

Tithing - Old or New Covenant?

Chapter 19 - *Calling Forth the Remnant*
By Way of the Cross

by Stella Paterson

What you are now about to read may make a lot of people very angry, so let me ask this question: Is tradition of greater importance than the Truth which came through Jesus? *“For the law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.”* (John 1:17 NKJV) Many people in the Church today are enslaved to the “law” that one MUST tithe to the local church in order to please God, to avoid being cursed, and to finance the spreading of the Gospel. This bondage has spread its suffocating tentacles throughout the institution which man considers *“The Body of Christ.”*

Satan, the deceiver, has achieved his greatest dream, but to the deceived church, it is an undetected nightmare from hell itself. Satan has masterminded the ultimate deception, and used it to draw the Church into his deadly clutches. He has relied on the western world’s god of money to hold the attention of the large and prosperous churches. Tithing is not a new idea, but over a period of more than one hundred fifty years, it has become increasingly popular among those who need to increase the church income. What better way to fill that “need” than to obligate people and establish a budget, knowing there will be a definite level of income? The admonition to tithe causes people to believe this is a commandment from God.

In reality, the church is on “life support.” For all intents and purposes, she is dead – the Life of God is lacking, as is faith. So churches rely on tithes to keep the doors open. Does the Church prefer to trust in tithing out of fear of poverty, rather than trust in God and have confidence in His provision?

There are man-made monstrosities needing enormous financial support to maintain them. They can be seen on the street corners of every city in North America. Because of television and other media, they are highly visible, referred to as *“God’s houses”* and *“gospel ministries.”* They speak great promises from God such as, *“If you tithe, God will bless you.”* And if you give above the “tithe” you can add the word “abundantly” to those three little words that people love to hear – *“will bless you.”* What is the real motive behind the doctrine of tithing? Is it so the people can be blessed? Or is it because the large business of “ministry” needs the capital to remain viable? Does any one truly know what Church money is primarily to be used for? It is to feed the hungry and provide for the widowed and the fatherless.

Within the Law of Moses there were curses which carried promises of death, destruction, or expulsion. One such law had to do with the treatment of the

widows and the fatherless. *“You shall not afflict any widow or fatherless child. If you afflict them in any way and they cry at all to Me, I will surely hear their cry; and My wrath shall burn; I will kill you with the sword, and **your** wives shall be widows and **your** children fatherless.”* (Exodus 22:22-24 Amplified) There was no tolerance for those who afflicted the widows and the fatherless.

One aspect of the Law regarding the tithe required the people to lay up the tithe within their gates so that the priest, the stranger, the fatherless, and widow would have food to eat. Every three years, they were to bring a tenth of their increase of that third year. The Levite priests’ inheritance was God Himself, so they relied on the people for their food. Strangers passing through were without home and food, and the fatherless and widows had no one to care for them. The tithe was to be their provision. The Bible gives the reason for this practice: *“so **that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands that you do.**”* (Deuteronomy 14:28-29 Amplified) Although this phrase applied only to those under the Law it has been quoted to justify present-day “tithing.”

The Father’s heart has always been toward the widowed and fatherless. In the New Testament, James said, *“Pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.”* (James 1:27) And that is what we must keep in mind – it is the real heart of the issue.

Truth from the Word of God

Knowing I was not yet ready to receive the truth about it, the Father did not initially reveal to me the error regarding the tithe. I had spent my whole church life believing that I *must* tithe. My husband and I had faithfully tithed for many years and found that our tithing provided no protection from any “devourer.” It could almost be said that we tithed our way to the poor house. We have heard similar reports from people who have literally gone broke because they believed that they must tithe no matter what.

As God led me throughout the truths of His Word, He revealed to me the error, and even abuse, surrounding today’s practice of tithing. Moses (the Law) said “Tithe,” but Jesus says, “Give.” It is vital that we understand both the Law and Grace in terms of the tithe.

Although this may seem like a hard message, it is a good message. In the end, it will mean freedom for those willing to humble themselves and receive it. God has opened the eyes of many, and they have experienced freedom from this bondage – though sometimes with criticism from the “faithful” tithers. But nothing can deprive a true believer of his new-found joy and the freedom of simply giving. This is something my husband and I have found. Ever since being freed from the bondage of tithing, we have done so much better financially. We are free to give

where the Lord directs us to give, and we have been so blessed financially as well as spiritually.

