



Dear Phil

TITHING part III

Does God require NT believers to tithe? Isn't the NT principle that everything belongs to God and we should want to give more than OT believers gave? In other words, is a tithe all God requires from us in our giving? Or should we be giving more than the tithe?

—Jim

Dear Jim,

With my previous two articles, I have only begun to touch the OT data on giving beyond tithing. The idea that tithing was a minimum OT standard is false. God expected His people to give offerings at the three pilgrim feasts: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles (Deut. 16:16-17). In addition to these offerings, God provided means for His people to offer thank offerings (Lev. 7:12-15), vow offerings (Lev. 23:38), and other kinds of offerings.

I'm afraid many Christians have completely lost sight of the biblical purposes for tithing. Foremost is God's desire to remind us that He is the center and focus of our lives, including our finances. Tithing promotes the fear of the Lord by reminding God's people that He owns it all, that He is the source of all bless-

ings, and that He is worthy of our joyous thank offerings of tithe. Further, tithes (and offerings) are God's method of providing for spiritual leaders whom He has chosen to serve Him and His people. How many churches are suffering spiritually because they fail to provide even a tithe of their increase to support their spiritual leader? And let's not forget that God designated the tithes of the third and sixth years to provide for the poor and needy!

You ask, "But what about the New Testament?" On two separate occasions, Jesus pronounced woe on the Pharisees' hypocrisy regarding tithing. In Luke 11:42a, Jesus said, "You pay tithe of mint and rue and every kind of garden herb, and yet disregard justice and the love of God." The Pharisees were tithing "down to the penny," but missing the main things: justice and love for God. We must make sure that we are not guilty of this kind of myopic attention to detail that loses sight of loving God and others. At the same time, we must not overlook what Jesus said in the second half of Luke 11:42, "but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others." In other words, it is not tithing versus loving God. It is both. We should tithe (a small concern) and not fail to love our neighbor and God (the biggest concern). Here then is our Lord Jesus Himself affirming the necessity of tithing (see also Mat. 23:23).

Because I find nothing in the Apostle Paul's writings or other NT writings that states the OT requirements for tithing were fulfilled in Christ or annulled by Him, I assume the principles they represent are still valid. When we study the NT, we find that it teaches that giving should be proportionate, reciprocal, systematic, and generous (1 Cor. 16:2; 2 Cor. 8:14-15; 9:6). Our giving should encompass needy saints (Rom. 12:13; 2 Cor. 9:12), the sick and aged (Acts 20:35), ruling and teaching elders (1 Tim. 5:17), Bible teachers (Gal 6:6-10), widows (1 Tim. 5:8-16), strangers (Heb. 13:2), and missionaries (3 John 5-7).

So, in answer to your questions, Jim: Yes, God requires us to tithe. No, I see no essential differences between the NT and OT principles for giving. No, a tithe is not all God expects from us. And, yes, we should be giving more than the tithe, as we are able (1 Cor. 16:2). Let's remember 2 Cor. 9:6, "He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully."

Sincerely,
Philip Brown

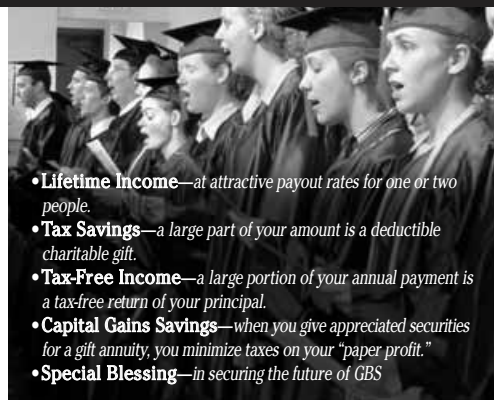
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