

Giving in the Age of Grace

2 Corinthians 9:7 is the standard for giving in the age of grace.

2 Corinthians 9:7:

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, *so let him give*; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver.

We live in the age of grace following the fulfillment of the law by Christ, and as such have been freed from the law, which includes the “requirement to tithe”. There is no scripture related to the age of grace that instructs a believer on how much they should give or to whom they should give.

God loves it when we give. If someone wants to give 10% and does so freely and cheerfully, God loves that. But there is nothing magical about 10% in the age of grace. What pleases God is that we give freely and cheerfully. The percent or amount is not what pleases God; it is the heart and attitude with which it is given.

The law’s requirement to tithe not only determined the amount to be given, but also where it was to be given (to the Levites). 2 Corinthians 9:7 makes no reference directing where or to whom a gift is to be made in order to bless or please God. As it states in the Amplified Bible, the giving is to be done as one has made up his own mind and purposed in his heart.

The purpose of this teaching is to help people to be set free from the bondage of the law (and specifically, the requirement to tithe) and to live with liberty with which Christ has set us free!

Let’s look at some context to tithing in the scriptures. The word “tithe” is used three times in the Gospels. All three times are in reference to the Pharisees (who were living under the law) paying the tithe. The word “tithes” is used five times in the New Testament, and all five times are in Hebrews chapter 7.

Hebrews 7 is about Melchisedec, king of Salem and priest of the most high God.

Hebrews 7:2,3:

To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

These verses tell us that Abraham gave a tenth part of all to Melchisedec.

Hebrews 7:5:

And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law...

This verse makes it clear that the tithe was part of the law; and in accordance with the law, the Levites were responsible to receive the tithes from the people.

In verse 11 we learn that the tithe was part of the law administered by the Levitical priesthood.

Hebrews 7:11:

If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need *was there* that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

This verse is also clear that the priesthood who administered the law, including the tithe, was not perfect, and consequently the Levitical law needed a change.

Hebrews 7:12:

For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

Hebrews 7:15-16 [ESV]:

This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, who has become a priest, not on the basis of a legal requirement concerning bodily descent, but by the power of an indestructible life.

“Likeness” means “similar”; it does not mean identical.

A similarity between Melchisedec and Jesus Christ is that neither were priests after the order of Aaron (a Levite). Their priesthood was not on the basis of a legal requirement coming from the tribe of Levi.

Tithing is clearly associated in the Scripture with priests (Melchisedec prior to the law and the Levites during the law). Verse 17 explains that Jesus Christ was a priest after the order of Melchisedec. He was similar to Melchisedec, but he was not identical. One example of the difference between them is that Jesus Christ was from the tribe of Judah. Another is that Jesus Christ is the only begotten son of God.

Hebrews 7:19:

For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope *did*; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The law (including the tithe) made nothing perfect. The verse does not stop there, it goes on to say that a better hope did.

Hebrews 7:22:

By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

The word “surety” is a guarantor and the word “testament” is a covenant or disposition which one wants to be valid. Jesus Christ is God’s guarantor of the better or more excellent covenant, which included the better hope; and this, unlike the law, is perfect.

Verse 22 tells us what the better hope is. The “better hope” by which “we draw nigh unto God” is perfect, and that is Jesus Christ. Melchisedec and Jesus Christ had likenesses, but Melchisedec did not fulfill the law neither was he a guarantor of the better covenant that superseded the imperfect law. Jesus Christ is the better hope which is perfect. The Book of Hebrews was written to the born-again Judeans who were still zealous for the law. Chapter 7 of that book leaves absolutely no doubt that the tithe is included in the law that Jesus Christ fulfilled.

Romans 10:4:

For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone that believeth.

Jesus Christ is the end of the law. It does not say all the law but tithing, it says the law. Some churches teach that tithing is an absolute must and even an immutable law, a law that is unchanging, absolute, and forever. The word “immutable” is used twice in the Bible. Both occurrences are in Hebrews chapter 6, once in verse 17 and once again in verse 18. They reference two things that are immutable:

1. The promise God made to Abraham (Hebrew 6:13); and
2. The confirmation of the promise with an oath (Hebrews 6:17). (In Genesis chapter 2, we learn that God promised that He will make Abraham a great nation.)

