



TITHING

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TITHING

Part 1

There are few subjects on which the Lord's own people are more astray than on the subject of giving. They profess to take the Bible as their own rule of faith and practice, and yet in the matter of Christian finance, the vast majority have utterly ignored its plain teachings and have tried every substitute the carnal mind could devise; therefore it is no wonder that the majority of Christian enterprises in the world today are handicapped and crippled through the lack of funds. Is our giving to be regulated by sentiment and impulse, or by principle and conscience? That is only another way of asking, Does God leave us to the spirit of gratitude and generosity, or has He definitely specified His own mind and particularized what portion of His gifts to us are due to Him in return? Surely God has not left this important matter without fully making known His will! The Bible is given to be a lamp unto our feet and therefore He cannot have left us in darkness regarding any obligation or privilege in our dealings with Him or His with us.

Tithing in the Old Testament

At a very early date in the history of our race God made it known that a definite proportion of the saint's income should be devoted to Him who is the Giver of all. There was a period of twenty-five centuries from Adam until the time that God gave the law to Israel at Sinai, but it is a great mistake to suppose that the saints of God in those early centuries were left without a definite revelation, without a knowledge of God's will regarding their obligations to Him, and of the great blessings which resulted from a faithful performance of their duties. As we study carefully the book of Genesis we find clear traces of a primitive revelation, an indication of God's mind to His people long before the system of legislation that was given at Sinai (see Gen. 18:19); and that primal revelation seems to have centered about three things: 1. The offering of sacrifices to God. 2. The observance of the Sabbath. 3. The giving of tithes.

While it is perfectly true that today we are unable to take the Bible and place our finger upon any positive enactment or commandment from God that His people, in those early days, should either offer sacrifices to Him or keep the Sabbath or give the tithe (there is no definite "Thus saith the Lord" recorded concerning any one of these three things), nevertheless, from what is recorded we are compelled to assume that there must have been such a commandment given: compare Genesis 26:5.

The Offering of Sacrifices to God

Take first of all the presenting of sacrifices to God. Is it thinkable that man would ever have presented blood to Deity if he had never first received a command to so do? Do you imagine it would ever have occurred to the human mind itself to have brought a bleeding animal to the great Creator? And yet we find in the very earliest times that Abel, Noah, Abraham, presented bleeding offerings unto Jehovah—clearly presupposing that God had already made it known that such was His will for His creatures: that the Most High required just such an offering: see Hebrews 11:4 and compare Romans 10:17.

The Sabbath

Take again the Sabbath. There is little in the early pages of Scripture to directly show us that God Himself appointed one day in seven, and that He made it a law that all of His creatures should so observe it; and yet there are clear indications that such must have been the case, or otherwise we cannot explain what follows. When God gave the ten commandments to Israel at Sinai, in the fourth commandment He did not tell Israel to keep the Sabbath; He commanded them to remember the

Sabbath day, which clearly implies two things: that at an earlier date the mind of God concerning the Sabbath had been revealed, but, that their forefathers had forgotten: see Ezekiel 20:5-8, and compare Exodus 16:27, 28.

The Tithe

The same is true in connection with the tithe. At this day we are unable to go back to the earliest pages of Scripture and put our finger upon a "Thus saith the Lord," a definite commandment where Jehovah specified His will and demanded that His people should render a tenth of all their increase unto Him; and yet as we take up the book of Genesis we cannot account for what is there, unless we presuppose a previous revelation of God's mind and a manifestation of His will upon the point.

In Genesis 14:20 it is written, "And he gave him tithes of all." Abraham gave tithes unto Melchizedek. We are not informed why he did so. We are not told in previous chapters that God had commanded him to do so, but the fact that he did so clearly denotes that he was acting in accordance with God's will and that he was carrying out His revealed mind.

The Tithe in Genesis 28:19-22

We will begin at verse 19 to get the context: "And he called the name of that place Bethel." You remember the circumstances. This was the night when Jacob was fleeing from Esau, a fugitive from home, starting out to Laban's; and that night while he was asleep he had the vision. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in the 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." Here again we have the tithe. Jacob vowed that in return for the Lord's temporal blessings upon him, he would render a tenth in return unto the Lord. We are not told why he selected that percentage; we are not told why he should give a tenth; but the fact that he did determine so to do, intimates there had previously been a revelation of God's mind to His creatures, and particularly to His people, that one-tenth of their income should be devoted to the Giver of all.

