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## **GOD'S FINANCIAL PLAN**

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## **FOREWORD**

Everything the Lord has revealed in the Bible is as necessary as every member in the human body. Of course a human being can live without some members of his body; yet some members are so vital that if removed death will ensue. So it is in the body of truth as set forth in the Bible.

One may do without some forms and ceremonies and ordinances as found in the Bible. It is a fact that if now at this time we observe some of these it would hinder and hurt real spirituality. Eph. 2:15; Col. 2:14.

Yet to disregard such vital truths as the new birth, as holiness, as repentance and faith and other truths in the same category, would make spirituality in the soul of man an impossibility. John 3:5; Heb. 11:6.

I am convinced that to propagate this spiritual life over the face of the earth, the financial plan of God to do this work, must be carried out.

In this booklet our brother Herbert Shaw ably presents this plan.

It will be worth your while to read this booklet, and if you practice it a corresponding blessing will attend you.

To oppose this portion of divine truth as set forth in this booklet, will, I fear, place you in the class of wrong opposition, whereas our Lord wants all of his followers to be in the class of right helpfulness.

To carry out this financial plan of the living God will be of great help in the home and foreign fields.

The tithe is the Lord's in any age or anywhere God's people are working to implant and nurture this spiritual life.

The Lord Jesus Christ said: "I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly." John 10:10.

How can you and I help foster this kind of life unless we are stewards and how can any one be a faithful steward, who is not in the light of God's financial plan? With a prayer in my heart, that God's dear people will practice, what is set forth in these pages; for it will glorify our Lord and bless mankind.

I remain,  
Yours in Jesus.  
Otto Duecker

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01 -- TITHING

In these days of many divines and leaders in religious circles we find it necessary to carefully and patiently discuss many religious subjects.

Much importance is attached to some minor subjects, while some that are very important are laughed at and passed over.

The subject in hand has had a very important place in the work of God down through the years since Abraham's days, and the work of God has moved along in proportion as his people have obeyed him and kept the work well balanced to go forward.

There are those who stress the money question until they tire all, and there are those who do not teach the followers of God anything along that line.

The tithers usually give to the ones who preach on it, while the others don't receive much. In view of this fact I desire to discuss with you a few questions about the financial problem in the church. We are told that the love of money is the root of all evil, therefore it must be a theme not to be neglected and passed over lightly.

I first desire to raise, then answer, the question, "Is tithing God's plan?" Some will at once say, yes; others will as freely say, no, while others who are not so sure will straddle the fence and say, non-essential.

Therefore we will let the Word speak.

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## 02 -- THE OLD TESTAMENT STANDARD

The origin of tithing so far as any Biblical record is concerned, was revealed in Abraham's life when he met Melchisedec, king of Salem, as Abraham returned from the slaughter of the kings and delivered Lot and his friends, which was probably over four hundred years before the law.

Melchisedec was an obscure man, and we have no record of his parentage or his offspring, we are only told that he was a priest and king of the most high God.

Abraham was a man consecrated to God, and had left his native land and family with their idols at the command of God, and God was with him in time of peace and war. Now we find that although he was a man of service to God, as guide of his own household, when he chanced to meet a man of God, though a lone priest, he paid a tithe to him. Thus the system began. See Gen. 14:20, also Heb. 7:1-9.

It would appear that there was some continuance of the paying of tithes in the family of Isaac, for when Jacob fled from Esau, and met God at Bethel, he made a vow. Although he went out empty, he vowed that if God would be with him and bless him so that he came again, he would pay a tithe to the Lord. Gen. 28:22.

To what extent Jacob and the twelve patriarchs tithed, is left for us to guess. However after they came to the land of promise which God had given them they were to pay a tithe. Moses had so

commanded in the law. It seems that Abraham and Jacob paid tithes from gratitude to God. Now God demanded a tithe from the nation of Israel.

The tribes of Israel had a separate possession in Canaan, except Levi who was to be a tribe of priests. God so ordered it that His house might be cared for, and the portion for Levi was the tithe instead of a portion of the land.

The work of God called for their time, so that they had no time for herds and vineyards, so God commanded that the system of tithing be adopted for their support. It was not left to their discretion as to how much, nor where it was to be placed but he demanded the tenth, that their part would be equal to that of the other tribes.

