

PROVING GOD

Selected Scriptures

This morning I want to share with you the second message in a three part series on Christian stewardship. The Bible has much to say about giving. We saw last week that 42% of Jesus' parables had to do with money. And we saw that the Bible contains more verses about money than it does love, faith, and prayer put together. So today we are going to further pursue a better understanding of what God says about how we are to be good stewards, good managers, of our money and possessions. And I want us to begin by briefly reviewing the six principles of Biblical stewardship that we learned last week.

1. Stewardship involves all of life. 1 Cor. 10:31

2. Gods own it all. Ps. 24:1. Haggai 2:8: "The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine, says the Lord of hosts".

3. All our possessions are a gift from God. David prayed in 1 Chron. 29:14, Lord, "...all things come from You". And in v. 16 he continued, "...all this abundance that we have prepared is from Your hand and is all Your own".

4. God has called us to be good stewards of our possessions. 1 Cor. 4:2 says, “Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful”. Now, the context here is stewardship of the gospel, but the application is universal.

5. Proper stewardship is one of the indicators of a true commitment to follow Christ. Someone said years ago that if you really wanted to see what the love of a man’s heart was then check out two things, his appointment book and his checkbook, where he spends his time and his money. And that person was spot on to the truth. We invest in what matters most to us.

6. God is honored by proper stewardship. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that they glorified God by their confession to the gospel through their giving (2 Cor. 9:13).

So if God does indeed expect us to be good stewards of all that He has given us, then what are the guidelines we are to follow? We are going to begin to look at them in a moment, but first I want us to hear the testimony of one of our deacons about his experience in giving to God and His work.

Thank you, Brad. So God told the Corinthians to be good stewards of their possessions. And He also said that their good stewardship brought glory to God. So what are the elements of good stewardship? Let’s turn first to 1 Corinthians 16: 1-2. Here Paul is addressing an issue that apparently the Corinthians had already inquired to him about. A number of the saints in Jerusalem were poor and needed help. And it appears from other verses in 1 Corinthians that the Corinthians had asked Paul about this situation in a prior letter, as well as a number of other matters. And the short of

Paul's answer is "Yes, by all means help them". But I want us to notice four specific parts of that answer.

First of all, Paul made it clear that he was speaking to the whole church. He said in verse 2, "Let each one of you lay something aside". Friends, giving is not just for the wealthy, not for just the ones who don't have house notes or car notes, not just for the ones who aren't living on fixed incomes. Giving is for every child of God.

Secondly, they were to give **obediently**. In v. 1 Paul says that he gave orders to the churches of Galatia to take an offering for the Jerusalem saints, and the Greek word for "order" means the same as the English. And he followed up by telling them that just as the Galatians were ordered to give, so were they. And the words, "you must do also" are in the imperative mood in the Greek, the mood of command. So Paul commands them to help their less fortunate brothers.

Now, we should not bristle at the command to give in the age of grace. Paul also said, "Be kind to one another", and it was a command. Paul said, "Be filled with the Spirit", and it was a command. Paul said, "Pray without ceasing", and it was a command. Peter said, "Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior..." and it was a command. James said, "Resist the devil" and it was a command. Would any of us disagree with these commands? Would we say that they were unreasonable? No! We would say that they are right and good for a Christian? Yes! And beloved, with the same language the Holy Spirit though Paul commanded the Corinthians to give.

So the Corinthians were to give **obediently**. But they were also to give **systematically**. They were to give on the first day of the week. That means every Sunday. Many Christians have yet to come to this conviction. They give some Sundays and some Sundays they do not. And if they happen to be out of church one Sunday, they do not lay their gift aside like Paul said and give it the next week along with that

week's gift. God never receives His gift for the week they were absent. But God says that we are to give every week.

Lastly, the Corinthians were to give **proportionately**. They were not to give equal amounts. Paul said that each was to give, "as he may prosper". But what did he mean by that? Is there any other guideline that is more specific? Yes, there is. Please turn to Malachi 3: 6-10. God says that there is a specific amount that is the starting point for obedient giving, and that amount is the tithe, or ten percent. And at times Israel was commanded to add other tithes to their regular tithe and the amount would be as much as 30%. But the regular tithe was 10%.

Now, I want to look at the tithe from three angles this morning. First, I want us to see the **practice** of the tithe. A survey of the verses that speak to the tithe reveals that tithes were received from the seed, from fruit, from corn, new wine, oil, and from the herds. So basically it was from everything that a farmer produced (Lev. 27:30, 32; Neh. 13:12). Secondly, the tithe could not be eaten in one's own house (Deut. 1:17), but in the place where God chose, where His name abode, in order that God's people might learn to fear Him (Deut. 14:22-23). And while we are not told specifically the name of the place that the Lord chose, it was likely the tabernacle or another place of sacrifice. And the closest comparison that we can make in the NT era is the local church. And thirdly, the tithe was to be given with joy. Look at Deut. 12:7. When those OT saints gave their tithes, they rejoiced in the blessings of God that allowed them to give it. And notice, the whole household was to rejoice. Father, mother, sons, daughters – they were all to rejoice in God's blessings to them.