The Tithe in the Mosaic Law

When we come to the Mosaic law, we find that the tithe was definitely and clearly incorporated into it. "And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto a fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30-32). Notice the twice-repeated expression concerning the tithe, that it was "holy unto the Lord." That is to say, God reserves to Himself, as His exclusive right, as His own, one-tenth of that which He has given to us. It is "holy" unto the Lord.

This anticipates a point which may have been exercising some minds. When we say that one-tenth of our gross income belongs to the Lord doubtless some are inclined to say that all of our income belongs to Him; that everything we have has been given us by God; that nothing is our own in the full sense of the word, it is all His. This is perfectly true in one sense, but not so in another. In one sense it is true that all of our time belongs to God, that it is not ours, and we shall yet have to give an account of every idle moment; but in another real sense it is also true that God has set apart one-seventh of our time as being holy unto Him. That is to say, it has been set apart for a sacred use; it is not ours to do with as we please. The Sabbath is not a day for doing our own pleasure, it is a day that has been appointed and singled out by God as being peculiarly His—holy unto Him—one-seventh of our time spent in His service. And here in Leviticus 27: 30-32 we are told that the tithe is holy unto the Lord. That is to say, one-tenth is not our own personal property at all: it does not belong to us in the slightest; we have no say-so about it whatsoever it is set apart unto a holy use: it is the Lord's and His alone.

Support of the Priestly Family in the Old Testament

"And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe" (Num. 18:25, 26). From this we learn that the support of the priestly family in the Old Testament was not left to the whims of the people, or as to how they "felt led" to give. God did not leave it for them to determine. The support of the priestly family was definitely specified. The priestly family was to derive their support out of one-tenth of all that the other tribes received from their annual increase, and the priests themselves were required to take one-tenth of all out of their portion and present it to the Lord. There were no exceptions to the rule.

Those who have read through the historical books of Scripture know full well how miserably Israel failed to obey this law after they had settled down in the land, how that almost every fundamental precept and statute of the legislation that Jehovah gave to Moses was disregarded by them. But what is very significant is this, that in each great revival of godliness that Jehovah sent unto Israel, tithing is one of the things that is mentioned as being renewed and restored among them.

First of all let us turn to 2 Chronicles 30. This chapter records a great revival that took place in the days of Hezekiah. There had been a time of fearful declension in the reigns of the preceding kings, but in the days of Hezekiah God graciously gave a blessed revival, and in verse 1 we read: "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel." Things had gotten into such an awful state that they had not even kept the Passover for several centuries! But when God works a revival one of its most prominent features is to cause His people to return to the written Word. Let us note this carefully. A heaven-sent revival consists not so much in happy feelings and spasmodic enthusiasm and fleshly displays, nor great crowds of people in attendance—those are not the marks of a heaven-sent revival—but when God renews His work of grace in His churches, one of the first things that He does is to cause His people to return to the written Word from which they have departed in their ways and in their practices. This was what happened in the days of Hezekiah. We read that he wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel. Think of them needing "letters"!! Now read on to chapter 31, verses 4, 5 and 6, and you will find the tithes mentioned. "Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and 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, 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" (vv. 4-6). Following which, God markedly blest them.

The same thing is true again in the tenth chapter of Nehemiah. It will be remembered that Nehemiah brings us to a later period in the history of Israel. Nehemiah records the return of a small remnant of the people after the nation had been carried away into captivity, after the seventy years in Babylon was over. Then God raised up Cyrus to make a decree permitting those who desired to go back to their own land. In this chapter we find that in the revival of his day, the tithe is also mentioned: "And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law: And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord: Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground

unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage" (Neh. 10:34-37).

Now turn to the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi brings us to a point still later, and shows us how the remnant that had returned in the days of Nehemiah had also degenerated and deteriorated and had departed from the word of the law of the Lord; and, among other things, note the charges that God brings against Israel in Malachi 3:7, 8. "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts. But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings." How solemn to notice that in the last chapter but one of the Old Testament, we are there taught that those who withheld the "tithe" from Jehovah are charged with having robbed God! Solemn indeed!

