

## A STUDY ON CHRISTIAN GIVING AND THE TITHE

Everything is God's (1 Cor. 10:26), everything in heaven and on earth (Deut. 10:14). Not only that, but since everything is God's, anything we have, or gain was given to us by Him because it was His to begin with. In fact, it's God who gave us the ability to get any sort of wealth (Deut. 8:18).

We also need to remember that He has called us to be good stewards of all that He has given us (Matt. 25:14-30). He has given us everything we have for two main reasons. The first reason is to take care of our needs (Matt. 6:25-34). God is a good Father who gives good gifts to His children (Matt. 7:11) and every good gift comes from Him (Jam. 1:17). The second main reason He gives us all that we have is so that we can give of what we have, to those in need (2 Cor. 9:10-11). We give to our brothers and sisters in Christ who are in need (Rom.12:13), we give to the poor (Luke 12:32-33), we give to our enemies (Luke 6:35-36, Prov. 25:21), we give to those who teach us and lead the church (Gal. 6:6, 1 Tim. 5:17-18), and we give to those who are traveling on mission (3 John 5-8). Our giving is proof of, and an extension of, God's love in us as believers (1 John 3:16-17).

It's also more than just about the act of giving, but it matters to God *how* we give. We should give generously (Rom. 12:8), not reluctantly or under compulsion but cheerfully (2 Cor. 9:7), we should give intentionally or plan our giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2), and we should give in secret, not for the praise of men (Matt. 6:1-4).

When we are obedient and give to others, it is a pleasing sacrifice and offering to God (Phil. 4:15-18). As we bless the brothers and sisters, we are blessing the King (Matt.25:35-40); and those who are kind to the poor are lending to the Lord, and He rewards them (Prov. 19:17)! Our giving to others *is* giving to the Lord! But remember, everything is already His, so when we give to the Lord, we are giving to Him what came from Him (1 Chron. 29:10-14).

We can confidently give generously and sacrificially (Mark 12:41-44) knowing He takes care of us (Psalm 41:1-3, Matt. 6:25-34) and blesses those who bless others (Phil. 4:19, Prov. 11:25, Luke 6:37-38). The reason God blesses us with more as we increase our level of generosity toward others is so that we have everything we need to bless others at every opportunity (2 Cor. 9:6-11). When we are faithful to His commands with little, God knows we will be faithful to His commands with much (Luke 16:10-12). That He can trust us to be obedient to His plans for everything He has given us.

As it pertains to tithing. The word tithe simply means, a tenth part of something (or ten percent). Tithing in the Bible is the command to the Israelites under the law of Moses to give to the Lord one tenth of the produce of their land and of their animals (Lev. 27:30-32). There were three main tithes, the first being the tithe that supported the Levites who worked to serve at the tent of meeting for the people of Israel (Num. 18:21-24). The Levites were even commanded to tithe on the tithe that they received from the other tribes of Israel (Num. 18:25-26). The second tithe was the tithe used for the celebration feasts. This was to supply everything needed for the people and the Levites when they travelled from home to go eat and rejoice in the presence of the Lord (Deut. 14:22-27). The third tithe happened every three years (as opposed to every year). This third tithe was brought into their own town and used to feed the Levites, the foreigners, the orphans, and widows (Deut. 14:28-29).

In the book of Malachi, God rebukes Israel through the prophet Malachi. He rebukes them for falling away from His commands and reminds them of the command to bring the whole tithe (Mal. 3:7-10). This rebuke was given to the people because they were God's chosen nation of Israel (Deut. 7:6-8) and had been given

the Law of Moses to follow as a nation (Deut. 4:1-2, 44). Jesus affirms this command in the New Testament when He rebuked the Pharisees for how they observed the Laws. He told them to continue with the tithe but not neglect the more important matters of the law (Matt. 23:23-24). This makes sense because Jesus was speaking to the Jews who were still under the Law of Moses, just as He was. Jesus was born under the Law to redeem those under the Law (Gal. 4:4-5). The Gospel message of Jesus is the power of God to bring salvation to everyone who believes: *first to the Jew* and then to the Gentile (Rom. 1:16). Jesus came to fulfill all of God's law<sup>1</sup> (the Law of Moses) and the prophets (Matt. 5:17-18). He perfectly fulfilled every prophecy about Himself and fulfilled all the requirements of the law. Because of Jesus, we no longer need to sacrifice animals for the forgiveness of sin (Heb.10:1-14). We no longer need a high priest to offer those sacrifices (Her. 4:14-16). We no longer need another person to represent us before God (1 Tim. 2:5-6). Since Jesus fulfilled the need for the priests and sacrifices, then He fulfilled the need for the Levites (Num. 3:1-13, 18:1-32). Not only that, but because of God's new covenant with His people through the blood of Jesus (Luke 22:20, Heb. 8:7-13), His chosen people come from every nation, tribe, and tongue (Rev. 7:9-10). That means there is no longer a single, physical, theocratic nation in need of all that God commanded of the priests and the Levites. Jesus' fulfillment of the law and God's new covenant with His people all over the globe remove the requirement and the necessity for the tithe on Christians under the law of Grace (Rom. 3:21-24, 6:14) and God's new covenant with His people.

This does not remove God's requirement for His people to be generous. As stated earlier, we see that believers and followers of Jesus are to be generous and meet the needs of everyone around them. Throughout His whole ministry on earth, and more specifically the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus corrects humanity's understanding of God's law by explaining His intention behind the law (Matt. 5:1-7:29), thereby raising the expectation of the intention of the law's effect on our behaviors as the people of God.

What does all this mean? If the tithe was a command only for the people of Israel under the old covenant, how much should Christians be giving today? How much are we commanded by God to give?

As an extension of His love for us, God commands His people to be generous to others with everything He has given us. When we see a need in our brothers and sisters in Christ, the poor, our enemies, those who teach and lead the church, and those on Gospel missions, we should meet that need; cheerfully giving what we have decided in our hearts, not reluctantly or under compulsion. Just like the early church, there should be no need among us. The amount we give is not what God is focused on, it's our heart toward what we have that He is focused on. Whether you give five, ten, twenty, or eighty percent, it all needs to be done from the right heart. We can give intentionally and sacrificially to others without fear knowing that God will take care of our needs and promises that those who sow generously will reap generously so they can be supplied with all they need to be generous on every occasion. It's all God's and we should be ready at any moment to give everything away to others.

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### <sup>1</sup>The Law and Salvation

Jesus came to fulfill the law (Matt. 5:17-18). As those who have repented and believed in Jesus, we are under the new covenant of Jesus blood (Luke 22:20, Heb. 8:7-13) and are no longer under the law as a means of righteousness or being right with God (Rom. 3:20-24), we are now under the law of Grace (Rom. 6:14). Because God's law (or His standard for mankind) was not abolished, but fulfilled by Jesus, it didn't disappear (Matt. 5:17-18). Now His commands flow out of us, the followers of Jesus, as we are transformed more into His image (2 Cor. 3:18). We become more and more like Jesus day by day. Rather than look to the law for righteousness, we look to Jesus (Rom. 3:22).