

GRACE RESPONSE Versus Tithing By Law



God loves
a cheerful
giver.

**Restoring The Joy Of Bringing
Offerings Before The Lord**

DICKSON

Grace Response Versus Tithing By Law

Roger E. Dickson

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rdickson@mweb.co.za
www.africainternational.org
YouTube: Roger E. Dickson
www.blog.africainternational.org
Facebook: Africa International.org
Philadelphia, Western Cape, South Africa
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INTRODUCTION

The spirit of discipleship is summed up in 2 Corinthians 4:15: *“For all things are for your sakes, so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God.”*

The church of our Lord is a community of grateful people. It is a community of people who have responded with thankful service to the grace of God that was poured out through the atoning sacrifice of the incarnation of God on the cross of Calvary. In their freedom from sin, and their inability to justify themselves through perfect keeping of law, Christians are those who have been drawn to the cross where Jesus did that which they could not do for themselves. They are characterized by “paying forward” because their sins were paid for in the past. It is not that they seek to place God in debt to save them. If they sought to do this, then they would nullify the grace of God (See Rm 4:4). In Christ they have been saved, and thus, they are living a life of thanksgiving. They do not live with the burden that they would receive a reward for their works. They already have the reward because of the grace of God. Therefore, they live in gratitude for that which they have received in Christ, and will be realized when He comes again.

When digging through the Holy Scriptures in order to discover the awesome privilege of expressing our gratitude for the sacrificial offering of Jesus, the profound meaning of sacrificial giving jumps off the pages of the Holy Writ. When we discover the emotional wonder of giving out of love instead of law, we experience the spirit of Jesus that was poured out as a gift for us. His giving has inspired a “thank you” in our hearts. When we understand how much God so loved us through the cross, our response is to so love Him by giving to others as we have been given to. It is as Paul wrote in 2 Corinthians 5:14: *“For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge that if one died for all, then all died”* (See Jn 3:16; 1 Jn 4:19). This is the true spirit of Christianity. Our offerings, therefore, are out of love, not compulsion or law.

The “willing spirit” that responds to God’s giving was first mentioned by Paul in reference to his preaching the gospel. *“For if I will-*

ingly do this [that is, preach the gospel], *I have a reward*” (1 Co 9:17). This is the spirit of giving. Notice how this willing spirit is brought by Paul into the context of giving. “*For if there is first a willing mind, it is acceptable according to what one has and not according to what he does not have*” (2 Co 8:12). This is a profound concept, especially in our deliverance from the bondage of giving according to law. A willing mind is the foundation of a cheerful giver. When we fully understand the cross, we are motivated to express our thanksgiving through giving as our salvation was freely given to us.

With the nation of Israel, however, it was somewhat different. Israel lived under the bondage of law that legally tutored the nation to the cross of grace (Gl 3:19-25). In reference to offerings, therefore, the Israelites gave according to the requirements of the Sinai law. In contrast to law, however, the Christian gives because of his gratitude for the grace of God. God, through the Sinai law, defined for the Israelites the specific amount they were to bring as an offering before the Lord. But under the grace, Christians themselves define the amount of the offering. In the context of contributions, Paul referred to this principle when he wrote, “*And this they did, not as we had hoped, but they first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God*” (2 Co 8:5).

The Jews gave because of commandment. The Christian gives because of thanksgiving. Therefore, **those Christians who seek to live under the tithing restrictions of the Sinai law have cheated themselves of the joy that comes in bringing free-will offerings before the Lord out of a willing spirit and a heart of thanksgiving.** They have actually robbed themselves of a “willing spirit.” And without a willing spirit there is no joy when we make our offerings. We view our offerings as a burden and not an expression of joy.

In our giving, we must always have a sense of knowing that we have given our time through our offering in order to advance the work of God. We must appreciate that our contributions indicate our labor for the Lord to continue His mission to preach the gospel to the world and care for the unfortunate (Js 1:27; 3 Jn 5-8). Free-will offering, therefore, is giving ourselves to the Lord.

