Does the New Testament Teach Tithing?

Freedom in Giving Under Grace



RICK SIMONI

THE OVERCOMER PRESS

A TOP Publication

The Fulfillment in Christ Series

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This independent exposition examines whether the New Testament requires Christians to tithe. Its concern is the Christian conscience, faithful interpretation, and generous life in Christ.

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A Note on This Edition

This book is a fuller version of the series on The Overcomer Magazine. The chapters bring the studies together and expand the biblical discussion where readers may have questions.

The question is whether the New Testament requires Christians to give a fixed tenth as a covenant obligation. This is not an argument against generosity, regular giving, or the support of those who labor in the gospel. It is an examination of the authority by which a particular percentage is made binding upon the Christian conscience.

All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version. Old Testament passages are considered in their covenant setting, and applications are distinguished from explicit commands. The reader is encouraged to test the argument with an open Bible.

The chapters follow the series from the burden of transactional giving to the freedom of love in Christ. Several familiar arguments are considered from more than one passage so readers can weigh each passage in its own setting.

Preface

There is a kind of giving that looks faithful on the outside yet produces pressure, expectation, and quiet disappointment within. When a believer has been taught that a fixed payment guarantees a measurable return from God, financial hardship can become a crisis of confidence in the Father Himself. The question beneath the disappointment is often painfully simple: Have I failed Him, or has He failed me?

This book is written for those who have felt that burden, and for those who teach or receive teaching about giving. My concern is to restore giving to the ground on which the apostles place it: the grace of God in Jesus Christ, received in faith and expressed in practical love.

Christ is risen and reigns now. His life is ours even while we wait for the redemption of our bodies. To overcome is to continue in fellowship with Him through trial, receiving grace to believe, obey, forgive, and love. That life includes generosity which does not bargain with God or depend upon the pressure of men.

May these pages give you courage to examine what you have been taught and humility to receive what the Word actually says. Christian liberty is precious, but it is never permission to close our hearts. The freedom Christ gives makes room for willing service, honest stewardship, and care for those whose needs He brings before us.

Rick Simoni

How to Read This Book

Begin with the passages named in each chapter. Notice who is being addressed, what covenant arrangement is in view, and what the passage actually requires. A recorded act of generosity is not automatically a command that every believer must repeat in precisely the same form.

The distinction between the Old and New Covenants does not make the Old Testament irrelevant. It teaches us the holiness of God, His care for His servants and the poor, and the movement of His purpose toward Christ. The question is how those truths are fulfilled and applied, rather than whether we may ignore them.

The Gospels also require careful reading. Jesus' words about tithing in Matthew 23:23 must be faced honestly, alongside His words about the weightier matters of the law. Their setting matters. So do the apostles' instructions to the churches after His death and resurrection.

The Overcomer's Checkpoint at the end of each chapter is an invitation to prayerful examination. Let it bring the discussion into your own giving, your treatment of others, and your confidence in the Lord. Freedom from a compulsory percentage should lead us into the service of love.

CHAPTER 1

The Tithe That Became a Chain

A tithe can become a chain when giving is bound to fear, pressure, and the promise of a return. I once knew a brother who had paid his tithe faithfully for fourteen straight years. Beneath his impressive consistency lay a quiet disappointment.

He had been taught, directly or indirectly, that if he honored God with his ten percent, God would take care of his needs in a visible and measurable way. His circumstances had not reflected that expectation. Behind the conversation lay a troubling question: Why has God not come through?

When Giving Becomes a Transaction

The danger begins when giving is presented as a system that produces a predictable response from God. The heart learns to think in terms of exchange: I have done my part, so now God must do His. A relationship of trust becomes an attempt to secure a result.

God does respond to faith and obedience, and His promises are trustworthy. But He has not placed Himself under a financial formula of our making. We cannot turn a percentage into a claim upon Him or measure His fatherly care by the return on a payment. He remains Lord, wise in His purposes and faithful in His love.

Many believers would never call their giving a bargain. Yet when the expected blessing does not arrive, they wonder whether they have given enough or lost God’s favor. A teaching intended to encourage faith has instead burdened the conscience.

God Is Not Indebted to Man

> *“Or who hath first given to him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again?”*
>
> Romans 11:35

Everything we possess has first come from God. Giving cannot make Him our debtor. Paul does teach that God supplies seed to the sower and enables generosity, but the fruit he describes includes righteousness,

further giving, and thanksgiving to God (2 Corinthians 9:6-12). That is richer than a promise that each payment will produce a particular financial return.

Some believers strain their households because they have been told that a required payment must come before every other responsibility. Scripture honors sacrificial giving, yet Paul also says that a willing gift is accepted according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have (2 Corinthians 8:12-13). Care for one's household is itself a serious responsibility (1 Timothy 5:8). We should not set one apostolic instruction against another.

The Father Has Already Given

The deepest answer to a transactional view of giving is the cross. Paul reasons from the greatest gift to every lesser one:

> *"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?"*
>
> Romans 8:32

The Father did not wait for us to pay in before He gave. He gave first, and He gave His best. Our Lord likewise tells His disciples not to live in anxious pursuit of food and clothing, because "your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Matthew 6:32). Giving that rests on that knowledge is free of anxiety, free of bargaining, and free to be generous.

Lack Is Not a Verdict

The brother in this story had no reason to conclude that fourteen years of faithful giving had failed. Scripture does not treat lack as a verdict on a believer's faithfulness. Paul, who gave his life to the gospel, could write, "I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound: every where and in all things I am instructed both to be full and to be hungry, both to abound and to suffer need" (Philippians 4:12).

The Macedonian churches gave out of "a great trial of affliction" and "deep poverty" (2 Corinthians 8:2). Their poverty was not evidence that they had failed to give. Their giving was evidence of grace at work in them. When a believer is in need, the right response is not suspicion about

his giving record but patient prayer, practical help from the body of Christ, and renewed trust in the Father who knows what he needs.

Called to Liberty

> *"Stand fast therefore in the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free, and be not entangled again with the yoke of bondage."*
>
> Galatians 5:1

Paul's immediate concern is the attempt to bind believers to circumcision and the law as necessary to their standing before God. That warning also guards us against making a financial rule a condition of acceptance with Him. Christ has brought us into the liberty of sons, whose obedience grows from faith and love.

This liberty frees generosity from the attempt to purchase favor. We may trust the Father's promises without dictating the form or timing of His provision, and give sacrificially without making Him our debtor.

