



The Grace Proclamator and Promulgator

“To testify the gospel of the grace of God.” Acts 20:24

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TITHING NOW! IS IT BIBLICAL? ABRAHAM TITHED

By Billy Holladay

(Originally published in October, 1994)

(The following is the substance of three regular Sunday morning studies in Hebrews)

Tithing is not my favorite subject to discuss. I do like to hear a good message on tithing, but it is pretty far down on my own list of Bible subjects I like to present to others. However, the subject of tithing is specifically mentioned seven times in the first 10 verses of the seventh chapter of Hebrews; that makes it pretty hard to ignore. So we will digress a bit from the main theme and consider the applicability of tithing. I don't personally know the giving habits of a single other member of this congregation - who, how much, how often, etc. The Department of Defense's "don't ask, don't tell" policy suits me just fine as far as another's giving goes. I would not be a good choice for treasurer because I would be tempted to assess others' spirituality by the amount of money they give. In Mark 12:41-44, Christ made it very clear that God is the only one who can judge aright in the matter of our giving - who but God would have credited the poor widow with giving more than all the rest who put money into the treasury that day? I'll just add in passing, God can so bless an offering of two mites that it will go farther than the rest, too!

So that no one is in doubt about where I'm going, I'll get this out right up front: Should a Christian tithe? ***Of course a Christian should tithe!*** At least as a minimum.

I did not come to that conviction naturally or easily. The church I was in from age 14 until I joined the Navy did not teach tithing or anything else about giving. There was usually a lot of change and several one-dollar bills in the offering plate as it went by. Occasionally a five would

show up and, rarely, even a ten. A few years later, after we were married, my young bride and I began attending a church pretty regularly, and I'd drop a dollar or two in the offering plate on Sunday mornings. Then one morning I handed the plate to my wife to pass on down the pew and I saw her drop in a twenty! I thought she'd lost her mind, or become a religious fanatic, or something! I didn't say anything to her about it because I knew that she knew a lot more about the Bible than I did, and I thought I'd better study up on it some before straightening her out. That was over 30 years ago and this is the first time I've brought it up!

Many who object to tithing say they do so because it was a requirement of the law and, since we are not under the law, tithing is no longer applicable. True, tithing was required by the law of Moses, and I gladly - thankfully - acknowledge that we are not under that law. However, tithing was practiced by God's people long before the law was given. Abraham gave tithes to Melchisedec, the priest of the Most High God (Gen 14:20). Jacob pledged himself to give tithes of all God blessed him with (Gen 28:19-22). Why did they do that? The fact that they did it suggests that God had communicated His mind on the matter beforehand, just as Abel's offering of a blood sacrifice suggests God had previously made His mind known on that matter.

The fact that the principle of tithing was subsequently included in the law does not invalidate it for this age. God laid down the principle of capital punishment for murder right after the flood (Gen 9:6), a long time before the law was given at Sinai. He also made capital punishment a part of the law. One might as well

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argue against capital punishment for murder because it was in the law of Moses as to argue against tithing for that reason. I dare say that ***all*** the moral and spiritual principles which God set down before the law, and then made a part of the law, continue in full force to this day. Thus has God's standard for giving been the same in all ages: before the law, during the dispensation of the law, and since the law, just as His strict prohibitions of idolatry, murder, and adultery have been. So, to argue against tithing simply because it was a requirement of the law is really pretty ludicrous.

It may be well to note that God does not require tithes of His people because He ***needs*** the money—or anything else from us. How absurd and unworthy of God are some of the pleas for money we hear, implying as they do that God's work will stop without your financial support! ***Everything*** already belongs to God. As the song writer well said, *This is my Father's world*, all of it, including what you and I call ours. **The earth and the fulness thereof...the world and they that dwell therein (Psalms 24:1); the silver..and the gold (Haggai 2:8); every beast of the forest.. and the cattle upon a thousand hills (Psalms 50:10).** That being the case, it seems to me that one of the main reasons God instituted the tithe was to provide a tangible way for His people to express their gratitude for the material blessings He provides for us. We worship Him, praise Him,

offer thanksgiving to Him in our tithes. Isaiah 29:13 tells us that lip service is cheap, “. . . ***this people draw near me with their mouth, and with their lips do honour me, but have removed their heart far from me.***” How easy it is to orally express thanks to God for His bountiful provision of material things for us, and how cheap!

