

THE FOUNDATION FOR GIVING

Text: Proverbs 3:9, 10

I. THE REQUIREMENT OF THE TITHE

A. Declaration

Leviticus 27:30: "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."

Exodus 23:19a: "The first of the firstfruits of thy land thou shalt bring into the house of the LORD thy God...."

In Hebrew, the word we translate "tithe" means a "tenth part." Notice the requirement was to bring, not give. The tithe is not ours and it is never ours. It is the Lord's. When we bring the tithe, we are returning or giving back what belongs to God. Tithing was never limited to the Old Testament. Let's do a brief word study on the word "ought." Compare Matthew 23:23, Acts 5:29 and John 3:7.

B. Demand

Exodus 13:1, 2, 13, 14. Here we see God sets a precedence of keeping first things first. Israel was required to bring all firstborn males to Him. The firstborn lamb is sacrificed. The ass (donkey) is to be redeemed. The lamb is a clean animal. The donkey is an unclean animal. The principle is the clean must be sacrificed and the unclean must be redeemed. Think about this: Are we born clean or unclean? We are unclean as David espoused, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me" (Psalm 51:5). Isaiah 64:6a: "But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags...." Was Jesus born clean or unclean? I Peter 1:18, 19: "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot." The ramification cannot be missed; the Heavenly Father gave His clean Son in sacrifice for His formerly unclean redeemed ones! Colossians 1:15: "Who [Jesus] is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature." Matthew 1:25: "And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS." Jesus is God's tithe to us!

The principle of giving first unto the Lord is throughout Scripture. Notice the demand when taking Jericho, the first city conquered in the Promised Land: "But all the silver, and gold, and vessels of brass and iron, are consecrated unto the LORD: they shall come into the treasury of the LORD" (Joshua 6:19). Achan coveted the beautiful, expensive garment, the silver and the gold and buried them in his tent. God said in Joshua 7:11, "Israel hath sinned, and they have also transgressed my covenant which I commanded them: for they have even taken of the accursed thing, and have also stolen, and dissembled also, and they have put it even among their own stuff." When we keep in our house what belongs in God's House (the tenth), we have stolen from the Lord. This is made clear in Malachi 3:8, 9: "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.”

C. Dividend

Notice how God rewards those who give back to Him in tithes, as seen in Malachi 3:10, 11: “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. And 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.”

II. THE REQUEST OF THE OFFERING

We observe in Malachi 3:8b, “...Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.” Notice there is a difference between tithes and offerings. We really never begin to give until after we have returned to God His tithe. After the tithe comes the offering.

I Corinthians 4:2 says, “Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.” Everything we have comes from God, as I Corinthians 4:7b points out, “...and what hast thou that thou didst not receive?” A steward is one who manages something that belongs to someone else. In this world we are managers, not owners. Psalm 24:1: “The earth is the LORD’S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.” A steward is given the task to protect and expand the assets of the owner. Thus, the Lord said in Luke 19:13, “And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.” “Occupy” is translated from a Greek word that means to “busy one’s self in trade or to do business.” To operate in the Lord’s business effectively, we have discovered the biblical pattern of faith promise giving will help us to not only protect, but to expand (through Christ) the kingdom of God in the earth. We see this principle in II Corinthians 8:1-5 and II Corinthians 9:6-8. This is one of the most wonderful ways to aid us in carrying out the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20).

III. THE RETURN OF THE INVESTMENT

Faith promise should not be seen as a weight that pulls us down, but rather as wings to give us flight: “For we walk by faith, not by sight” (II Corinthians 5:7). Think of the deprivation that will come to the Church and to the individuals members who ignore the walk of faith (Matthew 13:57 and Mark 6:5, 6). Think of the happiness that will be lost if the walk of faith is not inculcated into your year of giving. “...Remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35b). Luke 6:38: “Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.”

Someone may be saying, I cannot afford to tithe or give beyond the tithe. The truth is, we cannot afford not to at least tithe and give offerings, as the Lord provides. Dave Ramsey is probably the most respected name in the secular world of personal finances in America. And here is what he said about giving when in debt: “Even if you’re in debt or walking through a rough financial season, tithing should still be a priority. While it’s tempting to throw that money at your debt, the discipline (and faith) that tithing brings is so worth it. Even while you’re paying down debt, you can still have an attitude of giving—and be generous! If you think it’ll take a miracle to get through the month with 10% less in your wallet, you might need to do a lifestyle check. Take a look at your budget and find ways to cut back on spending. Now, that might mean reducing some of your fun money, packing your lunch instead of eating out every day, or buying generic products - but it is possible!”

Conclusion:

Exodus 13:14: “And it shall be when thy son asketh thee in time to come, saying, What is this? that thou shalt say unto him, By strength of hand the LORD brought us out from Egypt, from the house of bondage.” The Lord is telling His people, one day your son will want to know what this is all about. Then it will be the obligation of preceding generations to explain the “why.” And the answer to the “why” is the foundation for our giving.

-Pastor Pope-