

Truth and Spirit Ministries

Foundations To Grace Giving

By Denise Bostic

What is grace giving? The term grace (of) giving is based upon the Apostle Paul's teaching in *II Corinthians chapters 8 & 9* and helps believers understand how to give under the dispensation of the New Covenant. The Apostle Paul taught the Church, **“But just as you excel in everything- in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in complete earnestness and in your love for us- see that you also excel in this grace of giving.”** (*II Corinthians 8:7*)

According to *Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* [5485] when grace is joined with giving it means:

- The spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine grace.
- All earthly blessings, wealth, etc, which are due to divine goodness.
- A gift of grace, benefaction, bounty
- A token or proof of grace.
- Of the desire to give alms roused by the grace of God.

According to these definitions, we find that grace giving is a divine empowerment given to believers by God and is actual proof that His grace is operating in our lives. The endowment of grace also causes believers to be awakened, excited or motivated to action and we have the ability to give because God, in His goodness, supplies and blesses us with all earthly wealth and bounty.

The Apostle Paul called giving a *grace* and this teaches New Testament believers that our ability to give financially to the Church and God's work should be empowered by the love of God flowing out of us and because of His abounding grace in and upon our lives. (*II Corinthians 8:7-8*) Unfortunately, this biblical truth is not being taught in many of our modern day Churches, but instead believers are taught to give out of the works of their own flesh, according to the rules and regulations of the Mosaic Law and are also being deceived, manipulated and intimidated by the strong-armed tactics of men and women all in the name of God.

Again, believers should be motivated to give from the heart by the pure love of Christ within them and the divine grace that is imparted by God. We are not to give according to the Mosaic Law and are to beware of the **“cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming”** and **“those who are teaching things they ought not teach for the sake of dishonest gain.”** (*Ephesians 4:14-15, Titus 1:10-12*) The reasons why we are not to give according to the law are covered in Grace Giving Part I.

Many Christians and Church leaders today do not understand New Testament giving and are still giving according to the standards of the Old Testament Law (particularly tithing). Believers in Christ are to give by grace and not the law. Those who operate under the law are obeying God in the power of their flesh. (*Galatians 3:1-3*) Under the New Testament, believers are to be empowered by the grace of God and the power of His Spirit. God's promises can only be appropriated by grace and faith in Christ, not by works of the law. (*Galatians 3: 18, Romans 4:13-16*) Therefore it is imperative that all believers in Christ understand and receive God's empowering grace, walk in the Spirit and not the works of the law or flesh.

In order to understand giving under the dispensation of the New Covenant, there are some foundational truths from the Bible that we must know before we can understand why believers in Christ are not under the law of tithing and are instead to give by grace. These truths will also help

us to understand where and to whom we are to look to and follow as our ultimate authority. If we do not have the right foundation, we can easily be led off into error. We are to have no other foundation than Jesus Christ and our house must be built firmly upon the Rock. (*Matthew 7:24-27, 1 Corinthians 3:11*)

1. The New Covenant is superior to the Old Covenant.

This is so important for all believers to understand if we are to be free from works of the law and live in God's grace. When looking at all the different teachings that are being given on tithing today, the truth about this subject can only truly be understood in the light of the New Covenant. Why the New Covenant? It is because this is the only covenant in the Bible that is defined as *the Eternal Covenant*. (*Hebrews 13:20*) The understanding of true, godly giving is only revealed in the New Testament. It is giving from the inward heart, out of a spirit of love and divine grace.

The Old Covenant Law was only temporary and imposed on the nation of Israel by God until Christ could come and faith be revealed. It was only meant to identify what sin is, show people the need for a Savior and lead them to Christ. Now that He has come and fulfilled the requirements of the law, its purpose has ended. The works of the law (including tithing) were carnal or *fleshly* ordinances only imposed upon Israel until Christ could come with the reformation of the New Covenant. (*Malachi 3: 7-8, Galatians 3:19-25, Hebrews 9:8-10*)

The New Covenant supersedes the Old Covenant. What does supersede mean? 1. To take the place of; succeed. 2. To displace; supplant [The American Heritage Dictionary] To set aside and to replace with something newer or better; to take the place of. [Webster' Dictionary] The Old Covenant is no longer in force and has been made obsolete through the sacrifice of Christ. Jesus fulfilled its terms and took it away in order to establish the second or New Covenant. (*Hebrews 8:7,13, 10:9*) Believers in Christ are to be under the terms and conditions of the New Testament only. Since this is true, this means that no one can use Old Covenant ordinances or doctrines to validate tithing today, although many do just that, not realizing that these teachings have no authority in the life of New Testament Christians. If we want to learn the will of God, we must look to the New Covenant and the Law of Christ.

