

## The Act of Giving



"Each man should give what he  
has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or  
under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."  
2Cor. 9:7 (NIV)

Every man according as he purposeth in his heart,  
so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity:  
for God loveth a cheerful giver.  
2Cor. 9:7 (KJV)

## THE ACT OF GIVING

What's the one word that comes to mind when you consider giving to your local Church? Is it *tithing*? If so, you are not unlike most Christians who often experience pressure and guilt when it comes to giving. The question is, Is this pressure and guilt from God or is it simply from the Pastor? Please, keep reading and I trust that the Word of God will answer, sufficiently, this question.

It's important that we consider what this word *really* means and how it is used in the Bible. A fitting place to start is with its definition. The New Ungers Bible Dictionary gives this definition of the *tithe*: The Hebrew word as seen in the Old Testament is *maaser*, in the New Testament the Greek is *dekate* – in both cases tithe means a *tenth*. Additionally, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible gives a more conclusive definition: *The tithe was the tenth of produce or property for the support of the priesthood or for other religious objectives*. Even with these definitions, it helps to see the *tithe* as it appears in history, and more importantly, as it appears in the Bible. In this way, we will get a full picture of this most readily used and often misunderstood term.

### 1. HISTORY

Throughout history, tithing was practiced by other nations besides Israel. This practice in ancient times included giving a portion of one's labor or the spoils of war. Moreover, in the vassal/suzerain relationship in which one nation controlled another as a feudal lord, often the vassal nation paid some form of taxation to the controlling nation for continued peace and protection. This was similar in practice to the tithe as a form of taxation.

The Zondervan Encyclopedia gives other examples: "In Egypt the people gave two tenths of their harvest to Pharaoh (Gen 47:24); among other nations: Syrians [1 Macc 10: 31; 11:35]; Lydians [*Herod* 1:89]; and Babylonians, M. Jastrow, *The Religion of Babylonia and Assyria* [1898], 668). Tithes were both political (tribute and taxation) and religious (connected with offerings)" (pg. 756).

### 2. THE BIBLE

In the Scriptures, the word tithe is used in several areas involving three time periods: before the Mosaic Law; under the Mosaic Law; and in the New Testament.

#### A. Before the Law of Moses

The first mention of the tithe is in Gen. 14:18-20, where Abraham, having returned from a victory over the Mesopotamian kings, gave Melchizedek, king-priest of Salem, a tenth of all the plunder. Nowhere does Scripture, up to this point, support the idea that God required this of Abraham. This act by Abraham does have great significance, which will be discussed later. However, Abraham gave a tenth to Melchizedek, not because he was ordered to do so by God neither was it given as a tribute to God, but most likely, this was the practice of that day. The relationship between God and Abraham during this time was not a *legal* agreement in which Abraham had to perform to be blessed. Rather, this relationship was based solely on God's *unconditional* promise to Abraham that says, I {God} will... I will... I will. (cf. Gen. 12:1-3)<sup>1</sup>

The next and only other mention of the tithe prior to the Law was when Jacob, while fleeing from his twin brother Esau, vowed this amount to God, if God would keep and prosper him (Gen. 28:13-22). This act of Jacob wasn't in response to God's demand nor was it an acceptable tribute to God; Jacob was seeking to purchase God's goodness in making a deal with God. Also, there is no mention of Jacob ever honoring this agreement.

<sup>1</sup> It is essential to have your Bible available to read those references listed throughout this paper. Also, the New International Version (NIV) of the Bible is the primary Bible translation used. However, the King James, New King James, and the New American Standard versions of the English Bible are just as suitable. The choice is with the reader, as you will find that the truths outlined in this paper are the same in each version.

Here is how McGee describes Jacobs's actions:

What is he doing? He wants to trade with God. He says, "Now, God, *if* You will do this for me...." But God has already *told* him that He is going to do every one of these things for him-- "I am going to keep you; I am going to bring you back to this land; I am going to give you this land; and I'm going to give you {an} offspring." Then Jacob turns around and bargains with Him, *If* You will do it, then I'll serve You.

God doesn't do business with us that way. He didn't do business that way with Jacob either. If He had, Jacob would never have made it back to that Land. God brought him back into that land by His grace and mercy. When Jacob did finally come back to Bethel, he came back a wiser man. Do you know what he came back to do? To worship and praise God for His mercy. God had been merciful to him" (Thru The Bible with J. Vernon McGee, Vol. I pg. 118).

