

Tithing Principles in the Bible III Unrighteous Mammon!

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Let's just review a few Scriptures:

- *Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, today and forever.* That means the Lord of the Old Testament, the Lord of the New Testament, King into all eternity. He doesn't change!
- *Man shall live not by food alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God!* (Matt. 4:4).
- *We are to follow the spirit of the Law!*

Remember, tithing and giving of offerings are very important because God says *prove Me by doing!* That doesn't mean you can buy your way into the Kingdom of God.

As I've mentioned, I'm not giving this series of sermons so that you will send more to the Christian Biblical Church of God. I am doing them so you realize the blessings that God is going to give you and everyone thinks, many times, that they are financial blessings when they may not be.

I remember a man who said, 'I started tithing and I lost my job.' Well, six weeks later he found another job that paid 50% more. *'All things do work together for good to those who love God and are called according to His purpose.'* You have to keep that in mind.

God says that when you give, and you give liberally, then you will have *sufficiency in all things*. Let's see this principle in action, the principle of faith in tithing and giving, and how God will bless you. Remember what it says, that *God knows what you need before you ask Him*. In asking Him it's not just a matter of your asking, God wants to know that

- you love Him
- you trust Him
- you believe Him

The only reason I'm going through this is so

- you can draw closer to God
- you can trust God
- you can believe Him
- you can reap the benefits and blessings that come from God

Remember this: ***Not all blessings are physical!***

- How much is the knowledge of the Truth worth?

Think on that!

- How much is the knowledge of how the Bible is put together worth?

Of course, ***no amount of money is going to get you into the Kingdom of God!***

- How much is it worth when you pray that you come into the presence of God the Father spiritually? *No amount of money can buy that!*

Here is the whole thing that is true. Keeping the commandments of God:

- part of it's the Ten Commandments
- part of it's the food laws
- part of it's tithing and offering

Those who are on Social Security and pensions, that's not an increase. Many, many people who contribute to the Christian Biblical Church of God are in that category, and they send offerings very faithfully. God doesn't require that you tithe on that because it's not an increase. But whatever is an increase to you—through your labor, work or profit, whatever—then you should tithe on that.

Matthew 6:19: "Do not store up treasures for yourselves on earth... [which is what the world is after, and it's all going to come crashing in] ...where moth and rust spoil, and where thieves break through and steal; but store up treasures for yourselves in heaven..." (vs 19-20). This doesn't mean that you're going to send a money order through the post office and all of a sudden that it's going to be whisked up to heaven and God is going to use it up there. It means: What are the treasures you have in heaven?

- God's love for you!
- Christ's love for you!
- Your love for Them!
- God's blessing that He gives to you!

One of the treasures that God has stored up in heaven for you is proving God in giving tithes and offerings. Isn't that true? God says that you can prove Him with that. That's part of it.

This is not to get you to give more money, or to extract it from you or anything like that, because if you give grudgingly or by compulsion and you don't do it because you love God, you don't do it because you want to obey God—you only do it because you're told to do it—then that is worthless in itself. You need to understand that the whole thing is ***our love and attitude motivated by the Holy Spirit of God*** to do the things that are pleasing in God's sight.

Let's see how this works, v 21: "For where

your treasure is, there will your heart be also.” That’s true! How about all these day-traders on the stock market. What do they do? *They sit in front of their television or computer all day long to make the trades; looking at the returns.*

You can get up at 2 o’clock in the morning and you go turn on MSNBC and you have worldwide reports on the stock markets, the banking and the price of gold, oil, gas, the value of the euro, the dollar, yen and so forth. Everybody is glued to it. If that’s where your heart is, that’s what you’re going to be doing.

Here’s another part of the attitude, v 22: “The light of the body is the eye. Therefore, if your eye be sound, your whole body shall be *full of light.*” This is spiritually speaking. It can also be physical, too. There are some people whom you look at and you can almost say they have an evil eye. Only about two or three times in my whole lifetime have I ever met someone who has that. It’s rather startling.

Verse 23: “But if your eye be evil, your whole body shall be *full of darkness....* [Why? *Because you’re not living your life the way God wants!*] ...Therefore, if the light that *is* in you be darkness, how great *is* that darkness!” Satan is able to given an enlightenment that is darkness, because he’s the ‘prince of darkness.’

Here’s another principle, v 24: “No one is able... [no one has the power] ...to serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to *the* one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” James calls this ‘double-minded’; unstable (James 1:8).

Have you ever been in a situation on the job where you had two bosses and there’s contention between them and you are stuck in the middle. One boss comes and says, ‘Do this, this way.’ And the other boss comes around and says, ‘Why are you doing it that way.’ *He told me to.* ‘Well, I’m telling you to do it the other way.’

So, the first boss comes back and says, ‘How come you didn’t do it the way that I said?’ *The other boss came and told me that I needed to do it a different way.* You can’t do it! Same thing in everything!

- you cannot serve the true God and another god
- you cannot love your wife and another woman
- you cannot love your husband and another man

What that does, that bifurcates your mind and makes you a living hypocrite and you’re

unstable. “...You cannot serve God and mammon.” If your goal is to make lots of money, you can also go on early morning TV and channel surf and they always have this on there: make lots of money in real estate. Nothing down, buy these houses! Well, the housing market looks like it’s going down, so what’s going to happen? *Zero down, no money, foreclosures!* If it gets really bad, it’ll be just like a house of cards or dominos. Have you ever seen these great domino displays that they set up. You start it be clicking one domino and the whole thing goes. They’ve made them run as long as ten minutes, continuously through a pattern to do it.