Hear Him, "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year." Dent. 14:22. "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." Lev. 27:50. "Honor the Lord with thy substance, and with the first fruit of all thine increase." Prov. 3:9. Here are scriptures showing the demand that they tithe, and surely they were obligated to tithe unto the Lord.

Now for something about the plan for handling the tithe under the law: "But the tithe of the children of Israel, which they offer as an heave offering unto the Lord, I have given to the Levites to inherit, therefore I have said unto them, among the children of Israel they shall have no inheritance." Num. 18:24. This states that the tithe was for the Levites; not to build houses or to be used as they desired, but to be set aside for those who care for the temple. The purpose of the tithe was that there should be meat in his house. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house." Mal. 3:10.

In Jesus' time He said: the temple was to be a place of prayer but that they had made it a den of thieves, probably alluding to the misuse of the tithes as well as to the money changers in the temple. The thought of meat in his house was that those dedicated to its service should have a livelihood.

In the days of Hezekiah there was a spiritual awakening and the people who had become slack about the house of God began to tithe again. "And as soon as the commandment came abroad the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly," 2 Chron. 31:6. The offerings came in such abundance there was not room enough for them, and the chief priest exclaimed that "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." 2 Chron. 31:10. Hezekiah then had chambers fixed in the temple to store the offerings and tithes. Then he appointed certain men over them, and they distributed to the Levites equally according to their families.

Again we find when Nehemiah re-established the temple service at Jerusalem that they brought the offerings and tithes to the chambers of the house of God, and to the Levites, even all the tithe of the ground, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage. Neh. 10:37.

In Nehemiah 12:44 it is clear that there were men to have charge of collecting the offerings and tithes, so they were sure to get all the tithes from outlying cities and fields, they brought them for the Levites that they might have their portion.

In Nehemiah, the thirteenth chapter a condition is described where the stewards of the chambers of the house of God became unfaithful, the priest had prepared a great chamber for Tobiah the enemy of God. Nehemiah was absent at the time, and the Levites were robbed of their portion; and in verse 10 we see the Levites and singers were all fled to their fields because they had not received their portion. The trouble, the people failing to pay the tithe as in Malachi, and someone taking the tithe and thus robbing the Levites.

We need not preach about robbing God to the laymen, if we get a corner on the tithes that are paid and feather our nest while other preachers flee to the channels of commerce for a living. One of God's called ministers has equal right with all others to exercise their gifts and callings.

Nehemiah raised a contention and put them in their place, then the fund again flowed in. He then appointed men as treasurers over the treasury, and they were faithful men, and their office was to distribute unto their brethren. Neh. 13:13.

In the days of Malachi, about thirty seven years after Nehemiah's trouble, conditions were again bad, but this time the people had withheld the tithe, and God said, "Will a man rob God?" Then He declared that they had robbed Him in tithes and offerings, and commanded them to bring all the tithes into the storehouse (the chambers in the temple) so there would be meat in his house; with the promise of a blessing if they obeyed Him. Mal. 3:7-12.

In the days of Zacharias (John the Baptist's father) the priests still served in their course. Zacharias was serving when the angel announced the coming of John Baptist, his son.

In the course of lineage John should have been a priest and served at the temple, but God was so shut out of the temple, that no place was found there for John. He preached in the wilderness and had no part in the offerings to the priest, but ate locust and wild honey. Then when the temple crowd came to him he said, "Ye generation of vipers who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Bring forth fruits meet for repentance" Mat. 3:8. He had no part nor lot with the robbers of God.

When Jesus was at the temple he watched the people casting their gifts into the treasury, and one poor widow put in two mites. Then he commended her saying she had done more than all who had given of their abundance, because she had put in all her living.

The Pharisee prayed saying he paid tithes of all he possessed, and Jesus upbraided the Pharisees for passing over the weightier matters of the law. He said they should have paid tithes, but not to leave love, mercy and judgment undone.

The sum of what we learn here is: 1. Tithes were paid before the law was given on Sinai. 2. The law commanded it. 3. The tithes were for the priests, whose duty it was to serve at the temple. 4. That all others were to pay them. 5. That a few were not to get all the tithes but they

were for every Levite. 6. That Jesus spoke commendably of it. 7. And that he said nothing against it.

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### 03 -- THE NEW TESTAMENT STANDARD

That the law of Moses endorsed tithing as a system and God gave that law is a strong argument in favor of its being his favored plan. Christ was silent about any change, and gave us no system in its place.