Too many of God's people show about as much real appreciation to God for what He's done for them as a fellow I was in high school with showed his dad. Benny's dad raised and traded in cattle. It was commonly told around school how that every year from the time Benny was just a baby, his dad would give him a calf. When the calf was sold, the money went into Benny's account. After Benny was old enough, he cared for the calf, but still fed with his dad's feed, used his dad's medicine, etc. With the capital gained like that, Benny eventually bought a calf on his own . . . then another . . . and another, all the while receiving one every year from his dad and feeding with his dad's feed, etc. By the time Benny got to high school he was, to say the least, pretty well off. I believe it was as a sophomore that he bought a new 1952 Chevrolet and paid cash for it. For some reason, his dad had a short-term cash-flow problem and needed a sum of money on short notice. Knowing his son had it, he asked Benny to loan him the money. Benny thought about it a moment or two and said, "If you'll get two good men to go on your note, I reckon I can let you have it." (His dad told him to keep it!) (See **Tithe Now**, cont'd. P. 7, Rt. Column)

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EDITORIAL

THE KIND OF OLD LANDMARKER I AM

(Fourteenth in a Series)

In this study of the truly local nature of a New Testament type of ecclesia, we have called fourteen witnesses in previous articles. In this article I will call two more witnesses.

The first will be Eld. William Bullein Johnson. William Cathcart wrote that he was "one of the most active and useful ministers that ever labored in South Carolina." He was the first president of the Southern Baptist Convention. Cathcart writes again concerning Bro. Johnson, "In no section of our country was any Baptist minister more highly honored by his brethren." He also said, "He was a solid and impressive preacher, deeply versed in the sacred writings and full of his Master's spirit."

The second witness we will call is Eld. J. L. Reynolds also of South Carolina. Of him, Cathcart wrote, "As a classical scholar, the Baptist ministry of South Carolina has not had his superior, if, indeed, his equal."

Although they held to some kind of universal church which will assemble in heaven eventually, these two outstanding Baptists of more than a hundred years ago were clear on the nature of a true New Testament ecclesia. They both held strongly and stated succinctly that a church of the Lord Jesus Christ is a local body that meets in one locality, not two or more.

But, before calling these new witnesses let us review some short quotes from what our previously called witnesses have declared in their testimony.

OUR WITNESSES REVIEWED**WITNESS 1: James Robinson Graves**

"The ecclesia of the New Testament could, and was required to assemble in one place."

WITNESS 2: Elton Wilson

"How local is the local church? IT IS LOCAL ENOUGH TO ASSEMBLE. How local is the local church? IT IS LOCAL ENOUGH TO OBSERVE THE LORD'S SUPPER."

WITNESS 3: H. Boyce Taylor

"Our first reason for contending that the word *ekklesia* never means any thing but an organized and an assembling church is that the Lord Jesus, who is the author of the Book of Revelation, uses the word *ekklesia* 20 times in Revelation and every time He uses it, He refers to a local organized and assembling church."

WITNESS 4: Eld. Milburn Cockrell

"In order to have a church, baptized saints must come together in one place at the same time." "Twenty times the word church is used in the singular number, and it points to a church which meets in a certain place."

As I continue to read and research this subject I continue to find good biblically based quotes from some of our witnesses that support the position that has been advanced in this series of editorials. From this witness I recently found this:

I maintain that "ekklesia" is used twenty-three times abstractly, not referring to any particular organization at any definite place, but to the church as an institution. When a concrete application of the word is made, it must be to a particular local church somewhere.

Always and everywhere in the Bible a church is a local body found in a given place.

(*The Case Against the Universal Invisible Church*, Milburn Cockrell, On the World Wide Webb at <http://www.sovereigngrace.net/invisible.htm>).

"Always and everywhere in the Bible a church is a local body found in a given place." This statement leaves no room for equivocation or rationalization. A true New Testament ecclesia is a local body found in a given place—not two places, three places or ten places—in a given place. And, that is true *"always and everywhere in the Bible"* that the word ecclesia is used except when it is used *"abstractly"* and not in a *"concrete application"*.

WITNESS 5: ELDER CURTIS PUGH

"New Testament usage, secular usage and the

Septuagint usage of the word "*ecclesia*" indicate it was only and always used of an organized, congregating body of people in a given locality."

WITNESS 6: ELDER BUEL H. KAZEE

Just *one church in one locality* sent some messengers to *another church in another locality*

WITNESS 7: ELDER BRUCE ALLEN

" . . . ekklesia . . . in its Christian application . . . means an assembly of believers *called out to worship in one place together.*"

WITNESS 8: Elder Joe Wilson

These three things: 1. Locality. 2. Visibility. 3. Organized for a purpose inhere in the meaning of the word. A true "ecclesia" cannot exist that does not have these three ingredients.

WITNESS 9: Elder Ben M. Bogard

"A CONGREGATION is just as local as the wife is . . . "Remember the word CHURCH always means CONGREGATION, never anything else. A congregation is necessarily LOCAL. It would not be a congregation if it were not LOCAL."

WITNESS 10: Eld. C. D. Cole

The N. T. never speaks of one particular assembly or church as a part of the whole, but of each assembly as "the whole church."