Denominational borders seem to be non-existent when it comes to this one practice within the church. Books have been written both for and against, but most are only partially Biblical, with verses taken out of context. Those who are for the practice of tithing will choose only those verses supporting their beliefs, and those who are opposed will do the same. I even came across a web site offering help to churches and ministries so they could maximize their income by increasing the tithes. Maybe it would be more correct to call this kind of help “coercion.” If only they would search the Word of God to discover what He has to say.

A lot of the controversy is based on whether or not tithing was a part of the Law. There is not a lot of clear teaching about the fact that Moses’ Law does not apply today, yet the promoters of tithing tell how Abraham tithed before the Law – so now under Grace it is okay to tithe. But what most people don’t realize is that the “tithe” of the Old Covenant consisted of farm crops or animals – it was never money. And the tithe was required only from those who raised crops or animals. A person in any other occupation was not required to tithe anything.

The word “tithe,” or “a tenth,” was first introduced in the account of Melchisedec’s receiving of a tenth of the spoils of battle from Abram. (Genesis 14; Hebrews 7:1,2,4) Notice that it was a tenth of “*the spoils of battle*” – not a tenth of Abram’s income. It was a one-time event, with the remainder of the *spoils* going back to the king of Sodom.

Abraham was very special to God. He had been tested and proven, so that God made him the “father of all those who believe” (Romans 4:11) and gave him the promise of righteousness, which would come through faith in Jesus. (Romans 4:13) God’s chosen people Israel were the great-grandchildren of Abraham. Abraham’s son Isaac was the father of Jacob, whose name God changed to “Israel,” (Genesis 32:28) making his descendants “*the children of Israel.*” In earlier chapters the rebellion of Israel and the necessity for the Law has been explained. The various aspects of the tithe were a large part of the Law to cause Israel to acknowledge the LORD God.

The writer of Hebrews distinguishes between the fleshly priesthood (which was under the Law) and the Priesthood of Christ Who came to destroy all that is of the flesh. Jesus became the High Priest of both the Jews and the Gentiles, seating Himself at the right of the Father to make intercession on behalf of His own. He did away with the old priesthood, which was only a “shadow” to reveal what He would accomplish through His death and resurrection.

Much of the New Testament (Covenant) was written by Paul the Apostle to proclaim the good news that Jesus’ New Covenant replaced the Old. Paul’s

teaching was so thorough that if any person were to read all of his writings without stopping, as though reading a book, there would be no questions left unanswered. And all aspects of the Law, such as the tithe, would become clearer.

The continued explanation in Hebrews clearly shows that the law regarding the tithe actually did have its origin in Abraham's gift to Melchisedec. *"And indeed those who are of the **sons of Levi** (Jacob's son), who receive the priesthood, **have a commandment to receive tithes** from the people **according to the law**, that is, from their brethren [Israel], though they have come from the loins of Abraham... **Even Levi, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham**, so to speak, for he was still in the loins of his father when Melchisedec met him."* (Hebrews 7:5, 9-10 NKJV)

When Levi was yet in the loins of his father (being a "seed" of Abraham) he was present when Melchisedec met him. The promise of righteousness through faith was given to Abraham, but the Law was given to his son Isaac's grandchildren – the children of Jacob. Even so, the Law would not negate the promise and would continue only until Messiah came.

The next passage further illuminates the difference between the carnal and the spiritual. A question is asked: if the Levitical priesthood (received under the Law) could bring perfection, why was it necessary for Jesus to come according to the order of Melchisedec? The priests, after the order of Aaron and then Levi, performed their duties with sacrifices and offerings at the altar. But once there was a change in the priesthood (Jesus) it was necessary that the law be changed. As the writer of Hebrews said, *"**For he of whom these things are spoken belongs to another tribe, from which no man has officiated at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord arose from Judah, of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood.**"* (Hebrews 7:13-14 NKJV)

Jesus descended from Judah, of which tribe there were no priests according to the Law. Judah was one of Jacob's (Israel's) twelve sons and a brother to Levi, but the priesthood belonged only to the descendants of Levi. This tells us that both the Law *and* Grace came out of the loins of Abraham – the Law through Levi and Grace (Jesus) through Judah.

Under the Levitical priesthood, man gave attendance at the altar and the practice of bringing tithes to the Levite priests was a work done by man of flesh, and received by a man of flesh.

This same chapter of Hebrews also explains how God made Jesus a priest after the order of Melchisedec: *"not after the law of a carnal commandment, but **after the power of an endless life...For there is a disannulling [cancellation]** (Greek #115) **of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness.**"* (Hebrews 7:16, 18)

Because it was weak and unprofitable (being a part of Moses Law) tithing was canceled at the Cross.