Jesus said to the Jews they ought to tithe and also to keep the weightier matters of the law. He gave no intimation of a change. He said, "It hath been said, but I say unto you," as in Matt. 5, but nothing was said about tithing in this connection.

Some one may here object that we now give our all in consecration, so that tithing typifies consecration. But this is rather unsatisfactory, for Israel was a consecrated people but God still demanded a tithe of the ground. For us to suppose that we may give all to God in a verbal way and yet keep all for ourselves and never any thing go into the cause of God would be to charge God foolishly.

The temple of God in old times was no more sacred to the heart of God than is his spiritual house bought with his own blood, which is the Church of the living God.

Some will quote to the man of God, "Go and take no scrip or purse, and whatsoever is right I will pay you." So the poor preacher leaves all and goes out without purse and comes in just as empty, to find rent due, the flour bin empty, wife and children discouraged. While the good consecrated folk that don't need to tithe in this good gospel age, go to bed in comfort after praying for the preacher and thanking God for the good messages. Then the preacher goes out to hunt a job so as to earn a few dollars so he can go into the battle again.

To suppose that God calls men into a life of service and says, Go or woe unto you; and not to take any thought for their meat, is to charge God with folly. He did not do so with the Levites, and he does not do so with the gospel minister.

Judas was the treasurer for the company of Jesus, and had the bag. This is evidence that even Jesus had a financial order among his early followers.

Jesus taught that he that would be great among them should be servant of all. Phoebe was a servant of the church, and we hear Paul say, "Help those women that labored with me in the gospel." The hidden text would be that there is a possibility they might overlook the women in the ministrations of funds, so he sends instructions along that line.

Again Jesus said, "The laborer is worthy of his hire." Lu. 10:7. 1 Tim. 5:18, God calls or hires his ministers and provides for their wages. How? you ask. As He did the Levites of the dispensation gone by, by tithes and offerings.

The Apostles say nothing about a change, the great apostle Paul in all his writings has given no new system to take its place. Although he said, "They who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel." (Receive a livelihood by this means of preaching.)

When the new church started out with the Holy Ghost guiding her and guarding her, a need arose and some sold all they had and gave the proceeds to meet the need of the church. No one said that he possessed ought, but they had all things common. In a need like this God ordered deacons to be chosen and they took charge of the financial affairs. Just as Hezekiah and Nehemiah appointed faithful men over the chambers in the temple.

In Acts 20:33, 35, Paul reminds the brethren at Ephesus that he had labored and set them an example, and many seem to think that Paul here set the pace for all Christian ministers. They never fail to find Acts 18:3, where Paul said he made tents, but they fail to find what he said in I Cor. 9:12. Here he said that he had not used his power over them, to live of their benefits although he said, "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel." Ver. 14, he had just called attention to the fact that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple, Ver. 13. A direct reference to the Levites' portion, then he said, "Even so" or in the same manner do those who preach the gospel live of the gospel. This is all said in connection with the thought of having power to eat and to drink, and is strong evidence that some system was used among the apostles.

In 1 Thes. 2:9. He mentions laboring so as not to be chargeable to them. This was his choice but was not compulsory. In 2 Thes. 3:8, 9, he again mentions working so as not to be chargeable, but said, "Not because we have not power, but to make ourselves an example." What example? Why so they could be taught that if any would not work, neither should he eat. Ver. 10.

But to suppose that Paul did not earn his living laboring in the gospel would meet with objections from every side.

Now let us hear Paul the man that labored with his hands and would not allow the church to care for him. "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong." 2 Cor. 12:13. Now some one wants to know how a preacher can wrong a people by preaching to them and not receiving any thing from them. Hear him say again, "Not because I desire a gift: But I desire fruit that may abound to your account." Phil. 4 17. So to preach to a people and not receive any of their earthly things is to cheat them out of the reward and blessing that comes from supporting the gospel.

Once two brothers were converted and God called one to preach. Both had families to support, but God laid it on the preacher's heart to go some distance away and hold a meeting. He could not see how he could leave his family and go, so he told his brother about his trouble, the brother at once said, You go right ahead and I will take care of both of our families while you are gone." So the preacher went and his brother faithfully saw that the needs of the family were supplied. In a few days the preacher wrote home telling how God had visited them in revival power and a number had been saved, when his brother heard this he began to shout and said, "One

half of them are mine," because he had made it so his brother could go. Thus he had fruit to his account.

