

THE MASTER'S MONEY MATTERS IN THE MAKING OF MEN

“To give light to them that sit in
darkness and in the shadow of death...”
(Luke 1:79)

The Master's Business

Dedicated to Bob Catledge
Minister of the gospel,
Missionary, and a
Beloved friend

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FOREWORD

TO THE NEW CHRISTIAN converts of the first few centuries, the profession of faith in Jesus Christ was an entrance into a life of peril and suffering. In times of persecution there was no time for them to "grow" into Christian maturity. They were at once confronted with trials that are borne with fortitude only by those whom we call, by today's standards, mature Christians. But in the early church and in the dark ages following, the new-born fledgling in Christ was summoned to the flames alongside the seasoned, grey-bearded Christian soldier and called upon to face the ordeal with poise and steadfastness. They suffered gracefully but not without a deep surrender to Christ.

The church historian, William Jones, tells this story:

On the last day of the (Roman) show, Blandina was again produced, together with a young man of the name of Ponticus, about fifteen years of age, who had been brought out daily to be a spectator of the sufferings of others. This youth, being required to acknowledge the heathen deities, and refusing to do so, the whole multitude had no compassion for either of them, but subjected them to the whole circle of tortures, till Ponticus expired in them; and Blandina, having been scourged, and placed in the hot iron chair, was put into a net, and exposed to a bull; and after being tossed for some time by the furious animal, she was at length dispatched with a sword. The spectators acknowledged that they had never known any female to bear torture with such fortitude.

For young Ponticus and Blandina, maturity came quickly — no time to halt between two opinions. Would it be Christ or the world? The decision was swift, permanent. They threw themselves to Christ without reservation.

In the pages to follow, we shall be studying the will of God concerning money. It seems inconsistent to speak of the giving of money, however unselfishly, as a "sacrifice" after remembering the sufferings of our brethren in the past. Yet to most of us (we must be honest) the liberal sharing of our wealth in the work of Christ constitutes, in our way of thinking, a sacrifice -a sacrifice made with no small degree of self-abandonment and personal surrender to Christ and a great stride toward Christian maturity.

The fields are white to harvest — no time to halt between two opinions. Will we choose Christ or money? The decision should come swiftly, early. Christian maturity is not a function of time; it is a function of selfless surrender to the Savior. The new Christian can, and should, at once throw himself to Christ — body, soul, and wealth.

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April, 1963 Biloxi, Miss.

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HEART STRINGS - PURSE STRINGS

When we consider money, we consider something that is dearer to our hearts than most of us readily will admit. Although money is of itself nothing, it equates in our thinking all that is necessary and desirable in the material world. In our highly specialized civilization most of us have no way to gain the necessities and luxuries we desire except by the exchange of money. The nature of our flesh cries out for necessities and luxuries. For this reason money has come to be an item much treasured by humanity. For the love of money, human beings have labored, lied, schemed, robbed, murdered, and even betrayed the Son of God.

Every man has a treasure. What a man values most is his treasure. Our hearts are bound up in our treasures; we are powerless to withdraw and separate ourselves, our motives, or our deeds from pursuit of the things we value most. Just as a straw is tossed and driven before the wind, even so we are carried and driven in pursuit of the things we treasure and cherish.

If one's greatest efforts are expended acquiring money and material gain, here is the realm of his treasure. He values these things above all others. If one's greatest efforts are expended in the service of God, his time, strength and substance, then here is the realm of his treasure — he values the things of God above all others. A man's heart is inseparably bound to his treasure.

Jesus declared this principle when He said, "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Matt. 6:21). When we look at this principle alongside the principle that a man's actions or deeds manifest and betray the inward thoughts of the heart ("For as he thinketh in his heart, so is he." Prov. 23:7a), we grow alarmed when we observe the money

habits of people today. During the 10-year period (1) from 1948 to 1958, the American people spent \$113 billion for recreation alone (not including about \$88 billion for tobacco and liquor), while they spent only \$60 billion for all manner of churches, and all charitable organizations combined. This record was set by a people who are more than 60 per cent church members. The total national income was \$2.3 trillion, and a tenth of that is \$230 billion. What great things could have been wrought by people whose hearts were willing to yield \$230 billion for Christ?

A Christian nation? What a contradiction! Every Bible-believing, born-again, child of God should hang his head in shame if he has given no greater percentage of his income to the Lord than this nation collectively has given (less than 2.6 per cent). All who haven't should start now and find out what God expects and do something about it.

The only honest way to arrive at the minimum percentage that we should give the Lord is by light from His Word. Every man should not do "whatsoever is right in his own eyes." We should consider every doctrine and passage in the Bible that have a bearing on the subject so we can make sure that what we purpose in our hearts to give God is not an insulting trifle. We should make sure we are giving in accordance with His commandments. If our hearts have the right relationship with God, we will have a great desire to gain this knowledge and to conform to God's desires in this matter of giving. Why should we not want to give as much as God wants us to give? Can anyone show reason why we should not conform to His revealed will in giving?

THE GRATITUDE OF THE ANCIENTS

Ever since Adam fell by transgression and his descendants inherited his fallen nature, God has had a job to do. This job is the execution of His plan of redemption. God redeemed Adam purely by His own instrumentality. He preached the Gospel to Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:15) and Himself killed the first animal, a type of Christ, and clothed them (Gen. 3:21).

However, from that time forward it pleased God in His wisdom to use men as instruments in executing His plan of redemption. He uses man's efforts and man's accumulated wealth. God never requires man to give up all his wealth. He has recognized that man must use a part of it to sustain life and to maintain living conditions conducive to his well-being. But, He requires a portion of man's wealth to be given directly to support His work. God is wise and just and, therefore, does not require a fixed sum. He requires the same minimum percentage from each. This will amount to more from some than from others, because some have more. But no one is exempt or slighted.

1. God Has Always Used Our Wealth

At first, with Cain and Abel, the particular task at hand was to preach (or foreshadow) the Gospel through sacrifices typical of Christ. Therefore, they were required to offer a lamb. If they had one of their own, it was a part of their wealth and they used it for the task at hand. If they had no lamb, as Cain did not, they were to use their wealth and buy one. In this way God used their wealth in His plan of redemption. Then under the law God required the people to give of their wealth to accomplish a particular task. In Exodus 25 the task was to erect the Tabernacle and furnish it, for God was preaching the Gospel to mankind by types (see Heb. 9 and 10). This time God wanted

gold! He wanted it given as always, willingly from the heart: “. . . of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering. And this is the offering ye shall take of them; gold, and silver, and brass, and blue, and purple, and scarlet, and fine linen, . . .” (Ex. 25:2-4). God required their wealth to execute a task in His plan of redemption. That was under the law.

Likewise, in the New Testament, God uses the possessions of the people to support the present task. The apostles and the early church preached Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of the Old Testament types. God still is preaching the Gospel through men, but now the revelation is greatly amplified. The same grace that has been redeeming men since Adam, is now unveiled and manifest to the world in the life, death, and resurrection of Christ. The task now is to preach the full revelation of the Gospel to all the world. God still is using man's wealth to accomplish this task, but they gave much more in the New Testament than under law. The task is much greater now; it takes much more. Cain and Abel didn't have to worry about the whole world; they were the whole world.

Here is what the first Christians did: "And with great power gave the apostles witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus: and great grace was upon them all. Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles feet . . ." (Acts 4:33-35).

The task in the 20th century still is to preach the Gospel to the world. The task is larger than it has been before. There are more people now on this planet than there ever have been before. It takes a lot of hard cash to get the job done. God wants to use your cash just as He has used the cash of all those who love Him throughout the ages. Missionaries cannot swim the oceans; it takes money to travel. They cannot live on wild berries when they get there; it takes money to feed and clothe them. It takes money sometimes for customs and visas and things which most of us never have heard. Church buildings are not free. Pastors have to eat and dress, and they too must pay their bills. Sunday schools cannot operate without expense. Evangelists do not get free tires, gas, food, radio time, clothing, or lodging. It takes money to get the Gospel to lost people. That is still God's work. God has never apologized because

His work takes cash — and we do not presume to apologize for Him.