The Tithe in the New testament

Only God has the right to say how much of our income shall be set aside and set apart unto Him. And He has so said clearly, repeatedly, in the Old Testament Scriptures, and there is nothing in the New Testament that introduces any change or that sets aside the teaching of the Old Testament on this important subject.

Christ Himself has placed His approval and set His imprimatur upon the tithe. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23). In that verse Christ is rebuking the scribes and Pharisees because of their hypocrisy. They had been very strict and punctilious in tithing the herbs, but on the other hand they had neglected the weightier matters such as judgment, or justice, and mercy. But while Christ acknowledged that the observance of justice and mercy is more important than tithing—it is a "weightier matter"—while, He says, these they ought to have done, nevertheless He says, these other ye ought not to have left undone. He does not set aside the tithe. He places justice and mercy as being more weighty, but He places His authority upon the practice of tithing by saying, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It is well for us if we by the grace of God have not omitted justice and mercy and faith: it is well if by the grace of God those things have found a place in our midst: but the tithing ought not to have been left undone, and Christ Himself says so.

The second passage to be noted is 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." The emphatic words there are, "Even so" in the beginning of the fourteenth verse. The word "tithe" is not found in these two verses but it is most clearly implied. In verse 13 the Holy Spirit reminds the New Testament saints that under the Mosaic economy God had made provision for the maintenance of those who ministered in the temple. Now then, He says, in this New Testament dispensation "Even so" (v. 14)—the same means and the same method are to be used in the support and maintaining of the preachers of the Gospel as were used in supporting the temple and its services of old. "Even so." It was the tithe that supported God's servants in the Old Testament dispensation: "even so" God has ordained, and appointed that His servants in the New Testament dispensation shall be so provided for.

Referring next to 1 Corinthians 16:1 and 2: here again we find the word "tithe" does not actually occur, and yet once more it is plainly implied: the principle of it is there surely enough. "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 God hath prospered him." Now what does "laying by" imply? Certainly it signifies a definite predetermined act, rather than a spontaneous impulse, or just acting on the spur of the moment. Let us look at this again. "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." (v. 2). Why are we told that? Why is it put that way? Why use such an expression as "lay by in store"? Clearly that language points us

back to Malachi 3:10. "Bring ye all the tithes into the _____" Where? The "storehouse"! That is where the tithes were to be brought. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." Now what does God say here in Corinthians? "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." There is a clear reference here to the terms of Malachi 3, but that is not all. Look at it again. "Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." That signifies a definite proportion of the income. Not "let every one of you lay by him in store, as he feels led"; it does not say that, nor does it say "let every one of you lay by him in store as he feels moved by the Spirit"; no indeed, it says nothing of the kind. It says, "Let every one . . . lay by him as God hath prospered him": in a proportionate way, according to a percentage basis. Now consider! If my income today is double what it was a year ago and I am not giving any more to the Lord's cause than I gave then, then I am not giving "as the Lord hath prospered": I am not giving proportionately. But now the question arises, What proportion? What is the proportion that is according to the will of God? "As He hath prospered him." Can one man bring one proportion and another man bring another proportion, and yet both of them obey this precept? Must not all bring the same proportion in order to meet the requirements of this passage? Turn for a moment to 2 Corinthians 8:14: "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." Please note that this verse occurs in the middle of a chapter devoted to the subject of giving, and what is to be observed is, that at the beginning of verse 14 and at the end of it we have repeated the word "equality," which means that God's people are all to give the same proportion of their means and the only proportion that God has specified anywhere in His Word is that of the tenth, or "tithe."

There is one other passage to be looked at, namely Hebrews 7:5 and 6: "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." (Notice the order: "received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises"). And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." In the seventh chapter of Hebrews the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul is showing the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the order of the priesthood of the Levites, and one of the proofs of which He establishes the transcendency of the Melchizedek order of the priesthood of Christ was that Abraham, the father of the chosen people, acknowledged the greatness of Melchizedek by rendering tithes to him.

The reference in Hebrews 7 is to what is recorded in Genesis 14, where we have two typical characters brought before us—Melchizedek, a type of Christ in three ways: first, in his person, combining the kingly and the priestly offices; second, a type of Christ in his names, combining righteousness and peace, for "Melchizedek" itself means "peace"; and third, a type of Christ in that he pronounced blessing on Abraham and brought forth bread and wine, the memorials of his death.