Anything that binds the conscience must be examined in the light of Scripture. Giving belongs within fellowship with our Father, free from a bargain He never made.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Am I measuring God's faithfulness by the financial return I expect from my giving? Ask the Lord to expose any bargain beneath your obedience and to teach you how to give with trust, wisdom, and an open heart.

CHAPTER 2

Teaching for Doctrines the Commandments of Men

It should not be easy to abandon a deeply held belief merely because a new idea sounds attractive. We are called to steadfastness. Yet steadfastness in the truth includes a willingness to examine what we have inherited. A teaching is not established simply because it is familiar or has been repeated for many years.

In Mark 7:6-8, Jesus rebuked men who honored God with their lips while teaching human commandments as doctrine. Their traditions had acquired an authority that belonged to the Word of God. The passage should make every teacher careful, including anyone who writes against compulsory tithing. Sincerity does not remove our responsibility to interpret Scripture faithfully.

A Necessary Distinction

The New Testament mentions tithing. Jesus addressed it directly when He rebuked the scribes and Pharisees for scrupulous tithing while neglecting the weightier matters of the law:

> *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."*
>
> Matthew 23:23

Luke records a similar rebuke: the Pharisees tithed "mint and rue and all manner of herbs" while passing over "judgment and the love of God" (Luke 11:42). In neither place did Jesus tell those hearers to neglect their obligations under the law. We should therefore avoid saying that the New Testament never speaks favorably of tithing.

In another setting, the Pharisee in Jesus' parable says, "I give tithes of all that I possess" (Luke 18:12). He brings his fasting and tithing into his prayer as evidence of his own righteousness. The publican asks for mercy,

and Jesus says it was the publican who went home justified. The tithe belongs to the Pharisee's account of himself. The Lord's verdict shows where a sinner's confidence must rest (Luke 18:9–14).

The question is more precise: do Jesus and His apostles establish a compulsory tenth as the rule of giving for the New Covenant church? Matthew 23 addresses people within Israel's Mosaic order, and Jesus explicitly calls their neglected responsibilities matters of the law. The passage does not identify church leaders as Levites or instruct Christians to pay a tenth of their income to a local congregation.

When the apostles instruct churches about giving, they appeal to grace, willingness, ability, and care for others (2 Corinthians 8:12-13; 9:7). Those instructions must govern the claim that a fixed percentage is required of every believer.

A Christian may choose to give ten percent and find that practice useful. The problem arises when that personal practice is presented as God's universal command or made a measure of another believer's standing before Him. We may encourage generous discipline without granting our preferred method the authority of Scripture.

Before the Cross

Our Lord was "made under the law" (Galatians 4:4). He lived, taught, and rebuked among a people who were under it, and His words in Matthew 23 must be read in that setting. The new covenant was ratified by His death, for "a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth" (Hebrews 9:17).

This is why the apostles' instructions to the churches carry such weight in this discussion. After the resurrection and Pentecost, they teach the pattern of New Covenant giving. They speak of grace, willingness, ability, and love. They do not tell the churches to bring a tenth. The silence of the apostolic letters on this point is not decisive by itself, but it becomes significant when we remember how much those letters say about giving.

When Tradition Feels Like Truth

Tradition often carries an unspoken assurance: if this teaching were wrong, someone would have corrected it long ago. Yet the men Jesus confronted had inherited, studied, defended, and passed on their traditions. Longevity had not made those traditions immune to His judgment. The proper question is whether the teaching can stand before the Word of God.

This is why the distinction between giving and a required religious payment matters pastorally. When a believer's standing with God is measured by a giving record, an administrative rule has become a spiritual verdict. A missed payment can then feel like a broken relationship with the Father. The teacher may intend to encourage faithfulness, but the conscience is being bound to a requirement whose authority has not been established.

The remedy is not to despise faithful teachers or reject every inherited practice. It is to bring our teaching back under Scripture and to correct it where necessary. Those who have taught a compulsory tithe can make that examination honestly without abandoning their concern for the church's needs. Truth and responsible provision belong together.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Can I distinguish what Scripture commands from the method I have been taught to follow? Examine both your own practice and the expectations you place upon others, leaving room for conviction without binding another person's conscience to a human rule.

CHAPTER 3

The Broken Logic of Continuity

A common argument says that tithing existed before the law, continued under the law, and must therefore continue unchanged after the law. The first two observations do not establish the conclusion. A practice's age cannot, by itself, determine its place under the New Covenant.

Circumcision provides a clear example. God gave it to Abraham before Sinai (Genesis 17:10), and it was also included in Israel's law (Leviticus 12:3). Yet Paul opposed its imposition upon Gentile believers as a covenant requirement (Galatians 5:2-3). Its existence before Moses did not authorize the church to require it.

Sacrifices likewise preceded Sinai, but Hebrews directs us to their fulfillment in the once-for-all work of Christ (Hebrews 9:12; 10:14). We must follow the way Scripture itself carries a practice forward, fulfills it, or brings its covenant function to an end.

This does not mean that everything found before the law disappears. Nor does it mean that every moral truth must be restated in an identical sentence before it can instruct us. It means that continuity must be demonstrated from the whole witness of Scripture, with Christ and the apostolic teaching governing our understanding.

For tithing, the decisive question is whether the New Covenant teaching makes a tenth binding upon believers. Abraham's example deserves attention, but an example is not yet a universal command. Before requiring a Christian to give a fixed percentage, we must show more than the fact that someone gave that percentage before Moses.

The Examples Must Be Followed Through

The apostles' resistance to compulsory circumcision was deliberate. Paul would not yield to those who sought to bring believers into bondage, because the truth of the gospel was at stake (Galatians 2:4-5). He described the law's preparatory role and the change that came with faith (Galatians 3:24-25). He also spoke of serving in newness of spirit rather than the oldness of the letter (Romans 7:6). These passages show why a practice cannot be carried forward merely by pointing to its earlier existence.

The same care is needed with altars and sacrifices. Noah built an altar, and Abraham built altars before the giving of the Mosaic law (Genesis 8:20; 12:8). The law later regulated sacrificial worship (Leviticus 6:9). Yet Hebrews does not tell Christians to preserve animal sacrifice because it is ancient. It points to the sufficiency of Christ's offering. Christian praise and generosity are also called sacrifices, but they are offered through Him and do not repeat the old sacrificial system (Hebrews 13:15-16).

