving, not just giving out of an abundance, but sacrificial giving, if you don't understand that then you've failed to comprehend the message of the cross. The cross speaks of God's love for you, the fact that He desires to reach out to you and snatch you from the eternal ramifications of your sin. and He bridged the gap between sinful man and the perfect righteousness of God by offering Himself as a sacrifice upon the altar of the cross. Jesus gave Himself as the sacrificial Lamb of God for you; there is no gift that God has given you that did not cost Him greatly. How can you receive of the goodness of God apart from the cross? and Anytime that there is a sacrificial giving motivated by the love of God in your life, it brings joy to the Fathers heart, it's well pleasing to Him

Vs18

If you have even the slightest working knowledge of the OT you see the allusions to worship all over this. Our giving *to* the Lord is an aspect of our worship *of* the Lord, and when there's sacrifice involved it smells so sweet to Him, it's so well pleasing to Him. You know why they call it a sacrifice? Because it's a sacrifice, it costs you something; David refused to give God that which cost him nothing because that which costs nothing means nothing. and The bible says that David was a man after God's own heart, sacrificial giving pleases the Lord, in Mark 12:41-44 we read, *"Now Jesus sat opposite the treasury and saw how the people put money into the treasury. And many who were rich put in much. Then one poor widow came and threw in two mites, which make a quadrans. So He called His disciples to Himself and said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that this poor widow has put in more than all those who have given to the treasury; for they all put in out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all that she had, her whole livelihood."*

It was sacrificial, it meant something to her, and it was like incense before the Lord, a sweet smelling aroma. Believe me you guys the Lord notices our giving, and he keeps record of it, and the motive of our heart in it. An account is being kept, that's what Paul says in vs 17, read the book of Ezra sometime and see the listings of all the names, and how much of what the people gave, why would God spend so much time on recording names and amounts given in the offering for the building fund so to speak, to rebuild the temple? It's because God wants you to realize that He notices, and that it's recorded in His book, forever. So when you give, wherever you give, give to God, don't fall into the trap of well I don't think the church needs asphalt, or I don't Jeff seems to dress pretty fancy.

Watch out for that, because we're all susceptible to the enemy's whisper (be selfish) because that church, that ministry doesn't use the money properly, believe me brothers and sisters that's foolishness. If you can't give here, I'm sorry, if you don't trust this ministry that grieves me, but you need to be somewhere that you *can* believe in. Where you can say, "Yes, this is it, God is in this place and I need to identify with this ministry, and I will bring God's tithe and my offerings into this house not only that I might be blessed of God, but that I might be a blessing to God and will do now what the scriptures command."

Vs19

Now it would be interesting to find out how many of us have this vs highlighted, but contextually understand that this vs is in regards to those who give sacrificially. Paul is saying you've filled me up, you've caught the vision, you are givers, and it's not that I desire the gift, but listen, you've met my needs, so don't you worry, my God shall supply all you're needs. In other words you can't out give God, God will be a debtor to no man. Prov 11:24 *"There is one who scatters, yet increases more; And there is one who withholds more than is right, But it leads to poverty."* Prov 28:27 *"He who gives to the poor will not lack, But he who hides his eyes will have many curses."* Prov 19:17 *"He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD, And He will pay back what he has given."*

God will keep those who are givers in supply, why because they have hearts that take after His. To the wise and faithful steward Jesus said that man will be entrusted with more, but to the squanderer who isn't faithful even what he has will be taken from him. You will not put the Lord in debt to you, He will supply (not your greed's) but your needs (not out of, but *according to* His riches in glory) in proportion with which is exciting because His resources are with out end, no limits with the Lord. and He makes good on His debits, He won't have them, He will not be in debt to any man; you can't out give God.

One day Jesus says, "*Hey Simon can I borrow your boat to teach the people*" (using the water as a natural carrier of His voice) "*Sure*" Simon said. and So they shoved out a ways and the Lord taught the people, and when He was done He said, "Hey, thanks for letting me use your boat, go ahead take it out now go fishing." So they were like, "*Ok*" and so they launched out into the deep and let down their nets for a catch and man the catch was incredible, they'd fished all night and caught nothing, but now they find their nets bursting and calling for other boats to come and help with this incredible bounty. Because you just can't out give the Lord, they said you can have our boat, the Lord said, I'll fill it with fish. The little boy gave Him 5 loaves and 2 fish that day, and when everyone had eaten to the full, there was still 12 baskets of untouched leftovers remaining. God just won't be in debt to the likes of me. You will not out give Him. Jesus said, "*Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.*" Allow the Lord to develop in you a heart of giving, because if you do that, then He promises that throughout your entire life, He'll supply your needs by Christ Jesus.

Vs 20-22

Remember Paul was in prison in Rome, the guard's were rotating every 4-6 hours, the result was a massive networking of the gospel among the soldiers and they were coming to Christ, those of Caesar's household.

Vs23

The unmerited favor of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen (and This morning if you're here and don't know the Lord, God wants desperately to grant you His unmerited favor, He wants to give you the indescribable gift of His Son Jesus Christ) We've talked a lot about man's giving to God today, but realize that the most important thing in Life is that which God has given to man in the sacrificial gift of Jesus Christ upon the cross for you.