

The Sound of *Many Waters*

Many Waters is a weekly article written by Ron Cipic, lead pastor of Grand River Church, Grand Rapids, Michigan. To comment or ask a question about this piece, write to Pastor Ron at pastors@grandriverchurch.org. Related Scripture verses for further study are cited at the end of this piece.

The Rules Don't Apply

After the initial outpouring of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, many of those saved were Gentile (non-Jewish) believers. These Christians would have known little or nothing about the Mosaic Law. However, the Judaizers worked overtime to change that. The apostle Paul, who considered himself an apostle to the Gentiles, was constantly harassed by the Judaizers who claimed that to be truly saved, the believer must be "circumcised according to the custom of Moses." At the Council of Jerusalem, Paul and the other leading apostles officially rejected the Judaizer's claim that the Gentiles must add the Mosaic Law to the Cross of Christ.

One of the "customs of Moses" or ordinances of the Law was the tithe. The Old Testament prophet Malachi rebuked the Jews for robbing God by not tithing. This famous passage about tithing does not prove that Christians should tithe. In fact, it is a great proof text showing that the law of tithing is quite ineffective in motivating people to be generous with what God has so graciously given them. Under the Mosaic Law, God mandated generosity. But the Law is powerless to sanctify a selfish heart and make it saintly. According to Paul, the Law simply incites greater rebellion in the rebellious.

God's financial system was never to be built on the tithe anyway. The tithe is part of the Law and the Law was given to simply show

that sinners are sinners. The law of tithing ultimately proved that sinners are selfish by nature. When Jesus rebuked the Pharisees who tithed on "mint and dill and cummin," He accused them of robbery and self indulgence. Obeying the law of the tithe makes no man righteous.

So God's financial system cannot be built on laws of giving. It is built on the Spirit of giving. God has come down. Moreover, He has moved in. Genuine Christians are filled with the Spirit of Christ, and they are generous only because His nature has become their nature. No one commands God to be generous. Love and generosity is His very nature. God acts like He believes what He says: "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

When the Holy Spirit poured out at Pentecost, the baptized were exceedingly generous. Why? Not because they were commanded to be generous, but because God was manifesting His generosity through them. So giving were the saints that they didn't hesitate to sell their possessions to provide for those who lacked. Offerings went well beyond 10% of gross, as the people were drunk with generosity. The Kingdom had come, and the Lord was Lord of all, including people's stuff. Not one felt pressured or manipulated to give. The givers enjoyed giving; and God's will was gloriously done on earth as it is in heaven.

This same Spirit lives today in the church that Jesus builds. It's leaders are not Judaizers who try to control the people with rules made for sinners. It's people are directly under His divine influence. In His church, the rules simply don't apply. *RC*

Study Verses: Acts 15; Mal. 3:8-12; Ro. 3:9-23; Gal. 19-27; Ro. 8:1-17; and Acts 4:31-35.

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