The appeal of a fixed rule is understandable. It can make obedience seem easy to measure. But a measurable practice must still be tested by Scripture. We must not allow the reassurance of a familiar system to replace the harder work of following the Word into its fulfillment in Christ.

Fulfilled, Not Despised

Nothing in this argument treats the law of Moses with contempt. The Lord Himself said, "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil" (Matthew 5:17). Paul calls the law holy and the commandment "holy, and just, and good" (Romans 7:12). The law still teaches us the holiness of God and His care for the poor and for those who serve Him.

The question is not whether the law was good but under what authority Christians are now governed. Paul answers plainly: "ye are not under the law, but under grace" (Romans 6:14), and "Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Romans 10:4). The law commanded love and taught Israel to show mercy and generosity. The Holy Spirit bears the fruit of love in those who live in Christ.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Have I mistaken the antiquity of a practice for proof that it is binding upon every Christian? Read the passages in their own setting and ask how the apostles direct us to understand them in Christ.

CHAPTER 4

Abraham’s Gift and Jacob’s Vow

Genesis records two patriarchal accounts commonly used to establish a pre-law tithe: Abraham’s gift to Melchizedek and Jacob’s vow at Bethel. Both matter, but neither account states a command requiring all believers to give a tenth of their income.

Abraham gave Melchizedek a tenth after the rescue of Lot (Genesis 14:18-20). Hebrews identifies the gift as a tenth of the spoils (Hebrews 7:4). This is the one occasion of Abraham’s tithing recorded in Scripture. That wording is important: the record does not tell us everything Abraham ever gave, but it also does not establish a recurring income-tithing system.

Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and Abraham honored him with the gift. Hebrews develops the significance of their encounter in relation to priesthood and blessing. We should follow that inspired explanation before turning the event into a rule the passage does not state.

Jacob’s words were a vow made in response to God’s promise and presence at Bethel (Genesis 28:20-22). He promised a tenth of all that God would give him. The narrative records his pledge; it does not present that pledge as a command to every household or explain a universal system for collecting it.

The question is whether Abraham’s gift and Jacob’s vow establish a binding ordinance for the church. Abraham’s faith is explicitly set before believers (Genesis 15:6; Romans 4:3). A compulsory Christian tithe must likewise be established by Scripture, not assumed from a narrative detail.

A Gift from the Spoils

Abraham’s tithe was taken from the spoils of war, not from his regular income. He had just recovered the goods of Sodom and the people taken captive, and the king of Sodom offered him the goods as a reward. Abraham refused to keep any of them for himself (Genesis 14:21-24). Hebrews is careful to say that he gave Melchizedek “the tenth of the spoils” (Hebrews 7:4).

Scripture also tells us that Abraham “was very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold” (Genesis 13:2). Yet it records no occasion on which he tithed that

wealth, whether annually, monthly, or at any other interval. We honor the gift to Melchizedek, and we do well to notice what the text actually reports: a single act of thanksgiving after a victory that God had given.

Blessing and the Patriarchal Record

Genesis does not make Abraham's covenant standing depend upon a continuing tithe. God's promise and Abraham's faith occupy the center of the account, and Paul uses that testimony when explaining righteousness by faith (Romans 4:1-5). We should not move the center of the story from God's promise to a financial practice which the narrative does not establish as the condition of that promise.

Nor should we claim to know more than the record tells us. Scripture's failure to describe a later tithe from Abraham does not prove that he never gave one. Likewise, Jacob's conditional wording should be read carefully without treating it as proof that every motive in his heart was mercenary. The sound argument is narrower and stronger: these accounts do not state a universal, recurring tithe obligation for Christians.

Jacob's vow ends with the words, "of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Genesis 28:22). It is a moving expression of a man responding to the promise of God at a place he named the house of God. It is also a personal vow, made at a particular moment, and nothing in the passage presents it as a pattern that God required of Jacob's descendants or of the church.

To turn one recorded gift and one personal vow into a compulsory church finance system requires further warrant. Hebrews supplies a revelation of Christ's priesthood, not instructions for a modern collection office. The question remains whether the conclusion being imposed upon believers is the conclusion the inspired writers themselves draw.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Am I allowing a biblical example to say more than the passage says? Honor the faith and generosity of Abraham and Jacob while distinguishing their recorded actions from a command laid upon the church.

CHAPTER 5

What Old Testament Tithing Actually Was

The tithe prescribed in Israel's law was connected to the produce of the land and the increase of the herd and flock (Leviticus 27:30-33). It belonged to a covenant arrangement with specified recipients, purposes, and places. Reducing that arrangement to ten percent of every modern income paid into a church treasury leaves much of the biblical description behind.

Numbers 18:21 assigns Israel's tithe to the Levites for their service at the tabernacle. The Levites in turn were to offer a tenth of what they received, given to Aaron the priest (Numbers 18:26-28). Levites and priests should not be treated as interchangeable terms: the priests were of Aaron's house within the tribe of Levi.

Deuteronomy describes a tithe eaten before the Lord, with provision for converting the produce into money when the journey was too long and purchasing what was needed at the appointed place (Deuteronomy 14:22-27). It also describes the third-year provision stored within the towns for the Levite, stranger, fatherless, and widow (Deuteronomy 14:28-29).

Readers differ over the precise relationship among these provisions and whether particular tithes were additional or substituted in certain years. The argument here does not depend upon a calculated annual percentage. The plain point is that the law describes more than a simple payment from every person's wages to a religious leader.

The land, sanctuary service, and Levitical arrangements belong to the setting of these commands. The absence of a functioning Mosaic sanctuary system today is not the deepest reason for Christian liberty; Christ's fulfillment and the apostolic teaching are. We cannot simply transfer the ancient recipients' rights to church leaders without showing that the New Testament makes that transfer.

The purposes revealed in these laws still instruct us. God cares for those who serve and for those in need. The apostles carry those concerns into the

churches through their own instructions on support and generosity, without imposing Israel's tithe system.

A Tithe According to the Law

Hebrews itself describes the Levitical tithe as something the sons of Levi received by "a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law" (Hebrews 7:5). The tithe was therefore not a free-floating principle of generosity. It was part of the law's provision for the tribe that had no inheritance among their brethren in the land (Numbers 18:20-24). When that arrangement is lifted out of its setting, we should not be surprised that its details no longer fit.

