

Christian Giving

by J.C. Philpot

Christian giving is not about the costliness of gifts, but about the ability and willingness of the giver, and the privilege of offering what we have and are to the Lord's service.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:2

Topics: "Christian Stewardship", "Sacrificial Giving"

Description

J.C. Philpot preaches on Christian giving, drawing parallels from the offerings made for the tabernacle in the wilderness. Just as the children of Israel brought offerings willingly and according to their substance, believers are called to freely offer themselves and their possessions to the Lord's service. The value of the gifts is not measured by their intrinsic worth but by the willingness and ability of the giver, emphasizing that even the smallest service done for God's glory is precious in His sight.

Transcript

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When God bade Moses set up the tabernacle in the wilderness, as a standing type of the sacred humanity of his own dear Son, (Heb. 8:2; 9:11; John 2:21) he thus spoke unto him--"Speak to the people of Israel, that they take for me a contribution. From every man whose heart moves him you shall receive the contribution for me. And this is the contribution that you shall receive from them: gold, silver, and bronze, blue and purple and scarlet yarns and fine twined linen, goats' hair, tanned rams' skins, goatskins, acacia wood, oil for the lamps, spices for the anointing oil and for the fragrant incense, onyx stones, and stones for setting, for the ephod and for the breastpiece. And let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell in their midst." (Exodus 25:2-8)

Thus all the children of Israel might freely bring an offering, each according to his substance, and each according to his willing mind. Being all redeemed by blood and power--the blood of the paschal lamb, and the overthrow of their enemies in the Red Sea; being all baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea; all eating the same spiritual food--the manna from heaven; and all drinking the same spiritual drink--the water out of the smitten Rock that followed them, which Rock was Christ, (1 Cor. 10:2-4,) they were all viewed as a holy people, (Exodus 19:6; Lev. 21:44, 45; Jer. 2:3) standing typically and representatively as God's elect family. (Deut. 7:6.)

Thus Balaam could say of them in the visions of prophecy--"He has not seen iniquity in Jacob, neither has He seen perverseness in Israel. Jehovah his God is with him, and the shout of a king among them." (Num. 23:21.) Now this was the reason why the Lord asked for and accepted their offerings for the building and service of the tabernacle. As an elect, a redeemed, and a holy people, their offerings were as if sanctified by their standing and position in the covenant made with them and their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. To be allowed, then, to contribute their gifts to the tabernacle in which God was himself to dwell, was a high privilege conferred upon them.

If our readers will turn to Exodus 34 they will find a beautiful account of the offerings brought and of the willingness of the people in bringing them, accounting it so high a privilege, that God would accept their gifts for his own sanctuary and service that they had to be restrained by public proclamation from giving more than was needed for that purpose. (Exodus 36:5-7.)

Now, one main beauty in the offerings thus made, and in the willingness of the people to make them, was that these gifts were measured not by their actual intrinsic value, but by the ability and willingness of each individual giver. Thus some brought onyx stones, others precious jewels; some offered gold and silver, others brass; some gave blue, and purple, and scarlet, others rams' skins dyed red or badgers' skins; some fine linen, and others goats' hair. If a man had a precious onyx stone, or a costly diamond, or a beautiful sapphire, or a choice amethyst, what an honor, what a privilege, that instead of being kept in a bag in his tent, or shining in a ring on his wife's finger, the onyx should be worn on the ephod, and the diamond or sapphire on the breastplate of judgment when the high priest went to consult the mind of the Lord in his sanctuary. (Exodus 38:9-12; 15-21.)

To what a noble use, too, was the gold put, when instead of, like Achan's wedge, being hidden in the earth, it was made into the mercy-seat or the golden candlestick, or overlaid upon the altar of incense, and the table of showbread (Exodus 25:17, 18, 23-25, 31.) The very goats' hair spun by the women had an honor put upon it as wrought into one of the curtains within which the ark of the Lord dwelt. (Exod. 26:7; 35:26; 2 Sam. 7:2.) When, then, the tabernacle was completed, and consecrated by the holy anointing oil put upon every part, (Exodus 30:22-29,) and especially when it had been filled with the glory of the Lord, so that Moses himself could not enter into it, (Exodus 40:34, 35,) every portion of the sanctuary and the vessels of service used therein were equally sanctified, from the precious diamond to the spun goats' hair, from the polished onyx to the rough badgers' skin. All were equally valuable, equally acceptable, equally set apart from common uses, and dedicated permanently and unalterably to the service of the Lord.

Now for the APPLICATION of our subject, for of course we have not written all this for writing's sake, without any definite train of thought or special purpose. View the matter spiritually. Every one who has been redeemed by blood and power--the blood of the cross, and the work of the Holy Spirit in delivering him from the power of darkness, and translating him into the kingdom of God's dear Son; (Col. 1:13;) every one who has been spiritually baptized into Christ, and thus put on Christ; (Gal. 3:27;) every one who has fed and is feeding on the hidden manna, (Rev. 2:17,) and drinking out of Christ's fullness the water of life; (John 7:37; Rev. 22:17;) every one who has been made willing in the day of Christ's power, (Ps. 110:3,) is called upon and may freely offer what he has and is to the Lord's service!

In fact, he is no longer his own, but is bought with a price. Therefore his body and spirit are both God's. (1 Cor. 6:19, 20.) And if so, then his time, his money, his gifts, his abilities, whether natural or spiritual, his very life--and death itself--are not his own, but the Lord's, and are to be freely given and used in his service. Not that any one of us does these things, at least as they should be done, for we are all poor,

sluggish, selfish, do-nothing wretches, at our very best unprofitable servants, (Luke 17:10) and few even see or feel that they may or should do them; but it is our privilege and happiness that we are allowed to do them when there is a willing mind and an obedient spirit; and what is more blessed still is that the Lord accepts them. (Rom. 12:1; Phil. 4:18; 1 Pet. 2:5.)

No, more, as in the case of the widow's two mites, it is not the costliness of the gift which measures its value, but the ability and willingness of the giver. (2 Cor. 8:12.) It is in this way, that the lock of goats' hair may be as acceptable as the diamond, and the smallest service done with a single eye to the glory of God and the good of his people--even a cup of cold water given in the name of a disciple, (Matt. 10:42,) may out-value the most princely gift.

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