

## To Give or Not to Give

(Tithing #2)

Fred R. Coulter—December 5, 2015

Greetings, everyone! Welcome to Sabbath services.

We had another terrorist attack. I can't give a sermon every time we have a terrorist attack now. It just shows that God means business. Until people start returning to God, it's only going to increase in difficulties.

- they'll never have enough policemen
- they'll never have enough spies
- they'll never have enough 'data snoopers' to stop it

*Except if they would repent and return to God!*

Let's continue you on here in the book of Malachi. There are a lot of things here in the book of Malachi that are important for us. This also touches on the problems that we have in the world today.

Malachi 1:1: "The burden of the Word of the LORD to Israel by Malachi... [this is the message of God] ...I have loved you,' says the LORD..." (vs 1-2). God says of Israel, 'I have loved you with an everlasting love.' It's important to know who Israel actually is in prophecy. We have a first fulfillment, a second fulfillment and many other things that fit into it that fulfill it.

"... 'But you say, "In what way do You love us?"..." (v 2). By giving them His laws, His commandments, by blessing them, by fulfilling the promise that He gave to Abraham.

God answers and says: "...Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" says the LORD. 'Yet, I loved Jacob. And I hated Esau and made his mountains a desolation, and his inheritance *to be* for the jackals of the wilderness'" (vs 2-3).

It just occurred to me, with all of these things taking place, with the Islamic terrorists, and so forth, do you suppose that there is a direct correlation between God's promises, Israel's obedience to God, and Esau and Ishmael not being so vicious? Instead of coming to correct us personally, God uses human beings; that's why we have this.

Could it be that the more that Israel loves and obeys God, the more peaceful that Esau and Ishmael will be? *God does not raise them up until we sin!* So, that's just something to think about as far as the things that are taking place in the Middle East, all the Syrians, the Arabs, the Turks, Afghanistan, Pakistan and all of the different Islamic nations. It's interesting that it's not just restricted to the men.

Verse 6: "A son honors his father, and a servant his master. If then I *am* a Father, where is My honor? And if I *am* a Master, where is My fear? says the LORD of hosts to you, O priests, who despise My name...."

I was going to show you a video on some of the televangelists, but it's too long and would not really serve a purpose. Today we don't have priests, but we have ministers claiming to represent God. Number one in line for the responsibility as to why we have the difficulties that we have begins with them. You can read that in Jer. 23 and Ezek. 13.

So they answer back, "...And you say, 'In what way do we despise Your name?'.... [God says:] ...You offer defiled bread upon My altar. And you say, 'In what way do we defile You?' In your saying, 'The table of the LORD *is* contemptible'" (vs 6-7).

This is what Protestants have done. 'The Old Testament is done away. The Law is done away.' Then they have these ridiculous things that the televangelists do to get money. Then they spend it all on themselves instead of preaching the Gospel and serving the people. I've pointed out how this one man, he said, 'I'm going to buy a jet. It's going to be \$56-million. Now all you send in your money.' He got his \$56-million. I would not want to be in that plane in the air one day. 'All in the name of the Lord.' Is that not contemptible? *Yes!*

Another way, is it not contemptible to say that the Sabbath has been changed? Now think of this:

- 1<sup>st</sup> commandment is: *you shall not*
- 2<sup>nd</sup> commandment is *you shall not*
- 3<sup>rd</sup> commandment is *you shall not*
- 6<sup>th</sup> commandment is *you shall not*
- 7<sup>th</sup> commandment is *you shall not*
- 8<sup>th</sup> commandment is *you shall not*
- 9<sup>th</sup> commandments *you shall not*
- 10<sup>th</sup> commandment is *you shall not*

Two of them, the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> commandments are different. God doesn't say, 'You shall not forget the Sabbath.' He says, 'You shall **remember** the Sabbath,' which means there's a whole lot more to it, which means you have no choice.

The other one is: 'Honor your father and mother that your days may be long.' Those two commandments have to do with your standing and contact with God. As adults, to learn of God's way

on the Sabbath; As children, you honor your father and mother because you consist half each of father and mother and God created you through them.

Then He talks to them about not being the kind of priests that they need to be, as we covered in Mal. 2.

Malachi 2:17: “You have wearied the LORD with your words. Yet, you say, ‘In what way have we wearied Him?’ When you say, ‘Every evildoer is good in the eyes of the LORD, and He delights in them’; or, ‘Where is the God of judgment?’”

Aren’t those two right? What you might say daggers in the heart of Protestantism. ‘Judge not, lest you be judged. So therefore, we can’t make any judgment on what anybody does.’ The other one is, ‘Sabbath has been changed to Sunday and the Law has been done away.’ So not too much different with the priests.

