

Truth and Spirit Ministries

The True Meaning of First Fruits Part III

By Denise Bostic

As saints under a New Covenant, it's important for us to understand what Christ has done for us through the atonement. It's important so that we'll be able to receive the reality of what he has given us through a better and everlasting blood covenant. (Hebrews 7:22; 8:6; 9:23; 13:20) Ministers today that teach believers to keep carnal ordinances of the law are teaching a mere shadow rather than the reality in Christ. We must know that the Mosaic Law was only a shadow that pointed to the person of Christ but that there's no substance in a shadow. The substance can now only be found in him. (Colossians 2:17; Hebrews 10:1)

When we live in the shadow instead of living in the reality that they've now become, we miss out on the true spiritual meaning that these things have become to us through Christ. This, in turn, prevents us from receiving the fullness of God that now dwells in him. (Colossians 1:15-19) There's a greater meaning behind the first fruit offering that was given through the law. When we understand it with the mind of Christ and his Spirit, we will gain a better understanding of what was really accomplished for us through the atonement and how this applies to our lives as Christians today.

You Are The First Fruit Offering!

Believers are now the first fruits in Christ! Knowing this, how does the fulfillment of first fruits apply to our lives now under the New Testament? The Apostle Paul had a wonderful revelation concerning this and gave instruction to the Church in this regard. **“Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God’s mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God-this is your spiritual act of worship. Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God’s will is-his good, pleasing and perfect will. (Romans 12:1-2)**

Through Christ we have now been made first fruits unto God. Since believers in Christ are now the first fruits of God, when we offer ourselves up to God as *living* sacrifices, we are now offering up a true first fruit offering unto the Lord! When we do this it becomes a true act of worship. When we offer ourselves to God, this means that we are surrendering our entire lives to his divine will, plans and purposes. We prove our love by giving ourselves to him in obedience and living for him daily. This is the offering that God truly desires and this **is** the first fruit offering that is acceptable and pleasing to him now.

Jesus understood this and was the first to offer up himself as an acceptable offering as the first of the first fruits unto God in order to accomplish His perfect will. When Christ came into the world, he said:

“Sacrifices and offerings you did not desire, but a body you prepared for me; with burnt offerings and sin offerings you were not pleased. Then I said, ‘Here I am-it is written about me in the scroll-I have come to do you will, O God.’ First he said, “Sacrifices and offerings, burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not desire, nor were you pleased with them” (although the law required them to be made). Then he said, “Here I am, I have come to do your will.” He sets aside the first to establish the second.” (Hebrews 10:5-10)

Jesus came to earth not only to say and do but also to set a godly example for us to follow in all things. We are to follow in his footsteps by also offering ourselves up as living sacrifices as well. God does not desire carnal or material offerings of blood, food, drinks or *only* money. He desires the complete sacrifice of our spirits, souls and bodies. God does not command us to give money as a first fruit offering; instead YOU are the first fruit offering that God really and truly wants!

The Gospel of Grace and Giving

Some reading this may be thinking by now that I'm against giving monetary offerings but this is simply not true. No, I'm not a miser that doesn't want to let go of my money. No, I don't have a problem with giving generous *free-will* offerings. No, I will not stop giving because I quit tithing and no longer have to give by command or compulsion. No, I don't have a problem with teaching the Church about giving as long as it is being taught according to New Testament grace. (II Corinthians chapters 8 and 9) *What I do have a problem with however, are those that spew out false teaching to believers in Christ by telling them that they must **earn** their protection, provision and blessings from God by performing works of the law.* Why? It's because this false teaching goes totally contrary to the Gospel of Christ and his grace. We cannot earn any of these things through works of the law because they are given to us freely by God's grace (unmerited and undeserved favor). (Romans 3:23-30; 4:13-16; 10:4; Galatians 1:6-10; 3:10-25; Colossians 2:9-17)

Just because I'm teaching that believers in the Church should not give a first fruit offering today does not mean that I don't believe in giving. Giving is the will of God. I give out of my love for God and others. I give out of obedience to the Holy Spirit. I give because I want to support the advancement of the Gospel and the Kingdom of God. I give because I want to support the Church. I give because I want to help and bless the poor. I give because God enables me to by his grace. *I give because I want to, not because I have to according to some commandment of the law.*

