

September 2005: The Distance Between Money and the Heart

by Aaron Greenway

A couple of weeks ago, our pastor caught us totally off guard with something that was not his usual style of preaching. He got off the platform and began to walk around the sanctuary. He then began to tell us about the church budget and how the church was about to send a letter to a pastor in El Salvador and to other missionaries, telling them that their financial support would be cut off at the end of this year, all because the church was not meeting its financial obligations. Although the pastor did not normally like to look at the "giving" report of the church, because of the nature of what was going on, he took a look and discovered that only 19% of the church was tithing.

A while back, I learned a very hard lesson over the same issue. I had just come back from my stay in Peru and found that I had very little money. However, before I left the country, I made a deal with my boss that he would give me my job back in the valet parking once I returned. He agreed. But upon my return, I discovered that I couldn't work in the same places I was in before because other guys had taken my place; and I certainly couldn't take away their places after several months of not being there. As a result, I decided not to tithe for a time so that I could pay my bills and debts.

However, the opposite occurred. Instead, I made less money. The more I held back in my tithe, the less I had. My customers just weren't giving me the tips I once got. One day, it just got so difficult that I decided to go and write a check to the church, tithing on what I had. The next week, I made over \$100 more than what I needed in my weekly budget. The total on my check stub ended up being more and more every week. I have tithed ever since because obeying God with my money is having faith in His provision.

But some have said that the tithe is an Old Testament teaching and does not apply to today. But everything that Jesus mentioned in the New Testament, I believe, does apply to today. For example, Jesus said, "Not only will you not kill, you will not hate your brother" and "Not only will you not commit adultery, you will not lust either."

Today, you can take care of the debt in your heart with God. It has nothing to do with money, but more to do with the inside. If we hold back from the Lord what He requires, how can we say that we trust Him? How can we say that we serve Him? When one gives from their wallet, they also give from the heart. We have seen that with the Hurricane disaster in Louisiana. As I was reminded by a friend this past week, "It all belongs to God anyway." And I can tell you, that we truly can trust God with our money as well as with our lives.

As a result, when Jesus said, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21), how would a Jew of that day interpret what Jesus had said if not by the Law. There's your New Testament connection!

For sure there are people out there who do not contribute, and they certainly don't tithe. Our church is in the red right now and is about to take away the financial support of our dear Salvadorian pastor in Central America. What a shame that he will have to look for support somewhere else. The problem is that our giving reflects what is in our heart. A person can lift up his hands, his prayers and tell of what God has done for him, and -at the same time- not tithe. I have been giving 10% of my income to the Lord, but only after learning a very hard lesson three years ago, and God has provided everything I have ever needed. God has also provided for our pastor and his family, allowing his children to go to some very costly universities without paying a dime. Whatever he has needed, God has provided it all! And if we are not tithing, we need to remember that God will not be deceived or mocked.

Where does that put us? Are we willing to give from the heart? We long for the blessings of yesterday but at the same time we move further and further away from it because we are being skimpy on our tithe. We will find that God -will- provide everything...and more! This is not just some "crazy, concoction" (as some would say) of the Charismatics; this is straight from the Word of God. My pastor delayed in telling us the truth. What could have been saved if he had told us sooner. For this reason, the churches need to be preaching on the tithe. But many don't because they don't want to be seen as greedy opportunists, or as preaching the Prosperity Gospel.

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Something to ponder...

Your brother,
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