

WHAT WE OWE AND HOW TO PAY IT

BY A LAYMAN

In all former editions of this pamphlet, there were several pages of directions as to how to tithe, which are now published in "How to Tithe and Why." Also about 8 pages of testimonials similar to those which now appear in "Does Tithing Pay?"

"Why should I devote a certain definite proportion of my income to God and His work in the world?"

The first and very much the most important reason is, because it is God's law, or principle, if you prefer the word, having its origin in the mind and will of God; and the second, because you thereby promote your spiritual and temporal interests. In short, it pays. Pays in the highest and best sense of the word. Pays in spiritual blessings, pays in temporal prosperity, pays in peace of mind in having a question of duty settled. Transfers from you to your Heavenly Father the responsibility of how much it shall be; permits Him to decide whether it shall be little or much as He prospers you.

"I am afraid I cannot afford it."

It is natural that you should name this objection first, as it is the chief obstacle with nearly all Christians. But you can. If you will try it you will keep it up, because you will find that you cannot afford not to do it. I mean in dollars and cents. Your objection is from the temporal standpoint and so is the reply. Did you ever try it? Ever know a business man, professional man, farmer, or worker for wages who had tried it and was not more than satisfied with the results? Thousands, tens of thousands of laymen in the United States and other countries are doing it and have been for years. If there are exceptions they ought to be known.

"Is it not wrong to appeal to my love of gain in this matter?"

Do you not pray for God's blessing on your temporal affairs? Do you mean what you say when you do? Do you not daily ask for the promised wisdom that you may be guided by it in all your duties? Do you keep your business, or daily labor, or your profession separate from your religion? Don't you work for gain? Gain, that you may care for

those you love and those who are dependent upon you? Gain, that you may give them every advantage within your power? Gain, that you may do much more than this: that you may have to give and do for others; that you may the more liberally aid and support those who give themselves to charitable, benevolent and Christian work; that you may give more for the spread of Christ's Kingdom in the earth? Is it wrong to pray for temporal prosperity with these objects in view?

"But are there no higher motives?"

There may be, but it is the temporal side of the question we are talking about—the practical side to you and me. You and I are laymen, not ministers; we don't preach; we are not missionaries. We may have to work hard and constantly to make ends meet, and care for our households and loved ones. Yet we owe something to others, do we not? Something to God, in practical recognition of the fact that to Him directly or indirectly we owe all we have or possibly can have.

"But we cannot pay what we owe to God personally."

True; but you can pay it through His agents, by which is meant your pastor, your church officials, your missionaries, in short, through every man or institution devoted to building up Christ's Kingdom and depending for support upon the contributions of Christians and benevolent people.

"How much do we owe?"

God says one-tenth, the tithe. Surely He should know.

"Is this all we owe? Do we not owe everything to Him?"

Certainly, inasmuch as everything really belongs to Him. There is only so much money, so much property in the world. That which you now call yours belonged to some one else before it came to you, and it will belong to yet another when you leave it, but while in your possession you are accountable for its use. God does not ask that you pay it all back at once, or that you transfer it to others, but He does ask and remember **for your sake**, and for **your own good**, for some constant, practical recognition of His ownership and your stewardship. Whether you accept the fact or not, you are His steward for the entire amount, and you, and not another, must render an account for all He lends you.

"But did not our Savior tell the rich young man to sell all he had and give to the poor?"

Yes; and God told Abraham to offer up his son Isaac as a burnt offering, but He did not let him do it. Suppose the young man had started in good faith to obey this command. Do you think the Savior would have permitted him to do it? Would He not have called him back

and told him to regard his "great possessions" as talents to be used and accounted for to God, the real owner?

"Was not tithe paying a Mosaic and Jewish ritual law only, and hence abolished by Christ?"

No; no more than the law of the Sabbath. Abraham paid tithes hundreds of years before Moses was born. So did Jacob. So, it is fair to suppose, did all the patriarchs. So did the Phœnicians, the Egyptians, the Chaldeans and, in fact, all the nations and tribes of antiquity to their gods thousands of years before the Jews had an existence. No fact in ancient history is better established than this. In giving the law to Moses the first mention of the tithe is the simple statement, "The tithe is the Lord's." Not shall be, but **is**, as it always had been, and it was at least twenty years after this before God directed that the Levites, his ministers, should be supported from it. It was still longer before the tithes mentioned in Deuteronomy xiv., 22-29, were instituted. These were clearly national and ritual, and expired with the Jewish economy, but the law of the "Tithe Terumoth," God's Tithe, did not expire and never will.

"Did Christ commend the law of tithing?"

Emphatically, yes. He said to the Pharisees, referring to Judgment, Mercy and Faith: "These ought ye to have done and not (referring to tithing) leave the other undone." Can you find in His teachings any stronger language than this regarding the observance of the law of the Sabbath? Can you find any so strong?

"Is there any reason why our Savior did not more strongly commend the law of the Sabbath as well as the law of the Tithe?"

So far as the records show, He never spoke of the Sabbath or the Tithe, except to the Pharisees and other Jews, who did not need teaching on either subject, except in the line of reproof for their observance of the form rather than the spirit of both laws.

