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TITHING -- YOUR QUESTIONS ANSWERED
By Jarrette Aycock

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The Crimson Stream
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TITHING

SCRIPTURE LESSON: Malachi 3:8-12

INTRODUCTION

There is need of a real awakening in the church on tithing. We assume the tithe as a Custom rather than a command of God and the teaching of the Scriptures. God commands that all people everywhere should tithe. There is no method that will solve the financial problems of the church as readily as all the people bringing all their tithes into the storehouse.

In this message I desire, in a personal, heart-to-heart way, to discuss with you a few simple questions about tithing.

WHAT IS THE TITHE?

What do we mean by the tithe? What do we mean by giving a tithe?

A tithe is one-tenth of our earnings. It is one dime out of each dollar. It is one dollar out of every ten. It is ten out of every hundred. It is one hundred out of a thousand. This is the part that God asks of His people.

CAN ONE BE A CHRISTIAN AND NOT TITHE?

"Can one be a Christian and not tithe?"

I have often heard this question asked. I have heard preachers give the impression that one could not. My answer to it would be, "Yes." Our salvation does not depend upon our tithing.

One can be a Christian and not tithe but, I believe, he can be a better Christian if he will tithe.

Other than repentance and faith, our conversion does not depend upon anything we do. However, after we are saved, keeping our salvation depends much upon our conduct. To keep victory and grace in our hearts we must walk in the light that God gives us.

Illustration

It was about one year after my conversion that I first heard of tithing. I do not recall ever hearing it mentioned before. I had been given a little book, the title of which was Soul Food, by Dr. George D. Watson. It was a series of articles on various subjects.

One day as I sat reading this book I came across a chapter on tithing. I do not even know what phase it was but I do know that, as I read it, it dawned upon me for the first time in my life that one-tenth of what I made belonged to God.

What was that? It was light. Up to that time I had kept a good experience by giving little or nothing of what I made to God. But now God had given me light. The only way that I could keep victory and an experience of grace in my heart was to walk in the light and pay my tithe.

WHO OWNS THE TITHE?

"To whom does the tithe belong?"

I would like to answer this question with scripture, "The tithe is the Lord's." In Lev. 27:30 we read, "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."

Some may quote, "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof," or, "Everything belongs to God."

Yes, that is true; but God has given man the earth to use, and the tithe is the rent He asks for the use of it.

Illustration

My father was a tenant farmer in Oklahoma; our land was rented from an old Indian.

He said to my father: "You may live in that house. You may have what land you desire for gardens and things of that kind; you may use the barn, the pasture for your horses and cattle. But the major portion of the land I want planted in cotton and corn, and for the use of all this I want one-third of the corn and one-fourth of the cotton."

That was the rent for the use of that particular farm. We called it "renting on the third and fourth." A third of all the corn and a fourth of all the cotton we raised belonged to the man who owned the land. It did not belong to my father.

It is true he tended it, gathered it, and sold it. But unless the money was turned to the landlord, my father could have been brought into court, and judgment would have been found against him.

Walking in Light

God does not ask a third or a fourth, but God does ask that we give Him the "tithe" of all that the land bringeth forth, or a tenth of our earnings.

When it dawned upon me at that noon hour in my office long ago that one-tenth of my earnings belonged to God, I did not have to get down upon my knees and take out a dollar and pray: "Lord, I have just discovered that one dime out of this dollar belongs to You but I don't want to give it to You. It is true that You have told me that I could use nine dimes if I would give You one. But, Lord, my selfish heart wants all ten dimes. I don't want to give You even a tenth of the dollar." No! I did not have to do that.

You say, "That would be blasphemy." Yes, that is true. Yet there are thousands of people who claim to love and follow the Lord who do not even pray about it. They just keep all the dimes of every dollar they earn.

A Thrill to Tithe

I know of nothing that thrilled me as much as awakening to the fact that I was God's steward and one-tenth of all I made belonged to Him.

I had nothing to give at the time, for I had spent all I had. But as soon as I received my check on Saturday, I went to the bank window and cashed it. I put nine-tenths in one pocket and I put the tithe in the other.

I eagerly and quickly made my way, at the first opportunity, to the house of God, in order that I might pay my tithe. "THE TITHE IS THE LORD'S."

TITHE AND OFFERINGS

"What is the difference between the tithe and offerings?"