Let me say a word to our parents who still have children at home. Dads and moms, teach your children to give! Teach them first of all that God has given to them all that they have, and teach them to give back to Him with joy. Give them part of your gift to

God each week. After all, God has blessed your entire family with His blessings, and they are a part. God has given to them, and they need to give back to Him. Practice giving as a family. And when they have a family of their own, giving will be the most natural thing in the world to do.

But let's talk just a few moments about the **perpetuity** of the tithe. The tithe was definitely practiced in the OT, but what about the New? Some conservative Biblical scholars say that tithing was a part of the law, and that the law was done away with at the cross, and therefore the tithe is no longer a biblical practice. What about it?

Beloved, when the whole of Scripture is taken into account, there is no compelling support to the claims that tithing is not for today. Tithing is just as valid for you and me as it has ever been. And I want to show you three reasons why. First of all, because of **the tithe of Abraham**. Gen. 14:20 tells us that Abraham gave a tithe to Melchizedek, king of Salem.

Now, Melchizedek was a mysterious character indeed. We know nothing about him except what we read of him in his one appearance in Gen. 14, and then a brief commentary on him in Hebrews 7. He was not a priest of Levi's lineage, but He was a priest of the Most High God none-the-less, and Abraham recognized that and gave him a tithe of the spoils he won in battle. But the writer of Hebrews says that Melchizedek was made like the Son of God, in that he was without a recorded genealogy, without father, without mother, having neither beginning nor end, and remaining a priest continually. Some scholars say that Melchizedek was an appearance of the pre-incarnate Christ, and that is what I believe. But even if he was not he was at least a type of Christ. And the whole point of Hebrews 7 is to show that Jesus is a better high priest than all of the Levitical priesthood.

But here's what this has to do with the tithe. Abraham was not under the law. It would not come for another 500 years or so. But Abraham gave the tithe anyway. God put it in his heart to give a tenth of his spoils to Melchizedek. But more significantly is to whom Abraham gave the tithe. He gave it to Melchizedek, who was either Christ or a representative of Christ. He gave a tenth of his goods to the one who came after the law, to the same One Whom we now love and serve, the Lord Jesus Christ. And for this reason the tithe is still applicable to Christians today.

But there is another reason that the tithe is valid for today. And that is because of **the nature of the law**. The OT law was divided into two parts, the ceremonial law and the moral law. The ceremonial law had to do with the sacrificial system, which was a temporary, imperfect fix for the problem of sin. But when the perfect Sacrifice for sin was accomplished, which was the death of Jesus on the cross, the imperfect system passed away. It was no longer necessary.

But the moral law different. First of all, the moral law was in force from the Garden of Eden. It has always been wrong to murder, it has always been wrong to steal, to commit adultery, to lie. And when the law of Moses was written, what was already a moral law was merely incorporated into written law. So it was with the tithe. Tithing was practiced before the law was written, and it naturally became a part of the written law. But just as laws concerning murder, stealing, and the rest of the moral law did not cease at the cross, neither did the law concerning tithing. Tithing had nothing to do with the sacrificial system. It contained no symbolism of what Jesus did on the cross. And therefore it did not cease with the ceremonial law.

There is a third reason why the tithe is still valid for today. And that is because of **the teachings of Jesus**. In the Sermon on the Mount Jesus gives us the broad picture of the Christian life, how someone lives who claims to be a His follower. For instance,

Jesus said in Matt. 5:21-22. He said in Matt. 27-28 . And in every other instance when Jesus compared the law to His requirements for His followers, His standards exceeded the law. And as I've said numerous times before, if Jesus raised the bar for our conduct as Christians in every other area of our lives, why would he lower the bar in the matter of giving? So beloved, because of the **tithe of Abraham**, and the **nature of the law**, and the **teachings of Jesus**, you can be certain that the tithe is still for today.

So we've seen the **practice** of the tithe and the **perpetuity** of the tithe, and now I want us to see the **promise of the tithe**. Oh, the tithe comes with a great promise! Look at Mal. 3:10 again. God says that if we will tithe from what He has given to us that He will give us a blessing again that is so great we will not be able to receive it. Now, friends, giving should never be a get-rich-quick scheme. If that's the purpose of your giving you are in for a sad awakening. You're attitude is as devilish as Simon the sorcerer, who tried to buy the power of God from Peter and John. But when you give to the glory of God, then you'll be blessed for the glory of God, more so than you could ever imagine.