Think about that when the economy collapses. It’s going to go down like dominos, not only through the whole economy, but perhaps through the whole world. Then He gives reassurance, and tie this in with Mal. 3;

Verse 25: “Because of this I say to you, do not be anxious about your life *as to* what you shall eat and what you shall drink; nor about your body *as to* what you shall wear. Is not life more than food, and the body *more* than clothing?... [then He gives an example]: ...Observe the birds of heaven: they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor do they gather into granaries; and your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?” (vs 25-26).

At our house on the edge of the front porch, we, for years, have had little sparrows. Now we have a flock of anywhere from 10-20 sparrows. They come around all the time, and there’s always a blackbird that tries to get them. They build their nest, because we have a tile roof and it overlaps on the edge, in between the tiles, and they get up in there. We sit there in the morning and look out the window and here are all the little birdies. After they have their little ones, we remember there was one that was no more than two inches long and it would fly up on the window and it didn’t know how to get food yet, so it would tap on the window.

You look at that and think that’s fantastic, but God’s taking care of it. God has given seed, insects, worms—God is taking care of them.

Verse 27: “But who among you, by taking careful thought... [here is improve yourself, become greater, bigger, stronger, mightier and so forth] ...is able to add one cubit to his stature?” Can’t happen! Or as it says in another place, ‘make something black white.’

Verse 28: “And why are you anxious about clothing?...” Some people are obsessed with clothing. Look at Imelda Marcos, she had 3,000 pairs of shoes! Look at how many men and women are obsessed with dress. They walk into department stores—and department stores know how to do it—

and first shot in is perfume and jewelry.

They even have compulsive buyers. I saw a report on this. Here was this woman, 'Oh, I just love to shop. When I get into the department store I can't help myself.' They've got everything right there, and she just charges everything. Plow through the department store compulsively buying; buy this, that and the other thing! I can tell you that Delores does not do that! She shops for the 80% off and gets it 90% of the time; very prudent, very wise and knows how to buy.

He says He wants you to have another object lesson, "...Observe the lilies of the field, how they grow: they do not labor, nor do they spin; but I say to you, not even Solomon in all his glory was arrayed as one of these" (vs 28-29). He says, 'I want you to think about this.'

Verse 30: "Now, if God so arrays the grass of the field, which today is and tomorrow is cast into the oven..." We know that in California. We've had a lot of rain, the grass is going to grow and you get out and drive around the hills and it's all green and beautiful. By the middle of May it's all dried up and it's all straw. It's short lived.

"...shall He not much rather clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore, do not be anxious..." (v 31). Don't worry about it because God is going to take care of it. He wants us to concentrate on attaining the goal that God has called you to attain to the Kingdom of God and eternal life. That's the overall goal; all these other physical things God will take care of. I have yet to meet any brethren in the Church that God is not doing this to take care of them. God is true to His word!

"...saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we be clothed?' For the nations seek after all these things. And your heavenly Father knows that you have need of all these things" (vs 31-32). After all, He did make us—didn't He? *Yes!* What about your circumstances? It doesn't mean that you sit in your house or wherever you are and say, 'God, I'm here, take care of me.' NO! He expects you to work, to labor, to plan, to pray about it. God will bless and prosper your way as you do it.

Whether you have much or whether you have little, if you're faithful to God, He'll take care of you. That's a promise that He has given.

Verse 33: "**But as for you, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.**" That's the way that it's going to have to be.

Let's see a parable about the unrighteous steward and the unrighteous mammon. We'll talk

about money a little later. I'll just have to say that none of have any *real* money. I want you to think about that as we go along.

Luke 16:1: "And He also said to His disciples, 'There was a certain rich man who had a steward, and he was accused of wasting his *master's* goods.'" He was the one who would buy and sell. A steward is someone who takes care of someone else's property. We call it today 'a trust.' Same way with the Gospel. Paul said, 'Woe to me if I don't preach the Gospel. If I do it willingly, I have a reward. But if I do it against my will I have a stewardship.' So, either way, he's got to handle it correctly.

Verse 2: "And after calling him, he said to him, 'What *is* this I hear concerning you? Render an account of your stewardship, for you can no longer be steward.'" We're going to see why the steward was wise. It was at the point that He was accused of wasting all of his master's goods. His master probably didn't figured there was very much left.

Verse 3: "Now the steward said within himself, 'What shall I do, for my lord is taking away the stewardship from me? I am not able to dig; I am ashamed to beg. I know what I will do, that, when I have been removed *from* the stewardship, they may receive me into their houses'" (vs 3-4). Financially you need someone in the world to help you is what it's talking about here.

Verse 5: "And after calling each one of his lord's debtors to *him*, he said to the first, 'How much do you owe my lord?'" Obviously, he was dealing in goods and money, as well.

Verse 6: "And he said, 'A hundred baths of oil.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill, and sit down immediately *and* write fifty.'" Discount sale! Isn't that what happens when a business starts going bad? They have discount sales, and then the prudent buyer comes along. It's like the Proverb says, 'The seller says it's not worth too much.' The buyer says, 'I'll offer you so much' and goes away and says, 'Look what I got.' The seller went away and said, 'I've recovered.' This is what's happening here.

Verse 7: "Then to another he said, 'And how much do you owe?' And he said, 'A hundred measures of wheat.' And he said to him, 'Take your bill and write eighty.' And the lord praised the unrighteous steward..." (vs 7-8). When you first read that you wonder why did the lord praise the unrighteous steward. The reason is *he got something* instead of bringing him nothing!

"...because he had acted prudently. For the children of this world are more prudent in their own generation than the children of light" (v 8). We can

learn an awful lot from people in the world on how to manage money, provided they're honest. Also understand that giving tithes and offerings you're going to manage your money better, without a doubt! Always remember this: ***you are going to tithe one way or the other!***

One man said, 'I quit tithing and I tithed all the way to the bankruptcy court.' Or you're going to quit tithing or don't believe in it, and you're going to end up spending it on so many things that you never knew were going to come around.

