

TITHING AND CHURCH POLICY

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THE answer to all our needs and questions is found in the Gospel of Jesus Christ — in the Book of God — and we benefit by the answer when we do what the Lord teaches us to do.

I would like to talk again today about something that pertains to every one of us. To let our Christianity spread as far as we can spread it, we must speak of things that can benefit all who hear us. And this teaching has to do with money.

Now don't tell me it does not pertain to you. Why is it that you complain about inflation? Prices go up and you cannot buy much with what you have. You complain about taxes; you can't quite pay the price the government demands of you. This is a real problem. Why? It hits you in the pocketbook.

You talk about the necessities of life and you need so much more than you used to need. You really do. You have to have many things these days that people didn't have in times 'past. Today, you come to church in the luxury and comfort of a car. Who does not want a car? You need a car for transportation. You might be satisfied without having the newest car but you need transportation. If you don't have it, you have to get friendly with someone who has a car and make some arrangements. You want a car, but oh, how much money a car costs!

Things are getting away out of sight in price and you cry about it. Why? It takes money — more and more money. Every day we are concerned about this. We try to be wise, try to shop carefully, cut the corners where we can. We have to establish priorities and decide what we will take and what we will leave, when we will trade and when we will not.

It seems nobody can stop inflation. It seems nobody can provide a job for everyone who needs a job. Unemployment is a problem. This is because of a lack of money. We cannot shut our eyes to the situation. We have to deal with these things to the best of our ability. We can't control prices; and it seems neither can Congress or the President. It is a matter that plagues the whole world.

But, we can learn something concerning our money by looking into the Bible. It tells us there the action we ought to take regarding the tithing of what we do have, and of the blessings we can expect if we do what the Word says.

We do not often speak on this subject, and if you were asked, you probably could not remember the last time I taught on tithing. About eight or ten years ago, on a Sunday night, I announced that we would have a Bible teaching the following Tuesday night on the subject of Church Finances — Tithing. That night we had a larger crowd than ever. Some people came for one reason and some for another. Two-thirds of the crowd were those who came all the time anyway, no matter what we were going to preach about. They were always there. Thank God for them! We thank Him, too, for those who come on special occasions, and for those who do not yet know but want to learn what the Bible says concerning these things.

Anyway, this is a touchy subject. If the preacher preaches on finances, he has a problem. But, too, if he preaches on how to raise your children he has a problem. If he preaches on politics, he **really** has a problem. We are not going to get involved in that area. That is not our job. It is not taught in the Bible, only to the extent that we are to be subject to them that have the rule over us, and we are to pray for the governors and those in authority. That is in the Bible, and what is in the Bible we must preach.

Money can be a blessing, a great blessing. Sometimes a little money is more of a blessing than a lot of money. Some can handle a little money and retain God's favor, but they could not with riches. God knows this and He keeps that problem from most of us by not letting us have the wherewithal to do much. But we must thank God for what we have, because it is given us for a blessing. We must have it to pay for clothing, food and other necessities for our family. So we certainly want God to bless what we do have, don't we?

In Malachi, we read:

"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."

If you want to have God's blessing, that is the way to get it.

And listen to this:

"I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts.

"And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts" (Malachi 3:10-12).

This prophecy given to the Israelites, to the children of God in that day, gave them a chance to really multiply the blessings that God had in store to give them, naturally, and also the blessings they would obtain by their own labor and their own doing. That was what Malachi, the prophet of God, was telling them — that if they obeyed God they could have **it** better than they had ever had it. Their crops would be greater; and the plagues that came so often upon their land would be less.

This is a direct promise from God in that if you will do your part, God will do His, and you will have His blessing. You do a little and God will do **much**. **You make a little** effort and God will cause that effort to blossom into a rose of beauty. It will be something beyond what you would ever expect to come from your efforts.

"Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse . . . and prove me." Tithing is giving a part of our substance, a part of our increase, a part of our salary if we work, or of our income if we are in business — giving of that which God has given us, giving to Him a **tithe** — which rightfully is His already.

In Hebrews 7:3, 4, we read about the King of righteousness, the King of Salem, the King of peace, a mysterious character, "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." He was at least a type of Jesus, if not the Lord Himself.

In Genesis, the 14th chapter, we are first told of that divine personage — Melchizedek who met Abraham when he was returning from battle, after rescuing Lot from the enemy. Abraham could feel the glory of God there in the presence of Melchizedek.

