

Sermon Notes for March 21, 2010

## “Questions Christians Ask About Tithing” Malachi 3:6-12

**Two men were marooned on an island.** One man paced back and forth, worried and scared while the other man sat back and was sunning himself. The first man said to the second man, “Aren’t you afraid we are about to die.” **“No,” said the second man, “I make \$100,000 a week and tithe faithfully to my church every week. My Pastor will find me.**

### Introduction

#### A. I DO NOT LIKE PREACHING ON MONEY!

1. I know that there are visitors here today who are saying:
  - a. “Yeah, I bet that is true when he says that he doesn’t like to preach on money.”
  - b. “That’s all I hear preachers preach on . . . money.”
2. Well, to be honest with you . . .
  - a. Except, for those times that we have had building campaigns.
  - b. **I have preached on money less than 10 times since I started this church in 1994!**
3. Now, in a sense, that is something that I am not very proud of:
  - a. of all of the topics in the Bible, money is mentioned more than most
    1. **16 of 38 parables** taught by Jesus Christ were about money.
    2. **1 out of every 10 verses in the gospels** focus on money
    3. while **faith** and **prayer** are referred to some **500 times** in Scripture, **money** is referred to some **2000 times!**
  - b. of all of the areas of a person’s life, there are two areas that really “define” who a person truly is:
    1. one – their calendar
    2. two – their checkbook

#### B. Today, I Am Going To Speak ON GOD’S PERSPECTIVE ON GIVING – THE TITHE

1. But, the way that I am going to share this message is to answer your questions on tithing.
2. So, let’s look at some of these questions.

### I. Question One – WHAT IS TITHING?

#### A. The DEFINITION Of Tithing

1. The word tithe in the **Hebrew** (Old Testament).
  - a. **maaser**
  - b. it simply means a tenth
  - c. **payment of a tenth**
2. The word tithe in the **Greek** (New Testament).
  - a. **apodekatoo**
  - b. to pay a tithe
  - c. **to receive a tenth**

## B. The **DEGREE** Of Tithing

1. The word tithe means a tenth
2. It does not mean:
  - a. 2/10th
  - b. 5/10th
  - c. but a tenth

## II. Question Two – **ARE CHRISTIANS CALLED TO TITHE IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AGE?**

### A. Theological Perspectives

#### 1. Dispensationalism

- a. Dispensationalism is the theological belief that the Bible is divided into “sections”, “parts”, or “periods of time.” Most dispensationalists believe that there are seven dispensations
  1. from **creation to the flood** – the age of **innocence**
  2. from the **fall to the flood** – the age of **conscience**
  3. from the **flood to Abraham** - the age of **human government**
  4. from **Abraham to Moses** – the age of **promise**
  5. from **Moses to Christ** – the age of **law**
  6. the **church age** – the age of **grace**
  7. the **millennium** – the age of the **kingdom**
- b. The teaching of dispensationalism is that once an “age is over,” nothing from that previous age is “carried over.” Old Testament Jews lived during the “age of law”:
  1. Jews who lived during the “age of law” would be required to tithe
  2. according to dispensationalists, now that we are living in the “age of grace”, believers are no longer required to obey the practice of tithing.

#### 2. Covenant Theology

- a. Covenant Theology, on the other hand, sees only “two dispensations,” or two periods of time – the Old and New Testaments (slide of the Covenant)
- b. Covenant Theology teaches that there are some practices that **are not to be obeyed** in the New Testament time because the New Testament taught that those practices had been fulfilled.
  1. the sacrificial system;
  2. the Priesthood
  3. the Passover
  4. circumcision
- c. however, other practices of the Old Testament **are to be obeyed**, even in the days of the New Testament
  1. it all depends on whether the teaching of the New Testament requires a continuation of Old Testament laws
  2. examples of Old Testament requirements that are still to be obeyed in the New Testament:

a. The Ten Commandments

1. **Matthew 5:17-18** – “**Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them.** I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished.”
2. **Matthew 19:17** – “Why do you ask me about what is good?” Jesus replied. “There is only One who is good. **If you want to enter life, obey the commandments.**”

