



LDS Gospel Library E-texts

THE LAW OF TITHING

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My subject is tithing. I can scarcely hope to contribute a single new thought to this matter, but I have felt that the importance of it would serve to challenge your interest, and I have hoped that some good might result from a discussion of it. For some things that I may say I acknowledge indebtedness to a little volume which has recently been placed in my hands called, "Dealing Squarely With God."

THE RELATIONSHIP OF MONEY AND PROPERTY TO CHRISTIANITY: "You can usually tell the sincerity of a man's interest in anything by the way he puts his money into it." Indeed it has been said that the measures of a man's Christianity may be determined by the way he gets and spends his money. It is said that Jesus had more to say about money and property, strange as it may seem, than about any other subject. In sixteen of thirty-eight of His parables money and property are made His theme.

MONEY AND MYSELF: After all, "Is not money myself? Money is the medium for which men exchange their abilities, ingenuity and labor. When a man gives his money he is giving himself, and the way a man gives his money is the way he gives himself. Money is myself. I am a laboring man, we will say, and can wield a pick axe and hire myself out for a week at two dollars a day. At the close of the week I get twelve dollars and I put it in my pocket. What is that twelve dollars? It is a week's worth of my muscle put into greenbacks and pocketed. That is, I have got a week's worth of myself in my pocket. "So when a man gives the money that he has earned, he is giving literally of himself. Giving is worship. We are commanded "not to appear before the Lord empty-handed." Not that the Lord needs the gift, but that man needs to give.

TEST OF FAITH IS GIVING: The first principle of religion is recognition of God-faith. The real test of that recognition is giving. By that test we may judge with accuracy the religious attitude of our country. In a recent year, statistics reveal the fact that more money was spent for face powder and cosmetics; more for ice cream, soft drinks and chewing gum; more for cigarettes, respectively, than the total sum expended to support all churches. May that not be a criterion by which we may safely judge the religious attitude, the deep-set religious feeling of the people of the country? Do not the words of Malachi seem pertinent:

"Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings."

SOVEREIGNTY OF GOD: We do not rob God by withholding our gift in the sense that we deprive him of the substance of earth. He always has that substance, never relinquishing it. But we rob him of the satisfaction and the joy that he must feel when his children respond to his mandate and open their hearts in giving and in worship. Someone has said, "God never gives a quit-claim deed, he only grants a leasehold estate, and he who receives the lease must ever return the rental."

BOUGHT WITH A PRICE: Now the Lord has commanded that a rental be returned for all the substance and for all the blessings which he has given to his children. Christ bought us with a price, so we are told in the scripture. Is it to be thought that we are to gain salvation without a price, without giving and paying for it? When we speak of paying in this sense we do not mean that pay which is given as if in barter, but we mean the return of substance which is committed to our stewardship and which we hold in trust for the one who has so blessed us.

PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD: I like to think of the Lord as a partner because the essence of partnership is a sharing of profits. It is however indispensable in a partnership that there shall also be a sharing of the burdens of the enterprise. The honor and the satisfaction that come to one in realization that he lives his life in partnership with God is to me a lofty and exalting thought. One cannot hope to realize the profits from that venture without bearing his portion of the expense -- the giving which is requisite.

PAYMENT OF DUES: The Church generally is probably the only society in the world where a man is not suspended from membership for failure to pay his dues. I think that in substantially every other organized body of men for social or material gain if a man fails to pay his stipulated contribution he is dropped. While the Church does not drop from membership those who fail to pay, I feel very certain that those who fail to pay their stipulated portion automatically drop themselves from the real advantages of Church participation and the blessings that inure from activity within it.

THRIFT HABITS: "Prove me herewith, saith the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open the windows of heaven," speaking to those whom he had admonished to pay their tithes and offerings. What comes from the windows of heaven Both temporal and spiritual blessings. Temporal blessings accrue largely from the cultivation of thrift habits. The payment of tithes of necessity compels an orderly arrangement of affairs. Accounting is indispensable. Budgeting is necessary. Saving follows. All of which are

necessary to financial success.

