

Message #7

Malachi 3:7-12

It does not matter whether it is the O.T. or the N.T., but money is definitely connected in the mind of God to our spirituality and it is definitely linked to having God's blessings.

In fact, we believe one thesis statement that covers both the O.T. and N.T. principles is this:

IF GOD'S PEOPLE WANT GOD TO OPEN UP HIS ULTIMATE STOREHOUSE OF BLESSINGS ON THEM, THEY MUST GIVE GOD THE OFFERINGS HE DESERVES.

As we will see, **there is a difference between legal tithing under the O.T. Law and grace giving in N.T. grace; but this thesis statement is true regarding both systems.**

Now we live in the N.T. grace age and are not under the legal mandates of the law; however, the principles we have concerning giving and the principles we will discuss do in part come from the Old Testament.

Often times you will hear someone say that all the church wants is money. For a true church of God that is not the point. What the church wants is the blessing of God. For that to happen, the people need hearts right with God and when people's hearts are right with God, God blesses them. What the church wants for the people are the blessings of God and to get those blessings at the ultimate level, money is a part of it.

We saw last time in **Malachi 3:7** that God's people had been turning away from the word of God in a variety of ways. So far in the book of Malachi, we have catalogued at least 19 ways God's people had not obeyed God.

One of the ways they had been turning away from the word of God was on the subject of their offerings. That theme shows up multiple times in this book—1:7-8, 13, 14; 2:13. Their offerings were pathetic. They were not giving God what they should have been giving God and, as a result, God was not showering them with the blessings they could have had.

Now last time we saw in **verse 7** that God told the people you have “turned aside from My statutes and have not kept them.” Then, in pure grace God says, “return to Me and I will return to you.” What a tremendous invitation. God invites His wayward people to get back to a right relationship with Him.

Well the response of the people is “how shall we return?” Just exactly what is it that we need to do to return to You so You will bless us?

God's answer in **verse 8** is stop robbing Me of My offerings. In **verse 8** God begins with a question, “Will a man rob God?” Let's think about this. **One of the most foolish things any child of God could ever do would be to rob God.** This is a crime of which no one will ever escape.

The Hebrew word “rob” (qaba) is one that means to deceive and defraud; to hide and cover (William Gesenius, *Hebrew Lexicon*, p. 721). **So to “rob God” here means to give something to God but it is deceptive because it defrauds God and is not really what should have been given to Him.** It isn’t the right thing or the right amount.

Now if a child of God tries to defraud God and not give Him what should be His that is not a recipe for His blessings. Robbing God is serious, senseless, shameful, dangerous and punishable.

So in **verse 8**, God says you have been robbing Me and the people said, “How have we robbed You?” It is so sad that people can become so accustomed to their own spiritual failure that they don’t even see it as failure. Well, God responded and said you have robbed Me “By your tithes and offerings.”

The actual word “tithe” is related to the word ten. Giving God ten percent was something that was found in Scripture before the O.T. law was even given. In Genesis 14:20, Abraham gave 10% of what he had to Melchizedek. Jacob made a promise to God that he would give Him 10% of everything.

Now tithes and offerings were mandatory legal offerings that Israel was required to give under the O.T. law. It was a legal bill that was owed and was to be paid. In Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy, we get some of the specifics of the legal tithe regulations.

- 1) Leviticus 27:30–All a tithe of land seed and tree fruit belonged to the Lord as a holy offering.
- 2) Leviticus 27:32–A tenth of herds or flocks were to be given to the Lord as a holy offering.
- 3) Deuteronomy 12:5-18–Tithes, contributions, votive offerings, freewill offerings and firstborn offerings were to be brought to the Lord along with burnt offerings and sacrifices.
- 4) Numbers 18:8-32–The priests were to be compensated by these offerings.
- 5) Deuteronomy 14:22-29–The Levite was to be supported and some was to go to help the alien, orphan and widow.

So these O.T. tithes were equivalent to a nationwide legal income tax. Now this tithe matter was a legal debt that was to be paid to God. This was a legal income tax that the people were to pay. Well they had not been paying what they owed and they were robbing God.