2. Abraham's Money Habits

The first Bible episode that begins to shed light upon the principle of giving is that of Abraham and Melchizedek:

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him (Abram) after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale. 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 (Abram) gave him tithes of all (Gen. 14:17-20).

In Abraham's day, more than 400 years before the law was given, faithful believers were giving of their wealth to the service of the most high God. Abraham did not offer God's priest an insulting tip, nor a convenient token offering to conform to custom. He cal-

culated all he had and gave one-tenth of all. Not after the income tax had been paid, nor the rent, groceries, car payment, and TV payment had been deducted; he gave tithes of all. Notice in verse 23 Abraham didn't take a thread nor a shoelatchet from the king of Sodom lest he should say that he had made Abraham rich. Abraham believed God, and God made Abraham rich. God approved and blessed Abraham's voluntary tenth.

In connection with this episode, we turn to the New Testament, Hebrews, chapter 7. Everyone wants to know if the New Testament teaches anything about tithing. It teaches much by implication to those who desire to be taught.

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 the 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. And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him (Heb. 7:1-10).

It is recognized that the primary message of this chapter is not giving. But here, as in many other places throughout the Bible, a secondary truth is used to illustrate or emphasize a primary truth. One truth is no more truth than the other, but the difference is in the way they are set in the context. The principle of giving the tenth (v. 2) to God through His ordained channels is used here to illustrate the imperfection of the Aaronic priesthood and contrast it with the priesthood after the order of Melchisedek who is a type of Christ.

But consider the secondary truth: God's perpetual approval of the tenth as the common minimum acceptable gift to Him through His ordained channels. The writer of Hebrews emphasizes that Abraham (under grace) gave a tenth of all to Melchisedek who is a type of Christ, showing clearly that in this Abraham honoured Christ unto whom "The Lord swears and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedek" (Heb. 7:21b). The writer further emphasized that the sons of Levi (the priesthood under the law) gave tithes to Melchisedek while yet in the loins of Abraham, thus honoring Christ, and showing that they, the less, were blessed of the better (v. 7). But even the Levites, who paid tithes to Melchisedek through Abraham, also received tithes, and they were merely men who died (v. 8). The argument is that it is a mark of honor to receive tithes, therefore, the Levitical priesthood actually honored Christ. Christ is honored to receive tithes — before the law, under the law, and after the law.

The writer of Hebrews speaks freely of the tithe as if his readers would take for granted and understand that to give tithes is to honor. If an illustration is to be vivid, it requires use of common objects or practices. So it seems obvious that in New

Testament days it was a common and undisputed practice at least to tithe for Christ's work. And it is implied in II Cor. 8 and Phil. 4 that some gave much more than a tenth. And it should be so, under a much better covenant.

If Abraham under an imperfect revelation of God's coming grace gave a tenth and God approved it, and if Israel under the law gave a tenth and God demanded it, and if the writer of Hebrews cited these as occasions of honor to the more perfect priesthood of Christ; how do some people reason, (who are under the full revelation of the glorious grace of Christ) that they are less obligated to love and honor Him by at least a tithe? Can anyone really believe that God is pleased with less now than He was before the eternal gift of the precious Son of God was made manifest? Is God honored when a \$50-a-week man flips Him a paltry dollar bill and goes piously on his way, (through ignorance or selfishness) thinking he has done God a big favor?

3. Jacob's Covenant

After Abraham's death, and Isaac, the son of promise, had also yielded up his spirit to the great Jehovah, Jacob, the little deceiver, headed down to Haran to get out of reach of Esau's knife. But on the way down something happened to Jacob that transformed his life and motives. He had a revelation from God in a dream. He found himself, a common schemer, gazing up a long ladder into heaven, with the celestial angels of God ascending and descending.

He looked on above the ladder and there he saw Him; he was in the presence of deity. A little sissy, Semitic boy running away from an angry brother, suddenly was confronted with the glorious presence of the Lord God, creator of the universe, who unconditionally confirmed to him the same promise that he had given to his grandfather Abraham. This tremendous promise was made to Jacob, the supplanter, unconditionally, by the Lord God himself!

No wonder it shook Jacob right down to the soles of his Semitic sandals! Wouldn't it have shaken you? If we were ushered suddenly into the presence of Almighty God, even if not in the full manifestation of His glory, we'd be like Jacob; we'd see ourselves in our vanity, greed, pride and indifference, and we'd jump up frustrated, ashamed, and scared like Jacob.

No wonder Jacob woke up scared and poured oil on the stone. He may have been like Peter on the Mount of Transfiguration, there in the presence of deity, he wist not what to say." What would you have done? Jacob did this:

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 Beth-el: 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 (Gen. 28:16-22).

Jacob "vowed a vow." God made an unconditional promise to Jacob that in "thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed." And Jacob made a vow that the Lord would be his God — if He would meet several conditions, and he would surely give the tenth (of all that thou shalt give me) unto Him. In view of the circumstances there, Jacob seemed a little tight-fisted offering God "the tenth." Don't you think so?

But Jacob, bless him, was flesh like you and me. Although that was perhaps the most sublime promise ever made, yet it was just a promise at that time. Certain of course, but still only a promise. Nevertheless, Jacob's heart responded with return gifts to God of a tenth of all his wealth. Did God bless and honor his tithe? Read Gen. 30 and 31 and see. God honored and blessed not only Jacob, but He even blessed Laban in some instances because Jacob was staying with him.

Now let us leave Jacob and get back home to us. God made that promise to Jacob and to you. "For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call" (Acts 2:39).

You are in one of the "families of the earth (to) be blessed." The "seed" is none other than the Lord Jesus Christ. While Jacob had the promise, you are the recipient of the fulfilled blessing of the promise if you have been saved through faith in the blood of Christ. The promise was made to Abraham and Jacob, but it is effectual to you also. Paul says that the "seed" Christ and the "blessing" is redemption:

And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.....Christ hath redeemer! us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree: That the blessing of Abraham might come on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ; that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not. And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ (Gal. 3:8, 13, 14, 16).

Now, who has the greater obligation to love and honor, Jacob or you? Who has received the fuller revelation of the promise, or the fuller blessing of the Spirit, Jacob or you? We can say, on the authority of the Word of God, that the Christian who offers God less than one-tenth of his wealth has no reason to expect God to honor and respect that kind of giving. Our obligation is greater than that of Jacob. The Bible is clear on what God expects and approves. The Christian who says God is satisfied with less than a tenth of his income says so without one single verse of Scripture to support his claim. The burden of bringing Scripture to support his actions rests heavily upon the non-tither. He is obligated to show scriptural reason why he should not give a tenth when every example indicates he should.

The Bible nowhere sets a precedent where God honors anything less than a tenth. And so, before the law came, we have two clear-cut examples of scriptural giving, and both declare the tithe.

WHEN GOD REVEALED HIS TRUE FEELINGS

Up to now we have considered only the Bible examples of giving under a period of grace, that is, before the law was given. But now we will consider the principles of giving

under the law.

1. God Demonstrates His Attitude Toward Sin

Before the law was given men were guided by conscience and by the few direct revelations which God gave them. And God, through His forbearance, and foreknowledge of future atonement, did not bring immediate judgment for sins even though they were repugnant in His sight. God had the same Holy nature before the law that He had during the law and that He has now. His demands are not less stern now than they were then. Because God doesn't strike people dead for disobedience, as He has in times past, does not mean that He has lost any of His hate for transgression of His commandments.

God gave the law to Israel that He might, among other reasons, demonstrate vividly His abhorrence and hatred of disobedience. God dealt strongly with Israel that He might demonstrate to them and to the world that in addition to being a merciful God ready to forgive the truly repentant, He is also a God of wrath and indignation who, without partiality, brings swift and terrible judgment upon the lawless.

