

Tithes and Offerings



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Notice that in the seventh of Hebrews we are referred to the case of Abraham and Melchizedek for proof that the paying of tithes is not a Levitical ordinance. Long before Levi was born, Abraham paid tithes. And he paid them, too, to Melchizedek, whose priesthood is the Christian priesthood. Those who are Christ's and thus children of Abraham will also pay tithes of all.

It will be noticed that the tithe was a well-known thing in the days of Abraham. He gave tithes to God's priest as a matter of course. He recognised the fact that the tithe is the Lord's. The tithe record in Leviticus is not the origin of the tithing system, but is simply a statement of a fact. Even the Levitical order "paid tithes in Abraham" (Hebrews 7:9). We are not told when it was first made known to men, but we see that it was well known in the days of Abraham. In the book of Malachi, which is specially addressed to those living just before the Second Advent, "the great and terrible day of the Lord" (Malachi 4:5), we are told that those withholding tithe are robbing God.

It should be understood that no man, nor any human power, whether State or the Church, has

anything to do with requiring people to pay tithe. In Christ's day, the Jewish church leaders rightly recognised the tithing obligation, but they erred in not leaving it to the people to carry out their own convictions of duty. "The tithe is the Lord's" (Leviticus 27:30) and with Him alone people have to do in the matter of tithes. Just as whether the first fruits designated for the regular lines of Levites (Deuteronomy 18:1-4) be also given to the self-supporting non-Levites (2 Kings 4:42-44) is a matter for the Lord, so is the tithe a matter for the Lord to decide. Whether or not a person will pay the Lord's tithe to Him, is a matter for him alone to decide, just the same as whether or not he will worship God at all, and as whether he will keep the Sabbath or not.

For a Christian, the argument for paying tithe to the Lord is very simple: "And if ye *be* Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Galatians 3:29). Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek; the Melchizedek priesthood is a priesthood by which righteousness and peace come; it is the priesthood by which we are saved. Abraham gave tithes to Melchizedek, because Melchizedek was the representative of the Most High God, and the tithe is the Lord's. If we are Christ's then we are children of Abraham; and therefore if we are not

children of Abraham, then we are not Christ's. But if we are Christ's and therefore Abraham's children, we shall pay tithe, as did Abraham. Whose are we?

Will a man rob God?

The eighth commandment says, "Thou shalt not steal" (Exodus 20:15). It is not confined to stealing from fellow men. It is broken by men who would no more think of taking money from another man than of cutting off their own right hand. You might leave any amount of money with them, uncounted, and they would return it all; yet they are guilty of robbery.

In Malachi 3:8-12, the Lord asks, plainly: "Will a man rob God?" People think that they are innocent, for they reply, "Wherein have we robbed Thee?" and the Lord says, "In tithes and offerings." And He continues, "Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed Me, even this whole nation. Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in Mine house, and prove Me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast

her fruit before the time in the field, saith the Lord of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of hosts.”

“The earth is the Lord’s, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein” (Psalms 24:1). Businessmen have a standard of honesty. If one does not act according to it, he is soon discredited. One point is that a man has the right to the control of his own affairs, and that property belonging to another must be delivered to him. The man who cannot or will not meet this standard, must cease to do business. Meeting that business standard means the delivering to another that which belongs to him.

Many do not believe that the earth belongs to the Lord, or else they do not deal with Him with the same honesty that they deal with their fellow men. If the earth belongs to the Lord, then He has the right to control it, and every man ought to yield to Him His own. Many do not believe that the earth belongs to the Lord, and few believe that there is any God. Heathen principles prevail not only in the world, but largely among those who call themselves Christians.

Although the earth is the Lord’s, He has given it to the children of men (Psalms 115:16). This does not absolve them from acknowledging the gift. To receive a gift, and never to acknowledge it, is

ingratitude such as always brings a man into disrepute, if manifested toward one of his fellows. But in giving the earth to man, the Lord has reserved a portion for Himself, as He certainly has the right to do, when it is all His. "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord." "And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord" (Leviticus 27:30, 32).

