

## Spiritual Growth Lessons

### LESSON 23 of 32

#### THE MINISTRY OF GIVING

A part of the ministry of the saints includes this special ministry. This is both a ministry unto God (because it is His church) and unto men. As in every other ministry, however, the participator is also blessed: *"It is more blessed to give than to receive"* (Acts 20:35).

Although giving involves far more than just material things, we are dealing here with just that aspect.

#### OLD TESTAMENT GIVING

In the Old Testament, believers in the one true God gave tithes and offerings. A tithe is ten percent of one's income. During the Old Testament Law, this was to be given for the support of the priests and Levites, and the offerings were for the upkeep of the tabernacle, and later the temple.

Tithing did not originate under the Law, therefore it did not perish with the coming into existence of the New Testament Church:

#### EXAMPLES OF TITHE-PAYING BEFORE THE LAW

*"And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he (Abraham) gave him tithes of all"* (Genesis 14:18-20)

*"And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the LORD be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto thee"* (Genesis 28:20-22).

#### TITHING UNDER THE LAW

Under the law, tithing was "holy unto the Lord": *"And all the tithes of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD's: it is holy unto the LORD"* (Leviticus 27:30).

*"And, behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tenth in Israel for an inheritance, for their service which they serve, even the service of the tabernacle of the congregation"* (Numbers 18:21).

Israel was commanded to give their tithes unto the LORD. God, in turn, gave the tithes to the Levites for their support and maintenance. They were not given land for their inheritance, as were the other tribes of Israel. They were to serve in the tabernacle.

There is a lesson in this for us. Even today tithes are for the support of the ministry, but when we give them, we give them unto the Lord. It is God who has given them for the work of the ministry. A person who gives his tithes does not have any controlling interest in the pastor because of his giving. When he gives them, he must give them to God with no strings attached!

A blessing is pronounced upon those who are faithful to give: *"Honour the LORD with*

*thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine" (Proverbs 3:9-10).*

A curse was pronounced upon Israel, because they withheld their tithes and offerings:

*"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." (Malachi 3:8-9).*

After pronouncing a curse upon Israel for their failure to give tithes and offerings, God promised a blessing to them if they would give: *"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" (Malachi 3:10).*

### **NEW TESTAMENT GIVING**

Contrary to what some people say, Jesus Christ endorsed the giving of tithes: *"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithes 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" (Matthew 23:23).*

Jesus did not rebuke the scribes and Pharisees for giving their tithes. He told them in this verse that while they were so careful to give their tithes on even the very least and smallest of things, they omitted those things which were more important. Jesus then made it clear that they were to continue to give their tithes *"and not to leave the other undone."*

God's perfect will, where possible, is for a minister of the Word of God to "live of the gospel." Read I Corinthians 9:13-14 and I Timothy 5:17-18. This means that he is to receive financial support for his ministry, which will enable him to work full time for Jesus.

It is true that Paul did not always take advantage of this (I Corinthians 9:7-15), but he later apologized to the Corinthian church, because he did not allow them to support him. His support had instead come from another church (II Corinthians 12:13; Philippians 4:10-17).

### **THE NEW SPIRIT OF GIVING**

Thus far, we have referred to the giving of tithes in the Old Testament Church. However, with the coming of the Holy Spirit, there came a new spirit of giving, and a new attitude towards the things that the believers possessed.

In the Old Testament, tithing (ten per cent) was regarded as belonging to the Lord, and the other ninety per cent was the individual's to do with as he desired. In the New Testament Church, a different spirit prevailed: *"And the multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul: neither said any of them that aught (any) of the things which he possessed was his own; but they had all things common" (Acts 4:32).*



Many of the believers in the Jerusalem church had come to Jerusalem from another country in order to keep the feast of Pentecost. After they received the baptism of the Holy Ghost, they chose to remain in Jerusalem, so that they could receive further edification and instruction from the apostles. The Jerusalem saints responded to meeting the needs of their brothers and sisters by willingly selling their houses and lands, and giving the money to the apostles, for their distribution.

While this might not work today, we do need to have this kind of an attitude in regard to our material possessions. When we gave ourselves to Jesus, we also surrendered to Him everything we own: our money, our talents and abilities, our material

possessions, etc.

Because God has given us all things, we should regard all that we have as belonging to Him, and we must use it in a way that we feel is pleasing to Him. Besides the giving of our tithes and offerings to the church for its support, if we know a brother or sister that has a financial need, and we are able to help them, we need to take this Christian action.

*"But whoso hath this world's goods, and seeth his brother have need, and shutteth up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwelleth the love of God in him?" (I John 3:17).*

This act of benevolence is not to be given, however, to the lazy, because the Apostle Paul warned: *"For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat"* (II Thessalonians 3:10).

Also, if we are ever going to reach this world with the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must give unselfishly to the cause of world evangelism.

In all of these things, never forget that giving is God's plan to bless the giver more than the receiver! But we must make sure that we have the proper attitude when we do give: *"Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity (because he is forced to): for God loveth a cheerful giver"* (II Corinthians 9:7) *ds*

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