



The Truth of Grace and the Error of Tithing

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Preface

Whenever a subject such as tithing or giving is addressed in the Christian church it MUST be based upon the Truth of the gospel as a whole. If the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ is not understood then the Truth about tithing and giving will be redefined according to whatever misunderstanding is already in place. And yet in a work such as this it is simply not possible to discuss every detail of the entire gospel of Jesus Christ. Thus, it is hoped that the Truth of the overall gospel that is included in this book will be sufficient to insure a proper understanding of the subject of tithing and giving. If we understand the Truth of God in Jesus Christ – if we are growing to know the Person of Christ – we are going to have our minds renewed to the point where we will have His mind and understanding on this important matter.

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By David A. DePra

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Chapter 1

The Covenants

If Christian people understood the New Covenant, indeed, if they understood God Himself, there would be no questions or confusion over the issue of GIVING. For example, TITHING would not even be on the table for discussion. We would know that it is NOT required of Christians. Likewise, we would not be manipulated and deceived by the continual promises made by so many today to the effect that if we give money to THEM, that God will bless us financially. Yet on this matter of money and giving in the church, error continues to reign in so many places. Frankly, it is nothing more than an outward indication of how little we understand of the overall Truth in Jesus Christ.

Of course, those who demand that the tithing laws of the OT are required of Christians today have their, "proof texts." I know them all quite well, since many years ago, I tithed religiously. Usually, the passage from Malachi is used front and center, and the teachers of tithing will likewise point to Abraham tithing to Melchizedek as proof that tithing was in effect before God formalized it into law through Moses under the Old Covenant. Both arguments have no basis whatsoever.

Somehow lost in all of these arguments is the bottom line: What reflects the mind of Christ and the true gospel of grace?

The inerrant Word of God tells the Truth about the mind of God – because it is OF His mind. But you have to take the entirety of scripture on the

subject to arrive at God's mind – not just parts of it.

If you did not have the New Testament, you could find the whole Truth in the Old Testament – the apostles did. The Truth of grace is THERE – if not openly, then in the form of the types and shadows.

Herein we are able to state the distinction between the Old and New Covenants: The Old Covenant was a type and shadow of Jesus Christ. The New Covenant is Christ Himself – and by extension – Christ IN His people.

That means that the Old Testament was TRUE – because the shadow of a person is a true representation of that person. But it was NOT substance. Only the PERSON is substance. But many Christian people have a pension for taking the type or shadow OF Christ and setting it up AS Christ Himself. Would you point to YOUR shadow and say that it was you? No. But that is what Christians do to the One they are supposed to know in spirit and in Truth.

When we look at the Covenants we MUST understand that distinction. If we do, we will see that the New Covenant did not do away with the true intent of the Old Covenant. Rather, the Old Covenant was completely unfolded in the Person of Christ.

Now, don't misunderstand. Because the Person of Jesus Christ replaced the type and shadow of Christ it DID result in the doing away with many of the outward ordinances and practices under the Old Covenant. But it did not do away with

the Truth to which the Old Covenant pointed – found in the Living Person of Jesus Christ.

The New Covenant superseded the Old Covenant - - but NOT because the Old Covenant was error. Neither did the New Covenant replace the Old with contradictions to the Old. No. The New Covenant replaced the Old in the same way that a Living Person could replace his shadow. The shadow DOES properly reflect the Living Person – it IS His shadow; it is a TRUE shadow. But it is NOT HIM. Once the real Person comes, it is time to move on into the REAL relationship with the Living Person, instead of continuing to live with the shadow.

Chapter 2

The Sabbath Commandment

So many Christians today, when you begin to talk to them about the fact that the New Covenant is DIFFERENT than the Old Covenant – indeed, it SUPERCEEDS the Old – immediately think that you are doing away with a big chunk of the Bible. For instance, if you tell them they don't have to tithe, they will argue that the Bible teaches tithing, and that even though tithing is mandated under the OT -- that since the OT is a big part of God's inspired Word – they will argue that tithing must be in effect for today. To them, this is the only conclusion possible.

But there is a great blindness here. Every point of the OT is fulfilled in the Living Person of Jesus Christ. The OT is fulfilled in Christ because every point of the OT revealed something about the Person of Christ – and something about the life of FAITH that is to be lived in Him.

But why does this affect the commands of God – why does it affect whether we are to keep the OT laws and ordinances? For example, the Old Covenant DID command tithing. But tithing is no longer required today. Is this not a contradiction? How is tithing fulfilled in Christ under the New Covenant?

First, let's address the argument that what God has commanded under the Old Covenant is today required – right down to the letter of the law. Do we sacrifice animals today? Is there a Levitical priesthood today? There are many such examples. But perhaps the greatest example of how the Old Testament commands are fulfilled by

faith in Christ involves the FOURTH COMMANDMENT. Remember that one?

***Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Six days shall thou labor, and do all thy
work: But the seventh day is the Sabbath of
the LORD thy God: in it thou shall not do any
work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter,
thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor
thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy
gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven
and earth, the sea, and all that in them is,
and rested the seventh day: wherefore the
LORD blessed the Sabbath day, and hallowed
it. (Ex. 20:8-11)***

This command is not merely an obscure OT ordinance. Rather, it is one of THE TEN COMMANDMENTS. Yet do YOU and I keep the SEVENTH DAY Sabbath? You probably do not – although I do know of a few people who do keep it. Indeed, more and more professing Christians today are claiming that we ought to keep the Sabbath on the seventh day precisely because it IS one of the Ten Commandments.

You will also notice that not only does God command that the Sabbath be kept, but He commands that it be kept on the SEVENTH DAY. In fact, God links His command to the fact that HE Himself instituted the Sabbath at creation.

That is pretty ironclad, isn't it? So if there were one command that we would never be able to CHANGE, it would be THIS command. It states the command, the day, and the reason. It is one of the BIG TEN. Yet you and I know that most of Christianity does NOT keep the seventh day –

indeed, it is accurate to say that most Christians keep NO day at all in the way that this command requires God's people observe the sabbath.

Why are Christians NOT required to keep the seventh day Sabbath? Some might argue that because Jesus was raised from the dead on Sunday that it has now replaced Saturday as the Sabbath. But nowhere do we find this change in scripture. That being the case, do we really have the liberty to CHANGE to God's law? How do we get around one of the Ten Commandments?

Well, in the answer we discover a perfect example of how the New Covenant replaced the Old – not with a contradiction to the Old, but with a revelation of the Person who was represented by the shadow of the Old.

God rested when His creation work was done – it is upon this that the entire commandment is based. But notice that this was the first, or OLD creation – God rested when THAT creation was finished. But are Christians of that OLD creation? No. Through Christ, the old creation has died. God has now made a NEW creation through the resurrection. This is why we no longer keep a Sabbath that celebrated the completion of the OLD creation – in Christ there is a NEW creation.

That is one reason. But there is more. Christ Himself is God's completion of His new creation. And it is by faith that we are baptized INTO HIM and ENTER INTO HIM – in other words, by faith we REST IN HIM. Indeed, when we enter God's true rest IN CHRIST, we cease from all of our labors and works – as far as using them to earn or merit anything from God.

This is, of course, the basic gospel. Indeed, we see that the fourth commandment is a type or shadow of the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ – and there it is right in the middle of God's Ten Commandments!

For we which have believed do enter into rest...For he spake in a certain place of the seventh [day] on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works...There remains therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God [did] from his. (Heb. 4:3-10)

So what day should be kept as the Sabbath? No day at all – or better said – we are to keep the Sabbath by faith in the Person who is our rest.

One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day [alike]. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind. He that regardeth the day, regardeth [it] unto the Lord; and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth not regard [it]. (Rom. 14:5-6)

Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the sabbath [days]: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body [is] of Christ. (Col. 2:16-17)

Paul directly states that the Sabbath is a SHADOW but that Christ is the SUBSTANCE – which is the Greek word translated, "body." Would he have

written these words if he knew that Christians were required to keep the seventh day Sabbath? No. And since we are talking about one of THE Ten Commandments, this opens up the Truth to us with regards to all of God's OT law. It was a type and shadow of Christ – but pointing towards the Living Person of Christ Himself that would be fully revealed in God's people.

Now, there are people who, despite agreeing with this principle, nevertheless demand that we MUST keep the fourth commandment by keeping a day – indeed, some even demand that it be the seventh day. Many demand that same with regards to the law of tithing. I even know of some who insist that it is precisely because the fourth commandment is a shadow that we are required to keep it – they say if we don't keep it we are denying the Person who is the substance.

Actually, the opposite is the Truth. Why? Well, here is the problem: The moment you say we are REQUIRED to keep the Sabbath, or to tithe, you are putting yourself UNDER THE LAW. Sure. And in doing so, you are actually denying the true meaning of the Sabbath rest in Christ. The true Sabbath in Christ means that if I enter into HIS rest by faith, nothing is based upon MY WORKS. But the moment I require any WORK, I am no longer keeping the true Sabbath. Thus, ironically, to require that we keep the Sabbath as a day is a denial of everything that day means as fulfilled in Christ.

Chapter 3

Under the Law?

Can anyone doubt that the New Covenant is different than the Old Covenant? Are we still commanded to sacrifice animals, or has that been replaced by the once for all sacrifice of Christ? Do we still keep OT Holy Days, or are they fulfilled in Christ? Is there still a Levitical priesthood, or is there a new priesthood in Christ? If you answer YES to even one of these questions, then you know something has changed. Indeed, this is exactly what God said has happened:

For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now

that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away. (Heb 8:8-13)

We have seen that the OT was a type and shadow of Christ, but the NT is Christ Himself in His people. This is revealed in the above passage. The Old Covenant was outward law, but the New Covenant is inward life in Christ. Or, to get right to the point, the New Covenant is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." Thus, we are right back to seeing that Christ, the Person, replaces all that merely spoke of Him in type and shadow.

For example, we don't need a tabernacle or temple under the New Covenant. WE are the temple of God because Christ is in us. Neither do we need the sacrificial system, or any of those other symbolic aspects of the OT – because Christ is in us. He is the fulfillment of all of those types and shadows.

Under the Law

If I don't understand the covenants I won't grasp much else. In fact, I might walk through my Christian life keeping these OT laws and ordinances, thinking that this is somehow keeping me in right standing with God. Yet all the while I am, at best, carrying on a relationship with a SHADOW rather than the Living Christ.

Walking with a shadow of Christ instead of Christ Himself will always be legalism. It will always result in a life lived, "under the law."

But what does the term, "under the law," mean? To be, "under the law," means that I believe that my keeping of the law, or my breaking of the law,

determines my standing before the Lord. If I keep the law, I deem myself righteous. If I break it, I deem myself unrighteous. I am trying to establish my righteousness before God by my law keeping.

This is, "another gospel." It is unbelief. In fact, because it is unbelief, it is sin. In short, to be, "under the law," means that my faith is in my ability to keep the law, rather than in Christ. And remember, people that have their faith in their ability to keep the law find those laws IN THE BIBLE.

