

# GRACE GIVING

## A Devotional Prayer Guide on the Subject of Financial Stewardship

Prayer Time #6

Let's Talk Tithing

Focal Passage: Malachi 3:8-12

*<sup>8</sup> “Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings. <sup>9</sup> You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! <sup>10</sup> 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. <sup>11</sup> Then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,” says the LORD of hosts. <sup>12</sup> “All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,” says the LORD of hosts.*

The subject of tithing is controversial among Christians. The Children of Israel were to offer tithes to the Lord. That didn't simply mean ten percent. The giving as commanded within the Old Testament Law can be confusing. I want to help you work through the biblical teaching on tithing, and consider how tithing is a direct application of grace giving. Your prayer time today presents the opportunity to recognize a vital part of the Christian life. Tithing is part of grace giving.

While it is true that the tithe mandated in the Old Testament Law related primarily to Israel, the principle of tithing is not limited to the Mosaic Law. You've heard of Abraham, right? When his name was still Abram, he took on a risky endeavor to retrieve captives from evil men who had conquered Sodom, Gomorrah, and three other cities. His nephew Lot and his family had been taken too, so Abram formed a small band, pursued the captors and the Lord gave Him success. When he returned, he was met by Melchizedek, Priest of God Most High, and the Bible says that of all the spoil Abram had gained, he gave a tenth to Melchizedek as an offering to the Lord. Abram didn't do that because the Mosaic Law required it, Moses wasn't born for more than 400 years after this event!

Tithing is a matter of the heart, making it a matter of grace giving. When I teach financial stewardship, I stress grace more than law. If the Old Testament Law required the people of God to give a certain percentage (a tenth), would not I, in view of God's grace, want to do at least that?

Here in the Malachi passage, the Lord strongly rebuked His people for failing to honor Him in their giving. He regarded their failure as “robbing Him.” Don't forget what we learned in a previous devotional; the Lord owns everything, so it's not as though the Lord was needy. The robbery of the people was a direct matter of the heart. They weren't taking anything from God that put Him in a bind. They were dishonoring the Lord, and in the process robbing themselves of the blessing of living obediently and joyfully.

I am not a stickler on the giving of a tithe (ten percent). Hear me out on this. Grace giving is a heart matter. A person can be very rigid about giving exactly ten percent. They can do so out of a sense of duty. That's not grace that's law! Likewise, a person can ignore the principle of the tithe as a way of purposing in their heart to give less. That's not law, but it's not grace either! That's a matter of a heart that is not first and foremost seeking to honor the Lord. There is no joy for one's self, nor

honor for the Lord, when we tithe by strict rule of law. Likewise, there is no honor for the Lord or joy for the professing believer that avoids the principle of tithing and purposes they don't have to give a certain amount. One should give as they are blessed of the Lord, and with a desire to please Him.

So what should we do with regarding the principle of the tithe? Honor it by considering the matter of stewardship and living by faith. The most important aspect of the tithe is not the specific amount, but it is the matter of giving to the Lord first. The tithe was of the first fruits, first of the fields, first of the flock. It was not a "tax" or "tariff" pressed upon God's people. It was a means by which they honored the Lord and trusted His faithfulness and unconditional love. Our giving is grace giving when we desire to honor Him with the first from the blessings He pours out on us.

Thank you for reading, and please continue to be serious in your prayer times. This matter of stewardship is an important part of Christian living, and is key to spiritual health and maturity.

**Suggestions for your prayer time:**

- Meditate on the Malachi passage and think of how the New Testament stresses grace giving.
- Confess to the Lord if you've been giving out of a sense of duty.
- Ask the Lord to show you if you've taken an unbalanced view on tithing in order to be less sacrificial.
- Praise the Lord for the lessons He has taught you during times when your finances were tight.
- Commit yourself to giving to the Lord first.