This is not a 'Levitical law;' but it is the statement of the simple fact: "The tithe is the Lord's." There is no limitation, no qualification. It is not limited to time nor to place. It is true all over the earth, in all time.

You may ask, 'did not Christ do away with tithe?' Christ did not come to this earth to overturn the Father's Government, but to establish it. He did not come and give His life for the purpose of upsetting what God had established. Even if that had been His purpose, He could not have accomplished it with regard to the tithe, for there we have not a law, but a fact, and nothing can ever change a fact. "The tithe is the Lord's," and nothing can ever change the fact.

The tithe may be kept back from the Lord, by robbery, but robbing one of his property never proves that it is not his. If a thing belongs to me, it

can never cease to belong to me unless I sell it or give it away. If a man steals it, it is mine still; if I lose it, it still belongs to me if it can be found. Now we have no record that the Lord has ever sold or given away His right to the tithe. That is to say, there is no evidence to show that God has ever renounced all claims on this earth and on mankind. Tithe belongs to Him now just as much as it did thousands of years ago. "I am the Lord, I change not" (Malachi 3:6).

You may ask, 'but did not Jesus reprove the Pharisees for paying tithe so strictly?' Let us read what He said. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin ..." You say, 'Ah, duty is relieved!' Not so fast, please; let us read a little further: "Woe unto you scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matthew 23:23).

Instead of saying that they ought not to have paid tithe, Jesus says that they ought to have done it, but they ought not to have made their strictness in this matter an excuse for neglecting something else. "Ye ought," means, 'Ye owe it.' The Saviour recognised the tithe as belonging to the Lord, by saying that we

owe it to Him. He says also that we ought to be very strict in tithing; they tithed herbs that were of trifling value, and He says they ought to have done it.

The woe is not for paying the tithe, but for their unrighteousness, while outwardly very punctilious in the smallest details. No service is acceptable to the Lord when the heart is corrupt and deceitful. Hypocrisy is what the Lord hates. The people could see that the Pharisees were scrupulous in the payment of tithe, therefore they paid it; but that could not atone for their deeds of oppression and their lack of mercy. To pay tithe of what they had rung from some poor widow was not acceptable to the Lord.

God says, "I hate robbery for burnt offering" (Isaiah 61:8). After naming judgment, mercy, and faith, the Lord says, "These ought ye to have done," but He did not say that they ought to have done these things instead of paying tithe. "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." That is, they ought not to have ceased paying tithe, which is the same as saying that they ought to have paid it, but they ought at the same time to have done works of mercy, judgment, and faith. Christ did not spend time on this earth trying to overthrow the truth, for He is "the truth" (John 14:6). He bears witness to the truth, and one truth is that the tithe is the Lord's.

When a man has exhausted his argument against the payment of tithe, he will often turn, and say, 'a Christian cannot be content with giving only a tenth, as they did under the law, but must give more, corresponding to the greater light and privileges that he has.' Very well, but the greater always includes the less. If it is one's duty to render to the Lord more than a tithe, that certainly does not abolish the tithe.

We are not told to give the Lord a tithe. It belongs to Him, and we are to pay it. It is not a gift to Him. To be sure, the word giving may be used in connection with it, just as one may say, 'Today I met Mr A, and gave him the five pounds that I owed him,' but he does not mean that he made the man a present of five pounds. So in handing the tithe over to the Lord, we are simply giving Him what belongs to Him; over and above that are offerings that ought to be made. And these were due the Lord in ancient times just as much as today. The very simplest way that we can show that we and all that we have belong to the Lord, is to pay to Him His own tithe.