God's mercy can be seen as He comes to Jacob after the horrible crime that his sons had committed at Shechem and tells him to "Go up to Bethel..." Jacob then tells his house hold to "Get rid of the foreign gods you have with you" (Gen. 35:1-3). Jacob, whose name means *trickster*, learned the hard way just what it means to totally trust God and not self-effort or ability. As he told Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers" (Gen. 47:9).

This pretty much sums it up: God's blessings – mercy, goodness, grace, etc – cannot be bargained for nor purchased, as Simon the sorcerer tried to do in Samaria and was rebuked by Peter. Simon the sorcerer was trying to "buy the gift of God with money!" (cf. Acts 8:18-24). Jacob can truly testify to God's mercy, which brought him back even while his clan practiced idolatry.

## B. Under the Mosaic Law

Now, we move into the area of Scripture that is often greatly misunderstood and misapplied – The Law. At the command of God, Moses gave the Law to Israel at Mt. Sinai. Which is why it is often referred to as the Mosaic Law or the Law of Moses (cf. Jn 7:23). The Law consisted of The Ten Commandments (Ex. 20:1-26); Law governing Israel's Social/Religious life (Ex. 21-23); and Law governing Israel's Priesthood (Ex 25-31). No Gentile nation was ever under the Law of Moses. The apostle Paul makes it clear in Rom. 2:14-15: (Indeed, when Gentiles, who do not have the law, do by nature things required by the law, they are a law for themselves, even though they do not have the law,<sup>15</sup> since they show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts now accusing, now even defending them.)

Even though every soul is under the *Natural Law*, which pricks the conscience, only Israel was under the Law of Moses. The Law of Moses reflects the Holiness of God, and through its righteous requirements, it shows the sinfulness of man, as he fails to live up to God's Holy standards. A child of God (one who is born again!) has been *credited with* the very righteousness of God, through faith in Christ Jesus (cf. 1Cor. 1:30; 2Cor 5:21). He is not under any *law* as a principle of life to gain favor with God; rather, a child of God, today, stands by '*Grace*' (see Rom 8:2-4). The Law, on the other hand, bound the Jew, even though it could not save him or her (cf. Heb. 7:18-19). Grace saved an Old Testament Jew, as with Abraham, through faith. As it is written, "Abraham believed God and it was *credited* to him as righteousness" (Rom 4:1-5). A Jew was not righteous before God because he did not sin, but because he believed God. Then, his belief or faith can be seen in his bringing forth animal sacrifices for his sins. Similarly, a Christian is not righteous because he does not sin--*this he occasionally does*--he is righteous because God, through Grace, has declared him to be righteous through faith *in* Christ.

Now if you think the Church is under the *Law*, consider these facts. The *Law*:

- 1) **Makes no one righteous** (Rom 3:20; Gal 2:16; Gal 2:21; Heb 7:19)
- 2) **Makes one conscious of sin** (Rom 3:20)
- 3) **Places one under a curse** (Gal 3:10-11)
- 4) **Produces Death** (Rom 7:10)
- 5) **Reveals sin to be "utterly sinful"** (Rom 7:12-13)
- 6) **Was put in charge to lead Israel to Christ** (Gal 3:23-24)

The *Law* was central in the life for an Israelite with all sorts of rules and regulations. Just as the Lord gave commands to govern every aspect of the life of His Nation, Israel, He gave regulations concerning their offering. Moving then to that part of the *Law* that deals with tithing, we begin with what the Lord decreed:

A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD. <sup>31</sup>If a man redeems any of his tithe, he must add a fifth of the value to it. <sup>32</sup>The entire tithe of the herd and flock--every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd's rod--will be holy to the LORD. <sup>33</sup>He must not pick out the good from the bad or make any substitution. If he does make a substitution, both the animal and its substitute become holy and cannot be redeemed.' <sup>34</sup>These are the commands the LORD gave Moses on Mount Sinai for the Israelites (Leviticus 27:30-34).

Notice the contents of the "tithe":

1. **Everything from the land:**
  - a. Grain
  - b. Fruit
2. **Animals:**
  - a. Herd
  - b. Flock

What follows are some specific regulations God gave to govern the tithing procedure. These regulations were clearly stated and required strict observance.

