

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

TITHING

Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year. And thou shalt eat before the LORD thy God, in the place which he shall choose to place his name there, the tithe of thy corn, of thy wine, and of thine oil, and the firstlings of thy herds and of thy flocks; that thou mayest learn to fear the LORD thy God always. And if the way be too long for thee, so that thou art not able to carry it; or if the place be too far from thee, which the LORD thy God shall choose to set his name there, when the LORD thy God hath blessed thee: Then shalt thou turn it into money, and bind up the money in thine hand, and shalt go unto the place which the LORD thy God shall choose: And thou shalt bestow that money for whatsoever thy soul lusteth after, for oxen, or for sheep, or for wine, or for strong drink, or for whatsoever thy soul desireth: and thou shalt eat there before the LORD thy God, and thou shalt rejoice, thou, and thine household. Deuteronomy 14:22-26

The church that I was brought up in had a few cardinal teachings which were emphasized on a regular basis. One of those doctrines which took center stage was tithing. In fact, at one time, there was a great banner on the wall behind the pulpit which declared, "The tithe is the LORD's" which is a paraphrase of Leviticus 27:30. Another catchphrase which was used quite regularly was "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." (Mal 3:10) The preacher was expected to remind folks of this obligation on a regular basis and he seldom neglected his duty.

Having been indoctrinated with such teaching, one can imagine the surprise that awaited me as I began to study the scriptures for myself only to discover that nowhere in the New Testament are the children of GOD ever admonished to tithe. Not only that but the tithe in the old testament was more than just giving ten percent of one's money to the temple as we discover in the passage we took as a text. Now such a revelation is to be kept quiet in most churches and such teaching branded as heresy by many others. After all how can the "mega-churches" and so called "mission programs" not mention paying the preacher, of the modern day continue if the burden of tithing is not laid upon GOD's people continually. How can the dapper-dandy preachers of TV fame continue their work without it? Some seem to imply that GOD might have to go out of business if folks don't ante up and tithe. It has even become quite common to hear some of this ilk unashamedly teach that tithing is an investment of sorts. They say if you'll tithe (be sure and send it to us) or "sow seed" into their ministry (i.e.; their pocket) then GOD will open up the windows of heaven and you'll always have plenty of money, or at least they will. The part of all this that is not humorous is that the average church goer is persuaded that what they are being taught is true without ever searching it out for themselves. (see Acts 17:11)

This same mindset which says that GOD's people must be hedged about by the law concerning money often does the same thing with the Sabbath. Yet nowhere in the New Testament are the children of GOD ever admonished to keep the Sabbath. The word Sabbath literally means "seventh" and was given to the Jews. So if a man is convinced that he must "keep the Sabbath" then he better start at sundown on Friday and "keep" it till sundown on Saturday or he is in violation of the law. Of course some have transposed the LORD's day (Sunday)(see

Rev.1:10) into the Sabbath to make it more convenient since that is the day of the week that the New Testament churches seem to have met. (see Acts 20:7; I Cor.16:2) The only grounds for such a change exists in the imaginations of men and the edicts of the Roman Church.

The LORD JESUS CHRIST came to set men free, not to bind them with burdens which neither they nor their fathers could bear. I can hear the shudders and gasps of those who think GOD's people must be treated like bondmen rather than freeborn sons. They are convinced that unless they demand that the LORD's people be obedient to a written law that they will somehow become lawless. Yet the LORD plainly taught that HE would write the law within their hearts. (see Jer.31:33; Heb.8:10; II Cor.3:3) HE has indwelt HIS people by HIS SPIRIT and they don't need laws written in stone to guide them. Such is for the lawless and disobedient. We are not servants but sons, heirs and joint-heirs with CHRIST. Has HE not given us a new nature and has HE not called us brethren? Is HE not our guide and teacher? Has HE not placed within our hearts a desire to please HIM in all things? *"Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster."* (Gal 3:24-25)

The LORD said "The sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath" (Mark 2:27) GOD intended the SABBATH as a blessing for HIS children not as a burden they had to bear or a religious duty that takes precedence over mercy. CHRIST is our SABBATH, HE is our rest wherein we have ceased from our labors. (see Heb.4:8-10) JESUS CHRIST is indeed our TITHE as HE has paid all we could ever owe. (see I Cor.7:23; Gal. 3:13; I Pet.1:18)

Therefore, the LORD's people are admonished to give with a cheerful heart expecting nothing in return. We are givers not because we are obligated but because HE has placed in us a desire to do so. Giving of ourselves, our talents, our goods, and our time are but the outgrowth of that work HE has wrought in us by HIS SPIRIT. A man without a generous heart cannot be much acquainted with HIM who gave HIMSELF for us nor can he have an understanding of the fact that all that we have and are is a result of the grace of GOD. (see I Cor.4:7) *"How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"* (Heb 9:14)

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