ECONOMY: It was Victor Hugo who said: "Above all, teach the children to save. Economy is the sure foundation for all virtues." I heard a banker say not long ago that if tithing served no other purpose than to secure an orderly adjustment of one's affairs, a budgeting of the income and expenses, it would be invaluable. I feel sure that he who pays his tithes not only has a better conception of economy, but he is indulging in a practice which will bring him into better thrift habits and enable him to go forward toward financial prosperity.

SPIRITUAL POWER: Observance of tithing brings spiritual power, and after all that to me is the main thing. Religion is more than mere repose or relaxation. It is positive spiritual exercise. It makes for the growth of the soul, it cultivates all of the virtues. So one who is serious about religion will be willing to give to it the things which are vital to himself.

HONESTY: One who is honest with God is apt to be honest with his neighbor and with his employer. The need of honesty is attested everywhere and particularly in our own communities by defalcations, the extent and magnitude of which makes us all blush with shame. I can scarcely conceive of a man who is honest with his God not being honest with his fellowman, and I can well advocate the payment of our tithing in a straightforward, square, honest way as being a safe foundation on which to build those principles of integrity that shall make honest men and women in the community.

NEED OF THE TITHE: The need of the tithe in the prosecution of God's work must be apparent to all of you. There are so many avenues in which sums may be expended to promote the work that I can scarcely take time to mention them. Not long ago I had the privilege of traveling in one of the missions of the Church. I was delighted to observe that in many rural sections which are not in the van of our progress and civilization the Church has caused to be erected inexpensive but beautiful small chapels. I could well conceive the influence that these chapels might exert not only in the furtherance of our religious views, but in their effect on the home life, the community life, the habits and practices of the people. These little chapels were clean and orderly, and I am sure they will bring an inspiration to many hundreds of homeowners to clean up their establishments, to live in an orderly and a more beautiful way. If the Church were endowed with sufficient means these little chapels could be extended throughout the whole land and would bring wonderfully beneficial results.

USE OF TITHING FUNDS: With our temples large sums of money are required. Think of the great work of redemption there performed. Our whole missionary cause is, in large measure, dependent upon the financial support that comes to the Church and also that which comes to those who are called on missions. There is a very definite relation between the finances of our people and the propagation of the Gospel of Christ. There is a very definite relation between missionary work and debt. I propose this constructive principle of the Gospel embraced in the law of tithing as a solution for many of our financial problems, as a foundation upon which men may build to bring themselves in a position to accept the calls that come to them to spread the great truths which are committed to our custody.

ENJOYMENT OF TITHE-PAYING: Every man who pays his tithing should enjoy it. The Gospel of Christ is a gospel of enjoyment. "Man is that he might have joy." When one pays his tithing without enjoyment he is robbed of a part of the blessing. He must learn to give cheerfully, willingly and joyfully, and his gift will be blessed. In order that he may receive more enjoyment he needs to pay more frequently. Why deprive oneself of the joy that comes from this voluntary giving until the end of the year, when by payments throughout the year we may increase and enhance not only the joy of our giving but the practice of it.

MONTHLY PAYMENTS: I have found it to be a very difficult problem in mathematics to pay one-tenth out of one-twelfth. I commend that thought to those who are receiving monthly stipends and who indulge the practice of paying their tithing at the close of the year. I am sure you will find it very difficult indeed to get the tenth out of the twelfth if your tithing remains for payment until the last month. I can heartily recommend to you the payment of voter tithes as your funds come into your hands, not only because it will be easier, but because greater blessings will inure to you.

CONSECRATION: We consecrate our lives in this Church to the advancement of the cause of God. There is no higher evidence of that consecration than this giving which has been enjoined upon us by the Lord. "He who gives himself with his gift feeds three -- himself, his hungering neighbor and me." So the law of tithing is the epitome of the Gospel. It is genuine worship and true recognition of the sovereignty of God. It is real consecration, the giving of the muscle and energy of life to the cause, and it begets the abundant life of love and service for which the Christ came. It is a measurement of true religion. By the extent of its observance every man may determine for himself the vitality of his own faith and love of God. A prophet has said, "the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord." It will be holy unto you, men and women of Israel, if you give it lovingly, joyfully, willingly, to the great cause. God help us so to do. I ask in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.