The tithe is one-tenth of our earnings. The Scriptures have said, "The tithe is the Lord's." That leaves us nine-tenths. Our offerings come from that. A person who pays only his tithe has never given anything to God.

Thousands of people feel that when they pay their tithes they are doing wonders. Neighbor, that is only giving what is due. That is only paying the rent. If you give anything to God, it must be from your nine-tenths.

Only the Tithe

A man said to me, "When I go to the church on Sunday and place the tithe of my salary on the plate, I have fulfilled all my obligations to God."

I answered, "No! all you have done is to pay what you owe. 'The tithe is the Lord' That belongs to God. You haven't given anything to the Lord until you give above your tithe."

Illustration

The story is told of a father who was trying to teach his little girl the tithing system. He had ten dimes with which to illustrate. He told her of the goodness of God and how He had created us. He told the child of Jesus and how He had given His life on the cross that we might be saved.

Pushing one dime aside and leaving the nine stacked together, he said: "Now, Daughter, this belongs to God. These nine dimes belong to us. This is ours. This is His."

The little girl began to cry and her father was astonished and asked her, "Why are you crying?"

The little child replied in a broken voice, "Is that all God gets?"

Alas, from many Christians that is all He gets -- just a dime out of every dollar. From many others He does not get even that.

If you would have the blessing of God upon your heart in an unusual way, be generous. The Lord loves a cheerful giver, and until we have broken into our nine-tenths we have given nothing to Him who gave so much for us.

WHENCE THE TITHE?

"What shall we tithe?"

I would answer with the Word of God, as recorded in Deut. 14:22, "Thou shalt truly tithe all the increase of thy seed, that the field bringeth forth year by year." What shall we tithe? All the increase that the land bringeth forth.

Back in the days in which the law of the tithe was given to Moses, God's people were farmers; they were herdsman; they had flocks and herds; they raised grain, fruit, and had their great vineyards. God said, "Tithe it all."

Today most of us who read these lines are salaried people. We have an income, and that should be what we tithe.

Someone asked me the question, "What do you consider our income?"

I answered, "That is easy, just turn it around. Our income is what comes in."

When shall we tithe our income? In my opinion, we should tithe it when it comes in. We should pay our tithes before the taxes are paid, before the car payment is made, and before we make a payment on a suit or dress that the merchant has laid by.

Our income is what comes in, and we should tithe our income when it comes in.

The Milk Check

A good layman friend of mine said to his pastor, "I cannot feel clear in subtracting the cost of the feed I buy to feed my milk cows. If I subtract the cost of such things, how can I figure the amount God should charge me for the sunshine and rain that produce the pasture, which is the principal feed factor for my cattle? To avoid becoming legalistic with God, I just tithe the entire amount of the check."

HOW CAN I FIGURE MY TITHE?

I have often heard people say, "My business is such, the way I make my living is so complicated, that I do not know just how to figure my tithes."

I fear that this attitude is a flimsy excuse for not tithing. I venture to say that if I were in any kind of business, regardless of how unusual or how complicated or how mysterious, if one-tenth of all I made belonged to you, even if you had never been to school and could not read or write, you could and would find a way to figure it.

If we want to, we can find a way to figure God's tenth and see that He gets what is due Him.

Tithe the Little Things

I know people who have a few chickens, a cow, a garden, or something else, who believe in tithing and who are so careful that God should get all His due that they tithe their eggs, their chickens, and their gardens.

Many of them give this tenth to their pastor, which, I think, is a very helpful and generous thing to do. Others who have these things on a larger scale sell their produce and give a tenth to the church.

Be Generous

If I had any difficulty figuring my tithes, if I had a question as to whether I was paying my full tithes or not, I would so figure it that I would be sure that God had His tenth. If you run over, you will never lose anything by it. One never loses by being generous with God. The old colored fellow said, "God doesn't mind being overpaid a little once in a while." "The Lord loveth a cheerful giver."

Keeping Account

Often people say, "I do not keep account but I am sure I give more than the tithes."

Again I would venture, if you do not keep account you do not pay your tithes. I have met too many people who thought they tithed, but once they began keeping a strict account they confessed that they had never paid a tenth before.

It is surprising and it is wonderful how the tithes build up and how often you have money to put into the church when you rigidly, faithfully, and consistently tithe your income.

DOES THE NEW TESTAMENT TEACH TITHING?