Verse 9: "And I tell you, make friends for yourselves by means of the mammon of unrighteousness; so that, when you fail... [financially] ...they may receive you into the age-lasting dwellings." In other words, this is good through this age. You will have someone who will give you a job; someone who will have understanding for you.

Here's the whole lesson, and I want you to think about this in relationship to tithes and offerings. Here's the thing: God says that you have 'robbed Me in tithes and offerings.' What you have is something that is not your own. Also, you can liken this to the Holy Spirit. Having the Holy Spirit is not your own, it comes from God. Developing the character of God comes from God! You can apply many, many things to it this way.

Verse 10: "The one who *is* faithful in *the things that are* least is also faithful in much... [because it is the heart and mind involved] ...and the one who *is* unrighteous in *the things that are* least is also unrighteous in much." Do you think God is going to have you in the Kingdom of God if you don't believe in tithing; that he's going to pay you in tithes that people that are going to pay to the kings and priests that reign with Christ? Think about that! Consider that!

Verse 11: "Therefore, if you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will entrust to you the true *riches*? And if you have not been faithful in that which *is* another's, who will give to you your own?.... [We have the same thing here]: ...No servant is able to serve two masters..." (vs 11-13).

- You can't serve yourself and serve God!
- You can't have other gods and serve the true God!
- You can't have idols and serve the true God!
- You can't keep Sunday and have the true God!
- You can't take His name in vain, live in adultery, be murdering and still say that you belong to God!

Verse 14: "Now, the Pharisees who were also covetous, heard all these things; and they ridiculed Him. And He said to them, 'You are those who justify themselves before men, but God knows your hearts; for that which is highly esteemed among men is an abomination before God'" (vs 14-15).

Then He gave them a lesson, v 16: "The Law and the Prophets *were* until John... [that was the highest authority; there is a higher Authority] ...from that time the Kingdom of God is preached... [beginning with John the Baptist and Jesus Christ—*repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand*] ...and everyone zealously strives to enter it. But it is easier *for* heaven and earth to pass away than *for* one tittle of the law to fail." (vs 16-17). We need to consider that in all these things as we look at them.

Does God have a claim on the increase of your money? Since we really don't have *real* money today, does God have a claim on your increase regardless of the means for counting of value?

The Herodians wanted to trip Jesus up on giving tribute to Caesar, Matthew 22:17: "Therefore, tell us, what do You think? Is it lawful to give tribute to Caesar, or not?" If you think the IRS is over-gouging, imagine what it was with Caesar.

Verse 18: "But Jesus, knowing their wickedness, said, 'Why do you tempt Me, *you* hypocrites? Show Me the tribute coin.'...." (vs 18-19). They brought Him a silver coin. Gold and silver is real money! Gold and silver always has intrinsic value, as well as land.

"...And they brought to Him a silver coin. And He said to them, 'Whose image and inscription *is on* this?' They said to Him, 'Caesar's.' And He said to them, 'Render then the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of God to God'" (vs 19-21). Did they render money to God? Did they tithe money to God?

In the Apocrypha writings of the practices of the Jews between the inter-testamental period, they even sent tithes of gold to Babylon to the temple in Jerusalem. Did they tithe money and give it to the temple? In reading this account in Mark 12, we really can't distinguish between tithing and offering. But remember, ***all gold and silver belongs to God!*** The earth is His and everything belongs to Him.

Mark 12:41: "And after sitting down opposite the *temple* treasury..." Let me tell you a little bit about the temple treasury. That was the banking center of the whole Jewish world.

If you had a lot of gold and silver and you wanted to put it somewhere where you could earn a little money, you could send it to Jerusalem. That's why in Matt. 25 Jesus talks about putting the money

in the bank to receive at least interest when he returned to the one who received the one talent. When they destroyed the temple, they got everybody's gold and silver. It wasn't just warehouses of grain, warehouses of lockers of meat hanging, and skins of animals and things like this. No! There was a temple treasury.

"...He observed how the people were casting money into the treasury... [which then is money that belonged to God] ...and many rich ones were putting *in* much" (v 41). It says in Rom. 12 that the one who gives, 'let him give liberally, or generously.'

Verse 42: "And one poor widow came *and* dropped *in* two tiny coins..." The little mites. In *A Harmony of the Gospels* we've got a picture of two little mites. That's like a penny today,

"...which is equal to one copper coin" (v 42). By the way, today it cost more to make copper pennies than its worth. Nothing like a little inflation!

Verse 43: "Then He called His disciples to *Him* and said to them, 'Truly I say to you, this poor widow has put *in* more than all of those who are casting *money* into the treasury. For everyone *else* contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her destitution put *in* as much as she had, *giving* all her living'" (vs 43-44).

That was probably *all of her living* for the immediate future. Whatever that may be. I'm sure that it was not all of her living for the rest of her life, but at least for that particular time. Yes, God does have that claim, and He does expect it.

Let's look at the *deceitfulness* of riches. There is a *deceitfulness* in riches. It's just like the farmer in Luke 12 where he got a great crop and he said, 'Oh, what am I going to do? Soul, build your bigger barns, better granaries, put it all in there and say I've got enough to live for a long time and sit back and take your ease.'

Jesus said, 'You fool, this night your life is required of you.' Isn't it true that there's a Proverb that says, 'Wealth gained improperly, those who do so will die early.' Just observe some of the financial things, some of those who are involved in it. Remember what happened when the crash came in 1929? There were a lot of suicides, men and women jumping out of windows on Wall Street in New York City because everything crashed. All the money that they had, everything came to an end.