Now we’re going to find interlocked in chapter three, prophecy and the message from God. Malachi means *messenger*.

Malachi 3:1: “Behold, I will send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, Whom you seek, shall suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant...” This is the New Covenant and the Messenger is Christ.

Where in the New Testament did He suddenly come to the temple? *John 2!* He came up there during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. What did He do? He made a little whip and drove out all the animals, drove out the moneychangers, and spewed their money by turning the tables over, all over the temple area. He said, ‘Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandize.’ That’s exactly what the televangelists do; they merchandize the people for their benefit. When the Church of God did that, God likewise took corrective action.

“...the Messenger of the covenant, in Whom you delight.... [Who was the only One that was said of? *Jesus Christ!*] ...Behold, He comes,’ says the LORD of hosts” (v 1). Isn’t this interesting? This can apply to the first and second coming, but also can apply to those who will be the ministers and messengers of God through the New Testament.

Verse 2: ““But who can endure the day of His coming?...”—second coming and first coming. They couldn’t endure Him so they killed Him.

“...And who shall stand when He appears?... [Do you want to meet God face-to-face?] ...For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap” (v 2). Refiner’s fire is going to get all

of the dross out of the metal, and Fuller’s soap is going to clean everything out.

Verse 3: “And He shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver...” Isn’t that interesting?

- Does He not do that to us today?
- Is not Christ the foundation on which we build?
- What are we to build? *Gold, silver, precious stones or wood, hay and stubble.*

“...And He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness” (v 3). That’s what we are to do, that the Church be the offering to God. How? Through:

- love
- devotion
- faith
- belief
- teaching
- conduct

That’s how it’s to be!

This is a good lesson in how in the Old Testament it is ‘line upon line, here a little, there a little.’ Sometimes it goes back; sometimes it goes forward. Sometimes it is contemporary. Here we find a reference going back:

Verse 4: “Then the offering of Judah and Jerusalem shall be pleasing to the LORD, as in the days of old and as in former years. And I will come near to you for judgment. And I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers...” (vs 4-5). That’s all of the satanic religions that we have in the world.

“...and against the adulterers...” (v 5). Those who mix paganism with the Word of God *spiritually*. You can apply this physically, as well. There’s a physical application and a spiritual application.

“...and against the adulterers, and against those who swear falsely, and against those who extort from the hired laborer’s wages—and *against* those who turn away the widow, the orphan, and the stranger because they did not fear Me,’ says the LORD of hosts, for I *am* the LORD, I change not...” (vs 5-6). It says that Christ is ‘the same yesterday, today, and forever’ (Heb.13:8). This becomes important as we go along.

Verse 7: ““From the days of your fathers, you have gone away from My statutes, and have not kept *them*. Return to Me, and I will return to you,’ says the LORD of hosts....” How do we return to God?

- We repent of our ways!
- We repent of our thoughts.

- We seek the Lord (Isa. 55)!

He tells us we are to repent because ‘My ways,’ God says, ‘are not your ways and My thoughts are not your thoughts.’ Why does He want that? Because He wants us converted so we can be resurrected when Christ returns. God is working within us to develop His character. That’s what it’s all about.

“...But you say, “In what way shall we return?”” (v 7). God wants you to do this: Not only does He want our lives, through baptism, but He has given the Church the responsibility to preach the Gospel and feed the flock.

Read what God thinks about the shepherds who do not shepherd the flock, but take and steal and don’t do what they should (Ezek. 34). How about the people? *The same way!* If the priests bring an evil offering, what do you think the people will bring?

Sidebar: Look at Solomon: he built the temple. God appeared to him twice. As soon as he got it finished, even before he got it finished, he married an Egyptian wife. God said, ‘Don’t go to Egypt.’ First thing he did was go to Egypt. Then what did he do? He was so rich and important, and remember: God promised to give it to him, and it was unconditional. He got it even though he was still sinning, because God deferred the judgment later hoping that he would change.

So, he had 300 wives, 700 concubines. He made altars and little temples for the gods of the wives, wives of all the different nations. What kind of offering do you think they brought after the public saw what the king did? ‘If he worships Molech, that’s okay, I’ll worship Molech. Isn’t he God’s representative?’ *Yes, he is!* What if the priests go along with it? Who is to teach the people what is right?

God says, v 8: “Will a man rob God?....” You can rob God in many different ways:

- by not preaching the Truth
- by not showing the right way
- by not keeping the Sabbath and keeping Sunday
- in tithes and offerings

*If* it would have been right, and the people were giving tithes and offerings, and the king was faithful and the priests were faithful, and the Levites were faithful, then we wouldn’t have anything that is listed here in the book of Malachi of what went wrong. **So, there are many ways to rob God!**

“...Yet, you are robbing Me... [God gives them a starting point] ...But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings!” (v 8).