b. the tithe

## B. Biblical Perspectives

### 1. Regarding **tithing in the Old Testament**

- a. for those dispensationalists who say that, as Christians in the “age of grace”, we are not to obey any laws that were given during the “age of law”:
- b. we must realize that the practice of tithing was given **BEFORE** the giving of the law to Moses on Mount Sinai in the book of Exodus
  1. **Abraham** gave a tithe to the priest Melchizedek:  
**Genesis 14:18-20** – “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was Priest of God Most High, and he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven and earth. And blessed be God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” **Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.**”
  2. likewise, when **Jacob** had a vision of heaven, he gave God a tithe.  
**Genesis 28:20-22** – “Then Jacob made a vow, saying, “If God will be with me and will watch over me on this journey I am taking and will give me food to eat and clothes to wear so that I return safely to my father's house, then the LORD will be my God and this stone that I have set up as a pillar will be God's house, **and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth.**”
  - 3 **Warren Wiersbe** – “**Jacob practiced tithing.** He realized that his dedication to God meant nothing unless his material goods were under God’s control as well. **Abraham practiced tithing and in both cases the law had not yet been given.** Those who say that the tithe is not part of the Mosaic Law, not for this age of grace, **miss the fact that the early saints practiced tithing.**”

## 2. Regarding **tithing in the New Testament**

- a. for those dispensationalists that say that tithing is not taught in the New Testament, let us **look at the perspective of Jesus** regarding tithing:
  1. **Luke 11:42** - "Woe to you Pharisees, because **you give God a tenth of your mint**, rue and all other kinds of garden herbs, but you neglect justice and the love of God. **You should have practiced the latter (justice) without leaving the former undone.**" (tithe)
    - a. Jesus criticized the religious leaders for being so specific that they "tithed" from their garden
    - b. However, despite their obedience to tithing this way, they overlooked the needs of the poor.
    - c. Jesus says that they should have practiced the latter (taking care of the poor) **WITHOUT NEGLECTING THE FORMER** (tithing).
  2. **Matthew 22:17-21** – "Tell us then, what is your opinion? **Is it right to pay taxes to Caesar or not?"** But Jesus, knowing their evil intent, said, "You hypocrites, why are you trying to trap me? Show me the coin used for paying the tax." They brought him a denarius, and he asked them, "Whose portrait is this? And whose inscription?" "Caesar's," they replied. Then he said to them, "**Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, and to God what is God's.**"
    - a. "Caesar" is given the tax
    - b. God is given the tithe
- b. **let us look at the perspective of the Apostle Paul** regarding tithing
  1. **I Corinthians 9:13**– "Don't you know that **those who work in the Temple get their food from the Temple**, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar?
    - a. the purpose of the tithe in the Old Testament was to take care of those who served at the Temple
    - b. the tithe allowed the Priests and Levites to serve and not have to raise money to live
    - c. it seems obvious to me that Paul, as a Jew, was referring to the use of the tithe to provide for those in ministry.
  2. **I Corinthians 16:1-2** – "Now about the collection for God's people: Do what I told the Galatian churches to do. **On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income**, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."
    - a. it is interesting to see some "similarities" between **I Corinthians 16:2** and **Malachi 3:10**
      1. **Malachi 3:10** refers to the **tithe**; **I Corinthians 16:2** refers to "**set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income,**"

2. **Malachi 3:10** refers to the **storehouse**; or the Hebrew word for a treasury; **I Corinthians 16:2** refers to a “**sum of money**” which is the Greek word for treasury
- b. WHAT ELSE WOULD PAUL BE REFERRING TO THAN TITHING WHEN HE SAYS IN **I Corinthians 16:2** - “each one of you should **set aside a sum of money in keeping with his income**”?

### III. Question Three – WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF THE TITHE?

#### A. The Purpose Of The Tithe In The Old Testament

1. God makes it very clear why the Israelites were called to tithe  
**Vs 10a – “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.”**
  - a. The Jews were to bring their tithes to the “storehouse”
    1. the storehouse was an actual building
    2. it was seen as a depository or treasury
  - b. they were to bring their tithes to the storehouse “so that there would be food in my house.”
    1. the “food” that was to be brought was food for those who ministered full-time at the Temple
    2. **Numbers 18:21 – “I give to the Levites all the tithes in Israel as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving at the Tent of Meeting.”**
2. how else would those who served full-time at the Temple have time to raise money in addition to the time that they spent at the Temple?

#### B. The Purpose Of The Tithe In The New Testament

1. **LIKEWISE** there is the **same need** for those who work full-time in the gospel ministry during the time of the New Testament.
  - a. Paul was very clear about those who served Jesus Christ as a vocation that they were to be taken care of by the church.
    1. **I Corinthians 9:14 – “In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.”**
    2. **I Timothy 5:17-18 – “The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, “Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,” and “the worker deserves his wages.”**
  - b. it seems to me that the New Testament practice of taking care of Pastors parallels the Old Testament practice of the tithe to take care of the Priests.
2. Look around you; how else could a ministry like our church function without financial support?