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses" (Heb. 10:28). If this shows anything, it shows that God despises transgression. It reveals a part of His Nature. The law is to teach us what transgression is, and how it affects God. It demonstrates His displeasure against the apathetic and indifferent attitude of humanity toward His commandments.

If this side of God's nature had not been so vividly manifested under the law, we would not have known His hate for sin. It would have been hard to believe that a God who loved us enough to enflesh Himself and die for our sins would also relegate the unrepentant to eternal torment. But as we look at Israel under the law, we have no trouble believing that God means exactly what He says and that He feels very strongly about the things He commands.

Consider a few examples:

1) *And the people spake against God, and against Moses, Wherefore have ye brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? for there is no bread, neither is there any water; and our soul loatheth this light bread. And the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people; and much people of Israel died (Num. 21:5, 6).*

2) *He that sacrificeth unto my god, save unto the Lord only, he shall be utterly destroyed (Ex. 22:20).*

3) *For every one that curseth his father or his mother shall be surely put to death: he hath cursed his father or his mother; his blood shall be upon him (Lev. 20:9).*

4) *And David said unto Nathan, I have sinned against the Lord. And Nathan said unto David, the Lord also hath put away thy sin; thou shalt not die.*

Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die.

And Nathan departed unto his house. And the Lord struck the child that Uriah's wife bare unto David, and it was very sick . . . And it came to pass on the seventh day, that the child died (II Sam. 12:13, 14, 15, 18).

5) *And Achan answered Joshua, and said, Indeed I have sinned against the Lord God of Israel, and thus and thus have I done:*

When I saw among the spoils a goodly Babylonish garment, and two hundred shekels of silver, And a wedge of gold of fifty shekels weight, then I coveted them, and took them: and,

*behold, they are hid in the earth in the midst of my tent, and the silver under it.
So Joshua sent messengers, and they ran unto the tent: and, behold, it was hid in his tent,
and the silver under it.
And they took them out of the midst of the tent, and brought them unto Joshua, and unto all
the children of Israel, and laid them out before the Lord.
And Joshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, and the silver, and the
garment, and the wedge of gold, and his sons, and his daughters, and his oxen, and his
asses, and his sheep, and his tent, and all that he had: and they brought them unto the
valley Achor.
And Joshua said, Why hast thou troubled us? the Lord shall trouble thee this day. And all
Israel stoned him with stones, and burned them with fire, after they had stoned them with
stones.
And they raised over him a great heap of stones unto this day. So the Lord turned from the
fierceness of his anger (Josh. 7:20-26).*

God's nature is to hate disobedience. His nature has never changed; it never will. The short-sighted sentimentalist who rejects the picture of God as one of holiness and of fierce wrath, emphasizing only His attribute of love, must, to be consistent with scripture, adjust his views of God. This naive and shallow view of God makes Him a contradiction; failure to admit His hatred of sin reduces His love and mercy to a meaningless vanity. Now, back to the subject of money. If we want to find just how strongly God feels about what we give to Him, we must look into His law. For there He will reveal His true feelings. There He will reveal what is right and just and the least He is honored to receive. Just as He has revealed His true feelings concerning these things mentioned above, so will He show us how He regards those who withhold from Him that which He has declared to be equitable and the least He is honored to receive.

Some people try to excuse their greed by saying, "God is not so small and petty that he demands a certain sum right to the last penny." If it be "small" and "petty" to demand all that is right and just, then according to the Bible, God is "small" and "petty." Of course that is only an excuse for those who do not intend to give God the least that is equitable. But they still try to appear broad-minded and spiritual. They try to make it appear that they have a higher, more noble and loving view of God than those who take God at His obvious word and obey, but their deeds betray them.

2. God's Direct Command

If that broad-minded attitude is true piety, then these individuals are more pious than God. For what does the Bible say? And all the tithes 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 tithes of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.

He shall not search whether it be good or bad, neither shall he change it: and if he change it at all, then both it and the change thereof shall be holy; it shall not be redeemed (Lev. 27:30-33).

"All the tithes of the land," not a part, but all of the tenth. Not one per cent; not three

per cent not 9% per cent, but a full 10 per cent must be brought. And what if a man brings in only 9% per cent? God says that he will pay interest on the other half per cent; he will pay interest at the rate of 20 per cent.

Of every thing that passes under the rod, the tenth one will be God's. Don't search and cull out the skinny and the sick lambs and offer them to God. What an insult! But if you do. God says you'll give both the sick ones and the ones you exchanged.

God is trying to impress something upon us here. He is showing us that He wants us to do a certain thing and in a certain way, and His heart burns to see us pay attention to His words and show love and respect for His desire simply because He is our creator and redeemer. He is trying to show us another thing, that this matter of giving is so serious that if we take a slothful, indifferent, "broad-minded" or greedy attitude toward it, then we will come out on the short end. He will take even more than He first commanded, and by this He wants to make an impression that we should not forget.

The same God gave Lev. 27:30-33 that gave John 3:16. And God never spoke a word at any time that was not consistent with His immutable nature. God's commandment to give the tenth part of all to Him came forth from a nature of infinite holiness, love and wisdom, and it was from this same nature that the precious plan of redemption, through the atoning death of the Son of God, came. All things that come from God are a part of His nature. Why should we try to find loopholes in God's expressed desires? We should be eager to act on the slightest hint of His wishes. While He declares plainly, some people search for loopholes.

3. God's Purpose For The Tithe

The primary message of God to man is redemption, and all the communications of God to man has been mainly with a view to making this message of redemption effectual to the human race. And so it is with the commandment to tithe.

When God commanded Israel to give a tenth of all, He was not being cranky. This commandment was born of divine wisdom — wisdom, I say, and love. In His infinite mind, this commandment was given with a view to the propagation and manifestation of His plan of redemption. What were all the tithes and offerings used for? They went to the Levites. And Hezekiah appointed the courses of the priests and the Levites after their courses, every man according to his service, Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and the Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord.

And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits 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. . . .

Then Hezekiah questioned with the priest 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: (II Chron. 31:2-10).

The Levites used the tithes in the service of the house of the Lord." Because their office was to wait on the sons of Aaron for the service of the house of the

Lord, in the courts, and in the chambers, and in the purifying of all holy things, and the work of the service of the house of God; But for the shewbread, and for the fine flour for meat offering, and for the unleavened cakes, and for that which is baked in the pan, and for that which is fried, and for all manner of measure and size; And to stand every morning to thank and praise the Lord, and likewise at even; And to offer all burnt-sacrifices unto the Lord in the sabbaths, in the new moons, and on the set feasts, by number, according to the order commanded unto them, continually before the Lord: And that they should keep the charge of the Tabernacle of the congregation, and the charge of the holy place, and the charge of the sons of Aaron their brethren, in the service of the house of the Lord (I Chron. 23:28-32).

The Levites performed all of the ordinances of the ceremonial law; they purified the holy things, made the shewbread and unleavened cakes, prepared the meat offerings and burnt-offerings, and kept charge of the Tabernacle and later the Temple. And the Levites, of course, had to eat and live from the tithes and offerings as well. All this ceremonial activity in the Tabernacle and in the Temple was a continual testimony to the coming Redeemer. God was declaring His message of redemption to the people of Israel through types, and these types were shadows of the Gospel of Christ which was to come (see Col. 2:17).

Those who truly believed understood it that way. They knew the slain animals were not effectual to their salvation but the coming Messiah was. "For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins" (Heb. 10:4). But these things could testify to the redemption to come. All these types were supported by the tithes and offerings of the people.

It seems unnecessary to go into detail to show that in this age God's purpose for the tithes and offerings is in essence the same as it has always been. His purpose for the churches is to call out a people for His name from among all nations through the preaching of the Gospel. Hence Christ's commandment, "Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you.