2. The preeminence of Christ over all.

The Book of Hebrews is a powerful revelation about Jesus being greater than all men on earth and the angels of heaven. All dominion and power in heaven and earth has been given unto Him. (*Matthew 28:18*) This preeminence was given because He is God's Son and because of the victory that He obtained for us over sin, death, hell and the curse of the law. He accomplished this by His crucifixion, death, burial and resurrection. The opening statement of Hebrews declares the preeminence that has been given by God to Jesus to be the highest voice of authority sent by God to man. **Hebrews 1:1-2** states, "**Long ago God spoke many times and in many ways to our ancestors through the prophets. But now in these final days, he has spoken to us through his Son.**"

The entire Book of Hebrews teaches us the awesome truth that Jesus Christ is superior to all that have come before Him. Who is Jesus greater than? Hebrews gives us a pretty impressive list to look at. First, Jesus is greater than all of our forefathers and the prophets. Secondly, Jesus is greater than the angels of heaven. (*Hebrews 1:4-14*) Thirdly, He is greater than Moses. (*Hebrews 3:1-6*) Next, Jesus is greater than Abraham. (*Hebrews 7:4-7*) And then, Jesus is greater than the priesthood of Aaron and the Law. (*Hebrews 7:11-28*)

The revelation of Christ's preeminence over all *is a must* for every believer in order to obey God in truth and righteousness. When dealing with doctrines in the Church then, Jesus is the ultimate authority that we must look to and obey above everyone and everything else. Jesus said, "**If you love me, keep my commandments.**" (*John 14:15*) What are His commandments? They are not the Ten Commandments that are within the Law of Moses as some think. We will find Jesus' commandments in the New Testament. His commandments are called the *Law of Christ*. (*1*

Corinthians 9:21, Galatians 6:2) The Law of Christ is a higher law and greater in authority to the Law of Moses. (*Hebrews 3: 1-3, I Corinthians 9:19-21*)

The gospel message that Jesus came to give us came from the Father, the highest authority in the Universe. (*John 7:16, 8:28*) Whatever God speaks out of His mouth becomes *law*. It is important then, that we hear, learn, know and obey what Jesus has given us. It is extremely important to know that Jesus' commands have higher authority over all those who have come before Him, including the angels, Abraham, Moses and the Law and Prophets. This also means those who are in our lives today as well such as our denominations, pastors, government leaders, mates, etc. It is not wrong to obey someone in authority over us as long as what they teach or speak lines up with the *Law of Christ*. We should obey others when they are acting under God's authority but if one is not in line with the commands of Jesus however, we must obey His commands rather than men should they be in conflict with one another. (*Acts 4:19*)

There are many in the Church today that do not understand the preeminence of Christ. Many are obeying the commands of men over the commands of Christ. It is possible that while we are obeying the commandments of men, that we can be disobedient to the Lord at the same time. (*Matthew 15:1-9*) This is possible if we are adhering to legalism, false teaching, the doctrines of devils or the traditions of men instead of following the Lord. We must know for certain if what we believe is in keeping with the commands of Jesus.

Again, it is crucial for us to know this profound truth. Why? It is because there are many Ministers in the Church that are upholding and teaching believers to obey commands that Jesus did not command. It may be a teaching originating with man, it may be a doctrine of devils or it may be a doctrine or law from the Bible, but one that has been taken from the Old Covenant and has since been fulfilled, abolished, canceled or changed by Jesus under the New Covenant. Some do not yet have the revelation that the Word of Christ is greater in authority to the manmade laws, rules and regulations that they are teaching believers to obey. It is so important that all in the Body of Christ understand this profound truth.

For example, some teach believers that they must obey works of the Mosaic Law today although the Law has been fulfilled in Christ almost 2000 years ago. They teach such laws as the keeping of the seventh day Sabbath, the abstaining of certain foods, keeping Jewish Festivals and more specifically, tithing just to name a few. Jesus did not command the Church to keep these days and practices because He had brought an end to these when He fulfilled the Law. We should not receive the false teaching of man or allow them to bring us into bondage to works of the law. (*Galatians 2:1-5, 5:1*) Doing works of the law cannot justify us or give us any more favor than those who do not do them. (*Galatians 2:11-16*)

3. Believers Are Justified By Faith In Christ

The Apostles taught that believers are under the New Covenant and that we are to obey the Gospel of Christ. (*Galatians 1:6-9, Hebrews 12:18-24, II Thessalonians 1:8, I Peter 4:17*) Remember that to be "under" a covenant means to be under its *conditions* and *requirements*. The New Testament scriptures make it perfectly clear that believers in Christ are not "under" the Old Covenant Law, which was given exclusively to the nation of Israel. (*Deuteronomy 29:1, Romans 9:2-4*)

In Galatians chapter 2, it is recorded that Paul rebuked Peter in Antioch for trying to earn God's approval and favor by adhering to Jewish laws. Peter had already learned of the truth of the Gospel when God used him to open the door for salvation to the Gentiles. (*Acts 10*) Earlier, Peter declared before the Jerusalem Council that God put no distinction between Jews and Gentiles and that God has purified their hearts by faith and that they, too are saved by grace. (*Acts 15:7-11*) Since this was a fact, the Jerusalem Council's decision was to not put the yoke of the Law of Moses on the Gentiles because all those in Christ are justified by faith. (*Acts 15:10-11, 19-20*).