Again, giving is the will of God. The Church under the New Covenant is now admonished to give out of obedience to the Gospel of Christ. (II Corinthians 8:5, 9:13) In what manner are we to give then? God no longer wants His people to give by the **outward** rules and regulations of Old Testament laws and days. As a matter of fact they are no longer **acceptable** under the New Covenant. Instead God wants us to learn how to give in a way that pleases him. He wants us to give with a right heart and for the right reasons. We

should give gifts (and money) to the Church (brethren) or ministers of the Gospel out of an overflow of love and grace so that we might be a blessing and support one another's needs in the Body of Christ and help to spread the most important message on the earth to lost mankind- the Gospel of Christ and the Kingdom of God. We each have our own part to do. The apostle Paul wrote:

“From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.” (Ephesians 2:16)

We are not to serve God in the flesh now but serve Him in the Spirit. We are to be led **inwardly** by the Spirit in all that we do, including our giving and also *the way* that we give. (Galatians 5:16-18)

The Example of the Macedonians

To give you an excellent biblical example of giving ourselves to God and giving an offering combined, we can look to the example of the Macedonians. Paul commends them for their pleasing offering and sacrifice to the Lord in II Corinthians 8:1-5. The Macedonians first gave themselves to God (*as living sacrifices*) so that they could do their part of serving the body of Christ (*love*) and then gave as much as they were able (*giving is the will of God and proves that we are being obedient to the Gospel*), even beyond their own ability (*sacrificially*). This all was possible because God gave them the *grace* to do it.

It's important to note that the Macedonians were not giving according to the commands of the law but according to New Covenant grace. They *did* give an offering of substance or money but they did not do this according to Old Covenant ordinances by the God's empowering grace. They set themselves apart by first dedicating themselves to the Lord and then being obedient to the ministry message of Paul and Titus (who both preached the Gospel of Christ). (II Corinthians 8:5) They earnestly desired to do their part by supporting other members in the Body. They gave for the right reasons, with a right heart and a clear conscience!

Ministers today do not have to look to the law for examples of giving. We should be looking to Christ and his law as given to the Church through the New Testament. (I teach about the Law of Christ in the articles, Are You a Slave or a Son? I & II- This is found on the articles page) The New Testament has the best examples of how we should be giving today. A study of the epistles of the New Testament clearly teaches us that the Church did not give offerings according to the commands of the law. They clearly gave freewill offerings empowered by the grace of God.

Of course, we will be blessed for our giving. The Lord promised that when we give, we will receive back in good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over! (Luke 6:38) We are also promised that when we sow generously we will also reap generously. (II Corinthians 8:6) Now we can give out of a much higher law, the law of love which has been shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit. (Romans 5:5; James 2:8) Now that we are new creations in Christ and his love has been shed abroad in our hearts, we can now give out of a spirit of love and by God's empowering grace. (II Corinthians 8:1, 6, 7-9) The more

that we grow in Christ, the more we will become like him. Jesus is generous in all that he does.

We Receive the Blessings through Grace and Faith and Not Law

Those that teach the Body of Christ today that they must perform works of the law (like giving a first fruit offering) in order to receive the blessings, protection and provision from God do not know what their talking about. They are like those that Paul told Timothy about. There were some in Ephesus that were teaching false doctrines that were promoting controversies rather than God's work of faith. Paul said of them:

Some have wandered away from these (good doctrines from Christ) and turned them to meaningless talk. They want to be teachers of the law, but they do not know what they are talking about or what they so confidently affirm.” (II Timothy 1:3-7)

Today there are those who also desire to be teachers of the law and are so dogmatic about their teachings but are not educated by the Spirit in the doctrines of New Covenant grace. They have false revelations and a faulty foundation because they are looking to the law for truth and revelation. The only way we can receive the truth is by looking to Christ. The only way we can receive revelation knowledge from God is through the ministry of Christ and the Spirit. Truth cannot be revealed from the Law of Moses but only through Christ. John 1:17 declares:

“The law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”

True revelation knowledge can only be revealed to us through the Holy Spirit. It is written:

“No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him- but God has revealed it to us by his Spirit. The Spirit searches all things, even the deep things of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the man's spirit within him? In the same way, no one knows the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.” (I Corinthians 2:9-11)

The Law of Moses causes a blindness to come on those who read and *adhere* to it. That blindness can only be taken away when one turns to Christ.

