

Response to Creflo Dollar on Tithing

Religion vs. Relationship

SOME HAVE SAID:

Religion is sustained by two factors:

1. Fear
2. Guilt

“The church has used teaching on tithing to keep people in fear and guilt”.

RESPONSE:

That is true. Some churches and ministries have abused the teaching of tithing. But tithing was never meant to be used for fear and guilt. The answer to abuse is proper use- not stopping use. For example, Abraham tithed to Melchizedek before the Law. It was not a matter of fear or guilt. Tithing was always a matter of gratitude and grace.

The Old Testament

There is a viewpoint is that since Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of the Law, we do not follow the Law anymore. Jesus in Mat. 5:17 is quoted often, but you need to read the rest and place the text in context.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. For truly, I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not an iota, not a dot, will pass from the Law until all is accomplished. Therefore, whoever relaxes one

of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I tell you, unless your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven.” (Mat. 5:17-20).

Jesus says we are to teach the Law (referring to the entire Old Testament) and to “relax” any commandment makes you the least in the kingdom. “relax” – from the Greek word used to untie or unlatch a sandal, (Mark 1:17). (KJV- abolish, NIV, breaks).

Our righteousness exceeds that of the religious, not to be the same. This is because our righteousness comes from relationship and indwelling of the Spirit, not from keeping the Law. So, Jesus does not say Murder is good. He says anger and name calling are wrong. Jesus does not say adultery is now good. He takes it a step beyond... because grace does not eliminate responsibility, it increases responsibility. Now, in grace, our dependence is on our relationship with God, not on keeping laws. But the Spirit of **law-maker** lives in us to make us **law-keepers** in the Spirit.

Notice what Jesus says:

Therefore, whoever relaxes one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever does them and teaches them will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Jesus is not saying if you teach wrong, you are not saved. You said you are still in the kingdom, just the least. Not a Law thing or a religious thing, but a relationship. A discipleship issue, not a salvation issue.

The Old Testament is the foundation for kingdom living. Especially for political, justice and economic issues, as well as spiritual/ devotional

issues. For instance, we have criminal and civil courts because the Old Testament differentiated between laws of God and laws of men. The “certain inalienable rights” of our Constitution were rights given by God, not government. The Kingdom life is based on all the Bible.

Rightly Divide the Word.

The Old Testament is the inspired word. 2 Tim. 3:16- “All Scripture”. All scripture is God- breathed, but not all scripture carries the same authority. All of it is profitable, but not at the same level. The ceremonial laws are fulfilled. The moral laws are still in effect, and intensified due to grace. All inspired, but do not all carry the same authority. Word has to be rightly divided.

Abraham and the Law

Abraham did three things that were before the Law- paid tithe (Gen. 14:20) faith, (Gen. 15:6) and circumcision (Gen. 17). Paul makes a point that Abraham believed, and it was counted as righteousness (grace-gifted) before circumcision. This made circumcision evidence of faith, not just keeping a law. The tithe was even before the statement of his faith. However, we would still say it was an action of faith, not law, because the Law was not yet given.

It was the action of the tithe that opened up faith and prayer to Abram. He did not speak back to God in prayer or believe until after he tithed. This is the “windows of heaven” referred to by Malachi.

New Testament

- Jesus did not deny the tithe.
- Jesus acknowledged that the widow gave 100%, not 10%.

Paul did not teach tithe. He taught generous giving, So should we. However, tithe is a good starting place. (The Corinthians passages in 1 Cor. 16 and 2 Cor. 8,9 were all concerning a special offering for believers in Jerusalem during a famine, not the tithe).

Tithing was always accompanied by offerings. Mal. 3:8. Tithe is math. Offerings are a matter of prayer. The issue in Malachi was not that they were not paying- they were abusing it- not the “full tithe”- giving out of their surplus instead of their living, giving leftovers, not a cooked meal. The issue was always one of faith and relationship. God never needs our tithe. It was always a system to support church and ministry. (1 Cor. 9:13-14)

Psalm 50-

“If I were hungry, I would not tell you, for the world and its fullness are mine. Do I eat the flesh of bulls or drink the blood of goats? Offer to God a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and perform your vows to the Most High, and call upon me in the day of trouble; I will deliver you, and you shall glorify me.”

During the exile, no temple, no tithe. Still God in relationship.

ACTS 15: Jerusalem Council- No statement of tithe.

Also, no statement of church on Saturday or Sunday. No Sabbath at all. You cannot make an argument from silence. The Bible does not use the word “Trinity” or “rapture.” Does that mean it is not true? There are some things that we base on tradition, not Scripture. No verse commanding us to worship on Sunday.

Conclusion

Curse: The curse Jesus bore was the curse of sin, not the curse of no tithe. The tithe was never a heaven or hell issue, but at least in the kingdom or great in the kingdom issue. If the tithe was preached that way, the preaching was wrong, not the tithe principle. We have always preached the blessing or curse were financial in nature, not entire life.

Jesus also said: And Jesus said to them, “Whose likeness and inscription is this?” They said, “Caesar’s.” Then he said to them, “Therefore render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, and to God the things that are God’s.” (Mat. 22:21,22) – There are things we give toward God.

Jesus said – “For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.” (Mat. 6:21). Not the ‘tithe’ but principle is true regardless of percentage.

We have always thought the tithe was great, especially for new believers. It helps them budget their money. It places their heart in the right place. Also, tithe as a requirement of church membership is valid. Again, not a salvation issue, but a discipleship issue.

Grace

Heb, 12:15- “See to it that no one fails to obtain the grace of God...”

Heb. 13:9- “Do not be led astray by diverse and strange teachings, for it is good for the heart to be strengthened by grace, ...”

You can be “under grace” but fail to obtain it Being “under grace” requires more, not less, from those who receive. Example: We do not give sacrifices, we become “living sacrifices.”

Wesley and others taught on “the means of grace.” The thinking here is that we are under grace, but how do we get grace in our lives to strengthen and bless our faith? The Roman Catholics think that certain dead saints have extra grace to share, and you can ask them. Protestants reject this. But we partake of “means of grace” such as: Bible study, church, worship, communion, baptism, etc. The tithe is also a means of grace. It will bring grace to you. No tithe, no grace and so no blessing.

If Tithe was preached as Law instead of as a means of grace, then the preaching was wrong, not the tithe.