It is for this reason that we must take another look at the practice

of tithing that has been so corrupted in the frenzy of religious priests and pastors who would stir up guilt, rather than free-will, in order to move their adherents into submitting to their obsession for money. There are too many M & M religionists among us, that is, “miracles” and “money” religionists who seek to gain wealth at the expense of sincere hearts who simply want to respond to the grace of God. They are religious predators, who, as the sons of Eli, take advantage of the spiritual obligations of the sincere in order to profit themselves (See 1 Sm 2:12-17). They do so to the point that the people “*abhorred the offering of the Lord*” (1 Sm 2:17). The people of Israel came to abhor that which they were obligated to do, that is to bring an offering before the Lord. When the people start to view the preacher as a profiteer, it is then that they begin to “abhor the offering to the Lord.”

We were once living in the West Indies when an “M & M” predator came through the island of Antigua where we were living in the early 1980s. Upon arrival, he and his cohorts first went to the hardware store and purchased several large buckets for the meeting. To begin the meeting in the early hours of the evening, the “M & M” preacher stood up and cried out, “God wants a miracle tonight!” The people shouted the response, “Amen!”, not realizing that the preacher was using “miracles” as the bait to get their money.

After about an hour of raving and shouting, the preacher and his cohorts passed out the buckets to collect the money. The buckets were then returned to the preacher. He looked in the buckets, and then cried out, “There is not enough money for a miracle to happen tonight!” So he raved on that the people must give in order that they be blessed with a miracle. He shouted that God would bring a miracle if they had enough faith, and their faith must be expressed through their giving.

The bucket brigade again passed out the buckets. The buckets came back, and again, the preacher was not satisfied. “There can still be no miracle tonight,” the preacher cried out, “for there is little faith revealed in the buckets.” He continued to bait the hook by promising miracles, and then, passing out the buckets hour after hour.

The sadness of the story is that the people were so emotionally caught up in the frenzy of the moment that they cried out, “Amen,

Amen!” They had been baited with promises of miracles, and thus, they were fully hooked to give everything they had in their pockets. At about midnight, the preacher was emotionally wasted. Finally, some deceived and beguiled person came forward to be “healed.” He too had been emotionally worn down by the endless ranting and verbal abuse of the preacher.

The next morning the preacher and his bucket brigade boarded an airplane and went on to the next island to carry on again a religious circus in order to extract money from the innocent for the purpose of gain. The people in Antigua were left with empty hopes and a feeling of guilt because they were convinced that they did not have enough faith to be healed. They were victims of a religious predator.

The unfortunate truth about what we might consider a unique event of a Balaamite preacher in Antigua happens almost every Sunday morning in thousands of religious meetings throughout the world (2 Pt 2:15). People have been burdened with so much guilt by the Balaamite preachers who preach for gain that they simply throw money in the bucket in order to find some relief from being harangued about giving. In their unwilling contributions, they find a token of relief until next Sunday morning when the whole rampage of imposed guilt and profiteering continues. While the Balaamite drives to the next meeting in a fine vehicle, saying to the people, “God will bless you too if you will give,” the people continue to be burdened with the guilt of a false hope that they also will be “blessed” some day with a fine vehicle.

The unbelieving world turns away in disgust from these religious charlatans. It is time, therefore, that we take another look at the concept of “tithing” that was initiated in ancient times when thankful people expressed their gratitude to God for all that He had done in their lives. It is necessary to understand that we are not under law, but under grace. It is as Paul wrote, “*For you are not under law, but under grace*” (Rm 6:14). We must understand this point clearly, for Paul was referring to being compelled by some law in order to give to the Lord. But Christians are not under any such law. In being set free from law through the grace of God, Christians are now free to give willingly out of the abundance of their hearts.

Chapter 1

THE TITHE

Tithing (meaning, a tenth part) of one's produce, livestock and spoils of war originated before the giving of the Sinai law to Israel on Mount Sinai. Over four hundred years before the giving of the written law of tithing at Mount Sinai, Abraham tithed part of the spoils of war to Melchizedek, who was a Gentile king and priest of God at the time (See Gn 14:17-20; Hb 7:4).

