

The Giving of Tithes

By
Robert M. HANLIN

July 21, 1983

THE subject of tithing is seldom preached about in our services, but it is an important doctrine of the Gospel; and as we look into God's Word we will see that it is God's plan for financing His work. We will begin our study with Genesis 14:18-20. Some try to tell us that tithing was established by the giving of the Law of Moses, but what we will read here happened hundreds of years before the Law was given:

"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God.

"And he blessed him, [that is, He blessed Abraham] and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:

"And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all" (Genesis 14:18-20).

This is back in the time of Abram, even before his name was changed to Abraham Lot, who had been living in Sodom, had been taken captive by some kings who had gone down into that country and fought against them. So Abram gathered some 300 of his servants and went out and fought against these kings and rescued Lot and the others. He also took all the spoils. On his way back, he met Melchizedek, King of Salem, and paid tithes of all that he had. In explaining who Melchizedek was, the writer of Hebrews mentioned this incident:

"For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

"To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace;

"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.

"And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: "But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises" (Hebrews 7:1-6).

Abraham paid his tithes unto Melchizedek, who was possibly the Son of God. He is likened unto the Son of God, without father or mother, without beginning, and without end. And what we are bringing out this morning is that our tithes belong unto God.

I thank God for the standard we have in this Gospel, in the Apostolic Faith Church. If you have been around here for a few years, you know that there never has been a public collection taken in any of the Apostolic Faith meetings. Thank God for that. We don't have church carnivals, church bazaars, or bingo games to raise money. That isn't God's plan. His plan is that His people pay tithes and give offerings unto the Lord. It isn't our choice as to whether we might or might not do it. This is the commandment of God, and we will see as we continue in our lesson.

Let's turn back to Genesis, the 28th chapter, and read about Jacob, the grandson of Abraham. This is 200 years after Abraham had made his offering unto Melchizedek, and 500 years before the Law was established by Moses. This happened when Jacob had left his home, fleeing from his brother Esau into a far country. On his first night out, he saw a vision of a ladder reaching into Heaven, angels

ascending and descending on it, and God at the top promising him the land and that through his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. He also promised: "I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land."

"Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillows, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil upon the top of it.

"And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first.

"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on,

"So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God:

"And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Genesis 28:18-22).

Where did Jacob learn this? Maybe he had heard it from his mother and father as they were sitting in their tents, talking about how they were giving offerings unto God. Maybe he had heard them as they rehearsed about Abraham, his grandfather, and told of his paying tithes and offerings unto God.

All this happened before the Law was established. I believe it was God's commandment from the very beginning. Now we come to the Law. Turn to Leviticus 27:30-32:

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S: it is holy unto the LORD.

"And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof.

"And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD."

You ask, "How are we going to know where to give our tithes?" We give them where we participate with others in worship to God. If you worship here in Portland, this is where your tithes should be paid. If you live in San Francisco, where I live, then your tithes belong to the church in San Francisco.

I see the vans with the name of the Apostolic Faith Church painted on them. How are those vans kept in operation? Through the tithes and offerings of you who live here in Portland. I've thanked God for those vans at this camp meeting because they are being used to bring children to Sunday school, to pick up seamen to bring them to church. They are used to take groups to some of the hospitals and rest homes for meetings. They have to be kept in operation by financial assistance, and that assistance comes from you. And you have a part in the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ when you do your part in paying tithes. Tithes are holy unto the Lord.

There is much smooth talk by men on the radio these days who try to win people through their winsome talk and pleas for money. I have personal knowledge that many of them have something else at stake rather than the furtherance of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of the reasons I say that is that one of the most popular evangelists, a few years ago, in the city where I am living, was found in a hotel room where he had died under the influence of alcohol. They impounded his car, and in the trunk were several suitcases filled with money. Whose money? Well, the man wasn't working. It was money that people had sent to him through his pleas over the radio.

Another radio man wrote books, and he had quite a good thing going, such as a prison ministry. But a few years ago that man was killed by the husband of the woman he was found with in a motel. You say, "Those are just one or two instances." We could go on and on with many others. I am not doing this just to downgrade people, but to let you know what God would have us to do with our tithes and offerings. And we know if we do what God wants us to do, we are a happy people. "Happy are ye if ye do it."

Numbers 18:21-24:

"And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation.

"Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die.

"But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity: it shall be a statute for ever throughout your generations, that among the children of Israel they have no inheritance.

"But the tithes of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the LORD, I have given to the Levites to inherit: therefore I have said unto them, Among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance."

This is how God established the working of His ministry. And He says that the ministry shall live from the tithes that are brought in by the people. To continue with this same thought, turn to I Corinthians 9:13,14:

"Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?"

"Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."

Drop down to the 16th verse. Paul says:

"For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"

I didn't start out in life to become a minister. I didn't have that thought in mind. But there came a time when I received a call from God. This is something God laid upon my heart; and because of that I do receive my sustenance from the tithes that are given to the church. God has established it that way. I pray often that God will give us wisdom to use His money in the best way that He would have it used.

