

# Tithing Part 1

by A.W. Pink

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*The Bible teaches that giving one-tenth of our income as a tithe is a fundamental principle of the Christian life, demonstrating our love and gratitude to God and supporting His work.*

**Scripture:** Genesis 14:20, Genesis 28:19

**Topics:** "Financial Stewardship", "Tithing"

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## Description

A.W. Pink emphasizes the biblical principle of tithing, arguing that many Christians misunderstand their financial obligations to God. He traces the practice of tithing from the early patriarchs, such as Abraham and Jacob, through the Mosaic Law, and into the New Testament, asserting that God has always specified a portion of our income to be returned to Him. Pink highlights that tithing is not merely a suggestion but a divine command, and neglecting it equates to robbing God. He calls for a return to scriptural teachings on giving, noting that true revival often includes a renewed commitment to tithing. Ultimately, Pink asserts that faithful tithing leads to God's blessings and the flourishing of Christian enterprises.

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## Transcript

### TITHING

#### Part 1

There are few subjects on which the Lord's own people are more astray than on the subject of giving. They profess to take the Bible as their own rule of faith and practice, and yet in the matter of Christian finance, the vast majority have utterly ignored its plain teachings and have tried every substitute the carnal mind could devise; therefore it is no wonder that the majority of Christian enterprises in the world today are handicapped and crippled through the lack of funds.

Is our giving to be regulated by sentiment and impulse, or by principle and conscience? That is only another way of asking, Does God leave us to the spirit of gratitude and generosity, or has He definitely specified His own mind and particularized what portion of His gifts to us are due to Him in return? Surely God has not left this important matter without fully making known His will! The Bible is given to be a lamp unto our feet and therefore He cannot have left us in darkness regarding any obligation or privilege in our dealings with Him or His with us.

Tithing in the Old Testament At a very early date in the history of our race God made it known that a definite proportion of the saint's income should be devoted to Him who is the Giver of all. There was a period of twenty-five centuries from Adam until the time that God gave the law to Israel at Sinai, but it is a great mistake to suppose that the saints of God in those early centuries were left without a definite revelation, without a knowledge of God's will regarding their obligations to Him, and of the great blessings which resulted from a faithful performance of their duties.

As we study carefully the book of Genesis we find clear traces of a primitive revelation, an indication of God's mind to His people long before the system of legislation that was given at Sinai (see Gen. 18:19); and that primal revelation seems to have centered about three things: 1. The offering of sacrifices to God. 2. The observance of the Sabbath. 3. The giving of tithes. While it is perfectly true that today we are unable to take the Bible and place our finger upon any positive enactment or commandment from God that His people, in those early days, should either offer sacrifices to Him or keep the Sabbath or give the tithe (there is no definite "Thus saith the Lord" recorded concerning any one of these three things), nevertheless, from what is recorded we are compelled to assume that there must have been such a commandment given: compare Genesis 26:5.

The Offering of Sacrifices to God Take first of all the presenting of sacrifices to God. Is it thinkable that man would ever have presented blood to Deity if he had never first received a command to so do? Do you imagine it would ever have occurred to the human mind itself to have brought a bleeding animal to the great Creator? And yet we find in the very earliest times that Abel, Noah, Abraham, presented bleeding offerings unto Jehovah--clearly presupposing that God had already made it known that such was His will for His creatures: that the Most High required just such an offering: see Hebrews 11:4 and compare Romans 10:17.

The Sabbath Take again the Sabbath. There is little in the early pages of Scripture to directly show us that God Himself appointed one day in seven, and that He made it a law that all of His creatures should so observe it; and yet there are clear indications that such must have been the case, or otherwise we cannot explain what follows. When God gave the ten commandments to Israel at Sinai, in the fourth commandment He did not tell Israel to keep the Sabbath; He commanded them to remember the Sabbath day, which clearly implies two things: that at an earlier date the mind of God concerning the Sabbath had been revealed, but, that their forefathers had forgotten: see Ezekiel 20:5-8, and compare Exodus 16:27, 28.

The Tithe The same is true in connection with the tithe. At this day we are unable to go back to the earliest pages of Scripture and put our finger upon a "Thus saith the Lord," a definite commandment where Jehovah specified His will and demanded that His people should render a tenth of all their increase unto Him; and yet as we take up the book of Genesis we cannot account for what is there, unless we presuppose a previous revelation of God's mind and a manifestation of His will upon the point.