Mark 4:18: "And those which were sown among the thorns, these are the ones who hear the Word, but the cares of this life..." (vs 18-19). They're worried about:

- What will my wife think?
- What will my husband think?
- What will my boss think?
- What will my friends think?
- How am I going to live?
- How am I going to get along?
- How can I possibly make it by keeping the Sabbath and the Holy Days?

"...and the deceitfulness of riches..." (v 19). 'I've got all these riches and wealth and I've got to somehow take care of it.' Notice what that leads to:

"...and the lusts of other things *that* come into *their lives* choke the Word, and it becomes unfruitful" (v 19). God wants us to bring forth a lot of fruit; not just of tithes and offerings, but of character. If you have character you will obey God and you'll take care of tithes and offerings without a doubt.

Let's look at another deceitfulness that is important to understand. Let's tie this in with the Laodiceans, because the Laodiceans are caught up in the *deceitfulness of riches*. What do they say? *I'm rich and increased with goods!* If we aren't living in a Laodiceans society where people are rich and increased with goods and have need of nothing, I don't know what to tell you.

If you want to know the difference in the wealth in America and a foreign country, just travel to Southern California and go into Tijuana, Mexico, the first city right on the border, and it's like day and night. Then if you drive down to Ensenada, little teeny roads and ruts and everything like this. You just came from America on eight-lanes of freeway. Right down to the gate and you go through and all of a sudden you see a different world: dirt roads, filthy settings, people living in cardboard huts. Amazing!

There's a *deceitfulness of riches*; you don't honor God! What does that lead to with the lust of other things? What is the principle for unleavened bread: ***a little leaven leavens the whole lump!*** I've seen people get angry and mad and bitter! Remember that 'two wrongs don't make a right.' If the money is not administered correctly and reported by the ministry—those who are in charge of it—*that is a wrong*. If you quit tithing and steal from God, *that is a wrong*.

I remember one man who was healed miraculously; he couldn't even walk. He walked later and became a real fine minister, and then he got so disillusioned, he got so bitter, just absolutely bitter of heart, mind and soul, and he just lived the rest of his life in hatefulness. Rather, he should have remembered that 'two wrongs don't make a right.' Why should I let someone else's sin take me away

from God? There may be a time because of that, like some people have done, that they've been faithful with their tithes and offerings and put them in the bank till they could figure out where they needed to send it, where it's used properly. I'm not asking for people to send more money to us. I'm just asking that you get right with God and wherever the storehouse is and you see people doing the work of God, send it there.

I wish that every Church of God would get as right with God as they could, and that combined together—not as one organization, but separately under different administrations—really preach the Gospel, feed the flock, take care of the brethren and produce the things that we need to produce, and not get carried away with the deceitfulness of riches.

Hebrews 3:12: “Beware, brethren, lest perhaps there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief... [you don't believe God, you don't believe Christ] ...in apostatizing from *the* living God. Rather, be encouraging one another each day [daily], while it is called 'today,' **so that none of you become hardened by the deceitfulness of sin**” (vs 12-13).

So, if you have the deceitfulness of riches and the deceitfulness of sin combined together you have heap big trouble! You know that things are going to come along!

(go to the next track)

Let's see what Jesus said concerning tithes and offerings. The Pharisees were very factitious in the letter of the Law, but let's see that they had the wrong focus.

Matthew 23:23: “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithes of mint and anise and cummin... [measure it all out] ...but you have abandoned the more important *matters* of the Law—**judgment, and mercy and faith**...”

People can get so focused in on money. Even some of the Churches of God have done that, so focused in on money, and then they get carried away with the *deceitfulness* of riches and overspend. They get themselves in a bind and send out desperate letters to the brethren: ‘Oh, brethren, send in more money!’ Even one said to go to the bank and borrow the money and send it in. That's being hypocritical. That's why we budget; what God sends, that's what we use. That's why we give a detailed accounting every year where the money goes, because we have a stewardship to do it.

Paul took wages; the Church collected the tithes. But notice what Jesus says, “...These *you* were **obligated** to do, and not to leave the others undone” (v 23). In other words, tithing is important,

but it is not the major thing.

The major thing is Matthew 6:33: “But *as for you*, seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.” The major things are *judgment, mercy and faith!*

Let's see the parallel account, because Luke records something just a little bit differently, Luke 11:39: “Then the Lord said to him...”—after a Pharisee saw that He had not washed His hands properly. You couldn't eat unless you washed your hands. I tell you what, you figure this out: What if you're a skyscraper—a steel beam contractor—and you're up 40 floors? You have your lunch pail and it's time to eat. You take off your gloves, and maybe if there's a little something on your hands you wipe it on your shoulder and open up your lunch bucket and eat. Here's Jesus' answer:

“...‘Now, you Pharisees cleanse the outside of the cup and the dish, but inside you are full of greediness and wickedness.... [God is interested in the heart—*judgment, mercy and faith*] ...Fools... [Jesus pulled no punches!] ...*did* not He Who made the outside also make the inside? Rather, give alms *from* the things that are within...” (vs 39-41). What does that mean?

- you have *compassion*
- you have *mercy*
- you have *understanding*

Instead of everything to such a rigid of the law thing, that you absolutely crucify everyone who doesn't keep the very little letter of it. That's what they were doing—*picky!*

“...and behold, all things are clean to you. But woe to you, Pharisees! For you pay tithes of mint and rue and every herb, but you pass over the judgment and the love of God...” (vs 41-42). You've got to have the love of God! Even the Pharisees understood that you're to *love the Lord your God with all your heart, mind, soul and being!* If you do that you're not going to want to do anything against God—correct?