God says, "Ye have robbed me." Will a man rob God? One would think that God is the last One that one would think of robbing; but it is not so. Why is this? Is it because God is so far away, and does not press His claims as men do? Is it because nobody

thinks any the less of a man who robs God, while it is disreputable to rob men? If it is for one or both of these reasons, is it not plain that such a man would rob his neighbour if he could do it without losing his standing in society? Can such a man be called an honest man? If a man be brought into court charged with theft, can he clear himself of the charge by saying, 'I robbed only one man, and he was a foreigner; I have never robbed one of my neighbours.' Robbery is robbery, no matter who the victim is. Surely it is no less a crime to rob God than it is to rob a man. What a debt we owe to the Lord!

Marvellous to relate, the Lord positively rewards men for doing their duty, that is to say, He rewards those who have robbed Him when they come and restore what they have stolen. What man would do that? Giving to the Lord, or paying Him what is His due, never impoverishes anybody. People do not grow poor by serving the Lord. There are thousands of people in the direst poverty today, who would in a few months be in comfortable circumstances if they would serve God in truth. "Godliness is profitable unto all things, having promise of the life that now is, and of that which is to come" (1 Timothy 4:8).

Many are in poverty because of habits of life, which a perfect living out of the Gospel would take

away, leaving them free. God says that when a whole tithe is brought to Him, He will open the windows of heaven, and bless till there is not room enough to receive it; it will overflow. If anybody wishes to know what sort of blessings the Lord will pour out, he has only to prove the Lord, as He says, and he will see for himself. But few believe God.

But do not try an experiment with the Lord. It is not best to keep too strict a book account with Him. Do not go to making the experiment for a year, resolved that if at the end of that time you do not see a marked increase in your business, you will pay no more tithe to the Lord. That is not to bring a whole tithe into the storehouse. Paying the tithe is in itself an acknowledgment that the whole belongs to Him.

Honour God with first fruits

Many who do not deny the duty to pay tithe, do not pay it, they excuse themselves by saying, 'I have nothing with which to pay; after I have fed and clothed my family, I have nothing left.' Whoever has wherewith to get food and clothing, has wherewith to pay the tithe; for the principle taught by the tithe is this: that nine-tenths of what we receive will, with the blessing of God, go further than the whole of it

without His blessing. God is to come first in all our considerations; we are to “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness” (Matthew 6:33). “Honour the Lord with thy substance, and with the first-fruits of all thine increase” (Proverbs 3:9).

The basis of stealing

Why do people steal? Because they think that they have not enough, and they cannot trust God to supply their needs. Some do not know the Lord, and they suppose that they are obliged to look out for themselves. Others who profess to know the Lord, lose their supposed trust as soon as they see difficulty. The basis of what is generally recognised as stealing is therefore identical with distrust of God.

Many have never realised the duty to pay tithe. “Will a man rob God?” Many do, who have never robbed their fellow men, who are counted as having a reputation for honesty. The Lord says that the tenth belongs to Him. Then He ought to have it. But if I keep it and use it, knowing what the Bible says about it, how can my neighbour have confidence enough in me to trust me with what belongs to him? If a man will rob God, will he not rob his fellow man?

Many do not steal because there is a law against theft, and one who steals from his neighbour is not only punished, but he loses credit and reputation. The Lord does not demand His own immediately; He does not call for a settlement every month and every year; so in our blind selfishness we take liberties with Him, persuading ourselves that He does not see nor care (Psalms 94:7). As others may not know whether we pay tithe or not, we do not lose standing with men; or we may get the credit of paying tithe by paying a fragment of it, and calling it the tithe. That is, we are honest for appearance sake, or because we fear to be found out. Let us ask ourselves, is our supposed honesty only a sham, an outside show, and are we honest only because there is danger of being found out and lose our professed Christianity?

The secret of all honesty

The Apostle Paul bears witness to the great liberality of the churches of Macedonia, in spite of their "great trial of affliction," and "their deep poverty" (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). He did not need to plead with them to make an offering to the cause of God, but says, "For to their power I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;

Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift;" and the reason for this is that they "first gave their own selves to the Lord" (2 Corinthians 8:3-5). This is the secret of all honesty; for whoever is honest with the Lord will never defraud any man.