In Rom. 16:17-18. Paul warned against those who cause divisions and offenses contrary to the doctrine which ye have learned and avoid them: "Because they serve not the Lord but their own bellies."

This indicates that some had pulled off and separated from the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in order to have more to satisfy their own desire.

The cause of Christ has been cursed by selfish money-loving hirelings who group a class together in order to fleece them for their own profit. Surely God's plan is one of equality.

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#### 04 -- STUDIES IN I CORINTHIANS, CHAPTER NINE

Permit me now to call your attention to the 9th chapter of 1st. Cor. Here Paul is dealing with the subject of supporting the ministry. In the first 18 verses of this chapter are 19 questions. Let me call your attention to them.

1. "Am not I an apostle?" In ver. 3 is evidence that Paul was at times called in question and examined in regard to his apostleship. Here he leads up to the subject in hand by asking these questions. "Am not I an apostle?" He asked of them and they could not deny that he was, because he had done the work of an apostle among them. He said, "I have planted and Apollos watered but God gave the increase." An apostle is one who plants the gospel and establishes the church, so he was an apostle to them.

2. "Am I not free?" Is there any bondage on me? Can't I exercise the rights of the other apostles?

3. "Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?" Yes, he had, as one born out of due time.

4. "Are ye not my work in the Lord? They could not deny that he was their spiritual father. "For in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel." 1 Cor. 4:15. He now calls their attention to the fact that they were the seal of his apostleship in the Lord.

5. "Have we not power to eat and to drink? In other words is it not our privilege to live of the gospel? Are we compelled to labor and support ourselves as we do? No, they had a right to eat and to drink. It was the duty of those they ministered to, to supply their physical needs.

6. "Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?" Peter's wife's mother was sick of a fever and Jesus healed her and she arose and ministered unto them. Matt. 8:14, 15. Other apostles enjoyed marital happiness, but Paul had no wife, and has been called a woman hater, which I think is incorrect. But for the

purpose of leading a rugged life of self denial he forewent the blessings of a companion of the weaker sex. But he leads us to believe that he had a right to a wife if he wanted one.

7. "Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" It was his privilege to forbear working. He made tents by choice. There were means provided if he had cared to take advantage of them, until there was no need of working.

8. "Who goeth a warfare any time at his own charge?" Here is argument, that as a soldier is provided for who fights under the colors of a nation, so God's called-out soldiers who fight for him, should be provided for: and we will see how before we leave this chapter. "No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier". 2 Tim. 2:4. Here the same Paul exhorts Timothy, a young preacher, not to mix up with the affairs of this life, surely if he would not be entangled by the cares of this life his needs were supplied without his making tents.

9. "Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof?" The husbandman is the first partaker of the fruit of the vineyard as the minister partakes of the fruit of his labor in establishing a church.

10. Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?" The ministers of God have the first claim on the fruit of the church as the herdsman has first right to the milk of his flock, and the husbandman has first right to the fruit of his vineyard.

11. Say I these things as a man?" Is this just my idea as a man reasoning?

12. "Or saith not the law the same also?" Here Paul goes back to the law to get proof for his position in regard to the support of the ministry.

13. "Doth God take care of oxen?" He had just quoted from the law, "Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn." This law alludes to the threshing floor of Bible times. The grain was spread out on solid ground or a floor, and oxen were driven over it so that the continual tramping, caused the grain to be threshed out, then it was winnowed out from the chaff. But to put a muzzle on the ox so that he could not eat of the grain he was threshing was against the law. The ox was well fed in threshing time, as he was kept in use all the time so never got hungry. How do you suppose this fits the case of the present day preacher? The more he preaches the poorer he gets, not like the ox. Why? Because he wears a muzzle and has not power to eat and drink, as Paul said. The church may be holding back the portion of the ministry, because they don't pay tithes and offerings.

There is also a lack in the distribution of the tithes and offerings until some abound with plenty while others have but little. One ox gets what should go to others. We hear folk say again the ways of the Lord are not equal. It is equal when the preacher gives of his or her time and talent and the layman give the tithe of their income, and each minister has his equal share. The plan of God is equal but we can get it out of line and defeat his purpose. Let us get back to the law and the testimony and no more muzzle the faithful old ox.