Years ago, when I was called to Portland and asked if I would become a pastor, I accepted, not once thinking, How am I going to live? What am I going to do now? I can tell you that I am not in this for filthy lucre's sake. God has called me to be a preacher of the Gospel of Jesus Christ, and I am here with these other ministers to be a winner of souls. This is our calling.

There have been times in some of the churches when there wasn't enough coming in through tithes to meet some special needs of my family, and it wasn't beyond me to go out and labor with my hands to add to what was needed. This happens sometimes, and any of us ministers are willing to do this. But usually we can live from the tithes that are brought into the church by the people, as God directed.

Let's look for a moment at II Chronicles 31:5-10, of what happened in Hezekiah's time:

"And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the firstfruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly."

"And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, that dwelt in the cities of Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the LORD their God, and laid them by heaps."

"In the third month they began to lay the foundation of the heaps, and finished them in the seventh month."

"And when Hezekiah and the princes came and saw the heaps, they blessed the LORD, and his people Israel."

"Then Hezekiah questioned with the priests and the Levites concerning the heaps."

"And Azariah the chief priest of the house of Zadok answered him, and said, Since the people began to bring the offerings into the house of the LORD, we have had enough to eat, and have left plenty: for the LORD hath blessed his people; and that which is left is this great store."

God blesses people who are obedient to what He tells them to do, whether it is to pay tithes, to live holy, or to do anything that God commands in His Word. Many people are robbed of blessings in their lives because they do not pay tithes. And many people even backslide because of it. I have seen it happen.

I remember one gentleman in a church where I was a pastor many years ago, who told me: "I am holding back my tithes. I am just paying the Lord the interest on them, but I am using my tithes." I guess he expected to give it all back to the Lord someday. I don't know. Of course, I told him that I didn't think that was right and tried to show him by the Word. But you can't demand it of people. All you can do is show them what "thus saith the Lord."

I'll tell you what happened in this man's life. He became lean in his soul, and it wasn't long until he started to drift. He began to miss meetings, and before long we didn't even see him in church. He didn't go out and join another church; he just stayed home. I know that when he passed out into eternity he wasn't going to church. To my knowledge, he never got the tithing situation cleared up with God. That's between him and God. It is dangerous to hold back anything that belongs to God, in fact, any consecration that God is calling for in your life.

Some say, "I can't afford to pay tithes. By the time I take care of my bills, I don't have anything left with which to pay tithes."

One of the brothers who told me that, said, "I just can't afford to, Brother Bob. It doesn't work out." So I said to him, "Let's put it down on paper." We listed it all on paper, and I had to agree with him that he didn't have enough to go around. But I told him, "Why don't you just pay your tithes first. Give unto the Lord that which belongs to Him. It isn't yours anyway. The tithe belongs to God. Pay your tithes first and see what happens." That's all I told him.

About three or four months later he came to me and said, "Brother Bob, it works. It works!" I had even forgotten about it, and asked, "What works?" He said, "I pay my tithes first and I always have a little left over." He was living in a rented home and he had an older car, but it wasn't long until he got a better car. Then he set aside a little and bought himself a home. Now he has a brand new car. You may say, "He has a different job with a different company." No, he has been with the same company all the time. But he just pays his tithes, and God honors him.

We are not going to tell you this morning that if you pay your tithes you are going to have a new car, a new house. Nor are we going to tell you that if you pay your tithes, that's your ticket to Heaven. But if you pay your tithes and do that which God wants you to do, He will bless you. However, if you hold back from God, you will suffer the consequence.

Nehemiah 13:12,13:

"Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries.

"And I made treasurers over the treasuries, Shelemiah the priest, and Zadok the scribe, and of the Levites, Pedaiah: and next to them was Hanan the son of Zaccur, the son of Mattaniah: for they were counted faithful, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren."

The people brought their tithes into the House of God, and were able to go at it in a businesslike way. I am glad that in the Apostolic Faith Church, too, it is done in a businesslike way. I know that when tithes are put into the tithe box and are collected, it is noted how much comes in. There is notation made in a journal if some of the money is put into the box for other activities, such as various missionary efforts, or for a new building, for publications, etc. Those are offerings in addition to their tithes.

We as pastors send a financial report in to headquarters every month. This report lets those at headquarters know what income has come into our church and also what it is spent for: lights, heat and water at the church, automobile needs, for the Sunday school or the music department. Who pays for the electricity? Your tithes do. What helps to keep the Sunday school work going? Your tithes. All of this is given in a report and sent to the headquarters.

If something comes into our church that is for Korea, for the West Indies or anything like that, we send it to Portland. It is so designated and it is so used. How do I know it is so used? Because we get letters from the Barretts in Korea every once in a while and they will thank us, not knowing possibly who it came from, but thanking us for some of the offerings that come for Korea. And letters come from other countries as well. It works, saints. And I thank God that it is done this way.

