

Grace Giving

From Every Deed: Created in Christ Jesus
for Good Works by C. D Hildebrand

I have written previously that New Covenant believers are not under the laws of tithing,¹ but this was not always our belief. It was not until tithing became an absolute impossibility for us that we had to rely on His grace in this area and open ourselves to the possibility that our ideas on tithing were not based on Scripture.

So engrained in me was the “command” to tithe, that even searching for information on this topic was done in a secretive and fearful manner. This is because tithing was a practice embedded in me from my childhood. My mother gave me money to give in the offering during children’s church. Only once did I sneak out of Sunday School and go to a nearby store to get a candy bar with part of it. My conscience was so stricken that I later confessed to my mom what I had done and never did it again.

In our young adult years up until 1987, we meticulously tithed and gave even more. We were happy to give and never once questioned the practice because we were already beginning to combine Old Testament laws into our Christian experience. We honestly did not see there was a dividing line at the cross where Jesus initiated the New Covenant and extinguished the law’s control over us. We gradually came to believe that the Christian life was a combination of both covenants. We thought Jesus only did away with the ceremonial laws. (Never mind that tithing is a ceremonial law.) It was as if we did away with keeping the Sabbath and made tithing one of the Ten Commandments—by which we believed we were governed as believers.

It was a full four years after beginning to wake up to grace that the courage came to me to investigate the matter. I ordered a cassette tape by Bob George on the topic and all alone listened carefully with my Bible in front of me and notebook to my right. Keep in mind, we had taught tithing and knew all the arguments for it. As I took a closer look, my jaw dropped open as I realized how flimsy my arguments were in favor of tithing as a Christian obligation. Gradually, the knot that was tied in my heart loosened and then released. I could nearly feel it happening. It was a major milestone for us in our gradual liberation from law and embracing of grace.

If in any way, you find what I am saying troubling, believe me, we understand. We were completely devoted to tithing. But are you ready to

¹ Are We Preaching “Another” Gospel? Day 16; Overcoming the Overwhelming, Day 38

take a closer look? Only the truth can set us free. Are you ready to be free to give as *God* desires?

Please consider these facts. Jesus did not tell His disciples to tithe. Yes, He did commend the **Jews** for tithing herbs, but they were under the law and it was correct for them to tithe.² This is also quite significant: no New Testament writer instructed the believers to tithe, not Paul, not Peter, not John, *not even James*. Where tithing is mentioned, it is only in the book of Hebrews and only in the context of the time before the New Covenant. Finally, considering how many heavy-handed sermons we heard about Christians being “cursed with a curse” for not tithing, it still amazes me that not one of the churches in the book of Revelations was corrected for not practicing it.

Some believe that since Abraham and Jacob tithed before the law was given, that tithing is the pattern we should follow today. It is important to notice that much like the giving principles Paul sets forth, tithing before the law was also from the heart and not out of obligation. It was an act that the individual purposed in his heart.³

With that being said, let me reassure you that New Covenant giving is to be a precious privilege and joy in our day-to-day lives. Constantly we are encouraged in the New Testament to give generously.

Matthew 6:1-4

“But when you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing,⁴ that your charitable deed may be in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will Himself reward you openly.

Did you ever wonder how you could precisely give ten percent without your left hand knowing what your right hand was doing? Neither did we. We often got out our calculators. We rounded up to the next exact cent. We were not advertising our giving, but we sure knew how much we gave. Can you imagine the joy of giving so liberally that you have no idea if it is 5% or 20%?

Proponents of tithing often threaten this way: “So, you don’t believe in tithing? Then do as the early church did. Give 100%.” Do they mean to coerce us into accepting 10% as a better option by threatening to demand we give all? That makes no sense. If they honestly believe we are supposed to give all, why not teach that in the first place instead of tithing?

When you examine the initial giving of the early church, you will see a special abandon when it came to giving. The rich sold properties and gave them to the apostles to distribute to the poor among them, but this was from their hearts and not a requirement of the New Covenant.

² Lk. 11:42

³ Jacob, Gen. 28; Abraham, Heb. 7:1-4

Acts 2:44-45

Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, ⁴⁵ and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need.

This was a moment in time. No one was instructed to do this. If we are to accept giving 100% as grace giving, then we must also accept that all of us being “together” and having all things in common” is how we live by grace through faith. What we witness in the beginning was an eagerness to make sure all believers had what they needed. In a way, it was the complete opposite of tithing.

In the rest of this chapter, we will look briefly at the true nature of New Covenant giving. Then in subsequent chapters, we will take a closer look at the giving practices of the early church and how grace giving might look in our lives today. For now, let us examine these two verses which sum up best how we are to view giving under the New Covenant.

2 Corinthians 9:7-8

*So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.
⁸ And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*

These two verses make it clear. We give what we *want* to give. Let me be bold and say, while there is no sin in asking God how much to give nor would it be unlikely that He would speak an amount to our hearts in various situations, Paul wrote that we are to give as **we** purpose in **our** hearts. Give what **you want** to give; you do not need to “pray about it.” We give not because we have to or need to give. There is little joy in that kind of giving. God wants us to give with a cheerful heart.

We need not worry about giving this way because God will make all grace abound toward us financially so that we will not only have all that we need but also have an abundance so that we may give toward every good work—every deed. This is the description of what true prosperity is—having an abundance so that we may give.

Paul’s Example

Acts 20:33-34

“I have coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴ Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.”

Paul set an example while in Ephesus. He not only worked to supply his own needs but also the needs of those who worked with him. Paul wrote that the “laborer is worthy of his wages,”⁴ referring to those who worked in the ministry. So he paid the expenses of those who labored with him. Yet, he himself did not insist on outside support. He worked to supply his own needs.

Immediately after reminding the Ephesians of this, he said,

“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, ‘It is more blessed to give than to receive.’”

It *is* more blessed to give than receive. If you have been on the receiving end of this statement, you know this is true. What we discovered is that as we began to give according to the New Covenant pattern, we eventually found ourselves on the giving side. God saw to it that as we gave, He caused all grace to abound toward us, that we, always having all sufficiency in all things, had an abundance for every good work.

God loves a cheerful giver.



⁴ 1 Tim. 5:17-18