

The Rock: 08-14-2022

A year with the master

Title: Biblical tithing

Scripture: Luke 21:1-4, 1 Corinthians
15:58-16:4

(Black bible Pg. 827, 905 ESV)

Theme:

The question we are going to answer today is: Why the tithe is still our duty -in faith and obedience. Being under grace and not the Law doesn't free us from the requirements of God's eternal commands.

Introduction:

Today, I get to tackle the topic no pastor seems to like to tackle on a Sunday morning. Doing so not because we are "doing poorly" in our finances, but rather because it is a Biblical command which comes with a blessing and promise.

There are very few pastors whom I have run into who even like to think about preaching in this, the biblical tithe.

We can tackle a whole bunch of topics which really are externals; How we engage the community, how we are to live in a

culture which is anti-church, gender issues, etc...

All are outside and deal with "the other" and not us personally.

It was 20-25 plus years ago -when I had one of my worst desert times in my walk with Christ. I want to share this for two reasons:

- 1- It's personal, and when it comes to money, I find that is the better route to go.
- 2- I hope that out of my personal, prideful stupidity, I can steer others away from the same mistake.

I had been trying for about 5-6 years to find where God wanted me to be in full-time ministry. For three years, I had been "ready", and willing to step into full time pastoring.

The problem was, nothing opened up for us. Nothing! Year after year, here I sat and nothing. I know now, all these years later, it was God's grace, goodness and mercy which kept me here.

I was a lot of things then, but ready for full time ministry was not one of them.

So, when nothing happened, I got mad, and then madder, until finally I stepped away from everything. After all, if God wasn't

going to give me what I wanted, and what He called me to, in my timing, I wasn't going to do anything.

A big indicator that I was far from ready to take a pulpit somewhere. But that is another sermon. It is also God's goodness in that He was giving me, and He does this for all of us, He was giving me what I genuinely needed, not what I thought I needed.

Remember, God always answers the prayers of those who genuinely seek Him. It is just not the way we may like or want, all the time. This is a key to remember.

So, I stopped tithing too for a couple of years. Not my most brilliant idea, but anyway. I was going to show God just how I felt. Again, not a course of action I recommend. That's the point.

Those two years were a couple of my highest earning years to that point, and yet they turned out to be some of the worst years financially that we ever experienced.

I share this because when it comes to tithing, we tend to dig in our heels and think: "My money, I've earned it, how dare you tell me it's not actually mine."

Well, I'm not. I'm saying to us all, me included that the Bible actually says

that, and as importantly (This is the lesson I learned first-hand), God does far more with what is left after our faithful obedient giving, than I ever did when I kept it all.

The Story:

So, lesson number one as we look to Luke this morning:

Number 1 -It is not about the money; it is about the heart.

God wants to bless, He wants to pour out and provide, but our hearts need to be right before Him. And a prime indicator is how we show our trust in Him through how we handle our finances.

I want us to look at the two places from our readings this morning. Luke and then in Paul's letter to Corinth, in order to unpack this truth principle.

So, I ask that you afford me the opportunity to walk us through the Scriptures. As we look at this incident in the life of Jesus that Luke records for us, it's good to note that this took place at the end of Jesus' life.

At best He had three or four days left on earth, and he chose to teach on a Kingdom value (tithing) and then the future glory that awaits us.

-Luke 21:1-4 (ESV)

"Jesus looked up and saw the rich putting their gifts into the offering box, and he saw a poor widow put in two small copper coins. And he said, "Truly, I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all of them. For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty put in all she had to live on."

This is one of the most beautiful and painful texts to read, if we understand what is happening. Jesus must have purposefully put himself by the court of the women in the temple, otherwise he would not have seen this poor widow.

Another personal touch that we find in the Bible. Luke captures the humanity of Jesus as He stops "ministry" to rest and watch over the goings on with the women in Temple. Not a normal thing actually, but we see His tender concern here.

The Law and the Prophets give us the guide for giving as well as the principle of God's blessing:

-Leviticus 27:30-32 (ESV)

"Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the trees, is the Lord's; it is holy to the Lord. If a man wishes to redeem some of his tithe, he shall add a fifth to it.

And every tithe of herds and flocks, every tenth animal of all that pass under the herdsman's staff, shall be holy to the Lord."

-Deuteronomy 16:9-12 (ESV)

"You shall count seven weeks. Begin to count the seven weeks from the time the sickle is first put to the standing grain. Then you shall keep the Feast of Weeks to the Lord your God with the tribute of a freewill offering from your hand, which you shall give as the Lord your God blesses you. And you shall rejoice before the Lord your God, you and your son and your daughter, your male servant and your female servant, the Levite who is within your towns, the sojourner, the fatherless, and the widow who are among you, at the place that the Lord your God will choose, to make his name dwell there. You shall remember that you were a slave in Egypt; and you shall be careful to observe these statutes."

-Malachi 3:10 (ESV)

"Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. And thereby put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven for you and pour down for you a blessing until there is no more need."

It is a heart matter.

Both the rich and the poor understood the Law and the provisions within it to care for the widow, the orphan, and the poor among us.

The beauty and the pain of this story was the ease at which the rich gave, and it seems they gave just as they should (10%). Out of their abundance, and nothing more.

But here, here is this old lady, a widow who gives all she has (100%) of here money.

Now, before we move on to Paul, let's look at number two:

Number 2- Nowhere did Jesus say that one was right and the other was wrong. Simply that the widow actually put in "more than all of them."

In other words, she gave out of her need, and not her surplus. This is not to look down at anyone who gives out of their abundance, for that too is celebrated.

Simply put: "What the wealthy here gave was impressive and acceptable, but what she gave hurt. Sacrifice of any kind, including giving of our finances requires trust in God's provision and blessing.