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

"And he blessed him, 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).

How happy Abraham must have been, having obtained the victory that God gave him over the enemy; and then to come back and meet Melchizedek, who gave him this great blessing! So Abraham "gave him tithes of all." He paid tithes!

This shows us that even before God's giving of the Law to Moses, Abraham had something in his heart that let him know he owed a part of what he had to God.

Jacob's Vow

Let us turn to Genesis 28, and read about Jacob and his promise to pay tithes, Jacob had defrauded his brother Esau, and had deceitfully obtained the birthright and the blessing. Because of the great controversy that arose between the two, brothers, Jacob had to flee for his life. His own father suggested that he go to live in the land where his mother's brother Laban lived. This he did.

"And Jacob went out from Beersheba, and went toward Haran.

"And he lighted upon a certain place, and tarried there all night, because the sun was set; and he took of the stones of that place, and put them for his pillows, and lay down in that place to sleep.

"And he dreamed, and behold a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven: and behold the angels of God ascending and descending on it.

"And, behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, I am, the LORD God of Abraham thy father, and the God of Isaac: the land whereon thou liest, to thee will I give it, and to thy seed;

"And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the

families of the earth be blessed.

"And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest, and will bring thee again into this land; for I will not leave thee, until I have done that which I have spoken to thee of.

"And Jacob awaked out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the LORD is in this place; and I knew it not.

"And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven.

"And 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 28:10-22).

There we have another natural reaction from a man who honored God. Even though he had been very unwise in some things he had done, underneath it all he knew he needed God's help: and God was promising Jacob here that He would help him if he would do right. Immediately out of his heart came the response that if God would help him, he would certainly give a tenth to Him. So again we see that tithing was in order before Moses and the Law.

Now we shall see the principle of tithing in the New Testament, that a tenth of our increase, a tenth of our income belongs to God. It has been in the heart of man from the beginning, and I am persuaded it is in your heart too, if you love the Lord your God. You desire to know how the Lord would have you express yourself and how to honor God with your substance: not just with your lips as you testify, not with your hands only as you praise the Lord and lift your hands in prayer, or even when you work to serve the Lord. Not that way only, but literally with whatever you have, you will want to do what God wants you to do. You will say: "God, I appreciate the blessings You give me and I want to keep myself in tune with Your plan and with Your method of financing the work of God."

Jesus gave the disciples some down-to-earth instructions about how to get along with each other, what to do, how to pray, how to live, how to get misunderstandings straightened out, and all of that. And even about taking oaths.

In Matthew 23:21, 22, He said:

"And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.

"And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

He was teaching that they should not swear by their right hand nor their left, because even the hairs of their head God has numbered. You can't make yourself taller or shorter. What you are, you are. So do not think you can give your body as a ransom or a surety for something. After all, you belong to God.

Jesus said in Matthew 23:23:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, . . ."

In other words, they were methodically giving of their tithes because that had been assuredly taught of Moses and they claimed they were scholars and disciples of Moses. He had taught them tithing. It was a part of the Mosaic Law. So, 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."

Paying your tithes will not give you a ticket to Heaven. You have to do the other things, too. But tithing is a necessary part of following God, doing what He wants you to do. God put it into the hearts of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob to tithe. God delivered it to the Children of Israel in writing, and in the

teachings handed down by Moses. The priests had their orders to administer this in their day. Here Jesus tells these Israelites many years later that they had taken tithing seriously, and had paid their tithes, but they ought to do that which is more important than paying tithes.

We are not telling you that paying your tithes is the most important thing in the world. It isn't. The most important thing is to love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul, mind and strength. and your neighbor as yourself. Doing good to them that despitefully use you and praying for your enemies and those that persecute you, are more important than to pay your tithes. But if you have done that. then you will naturally do as Abraham did and as the others have done. You will say, "I want to do what Jesus said." He told even those hypocrites, those Pharisees and Sadducees, that they ought to pay their tithes.

We don't refuse the tithes of unbelievers unless they give them to us with a string attached and tell us how to use the Lord's money. But we don't ask them to help the Lord's work. We don't go to the world to ask for money. We don't go to businessmen and invite them to help the Good Cause along.

