

Living Word Fellowship Church
Pastor Paul Cannings, D.Phil.

A Biblical Analysis of How God Defines Stewardship

The Issue of a Tithe and Free-will Giving
Lesson 2

A. The time of Abraham:

1. Abraham did not give because of the law (God provided the Law to Moses, who came after Abraham) to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:17-24; Abraham gave based on the custom of his day.

2. Abraham's gift to God is because he recognized how good God had been to Him (Genesis 13:2-7, 14-18; 14:23). Abram believed in God and blessed God because of his faith in God, not because of the law.

a) "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." (Rom 4:16; NASU)

b) 10% of a person's gross income (1 Corinthians 16:2) did not start with the law; it **began** with faith, and after the law was fulfilled (Christ fulfilled all of it; Matthew 5:17), God did not say, "Do not follow Abraham." From the verses mentioned above, we should follow Abraham's giving when there was no law, it is a model we should follow.

c) The verses listed below teach us that God always intended Abraham's walk of faith to be a model for Jews and Gentiles, whether under the Law or grace (Genesis 12:3).

- "And I will bless those who bless you, And the one who curses you I will curse. And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed." (Genesis 12:3; NASU)

- "For the promise to Abraham or to his descendants that he would be heir of the world was not through the Law, but through the righteousness of faith." (Romans 4:13; NASU)

- "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." (Romans 4:16-17; NASU)

d) Note that in Hebrews 7:4-10 the writer is careful not to mention the word 'tithe' in this passage because to the readers, it would mean the three tithes that came under the Law: the Levitical tithe (Num. 18:21), the Festival tithe (Deut. 14:22-26), the tithe for the needy (Deut. 14:28, 29). The writer is careful to mention the church (Heb. 10:23-26), which is functioning under grace, tenth because it directly relates to what Abraham (operating by faith, like we are) gave. Again, the writer was careful to say a tenth (Heb. 7:4). Please note that the writer knows

that he is writing to a majority Jewish congregation, so if he said tithe, they would think he is speaking of all three tithes, which add up to 23 and 1/3, not 10%.

- “Now observe how great this man was to whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth of the choicest spoils. 5 And those indeed of the sons of Levi who receive the priest's office have commandment in the Law to collect a tenth from the people, that is, from their brethren, although these are descended from Abraham. 6 But the one whose genealogy is not traced from them collected a tenth from Abraham and blessed the one who had the promises.” (Hebrews 7:4-10; NASU)

B. The time of the Mosaic Law:

1. When God gave the Law to Moses, he formulated it using what was familiar in their culture. God's Law was, therefore, different, but it was familiar, making it a bit easier for the Jews to adjust to God's standard.
 2. Tithing was a part of their culture, so God **outlined** the laws for how he wanted them to tithe because they were now getting to know God. He wanted them to exercise faith in Him, like Abel and Abraham. This was not necessary for Abraham or Abel because they knew God personally.
 3. Tithing was designed to be an active part of worship. Without tithing, there truly was no worship (Ps. 96:7-9).
- a) A Levitical tithe (Num. 18:21)
 - b) A Festival tithe (Deut. 14:22-26)
 - c) A tithe for the needy (Deut. 14:28,29)
 - d) Offerings which were in addition to the required tithes (Deut. 12:17; Mal. 3:8-12)

This means that they were required to pay 23 1/3 of their gross income annually in tithes.

4. There were five main ceremonial offerings in the Book of Leviticus, and each of their main focuses were how each worshipper can maintain their relationship with the Lord God. They were as follows:

- a) **TRESPASS OFFERING** *** (Manifest sin as an act against God's law): The blood of the trespass offering cleanses the conscience and sends the trespasser back to the one he has wronged for restitution and restoration.” This was a sense of sorrow over some wrongdoing – a need for forgiveness.
- b) **SIN OFFERING** *** (Manifest sin as a part of man's nature): Mandatory atonement for specific unintentional sin (priest 4:3, community 4:13, leader 4:22, individual 4:27). Requires confession because these must become personally aware of their own sin. It is a sin even if they are not aware, 5:17. But obviously, no sacrifice would be offered until the conviction of sin takes place for instances of sin where no restitution was possible.