“...It is **obligatory** *for you* to do these things...” (v 42). Is tithing obligatory? *God says that it's His!* If you have an argument with that, don't take out on me, go take it out on God because He's the One Who gave the laws. He's the One Who said to do this.

“...It is obligatory *for you* to do these things and not to set aside those *lesser things*” (v 42). So, it is a lesser thing; it is not the major thing. That's why speak on this once a year. On occasion, like this, I may have to give more sermons in a row on it.

Maybe next year I won't speak on it, but just as a reminder as we go along. We don't want to focus in on dollars and money. We want to focus in on:

- teaching the brethren
- loving God
- serving God
- providing for the brethren the things that they need to grow in grace and knowledge

The money that we use for it, we're happy to use for it, because that's what it's intended for.

Our cars are paid for; our house is paid for. We don't need lots of money. We don't want lots of money. Our goal is not money. Our goal is to serve the brethren and help them have a personal relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ, and that's what it's all about.

- for God to bless you
- for you to love God
- for us to love each other

Otherwise, all the money in the world isn't going to amount to a 'hill of beans'—is it? *No!* We need to really keep that in mind.

This is the way that too many people do: They trust in themselves and despise others; they look down on others. 'Oh, I am so righteous! It's like the snobbery of the establishment elite! They tell everyone else how to run their lives, and they steal everybody blind! You have covetousness in government, in lobbyists.

Luke 18:9: "And to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others, He also spoke this parable..." That's what happens. When you get so caught up in yourself and your righteousness, you despise other people because you're so good. God doesn't want that. Did Christ do that? *No!* He gave up everything to save us! Are we to have the mind of Christ? *Of course!* It's entirely different.

Jesus said to those who were going to serve that it's not going to be like the Gentiles 'who lord it over,' extract money and beat them up. *No!* You go serve because the one who is greatest is the one who serves the most. Don't get this attitude of despising others, He spoke this parable:

Verse 10: 'Two men went up into the temple to pray...' They should go to the temple to pray, when the temple was there. Think about this in relationship to having access to the temple in heaven above and God the Father.

"...the one *was* a Pharisee and the other a tax collector" (v 10). In your own mind translate that 'an IRS agent.' Remember, the government *always*

extracts what they want. Of course, it's true that universally, everywhere in the world, tax collectors are the most despised of all.

Verse 11: "The Pharisee stood and prayed with himself... [he wasn't praying to God; he mentioned God's name, but he was praying to himself while he thanked God] ...in this manner: 'God, I thank You that I am not like other men...' " (v 11).

What are you going to do with 'all have sinned and come short of the glory of God'? We're not to trust in *our* righteousness. Besides, how can a human being be spiritually righteous unless it's by the Spirit of God, by God's gift of the imputation of the righteousness of Jesus Christ? *You can't do it!*

"...not like other men—extortioners, unrighteous, adulterers—or even as this tax collector. I fast twice in the week, **and I give a tithe of everything that I gain**" (vs 11-12). Remember, Jesus said that it was *obligatory to do so!* If he tithes of everything that he gained, that means money and everything else.

The tax collector being convicted in his heart had a totally different attitude toward God, v 13: "And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat himself on *the* chest, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner.'" Unless there is repentance, praising God and understanding about our weak human condition, and asking God for help and mercy, that puts us in right standing with God.

Verse 14, Jesus said: "I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself shall be humbled... [always happens] ...and the one who humbles himself... [to God] ...shall be exalted"—by God in due time. Promotion doesn't come from the north, south, east or west; *it comes from God!*

Look what happens when ministers exalt themselves and begin to beat the face of the brethren for money, or beat them up for 'projects,' or give themselves great, exalted titles. God doesn't want that. If we don't have the love of God, the Spirit of God, all the self-exaltation in the world doesn't gain one wit with God. As a matter of fact, it puts you in dire straights with God when you understand it.

Now let's see how the Church operated, and we're going to see *from the beginning* the Church operated with money. As those who served at the altar and in the temple lived of the things of the temple. The things of the temple were all the sacrifices, tithes and offering of money that was given; they lived of that. Even in a raw agricultural society you've got to have money, because you can't

get everything by barter and trade. Some of the things that you need are hundreds of miles away. You can't barter your eggs for some cloth.

What they would do, even in the west, they would come and there was a merchant who ran a general store, and you bring your eggs and chickens in and you sell them to him and he gives you money, and then you buy what you need and he sells the eggs and chickens to those who need that.

After the disciples were released and told the brethren all that had happened, Acts 4:24: "And when they heard *this*, they lifted up *their* voices to God with one accord and said, 'O Master, You *are* the God Who made the heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that *are* in them, Who by *the* mouth of Your servant David did say, "Why did the nations insolently rage, and the people imagine vain things?... [Rage against God!] ...The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord and against His Christ."... [just rehearsing] ...For of a truth they did gather together against Your Holy Son, Jesus, Whom You did anoint, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with *the* Gentiles and *the* people of Israel, to do whatever Your hand and Your counsel had predetermined to take place. And now, Lord, look upon their threatening, and grant that Your servants may speak Your Word with all boldness'" (vs 24-29).

What is that going to take? *Sooner or later*—and it's going to be sooner—*they needed money to carry on*, because a lot of the brethren were still there after Pentecost and staying in Jerusalem. They had all things in common. But what they needed first was the power of God.

Verse 30: "'By reaching out Your hand to heal... [and we'll see how that was done miraculously] ...and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Your Holy Son, Jesus.' And when they had prayed... [How is this for an answer to prayer?]: ...the place in which they were assembled was shaken; and they were all filled with *the* Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul... [that's what God wants us to be] ...neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things common" (vs 30-32).