WITNESS 11: Elder B. H. Carroll

Locality inheres in Ecclesia. There can be no assembly now or hereafter without a place to meet.

WITNESS 12: Elder Jarrel E. Huffman

"The church is a local organization, a single congregation." (*The Berea Baptist Banner*, January 5, 1987)

"Each local EKKLESIA has tangibility, reality, locality, and can and does assemble." (Unpublished Book on the Church).

WITNESS 13: Eld. Hezekiah Harvey

Bro. Hezekiah Harvey wrote concerning the word *ecclesia*,

"Its ordinary use in the New Testament is to designate a specific, local assembly of Christians, organized for the maintenance of the worship,

the doctrines, the ordinances, and the discipline of the gospel, and united, under special covenant, with Christ and with one another; as, 'the church at Jerusalem,' 'the churches of Galatia' " (*THE CHURCH*, Hezekiah Harvey, p. 27, 1879 edition, From *The Baptist Examiner*, May 14, 1977). **Editor's note:** This quotation is also found on page 27 of the 1982 reprint of this book.)

Bro. Harvey wrote,

The fact is, moreover, everywhere obvious that the charge of a primitive bishop was, not over a diocese as now understood, but over a single church or congregation. This is shown by undoubted authorities. Campbell, an eminent Episcopalian historian, after quoting many Fathers of the second and third centuries, among others Ignatius, Justin Martyr, Irenaeus, Tertullian, and Cyprian, concludes: "Now, from the writings of these Fathers it is evident that the whole flock assembled in the same place, *epi to auto*, with their bishop and presbyters, as on other occasions, so in particular every Lord's Day—or every Sunday, as it was commonly called—for the purpose of public worship, hearing the Scriptures read, and receiving spiritual exhortations. . . . Again, as there was but one place of meeting, so there was but one communion-table, an altar, as they sometimes metaphorically called it.

WITNESS 14: Eld. Tom Ross

Paul recognized each congregation of baptized believers existing in a specific place as a body of Christ.

Eighteen *times* the word church is *employed* in the singular, referring to a congregation in a specific location.

And now I am ready to call our next witness,

WITNESS 15: Eld. William Bullein Johnson

I mean a particular church, a distinct body of the Lord's people associated together in one place, on the principles of the gospel.

". . . church indicates one church, one body of the Lord's people, meeting together in one place, and not several congregations, forming one church."

Eld. W. B. Johnson writing on the subject,

THE GOSPEL DEVELOPED through the GOVERNMENT AND ORDER of the CHURCHES OF JESUS CHRIST wrote concerning the nature of a church of the Lord Jesus Christ declared that the term "church indicates one church, one body of the Lord's people, meeting together in one place, and not several congregations, forming one church."

After giving a list of Scriptures where the word *ecclesia* was used, Bro. Johnson wrote,

The first nine quotations relate to the church in Jerusalem, and very satisfactorily shew, that the term church indicates one church, one body of the Lord's people, meeting together in one place, and not several congregations, forming one church. For all the members in Jerusalem were together in their public meeting, and met in one place for their exercises. In further support of these positions, the following scriptures will be found conclusive. "All that believed were *together*, and had all things common." "And they continued daily, with *one accord*, in the temple." "And being let go, they," Peter and John, "went to their own company,"—the multitude just spoken of, which were together. "And when they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were assembled *together*, and they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and they spake the word of God with boldness. And the *multitude* of them that believed were of *one heart and one soul*." "Then the twelve called the *multitude* of the disciples unto them, and said, it is not reason that we should leave the word of God and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. And the saying pleased the *whole multitude*." "And when they were come to Jerusalem, they were received of the *church* and of the apostles and elders." "Then pleased it the apostles and elders and the *whole church*, to send chosen men of their own company to Antioch." Now, it is worthy of particular attention at this point, that the church at Jerusalem was the first church, and that it was formed under the immediate guidance and supervision of the

apostles, who were acting under the commission of their divine Lord, by which they were required to teach the baptized disciples to observe *all things whatsoever* Christ had commanded them.

It may be supposed, that the number of disciples in Jerusalem was too large to admit of their assembling in one place, and that, therefore, there were several congregations in the city, which yet formed only one church. But the terms church and congregation, as translations of *ecclesia*, are of precisely the same import, as has been shewn. Such supposition, then, is in contradiction of the record, and consequently inadmissible. It may also be supposed, that there was no place sufficiently large in Jerusalem to contain the multitude of believers in one place. But this again is in direct opposition to the record, for it is positively said that the twelve called the multitude *together*, and that according to their direction, seven men were chosen, to whom the daily ministrations of the poor saints was committed. (*Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life: A Collection of Historic Baptist Documents*, Edited by Mark Dever, AD 2001, P. 171).