It is also worth noticing what the law does not mention. The passages that define the tithe speak of the seed of the land, the fruit of the tree, and the herd and flock (Leviticus 27:30-33). They do not speak of the wages of a craftsman or the earnings of a fisherman. Such details should make us careful before we assume that the modern practice of tithing a paycheck is simply the biblical tithe under another name.

More Than a Percentage

The common modern definition often has three parts: ten percent of all income belongs to the local church, it must be paid there, and anything beyond it counts as an offering. Each part deserves examination. The word tithe does mean a tenth, but that definition alone does not establish the income base, the recipient, or the distinction between a required church payment and every other gift.

Israel's provisions involved food, celebration before the Lord, support for sanctuary service, and local relief. They cannot be compressed into the modern formula without changing important features. Even the use of money in Deuteronomy was part of a specified journey and feast; it does not simply turn the passage into a command about weekly wages.

The fulfillment of the sanctuary order in Christ is therefore central to the discussion (Hebrews 7:12; 10:14). The Christian's question is not how to reproduce selected parts of that order under new names, but how the apostles teach us to fulfill our responsibilities in the life of the New Covenant. Their teaching leaves no room for indifference to the poor or neglect of faithful servants. It also gives no permission to manufacture a tithe ordinance in the name of meeting those needs.

Overcomer’s Checkpoint

Does my understanding of biblical tithing match what the law actually describes? Let the details sharpen your reading and deepen your concern for ministry, hospitality, and the poor.

CHAPTER 6

Malachi 3 and the Storehouse Trap

Malachi's rebuke was serious. Israel had withheld tithes and offerings that belonged to God under the covenant, and the prophet called the people to return (Malachi 3:7-12). We do not honor Christian liberty by pretending that their disobedience was unimportant. The question is whether we may transfer that covenant charge directly to Christians who have not paid a tenth to a local church.

> *"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."*
>
> Malachi 3:8

The storehouse belonged to the provision for the house of God. Nehemiah describes chambers and treasuries associated with the grain, wine, oil, and portions for the Levites (Nehemiah 10:37-39; 13:10-13). Malachi's promise concerning the devourer and the fruit of the ground fits that agricultural and covenant setting.

Calling a modern church treasury the storehouse does not establish that it has inherited every right attached to the temple arrangements. That connection must be demonstrated, not created by repeating the word. The New Testament teaches support for ministry, but it does not make Malachi's storehouse command the church's collection rule.

Paul declares that Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13). This does not make selfishness harmless or place believers beyond the Father's correction. It does mean that a teacher must not threaten Christians with Malachi's covenant curse as though Christ had left them under a compulsory tithe.

The apostolic appeal to generous giving is strong, but its form is different. Paul directs each person to give willingly, as purposed in the heart (2 Corinthians 9:7). Malachi teaches us that God takes faithfulness seriously. It does not authorize us to attach His name to a financial threat the apostles did not impose upon the churches.

What Malachi Was Actually Confronting

Malachi's charge was wider than withheld tithes. The prophet rebukes priests who despised God's name and offered polluted bread and blind and lame animals on His altar (Malachi 1:6-8), and he denounces sorcerers, adulterers, false swearers, and those who oppress the hireling, the widow, and the fatherless (Malachi 3:5). The unpaid tithe was one symptom of a nation that had grown careless about the covenant. The book closes with a call to "Remember ye the law of Moses my servant" (Malachi 4:4), which fixes the whole prophecy within the Mosaic covenant.

The promise attached to the tithe also needs to be read as written: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house" (Malachi 3:10). The word meat here means food, which fits the grain, wine, oil, and livestock the Levites received. The devourer that God promises to rebuke is a threat to "the fruits of your ground" (Malachi 3:11).

Restoring the Covenant Setting

Malachi addresses the whole nation, and the threatened loss concerns the provision and fruitfulness of the land (Malachi 3:9-11). The language belongs with the covenant blessings and curses set out for Israel (Deuteronomy 28:1-24). This is a prophetic call to covenant faithfulness, not a detached formula for predicting the finances of every Christian household.

The tragedy of misusing it is not merely an error in a Bible lesson. A sincere believer may begin to see every repair bill, failed crop, or lost job as evidence that God is collecting an unpaid debt. Instead of turning to the Father in confidence, he turns inward to search his giving record. That is a heavy burden to place upon someone without apostolic warrant.

Christ's redemption from the curse of the law does not make obedience unimportant. It changes the ground on which we stand before God. Under the New Covenant, the blessing is not measured by barns and vineyards. Paul says that God "hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ" (Ephesians 1:3). Those blessings come to us in Him, not through a payment.

The call to mercy, hospitality, and support for faithful ministry remains searching, but it is addressed to people already received in Christ. The answer to a misused passage is neither fear nor selfishness. It is to receive

the whole counsel of Scripture in its proper setting and let grace bear its intended fruit.

Overcomer’s Checkpoint

Have I heard Malachi chiefly as a threat against my household? Read the whole passage in its covenant setting, then consider how the apostles call you to faithful generosity in Christ.

CHAPTER 7

Acts 15: The Council That Refused to Trouble the Gentiles

Acts 15 arose from a dispute about Gentile believers, circumcision, and the law of Moses. Some insisted that circumcision was necessary for salvation and that Gentiles must be commanded to keep the law (Acts 15:1, 5). The apostles did not treat this as a harmless preference. The truth of the gospel and the standing of Gentile believers were at stake.

> *"Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?"*
>
> Acts 15:10

Peter asked why a yoke should be placed upon the disciples that neither their fathers nor they had been able to bear. He then directed attention to salvation through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ (Acts 15:10-11). James concluded that the Gentiles turning to God should not be troubled, and the letter denied that the troubling teachers had received such authorization (Acts 15:19, 24).

The council's letter was not an exhaustive manual of Christian conduct. Its failure to mention a practice cannot, on its own, settle every question about that practice. We should not argue that because tithing is absent, the council explicitly discussed and abolished it. Luke records no such debate.

What Acts 15 does establish is the refusal to place Gentile believers under the Mosaic law as a covenant requirement. Anyone wishing to impose one portion of that system must therefore show how the apostles themselves apply it to the church. Merely selecting a familiar command from Israel's law does not answer that question.

Read beside the giving instructions in the epistles, the council's decision supports the same conclusion: believers are taught to live faithfully and generously in the grace of Christ, without being brought under a compulsory Mosaic tithe.