Just like today. People spend all their money on what they want. Then they have false religions and they’re merchandized to give more money so that the televangelists can have all the wealth. The biggest and most wealthy bank in the world is the Vatican, in a geographical area that cannot be audited. Isn’t that convenient?

Most of this is used to beat up on church members to give tithes and offerings. And they should, but it also puts a responsibility on those who receive it.

- How do you use it?
- Do you preach the Gospel?
- Feed the flock?
- Help the poor?
- What do you do?

Now what happens? *Cause and effect!* How many times have I said the laws of God act like the tide. Automatic! He doesn’t need to do anything.

Verse 9: “You *are* cursed with a curse; for you are robbing Me, even this whole nation.” If you start with what’s close to your heart—your money—and you realize that God has first claim on it because He made the heavens and the earth, created everything on the earth and *gives us* the ability to earn money, *gives us* a system where we are actively participating in it, that’s what God wants. God’s not going to do everything for us. That’s a welfare state! He wants our full participation in everything that we do: spiritually, physically, monetarily.

Verse 10: “Bring all the tithes into the treasure house, so that there may be food in My house. And **prove Me** now with this,” says the LORD of hosts...” So, God says, ‘Okay, I dare you; “...prove Me...”’ It’s about the only place He says for man to test God. It’s mostly the other way around; God tests us.

“...‘to see if I will not surely open the windows of heaven for you, and pour out a blessing for you, until *there is not enough room to receive it*’” (v 10). Think of the inestimable value of the Spirit of God. You can’t buy it; it only comes from God, and God blesses you with it.

Look at it this way: Is the world under a curse because they’ve turned their backs on God? *Of course!* They don’t have the Spirit of God, they don’t keep the laws of God, they don’t keep His commandments. All of it!

Does every blessing have to be in the form of physical return from God? How do you count the blessing of understanding the Truth? **You can’t measure that!** But just like everything else, if we don’t follow through and do the things that God wants, we limit God and we limit ourselves.

Jesus told the goal of everything that His ministry stood for and what He was going to do to those who believe and follow Him right at the beginning.

Matthew 5:48: “Therefore, you shall be perfect...” This could also be translated, *become perfect*, because *perfection is a process*. How?

“...even as your Father Who *is* in heaven is perfect” (v 48). How is that for a goal? *That’s something!*

When we do not love God with all our heart, mind, soul and being—that’s a positive command—when we don’t do the things that please God, then difficulties come.

Malachi 3:11: “And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes...” The greatest devourer is *wasted* money. I’ve also seen this through the years, so this is an absolute truism. I’ve had people tell me this over and over again: ‘When I didn’t tithe and give offerings, I spent all my money on things that were problems.’ So, if you don’t use it the way God wants, what happens? *You get problems! It’s automatic!*

“...**I will rebuke the devourer** for your sakes, and it shall not destroy the fruit of your ground; nor shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field,’ says the LORD of hosts” (v 11).

Everything is dependent on agriculture. The only thing stopping God’s judgment to really begin to destroy the agricultural system here in America is because the Gospel needs to be preached. It’s setting itself up for self-destruction by GMO food.

Sidebar: Putin just announced that Russia is going to be the leading export in non-GMO food. Think of it! Our enemies are going to be blessed **because we’ve left God**, and are changing through GMO the very creation of God to make nourishing food unfit to eat. *Our enemy* is going to produce non-GMO food.

Do you suppose that even with the sins that they have that they will be blessed for following that? They also said, ‘We won’t have any homosexuality either.’ Compare what it is to this nation. Then look at the Christian community of the world are all cursed with a curse. Even the money that they get is going to end up being a curse.

Then look at the Churches of God. Like I said in my letter in November, I hope you really read it, that the very first colony in the United States sent by King James in 1609 *dedicated the whole continent to preaching the Gospel*. It is a truth that the only place that the Gospel is being preached in any power is in the United States of America and out

to the world. There are many ways of doing that now. All of this is necessary.

Remember the Scripture that says: ‘And this Gospel of the Kingdom shall be preached in **all the world** as a witness to **all nations** and then the end will come.’ Where’s that going to come from?

- China?
- Russia?
- Saudi Arabia?
- Turkey?
- Afghanistan?
- Any nation in Africa?
- South America?
- **The United States of America, the only place!**

Today many people won’t believe the Americans because there’s so much sin and so much hypocrisy and things going on. That is true from that point of view and modern Protestantism is right in that category right now. But there are people searching for Truth. You’d be surprised that we’re getting more people now who are saying that they have been searching for years.

I got a letter here recently from a family saying, ‘We’ve been keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days of God for years, and finally came across your website.’ So, we don’t know what God is going to do out there. We don’t know whom God is going to call.