1. There could be no exchange (vv. 32, 33).
2. The Israelite could not use the crop until the tithe was offered to God (Lev. 23:14).
3. Because the Levites had no inheritance, they were allowed to use the tithe for food and also required to give a tenth of all they received from the other Israelites (Num. 18:21-32).
4. The Lord later commanded them to offer the tithes and sacrifices "at the place the Lord will choose..." (Deut 12:13-19).
5. Money could not be tithed. However, if the distance was too great to the place where they were to bring the tithe every third year, they could exchange it for money, go to the place {Jerusalem}, buy cattle, sheep, wine etc., and eat this as the tithe in the presence of the Lord (Deut. 14:22-28).

At the close of the Old Testament, Israel had reached a pitiable state of *apostasy* (a falling away). They were in a very sinful, backsliding state, as is recorded in the book of Malachi. Malachi records in chapter 3 how Israel had begun to "rob God" of tithes and offering. When it comes to giving, this is perhaps the most abused, misused, taken-out-of-context passage in all of Scripture. Countless clergy, as well as lay people, whether knowingly or unknowingly, wrongly apply this passage to the Church in an effort to "Get people to give." Here in Malachi, the Lord clearly is addressing Israel and not the Church, the Bride of Christ (cf. Mal. 1:1). As a matter of

fact, if one applies this passage (3:7-12) to the Church, he or she must apply not only the book of Malachi, but the entire Law of Moses as well.

In looking at the book of Malachi as a whole, one will discover that the phrase, *Robbing God*, is only one of six oracles that Malachi pronounced concerning sinful Israel. Below is a list of all six oracles as they appear in Scripture. Notice how the people questioned them each:

**1<sup>st</sup> Respond to God's Love (1:2-5)**

Question: "How have you loved us?"

**2<sup>nd</sup> Honor God (1:6-2:9)**

Question: "How have we shown contempt for your name?" "How have we defiled you?"

**3<sup>rd</sup> Be Faithful as God's Covenant People (2:10-16)**

Question: "Why?"

**4<sup>th</sup> Hope in God (2:17-3:6)**

Question: "How have we wearied Him?" "Where is the God of justice?"

**5<sup>th</sup> Obey God (3:7-12)**

Question: "How are we to return?" "How do we rob You?"

**6<sup>th</sup> Fear God (3:13-4:3)**

Question: "What have we said against You?"

A closer look at each of these six oracles will reveal how impossible it would be to apply to the Church what was being demanded of Israel. There are, however, principles and great truths that are useful in bringing us to a greater knowledge of our God and Savior.

1. In the first oracle the Lord says, "I have loved you." After their question, the Lord illustrates His love for Israel in his choice of Jacob over Esau. As we have already seen, this choice was not made because of any good Jacob had done (the choice was made before their birth—Gen. 25:23-24). Neither was the choice based on what good Jacob would do (he lied to his father, Isaac; thus, living up to his name "*trickster*"—Gen. 27:19) [see also Rom 9:11-24 on God's Sovereign Election].

A nation came from both Jacob and Esau—Israel and Edom. Even though, the Lord allowed the Assyrians and Babylonians to conquer and take captive Israel (both kingdoms), Israel will never be completely cut off (2 Kings 17:4-6; 24:10-16). In the Palestinian Covenant, God promised to bless Israel, if she obeyed His commands. If she were disobedient, He would bring on discipline. In the end, however, Israel will be gathered and brought back (Deut. 29-30; Rom. 9-11). Edom, on the other hand, was completely destroyed (see the book of Obadiah). **NOTHING IS SAID OR COULD BE SAID IN THIS FIRST ORACLE ABOUT THE CHURCH!**

2. In the second oracle the Lord says, "If I am a father where is the honor due me?" This was the Lord's relationship to the Nation as a whole. They dishonored the Lord by bringing "crippled or diseased animals" for a sacrifice which violated the Law (cf. Lev 22:2, 32). Notice how they could not plead ignorance of the Law, so they asked *how* they had dishonored the Lord, as if to make the Lord spell it out. Obviously, if one could apply the 5th oracle to the Church, this oracle must be applied as well. This would require the Church to start bringing sacrificial animals (in the words of Paul, "Banish the thought."). **CLEARLY, THE CHURCH IS NOT UNDER THIS SYSTEM!**