The church at Philippi seems to be outstanding among the few churches in New Testament times that had discharged their responsibility toward giving to the support of the Gospel (Phil. 4:15). The church at Corinth contributed to the poor saints at Jerusalem, but even this was necessary not only for the sake of the poor but also for the effectiveness of the Gospel testimony. All church activity is ultimately for the propagation of the Gospel, for if God's ultimate goal were merely to have spiritual, loving, edified churches, He could take them to heaven and have all of these things in greater measures. But these things are necessary here as a means to the end of reaching a lost world with the Gospel message. The apostle Paul set the church at Corinth straight concerning its responsibility toward support of the Gospel. "Who goeth a warfare anytime at his own charges?" It's absurd that a soldier should go to war and pay his own way. How can he do battle when he must be occupied making a living? (See I Cor. 9).

God's purpose for the tithes and offerings still is to finance the message of redemption.

4. The Place To Give It

As it was God's purpose to preach the Gospel through types and ceremonies and to support these types and ceremonies by the tithes and offerings of the people, so it was His

purpose to designate a place where the tithes and offerings should be brought. But unto the place which the Lord your God shall choose out of all your tribes to put his name there, even unto his habitation shall ye seek, and thither thou shalt come: And thither ye shall bring your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, and your tithes, and heave-offerings of your hand, and your vows, and your freewill-offerings, and the firstlings of your herds and of your flocks: ... Ye shall not do after all the things that we do here this day, every man whatsoever is right in his own eyes (Deut. 12:5, 6, 8).

God had a certain place then to put His name. It was a place that was established from which to operate His business on earth, and His business is to get the message of redemption before the world. The place from which this message went out was the Temple on Mt. Zion. God never has left it to the individual to squander the tithes and offerings on anything that "was right in his own eyes." God designated the minimum amount to bring, and He designated also where it would be brought. The tithes and offerings will be brought, to the "house of the Lord."

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 (II Chron. 31:10).

God knows where these things will do the most good, but some people take it upon themselves individually to distribute the tithe as they see fit. God rejects that. Money given that way is not given to the Lord. One cannot give money to the Lord unless he brings it to the place God says to bring it. They were told specifically:

Then there shall be a place which the Lord your God shall choose to cause his name to dwell there; thither shall ye bring all that I command you; your burnt-offerings, and your sacrifices, your tithes, and the heave-offering of your hand, and all your choice vows which ye vow unto the Lord: (Deut. 12:11).

They were forbidden to do otherwise: Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest; But in the place which the Lord shall choose in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt-offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee (Deut. 12:13, 14).

Now we have established that God, in His wisdom, did not allow the children of Israel to disburse the tithe as they saw fit. And it takes no great intellect to understand why. If He had permitted this, they would have given some to their unfortunate relatives. And they would have sent a little by mail to their favorite prophet — having such great revivals down in Sodom, and Egypt, and Babylon. They would give a little to half-dozen "good causes" and institutions. Then they would sit back with a pious smile and say, "I've given my tithe to God.

The tithe would be squandered. The House of God would fall; the Levites would starve, and the message of redemption would perish from the earth. And all the people from that time forward would go to hell including you and me. God is wise; He designated a place.

We know that God's wisdom and purpose is unchangeable, but it helps to hear from the New Testament that God has designated a place to bring that which is to be given to Him.

Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as Cod hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem (I Cor. 16:1-3).

Notice these things about this passage: 1) Paul gave "order to the churches" by his apostolic authority. 2) The time is "upon the first day of the week," obviously because they assembled on that day. 3) They were to lay by in store as (proportionally) God had prospered. 4) There were to be no special gatherings when Paul arrived. That is, it was to be collected (v. 1). every Sunday (v. 2) and stored in a common treasury so they would not have to collect it when Paul arrived. The language will not permit us the claim that they laid by in their own private store at home to be collected when the apostle arrived (as some claim). Nor does the language allow the claim that they were to lay by in their own private store to disburse as they individually chose (v. 3). 5) The church was to be the authority for disbursing the money (v. 3).

This means that New Testament Christians today have an obligation like that of Israel. We have the commandment, at a certain time, to give a proportion so it will be gathered and ready for use as the Lord's institution (the church) shall direct.

God's name, in this age, is in His churches (Eph. 3:21). Therefore we know, by example from the Old Testament and by commandment from the New Testament, that God has not left it to our own individual discretion as to where we will put His money. He says it is to be put in the local church — the place where we are to assemble on the first day of the week. We speak of duty under ideal conditions, but deviation may be necessary.

We would expect God to make this commandment, because we have seen that His central concern is the salvation of man. And according to Christ's commandment, the job of the church is to evangelize, baptize and teach all nations (Matt. 28:17-20). No group or organization is authorized to do this apart from the New Testament church.

This is not meant to imply that the worthy private institutions and foundations should receive no support. To the contrary, these things can be and should be instruments of the churches wherever they are effectively engaged in the work of Christ. They should receive their support from the churches, and the churches should use these various instruments and facilities that have been established through the devotion and genius of individuals. But ideally, and the Bible is clear on this, the institution that Jesus Christ established and authorized to do His work is the New Testament church, and the individual's obligation is to bring God's money into this institution.

If this were done, churches would be able to extend their ministries through all the great Christ-honoring establishments, and these worthy private institutions would know financial support such as they have never known. But the responsibility of the individual is to the institution that Christ established to carry out His commission to evangelize, baptize, and teach all nations.

This work is to be supported by tithes and offerings. It is absolutely necessary, because this work it costs money just as it cost money in Old Testament days to maintain the testimony of the Gospel by types. God still is doing the same job according to His eternal purpose wrought in wisdom. He still is trying to get the message out.

5. Strong Feelings From Above

Now, as then, the Gospel message must be supported by tithes and offerings. This is God's method of support. Without tithers the Gospel cannot go abroad; it cannot even subsist at home. The bulk of money in any church is given by tithers (if there is a bulk of money). The tippers, those who flip God a tip the way you would a shoe-shine boy, do not

give enough collectively to pay the light bill once a month, much less send missionaries across the sea.

This world is on the way to hell, and one of the big reasons is because there are too many tippers and not enough tithers. Tippers are letting people go to hell, and this is a thing that gets very close to the heart of God. Christ died for souls, and tippers are withholding the Gospel from them.

You may not think God is a stickler about money, but if you want to stir up His wrath, withhold the Gospel from some soul that He loves. Could it be that we may some day stand in His presence with the blood of souls we could have reached dripping from our hands? (Ezek. 3:18). When it gets down to the inevitable rock-bottom consequence that souls are going to hell because of greed, God's anger is kindled.

Christ did not hang there spiked to the tree that afternoon with His body naked to the staring eyes of a hateful creation and His soul naked to the blaze of God's wrath for sin, just to have the benefactors of that sacrifice sit smugly in their greed and hold down that blessed message. Christ would never have trudged up Calvary if He had not had a burning passion to keep people out of hell. It is no longer a matter of dollars; it is a matter of souls. It is a matter of an all-wise God determining what is necessary to do a job that is precious to His heart. Will His very elect refuse Him? God says a tenth-plus will do the job, and some will not do it. No wonder He feels strongly about it!

There is a true story of a man who stole the shoes off the feet of his dead baby to buy himself another drink. This is despicable beyond words. But how much more despicable is it to steal from someone who poured out His life's blood for your soul — who endured indescribable anguish of soul for you?

And yet some do that very thing. God must ask: 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, 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 (Mai. 3:8-10). God regards those who withhold from Him that which is equitable as thieves. God told Israel that they were robbers, and all who withhold from God that which He has revealed is equitable are likewise robbers.

And listen to the cry. "Who me? Wherein have I robbed God?" He lays it on the line, straight to the heart of the matter, "In tithes and offerings." He is trying to make an impression on us. He regards it as thievery.

His wrath is hot against Israel for this manner of thievery. God tells them, "Ye are cursed with a curse." An unchangeable God is demonstrating His wrath against this particular transgression. God did not record this incident needlessly. The New Testament says, regarding these judgments upon Israel, "Now all these things happened unto them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come (I Cor. 10:11).