There are some who are inclined to argue about the tithes. They say it is not taught in the New Testament.

In Matt. 23:23 Jesus said, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone."

"These ought ye to have done," refers to the first statement, "Ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin" No one says the tithe is the most important. Judgment, mercy, and faith are greater than tithing; but Jesus endorsed both.

Jesus Mentioned Tithe Once

Some would ask the question, "Did Jesus mention it anywhere else?"

We must answer, "No." There are two records of this same statement, but this is the only time the Master ever mentioned directly or used the word tithe.

Does that weaken the argument? No. How many times should Jesus mention a thing to make it true? The only time He ever mentioned it, He said, "Ye ought to tithe," and that is just as binding as though He had mentioned it in every chapter of the Gospels.

Paul

The very tenor of Paul's message to the Jewish Christians in Heb. 7:1-10 is an endorsement of the tithe.

The statement, "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come," suggests taking the tithe from our weekly income for the storehouse of God.

Tithing -- Old Testament Law

You notice that Jesus, in speaking of tithing, referred to the law.

No one denies that tithing was the law of the Old Testament. The Scriptures say that Jesus came, not "to destroy the law ... but to fulfill it. The law is no more done away with in tithing than it is in judgment, mercy, and faith.

When they asked Jesus about paying tribute to Caesar, He answered, "Render to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." I quote from Lev. 27:30, "The tithe is the Lord's"; and Jesus said, "Render ... unto God the things that are God's."

MAY ONE USE THE TITHE?

"May we borrow the tithe?"

According to Lev. 27:31, yes. It says, "And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto the fifth part thereof."

If I get in a tight and I have a hundred dollars of tithe money, I may use it; but when I pay it back, I must pay one hundred and twenty dollars.

The most hard-boiled, money-grabbing banker hardly dares ask more than 10 per cent interest. Yet this great God of love and mercy charges 20 per cent

Why should God ask more interest on His money than the banker? In fact, in most instances, more than twice as much. Because it is dangerous to use the tithe.

When Children Borrow

Borrowing the tithe from the Lord is like children borrowing money from their parents. They are honest and plan to pay it all back. Yet many of you know by experience how it turns out. Once you have borrowed from your tithe, it is one of the hardest things in the world to replace.

The devil takes advantage of the fact that you are in debt to God and whips you over it and makes you miserable and, if possible, will make you backslide altogether. It is dangerous to borrow the tithe. If you need money, you had better go to the bank. Don't borrow from the Lord.

Illustration

After I had been tithing a year or more, through no fault of mine or my family but through sickness, we got rather deep in debt.

The enemy said to me: "It is not right for you to give a tenth of what you make to the church when you owe these bills. A Christian pays his debts. You should pay these creditors, and when all your obligations are settled you can give more than a tenth to the church."

That sounded very religious. In fact, it sounded so much like the thing to do that I took his advice.

His advice was wrong and this is what is wrong with it: a Christian should pay his debts, but he should not use God's money to pay them. He should use his own.

Honesty, the Best Policy

Suppose a man hands me a ten-dollar bill to give to our rescue mission. He has made me his steward. He has entrusted me with his money to turn over to our rescue mission treasurer. Suppose I owe a hundred dollars to some mercantile company and my note is due and, instead of turning the ten dollars to the treasurer of our rescue mission, I add it to my ninety dollars and pay my debt to this mercantile company.

You say, "Brother Aycock, that would not be honest -- that would not be right."

True! However, it would be just as honest as it would be for me to take ten dollars of the tithe of God's money and apply it on my debts.

Never lose sight of the fact that "The tithe is the Lord's." No part of it belongs to us. Therefore, we have no right to use it to pay our debts.

Listening to Satan

However, I listened to the devil. I quit paying my tithe so I could pay my debts, and the result was God was not getting anything, I was not getting anything, and neither were my creditors. Condemnation came into my heart and I began to lose peace, joy, and victory from my soul.

When I awakened to this fact, I went on my knees and promised God that, if He would forgive me, I would pay Him one-tenth of all I made the rest of my life.

Immediately I began tithing again, and it was not long until I had a dime to go into the church and I had ninety cents to apply on my debts.

I discovered back there years ago that ninety cents will go further if God gets the tithe than the whole dollar will go if God does not get anything.

MAY WE PAY EXPENSES FIRST?

Almost every time I speak on tithing, someone asks, "May we not pay our expenses and tithe what is left?" This question is asked occasionally publicly and often privately.