You have noticed at the campground we don't even pass a collection plate to ask those folks who come to camp meeting every year to help finance the Lord's work. It takes a lot of time. really, to do that, and time is so precious. We could have two or three testimonies given by the time a collection plate would be passed down the aisles. We aren't saying there is any sin to passing a plate. The Apostles told the people in the New Testament times to lay aside, to save up what the Lord had given them that they might present their tithes and offerings to the Lord to be used for His work, and even to help support the poor and the widows **of** their day.

"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).

I think the Apostle meant by this that they wouldn't need to have a special meeting about that. Just do this and God will honor you for doing it.

We have boxes on the wall into which people can drop their tithes and offerings — after meeting or before meeting. Jesus has said that we ought to tithe, and that we ought to do the more important things, too.

All that we learn from the teachings of God's Word we should do if we are going to be perfect man before the Lord.

Our Tithe Belongs to God

God's Word is handed down through Moses' teachings, through the Law. And Jesus Christ is the fulfillment of the Law. This Gospel of Jesus Christ is an unfolding of that which was taught in type in the Old Testament shadows and rituals. In the New Testament we have the opening up of that which was taught in the Old. Verse 30, of Leviticus 27, says:

"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."

This teaches us that the tithe is not ours. It belongs to God. We are not **giving** something when we pay our tithes. It is God's. This was understood by Abraham because he just opened up and did it — right away. He wasn't doing it grudgingly, or seemingly doing Melchizedek a favor. He didn't know what Melchizedek would do with his offerings. After all, if this was a personage from Heaven he wouldn't need earthly currency nor earthly things to live on, so that wasn't what Abraham was worried about. Abraham was concerned about doing what God said to do — to pay his tithes and offerings.

So verse 30 says, "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."

Now this must mean that if they brought the produce of their land or their livestock to offer as a tenth of their increase, and for some reason they wanted to keep a certain part, they would have to turn in one-fifth more than it was worth. Most people don't sell livestock that way. Most of them want to buy cheaper and sell at a higher price. This meant they could keep it or buy it back at more than it was worth — just so they wouldn't be cheating God, or be guilty of keeping the best and giving the inferior to God.

God will bless you for paying tithes. If in doubt about how much you should pay, you will not lose anything by giving more than is necessary. And you'll never have a guilt complex.

Verse 32 says:

"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.*"

There we have again the exact specification that the tithe means the tenth, and it says also it is the Lord's. Turn your tithes in for the Lord's use, for the Lord's work, and for the Lord's ministers.

In the Old Testament days, the tithes were for the Levites and the priests. But now we are beyond the priesthood stage. We are in the New Testament dispensation, and have a new order of worship. Today the ministers, those who have the spiritual responsibility for guiding you and teaching you and instructing you, have a parallel responsibility in being sure that the freewill offerings or the tithes given in to the church are used in a way that God can bless.

The Use of the Tithe

"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" (Numbers 18:21).

The Levites had no inheritance so far as the land and earthly possessions were concerned, but they were given a part of the tithes as their inheritance for their sustenance, for their families, for the service of the house of God, for the furthering of the teaching and the order of the service.

"Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation, lest they bear sin, and die" (Numbers 18:22).

This, following right upon the heels of verse 21 where it says the tithes are to be given to the Levites, warns other people about coming too close to the tabernacle, too close to the holy things'. So there must be a double meaning here. Others should not try to exercise themselves in what the Levites, or those in charge, do with what God has given them to use. We should honor those in charge and pray for them and praise God for their faithfulness. Pray that they will be used of God literally to advance the Kingdom and to magnify the name of the Lord.

It was possible for a priest in that day to fail. In one case where a priest had failed, he had brought wrong people into the Temple, but God had His ways of revealing it to the other priests. In our case today the minister, or the "prophets," are subject to the "prophets" as the Bible says. In the New Testament dispensation this means that the spirits of the preachers, the spirits of the ministers, are subject one to the other; and we literally work that way. We subject ourselves one to the other that we might truly understand what we are preaching, how we are succeeding, where our failures are, where we can amend our ways, what more we can learn and what we can do.

If one of us is out of order, this is something we discuss among ourselves and pray about, among ourselves. We all love each other dearly and God helps us to subject ourselves one to the other. If someone does not subject himself to the spirit of the prophets or ministers and shows he is not doing things God's way — if he rebels and says, "I won't do it that way" — and such a fellow leaves us, we just have to pray God will have mercy upon him. There is no other way for us to operate than to do things the way God says to do them.