Not simply our property, but we ourselves belong to the Lord, and we are to render to Him His own. When we recognise that we are not our own, but that our whole being belongs to Him, we shall also recognise that we can have no property in our own right; all is the Lord's. Strength is more than money; and the commandment "Thou shalt not steal" forbids our robbing God of the strength that is His due.

If I want to only destroy my neighbour's property it is the same as though I steal his goods. All our members belong to the Lord, as instruments of righteousness. If we misuse them in any way, making them serve our own personal gratification, we are guilty of theft. We owe to the Lord, not merely all the strength we may have at this present moment, but all that we might have if we lived according to the law of life in Christ Jesus.

And here we clearly see that the commandment is life everlasting. All God's requirements are really statements of His promises. He asks nothing from us that He does not first give to us; and in asking for

it of us He does not ask that we give it to Him in the sense that we ourselves are deprived of it, but that we always have it in possession to render to Him.

So the commandment, “Thou shalt not steal,” requiring us to give all the strength of our soul and body to the Lord, means that if we heed His word He will see that we have perfect strength to give to Him. His commandments are not grievous, but on the contrary they assure us all blessings. Everything grows with use, so as we keep the commandment, yielding to God all the strength which His own everlasting power works in us to yield back to Him, we shall go from “strength to strength,” until we each one “in Zion appeareth before God” (Psalms 84:7).

Tithe and blessings

We read, “And Isaac sowed . . . and received . . . an hundredfold; and the Lord blessed him” (Genesis 26:12). The Hebrew particle here rendered “and” has also a host of other uses. In fact, there is scarcely any connective for which it does not stand. Instances are numerous in which the same word so often rendered “and” is also correctly rendered “because.” With this explanation we may be sure that we are not taking any liberty with the text when

we read it thus: "Isaac sowed ... and received ... an hundredfold; because the Lord blessed him."

The blessing of the Lord does not come because of our prosperity, but is the cause of it. Man may sow, but it is God who gives the increase. He does not always give us material wealth, as an evidence of His blessing; yet the sure promise in Malachi 3:10.

However, no thought of what we may receive should ever enter into our service to God; for in that case it would not be service to God, but mere self-serving. God's promise to Isaac was, "I will multiply thy seed" (Genesis 26:24). This was a repetition of the promise given to his father, Abraham, that God would bless him by giving him an abundant posterity.

Now let us take notice of the significance of the statement occurring in the same chapter, that God blessed Isaac in giving him an abundant harvest for his sowing. God multiplied his seed that he sowed, and from this Isaac could learn the reality of God's promise when He said, "I will multiply thy seed," meaning his own posterity. Thus every returning harvest is a reminder to us that God will multiply godly men and fill the earth with them, and it is at the same time an announcement of the coming gathering of the faithful at the final harvest, which is the end of the world and the coming of Christ.

Recognising God in tithing

We find this recorded in Scripture: “And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father’s house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God; and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God’s house; and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee” (Genesis 28:20-22).

Jacob had learned that God is everywhere and that everything exists only in Him, and so he accepted Him as his God. His vow expressed recognition of God, and is not to be considered as a bargain made with the Lord. This is apparent on the face of it, for Jacob knew that even “bread to eat, and raiment to put on” came from God, hence did not think to enrich God by returning a portion to Him.

“All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord’s; it is holy unto the Lord” (Leviticus 27:30). God has reserved the tithe to Himself, just as He has reserved the seventh day out of the week. “The seventh day is the Sabbath of the Lord” (Exodus 20:10); nobody can change it. It is God’s Sabbath

day, whether anybody keeps it holy to Him or not. Likewise the tithe is the Lord's, even though we do not give it to Him. If we withhold it, and use it upon ourselves, we are guilty of robbery (Malachi 3:8-10).

What good does it do God for us to devote the seventh day to Him, and to give Him the tenth part of our earnings? – No good whatever; for “Who hath first given to Him, and it shall be recompensed unto him again? For of Him, and through Him, and to Him are all things” (Romans 11:35-36). God's requirements are not for His own benefit, but for ours. It does us good to acknowledge God in all our ways; for to know Him is life eternal (John 17:3).