I will not be dogmatic in answering this question but I know this, with most of us, when we pay our expenses there is very little left to tithe. Personally, I have always tithed my income when it came in. I have never regretted it and I can highly recommend it.

Illustration

For many years I was an evangelist and was paid quite well. When a church gave me my offering for a revival, I put aside my tithe before I paid a hotel bill, before I bought a ticket, before I filled up my car or figured any expense to the next place. I tithed the total amount given me.

You ask, "Could you not have paid your fare to your next revival, taken out the expenses of the trip, and then tithed what was left of your offering?"

I can only answer, "I never did and I am glad I tithed it all."

Did I Lose?

If I was wrong in paying a tithe of the whole, do you think I have ever lost anything? Do you think that I am any worse off financially or spiritually because I paid God a tenth of my income?

I know that I am not. One never loses anything by being generous with God.

If I had it to do over again after these forty years, I would still tithe it all. "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over."

WHERE SHALL WE TITHE?

Perhaps the question asked more often today than any other is, "Where shall we give our tithe?"

It seems to me that it is so definitely and clearly answered in Mal. 3: 10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house."

What is the storehouse? The storehouse is God's house. "That there may be meat in mine house." In other words, I think, the storehouse to each individual is the church to which he belongs.

How a person can use his tithe to help his poor kinsfolk or to send the children to school or for any other selfish purpose and figure that it is going into God's storehouse is beyond me.

God said, "My house." Personally, I do not have any kinsfolk that remind me of God's house.

Independent Workers

I do not believe that we are bringing our tithe into the storehouse when we send it away to independent preachers and workers who give no account of the money they collect. How free-lance men and women use the money sent in to them, only God knows.

You may ask the question, "Don't you think it is legitimate, if we hear a good message on the radio that appeals to us, for us to send something? Do you think we do wrong when we do that?"

I think, if you want to give to the radio preacher you should give it out of your nine-tenths. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." If all of our people would do this, the financial problems of our local churches would be more than solved.

We Have a Program

If the preacher to whom you listen has a great program of missions or some definite work of the Lord, remember we too have a program, we too go all out for missions both at home and abroad.

Does he have a great radio program? Our own church has one of the best in the nation.

As a church we have a great work, we are accountable for all the money that is given us, and an exact record is kept, so you may know where your tithe works for God.

RESULTS OF STOREHOUSE TITHING

What are the results of storehouse tithing?

Again the Scriptures give a definite answer. "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" (Mal. 3:10).

You often hear people quoting this verse when they pray. They use this verse when praying for various things, but the key to this window is in your pocket or purse. This promise is only to the storehouse tither.

There may be other windows and other blessings we can claim at other times, but this one is particularly for those who "bring ... ALL the tithes into the storehouse." God said, "The storehouse is My house." If language means anything here, it means the church-the place of worship.

Spiritual or Material

A lady stood up during a message and asked me, "Is not this blessing He is speaking about a spiritual blessing?"

I answered: "Yes! I do not believe that one can faithfully tithe without receiving a spiritual blessing or an uplift in soul. But I think primarily the blessing referred to in this scripture is a material blessing."

In Mal. 3:11, God says: "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."

CAN I AFFORD TO TITHE?

"How can I afford to pay one-tenth of my income to my church?"

A lady came to me at the close of a message on tithing and said: "Brother Aycock, I can't afford to tithe. My family would suffer if I gave a tenth. I can't support them on the nine-tenths of what I earn."

I did not argue with the lady, for it seldom pays. But it seems to me that such an excuse is very poor.

Friend, if you cannot live on ninety cents out of a dollar, doesn't common sense teach you that the dime will not keep you alive much longer?

Be Honest

If we must starve anyway, then let us pay our tithe and live as long as we can on the ninety cents and go out to meet God with clean hearts and say to Him, "I could not make it on the nine-tenths but I did not rob You. I paid my tithe."

Don't ask the question, "How can I afford to tithe?" A better question is, "How can I afford not to tithe?" No one ever starved to death because he paid his tithes. No children ever suffered because God's tenth was faithfully given. You can't afford not to tithe.

DOES TITHING PAY?

A question often raised by Christians in their hearts, if not on their lips, is, "Does tithing pay?"