With the problems and difficulties that are coming along, who knows how many people will repent. If there is no one out there telling them *to repent*, then we’re going to be held responsible for it. So, this is where all of these things come and go in a realistic sense. But America is the only place that has the financial base, that has the Bibles, that is of Israel, that is going to bring it to the world. If we fail, and I’m talking we, all the Churches of God. They’re all responsible in it.

(go to the next track)

Malachi 3:12: “And all nations shall call you blessed...” Think about it today. Are we called blessed or cursed? *Cursed!*

“...for you shall be a delightful land,’ says the LORD of hosts. ‘Your words have been all too strong against Me,’ says the LORD...” (vs 12-13).

Think about all the orthodox Christianity, all the things that they say, all the things that they claim: all their holidays are of God. *They are not!* ‘God changed the Sabbath to Sunday.’ *He did not!* ‘God did away with the Holy Days.’ *He did not!* Then, they say everyone who is evil is delightful to God. And any way you want to live, even in

abominable ways, 'Your words have been too strong against me.'

Now it goes even further. Have you heard of the Foundation for the Freedom From Religion? What do they want to do? Get rid of every Bible in any public domain—*period!* Is that a curse? *Yes!* Why is that? We'll see right here.

"... 'Yet you say, "What have we spoken so strongly against You?"'" (v 13). Try walking into a Baptist church and telling everyone, 'You're meeting on the wrong day.' You don't have to say anything else; they will run you right out.

Verse 14: "You have said, 'It is vain to serve God...'" Isn't that what we have with the atheists and the agnostics? *Freedom from religion!* The Truth is you can never be free from God. Whether you are righteous or wicked, you can never be free from God, because we all live and move and have our being in Him.

"...and, what profit *is it* that we have kept His charge..." (v 14). Think about what happened with the Church of God. When they converted over after all the enemy infiltrated and those who believed the lies converted over to Sunday-keeping. 'Oh, that was so hard with the Sabbath and Holy Days. That was difficult, indeed. Now we have freedom.'

"...and that we have walked mournfully before the LORD of hosts? And now we *are* calling the arrogant blessed. Yea, they that work wickedness are built up, they even tempt God, and are delivered" (vs 14-15).

Why? *Because as a nation, we're rejecting God more and more!* You'd be surprised the number of e-mails that I get from people who attend other Churches of God, saying, 'We're not being fed'; 'I can't stand going to Church because it's like God has left.' Also, that they have to be sure and give the money so that they can pay the ministers their retirement.

One woman wrote me and asked me, 'What do you think about retirement?' I said, 'I don't plan on retiring.' They were asking for extra money to pay for the retirement. Some of the Churches of God that split off, when the Church all split up, they split off *so they could keep their salaries* from the tithes and offerings that came from the brethren.

Even one man bragged, 'I quit, received my paycheck and two weeks later in a new Church I got my next paycheck.' *That's not standing for God! You have to stand for God in Truth regardless of the circumstances!*

- If you stand for the Truth, will God take care of you? *Yes!*
- Does He say it will be easy? *No!*
- But does He take care of you? *Yes!*

Verse 16: "Then those fearing the LORD spoke together, *each* man to his neighbor. And the LORD listened and heard. And a Book of Remembrance was written before Him for those who feared the LORD, and for those who thought upon His name."

You have comparative value here. What are you worth to God? Not monetary terms, but in terms of being His future family, his sons and his daughters. God thinks upon us. That's why when you read about the Laodiceans, God gets angry. We have everything right at our fingertips and then we don't honor God.

But notice what God says, v 17: "'And they shall be Mine,' says the LORD of hosts, 'in the day that I will make up My own special jewels.... [the reward at the resurrection] ...And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him.'.... [then this day will come]: ...**Then you shall return, and discern between the righteous and the wicked, between the one who serves God, and the one who does not serve Him**" (vs 17-18).

Quite a statement! If we're going to be perfected, and God is working with us, that includes everything. How can we preach the Gospel if we don't all participate in supporting it? *We can't!*

I had one woman write a long paper and say, 'We need to do like they did in Matt. 10 and Luke 10. You go out and preach the Gospel and you don't take anything with you.' That was a special tour. You try that today; won't work.

This is typical thinking of people in Protestantism, Luke 18:18 "And a certain ruler asked Him, saying, 'Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?' Then Jesus said to him, 'Why do you call Me good? No one *is* good except One—God. You know the commandments: "You shall not commit adultery. You shall not commit murder. You shall not steal. You shall not bear false witness. Honor your father and your mother.'" And he said, 'I have kept all these *commandments* from my youth'" (vs 18-21).