God has shown us how He regards the sin of withholding from Him what is His. There is no question but that His wrath is hot against it. Because He is now withholding immediate judgment, don't think He hates it one whit less.

But there is another aspect - His blessings and approval upon all who bring the tithes and offerings into His storehouse. What a pleasant thing it is for God to see His

people bringing in the tithes and offerings out of hearts of love for the Saviour and for the souls of those for whom He died. How it must warm His heart to see His people willingly bringing in their substance for the furtherance of the Gospel, and trusting Him with their money. He loves them and will bless them, for those who do such declare plainly and practically that their hearts are very near to the Lord and His work. "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also" (Luke 12:34).

WHERE GRACE ABOUNDS

Most Christians who are not tithers profess to give as they are "led" or as they "purpose in their hearts." This is truly the proper way to give, for certainly God's Word provides abundant leadership in this matter. Of course we should give as we are "led.' He has not left us without vivid demonstration of His feelings on this matter. And certainly the Bible is plain in teaching that God wants voluntary, loving, cheerful, and purposeful obedience. Even so-called narrow-minded tithers realized that God desires only gifts of love with joy and sincerity, and not gifts from a miserly, begrudging heart.

Strangely, most non-tithers always are "led" to give only what they can get their hands on quickest, provided it is a bill smaller than a five dollar bill, and most people don't have two dollar bills which leaves only a one dollar bill or some random change! This does seem strange. It looks almost as though their giving is left up to chance rather than "purpose," or perhaps their purpose is to ease their conscience or to be seen giving by their friends. In any case, this kind of giving does not spring from a genuine love for the work of God; it is not of charity, "And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing" (I Cor. 13:3). The plain truth is that there is no "purpose" in such giving. They have not sat down with the burden of God's work on their hearts and arrived at an amount by deliberate "purpose. It is random, haphazard and careless giving, not sacrificial or purposeful giving from the heart.

1. Give As You Purpose In Your Heart

"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (II Cor. 9:7). All God wants people to give at any time is what they purpose in their hearts. However, the Bible does not say that God is always satisfied with what we purpose. It is possible to purpose so little as to be an insult to God, yet He doesn't want us to give any more than we purpose. To give more than we purpose in our hearts would be to give grudgingly and not in love. He has no pleasure in such giving, and He never has. We are not under coercion to give a nickel; we are under grace. God has expressed His wishes throughout the Bible; we are obligated by love to respond.

Even in the Old Testament, God wanted the tithes and gifts given "willingly with the heart." "Speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heart ye shall take my offering" (Ex. 25:2). Israel, under the law was forced on pain of judgment to give what God declared to be right and just to demonstrate God's attitude toward giving not because He desired a gift given begrudgingly any more than He does now. God's nature has not changed; it was simply His purpose to use the period of the law to demonstrate His attitude toward certain things, and having done it He expects us evermore to be aware of His attitudes. Nevertheless, God wanted the tithes from a willing, cheerful, and loving heart under the law just as He does now.

In order to give in a pleasing manner to God, we first must purpose. The flippant, random attitude tippers have toward their giving is insulting to God. There is no purpose in it; it is based on convenience and chance.

Abraham purposed to give a certain percentage, not a random amount. He gave a certain proportion, as God had prospered him — a tenth of all, and the Lord blessed it. Jacob purposed in his heart a certain proportion, as God prospered him — a tenth of all, and God honored and blessed it. These gave cheerfully, not grudgingly, or of necessity. This is the kind of purpose we should have in our hearts. So, we have it by commandment and by example that we should give as we purpose in our hearts.

2. How Much Should We Purpose?

Is God pleased with just any amount we purpose? Is it possible that we could purpose too little? We would never advise anyone to give more than they purpose in their hearts, but we would advise many, on the authority of God's Word, to purpose more than they are now giving. "There is that (which) withholdeth more than is meet (proper) . . ." (Prov. 11:24). We can purpose too little.

The Bible says give "as God hath prospered" you. How can we do that without figuring, purposing, and giving some certain percentage? If you give two dollars each Sunday all your life and your earnings increase or decrease, you are not giving "as prospered." In order to give as prospered, you must calculate a certain percentage of your total income and purpose to give it. Then as your income goes up, your giving goes up and vice versa. God then may regulate the amount, by prospering you or failing to prosper you. If you are not giving that way, you are not giving "as prospered." And if you are not giving as prospered, then you are disobedient to the plain commandment of the New Testament, and that which you purpose in your heart is wrong; you are sinning against God.

Now, under New Testament giving so far, we have established two principles that must be observed.

- 1) Give as you purpose in your heart (II Cor. 9:7).
- 2) Give as God has prospered you (I Cor. 16:2). We have seen that "as prospered" means to purpose a certain percentage, so that your giving is tied to your income and goes up and down as your income fluctuates. These two principles must be the criteria for New Testament giving.

| Now we must examine the percentage. What percentage should we purpose in our hearts to give? We must establish from the Bible a maximum percentage and a minimum percentage that could be pleasing to God. And as near as we can discern from the Bible, any percentage between the maximum and the minimum is left up to direct leadership of the Holy Spirit as He will direct a surrendered individual, and this will probably be the amount the individual can get along without and still serve God effectively. But the two limits are set and established by the Bible, and the Holy Spirit wrote the Bible (through men, of course) and does not contradict His own word by leading people to give more than the maximum or less than the minimum. We will consider the maximum percentage first. The precedent for a maximum is set for us in Luke 21:1-4 and Mark 12:41-44. And Jesus sat over against the treasury, and beheld how the people cast money into the treasury: and many that were rich cast in much.

And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing.

And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you,

That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury.

For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living (Mark 12:41-44).

One remarkable thing about this passage is that Jesus was watching "how the people cast money into the treasury." He is interested in seeing people make their offerings. He died for souls, and it takes money to get the Gospel to them. No wonder He is watching the casting of money into His treasury!

But back to the precedent. This widow cast in every penny of her subsistence. All of her living, she cast into the work of the Lord. My, how she loved! (There is a difference here and when the disciples sold all at Pentecost and had "all things common." Some actually got more than they had ever had, but none had want).

And by this she set the upper limit of the percentage one may give to the Lord. You may give a maximum of 100 per cent; you may give all you have. God has not required it (Acts 5:4), but if you are so inclined, God will bless you for it. We feel confident that the widow did not starve, for God clothes the lillies of the field. The widow believed that promise. Bless her heart, what love!

It would be interesting if we could follow her and observe the details of a life so devoted, so full of faith and so empty of self. What lessons we could learn if we could have watched her trudge home that night to a house empty and lonely. A house not only empty of food and friends but empty also of the blessed companionship of her lifetime mate. And in the loneliness of the years we know, from her unselfish deed, that she had learned to depend upon the "Friend that stick-eth closer than a brother." Without knowing where she would get the next meal, she walked serenely back to her cottage and knelt — and the next morning she ate.

Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:30-33).

The maximum percentage for which we have precedent and example in the Bible is 100 per cent!

The minimum percentage that we should purpose in our hearts to give to the Lord is a more controversial question. It should not be, but it is. We do not know anyone who is giving the maximum percentage. We know some who are giving the minimum percentage, and above. But we know many who are giving less than the minimum.

Let us examine this matter from the standpoint of the New Testament. We are not under the law but under grace. Being under grace does not mean that anything we can get by with is right and pleasing to God. Sin grieves God as much (if not more) under grace as it did under law. Some people give as little to the Lord as they think they can get by with. A person can "get by" with a lot under grace. For "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound" (Rom. 5:20). We are not trying to establish what one can "get by" with; we are trying to establish what God wants — what He yearns to see us give, and what His revealed wishes are.

We well know what God expressed as the minimum percentage that was acceptable under law, and if the Old Testament record did anything, it demonstrated God's attitude

toward failure to give the minimum amount that is right and just — a tenth of all.

Now, what has changed under grace?