- **Principle of tithing:** Because Abraham tithed to the Gentile king prior to the giving of the Sinai law, the principle of tithing had already been given by God to those who walked according to an unwritten revelation of law that God gave to all those who lived by faith (See Hb 1:1). However, before the giving of the law at Mount Sinai, it is not known exactly where tithing a tenth part to rulers and priests originated. The practice existed in ancient Babylon, as well as in Persia and Egypt. Even in ancient China there is evidence that tithing existed in the religious culture of ancient China. Our first conclusion concerning the practice of tithing would be that it was not unique with the Israelites alone. We would also conclude that tithing was not always practiced in a religious context, but also in the paying of taxes to the state, as in the tithe that Abraham paid to Melchizedek who was the king of Salem.

- **Israel tithed:** In the law that was given to Israel at Mount Sinai, tithing was mandated to Israel that the Israelites give of the produce of their land that included tithes of both crops and livestock. In the early years of the existence of Israel as an agricultural state, there was no use of money for exchange purposes. Tithing, therefore, was of their crops or livestock that manifested the giving of their labors. The purpose for their tithing was to support their spiritual leadership, the Levites and priests, which Levites functioned as the “governors” of the tribal states. This allowed the Levites to function as the spiritual leaders of the people

on a full-time basis. The Levites in turn were to give tithes to the priests who administered to the spiritual affairs of the people.

- **Tithing of produce and animals:** In reference to the produce of the land, the Israelites were to tithe the fruit of their trees, oil and wine. They were also to give the animals of their herds and flocks (Lv 27:30-33; see Dt 14:22,23; 2 Ch 31:5,6). At the time of tithing, when their livestock went out to pasture, every tenth animal that passed under the rod was tithed as holy to the Lord (Compare Jr 33:13; Ez 20:37). Though we do not understand all the procedure of the animals “passing under the rod,” we can conclude that there was no arbitrary closing of those animals that were to be tithed to the choice of the owners.

In the process of determining the animal to be tithed, the owner did not have the right to choose which animal was to be given to the Lord. He could not exchange any tenth animal that was tithed. Neither was the owner allowed to buy back any animal that was tithed. However, tithes of the seeds of the crops and the fruit could be bought back. If they were bought back, however, twenty percent of the value of the tithe was to be added to the cost of buying back the tithe. We would assume that the reason for being allowed to buy back the seeds of the crops was for the purpose of maintaining the people’s survival during times of famine.

- **Purpose of the tithe:** The Israelites were instructed to tithe in order to support the Levites since the Levites did not receive an inheritance of land when Palestine was first divided among the Israelite tribes (See Nm 18:21-32; see also Hb 7:5). The tithe the Levites received from the people was for their spiritual service to the people in teaching the law and service at the tabernacle (Nm 18:21,23). They were to receive tithes from the grain of the threshingfloor and wine from the wine press (Nm 18:27). From the tithe that was given to the Levites, a tithe of this offering was also to be given by the Levites to the priests who served in the ministry of making sacrifices for the people. This was a tithe of the tithe (Ne 10:38,39). The Levites who received tithes were also to tithe of that which they received from the tithes of the people.

• **Place of the tithe:** The tithe was to be brought to the tabernacle, wherever the tabernacle was alternately set up in the tribal territories of Israel each year throughout their history (Dt 12:5,6,11,18; see Am 4:4). When this tithe was brought to the tabernacle, it was to be eaten as a sacred meal. It was to be eaten by the one who brought the tithe, his household, and the Levites. In other words, the eating of the tithe during the Passover meeting was as a communal meal in which both priests, and the one who offered the food for the meal, participated. It was a “fellowship meal” between priests and contributors.