Again, it's not about the money, and yet it is. It's about the money, because it's about the heart. WHY you give is more important actually than WHAT you give.

Because it is an outward sign of an inward trust. How is our heart postured before the Lord? I firmly believe, because I tested this remember. Based on my own story it comes down to this:

Who is the object of my affection? Who owns my heart? It is clear that for this unnamed widow, we see that her trust was placed in God and His ability to care for her and her needs.

Looking at how Paul taught through this as a continuing principle for the Church right up to today. Keeping in your mind that both Jesus and Paul had the Old Testament as their worldview.

-1 Corinthians 15:58 - 16:4 (ESV)

"Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that in the Lord your labor is not in vain. Now concerning the collection for the saints: as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no

collecting when I come. And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem. If it seems advisable that I should go also, they will accompany me."

Paul here, makes a direct connection between the "work of ministry", and the giving support of the Church. It's the same principle as taught in the Old Testament, except it is now framed around Jesus and the declaring of the Gospel.

In other words, that you give doesn't change. Just the how and the when.

When we come to any book in the Bible remember that chapter and verses were added later on. So, Paul didn't write this letter with chapter breaks and verses. It was a letter.

That means these verses flowed together as a teaching. It's important to know that here because Paul is encouraging the church to "keep at it."

"Doing the work of the Lord", and not as some after-thought, but as a prime thought, he goes right into teaching on how to tithe. "So that", the work of ministry can continue.

Notice what he says in what he doesn't say. (vs. 2)

-1 Corinthians 16:2 (ESV)

"On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and store it up, as he may prosper, so that there will be no collecting when I come..."

Put something aside "as the Lord prospers you." Your tithe, in other words. Paul doesn't define it as 10% here, even though his world view defines it as such.

No, he goes deeper, because Jesus did as well. He is once again teaching folks here, who are Gentile, and didn't have the same world view, that giving to God is a heart thing, and obedience thing.

This is why I chose Luke 21 to start with. Remember that we live in His faith (Jesus), because we are clothed in His righteousness. We learned that last week.

-Habakkuk 2:4b (ESV)

"...but the righteous shall live by his faith."

It is hard to demand of someone who has never tithed this 10% piece, as if that is the beginning and the end. It's not. Paul knew he was dealing with a culture of new believers who, under grace, had to start somewhere.

But start giving, one must and it must be from the heart, so here is how you do it.

We must always understand what we are personally responsible for In Christ. Because many misunderstand, "we are no longer under Law but under grace. Romans 6 is so helpful here, specifically 1-4, and I leave that for you to look at.

Just because we are under grace, does not mean then, that we are free to do whatever we want, as though we are outside of the Law.

We don't pick and choose. Why? Because we are bound to Christ as the fulfillment of all the Law and the prophets. Again Romans 6:11-14

This is why it is so important to know our Bibles, to know God's story and His authority found there. Don't take my word for this, please. Look to see if what I'm saying is there.

Because this topic is about money, it always becomes a delicate thing. Let's be honest, we are good at giving to God in matters of time, talents (touch on kid's church need here, and BBQ) and our energy.

Yet, when we hit this subject, we tend to sit back in our seats and say, "wait a

minute, that's my checkbook you're talking about." Yup, but mine too.

"Oh, I'm not bound to that!" Would we find ourselves saying that same thing when it came to murder, adultery, violation of the "sabbath and vacations" and treating our neighbors correctly?

Yet, and lastly, something to really understand:

Number 3-Giving is an act of grace. It is part of our spiritual act of worship and growth.

-2 Corinthians 8:1-7 (ESV)

"We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. For they gave according to their means, as I can testify, and beyond their means, of their own accord, begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints— and this, not as we expected, but they gave themselves first to the Lord and then by the will of God to us. Accordingly, we urged Titus that as he had started, so he should complete among you this act of grace. But as you excel

in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you—see that you excel in this act of grace also.”

Again, just as with his first letter to this church, Paul is calling all members (rich and poor), to give accordingly and to do so with a glad (cheerful) heart.

Just like the wealthy and the widow of Luke 21, all give in accordance with their faith.

So, the Old Testament law, while still valid, (Mathew 5:17-20) has, it seems to me become the base line. If one has never given before, it becomes the target of faith to reach.

If one has been giving forever, it becomes the starting point of faith and not the end game.

Because Paul has never defined the amount, only the manner. Cheerfully led by God, give out of what you have.

Why? Because your giving is an act of grace, and in the. Grand scheme of things, it is actually one of the easiest things to do. Jesus paid it all, and all to Him I owe. In Christ, God's abundant grace has been poured out upon us.

I close with where I began -my failure to really understand why I tithe. I always thought that it was my money, and it is. I earned it, and frankly I wasn't seeing much return on my investment.

Ignorant, foolish, PRIDE!

It's about the heart, and tithing, which I have found as I have grown is a faith-builder. It allows God to keep His covenant promise to bless, because I have kept my covenant promise to give.

The heart question in this whole thing is: Who owns me and my stuff? Well, me, right? Yes and no. It is ours /mine, but who has given it? Our homes, our jobs, our families, our health?

Jesus' brother James helps us with that:

-James 1:17 (ESV)

"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."

Including the goodness of our income.
What an act of grace:

(If you have the time-share this.)

Alfred Edersheim:

"He (Jesus) spake not to her words of encouragement, for she walked by faith, He offered no promise of return, for her reward was in Heaven. She knew not that any had seen it -for the knowledge of eyes turned on her, even His, would have flushed with shame the pure check of her love, and any word, conscience notice, or promise would have marred and turned aside the rising incense or her sacrifice. BUT, to all time it has remained in the Church, like the perfume of Mary's alabaster that filled the house, this deed of self-denying sacrifice."

-Life and times of Jesus the Messiah: Pg.
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