

## Message 1 - You must first give of yourself (2 Corinthians 8:5)

**[2Co 8:5 KJV] 5** And [this they did], not as we hoped, but **first gave their own selves to the Lord**, and unto us by the will of God.

In this passage, Paul is writing to the Church at Corinth to encourage them to participate in grace giving, or the support of missions, as the Macedonian churches did (see verse 1). The **'this they did'** in verse 5 refers to the support those Macedonian churches gave to Missions...

So for our missions month, this is a fitting verse to look at. Next week we are going to spend a lot more time talking about what grace giving is and how it can support missions but before that, today I want to focus on the fact that we can't really give to missions if you are not tithing first. Even though this verse is not talking about tithing at all, there is a really important principle in relation to tithing that I want to pick up on - and that is the churches of Macedonia **'First gave their own selves to the Lord...'**

A lot of what I am going through in these two messages is shamelessly stolen from a Baptist International Missions Incorporated series by a preacher called John Halsey - but that's ok I know where he got his material from (God, the Bible!). The DVD set is available online for about \$20 and well worth watching but I will also talk about some of my own experience in relation to tithing and grace giving.

So, first of all, what is a tithe?

The Hebrew word for tithe literally means the tenth part. A payment of the tenth part. As we will see in a moment, the tithe was primarily for the care of the priests in the OT and in the NT this relates to caring for your pastor and the upkeep of the church.

Before we go any further I want to make a really important point: **Tithing is a principle, not a NT commandment...** I'll say it again, a principle not a NT commandment, but hopefully you will agree with me that it's one worth following.

Now even if you are a saved person and you regularly give a tithe, I would ask you to still pay attention - please don't zone out, you might **learn** some things and it might also help you to make sure the **reasons** for what you are doing are right.

If your not saved or you don't regularly give a tithe, that's ok, I ask you to just listen with an open mind and see what you think about this principle.

Up until recently I would have said that even though tithing is not a new testament commandment we should do it anyway even though it was part of the law and its a good idea. But I can tell you now with 100% certainty that tithing actually pre-dates the law:

- Have a look at Gen 14:20 (turn there) - When Abram met Melchizedek, priest of the most high God, Gen 14:20 tells us 'he gave him tithes of all'
- We also see that Jacob tithed (again this is before the Law) - [Gen 28:22 KJV] 22 'And this stone, which I have set [for] a pillar, shall be God's house: and **of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee.'**

Now tithing was subsequently introduced as part of the law:

- [Exo 23:19 KJV] 19 **The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God.** Thou shalt not see the kid in his mother's milk.
- Leviticus 27:32 also tells us that **every tenth animal from the herd or flock belonged to God**)
- In Numbers 18:26 we see one of the practical applications of tithing

“[Num 18:26 KJV] 26 Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, **When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance**, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, [even] a tenth [part] of the tithe.”

God gave a tenth of the land for the priests - he did this so that they would be provided for along with part of the sacrifices being given to the priest. The Levites are the only tribe that didn't have an inheritance as part of the land (God said he was their inheritance - Joshua 13:33), they were to rely on God for provision through the tithes and offerings.

We don't have priests anymore because all believers are priests but I think providing for the pastor is an important use of the tithe.

- As part of the law, they also had principles such as leaving the corners of the fields unharvested (Lev 19:9-10)

[Lev 19:9-10 KJV] 9 And when ye reap the harvest of your land, thou shalt not wholly reap the corners of thy field, neither shalt thou gather the gleanings of thy harvest. 10 And thou shalt not glean thy vineyard, neither shalt thou gather [every] grape of thy vineyard; thou shalt leave them for the poor and stranger: I [am] the LORD your God.

This was another practical application - to provide for the poor and stranger (gentiles) - and it's exactly what we see in the book of Ruth when she is gleaning in the field of Moab. This isn't exactly a tithe, but it's effectively the same thing, it's the same principle.

It's worth noting the commandment to tithe is never REPEATED in the new testament but it is never REPEALED either. It's not REPEATED but it's never REPEALED, that means there is no biblical evidence to suggest that God has done away with tithing. In fact, the opposite is true, we see examples of giving in the new testament:

- [Mar 12:17 KJV] 17 And Jesus answering said unto them, **Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's**, and to **God the things that are God's**. And they marvelled at him.  
Technically this an old testament example because it pre-dates the death of Christ, but it is clear from the passage that Jesus **certainly** believed in tithing **AND paying taxes**. Render unto Caesar's what is Caesar's and to God what is God's.

- In Acts 2:44-45 - the bible told us that new testament christians sold all they had, and divided them up according to what everyone needed.
- Acts 4:34 also gives us similar example, they sold and divided their possessions and 'neither of them lacked any thing'
- In Acts 5 we also see the examples of Ananias and Sapphira - who sold their possession and were struck dead because they lied about the price and withheld part of the money (their sin was lying remember).
- All of these things show us that the notion of giving for furtherance of the gospel and for benevolence is well and truly alive.