If you have a lot of people who come in from countries roundabout, they have no place to stay, they're not working and so forth, and you need to share all things.

Verse 33: "And with great power the apostles testified of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and great grace was upon them all. For neither was anyone among them in want; for as many as were

owners of lands or houses **sold them**..." (vs 33-34). That's much like what happened when Moses called for the offering to build the tabernacle—bring your gold, silver, raiment of purple, blue and red and so forth. They sold them!

"...and brought the amounts of those *things* that were sold, and laid *the money* at the feet of the apostles; and distribution was made to each one according to his need" (vs 34-35). The apostles were stewards of the matter. Later they selected seven other men to handle it because it became too much for the apostles to do and they couldn't administer the Word of God the way that they ought to.

Verse 36: "And Joses, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (which is, being interpreted, "son of consolation"), a Levite, born *in the country* of Cyprus, had land; *and he sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet"* (vs 36-37).

We're going to see something that is important. It's not the money; the money is secondary. What do you think is the important thing? *Let your 'yes' be yes, and your 'no' be no!* This is what happened to Ananias and Sapphira, because the brethren were selling possessions and bring the money in. Ananias and Sapphira had a piece of property that they sold and they probably got more than they figured.

Let's say in today's terms they were figuring to get \$50,000 and they got \$70,000. Rather than their 'yes' be yes: 'when we sell it we'll bring it all in' they connived and said, 'Let's bring the \$50,000 and we'll keep the \$20,000. This doesn't mean that they went into a starvation mode, but we need to learn the lesson.

Acts 5:1: "Now, a certain man named Ananias, with his wife Sapphira, sold a possession, and kept back *part* of the price *for* himself, his wife also being aware of *it*; and he brought a certain portion *and laid it at the apostles' feet"* (vs 1-2).

- this had to do with giving to the Church
- this had to do with what you determined in your mind
- this had to do with rendering to God the things that are God's

If you say, 'I'm pledging this, you better do it.' You can go back to Lev. 27 and read the principle that if you pledge a house for so much, if you wanted to redeem it you added 20% to it. Here they said they were going to sell it and we're going to give it to the apostles.

Verse 3: "But Peter said, 'Ananias, why did Satan fill your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to

keep back *part* of the price of the estate? Before it was sold, was it not yours?....” (vs 3-4). You had control over it. you didn’t have to volunteer and say that you were going to sell it.

“...And after you sold it, was it *not* in your own authority?... [In other words, you said you were going to give it, and it is was your pledge to God] ...Why did you contrive this thing in your heart? You have not lied to men, but to God.’ And when Ananias heard these words, he fell down and expired; and great fear came upon all those who heard these things” (vs 4-5). That got everybody’s attention—didn’t it? What happened?

Verse 6: “Then the young men wound him up, and carried *him* out *and* buried *him*. Now, it came to pass about three hours later... [that’s fast] ...*that* his wife also came in, not knowing what had taken place. And Peter said to her, ‘Tell me if you sold the estate for so much?’ And she said, ‘Yes, for so much.’ Then Peter said to her, ‘Why *is it* that you agreed together to tempt the Spirit of *the* Lord? Behold, the feet of those who buried your husband *are* at the door, and they shall carry you out.’ And she immediately fell down at his feet and expired. And the young men came in and found her dead; and they carried *her* out *and* buried *her* by her husband. Then great fear came upon the whole church, and upon all who heard these things” (vs 6-11).

In other words, if God is going to give His power, and if He’s going to have you preach the Gospel and people get together and agree on a certain thing, then their ‘yes’ better be *yes* and their ‘no’ better be *no*. What is it that they pledged after the Declaration of Independence? *Our honor, our wealth and our lives!* That’s what you do when you’re baptized. ***You pledge your whole life to God!***

Then everything exploded with the Church and let’s see what happened here. Remember, before the Passover the scribes and Pharisees were saying of Jesus—after His triumphal entry into Jerusalem—‘Look, the whole world is going after Him, and we are losing.’ All these covetous greedy Pharisees were losing. When people left, what were they losing? *Income! Tithes!*

Let’s see what happened; God has a method in doing these things, v 12: “And many signs and wonders were done among the people by the hands of the apostles; (and they were all with one accord in Solomon’s porch... [right there at the temple] ...and none of the others... [who were not of the apostles and brethren] ...dared to join them, but the people magnified them; and believers were added all the more to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women)” (vs 12-14). Imagine this: Talk about sealing the authority and power of the apostles that they are from God.

Verse 15: :Insomuch *that the people were* bringing out the sick into the streets and putting *them* on beds and stretchers, so that at least the shadow of Peter passing by might overshadow some of them”—that is be healed! Imagine that? Just walk by and a shadow hits you and you’re well!

Verse 16: “And a multitude from the cities round about also came together to Jerusalem, bringing sick ones and those beset by unclean spirits; *and* they were all healed.” The priests and Sadducees and Pharisees had everybody watching this; they knew this was going on! Can you imagine if we put this in a movie what kind of movie this would make?

Verse 17: “Then the high priest rose up, and all those with him, being of *the* sect of the Sadducees...” and they were happy and delighted and ran out and shook the hands of the apostles and congratulated them on the wondrous works that God had done. ***NO!***

“...*and* they were filled with anger... [covetousness, jealousy] ...And they laid their hands on the apostles... [arrested them] ...and put them in *the* public hold. But during the night an angel of *the* Lord *came and* opened the doors of the prison; and after bringing them out, he said, ‘Go and stand in the temple, *and* speak to the people all the words of this life.’ And after hearing *that*, they entered into the temple at dawn and taught. Now, when the high priest and those with him came, they called together the Sanhedrin and all the elderhood of the sons of Israel, and sent to the prison to have them brought. But when the officers came, they did not find them in the prison; and when they returned, they reported, saying, ‘We indeed found the prison locked with all security, and the keepers standing outside in front of the doors; but after opening *them*, we did not find anyone inside.’ And when they heard these words, both the *high* priest and the captain of the temple, and the chief priests also, were utterly perplexed as to what this could lead to. But a certain one came *and* reported to them, saying, ‘Behold, the men whom you put in the prison are standing in the temple and teaching the people.’” (vs 17-25).