I would answer, "Yes." If one tithes in the right spirit, if one tithes because tithing is taught in the Scriptures, if one tithes because he loves God and because it is right, I believe it pays. It will pay spiritually and it will pay materially.

You say, "I know people who faithfully pay the tithe who do not prosper."

Probably so, but it was not because they tithed. You may have known people who lost all they had who were tithers, but they did not lose it because they tithed. No one ever lost anything by being honest and paying the tenth to God.

Thousands Testify

While you may find a few that were faithful tithers that failed to prosper, that lost all they had, yet on the other hand you can find hundreds, yes, thousands, who will testify that God has blessed them materially since they started tithing. They attribute their prosperity to the fact that they were faithful in paying their tithe.

Jesus said, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over" (Luke 6:38).

A War Veteran

There was a young couple with two small children. He was a cripple from the war. His government check was very small. It was hardly enough to keep the wolf from the door. The little house in which they lived was not their own and it was poorly furnished.

They picked cotton and worked at any kind of manual labor they could find to help supplement this government check.

One day the wife was reading the Bible and came across some scriptures on tithing. I assume it was this third chapter of Malachi. Anyway, reading it, she was convinced that this was God's plan. When the husband came home that night they read it together and, though it seemed impossible, they decided they would tithe.

She said: "To take a tenth of our government check when it came seemed like taking bread from the mouths of my children but we were faithful and, though we are not church folks, we believed that it was God's plan.

"Three years have gone by, and now we can dress our children so we are not ashamed of them when they go to school. We have better furniture and rugs on our floor. We have a tractor, a wagon, a team, a nice flock of chickens, and some cows for milk."

Then she said, "You ask me, 'Does it pay to tithe?' We have proved that it does pay." "Prove me ... if I will not ... pour you out a blessing."

The Hailstorm

A very dear layman friend of mine, a good Christian and a strict tither, when he was first married bought a ten-acre orchard.

One day while in one of his trees shortly before the gathering of the crop, he noticed what seemed to be a storm coming. He climbed down and got on his knees at the foot of the tree and promised God that, if He would protect his orchard from the hailstorm that seemed on its way, he would pay Him two-tenths of all he made, no matter how much it was.

The hailstorm came on and badly damaged the orchards on all four sides of the ten acres, but his orchard was spared. He made the greatest crop that year that he had ever made in his life, and all over the community people talked about his orchard and how his crop was spared.

You say, "Oh! that just happened."

Maybe so, but it happened to a man who paid his tithe. It happened to a man who had just promised God that if He would spare his crop he would pay Him two tithes. It fulfilled the scripture in the lesson of Mal. 3:11, "I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes."

Ask my friend and he will tell you why his crop was spared. It was spared because he promised God that he would pay Him two tithes.

Dangerous Not to Tithe

Over against my friend whose orchard was spared when he promised God he would pay two tithes, a minister friend of mine tells the story of one of his members who was a merchant in a small way. He had been a faithful tither and one who gave offerings during special meetings.

Shortly before a revival began the minister went down to his place of business and noticed the man seemed very nervous as he talked to him and finally asked him about his gift for the coming revival.

The merchant said: "No! It is time some of the other people around the church paid some of the bills. I am tired of giving to the church. I am tired of giving to the district and I am not doing it any more. I am not paying my tithe. I am going to enjoy my money."

He pointed to a beautiful car parked at the curb and said, "Do you see that? It is mine. It is paid for. There is not a penny against it."

Probably the fact that he paid cash is why no insurance was taken out. Anyway, the pastor went away grieved.

A little while after he left, the man went out and got into his car to enjoy some of the things that he had made. It was only a short while until there was a terrible wreck. The car was completely demolished beyond repair, and not a penny of insurance. The man himself was badly crushed and taken to the hospital, where he remained for six months.

When he regained consciousness and could talk, he said to his pastor: "I have paid an awful price for this lesson but, if God gives me back my strength, I will pay Him one dime out of every dollar I make as long as I live, and I will give offerings besides."

Again someone says: "Oh! it just happened. There are thousands of automobile wrecks every year and many of them involve good Christian people. What you tell about this man just happened." Probably so, but it happened to a man who had just backed down on light and refused to pay his tithe. You can't afford not to tithe.

Yes, it pays to tithe. It always pays to walk in the light, to obey God, and to follow the teaching of the Word. It pays off in satisfaction, a good conscience, and in that blessing which He promised through the prophet Malachi.

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THE END