- a. our overall budget for the church is about 1.4 million dollars; the total amount given is almost 2 million dollars, which includes Faith Promise and building fund giving!
- b. each of our full-time staff have the same financial needs that you do
- c. our church has to pay the light and water bill just like you do in your home; it's just bigger.

3. **TITHING IS GOD'S METHOD FOR PROVIDING FOR A CHURCH!!**

- 1. it **WAS His method in the Old Testament**
- 2. it **IS His method in the New Testament**

**IV. Question Four – DO I HAVE TO TITHE ONLY TO THE MINISTRY OF MY LOCAL CHURCH?**

**A. The Reason To Tithe To The Temple**

- 1. There was **ONE LOCATION** where the Jews were to bring their tithes
  - a. their tithes were to support the Priests and Levites that worked **AT THE TEMPLE**
  - b. the Scripture does not mention any other storehouse
- 2. **WHERE ELSE** would the Jew take his tithe than **THE STOREHOUSE** in Jerusalem?

**B. The Reason To Tithe To The Local Church**

- 1. It is my opinion that the “parallel” to the storehouse In the Old Testament is the local church, **NOT** the larger body of Christ around the world
  - a. the storehouse was for the Temple at Jerusalem
  - b. the storehouse is the local church
    - 1. what if every member of a local church “spread out” their tithes to the greater body of Christ?
    - 2. the impact of the tithe would not be very effective
      - a. the principle of the tithe is that **BY USING EVERYONE'S TITHE**, the local ministry can be taken care of
      - b. if the tithes of the people are parceled out to ministries other than the local church, the needs and ministry of the local church will not be met.
- 2. notice the difference between “tithes and offerings”
  - a. it is my belief that the tithe should be given to the local church
  - b. while the offerings (an amount given in addition to the tithe) can be given outside of the local church.
  - c. let me say however, that all tithes and offerings should be given to support the gospel ministry
    - 1. not the United Way
    - 2. not the American Cancer Society
    - 3. not the Boy Scouts

**V. The Fifth Question – CAN I “WORK MY WAY UP” TO GIVE A TENTH?**

**A. We Are Not To Give God A Portion Of The Tithe Until We Are “Able To.”**

**Vs. 10** – “**Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse**, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the LORD Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.

1. nowhere in Scripture does God allow the giver to “ramp up to 10%”
2. all God says is to give a tithe or a tenth
3. why would we need faith to give 1/10th, 2/10ths, or 6/10<sup>th</sup> ?

**B. We Are To Give A Tenth**

1. a tithe is a tenth
2. giving a tenth of your income will challenge a lot of people because very, very few believers actually tithe
  - a. only **6 – 9 %** of all believers actually tithe
  - b. some **4 out of 5** Americans donate “some money” to non-profit organizations.
    1. The average amount that Americans give per year is about **\$1500.00**
    2. that would suggest that the typical American gives away about **3%** of his income
    3. Almost **50%** of all church goers do not give anything to the church
    4. and yet, **91%** of Americans say that they are making more money than they ever have in their life!
3. so, for most Americans who do not tithe, to begin to tithe will be a huge financial challenge

**VI. Question Six – WHAT IF I CAN’T AFFORD TO TITHE?**

**A. NO ONE CAN AFFORD TO TITHE!**

1. I am always amazed at people that say that cannot “afford” to tithe
  - a. I want to remind you that the people of God in the days of Malachi were actually experiencing a depression
    1. the book of Malachi is at the end of the entire Old Testament
    2. at the end of the book of Malachi, God became silent and “spoke” to no one for some 400 years!
      - a. this is because the Israelites had become disobedient to God
      - b. as a result, the people of God were not blessed by God and were in deep poverty
  - b. **IT WAS AT THIS EXACT TIME THAT GOD CALLED THEM TO TITHE!**
    1. they were financially destitute
    2. their crops were poor
    3. they did not know where their next meal would come from
  - c. **OBVIOUSLY, THESE JEWS “COULD NOT AFFORD TO TITHE!”**
2. let me ask you, how hard is it for ANYONE to tithe?
  - a. Donald Trump
    1. Donald Trump’s income last year was approximately 50 million dollars
    2. thus, Donald Trump’s tithe would have been 5 million dollars