Since the people were not giving God the tithes He demanded, **verse 9** says, “you are cursed’ because the whole nation is robbing Me. They were robbing God of the offerings He demanded and deserved.

When we give our money to the place that God has established for offerings, God considers that money as His money.

So according to **verse 9**, God says I have put a curse on the whole nation. God says I am not prospering you at the level I can and I am withholding My blessings on you and your land.

Now the specific curse that God was putting on the nation was what He said He would do in Deuteronomy 28. It was a curse God had pronounced on the land. God had given them the land unconditionally, but He would only bless them in the land if they purposed to love Him and obey Him.

The Promised Land was not flourishing and blossoming because God was not permitting it to flourish and blossom because His people were not obeying Him. They were not giving Him their offerings they owed to Him. God told them that they would not be able to enjoy this land if they did not obey Him and His word.

So in **verse 10**, God says bring all the offerings to Me and I will see to it that you overflow with prosperity and blessings. God says bring Me the “whole tithe.” Bring it to the Temple and give it to Me. This is the Temple treasury.

God says if you do that, I will shower you with My blessings. In **verse 11**, God says I will rebuke the devourer that I am allowing to devour your crops and you will flourish so much that all nations of the world will acknowledge you are blessed of God.

God says if you will do this, He will pour out blessings. **What is absolutely clear from both the O.T. and the N.T. is that God is in sovereign control of what happens to a nation, a state, a city, a church and an individual financially.** He can bless and He can curse.

GOD DOES NOT EVER AND WILL NOT EVER BLESS HIS PEOPLE AT THE ULTIMATE LEVEL WHEN THEY ROB HIM OF THE OFFERINGS THEY SHOULD GIVE HIM.

We are not under a mandatory legal tithe system of giving, but we are under a grace system of giving. In fact, obligatory tithing is not the same as grace giving. But we do not want to become lax or sloppy when it comes to our own giving to the Lord. So we want to track this theme of giving through the New Testament to make as many accurate observations as we can. There are two parts to this:

PART #1 – N.T. observations about legal tithing.

There are four main observations we want to make about legal tithing:

Observation #1 - The concept of giving God 10% did start before the O.T. law. Abraham gave an offering of 10% of everything he had to Melchizedek in Genesis 14:17-20. There is no evidence that God legally required this, but he did this of his own free will. This was referred to in **Hebrews 7:4-10** and in that text, God calls Abraham a “great man.” The 10% he gave was 10% of everything—money, cattle, sheep, produce, crops. It was an incredible offering, worth an astronomical amount of money.

Many people start giving at 10%, but the vast majority of spiritually minded people usually give quite a bit more than just 10%.

Observation #2 - Jesus Christ said that tithing was part of the O.T. law—**Matt. 23:23;**
Luke 11:42

Legal tithing is an O.T. principle. In fact, He actually commended tithing. Being part of the O.T. law means we are no longer under its obligations. That O.T. law has been nailed to the cross and we are free from it. Furthermore, it is wrong for a N.T. church to try to put people back under the O.T. law. Galatians 3:13—Christ redeemed us from the Law. Romans 6:14— you are not under law but under grace.

Observation #3 - Jesus Christ said tithing was no guarantee one had real spirituality.
Matt. 23:23; Luke 11:42

Some of the Pharisees were meticulous in their tithing, but they did not love God. Under law tithing was right, but that did not mean one was really spiritual.

Observation #4 - Jesus Christ said tithing was no guarantee one was justified. **Luke 18:12-14**

People can tithe and give their offerings to some religious place and not be saved. Many people give their money to religious places and do not know Jesus Christ.

PART #2 – N.T. observations about grace giving.

Now many of these observations about N.T. grace giving come from I Corinthians 16 and II Corinthians 8-9. There are 15 observations we want to make.