The Direction of Peter's Answer

Peter's answer deserves particular attention. He did not say that Gentiles would be saved by becoming like Jews under the Mosaic order. He confessed that Jewish believers would be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, even as the Gentiles (Acts 15:11). Both groups depended upon the same Savior and the same grace.

The council did issue necessary instructions concerning conduct and fellowship (Acts 15:28-29). Christian liberty was never a declaration that behavior no longer mattered. But these instructions did not establish the law of Moses as the governing covenant for the Gentile churches or authorize teachers to add further requirements at will.

The pastoral concern appears in James's determination not to trouble those turning to God. The apostles understood that unauthorized teaching could unsettle souls, even when it used biblical language. We should share that concern. Before telling a believer that his standing, blessing, or eligibility for fellowship depends upon paying a tenth, we must ask whether we possess the authority we are claiming.

Remember the Poor

Paul's own account of a conference with the Jerusalem leaders is instructive here. He says that those who seemed to be leaders "added nothing to me" (Galatians 2:6), and that the one thing they asked was "that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do" (Galatians 2:10). Many identify this meeting with the events of Acts 15, though that identification is debated.

Either way, it shows what the apostles emphasized in the matter of giving. They asked for remembrance of the poor. They did not hand down a percentage. The concern of the Jerusalem apostles was mercy, and Paul received it as something he was already eager to do.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Am I adding a covenant requirement to the grace by which God received His people? Let the apostles' care for the Gentile believers teach you to handle other people's consciences with the same seriousness.

CHAPTER 8

Ananias and Sapphira: What Peter Did Not Say

The judgment upon Ananias and Sapphira is among the most sobering events in Acts. It must not be softened into a lesson about poor financial planning. They agreed in deceit, and Peter exposed the lie as a lie to God (Acts 5:1-4).

> *"Whiles it remained, was it not thine own? and after it was sold, was it not in thine own power? why hast thou conceived this thing in thine heart? thou hast not lied unto men, but unto God."*
>
> Acts 5:4

Yet Peter's words also identify what their sin was not. While the property remained unsold, it belonged to Ananias; after it was sold, the proceeds remained within his authority (Acts 5:4). Peter did not charge him with failing to surrender a required tenth or with withholding a compulsory sale price.

The surrounding account describes remarkable generosity. Believers sold possessions so that needs could be met, and Barnabas is named as one who brought the proceeds of a sale (Acts 4:32-37). Ananias and Sapphira sought the appearance of that generosity while concealing the truth about their own gift.

This distinction matters. Voluntary giving does not make honesty optional. The freedom to retain property did not give them freedom to lie to the Holy Ghost. The church's liberty and the Lord's holiness stand together in the passage.

A teacher who uses this judgment to threaten anyone who has not paid a particular percentage inserts a requirement Peter did not state. The proper warning is already searching enough: we must not use religious giving to manufacture a reputation while deceiving others about what we have done.

A Lie Told in the Name of Generosity

Peter's first words to Ananias identify the source of the sin: "Ananias, why hath Satan filled thine heart to lie to the Holy Ghost, and to keep back part of the price of the land?" (Acts 5:3). The sin was a lie told to gain a reputation for sacrifice. It was not a failure to hand over a required portion. Afterward "great fear came upon all the church" (Acts 5:11), and that fear belongs where Luke places it, on the holiness of God and the seriousness of hypocrisy.

Our Lord warned against exactly this kind of display: "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven" (Matthew 6:1). Giving offered for the sake of appearance has already lost its Father-ward character.

Generosity Without Ownership by Leaders

Acts 4 describes believers of one heart and soul, with possessions made available to meet real need. Acts 5 prevents us from turning that generosity into an enforced surrender of every household's property. The same apostle who received gifts openly acknowledged the giver's authority over his property and its proceeds.

Church leaders are therefore servants who receive and administer gifts, not owners of the resources entrusted to the saints. They may teach, appeal, and account for the work. They must not claim a right to control every giving decision by attaching the judgment of Ananias and Sapphira to an unpaid assessment.

The passage also searches the receiving side of ministry. Where image, impressive totals, and public appearances matter more than truth, the danger exposed in Acts 5 is close at hand. We must not use the story to inspect the donor's heart while refusing to examine the honesty of the appeal. Truthfulness is required both of those who give and of those who ask.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Is my giving honest, or am I using it to preserve an appearance? Ask the Lord for integrity that is content to be truthful before Him without seeking praise for a generosity you have only pretended to show.

CHAPTER 9

Leadership Without the Tithe: The Silence of 1 Timothy 3

Paul’s qualifications for bishops and deacons concern character, sound teaching, self-control, household faithfulness, and a good testimony (1 Timothy 3:1-13). Titus receives similar instructions for appointing elders (Titus 1:5-9). These passages take the handling of money seriously: greed and the love of dishonest gain are incompatible with spiritual oversight.

Neither list establishes payment of a tithe as a qualification. That absence does not prove that a leader’s generosity is irrelevant, nor do these lists mention every possible expression of Christian obedience. It does mean that we should hesitate before making a particular giving percentage an apostolic test for leadership.

A wealthy donor may still be unfit to oversee God’s people. A believer with little money may possess the character and spiritual maturity the passages describe. Financial contributions cannot purchase the ability to teach, a faithful household, or a servant’s heart.

Paul also instructs the church to honor elders who labor in word and doctrine and supports their right to material provision (1 Timothy 5:17-18). We must hold that instruction alongside the qualifications. Rejecting a compulsory tithe is no excuse for expecting faithful workers to serve while the church refuses all responsibility for their support.

The apostolic pattern calls us to recognize qualified servants and care for them responsibly. It does not authorize us to replace that discernment with a financial threshold or make a donor’s influence proportional to the size of his contribution.

What Paul Actually Emphasizes

Paul’s concern about money runs in a direction worth noticing. His qualifications warn against covetousness and filthy lucre (1 Timothy 3:3, 8). He does not instruct leaders to establish their authority through the ability to collect a prescribed percentage. Peter’s charge to elders likewise rejects both dishonest gain and domination (1 Peter 5:2-3).

This challenges any practice that quietly grants major donors greater spiritual weight. A contribution may help pay an expense, but it does not prove that the giver's judgment is sound or that his character is ready for oversight. The church should be grateful without allowing gratitude to become favoritism.

