

GRACE GIVING

Without apology the New Testament places a great deal of emphasis on the subject of giving. There are many commands, practical suggestions, warnings, examples, and exhortations concerning this important subject. Everywhere miserliness, greed, and avarice are denounced, and generosity, hospitality, and charity extolled. The same word which is used for the fellowship of the believer with his Lord is also used in relation to the collection of money in 2 Corinthians 8:4; thus, giving is of the highest spiritual character.

Perhaps the New Testament passage which sets forth most succinctly the basic principles of grace giving is 1 Corinthians 16:2—"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him that there be no gatherings when I come."

(1) Giving is a personal matter--let every one. Contrary to popular opinion that the church has such--and such a mission, one may search in vain throughout the entire New Testament for a single divine command or even entreaty addressed to the church as a whole. All the commands in this day are to individual believers. Likewise, in the matter of giving each believer sustains a direct and personal relationship to God as if he were the only Christian in the world.

(2) Giving is to be proportionate--as God hath prospered him. No hard and fast proportion is determined. This is fair, as another has well said: "Based on the tithe a rich man could satisfy his conscience by paying \$1,000 on \$10,000 of income, leaving him \$9,000 on which to live, but a poor man, paying \$100 on \$1,000 of annual income would have to struggle to live on \$900 for a year. If, however, the rich were asked to give as God had prospered him, he might well give \$6,000 and live comfortably on the remainder." Each time the Christian gives he is to reflect upon the Divine blessings so faithfully lavished upon him.

(3) There is to be a private deposit--lay by him in store. Contrary to the usual belief, the Christian is not told to turn in his gift each Sunday to the church treasury. The word "in store" means to gather and lay up, to heap up, or treasure, and the reflexive pronoun "to himself" indicates that it is to be kept in a private, not public deposit. The picture is that the believer is to have his own gift fund out of which he gives, sometimes on Sunday to the church and many times on other days of the week to other groups.

The word tithe is found only 8 times in the entire New Testament (Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42; 18:12, Heb. 7:5,6,8,9). In the gospel references it is used in connection with that which the Pharisees were doing. In the Hebrews references it is used to show the superiority of the tribe of Levi, for to them was given the tithe. There is no passage of Scripture that enjoins the tithe upon the believer in this age. It is very evident that the tithe is part of the law of Moses (Lev. 27:30-33), and it was an important factor in the economy of Israel. The law was never given to Gentiles and certainly the Christian is under no part of the law (Rom. 8:6-7; 2 Cor. 3:7-8; Heb. 7:11-12). No Christian today could tithe as commanded in the Old Testament, for, instance, where is the priesthood to which he would pay the tithe since every believer is a priest? Neither are the words of Malachi 3 for the Christian, for who among us claims to be a son of Jacob to whom the passage is addressed (vs. 6)? If material blessing is promised on the basis of tithing, then the apostle Paul must have been out of the Lord's will when he suffered need (Phil. 4:12). Faithfulness to God in everything does not necessarily guarantee material blessing.

Therefore, I do not tithe because (1) the tithe, as an integral part of the Mosaic system, is done away for the Christian; (2) obligation to tithe demands fulfillment of all other Mosaic requirements; (3) the law of which the tithe is a part was never given to Gentiles, much less the church, but to Israel only; (4) the tithe is opposed by its very character to grace as a rule of life; (5) tithing can no longer be practiced in a Scriptural manner; and (6) the blessings of the tithe were material, and the church is never guaranteed material blessings but is guaranteed all spiritual blessings in Christ.

But please do not think that this is lawlessness. Though we are not under the law we are in-laws to Christ, and this assures proper conduct in all realms including that of giving. When one says, "I do not tithe" he is not necessarily saying, "I do not give." I believe that every Christian owes 100% to God and I for one have said to Him that everything I have or hope to have belongs to Him. The question, therefore, is not what do I give to God; that question has been settled long ago. The question is: How much will He direct me to use for myself, and the answer to this question may vary widely at different times. The general principles of grace giving have been stated in the first paragraphs of this answer, and these are what we apply today. And generally speaking, proportionate giving amounts to far more than a tithe. It is a question of basic principles, motive, and resultant actions. We give because He gave, not because He commanded; we give because we want to, not because we have to; if in turn He blessed materially, we praise Him, if not, we still praise Him. This is grace giving.

Charles Ryrie

Written in response to Mrs. Lewis*
request to know if Westmont faculty
tithed.

1944 or 50.

Even then I didn't believe was
in today !! (2007)

* Magin down to Westmont.