

# **Giving Under Grace**



**By R. B. Shiflet**

The increasing emphasis on money in most churches is causing many people to study the Word of God for the truth on this important subject. Each year brings new schemes to raise money to support the increasingly top-heavy ecclesiastical organizations with which so many of God's own are affiliated. A professor in a large institution of higher learning recently was heard advising several hundred young preachers to get new members to sign tithing cards as soon as they joined the church, "before someone tells them they are not under the law, but under grace." A large first church in an east Texas city has rated its members according to the amount

they contribute to the church each year, while another first church of the same denomination in another Texas city has developed a slogan: "Would you want your neighbor to know how much you give?" These clearly are efforts to play on the desire for social approval and the wish to out-do one's neighbor, and to use these urges to increase the funds coming into the church organization. The question we are considering is not "to give or not to give," but a study of giving as a member of the body of Christ, under grace, in contrast with giving as an Israelite under the law.

In the first place, the word "tithe" is found in only one portion of Scripture this side of Calvary,

and that is Hebrews 7:1-10, which refers back to Genesis 14:17-24. Many glory in these passages, insisting that since Abraham paid tithes, tithing ante-dates the Mosaic Law, and is therefore binding today. By this same argument, one would have to accept circumcision, (Genesis 17:9-14); animal sacrifices, (Genesis 4:4; 8:20); the seventh day Sabbath (Genesis 2:2,3); etc. Some hold that Hebrews 7:8, which says "men that die receive tithes" would indicate, by the verb tense, that they are still being received. In the same book, chapter 10 and verse 11, however, we read that priests were still offering daily sacrifices, but that does not indicate that God required either the tithe or the sacrifice at that time.

Tithing definitely was incorporated into the

law program, as is brought out in Leviticus 27:30-34. Note how carefully God links this with Israel. After giving the law of the tithe, He says: "These are the commandments, which the Lord commanded Moses for the children of Israel in mount Sinai." (Leviticus 237:34.) By reading Leviticus 25:8-24, one can see how the "year of jubilee," which saw the land redistributed at regular intervals, would make the tithe a fair system under that economy. From Deuteronomy 12:5-18; 14:22-29; and 26:12-14, it seems that a second tithe was taken each year, with possibly a third tithe each third year. Hence, instead of 10%, as much as 30% may have been taken in some years. Modern tithers make no effort to carry this over.

Nehemiah 10 gives an account of the revival

and restoration after captivity, which included a revival of tithing. Again, it is clearly linked with Israel (Nehemiah 10:39) and with God's law given by Moses (Nehemiah 10:29).

In Malachi 3:7-15, we have the verses that are overworked by preachers today who accuse believers of robbing God if they do not tithe. The "storehouse" of verse 10, they tell us, is the local church treasury, and church members are told that they have actually given nothing until they have paid the tithe to the storehouse. Anything above the tithe, they say, is an offering. Actually, God nowhere calls the local congregation of members of the body of Christ a "storehouse." The storehouse, under law, was the Jewish temple. Note again how God tags the verse in Malachi with Is-

rael (3:6-"Jacob"). He calls tithing his ordinance (3:14).

Any believer with only a superficial knowledge of the Word knows we are "not under the law, but under grace." (Romans 6:14-15). Colossians 2:14 assures us that the ordinances (cf. Malachi 3:14) have been blotted out, nailed to His cross. How does this affect our giving?

First, our motive for giving is infinitely greater. Instead of bringing a tithe into an earthly storehouse because a legal ordinance requires it, we give because we have received God's unspeakable gift (2 Corinthians 8:5), eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord (Romans 6: 23).

Who should give? Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ has the privilege of giving (1 Corin-

thians 16:2; 2 Corinthians 9:7).