There is also a warning for those who give. We must not offer money as a means of purchasing access, influence, or exemption from correction. The same Christ who frees us from a compulsory tithe calls us to humility. Giving should strengthen the fellowship of His body, not create a private claim upon it.

Wealth and Spiritual Weight

Scripture does not allow wealth to purchase standing in the church. James forbids showing favor to the man with the gold ring while despising the poor (James 2:1-4), and he reminds the church that God has chosen the poor of this world to be rich in faith (James 2:5). Paul likewise charges the rich "that they do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to distribute, willing to communicate" (1 Timothy 6:18). The rich are to be taught to give. They are not to be treated as those whose gifts qualify them to rule.

The same apostle warns that "the love of money is the root of all evil" (1 Timothy 6:10), and that root can grow as easily in the one who solicits money as in the one who keeps it. The qualifications of 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 guard the pulpit as well as the pew.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Do I measure spiritual fitness by the amount someone gives? Pray for leaders whose character reflects Christ, and consider how you can support faithful service without confusing generosity with authority.

CHAPTER 10

Pay or Give? The Difference Between Law and Grace

The distinction between paying and giving can help expose financial coercion, but the words alone do not settle the matter. Scripture speaks of lawful debts and responsibilities, and Christians must honor them. The issue here is whether the church may impose a fixed religious payment that the apostles did not require.

Paul's instruction is clear:

> *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver."*
>
> 2 Corinthians 9:7

This is purposeful giving. A believer thinks, decides, and acts. Willingness does not require spontaneity, and regular planning is not contrary to dependence upon the Spirit. Paul instructed the Corinthians to set something aside as God had prospered each one for the collection for the saints (1 Corinthians 16:1-2).

Grace also makes room for sacrifice. The Macedonians gave amid deep poverty and were eager to share in the ministry to the saints (2 Corinthians 8:1-5). Paul commends their willingness without turning their example into a demand that every household give beyond its means. In the same discussion he recognizes what a person has and refuses a scheme that would ease others while burdening the givers (2 Corinthians 8:12-13).

Christian giving therefore has both freedom and responsibility. It is willing, proportionate to circumstances, attentive to need, and capable of costly love. The absence of a compulsory tenth does not mean the absence of moral obligation to care for others. It means that the obligation of love must not be reduced to a percentage Scripture has not imposed upon the church.

Not by Commandment

Paul's own wording about the collection for the saints is especially revealing. He tells the Corinthians, "I speak not by commandment, but by occasion of the forwardness of others, and to prove the sincerity of your love" (2 Corinthians 8:8). He wants their gift to be "ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness" (2 Corinthians 9:5). Paul gave practical instructions for preparing the collection and appealed to the sincerity of their love in giving.

That appeal still has weight. Paul's approach teaches us that a gift is most fully a gift when it is given by the persuasion of love rather than by the pressure of rule. Churches and ministries can honor that pattern by speaking honestly about needs, accounting faithfully for what is received, and leaving room for each believer to answer before the Lord.

The Church Is a Family

When famine threatened, the disciples determined to send relief according to their ability (Acts 11:29). Their giving answered a real need among their brethren. It was neither an abstract financial performance nor a payment designed to secure a return. They shared because those who would suffer belonged to the same family in Christ.

That example helps us answer the fear that generosity will disappear without a compulsory tithe. The apostles did not rely upon a universal ten-percent assessment to produce concern for the saints. They taught the gospel, made needs known, encouraged purposeful action, and called believers to complete the generosity they had undertaken (2 Corinthians 8:10-11).

The life of grace still needs exhortation. It is not enough to say that a changed heart will always act generously without teaching or correction. Paul urged believers to bring willingness into practice. His appeal shows how to take giving seriously without treating the members of Christ's body merely as a source of revenue.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

Have I confused freedom with lack of planning, or responsibility with compulsory tithing? Consider a deliberate pattern of giving that reflects your means, your household responsibilities, and the needs the Lord has placed before you.

CHAPTER 11

Will We Have a King Over Us?

When Israel demanded a king like the nations, Samuel warned what royal power would take from them. The warning included sons, daughters, fields, servants, and a tenth of their produce and flocks (1 Samuel 8:5, 11-17). The desire for visible security carried a cost the people were unwilling to weigh.

This passage concerns monarchy and royal exactions. It is not a direct explanation of the Levitical tithe, and it does not prove that every request for financial support is an act of tyranny. Its application to church life must be made as a warning about power, not presented as a command the passage itself gives about church finances.

That warning is still searching. Religious authority can be used to serve people, or it can be used to make people serve the interests of those who lead. Jesus forbade His disciples to model their greatness upon rulers who exercise dominion. He directed them instead to His own service and self-giving (Mark 10:42-45).

Peter likewise instructed elders to shepherd willingly, without the pursuit of filthy lucre and without lording it over God's heritage (1 Peter 5:2-3). Such words do not remove the church's duty to provide for ministry. They govern the spirit and conduct of those who receive that provision.

Christ's reign teaches His servants how to lead. They may explain needs, teach generosity, and receive support with gratitude. They must not turn spiritual care into financial control or present their own institutional demands as though every demand came from the King Himself.

Visible Security and the Rule of Christ

Israel's request was not made in a vacuum: Samuel's sons had failed to walk in his ways, and the people wanted a king to judge them like the nations (1 Samuel 8:1-5). A real grievance did not make their chosen answer faithful. God identified the rejection of His kingship beneath their request (1 Samuel 8:7).

That detail should prevent a careless application. The lesson is not that all organization or visible leadership is wrong. Scripture appoints leaders and

requires responsible care. The warning concerns the exchange of trust in God for a form of human power that promises security while taking control.

Jesus told His disciples that the lordship practiced by the kings of the Gentiles must not become their pattern (Luke 22:25-26). The rule of Christ produces servants who care for His people. Budgets and buildings may serve that care, but they must not become reasons to manipulate the very people they are meant to serve. The searching question is whether our financial practices reflect His government and His character.

The King Who Became Poor

The Lord Jesus Christ is the King whose rule we confess, and He reigns in a way that no earthly king does. “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 Corinthians 8:9). He gave Himself for His people, “not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).

Paul’s conduct reflected that King. He reminded the Ephesian elders, “I have coveted no man’s silver, or gold, or apparel” (Acts 20:33), and he reminded them that his own hands had ministered to his needs (Acts 20:34). He did this without denying that ministers may be supported. He defends that right in 1 Corinthians 9:14, and explains, “Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ” (1 Corinthians 9:12). That is the spirit of a servant who has met the King.