- A sense of guilt for the sinner's sin, seeking a pardon from God.

c) PEACE (FELLOWSHIP) OFFERING: Christ is our peace, Eph 2:14. This offering represents fellowship and communion with God. A sense of distance from God. Seeking to restore their relationship with God. This led to the following:

- Thanksgiving offering (Lev. 7:12-15; 22:29).
- Votive offerings (Lev. 7:16; 27:9-10).
- Free-will offering (Lev. 7:16; 22:18-23).
- Wave offering – sometimes used as a peace offering.

d) MEAL (GRAIN) OFFERING: It was the only bloodless offering, but it was to accompany the burnt offering (Num 28:3-6), sin offering (Num 6:14-15), and fellowship offering (Lev 9:4; Num 6:17). "We must come to Him first with our whole burnt offering. Then we keep coming with our continual meal offering"--Mears, 46. This is the sacrifice of daily devotion.

- This was done as a sense of gratitude seeking acceptance from God.

e) "BURNT OFFERING: This was the most common sacrifice in the ancient temple. The offering was fully consumed and speaks of complete surrender to the will of God.

5. "Though placed last, the sin and trespass offerings are included in all that goes before. The only reason burnt offerings, meal offerings or peace offerings can be made is that the blood of pardon has been shed."--Mears, 46. SEE ORDER OF SACRIFICE, NIVSB 150.

- A sense of complete devotion, full surrender to the Lord God (Romans 12:1). The person viewed themselves as owned by God. Same in the New Testament (1 Corinthians 6:20)

6. HOW DID THIS FUNCTION IN ISRAEL EVERYDAY LIFE:

a) Old Testament: Imagine a worshipper who has stolen one of his neighbor's sheep. He has returned the stolen animal to its owner, but now he feels the need for forgiveness from God.

- First, he comes feeling sorry for a sin he had committed, and by bringing a trespass offering, he received forgiveness. Then he came feeling guilty as a sinner, and by a sin offering he received pardon. Then he came with a sense of distance from God, and through bringing a peace offering he went away with a sense of renewed relationship with God. Then his heart was filled with a great desire to express his gratitude to God, and he came with a meal- offering which said "Thank you" to God. Now finally, as an act of utter devotion to the will of God, and craving God's complete ownership, he has brought a burnt offering.

b) NEW TESTAMENT RELEVANCE:

- "When we first come, as awakened and believing sinners, to the Cross, the first thing we see in it is forgiveness of our many trespasses. But scarcely have we begun to rejoice in the

forgiveness of our sins before we realize that there is a further and deeper need, namely, sin in our nature. This further need is met by a deeper insight into the meaning of the Cross. Christ not only died for our sins; He bore our sin, as typified in the Sin Offering. It is then, when we realize that both sins and sin have been dealt with in the Cross that we enter into wonderful peace with God, as set forth in the Peace Offering. Then, still further, we find rest and joy and complete acceptance with God in the glorious perfections of Christ as typified in the Meal Offering; while more and more we come into fellowship with God through the fullness of that one perfect Offering to God on our behalf which is set forth in the Burnt Offering. Is there not wonderful Divine design in all this?"

J. Sidlow Baxter, Explore the Book, I, pages 124-25.

When these worshippers completed this process (this was continuous) they had given 23 1/3 of their crop.

"We can give without worshipping, but we cannot worship without giving."