It must be emphasized that, although He became God's Priest, Jesus had no priestly duties as did those who were under the Law. Therefore, He does not require tithes from the hands of man, nor does He want them. HE WANTS THE WHOLE MAN! This was what Paul was teaching when he asked the Romans, "*For who has known the mind of the LORD? Or who has become His counselor? Or who has first given to Him and it shall be repaid to him? For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things, to whom be glory forever. Amen. I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world [age] (Greek #165), but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.*" (Romans 11:34-36 & 12:1-2 NKJV)

(It is unfortunate that man chose to interrupt Paul's message with a chapter break.) Jesus wants all or nothing. By presenting our bodies as a living sacrifice, we offer our flesh to be crucified with Him, thereby allowing His Spirit to mortify the deeds of our body. We must remember that "*IN HIM we live, and move, and have our being.*" (Acts 17:28a) It is abominable to think we can keep Him at arm's length, offering Him a mere tenth of our substance because we have been "conformed to this age."

Jesus strongly rebuked the scribes and Pharisees in the twenty-third chapter of Matthew. There was no stronger word than "woe" when Jesus rebuked anyone. He repeatedly said to the scribes and Pharisees, "*Woe unto you,*" and called them "hypocrites" as He pointed out their self-righteous performance. He chided them for meticulously paying a tithe, even of spices, while neglecting weightier matters like justice, mercy, and faith. He told them, "*These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.*" (Matthew 23:23b NKJV) The earlier part of the chapter tells how they were taken up with themselves rather than showing judgment and mercy and giving honor to God. When Jesus told them not to leave the tithing undone He had not yet nailed the ordinances of the Law to His Cross. At that point, it was still required of some of the Jews to tithe. Jesus was not telling those NOT under the Law to tithe. Jesus spoke of "tithing" only in reference to the Pharisees.

Bring the "whole" tithe

The majority who promote tithing cite Malachi 3:10, where the people were told to bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so there would be food in God's house. This verse is only a part of the message given to Malachi for the unfaithful Israelites, particularly the Levite priests. They had been offering polluted sacrifices, because the animals were blind, lame, or sick. So the LORD asked if He should even receive this offering from their hand, saying, "*But **cursed be the***

swindler who has a male in his flock and vows it, but sacrifices a blemished animal.” (Malachi 1:14a NAS)

The first verse of Malachi 1 shows that He is indeed addressing the Israelites. Then again, in Malachi 3:6, God says, *“For I the LORD change not; therefore ye, O sons of Jacob are not consumed.”*

Throughout the first two chapters, the priests continually asked “Why?” or “How?” or “Wherein?” at everything the LORD spoke to them regarding their disobedience and unfaithfulness in carrying out their priestly duties. They had also been unfaithful to their wives.

Malachi 3:7 begins the full context of the popular “proof” that one MUST tithe. Here the LORD speaks of how the Israelites had strayed from His statutes for so many years. He says, *“Return to Me, and I will return to you,...But you say, ‘How shall we return?’ Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, ‘How have we robbed You?’ In tithes and offerings.” (Malachi 3:7b-8 NAS)*

He follows this by telling them that the whole nation of Israel is cursed for robbing Him, and that they must bring the whole tithe into the storehouse. The LORD challenges them to test Him and see if He will not open the windows of Heaven, bringing great blessings upon them and putting an end to the destruction of their crops. Again, we must keep in mind He was addressing the Israelites.

After chiding Israel for their arrogance toward Him, the LORD saw how a remnant of the people feared Him. Malachi tells how *“...a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the LORD and who esteem His name. ‘They will be Mine,’ says the LORD of hosts, ‘on the day that I prepare My own possession, and I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.” (Malachi 3:16b-18 NAS)*

Various “tithes”

Leviticus 27:30 is often quoted: *“Thus all the tithe of the land, of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’S; it is holy to the LORD.”* Verses 26-29 and 31-34 are omitted because they support the fact that tithing was a command given to Israel: *“These are the commandments which the LORD commanded Moses for the sons of Israel at Mount Sinai.” (NAS)*

Likewise, Deuteronomy 14:22-27 would NEVER be quoted to promote tithing. The people were told to bring a tenth of all they produced in the field each year. *“You shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your*

oil, and the firstborn of your herd and your flock, so that you may learn to fear the LORD your God always." (Vs. 23 NAS)

If the distance was too great to the place of the Lord's choosing, they could sell their tithe. Upon arrival, they would spend the money "...for **oxen, or sheep, or wine, or strong drink**, or whatever your heart desires; and **there you shall eat in the presence of the LORD your God** and rejoice, you and your household. Also you shall not neglect the Levite who is in your town, for he has no portion or inheritance among you." (Vs. 26b-27 NAS)

As seen within the above context, the tithe was to be eaten by the tither in the place that the LORD chose. The suggestion of wine or strong drink would horrify a lot of Christians, because the focus has traditionally been on money for the church. The same Bible we claim to obey will undo our misguided beliefs if only we would read the Word of God as opposed to accepting the word of man.