But not only was Melchizedek there a type of Christ, but Abraham was also a typical character, a representative character, seen there as the father of the faithful; and we find he acknowledged the priesthood of Melchizedek by giving him a tenth of the spoils which the Lord had enabled him to secure in vanquishing those kings, and as that is referred to in Hebrews, where the priesthood of Christ and our blessings from our relations to it and our obligation to it are set forth, the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek as mentioned there, indicates that as Abraham is the father of the faithful, so he left an example for us, his children, to follow—in rendering tithes unto Him of whom Melchizedek was the type. And the beautiful thing in connection with the Scripture is that the last time the tithe is mentioned in the Bible (here in Heb. 7) it links the tithe directly with Christ Himself. All intermediaries are removed. In the Old Testament the tithes were brought to the priests, then carried into the storehouse, but in the final reference in Scripture, the tithe is linked directly with Christ, showing us that our obligations in the matter are concerned directly with the great Head of the Church.

In the above we have only introduced the Scriptures that present God's mind on this matter. In the

following section we will deal with the subject in an expository and in an argumentative way.

One evil ever leads to another. God's appointed method for the financing of the work which He has been pleased to place in our hands, is that of tithing—the strict setting aside one-tenth of all we receive, to be devoted to His cause. Where the Lord's people faithfully do this, there is never any shortage or going into debt. Where tithing is ignored there is almost always a deficit, and then the ungodly are asked to help or worldly methods are employed to raise money. If we sow the wind, we must not be surprised if we reap the whirlwind.



TITHING

Part 2

"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" (Mal. 3:10).

Down deep in the heart of every Christian there is undoubtedly the conviction that he ought to tithe. There is an uneasy feeling that this is a duty which has been neglected, or, if you prefer it, a privilege that has not been appropriated. Both are correct. Possibly there are some who soothe themselves by saying, Well, other Christians do not tithe. And maybe there are others who say, But if tithing be obligatory in this present dispensation why are the preachers silent upon the subject? My friends, they are silent on a good many subjects today: that does not prove anything.

In the previous section of this article the attempt was made to show three things: first, that tithing existed among the people of God long before the law was given at Sinai and that in the brief record we have of that early history we learn that Abraham, the father of the faithful, gave tithes unto Melchizedek, the priest of the Most High God, and that Jacob, when he had that revelation from the Lord on his way out to Padan-aram, promised to give a tenth unto God. Second, we saw that when the law was given the tithe was definitely and clearly incorporated in it, but, like almost everything else in that law, Israel neglected it, until, in the days of Malachi, we find Jehovah expressly telling His people that they had robbed Him. In the third place, we found that in the New Testament itself we have both hints and plain teaching that God requires His people to tithe even now, for tithing is not a part of the ceremonial law, it is a part of the moral law. It is not something that has a dispensational limitation, but is something that is binding on God's people in all ages.

Now let us go a step farther. Tithing is even more obligatory on the saints of the New Testament than it was upon God's people in Old Testament days—not equally binding, but more binding, and that for two reasons: first, on the principle of "unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required" (Luke 12:48). The obligations of God's saints today are much greater than the obligations of the saints in Old Testament times, because our privileges and our blessings are greater. As grace is more potent than law, as love is more constraining than fear, as the Holy Spirit is more powerful than the flesh, so our obligations to tithe are greater, for we have a deeper incentive to do that which is pleasing to God. Listen! The Christian should tithe for the very same reason he keeps all the other commandments of God, and for the same reason he keeps the laws of his country—not because he must do so, but because he desires to do so. As a law abiding citizen in the kingdom of God, he desires to maintain the government of God and to do that which is pleasing in His sight.

Again, in proportion as the priesthood of Christ is superior to the priesthood of Aaron, so are our obligations to render tithes to Him. The Aaronic priesthood was recognized and owned by Israel through their payment of the tithe to them. In the seventh chapter of Hebrews the Holy Spirit has argued the superiority of the priesthood of Christ, which is after the order of Melchizedek, on the fact, or on the basis of the fact rather, that Melchizedek himself received tithes from Abraham. That is the very argument the Holy Spirit uses there to establish the superiority of the Melchizedek order of Christ's priesthood. He appeals to the fact as recorded in Genesis 14, that Melchizedek, who was the type of Christ, received tithes from Abraham, and argues from that that inasmuch as Levi was in the loins of Abraham, therefore the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ is greater than that of Aaron because Abraham himself paid tithes to Melchizedek, who is a type of Christ. Therefore, in proportion to the greater blessings and privileges that we enjoy, we are under deeper obligations to

God; and in proportion as Christ's priesthood is superior to that of the Levites, so is our obligation the greater to render tithes unto the Lord today, than that under which His people lived in Old Testament times.