“Even to this day when Moses is read, a veil covers their hearts. But whenever anyone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.” (II Corinthians 3:15-16)

We cannot receive a true revelation of God's glory and fullness by looking at the law. *The law conceals, Christ reveals.* We can only receive the fullness of the revelation of Christ and the New Covenant when we turn to the Lord completely. The veil that comes with the law is only removed in Christ and Christ alone.

When we receive Christ we also are born again or regenerated by the Holy Spirit. This not only makes us at one with God but also gives us the Spirit of *sonship*. We no longer have to cringe before God in fear as slaves to sin and the law because we have now been made his sons through Christ and his Spirit. (Romans 8:15-15-6) We do not have to work as

slaves under the law but now freely inherit all things with Christ as sons. (Galatians 4:6-7, Romans 8:14-17)

Remember: **“For if the first fruit be holy, the lump is also holy. (Romans 11:16)**

Through His sacrifice, he has brought many sons unto glory. **(Hebrews 2:9-18: This is a powerful read!)** Because Christ is the first born among many brethren and because he is holy, then so are we. Because he has inherited all things, so have we! (Romans 8:14-17) Now that we have been made son of God we have now been made heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ, our elder brother. (Romans 8:17) We receive our inheritance based on a promise that God made to Abraham long ago. **He made good on that promise by sending his Son to fulfill the oath.** God never made the fulfillment of the promise dependent upon men keeping the law. This is why Paul taught:

“For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise but God in his GRACE gave it to Abraham through a promise.”

Who were the promises spoken to? **“The promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. The scripture does not say “and to seeds,” meaning many people, but “and to your seed,” meaning one person who is Christ.” (Galatians 3:16)**

God did not make us fulfill the conditions and requirements of the law in order to receive the inheritance promises. (Thank God that he didn't, we would've never succeeded!) He made a way for us to receive them based upon the perfect work and sacrifice of his Son. Jesus came to the earth as God in the flesh to save his people! He came to rescue us from sin, the law and death. He came to do for us what we could never accomplish ourselves. Praise his holy name! We must never forget that God does not bless us based upon the merits of our own works or the works of the law but instead blesses us freely by his grace because of what his Son has obtained for us through the Cross. We receive the inheritance blessings because God is making good on His promise to Abraham. I repeat again:

“For if the inheritance depends on the law, then it no longer depends on a promise, but God in his GRACE gave it to Abraham through a promise. (Galatians 3:18)

The inheritance was handed down to God's Son, Jesus. However, Jesus is no longer the **only** Son. Through faith in Christ, we have now become sons of God as well. Jesus has now brought many sons to glory. We now receive the blessings of God because we are in Christ, Abraham's seed and heirs according to that promise!

“You are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus, for all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. If you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise.” (Galatians 3:25-28)

God does not bless us because we do works of the law, i.e. tithe, keep the Sabbath, Feasts of Israel, and give first fruit offerings or any other offering under the law for that matter. We cannot earn the blessings of God based upon the merits of our own works. We receive the inheritance blessings through God's free grace and by having faith in Christ and the

promises of God. *The work has already been done by the Lord Jesus!* We receive the inheritance blessings because we are now true sons of the living God. We are *already* a blessed people and we can now give to others, because God has given us so much!

You've Already Got It in Christ

Many people today perform works of the law or religious rules and regulations trying to earn the blessings and favor of God not realizing that they already have these things by virtue of Christ and what he has already accomplished for us through his life, death and resurrection. We just need to believe what God's Son has already done and believe what he has said and receive it all by grace through faith in him. This is why God was pleased with the faith of Abraham. The word says,

“Abraham believed God and it was credited to him as righteousness.” (Romans 4:3)

Abraham didn't receive justification or the blessings of God through his own works, but by trusting in God by faith to perform all that he said. (Romans 4:1-5) God was pleased with Abraham's faith and when we simply believe what God has promised us, he is pleased with us as well. (Hebrews 11:6) God knew that man could never obtain salvation and everything that went along with it. This is why God made such a promise to Abraham. *God swore to Abraham that he would make good on this oath himself.* This is why he sent Jesus (God in the flesh) to do what we could never possibly do! **(To understand this powerful truth read: Hebrews 6:13-26)**

Some reading this may be thinking, “If Jesus did it all, what's our part?” Our part is to receive God's grace, place our trust and faith in him, obey him and follow him wherever he leads. This may sound too simple but remember brothers and sisters what the apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