This deception can take many forms. Much of it happens within a person. A person tries to keep God's law – tries to obey some standard that they believe is of God – and they fail. They feel condemned. So they try harder. It becomes a pattern. All of this may happen within a person's thought life or mind. Such people may actually say they are under grace. But in practice they are in unbelief – under the law.

But the gospel of grace in Jesus Christ states that solely on the basis of Christ – which is completely independent of ME – I am made righteous by faith. I am declared legally righteous before God by faith in Christ – the righteousness of Christ is imputed to me. But likewise I am imparted with Righteousness Himself -- because I have Christ in me.

The OUTCOME of this new birth is that I will do good works. But those works do not save me, keep me saved, or change anything about my standing in Christ. Rather, those works are the

result of loving God, and of the continual work of the Spirit of holiness.

But again – there are thousands who sit in church each week who never hear this, do not understand it, and there are even many who demand otherwise. Yet it is the very gospel of Jesus Christ. We would do well to once again read the first chapter of Galatians:

I marvel that ye are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ unto another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any man preach any other gospel unto you than that ye have received, let him be accursed. For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ. (Gal 1:6-10)

You will note that the false gospel Paul repudiates, and to which he attaches a very serious warning, is not a gospel that promotes immorality. It is not a gospel that denies that Jesus is God, or one that suggests Christians should not obey God. No. The false gospel of Galatians is one that preaches law-keeping and supposed obedience front and center. And yet it is a false gospel because of what it makes those things mean – it makes them be the means by which we are saved, keep saved, and continue in right standing with God. This false gospel is, in

fact, a denial of the Truth, and of the grace of God in Jesus Christ.

The Truth of God will result in freedom from sin and a life of progressive holiness – and yet one that is free of condemnation, manipulation, and fear tactics. People will NOT need to be kept in line with a threat of punishment or curse. Rather, people will obey God because they want to – despite the fact that their works have NO EFFECT upon their salvation or standing with God.

What was Paul's solution for the Galatians church? To find better laws to keep? To try harder? To sin because grace bounds? No. He gave the one solution to all the problems of the church:

My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you. (Gal. 4:19)

The word translated, "formed," means, "to be inwardly realized and expressed. If Christian people would come into an inward realization of the Christ who dwells in them – CHRIST IN US, the hope of glory – it would solve most of the arguments, confusion, and deception, in the body of Christ. Issues like tithing, days to keep, etc., would be swallowed up in the knowing and experiencing of the Living Person.

Chapter 4

Losing Yourself

What is the number one characteristic of LAW? It is that law always has rewards or punishments attached. There are positives for obeying and consequences for disobeying. This is especially true in the minds of most professing Christians with regards to the law of God – or with regards to any law that is established by religious people.

Some professing Christians have no other frame of reference for obeying God. They think they are, “under grace,” but they are, “under law.” It is possible to be just that deceived. The Galatian church was. They are actually under, “another gospel.”

If we were to search the body of Christ for a good example of how many live under law rather than under grace – of how many live under a rewards vs. punishment system of religion – we would be hard pressed to find a better example than that of tithing. Included in this would also be the Word of Faith heresy of, “planting a seed.” Both of these offer blessings from God for obedience, and consequences and even curses for disobedience. They are the very definition of being, “under the law.”

What is the alternative? The plain and simple Truth is this: Until we live for God to the complete disregard of rewards or punishments we are NOT living in the Truth. We are not living by grace through faith in Christ. We are falling short of it – and in one way or another, living under law.

This is a radical statement, of course, for many Christians. Thousands GIVE, do good works, and serve God at church – thinking that they are earning something from Him. Some think that are earning a greater reward in heaven. Others think they are keeping in His favor, or avoiding His displeasure. Still others do these things out of mere duty. But it is an absolute fact that if we are walking with Christ for those kinds of personal benefits we are NOT seeing the Truth. We may, in fact, be more deceived than we suspect is possible.

If you and I cannot give all of ourselves to God – even if there would be NO reward for doing so – we cannot say we love Him. Indeed, we don't KNOW Him.

Are we walking with Christ because we think it is going to PAY us to do so? Read the Bible. Did it pay the apostles – in this life – to follow Christ? No, it cost them their lives.

Jesus once said:

If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works. (Mat 16:24-27)

There is NO middle ground here – not according to Jesus Christ. God doesn't want, or need, our money. He wants US. He wants us to completely abandon ourselves to Him.

If we can do nothing else we can ask Jesus Christ, "to do whatever it takes," to bring us into the reality of what He is saying in this passage. That, in and of itself, is a losing of ourselves to Him.

But notice: If you do lose your life to Christ, and find real life, then this will govern everything – including your money, and your giving. If you don't lose your life to Him, you can give until you are broke, but you will NOT be a disciple, and you will NOT find true life.

Let's make this very practical and apply it to tithing and giving. If I am tithing or giving money, or my service, to God – with the expectation of a reward – because I think doing so is going to pay me -- have I lost myself to Him? If I do any of the above because I think that doing so will help me escape consequences for NOT doing – have I lost myself to Him? We are here talking about faith vs. unbelief. We are talking about real motives.

There is a Truth in this that is vital to see. If I lose my life into the hands of Jesus Christ, it means that I can no longer serve Him for what I get out of it. I will serve Him to the disregard of any possible reward. In fact, I will serve Him for what HE will get out of it. I will serve Him to benefit others for His sake. My life in Christ will be lived completely independent of rewards – I will LOSE all of that into His hands.

To emphasize this Truth, we might paraphrase the words of Jesus from the passage above and apply them to our thinking about rewards and punishments for works:

Whoever would LOSE his reward into My hands will find it. But whoever would seek to EARN his reward will lose it.

The Truth here is really not complicated. We are to get to the point where we live for Christ without reservation and leave any rewards to Him. We are to completely LOSE ourselves to Him – leaving it to Him. This will set us free to abandon ourselves to God. And it will set us free from the delusion of thinking what we do for God is equal in importance to what He has for us.

This is not a matter of doing or not doing the right thing. It is a matter of walking in the Truth by faith. We will NOT find Christ as our life unless we lose ourselves to Him. And we will never come to value any blessings that He has to give us within that life in Christ unless we lose ourselves to Him. Rather, we will be walking contrary to the Truth, which is deception.

Now, you will notice that at the end of the above passage about losing your life, Jesus says that God will reward everyone according to their works. Doesn't this seem to contradict everything else in the passage? Actually, no -- it affirms all that we have been seeing.

How? Well, first of all, the word translated, "reward," means, "recompense," which could mean reward or wages, but really refers to God's giving us whatever is just and right in response to

our works. But what WORKS? Do we think that God is going to recompense us ONLY according to our good works? No. If we are to be rewarded according to our works then He must also take all of our bad works into account to determine our recompense. This would include all of our thoughts, attitudes, unbelief, intent – all that we produce from out of ourselves. That being the case, ask: How much of a reward do you think you will be entitled to receive?

The real nature and essence of our WORKS are found in the motivation behind them. Do we realize that FAITH is a work? Sure, because faith is a choice.

Remembering without ceasing your WORK OF FAITH, and labor of love. (I Thes. 1:3)

Wherefore also we pray always for you, that our God would count you worthy of [this] calling, and fulfill all the good pleasure of [his] goodness, and the WORK OF FAITH with power: That the name of our Lord Jesus Christ may be glorified in you, and ye in him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ. (II Thes. 1:11-12)

Then said they unto him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered and said unto them, This is the work of God, that ye believe on him whom he hath sent. (John 6:28-29)

In our passage from Matthew 16, the only work mentioned is that of losing our lives for the sake of Christ. THAT is a work or choice. So, in other

words, Jesus says, "Lose yourself in to my hands, and if you do, then you will find true life." THAT is the recompense. But you cannot find the recompense of life unless you lose your life – unless you completely abandon yourself and your desire for a reward to God. Then God will be free to give you whatever He sees fit is right and good for you."

Can we see that if we freely give without any expectation of reward – that if doing so is our WORK -- that God can freely give to us – and that what God freely gives will be His recompense to us for that work? Sure. But it is not a PAYBACK. It is not EARNED. No. Rather, because it is NOT earned, God is free to give to us whatever He pleases.

Do you want God to give to you only what you deserve or merit? That would be insane. Rather, we should give ourselves to God without strings attached. Then trust God to give us whatever HE chooses. If you freely give yourself to HIM then He is free to give unto you.

What we are talking about when we look at the words of Christ is a RELATIONSHIP based upon Truth and grace. It is REAL. You lose your motivation of a reward because you have seen GOD! You cannot continue in those old patterns. No. The Truth about God has renewed your mind and you have learned Christ to the point where you are able to leave the whole reward business in HIS hands.

This is really where LOVE will lead us. Can we see that LOVE doesn't keep a timecard? Or a scorecard? Love is abandonment unto the One I

love. You cannot walk in freedom, or walk in love – much less walk in faith – if you are serving and obeying God for some reward you think you are going to get for it!

I am talking here about seeing the Truth – about seeing Jesus Christ. Indeed, this motivation of serving God with abandon – which is LOVE -- is really the ONLY POSSIBLE OUTCOME of seeing Jesus! If you see Jesus, and come to know Him, and are surrendered to Him in faith, this is going to be the result. You will LOVE HIM. You will WANT to lose yourself to Him. You will WANT to serve Him. Indeed, you will WANT HIM!

This is really all about an eternal RELATIONSHIP with God. Jesus described this relationship in one sentence: "Freely you have received. Therefore, freely give." (Matt. 10:8) To, "freely give," means that I give expecting NOTHING in return. It means NOTHING ELSE. This is exactly where God seeks to bring us. It is really what it means to BE TRUE TO GOD – and again, is the only possible result if we see the Truth in Christ Jesus.

Chapter 5

Freely Received, Freely Give

This Truth of grace was certainly lived out by Jesus Christ during His earthly ministry. And He directly taught his disciples to do likewise:

Preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give. (Matt. 10:7-8)

The occasion in which Jesus spoke these words to His disciples was the very FIRST time He sent them forth to minister in His name. But there is one sentence in this passage which gathers together all of the Truth about ministry – which is an expression of what it means to be a FAITHFUL servant: FREELY you have received, FREELY give.

This is, of course, the Truth of grace. But again - - here we see that GRACE is not simply the means by which God saves His people. Rather, GRACE governs ALL that is of God – and therefore GRACE governs ALL that God does IN His people and THROUGH His people. In other words, if God has given His people all things FREELY in His Son (Rom. 8:32) – then God's people MUST likewise give all things FREELY. We have received NOTHING that is of God except it is by GRACE through Jesus Christ – therefore, having FREELY received, we must FREELY give.

If believers would see this Truth in Christ, and then live out from it, it would not only revolutionize our personal lives, but it would completely alter the face of ministry. God has given us ALL things freely in His Son – everything

that God has to give is given to us, not as a supplement to Christ – but in the Person of Christ Himself. God has NOTHING to give humanity outside of what He has given in Christ. And He has given us Christ solely by His grace. But since all ministry is OF Christ, and is a matter of conveying and manifesting Christ – a faithful servant will freely give because he has freely received. Anything other than giving by grace what we have received by grace is UNFAITHFULNESS, and a misrepresentation of Jesus Christ.