No one can be mistaken about Bro. Johnson's meaning of the church in the New Testament sense. He wrote that "the term church indicates one church, one body of the Lord's people, meeting together in one place, and not several congregations, forming one church." Positively he said that the term church indicates "one church" and "one body of the Lord's people, meeting together in one place." Negatively he said that the church does not mean "several congregations forming one church."

Could anything be clearer as to this man's conviction about a local visible body that is called an *ecclesia*.

And that I may not be misunderstood, I here explicitly state, that in treating of the government and order of a church of Christ, I mean a particular church, a distinct body of the Lord's people associated together in one place, on the principles of the gospel: and not the universal church, nor a given number of distinct individual

churches associated together under a confederated system of government, nor the officers of any one or more churches, or their representatives united in a council. (*Ibid.* P. 172).

WITNESS 16: ELD. J. L. Reynolds

"A particular gospel Church," says one of the earliest authorities in this country, "consists of a company of saints incorporated by a special covenant, into one distinct body, and meeting together in one place, for the enjoyment of fellowship with each other, and with Christ their head..."

"From the meaning and use of the term. We read in the New Testament of "the Church" in a particular city, village, and even house, and of "the Churches" of certain regions; but never of a Church involving a plurality of congregations."

J. L. REYNOLDS, another old Baptist wrote in 1849 in *Church Polity Or The Kingdom Of Christ, In Its Internal And External Development*.

When the Apostles went forth, under the broad commission of their ascended Master, preaching the Gospel, they gathered together the fruits of their ministry, wherever they went, into local societies. These are the only Churches known to the New Testament. They constitute the external development of Christ's kingdom; and are employed, as nurseries, to prepare the genuine children of the kingdom for their ultimate and permanent abode.

A Church of Christ is a single congregation of professed believers, formed by the mutual agreement of its members, and designed for religious purposes. In this sense the word is used by the sacred writers more than sixty times. This is the view which has always been held by Baptists. "A particular gospel Church," says one of the earliest authorities in this country, "consists of a company of saints incorporated by a special covenant, into one distinct body, and meeting together in one place, for the enjoyment of fellowship with each other, and with Christ their head, in all his institutions, to their mutual edification, and the glory of God through the

Spirit." 2 Cor. 8: 5 ; Acts 2: 1. (*Biblical Arguments on How to Conduct Church Life, A Collection of Historic Baptist Documents*, Edited by Mark Dever, Sheridan Publishers, 2001, P. 320).

As evidence that the churches of the New Testament were single congregations in a given locality that regularly worshiped together in one place, Bro. Reynolds writes again concerning the word ecclesia,

A CHURCH IS A SINGLE LOCAL SOCIETY.

This is clear:

1. From the meaning and use of the term. We read in the New Testament of "the Church" in a particular city, village, and even house, and of "the Churches" of certain regions; but never of a Church involving a plurality of congregations. "A bishoprick was but a single congregation." There is no trace of any other kind of Church, presbyterian, diocesan, or national.
2. From the history of the Churches in the New Testament. The Church at Jerusalem, the model after which the other Churches seem to have been formed, was a single congregation, which could meet together for social worship and the transaction of Church business. So also the Churches at Antioch, Corinth, Ephesus, &c., were all single congregations. (*Ibid.* P. 321)

Bro. Reynolds continues,

It has been objected that the members of these Churches were too numerous to constitute a single congregation. But if the New Testament alludes, in these cases, to only one Church, and affirms that "the whole Church" did meet together and transact business in common, the objection is negated by the authority of Scripture. The argument which attempts to disprove the congregational polity of the Church at Jerusalem, is similar to that by which the baptism of its members has been assailed. The narrative in Acts plainly intimates that the three thousand converts were baptized, (or immersed.) But it is objected that they were too numerous to be baptized, and therefore must have been

sprinkled. In either case the baptized congregationalist rejects the unwarrantable assumption.

Near the end of his work Bro. Reynolds affirms again that a true New Testament type of ecclesia meets in one place. He writes,

Each particular church is a local society, composed of persons who have been baptized upon a credible profession of faith in the Son of God, and have solemnly covenanted to walk together in the spirit of the Gospel, acknowledging Christ as their Lord, and his word as their infallible guide. Upon such a church, Christ has conferred the prerogative of self-government, under his laws. It is the right and duty of a church to interpret these laws for itself, and to declare what it considers the will of Christ to be, with reference to doctrines, ordinances, moral duties, the terms of communion, and church order, and to govern all its members accordingly; to receive persons to fellowship and to expel offenders; and to choose its own officers. In the execution of the laws of Christ, it is responsible solely to Him. Churches are therefore independent of each other, so far as coercive interference is concerned; yet they sustain an intimate relationship; are bound to promote, in all lawful ways, each other's welfare; and to unite their efforts in the general advancement of the Redeemer's kingdom. A church when fully organized is furnished with two classes of officers, one of them having special charge of its spiritual interests, the other, of its temporal or secular concerns. In these classes, there is no distinction in grade. All bishops are of equal rank, and so are all deacons.