“But I am afraid that just as Eve was deceived by the serpent's cunning, your minds may somehow be led astray from your sincere and pure devotion to (and simplicity in) Christ. For if someone comes to you and preaches a Jesus other than the Jesus we preached, or if you receive a different spirit from the one you received, or a different gospel from the one you accepted, you put up with it easily enough.”
(I Corinthians 11:3-4)

So many today are also being deceived and corrupted by the devil and in so many different ways. Some say that they are speaking for the Lord when it's not really from the Lord, some are saying that their hearing from the Holy Spirit when they are actually hearing from a different spirit. Some preach a gospel that's not truly the gospel of Christ. So many also put up with and receive anything so casually that it's dangerous! We should be trying the spirits as we have been commanded to do. (I John 4:1) We should be studying the word daily to find out whether the things we are reading and hearing are really from God. (Acts 17:11) We should be acknowledging and seeking God in prayer and looking to him as our number one source of knowledge and truth. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

The Lord doesn't want us to be deceived and led away by false teachers. They have been led away by deception and he doesn't want us to follow after them. Some have been

enticed away by the lust of their own flesh and their greed for money. They see the commandments of the law as a sure way to force the body of Christ to give so that they might gain wealth. Paul wrote to Titus about these false teachers.

“Those false teachers only want your money, so they will use you by telling you lies.” (II Peter 2:3 NCV)

The greed of certain ministries within the Church has become blatant. They brazenly teach and prophecy lies to extract money from the Lord's sheep. Even though some may be sincerely deceived, their motive for ministry is all wrong. Some only have the goal of becoming wealthy and successful, not serving God and His Kingdom. By letting their lust for money go unchecked, Satan can take full advantage of them and use them to deceive and rob the people of God of their finances, lead them astray from the gospel of Christ and their true inheritance as sons of God. May God open the eyes of these false ministers and may they repent of their ways!

Those that teach believers that they must give a first fruit offering according to the commandment under the law can only get an offering out of those who do not truly understand that **they are not under law but grace**. Get fully grounded in Christ and grace and there is no way that you can be deceived by this false teaching!

Rest in the Finished Work of Christ

Jesus came to earth to complete the work that the Father sent him to do. He declared on the cross, **“It is finished!” (John 19:30)** Jesus is the first of the first fruits that has already risen from the dead. We are now a first fruit after his kind. (James 1:18) After Jesus' death and resurrection, he ascended to the Father, went into the real Holy of Holies as an atonement on our behalf. He waved the real sheaf offering so that we might have peace and reconciliation with God. God has accepted His perfect sacrifice. We are now accepted in the beloved. (Ephesians 1:6)

Speaking of the finished work of the cross and the resurrection power of Christ it is written:

Which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come. And God has placed all things under his feet and appointed him head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.” (Ephesians 1:20-23)

After his resurrection and appearing into the Holy of Holies on our behalf, Jesus sat down at the right hand of the Father and is now resting because of this finished work. (Hebrews 4:1-11) By receiving Christ and the atonement and regeneration of the Spirit, we have now become sons of God and are now at one with him. (*Atonement means “at one with God”*) (Romans 8:14-16, Ephesians 2:14-18) Because of Jesus' victory and exalted position and the body of Christ now being made one with him, we are also seated in heavenly places with him as well:

“And God raised us up with Christ and seated us in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus.” (Ephesians 2:6-7)

Now that we have been seated in heavenly places with him, we are also to rest in his finished work as well. (Hebrews 4:1-11) This passage of scripture teaches us that the way that we rest is by resting from our own fleshly works (including works of the law). We also rest by entering into his perfect, complete and finished work through the Cross. Our works are not sufficient but his are!

Stay Connected to the Head

Christ has made us at one with him. The Head (Christ) and the Body (Church) are truly one. Now that we have been made at one with Christ and are real first fruits unto God, we need to remain in him always. The Lord has said, **“Remain in me and I will remain in you.” (John 15:4)** The Lord will never sever his connection with us for he has promised, **“Never will I leave you and never will I forsake you.” (Hebrews 13:15)** But we can fall away from his grace or sever our connection with him by returning to the works of the law. Paul taught about this in Galatians.