The Sabbath was given that men might know God and His sanctifying power (Ezekiel 12:20). The tithe serves the same purpose, also, in a different way. We are constantly receiving life from God, – continually earning (or rather gathering what He showers), by the strength He gives us, the means of continuing our existence. Now we are forgetful creatures, and apt to lose thought of God; but if as often as anything comes to us from His hand, we religiously lay aside one-tenth to be sacredly devoted to His cause, we cannot forget Him. It is simply an acknowledgement of the fact that “in Him we live, and move, and have our being” (Acts 17:28).

The tithe is a test of our trust in God, not merely for temporal things, but for eternal salvation; for if, through stress of poverty, or the fear of want, we keep the tithe, how can we make it appear that we trust God as our everlasting Saviour? If we cannot trust Him to provide us an earthly living for a few days or years, how can we trust Him to keep our souls alive in eternity? "In all thy ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct thy paths" (Proverbs 3:6).

The tithing question

One may ask, 'how am I to pay tithe, to whom shall I pay it?' Let us first recount the tithe principle by rereading Leviticus 27:30: "All the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's; it is holy unto the Lord."

That this was not a mere ceremonial regulation, that was local and temporary, is evident from two things. First, we find the tithe paid by Abraham and Jacob as a matter of course, long before there were any Jewish ceremonies, or even any Jewish nation (see Genesis 14:17-24; 28:20-22, which we study further below). Second, we have the words of Christ, plainly stating that the tithe ought to be paid: "Woe unto you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites!

for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of law, judgment, mercy, and faith; these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone” (Matthew 23:23).

Christ did not pronounce a woe upon the scribes and Pharisees for being strict in the payment of tithe, but for neglecting the vital principles of the Gospel.

The first recorded instance of tithing is that of Abraham, when he was returning with all the goods of the city of Sodom which he had received from the kings who had carried it away. The king of Sodom went out to meet him, and Melchizedek, also, king of Salem, or Jerusalem, and priest of the Most High God, met him, bringing bread and wine. Melchizedek blessed Abraham, and to him, as God’s priest, Abraham gave tithes of everything. Note the words: “He gave him tithes of all” (Genesis 14:20).

Then the king of Sodom said to Abraham, “Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself” (Genesis 14:21). But Abraham would not seem to be under any obligation to the king of Sodom, and he said: “I have lift up mine hand unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth, that I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, lest thou shouldst say, I have made Abram

rich" (verses 22-23). Of the young men who were with him, however, Abraham said, "let them take their portion" (verse 24), that is, they were entitled to what they had eaten while engaged in the work.

Here we learn: (1) That Abraham tithed all that he captured from the kings, giving the tithe to the Lord's representative; and (2) That he did not recognise the tithe as belonging to the king of Sodom at all; for he was not taking anything from him, in paying tithe on the property. When the king of Sodom's property came into the hands of Abraham, and therefore belonged to Abraham by right of capture, he used his right to give to the Lord that which belonged to Him, and then returned the rest to the original owner.

We learn, in short, that one is in duty bound to tithe the whole of his income all that comes into his hand so as to be called his own; but it is also a self-evident that the amount necessarily expended in securing that income must be deducted from it. If a man's annual gross income is £11,000, and he has expended £3,000 for help and materials, it is plain that his real gain is only £8,000. A strict tithe does not demand that he should tithe the £11,000, but only the £8,000, since it is to be supposed that he had already paid tithe on the £3,000 that he paid out.

‘To whom shall I pay tithe?’ To those to whom is committed the charge of the Lord’s work; whether the regular lines or the self-supporting ministries. We find a non-Levite, Elisha, in a self-supporting ministry, receiving “first fruits” (2 Kings 4:42-44). It was as a self-supporting missionary that the apostle Paul laboured in spreading the knowledge of Christ throughout the world, and he not only received means (Philippians 4:15) but also approved receipt of the same (1 Timothy 5:17-18; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14). Pay the Lord’s tithe to those who, most fully of any that you know, are truly standing as the Lord’s representatives to spread the knowledge of His truth.

