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Biblical Giving

Lesson 9 **GIVING AND THE LAW**

Christians disagree as to whether giving is part of the moral law of God and required by God, or whether giving is not part of the moral law and is only commanded. Those that believe it is part of the moral law state that the Christian is required to give 10% of his income to the Lord. Those who think that giving is only a command from God do not believe that giving 10% is required of the Christian. Those that believe the tithe is not required would say the Christian is to give as the Lord has prospered him, using 2 Corinthians 8 and 9 as their standard for giving.

The issue goes much deeper than whether the Christian should tithe or not. The real issue is what relationship the Christian sustains to the law of the Old Testament. Is he under law or grace? What view a person holds effects his concept on obedience, the Sabbath, the tithe and other issues. Those who believe tithing is not required of the Christian in the age of grace take the New Testament teaching alone on the subject. Those who believe that tithing is required of the Christian in the gospel age try to harmonize the teachings of the Old Testament and New Testament on giving.

There are good men on both sides of the question. Neither view may be totally correct, and the truth somewhere in the middle. Quite often Christians are arguing over semantics rather than doctrine. However, all Christians must try to harmonize all the teachings of both testaments on giving, and obey what he thinks the Bible teaches on this subject.

GIVING IN THE MORAL LAW BEFORE THE LAW OF MOSES

Gentiles Had the Moral Law. Hundreds of years before the Mosaic Law was given, the Gentiles had God's moral law written on their hearts. Paul tells us about the Gentiles and the moral law in Romans 2:14-16, and the context is about judgment because they failed to do what their own conscience told them to do.

(Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law, since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.) This will take place on the day when God will judge men's secrets through Jesus Christ, as my gospel declares (Rom. 1:14-16).

We may assume that the Gentiles gave to the Lord (probably a 10%) because the moral law stated this was God's standard.

Jews Gave a Tithe before the Mosaic Law. *Abraham* presented 10% of his spoils to Melchizedek, a priest of God Most High. **Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything (Gen. 14:20).** The tithe to Melchizedek is confirmed by the author of the Book of Hebrews (Heb. 7:2-6). Also *Jacob* is said to have given a tithe of all his property to God (Gen. 28:22).

These two verses in Genesis indicate that giving was a vital part of a true believer's lifestyle before there was a Mosaic Law. They give strong evidence that tithing was practiced before the Mosaic Law. Tithing was connected with moral law and not the Mosaic Law.

GIVING IN THE MOSAIC LAW

Mosaic Law. God gave the Law of Moses (the Old Covenant) to the nation of Israel. The Law consisted of 613 commands divided into moral, social, ceremonial, civil and dietary laws. The Law of Moses was a way of life for the Jew in the Old Testament.

The Jew gave three tithes each year that amounted to about 23% of their income—priestly tithe (Lev. 27: 30-33), festival tithe (Num. 18:23-24) and charity tithe (Deut. 14:28-29). The Levites (ministers) were also to give 10% of all they received of the first tithe from the Israelites and it was given to the High Priest (Num. 18:25-32).

Moral Law. The moral aspects of the Mosaic Law are summed up in the Ten Commandments (Exo. 20). While some times it is difficult to discern what is moral law and what is social or ceremonial law, it is fairly obvious that tithing (10%) was part of the moral law of God, even though the Jew was required to give about 23% to the Lord.

The Law Was a Blessing. According to Deuteronomy 28, the Law brought blessing to those who tried to keep it, and cursing to those who did not. ***Cursed is the man who does not uphold the words of this law by carrying them out (Deut. 27:26).*** Yet, King David loved the Law. ***Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long (Psa. 119:97).***

GIVING AND THE MOSAIC LAW BY JESUS

Jesus Kept the Law Perfectly. Jesus was born, lived and died under the Mosaic Law system. He kept the Law perfectly; therefore, He had to tithe of his substance.

Jesus Did Not Do Away with the Law in His Life and Death. The Lord Jesus fulfilled the moral, social and ceremonial aspects of the Law. ***Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished (Matt. 5:17-18).***

Jesus Acknowledged the Tithe. The Lord did not repudiate the tithe but repudiated the Pharisees for their attitudes about neglecting important aspects of the Law - justice, mercy and faithfulness. ***Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You give a tenth of your spices—mint, dill and cumin. But you have neglected more important matters of the law—justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matt. 23:23).***

GIVING AND THE LAW AS TAUGHT BY THE APOSTLE PAUL

The Law and the Sinner (Unbeliever)

The Law Brings a Curse. All who try to live by the Law are under a curse. ***All who rely on observing the law are under a curse, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law"(Gal. 3:10).*** The Apostle James said if one aspect of the Law was broken, then the person was guilty of all the curses of the Law. ***For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it (James. 2:10).***

The Law Cannot Justify Anyone. No matter how good a man may live by a desire to keep the Law, the Law cannot save him. ***Clearly no one is justified before God by the law, because, "The righteous (just) shall live by faith."*** No amount of good works, human righteousness or attempts to keep the Law can save anyone. The harder he tries to keep the law for salvation, the deeper he goes into sin, frustration and condemnation.