"Do you mean to say that I should expect greater temporal prosperity if I scrupulously devote one-tenth of my income to the upbuilding and spread of Christ's Kingdom in the earth and that the remaining nine-tenths will go further in the support of those dependent on me than if I should try to keep all for my own use?"

Yes. That is a plain question in plain English, and I mean just that.

"Can you explain the reason?"

No; or at least not fully, and there are many more of God's laws which no one can explain. Gravitation, for instance, or how vege-

tation grows, or how flowers are colored, or, to come nearer to the subject, I cannot explain why men and animals can do more and better work in one or five years working six days in the week and resting, doing nothing so far as work is concerned, every seventh day.

"Do not we and they need the rest?"

Certainly, but just now we are dealing with facts, not theories and reasons, and the facts are that it pays in temporal prosperity to observe the law of the Tithe, just as it does to observe the law of the Sabbath.

Can you explain why we need the seventh of time for rest? Why not the tenth or the sixth?

The seventh of time and the tenth of income, or "increase" as the Bible has it, belong to God in a special sense, and while we can work seven days in the week and keep it up for years, and we can keep tenths of all we make, we are poorer for it morally, physically and financially, all the same.

"Are there not strictly business reasons that will at least partially account for the increased temporal prosperity of those who tithe their income?"

Yes. And yet it is hard to separate common sense and strict business matters and principles from God's laws; in fact, it cannot be done.

"Whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." Tithing the income leads to system—is, in fact, system itself—and the harvest or reward of system in business, or labor, or farming, or professional life, is prosperity.

Tithing our income is a practical recognition of God's real ownership of our substance, and His blessing naturally follows such recognition. It is a practical acknowledgment also of the claims of Christ and humanity upon us, and human nature is swift to respond to such evidence of sincerity by hearty words of encouragement and helping hands. But these are results, not causes.

"Are there not other and deeper business reasons than these?"

Yes. You believe a thing is right. In other words, you believe it to be your duty and have faith in it. By doing the thing itself you step into the line of your faith and duty, and you are at once and consciously a stronger, better and more self-reliant man. Your mind and heart broaden. Instead of receiving, you give favors, and you begin to realize the wealth of meaning in the Savior's words, "It is more blessed to give than to receive."

"Do not the promises of rewards in the Bible for the payment of the tenth of income back to God refer solely to spiritual blessings?"

No. They refer very largely—I am tempted to say almost wholly—to temporal blessings. The third chapter of Malachi is perhaps the

plainest in the Bible on this subject. Read it carefully and see if you can torture its meaning into promises of spiritual blessings only.

"You claim that the payment to God of one-tenth of our income always results in increased temporal and spiritual blessings. Suppose I concede the spiritual; are there no exceptions so far as temporal blessings are concerned?"

I do not believe there are any exceptions worthy of the name. I submit the following facts as evidence, which you would doubtless accept as conclusive on any other subject:

Since 1876, copies of this and similar pamphlets on the same subject have been circulated among many thousands of ministers and millions of laymen. In all were printed the following statement and question:

"My belief is that God blesses in temporal as well as in spiritual things those who honor Him by setting apart a stated portion of their income to His service. I have never known an exception. Have you?"

I now ask the same question of you. It is more than probable that among your acquaintances are some who make this the rule of their lives and that you know how their prosperity compares with that of other Christians in the same circumstances who have no such rule.

"Am I to infer that I may hope and expect to get rich if I practice this system?"

Emphatically, no. All that is claimed is that you will be more prosperous in your temporal affairs than if you do not. Pay the tenth precisely for the same reason that you observe the Sabbath, i. e., because it is God's law. You do not keep the Sabbath to get rich or to make money, neither should you pay the tenth for that purpose, yet you know you are better off in your temporal affairs for keeping the Sabbath, and practically all who have ever tried it are uniform in their testimony that paying the Tithe brings God's blessings upon their temporal affairs; in short, they have found by experience that He keeps His promises.

But remember that paying the Tithe will not alter natural conditions. It will not make rich land out of poor; it will not bring city trade to a village; it will not produce quarrels or bring sickness to a community, thereby enriching such lawyers and physicians as have adopted the rule. It will not take the place of brains or ordinary common sense. Many other conditions might be mentioned which it will not change, because it has no connection with them. What I thoroughly believe is that you will be more prosperous if you follow this rule than if you do not; but be careful not to judge a whole life by a single year, nor to set up false standards of prosperity.

"Should I ever borrow from my tithe fund for personal or family use?"

I very strongly advise against it. Many instances have been reported of this kind, and invariably with bad results as regards temporal prosperity. Your faith may often be tried in this direction, but you can and should withstand the temptation. A somewhat parallel case would be to suppose that you had borrowed money from a banker, and, after paying the interest, should go to him and ask to borrow the interest back again. Remember, after you have put aside or agreed to pay the tenth, it is no longer yours. You are simply an agent for its wise bestowal.

"Is there not rather too much of 'business' in these arguments?"