This should not be a law or principle to follow, but rather, the Truth in Christ that governs us. Or, to put it another way, grace received should have the inward impact upon me such that I will desire to freely give. The grace received will so adjust and alter my inward relationship with Christ according to that same grace that I will gladly freely give.

There is simply no way to freely receive by the grace of God unless that grace does a work in me whereby I will then voluntarily and gladly freely give to others. These things are NOT passive. What God freely gives amounts to LIFE and LIGHT that is of His Son – and Christ in me by His spirit will begin a work of grace that will make me want to FREELY give what God has given me. This is the ONLY possible outcome of FREELY receiving from God.

The First Instructions

As noted, the words, “Freely you have received, freely give,” were at the forefront of the instructions Jesus gave to His disciples in sending them forth to minister in His name for the FIRST TIME. We cannot ignore this significance

– and if you read the rest of the passage you will see that those words of grace were to GOVERN all that they did as they ministered in His name. Obviously, if grace and Truth were given in the Person of Jesus Christ then all that is preached in His name would be governed by that same grace and Truth – in doctrine but also in practice.

Jesus was talking about ministry. This is His description of a faithful steward – it is actually the only way to be faithful to Jesus Christ. It is a description of true MINISTRY. We freely give BECAUSE we have freely received – and what we have freely received has made us to be people who desire to freely give.

So we see that all ministry, at the root, is out from Christ – it is Life and Truth in Christ, being experienced by a person, doing a work in that person – and then as the result, being brought into the life of others. Do not separate ministry from Christ; do not separate stewardship from Him – for all Life and Truth is out from Him. It is only as a person gives themselves to Christ can such a person can be a vessel through whom Christ can be ministered.

A Process

Believers are supposed to be a work of grace. Surely, those who would minister to others ought to be a work of grace. And the words of Jesus, “Freely you have received, freely give,” do summarize that work of grace.

We must say it this way. God has freely given us all things in Christ. If we believe, we have received all things freely in Christ. But that will have an incredible impact in us. It will adjust our

relationship with God. It will renew our minds according to the grace in Christ. The result will be that we will freely GIVE. Indeed, there can be NO OTHER outcome of the work of grace.

Now, just to be clear: What does the word, "FREELY," imply? It simply means, "no strings attached." Or, "no payment possible." Of course, it is possible to freely receive and then to NOT surrender to the work of grace – in which case I will NOT freely give. But that does not mean the grace of God is not freely given. It simply means that I have corrupted it and have become an unfaithful steward. But that aside, the grace of God is given with, "not strings attached." We must come under that work of grace and offer to others the Truth and the light in Christ that God has given to us – freely without strings attached.

If the body of Christ would function in grace it would completely revolutionize ministry. It would actually revolutionize fellowship in Christ. Things would be on an entirely different and higher basis – that of grace and Truth.

Addressing a Common Question

We know that Jesus said, "Give and it shall be give unto you." (Luke 6:38) How often in the Christian church has this verse, and a few others like it, been used as a LAW that is imposed upon Christians? People are told, "You are to GIVE to God in order to GET from God. It says so right here!" Others say, "God will NOT give to you unless you give to Him!" And then there is this abominable teaching, "If you give to God a one hundred dollar seed, He will give to you an uncommon harvest of one hundred dollar harvest

multiplied!" Others offer a more tempered version, "God will only bless you financially to the extent that you give to others." But however it is taught, this error governs the church today with regards to money. It is found in teaching on tithing and in teaching on giving offerings. In short, God's willingness to give to you is directly related to whether you give to Him. That is what is taught. And so Christians give. And we somehow never see that every bit of this is totally contrary to the Truth of grace!

Now, as is usually the case, we must include the rest of the verse. Jesus also added, "The measure with which you measure will be the measure that is measured unto you." If you look up the word translated, "measure," you will find that it means, "the method of calculation." Or, "the standard that is used to measure." So Jesus is not talking about the AMOUNT given. He is referring instead to motive behind our giving – He is talking about WHY we are giving and HOW we came to give.

Plug this into the words of Jesus, "Freely you have received, and so freely give." Should grace not be our, "method of calculation?" Should grace not be our, "standard that is used to measure?" Yes. For the Truth is the Truth with regards to ALL.

We said that grace means, "no strings attached." Can we also see that grace gives no thought to rewards or punishments? That's right. I freely give because I have freely received. God did not give to me because He would get a reward. I should not give because I think I will get a reward. I should give to the complete disregard

of personal gain – either from God or from others. Isn't that what LOVE does?

I should give because giving is the only possible outcome of being in a true relationship with Jesus Christ. It is not a matter of following a law. It is not a matter of giving to get. It is not about earning, meriting, or losing a reward. It is about LOVE. It is about coming into the Truth and then a matter of the Truth coming out of us.

Believers ought to freely give from out of what God has freely given them – and they WILL DO SO if what they have freely received has done a work of grace in them. This is especially so with regards to those who would minister. There should be no strings attached. There should be no reward as the motive. Those who minister the Word should do it fully in grace and Truth. And those who receive the Word should be told that it is freely given to them – no obligation -- and it can be left to God as to their response.

Chapter 6

The Laborers in the Vineyard

During His earthly ministry, Jesus had much to say to His disciples about what it would mean to follow Him, and what it would mean to be His servant. One of the best teachings on the matter is in the form of a parable. In Matthew 20, we find what is usually referred to as, "The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard." This parable gathers together much Truth about ministry.

This parable may not seem to have any relationship to an issue like tithing or giving. But it does – because in this parable Jesus is giving a principle of Truth that needs to govern every believer. He is showing that we ought to serve God – even in our giving – to the complete disregard of anything we might get out of it.

Does this not speak to the motives that many people have for giving – what they will receive in return? Well, in this parable the Truth about this, and the dangers therein, are clearly taught by Jesus.

The Answer to a Question

First, let's get the setting – let's see WHY Jesus gave this parable. Jesus had just had a conversation in the hearing of the disciples with a rich, young ruler. That young ruler would not follow Jesus at personal cost. As he walked away from Jesus, Jesus said, "It is with great difficulty that a rich man enters the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 19:23)

Peter and the disciples were, “amazed. It would seem that they were somewhat shaken. Why? Because at this point of time they were following Jesus for what they believed they would get out of it – as those who would be at His side in His kingdom. The disciples mistakenly expected that Jesus was going to set up a material kingdom at any moment, and that they would be given possessions, authority, and, of course, riches. But when they heard what Jesus had to say, their confidence that this was going to happen was greatly shaken. Peter stepped to the front and expressed the concerns of the disciples by asking this question:

***Then answered Peter and said unto him,
Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed
thee; what shall we have therefore? (Matt.
19:27)***

There it is – all wrapped up in a single question. Peter and the others had indeed forsaken all and followed Christ. But at this point in their understanding, they were following Him because they thought it was going to PAY them to follow Him. They expected a reward. The Parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard is a teaching given by Jesus to correct their motives and attitude for following Him.

Are we following Jesus because we believe it will earn us a greater reward? Because we believe it is going to PAY us to follow Him? This is probably an attitude most of us have in the beginning. But thank God that He does not abandon us in such deception. Instead, He will begin to expose our unbelief – usually by showing

us that we could never merit PAY or reward. He will reduce us to where we will walk with Christ at great COST if necessary – simply because we love Him, and love other believers.

This parable reveals that what God is after are those who will give themselves to Him to the complete disregard of personal gain or reward – He is after those who will allow God to use them as extensions of Himself for the benefit of others. He desires true stewards who will pay a great cost so that others might receive all that God has for them – and so that God may receive HIS inheritance in the saints.

This is impossible to learn in a seminary because it is not theological. It is not a profession. It is produced by a relationship with Christ. It is the outcome of having been apprehended by Christ for His purposes – and of abandoning oneself to Him.

Of course, at this point, Peter was not yet faced with this reality – although he definitely WOULD be. But we must be clear about this: Jesus is speaking this parable to show His disciples the dangers – the sin and unbelief – of following Jesus for a reward; of following Him because we think it will PAY us to follow Him. And He is revealing that the real reward for giving ourselves to Christ is nothing less than Christ Himself.

The Work of the Cross

In order for Peter and the others to be brought to the place where they can be faithful stewards who walk with Christ for His glory, it will take a work

of the Cross – there must come a death in Peter and the others – with regards to their ambitions and religious flesh. All of that needs to be crucified. They must be convicted of their unbelief and repent of following Christ for what THEY think they are going to get out of it. They would do so later – but Jesus is telling them this parable to warn them as to what can happen if a person tries to serve God for what they will get out of it.

It would seem that few of us have any idea of the possibilities in our own heart on this matter. If there has been one sin of the church for the last two thousand years it is that people have taken the things of God unto themselves and used them for personal gain – financial gain, the gain of power and position, the gain of self-righteousness, or the gain of, “being someone,” in the eyes of others. The church has generally dragged down that which is spiritual into the realm of religious flesh and has corrupted it.

None of us are free from at least this possibility, and that is why any calling of Jesus Christ to ministry will ALWAYS include a calling to the Cross. This is true of any calling to Christ, but it is especially so with regards to any calling to influential ministry.

Despite the fact that this parable is a warning against following Christ for personal gain, we must keep in mind that all of God’s warnings are redemptive in nature. If we have wrong motives for following Jesus Christ in this age, God will, by His spirit, bring enough light so that we can turn and repent; so that we can get back to following

Christ for HIMSELF and HIS glory. So as we examine this parable, we have to keep that in mind.

These first disciples, except for Judas, avoided the pitfalls against which Jesus warns in the parable – they did allow God to set them free from these dangers. But it is possible that those called last could fail through unbelief in the way that those called first failed in the parable. This parable, as is the case with most parables, presents spiritual principles -- and is not intended to cover every possibility. Jesus is simply focusing upon those given the greatest Truth and responsibility – and thus are in the position of the greatest danger.

The Spiritual Kingdom

Jesus begins this parable with the same words He uses to begin many parables. He says, “For the kingdom of heaven is like unto...” So this parable is not about the physical or material world. No. The vineyard is the kingdom of God – or more specifically – it is life in Christ. The working IN the vineyard is all that we might do to produce the spiritual fruit that God is after in our personal lives -- and in the lives of those whom we impact from out of our relationship with Christ. The material objects in the parable are used to convey to us spiritual Truth.

The Parable

For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man [that is] an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire laborers into his

vineyard. And when he had agreed with the laborers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, [that] shall ye receive.

Jesus gives the picture of a householder calling laborers to work in this vineyard. The vineyard is not to be limited to performing ministry. The vineyard is really the Christian life – and therefore includes all that is within the Christian life that is supposed to produce fruit. This makes the parable apply to each believer.

Note a couple of important details. The laborers are pictured as being called into the vineyard – called unto Christ -- at different times of the day. None of the laborers decided when to be hired or called. But they did have a heart that was ready to be called – for they were waiting and ready. This shows that God was already doing a work in them to draw them to Christ – such that when He does call finally call them they do come to Christ.

