

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

The previous Sabbath Thought discussed the origins of Giving & Receiving in the OT and showed that it is distinct from tithing. It also illustrated that, as a matter of human behavior, people of the Old Covenant were incapable of Giving & Receiving according to God's intents and purposes because their hearts were hardened and without compassion. That all changed in the NT where tithing is briefly mentioned as a basic statute that provided for the Levites and priests. Instead, there is a great emphasis on mercy and providing for the needs of others in the NT stories and parables. This is the result of the change in the New Covenant to a spiritual relationship with God in which the hearts of the people become vessels of His agape love instead of selfishness.

Unlike *tithe*, there is no simple or 'official' name for desires borne out of love and mercy to serve others. Instead, several NT scriptures emphasize the actions of "Giving & Receiving" and, hence, that is the name I have chosen to describe the way of life that was always intended by God:

MATTHEW 10:8 "Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. **Freely you have received, freely give.**

PHILIPPIANS 4:15 ... no church shared with me **concerning giving and receiving** but you only.

1 TIMOTHY 4:3-4 ... [*that which*] God created to be **received** with thanks**giving** by those who believe and know the truth. 4 For every creature of God *is* good, and nothing is to be refused if it is **received** with thanks**giving**;

What is unique about Giving & Receiving is that it is, as described in Ezekiel 18:5, 7, 16, only FROM by God. It is, in fact, the result of agape love, which is not natural to the human heart and, therefore, is something that must be GIVEN by God:

1 JOHN 4:16-17, 19 And we have known and believed **the love that God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God in him.** 17 Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because **as He is, so are we [to become] in this world.** ... 19 **We love Him because He first loved us.**

Agape love originates from God. He IS agape love and is PERFECTING it in us. Giving & Receiving is an outreach of agape love, which is first GIVEN by God, RECEIVED by us, and then GIVEN to Him again. Agape love is, truly, the only thing that we uniquely can offer to Him that He does not have. Agape love is then the motive for all that follows in a relationship that spans eternity:

JOHN 3:16 "For **God so loved** the world **that He gave** His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but **have everlasting life.**

It is God's love for mankind that is behind His desire to GIVE us eternal life. It is agape love for God that causes us to want to RECEIVE eternal life. So, God GAVE to us first because He LOVED us:

JOHN 17:8 “For **I [Jesus] have given to them the words which You [God the Father] have given Me; and they have received them**, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

1 CORINTHIANS 2:12 Now **we have received**, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been **freely given to us by God**.

ACTS 10:43 “To Him [Jesus Christ] **all the prophets witness** that, through His name, **whoever believes in Him will receive remission of sins**.”

ACTS 26:18 [Jesus sent Paul to the Gentiles,] ‘to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, that **they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance** among those who are sanctified by faith in Me.’

Those under the Old Covenant were incapable of fulfilling Giving & Receiving even though it was a clear statute (Deu. 15:7-11) and, yet, it is an expectation in the NT. What makes it possible for those in the New Covenant? The obvious answer is the Holy Spirit:

JOHN 7:39 But this He [Jesus] spoke concerning **the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given [by God the Father]**, because Jesus was not yet glorified.

ACTS 2:38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall **receive the gift of the Holy Spirit**.”

But notice this is the GIFT of God¹. He expects His people to fulfill Giving & Receiving because, 1) He GAVE us the Holy Spirit so we could have His agape love working in us and, 2) He GAVE to us FIRST; therefore, we have an obligation and, hopefully, desire to give to others. All of this, of course, was made possible by God when the Father “**gave His only begotten Son**” for our sins. Such an act is only a glimpse of the immeasurable depth of His agape love. No one can, as is the common expression, out-GIVE God.

God the Father gave us everything through His Son so that His people can become agape love and continue the only way of true ETERNAL life—Giving & Receiving! This is absolutely a matter of salvation. Notice perhaps the most important testimony to this:

MATTHEW 25:31-46 “When the Son of Man comes in His glory, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will sit on the throne of His glory. 32 “All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides *his* sheep from the goats. 33 “And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 “Then the King will say to those on His right hand, **‘Come, you [sheep] blessed of My**

¹ Also Acts 10:45; 11:17; Rom. 5:15-19; 2 Cor. 9:15; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6 et al.

Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: 35 ‘for I was hungry and **you gave Me** food; I was thirsty and you **gave Me drink**; I was a stranger and **you took Me in**; 36 ‘I was naked and **you clothed Me**; I was sick and **you visited Me**; I was in prison and **you came to Me**.’ 37 “Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed *You*, or thirsty and give *You* drink? 38 ‘When did we see You a stranger and take *You* in, or naked and clothe *You*? 39 ‘Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to *You*?’ 40 “And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, **inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me**.’ 41 “Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘**Depart from Me, you [goats] cursed, into the everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels: 42 ‘for I was hungry and **you gave Me no** food; I was thirsty and **you gave Me no** drink; 43 ‘I was a stranger and **you did not take Me in**, naked and **you did not clothe Me**, sick and in prison and **you did not visit Me**.’ 44 “Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and **did not minister to You**?’ 45 “Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, **inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me**.’ 46 “And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.”

Those beloved of God the Father and Jesus Christ and who are GIVEN salvation also GIVE to others. Those cursed of God the Father and Jesus Christ are denied salvation because they did NOT GIVE.

Giving & Receiving, in all respects, is a measure of God’s agape love in a person.

The parable of the Sheep and Goats is reflected throughout the NT. While a reader will not always find scriptures under the heading of Giving & Receiving, it is there nonetheless. Notice one example:

GALATIANS 6:2-5 **Bear one another’s burdens [take it upon oneself to GIVE aid]**, and so **fulfill the law of Christ**. 3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself. 4 But let each one examine **his own work**, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another. 5 For each one shall bear his own load.

What is the Law of Christ that is FULFILLED? The two Great Commandments: Love God and Love Our Neighbor². These have been mentioned in more scriptures than can be listed (a sampling of them is in the footnote). The Law of God from the days of old is not just to teach *concepts* but it is a MEANS to BECOMING agape love:

1 TIMOTHY 1:5 Now **the purpose of the commandment [God’s Law] is love from a pure heart**, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith,

So, HOW is the Law fulfilled? Through good works (Gal. 6:4) of Giving & Receiving! This is the core of salvation. Here are warnings to those who exhibit ‘goat’ behavior:

² Matt. 7:7, 12; 22:36-40; 19:19; Mark 12:29-31; Luke 10:27; Rom 13:8-10; Gal. 5:13-14; Eph. 5:2; 1 Thess 4:9; 1 Tim. 1:5; Jas 2:8 et al.

GALATIANS 6:7-10 **Do not be deceived, God is not mocked**; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap. 8 For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life. 9 And **let us not grow weary while doing good**, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart. 10 Therefore, **as we have opportunity, let us do good to all**, especially to those who are of the household of faith.

JAMES 2:14-18 What *does it* profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? [*None!*] Can faith save him? [*No!*] 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” **but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit?** 17 Thus also faith by itself, **if it does not have works [of Giving & Receiving], is dead.** 18 But someone will say, “You have faith, and I have works.” Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works.

1 JOHN 3:17 **But whoever has this world’s goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?**

... and here are a couple of ‘sheep’ examples:

1 THESSALONIANS 1:2-3 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing **your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope** in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father,

HEBREWS 6:10 For **God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love** which you have shown toward His name, *in that* **you have ministered to the saints, and do minister.**

Hopefully, this is much more than an intellectual review of basic Scripture because having faith in the sacrifice of Jesus for our sins, becoming agape love, and doing good works through Giving & Receiving ARE the “simplicity in Christ” (2 Cor. 11:3). They are so easily corrupted by Satan through all manner of distractions but they are the fruit that must remain.”³ The gospel of Christ for salvation⁴ is simply put:

For God so loved the world that He GAVE His only begotten Son for the remission of sins of those who believe in Christ so they can become agape love and live a life of Giving & Receiving through good works now, and to RECEIVE everlasting life in the day of our visitation.⁵

May God’s grace and peace be upon you!

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³ John 15:16.

⁴ Eph. 1:13.

⁵ John 3:16; 1 Tim. 1:5; Phil. 4:15; 1 Pet. 2:12.