

Tithes & Offerings Today: The Significance of Giving To God

By Paul Norcross

We often hear that the tithe is Old Testament, and that it is no longer required in the New Testament. Usually developed in the vocabulary of being led by the Spirit to give in the New Testament (which of course is very good!), nevertheless I have never seen a proponent of this view ever faithfully give by the Spirit of the Lord. Usually, their giving degenerates to greed, and instead of God getting their first fruits – even if only out of duty to law – He gets little or none at all.

This is an abomination to God. Why? Because God honors the motives of the heart. When there is not even joyful and diligent giving of even ten percent, how can one go the further distance to accomplish being led by the Holy Spirit? The whole point of being led by the Spirit of God to go beyond the tithe is because it represents a greater dependence and trust upon God for one's finances, not less. The point of the New Testament is to increase in relationship with Jesus Christ, having gotten beyond the law.

Don't be deceived by the demonic doctrine regarding your finances and regarding the conditions for God's prosperity. God set the ten percent tithe standard in the Old Testament, and there is a curse for failing to honor it. The New Testament does not negate the Old Testament. Instead, The New Testament enables its fulfillment and launches the believer into a further, deeper covenant relationship. So if, in the arena of your finances, you have not performed at New Testament levels, then at least start with an Old Testament level.

Malachi 3:8-13a

Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. {pour...: Heb. empty out}

And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. {destroy: Heb. corrupt}

And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

Your words have been stout {chazaq = rigid, hardened} against me.....

We know from I Timothy 6:10 that the love of money is the root of all evil[1]. When we love our money more than God, we refuse to pay our tithe bill to God first. We pay our creditors and purchase our conveniences and necessities first. Thus we have placed our needs and desires ahead of God. Anything we place ahead of God is idolatry! Thus, the curses of Malachi arise in our financial lives. Instead of more blessings than we can even hold, the devourer – satan—steals, kills and destroys what finances we have. The bills get larger, with no provision to pay them. We work harder, trying to keep up, but the bag we use to hold our money develops holes. The cycle of self-reliance and self-provisioning breaks God's cycle of prosperity through our lack of faith – faith that God will do all that He said He will do for having the trust in Him to merely tithe!

So what if we go beyond the tithe? That is where the walk by the Spirit begins. Can a man or woman afford to rob God and not at least tithe? Not in God's book. God Understands Your Need

Our heavenly Father so very well understands your need. That's why He gave you something easy to start the financial blessing cycle in your life. He called it the tithe. It is a lot easier to take ten percent of your income and give it to the storehouse, the temple treasury back then, so that there is provision to bless and serve the people with the Word of God.

The mature Christian goes further. When tithing diligence gives way to truly honoring God in one's heart with their giving, they begin to enter the realm of the joyful heart, and being open to give even more as the Holy Spirit leads them. Now, what do you suppose God will do with that kind of heart? Much more. Much more prosperity and greater blessings flow to the one who determines they will honor God with their first fruits, not their leftovers. As you sow, you will reap. Slaying The Idol of Money

The love of money must give way to the love of God. The need for money must give way to the need for God. There is a process of heart growth toward God which must occur for God to extravagantly bless and prosper His people. Otherwise more

financial blessings become greater idolatry. God will not give what will cause destruction to the people of His pasture!

When one has not enough funds to pay bills, what is one more bill? Why not make God's bill, the tithe, your first bill paid (which would then be consistent with the first fruits concept of the Old Testament tithe and offering[2]) and thereby begin breaking the cycle of the curse against your finances? God is always for us and recognizes the hardness and stubbornness of our faithless hearts – paying our bill to Him enables Him to start flowing a financial blessing to us. As our hearts soften toward giving to Him, He flows more blessings to the giver. Softer heart, better finances. The tithe softens the heart enough for God to break the curse off one's finances.

For the deeply hardened heart, giving is torture. But willingness to change starts with being willing to be made willing. The tithe is easy to understand, and confronts the human heart with the unmistakable choice of honoring God, or remaining in lack.

People who become consumed with gambling, and even career planning and retirement investing, do so at great cost to their relationship with God when their trust in those plans eclipses their trust in God. Simply put, if those individuals are not at least good tithers, all their financial plans will come to naught. In their hardened, plan-focused hearts, they have violated God's principle means to train the human heart to love Him more than they love money.

It doesn't take God long at all, with His cattle on a thousand hills, to raise money to supply your need. Philippians 4:19 promises that He will supply all of your need according to His riches in glory in (en = at rest and continuance in) Christ Jesus. But it will take the non-tither a whole lifetime to dig out of the debts accrued from having robbed God.

May the Lord sever the cords of financial idolatry of our hearts, and prosper you with more blessings than you can even hold as you insist on doing His Word with your finances.

In His love with you,

--Paul Norcross

I Timothy 6:9-12

But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.

*For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
{erred: or, been seduced}*

But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness.

Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses.

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The whole land's produce was consecrated to God by the consecration of the first-fruits (Rom. 11:16); just as the whole nation by that of the firstborn. At the Passover, on the morrow after the sabbath, a sheaf of green barley (which is earlier than wheat), of the first fruits of the crop, was waved before the Lord. At Pentecost, 50 days later, two loaves of wheaten bread (Lev. 23). The feast of tabernacles, on the 15th day of the seventh month, was itself an acknowledgment of the fruits of the harvest. Besides these national offerings the law required that the first of all ripe fruits and liquors should be offered by individuals (Exo. 22:29). A cake of the first dough baked was to be a heave offering (Num. 15:19 ,21). The first-fruits of the oil, wine, and wheat were to be offered to Jehovah, for the benefit of the priests as His representatives (Num. 18:11 -13). The Talmud fixed on the 60th as the least to be given of the produce, a 30th or 40th as a liberal offering.

