

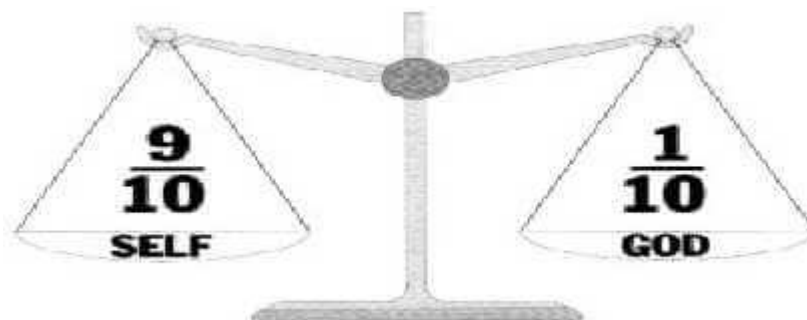
# TITHES & OFFERINGS

Paying *Tithes and Offerings*. How does our willingness to pay *tithes and offerings* show gratitude to our Heavenly Father for all His blessings to us? We have been given commandments to help us prepare in every way to live in the presence of our Heavenly Father. He has given us a way to thank Him for our blessings.

*"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil" 1 Timothy 6:10.*

*"And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work.." (2 Corinthians 9:8)*

## GOD'S MATHEMATICS



### THE CHRISTIAN USE OF MONEY

Ofentimes Paul's injunction to Timothy in I Timothy 6:10 is misquoted — *"For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil"* This misquotation is tainted with the erroneous notion that a Christian should not be involved with money, or that a Christian should not become rich. The reverse is the truth. A Christian who works hard and runs his business efficiently is well compensated. *"The worker deserves his wages."* (I Timothy 5:18). *"For whoever has will be given more, and they will have an abundance.."* (Matthew 25:29). This last quotation is the reward our Lord gives to the five and two talent man, who traded wisely the money their Lord had entrusted them.

Thus, upon his faithful servant Abraham God blessed with much wealth. *"Abram had become very wealthy in livestock and in silver and gold."* (Genesis 13:2). Even Lot the nephew was blessed under his uncle's umbrella. *"Now Lot, who was moving about with Abram, also had flocks and herds and tents."* (Genesis 13:5). What is wrong with money.

Not only must a Christian work hard to get wealth, he must realize he needs God's help in the process. *"But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today."* (Deuteronomy 8:18). Never say, like the arrogant and ungrateful man, *"My power and the strength of my hands have produced this wealth for me."* (Deuteronomy 8:17).

I remember the son of a certain Chinese pastor who joked, *"Before I eat I should rather give thanks to my right hand that earns the money to buy me food."* He did not say this for long when he had to go to hospital for operation on his appendix. Let us, when we become prosperous, walk ever humbly before God. Let us remember to thank Him for helping us to get wealth. For, if He is displeased with us and withdraws His mercies.. Let us rather say with David, *"Praise the Lord, my soul; all my inmost being, praise his holy name. Praise the Lord, my soul, and forget not all his benefits—"* (Psalm 103:1,2).

What are the benefits for which we are to give thanks? Not only the material but rather for the spiritual. They are:

1. The forgiveness of sins.

2. The healing of all our sicknesses.
3. Deliverance from destruction (accident and death).
4. His loving kindness and tender mercies.
5. Good appetite and youthful energy.
6. Withholding His anger and not punishing us according to our sins.
7. Fatherly pity and keeping His Covenant with those who fear Him (Psalm 103:3-18).

Let us realize that our life and property are gifts from God. We are not absolute owners of our wealth. We are trustees or stewards. We cannot spend on what we like. Every item of expenditure must be prayerfully considered. We can spend only what pleases Him and never to satisfy our selfish pleasures. When we do this with Him in view, He will entrust us with more wealth as He would reward His faithful servants.

Now, to set a standard of giving to Him who owns us, God instructs Moses to require of Israel, that sacred tenth: "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the Lord; it is holy to the Lord." (Leviticus 27:30). When Israel very conveniently skipped paying the tithe in the days of Malachi, the prophet chided them in no uncertain terms:

"Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me."

"But you ask, 'How are we robbing you?'"

"In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this," says the Lord Almighty, "and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe," says the Lord Almighty. "Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the Lord Almighty." (*Malachi 3:8-12*)

This message is addressed both to the individual as well as to church and nation. Individually speaking, we have Abraham who set the Israelites the example. The tithe was given by him spontaneously, from a grateful heart, not because a law had been laid down on him. So did Jacob his grandson. Let us as individual members of the Church render our tithes to God as spontaneously and cheerfully as patriotic citizens willingly pay their income tax. Those who give thus are blessed beyond measure as promised, receiving back from God like pouring rain. Moreover God will keep our produce from being devoured by pests.

