I Want You to Prosper: Tithing in Faith, Love and Righteousness

by Kenneth Copeland

What does it mean to tithe **according to the Word?** Let me refresh your thinking concerning the statement Jesus made on this subject. He said;"*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 (righteousness), mercy (love), and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone* (Matthew 23:23)."

Addressing the religious people of the day, Jesus said that they tithed their money but they neglected the important matters of the heart. With this thought in mind, we can expand our definition and say that tithing is bringing the first tenth to Jesus, according to His Word, **by faith, in love, through righteousness**.

Righteousness, love and faith are directly related to one another. Faith works by love (Galatians 5:6), and righteousness is by faith in Jesus Christ (Romans 3:22). Therefore, these three cannot be separated. When we tithe, we need to be mindful of all these areas.

Tithing by Faith

Let's look at tithing from the level of "faith first" by studying Genesis 4:1-8; "*And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord. And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.*

"*And in the process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.*" *(vs. 3)*

"*And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering: But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell. And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? And why is thy countenance fallen? If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? And if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him. And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.*

This incident in Genesis, chapter four occurred at the time of harvest which also coincided with the birth of the lambs. For years, I heard that God would not receive Cain's offering because he didn't bring a lamb. But, that isn't so. Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground unto the Lord. It wasn't the offering that was the problem. It is impossible to please God without faith. Notice verse three, God had no respect for Cain. When God rebuked him, instead of changing, he got mad and his countenance fell. Cain was out of line with the Word. A man and his offering are one. The offering is nothing without the man.

Hebrews 11:4 tells us that Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice **by faith. Faith is a product of the Word of God** (Romans 10:17). Obviously, both Cain and Abel had heard the Word. Their own father received it personally from the Creator Himself. I'm satisfied that the revelation which they received was the knowledge that the whole earth belonged to God and they (who were given the use of the earth) were to tithe a tenth of it back to God (Leviticus 27:30; Psalms 24:1; Haggai 2:8). Abel was eager to see that God received His. Cain was not. That's why God couldn't accept Cain and his offering.

The New King James Version says it much more plainly;"*But (God) did not respect Cain and his offering. And Cain was very angry, and his countenance fell. So the Lord said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, will you not be accepted? And if you do not do well, sin lies at the door. And its desire is for you, but you should rule over it."*

How could he do well? By staying with the Word. Satan was at the door, lying in wait to steal the Word from his heart. Cain only needed to resist the devil so that his faith would not fail.

Do you remember what Jesus told Peter? He said, "Satan has tried to sift you like wheat, but I have prayed for you that your faith fail not." Sin was at Cain's door. The King James Version calls sin "him." Sin and Satan are the same.

The scripture tells us to give Satan "no place." Cain would have done well not to have given the devil place through his disobedience and anger. But he did and the result was the death of his brother. No wonder the church has fought over the tithe--the first murder was committed over it.

As the New Testament church, we cannot afford disobedience either. But sin and the hundredfold blessing of God lie at the door. We are the only ones with the authority to let one or the other in. This is one of the reasons that we have been robbed financially.

Tithing Righteously

The next illustration is tithing with judgment or justice. The story is from Genesis, chapter 14.

A group of kings joined forces and trapped the king of Sodom to exploit him, his goods and the goods of all of his subjects. Among the people who were taken captive was Abram's nephew.

When Abram heard the news, he armed 318 trained servants and pursued the kings' armies to the death. They slaughtered them and took the spoils. The first thing Abram did was tithe the spoils. Melchizedek, the priest, blessed Abram and said; "*Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.*"

The king whose goods had been stolen greedily watched Abram, thinking that he was going to keep all of the spoil. He wanted some of it back. After all, it belonged to him before those armies came in and stole it.

He went to Abram and said; "*Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself. And Abram said to the king of Sodom, I have lifted up mind 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 shouldest say, I have made Abram rich.*"

What was Abram saying? Permit me to paraphrase it to make it easier to understand. I believe he was saying, "I've lifted my hand to God; I have made a covenant with Him. I promised when I tithed the spoils that I wouldn't even take one of your shoestrings, lest you say that you are the one that made me rich." Abram judged himself according to his covenant with God. He made sure he did "the right thing"--not just the easy or convenient thing.