Such is the scriptural church polity, as adopted by Baptist churches, in opposition to all other existing systems. It differs from all sorts of prelacy, Roman, Oriental, Episcopal, and Wesleyan, by the principle, that all the servants of Christ in the work of the gospel are of equal rank. It is distinguished from Episcopacy and Presbyterianism, by the principle that the only organized church is a particular church, a society of believers, who statedly meet in one place, for

the transaction of its business. It, therefore, excludes every such thing as a provincial or national church, the aggregation of churches, and the centralization or consolidation of church power.

Notice this pointed and pungent statement from Bro. Reynolds. He writes above, "the only organized church is a particular church, a society of believers, who statedly *meet in one place*, for the transaction of its business."

Both of our witnesses called in this article make it clear that they believed that a true New Testament ecclesia is a congregation of organized baptized believers who meet together in one place. They opposed very strongly the notion that two, three, four, or more congregations meeting in different places may properly be considered one ecclesia.

I do not hesitate to declare again, "***That is the kind of Old Landmarker I am!!!***"

—Wayne Camp, Editor—

(Tithe Now, Continued from Page 2)

Now, God has no cash-flow problem, but He has laid definite claim to the tithe: **And all the tithe..is the LORD'S; it is holy unto the LORD (Lev 27:30)**. Holy! And God feels so strongly about the tithe that He considers the withholding of it as nothing short of robbery (or fraud)! **Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings (Malachi 3:8)**. A few years ago I heard a preacher commenting on this verse ask, which is worse, for a man to steal God's money **after** the people have given it, or for people to steal it **before** it's given?¹ All too often we hear of unscrupulous preachers who steal money from churches, sometimes huge sums. We think, how terrible; they ought to jack up the jail and throw them under it! But, per Malachi 3:8, is that a lot worse than folks in the pew defrauding God of money before it's given? That seems to be the way God looks at it, for He says in verse nine of that chapter, "**ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me...**"

Getting back to common objections to tithing, some are wont to say, there's nothing in the New Testament (NT) about it. When God lays down a principle, does it really matter what section of His

Word He includes it in? However, I do believe NT scriptures make a very definite connection with Old Testament (OT) scriptures on tithing. For example, what about these first ten verses of Hebrews 7? As mentioned earlier, tithing is specifically mentioned seven times in this passage, and not once in a negative way or in a way that suggests it is now passe'. Also, consider I Cor 9:13-14 (to a NT church), ***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.*** Although the tithe is not specifically mentioned in this passage, it is inferred. Verse 13 refers to the means of support for the priests under the old economy, which of course was the tithe. Then, in verse 14, we read, ***Even so***—in the same manner as it was done in OT times—are preachers of the gospel to be supported today.

I believe the tithe is also inferred and a connection made with OT scriptures in I Cor 16:1-2, ***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...*** Whatever else this may refer to, it does teach that their giving (and hence ours) was to be in accordance with an "order" given to the churches through the apostle. Our giving is, therefore, to be a definite, predetermined act, rather than a spur-of-the-moment impulse or whim.²

Lay by in store clearly points back to Malachi 3:10, Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...; there is the idea of a common treasury in both. The idea is that one should have that which he is going to give already designated and set aside beforehand. ***As God hath prospered him*** implies in a proportional way. Has a person given proportionally, as God has prospered him, who gives the same amount this week as last week even though he earned twice as much? What better standard for proportional giving than a definite percentage? What proportion is per God's revealed will? Can one person adopt one proportion as his standard, and another person adopt a different proportion as his standard, and both be in conformity with this principle of giving? The eighth and ninth chapters of Second Corinthians deal extensively with the

principles of Christian giving; I quote from chapter 8, verses 13 and 14, ***For I mean not that other men be eased, and ye burdened: but by an equality, that now...that there may be equality.*** How is an equality to be realized except all have the same standard, an equal proportion?² I submit that God spelled out His mind on that a long time ago - the tithe, a ten-percent minimum.

Lay by in store (in treasury, in storehouse). Yes, I believe in storehouse tithing. Further, I believe I Cor 16:1-2 clearly indicates the church is the storehouse (not the building, the living assembly). As there is command and precedence to tithe, so there must be authority to receive the tithes. Clearly, Melchisedec was vested with such authority, as were the Levitical priesthood (in Heb 7:5 the emphasis is more on the priests' authority to receive tithes than on the people's responsibility to give them). Today the church is the Lord's representative on earth; it is His body (Eph 1:23), and it is the only organization or institution on earth authorized to receive and distribute His tithes. God appointed the tithe, not only as a means of praise and thanksgiving, but also as the primary means of financing His work on earth. Under the law, the tithe was for expenses relating to the tabernacle/temple and the priesthood; Malachi 3:10 refers to this. During the church age, expenses relating to the ministry - pastors, missionaries, etc. - and the relief of destitute saints are to come from tithes. How utterly demeaning to the name of Christ for His assemblies to lower themselves to begging, bingo, selling, etc., to finance His work! He has appointed a better way, and I dare say, you will not see a church whose members tithe having money problems; Mal 3:10 applies to this, too.