Observation #1 - Grace giving that is liberal giving is not determined by dollar amount but by sacrifice amount. **II Cor. 8:2, 3**

Observation #2 - Grace giving is giving out of one's own volition. **II Cor. 8:3**

It is not manipulated giving but it is giving that is of one's own accord. Sometimes churches will try to shame people into giving or manipulate through matching gift promises. That is wrong.

Observation #3 - Grace giving considers it a privilege to participate in giving. **II Cor. 8:4**

Observation #4 - Grace giving comes from those who have first given themselves to Christ.
II Cor. 8:5

Observation #5 - Grace giving is not commandment giving or demanded giving. **II Cor. 8:8**

Grace giving is not O.T. law tithing. It is giving.

Observation #6 - Grace giving is based on what one has, not what one doesn't have.

II Cor. 8:12

This is why faith pledge systems and promises are wrong. People are told to make a pledge based on what they think they will be able to give. Grace giving is not based on what one thinks one might have, it is based on what one does have.

Observation #7 - Grace giving is equality giving, not an excuse for not giving. **II Cor. 8:13**

The equal principle is that God's people give based on what they have. Some have more, some have less. This principle is not designed to promote ease in some and affliction for another. In other words, if each were to give the same percentage, it is easy for some and a real affliction for others. But if it is based on what a person has, then it is equality giving because the amount is determined by what one has.

Observation #8 - Grace giving is giving that understands if we give sparingly we will reap sparingly and if we give bountifully we will reap bountifully. **II Cor. 9:6**

This certainly is a principle for the individual believer. God does bless proportionately to what one gives.

Observation #9 - Grace giving is giving that is purposed in one's own heart. **II Cor. 9:7a**

This is really personal. This is not to be manipulated by some outside pleading or promotion or pressure. Grace giving is giving out of one's own heart. A person needs to think and pray and come to some conviction and conclusion as to what he/she/they will give. Sometimes people ask what shall I give? You get alone with God and determine the amount.

Observation #10 - Grace giving is not giving that begrudges giving. **II Cor. 9:7b**

Grace giving does not resent giving or feel bitter about giving, but is happy to give.

Observation #11 - Grace giving is cheerful giving. **II Cor. 9:7c**

Notice God loves the cheerful giver. He monitors the heart emotions of one when that person is giving Him his offerings.

Observation #12 - Grace giving realizes God will richly bless everything in the life of grace givers. **II Cor. 9:11**

Observation #13 - Grace giving is systematic giving on the first day of the week. **I Cor. 16:2a**

Notice it is not on the Sabbath Day, for that would be back under the O.T. law. Also observe that this is the first subject that Paul addresses after I Corinthians 15 that deals with the doctrine of the Resurrection. So grace giving must be very important to God by this very context.

Observation #14 - Grace giving is proportionate giving based on our prosperity. **I Cor. 16:2b**

Grace giving is to be giving proportionate to how God has prospered us.

Observation #15 - Grace giving is to be private giving, not public notoriety giving. **I Cor. 16:2**

God obviously watches His people and He monitors what they give in both the O.T. and the N.T..

We are to give systematically, sacrificially, generously as God has prospered us and Paul says we will reap what we sow. If we give sparingly, we will reap sparingly. If we give generously, we will reap generously.

I want to go back to Malachi 3:12. God said if you will start giving the way you should, then “all the nations” will call you blessed and realize God is blessing the land.

Now we have in this church many people who give way more than 10%. I know that for fact. We also have people sending in offerings from all over the nation. That is a fact.

We have never asked for one dime. God in His grace has seen fit to bless us abundantly.

A while back we did a memorial service and some from the funeral home asked me how long it took to pay off nearly 3 million dollars for the new sanctuary. I said by God’s grace 7 years. One of the men from the funeral home, who is not part of this church, said the giving at this church is amazingly high.

I said to both of them, there is nothing we do here that is flashy. We pray, have reverent worship and we are very serious about systematic study of God’s word. They said we know that.

Do you realize what that means? God has made a statement to other churches that He is blessing this church.

We have people who love the Lord. We have people who love the word. We have people who pray and we have people who give.

Because of that others know we are blessed by God.