“If you seek to be justified and declared righteous and to be given right standing with God through the law, you are brought to nothing and so separated (severed) from Christ. You have fallen away from grace (from God’s gracious favor and unmerited blessing.)” (Galatians 5:4 Amplified Version)

We do not want to lose our connection to the Head, which is Christ our Lord. (Colossians 1:18) We do not want to fall away from his favor or free, unmerited, undeserved grace. Paul also taught that those who try to teach or pressure believers into keeping the ordinance of the law have lost their connection to the Head so we certainly do not want to obey or follow them. He made it clear that worldly philosophies, human teachings and commands and regulations of the law have no real value for those in Christ. (Make sure to read **Colossians 2:6-23**)

We place ourselves in a very dangerous position when we try to justify ourselves before God or obtain the blessings of God based upon works of the law. Why? It’s because in God’s sight, we can only be justified or receive his blessings based upon the finished work of Christ. We cannot earn them because God says that he now gives them to us freely by his grace. Again, only Jesus’ works are sufficient, not ours. When we try to perform works of the law, this disconnects us from Christ and his perfect, finished work. This also means that we are trying to function apart from the Head. If we realize that we have been doing this however, we must realize that these type works are not acceptable to God anymore and come back to the Head of the Church, Jesus.

Stand Fast in the Liberty of Christ

So what should we do if we come to the knowledge of the truth and realize that we have been trying to be justified, made right with God or earn the blessings of God through the works of the law (like giving a first fruit offering)? This can be remedied in one word, **repent.**

What does repentance mean? It means: **the change of mind by which we turn from; desist from.** (3340, *Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*) It also means: **to think differently or afterwards to reconsider, morally: to feel compunction.** (3340, *Strong's Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible*) What does to "feel compunction" mean? According to the Webster's dictionary it means: **uneasiness or doubt aroused by the prospect of wrongdoing.** In order for our repentance to be genuine, we must acknowledge our wrongdoing and turn from it and start doing right. It is wrongdoing to disobey the gospel of Christ and his grace by turning back to the works of the law. This is what the Lord really desires from those that have reverting to keeping the law.

Some may think that there's no harm in keeping the rules and regulations of the law but once you start heading down the slippery slope of legalism the works never end. First you tithe, then you give a Passover offering, then a first fruit offering, then an atonement offering, after that you begin keeping the Hebrew Festivals, keeping the Sabbath, eating only "kosher" food.... The list just goes on and on! Do you get the point my friend? When you look into the law, you will find an endless list of rules and regulations. Rule keeping only leads to more rules to keep! This is why we must come to the end of the law (and our own works) by receiving Christ. We cannot keep the carnal ordinances of the law. Jesus fulfilled the law and then nailed it to the Cross. He delivered us from the law so we can now serve him in the newness of the Spirit. (Romans 1-6)

Remember that the apostle Paul said, **"A little leaven leavens the whole lump."** (**Galatians 5: 1-14**) Leaven is symbolic of different things in the Bible. In this passage of scripture, Paul is referring to the leaven of the legalism of the law. A little bit of law keeping leads to more law keeping and keeps growing and spreading until one day you will find that you have become entangled in the law so much that it has totally enslaved you! You will no longer be serving Christ because you will be too busy serving the law. This is why the apostle Paul warned:

"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 understood the futility of trying to keep the law. (Galatians 2: 14-21) He also understood the dangers of placing oneself back under the law after they have received God's free unmerited, undeserved grace. (Galatians 3:10-12, 5:4) The Lord doesn't want us to come back under the condemnation and curses of the law; in fact he took that curse so we wouldn't have to. (Galatians 3:10-12, 5:4) He wants us to walk in the liberty or freedom that he has purchased for us through his vicarious sacrifice. We are no longer to be slaves (to sin, the law or death) we are now sons of the living God. (Romans chapters 6-8)

The Lord wants his Church to be warned of the dangers of the legalism of the law. He paid a high price to set us free, to give us the exalted status of sons of God and has now generously made us co-heirs with him in all things. Wouldn't it be a shame if any of us tried to work for all these things only to wake up one day and realize that we have been working in vain? Wouldn't you feel foolish working so hard for all of those things that God says he gives freely to you by his grace? We shouldn't insult his spirit of grace by refusing it. We should not treat his sacrifice as incomplete or insufficient because it is all finished

and all sufficient. (Hebrews 10: 26-29) We cannot add or take away from his perfect work.
All he wants us to do is receive it.