3. In the third oracle, the Lord points out that the Nation had broken faith with Him by "*breaking faith with one another*?" In the Law, God forbid them to intermarry with people of other nations. The Lord's desire for His *Holy Sanctuary*, Israel, was for her to remain pure. Instead, the Israelites defiled themselves by marrying women,

who worshiped false gods. The people, who had divorced their Jewish wives to marry pagans, began to "flood the Lord's altar with tears" because God would no longer accept their offering... And they had the audacity to wonder "Why?" **NEEDLESS TO SAY, IT IS A MISUSE OF SCRIPTURE AND A FAILURE TO RIGHTLY DIVIDE THE WORD TO TRY TO APPLY THIS ORACLE TO THE CHURCH!**

4. In the fourth oracle, the Lord says they had "wearied" Him. Once again they ask, "How?" They had begun to question the justice of God. Others had innocently questioned God's justice in the past (see Job 21:7-26; Ps 73:1-14; Ecc. 8:14; Jer 12:1-4; Hab. 1). God gave the answer to each of these inquirers by showing how He will come in the future to "judge the wicked." This Judgment can be seen in the following passages: Job 24:22-23; Ps 73:16-20; Ecc. 8:12-13; Jer 12:7-17; Hab. 2:3; 3:2-19). Following these judgments, He will establish the righteous ones. No judgment was pronounced against these inquirers. However, this inquiry into the justice of God in Malachi was not done in innocence; these hypocrites questioned God with bitter disdain. As a result, the judgment pronounced here also included these hypocritical inquirers.

5. In the fifth oracle the Lord says, "return to me, and I will return to you." They ask, "How are we to return?" The answer-- they have robbed God. Then comes the familiar, "How do we rob you?" To which the Lord responds, "In tithes and offerings." Offering is the Hebrew word *terumah* --*heave offering*-- which refers to that part of the tithe which was offered in support of the Levites and also offered up as a sacrifice by the Israelites (cf. Lev 7:34; Num. 18:28).

As was pointed out earlier, the tithe consisted of produce--plants, grains, animals, etc. This is made obvious here as the Lord uses the word "food" (NIV) or "meat" (KJV). The storehouse mentioned here were special rooms in the temple for keeping the tithed: grain, new wine, oil, etc. (cf. Neh. 10:38; 13:12). When the Lord says that He would "open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessings that you will not have room enough for it," He was referring to the Israelites not to the Church. For believers do not have a temple with storerooms, nor does the Church have Levites. Some have read into this verse, messages that are simply not there. The Scriptures must be interpreted as God intended and not *taken out of context* to get a "hidden" message. Once we start reading into the text that which does not exist--for the purpose of making a point--we negate the true meaning of the passage. **ONE SHOULD ALWAYS BE MINDFUL OF THE SCRIPTURAL WARNING OF NEITHER ADDING TO NOR DETRACTING FROM THE HOLY SCRIPTURES!**

As we discussed earlier, Israel's continued blessings depended on their obedience. Through their material blessings, they would be a testimony to the surrounding Nations (v. 12) of the true God. Every Christian, however, has been blessed with "all spiritual blessings in the heavenly realm in Christ" (Eph 1:3). The word for Believers today is, "let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven" (Matt. 5:16). The true testimony for the Church is not in material things, but in the life believers lead, daily, before God.

There is a sharp contrast between "Law" and "Grace" that is worth mentioning at this point. As the Scriptures says, "For the Law was given through Moses; Grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (John 1:17). We have already seen how Israel was in a legal relationship with the Lord. They had many stringent rules by which to live. The Church, however, is under Grace (*unmerited favor*). The Lord has graciously granted to us by faith, what Israel sought by works--**HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS!** Therefore, there is no law that the Christian must live by to gain God's favor. His commitment comes through his love for God and his understanding of and appreciation for God's Grace. The message to Israel was, "Obey!" The message to believers in Christ is, "I Beseech You" (Rom. 12:1) and "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teachings" (Jn 14:23)!"

So, when it comes to collecting an offering, it is not "YOU WILL"--as some suppose--rather, it is, "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a

cheerful giver" (2Cor. 9:7). No one has the authority to mandate what a believer ought to give. Even the Apostle Paul in collecting an offering from the Corinthians did not order them to give, but said, "I am not commanding you, but I want to test the sincerity of your love by comparing it with the earnestness of others" (2Cor. 8:8).

