



TITHING - GOD'S PLAN OF FINANCING

THE question is sometimes asked "Do Christians pay tithes?" or "What is the financing plan instituted by God for the maintenance and advancement of His cause and the upbuilding of His Kingdom?" It is good for us to know what the Word says, and then follow the admonition of the Lord: "If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them" (John 13: 17). The people who are happy today are those who are doing all things according to the Word.

While the subject of tithing is rarely preached in our meetings, yet it is by no means a minor part of the Gospel. Tithing is a part of God's Word and the teaching of it is required at the hand of every true minister of the Gospel. We have every reason to believe as we search the Scriptures that tithing is the plan of God and is the method which is receiving the blessing of God.

Tithing Was Ordained Before the Law Was Given

Some say that tithing originated in the Israelitish Law, and that we are now in the Gospel dispensation, and therefore the law of tithing no longer applies to God's people. But we read in Hebrews, seventh chapter, that the paying of tithes was observed before there was a Hebrew nation. At least 400 years before the Law was given, Abraham paid tithes to Melchisedec, the priest. of the most high God. Paul says: "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; . . . Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils" (Hebrews 7:1-6).

So Abraham paid tithes before the giving of the Israelitish Law. Jacob also, long before the Law was given, vowed a vow to God, in which he said: "And of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee" (Genesis 28:22).

Established in the Jewish Law

In the Law given to the Israelites on Mount Sinai , God said to Moses, "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 the tenth shall be holy unto the LORD" (Leviticus 27:30-32). Mark the words here, the tithe "is the LORD'S." It is not yours or mine. It is the Lord's. The tenth belongs to God, according to His Word. And so long as we keep it we are robbing God.

That Jesus found the Jewish people paying tithes and that He endorsed it, is very evident by the words of the Lord spoken to the scribes and Pharisees. The twenty-third verse of the twenty-third chapter of Matthew reads: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for 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."

Will a Man Rob God?

It is a serious thing to withhold tithes and offerings from God. The Word says we are put in the class of robbers if we do. In Malachi 3: 8-10, we read: "Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say,

Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings. Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, . . and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts."

There is a challenge thrown out to those who have been robbing God. When this charge was brought against the Children of Israel, they seemed to be entirely unaware that their failure to bring in their tithes had brought on blighted crops, afflicted bodies, and oppression by the enemies. How serious do you consider it to rob God? "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse and prove me . . . 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." "Prove me." I have never seen anyone yet who was loyal and faithful to God in this respect but who prospered, and could get his prayers through.

I personally knew two young businessmen in the city of San Francisco who scrupulously paid their tithes. They had offices in the Call Building on a certain floor. They were not saved, but they honored God with their tithes. At the time of the great San Francisco earthquake the fire destroyed all the Call Building except the offices of these two young men. There was no damage done either to their offices or equipment. They said they believed it was because of the giving of their tithes to the Lord that He had protected them from loss.

Ten Cents of Every Dollar for the Lord

When Paul the Apostle rebuked the Corinthian church for having partaken of the Lord's supper unworthily he said, "For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (I Corinthians 11:30). Many had died because they had come to the Lord's table unworthily. In the same way the Israelites had come into the Temple of the Lord in the days of Malachi. God said they were cursed with a curse for failing to bring in their tithes. It is a dangerous thing to trifle with the commandments of God; and it does not pay to play the part of Ananias and Sapphira who held back part of the price (Acts 5:1-10).

A man once said that at one time his tithes grew so large, because God had blessed his business, that they amounted to considerable money. The devil said, "You are giving too much to God." He began to withhold his tithes, and it was not long until his business failed, and he lost everything. He talked it over with his wife and they went down before the Lord and confessed it. He said, "Lord, the next dollar I make, ten cents of it shall go to Your cause." From that day on he has never failed to give unto the Lord his tithes and offerings; and God has again prospered and blessed him.

God's Plan for His Church

Tithing was God's plan instituted in the very beginning. It was perpetuated in the Law of Moses and reinforced. Therefore it must have been a good institution, and God has never substituted anything else. We can see that Paul acknowledges and confirms the paying of tithes to Melchisedec, who was like unto the Son of God in that he had neither beginning nor end of days. If the people of God were to bring in 'their tithes under the Law, how much more should we, in the Gospel dispensation, bring our tithes unto the Lord.

In I Corinthians 16:2, Paul writes, "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." As Christians we owe Christ all that we have. God does not exact, it of us, but He makes us stewards over what we have committed to Him. Some will say that when one consecrates everything to God he is no longer required to tithe, as all is in His hands. But we are held responsible for what He has placed in our care.

The Widow's Mites

The question is asked, "What of the people with small incomes - are they exempt from tithing?" They are no more exempt from obedience to the Word of God than anyone else. -We read in Luke 21, that Jesus "saw the rich men casting their gifts into the treasury. And he saw also a certain poor widow

casting in thither two mites. And he said, Of a truth I say unto you, that this poor widow hath cast in more than they all: for all these have of their abundance cast in unto the offerings of God: but she of her penury hath cast in all the living that she had."

Jesus sanctioned the giving of two mites by this widow; and not only that, He commended her for giving all that she had. She stood out in the estimation. of the Lord for what she had done, more than the rich who gave of their abundance. Some say that God does not require those of meager incomes to pay tithes. That is merely human sentiment and is not found in the Word of God. No one ever loses by obeying God.

Some will ask, "What about debts - are we to pay our debts before we pay our tithes?" That depends upon who comes first with you man or God. It is a serious thing to rob your fellow man; but it is infinitely more serious to sin against God. This debt question is a serious thing in the sight of God, whether we owe man or God. I believe debts will bring a curse down on one's head quicker than anything else.

God's Plan for the Financing of His Cause

From the beginning of this Gospel enterprise, which has proclaimed the Word of God in all its fullness since 1906 - the time of the Latter Rain outpouring - tithing has been used because it was taught in the Word, and the Word of God is our guide and textbook. We have always believed that God's plan for the financing of His cause was tithing And no work of the Lord' is being blessed today as is the Latter Rain Gospel. Every department is growing.

Many ask when they visit our work at Sixth and Burnside and see the vast extent of evangelistic enterprise: "How do you do it? How do you conduct your finances?" The answer is, "Through tithes and offerings." Collections are never taken.

Two small receptacles are placed on the rear wall of the auditorium, into which our people put their tithes and offerings. No records are kept and no one knows the amount given except God and the giver. Our people heartily give their tithes without any coercion or suggestion from anyone; and the subject of tithing is scarcely ever mentioned in our services.

Can we afford to substitute something else for God's plan? Many organizations are substituting bazaars, raffles, dramas, and financial drives to defray the expenses of the church, but this people have found that the blessing of the Lord rests upon the doing of His will and walking in the light of His Word.

"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 3:10).