In Genesis 14:20 it is written, "And he gave him tithes of all." Abraham gave tithes unto Melchizedek. We are not informed why he did so. We are not told in previous chapters that God had commanded him to do so, but the fact that he did so clearly denotes that he was acting in accordance with God's will and that he was carrying out His revealed mind. The Tithe in Genesis 28:19-22 We will begin at verse 19 to get the context: "And he called the name of that place Bethel." You remember the circumstances.

This was the night when Jacob was fleeing from Esau, a fugitive from home, starting out to Laban's; and that night while he was asleep he had the vision. "And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in the way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: and this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that Thou shalt give me I will surely give the tenth unto Thee."

Here again we have the tithe. Jacob vowed that in return for the Lord's temporal blessings upon him, he would render a tenth in return unto the Lord. We are not told why he selected that percentage; we are not told why he should give a tenth; but the fact that he did determine so to do, intimates there had previously been a revelation of God's mind to His creatures, and particularly to His people, that one-tenth of their income should be devoted to the Giver of all. The Tithe in the Mosaic Law When we come to the Mosaic law, we find that the tithe was definitely and clearly incorporated into it.

"And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the Lord's: it is holy unto the Lord. And if a man will at all redeem ought of his tithes, he shall add thereto a fifth part thereof. And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock, even of whatsoever passeth under the rod, the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord" (Lev. 27:30-32). Notice the twice-repeated expression concerning the tithe, that it was "holy unto the Lord." That is to say, God reserves to Himself, as His exclusive right, as His own, one-tenth of that which He has given to us.

It is "holy" unto the Lord. This anticipates a point which may have been exercising some minds. When we say that one-tenth of our gross income belongs to the Lord doubtless some are inclined to say that all of our income belongs to Him; that everything we have has been given us by God; that nothing is our own in the full sense of the word, it is all His. This is perfectly true in one sense, but not so in another. In one sense it is true that all of our time belongs to God, that it is not ours, and we shall yet have to give an account of every idle moment; but in another real sense it is also true that God has set apart one-seventh of our time as being holy unto Him.

That is to say, it has been set apart for a sacred use; it is not ours to do with as we please. The Sabbath is not a day for doing our own pleasure, it is a day that has been appointed and singled out by God as being peculiarly His--holy unto Him--one-seventh of our time spent in His service. And here in Leviticus 27: 30-32 we are told that the tithe is holy unto the Lord. That is to say, one-tenth is not our own personal property at all: it does not belong to us in the slightest; we have no say-so about it whatsoever it is set apart unto a holy use: it is the Lord's and His alone.

Support of the Priestly Family in the Old Testament "And the Lord spake unto Moses, saying, Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the Lord, even a tenth part of the tithe" (Num. 18:25, 26). From this we learn that the support of the priestly family in the Old Testament was not left to the whims of the people, or as to how they "felt led" to give.

God did not leave it for them to determine. The support of the priestly family was definitely specified. The priestly family was to derive their support out of one-tenth of all that the other tribes received from their annual increase, and the priests themselves were required to take one-tenth of all out of their portion and present it to the Lord. There were no exceptions to the rule. Those who have read through the historical books of Scripture know full well how miserably Israel failed to obey this law after they had settled down in the land, how that almost every fundamental precept and statute of the legislation that Jehovah gave to

Moses was disregarded by them.

But what is very significant is this, that in each great revival of godliness that Jehovah sent unto Israel, tithing is one of the things that is mentioned as being renewed and restored among them. First of all let us turn to 2 Chronicles 30. This chapter records a great revival that took place in the days of Hezekiah. There had been a time of fearful declension in the reigns of the preceding kings, but in the days of Hezekiah God graciously gave a blessed revival, and in verse 1 we read: "And Hezekiah sent to all Israel and Judah, and wrote letters also to Ephraim and Manasseh, that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem, to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel."

Things had gotten into such an awful state that they had not even kept the Passover for several centuries! But when God works a revival one of its most prominent features is to cause His people to return to the written Word. Let us note this carefully. A heaven-sent revival consists not so much in happy feelings and spasmodic enthusiasm and fleshly displays, nor great crowds of people in attendance--those are not the marks of a heaven-sent revival--but when God renews His work of grace in His churches, one of the first things that He does is to cause His people to return to the written Word from which they have departed in their ways and in their practices.

