

# THE GRACE OF GIVING

---



## PREFACE

*All* things that we have ever received pertaining to life, have come to us through the gift of God's love and grace. At creation God gave man identity, intelligence, a free will, fellowship with Himself and authority to represent Him in ruling the earth.

After Adam's fall, God established a covenant relationship with man in which He freely gave Himself up in death on a cross, in order to offer us forgiveness of our sins and the privilege of regaining eternal life and fellowship with Him. Those who respond in faith, are given His Holy spirit, made a member of His body with a commission to proclaim the gospel of His kingdom to *every* nation on earth! They are no longer their own, they have been bought with a price to serve Him!

Today, the church faces the tremendous challenge of a great end time harvest and spiritual warfare that will close this age. It is imperative that she embrace the covenant principles of *grace* and *giving* that will ensure the supply of *all* resources necessary for this task.

## COVENANT: THE BASIS OF GIVING

All that pertains to giving to, and receiving from God is based on the covenant He has made with us. This covenant was initiated and established with Abraham, who God declared to be the father of *all* who would afterward become His children (Galatians 3:6-7). This covenant, which is based on faith, continued to exist even after the covenant of law was given to Israel (Galatians 3:17). It was then later confirmed and fulfilled in Christ, and became the basis of God's grace and blessing coming to *all* who receive His Son as their Lord and Savior (Galatians 3:8, 14, 22).

A covenant is a *binding* agreement between two parties with *clearly defined* responsibilities and commitments. If one party comes to a place of need, the resources of the second person are to be made available to meet that need.

## ABRAHAM

The history of God's dealings in the life of Abraham over many years, reveal how covenant commitment was progressively developed in his relationship to the Lord (Genesis 12-22).

The first step began with God making great promises to Abram. The only condition placed on Abram at this time was that he leave the pagan country he was living in, and go to a new land, which he immediately did (Genesis 12:1-4).

The next step occurred after Abram had rescued his nephew, Lot, from pagan kings. On the way home, the Lord, as Melchizedek, met Abram and blessed him. In response, Abram paid tithes to Him (Genesis 14:17-20).

The third step took place when the Lord promised to personally be a shield to Abram and to reward him greatly. In response, Abram asked the Lord for a son. God then promised him seed as numerous as stars in the heaven. Because Abram believed this promise, God reckoned his faith as

righteousness. On the basis of this faith, God made a covenant promise to give specific areas of land to Abram and his promised descendants (Genesis 13).

The next step in the process came to pass after a carnal attempt by Abram to have a son by the maid Hagar. The Lord came and reaffirmed His promise that Abram would become a father of a “multitude of nations”. However, more was now required of him; he was to change his name to Abraham and to take in his body the pain and mark of physical circumcision as a sign of the covenant he had entered into with God (Romans 4:11). The Lord then said that He would visit Sarah and she would give birth to the promised son of the covenant within a year; which came to pass when her son Isaac was born.

The final step in the process consisted of God’s testing Abraham’s level of commitment to their covenant. He was asked to offer up the *most precious possession* he had; to sacrifice his son, Isaac! It was Abraham’s immediate, unquestioning obedience to do so that proved his total commitment to their covenant (Genesis 22:16-18). The fact that God did not take Isaac’s life is unimportant; it was Abraham’s willingness to give him up that made it clear he recognized *all* that he possessed belonged to God.

We can learn much from this history of our spiritual father. It is good to believe gospel promises, and leave our friends and associates in the world to follow the Lord. It is better when we come to the place of faithfully tithing and take upon ourselves the mark of spiritual circumcision. However, we are called to a higher plane: to recognize that *everything* we own, and *all that we are*, belong to the Lord. In the covenant of grace, God has given us His most precious possession, the Lord Jesus, to die for our sins. He has promised to meet all of our needs, and in return, we are to acknowledge that all we have and are belongs to Him.

## THE TABERNACLE AND THE PRIESTHOOD

The covenant God made with Israel through Moses reveals new understanding on the grace of giving to the Lord. In this covenant, the house of God was introduced with specific laws given by the Lord for its construction, maintenance and for support of the priesthood who served Him in the house. In addition, the Lord established provision to support the poor among the people.