So when we admonish you, as we did the other day, to be sure that you honor them that have the rule over you, and that you consider them as God's servants, God's appointed authority, to advise you, you can be sure that we ministers also are subjecting ourselves one to the other. We are all endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit and the harmony among us so that we with one voice will be able to teach the same Gospel, the same doctrines, the same practices, the same disciplines, the same standards as best we can.

We do not want to sit in judgment on one another and try to think we are succeeding and somebody else isn't. After all, we are one family. And if one suffers we all suffer with him. If one minister has a problem, all the rest of us have a problem, and we all suffer. In our church congregation, if one member suffers, all suffer, because from the least unto the greatest there is no such thing as an unimportant one. God loves us all. He wants us all to be perfected in the bond of unity and to stand together in practice and in discipline and in doctrine, and even in the matter of financial structures of our church and how we handle the Lord's funds. This is a part of the Gospel.

So here in Numbers, we read that the tenth has been given to the children of Levi for their inheritance. They would not inherit land along with the other tribes but were to live off the tithes.

Verse 22, again:

"Neither must the children of Israel henceforth come nigh the tabernacle of the congregation,

lest they bear sin, and die."

In other words, don't be too eager to assume responsibilities that might belong to another.

Verse 23:

"But the Levites shall do the service of the tabernacle of the congregation, and they shall bear their iniquity. . . ."

This means that if they who are in charge do wrong they will suffer for it.

... 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" (Numbers 18:23, 24).

Now this teaches us that the tithe money is the Lord's and the purpose for the Lord's money is to pay the expenses of the church operation, the publishing of the Good News, the sending of missionaries, etc., and the support of those who have the spiritual responsibility for bearing the Gospel tidings. That means ministers, workers, helpers and those who are devoting their strength and their time to serve the Lord. To the extent that they can, they do it freely. They are eager and glad to do it, even without remuneration. But it is not outside the realm of God's Word — rather it is well within it — that they who preach the Gospel shall live off the Gospel. So we should "not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn" (I Timothy 5:18). We should not put pressure on to try to make it hard on the minister or pastor and say, "He should be humble and we will do our best to keep him humble."

Some churches act that way and some people feel that way about their pocketbook. God will judge those who do. God will bless those who open up their hearts to follow the Lord in all things, and in so doing, ministers will have less worries about how they will make their living or where their livelihood will come from.

We ministers are not above working if we need to. We are not saying that it is dishonorable to earn our bread by the sweat of our brow, because the Bible certainly does say that. And it is necessary for many of our ministers to work. Some of them work full time, almost, and some of them part time, and they are not grumbling and complaining. They know that with a small body of believers, the tithes and offerings are only enough to pay the utilities, or to paint the church once in awhile. There is not enough to support the minister so he is glad to do his part.

God-appointed ministers are not mercenary in this. They aren't concerned about their own lack of having full support. They are praying that God will help them to be at the church at the right time, to minister to the people God has appointed them to be over, and to faithfully do their duty there. And then when the Lord calls them to another field, they don't go there just for a better salary. They don't go just for a bigger church. They go because it is in God's order and God's plan, for we are their elders and overseers to suggest to them and pray with them that God will help us to know where each minister should go to labor and how he would fit best in the whole pattern, to preach the Gospel under the auspices of the Apostolic Faith.

What Constitutes an Offering

I Chronicles 21:22-26:

"Then David said to Oman, Grant me the place of this threshingfloor, that I may build an altar therein unto the LORD: thou shalt grant it me for the full price: that the plague may be stayed from the people.

"And Oman said unto David, Take it to thee, and let my lord the king do that which is good in his eyes: lo, I give thee the oxen also for burnt offerings, and the threshing instruments for wood, and the wheat for the meat offering; I give it all.

"And king David said to Ornan, Nay; but I will verily buy it for the full price: for I will not take that which is thine for the LORD, nor offer burnt offerings without cost.

"So David gave to Ornan for the place six hundred shekels of gold by weight.

"And David built there an altar unto the LORD, and offered burnt offerings and peace offerings, and called upon the LORD; and he answered him from heaven by fire upon the altar of burnt offering."

David had a principle here. It would not be a gift from him if it cost him nothing.