Has God changed?

No. God is immutable.

Has God's attitude toward failure to give changed?

No, He merely withholds immediate judgment.

Has God changed the minimum percentage that is right and just?

No. He has changed no commandment given in the law except the ordinances which were types and shadows of the coming Christ. These were meat offerings, holy days, the Sabbath etc. (Col. 2:14-17). But tithing was not a type or shadow. It was a practical provision to maintain the testimony of salvation. If God has "blotted out" His commandment that the tithe is the minimum amount that is right and just, we have no record of it. Only ordinances and types were fulfilled and "blotted out" for us.

Someone may object that tithing was not demanded of the Gentiles by the letter from the council at Jerusalem (Acts 25), but then, neither were such grave sins as murder and stealing mentioned. They were dealing with the ceremonial law, and were advised only to abstain from those things that would be offensive to devout Jews (Acts 15:20, 21). That murder is wrong and tithing is right is self-evident. There was no need that they should mention these things.

But what has changed under grace? Has our responsibility changed?

Yes. Our responsibility is the only thing that changed when we entered the dispensation of the full revelation of redemption, or grace. The types were fulfilled; the other commandments remain. But our responsibility has changed.

In which direction has our responsibility changed?

Let the Son of God answer:

Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.

For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled (Matt. 5:17, 18).

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:

But I say unto you. That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council; but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire (Matt. 5:21, 22).

Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart (Matt. 5:27, 28).

Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:

But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.

And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.

And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.

Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.

Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbor, and hate thine enemy.

But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that

hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you and persecute you (Matt. 5:38-44). This shows us plainly that our responsibilities and obligations are far greater under grace than under law. This means to an honest heart, sincerely desiring to please God even at the expense of his own comfort, that if Israel was required to give a tenth under the law then by the above principles we must give more than a tenth. But how can it ever be established that God is pleased with less than a tenth? Let him who can produce one single verse of Scripture that states or implies that God approves, or has ever approved, or ever will approve a system of giving that falls below 10 per cent. We are not talking about what we can get by with under grace, but what we ought to do. No one has been able to produce enough Scripture approving a less than 10 per cent giving program to out weigh or supercede:

- 1) The examples of the patriarchs before the law,
- 2) The plain commandment of God under the law,
- 3) The New Testament implications of Hebrews 7,
- 4) Christ's approval of tithe (Luke 11:42),
- 5) The implications embraced in the commandment of I Cor. 16:2 "as prospered" phrase,
- 6) The example of the heavy giving done by the Macedonians (II Cor. 8:1-6; Phil. 4:15-19),
- 7) The example of the early Christians who sold all and laid it at the Apostles' feet (Acts 4:34, 37).

It follows then that every Christian is obligated to give, consistently, not less than 10 per cent of his gross income to the Lord's work through the local church.

Anything less than a tithe is a presumptuous sin against God in view of the total light the Bible sheds upon the subject.

It becomes clear that the very minimum we should purpose in our hearts is 10 per cent of all.

A MATTER OF FAITH

In view of the total teachings of the Bible on the subject of giving, it is amazing how few Christians give even a tenth to the Lord. If we should ask them why this is true, the answers (or excuses) would probably go something like this:

- 1) Tithing was for the Jews only, and I am not supposed to tithe.
- 2) God is not such a stickler that He demands a tenth.
- 3) I would tithe, but taxes and the cost of living are so high I don't have any left.
- 4) I would like to tithe, but I just barely make ends meet as it is; I just can't afford it.

The Bible points out a real tragedy concerning the excuse of being too poor to give what is right to the Lord. The Bible says, "there is that (which) withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty" (Prov. 11:24). God is saying here that there are people who are poor, simply because they withhold more than is proper.

The complete passage in Proverbs reads as follows and states both the negative and positive sides of the matter:

There is that (which) scattereth, and yet increaseth, and there is that (which) withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that water-eth shall be watered also himself (Prov. 11:24, 25).

The principle is simple: Give that which is proper and you increase. Give less than is proper and you tend toward poverty.

However, as we look into the Bible and see the promises of blessing made to those who give liberally, it begins to dawn on us that the real reason most Christians do not give liberally is because they do not believe all of the Bible. We could weaken that statement and say they have "weak faith," but we want to be sure everyone knows what is embraced in this: it is failure to believe God. This may sting. We say it not with malice, but with love, that the truth may be brought home to us. Everyone readily admits that they have "weak faith," and because everyone admits it, the phrase has lost its weight and meaning. Some use it as though it were a virtue — as though it showed humility. But very few will admit they don't believe all that God said, which is equal to calling God a liar (I John 5:10). And this, we contend, is a big reason most Christians fail to give liberally to the Lord. With the commandment to give liberally, comes also the promise of blessing. The Bible paints a picture in which blessings follow liberal giving as surely as night follows day. And with obedience to the commandment, comes also the promised blessing, if God is true.

He was true to Abraham.

He was true to Jacob.

He was true to the nation Israel.

We need only to look at the record to see the profusion of promises God has given to them who will give abundantly:

There is that scattereth, and yet increaseth; and there is that withholdeth more than is meet, but it tendeth to poverty.

The liberal soul shall be made fat: and he that water-eth shall be watered also himself (Prov. 11:24, 25).

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. And 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 (Mai. 3:10, 11).

But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you (Matt. 6:33).

But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully.

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loveth a cheerful giver.

And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (II Cor. 9:6-8).

Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account. But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God. But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:15-19).

The anxious may rest in these promises. How great is our God, how good, how just! How right are His dealings, and how careful He is to do good to those who will obey.

Do you want to increase? Then scatter.

Would you have your soul made fat? Then be liberal.

Would you have a blessing poured out from heaven? Then prove God, by bringing in the tithes and offerings.

Would you reap bountifully? Then sow bountifully.

Would you have God supply all your needs? Then minister to the needs of others.

It is a matter of faith. What Christian does not want the blessings of God? And what Christian would not be a liberal giver if he really believed that God would "increase" him? What Christian does not want to "reap bountifully?" And what Christian would not "sow bountifully" if he really believed that he would reap bountifully? God seemed to think these things would be good incentives.

A young Christian, who was giving sparingly (by Bible standards) was once asked why he didn't give at least a tenth to the Lord. He said, of course, that he couldn't afford that much. He was asked if he was aware that the Bible said: "He which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully . . . and God is able to make all grace abound toward you: that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work." He said he was aware of that. He was asked if he believed that, and he said he did. When asked if he was concerned with bounty and wanted to "reap bountifully" and have all sufficiency," he was honest enough to admit that this was doubtless his greatest concern.

"Will you start with at least a tithe and prove God if He will not pour you out a blessing?" He was asked.

"No," he said, "I can't afford it."

It doesn't take a Harvard brain trust to figure out his trouble. He didn't believe what he said he believed; he didn't believe God. It is a matter of faith.

However, the young man did start tithing soon after that, and in about three weeks said he was going in debt. He was reminded that God had not lied, that eternity is long and before it is through God would pour out blessings he could not contain. That same week he got a raise which offset the tithe and got him out of debt; he at least had enough — "all sufficiency."

We have known the intimate details of only three cases where individuals started giving a tenth and above, but in all three of these cases everyone of them, separately and independently got raises within three weeks.

This may not happen to you. The Bible has not promised you a raise if you start giving liberally, but it would be just like God to do it. Or, He could make you increase in a hundred ways. He could make the tires on your car go 20 per cent further; He could make your clothes last longer (He made Israel's clothes last 40 years). He could save you doctor bills. He can give you overtime, or make the crops better. There are a million ways God can make you to increase (or decrease, if you "withhold more than is meet").

Why should we suppose God would make these promises and then deceive us? Our God will do good to them that obey Him. Believe Him — He will do good to you.