The lesson to be learned here is that we are made right with God through faith in Christ, not works of the law or manmade rules. The conditions and requirements under the law were *fleshly works* but the conditions and requirements of the New Covenant is having *faith* in Christ and all that He has accomplished for us and receiving these things by God's *grace* freely. (*Galatians 3:10-12, Hebrews 9:10 KJV, Galatians 2:15-16*) Any time we are doing any works of the law or the flesh to try to gain favor and approval with God, we are not living by faith in the Son of God and are not walking in line with the truth of the Gospel as given by Jesus. What is the Gospel? "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-not of works, so that no one can boast." (*Ephesians 2:8-9*) The "works" that Paul is referring to in this verse is: *works demanded by and agreeing with the law.* [2041, Joseph Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament.]

Again, how does this story relate to tithing? Salvation is a free gift from God by grace and by faith in Jesus Christ and what He has done for us. When it comes to the word "salvation" many people have a mind-set. We think that it is solely having eternal life with Christ in the hereafter, but salvation is much more than that. Included in our salvation are also all things that accompany salvation. (*Hebrews 6:9*) In other words, it's a whole package deal. Many people separate salvation and what happens in a Christian's life after salvation, making it two separate experiences. In God's eyes though, they are not separate but are a complete package. This truth will forever change our mindset. *If we cannot earn our salvation, neither can we earn anything that which accompanies salvation because it is all a free gift from God and we must receive it all by faith in Christ.*

This same truth applies towards the way that we receive all of those things that accompany salvation, including the blessings of Abraham. Since this is truth, then why are so many trying to gain blessings and favor from God by tithing? According to the Gospel, it is all received by faith in Christ and grace. (*Romans 4:13-16, Galatians 3:6-9*) This is the message that Paul was trying to get across to Peter and it is recorded for our learning today as well.

There are many people today who are still trying to gain God's favor and approval through tithing instead of receiving them by grace and faith in Christ. How do we live by faith? We live by faith by believing in and receiving the *finished or complete* work of Christ that He accomplished by His death, burial and resurrection. We must learn, receive and then walk in everything that Jesus has already done for us by faith. We will find what He has accomplished for us in His last will and testament, also called the *New Testament*.

4. Know that if you are born again that you are a son of God, an heir and a joint-heir with Christ.

When anyone accepts Jesus as Savior and has been born of the Spirit, they now become a son of God and as a result have become an heir of God and a joint-heir with Christ. (*Romans 8:15-17*) What does being an heir of God mean? Thayer's Greek English Lexicon of the New Testament describes an heir as being:

One who receives his allotted possession by right of sonship. Of Christians, as exalted by faith to the dignity of the sons of Abraham and so of sons of God, hence to receive the blessings of God's Kingdom promised to Abraham. Also: The favor of Christ. [2818]

We have an allotted possession given to us because we are now heirs of God! God has given us all the blessings of His Kingdom, just as He had promised Abraham. (*Read Romans Chapter 4*) These promises have been given to us through Abraham's Seed who is Christ. (*Galatians 3:16*) It is because of what Jesus obtained for us through His vicarious death, burial and resurrection that we have now been made sons of God. (*John 1:12-14*) He substituted His life for ours and obtained the victory for us over death, hell, sin and the law. (*Romans 8:1-2, Colossians 2:15, Romans 7:6, 8:3-4*)

Now that we have received the privileged status of being sons of God, we do not have to serve sin or the law any longer because we have been released from these things by the sacrifice of Christ. We are born again and have been made new creatures in Christ. (*1 John 5:18, II Corinthians 5:17*) Now that we have been born of the Spirit, we can receive our inheritance by right of sonship and serve the Lord in the newness of the Spirit! We do not have to “work” for the Abrahamic blessings by works of the law (including tithing), but can freely receive these blessings by grace and faith in Christ by virtue of what He has procured for us by His sacrifice.

Slaves do not receive an inheritance, only *sons* do. We cannot earn our inheritance blessings by our own works because they are given freely to us by God’s grace through heirship. We are to no longer serve sin or the rules and regulations of the law like slaves because Christ has set all men free from such bondages by the Atonement. It is only when we come to Christ that we can receive the status of “son” through spiritual adoption. We have become sons by receiving Jesus Christ as Savior and Lord and receiving His Spirit into our hearts. (*Galatians 4:1-7*) Again, the only way that we can receive our inheritance is by faith in Christ and receiving His grace.

God wants all of His children to stop working for what He gives freely by His grace. We are not walking in faith if we are trying to earn God’s blessings based upon our own works or merits. God will not allow us to take the credit or boast about what we have done. (*Ephesians 2:8-10*) He wants to receive the credit and the glory for the work that He has already accomplished through His Son. It is in Jesus and His finished work that we must trust, rest and abide in and not in ourselves. When we understand these foundational truths then we can move on to maturity, receive our inheritance and walk as sons of God.