The gift that you give is a blessing to you because you offer that which costs you something. Your tithes already belong to the Lord. After you have gotten the blessing for paying your tithes, you can have even more blessings if you feel the need for that, and if the occasion warrants it, by offering something extra besides your tithes.

We have heard the story of a time when Sister Crawford asked another sister if she had some spare time she could give to the Lord. The sister answered that she did not have any spare time, but the Lord's work came first and she would freely give her time to it. If the Lord's work needed her services, she was there to give.

That is the spirit to have. That is the same as saying, "I won't give unto the Lord that which costs me nothing. I may not be able to have all the luxuries others have, and it may take some rearranging of my affairs, but gladly give unto the Lord where there is a need. I'm going to put God first." That is being like David at Ornan's threshing floor: giving that which costs you something.

An Empty Temple in Nehemiah's Time

Nehemiah was a prophet of God who had been sent back to Jerusalem to build up the walls and the gates that had been burned with fire. God prospered him and the work was done. But the tithes had been neglected, In Nehemiah 13:10, we read,

"And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field."

All those who served the Temple had had to go out to work in the field to provide for their needs. The things they should have had had not been given them. The people of God had backslidden and gotten into a very low ebb, They had become disheartened and scattered, troubled and perplexed, and had not done what they should have done to support the Lord's work, So Nehemiah contended with the rulers and said,

"Why is the house of God forsaken?"

In other words, "If you are believers, if you are in harmony with God and doing what God says, please explain why things are like they are now. Why is the house of God forsaken?"

Nehemiah now tells us:

"I gathered them together, and set them in their place."

He said a few things to them that ought to have been said. He made a few new arrangements that ought to have been made. He set them in their place. He got everything all straightened out and told them they had been failing in their duty, that things were wrong. He reminded them that God had blessed them. The gates were now repaired and the walls were built up, but they could not stand around and just let the walls be a monument to their labor project.

There was more to this than just building up the walls, more than just being masons and carpenters and such as that. God had more for them to do. They were to bring to the Levites that which belonged to them, so they could again orient themselves in the right way and devote themselves to the work of God.

The people got the point. They understood. He was talking about something that hit them right in the "pocketbook." They had been holding back, but Nehemiah put things in order.

"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 . . . (Nehemiah 13:12, 13).

He appointed someone among the Levites to take the responsibility for this. He delegated some of them that would have a spiritual oversight of the work and would oversee those things that needed to be done, to repair the House of God, and do other work for the Lord.

One person possibly would have the responsibility of buying and paying for materials, someone else would have another part to oversee. God's men in God's order were delegated and authorized to take care of these things and to have them done.

And when all the people brought in their tithes, and everything was set in order, then the House of God was blessed, and again the Glory of the Lord could be felt therein.

Law and Order for Our Church

That is the same way it works today among us in the Gospel. There is no reason for us to think that something is wrong if we are set in our place. Though it is painful sometimes!

You may get a sliver in your hand and for awhile not know it is there, but it doesn't feel good in that spot. When you see it you say, "Oh, I stuck myself with a silver! It will be better in a few days." But it does not get better unless you pull it out. It is a painful process. But you can't leave it there. If you do, it will get worse. So you have to get it out.

So it is in spiritual matters. When something plagues us, some trouble comes along, when someone is ornery or forgetful or lazy or indifferent, or whatever it might be, and difficulty develops, it will not get better until the problem is taken care of. It really has to be taken hold of and pulled out. We must take the thing in tow and do what God would have us do, God has means of lining us up. He has counselors, elders and ministers that will teach us and correct us and show us the way. If we take their counsel and let ourselves be set in place, and let everything be put in order, then the blessing of God comes again.

But if we will not let ourselves be set in our own place, someone else may take our crown. We might be set aside, and end up as one of those "has-beens." We might be among those who drop by the wayside. We do not want that. We want to line our lives to the Word and have the blessing of God all the time, and be able to do what God says to do.

Again let us read in Malachi, 3rd chapter. We have already read verses 10 through 11, about bringing the tithes into the storehouse and receiving a blessing we cannot contain. Just ahead of that, in verse 7, we read:

"Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto me, and I will return unto you, saith the LORD of hosts."

In other words, he was saying, "You have this problem; it seems to be with you always, coming up again and again. From the days of your fathers, it seem to go this way, go that way. How can God bless you when you are not really what you ought to be, or where you ought to be; not really lining up and doing exactly what God wants you to do?"

