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WILL A MAN ROB GOD?

By Henry Clay Morrison

Pentecostal Publishing Company
Louisville, Kentucky

Printed Book: No Date -- No Copyright

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Digital Edition 02/01/99
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PREFACE

The law of tithing is plainly written in the Scriptures. There is no hint in the Bible that it has become obsolete, and there is no better or more reasonable way to meet the financial obligations of the church, than for each individual member of the church to perform his or her duty to bear their part in the support of the church and carrying forward the work of our Lord in the spread of the gospel.

This sermon has been preached effectively and it is hoped will prove helpful to all who may read it. If you should find it interesting and suggestive, place it in the hands of others.

H. C. Morrison

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THE MESSAGE

Text: "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 the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it." -- Mal. 3:8-10

In this text God through his prophet, brings a serious charge against the Hebrew people. He begins with an explanation as if he were surprised that a people would be so wicked and so rash as to rob the God who created them, and has preserved them, and upon whom they are so entirely dependent. He brings the accusation straight home to them. He tells them that they are cursed with a curse, and gives as a reason that they have robbed Him. He also assures them if they will bring the full tithe into his storehouse that he will open the windows of heaven and pour them out an overflowing blessing. There was a covenant between God and the Hebrew people. There were certain obligations that they were duty bound to observe; certain tithes that they were pledged to pay. They had broken their pledge, failed to perform their obligations, a curse had come upon them and in the text God is pointing out the curse, explaining the cause, and assuring them of the possibility of a remedy, but they must meet their obligations by bringing in their full tithe.

It is unthinkable that an intelligent God would undertake to set up a kingdom among men in the world, that must necessarily involve considerable financial expense, and not make some definite plan or arrangement for the meeting of those expenses. All governments arrange for assessments and taxation to secure an income sufficient to meet the running expenses of the government; the divine government is no exception to this rule.

The provisions made in the divine law to meet the expenses of the kingdom of God in the world are most equitable and liberal. His kingdom is to be run with the most careful economy; the expenses are to be met by all of the subjects of this kingdom in proportion to the income of each subject God asks men for a seventh of their time and a tenth of their income. They must give to him the Sabbath day and in turn he makes this contribution of time one of his greatest gifts to men. On the Sabbath they are to rest, relax their nerves, rest their minds, refresh their physical strength, enjoy the companionship of their families, direct their thoughts to their Maker, engage in worship and social religious service with their neighbors and fellow-beings.

Undoubtedly, the Sabbath day is one of the greatest benefits and blessings that God has ever bestowed upon the human race. The importance of keeping the Sabbath is not only written in the Holy Scriptures, but it is written in the nature of things. It is not only important that man should cease from his toil one day in seven for physical rest and the refreshing and renewing of his bodily strength, but it has been found that this is equally true with animal or brute creation. It is also true in the mechanical realm; the utensils of toil will last longer and render better service when they are laid aside for a seventh day rest from use. We see in the law of the Sabbath a gracious concern in the mind of our God and Maker for the dumb brutes that have been created for the service of mankind. God has taken pains to specify that his dumb creatures shall have the privilege of a seventh day rest. It is a shame and a sin for any owner of dumb beasts to work them hard through the week and then drive or gallop them about on the Sabbath day, regardless of their worn bodies and of the gracious commandment of God that was meant to protect them from overwork.

The law requiring a tenth of the income is certainly most liberal toward the tenant. God furnishes the land, the rain, the sunshine, the seed, the animals with which to cultivate the soil, the health and strength for the labor, and then proposes that when we dig the potatoes we put nine of them into our basket and one into his; that when we thresh the wheat we put nine bushels into our bin and one in his; that when we gather the corn we put nine wagon loads into our crib and one in

his, and so on, with all the products of our fields, our factories, our shops; in a word, we are to take nine parts of all the products of our labor, the increase of our activities and give to him only the tenth. This is certainly a most liberal arrangement; it is a plainly written law, and God clearly teaches us in the text that those who fail to comply with this arrangement are robbers. They are not only thieves, but they have the audacity to steal from God while his all-seeing eye is resting upon them. A Christian civilization without the Sabbath and the Church, and all those institutions for education, the care of the aged, the orphan, and the sick, which necessarily spring up about the Church, cannot be maintained without considerable expense; but it has been found that if all members of the Church will promptly pay their tithe these expenses can be bountifully met and that there will always be money in the treasury of the Lord.

Some years ago, when I was in India, I heard the complaint among some of the educated natives of that country, that Great Britain sent out high officials from England for the government of India; that these officials received large salaries, and that they sent away this money collected by taxing the native people, for investment in England, and thus the country was gradually drained of its wealth; that a stream of money constantly flowed from India into England which would never come back.

This is not so in God's administration of his kingdom among men. He collects his tithe, but he does not gather it up into the storehouses of heaven; he invests it in our midst, and for our benefit. What becomes of the tithe we give to God? He turns it back to the givers; with it, he builds churches in which we are educated; he erects the buildings in which our orphans are cared for, the hospitals in which our sick find comfort, nursing and healing. How infinitely gracious and good is God! There is no sort of selfishness in the administration of his kingdom. Our welfare, salvation and happiness is his one great concern. When we rob God we rob ourselves.