Again, this does not cover all possibilities. Jesus is not addressing those whom God draws to Christ

but who resist. That is not the point of the parable. He is limiting His teaching to the context of those whom God draws to Christ and who come to Christ when they are called.

So, each group of laborers are called at a different time of the day – which means that each group of laborers work a different amount of time in the vineyard. This means two things: First, those called first have a greater opportunity and a greater responsibility than those called later. Second, those called first must, “bear the heat of the day,” to an extent those called later do not need to bear. All of this is decided by God. None of it is decided by us.

This is actually the real meaning of election and predestination as taught in scripture. Election is NEVER unto salvation. Rather, election is unto the calling and purpose FOR those who are already saved. God decides the specific purpose for which He has saved each of us. He decides the time and the responsibility. We decide whether to be faithful.

So far we have this: The laborers are called into the vineyard at different times -- according to the will of the master. They are given different amounts of responsibility, and thus, are called to bear different amounts of, “the heat of the day.” But then we come to the WAGES. The householder AGREED with the first group on a set wage. Thus, this first group went into the vineyard expecting that this amount would be given to them at the end of the day. But this was not the case with the other groups. Jesus specifically says that regarding those called last

that there is no wage that is agreed upon -- but the householder promises to pay them, "whatever is right."

Can we see what Jesus is getting at here? The first group enters the vineyard for an agreed to wage. That does not picture GRACE. Rather, it pictures a, "works based," relationship with Christ. The other laborers entered – trusting the household to pay them, "whatever is right" – which is a picture of GRACE and FAITH.

Here we find the first challenge: Will we walk with Christ – fully giving ourselves to Him – but do so leaving any question of wage or reward to HIM? Or must we walk with Christ under the motivation of an expected reward for doing so?

Or, to bring in a passage discussed earlier, having freely received from God, will we now free give back to Him, and unto others? Or will we attach an expected reward?

Jesus said, "Whoever would lose his life for My sake will find it." Can we see that this applies to any thought of reward? Jesus is teaching that we must lose our reward for His sake – lose ourselves to Him to the complete disregard of reward or personal gain. But if we will do so then we will discover HIM as our reward.

The End of the Day

Back to the parable -- the details given about the wage agreements are vital to see because those details flow through to the end of the day when the wages are paid. The motives behind why

each laborer works in the vineyard remain their motives when they are paid at the end of the day.

But again – this does not cover all possibilities. Even though we might, in the beginning, be walking with Christ for a reward – or ministering to others for a reward -- it is a motive we can repent of. And even if we have initially served God by His grace, some do stray off course.

We have to remember that this parable is a correction and warning being given by Jesus in answer to Peter's question. Jesus is, in effect, saying, "You want to know what you are going to receive from God because you have forsaken all and followed Me? But this question, of itself, betrays an attitude that is dangerous. I am telling you this parable to illustrate that fact."

Jesus continued with the parable:

So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the laborers, and give them [their] hire, beginning from the last unto the first. And when they came that [were hired] about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. And when they had received [it], they murmured against the goodman of the house, Saying, These last have wrought [but] one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong:

***didst not thou agree with me for a penny?
Take [that] thine [is], and go thy way: I will
give unto this last, even as unto thee. Is it
not lawful for me to do what I will with mine
own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?
So the last shall be first, and the first last:
for many be called, but few chosen.***

Here we see a picture of not only what often happens in this life and in this age – but it is also a picture of what is possible at the judgment seat of Christ. All of the motives are exposed. The true character of our relationship with Christ is brought out.

Despite the fact that the laborers – through no choice of their own -- did different amounts of work -- bearing different amounts of the heat of the day – they ALL received the SAME wage.

This did not sit well with the group called first – who worked the most. They felt cheated. But those called first were not cheated – they were given exactly the wage to which they agreed. The fact that those called last received the same wage for doing less work did not change that fact.

This brings us to the entire point of the parable: God gives ALL the same reward regardless of the amount of work done – regardless of how much of the heat of the day each has to bear. What this means is that those who were called first are actually called first so that those who are called last might receive equally with them. Those called first bear that responsibility – we might even call it a privilege. To be called FIRST does

not mean that I have the opportunity to earn MORE from God. Rather, it means that I have the privilege of suffering for the sake of others in the body so that they might share equally.

Does that seem unfair? If it does then we are actually asking the same question as was asked by Peter, and which prompted this parable.

Those called first in this parable resented God because despite all of their suffering and work in the vineyard the others were given the same wage. God openly states that He has the right to FREELY GIVE what He pleases with what is HIS -- but those first called resented Him for it.

God says, "I have freely given and you must freely receive, and then from out of what you have freely received you must freely give." In other words, He is saying, "Walk with Me, and serve Me, with utter abandonment. Leave any rewards to ME – leave it to ME to decide, "whatever is right."

But if we walk with Christ in a spirit of entitlement we will not FREELY receive from Him – and we will not FREELY give to others. Rather, our entire Christian life and service will be upon the wrong basis. It will not be upon grace and faith. Instead of, "Yet not I, but Christ," my life will proclaim, "Yet not Christ, but I." In the end it will come down to that.

Suffering for Jesus' Sake

So here is the question for each of us: Are we willing to give ourselves fully over to God – for

whatever it takes – even if it means that we must suffering the heat of the day – are we willing to do this even if it earns us nothing more than other believers who are not called to such a walk?

Remember that the vineyard is life in Christ. Thus, “bearing the heat of the day” is not limited to suffering because of ministry.” Rather, it is any suffering because of Jesus Christ. And ALL who are in Christ are going to suffer – it is just that some are called to suffer more – for the sake of Christ and for the sake of others.

Are we willing to suffer for Jesus’ sake – for the sake of His body – so that others may receive the same as we have received? Do we think that this means we will be cheated? No. It simply means that we will receive all that God has to give – but that we will have suffered so that others may share in the same. This is the teaching of the parable.

So you want to be called of God into ministry? Such a calling is NOT so that you can BE SOMEBODY, or so that you can earn a greater reward. No. Such a calling is so that through your suffering others can be brought in to share equally in Christ.

The Called and the Chosen and the Faithful

The final statement of Jesus in this parable of the laborers in the vineyard:

***So the last shall be first, and the first last:
for many be called, but few chosen. (Matt.
20:16)***

In context, the FIRST are obviously those who were called into the vineyard FIRST. Sure. And the LAST were obviously all of the others -- represented by those who worked only one hour -- they were called, "the LAST," in the parable. And when the wages were paid, the FIRST were the LAST to be paid, and the LAST were the FIRST to be paid.

In addition, it is clear that the, "MANY who are CALLED," included everyone who was CALLED into the vineyard. But, the "few CHOSEN," were those who were called FIRST -- they were called to bear the greatest responsibility -- to bear, "the heat of the day." Indeed, they were CHOSEN to bear this greater weight for the sake of all of the others; for the sake of Jesus.

Jesus was saying to the apostles, "I am going to call MANY unto Myself. But within those who are CALLED, there will be a much smaller group -- the FEW CHOSEN. The CHOSEN will be people who are called to be, "stewards of the mysteries of God." They will be given greater responsibility, and thus, will have greater accountability. This will NOT be because they are better people, more obedient, or are more righteous, or have greater ability. No. And they will not be given a greater reward. God is saying, "I will choose them because I want an instrument through whom I can work -- unto the spiritual life and growth of others."

Paul was a great example of someone who was CHOSEN, "to bear the heat of the day," so that OTHERS could receive. He said of himself:

***Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you,
and fill up that which is behind of the
afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's
sake, which is the church. (Col. 1:24)***

Are we willing to allow God to use us for the spiritual benefit of others? Even if it does not result in a greater reward for ourselves – but simply because we love Christ, and others? That is quite a question, isn't it? But it is love of God. Jesus said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends."

We are not called to Christ to try to earn a greater reward from Him. He has already given all things freely in Christ – if we would simply believe that it would stop all of this nonsense of trying to earn. We are actually called for what God can receive through His work in us – which is HIS inheritance in the saints. That may be a shocking revelation for those of us who continue to be self-occupied – following Christ for what seems to be a justifiable self-interest. But it is the Truth – and if we understood it, we would see that it is a wonderful reality in which God wants all of His people to share. So there it is – and this is the message of this parable.

Chapter 7

Tithing is Legalism

Once we see that it is God's will for us to utterly LOSE ourselves in His hands, the idea that we can earn anything from God ought to seem an unholy thing. It actually is. The notion, for example, that God demands tithing under threat of curse, or promise of blessing, should – to us – be obvious error. The teaching that states that if you GIVE TO GOD – plant a seed in a ministry -- that He will give to you ought to have no power to move us. Indeed, any teaching that states that our Christian works earn anything from God ought to be purged from the Christian church. This is EXACTLY what Paul warned against over and over again.

Tithing is an especially good example of where Christians fail to see the Truth on this matter – it betrays the fact that we don't understand the New Covenant, and it betrays the fact that our understanding of the very gospel of grace is suspect. For the law of tithing, as it is normally taught in Christian churches, is the very definition of LEGALISM.

Normally, Christians are taught that if they tithe, that God guarantees financial blessing. They are likewise taught that if they don't tithe, God will at least withhold this blessing, and may actually curse them financially. They are taught that if they don't tithe they are stealing from God. In this one teaching, we see LEGALISM at its height. And completely ignored is whether a person has truly lost themselves in every way into the hands of God.

Then there is the Word of Faith seed heresy. The promises are similar. Financial blessing, healing, salvation for a family member, the breaking of the power of the enemy – all of this is promise if you send some of these ministries money. But it is just another form of LAW. And the deception therein is proven by the fact that it doesn't work but people keep living under that law.

What makes these teaching especially evil is that God has already given us all things in His Son – Who dwells within the believer. Thus, as we discover Christ and experience Him, whatever is the will of God for us will come. The will of God is found IN HIM – it is found His life that we find by losing our life. But these terrible teachings bypass Christ as our life and offer a way around Him in order to get what folks want.

Of course, I realize that some teach that IF you have lost your life into the hands of God, well then you WILL tithe, and you WILL give. But this is nothing more than the same legalistic system of rewards and punishments being taught on another level.

You and I cannot control God. We cannot control Him by anything we do or don't do. The moment I introduce a system whereby my works control God – even if I say God has put Himself under this control by His own promises – the moment I introduce this kind of error, I have limited God's grace, sovereignty, and ability to work in my life.

What if, for example, I am in bondage to the love of money? What if I am serving mammon? How

will God be able to set me free from such a terrible bondage if I can keep the money rolling in – by God's own hand – by tithing? Can we see a problem here?

Jesus spoke against people who honor them with their lips, but whose heart was far from Him. He said their worship of Him was in vain. Well, if our heart is far from God do we think we can remedy that situation by giving money? By tithing? Are we that deceived? Would God have to honor His promise to bless those who tithe financially, even though their heart was far from Him?