The promise and the oath are immutable, and Abraham did receive them.

Hebrews 6:15:

and so, after he [Abraham] patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Neither the promise nor the oath had anything to do with the law or tithing.

Hebrews 6:20:

... *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

As we saw earlier, Jesus Christ's likeness or similarity to Melchisedec was primarily in that neither of them were priests after the Levitical line. Jesus Christ was the high priest to Israel, but he is not the Christians' high priest: he is our Lord, our redeemer, our savior, and our brother.

Jesus Christ is an improvement over the law. He fulfilled the law, all the law including tithing, with grace.

Ephesians 4:7:

But unto every one of us is given grace according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

The law and grace are at odds with each other. The law is works and puts man in bondage. Grace is our willingness to accept what Jesus Christ accomplished for us to set man free, free from the bondage of the law.

Romans 3:19, 20:

Now we know that what things soever the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law: that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.

Therefore by the deeds of the law there shall no flesh be justified in his sight: for by the law *is* the knowledge of sin.

Verse 19 explains that the law is to them who are under the law.

Romans 3:21-24:

But now the righteousness of God without the law is manifested, being witnessed by the law and the prophets;

Even the righteousness of God *which is* by faith of Jesus Christ unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference:

For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;

Being justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus:

Verse 21 begins with the word "But", putting it in contrast with the previous verses. Verse 21 says "now", at this very moment, the righteousness "without the law is manifested". This is in contrast to verses 19 and 20, which state that the law is to them that are under the law — and that is not us.

In verse 22 it says the righteousness of God is by the faith of Jesus Christ to all them that believe. That is you and me. And finally, in verse 24 it says that we are "justified freely by his grace".

Through the deeds of the law no flesh was able to be justified; but we are not only justified, we are also righteous — and not by any deeds or works, but by the faith of Christ which we have because we believed. We are justified freely by his grace, not by any works.

Tithing was required under the law to be right with God, therefore tithing is works; it was part of the law that was replaced by the grace God gave us according to the measure of the gift of Christ.

Christians have had a hard time accepting God's grace. As early as fifteen to twenty-five years after Jesus Christ was raised from the dead, Church leaders were trying to put Christians under the law. In Acts 15, leaders came from Judaea and told the Gentiles that they had to be circumcised in order to be saved. It required Paul and

Barnabas to travel to Jerusalem and meet with the church leadership to correct the mishandling of God's grace in putting the Gentiles under the law.

Some church leaders have been doing this to congregations ever since. Examples abound in every century. Claiming that tithing is a requirement in the age of grace is just another example of church leadership attempting to put individuals under the law. The law required man's work to be right with God. Jesus Christ accomplished everything for mankind so that no one would have to work to receive God's grace! For me, an interesting aspect of this is when church leaders encourage the tithe, which was giving a tenth of the increase to the Levites, it can be self-serving. The church, who often financially supports the leader, is generally the direct beneficiary of the tithe some church leaders teach as being necessary today even though Christ fulfilled the law.

Ephesians 2:8:

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God:

We were saved by grace, not of our own works. Regardless of what some may teach, we do not stand approved before God by our works. We are already approved by God because of the accomplished works of Christ. What can be better than that?

Let's go back to the standard for giving as stated in the Epistles.

2 Corinthians 9:7 [ESV]:

Each one must give as he has decided in his heart, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

2 Corinthians 9:7 [Amplified Bible]:

Let each one [give] as he has made up his own mind *and* purposed in his heart, not reluctantly *or* sorrowfully or under compulsion, for God loves (He takes pleasure in, prizes above other things, and is unwilling to abandon or to do without) a cheerful (joyous, "prompt to do it") giver [whose heart is in his giving].

2 Corinthians 9:7 clearly states that it is an individual's decision on what he wants to give. Giving in the age of grace comes from the heart and mind of an individual, not by intimidation, compulsion, or reluctantly. It is to be given from the heart. As it states in the Amplified Bible, God takes pleasure in a cheerful or joyous giver and He is unwilling to abandon them.

As I stated in the opening, God loves it when we give. If someone wants to give 10% and does so freely and cheerfully, God loves that. But there is nothing magical about 10% in the age of grace. What pleases God is that we give freely and cheerfully. The percent or amount is not what pleases God; it is the heart and attitude with which it is given.