This was what happened in the days of Hezekiah. We read that he wrote letters to Ephraim and Manasseh that they should come to the house of the Lord at Jerusalem to keep the Passover unto the Lord God of Israel. Think of them needing "letters"!! Now read on to chapter 31, verses 4, 5 and 6, and you will find the tithes mentioned. "Moreover he commanded the people that dwelt in Jerusalem to give the portion of the priests and Levites, that they might be encouraged in the law of the Lord.

And as soon as the commandment came abroad, the children of Israel brought in abundance the first fruits of corn, wine, and oil, and honey, and of all the increase of the field; and the tithe of all things brought they in abundantly. And concerning the children of Israel and Judah, they also brought in the tithe of oxen and sheep, and the tithe of holy things which were consecrated unto the Lord their God, and laid them by heaps" (vv. 4-6). Following which, God markedly blest them.

The same thing is true again in the tenth chapter of Nehemiah. It will be remembered that Nehemiah brings us to a later period in the history of Israel. Nehemiah records the return of a small remnant of the people after the nation had been carried away into captivity, after the seventy years in Babylon was over. Then God raised up Cyrus to make a decree permitting those who desired to go back to their own land. In this chapter we find that in the revival of his day, the tithe is also mentioned: "And we cast the lots among the priests, the Levites, and the people, for the wood offering, to bring it into the house of our God, after the houses of our fathers, at times appointed year by year, to burn upon the altar of the Lord our God, as it is written in the law: And to bring the firstfruits of our ground, and the firstfruits of all fruit of all trees, year by year, unto the house of the Lord: Also the firstborn of our sons, and of our cattle, as it is written in the law, and the firstlings of our herds and of our flocks, to bring to the house of our God, unto the priests that minister in the house of our God: And that we should bring the firstfruits of our dough, and our offerings, and the fruit of all manner of trees, of wine and of oil, unto the priests, to the chambers of the house of our God; and the tithes of our ground unto the Levites, that the same Levites might have the tithes in all the cities of our tillage" (Neh. 10:34-37).

Now turn to the last book of the Old Testament. Malachi brings us to a point still later, and shows us how the remnant that had returned in the days of Nehemiah had also degenerated and deteriorated and had

departed from the word of the law of the Lord; and, among other things. note the charges that God brings against Israel in Malachi 3:7, 8. "Even from the days of your fathers ye are gone away from Mine ordinances, and have not kept them. Return unto Me, and I will return unto you, saith the Lord of hosts.

But ye said, Wherein shall we return? Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed Me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed Thee? In tithes and offerings." How solemn to notice that in the last chapter but one of the Old Testament, we are there taught that those who withheld the "tithe" from Jehovah are charged with having robbed God! Solemn indeed! The Tithe in the New testament Only God has the right to say how much of our income shall be set aside and set apart unto Him. And He has so said clearly, repeatedly, in the Old Testament Scriptures, and there is nothing in the New Testament that introduces any change or that sets aside the teaching of the Old Testament on this important subject.

Christ Himself has placed His approval and set His imprimatur upon the tithe. "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt. 23:23). In that verse Christ is rebuking the scribes and Pharisees because of their hypocrisy. They had been very strict and punctilious in tithing the herbs, but on the other hand they had neglected the weightier matters such as judgment, or justice, and mercy.

But while Christ acknowledged that the observance of justice and mercy is more important than tithing--it is a "weightier matter"--while, He says, these they ought to have done, nevertheless He says, these other ye ought not to have left undone. He does not set aside the tithe. He places justice and mercy as being more weighty, but He places His authority upon the practice of tithing by saying, "These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." It is well for us if we by the grace of God have not omitted justice and mercy and faith: it is well if by the grace of God those things have found a place in our midst: but the tithing ought not to have been left undone, and Christ Himself says so.

The second passage to be noted is 1 Corinthians 9:13, 14: "Do ye not know that they which minister about holy things live of the things of the temple? and they which wait at the altar are partakers with the altar? Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the Gospel should live of the Gospel." The emphatic words there are, "Even so" in the beginning of the fourteenth verse. The word "tithe" is not found in these two verses but it is most clearly implied. In verse 13 the Holy Spirit reminds the New Testament saints that under the Mosaic economy God had made provision for the maintenance of those who ministered in the temple.

