

Bible Study Notes 2 Corinthians

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Section 20
2 Corinthians 5:8, Part B

An Offering Pleasing to the Lord

In the last section we discussed finding out what pleases the Lord. As mentioned before, the Lord requires general characteristics from each of us. A quick search of the Scriptures will reveal many requirements for holy living. These, as well as specific requirements, are evident for each of us within the circumstances we face. We all face distressing circumstances of trials, tribulations, problems and temptations. God does have general and specific ways he wants us to respond to each one of those circumstances. God wants us to know what pleases him in each circumstance, and then train, fix or lock our mind on following his direction.

Previously, I suggested taking a moment to explore a couple of the areas of your life that are troubling you or in which you are hard pressed. You know what they are for you think about them often. Are you facing a difficult relationship at work, with your family or with your health? Are you facing persecution, injustice, unemployment, underemployment or loss of a loved one?

In every situation or circumstance we find ourselves in, it is an opportunity to please the Lord. In many ways, it is an opportunity to bring an offering or gift before the Lord. In other words, our response to a situation or circumstance is an offering unto the Lord. Let it be our goal to lift up to him an offering or sacrifice he will be pleased with. No matter what the circumstance, there is at least one of four offerings we can bring before the Lord: Offerings of our words, our body, our possessions and our love. Let us consider what kind of offering to bring before the Lord.

1. The offering of our words

The writer of Hebrews says, "Through Jesus, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise – the fruit of our lips that confess his name... for with such sacrifices God is pleased," Hebrews 13:15–16. These sacrifices are words of praise and honor unto God. In all of our circumstances let our words honor God and be pleasing to him. Also, let our words be edifying to our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are certainly many examples of improper words for the people of God, such as foolish talk, coarse words or joking, slander, gossip and lying -- just to name a few. When we speak improperly we

are making a sacrifice to the idols of this world, and the Lord is not pleased. When we speak properly, as the Lord has instructed us, it is a pleasing gift and aroma unto him.

2. The offering of our body

Paul writes, “I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God – this is your spiritual act of worship,” Romans 12:1. These sacrifices are the keeping of our body in control, in such a way that is holy and pleasing to God. The word “holy” denotes being set apart for God’s purpose. He considers this a spiritual act of worship. Let us let the Holy Spirit control our mind and body, thereby not letting our bodies, with thoughts and emotions, control the direction of our lives.

3. The offering of our possessions

Generous giving is clearly another New Testament sacrifice and is not based on law. Paul encourages the sacrifice of generosity in contributing to the needs of others (v.8). This sacrifice, that comes from the heart, without compulsion and hesitation, is pleasing to God. Holding onto our possessions will lead us to bow down to the ways of this world and hinder us from seeing our greater spiritual inheritance. The writer of Hebrews says, “Do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased,” Hebrews 13:16.

4. The offering of our love

Sacrificial love involves allowing God to transform us from the inside out. Our love must be sincere, without hypocrisy, or literally without play acting. The command of the Lord is for us to “Love one another.” 1 Corinthians 13:4-7 speaks of the great gift of love. It is described this way: “Love is patient, love is kind, love does not envy, love does not boast, love is not proud, love is not rude, love is not self-seeking, love is not easily angered, and love keeps no record of wrong. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. Love always protects, love always trusts, love always hopes, and love always perseveres.” This is specifically what the offering of love looks like. To not love others in this way is to withhold an offering that belongs to the Lord. It is to rob God and thus rob others as well as ourselves the joy of the Lord. When we obey the Lord, it pleases him -- it makes him smile.

In Conclusion: A word of personal application.

Recently, after studying the passages of Scripture concerning pleasing the Lord, I began to ask the Lord what I could bring him when I assembled with other believers. He reminded me of what he said in the Scriptures, “What you have done unto the least of these you have done unto me.” Suddenly I began to wonder if every interaction I have

with other people, not only in the assembly, is an opportunity to lift up an offering unto the Lord.

As we have discussed, what is required of us is to love God and love one another. Sounds simple, right? Chapter 13 of 1 Corinthians tells us the qualities of love. When we love like this it shows our love for God and it highly pleases him. When we love someone else we demonstrate that we love and trust God. We demonstrate God's love through joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

You might ask, "I thought those were gifts or fruit of the Spirit for me?" Although these gifts certainly benefit us, they are intended to show our love for God and for others. They are gifts that are to flow through us to others -- then returning back to God as thanksgiving, honor and praise. These gifts are not for us to hold and to admire, for they are the expression of the Holy Spirit intended to be a spiritual offering bearing fruit unto God. When we allow these gifts and others to flow through us we are participating in a glorious and beautiful offering unto God.

In light of this truth, what would God have you do?