So, they came up gingerly and said, ‘Come on, you’ve got an appointment with the Sanhedrin.’ What did they say?

Verse 27: “And they brought them in *and* set *them* before the Sanhedrin...” Can you imagine them all decked out in their finery, the whole group of about 120 in the Sanhedrin looking down at these fishermen? These despised Galileans! Uneducated dolts doing all of this!

“...And the high priest asked them, saying, ‘Did we not order you by a *direct* command not to

teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your teaching, with *the* purpose of bringing this man's blood upon us.' But Peter and the apostles answered *and* said..." (vs 27-29)—'We're sorry!' **NO!**

"...‘We are obligated to obey God rather than men. The God of our fathers raised up Jesus Whom you killed *by* hanging *Him* on a tree. Him has God exalted by His right hand *to be* a Prince and Savior, to give repentance and remission of sins to Israel. And we are His witnesses of these things, as *is* also the Holy Spirit, which God has given to those who obey Him”’ (vs 29-32). He was saying in effect, ‘You don’t obey Him so you don’t have the Spirit of God!’ Think about that! That’s the thing we need in our lives, the Holy Spirit of God by loving and obeying Him.

Verse 33: “Now, when they heard *this*, they were cut *to the heart* and took counsel to put them to death. But a certain man stood up, a Pharisee in the Sanhedrin, Gamaliel by name, a teacher of the law *who was* honored by all the people, *and* commanded *that* the apostles be put out for a short while” (vs 33-34).

Gamaliel said, v 38: “And now I say to you, withdraw from these men, and let them alone; for if this counsel or this work be from men, it will be overthrown; but if it be from God, you do not have the power to overthrow it. *Take heed*, lest you be found to be fighting even against God” (vs 38-39). So they beat them and let them go.

Now let’s see how the Church was run by money. Tithing in the New Testament is different than tithing in the Old Testament, because the Church always ran on money. Let’s see the instructions that Peter gave to the elders. The elders were the ones who became the stewards of the tithes and offerings. That’s why when Paul said that he ‘took wages’ from other churches’ they sent him money.

- Did they send him oxen?
- Did they send him a goat?
- Did they send him a 100 lb. sack of wheat and say ‘good luck, Paul’?
- *No! They sent him money!*

1-Peter 5:1: “*The* elders who *are* among you I exhort, even as a fellow elder, and an *eyewitness* of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker of the glory that is about to be revealed.” That’s when they saw him transfigured on the Holy Mount.

Verse 2: “Feed the flock of God *that is* among you... [Acts 20:28_[transcriber’s correction]—purchased with His blood] ...exercising oversight not by compulsion, but willingly; not in fondness of

dishonest gain...” That is collecting tithes and offerings and not handling it in a proper way.

“...but *with an eager attitude*; not as exercising lordship over *your* possessions; but *by* being examples to the flock *of God*” (vs 2-3). That’s why there was the warning with it.

Let’s see one of the requirements of an overseer or an elder. The pope says, ‘I’ve taken a poverty vow, but he administers the greatest fortune in the world and has everything that he needs.

1-Timothy 3:1: “Faithful *is* the saying, ‘If any man aspires to *be* an overseer...” The *KJV* says ‘bishop’; that’s one of the badly translated verses in the New Testament. You’re *to oversee*, and with that you don’t need a hierarchy.

“...he desires a good work.’ Now then, it is obligatory *that* the overseer be blameless, *the* husband of one wife, vigilant, serious-minded, respectable, hospitable, skillful in teaching; not given to much wine, not a bully, not greedy for selfish gain; but kind, not a quarreler, not a lover of money...” (vs 1-3)—because he’ll take it to himself.

There’s a Catholic priest who has made millions and millions by sending out written little blessings. People send in money; he charges for it. I’ve even had one man say, ‘Well, why are you a non-profit corporation? Why don’t you just become a regular business and then you sell everything that you have?’ God says, ‘Buy the Truth and sell it not!’ So, we don’t sell it.

The first part of 1-Tim. 5 talks about widow relief in the Church, that if she’s a widow she can be put on the Church roll. We give a lot of assistance out, as well, and everything that we do is to help the brethren build that relationship with God. That’s what is the important thing. I don’t need notoriety, I don’t want notoriety, fame, or people to treat me as some great thing. I’m not! I’m a sinner like everyone of us. ‘All of have sinned and come short of the glory of God!’

1-Timothy 5:17: “Let the *ordained* elders... [that’s differentiated from elder men in the Church] ...who are leading well be counted worthy of double honor...” That could also be remuneration. They had full-time ministers just like Paul when he was full-time. There were times when he worked. There were times when he was full-time. When he was full-time he ‘drew wages.’

“...especially those **who are laboring** in the Word and doctrine” (v 17)—teaching doctrine; also it can mean they were copying down the Epistles of Paul and the apostles to circulate them to the other congregations working in the Word of God.

Verse 18: “For the Scripture says, ‘You shall

not muzzle an ox treading out *the* corn,' and, 'The workman *is* worthy of his hire.'" They had administration of the monetary tithes and offerings that the brethren were given, and they paid the ministers and did those things.