It is not stated in the Bible that every promise connected with giving is of monetary gain, and much harm has been done by those who emphasize this out of proportion; it is not a get-rich-quick scheme! But it is stated that all your necessities will be supplied. Nevertheless, when God pours out blessings, they are better than gold. When He causes you to abound you abound indeed! When He causes you to increase, what a mighty increase! When God promises "blessings," why should we suppose His blessings

to be of less value or less desirable than monetary gain?

We don't know how He will bless you, but we know He will give you "all sufficiency" that you will be able to "abound to every good work." And He might — it would be just like Him to really fill up the horn of plenty, running over, if you can use it without getting hurt. It will not deplete God's resources to make you rich, if you are wise enough to use riches properly.

These promises are to you; claim them. Believe God — prove Him! It is a matter of faith.

THE NEED

We might do well to ask ourselves why God was so wrought up by Israel's failure to tithe (Mai. 3:8-10). "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation." It is clear that God was deeply moved, and if we take a look at the earth from God's perspective, we may be able to see why.

We each live in our own little world and have our families and our own little circle of friends. A few of them we know intimately and love deeply. We are grieved by their sufferings and elated at their good fortune. When we read of a tragic death in the newspaper we may have some sort of temporary emotion, but when one of those we know and love is the victim of a violent death, the reaction is vastly different. We are shocked, stunned, hurt and helpless. The difference is that we know this person; we love this person.

Did you ever stop to consider that all of this vast multitude on earth, about three billion people, are the intimate acquaintances of God? He looks down on the private life of the Ainu fisherman in his dugout canoe, the Mongolian herdsman with his cup of mare's milk, the Laplander with his reindeer, the American college intellectual with his horn-rimmed glasses, the African tribesman with his tom-tom, the rock'n'roller with his guitar, the British gentleman with his jodhpurs, the statesman with his briefcase, the witch doctor with his amulets, the pope with his ring, presidents, farmers, kings, coalminers, sophisticates, hayseeds, snobs, blowhards, flirts, dudes, strutters, slackers and a few sober people. God knows all of them intimately; He watches their every move. Although He may hate some of their ways, He loves them as creatures capable of obtaining righteousness. He watches day by day as multiplied thousands of His acquaintances plunge through the inevitable doors of death where immediately their souls quake and chill with terrible fear at the realization of their awful, inescapable fate — the very justice of ultimate justice. God, grieving, watches the intense panic and anguish that saturates their beings as they realize the utter hopelessness of their eternally doomed condition. They remember with unspeakable grief the free mercy and grace they could have had but would not. Arrows of intense anguish will pierce them through as they experience Prov. 1:24-29:
Because I (wisdom) have called, and ye refused; I have stretched out my hand, and no man regarded; But ye have set at nought all my counsel, and would none of my reproof:
I also will laugh at your calamity; I will mock when your fear cometh:
When your fear cometh as desolation, and your destruction cometh as a whirlwind; when distress anguish cometh upon you.

Then shall they call upon me, but I will not answer; they shall seek me early, but they shall not find me: For that they hated knowledge, and did not choose the fear of the Lord: God sees it all and declares, with blood and tears, "It is not my will that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance."

Can you see now why God gets concerned about money? As we have already seen,

this money was used to keep the testimony of salvation before Israel and before the world at large. It was used to preach the Gospel through types. It was used to maintain and propagate the Gospel message in the earth.

That was the need then; it is the need now.

Why should we not give liberally above the tithe? The piteous need is reason enough. This need can be adequately filled only by the selfless efforts of Christ-honoring Christians. We are not writing this to "modern" protestantism; they need John 3:16 first. But genuine Bible-believing Christians must fill the great need, and that takes money.

The supreme service of a Christian life is to get the Gospel to others that they might be saved. However, every human being must eat to live, therefore, It requires team-work to publish the Gospel. There are those who are called to labor in the Gospel (i.e. pastors, evangelists, teachers, etc.), but they must eat (I Cor. 9:14). This means that there must be those who labor with their hands (Eph. 4:28), that they might supply the necessities, and a few luxuries if possible, for those who labor in the Gospel. There are two general classes: those who "go down to battle," and those who "tarry by the stuff" (I Sam. 30:24). There are too many who neither go down to battle nor tarry by the stuff.

An average church of about 100 families may spend its income roughly as follows: 30 per cent for building and facilities. 55 per cent for salaries and miscellaneous expenses. 15 per cent for missions (unless something else comes up).

Buildings and facilities are necessary in this country, for you can't reach many unsaved people and carnal Christians without neat, serviceable buildings and facilities (not extravagant luxury, of which there is too much).

Salaries are necessary for those who labor in the Gospel. So it would seem that we are limited to 15 per cent for the primary job of the church, namely to disciple all nations. But if we examine this same church more closely, we would find this: 100 families mean 100 incomes. If nine of these families would give a tenth of their income, this would supply a tenth family with a salary equal to an average of what the nine had left. This would take care of a pastor's salary.

There are 90 families left, with 90 incomes. Building payments on 100-family churches, in this day, usually run not more than \$500 per month (this is a liberal figure). Let us say that the average family income in this church is \$250 per month (we don't know of anyone except possibly preachers, making that little). This means that it would require the tithes of 20 families to meet the building expenses.

This leaves 70 families with 70 incomes. Certainly miscellaneous expenses in a 100-family church would not exceed \$250 per month, so we may allot 10 families to miscellaneous.

That leaves 60 families with 60 incomes (60 per cent of the church's rightful income instead of the more ordinary 15 per cent) to do the real business of the church, which according to Christ is to disciple, baptize and teach all nations.

Now, of these 60 families one out of 10, or six, could be released to go down to battle — to go to the nations and preach the Gospel, and be supported by the tithes of the remaining 54 families. That could be done. And if every church would do that, the world would be won for Christ in one generation.

We have considered this at a bare minimum 10 per cent, but we don't know of any working family that could not give well over 10 per cent by sacrificing only slightly — give up an expensive TV set, drive the old jalopy another year, watch the cake, ice cream and coffee consumption. Why not?

If every Christian was willing and consistent with his tithe, the world could again be turned upside down for Christ.

Is the need not great enough? "Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields; for they are white already to harvest" (John 4:35). Two thousand years ago the fields were white "already" to harvest. How much whiter is it now?

At this time only about 35 per cent of the people on earth have heard the Gospel. This means that very probably 65 per cent, or more, of the people on earth are now trudging down life's short road to hell. How many souls are dropping into the pit minute by minute? From the findings of those who study the rate at which the earth's population has increased over the centuries, we arrive at the amazing estimate (2) that there are more people living on the earth today than have lived and died throughout the last 10 centuries combined! When we think of the millions that have died of natural causes, disease, and have been slaughtered in a dozen of history's most bloody wars — the millions of Jews alone that were piled and burned by Hitler, we begin to get a small picture of the number of souls that will perish from the earth in this short generation. It is a frightening thought, but there is little doubt that more people are living now than have lived and died in all generations since the year A.D. 1000! This means that during this generation more souls will pour into hell than have poured into hell through the last 10 centuries combined! And you're going to flip a dollar into the offering plate next Sunday! The early church had a mere handful of people to reach compared with the mammoth task facing Christians of this generation. Don't you think Jesus had some thoughts of these teeming millions of souls as He hung there on the cross? If the need had not been a gigantic need, would He have been so weighted down with grief? Jesus thought these souls were worth His blood; are they not worth your money?

What is wrong, Christian? Is the need not great enough?

A PERSPECTIVE VIEW

Where are you going, what is your goal for life? What are you really after? Do you expect to find it here?

1. The World's Sense of Value

What we need to do is to take a look at life in this world system through the eyes of Christ. We can read blind tragedy between the lines of the Gospels. History and experience paints a true-to-life picture of conditions in Jesus' time that reflects a basic flaw in all humanity. No doubt Jesus sometimes walked through the streets observing the people. Imagine how it must have been for Him making His way through the jostling throngs milling ceaselessly through the dirty streets and market places. Can we see ourselves in the crowd? How did the masses regard the Son of God as He walked among them?