So those people who tell you tithing is not a new testament commandment are right. But if they try to tell you that you don't need to tithe because we are under grace and not under the law... well, in a way they are right (we are under grace) but I think they are wrong and have missed the point. Tithing existed before the law and I believe it continues beyond the law.

Furthermore, in the NT there is still a need for the practical benefits of tithing - being able to provide for your pastor and also for the upkeep of the church and its members.

But if you will only give if you think its a commandment then personally I think you are looking at this all wrong. So why give?

### 1.1 Not because God needs you to

If you think you should tithe because God needs you, then sadly you are wrong. Have a look at Psalm 50, starting in verse 10

[Psa 50:10-14 KJV] 10 For **every beast of the forest [is] mine**, [and] the **cattle upon a thousand hills**. 11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field [are] mine.

For anybody that thinks God needs them: Newsflash! He doesn't need your money, he owns the cattle on a thousand hills he owns all the beasts of the forest and the fowls of the mountains.

God does not sit up in heaven, looking down as the offering gets passed around thinking 'Come on, he's going to open his wallet, I need that money.... C'mon... is he.... NO'.

I've got to tell you... **God is not broke**

[Psa 50:12 KJV] 12 **If I were hungry, I would not tell thee**: for **the world [is] mine**, and the fulness thereof.

God says in verse twelve if he was hungry he wouldn't ask you to provide him food. The whole world is his and he can do it himself! If he wanted money, gold or anything, he could just make it happen or point a pastor or a missionary to the biggest undiscovered gold vein in the world if he wanted to.

But look at verse 14 - the natural conclusion: 'Offer unto God thanksgiving; and **pay thy vows** unto the most High:' - pay thy vows. That's what this is really about.

The thing good really wants is us!!

God could make money money if needed, it's not a problem for God!

What God is looking for is committed people, he's looking for hearts. The heart has to come first and then the action, that's what James was talking about in James 2.

[Jas 2:17-18 KJV] 17 Even so **faith, if it hath not works, is dead**, being alone. 18 Yea, a man may say, **Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works.**

How on earth can anyone show they have faith without display that faith outwardly? That's what James is saying.

And this bring us quite literally to the heart of the matter. If you only want to give if you think its a commandment, if you don't think want to give, it's not because you have a financial problem, its because you have a heart problem. And I'm sorry if that offends you but if you examine yourself and ask God to examine your heart I think you will find its true.

Let me say it a different way: Churches don't have Financial problems, they have heart problems.

If a church has problems with money, problems supporting missions, problems getting people to help, problems getting people to attend... what do you think causes all these things? They are all heart problems

Matthew 6 tells us:

[Mat 6:19-21 KJV] 19 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: 20 But lay up for yourselves **treasures in heaven**, where neither **moth nor rust doth corrupt**, and where **thieves do not break through nor steal**: 21 For **where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

Two things to notice:

If you don't give then clearly you don't love. Where your treasure is, that's where your heart is.

If you do give, then God says there will be a reward in heaven. Unlike everything in this world its incorruptible, it can't be stolen and it will be eternal.

So if you were a broker would you encourage someone to invest in the things of this world (new cars, bigger houses, toys and all these other things) or invest in God and lay up treasure in heaven.

If your still not convinced, I'll tell you this: **If you don't want to give, don't... plain and simple.** That doesn't mean your not supposed to give - I firmly believe you are

supposed to give but if you don't feel that way then what you need to do is get your heart right with God.

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

- Example of the roses with the price tag and husband rubbing his wife's nose in it wailing about how much he spent on her
- How would you feel if you were that wife or your wife did something similar to you? Do you think she wants those flowers?
- But have you ever done that to God?

After Noah came out of the ark, the first thing he did was offer a sacrifice...

[Gen 8:20-21 KJV] 20 And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar. 21 And the LORD smelled a **sweet savour**; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man's sake; for the imagination of man's heart [is] evil from his youth; neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done.

God loves a joyful giver - when we give joyfully because we *want* to do it. When we give from the heart, God says it is a sweet savour - like smelling flowers - to God. He loves it, because he loves to be worshiped.

Make no mistake, God will accomplish his purpose without you if you don't want to give. He will succeed - the bible says so - but you are the one that missing out on the blessing (I will come back to that later). And you will never be a part of God's plans and God's blessing if you don't first give of yourself. It's not about money, it's about your heart - and if you don't want to give you need to get your heart right with God.

You must first give of yourself.

