

TITHING



The regulation under the law according to which an Israelite gave to God one tenth of his livestock and his gain from the land, and actually more if other sacrificial requirements are figured in; annulled with the law at the cross and replaced for this age with the principle of giving with joy as believer-priests (Heb. 13:16) and in proportion to God's financial provision (1 Cor 16:1-3; 16:2).

Hebrews 13:16 *And do not forget to do good and to share with others, for with such sacrifices God is pleased.*

1 Corinthians 16:1-3 *Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. 2 On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made. 3 Then, when I arrive, I will give letters of introduction to the men you approve and send them with your gift to Jerusalem.*

1. BIBLICAL AND HISTORICAL

a. Tithes - paid By Abraham to Melchizedek

Gen 14:20 *"And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand." Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.*

Hebrews 7:2-6 *and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, his name means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." 3 Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, like the Son of God he remains a priest forever. 4 Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! 5 Now the law requires the descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth from the people—that is, their brothers—even though their brothers are descended from Abraham. 6 This man, however, did not trace his descent from Levi, yet he collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises.*

b. Jacob vows a tenth of all his property to God, Gen. 28:22

Genesis 28:22 *and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth."*

c. Mosaic laws instituting

Leviticus 27:30-33 *"A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. 31 If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. 32 The entire tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod—will be holy to the LORD. 33 He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed."*

Numbers 18:21-24 *“I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting. 22 From now on the Israelites must not go near the Tent of Meeting, or they will bear the consequences of their sin and will die. 23 It is the Levites who are to do the work at the Tent of Meeting and bear the responsibility for offences against it. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. They will receive no inheritance among the Israelites. 24 Instead, I give to the Levites as their inheritance the tithes that the Israelites present as an offering to the LORD. That is why I said concerning them: ‘They will have no inheritance among the Israelites.’”*

Deuteronomy 14:28 *At the end of every three years, bring all the tithes of that year’s produce and store it in your towns.*

Deuteronomy 15:7-11 *If there is a poor man among your brothers in any of the towns of the land that the LORD your God is giving you, do not be hardhearted or tight-fisted toward your poor brother. 8 Rather be open-handed and freely lend him whatever he needs. 9 Be careful not to harbour this wicked thought: “The seventh year, the year for cancelling debts, is near,” so that you do not show ill will toward your needy brother and give him nothing. He may then appeal to the LORD against you, and you will be found guilty of sin. 10 Give generously to him and do so without a grudging heart; then because of this the LORD your God will bless you in all your work and in everything you put your hand to. 11 There will always be poor people in the land. Therefore I command you to be open-handed toward your brothers and toward the poor and needy in your land.*

1) Tithe of tithes for priests

Num. 18:26; Neh. 10:38.

2) Stored in the temple

Neh. 10:38,39; 12:44; 13:5,12; 2 Chr. 31:11,12; Mal. 3:10.

3) Payment of, resumed in Hezekiah’s reign

2 Chronicles 31:5,6 *As soon as the order went out, the Israelites generously gave the first fruits of their grain, new wine, oil and honey and all that the fields produced. They brought a great amount, a tithe of everything. 6 The men of Israel and Judah who lived in the towns of Judah also brought a tithe of their herds and flocks and a tithe of the holy things dedicated to the LORD their God, and they piled them in heaps*

4) Under Nehemiah

Nehemiah 13:12 *All Judah brought the tithes of grain, new wine and oil into the storerooms.*

5) Withheld

Malachi 3:8 *“Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me.” But you ask, ‘How do we rob you?’ “In tithes and offerings.”*

Nehemiah 13:10 *I also learned that the portions assigned to the Levites had not been given to*

them, and that all the Levites and singers responsible for the service had gone back to their own fields.

6) Releases blessing

Malachi 3:10 Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

7) Customary in later times

Matthew 5:42 Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you.

Matthew 19:21 Jesus answered, "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me."

Matthew 23:23 "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected the more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness. You should have practised the latter, without neglecting the former."

Luke 11:42 "Woe to you Pharisees, because you give God a tenth of your mint, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. You should have practised the latter without leaving the former undone."

Luke 12:33 Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys.

Luke 18:12 'I fast twice a week and give a tenth of all I get.'

2 Corinthians 9:5-7 So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to visit you in advance and finish the arrangements for the generous gift you had promised. Then it will be ready as a generous gift, not as one grudgingly given. 6 Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. 7 Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

Galatians 2:10 All they asked was that we should continue to remember the poor, the very thing I was eager to do.