Some, including A.W. Pink², say you should make it a matter of prayer as to how to distribute your tithe..where to give it. But, as another has well said, it is a sin to pray for guidance about something that God has already expressed His mind on. Storehouse! Church! His body! Certainly no radio/TV program, periodical, or such has been authorized to receive the Lord's tithe, no matter how worthy otherwise. I do not mean that a Christian should never give any money to anyone/anything else except his own church—I do—**but not the tithe**. There is only one place appointed for it, and only one with authority to receive/distribute it.

Some who object to tithing argue from a

grace-versus-law position. They reason that tithes were required under the law, but we are under grace; we, therefore, give in accordance with the principles of grace and not of law, i.e., 'cause we want to and not 'cause we have to. Well, in the main, I think that is right (**not**, however, to excuse giving **less** than the law required; as has been well said, people who use God's grace to excuse themselves from what God requires make grace a disgrace.¹) The passage in Heb 7:1-10 draws a distinction between tithing under the law and tithing under grace, but it is mainly a difference in attitude, not in principle.

The Israelite paid tithes based on the requirement of law. It was strictly a legal thing. It was not for the purpose of showing respect for the Levites who received the tithes. It was not an acknowledgment of the superiority of the priests over the rest of the people. Under a strictly legal system people may have given their tithes with an attitude no better than mine when I write my check to the IRS—grudgingly, with regret, and without my heart really being in it! Abraham, on the other hand, was not under the law, but grace. There was no legal requirement that he give tithes to Melchisedec. He did so spontaneously, in recognition of Melchisedec's greatness and superiority (Melchisedec was a grand type of Christ). Abraham gave tithes out of respect for **who** Melchisedec was, **his person**. He did it because he wanted to! Notice that in both cases—under law and under grace—the tithe was the standard; that's the standard that God has established.

Now, under grace, if you give grudgingly, with regret, because you feel obligated, as though it were a legal requirement, it seems to me you'd just as well keep it! Some pastors and treasurers may not see it that way, but God certainly doesn't need it, and neither do God's churches. **Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver (II Cor 9:7).** Under grace, God is looking for the same attitude exhibited in Abraham: because he wanted to. **For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not (II Cor 8:12).** The willing mind of grace will want to give...and give more than a minimum standard—a lot more! Love wants to keep on giving when the law has long since been satisfied.¹ And God graciously

says, I account what you really want to give as what you do give!

(Remember the poor widow and her two mites? **More** the Saviour said, **than they all.**) Conversely, without the desire, without the cheerful, willing mind, you may give your full tithe in a strict legal sense and not even get credit for it! Indeed, more **is** required under grace than under law; grace calls for **you** as well as yours!

Under grace one's motive for tithing must be right. Motive is very close to attitude, but there is a difference. Attitude is one's disposition or feeling toward a person or thing; motive is the thing that prompts a person to act in a certain way. The motive for tithing must ever be to honor God. It must **never** be for the purpose of getting a big return on your "investment." Too many sermons I've heard on tithing and giving have appealed more to selfishness than to thankfulness. "If you will tithe, God will pour you out a blessing so great...; you just can't out give God...; you can't take it with you but you can send it on ahead..."; etc., etc. God did say, **Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse...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).** So also in the NT, **This I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully (II Cor 9:6).** I'm certainly not going to quarrel with such statements and promises, but the personal application of them must be in the context of Mat 6:33, **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.** It is the heart-desire to obey Him, to honor Him, to give to Him simply because of who He is, that counts. As II Cor 8:8 expresses it, **to prove the sincerity of your love.** To tithe in order to get more back is more dishonor than honor, and amounts to a mercenary attempt to use God for selfish purposes.

Having said that, God will not be a debtor to any man. "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 a tenth of your income? Why of course not."² No one who gives to God with a sincere desire to honor Him is going to come up short for doing it. However, I take exception with those who promise that God will increase your income or otherwise

cause your ship to come in as a direct result of tithing. God has promised His blessing, but that does not necessarily mean He will bless by giving a lot more; He may simply cause what one already has to go a lot farther. Remember the poor widow's meal and oil? The account is in I Kings 17:9-16. God told Elijah to go to a widow whom He had **commanded** to sustain the prophet during the severe famine. I may have gone expecting a rich woman but Elijah found one near starvation, with only **a handful of meal and a little oil**. God did not open the windows of heaven and pour them out a barrel of oil and a ton of meal; He simply blessed the dab they had so that it adequately fed the woman, her son, and Elijah, day by day, for many days during the long famine. Without going into details, I can add my personal testimony to that of multitudes of God's people who have proven Him, that He can make nine-tenths go a lot farther than I can make ten-tenths go! Here is where Mal 3:10 comes in - after Mat 6:33 has been applied.