14. "Or saith he it altogether for our sakes?" He follows this question thus, "For our sake, no doubt, this is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope." One may think of a reward in heaven, but remember that Paul is here dealing with the support of the ministry (not his reward) so this can hardly be pushed off to the Judgment, when all the returns are in. Some one objects, "Oh, this man is more able and is worth more to the cause than another, so he should have the more, and we lay our tithe in his lap; and the poor man neglected, goes on and plows and threshes, because he feels that woe is me if I don't preach the gospel, but where is his hope? He knows if he can hold out on pancakes and water gravy and sleep on benches until he gets a good church raised up that some well fed and polished man will take the church and he can go to another infidel neighborhood and face eggs, rocks and mockery, and fast and pray and suffer until he digs out another good church for an able man. Where is his hope? And what does he look forward to? A system that encourages such, is not God's system and will never prosper beyond the first revival. The holy fire will die out when the soft-coated kid-gloved man gets into the pulpit. If each were paid alike the un-polished man might have been our greatest preacher. He does well that he does any thing, when the laity rob him of his meat, and other ministers rob him of his hope of meat by taking his part of the tithes. He is a hero to stay in the battle at all, and I want to lay my head on his bosom and hear his noble heart beat and try to catch a double portion of his spirit. Some day he will be crowned above his honored brothers. But why compel him to wait? Let us do as God would have us and give him a hand no".

15. If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?" Jesus said after we had done our best to then count ourselves unprofitable servants, because we had only done our duty. In fact to preach is a duty, God enjoins it upon us, "We don't preach for money. It should not have a place in our thoughts to preach to obtain money, but while the preacher is obligated to preach, without charge, God has as surely placed a responsibility on those whom he preaches to, and they are obligated to render to God that which is his, and he laid claim to a tithe under the law and surely nothing less could suffice under grace.

16. "If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather?" If others received of them carnal things, he says that we have greater right to that power than they, because we have sown among you. He impresses them with his power and right to his portion, but says, "Nevertheless we have not used this power; but suffer all things lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ." He willingly forewent all these privileges, but not of necessity.

17. "Do we not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple?" This referring to the temple and those serving there, and their living from the tithes which was the Levites' portion, in this connection can hardly mean less than to link that method of support to the needs of the present dispensation. Would it be hard to tithe if it was used to spread the work of the kingdom Oú God? Nay, verily. The thing that hinders many a man from paying tithes is the fact that the distribution of tithes is not systematic. For an example; a farmer raises wheat and sells his crop for ten thousand dollars profit, which would make a tithe of one thousand dollars. Now to whom does he pay it? To the pastor some one said. If he does and has nine neighbors as well favored as himself, his pastor will receive ten thousand dollars in the year beside his other tithe, then he may go into big business; yet the cause of God is not helped greatly. Some men may have farms and fine homes and such like these days that have been bought with tithes from washer women and poor people. Surely such a plan is not God's plan.

Then shall he give it to foreign missions, and leave his own friends and loved ones to go without the gospel? No. No, My brethren the tithe and offerings should be brought into the storehouse and each of God's ministers have an equal share according to his needs in order to obey and fill his place in the body of Christ. I can not see but one reason to object to such a plan and that reason is so un-christian that I had rather not charge any of my brethren with it. Selfishness.

18. "And they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar?" We have a type here. You say Christ is the altar now, if so and the called ministers wait at the altar (Christ) shall he not be partakers with the altar (Christ)? You say that you gave Christ all in consecration, then give the minister who partakes with Christ his part (the tithe) - Because he says in verse 14. "Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel." This is the secret of the power to forbear working, that he spoke of, because the gospel provides for him a support, just as the law provided for those who served at the altar of the temple. Paul farther states that he has used none of these things, neither is he laboring to change matters until he can so do, he states that he has nothing to glory of because he preached the gospel, because necessity is laid upon him, "yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel." He gets a reward if he does this willingly, but if not a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto him. Then comes his 19th question.

19. What is my reward then?

For further study let us look at Heb. 7. Here Jesus is proven to be a priest, not after the Levitical order of priests, but after the order of Melchisedec to whom Abraham paid tithes. The priesthood of Christ is a higher order than that of Levi, so the order of Levi had to be annulled and the law changed in the making of a priest, or Christ could not have been a priest because he was of the tribe of Judah and not of Levi.