03519 1249.02 The individual presentation of the first-fruits in a basket took place at the temple or tabernacle. The offerer said: "I profess this day unto the Lord thy God that I am come unto the country which the Lord sware unto our fathers to give us." The priest took the basket and set it down before the altar of the Lord. The offerer added: "A Syrian (Jacob) ready to perish was my father, and he went down into Egypt ," etc. (Deut. 26). The Talmud adds that companies of 24 used to assemble at evening in a central station, and pass the night in the open air; the leader in the morning summoned them, "Let us arise and go up to mount Zion, the house of the Lord our God." On the road to Jerusalem they recited Ps. 122; Ps. 150. Each party was preceded by a piper and a sacrificial bullock with horns gilt and crowned with olive. The priests met them, and the Levites singing Ps. 30. Each presented his basket, reciting the formula in Deut. 26. King Agrippa, it is stated, once carried his basket as others.

03520 1249.03 The offerings were either bichuriym, raw produce, "first-fruits," or t₁rumowt, "offerings," prepared produce. Times of apostasy brought a neglect of this duty; the restoration of the offering of both kinds was a leading point in the reformation under Hezekiah (2 Chr. 31:5,11), and under Nehemiah (Neh. 10:35 ,37; 12:44). The prophets insist on this duty (Ezek. 20:40 ; 44:30; 48:14; Mal. 3:8). Fruit trees were to be regarded as uncircumcised, i.e. profane, for three

years. The produce of the fourth was devoted to God, and only in the fifth year the produce became the owner's (Lev. 19:23 -25)

(The following is in response to a letter in regards to tithing.)

Subj: Does God require me to give a tithe of all I earn?

Dear Brother,

God bless you brother in the mighty name of Jesus Christ!

I read the article that you sent me concerning there being no need to tithe in the New Testament, and of the slice of the issue which the author focuses on is certainly true. You can read the New Testament heart of God regarding financial giving (and of course other ways of giving) in 2 Corinthians 8 and 9. My point in the article I wrote (above) is that most believers never get to the heart of 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 because these chapters are beyond the tithe and into the category of abundant sharing above the tithe.

Many folks ask how can this be, and why is this an issue at all since the tithe is not really mentioned in the New Testament. But it is a lot like the Sabbath worship, and other Old Testament laws -- the New Testament goes beyond the law in every category. For example, is worship to be one day a week, or an everyday relationship?

Our giving is to be part of that every day relationship. The problem is -- when our exceeding of the Old Testament (by grace) slips to under-achieving even the minimal level of the Old Testament, then we are no longer living in the blessings of the New Testament in that portion of our lives. Jesus did not come to eliminate the law. He came to fulfill it. We also, in the wonderful grace of the New Testament, fulfill the law (thereby going beyond the law) by faith in Jesus Christ.

For example, if all we do with the Lord occurs only on Sunday mornings, then we have obviously neglected Him the rest of the week (as was typical of believers at various times toward God in the Old Testament) and slipped from a close fellowship with Him in faith. Our faith giving is to be part of that praise to the Lord. And if we merely tithe out of duty, we have done the same thing as the once a week Sunday thing. He wants more from us, by faith, in the New Testament. He wants our whole heart everyday.

Thus if we don't even joyfully recognize Him by faith with our finances at even an Old Testament level, how can we say that we are trusting Him with faith with our

finances to the extent of the New Testament? We fail to demonstrate financial faith when we fail to even measure up to the law -- a far cry from fulfilling the law. What doors does this open to the enemy (as clearly indicated in Malachi 3:8-11) to mess with our finances when our hearts are so closed that we even resent giving minimally (the tithe)?

The language of the New Testament goes to sacrificial giving (2 Corinthians 8:2-5), and verse 12 speaks to the willing mind to give. I submit to you that those who are unwilling to at least tithe do not have the caliber of heart that Paul, by the Holy Spirit, is talking about here in these chapters. He is really talking about those who have gone beyond the level of duty, and into the freedom in giving that willingly gives all, sacrificially as the joy of the Lord brings to one's heart, not just a skimpy tithe!

So, people can read their own favorite interpretation into all this, I suppose. But to me, the incredibly strong language of Malachi 3 (as well the stern warning of I Timothy 6:10) is in itself a warning not to misunderstand the Lord's heart in giving. Do we really want to under-perform the law and fail in the joy of His grace in our finances? I believe that to sow sparingly is to do the tithe. To sow joyfully and abundantly is to go beyond the tithe as we are led by the Holy Spirit to give, even sacrificially.

But don't take just my word for all this. Try not tithing (at least). See what happens to your financial blessings. Rita and I have been around the block many times on this issue in the last thirty years since coming to the Lord. We have seen the blessings when we have at least tithed, and we have seen the leaky money bag problem when we have not. But where we really love to live is in the abundance of His blessings when we go beyond the tithe and sow bountifully with joy! Perhaps this is why we have the profound blessing of having dedicated our lives to serving Him, and why He has prospered us in so many ways so as to enable us to keep serving Him. That's not an easy thing to do in the economics of our times! We praise God for that often.

May the Holy Spirit give wisdom and understanding to us all who seek to live by faith, and not by sight, even with our finances.

With all praise to Him from Whom all blessings flow,

--*Paul Norcross*