When clergy and lay persons use trickery, deception, pressure, or manipulation to get money from the Saints, they are resorting to unauthorized and ungodly tactics. As Paul writes, "Rather, we have renounced secret and shameful ways; we do not use deception, nor do we distort the word of God. On the contrary, by setting forth the truth plainly we commend ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God" (2Cor. 4:2).

6. In the sixth oracle, the Lord says, "You have said harsh things against me," and of course, they questioned this charge as well. They ask, "What have we said against You?" They confessed that their worship and service to the Lord were empty, useless, and without result. They felt their serving the Lord was in vain and said, "What did we gain..." But what they failed to realize is that they were steeped in sin and were not worshiping according to the Lord's decrees. This was made clear in the previous five oracles. Once again, they have the audacity to question God.

What is said here in this sixth oracle should stand as an example to the Church (1Cor. 10:11). When the Church mixes law and grace, the result is similar to what the Israelites were experiencing here – *meaningless worship*. In such cases, the emphasis is shifted from the grace of God, to the works of man--**THIS IS NOT WHAT THE APOSTLES TAUGHT!** As a result of this kind of teaching, there is a lot of emotionalism and spiritual 'acting' with no true substance. The Word of God is useless to the Christian when grace is overshadowed or mixed with works (see Gal 3:1-5; 5:4). The Lord Jesus says true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth (cf. Jn 4:23-24). The Word of God is Truth (cf. Jn. 17:17). Therefore, we must worship in spirit according to God's Word. **Even though this oracle, as well as the other five, serves as an example to us, it is not applicable to the Church.**

These six oracles should make it quite apparent that the book of Malachi was written primarily to Israel and not to the Bride of Christ, the Church. However, when rightly divided, they do serve as examples and lessons to teach us more of the whole counsel of God.

### C. In the New Testament

The only mention of tithing in the New Testament, aside from the Gospels, where the Law was still in force upon the people, is in the seventh chapter of the book of Hebrews (by the way, none of the Apostles taught tithing). In the book of Hebrews, the writer is not establishing the rite of tithing for the church; rather, he is showing the superiority of Christ's priesthood over that of the Levitical system. This he begins by pointing out the greatness of Melchizedez as king/priest. According to Old Testament record, Melchizedez was without:

1. Father or mother
2. Genealogy
3. Beginning of days
4. End of life

The author is not establishing that Melchizedez was some kind of God, in verse 4 the author points out that Melchizedez was a man. But, having established these important descriptions of Melchizedez, the author makes a comparison of the priesthood of Melchizedez and Jesus Christ. Like the recorded record of Melchizedez, Jesus, the Son of God, was without:

1. Father or mother (Jn 1:1)
2. Genealogy

3. Without beginning of days
4. Without end of life

The point is, even though Melchizedez was a man like any other man (Heb 7:4), the Old Testament does not give a beginning or an ending of his life or priesthood. This is done to show the nature of Jesus' priesthood and life. So, Melchizedez was a type of Christ with the major emphasis being on his priesthood as a type similar to that of Our High Priest--Jesus Christ. He does this by pointing out how Abraham, from whom the Levitical priesthood came, paid tithes to Melchizedez. In essence, Levi, who was still in the body of Abraham, paid tithes to Melchizedez.

As was discussed earlier, the Israelites paid tithes to the Levitical tribe, who ministered as officials in Israel. With Abraham and Melchizedez, this was a reversal of the order and sets Melchizedez's priesthood as superior to the Levitical priesthood. Since the priesthood of Christ is likened to that of Melchizedez, which came before the Levitical priesthood and was superior to the Levitical priesthood, the priesthood of Christ is superior to the Levitical order. The author then continues to compare the Lord's priesthood with that of Levi by showing how He came from the tribe of Juda, not Levi.

This teaching on Melchizedez is complex, to say the least. However, it would take much more space and require a deviation from the subject at hand to explain this profound teaching. Nevertheless, the author of Hebrews, clearly, is not teaching how Christians should tithe; rather, he is emphasizing the superior priesthood of Christ in comparison to the Levitical order. He does this to bring the people to trust Christ for salvation and not the old order of things under the old covenant.