God receives not only the tithes but also "Through Jesus, therefore, let us continually offer to God a sacrifice of praise—the fruit of lips that openly profess his name." (Hebrews 13:15). The tithe is not given grudgingly, but hilariously. Why? "Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver." (2 Corinthians 9:7).

Tithing, according to the Dispensational theologian is a legalistic ordinance done away in the New Testament. Is it so? Let them read Luke 11:42 and Matthew 23:23. Here our Lord chides the scribes and Pharisees for their legal punctiliousness on the tithe, but overlook weightier matters such as judgment, mercy and faith. Nevertheless He upholds the tithe in the sense that the cart should stay in the position of the cart and not before the horse. St Paul never writes against the tithe. Undoubtedly, he supports it, but stresses that any form of giving to God must be rendered with a cheerful heart. And when it is given as in humble worship, God will cause every grace to abound toward us, that we, having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work (2 Corinthians 9:7-8).

Another thing I would like to stress about a Church's finance is that, as my Grandpa had taught us from a young age, "Never borrow, never pay interest." When a Church meets with an overwhelming need, such as buying a property involving millions, the normal path of action is to take a bank loan. To me this is blood sucking when every monthly installment of repayment is due. And this can go on 15-20 years.

Many churches are not outward looking enough. Like the Chinese who say, “*Let not fertile waters flow into other fields,*” they would like to see their income stored as into the Dead Sea. It flows in but never flows out! While God’s money must be spent with meticulous care, to hoard it so that God’s work is stifled is not only counter productive but against His will.

I have observed that many small struggling beginnings of Church work would have surged forward if Big Brother Churches would give a helping hand. This has given to those languishing in the shadows a big boost. “*This service that you perform is not only supplying the needs of the Lord’s people but is also overflowing in many expressions of thanks to God.*” (2 Corinthians 9:12).

Here’s a blessing from King Solomon, “*Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and he will reward them for what they have done.*” (Proverbs 19:17).

Another way of making good profit for the Lord’s work is to offer to the building of Churches and Bible Colleges in other countries, such as in the Philippines and Burma, yea, even in Africa. Let me cite two cases. Give to missions and make your dollar work six times more for you. This profitable investment for the Lord will surely earn from His lips, “*His master replied, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!’*” (Matthew 25:21).

What will happen to all your assets, money and property, when you leave this earth? This is addressed to members financially blessed of the Lord. Many will give them to their children. If they are God-fearing, well and good. If not, why don’t they give it to the Church or Bible College that is faithfully proclaiming the Gospel!

How modern economists today repudiate those of early years and were taught to save. Today we are taught to spend; to borrow and to owe. As people live above their means, they have to forfeit the fruits they would gather in future. As long as one is in debt one, they are choked in all of worries.

Solomon says, “*The rich rule over the poor, and the borrower is slave to the lender.*” (Proverbs 22:7). The debtor is slave to the creditor.

The way to economic freedom is to heed the old yet ever new injunction by the Lord, “*Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law.*” (Romans 13:8). This is possible when we hold to the Pauline philosophy of life. We must be content with what God has given us, live within our means, happy with what is essential — three meals a day, enough of clothing to keep us warm and a roof over our head. But we must be diligent under any circumstances. Paul testifies how by laboring with his two hands he earns extra so as to be able to help the weak. By good hard work and economic arrangement he becomes prosperous so that he can experience what Jesus has said, “*It is more blessed to give than to receive.*”

By this principle have arisen the truly rich. The story is told of Colgate how he started out with a few dollars in a small business. When he made a few dollars he was careful to give back one tenth to God. As he honoured God, God honoured him. His income grew steadily so that from tens, he increased to hundreds, from hundreds to thousands. He gave not only one tenth back to God, but two and three. The more he returned to God the more God poured His blessings upon him. Conversely, there are Christian businessmen who follow the world, borrowing and owing at the expense of others, who never honour God with their substance. So they are forever in debt which, if not like sinking, is like one with a millstone hung around his neck.

When we give to God, God will give back to us. We will not only be prospered vertically but also horizontally. Jesus says, “*Give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over, will be poured into your lap. For with the measure you use, it will be measured to you.*” (Luke 8:38).

This reciprocity from men is due to our dealing with others generously, not only in money matters but in other areas of human relationship, which our Lord prescribes earlier in His sermon,

*"But to you who are listening I say: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, 28 bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you. If someone slaps you on one cheek, turn to them the other also. If someone takes your coat, do not withhold your shirt from them. Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back. Do to others as you would have them do to you.."*Luke 6; 27 -31

The transcending philosophy of the Christian use of money is not only not to owe but to lend without demanding it back, yea, to give and in its final projection, to forgive. This is the way to prosperity with happiness. Amen.