If the journey was long to the location of the tabernacle in a particular year, then one could sell his tithe of crops or livestock where he lived and take with him to the tabernacle meeting a tenth of the value of that which he received from the sale. He could then bring the proceeds he received from the sell to the tabernacle and buy oxen, sheep and wine in order to eat the offered tithe with his household and the Levites (Dt 14:22-29). Unfortunately, by the time of Jesus this practice was greatly corrupted (See Mt 21:12,13; Mk 11:15-17). Unfair exchange rates were given by the Pharisees at the temple, and thus the religious leaders of the time were making a profit from the business of exchanging money.

• **The various tithes:** There was also the third-year tithe. This tithe was for the Levites, the foreigners, orphans and widows (Dt 26:12-15). This was often referred to as the “poor tithe.” According to some Bible students, the “first tithe” was to be given to the Levites, from which tithe the Levites were to tithe to the priests. The “second tithe” was to be taken from the remaining nine-tenths of the owner’s livestock and crops. This tithe was to be taken to the tabernacle meeting and eaten with one’s household in fellowship with the Levites. In the third year, that which composed the “second tithe” was to be given to the Levites, foreigners, orphans and widows, as the “poor tithe.” But according to Josephus, who wrote the latter part of the first century, the “poor tithe” was actually an additional “third tithe” that the priests and Levites were also required to give to the foreigners, orphans and widows (See *Antiquities*, IV, v; 3; VIII:8;22).

- **Temporary tithe:** Though tithing took place before the giving of the Sinai law, it was legislated under the law for the preservation of the Levites and priests who ministered to the spiritual well-being of national Israel. Tithing was also legislated for benevolent causes, specifically for orphans and widows. Since the proselyte (the foreigner, a convert to Israel's faith) had no land inheritance, then it seems that in some ways he was to be supported with the "poor tithe" until he was financially established in order that he could support himself and his household in the land of Palestine, and also tithe to the spiritual leadership of Israel. Tithing to the proselyte, therefore, was never a tithe that was to continue indefinitely. The foreigner was simply sustained until he could support himself, his family and then pay tithes himself.

- **Legal tithing:** Tithing was a legal system of support to sustain different social structures within the Israelite society, specifically the spiritual leaders who had the responsibility of spiritually leading the people and administering the law of God in a theocratic system of government. The tithe for Israel, therefore, originated from the Sinai law that was given to Israel alone. The law specifically defined the tithe, or tax, that was to be paid in order for the nation of Israel to function as a nation in the land of Palestine.

The tithes that were to be consumed by the one who offered the tithe were meant to maintain the social interaction between the people, and the spiritual leaders who were the Levities. The sacred meal that was provided by the tithing Israelite was to keep himself and his family in fellowship with those who had the responsibility to spiritually lead the nation. All tithes were given to the Levites in order to sustain the families of the priests in their service at the tabernacle.

God established the tithing as a law for Israel to obey. He did this in order to guarantee that the Israelites be spiritually led by those who had the responsibility of teaching the people the law of God. He also wanted to make sure that the unfortunate of the land be cared for until they could sustain themselves. We assume that this tithe continued until the first year of crops came in order that the family support themselves.

Chapter 2

THE TITHE IS GONE!

When we transition from the Old Testament to the New Testament in reference to tithing, most people make a fatal mistake of interpretation on the subject of tithing. In reference to contributions, most people seek to live under law, and thus, they bind on themselves those laws of the Sinai law that were given specifically to Israel. This is particularly true of those predator preachers who obsess over money in order to extract contributions from those who are free in Christ. They do so for the sake of their own gain.

Balaamite preachers who seek gain for themselves would take those who are free in Christ back into the bondage of law in order to generate “tithes” for themselves. This is particularly true in reference to their personal support. But we see something different that was instituted in the New Testament for the support of Spiritual leaders. The motive for contributions under the law of liberty are different than meritorious obedience to tithing what was commanded under the Sinai law.

Unfortunately, too many people have associated the Sinai law of the tithe with the free-will offering that is a vital part of Christians behavior. They have taken a word that was used in the Old Testament—“tithe”—in order to define the concept of free-will giving in the New Testament. Associating the free-will giving that is motivated in response to grace with legal obedience to the Sinai law concerning tithing, leads to an unfortunate misunderstanding of grace-motivated giving.