There are many people who brag that because they have tithed that God has prospered them? How about those who have tithed who continue to live in poverty? And what about those who do not tithe who are wealthy? The fact is, if God does bless those who tithe, and curses those who don't – then there can be NO exceptions to this law. This is LAW. The law of tithing in that case has to work all the time every time. If it is required of Christians under the New Covenant, then it MUST work.

You cannot beg the question, and say that if a person's heart is not right with God then tithing won't work – because if you say that, then you are admitting that the heart is what matters and it supersedes the law of tithing. And once you admit that then you are admitting – whether you realize it or not – that we are under grace and not under law. We are on the basis of faith in Christ and not on the basis of works.

This issue of tithing strikes at the heart and core of the grace of God. Any time you introduce

rewards and punishments as the motivation for obeying God, you have fallen from grace. Many Christians don't see this, and many object to it. But it is the Truth. The law of tithing is the very definition of legalism.

Chapter 8

Tithing and the OT

The purpose of this book is not to go through an exhaustive study of tithing in the Old Testament. Rather, it is to focus upon the New Testament. But that being said, it is profitable to look at some of the OT scriptures on tithing because if we have an ear to hear we will realize that tithing was a type and shadow of NT reality in Christ.

Melchizedek

One of the primary passages used to try to prove tithing is required under the NT is found in Genesis:

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he [was] the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed [be] Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all. (Gen. 14:18-20)

Those who teach tithing under the NT claim that since Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek BEFORE Moses gave the law to Israel that this proves that tithing was not part of the law of Moses – but it an eternal covenant going back to creation.

This is nonsense. Abel sacrificed animals before the law of Moses was given to Israel. So did Abraham. So did Noah and others. But are we to sacrifice animals under the New Covenant?

If you read Hebrews 7, which contains an explanation of what was being taught by God through the Genesis account you will see that when Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek it was to show that, "there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof." (Heb. 7:18) What commandment? The entire Old Covenant, but more specifically, the Levitical priesthood and all of the commands related – including tithing. We see in Hebrews 7 that the Levitical priesthood was going to give way to the Person of Jesus Christ – our High Priest. This was sealed by the fact that it says that Jesus was NOT a Levite – yet under the OT the Levites were the only tribe that was to receive tithes. Thus, when Abram paid tithes to Melchizedek – a type of Christ – who was NOT a Levite -- this one event foreshadowed the fact that the entire Levitical system, including tithing, would be giving way to Christ.

So we see that this passage – which is often used to try to prove tithing is required under the New Covenant – is actually a passage that proves otherwise.

Malachi

Read beginning with Malachi 2. You will see that through chapter 3 – including the familiar passage that speaks of tithing – God is rebuking the PRIESTS. Why? Because they were supposed to take the tithes they received into God's storehouse. Instead, they were indulging themselves. But it really does not matter because God does command the entire nation to tithe.

Thus, we are back to the question as to whether NT believers are required to tithe under the OT tithing laws. Well, to WHOM were the tithes to be paid? The Levites. Some say that ministers are the Levites today? Does it say that any place in the NT? No.

There is also the fact that the tithes were to be paid out of the harvested crops. In addition, since the land was to rest every seventh year, no tithes were to be paid every seventh year. But if we are under some version of the tithing law today, why isn't this part upheld?

In addition, every THIRD year the tithe was to be given, not only to the Levies, but to the widows, orphans, and strangers. (Deut. 26:12) And then what was left over was to be consumed by those who were doing the tithing. There were also other occasions where the tithe was to be used by the one who was tithing. Where is this practiced today?

Perhaps one of the important facts about tithing is that it is referred to as FIRST FRUITS. (see Numbers 10) First fruits were always representative of the entirety from which they came. If you offered God first fruits God accepted that as if you were giving to Him ALL. In this we see – that in type and shadow – that tithing was showing that we should give all of OURSELVES to God – lose our lives into the hands of Jesus Christ. This includes more than what we own. It speaks of abandoning our lives to Christ.

This is just a sample of what is taught in the Old Testament about tithing as a type and a shadow

of NT Truth in Christ. The tithe was representative of ALL of the worshipper, and was a type and shadow of our total surrender to God.

Chapter 9

"The Measure"

Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that you mete withal it shall be measured to you again. (Luke 6:38)

Doesn't this sound as if we are going to receive a one-on-one reward for every dime we give? Well, not if we look up the Greek. The, "measure," spoken of here does not refer to the AMOUNT you give. Rather, it refers to the METHOD you use to measure. In other word, Jesus is saying, "The method you use to determine your giving is going to be the measure God will use to give to you."

Can we see this great Truth? Jesus is affirming everything we are saying about the motive for our giving. In short, if we FREELY GIVE, God will be able to FREELY GIVE to us. But if we give only to get, is that what we want God to do to us – do we want Him only to give to us if He knows that He can get something out of us in return? Is that grace?

Herein we see a principle. Only if we freely give without any strings attached is God able to give to us without strings attached – only if we freely give are we able to be trusted with the fullness of what has for us. This is a principle that not only applies to money, but really, to so much else in Christ. If all we do is mechanically give money to people, simply because we want a reward for it, we have not seen the Truth. We are not rightly related to God. God has not dealt with our self

interest. Therefore, God cannot give much to us. But if the, "measure," we use to give is to FREELY GIVE, then that same freedom that motivates us enables God to freely give to us freely all the more.

This is about being rightly related to God – not about figuring out a principle to follow. If we know God and have given OURSELVES to Him, we will more and more be able to give freely. And because of this, God is free to give more to us. In that case, we will revere and value what God gives – and know that it is all by His grace.

But how often have we heard such a message preached? It isn't preached hardly at all. Instead, people are manipulated into giving, or serving – they are told God will reward them, or that He will curse them for not giving and serving. Or people, in their own pride, serve God to be seen of men, or to feel good about themselves, or to appease a guilty conscience. This is a misrepresentation of God. At best, it is legalism, which is a false gospel. But at worst, it is a deception Satan is using to keep people in bondage to a terrible religious spirit.

Giving in the NT

GIVING in the NT is voluntary, and is, in fact, a part of FELLOWSHIP. We need to see this. Giving is not a COMMAND – if it were, it would not be giving. Once you COMMAND giving, it is no longer giving, because it is neither voluntary, or from the heart. But the giving that is preached in the NT is both voluntary and of the heart. It is, in other words, truly GIVING. And as I said, it is

considered to be a normal part of fellowship between Christians.

Tithing, on the other hand, was always COMMANDED. Some people might try to argue that God COMMANDS that we obey Him by tithing from the heart. But here is the problem: Obedience from the heart – as already noted – is voluntary. In other words, by definition, obeying from the heart means we WANT to obey, and we will do so no matter what. So why attach incentives to obey – such as the promise of blessing and the threat of curses? These were always attached under the Old Covenant, and certainly were attached to tithing – and many NT preachers continue attaching them today. This is error. This is utterly contrary to the gospel of grace, and to the real essence of NT obedience. NT obedience is absolutely independent of any thought of rewards or punishments – this is the Truth even if we obey God for a reward. In that case, we are deceived. It doesn't change the Truth. The point is, once you say that God commands something, and attach rewards and punishments, you are no longer talking about the new birth. You are back under the law – this is a fact.

According to the NT, a Christian who knows Jesus Christ is going to want to obey Him to the complete disregard of rewards and punishments. We have seen this again and again. Indeed, this is the only kind of obedience that is truly of FAITH, is truly HOLY, and it is the only possible outcome of revering God and walking in Truth. We are here talking about what happens through the new birth. But unfortunately, millions of

Christians today have not frame of reference for such a miracle of the heart.

Chapter 10

Giving is of Grace

Grace and giving are the same. Thus, giving is voluntary. It is a part of Christian fellowship. NT giving is, in fact, one of the things that emerges from a right relationship with God. Several passages teach this Truth:

Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints. And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God. Insomuch that we desired Titus, that as he had begun, so he would also finish in you the same grace also. Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also. I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love. For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Cor. 8:1-9)

I want to look at this passage very closely, because in it we find so many basic Truths about giving. In the first sentence, we see that the giving of which Paul speaks is said to be the result of, "the grace of God bestowed." Get that. These people gave, not because of a command they had to obey, nor because they wanted a reward for their giving – no. They gave because God has bestowed GRACE upon them and it resulted in giving.

What we see here is that GRACE defines giving – it did in this case, and it does define all true and honest giving. Grace never carries giving under threat of punishment, nor promise of reward. Indeed, if there were one verse to describe the grace of giving it would be the words of Jesus, "Freely you have received, freely give." Now, what does it mean to FREELY GIVE? The answer ought to be more than obvious – it means exactly what I mentioned earlier – to FREELY GIVE means that you give with NO expectation of reward, nor fear of punishment. It means that you do so from your heart, rather than to keep some law. That is what it means to FREELY give – it is GRACE IN ACTION.

Any doubts about this are cleared up once we see how GOD – the God of all grace – gives to us. He FREELY gives – Jesus said so. And we are supposed to do the same.

Now, along the line of giving being a part of fellowship, we begin to see how this is so. Christians are supposed to fellowship in Christ, and certainly one of the dominant characteristics of this fellowship is going to be a, "sharing in common," the grace of God. Isn't this the basis

for forgiveness? Sure. And it is the basis of GIVING.

The saints at Macedonia are said to have actually begged Paul to accept their gift. Note that this church wanted Paul to, "take upon him the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." Get that – here giving is called, "the fellowship of the ministering to the saints." So right here GIVING – which is the ministering to the saints spoken of – is called FELLOWSHIP. Why? Because it has emerged, first, from fellowship with God, and secondly, from fellowship with each other.

Paul then makes a statement that states clearly the root of all God-ordained giving. He says that these people, "First gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God." Can we see FELLOWSHIP here? And that all GIVING is supposed to be the result of our FIRST being rightly related to God? This giving was the result of FIRST belonging to God. Then, because of that, they were able IN THE WILL OF GOD to give to others.

So many today teach the opposite. They teach that you must give IN ORDER to get right with God, or IN ORDER to keep right with God. But this is error. It is exactly what it means to be under the law. No. Paul says that if you give yourselves to God – and thereby become right with Him – that it will result in you doing the will of God, which, in this case, was giving.

God wants US – He wants us to give ourselves to Him, yes, in the overall sense, but regardless specifics. If there were a law that mandated that these saints give, it would not have been

necessary for them to first give themselves to God. They could have just obeyed the law.

You will notice that Paul makes sure they understand that he is not demanding that they give to follow a law. He says, "I speak not by commandment." Could anything be clearer? Do we think that God has this passage as part of His inspired Word for no reason? Is it possible that this passage which reveals so much Truth could say what it says if TITHING were still commanded, or if we were under any law about giving as NT saints? No.

Chapter 11

Sowing and Reaping

There are other passages which affirm these Truths about giving in the NT:

But this I say, He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work: (As it is written, He has dispersed abroad; he has given to the poor: his righteousness remains forever. Now he that ministers seed to the sower both minister bread for your food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;) Being enriched in everything to all bountifulness, which causes through us thanksgiving to God. For the administration of this service not only supplies the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God; While by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal distribution unto them, and unto all men; (2 Cor 9:6-13)

Even many who teach tithing admit that tithing is NOT, "giving." For you cannot GIVE to God the ten percent that He says already belongs to Him. Indeed, if you don't tithe, they say you are

robbing God of what belongs to Him. Of course, then the question then emerges as to why God would bless you at all for tithing to Him what already belongs to Him.