Years ago I was in a revival campaign in a country community in West Texas. In a daytime service I set out to teach people gathered under a brush arbor that God demanded first place in everything, that He wanted tithes and offerings from the loving and believing hearts of His people. Present in the service that day was a dear country preacher, Brother Kuykendal. He was then, and had been for years, county missionary in Palo Pinto county, preaching in churchless communities, building up weak churches, selling and giving away Gospel literature as a rural missionary. He asked if he might tell how God had dealt with him about tithing. I gladly asked him to proceed. He arose and told his story about like this.

"Some years ago when I was county missionary of this county the famous Baptist businessman, H. Z. Duke, who founded the Duke and Ayers Nickel Stores over a wide area, came to this county and, speaking as a Christian layman, urged the men and women everywhere to try God and see if He would not make good His promises to bless them in material things when they gave tithes and offerings to His cause. After Mr. Duke had spoken in one community, I took him in my buggy to another community. Mr. Duke said to me, 'Brother Kuykendal, do you believe in tithing?'"

"'I certainly do,' I said. 'I believe in tithing and I preach it myself.'

"'But, Brother Kuykendal, do you practice tithing?'"

"'Sadly I had to answer, 'No, I do not. I believe in tithing, but I cannot practice it. You see, I have thirteen children at home. Every meal fifteen of us sit down at the table. I receive only \$125 a month, \$1500 a year as salary. I have to maintain my own horse and buggy for constant travelling. It is just impossible to take care of all the needs of a family of fifteen out of \$125 a month and have money left to tithe. So I believe in tithing, and I preach it, but I cannot practice it.'

"'Mr. Duke was a very kindly man. He said, 'Brother Kuykendal, would you like to tithe? Would you tithe if I would back you up financially so you could be sure you would not lose by it?'"

"'Nothing would please me more,' I said.

"'So Mr. Duke made me the following proposition:

"'I want you to set out to give God at least \$12.50 every month, as soon as you get your salary. Then as you feel led, you may give more. I promise you that if you need help, I will give it. Simply write me a letter and say, 'Brother Duke, I am giving a tithe, but I miss the money. I need it for my family. I have given this year so much.' I promise you that I will send you a check by return mail. Are you willing to try tithing on that basis?'"

"I hesitated a moment, moved with emotion, and Brother Duke said, 'I have thirty-two stores. I have plenty of money to make good my promise. I will be glad to do it. Will you risk me and start tithing on my simple promise that I will make good any amount you have given, any time that you find you miss it and need it? Will you trust me about it?'"

"I gladly accepted his offer. I said, 'Yes, Brother Duke, I have long wanted to tithe, but I felt I simply could not do it. Now, thank God, I can tithe and I will be glad to. And I will not feel like a hypocrite when I tell others they ought to tithe.'

"So I started tithing for the first time in my life. Every month I took out first of all one-tenth of my salary and gave it to the Lord's cause; then, as I felt led, I gave more. In the back of my mind I always had this thought, 'Mr. Duke promised me that he would make it up any time I need it. He will send me the money if I simply ask him for it.'

"But a strange thing happened. It seemed our money went farther than before. I would preach in some country community and somebody would tie a crate of chickens on the back of my buggy. Somebody would put a ham under the seat. Or a godly woman would put some home-canned fruit in my buggy.

"A neighbor farmer said, 'Brother Kuykendal, God has blessed me so that I cannot get all my corn in the crib this year. I have a big wagon load extra that I cannot keep. May I put it in your crib for your buggy horse?'"

"Another neighbor drove over with a great hay wagon full of hay for the cow.

"It was very strange, but that year we had no doctor bills. The children's clothes seemed not to wear out so badly. It was a happy, happy time. I never did have to call on Mr. H. Z. Duke to make up the money I had given to the Lord in tithes.

"Then one day, when the year was about gone and the test was about over, I suddenly realized with shame that I had believed what H. Z. Duke said. He promised to make good anything I lacked because of tithing, and I believed him. But my heavenly Father had made the same promise, and I had not believed Him! I had taken the word of a man when I did not take the promise of God! Now I had proven God's promises and found that He took care of me and my big family on a small salary. I found that \$112.50 per month took care of our family better, with God's blessing, than \$125 did without being under the blessed covenant which He has made with those who seek first the kingdom of God and who tithe."

That godly country preacher stood there before the congregation weeping. With the deepest emotion he said,

"Now I have tithed for many years. My salary has been increased year after year. We have always had enough. We have never been shamed. The greatest spiritual blessing of my life, aside from my salvation, has been in learning to trust God about daily needs for my home and a big family."