The Lord’s storehouse is not a single place, but wherever there is a need in the vineyard of the Lord, there is the Lord’s storehouse. God grant that the kingly voices that restrict His storehouse shall not be heard. Regular lines should not worry if some means shall go direct to the self-supporting ministries doing the Lord’s work in an effective way. All the means is not to be handled by one agency or organisation.

Balancing your debts and tithing

You may ask, ‘should one pay tithe while he has other debts pressing?’ This concerns the devoting

of the Lord's money to one's own personal use, under the pressure of great necessity. Let us consider the matter from an historical incident which will show the short sightedness of such a course.

“In the six and thirtieth year reign of Asa, Baasha king of Israel came up against Judah, and built Ramah, to the intent that he might let none go out or come in to Asa king of Judah” (2 Chronicles 16:1).

That was a critical situation, – worse than any amount of private debt, – threatened the very existence of the nation. If the king of Israel succeeded in building and holding Ramah, then he could command the whole of the kingdom of Judah and put it under tribute. All the traffic of the kingdom would be stopped, or be exclusively in the hands of the king of Israel; no one, from the king to the peasant and tradesman, could have anything that he could call his own. It was a desperate case, and called for desperate measures, – at least the king of Judah thought so, – and that promptly.

“Then Asa brought out silver and gold out of the treasures of the house of the Lord and of the king's house, and sent to Benhadad king of Syria, that dwelt at Damascus, saying, There is a league between me and thee, as there was between my father and thy father: behold, I have sent unto thee

silver and gold; go, break thy league with Baasha king of Israel, that he may depart from me.

“And Benhadad hearkened unto king Asa, and sent the captains of his armies against the cities of Israel, and they smote Ijon, and Dan, and Abelmaim, and all the store cities of Naphtali. And it came to pass, when Baasha heard it, that he left off building of Ramah, and let his work cease.

“Then Asa the king took all Judah; and they carried away the stones of Ramah, and the timber thereof, wherewith Baasha had building; and he built therewith Geba and Mizpah” (2 Chronicles 16:2-6).

So the kingdom of Judah was delivered from the king of Israel, by the prompt action of Asa. At least it seemed to be delivered. Asa had done all that he could do, and the general opinion would be that he could not have done any less. He not only stopped the plan of the king of Israel and drove him away, destroying the city that was to command the commerce of Judah, but he guarded against any future danger by building Geba and Mizpah, or to translate the words, a hill and a water tower. To be sure he used the Lord's money with which to do it; but what else could he do? Perhaps he intended to pay it all back again with the returning prosperity.

That is the way man looks at the case; now hear the truth of the matter from God: “And at that time Hanani the seer came to Asa king of Judah, and said unto him, Because thou hast relied on the king of Syria, and not relied on the Lord thy God, therefore is the host of the king of Syria escaped out of thine hand. Were not the Ethiopians and the Lubims a huge host, with very many chariots and horsemen? yet, because thou didst rely on the Lord, he delivered them into thine hand. For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth, to show Himself strong in the behalf of them whose heart is perfect toward Him. Herein thou hast done foolishly: therefore from henceforth thou shalt have wars” (2 Chronicles 16:7-9).

This was not a case of pique on the part of the Lord. He did not propose to punish Asa with wars, because he had relied on the king of Syria, instead of on Him, but He merely told him, through His prophet, what would be the inevitable result of his foolish course, which to human short sightedness seemed so wise and politic.

Asa did not stop to consider that in bribing Benhadad to break his league with Baasha, so that Baasha would be compelled to cease operations against him, he was simply placing means in the

hands of the king of Syria, wherewith to attack him at some future time; for Ben-hadad could break his league with Asa as readily as he had broken his league with Baasha. Asa had simply postponed his trouble, but had by no means ended the wars.