These laws of giving were as follows:

The tabernacle was to be *built* with the free will *offerings* of the people (Exodus 25:1-8; 35:21).

The tabernacle was to be *maintained* and *restored* with *offerings* from the people (Exodus. 30:12-16; 2 Chronicles 24:4-10).

The Levites, who served in His house were to be supported by tithes from the people. The Levites, in turn, were to pay a tithe on their tithes to the high priest (Numbers 18:21-28). Tithing was an *obligation*. The Lord declared that the tithe belonged *to Him*, and was therefore holy (Leviticus. 27:30). The Law did *not* introduce tithing, it endorsed and made mandatory what was begun by Abraham and carried on by his descendants (Genesis 28:22).

Every third year, the tithe of all produce from the fields was to be shared between the Levites, the aliens, the orphans and the widows (Deuteronomy 14:22, 27-29). The Lord's instruction to Israel was to show mercy and help the poor and needy (IS. 58:6-7). The corners of the harvest fields, the gleanings of the field and vineyards were to be left for the needy and the stranger (Leviticus 19:9-10).

God's word to Israel was *absolutely clear* in requiring the nation to support His work through *two* distinct methods of giving: tithes and offerings.

Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But, you say, 'How have we robbed Thee?' In *tithes* and *offerings*. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! Bring the *whole tithe* into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this", says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. (Malachi 3:8-10)

The bottom line in the Lord's words are two options: obedience in tithes and offerings, with the blessing of abundance; or disobedience, with the curse of poverty.

## THE EARLY CHURCH

The issue of giving and resource need can only be properly understood within the context of the Lord's covenant at the time. In the day of Abraham, the covenant at the time was centered in a *family*, and in particular, a son (Isaac). The only resources of concern were those of Abraham's family. What Abraham was unable to supply, God provided through the supernatural birth of Isaac.

In the day of Moses, the covenant concerned a *nation* who God promised to dwell among if they would obey and serve Him. Now there was a greater need for resources; for the construction and maintenance of the Lord's house, for support of the priesthood and care for the poor and needy of the nation.

However, the present covenant with the church today concerns the *whole world!* She is commissioned to preach the gospel of the kingdom to *every* nation, with an emphasis on ministering to the poor. This task *cannot possibly be* done apart from the power of God; only the Lord can accomplish such a work! However, He will not do it apart from His people.

The resources now required are *infinitely* greater! How the Lord worked with His people in the early church to spread the gospel provides insight into the grace of giving and supply that was manifest in those days. The following are some observations of this period that are pertinent today:

The depth of commitment in these first century saints was demonstrated in that they *first gave themselves to the Lord*, and then they brought their material offerings (2 Corinthians 8:5). This does *not* mean that one should not tithe or give offerings until they are perfect in heart, but that as we prepare to give, we should repent of withholding *any* area of our lives from the Lord.

Believers saw themselves as stewards of *all* that they possessed, and great grace was upon them as they shared their possessions with those who had need (Acts 2:44-47; 2 Corinthians 8:1-14).

Local and translocal ministries were supported by the saints, most likely through tithes (Romans 10:13-15; 1 Corinthians 9:7-14; 1 Corinthians 16:5-6, 17; 2 Corinthians 1:15-16; Galatians 6:6; Philippians 4:10-16; 3 John 5-8). These men saw themselves *work-*

*ing for the Lord* as His representatives, *not* employed by the church. Paul set a personal example for leaders by often supporting himself through secular work in order to demonstrate the covenant principle that it is more blessed to give than to receive (Acts 20:33-35).

Ministry to the poor was a common and shared message of the apostles (Galatians 2:10). Their burden was imparted to the saints and generously supported by them (2 Corinthians 8, 9). The handling of all offerings was placed in the hands of men with proven integrity and accountability (Acts 11:27-30; 1 Corinthians 16:1-4; 2 Corinthians 8:16-24). The motivation to give, imparted to the saints by the apostles, was not simply to meet needs, but that the grace of their giving brought *much glory* and *thanksgiving* to the Lord: they were, in effect, giving to Him and He would greatly bless them in return so that they would have even more to give (2 Corinthians 9:7-14).