However as Melchisedec cannot be traced from his parent stock and there is no succession from him, he filled a place as the priest of the most High God.

Now Christ comes not from a male parent and he left no seed to succeed him in office: he is thus termed a priest after the order of Melchisedec.

It is here taught that Christ has the right to act as the priest for the whole race and to make an offering for them, and that he did. So if he took the place of all former priests he now has the right of all former priests, so as Melchisedec and Levi both received tithes he also must receive them.

There was only one cause for his coming to earth, and that was to save men. Now his program is that by the foolishness of preaching he would save them that believe. Therefore as ambassadors of the Christ, those who preach the gospel shall live of the gospel. The tithe is to support his program.

I now call attention to a thought in 1 Cor. 12:28: "And God hath set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues." Notice his questions that follow imply that all are not

apostles. He goes ahead to name all the nine gifts but two. Some translators render it, "All do not and are not." The two gifts that are not singled out as limited are "helps and governments." Therefore we may safely conclude that all are helpers and that we are all workers together with him. Each one helps by bearing the financial burden, also the spiritual burdens, and all have part in the government of the church.

In I Cor. 16 Paul asks that collections be arranged for a need arising in Judea. He said, "Let everyone of you lay by him in store on the first day of the week, as God hath prospered him." The fact that the first day of the week-Sunday-being the day on which the Christians met for worship, made it convenient to bring their tithes and offerings to be deposited in the church treasury. In the church age the local church is the center of power, this is the place where a company of Christians meet to worship and carry on the work of God. He has said that where two or three are met together in His name He would be in their midst, making clear that his plan of dealing with us is in the local assembly. There were the churches in various cities, also the church in some one's house: and the church in a private home was the church Just as much as was the one in a large city. In these assemblies they carried on all the work of the church, ordained elders and deacons, sent missionaries and collected and dispersed the tithe of the church. Thus the local church becomes to the Christian what the temple was to the Jew, the seat of authority and is "the house of God, the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" See 1 Tim. 3:15. Since the church has become the house of God in this age as the temple was the house of God in the law age (and the temple clearly typifies the church) shall not we expect to find the store-house in the church. This could not refer to the general church as it is not limited to locality or a material part, therefore it must apply to the local tangible part of the church.

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## 05 -- CHAPTERS EIGHT AND NINE

Let us now study 2 Cor. chapters 8 and 9. In the first verse of chapter 8 we find Paul writing of the churches in Macedonia how they had joy in afflictions, and in deep poverty their joy caused them to be liberal or in other words they gave even if they were so poor. They evidently insisted that they be allowed to help in the cause. I note that they first gave their own selves to the Lord, and if we can get folk to give themselves to the Lord the offering will be an easy matter.

In writing to the Corinthians he speaks of his desire that the grace of giving self and their means be given them also. Saying, "As ye abound in every thing, in faith, and utterance and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also." Ver. 7.

This church was strong in some gifts, but from various statements in the letters to them it is evident that they were slack in giving to the support of the cause, and Paul is desiring that they get the grace of giving. It is truly a grace and God will bestow it upon the humble soul. He speaks of a proof of the sincerity of their love. Again we read, "If any man see his brother have need and shut up the bowels of his compassion, how dwelleth the love of God in that man?" 1 John 3:17. So to say that we love the cause of God and are interested in the spread of the gospel and yet do nothing to speed it along, is not much proof of our sincere love.

He brings in the example of Christ how he was rich, yet gave until he became poor, that ye or we may be rich. If he gave to save us and our giving will carry the news of salvation and save others, shall we be clear if we refuse to give? He tells us of the willingness to give and declares that it is accepted according to that which we have and not according to that we have not. If we can do but little, our little is accepted, if we can do much, then a little is not enough! He means not that some be eased and others burdened. There is an equality among them, and he brings in the case of the manna to prove his statement. Those who gathered much had nothing over, and those gathering little had no lack.

If there is to be an equality in giving, because all do as much as his increase permits, then surely if God would equalize the burden on the giver the same equality should be found among those who receive that which is given. In verse 21 we read, "Providing for honest things, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of all men." With men it is unfair to expect a man to work and not receive wages for it, and that is one of the stumbling stones to the business man today. They can't see the equality of it and therefore blame the minister for neglect toward his family and temporal obligations. Our love is proved by our giving.