Why God has Appointed Tithing

In the next place we wish to suggest a few reasons why God has appointed tithing. In the first place, as a constant recognition of the Creator's rights. As our Maker He desires that we should honor Him with one-tenth of our income. In other words, the tenth is the recognition of His temporal mercies and the owning that He is the Giver of them. It is the acknowledgment that temporal blessings come from Him and are held in trust for Him.

Tithing an Antidote Against Covetousness

Again. We believe that God has appointed tithing as the solution of all financial covetousness, for by nature we are full of covetousness. That is why in the ten commandments God incorporates "Thou shalt not covet." That is why Christ said to His disciples, "Beware of covetousness." And tithing has been appointed by God to deliver us from the spirit of greed, to counteract our innate selfishness; therefore, it has been designed for our blessing for, like all of His commandments, none of them is grievous, but appointed for our own good.

Tithing the Solution of Every Financial Problem

Again. I believe that God has appointed tithing as the solution of every financial problem that can arise in connection with His work. While the children of Israel practiced tithing there was no difficulty in maintaining the system of worship that God had appointed. And if God's people today practiced tithing, there would be an end of all financial straits that are crippling so many Christian enterprises. No church could possibly be embarrassed financially where its members tithed. And I believe that that is the solution of rural church work in thinly populated districts. Wherever you have ten male Christians you have sufficient to support a permanent worker in their midst, for no worker should desire any greater remuneration than the average income of those supporting him. Therefore, if you have ten male Christians giving one-tenth of their income, no matter what it may be, you have sufficient to maintain and sustain a regular worker in their midst. That is God's solution to the missionary problem. Wherever you have ten average male Chinese you have a situation where they ought to be independent and no longer leaning upon the help of God's people at home. It is a scandal and a shame to see churches in India and in China today that have been in existence fifty years still looking to God's people in Australia and England and America for their financial support. And why is it? Because the teachings of the Word of God have been neglected. It is because they have never been taught the foundation of Christian finance. No wonder the missionary world is calling out today that they are crippled for lack of funds! They need to be taught scriptural finance. That is why God appointed tithing. It is the solution of all financial problems in connection with His work. Where tithing is practiced there will never be any going into debt.

Tithing as a test of Our Faith

Now then in the fourth place, God has appointed tithing as a test of our faith, and for the nourishing and developing of our faith—especially of the young Christians. Here is a young man who has just started housekeeping. He professes to trust God with the enormous matter of his eternal future. He professes to have confidently left his immortal interests in the hands of God. Well now, dare he trust God with one-tenth of his income for a year? My friends, tithing develops in young Christians the spirit of trusting the Lord in their temporal affairs.

Two Objections Anticipated

Before coming to the next point let us just anticipate two objections. When the subject of tithing is brought before the Lord's people, there are usually a few who are ready to say, Well, I think it is a man's duty to provide for his own household, for his own family. Yes, so do I. Scripture says so. There is nothing wrong in that. I go further. I believe it is perfectly proper for a young Christian man

to desire and to seek after an increasing income with which to properly support his growing family, but if he is not a tither he has no guarantee from God that his present income will even be maintained, let alone enlarged. But the tither has that guarantee from God, as we shall yet see, unless our eyes are shut.

And then perhaps there are some who say, I cannot afford to tithe, for I have made some investments which have turned out very badly. Yes, and you are likely to meet with some worse ones if you continue to rob God! My friends, you need Divine guidance in the matter of investing, and God won't give that guidance while you are walking contrary to His revealed will in the matter of church finance. I am fully persuaded that in the vast majority of cases, if not all (this may sound harsh: God's Word is piercing and condemning and rebuking and humbling) that where you have children of God in middle life or in old age, who are in financial straits, it is because they robbed God in their earlier years. Be not deceived: God is not mocked! If they did not handle to His glory and use according to His Word the money He did give them, then they must not be surprised if He withholds from them now: see Jeremiah 5:25! There is a cause for every effect. There is an explanation to all things right here in the Word of God, too.