It is true that the practice of giving the tenth part (the tithe) to the Lord existed before its first recorded mention in the Old Testament. The “tithing” practice existed before the giving of the Sinai law to Israel. The practice was incorporated into the Sinai law at Mount Sinai. However, when we come to the New Testament, we must understand that the principle of giving to the Lord continued, but giving in reference to the restrictions of only the tenth part did not continue. The motivation for giving under that law of Christ is far greater than giving

according to the demands of law and the limitations of only one-tenth.

• **Change in law:** This point is very confusing to many people. It is confusing because most do not understand that there is a difference between the Sinai law that was given specifically to the nation of Israel and the New Testament law of freedom under which Christians now live. If one does not understand the difference between the Sinai law and the law of grace under which Christians now live, he or she will never understand the principle of tithing that is mentioned throughout the Old Testament, and why Christians are no longer under the Sinai law of tithing.

The fact that one is always to bring offerings to the Lord has been a part of godly living regardless of what law one is under as a child of God. There is no argument about this, especially as we survey some key passages in the New Testament that relate to this matter. However, there is a difference between the legal “tithe” of the Sinai law and the free-will offering that is emphasized throughout the epistles of the New Testament. Therefore, if one says that we must “tithe” today because of what the Sinai law commands in reference to tithing, then he or she has missed the point of why Christians are to bring their free-will offerings before the Lord. In fact, it could be stated that if one assumes that he or she is still under the Sinai law of the tithe, then he or she can limit their contributions to the ten percent tithe.

But if we limit our contributions to the ten percent of the tithe, then we are limiting the grace of God. We forget that the grace of God moves one far beyond the law of the tithe. Some use the word “tithe” in this context in reference to the concept of contributing to the Lord. If we understand that the word “tithe” is used in a generic sense to simply refer to contribution, then we could possibly do such, though using this specifically defined word of the Sinai law to explain the Christian’s response to grace can be somewhat misleading. Christians give in response to grace, not in response to law. “Tithe” is a specific word that is used in reference to actions in response to obedience to law. However, Christians have been set free from the bondage of law, though they have not been set free from their responsibility to support

the work of the Lord. We must keep this clearly in mind as we move our studies from the pages of law in the Bible (the Sinai law) to the pages of grace in the New Testament.

Chapter 3 THE FREE-WILL OFFERING

Tithing under the Sinai law was a legal requirement of the law. It was thus a work of law that manifested one's obedience to the law, which law was given exclusively to the nation of Israel. The Israelites' legal obedience to the Sinai law, therefore, was a signal that they sought to maintain the covenant that God had established with them at Mount Sinai (See Dt 5:1-5; Ex 19:4-6; Ne 8:1; Rm 3:1,2).

- **Freedom from law in Christ:** Christians are no longer under the Sinai law (Rm 7:4). They have been freed from the limitation of law in order that they be able to work more abundantly in response to the grace of God (See Cl 2:14). This is what the Holy Spirit meant when He wrote through Paul, "*You are not under law, but under grace*" (Rm 6:14). So for this reason, **Christians are moved to give more than the required tithe of the Sinai law.** They have been freed from the ten percent tithe of the Sinai law in order to give according to their appreciation of the grace of God by which they have been saved. All that God had done on our behalf for our salvation through Christ has set us free from the Sinai law, "*so that the grace that is reaching many people may cause thanksgiving to abound to the glory of God*" (2 Co 4:15).

- **Condemnation through tithing:** Those who believe that we are bound to the Sinai law, unfortunately often live in confusion in reference to our responsibilities to serve God, especially in matters concerning our response to God's grace. In fact, those who would meritoriously perform a law in reference to tithing have severed themselves from the grace of God.