". . . Return unto me . . . But ye said, Wherein shall we return?"

You may say, "How does that apply to me? I have been around here for a long time. Why, I have heard the Gospel since Sister Crawford's day. I've heard this over and over, through the years." But just hearing the Gospel doesn't make you what you ought to be. Some people complain about the way we preach. Well, there is a reason for that, too.

I heard of one man who was called to be a preacher at a certain church and he got up on the first Sunday and preached on "repentance." The first Sunday he was there! He had been newly hired by that church, but he just poured it on, saying, "It is time for people to repent! Ask forgiveness of your brother and get right with God. Let us face it, you must repent!" The next Sunday came and he preached the same thing again. Bang, bang, bang! "Repent, repent!" He kept that up — couldn't get off the subject, preached on the same subject every time.

The deacons called him aside and said, "What about this? After all, we hired you to preach and we would like to talk to you about what you are preaching. You preach the same sermon all the time." He said, "I confess to that. But from the day I came here I have not seen one soul move a peg. So I am just going to keep on preaching repentance until somebody moves."

Well, of course, they did not keep him. If they had the power to hire him, they had the power to fire him.

That is not the way we work in our church. We assume that God knows what He is doing, and that He is appointing and anointing and directing and helping. He sets one here and one there. He sets one up or sets one down. He gives one a privilege of this kind one day and another privilege the next day. God does these things and God blesses. I know what I am talking about. I know God helped me in a very marvelous way in my younger days. And sometimes now, I cry out to God, "Oh, God, help me! I am getting older but please do not forget us in our older days!" God help us all to really have that same earnestness and desire to follow the Lord as in the beginning.

In my earlier days I did not need to worry about whether I was in the will of God or if I was where I ought to be in a certain church. I just went where Brother Crawford said, "Go," and I preached when I was told to preach, and I have been in a lot of places. I lived in Los Angeles three different times. I lived in Portland, in Klamath Falls, in Dallas, San Francisco and Medford. I have served under a lot of ministers, and worked with them, and I have never had any trouble with any of them yet. I just did what I was told to do. My overseers were men of God, and God blessed in what was done. Oh, what

a blessing! What a memory I have! That is worth a lot.

It will be worth a lot to you, too, if you can just stick in there and say, "I'll do my part, I'll do what God's Word says to do. I'll pay my tithes. I'll honor those who have the rule over me. I'll pray for those in authority. I'll honor them as God-appointed and God-anointed. I'll pray for my brother and my sister, help clean the church. I'll help paint the church. I will not complain about it. I'll give of my talent and of my time, and I will not demand remuneration for it as I would if I were working for the world. I know there is a blessing for me in doing something for God."

Oh, yes, there is a blessing awaiting the one who does what he should do. But those folks who heard they should repent didn't see their need to repent. They said as much as, "I am here, change me if you can." We have seen some people sit in the meetings, fold their arms, and even go to sleep. Some complain about the fact that they do not enjoy the meetings. I have seen some really sleeping during the preaching of the Word, possibly having bad dreams — at least they were not hearing what the preacher was saying. But it will behoove each one of us to wake up, listen, and decide once and for all: What is being said might pertain to me.

One time, years ago, Brother Ray Crawford was down in Medford holding meetings. I was not there but I heard this. Someone got up and testified before anyone had been asked to testify. They had sung just one song and this brother was thinking of something else, and out of habit of wanting to testify, he just jumped up and testified. So Brother Ray said, "I think we had better pay attention here. There might be something said that pertains to you. Everybody please pay attention to what we say."

I'm sure that brother felt like crawling under his seat. He was a faithful old brother and he apologized a dozen times. He had not done anything so wrong; he was just thoughtless, and he got a rebuke. But he didn't fail God because he got a public rebuke. He remained faithful.

Could you take a public rebuke? If somebody called your name out in the *service* and said, "Pay attention: something might be said pertaining to you," how would you feel? Some people have taken it. I heard of one who preached years ago and Sister Crawford told him that he had no Spirit upon his sermon and said to him, "Next time you get up to preach be sure you have the message and the Spirit. Don't you try again like you did this time." That was in the days back there when no one was assigned to preach and one would get up and preach if he felt he had the sermon, as we do now when we feel led to testify. That man took the reproof and did not leave the church. He died in the faith, a minister and faithful worker in the Gospel.