Of course, once we realize that WE belong to God, which in turn, means all that we own belongs to Him, then it brings us back to the Truth we saw about losing ourselves to Him. And it brings us back to the Truth that if we freely give because we have freely received then God is free to give to us whatever pleases Him and suits His purpose for us.

This passage says that, "God loves a cheerful giver." There is no mention here of tithing. It does not say, "God loves a cheerful tither." In fact, there isn't a single teaching in the entirety of the NT about tithing. The subject, outside of the gospels, is not mentioned once – despite the fact that there are entire chapters devoted to giving, and to the support of NT ministry. In the gospels, there are a couple of references to tithing. None of them remotely suggest that tithing would carry forward as a requirement upon the NT church.

Freely Given

From this passage, we are able to glean a number of Truths. First, we are never to give, "grudgingly," that is, we are never to give all the while resenting it. So in other words, we see once again that true giving is from the heart – we give because we WANT to give. Closely related, Paul says we are never to give, "of necessity," which means we are never to give BECAUSE WE HAVE TO GIVE. No. Again – real giving is voluntary, and

not to obey a commandment. All of this is wrapped up in the term, "cheerful giver."

Now, let's face it, if this passage is about tithing, or any other commanded giving, we WOULD give because we have to! But no. Paul not only says that God loves a voluntary, cheerful giver, but he says NOT to give resenting it, or because you have to give. To do so would be contrary to the Truth of God.

Now, there are those who try to say that, yes, this passage is talking about giving, but that tithing is nevertheless commanded. They say that Paul takes for granted that we know we must tithe, and so this passage is talking about giving that is beyond that. Well, it's nice to make the Bible mean what you want it to mean. The entire spirit of this passage ought to prove to anyone with any sense of the Truth that tithing cannot possibly be a requirement upon NT Christians.

A second principle we see is that any blessings that come our way because of our giving go far beyond that of money. This is all through the passage. Sure. This only makes sense because our giving is to be out of our relationship with God – we give money because we have already given ourselves to God. We are rightly related to Him with regards to money – and so He is free to give to us anything He chooses. This could include money, but any other blessing.

This goes back to the principle stated earlier: God can only trust us with MUCH blessing if we have been faithful in the LITTLE – only if we are free to give without self interest as the motive is God

free to give to us, because it will be for our good, and not to our harm.

This brings us to the principle of SOWING and REAPING. There has probably been no other principle with regards to giving that has been more distorted and perverted than this one. Many today teach that if you, "plant a seed," into their ministry, that God has promised that you will reap a great financial harvest. Is this what God is teaching us in this passage?

No. First of all, even those who teach this error tell you that you must SOW into good soil. Of course, they claim THEY are good soil. But they are almost never good soil – and they prove it with their attitude towards money. So right off the bat we see that God is never obligated to bless anything except His own Word and His Truth in Christ. You could give all you want to those who teach error and God is NOT going to bless you because of it.

It would be humorous if it were not tragic. Do we realize that every CULT on this planet uses all of the same passages of scripture to prove to their members that they must give them money for the support of the church? And do we realize that many of those members who do give, or tithe, will tell you with a straight face that God has blessed them because they have been faithful to give? But I say again – God does not bless us because we affirm or finance heresy and error. We are, in that case, helping promote that which keeps people in bondage and deception. So obviously, it DOES matter to whom we give. Yet even more, it matters WHY we give.

To truly SOW bountifully, you have to do so FREELY, and voluntarily, without any expectation of a reward. We have already seen this, and this is certainly built into the passage as a given. When you SOW a seed, you will notice that it passes OUT of your hand in the ground. You no longer own it. Thus, you are relinquishing any demand or expectation of a payback. The only thing that God says that you can expect is to REAP – in some way. And if you read the passage, while financial blessings are not EXCLUDED from this reaping, they are barely mentioned. Rather, the reaping that is mentioned is mostly spiritual. Paul mentions grace, righteousness, and thanksgiving.

But we must ask: Why is there a connection between sowing money by giving, and reaping in a spiritual way? That is really what the passage is getting at – and we are going to see that this is what many other passages teach. What is the connection, and why does it work that way?

It works that way because if we have lost ourselves to Christ, everything we are, and everything we own, belongs to God. And when we GIVE, or SOW, we are not only giving what belongs to God, but if we do it in the right spirit, we are actually FELLOWSHIPPING together. This fellowship with God, and with each other, opens the door for other blessings to flow in that same fellowship. Read the passage again. You will see that this is the Truth behind the entire issue of giving.

Now, if giving is a form of fellowship, then can we see that it can no more be governed by a law than fellowship is governed by a law? Imagine

God saying, "I command you to fellowship in the Spirit, or else!" That just doesn't fit, does it? It is nonsense. God does not offer rewards or punishments for FELLOWSHIP in the Spirit. But that does not mean that fellowship doesn't result in blessings.

Think of the blessings of God, including material blessings, in the terms that Jesus outlined in John 15, where He said, "I am the Vine and you are the branches." If that is the case, then as we abide in Christ, there are going to flow certain blessings from Him to us. But this is not because we are keeping laws – it is because we are living OUT FROM HIM. When a branch abides in the Vine, there are LIFE results – including fruit. Thus, the blessings or fruits are NOT the thing we work for. No. We are told to abide in Him and these things will come. Or, to go back again to the principle we saw earlier, if we lose ourselves in the Vine, and simply abide in Him, we will find LIFE in Him – and IN that life will be all the provision that God has for us.

This is exactly the same principle as Jesus taught when He said, "Seek you first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added unto you." (Matt. 6:33) Is there any room in this statement for tithing? Jesus did not say, "Tithe, and all you need will be added unto you." He did not say, "Seek the kingdom by giving money, and all will be added unto you." No. Rather, He told us to seek the kingdom of God – which means to seek God's rule and God's will over us regarding everything – and if we do, then because God will then be in charge of everything, God will be free to add to you everything we need.

So if you want to know what God says is the key to provision from Him, right here we have it – see first His kingdom and His righteousness. If we do, God will take care of material provision.

Can we see that to seek first His kingdom and His righteousness is exactly the same as losing ourselves in full abandonment to Him? – that this is equal to relinquishing our self ownership and self rule to Christ? Sure. We MUST relinquish self rule if we are to be rule by Jesus as Lord in HIS kingdom. Thus, this again is the same principle. In one single verse, Jesus makes it clear that if you want God to be free to add to you all that you need, you must surrender to Him as Lord of those things. If Jesus is Lord of you, and it is real, then the result is that He will bless and provide.

So again, Jesus says to abide in Him – and you will partake of Him. He says to seek Him first as Lord – and He will provide what you need. He says to lose your life and you will find it. The focus for the Christian is the Lord – to the complete disregard of any benefit or blessing. But if we do that, this ensures blessing – because how can you abide in Christ or live in His kingdom and NOT be blessed?

How ironic are the things of God. You have victory through surrender; life through death; you find by losing; and God is free to give you blessing only if you obey without the motive of one. And yet what else could possibly speak of GRACE? This is God. He is the God of all grace.

Chapter 12

Grace is Voluntary

There are a lot of clever, catchy phrases used today on Christian television – if we dare still call it Christian – phrases intended to get people to send money into the ministry using them. "Give until it hurts," is one phrase. Aside from the fact that this phrase is totally unbiblical – a fact we will see in a moment -- it is probably one of the less clever ones used today. Some of the better ones are, "You cannot out give God," meaning if you give everything to me, God will out give you and give to you. Another one is, "God cannot let go of what is in His hand, until you let go of what is in yours." I especially like that one, because it exposes so much about the corrupt minds of those who state it. I mean, if God has all this stuff for you, but won't let go of it until you give money to a ministry, then what could be a more clear definition of buying a blessing from God? Furthermore, if we really understood our own heart, we would realize that if we give in order to get, we really haven't let go of ANYTHING. We are just, "trading up."

The fact is, God isn't in any of these things, phrases, or gimmicks. He doesn't play psycho games with people to try to get them to give. He doesn't need to beg, borrow, or steal. Millions of souls aren't going to go to hell unless I write that check. Can you imagine it? A poor soul, say, in Africa, stands before the Lord at the last judgment, having never heard the gospel, and God condemns them to hell for all eternity. They ask why. And the Lord says, "Because David didn't write a check and send it into Benny Hinn,

so that he could come and preach to you!!!" Well, at least I'm saved, even if they aren't, right? I'm being a bit sarcastic, I know, but think these things through and you will end up seeing the utter nonsense in them.

The most powerful time the church has ever had came when there were no computers, televisions, books, or mechanical transportation. The gospel was spread because it was LIFE. Indeed, we are told that the Truth turned the world upside down. But you see, then people lost their lives for Christ – and so there was no profit or gain to pretending you were a Christian. Today, Jesus is big business. It does not yet cost much to be a Christian for many people – in fact, for some, they get rich calling themselves one.

Not only did the gospel spread on the basis of resurrection life, and the gates of hell could not stand against the Truth, but God waited 1500 years to allow the printing press to be invented. Does this sound like God was in a hurry – or that He needed those things? I'm simply pointing out that there is something wrong with the claim that money gives us the power to preach the gospel. The fact that God grants money to do so, and can use modern technology, doesn't take away from what the gospel is – eternal Truth in Jesus Christ.

Has it ever occurred to us that GIVING to support ministry, or to the needy among us, is more of a privilege for the giver than it is a blessing for the recipient. I know that most of us cannot grasp this. We don't really believe it. But isn't this what Jesus said? He said, "It is more blessed to give, than to receive." Now, that is quite an amazing statement. How can it be the Truth? Can we see

that in order for this to be the truth that it must mean that there really ARE spiritual blessings involved with giving? What do we think it means to be BLESSED? If we give, we are obviously NOT receiving what we are giving. And yet we are MORE blessed than the one receiving. None of this makes sense unless all of it is hooked into God, His grace, and the fellowship of believers.

The basic principle here is that if we are an expression of the grace of God to others, then we will be blessed by that same grace. In other words, be a vessel through whom God's grace flows and you cannot help but be impacted. If I give, God is giving through me. How can I not likewise BE blessed by God in spiritual ways, if not in material ways?

Well, back to the phrase, "Give until it hurts." Is that the way to get blessed? Well, why don't those who preach this practice what they preach? Why don't THEY give until it hurts? No. This is not biblical, as seen in the passage below:

For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not. For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened: But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality: As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack. (2 Cor. 8:12-15)

Rather than tell people to give what they don't have – to give until it hurts -- Paul states clearly that acceptable giving is, "according to what a man HAS, and not according to what he has NOT." He then follows that up by saying, "It is not my intention for you to give so much to others that YOU are then the in need."