Let me get back to the all-important matter of grace. Grace teaches that those in Christ belong **entirely** to Him. **Know ye not...ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price...(I Cor 6:19-20)**. The analogy comes from the slave markets. When someone bought a slave, the slave and whatever property he had became the legal property of the new owner. So it is that when Christ bought me with His own blood, He got clear title to me and all I have - it's all His. Like the man who purchased the field; he got the field and the treasure in the field, too (Mat 13:44). As stated earlier, grace does indeed put a person under more obligation than the law; love demands more—the heart and affections as well as actions. Love still cries out long after law has been fully satisfied¹. Look at how that is exemplified in the churches of Macedonia (II Cor 8:1-5, Amplified version), **We want to tell you further, brethren, about the grace of God which has been evident in the churches of Macedonia..; For in the midst of an ordeal of severe tribulation, their abundance of joy and their depth of poverty [together] have overflowed in a wealth of lavish generosity on their part. For, as I can bear witness, [they gave] according to their ability, yes, and beyond their ability; and [they did it] voluntarily, Begging us most insistently for the favor and the fellowship of contributing in this ministration for [the relief and support**

of] the saints [in Jerusalem]. Nor [was this gift of theirs merely the contribution] that we expected, but first they gave themselves to the Lord and to us [as His agents] by the will of God - that is, entirely disregarding their personal interests, they gave as much as they possibly could, having put themselves at our disposal to be directed by the will of God.

Giving is grace's biggest problem: it wants to give everything! Look at the cross and tell me, when does your giving stop?¹

When I survey the wondrous cross,
On which the Prince of glory died,
My richest gain I count but loss,
And pour contempt on all my pride.

Forbid it, Lord! that I should boast,
Save in the death of Christ my God:
All the vain things that charm me most,
I sacrifice them to His blood.

See, from His head, His hands, His feet,
Sorrow and love flow mingled down:
Did e'er such love and sorrow meet,
Or thorns compose so rich a crown?

**Were the whole realm of nature mine,
That were a present far too small;
Love so amazing, so divine,
Demands my soul, my life, my all.**³

I think probably this is why the tithe is not made a lot of in the NT—what Christian, under grace, would even think of giving less than that required by the law? **"If it were not for tithing, Christians would give everything they've got; God put it there so they wouldn't give everything they have."**⁴

After sitting through part of what has been presented so far, one brother disagreed with the statement made earlier that "under grace, if you give grudgingly, with regret, because you feel obligated, as though it were a legal requirement, it seems to me you'd just as well keep it." He reasoned that such a statement was tantamount to advising one to rob God. I got to thinking, he may be right, maybe I did overstate it, maybe I shouldn't have said it like that. The point I was aiming at was the importance of attitude: your attitude **is** more important to God than your money! I want to say just a couple of more things about that and leave it with you.

First, as the song says, just look at the cross, survey that scene; what did the Saviour hold back? The Holy Son of God literally gave Himself up—His body was battered and torn (Isa 52:14, Psalms 22:14, etc)—His very soul was made an offering for our sin (Isa 53:10)—yea, He was made sin for us! (I Cor 5:21)—He suffered the consequences of sin, even to the second death! *.having loved his own...he loved them to the end* (to the limit, to the uttermost) (John 13:1). To give stingily, to give grudgingly, in the light of His cross-work is to insult the Saviour, to mock His love, and to low-rate His atonement; it is to rob Him of honor due Him. To give Him the bare tithe without the willing mind (II Cor 8:12) and cheerful attitude (9:7) is to give Him no more than one-third of what He expects under grace. This is admittedly a crude analogy: There is no legal requirement that you tip a waiter after dinner in a nice resturant, but it is expected and there is a generally accepted standard. If you give only one-third of the

standard tip, you actually show more contempt for the waiter than if you left no tip! Is robbing/defrauding God of mere money worse than that?