The mid-day sun bore down from directly above the narrow streets of Jerusalem, Jesus had left His disciples for awhile to be alone in the jungle of humanity that inhabited the market places. There He would see people as they are. Their standards and ideals would here materialize into deeds and deals and words that would betray their inward motives, loves, and prime, objectives.

The smell of animals, of rotting fruits and vegetables, and of fish mingled in the still, hot air and hung heavily over the dirty street. Jesus started to cross, but He stepped back to make way for a train of plodding donkeys laden with produce from the country.

The donkeys were being tugged, prodded and cursed by two Syrian slaves who in turn were being prodded and cursed by an impatient, well-dressed merchant. They passed so close to the Son of God they could have reached out and touched Him. They hustled on. The donkeys passed, and the Son of God moved on by a booth where two women were squabbling over the price of a small basket of figs. They didn't even see Him. On the next corner a fat robed figure, wearing a skull cap, stood with arms stretched upward and his face lifted to the heavens. His voice arose in a pious prayer while the rabble slipped by silently and reverently. The Son of God waited behind him until he had finished the prayer and had waddled on down the street.

Jesus walked on and turned the corner and — look out! He had almost stepped on an old woman, virtually a bundle of rags huddled on the sidewalk guarding a half-rotten egg and three dried fish. This pathetic creature looked up into the eyes of the Son of God hoping that He would buy a fish. He had no money. So with a hopeless sigh she turned from the Son of God to the passers-by. She must sell her egg and the fish before dark. Up ahead the throng was parting, and people were scurrying to the gutters. A troupe of Roman soldiers was strutting gaudily down the street. Everyone scattered to make way for Rome, both the rabble and the well-to-do.

The Son of God was caught in the press, jostled into a side alley, and Rome passed by.

Yes, there was Rome, ruler of the world. Sure, the rabble were foolish to ignore the Son of God. But Rome? It had a world to rule — and the ragged old woman had an egg to sell.

Rome! Full of pomp and power because she knew how to kill better than the rest.

Rome! Sustained in frivolity and wanton extravagance by sucking the meager livelihood from the rabble through corrupt leech-like local leaders standing on street corners praying and selling out their own people. The local leaders sold out the people to Rome, and Rome catered to the local leaders, for they would lose control without them. And local leaders lose control without the people — and the people? They don't care. They have a fig to peddle and an egg to sell; they don't want to think about it; it might worry them — they don't want to think. Let them sell the Son of God to Rome. Yes, someone must get rid of this Jesus. He talks about honesty and loving your neighbor and loving God; He chased the merchants out of the Temple. This Jesus must go!

Thus the Son of God became barter between Rome and the local leaders. Local leaders must get Him out of the way; their positions and financial interests were being threatened. Rome must appease these small-time rulers lest they stir up the people and Rome would lose tax money. The people were too busy with their produce, figs and dried fish, their financial interests, to care what happened to the Son of God or the cause for which He was to die. Are you somewhere in the picture?

Rome's tax money, the local rulers' share, and the small financial deals of the rabble are the fundamental factors that produced the slaughter of the Son of God. Even Judas, one of Twelve had his little money angle. And thus is demonstrated again the eternal principle that "the love of money is the root of all evil." At the root of the slaughter of Jesus Christ, was the love of money.

So they took Jesus before the world courts — and the world stood trial before the Son of God three times in one day. It was found guilty. So He shouldered His cross and trudged out to the place of a skull to ransom a guilty world — to ransom me — to ransom you.

2. The Gift Of Supreme Value

There were two malefactors present. They were going to be crucified that morning too. The soldiers started nailing them first. They writhed and cried like babies from the excruciating pain. Have you ever heard a man cry of pain?

Then they started nailing the Son of God. Those who stood by knew this was no ordinary nailing. He opened not His mouth — He made no cry. He was set for this shameful affair — like a flint. They stood the cross upright, and everyone stared at Him. The soldiers had ripped off His clothes and were lounging on the ground beneath the cross casually rolling dice.

A number of people were standing in small huddles a little distance away. Not very many of the well-dressed elite who pressed the charges at the "trial" were there. They presumably had gone back to their businesses now that this troublesome affair had been finished, but some were there to hiss and mock. A small group of humbly dressed people stood a little way off. There were women in the group and some of them were weeping inconsolably.

The man on the middle cross said something, and a young man broke out of the group and ran quickly to the foot of the cross, straining to catch every word. His mother — the young man was to take care of His mother.

The sky was lowering. An eerie, unnatural darkness settled in. Things were quieter now, and the only sounds were the low, droning murmurs of astonished and frightened voices and the rasping laborous breathing of one of the malefactors broken occasionally by a cry followed by thick muffled sobs.

The pain was almost unbearable. The slightest movement tore at the nail holes. He tried to keep from moving, but the muscles twitched violently from the severe pain and cramps caused by the unnatural, strained position. The wounds were becoming inflamed and a burning fever was mounting. His head and chest were throbbing from poor blood circulation, and the wrist, elbow, and shoulder joints were wrenched from their sockets. Great gaps appeared at the joints, and those standing by could see the outline of every bone. The extreme thirst from loss of blood was maddening, and the dry swollen tongue and throat made breathing very difficult.

One of the young men, who had been standing by an elderly woman, suddenly grew pale and sick. He had been a faithful student of the Scriptures for many years, but as he witnessed the shame of his beloved Friend, upon whose breast he had leaned only the night before, he suddenly realized the true significance of that haunting passage in Psalms 22:6-17:

But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people. All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head saying, He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him ... I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax: it is melted in the midst of my bowels. My strength is dried up like a potsherd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me unto the dust of death. For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet. I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

The young man slumped to his knees and wept unashamedly.

The man on the middle cross spoke again, and a soldier came around carrying a pole with a sponge on the end of it. He poured something on the sponge and tried to push it

between the parched, swollen lips of the Son of God.

No one standing by knew what manner of suffering and anguish or what miraculous, divine transactions and judgments took place in the soul of this one on the middle cross to cause Him to cry out "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" No one here will ever know. Many blunder and say, "God couldn't look upon sin." Christ is God, and no less holy than the Father. He stared sin right in the eye. He came to grips with the sins of the world right there in the blackness of that hour. We don't know how, but the plaintive cry of the malefactor can't give us much of a picture of the agonies of the Son of God

The waning figure on the middle cross surveyed the crowd with pain-filled eyes and asked that they should be forgiven. He bowed His head and dismissed His Spirit from the wretchedness of His tormented body.

Those who had dared to stay heard Him cry, "It is finished" and felt the very earth quake and heave as if made to vomit from the baseness of the day's affairs. The once brave, proud scoffers smote their breasts and scuttled for their little shelters like so many craven rats, frightened, yet proud, in their unreasoning hearts of this day's dastardly deed. It was finished now: the shame, the sacrifice, the agony, atonement.

He gave Himself for unworthy humanity.

Let it sink in deep.

He poured out His soul for a sin offering.

If the substance of this is a fact of history, what consolation can we have in material wealth? The comfort money offers becomes a sickening mockery and pales to a beggarly state of poverty when measured against the eternal value of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.

Where are you going Christian? What is your goal in life? What are you after? As long as it remains a fact that Jesus poured Himself out for humanity in such a manner, how can money possibly gratify? How can one gratify himself with money that belongs to such a Savior as this?

We were talking about giving money, remember?

But you must first give yourself. The money will be no problem once you give yourself. When you give your self, a tithe will be a mere trifle. Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia;

How that in great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.

And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God (II Cor. 8:1-5).

Can we not first give our own selves? What are you after? What is your goal? Do you want to wear a crown — or sell an egg?

ENDNOTES

(1) Ten Amazing Years," U.S. News and World Report, Dec. 27, 1957, pp. 42-53. See also annual statistical publications of U.S. Department of Commerce.

(2) Warren H. Leonard, "World Population in relation to Potential Food Supply," *The Scientific Monthly*, Sept. 1957, p. 114.