- b. Bill Gates
    - 1. Bill Gates, after receiving his dividends and stocks from Microsoft, made almost 150 million dollars last year
    - 2. thus, Bill Gates' tithe would have been 15 million dollars
  - 3. tithing is a challenge for everyone, especially those who have never practiced tithing
    - a. I married a BAPTIST and my wife and I have always tithed
    - b. However, for those who have never tithed, it can be very scary to start to tithe.
- B. Those Who Cannot Afford To Tithe Are To Test God**
- Vs 10** – “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. **Test me in this,**” says the **LORD Almighty**, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.”
- 1. for those who have never tithed: for those who cannot “afford “ to tithe, God has a challenge for you
  - 2. God says to **“test me in this”**
    - a. in other words, God is telling those of you who are broke, those who have young children who are always sick, those who have no job – **TEST ME BY STARTING TO TITHE!**
    - b. **GOD SAYS, START TO TITHE AND I WILL SHOW YOU MY POWER!**
      - 1. God says that He will take care of you
      - 2. **BUT, GOD SAYS THAT HE WILL TAKE CARE OF YOU AFTER YOU START TITHING!**
        - a. God says that, after you start tithing, He will “throw open the flood gates of heaven” to bless you
        - b. and God is not talking about “spiritual blessings”
          - 1. to those who were farmers, God said that he would prevent physical pests from harming your physical crops
          - 2. **God is talking here about REAL, PHYSICAL MONEY!**
      - c. Notice that God said in **Malachi 3:10** that he would **“open the windows of heaven”** – another place where this term is used is in **Genesis 7:11**, where God **“opened the windows of heaven”** to cause a world wide flood!
  - 3. I don't know what your “stories of tithing” are, but I have seen God “open the floodgates of heaven” in the life of my family
    - a. scholarships for college;
    - b. grandmother's estate
    - c. my roof

- d. man I met with in K
  - 1. he had never tithed
  - 2. he continually had sick kids who began to get better after he began to tithe
  - 3. I began to disciple him
  - 4. we could not meet one day, but he wanted to bring his tithe check by the church

## VII. Question Seven – HOW DOES GOD VIEW THOSE WHO DO NOT TITHE?

### A. God Sees You As A Thief

**Vs. 8 – "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. "But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' "In tithes and offerings."**

- 1. Please know that **I** did not call you a thief
- 2. **No, God calls you a thief**
  - a. Why does God call a non-tither a thief?
  - b. because, of the 100% of money that you have, God wants 10% of that money to fund His church
    - 1. that 10% is His money, not yours
    - 2. please realize that God is allowing you to live off of 90% of your money
      - a. out of one dollar, God asks for a dime
      - b. how can we argue with the fairness in that, because God has blessed us with all that we have anyway?
      - c. or, do some of us have the same view of Jimmy Stewart in the movie "Shenandoah"
        - 1. Jimmy Stewart played the part of a farmer during the Civil War
        - 2. as he sat down to a meal, here was his prayer: **"Lord we planted this seed, we watered the plants, we picked the food and we cooked it. We did it all ourselves. We worked dog bone hard for this, but we thank you just the same, Amen. "**

### B. God Is Withholding His Blessings

**Vs. 9 – "You are under a curse--the whole nation of you--because you are robbing me."**

- 1. God clearly tells us, for those who are not tithing, His hand is holding the window of blessings closed.
- 2. as a result, not only are you not being blessed, you are struggling because of your lack of tithing
- 3. you have unexplainable problems, costs, and struggles
  - a. the kids stay sick
  - b. you have constant struggles
  - c. you cannot get ahead
  - d. T.

**Conclusion:**

1. I fully understand that Christians have two views of tithing:
  - a. One – that the church of Jesus Christ is under no obligation to tithe
  - b. Two – that, just as God used the tithe to take care of the needs of those who served the Lord in the Old Testament, the practice of tithing continues in the New Testament.
2. I would say to all of us:
  - a. If you believe, based on your study of the Word of God, that Christians are not called to tithe, then I respect your position
  - b. However, if you believe that God does call us to tithe, I challenge you to test God and see if He will not bless you as you tithe.
    1. ask anyone who has ever tithed and they will tell you countless stories of His blessings
    2. Don't you want to see God show His blessed hand upon you so that He uses you to bless others?
    3. **Pastor Jason Heffner** – Tithing lays the axe to the root of the Money Tree. **Tithing is the Christian's way of stepping out of this currency-controlled mindset and subjecting oneself instead to the dominion of God.** What we are talking about here is a revolution, not an adjustment. We are not talking about working in a percentage for God and then still doggedly pursuing wealth; rather, we are talking about recognizing that **100% of our wealth belongs to God and then giving 10% to God to symbolize and enact that truth.** The 90% which remains still belongs to God. One faithful tither said this, "It is not how much of my money I give to God, but how much of God's money I keep for myself." **Tithing is an invitation to a whole new way of life.**