I was living in Eureka several years ago and knew a businessman, a mortician. His daughter was on the board of several charity groups that receive money and disburse it. She told him that about 70% of what they receive is used for operating expenses and only about 30% is actually used for those that are in need. If you send a \$5 bill in here for the West Indies, \$5 will go to the West Indies. If you send \$100 for the building project, it will be used over there at the building project. You don't need to worry about your offerings not being used as you designate.

I say this because I know what happens in God's work. And this morning we say this before God, because we want you to know just what is expected of you and what God wants you and me to continue to do.

Turn to Malachi 3:8: "Will a man rob God?" This is a Scripture we read when we talk about tithing. Maybe we should preach about tithing more often because it is one of the doctrines of the Bible. We don't draw back just because we don't want to talk about it, but it is one of those things that we know God takes care of. And we don't want people to feel that we are trying to dun them for money. We are not. But we want you to know what God would have you to do.

Would you rob God? I don't believe you really would. At least you feel that you would not, and possibly you don't really think you are robbing Him when you haven't paid your tithes. But this is what God said: "

. . Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

Your offering is something that you give freely — a freewill offering — and God blesses it, too. But the tithes belong to God and if you withhold your tithes from Him, you are robbing God.

If God lays it on your heart to give some offerings for missionary work, for the literature ministry, the new building and things like that, He will bless you for giving it. We are not asking you or telling you what to do. God knows the needs.

I remember when I was in Los Angeles and Brother Damron and Brother Mel Frost were down in Boca Chica. They were building a church, and there was a need. I don't know if they realized what they were going to get into when they went, but as they were building on the church they ran out of funds. I didn't get a letter telling me about it nobody did, to my knowledge. But one day in the tithe box came an offering marked for the work in the West Indies. To this day, I don't know whom it came from, and we don't need to know. It was done as unto the Lord. It just shows you how God works. I called down there and asked, "Is there a need, something in particular that there is a need for now?" They explained: "Yes, we are building this church in Boca Chica and we ran out of funds." I wired them the money, and it turned out to be just enough. When that building was finished, they had less than one dollar left. So God worked on someone to give a freewill offering to His work, and every nickel was used as that person asked it to be used. I say again, I am glad that I am a part of the Gospel.

God went on to tell the people what the consequences would be of their actions:

"Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it" (Malachi 3:9,10).

God said that He will bless you if you do what He requires of you. And if you hold it back, you are going to be the loser because of it. Start doing what God wants you to do and see if God won't start working in your behalf. God will, because He said, ". . . prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it."

I Corinthians 6:9,10:

"Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind,

"Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God."

I was impressed by the words, "not covetous." Someone who is covetous is listed along with the drunkards, thieves, fornicators and adulterers. It is because of a covetous spirit that some withhold their tithes.

If you have a covetous spirit, you should repent of that just as much as if you were a liar or a thief. If you are withholding from God you are robbing Him. If you have a covetous spirit, you will lose your soul in hell.

We could go on and give you many New Testament texts where the Lord commanded the paying of tithes, as in Matthew 23:23, where Jesus said: "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." They had paid tithes as they should, but they should also have done the other.

The Lord is expecting you and me to give Him that which we owe Him. The Lord saw even the little widow as she passed by the treasury and cast in her few mites, and He commended her for it.

Some ask: "How am I going to pay tithes?" You are going to pay them because God gives you what you need. You cannot out-give God.

In speaking of the man who had made out the list of his needs, when he began to pay tithes, he paid on the gross of his check. That is what one should do — not after everything has been withheld. Some of the withholdings might be into a credit union, or for dental bills, insurance, taxes, etc. We pay tithes on the wages earned, before the deductions. They belong to God.

Let us read what the Apostle Paul told the Corinthians:

"Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come" (I Corinthians 16:2).

As God prospers, as God gives, as God helps you, you are to give back to Him accordingly. It isn't what you choose to give Him, but the tithe belongs to God. And I thank God that He does bless those who honor Him.

"We'll close by reading Deuteronomy 4:1,2, and may God help us to take this warning as from His Word:

"Now therefore hearken, O Israel, unto the statutes and unto the judgments, which I teach you, for to do them, that ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you.

"Ye shall not add unto the word which I command you, neither shall ye diminish ought from it, that ye may keep the commandments of the LORD your God which I command you."

Why? "That ye may live, and go in and possess the land which the LORD God of your fathers giveth you." That's why we want to keep the Word of God in its entirety: that we might go into our inheritance. He has experiences and blessings here for us today, and God wants us to reach out and receive them from Him.

If we are obedient unto God, and don't add anything to the Word nor take anything away from the Word — just do what this Bible tells us to do — God is going to bless, and we will be able to go in and possess the land He has for us.

May God help us to really search our hearts: Am I giving to the Lord all that He requires? Can you say, "Yes, God, I am"? Or you can pray, "God help me to come up to Your standard and be the kind of worker, the kind of servant, that You would have me to be." God will bless you. He has promised to pour you out a blessing more than you can contain.