But Protestants look at that and say, 'He didn't mention the Sabbath, so therefore, we don't have to do it.' He didn't mention idols either. He didn't mention taking God's name in vain either.

What is the answer? *Not everything is contained in one location!* That's why we have the Old Testament and the New Testament. You can't

understand the New Testament without the Old Testament, and you can't understand the Old Testament without the New Testament. That's what they do. You can say right here, 'Doesn't say you are to tithe either.'

Verse 22: "And after hearing these things, Jesus said to him, 'You still lack one thing; sell everything that you have, and distribute to *the* poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come *and* follow Me.' But when he heard these things, he became very sorrowful; for he was quite rich" (vs 22-23).

So people say, 'All right, that's what you need to do. Everybody sell all things that you have.' No, that was for that one man. However, of what you have, don't make idols out of it.

Let's see what Jesus said to the scribes and Pharisees concerning tithes and offerings. **Should people tithe according to the New Testament** and living in the modern age where you don't have land and grow crops? *Yes!*

As I mentioned last time, if you are unemployed, how much increase do you have? *Zero!* Today, you may get some unemployment. But if you don't get unemployment, you have nothing. If you work, you have an increase. So your work is your increase. How do you think you get an increase out of a field?

- you work
- you have to put the seed in the ground
- you have to cultivate it
- you have to watch it so it grows
- you have to harvest it

All of that is work. Then you sell it. The money you get, you tithe on your increase. Same situation, but people have all these arguments.

The scribes and Pharisees took it to an extreme, Luke 11:37: "Now while He was speaking, a certain Pharisee asked Him to dine with him; and He went in *and* sat down. But the Pharisee, seeing *this*, wondered why He had not first washed before dinner" (vs 37-38). Great sin!

You could put in parenthetical statements: Jesus, knowing his thoughts, said...

Verse 39: "Then the Lord said to him, 'Now, you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are full of greediness and wickedness. Fools, *did* not He Who made the outside also make the inside? Rather, give alms *from* the things that are within...'" (vs 39-41). Love, service, faith, hope, etc.

"...and behold, all things are clean to you. But woe to you, Pharisees! For you pay tithes of

mint and rue and every herb..." (vs 41-42). Imagine that, all the little seeds. You have a big pile of seeds: one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

"...but you pass over the judgment and the love of God..." (v 42). Yes, the love of God is the most important thing. They were supposed to make right judgments for the people from the Word of God.

"...It is obligatory *for you* to do these things, and not to set aside those *lesser things*" (v 42). Yes, tithes and offerings are lesser things. That's not the main commandment. First, you've got to get your life squared around.

Part of your return to God is by keeping the Sabbath (Isa. 56). You return to God by participating in preaching the Gospel. The ones who receive the tithes and offerings are stewards and accountable to God and to the people, which we do every year. And to use the money the way that God wants.

When we leave here, I don't want you to look at my Cadillac down there. No, I just traded it in for a Rolls Royce. No, I just traded it in for a jet plane. I'm going to fly around Hollister. (Just kidding) You see all the foolishness in it.

Because they were neglecting love and judgment, but focusing in just on the tithing, they missed the whole point.

Paul took it one step further. This will show that, yes, the apostles, and hence the ministry, had the authority to receive tithes. Because of the false apostles coming around, and people giving money to them, Paul said, 'Nope, I'm going to preach the Gospel to you at no cost to see if you really get the point.' If they really, really got the point then they would begin to voluntarily give because giving of tithes and offerings is a choice and voluntary. God makes it a command, but *you have to choose it*.

This substantiates the authority of receiving tithes and offerings, 1-Corinthians 9:1: "Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in *the* Lord? If I am not an apostle to others, without a doubt I am to you. For you are the certification of my apostleship in *the* Lord. My defense to those who are examining me is this" (vs 1-3). They were saying, 'Well, now, Paul must not be correct because he's not receiving any tithes or offerings.' That's what it's talking about here.

Verse 4: "Do we not have a right to eat and to drink?... [Does it cost money to eat and drink? *Yes*, indeed, even today!] ...Do we not have a right to take with us a sister, a wife, as also the other apostles, and the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas?" (vs 4-5).

How were they supported? You can't be full time and serving the people and serving God unless you're supported somehow. God is not raining down silver and gold from heaven. He wants us all to participate.

Verse 6: "Or I only and Barnabas, do we not have a right to refrain from working?" They worked! There were years that I worked, and Dolores worked, so we know what that's like. How much was I able to produce when I was working? *Very little!*

Verse 7: "Does anyone at any time serve as a soldier at his own expense?..." You go sign up in the Army, you go to the quartermaster and he says, 'Here's your fatigues, here's your dress, here's your underwear, here's your socks, here's your boots, here's your shoes, and now pay me \$1,000.' *NO!*

Also when you first go in the Army, like I did, they give you a choice of what kind of haircut you want. But they immediately ignore it, and trim it all off.