You see, Paul knew that it was GOD who was the source of all provision. So if God prospers someone, part of the reason is so that they can give to others. (see Eph. 4:28) Likewise, if someone is left in need, this is so that others may GIVE, and thus be blessed by that giving.

If you read the NT, you will see much direction given as to the care of widows. You will see that God tells us to give to those in need. Well, can't God just bypass us and someone provide for people? Sure. But often He does not. Why? Because He wants the fellowship of GIVING. He knows that it is more blessed to give than it is to receive. There is something in that which speaks of God's grace, and the love and fellowship in the Spirit. This is about MORE than the passing of money or goods from the hands of one to another. It is about be an extension and expression of God's own grace TO US.

Of course, it is entirely possible to give much, but to do it completely outside of the grace of God, or to do it out of the will of God. There are times when it is the will of God to NOT give – even if it is so I can get my own perspective and heart right before the Lord. Ultimately, however, God is a giving God, and we will at least WANT to give what we are able to give. Again – this is not a law or a command. It is the character of God.

But if we read the above passage, it is clear that is not the will of God for you to ever give what you cannot afford. Why? Well, two reasons. First, if you give more than you can afford, then YOU will be in need, and someone will then have to give to you. Secondly, if you give more than you can afford, then you are exceeding what God has provided TO YOU so that you CAN give.

So the notion that we ought to give money that we don't have to give – that ought to be used to support our own family – is contrary to scripture. God says "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel." (1 Tim 5:8) Our FIRST responsibility – and the first reason God provides for us – is so that we might take care of our own household. If I am giving at the expense of the needs of my family, I am WRONG. No. It is God's will for us to support our own family FIRST – otherwise someone might have to support us. Then, once we get that done, we can help those of the faith. After that, we might want to help someone who is not a believer. This is the basic priority – although we don't want to set up a law. It is a simple principle or rule of thumb.

You will also notice that Paul says he wants, "equality." The word means, "fairness." This affirms what we are saying. God would not create hardship upon someone because they GAVE more than God supplied for them to give. But He does say we ought to ease the hardship of others as He directs and provides. If we have abundance, one of the REASONS God has given it to us is so that we might give. If we do not have abundance, then

perhaps God has allowed this so that others can give to us.

Of course, I do realize that life is a bit more complicated than can be covered by laying down foundational principals. For example, there are people who won't work or help themselves, and so, rather than just give to them, Paul said, "If a man will not work, he should not eat." (II Thes. 3:10) There are also NEEDS, and there are WANTS. And above all, there are times when God will withhold provision from people – not because they have sinned – but because for a season He wants to teach them the Truth, and build in them the faith to walk with Him in these matters.

But if you read passages like this one from II Corinthians 8, it becomes clear that once again fellowship stands behind much of this giving and receiving. Fellowship in Christ ends up touching many practical matters.

Chapter 13

The Support of NT Ministry

The Bible does teach that Christians are supposed to support those who are called to Christ for ministry. But that being said, it is somewhat amazing to me that Christians will send millions of dollars to keep the worst televangelists on the air – because of their promise of God’s blessing – but that relatively few of these same people will help widows and the needy in their own church.

There are a number of extended passages on this matter:

Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself. But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. (1 Tim 6:5-10)

According to the Word of God, if I teach that godliness is going to result in financial gain, or if I say that financial gain indicates godliness, I am a person that has a CORRUPT MIND, and I am DESTITUTE or void of the Truth. Do we see what this means? It means that anyone who teaches that GIVING – which is a godly act – is going to

result in financial gain from God, this person has NO Truth in them. And rather than have the mind of Christ, they have a corrupt mind – because only a corrupt mind could embrace and teach such heresy.

This is so serious a thing that Paul actually commands that we WITHDRAW from such a one. Instead, Christians today keep sending them money. As I said earlier, the Christian church is producing a witness. We are funding and affirming what we believe. And in the end, we are going to get exactly what we have paid for. I can only suspect that if someone is sending money to Kenneth Copeland – who is the very definition of the corrupt mind described in this verse – I can only suspect that many of the people who support him are LIKE-MINDED.

Incidentally, if God has set up a system whereby we can GIVE TO GET, then He is violating His own passage – for that kind of thinking is exactly what is being condemned in this passage. But the question might then arise, "Doesn't God provide for His people?" Sure He does. We already read the primary passage on that matter: Seek you first His kingdom and His righteousness and all these things will be added." If we seek first the RULE of God, then God will RULE us, and included in this, God will rule our money – i.e., we will be given exactly what God determines is good and right for us according to His present purpose in our lives. The notion that we can GIVE ourselves into some purpose that circumvents this is nonsense.

By the way, I have come across people who will tell you that God has made them rich, or blessed

them, because they tithed, or gave money to their church. They are wrong. There are many reasons why people have money, and many reasons why they don't have money. But according to the Word of God, gain and godliness are not linked. God wants US. He wants to give to us according to His purpose.

For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treads out the corn. Does God take care for oxen? Or says he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written: that he that plows should plow in hope; and that he that threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things? (1 Cor 9:9-11)

Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture says, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward. (1 Tim 5:17-18)

Many years ago, when I did a study on tithing, it jumped out at me that in both these passages, Paul is talking about the support of NT ministers. In both passages, he quotes the OT – indeed, he quotes the same verse from the OT – you shall not muzzle an ox that is treading your grain. THIS verse is THE verse Paul chose, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, to show that Christians ought to support ministry. Doesn't that seem strange? Actually, it seems impossible that he would use that verse for his teaching if, in

fact, TITHING were a law that was still in effect under the New Covenant.

If there was ever an opportunity for Paul – for GOD HIMSELF – to make sure that everyone understood that tithing was required under the New Covenant, it was here. Paul is teaching on the exact subject of the support of the ministry. Yet he never even mentions tithing. Not a hint. As I mentioned earlier, always notice things like this – always notice what God does NOT say when He is talking about a particular subject. The blank spaces mean something – and we are to fill them in with the revelation God has given elsewhere.

In addition to this glaring omission, we also have a general principle given in this passage for giving to NT ministers. Paul says, "If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" The principle is this: It is good and right – and certainly approved by God – that we give to those who have fed us, and sown into us, spiritual Truth. Note that this is NOT a command or a mandate. All of this is governed by the principle of voluntarily giving, as we saw taught earlier. But Paul is saying, "We have taught you the Truth. Indeed, we have SOWN into you that which is of God. So it is perfect acceptable to God that you share with us material things."

Here once again we see fellowship. But we also see another facet of the law of sowing and reaping – one that was not mentioned when we read II Corinthians 9. The SOWING is not merely MONEY GIVEN – and the REAPING is not merely MONEY received. No. Sowing is TRUTH TAUGHT.

And REAPING is all of the fruit that comes about – including both spiritual and material blessings.

The focus here is once again fellowship. It is not that people are to PAY for the Truth taught. No. But Paul is saying, "We are all in this together. Thus, it is right that those who forfeit the right to work for a living should be supported by those for whom they have forfeited that right. This is the mind of God, and it is a part of practical fellowship."

Now, once we begin to see the Truth about this, we see that a teacher of Truth should not be preaching FOR the money. Neither should people give to PAY FOR the Truth. Rather, all of this ought to be unto the Lord. Those who preach ought to do so because of the Lord, and those who give ought to do so because of the Lord. This is fellowship.

So what we have is this: A minister should preach the Truth to the complete disregard of whether he is given money as support. Indeed, any minister who is truly devoted to Christ is going to preach the Truth even if it LOSES him his position, or living. All the while, he must trust God. This is the only way possible to obey the exhortation of Christ, "You have freely received, now freely give." (Matt. 10:8) Look it up – Jesus is speaking directly to PREACHING. But on the other hand, people should give to those who preach the Truth. Not because it is a command, and not because of something they will earn. They should give because they value the Truth, and because fellowship with God will tend toward giving as a means of expressing affirmation of the Truth and of fellowship. This is all free. It is all of grace.

And it is GOD'S BUSINESS to look after it. It is ours to believe and obey.

So how should NT ministry be supported? The Bible teaching is through DONATIONS – freewill by grace. This could take a number of forms. But the important thing is that the donations or money received ought to be completely detached from the freedom to preach. No one should be paid TO preach. They should be paid so that they can preach. This should not be part of a religious system, but of the fellowship of the saints. And there should be no pressure or manipulation upon anyone to give. In short, leave it to God.

Chapter 14

Serving God OR Mammon

The Bible is filled with teaching and revelation on this matter of money, and giving, and we have touched upon only SOME of these Truths. There are many other scriptures that God has given. But perhaps at the end of the day, we will eventually be led back to a passage from the sermon on the mount – from the mouth of Jesus:

No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon. Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after

***all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things. But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
(Mat 6:24-33)***

All of these Truths about giving ultimately take us back to the words of Jesus Christ. He told us, "You cannot serve God AND mammon." (Matt. 6:24) Rather, He said that we would either serve God OR mammon. He was talking about the motivation behind our living – indeed, behind everything we do. You will recall that this declaration is part of the same passage that is concluded with the statement, "Seek you first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added." (Matt. 6:33) In effect, Jesus was saying, "Serve God by seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, and if you do, then everything you thought you would earn by serving mammon will be added unto you free of charge."

It is a tragic irony that it is entirely possible for a professing Christ to tithe, and give money, but for the tithing and giving to be nothing more than the means by which they SERVE MAMMON. Sure. If I am giving in order to get – if my giving is something other than free of charge, voluntary, and by God's grace – then it is because I have some self interest in mind. In that case, rather than seeking first His kingdom and His righteousness, I may be seeking first a reward FOR my giving or tithing. In that case, I am actually serving mammon – because this is the motive behind my giving. I am linking GAIN with GODLINESS.

Jesus outlines the mind and heart of someone who has seen Jesus Christ, and knows the Truth on these matters. They GIVE – but not out of duty, or out of any command to keep a law. They don't give to earn a reward, or to avoid a curse. They don't give to keep right with God. Rather, their giving is because they KNOW GOD – their giving is a voluntary act of their free will – they FREELY give because they have FREELY received. We are here talking about the fact that something has changed their entire thinking and motivation – the Truth of Jesus. In short, the fact they have freely received translates into them wanting to freely give. It just does – and no law can make this happen. This is the result of being set free by the Truth.

People can set up laws and principles that mandate supposed giving, and usually these mandates WILL produce a certain amount of prosperity for the one to whom money is given. Entire churches can become rich and prosperous if they demand that their people tithe – and those same churches might even, "give God the glory," for this prosperity. Television ministries can become rich if they promise people that God will greatly bless them if they sow a seed of money into their ministry. Jesus never said that if you serve mammon that you would not become rich. Nope. You CAN get rich serving mammon. Those of a corrupt mind can become wealthy. Jesus never said that mammon was NOT a master that would prosper you. I mean, when the Roman church used to sell indulgences it made them rich. These things work. Serving mammon may PAY. But none of this is of God.

It is also a fact that if you freely give that most people will not give to you. But nevertheless, God says to freely give. At some point, you have to trust Him.

The issue of whether we are serving God or mammon is one that MUST be resolved if we are to go on with Jesus Christ. We are here talking about basic provision – and who we are living for in this world. Do we live FROM above, or do we live FROM below? What do we value?