You and I being laymen, our religion and our business are inseparably connected. We cannot separate them if we would. Our time is fully occupied with our business, and hence we must depend largely upon others to do our share of religious work for us. God has given others special talents for this work which He has denied to us. They can do it far better than we can. They devote their lives to it, and we should support them. If we do this loyally and to the extent of our ability and duty we have a personal share in the results of their labor. They are our partners in the Master's work. The books of final account are correctly kept, and we will receive due credit for all we do, whether personally or by proxy. Besides, the Bible is full of "business." It contains the finest and most practical business maxims and directions ever written, and they are meant for practical use by practical men.

"Should I ever give or pay more than the one-tenth?"

Yes, when you can afford to do it without endangering your ability to produce a reasonable income. But "give" is not the right word to use until the tenth, God's Tithe, has been paid. "Be just before you are generous." In other words, pay what you owe before "giving" anything. Giving or making free-will offerings cannot justly commence until the tenth has been paid.

"Suppose I give until I feel it?"

Possibly you have inherited or acquired a "close" disposition and would "feel" the giving of a nickel or a dime when you ought to give a dollar; or you might "feel" the giving of a dollar when you ought to give ten. Or, on the other hand, you may have a naturally generous nature and, in order to "feel" it, would have to give, say, ten dollars when one, or two, or five would be nearer right. Feeling is not a safe guide. God's law of paying the tithe is a safe guide and it pays, literally and in every sense, to obey it.

“What are the usual results of paying the tenth?”

I have never known, nor heard of anyone who did not give more than the tenth after practicing tithing for a year or two. Have you? Tithers call all beyond the tenth “Free Will Offerings.” But talk of giving more than the tenth by or to those who do not believe in and practice tithing, is like trying to solve problems in higher mathematics by people who have not learned and do not believe in the multiplication table. The multiplication table occupies about the same relation to mathematics that tithing does to stewardship.

“What would be the result were all Christians to devote one-tenth of their income to God?”

The results would be in two directions: First, upon Christians themselves. Second, upon the nonchristion world.

We should always remember that the law of tithing, like all of God's laws, was not instituted for His benefit nor primarily for the benefit of those to whom we give, but for our own benefit. In other words, to make us better and happier first, and then enable us by example, influence and money to make other people better and happier.

It is absolutely certain that rendering unto God the things that are God's, i. e., paying to Him the tenth of income, results in both spiritual and temporal benefits to those who do it.

As to the results upon the world, you, my intelligent reader, are as competent to investigate and form an opinion as anyone.

Take just one department of Christ's work as an illustration. Never in the history of the church until within the last twenty-five years has the supply of men and women willing to go as missionaries equaled the demand. For ten or fifteen years past thousands of mentally and physically well equipped and thoroughly consecrated young men and women have offered themselves as missionaries but there was no money to send them. If all Christians gave the tenth of income to the Master's work, not only could these missionaries have been sent out, but also the other thousands who would offer themselves if there was any hope of being accepted. If this could be done, how long would it be until Christ's Gospel would penetrate, permeate and transform not only the entire pagan and heathen world, but our own land also? How long would it be until the millennium?

“What is the relation between Tithing and Stewardship?”

Dr. and Mrs. A. T. Robinson of Lansing, Mich., are among the most successful tithing evangelists I have ever known. I cannot answer your question better than by copying the following extract from his letter in reply to mine asking for a synopsis of their methods and teaching. He writes:

"Our work has certain characteristics. (1) In the first place, we stick to tithing and let stewardship alone. In my judgment we should distinguish more sharply between these two than we usually do. Stewardship is a New Testament word, a divine word, a fine word, and we cannot get along without it. It presents a goal, an ideal. Hold it up and the life will certainly gravitate toward it, for the life swings to the look always. It is essentially a New Testament doctrine taught by men and to men filled with the Holy Ghost and to folks whose ancestors had tithed for over a thousand years.

"God is the God of things as they are. He never started in on a campaign of stewardship, asking that they hold all they had as in trust for him. God met them on the level on which they lived and asked for one tenth as their recognition of his overlordship and sovereign rights in the case.

"Tithing is the first step toward the goal of stewardship. Better take the first step first and one step at a time. That is God's method. Tithing is the **alphabet of stewardship**. We do not start a child in Kant's 'Critique' when learning to read, but at the alphabet. In music we start them in at the staff and scales, not at one of Beethoven's sonatas. Tithing is a short cut to stewardship, and if you want stewardship, get your people to tithe, for the peculiar thing about this divine method is that people no sooner begin to tithe than they want to do more, and are now ready for the second lesson in stewardship. For tithing is stewardship so far as it goes. It is the practical, the very real acknowledgment that another owns the plantation. After that the way is easy. The undeveloped soul can understand the tithe for it is essentially a reasonable proposition. For this reason you can both teach it and expect people to come across with it."

"Adventures in Tithing, 1919-20, No. 2" is a closely printed pamphlet of 32 pages, made up of "Tithing by Individuals" and "Answers to Questions." The last is especially valuable to beginners.

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