"Proving God"

Now let us come at closer grips with the text itself. There are three things I wish you to notice carefully. "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" (Mal. 3:10). My friends, that is a startling expression. It is a remarkable expression. God says, "Prove Me." Those words mean this: Place the Almighty on trial (and it would be sin, it would be positively wicked, for any creature to do so unless he was definitely commanded so to do). "Prove Me now herewith"—with the tithe. In other words, our text tells us to put God to the proof, to test Him out and see what He will do. We are bidden to give Him one-tenth of our income and then to see whether He will let us be the loser or not. "Prove Me now herewith." I tell you, my friends, my soul is overwhelmed by the amazing condescension of the Most High to place Himself in such a position. God allows Himself to be placed on trial by us, and tithing is a process of proof. Tithing is a means whereby we can demonstrate in the material realm the existence of God and the fact of His governor-ship over all temporal affairs. If you have any shadow of doubt in your mind and heart as to whether or not God exists, or as to whether or not He controls all temporal affairs, you can have that doubt removed by an absolute demonstration of the actuality of God's existence and of His control over temporal affairs. How? By regularly, faithfully, systematically giving Him one-tenth of your gross income, and then seeing whether He will let you be the loser or not: proving whether He does honor those who honor Him: proving whether He will allow Himself to be any man's debtor. He says, "Prove Me, prove Me, put Me to the test." You trembling, fearful saints, never mind if your income is only \$1 a day, and you have to scheme and scratch and strain to make both ends meet. Take one-tenth away and devote it to the Lord, and then see if He will remain your debtor. "Prove Me now herewith," He says. Try Me out and see whether I am worthy of your confidence; put Me to the test and see whether I will disappoint your faith. As we said above, God has appointed tithing as a test of faith, for the development of faith; and if the young Christian would only start by proving God in the material realm, testing Him out in His own appointed way, what a confirmation it would be! How it would enable him to trust God in temporal things—which is one of the hardest things that the average Christian finds to do.

"The Windows of Heaven" Opened

Now coming again to the text. Notice the expression, "Prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven." What does He mean by that? "And see if I will not open the windows of heaven." What does He mean? Now Scripture always interprets Scripture. If you will go back to the seventh chapter of Genesis, verses 11 and 12, you will find that identical expression used there, and it explains the force of it here in Malachi 3. Read Genesis 7:11: "In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened. And the

rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights." Now the same expression that is used in Genesis 7 in connection with the Deluge is used here in Malachi 3 in connection with the return, the response, the blessings that God has promised to those that honor Him with their substance, by devoting a tithe to His service. In other words, that expression "open the windows of heaven" signifies an abundant outpouring. Now listen! That does not mean an abundant spiritual blessing. It does not mean that at all, for spiritual blessings cannot be purchased. You ask, Can temporal? In one sense, yes. Certainly they can in the sense that God has promised that we shall reap what we have sown; in the sense that He has promised to honor those who honor Him; in the sense that He promised a bountiful return to a bountiful giver. Certainly! Just in the same way that He has promised length of days to those who honor their parents when they are children. That is a blessing that is purchased! Now then, listen! When God has promised to open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing, it is not a spiritual one, it is a temporal one. He promises an increase in your income. Of course He does. Do you suppose Almighty God would be your debtor? Do you suppose the Most High would allow you to be the loser because you are faithful to His Word and obedient to His will and give Him a tenth of your income? Why, of course not. And we say again, the great reason why so many of God's people are poor is because they have been unfaithful with the money that God gave them. They robbed GOD! No wonder they have suffered adversities and misfortunes. No wonder! Some of us need to re-read our Bibles on the subject of the principles and conditions of temporal prosperity. Some need to learn that the God of the New Testament is the God of the Old Testament and that He changes not. God changes not. God does not vary the principles of His government. The God who gave bountiful crops to a people in the Old Testament times who honored Him and kept His Word, is the same God who is on the throne today, and the same God gives bountiful crops and prosperity in business to them who honor Him. But those who meet with financial adversities and financial misfortunes—there is a reason for it; of course there is. The world calls it "bad luck": they know no better, but we ought to!