Overcomer’s Checkpoint

Do the ways I lead, give, or respond to authority reflect the service of Christ? Ask whether the needs of people are being served and whether financial appeals leave room for honesty, accountability, and willing obedience.

CHAPTER 12

Hebrews 7 and Melchizedek: The Better Priest, Not a Better Tithe

Hebrews 7 makes Abraham's tithe part of an argument about priesthood. Melchizedek received a tenth from Abraham and blessed him; the writer then explains the significance of that relationship for Levi, who was still in his ancestor when the encounter took place (Hebrews 7:1-10). The point is the greatness of Melchizedek's priesthood in relation to the Levitical order.

Because Christ is priest after the order of Melchizedek, some reason that Christians must now tithe to Him through church leaders. But that conclusion requires steps the chapter does not supply. Hebrews does not identify pastors as successors to Melchizedek for collecting a tenth, nor does it instruct the churches how to make such a payment.

Hebrews 7:8 contrasts mortal recipients of tithes with the one of whom the scriptural testimony speaks as living. This belongs to the writer's presentation of Melchizedek and the superior priesthood fulfilled in Christ. Even if the verse is pressed as evidence of Christ's living ministry, it contains no command assigning a Christian tithe to a church treasury.

The chapter states:

> *"For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."*
>
> Hebrews 7:12

That change concerns the legal order associated with priesthood. It is not a bare declaration that every moral obligation has disappeared. Hebrews directs us to a better hope, a better testament, and the priest who continues forever (Hebrews 7:19, 22-25).

Our confidence rests in the living Christ, who is able to save to the uttermost those who come to God by Him. To make a new collection system the conclusion of this chapter is to turn attention away from the very ministry the writer is unfolding. Abraham's gift serves the argument; Christ's priesthood is its destination.

A Different Tribe, a Different Priesthood

The writer is explicit about whose priesthood tithing belonged to: the sons of Levi had “a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law” (Hebrews 7:5). Our Lord does not belong to that line. It is “evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood” (Hebrews 7:14). He became a priest “after the power of an endless life” (Hebrews 7:16), and the writer adds that “if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law” (Hebrews 8:4).

These statements matter because they show that Christ’s priesthood is not an extension of the Levitical system under a new name. He is the priest of a better covenant, ministering in the heavenly sanctuary (Hebrews 8:1-2, 6). It would be strange to answer that fact by establishing an earthly office to receive a tenth on His behalf, when Hebrews itself never instructs believers to do so.

It is worth noticing how much Hebrews does say about our response. The letter calls us to draw near with full assurance of faith, to hold fast our profession, to provoke one another to love and good works, and not to forsake the assembling of ourselves together (Hebrews 10:22-25). It reminds us, “But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased” (Hebrews 13:16). The New Testament letter that discusses tithing most fully never tells its readers to tithe.

The Worship of the Whole Person

Hebrews does not lead us from one priestly collection system to another. It leads us to the One who has offered Himself and now lives to intercede for His people. The greater priesthood is not a device for preserving the old arrangement under a Christian name.

The response it calls forth reaches the whole person. Through Christ we offer praise to God, and we do good and share with others as sacrifices pleasing to Him (Hebrews 13:15-16). Material generosity belongs within that worship, but it is not presented as the price of access to the heavenly Priest.

This is why the question at the end of the chapter must remain the question Hebrews is answering. Have we come to the Priest who continues forever, or are we seeking reassurance in the arrangements He has fulfilled? A discussion of tithing that leaves the reader thinking chiefly about a

percentage has missed the center of the passage. Christ Himself is the ground of our approach to God.

Overcomer’s Checkpoint

When I read Hebrews 7, do I follow the writer’s argument all the way to Christ? Let the passage establish your confidence in His continuing priesthood before asking it to support a financial practice.

CHAPTER 13

When Giving Is Driven by Fear

Certain phrases can settle deeply into a believer's conscience: you are robbing God; you are under a curse; you cannot afford not to tithe. The first two draw their force from Malachi's rebuke of covenant Israel. The third is a modern slogan, not a biblical quotation. Repetition can make all three sound like direct apostolic instructions to the church.

We should examine the teaching without assuming that every person who repeats it is dishonest. Some have inherited it sincerely. Nevertheless, a sincere warning can still be misapplied, and its effect can be severe. A believer may neglect real household needs because he fears that God will punish his family if a payment is missed.

The apostles do warn against greed and call believers to costly generosity. Paul teaches sowing and reaping (2 Corinthians 9:6), but he immediately joins that teaching to purposeful, willing giving (2 Corinthians 9:7). He then describes provision that enables good works and produces thanksgiving (2 Corinthians 9:8-12). We should not turn the passage into a guaranteed financial return or use it to override its own rejection of compulsion.

Another familiar appeal concerns the widow who gave all her living (Mark 12:41-44). Jesus saw the cost of her gift; He did not command every poor household to reproduce it. The surrounding warning about those who devour widows' houses should make anyone especially careful about using her example to pressure the vulnerable (Mark 12:38-40).

Clear teaching can be both firm and free from manipulation. We may name needs, appeal to love, and call selfishness what it is. We must also refuse to attach divine threats or financial guarantees to a percentage the apostles did not impose.

Fear Is Not the Spirit God Gives

Paul encourages Timothy to bear witness and suffer for the gospel with courage. He reminds him that “God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7). John writes about confidence in the day of judgment when he says that “there is no fear in love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment” (1 John 4:18). These passages help us distinguish the reverent fear of God from the dread produced by financial threats. The Father disciplines His children in love, and we should teach them to give with that same love.

Peter warns that false teachers “with feigned words make merchandise of you” (2 Peter 2:3). Many have received and passed on the teaching of a compulsory tithe sincerely. Peter’s warning reminds us how much care is needed when we appeal to the conscience of God’s people.

Testing the Familiar Phrases

“You cannot afford not to tithe” often implies that the Father’s care is withheld until a payment is made. Yet Jesus directs His disciples to the Father who feeds the birds, clothes the grass, and knows their needs (Matthew 6:25-33). His teaching calls them to seek the kingdom and trust their Father. It does not make that care something purchased by a tenth.