If the Church is determined to adhere to the law of the tithe, she must return to the whole Law, and abide by every part.

Giving or tithing?

The words "tithe" and "give" are often used interchangeably. Some books and sermons say the passages in the New Testament on giving refer to "*tithing*." After what Jesus went through to cancel the Law of Moses and free His people from adherence to carnal (fleshly) commandments, it is unthinkable that Gentiles should adopt any part of that Law to govern the finances of what has become an apostate church.

The New Testament teaching was on "giving," never "tithing." Still, somehow, 1 Corinthians 16:2 is used to promote tithing: "*On the first day of the week let each one of you lay something aside, storing up as he may prosper, that there be no collections when I come.*"(NKJV) The last phrase indicates a particular occasion in Paul's day, as we will soon discover.

In the above verse, where was Paul coming from and where was he going with the money? He was not telling the Corinthians to take the money to church to pay the pastor and to cover a mortgage payment, utilities, janitorial services, computers, photocopiers, paper, etc. The background and full context of Paul's letter tells the story. He was telling the Corinthians to do the same thing he had told the churches at Galatia to do – to lay aside something on the first day of the week. Paul was coming with offerings from the Macedonians, the Achaeans, and the Galatians. His plan was to pick up the Corinthians' gifts, according as they had prospered, and carry on to Jerusalem. (1Corinthians 16:1-5) There were many poor among the saints at Jerusalem, and Paul's mission was to provide aid to those who were in need. (Romans 15:25-26)

There is more on giving in 2 Corinthians 9. However, this chapter is also the source of even more verses taken out of context and used to support the doctrine of the tithe. This chapter continues the same context as that of the previous paragraphs, where Paul was admonishing the Corinthians to join with the Macedonians and the Achaean in giving to the poor saints at Jerusalem. He said, "*Therefore I thought it necessary to **exhort the brethren to go to you ahead of time, and prepare your generous gift beforehand, which you had previously promised, that it may be ready as a matter of generosity and not as a grudging obligation. But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity [distress] (Greek #318); for God loves a cheerful giver.***" (2 Corinthians 9:5-7 NKJV)

What carnal man has made from these verses could be called "a basis for extortion through means of distress." They have nothing to do with "giving at church," but have everything to do with providing for the poor saints at Jerusalem in Paul's day. If there were principles to be learned from the above verses, they would be these: "*sow sparingly, reap sparingly; sow bountifully, reap bountifully,*" and "*God loves a cheerful giver.*"

Paul instructed the saints on how to share with one another out of their supply, so as to bring equality. He said, "*As it is written, **'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.'***" (2 Corinthians 8:15 NKJV) Amassing earthly wealth is of no eternal value, but having faith in God and generosity in the grace of giving will guarantee that our needs will always be met. If we would only let go of all that is in our hands, it is certain that our hands will never be empty.

Even Jesus' own words have been taken out of context to justify man-made doctrines. One partial verse often found in sermons and books is, "*Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom.*" (Luke 6:38a Rev. KJV) Here is the full sentence from which it was taken: "***Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven: give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again.***" (Luke 6:37-38 Rev. KJV)

The measure measured and returned applies to all of the above admonitions Jesus spoke – not only the giving. And every admonition, if followed, would fulfill the requirement in Jesus' one commandment – "love". The full context begins in Luke 6:27 and includes, among other things, "***love your enemies, do good to those who hate you, bless those who curse you, pray for those who mistreat you.***" And He ends verse 36 with, "*Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful.*" (New American Standard)

The big question

The question remaining would be "How does the preacher get paid?"

There are some who believe that Galatians 6:6, where Paul speaks of communicating with others, means "paying the teacher." I believed this also until recently, when the Lord corrected me as I pondered this passage and the Greek word translations.