So he uses this as something to think about. "...Does anyone plant a vineyard and not eat the fruit of it? Or does anyone shepherd a flock and not eat *the meat* and milk from the flock? Am I saying these things *merely* from a human point of view? Or does not the Law say the same things?" (vs 7-8).

If I interpreted an Old Testament Scripture the way that he did right here, I would have a lot of kick-back from people. They would say, 'Is that not a stretch to say that feeding the ox was intended for us today?' *Yes, indeed!*

Verse 9: "For it is written in the Law of Moses, 'You shall not muzzle the ox that is treading out corn.' Is it because God is concerned for oxen? Or does He not certainly say *this* for our sakes? For our sakes it was written, so that the one who plows might plow in hope, and the one who threshes the corn in hope might be partaker of his hope. If we have sown to you spiritual things..." (vs 9-11). That's what he was doing, teaching them the Word of God. That takes:

- time
- effort
- study
- travel
- everything that's necessary to do

Today, we can produce books, we produce Bibles, we send out CDs, DVDs and now we're approaching nearly 2-million a year on our websites. Right now, in November, we have a 500,000 increase in the number of people using our websites. So we're helping people. We're feeding the flock.

That's what he's saying here. Verse 11: "If we have sown to you spiritual things, *is it* a great thing if we shall reap your physical things?" For what? To enrich himself? *NO!*

Verse 12: "If others participate in this authority over you..." Notice: *this authority*. Because he said those who work at the altar, live of the altar, and so forth.

"...much more surely *should* not we? Nevertheless, we have not used this authority; but we have endured all things, so that we might not hinder the Gospel of Christ" (v 12). That was to them. Paul said that in order to have support, he had to receive money from other churches (2-Cor. 11).

Verse 13: "Don't you know that those who are laboring *in* the sacred things of the temple live of *the things* of the temple, *and* those who are ministering at the altar are partakers with the altar? In the same way also, the Lord did command that those who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel" (vs 13-14). There it is as clear as can be.

What supported the temple and the altar? *Tithes and offerings!* Today that's in the form of money, most of it digital money or paper money. Isn't it something that the Federal Reserve creates money out of nothing, which they give to us, which we use to preach the Gospel? *That's a pretty good deal!* So God will use that system. God knows!

Verse 15: "But I have not used any of these things. And I have not written these things in order that this might *now* be done to me. For *it would be* better for me to die rather than to have anyone make my boasting void."

His boasting was, 'I'm not going to take tithes and offerings from the Corinthians'—because of whatever. You can see by the fruits of it they had a lot of problems. He said, 'I'm not going to do it. Let's see what happens.' Nothing happened!. Here were coming in the false apostles and they were taking money and the people were happy to give it to them.

Verse 16: "For though I preach the Gospel, there is no *reason* for me to boast because an obligation has been laid upon me. And woe to me, if I do not preach the Gospel!" Preaching the Gospel means *if you receive the money you use it to preach the Gospel!*

What happened to the Church when they didn't preach the Gospel, but consumed it on lands, properties and themselves? You need certain assets and certain things. That's not wrong, but they got carried away. All of a sudden here came in an advisor and said, 'All of these ministers are greatly

underpaid when you compare it with those who work in corporations in the world.' *Oh, really?* 'Yes!'

All of a sudden, all the evangelists now had salaries in the 6-figures. This was back in the 1970s, and up higher. Then they were using assistance money that was supposed to go to widows and the needy to buy fuel for the jet. So, you see why it had to go the way that it went.

Just think what could have been done if they did it right. Just think what could have been done using the money today, to the tune of \$200-million in a single year. Think of that! Think what could be done with that with the websites and things that you have today.

God has made it so that we can be smaller and do more. We can reach out and be effective. Maybe there are other ways that God wants us to do it. Maybe He'll show us what we need to do. But this is what we do. We're not going to boast in it. We're not going to brag on what great income we have. We need to use it properly and make sure that it's done right.

I can tell you this. Dolores would never let it be used any other way. I'll tell you this. I would not use it in any other way. If I can't buy it out of the salary that I draw, I don't buy it. Very simple, just like you.

He says then, v 17: "For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if *I do this* against my will, I have been entrusted with a ministry." We are stewards of the Word of God, stewards of the money of God. Every one of us are stewards of what God gives us—spiritually and physically.

Verse 18: "What then is my reward? That in preaching the Gospel, I may make the Gospel of Christ without expense, so that I may not abuse my authority in the Gospel.... [that's saying quite a bit] ...For although I am not under bondage to anyone, I have made myself a servant to all, so that I might gain the more" (vs 18-19).