Yes, when things were set in order, those old-timers just said, "All right, just set me where you will. Move me. Teach me. Let me know what I am supposed to do, and how to do it." They had the right spirit.

Be Careful Where You Get Your Spiritual Food

But now, we are in an age when everybody says, get my instructions from just' where I want." Some people even go out there into "Egypt" to get information for God's people. They go out among the "Philistines" to have their "ax sharpened." I mean by that, that there are people today who go here and there, to seminars, conferences, other churches, to get somebody to teach them how they ought to serve God. I have not seen one good thing come of that yet, notwithstanding what people have said about it. I have seen harm. I have seen people literally get attracted by some person and they begin going to listen and think that the person is someone great. Such speakers may even claim to have the baptism, even though they are way off doctrinally. If they do not stand for all the Bible doctrines, they are not true, and they are not the ones who should be influencing you.

You cannot go listen to those out there who preach other doctrines, and get by with less than you have learned right here. You will ruin yourself spiritually. You will imbibe their false spirits. You will soon be obsessed with their ideas and will wonder, "Why is everybody else so wrong and I am so right?" Satan will take up his abode in you because you are compromising and going out there where you ought not to go, listening to the wrong preachers. You are "dancing to the wrong tunes," believing those people and their teachings. Pretty soon you will even think: At our church, they can't even preach.

We have to fulfill our responsibility as God demands. None of us brag about our ability to preach, but God has given us that responsibility. God gives each one of us a duty to discharge before Him.

The one thing I am trying to do is to encourage everybody everywhere to stand for this Gospel that has been delivered to us. Do it with all your heart, and compromise with no one. Don't go anywhere else trying to find food for your soul. If you do you will be taking on false doctrine, you will believe anything, perhaps, and will be open for anyone's "garbage" pretty soon, even though they tell you they are preaching the same thing, or very nearly the same thing. If that is true, why are they not here with us? If they are teaching the same thing we are teaching, how good they would feel among us! They would say,

"I didn't dream anything like this was in the world, where people held such a standard. I thought I was-by myself."

There are some elsewhere who are preaching the truth, all right. We are not saying they are not. But, oh, how good they would feel to come into a House of God like this and feel what we feel. If they literally are standing for the same truths of God's Word we preach, God help us to rejoice and give them the right hand of fellowship. But we don't give them the right hand of fellowship with any "ifs," "but's," and "maybe's," or any "almost-like-us" doctrines.

Almost the same Gospel is no Gospel. Just mark that down now. We aren't unconscious. We know what we are saying. And it is something that needs to be said because Satan would like, in these very last days, to make a shipwreck of people and cause them to think black is white and white is black.

God sets things in order. God does things His way. He doesn't send you down into the camp of the Philistines to have someone sharpen your ax for you. If you want your ax sharpened, get down to this altar and pray. Don't stand around the back there and talk and talk and talk. A lot of people do that. Some who claim they are very spiritual can stand around and talk and talk before meeting and after meeting. When do they pray?

The right way is to pray. Open your heart before God, and say: "God being my helper, I will be what God wants me to be, and I have chosen to be in the Apostolic Faith." If you haven't chosen to be here, please pardon me. Please get your counsel from your own preacher. But if you are of the Apostolic Faith and come here, then get your counsel from the preacher that preaches the Gospel to you. If we are all in harmony, in faith together, then God will help us to stand together.

Those in other churches have to do the same thing. They have law and order of certain kinds, they have disciplines and rules. They have to enforce them to have any semblance of order.

We are not fighting them, but We are trying to defend the faith with a positive approach and say, "This is the Gospel. This is the Truth. God has given it to us, from the handling of our finances to raising our children, to honoring each other and praying one for the other, getting along in the city, in the school and all of that. It is all in the Book of God." We thank Him for the privilege we have to preach it.

Remember, now, you must do more than just pay tithes. You must also do the weightier matters of the Law. You must do all God said to do. Failing in one point makes the whole effort a failure.

If you "almost" make it, where are you going? If you almost get in the door, where will you be? If you almost feel this is right, where are you? **THIS IS THE GOSPEL, THIS IS THE TRUTH.** God help us to stand for it! Praise God for it! Apologize never! L.C.C.