The Law Points Sinners to Christ. The Law shows that all men are sinners and they can never keep it. ***Now we know that whatever the law says, it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to (made guilty before) God. Therefore no one will be declared righteous in his sight by observing the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of sin (Rom. 3:19-20). What, then, was the purpose of the law? It was added because of transgressions until the Seed (Christ) to whom the promise referred had come (Gal. 3:19).***

The Law's Curse Was Taken on by Christ. Christ died in the place of sinners, taking away the curse of the Law against them. ***Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us, for it is written: "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree (Gal. 3:10).***

The Law's Curse On Sinners Can Only Be Taken Away by Christ. The only way a person can be saved, justified, declared righteous before God, is to receive Christ who kept the Law perfectly and died for the curse. ***But the Scripture declares that the whole world is a prisoner of sin, so that what was promised, being given through faith in Jesus Christ, might be given to those who believe. Before this faith came, we were held prisoners by the law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the law was put in charge to lead us to Christ that we might be justified by faith (Gal. 3:22-24).***

The Law and the Saint (Believer)

The Law Was Fulfilled by Christ for the Christian. Christ did not remove the Law. It still condemns all men for all are sinners. However, Christ died for sinners, and fulfills the righteous requirements of the Law within the Christian. ***For what the law was powerless to do in that it was weakened by the sinful nature, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful man to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in sinful man, in order that the righteous requirements of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the sinful nature but according to the Spirit (Rom. 8:3-4).*** The Law convicts sinners of their sin and condemnation, but the Christian does not have to fear the condemnation, threats and curses of the Law because Christ has fulfilled Law for and in them. ***Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus . . . (Rom. 8:1).***

Christ Is the End of Law for Righteousness. The Law could never give a righteousness that would make men acceptable to God, but humans thought it would. ***Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes (Rom. 10:4).***

Christ Is the End of the Law as a Way of Life. The Christian is no longer under the Mosaic Law as a rule of life (613 laws), but is under grace. ***For sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law, but under grace (Rom. 6:14).*** The Christian is in Christ and

under a grace-way of life. *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. . . . But now, dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code (Rom. 7:4, 6).*

Christ Established the New Covenant. At His death on the Cross, Christ established the New Covenant. *In the same way, after the supper he took the cup, saying, “This cup is the new covenant in my blood, which is poured out for you” (Luke 22:20).* Christians are now related to the New Covenant as opposed to the Old Covenant (Mosaic Law). *He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant—not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life (2 Cor. 3:6).* The New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant and replaces it as a way of life for the Christian. *But the ministry Jesus has received is as superior to theirs as the covenant of which he is mediator is superior to the old one, and it is founded on better promises. For if there had been nothing wrong with the first covenant, no place would have been sought for another. . . . By calling this covenant new, he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear (Heb. 8:6, 13).* While there is grace in the Old Covenant and law in the New Covenant, grace dominates and underpins the New Covenant.

Christians Are to Honor the Law. While the Christian is under the New Covenant and dominated by grace and free from the Mosaic Law, he is still to honor the moral aspects of the Mosaic Law (moral law). The law cannot condemn or threaten the Christian, however, it can still be used as a standard of living that reflects the holy character of God. *We know that the law is good if one uses it properly (1 Tim. 1:8). Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law (Rom. 3:31). So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good. Did that which is good, then become death to me? By no means! But in order that sin might be recognized as sin, it produced death in me through what was good, so that through the commandment sin might become utterly sinful (Rom. 7:12-13). And if I do what I do not want to do, I agree that the law is good (Rom. 7:16).* All of the Ten Commandments but the command to keep the Sabbath holy are repeated in the New Testament, so we know there is moral law in the New Testament. The moral law tells us what is right and what is wrong. Yet, when we seek to do the moral law, we are convicted of our sinfulness and inability to keep the law. This drives us to Christ who alone is our deliverer. Christ, through the power of the Holy Spirit, gives us the grace and ability to be obedient to the Father as we operate by faith.

Christians Are under Law. The Christian is under the Law of Christ in the New Covenant. *To those not having the law (Gentiles) I became like one not having the law (though I am not free from God’s law but am under Christ’s law), so as to win those not having the law (1 Cor. 9:21).* Christians, as spiritual Israel (Phil. 3:3; Gal. 6:16), are dominated by the Law of Christ. Notice, however, Paul makes it clear that “I am not free from God’s law.” God’s law must refer to the moral law of God that has been in force since Adam and Eve. The moral law includes the pre-Mosaic, Mosaic, teachings of Christ and the Apostles that deal with morality. The Law of Christ takes into consideration the moral law of God in all ages. All moral law must be poured through the New Covenant and the Law of Christ. In the Old Covenant adultery was wrong and punishable by death. In the New Covenant, adultery is still wrong and has terrible consequences, but is not punishable by death. Yet adultery in the New Covenant certainly invites God’s discipline and church discipline for Christians.

The Law of Christ Is Fulfilled by Love. Love is the essence of the Law of Christ. *Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ (Gal. 6:1).* Love is

defined by the Ten Commandments. *For he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, “Do not commit adultery,” “Do not murder,” “Do not steal,” “Do not covet, and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: “Love your neighbor as yourself.” Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law (Rom. 13:18-10).* The words “whatever other commandment there may be” include all the Ten Commandments and any moral law in the Old Testament.

The Law of Christ Is a Higher Law. The Law of Christ is based on love, but even Christ said that love was the essence of the Mosaic Law. *Jesus replied, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments” (Matt. 22:37-40).* What makes the Law of Christ a higher law of love is that Christians are to love as Christ loved them. *A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another (John 13:34).*

The Law of Christ Includes Tithing. The Law of Christ that includes all aspects of the moral law allows for tithing in the New Testament. While it is never stated that New Testament saints are to tithe, it seems to be an assumed fact. Silence supports tithing because of the moral law. The New Testament does not state there is a Christian Sabbath, or infant baptism, or that women are to participate in the Lord’s Table, but these doctrines are based on sound deductions and systematic theology. The New Covenant and the Law of Christ are based on God’s grace. If for some providential reason a person cannot tithe, then God will be gracious. Yet, it ought to be the goal of all Christians to give tithes and offerings to the Lord.