That's the whole purpose in it. That's why we give out all the books at no cost. We do ask for a donation for the Bibles, because those cost a great deal. However, we now have the website, **afaithfulversion.org**, and we'll soon have it in 'app' form, which means you can put it on your cell phone. Think of this: We're #270 of Bible websites, just for the Bible that can go around the world.

I got an e-mail from someone in Mortise, down east of Madagascar. You know where that plane sank and they never found it? Right down near there. We don't need to know; **God knows!** All

those who went down are going to be raised in the second resurrection, and won't they be surprised?

I'll just mention this. We have a complete series on tithes and offerings, going through everything. If you read in the beliefs sections in the back of the Bible, in one of the appendices, we have Christian Financial Responsibility. (*The Holy Bible in Its Original Order*, Appendix M, Section XX.). God doesn't expect you to give what you don't have. Certain forms of income are categorized as assistance and you didn't work for it. We have some of that today.

Remember what Jesus said; He was watching there in the temple area and here came this little widow and she threw two mites into the treasury.

Sidebar: The society in Galilee and in Judea was not purely agricultural. It was very metropolitan. That's why they had offerings, the offering box, where they put in the money.

The widow didn't throw in a chicken. She didn't throw in a half a lamb. She threw in two mites, which was all of her living for that day. Not all of her living for the rest of her life, obviously.

Then here come the rich men. They dump in a whole bunch. And they said, 'They give of their abundance, but Jesus said, 'I tell you, she gave more than all of them.' So, it's not the amount, it's *the love, obedience and service to God!* Here were those false apostles coming in.

Paul said, 2-Corinthians 11:3: "But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds might be corrupted from *the* simplicity that *is* in Christ. For indeed, if someone comes preaching another Jesus..." (vs 3-4). This is why he didn't have them give tithes and offerings to him.

"...whom we did not preach, or you receive a different spirit, which you did not receive, or a different gospel, which you did not accept, you put up with it as *something* good." You go along with these things, all these false teachings.

Verse 5: "But I consider myself in no way inferior to those highly exalted *so-called* apostles. For although *I may be* unpolished in speech, yet, *I am* not in knowledge; for in all things I have demonstrated this to you. Now, did I commit sin by humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the Gospel of God to you freely?... [or at no charge] ...I robbed other churches, receiving wages *from them* for ministering to you" (vs 5-8).



He had to get his support from some place and he also worked. But you can't work and travel and preach and write and do all of these things unless you are supported.

Verse 9: "And when I was present with you and in need, I was not a burden to anyone (for the brethren who came from Macedonia fully supplied my needs)..." They made a journey to carry the things to him that he needed. Imagine that.

"...for I kept myself, and will *continue* to keep myself, from being **burdensome** to you in anything" (v 9). The word *burdensome* means he did not exercise the authority that he had to receive tithes and offerings. That's what it means.

2-Corinthians 12:13: "For in what way was it that you were inferior to the other churches, except that I myself did not burden you? **Forgive me this wrong.**" Tithes and offerings are not the major thing, but they are essential, so he says, "...Forgive me this wrong." But he still said, 'I'm not going to take a penny from you,' to put it in modern English.

Verse 14: "Behold, a third time I am ready to come to you, and I will not burden you; for I do not seek what is yours, but you..." The most important thing is your conversion, your relationship with God, the Truth of the Word of God, and how you understand it and live by it. Then once you understand that, then should you not be willing to give because of what it's going to do in going out to others? That's what it is, and it's all a choice.

So he says here, "...for the children are not obligated to lay up for the parents, but the parents for the children" (v 14). He said he did all of this so that they could grow.

Verse 15: "Now, I will most happily spend, and am willing to be totally spent, for your souls; although the more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved."

He saw the fault of what he did and the fault of human nature. If you get it free with no cost at all, you become very presumptuous and very selfish and stingy and don't want to do anything. We're going to see that happen because they're going to have to cut off in America: welfare, *way low*, food stamps, *way low*. We're going to have some riots; you wait!

Because what needs to be done to turn this nation around is so astronomically difficult, that to really say what needs to be done in returning to God, to repent. Then start changing the institutions that are here, eliminating the institutions, and having it so that ***if you are unwilling to work***—not that you don't have the ability to work—***and you should work and yet have so many people come into the***

***country that you can't have jobs, something is going to give!***

We're pretty close, I think, to exploding point on this whole thing, because *it is wrong to give welfare without some kind of work*. God made people to work. What would it be if you just sat around, did absolutely nothing, thought nothing, did nothing? If you're retired and you're up there in age and you can't do too much, okay, then you can do limited things, but you still work.