Not only is this true, that God gives back to us for our own use, what we give to him, but he also pledges prosperity to the liberal giver. "Give, and it shall be given you; good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom." Let no one suppose he can be stingy or dishonest with God and escape the notice of his all-seeing eye; let such an one remember that God hath spoken of him in plain terms; he has called him a robber; that tenth which he holds is not his own; it is an act of theft as really as if he had stolen from his neighbor's field, or extracted the purse from the pocket of his fellow man. God is displeased with him and will call him to account. Because of these robberies by vast multitudes of church members the cause of God struggles in the world. Churches are not built and the people go without the benefits of the sacred sanctuary; orphanages are not erected, and little children who are without parents go unprotected and grow up ignorant and vicious; missionary enterprises languish, and the heathen that might have been saved and civilized, live in darkness and die in their sins.

It is no small matter to rob God; to go through life indifferent to his divine commandment with reference to the very small tax he would collect of us while we live on his earth, breathe the air, enjoy the fruitage, and dwell amidst the countless blessings that he has poured upon us with unstinted mercies from a bountiful hand. Many a man has been stingy and dishonest with God. He has clung grudgingly to that tenth which belongs to his Maker and Preserver. He has hoarded it up and held on to it with a grudging, thieving spirit, died in his sins and gone up to meet the God from

whom he had stolen all of his life, and left the fruits of his robbery to be the curse of extravagant, wasteful, and godless children.

There is a story told of a peasant who, in a beautiful valley at the foot of a mountain, laid his sacrificial lamb as an offering upon the altar of God; kindled the fire to consume the lamb, fell upon his knees and closed his eyes in worship. An eagle perched upon a tall crag above the nest of its young, sniffed the odor of the consuming meat and swooping down, snatched the lamb from the burning altar, and mounting to its erie, dropped the stolen sacrifice into its nest to feed its fledglings, while the astonished peasant gazed in grief and sorrow upon the bird which had stolen his sacrifice, and now perched above its nest, far beyond his reach. As he gazed with grief upon the thieving bird, he saw a smoke rising from the eagles' nest, and then a flame shot up. The mother bird screamed with agony and flew helplessly about the crag while the nest was consumed and her helpless young were burned to death. It chanced that a live coal of fire had adhered to the stolen sacrifice and dropping into the nest had kindled the dry sticks into a flame, which had destroyed the objects of her care and love. This fable strikingly illustrates the folly of those parents who have robbed the altars of God in order to satisfy the extravagance and lusts of their wicked children who have been consumed in the fire of their own carnal passions.

There is a feature in this wise law of tithing that must not be forgotten; forgetfulness of God leads to all manner of sinfulness. The memory of God is the best preventive against wickedness of every kind. Doubtless, one of the objects of the law embracing the keeping of the Sabbath and the paying of the tithe, is to keep in our minds the thought of God, his presence in our midst, his right to rule the inhabitants of the earth; the mercies he has extended to us, the grace and compassion revealed in the gift of his Son, and the salvation provided in his sacrifice upon the cross. No one can keep the Sabbath and carefully and conscientiously pay his tithe, and forget God.* Obedience to these commandments will keep the thought of God, our obligations to him, our dependence upon him, and our trust in him, always before our eyes. If man neglects the Sabbath, forgets to keep it holy; if he refuses to pay his tithe, he will forget God; he will forget that God owns the world; he will come to believe that he is the owner of the earth he occupies instead of a mere tenant remaining for a little while and hastening on to some other world where he shall give a strict account for his stewardship here. We do not believe that infinite wisdom could have devised a better method of keeping the thought of God and reverence for him in the minds and hearts of men, than is provided for in the keeping of the Sabbath and the paying of the tithe.

In conclusion, let us remember that a blessing is pronounced upon those who bring in all the tithes; and God has not forgotten to keep this promise. We believe it is the universal testimony of those who carefully keep accounts and pay their tithe, adding to this obligation frequent thank-offerings, that God has graciously blessed them in basket and in store. We have known persons who date the beginnings of their prosperity to the time when they commenced to carefully pay their tithe. It is pitiful and distressing to hear people who claim to be religious, whining about and saying, "My present circumstances are such that I cannot pay my tithe," as if they could not get on with their ninety cents without stealing a dime from God almighty. We have heard others complain thus: "I am in debt, and I feel I must pay my debts before I can pay my tithe," as if it were necessary to rob God of the few dimes one owes to him in order to pay a debt to some one else. This is not only poor religion; but it is poor business; it is transacted at great risk. In our text God says, "Ye are cursed with a curse." What intelligent being, professing to be a Christian, is willing

to steal God's ten-cent piece and with it, take his indignation and curse? Let us heed the divine exhortation: "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse," and dwell under the window from which overflowing blessings are poured out.

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NOTE BY DVM

*With no desire to detract from the truths in this good article by H. C. Morrison, I would say that I believe this to be an over-statement that is not always so. The Pharisee in the passage from Luke 18 below was a very scrupulous tither, and no doubt Sabbath-keeper as well. Yet, he forgot God inwardly while resting his faith in the outward performance of these duties. No, he did not steal God's tithe, but in boasting of his tithe paying and fasting he did try to steal God's glory, which was no better. The same God who said to bring all of the tithes into the storehouse, also said: "I am the Lord: that is my name: and my glory will I not give to another." -- Isa 42:8 The publican who had perhaps stolen money both from God and from men, but who begged for mercy went home justified, while the tithe-paying went home condemned, having stolen, as it were, God's glory. Nonetheless, if the forgiven publican lived long thereafter, he no doubt had to begin paying his tithe faithfully to retain his justification. -- DVM

Luke 18:10-14 "Two men went up into the temple to pray; the one a Pharisee, and the other a publican. 11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this publican. 12 I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess. 13 And the publican, standing afar off, would not lift up so much as his eyes unto heaven, but smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner. 14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other: for every one that exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted."

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THE END