“God cannot bless disobedience” raises a different question. Certainly we are called to obey Him, and we must not use grace to excuse sin. But before applying that warning to someone’s giving, the teacher must establish that the disputed requirement is actually God’s command. Calling a practice obedience does not supply the missing authority.

“If you want God’s favor” can also turn a gift into a negotiation. The Christian’s acceptance is in the Beloved (Ephesians 1:6). God’s fatherly dealings include correction as well as provision, but our acceptance in Christ is not bought by a financial contribution. We may respond to grace with costly generosity without treating the gift as a purchase of grace.

A sound appeal invites us to trust the Lord and obey what He has said. Manipulation goes further, attaching His name to a promised return or threatened disaster He has not authorized us to announce. The difference must be maintained for the sake of both the giver and the teacher.

Overcomer’s Checkpoint

Which financial phrases still govern my conscience, and where do they come from? Bring them into the light of their biblical context, allowing the Lord to replace fear with truth and selfishness with willing love.

CHAPTER 14

The Law of Love: Giving as Free Men in Christ

The argument of this book does not end with permission to keep our money. It brings us to Christ, whose grace teaches us how to live together. Paul joins liberty with service: believers are called to freedom and are to serve one another through love (Galatians 5:13-14). The freedom He gives is fruitful in care for others.

> *"Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law."*
>
> Romans 13:10

Love fulfills the law's concern for our neighbor (Romans 13:10). John makes that concern concrete: a person who has this world's goods must not close his compassion when he sees a brother in need (1 John 3:17-18). We have not understood liberty if we use it to protect ourselves from every costly claim of love.

Supporting the Work and Meeting the Need

The apostles teach material support for those who minister the gospel (1 Corinthians 9:13-14), sharing with those who teach the Word (Galatians 6:6), and practical relief according to ability (Acts 11:29). In 1 Corinthians 9, Paul draws upon the provision for those serving at the temple to establish the right of gospel workers to support. He does not specify a tenth as the method by which the churches must provide it.

A congregation may plan its expenses, communicate its needs, and encourage regular giving. Those are sensible expressions of shared responsibility. A believer may also choose ten percent as a personal starting point. Neither choice must become a divine minimum imposed upon every other believer, and neither should become a ceiling beyond which love refuses to go.

Begin with gratitude to God, honest attention to your circumstances, and a willingness to see the needs around you. Provide for your household,

support faithful ministry, remember the poor, and remain open to unexpected opportunities for mercy. Giving is an aspect of discipleship, not a payment that purchases membership in the Father's favor.

Our treasure is Christ. As His life finds expression in us, generosity becomes more than compliance with an external demand. We learn to give because we have received, to serve because we are loved, and to care because the people before us matter to Him. That is the liberty this book seeks to recover.

Fellowship in the Gospel

Paul's relationship with the Philippians shows what New Covenant giving looks like at its best. He recalls that "no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only" (Philippians 4:15). He then says, "Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account" (Philippians 4:17), and he calls their gift "an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God" (Philippians 4:18).

Only then does he add, "But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:19). The promise is addressed to people who had given sacrificially, and its measure is God's riches in glory. It is not a promise that every gift will return as money. It assures generous believers that the Father who receives their sacrifice will not leave them forsaken.

This is fellowship in the gospel, a partnership in which the one who gives and the one who receives are both servants of Christ. Hospitality belongs to the same pattern, for Paul urges believers toward "distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Romans 12:13). The generosity of the church is as wide as the needs of the body.

Freely Received and Freely Given

When Jesus sent the twelve to minister, He told them, "freely ye have received, freely give" (Matthew 10:8). The immediate setting concerns the ministry He had entrusted to them, rather than a rule for calculating church contributions. Yet the pattern of receiving from Him and serving freely is consistent with the generosity the apostles later teach. The gift of God is not merchandise to be sold for personal advantage.

Stewardship also includes our time, hospitality, gifts, homes, and practical help. The Lord sees quiet generosity that no church ledger records. Ten

percent cannot divide life into God's portion and a remainder over which He has no claim. Everything is entrusted to us under His lordship, and a planned percentage cannot replace attention to people or the leading of the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:35).

Hebrews directs believers from the terrors of Sinai to Mount Sion and to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant (Hebrews 12:18-24). That is the larger movement in which this study belongs. We approach God through Christ, and from that fellowship learn to share what He has entrusted to us. Grace frees the heart for the obedience of love.

Overcomer's Checkpoint

What practical act of generosity should follow what I have read? Ask the Lord to make your freedom fruitful in a willing gift, faithful support, or personal care for someone whose need you can help to meet.

Glossary

Cheerful giver

Paul’s description of one who gives willingly and purposefully, rather than grudgingly or under compulsion (2 Corinthians 9:7). Cheerfulness does not exclude planning or sacrifice.

Christian liberty

The freedom believers have in Christ from bondage to the law as a covenant requirement for their standing before God. This liberty expresses itself through love and service, not selfishness (Galatians 5:1, 13).

Levitical priesthood

The priesthood of Aaron and his descendants within the tribe of Levi. Other Levites assisted in the sanctuary service. The law distinguished the tithe received by the Levites from the portion they gave to the priests (Numbers 18:21, 26-28).

Melchizedek

The king of Salem and priest of the most high God who blessed Abraham and received a tenth from him (Genesis 14:18-20). Hebrews uses the account to explain the superiority of the priesthood fulfilled in Christ.

New Covenant

The covenant established through Christ’s blood, bringing forgiveness and the inward work of God in His people (Luke 22:20; Hebrews 8:10-12). Its life and obedience are understood through Christ and His apostles.

Stewardship

The faithful use of what God entrusts to us. In this book it includes generosity, household care, honesty, and responsible support of ministry and those in need.

Storehouse

The storage associated with the provision for God's house in Malachi 3:10. Related temple chambers and treasuries appear in Nehemiah 10:37-39. Calling a church treasury a storehouse does not establish an identical covenant arrangement.

Tithe

A tenth. Scripture records patriarchal gifts and vows as well as the particular tithes prescribed for Israel under Moses. These settings must be distinguished before drawing conclusions about Christian giving.

Transactional giving

Giving treated as a payment intended to secure a predictable return from God. This differs from trusting His promises while leaving the form and timing of His provision to Him.

Yoke of bondage

Paul's language in Galatians 5:1 for the bondage against which Christian liberty must be guarded. Acts 15:10 also uses the image of a yoke in the dispute over imposing the Mosaic law upon Gentile believers.

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