Here we have an exact parallel to the case of many who are in debt, and sorely distressed, perhaps not knowing even how to supply the wants of their family, to say nothing of paying their debt. Or it may be that they are not in debt, but they are in exceedingly close circumstances; and they can see no way out except to take the Lord's tithe, or other money belonging to Him, and use it for their pressing necessities. They may say that they will pay it back as soon as they can, but even if they cannot, they must live; they cannot let their family starve.

The case resolves itself into this: Shall we trust the Lord to use His own unlimited resources in His own way for our deliverance, or shall we seize upon a portion of His property, to help ourselves? Enlightened judgment would say that the former was the wiser course. The one who takes the Lord's tithes to pay his own debts, or to keep himself out of debt, as he imagines, does not accomplish his purpose. He succeeds only in putting off the trouble, and the last case will be worse than the first.

If Asa had trusted the Lord, and depended on Him for deliverance from the king of Israel, he would have been delivered; for the Lord has never forsaken those who seek Him (Psalms 9:10). His promise is, "I will be with thee: I will not fail thee" (Joshua 1:5). And the deliverance which the Lord wrought would have been decisive, as it was when the Ethiopians came against Asa, to which the prophet referred. See below what took place then.

An overwhelming force came against Asa. "And Asa cried unto the Lord his God, and said, Lord, it is nothing with Thee to help, whether with many, or with them that have no power: help us, O Lord our God; for we rest on Thee, and in Thy name we go against this multitude. O Lord Thou art our God; let not man prevail against Thee" (2 Chronicles 14:11). Now what was the result of Asa's trust in God? Let us read on a little further: "So the Lord smote the Ethiopians before Asa, and before Judah; and the Ethiopians fled. And Asa and the people that were with him pursued them unto Gerar: and the Ethiopians were overthrown, that they could not recover themselves; for they were destroyed before the Lord, and before His host" (2 Chronicles 14:11)

What a pity that Asa did not remember that experience! And what a pity that we do not always

remember and profit by the record of it! The reason for the record like that Asa is given: "For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope" (Romans 15:4).

How many things were written aforetime concerning how God provided the necessities of life for His people! Think of the manna in the desert, and the water from the rock. Think of the widow's meal and oil (1 Kings 17:12-16), and of the provision for the payment of the widow's debt, and for her future living, in the time of Elisha (2 Kings 4:1-7). Think of the feeding of the multitudes in the wilderness in the days of Christ (John 6:5-13), and of many other miraculous interpositions on the part of God, as well as the miracle of our very existence day by day, when we are not conscious of want.

The same God lives today, and He is our God. His resources are undiminished, and He is just as compassionate, and just as ready to help the needy. We have been taught to pray, "Give us this day our daily bread" (Matthew 6:11), and we profess to believe that all that we have comes from Him, and that our existence depends on Him; yet when trouble comes we are likely to act as though God did not exist, and everything depended on ourselves. Do

you not see why these hard times are allowed to come upon us? They do test our confidence in God.

Shall we trust Him in the time of trouble, even to the last extremity, and experience a wonderful deliverance? or shall we trust in ourselves, and multiply our troubles? One text of Scripture that is sufficient to settle the question is Malachi 3:8: "Will a man rob God? yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings." But you may still ask, 'If a man is in debt to his fellow men, and also to God, should he give his fellow men the preference over God, paying them all off before he pays anything to the Lord?' Is there any doubt as to the answer? "The tithe is the Lord's." If we ignore that fact, ought not the Lord to stand at least an equal chance with other creditors? Ought He not to receive a *pro rata* with the rest?

If you are still in debts, it does not excuse you to rob God (Malachi 3:8-10). Some feel conscientious to "owe no man anything" (Romans 13:8), and think that God can require nothing of them until their debts are all paid. Here they deceive themselves. They fail to render to God the things that are His, and they rob God "in tithes and offerings." Those who are in debt should take the amount of their debts from what they own, and tithe a proportion of the remainder.

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