"Enough and More Than Enough"

It is very obvious the translators did not know what to do with this text, if you will notice the words they have put in italics. Look at it as it reads (the last part of Mal. 3:10): "I will open the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing, that (now leave out the words in italics) not enough." The words in italics are not in the original. They have been supplied by the translators and they had to supply more words in the last clause than were actually there, which shows they did not know what to do with it. The Hebrew as nearly as I can get it in the original means, "there shall be enough and more than enough." That does not vary very much from the rendering of the translators. In other words it means, "The liberal soul shall be made fat." Turn for a moment to 2 Chronicles 31 and notice now the tenth verse: "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." Now if you read the preceding verses you will find it was when the tithe was restored in that revival in the days of Hezekiah; and here we are told that since the people brought their offerings (their tithes) into the Lord's house there was not only enough, but there was more than enough; there was a great store left over! It is ever thus when we faithfully honor God with our substance! John Bunyan wrote:

"There was a man,
Some called him mad;
The more he gave,
The more he had."

Practical Suggestions

In closing I want to give you a few practical suggestions. They are very important and they are very simple. In the matter of tithing, Christian friends, be just as strict, and careful and systematic as you

are in business matters, in fact, even more so, for it is not the world's money and it is not your own, but it is the Lord's money which is involved. Now do not trust to memory. There are some Christians who say, Well, I have never bothered to keep any records, but I am quite sure that if I had done so, I should find that I had given at least a tenth to the Lord. Some of you might be surprised to find—if you did keep a record and looked it up—how much short of the tenth you had given!

In the first place I would suggest this. Form the habit of taking out one-tenth from all the money that you receive either as wages or gifts. Subtract one-tenth and put it into a separate bag, or box, or purse. That is what it means when it says in 1 Corinthians 16, "laying by in store." And that box or purse is the Lord's, not yours. It is holy unto Him. Form the habit of taking out a tenth from all you receive, putting it into a separate compartment belonging to the Lord.

In the second place, get a small book, a cheap notebook, and on one page put down all your receipts (it will not take some of you very long—one entry, I suppose, at the end of the week) and on the other page put down the disbursement of God's "tithe."

And then in the third place make it a matter of definite prayer to God to guide you in the disbursement as to where He would have you use the money that belongs to Him. It is not yours; it is His; for remember you have not even begun to give at all until you have first paid your tithe. Giving comes in afterwards. The tithe is the Lord's. That is His. That is not yours to give at all; that belongs to the Creator. You have not begun to give until you have done your tithing.

A Testimony

Now in the last place I just want to quote an extract clipped from a religious magazine published in England. In that magazine there has been going on for some time a correspondence, a number of letters, and the subject has been the unemployment in England among the Lord's people. Here is the testimony of one who has written to that paper:

"Twenty-five years ago, being influenced by reading the life of George Muller, I was led to give a tenth of my income to the Lord. I think I was earning 6£ (\$1.50) a week at the time. The first few years I found it sometimes a sacrifice. One shilling out of ten seemed a lot. But it became such a habit with me to divide at once and put away the Lord's tenth that for years it has been no sacrifice. Now what is the result? This: I have proved the truth that Him that honoreth Me I will honor. All through the war, and since, I have experienced no poverty. Though a shop assistant and now over forty (it is a woman that is writing) I have been away ill only one week in twenty-five years. What makes it even more wonderful is that after twenty I became slightly deaf and this has increased (and they do not want deaf assistants to wait on people in a shop, do they?) and yet, praise the Lord, I am still holding my situation. When I read of so many other sad cases of unemployment I praise the Lord for His mercy to me."

One testimony like that is worth twenty arguments. And, my friends, I want to bear my own witness that after twenty years' experience and observation I have proven the truth of our text that God does open the windows of heaven and that He does give more than enough in response to simple obedience to Him.

"Prove Me now herewith." That is God's challenge to you. God dares you to test Him out in the financial realm. You profess to have faith in Him, to trust your soul into His keeping; now He challenges you to see whether you have faith enough to just trust Him with one-tenth of your income for a year, for mind you, in the case of the children of Israel it was a matter of waiting very nearly twelve months for any returns. They were farmers. You test the Lord out for twelve months. You wait a reasonable length of time, and then see whether He lets you be the loser or not. "Prove Me now herewith." That is God's challenge to your faith. O brethren and sisters, do so and see if He will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out such a blessing that there shall be "enough and more than enough."