Christians are under grace, not law. Paul wrote, “*And if by grace, then it is no more by works [of law], otherwise grace is no more grace. But if it is by works, it is no longer grace, otherwise work is no longer work*” (Rm 11:6). Now consider this thought in reference to some among the Galatian Christians who were reverting back to certain ordinances of the Sinai law, specifically circumcision, in order to be self-justified before God. “*You have been severed from Christ, you who seek to be justified by law. You have fallen from grace*” (Gl 5:4). If anyone would seek to use any law of God as a meritorious legal means by which to be justified before God, then he has fallen from grace. In other words, if one gives his “tithing” in an effort to be meritoriously justified before God because he had kept “the law,” then he is severed from Christ. This is true because there is no such thing in the Bible, as in our lives, as self-justification through perfect law-keeping.

The reason for this is simple. Paul wrote, “*For I testify again to every man who is circumcised, that he is a debtor to keep the whole law,*” if he would seek to live perfectly according to law (Gl 5:3). In other words, if one would seek to use circumcision, or even tithing, as a legal means by which to justify himself before God, **then he must keep the whole Sinai law perfectly in order to be justified before God.** The problem with this theology is that **no one can keep any law of God perfectly in order to self-justify himself before God.** And since one sin condemns, every man stands as a sinner before God on the basis that all have sinned (Rm 3:9,10). We all sin and fall short (Rm 3:23). Therefore, the one who gives according to the law of tithing is often seeking to self-justify himself before God on the basis of the meritorious performance of giving a tenth to the Lord.

- **The one-hundred-percent sacrifice:** If one maintains the belief that a tenth contribution can put God in debt to be satisfied with our sacrifice to Him, then he might consider again what Paul wrote in Philippians 2:5-8. It was in this context that Paul reminded the Philippians, “*Let this mind be in you that was also in Christ Jesus*” (Ph 2:5). The mind that we are to have as followers of Christ was spelled out in these words: “*Who, being in the form of God, did no consider it robbery to*

be equal with God. But He made Himself of no reputation ...” (Ph 2:7).

Since the Son of God gave one hundred percent for us, then it is reasonable to conclude that He would inspire one hundred percent from us. It is not that we put in the “collection plate” one hundred percent. It is a matter of understanding that Son of God put one hundred percent of Himself into our salvation. If we give our lives as a “*living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God*” in response to His grace offering, then it is only reasonable that we be a living sacrifice for Him (Rm 12:1). This reasonable sacrifice will always show up in our giving, whatever it may be. But since He gave one hundred percent, we would be quite foolish to think that we can sluff off the grace of God with a self-justifying ten percent offering.

Paul reminded the Galatians, “*A man is not justified by works of law, but by the faith of Christ Jesus ... **for by works of law no flesh will be justified***” (Gl 2:16). “*But that no one is justified by law in the sight of God is evident, for ‘the just will live by faith’*” (Gl 3:11). Therefore, if any Christian goes back to the Sinai law in order to tithe legally according to the limitations of the tithing law, **then he is fallen from grace**. He is seeking to meritoriously self-justify himself legally before God by legally trying to keep law perfectly. If such a one seeks to be justified by any meritorious obedience to law, **then he is a debtor to keep every article of the law**. In other words, and in the case of the judiazing teachers in Galatia, he must keep the whole Sinai law perfectly in order to be justified by the law.

Those who would use the Sinai law to bind tithing on the disciples of Jesus, are also debtors to keep the whole law, including the law of circumcision, animal sacrifices, the Passover, and the countless other ordinances of the Sinai law. “M & M” preachers need to keep this in mind as they take sincere people down the road of guilt in order to extract money from their pockets on the basis of the Sinai law on tithing.

- **Grace causes giving:** Christians are dead to the Sinai law by the body of Christ in order that they be married to Christ (Rm 7:4). Therefore, if one would want to remain married to the tithing of the

Sinai law, then he **cannot** be married to Christ. The reason for this is simple logic. **If we seek to limit ourselves to a ten percent contribution, then we are marginalizing the grace of God, if indeed we really understood the incarnational offering of the Son of God in the first place.**

So when considering contributions to God for the continuation of His work under the law of Christ, our sacrifices of thanksgiving are based on the principle of 2 Corinthians 4:15. Grace causes thanksgiving. God's grace causes thanksgiving in our hearts, which thanksgiving is manifested through our free-will offerings. **Christians give out of gratitude because of the grace of God that was poured out in their lives through the atoning sacrifice of Jesus on the cross.** Because we have married ourselves to Christ, we have married ourselves to the responsibly of preaching the gospel of His grace.