8) Observed by idolaters

Amos 4:4-5 "Go to Bethel and sin; go to Gilgal and sin yet more. Bring your sacrifices very morning, your tithes every three years. 5 Burn leavened bread as a thank offering and brag about your freewill offerings - boast about them, you Israelites, for this is what you love to do," declares the Sovereign LORD.

2. GIVING AND THE LOCAL CHURCH

a. Confusion

Giving money and possessions is one of the most practical, yet frustrating and abused, areas in the Christian life. Every believer must make decisions as to how, when, why, and to whom to give. Yet many find that they do not have helpful guidelines in the form of teaching. And further, many assume things about giving—and getting—that are not in the New Testament. Should I tithe? How often should I give? How much is enough? What if I just can't give? Is it all right to pledge or make a faith-promise? Who or what should I give to? These are all legitimate questions that all believers must answer. Perhaps the best way to summarise this area of doctrine concerning the local church is this: every believer is obligated to give—but only in accordance with the teaching of the New Testament. The following discussion necessarily deals with practical aspects of giving, since this is not a doctrine (there is a New Testament doctrine of giving!) that can be treated in the abstract.

b. Principles and Guidelines

In Phil. 4:18–19 and Heb. 13:15–16 giving money is described as a priestly act, a form of worship, a response to the grace of God. Just as my public worship is to be directed by the Spirit, so also is my giving. Such giving is pleasing to God, as an Old Testament sacrifice might have been (Phil. 4:18–19). Because of the priestly nature of giving—a response to grace shown to individuals—no one can tell a believer how much to give, or where to direct his giving. Further, this rules out appeals to those outside the Body of Christ, since they are not priests and cannot give as such to the Lord's work; they have never experienced the grace of God.

One area of giving involves those who minister the Word of God in teaching: “Anyone who receives instruction in the Word must share all good things with his instructor” (Gal. 6:6, NIV). Providing for teachers is an obligation for every believer, for essentially everyone is taught by someone. Unfortunately this kind of giving is often neglected. 1 Cor. 9:11–15 describes this from another perspective. The one who ministers has a right to be supported, but that right can be forfeited, as in the case of Paul. It is important to remember that he never asked for money for himself, thus living in the Gospel ministry entirely by faith. Another aspect of giving to those who minister is found in 1 Tim. 5:17–18, where some elders may spend more time in ministry and do better at leading than others, and should be compensated proportionately.

1) Important Scriptures

Two important passages dealing with giving that also form a unit are 1 Cor. 16:1–2 and 2 Cor 8:1–9:15. In 1 Cor 16 Paul mentions the collections for the believers, and then resumes the same topic in 2 Cor 8:1, written a short time later. In 1 Cor 16 we learn:

1. Paul taught the same principles in Asia and Europe. His teaching was universal (see also 1 Cor 4:17 for the same principle). Therefore these principles of giving must have universal application.
2. The collection was part of ministry to the poor.
3. This is part of apostolic command.
4. Giving is to be done by individuals (“each one of you”)
5. Money is to be put aside, as in a fund.

6. There are to be no public collections.
7. Giving is to be done out of what is earned already (v. 2), not out of what is anticipated.

2) Learning from 2 Cor. 8:1–9:15

1. Giving is a part of grace (9:7), as opposed to the Old Testament tithe. Tithing (one tenth plus) was for those under the law. We are not under the principle of tithing today, since we are not under the law.
2. Giving comes after seeking God's will (v. 5). It is to be a matter settled personally between the individual and God after dedication to His direction.
3. The Corinthians had on their own asked if they could give. The amount and time were not specified. Paul, a third party, urges them to finish this commitment. The money is not for him. It is not a fixed, promised amount—that would violate 8:12. When the Macedonians had heard about the need in Jerusalem they had begged to participate on their own (8:4). Paul exhorts them to give, but not to him. The New Testament does not condone the requesting of money for one's own ministry or other needs. It is not found here and would violate 1 Cor. 16:1–2 and the free leading of the Spirit. God is quite able to supply the needs of those who minister in His name, by leading other individuals to give to those ministries He wants supported. Many have found that this works and brings great honour to God.

Giving is a privilege under grace, a responsibility under priesthood, and can be a blessing to believers and glorifying to God, if done in conscious obedience to the New Testament. As in all things, God prospers us as we follow His word. He does not promise to bless what is not done in accordance with His word. It is thus a biblical principle that the will of God can be discerned by the way God provides for lives and ministry through others. Dependence on the Spirit of God to supply financial needs is thus a key ingredient in determining how and where God wants us to serve Him. Forcing people to give eliminates this important part of God's leading.

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