Some teach that since we are also the children of Abraham, we ought to pay tithes as Abraham did. Where is it written that we should tithe as did Abraham? Abraham also brought sacrificial offerings and this before the Mosaic Law, but this does not mean Christians should do likewise. When the Word says, "Levi was still in the body of his ancestor," it means *physically* in the body of Abraham, not spiritually. All believers, today, are spiritual, not physical, descendants of Abraham unless of course they are Jewish. The promise that God gave Abraham that all nations would be blessed through him is fulfilled in Christ. It is through the blessing that comes through this promise that Abraham is said to be the father of us all. Paul writes in Rom. 4:16-17:

"Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all. <sup>17</sup>As it is written: 'I have made you a father of many nations.' He is our father in the sight of God, in whom he believed--the God who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were."

To say that because Abraham tithed to Melchizedez and thus the church should tithe is to go beyond what is written. It is a detestable insult to our Savior and to the Word of God to use such a rich passage about the superior priesthood of our Lord to wrongly teach that Christians should tithe.

### 3. CONCLUSION

That none of the Apostles mentioned or taught tithing makes it clear that it is not a New Testament teaching. Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (cf. Rom 11:13; Gal 2:8), covers areas from marriage to church discipline and much in between, but never mentioned tithing. However, in Second Corinthians, he does give the Church God's rule for *giving* under the new Covenant. This New Testament teaching on *giving* has Grace as its principle: "Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver."



No one has the right to tell a believer what he or she ought to give or not give. As believers grow in the Lord, with the Spirit's guide and control, they will give, increasingly, according to the Lord's will. Certainly, we are not suggesting that believers are not to give, nor are we suggesting that tithing is an evil thing. What we are suggesting, however, is that giving is to be kept between the giver and God, and that tithing was an Old Covenant form of taxation and is not to be used as a leverage to get believers to support local churches. As the Lord moved the hearts of the Israelites to give for the building of the tabernacle, so too will He move the hearts of his people to support local churches.

There is an example of this type of giving in the Old Testament. Yes, there was *freewill* offering in the Old Testament. In Exodus, the Lord commands Moses to receive an offering from "*each man whose heart prompts him to give*" (Ex. 25:2) to build the sanctuary. Here is a small narrative of what occurred:

First, Moses went to the people and said *exactly* what the Lord commanded him to say. He didn't use pressure and he didn't add his opinion: Moses said to the whole Israelite community, "This is what the LORD has commanded: <sup>5</sup> From what you have, take an offering for the LORD. Everyone who is *willing* is to bring to the LORD an offering of gold, silver and bronze; <sup>6</sup> blue, purple and scarlet yarn and fine linen; goat hair; Exodus 35:4-6.

Next, as the people received the word, only those who were willing gave, neither *trickery* nor *pressure* was used. "Then the whole Israelite community withdrew from Moses' presence, <sup>21</sup> and everyone who was *willing* and whose heart moved him came and brought an offering to the LORD for the work on the Tent of Meeting, for all its service, and for the sacred garments." Exodus 35:20-21

Finally, we see the results—no pressures, no trickery, no misuse of the Word of God. "So all the skilled craftsmen who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left their work <sup>5</sup> and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the LORD commanded to be done." <sup>6</sup> Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more..." Exodus 36:4-6

This should serve as an example to the Church today. The Lord worked in the hearts of these people a willingness to give. Moses did not issue a command to give, but he issued a command to stop giving. This is the nature of giving. Tithing was a mandate in the same way our government mandates the paying of taxes. But when the government wants you to contribute to the presidential campaign or a similar endeavor, it does not mandate, but leaves the choice to the giver. This is exactly what occurred with Israel. The tithe (taxation) was a mandate, but giving was not.

From the Old Testament example given above, one can confidently conclude that any work the Lord calls his servants to perform will receive His abundant support, which would not be based on manipulating individuals, but rather on God's divine provisions. Consider this. When a road crew goes out to pave the streets, the government provides them with tar, heavy equipment, rocks, etc. If this same crew went out to do a job and the supplies were not provided, then they would be attempting to do work not directed by {in the will of} the government. Similarly, when anyone goes out to do the work of the Lord, all the required resources will always be provided. If the ministry is not being divinely supported, then we must question whether or not such a ministry is in The Will of God!

IN THE END, CHRISTIANS GIVE, NOT TO MOVE THE LORD, BUT THEY GIVE AS A RESULT OF THE LORD MOVING THEM.

"For it is God who works in you to *will* and to *act* according to his good purpose" Phi 2:13

*May this be a blessing to you, my beloved*