The Israelites tithed in legal obedience to the Sinai law. Christians give in response to the grace that God has poured out in their lives through His only begotten Son. Christians give because they are debtors to the grace of God (Rm 1:14). They thus contribute liberally (2 Co 9:6-15), even out of their poverty (See 2 Co 8:1-4). Because they understand all that God freely gave to them through Jesus, they freely give in return from the gratitude of their hearts.

Here is the principle for Christian giving: *“Let each one give according as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, **for God loves a cheerful giver**”* (2 Co 9:7). If one gives because of the compulsion of the preacher, then he is not giving cheerfully. If one gives because he or she feels obligated to give according to law, then again, this is not giving that is free-will. He is not giving as one whom God would motivate through the power of His grace. The next time we give because of the compulsion of law, or the guilt trip of an “M & M” preacher, then we must remember that God loves the one who gives cheerfully out of appreciation, not because he is bound by law to give.

We must never forget that **the free always give more than those who are in the bondage of law.** In order to inspire giving, therefore, we preach freedom in Christ in order to set people free to give as we

were freely given to by Jesus. This is exactly what Paul meant in reference to his own life. He stated the same in 1 Corinthians 15:10: “*His grace toward me was not in vain, but I labored [contributed] **more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me.***”

Christians are not restricted to a ten percent tithe. They are free to give according to the means that they have in hand (1 Co 16:1,2). Their love of others and appreciation for the grace of God in their lives, therefore, moves them to sacrificially give in abundance because they understand that it is more blessed to give than to receive (At 20:35). They thus give to the poor (At 20:35; Js 1:27), to evangelists who preach the gospel (3 Jn 7,8), to those who are teachers of the word of God among them (Gl 6:6), to other Christians who are in need (At 2:44,45; 4:32-37), and even to unbelievers who are in need (Gl 6:10). Christians, therefore, **are not restricted in their giving to the ten percent of the Sinai law tithe.** Because of the abundance of the grace that was poured out upon them, **they give abundantly.**

- **A Holy Spirit recorded example:** Consider as an example of sacrificial giving the case of the initial few disciples in Philippi. When Paul, Luke, Timothy and Titus walked into Philippi, they encountered and led to Christ a traveling single business woman and her household (At 16:15). A humble government worker, the jailer, and his household also gave themselves to the Lord (At 16:33). Paul, Timothy and Titus stayed only a few days in Philippi before they went on to Thessalonica (At 16:12; 17:1). And yet, their message of the gospel of grace had a profound impact on the hearts of those who heard in Philippi.

Now notice what Paul said of these few disciples many years later, among whom there were initially only two wage earners, the jailer and Lydia. “*Now you Philippians know also that in the beginning of the gospel when I departed from Macedonia, **no church shared with me concerning giving and receiving but you only. For even in Thessalonica you sent once and again for my needs***” (Ph 4:15,16). What makes newly baptized disciples do this? They had been Christians for only a few days, any yet, when the evangelists went on to Thessalonica they supported them.

Was their support of the evangelists something that Paul taught them? Or, **was it inherent in the nature of the gospel message they received and obeyed?** We believe the latter was the reason. They received a gospel message concerning the outpouring of God through His only begotten Son. The only way they could express appreciation for their salvation was to sacrifice for the continued preaching of the message of grace. Their thanksgiving for the grace of God to which they responded moved them to support the preaching of the same opportunity to others.

Even in hard times, the Philippians were willing do give to the needs of others. Philippi was in the province of Macedonia. Now notice what Paul wrote of the Philippian disciples in reference to their giving to the famine victims far away in the province of Judea:

*Moreover, brethren, we make known to you the grace [favor] of God that has been given to the churches of Macedonia, that **in a great trial of affliction, the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty, abounded in the riches of their liberality.** For I testify that according to their ability, yes, and **beyond their ability they gave of their own accord ...** (2 Co 8:1-3).*

Again we must ask, what makes people do this? This is a concept of true Christianity that the “M & M” preacher will never understand if he persists in his “money making” sermons to cast guilt upon the people. We believe that the message of the gospel of the incarnation of the Son of God is so great and powerful that it compels people to respond in sacrificial giving (See Ph 2:5-8).