"The law gives minimums, grace seeks maximums. The old man looks to the law and gives legally, the new man looks to the cross and gives lovingly. The old man gives expecting to receive something, the new man gives because he has received something. Even the tithe comes for a different reason: it is the **least** I can do in the light of Calvary! To the Christian, the law of the tithe is the law of the minimum; then the Bible starts talking about offerings—they are the Lord's, too!"¹

¹Jay Wimberly in a sermon, *Give God What Belongs To Him*

²A.W. Pink in the booklet *Tithing*

³Issac Watts in the hymn, *When I survey The Wondrous Cross*

⁴Quoted by Jay Wimberly

Thailand Mission Report

By Eld. Bill Lee

With this newsletter concerning the mission work in Thailand we begin what will be a monthly report to all that share in the work in Thailand. In these reports we will keep you informed about the progress of the churches, new churches that are being organized, an update on the children's center as well as other on-going projects such as the distribution of medicine, Bibles and other supplies. We will keep you abreast of the building projects that are underway and in general keep you up to date on what is going on in the Thailand mission work. In these reports we will not be listing the contributions from each supporter as we think this is a matter of confidentiality. We do not think that it is our place or duty to make public what other churches or individuals are doing. Those who contribute to this work do so for the glory of God and not for public recognition. We appreciate the support of each church and individual in this work and our desire through these monthly reports is to inform you of what is being done and how the Lord's money is being used.

There is always much activity in the work in Thailand. Bro. Anond stays very busy going from village to village preaching the gospel. Since our last

trip to Thailand which was in October 2001, there have been four new churches established in the mountains of Thailand. We thank our God for this. There are so many villages in those mountains that now have heard the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord has been pleased to save many individuals and there are now local churches in many of these villages.

One thing that really stood out in my mind on our last trip was when one of the men in a church service told me that his village had never even heard about God until we came and preached in their village. Not only had they never heard the gospel of Jesus Christ, **they had never even heard that there was a God.** All they knew was "spirit worship". We first went to this village three years ago and now there is a local Baptist church in this village with about thirty-five faithful members who are now worshipping this God that they previously had never even heard of. And this is not an isolated incident. This same thing is being repeated over and over again in the mountains and jungles of Thailand. There are constantly other villages getting in touch with Bro. Anond and asking him to come and preach the gospel in their village. God has truly opened an effectual door in northern Thailand. Of course all of this places a terrible work load upon Bro. Anond. He is only one man with so much to do. The travel to these villages is very hard, many times over very rough terrain and at times very dangerous. But Bro.

Anond is always very willing to go, working long hours each day. He not only has a burden to go to the villages and preach the gospel but also to follow up with consistent and regular teaching. Each month Bro. Anond arranges to meet with the pastors of the churches to hold teaching sessions. He is convinced even as we are that there are three parts to the commission the Lord gave unto His churches. First, to make disciples; second to baptize them; and third to teach them. This third aspect of the commission Bro. Anond does personally in as many villages as possible but he also realizes that the teaching of the pastors is very important. Therefore he arranges for the Lahu pastors to come and meet with him once a month for two or three days and he systematically teaches them and they go back to their own villages and teach their members. Then at another time he meets with the Lisu pastors and does the same thing with them. This is followed by meeting with the Thai pastors. All of these, the Lahu, the Lisu, and the Thai speak different languages therefore Bro. Anond meets with each group separately. These teaching sessions are a very important part of the on-going work in Thailand.

We have just this past week made another payment on the land for the children's center. For the past several years we have been renting a place for the children, but now the Lord has opened yet another door and provided land for us to build a permanent place for the children. We made arrangements to pay for the land in three yearly payments of just over \$3300 each. This latest payment was the second of the three payments. We have just completed having electricity run to the land and a well and water system has also been put in. These two things cost us a little over \$5000 but we are thankful that we were able to get this done. This week we are sending money for Bro. Anond to begin building one of the buildings that will be built on this new land. We will begin the building process by building a dormitory type building for the girls. We plan to follow this by a similiar building for the boys and then a building that can be used both for a dining area and chapel. Until we are able to build all of these buildings we will move the Lahu type buildings (bamboo) that the boys are currently living in and the Lahu type dining building to the new land. Our plans are to build the new buildings one at a time as the Lord provides the means to do so. What a blessing it will be when completed. In the past the children have been forced to move from several rented properties but now the Lord is preparing them a permanent place to live.

The Lord willing Bro. Wayne Camp, his wife Ruth along with Janice and myself will make another trip to Thailand in early March, 2002. Our plans are to have extensive as well as intensive teaching sessions with Bro. Anond and the pastors of the churches. We will also go to as many of the villages as possible for church services and also carry medical supplies for each village we visit. There are building projects in process in several villages as well as the children's center and we will be checking on these. We hope that while we are there that we will once again be able to meet with some of the pastors from Burma and have at least one teaching session with them. We plan to buy as many Bibles as possible to distribute in the village and also to send into Burma. Recently we received a donation for \$500 for the purchase of Bibles that has already gone a long way in meeting this need. We ask for your prayers as we make this trip.

On behalf of the saints in Thailand and in Burma, we thank each of you for your support in this work of the Lord. Without the faithful support of others we could not do the things that we are doing. Our prayer is that God will continue to bless this work and bless each of you. *Hebrews 6:10*

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