The next time you approach the tithing altar, realize that Jesus your High Priest is standing there. Judge yourself according to the Word of God. Test your heart and your motives. Don't just tithe and neglect the weightier matter of justice. Abram did what was right and just. **He tithed righteously, not selfishly.** Abram is our example.

The Matter of Mercy

Mercy is the last area that Jesus mentioned in Matthew 23:23 concerning how we ought to tithe. The word translated "mercy" is sometimes translated "love." The believer who says that he cannot afford to tithe is not only

operating without faith, he is out of line with judgement because he has forsaken the house of God.

Read Nehemiah 10:38,39 and you will see what I mean; "*And the priest the son of Aaron shall be with the Levites, when the Levites take tithes: and the Levites shall bring up the tithe of the tithes unto the house of our God, to the chambers, unto the treasure house. For the children of Israel and the children of Levi shall bring the offering of the corn, of the new wine, and the oil, unto the chambers, where are the vessels of the sanctuary, and the priests that minister, and the porters, and the singers: and we will not forsake the house of our God.*

To attend church every Sunday and always be on the receiving end and never on the giving end is selfish. The person who does this has forgotten the weightier matter of mercy and love. **Love gives. To withhold the tithe is to forsake the household of God.**

Who Receives the Tithe?

Jesus is the High Priest over the house of God in the New Testament. In the spirit, He receives our tithes and presents them to the Father in heaven. But who receives them here on earth?

II Chronicles 31:4,5 says that the priests and Levites, or the ministry, received the tithe that they might be encouraged. This is not an issue that we can handle lightly. As the Head of the church, Jesus is the One who should be directing where the tithe should go. The proper way to handle it is to pray and ask Him where to put it.

Under the Old Covenant, the tithe was brought mainly into the temple in Jerusalem and the local synagogue. In the New Testament, the local church is the backbone of the body of Christ. Malachi 3:10 tells us, *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.* Meat is spiritual revelation. Wherever you are receiving revelation, that is where your tithe should go. You receive mostly from your own church, that is, if it is preaching the uncompromised Word.

But let us also notice that Paul said that the church at Philippi supported him. As an apostle, he traveled extensively ministering the Word. If there is a ministry which has fed you spiritual meat and you want part of your tithe to go there, you ought to be able to make note of that when you bring your tithe check into the local church.

I received a check from a church in Houston, Texas, one day and I thought, “I wonder why they’re sending me a check?” Later, I found out that the pastor had told the congregation, “If you are bringing your tithe today and there is a specific ministry which has fed you spiritually outside this church, just make a note of it and we will see that they receive a check.” That pastor is receiving the tithe in love and faith and righteousness. The people are giving it that way as well.

God is looking for a people who will handle their tithing as holy. He is seeking those who will ask Jesus where He wants His money to go. **Are you one whom the Father can trust? Will you allow Jesus to direct your giving? If you are, God will open the windows of heaven and pour out a blessing so rich, so abundant that you will not be able to contain it!**

Let me provide you with a sample confession for your tithe based on Deuteronomy 26. First read that entire chapter. Then relate it to the New Testament and hold your tithe before the Lord as you say out loud:

"*We profess this day unto the Lord God that we have come into the inheritance which the Lord swore to give us. We are in the land which You have provided for us in Jesus Christ, the kingdom of Almighty God (Colossians 1:13). We were sinners serving Satan; he was our god, but we called upon the name of Jesus and You heard our cry and delivered us from the power and authority of darkness and translated us into the kingdom of Your dear Son.*"

"*Jesus, as our Lord and High Priest, we bring the firstfruits of our income to You and worship the Lord our God with it. We rejoice in all the good which You have given to us and our household. We have hearkened to the voice of the Lord our God and have done according to all that He has commanded us. Now look down from Your holy habitation from heaven and bless us as You said in Deuteronomy 26:14,15 and Malachi 3:10,11.*"