## 1.2 So why should you tithe? You should tithe because God is worthy of worship

Revelations 4 says:

[Rev 4:11 KJV] 11 **Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things**, and for thy pleasure they are and were created.

God is the creator of the universe - all things come from him and that is worthy of acknowledgement. All things come from him so tithing is a way of giving back a small portion (one tenth) to him. It's like saying 'Without you Lord, I would have nothing. So take the first tenth of everything I receive as a way of acknowledging all things come from you and you should be first in every aspect of my life'

Genesis 7 says...

[Gen 7:22 KJV] 22 All **in whose nostrils [was] the breath of life**, of all that [was] in the dry [land], died.

The bible says in God's nostrils was the breath of life, he provides every breath (Daniel 5 - Belshazzar told "the God in whose hand thy breath is"). I'm not sure if you've ever thought about it but if God stopped being then the whole earth would too. He is the sustainer of all creation and without him there is nothing...

The book of Lamentations chapter 3:

[Lam 3:22-23 KJV] 22 **[It is of] the LORD'S mercies that we are not consumed, because his compassions fail not.** 23 [They are] new every morning: great [is] thy faithfulness.

We are all sinners, worthy of destruction and only by his grace are we not consumed, every day. His holiness demands it but his love and his compassion withholds it and he holds off his return EVERY SINGLE DAY so that none should perish, no not one. And all any of us needs to do is accept the free gift of salvation Christ offered us when he died on the cross and paid for all of our sin.

If you don't think God is worthy of worship, then you don't know God. You need to ask him to reveal himself, to show you his grace.

But if you are saved, then you need to go back to that principle we found in Exodus (Exo 23:19) - the principle of firstfruits. You need to take the first of your life, the first of your money, the first of everything... and give it back to God. Why? Because HE is worthy!

In order to give anything to him, you need to first give of yourself.

### 1.3 It is 'expedient' - God will bless you

In Phillipians 4 Paul Says - [Phl 4:17 KJV] 17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

This is what Paul is talking about when he said in our opening text and verse 10 of 2 Corinthians - "[2Co 8:10 KJV] 10 And herein I give [my] advice: for **this is expedient for you**, who have begun before, not only to do, but also to be forward a year ago."

Paul says its for fruit to abound to your account. It is expedient or profitable for you, it's good for you. God wants every christian to bring forth fruit.

When I say God will bless I'm not talking about prosperity theology. People who think like that haven't read John 16:33 [Jhn 16:33 KJV] 33 These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. **In the world ye shall have tribulation**: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world.

The bible says in this world ye shall have tribulation, not sunshine rainbows and lollipops.

But I still think that Malachi 3:10, even though it is written to Jews is an important verse. I think like the tithe that the principle still applies.

[Mal 3:10 KJV] 10 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].**

God says 'prove me now herewith' - that word means to test, to 'try' it in the same way the purity of gold is tested by boiling it down in a furnace and melting away any impurities. God is saying test me, just try me, just prove me - he says if you will obey, then I will take care of you. And again, I'm not saying God will make you a millionaire but he says he will pour you out a blessing and it's certainly been my experience that God has taken care of Sandy and I.

Share my own experience and our family - not bragging, all of this is only of God. To him be all honor and glory.

God doesn't ask you to tithe because he wants you to suffer. It's about obedience, it's about honoring authority.

[1Sa 15:22 KJV] 22 And Samuel said, **Hath the LORD [as great] delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying the voice of the LORD?** Behold, **to obey [is] better than sacrifice**, [and] to hearken than the fat of rams.

The bible says obedience is better than sacrifice. Tithing is not some punishment, it's just obeying the word of God and giving him the honor and respect he deserves. But he wants you to first give of yourself...

If you are struggling to give yourself over to the Lord in any area, you need to settle that this morning. You need to give in because you are not going to win against God. You need to give your will over to him like Jesus did in the garden - thy will, not mine.

We will finish off with this exercise of looking at all your incomes and expenses (mental list)

Principle: first thing you take off is least important

Is it your tithe? You prove you love God least

Less than food, house, schools

## Conclusion

- Tithing is a principle not a NT commandment
- While not a NT commandment - it precedes and outlasts the law
- Tithing still has practical benefits for the NT church - caring for your pastor and taking care of physical needs of the church and its members... God has not introduced any system to replace tithing

- God doesn't need your money, he wants your heart - Abraham first gave himself. The Macedonians first gave of themselves...
- If you won't give money you've never given yourself!!! And if you haven't given yourself there is no point in giving money.
- God still wants you to give, but he wants you to give of yourself first.
- He is worthy of worship, in all aspects of our lives, including tithing.
- So make the decision, Settle it this morning - get saved if your not.
- If you are saved, decide to be sold out for God. And God will bless you for it and use you in his plans and allow you to be a blessing to others who need to know Jesus as their savior.