Now then, He says, in this New Testament dispensation "Even so" (v. 14)--the same means and the same method are to be used in the support and maintaining of the preachers of the Gospel as were used in supporting the temple and its services of old. "Even so." It was the tithe that supported God's servants in the Old Testament dispensation: "even so" God has ordained, and appointed that His servants in the New Testament dispensation shall be so provided for. Referring next to 1 Corinthians 16:1 and 2: here again we find the word "tithe" does not actually occur, and yet once more it is plainly implied: the principle of it is there surely enough.

"Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." Now what does "laying by" imply? Certainly it signifies a definite predetermined act, rather than a spontaneous impulse, or just acting on the spur of the moment. Let us look at this again. "Upon the first

day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." (v. 2).

Why are we told that? Why is it put that way? Why use such an expression as "lay by in store"? Clearly that language points us back to Malachi 3:10. "Bring ye all the tithes into the \_\_\_\_\_" Where? The "storehouse"! That is where the tithes were to be brought. "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse." Now what does God say here in Corinthians? "Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store." There is a clear reference here to the terms of Malachi 3, but that is not all.

Look at it again. "Let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him." That signifies a definite proportion of the income. Not "let every one of you lay by him in store, as he feels led"; it does not say that, nor does it say "let every one of you lay by him in store as he feels moved by the Spirit"; no indeed, it says nothing of the kind. It says, "Let every one . . . lay by him as God hath prospered him": in a proportionate way, according to a percentage basis.

Now consider! If my income today is double what it was a year ago and I am not giving any more to the Lord's cause than I gave then, then I am not giving "as the Lord hath prospered": I am not giving proportionately. But now the question arises, What proportion? What is the proportion that is according to the will of God? "As He hath prospered him." Can one man bring one proportion and another man bring another proportion, and yet both of them obey this precept? Must not all bring the same proportion in order to meet the requirements of this passage?

Turn for a moment to 2 Corinthians 8:14: "But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there may be equality." Please note that this verse occurs in the middle of a chapter devoted to the subject of giving, and what is to be observed is, that at the beginning of verse 14 and at the end of it we have repeated the word "equality," which means that God's people are all to give the same proportion of their means and the only proportion that God has specified anywhere in His Word is that of the tenth, or "tithe."

There is one other passage to be looked at, namely Hebrews 7:5 and 6: "And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham: But he, whose descent is not counted from them, received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises." (Notice the order: "received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises").

And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better." In the seventh chapter of Hebrews the Holy Spirit through the apostle Paul is showing the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the order of the priesthood of the Levites, and one of the proofs of which He establishes the transcendency of the Melchizedek order of the priesthood of Christ was that Abraham, the father of the chosen people, acknowledged the greatness of Melchizedek by rendering tithes to him. The reference in Hebrews 7 is to what is recorded in Genesis 14, where we have two typical characters brought before us--Melchizedek, a type of Christ in three ways: first, in his person, combining the kingly and the priestly offices; second, a type of Christ in his names, combining righteousness and peace, for "Melchizedek" itself means "peace"; and third, a type of Christ in that he pronounced blessing on Abraham and brought forth bread and wine, the memorials of his death.

But not only was Melchizedek there a type of Christ, but Abraham was also a typical character, a representative character, seen there as the father of the faithful; and we find he acknowledged the priesthood of Melchizedek by giving him a tenth of the spoils which the Lord had enabled him to secure in

vanquishing those kings, and as that is referred to in Hebrews, where the priesthood of Christ and our blessings from our relations to it and our obligation to it are set forth, the fact that Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek as mentioned there, indicates that as Abraham is the father of the faithful, so he left an example for us, his children, to follow--in rendering tithes unto Him of whom Melchizedek was the type.

And the beautiful thing in connection with the Scripture is that the last time the tithe is mentioned in the Bible (here in Heb. 7) it links the tithe directly with Christ Himself. All intermediaries are removed. In the Old Testament the tithes were brought to the priests, then carried into the storehouse, but in the final reference in Scripture, the tithe is linked directly with Christ, showing us that our obligations in the matter are concerned directly with the great Head of the Church.

In the above we have only introduced the Scriptures that present God's mind on this matter. In the following section we will deal with the subject in an expository and in an argumentative way. One evil ever leads to another. God's appointed method for the financing of the work which He has been pleased to place in our hands, is that of tithing--the strict setting aside one-tenth of all we receive, to be devoted to His cause. Where the Lord's people faithfully do this, there is never any shortage or going into debt.

Where tithing is ignored there is almost always a deficit, and then the ungodly are asked to help or worldly methods are employed to raise money. If we sow the wind, we must not be surprised if we reap the whirlwind.

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