There is *no* mention of support for church buildings. During the life time of the first apostles, the church was located in homes. Where possible, synagogues were used to evangelize while the church was built in homes with a *strong* emphasis on the spiritual house of the Lord, the body of Christ (Acts 2:46; Romans. 16:5; 1 Corinthians 16:19; Colossians 4:15; Acts 18:7-8, 11).

There were no para-church functions; *all* ministry was an expression *local church* life and oversight.

## CONCLUSION

The following observations from the three periods of God's covenant with His people are *vital* principles and guidelines by which resource needs facing the church today will be met.

1. The story of Abraham reveals that one who has *wholly* given himself to God will not withhold his most precious possession from Him. This was also the heart attitude of saints in the early church and it must also be ours as well. The two key factors in the Abrahamic covenant was the *faith* of Abraham to believe and give, and the *grace* of God to supply what *only He could do*. The task facing the church today is just as impossible as was Sarah's pregnancy; it *can only be accomplished by the*

***power of God!*** Our responsibility is to believe, give ourselves wholly to Him, and He will do what we cannot do!

2. The history of Israel makes it clear that being *obligated by law* to tithe and give can *never* take the place of freely giving out of love and commitment to the Lord. If God doesn't have our hearts, then our tithes and offerings will not meet the mark. They may benefit others but we will walk in spiritual poverty. The key is the grace of giving.

“And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed.” (2 Corinthians 9:8)

3. The *first* and *most important* use of tithes in the church is to support those who minister the word of God. The priority is men not buildings. It is important that young men being raised up for ministry in the generation ahead, be trained with trades/skills/professions that are easily mobile, so that they, like Paul, may have “tent making” capability to support themselves when necessary.
4. A focus in preaching the gospel is bringing it to the poor and afflicted (Isaiah 61:1-2). This emphasis will demand greater resources which will be supplied as the grace of giving is developed in the saints. This will bring God's abundant supply into the situation. Very often the key resource is not money; it can be simply giving up of our time to go out and take the gospel to those in their place of need. It can also be sharing our home as a place of shelter and supply to one who is homeless. To deny ourselves in such ways is to give to the Lord (Matthew 25:34-40).

“He who gives to the poor shall never want, but he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.” (Proverbs 28:27)

5. Today, because of the *immense* scope of ministry, there exist needs for resources to support many functions that did not concern the first church (i.e. communications, technology, travel, materials, etc.) In general, such needs should be met out of *offerings*. Each local church needs to know and promote God's vision and purpose for them, and to give accordingly.
6. The handling of *all* moneys in ministry must be done with godly *integrity* and *accountability* both in the church and in the eyes of the world.

7. Giving should be systematic (1 Corinthians 16:1-2). Legalism, coercion or constant asking for money should be avoided. The motive and messages of leaders are always to be centered in seeking God's perfect will for the people, not seeking for what they possess (2 Corinthians 12:14-15). However, there must be clear communication of the blessings contained in scriptures such as the following:

“Give, and it shall be given to you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, they will pour into your lap. For by **your** standard of measure it will be measured to you in return.” (Luke 6:38)

“There is one who scatters, yet increases all the more, and there is one who withholds what is justly due, but it results only in want. The generous man will be prosperous, and he who waters will himself be watered”. (Proverbs 11:24-25)

THE FOLLOWING IS A PROPHETIC CHALLENGE:

**“Give yourselves wholly to Me, be faithful in tithes and offerings and I will develop the grace of giving in you, and bring blessing into your lives. Those things you cannot supply, I will provide; and the greater your need the greater will be My provision”.**



## **FOUNTAIN OF LIFE PUBLICATIONS**

*No copyright restrictions. Tracts may be copied.*

*Offerings will be gratefully appreciated..*

71 Old Kings Highway • Lake Katrine, NY 12449

(845) 336-7333

*For this tract and others download from*

**[www.thefountain.org](http://www.thefountain.org)**