Following his exhortation in chapter 5 to walk by the Spirit, Paul said, "*Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye which are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of meekness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted. **Bear [receive]** (Greek #941) **ye one another's burdens [authority]** (Greek #922), **and so fulfil the law of Christ. For if a man thinketh himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceiveth himself.**" (Galatians 6:1-3)*

This speaks of correction and ministering one to another within the Body of Christ. We are all equal in Christ and must be open to receive the authority given to fellow believers. We see this concept of sharing in verse 6: "***But let him that is taught in the word communicate unto [share with] (Greek #2841) him that teacheth in all good things.***"

According to Galatians 6:3, if we think we are something when we are nothing, we deceive ourselves. Paul's next words tell how we must be open to one another, not sowing to our own flesh. "***Be not deceived [caused to roam from truth]*** (Greek #4105); ***God is not mocked [ridiculed]*** (Greek #3456): *for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.*" God will not be ridiculed by man who sows to his own flesh rather than to the Spirit. "***For he that soweth unto his own flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth unto the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap eternal life.***" (Galatians 6:7-8)

Paul did give some instruction to the Corinthians regarding a minister and his support. "*Do you not know that those men who are employed in the services of the temple get their food from the temple? And that those who tend the altar share with the altar [in the offerings brought]? [On the same principle] **the Lord directed that those who publish the good news (the Gospel) should live (get their maintenance) by the Gospel.**" (1 Corinthians 9:13-14 Amplified)*

Although Paul the Apostle supported himself by making tents, and never once received financial support, he taught that a minister of the true Gospel of Jesus Christ has a right to "live by the Gospel." This "living" would come through the support of those to whom he ministers the Word of Truth.

A minister is not worthy to bear the name "minister of the Gospel" if he does not proclaim the good news of the Gospel – that JESUS DIED TO FREE MAN FROM THE FLESH. If he preaches any other "gospel," he is a deceiver. Even

though the deceiver will fully account for his deceit, would those who support such a one be any less accountable for their part in supporting him?

The tragedy

Without question, tithing was established under the Law and has no place in the Church. It is no light matter to choose to adhere to the Law. And the consequences are most severe for those who would place others under the Law, even with a seemingly harmless matter such as tithing.

Materialism has invaded the Church, so to guarantee survival in a materialistic society this would-be Body of Christ is willing to go against all Jesus accomplished in His death and resurrection. How can Jesus be the Head of a Body that is in such bondage to flesh?

The preceding pages have sufficiently revealed the Truth about tithing and giving in relationship to the Law and Christ's command to "love." It should now be clear that all the demands of the Law, including tithing, became history at the Cross. It should also be clear that the Law was never intended for the Gentiles in the first place. Paul the Apostle said, "***I do not make void the grace of God: for if righteousness is through the law, then Christ died for nought.***" (Galatians 2:21) Paul also said, "*Now that no man is justified by the law in the sight of God, is evident: for, The righteous shall live by faith. And **the law is not of faith: but, he that doeth them shall live in them.***" (Galatians 3:11-12) Let us not grieve the precious Holy Spirit by turning to trust in a law never intended for us.

James said, "*If ye fulfil the **royal law** according to the scripture, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well...For whosoever shall keep the whole law [Moses' law], and yet stumble in one point, he is become guilty of all.***" (James 2:8, 10)

This means that if a man is convinced he must tithe but does not, he is guilty of murder, adultery, and every other transgression under the Law. Is this the desire of the Church? I think not. But this is the choice she has made by choosing the knowledge of good and evil over the knowledge of God or, "*full acknowledgement of God.*" (Greek #1922) Let us not be double minded – we must choose between flesh and Spirit, Law and Grace, unbelief and Faith, self and Love. Flesh, the Law, unbelief, and self are in total opposition to *Spirit, Grace, Faith, and Love.*

Again, every person who chooses adherence to any part of the Law of Moses is obligated to abide by the whole Law and will be judged according to that same Law. The verdict is guaranteed to be "GUILTY!" The punishment is ETERNAL SEPARATION FROM GOD. And to all who choose the path of Law and flesh, God the Father will say, "YOU HAVE REJECTED MY SON."

A man or woman may desire to break free from the bondage of tithing, while continuing to give in obedience to the Lord's prompting. It may be to provide for someone in need or to support a minister of truth. We should forget percentages and follow the Lord's leading – He will never see *“the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging their bread,”* as David said in Psalm 37:25.

Repentance is the only hope the Church has to become a part of the remnant. She must turn from self, flesh and unbelief, and rest in Jesus' fulfillment of the greatest law which is, of course, LOVE.

©2004-2010 ekklesia4him.net. Permission is granted for not-for-profit reproduction or distribution (without any changes) provided this notice appears and this link is included: http://www.ekklesia4him.net/tithing_old_or_new_covenant.html