In the 9th chapter, He urges them to give without covetousness, to sow bountifully, not to give grudgingly or of necessity, for God loves a cheerful giver. I am afraid that some preaching on giving is an appeal to the greedy or covetous mind. Tithing is preached as a means to avoid pestilence and they tell us how God gives four dollars for every one we give him; to give is to prosper and so on, so the greedy are led to give a few dollars so as to receive a goodly sum. To give to God is to give because we love him and his cause and we give with no thought of a financial blessing. It is a privilege to give. Oh, thank God for the privilege to do a little for such a marvelous Savior and for the souls of men.

He farther asked if he had committed an offense because he preached them the gospel freely, and declared he had robbed other churches, taking wages of them to do you service, even though he was in need while among them he said nothing, because some sought occasion against him, he bore his need and asked for nothing.

Then we follow him into 2 Cor. 12:13. "For what is it wherein ye were inferior to other churches, except it be that I myself was not burdensome to you? Forgive me this wrong." If it was not in some sense an injustice to this church, not to have been taught in regard to giving, and been exercised by so doing, why did Paul now spend so much time trying to get them established in giving, and ask forgiveness for not dealing with them on this line sooner?

I wish to call attention to a truth in 1 Tim. the fifth chapter. The chapter is dealing with the care of widows, and there are instructions here not to receive some, and if any have relatives to relieve them, not to receive them, but for the church to care for widows who were widows indeed and they must be well reported for good works and sixty years old. No idle women could receive of the widows' fund in the church there.

That they had the same system here as the Jerusalem church had, seems certain. Let us quote, "And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a

murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations." Acts 6:1. This was the situation that caused the seven deacons to be selected. The apostles had acted as the treasurers until now, and had supervised the temporal affairs of the church. Now the need had come for help, as they could not care for the preaching of the gospel and the temporal things also. Before this they had laid all at the apostles' feet and they had made distribution as every man had need. Now the deacons take over the care of the widows and in the time of Paul's letter to Timothy they still cared for the widows.

I also call your attention to the fact that 1 Tim. 5, not only speaks of widows but of the ministers also. "Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine." Ver. 17. The widow was worthy of support, the elder of double honor. "And to esteem them very highly in love for their works' sake." 1 Thes. 5:13. They are worthy of love and respect, also support. Making a double honor. He now brings the case of the ox and the threshing floor to notice again, and the fact that the laborer is worthy of his reward.

If the case with the widow was the same as at Jerusalem, why not the elders case the same? We have been slow to see that the New Testament taught a systematic plan for giving to support the church, but here is a plain case. Let us go back now and see what happened at Jerusalem.

One important thing to notice is that they were all of one heart and one soul. Acts 4:32. No one said that what he possessed was his own, and they had all things common. They had a fellowship in unity and the Holy Ghost ruled among them, and none among them lacked. This point of equality we have previously mentioned. The need was so great that they sold their possessions and laid the price at the apostles' feet. I do not want to be understood to put the stress on this that some have, and teach that everyone must sell all, and give to the church to be a Christian, but at that time the need was so great, that they did that, and if the need should arise again I believe that consecrated souls would do the same now. But the apostles never built a city or irrigated a valley, but, "Distribution was made unto every man according as they had need." Ver. 35. The whole thing sums itself up in the fact that this money went into the spread of the gospel that should begin at Jerusalem and be preached unto all the world.

Barnabas sold some land and brought the price of it. He was a Levite and had no lawful right to own land, he had been cheated out of his portion by the priest craft of his time, so had acquired land, but now saw his privilege of a support without the land. The funds were to be equal now under the Christian-guided program, so he could sell the land that he had been forced to buy out of divine order. He sold out and went far and near in the work of the Master, until he finally denies himself this power in the gospel, to be supported by it, so we find him and Paul laboring and preaching. This was their own choice and not because they had not power to live of the gospel.

The Bible clearly describes a bishop or elder, so there is no need to be at a loss to know who is eligible to share. And the Word said that they who will not work should not eat, making it necessary for those who receive support to be busy in the work of God. No drones in the hive.

Those greedy of filthy lucre are barred from the office of bishop and deacons. If there was no lucre to handle it would not matter so much, but the thought is that they who hold these offices would need to handle money therefore they must be unselfish men.

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THE END