Let's look at something else. After all is said and done, I remember a man way back in about 1993 came up to me and said, 'I want to talk to you about tithing. I don't believe that the New Testament Church ought to tithe.' I said, 'Well, let's not spoil the Feast, let's talk about it another time.' He wanted to have some big knockdown drag out. Let's see what we are to do?

After all of this, if you're not convinced about tithes and offerings, let me then just challenge you. Don't you think that you ought to be generous in what you give? This man told me, 'I give more than tithing.' Which I found out later that, no, he didn't. He didn't give anything. And saying that he didn't believe in tithing was an excuse to steal what belonged to God.

Notice the whole thing that we are to do, Romans 12:2: "Do not conform yourselves to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind in order that you may prove what *is* well pleasing and good, and the perfect will of God." Again, the focus is on that. Then Paul talks about all the gifts that different ones in the Church had.

Verse 8: "Or the one who is encouraging, *let him tend* to encouragement; the one who is giving, *let it be* with generosity..." So, if after all of this you still don't believe in tithing and you still don't see the principles in the New Testament and connecting that with the things in the Old Testament, etc., then why don't you take v 8 and let your giving "...*be* with generosity..."? ***Because whether you believe it or not, it belongs to God!***

Those are the things that we need to know, realize and understand. I hope this covers everything. {note book: *Jesus and the Forgotten City—New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus* by Richard A. Batey (amazon.com). It shows the economics in the time of Jesus. If you're still not convinced, then go through the whole series on tithing.}

Today we don't have real money. Real money is based on gold and silver, and the U.S. dollar used to say, 'Give to the bearer on demand gold or silver.' Today it doesn't say that. It says, 'This note (which is an I.O.U.) is legal tender for all debts public and private.' So, the Federal Reserve is just printing, *printing, printing!* They've printed so much that there are rumors that countries are going to sue the Federal Reserve, so they're going to take

off the Federal Reserve note and it's going to be worth even less.

Money is only of value as long as people agree to what the value is. There's something that takes away from it, which is inflation, because they aren't trusting in God.

Now let's look at some other money, because you don't have any money. This is phony money/funny money—not real money. 'Well, I have money in the bank.' Do you? *No, you don't!* Read very carefully, if a check bounces, it says 'insufficient funds.' You talk about unrighteous mammon! Today we have the most unrighteous mammon in the world—don't we?

It's just in a bank account and the banks never lose—do they? You get it from one bank and you put it another bank and it's all in the banking system. The banking system never loses anything! If you have good credit, they want you in debt so you can pay the interest! They can loan out the money for every hundred dollars that you put in they can loan out \$88. If they loan out 88% of the money they have, they have a 12% reserve—sometimes they even get it down to a 5% reserve—and in extreme runs on the bank the Federal Reserve will say, 'We'll go to 1%!' They know that they have so much money in the bank.

Then if you take that \$88 and re-deposit it back in their bank then that becomes an asset for them again, because they have the money in the bank and they can loan 88% of that ad infinitum. That's how money is created out of thin air!

It's created out of thin air even more: since you have such good credit we will give you a line of credit and we will verify it by a plastic card. I have one that is CitiBank Master Card. I pay it every month. Another one I use for the Church is American Express. My Master Card they said, 'Okay, you have such good credit you have a \$14,000 line of credit.' My American Express says, 'Okay, you have such good credit you now have a line of credit of \$20,000—all on paper, all thin air, all nothing! If you have a checkbook, look at that, that's no money; that's a piece of paper and you pass that around as money.

So, we have the most *unrighteous mammon* in the world. What if the bank computer system blows up and it loses everybody's accounts, and they can't retrieve it? *It's gone!* You talk about losing. You don't have any money. You don't have wealth.

If you don't believe in tithing on the unrighteous mammon, what are you going to do when Christ says, 'Why didn't you do it?' Think on

that for a minute! Plastic and paper and digitized funds, it's all going to come crashing pretty soon!

Also, all the interest that all these bankers make, if you can't use Satan's money, take his money and use it to preach the Gospel, which he hates, and you don't want to tithe on that, you may have some tall explaining to do at the resurrection. You think about that the next time you talk about how much money that you have!

There are some people that go just absolutely bananas when they get credit cards. A TV ad shows this nice looking guy and he's got this big home and he's out on his power mower mowing the front lawn. It shows him going in his nice SUV going down to the country club. Then in the last show it shows him in the backyard with a barbeque and everybody there. He says, 'And you ask me how I do this? I'm in debt up to my eyeballs!' So, they say, 'Refinance and go in debt again, get lower payments.'

My advice to you is to ***get out of debt as much as you can!***

All Scriptures from *The Holy Bible in Its Original Order, A Faithful Version* by Fred R. Coulter

Scriptural References:

- 1) Matthew 6:19-33
- 2) Luke 16:1-17
- 3) Matthew 22:17-21
- 4) Mark 12:41-44
- 5) Mark 4:18-19
- 6) Hebrews 3:12-13
- 7) Matthew 23:23
- 8) Matthew 6:33
- 9) Luke 11:39-42
- 10) Luke 18:9-14
- 11) Acts 4:24-37
- 12) Acts 5:1-25, 27-34, 38-39
- 13) 1 Peter 5:1-3
- 14) 1 Timothy 3:1-3
- 15) 1 Timothy 5:17-18
- 16) Romans 12:2, 8

Scriptures referenced, not quoted:

- Matthew 4:4
- James 1:8
- Malachi 3
- Matthew 25
- Romans 12
- Luke 12
- Leviticus 27
- Acts 20:28

Also referenced:

Books:

- *A Harmony of the Gospels* by Fred R. Coulter
- *Jesus and the Forgotten City—New Light on Sepphoris and the Urban World of Jesus* by Richard A. Batey (amazon.com)

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