If you want to know what is the key to financial freedom within the will of God, we can now state it: Serve God, and not mammon. Repent of serving mammon, and seek first His kingdom and righteousness. (You will notice that I did NOT say the key to financial freedom was to have lots of money!) In other words, the key to freedom is to know the Truth about this issue, and then to be rightly related to God over it. And the Truth is this: Everything belongs to God. That doesn't mean you give it all away – I am talking more about where your heart is, and about your relationship with God. It is a great freedom to finally realize that if you own nothing, you need protect nothing, or worry about anything. God is able to look after that which is given into His hands.

So regarding giving: For giving to be real, it must voluntary, from the heart, and within the will of God. It must be done without any expectation of a reward. This kind of giving is the result of having received from God in that same Spirit. So we must LOSE ourselves in this matter into the hands of the Lord, and leave any blessing to Him. He is just, fair, and knows what we need.

The New Covenant is the covenant of GRACE. Tithing is not part of it. Giving – which is grace -- is front and center. These matters are not matters merely of theology or of Bible doctrine. They speak directly to the kind of God we serve, and whether we know Him, and how we must walk with Him.

Chapter 15

Fellowship

Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. (Phil 4:15-19)

Notice that Paul said, "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account." How many TV preachers can honestly say this today? Not one, I should think – although some of them try to fake it. But think about what Paul is saying here. He is saying that he wants them to give, but not so he will have the gift, but so that they will have the fruit that results of their giving. Despite the fact that some people try to say that Paul is talking about financial blessing, I don't' think so. He is talking about fellowship and the flow of something more than money.

Let's put aside, for a moment, any ramifications of giving to the unsaved, and focus just on saints giving to saints. By the way, God tells us that it is His will to help the poor and needy, even if they

are NOT saved – but you cannot escape the fact that it is His will for us to give to the saints FIRST. It always amazes me when Christian people easily give to a worldly charity, but ignore widows and those in their own congregation who cannot even afford to pay their light bill. It is an absolute disgrace that widows especially have to live the way they do, when their brethren have much. But that aside, let's talk about the real meaning of saints giving to saints – including saints supporting the ministry.

When I give money to someone, or to a ministry, I am saying that I affirm and support what they, in ways that go beyond the mere act of giving. For example, if I give money to a ministry, I am entering into a fellowship with them – and my giving is an embracing of the Truth taught. Now, it is possible to do this without giving – but if you see what I'm saying, giving requires cost. You are going another step.

Even false teachers know and teach this. They teach that if you, "partner with them," that the blessings of God that are upon them will be upon you. Well, they had better be careful, because if they are teaching error, then the opposite could be true. In the very least, it is a fact that the Christian church produces as a witness exactly what they finance. The reason error prevails on Christian television today is because professing Christians have paid to keep them on – but is this not a fellowship? Sure.

I don't believe that MONEY can substitute for the LIFE of Christ. Ultimately, God doesn't need money to promote the gospel. He never did. But it is nevertheless a fact that the money trail does

often indicate what people VALUE. Jesus Himself said, "Where ever your treasure is, there will your heart be." In other words, whatever you VALUE, there you will dedicate your heart, and often, this will mean that you will invest your money. Thus, it is a fairly accurate snapshot of the spiritual condition of the church to see what is being financed by Christians today. Christians give their money to what they believe in, and to what they value. They give, or neglect to give, in accordance with the value they place upon the message. Because ultimately, all of this is tied back to the value we place upon God Himself – it is tied back to whether we know Him.

If I know God, and have truly entered into fellowship with Him, I am going to slowly learn Christ in such a way that I will VALUE and REVERE according to the Truth. This is just another way of saying that I will exhibit the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Well, if this is so, then it must, at some point, result in works – it will result in giving or not giving. Now note: It is not the giving that produces a knowledge of God, or the fruits of the Spirit. No. It is my knowledge of God, and my relationship with Him, that results in the giving – because I will value what HE values. Thus, my giving is an extension of my fellowship with God. And so is my receiving from others – which is just as important. Therefore, giving and receiving is a part of fellowship – a part of our, "having in common." This opens up much in the way of blessing.

We saw this earlier – if I first give myself to the Lord, then it is going to result in my giving to others according to the will of God. But again, don't misunderstand. I don't make myself right

with God, or enhance my fellowship with Him, by giving. No. I first give myself to God, and then the RESULT is often giving – as God directs, and makes possible.

This is how fellowship in the Spirit works. I cannot fellowship with other Christians if I am not fellowshiping with Christ FIRST. But if I am fellowshiping with Christ, and others are fellowshiping with Christ, then we are going to fellowship with each other IN CHRIST. This echoes down through our conduct, including giving.

When the early church began, you will remember that one of the first things that God did was bring them into a time where, "they did not consider anything as belonging to themselves." It says, "they had all things in common." This was not merely a religious ritual to follow, or a law that was commanded. In fact, you will find NO command that they do this. Rather, this entire perspective was the result of these people SEEING JESUS CHRIST. They saw Christ, and had experienced Him, and all of a sudden, none of these things mattered anymore.

Since then, many people have tried to duplicate this as a pattern to follow. You cannot. You cannot duplicate the results of seeing Christ if you have not seen Christ. If you try, it will be of the flesh. This event in the book of Acts is not a command to give everything away and go live in a commune. Rather, it is a revelation of God's mind, and of what happens to people who actually see the Truth.

Front and center in this matter was COMMUNION or FELLOWSHIP. They had fellowship in Christ, but now it had come to govern their everyday living and possessions. This was a completely voluntary and free expression of God's grace. In fact, even when Ananias lied and stood before Peter, he was told, "The land and the money were always yours to keep. You were never required to give a nickel of it to the church. So why did you LIE about it?"

If we learn nothing from this event in the book of Acts, we certainly learn that the result of seeing Jesus Christ is GIVING. Not a mandated giving. But a voluntary giving. It is not only the act of giving, but the fellowship that is behind it. Fellowship with God means everything belongs to Him and not me. And at some point, the spirit of that is going to be seen in my relationships with others.

Back to Paul. He said that he wanted fruit to abound to the Philippians. This would happen because they GAVE. And that fruit involved more than material provision. It involved fellowship and spiritual blessings. In fact, you cannot find a single passage in the NT with regards to giving that does not in some way mention that the result is going to be SPIRITUAL blessings.

Chapter 16

The God of All Grace

"The God of all grace." (I Peter 5:10)

But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God. (Acts 20:24)

For sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace. (Rom. 6:14)

And of his fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. For the law was given by Moses, [but] grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:16-17)

God is the God of ALL grace. The gospel is the good news which reveals the Person of Jesus Christ – in Whom all GRACE and Truth has been given. Christians are NOT under law, but under GRACE. Are these merely doctrinal statements? No, they are more. They are descriptions of life in Christ. And life in Christ is indicative of the nature and character of God Himself. God is the God of all grace because God IS grace – that is His nature.

Most believers will agree that we are saved solely by the grace of God through faith that is solely in Jesus Christ. But what about the Christian life that follows? Is it possible that everything having to do with salvation is of God's grace – but that

the walk with Christ that follows could in any way be based upon LAW? No, it is not possible. And yet that is exactly the walk with Christ that so many believers try to live.

Tithing is one example. To say that we saved solely by grace, but then to turn around and try to live under the law in order to garner God's favor is not only a contradiction, but it is deception. It is exactly what the Galatian church was trying to do. Paul said they were under, "another gospel."

We need to come to terms with Paul's rebuke of the Galatian church. The Galatian church had not openly renounced Christ. In fact, not once does Paul question their salvation. No, he rebukes them for their unbelief and error AS those who ARE saved. In fact, the Galatian church did lots of good works. But it was through those good works that they were trying to become righteous. That was their error. That was how they practiced, "another gospel." That was how they had, "fallen from grace." And that was how, "Christ was of no effect for them." They were living on an entirely false basis – that of works rather than grace.

Do we realize that if we try to merit a blessing from God through our works – works like tithing and planting a seed – that we are actually, through those works, trying to make ourselves righteous enough to merit that blessing? Sure. To merit a blessing you must be righteous enough to merit it – and to be righteous enough to merit it you do works. This is deception. It is unbelief. It is sin. It is a false Christianity.

For the last two-thousand years professing believers have practiced, "another gospel," in many ways. And exactly what is, "another gospel?" For the Galatians it was to live under the law as the means of righteousness. But there are other ways to live in a false Christianity; to live under a false gospel. Yet in order to grasp the error we must first see the Truth.

The Gospel of Grace

What is the gospel? -- What is the true good news of God? The good news is a PERSON – Jesus Christ, the Son of God. The gospel is the revelation of the Person of Jesus Christ – Who He is, what He has done, what He is doing, and what He will do. Note that the gospel is not merely a message ABOUT a Person. It is the Person Himself.

The outcome of the gospel for the individual is, "Christ in you, the hope of glory." (Col. 1:27) We are joined to the Lord in resurrection union by first repenting and taking our place in His death. We are united in spirit with Christ in both His death and resurrection – which is how we are joined to Him. (I Cor. 6:17) The Christian life that emerges is that the believer comes into a growing inward realization of Jesus Christ (Gal. 4:19) that renews our mind and comes to govern our entire self. All of this is preliminary for God's greater purpose for the eternal ages.

All of this is made possible by the grace of God – not an irresistible grace – but by the grace and Truth that is given in Jesus Christ that must be received by faith. And the life that emerges is

based upon that same grace because Christ IS our life.

Now, here is the point: Christ is the life of the believer. Grace and Truth are given IN Christ. We are saved by grace through faith. God is the God of all grace. We are not under law, but under grace. Given all of these basic Truths of Christianity, do we actually believe that we must be under the law of tithing, or any law, in order to avoid the curse of God and garner His blessing? Must we plant a seed in a ministry in order to receive what God has already given in Christ freely by His grace? Is the Christian life lived out on a basis other than the grace by which we are saved?

Any Christian life that is practiced upon a basis other than CHRIST as our life – other than upon the basis of the grace of God – is a false Christianity. It is, “another gospel.”

All Things Freely Given

Freely you have received, freely give. (Mat 10:8)

He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things? (Rom 8:32)

Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. (1 Cor 2:12)

I will freely sacrifice unto thee: I will praise thy name, O LORD; for it is good. (Ps. 54:6)

John answered and said, A man can possess nothing, except it be given him from heaven. (John 3:27)

There is absolutely nothing that is of God that we are able to muster up out of ourselves. All that is of God must be of His grace – must be given IN CHRIST. God has given all that He has to give IN HIS SON. Thus, in order to experience what God has given we must experience and live in CHRIST.

Hopefully, we can see what a terrible contradiction to the Truth of the gospel of grace it is to introduce LAWS such as tithing into the Christian life. And hopefully we can see that the error is not merely that we might tithe when we do not have to tithe. The error is not merely that we misinterpret scripture. No. The actual error is that we are blind to the Truth and walking in unbelief. May God open our eyes to see Jesus Christ in spirit and in Truth.