Same way with Jim and all that he's gone through with his health. He's still working, not much, but he's still working, and he's keeping busy and he's getting stronger. When he gains another fifty pounds, he's going to be charging up here all the time.

So, Paul says, 'Forgive me,' v 16: "Yet, even so, I did not burden you; but being crafty, I caught you with guile." In other words, he exposed their attitude that 'if we give it free, we receive it free. We're not giving anything back. Oh, but those razzle-dazzle so-called apostles, we'll give them money. They're really good. They really can speak, but Paul, he can't speak very well. You look at him and you think, really, is this God's servant, someone in the shape that he was in?' I imagine he was quite a sight. Some people would say, 'Why would God choose someone like that?'

Just think, if all the money went into all these televangelists was really used properly, and all the Churches of God was really used properly, and if all the televangelists would return to God in one thing: *by keeping the Sabbath* (Isa. 56). Just that one thing and they were sincere in it! What a revolution that would be. Would God hold back His hand of judgment? *Yes!* That would be a pronounced profound miracle! That would really be something. Think what else could happen with that. People would want to:

- serve God
- love God
- keep His commandments
- do the things that are right

Think how much more crime and sin would go down.

Just think what it would be if they could teach the Bible in the schools. That would be something. Wouldn't be turning out stupid idiots at age 30 who have never learned how to work. All of that if it were done right.

Verse 17: "Did I make a gain of you by any of those whom I sent to you?"—Titus and Timothy. Did they come in receiving tithes and offerings? *No, of course not! No they didn't!*

Let's look at something else Paul said, that Christ said. In 1-Cor. 9 he said, 'The Lord commanded that those who preach the Gospel are to live of the Gospel as the priests and the Levites did at the altar.' You do not find that command anywhere else in the New Testament. Because He said it once, is that enough to make it true? *Yes, indeed!* It would be like this:

You drive up, here's a stop sign. You drive right through it and ignore it. You see the lights flashing behind you and the policeman comes up and says, 'You ran a stop sign.' *Yeah, I know I did.* 'You mean you saw it?' *Yeah, I saw it.* 'Why didn't you stop?' *I only stop if I see three stop signs.* In other words, you need to be told three times. **Once is enough!**

Acts 20:32: "And now I commit you, brethren, to God and to the Word of His grace, which is able to build you up and to give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have coveted no one's silver or gold or clothing" (vs 32-33). That's why we do not ask and beg for tithes and offerings. Doesn't mean we don't need to preach about it from time to time. I don't think I've given a full sermon on it for well over four years. We don't want your silver, gold, your clothing, or what you have.

Verse 34: "Rather, you yourselves know that these hands did minister to my needs... [his own hands] ...and to those who were with me. *In* all things, I have showed you that you are obligated to so labor to support those who are weak, remembering the words that the Lord Jesus Himself said: '**It is more blessed to give than to receive**'" (vs 34-35).

Once it's said, not in the Gospels, but it's still true. You never understand it, especially if you have difficulties. The blessings may not necessarily be physical but are spiritual.

- How much of a blessing is it if there are angels watching over your house?
- How much of a blessing is it if there are angels who help you in case you have a car wreck?

I know what that's like. Tell me, what insurance company could you buy insurance for to have that kind of protection? Insurance companies don't give you protection, they pay if something happens. ***God gives that free!***

- How much is it worth to understand the Word of God?

Think about that a little bit when you watch all this Christmas nonsense that's going on at this time of year.

- How much is it worth to really know the Word of God? *Fantastic!*
- How much is it worth to really know why you're born, where you're going, what God's plan is?
- How much is it going to be worth when you're raised from the dead?

The old undertaker that puts you under, he couldn't help you. ***Only God can do that!*** So yes, it is more blessed to give than to receive.

If you want to know about Heb. 7, order the *Tithing* series that we have. You get the full understanding of tithes and offerings if you read the appendices *Christian Responsibility*.

#### Scriptural References:

- 1) Malachi 1:1-3, 6-7
- 2) Malachi 2:17
- 3) Malachi 3:1-10
- 4) Matthew 5:48
- 5) Malachi 3:11-18
- 6) Luke 18:18-23
- 7) Luke 11:37-42
- 8) 1-Corinthians 9:1-19
- 9) 2-Corinthians 11:3-9
- 10) 2-Corinthians 12:13-17
- 11) Acts 20:32-35

#### Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Jeremiah 23
- Ezekiel 13
- John 2
- Hebrews 13:8
- Isaiah 55
- Ezekiel 34
- Matthew 10
- Luke 10
- Isaiah 56
- Hebrews 7

#### Also referenced:

- Sermon Series: *Tithing*
- From *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version*: Appendix M, Section XX: **Christian Financial Responsibility**

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