How much should be given? It is here that confusion arises, when truth which God gave to Israel under the dispensation of the law is brought over and forced upon members of the body of Christ, living under grace. Two principles are laid down to guide the member of the body of Christ as to how much he should give. He is to give "as God hath prospered him." (1 Corinthians 16:2). This suggests giving in proportion to our income, and giving systematically. As the consecrated believer's income increases, his love gifts to support the work of the Lord will increase. The second principle regarding the amount to be given is laid down in 2 Corinthians 9:7. Here we learn that the believer is to give "as he hath purposed in his



heart." The yielded believer prays much about his giving as to the amount, the phase of the Lord's work to which the gift will go, etc. The amount the believer under grace gives, then, is based on the amount of his income and the amount he purposes in his heart to give. The question of purposing in the heart leads to the method of giving. Much can be gleaned from 2 Corinthians chapters 8 and 9.

The giver is to have a willing mind (2 Corinthians 8:12), that is, a desire to give without coercion. When one gives on that basis, it is accepted according to what a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. Does this not eliminate pledging, which is actually giving out of that which one does not have?

Besides giving with a willing mind, we are to

give cheerfully (2 Corinthians 9:7). The Greek word for "cheerful" is "hilarious," from which we get our word "hilarious." God loves a cheerful giver—one who gives joyous—a happy giver.

This same verse (2 Corinthians 9:7) teaches us that we are to give freely. Our gifts should be made without compulsion, "not of necessity." Contrast because a strict law demands that we give, with giving cheerfully, not because we are bound to, but because it is our desire!

The believer under grace is to give bountifully and aboundingly (2 Corinthians 9:6; 8:7). Many have been enabled to give far more than the legal tithe, and have done so. One well-known Christian business man has consistently given 90% of his profits to the Lord's work, and used the other 10%

for personal needs, and God has prospered him. On the other hand, God has many choice saints with a meager income, barely able to meet life's needs, whose financial contributions are not much in numbers, but are acceptable in God's sight on the basis of the above standards. Many who have been unable to give financially to the support of the gospel have spent much time in prayer and witnessing, and they are accepted according to what they have, and not what they have not. Under the law, one day out of seven and one tenth of the income were set apart for God. Under grace, all we are and all we have belong to Him. "Ye are not your own; ye are bought with a price." (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Giving can and should be a means of worship. But giving is a matter that should be

strictly between the believer and His Lord; no man or men have Scriptural authority to dictate the lowliest believer how much he should give nor how he should give it. When believers are taught the Word of God, which includes not only the gospel of grace, but truth concerning our position in Christ and our walk as believers, they will get a joy out of giving, and the high-pressure schemes will be unnecessary.

By way of warning, we urge everyone to be very careful and prayerful about giving. Are you sure how the money you give is being used? Many of the churches which are strongest in demanding a tithe are affiliated with the atheistic National Council of Churches (formerly Federal Council) and a part of your gift may be going to help this

organization in its campaign to deny the Word of God. Speaking of this organization, John T. Flynn, in his book *The Road Ahead* says "... this powerful Council issues periodicals, pamphlets, books and booklets and sends out preachers to preach the gospel, and that it is by all odds the most powerful apparatus in existence for propaganda among the Christian laity of America. And I know moreover, and assert, that many of the men most powerful in directing its affairs are using its machinery to promote the interests of a Socialist revolution in America. The humble communicants of countless thousands of little churches all over this broad land dedicated to the worship of God and the spiritual needs of their people are paying the bills for this propaganda drive. I do not believe that they

realize what is being done by leaders." (pp. 107-108). Are you one of those who is supporting this anti-Christian organization which wears a Christian name? It might pay to check up. The above quotation comes, not from the pen of some overwrought fundamentalist, but from a recognized sociologist of our day.

To summarize, every believer in Christ has the privilege of giving to the Lord's work because we have received His unspeakable gift and have given ourselves to Him. We are to give as God hath prospered us; that is, we are to give systematically. There is nothing wrong in giving a tenth, so long as it is understood that we are not legally bound to any tithing ordinance of Israel. These gifts are to be given as we have purposed in our hearts, with a

willing mind, cheerfully, freely, bountifully and aboundingly. We are saved by grace; let us live under grace; let us learn the superiority of giving under grace to tithing as though we were under law.