Christians who clearly understand the gospel message of the incarnation and cross **do not have to be taught to give.** They only need to be directed to where to take their offerings. They would never dare come before the Lord empty handed, for the Father in heaven came to them with His crucified Son in His hand. And because His crucified Son set them free, they freely give in turn. If we would seek to increase our giving, then we must continually teach the message of freedom in the crucified Christ. Taking people back into the bondage of law re-

stricts our willingness to give. Bringing people to a greater understanding of the willingness of Jesus to set us free through the cross inspires free-will sacrifice on the part of those who have been set free by the cross.

- **Corrected motivation:** Under law, it is the mandate of the law that tithing was to be made. But under grace, it is our own will that we give in response to what God has given to us through His incarnate Son. Free-will offering can thus never be pleasing to God if it is the result of our response to law. It must be made from the grateful heart of the free.

We are free from law in Christ, and thus, fully willing to give all that we can because He gave all He could for us. We thus present our entire lives as a sacrificial offering before the Lord because He presented Himself in the flesh of man before us on the cross. Our offerings, therefore, are not a sacrifice, but a statement of who we are as the sacrificial flock of God. The Holy Spirit said it thus, *“Therefore, I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service”* (Rm 12:1). And again, *“I have been crucified with Christ. And it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me. And the life that I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me”* (Gl 2:20).

[Since the discussion of this book has been limited to information concerning tithing, a full discussion on contributions, and the responsibility of every Christian to support the work of the Lord is in Book 57, *The Godly Giver*, in the Biblical Research Library. Download free from www.africainternational.org.]

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ABBREVIATIONS

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis - **Gn**, Exodus - **Ex**, Leviticus - **Lv**, Numbers - **Nm**, Deuteronomy - **Dt**, Joshua - **Ja**, Judges - **Jg**, Ruth - **Rt**, 1 Samuel - **1 Sm**, 2 Samuel - **2 Sm**, 1 Kings - **1 Kg**, 2 Kings - **2 Kg**, 1 Chronicles - **1 Ch**, 2 Chronicles - **2 Ch**, Ezra - **Er**, Nehemiah - **Ne**, Esther - **Et**, Job - **Jb**, Psalms - **Ps**, Proverbs - **Pv**, Ecclesiastes - **Ec**, Song of Solomon - **Ss**, Isaiah - **Is**, Jeremiah - **Jr**, Lamentations - **Lm**, Ezekiel - **Ez**, Daniel - **Dn**, Hosea - **Hs**, Joel - **Jl**, Amos - **Am**, Obadiah - **Ob**, Jonah - **Jh**, Micah - **Mc**, Nahum - **Nh**, Habakkuk - **Hk**, Zephaniah - **Zp**, Haggai - **Hg**, Zechariah - **Zc**, Malachi - **Ml**

NEW TESTAMENT

Matthew - **Mt**, Mark - **Mk**, Luke - **Lk**, John - **Jn**, Acts - **At**, Romans - **Rm**, 1 Corinthians - **1 Co**, 2 Corinthians - **2 Co**, Galatians - **Gl**, Ephesians - **Ep**, Philippians - **Ph**, Colossians - **Cl**, 1 Thessalonians - **1 Th**, 2 Thessalonians - **2 Th**, 1 Timothy - **1 Tm**, 2 Timothy - **2 Tm**, Titus - **Ti**, Philemon - **Pl**, Hebrews - **Hb**, James - **Js**, 1 Peter - **1 Pt**, 2 Peter - **2 Pt**, 1 John - **1 Jn**, 2 John - **2 Jn**, 3 John - **3 Jn**, Jude - **Jd**, Revelation - **Rv**