C. The time of grace that Christ established by His death, and resurrection seem to imply to some believers that the nature of giving changed and we can now give based on our free-will.

a) Offering was required in the Old Testament to show diligence in asking God to forgive sins. However in the New Testament we bring offerings in recognition of sins forgiven.

b) For some reason people seem to imply that free-will giving is give as you feel. This is far from the truth. Every example of free-will giving is far more than a tenth because the person is giving out of joy and excitement of what God has done for them so their gifts were bountiful (2 Corinthians 8:1-2).

c) This is the very reason why when Paul is speaking of free-will giving in 2 Corinthians 8-9 he mentions the word 'bountiful' (2 Corinthians 9:6). Here are some examples:

- This passage goes from Exodus 35:20-36:7. Here is a sample – "Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel departed from Moses' presence. Everyone whose heart stirred him and everyone whose spirit moved him came and brought the Lord's contribution for the work of the tent of meeting and for all its service and for the holy garments. Then all whose hearts moved them, both men and women, came and brought brooches and earrings and signet rings and bracelets, all articles of gold; so did every man who presented an offering of gold to the Lord." (Ex 35:20-22; NASU) This was done with such liberality Moses had to stop the people; "and they said to Moses, 'The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the Lord commanded us to perform.'" (Exodus 36:5).

- Similar examples can be found in many passages (Exodus 25:1-9; Proverbs 11:24-25; 28:19-20; Acts 2:44-45; 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 8:1-3).

d) In Corinthian when the scriptures discuss free-will giving it was for the church in Jerusalem, it was not to keep the church of Corinthian operating but to help with the needs of the church in Jerusalem. So, this is why it states to give in proportion to what you have (2

Corinthians 8:12; very similar to Exodus 25:21, 29) and therefore correctly assimilates to the meaning of free-will offering executed in the Old and New Testament.

e) A person must first give themselves to the Lord and to us; i.e., the church, by the will of God (2 Corinthians 8:5). This is very much the same as 'first-fruits.'

f) As God causes him to prosper so proportionately he should put aside for the church (1 Corinthians 16:2) from our gross not our net. This again is very much the same as 'first-fruits.' Abel gave as God prospered him; the fat of the animal.

g) When believers do not give all which the Holy Spirit directs them to give, they rob God (Malachi 3:8-10). God says as a result He will ensure they would be unable to enjoy the fruit of their labor consistently because the Lord is not pleased (Haggai 1:1-12; Malachi 1:6-14).

Summary:

A. The amount to give:

1. Please note that nowhere in the New Testament is a believer commanded to offer a tithe or one-tenth of his income. However no-where in the New Testament did the Lord ever say that a tenth is not required and nowhere in scripture (the entire Bible) does God ever require of us less than one-tenth, even in the case of free-will giving (explained below).

a) While teaching the church in Hebrews on the supremacy of Christ the writer establishes Christ supremacy (Christ being the head of the church; Colossians 1:18) while discussing the gift being offered to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:4-10). The tithe (tenth) is not mentioned in all the other offerings (Meal Offering, Peace Offering, Sin Offering, etc – these are ceremonial offerings that Christ death and resurrection replaced) because this was a time under grace not the Law. This distinction implies that giving a tenth (tithe) was still a part of how the church functioned.

b) Abraham's gift to God is because he recognized how good God had been to Him (Genesis 13:2-7, 14-18; 14:23). Abram believed God and blessed God because of his faith in God not because of the law.

- "For this reason it is by faith, in order that it may be in accordance with grace, so that the promise will be guaranteed to all the descendants, not only to those who are of the Law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all." (Rom 4:16; NASU)

c) These verses listed below teach us that it was always God's intent that Abraham's walk of faith was a model for Jew and Gentile, whether under the Law or grace (Genesis 12:3).

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also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, (as it is written, "A FATHER OF MANY NATIONS HAVE I MADE YOU") in the presence of Him whom he believed, even God, who gives life to the dead and calls into being that which does not exist." (Romans 4:16-17; NASU)

d) 10% of a person's gross income (1 Corinthians 16:2) did not start with the law, it started by faith and after the law was fulfilled (Christ fulfilled all of it; Matthew 5:17), God did not say do not follow Abraham. From the verses mentioned above, Abraham's giving, when there was no law is a model, we should follow.

e) When a Christian does not give all which the Holy Spirit directs him to give, he robs God (Malachi 3:8-10). God says as a result He will ensure they would be unable to enjoy the fruit of their labor consistently because the Lord is not pleased (Haggai 1:1-12; Malachi 1:6-14).