

a Bible Lesson from LUKE 11:37-42:

THE GIVING OF ALMS IS IN ADDITION TO TITHING!

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I. A QUESTION OF THE HEART

Do we love GOD enough to joyfully obey His Commandment that we tithes to The Church? Do we love our neighbour enough to compassionately give alms, above and beyond our tithes, to the poor? For we are commanded to do both, and that with joy!

II. LUKE 11:37-42 – GIVING FROM A CLEAN CUP WITHIN

³⁷ And as...[JESUS] spake, a certain Pharisee besought Him to dine with Him: and He went in, and sat down to meat.

³⁸ And when the Pharisee saw it, he marvelled that He had not first washed before dinner.

³⁹ And The Lord said unto him, Now do ye Pharisees make clean the outside of the cup and the platter; but your inward part is full of ravening and wickedness.

⁴⁰ Ye fools, did not He that made that which is without make that which is within also?

⁴¹ But rather give alms of such things as ye have; and, behold, all things are clean unto you.

⁴² But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of GOD: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.¹

III. INTRODUCTION

In The New Testament, we find our Lord JESUS CHRIST drawing a clear distinction between the mandatory tithing to GOD's House and the voluntary giving of alms in addition, which is above and beyond tithing.

Now there was a certain Pharisee who sat at table to eat with CHRIST. But The Lord did not ceremonially wash his hands before the meal, which was apparently a tradition of the Pharisees of Old. And the man was greatly offended. After the meal, JESUS chastises the man and his fellow religious traditionalists for being too focused on washing the outside of the cup of the actions clean, but forgetting to seek an inward washing of their souls before The Almighty.

The example that The Lord uses first is tithing and giving alms. The Pharisees were so focused on external keeping of The Law of Moses in every minute detail that they would tithe the smallest particle of mint and herb to GOD's House. And while they were technically correct to do so, it seems they at times lacked the more important drive of compassion for the needy, which caused them to omit the giving of charity to the needy beyond the giving of tithes.

¹ 1, KJV, LUKE 11:37-42.

And because they did not give their tithes with joy and from a clean soul within, they did not bother to give their alms beyond their tithes. Their faith being minutely mechanical, they neglected the weightier parts of The Law of GOD – “judgment and The Love of GOD, ² mercy and faith!” ³

IV. KEEPING THE LETTER OF THE LAW, BUT FORGETTING ITS HEART

From our New Testament Text above, CHRIST says in LUKE 11:42 that the Pharisees “tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs.” The word for “tithe” here in The Greek Text is - ἀποδεκατόω - apodekatoo, which means “to give [or] pay a tithe of anything,” or more precisely, “to exact receive a tenth from anyone.” ⁴ So there we have it. The Pharisees were keeping The Letter of The Law of GOD, The Commandment to tithe so exactly that they sat about cutting up bits of mint and herbs into tenths and carrying of one tenth of these to The Temple treasury, but CHRIST observes that they neglected the heart of The Law of GOD: Judgement. Love. Mercy. Faith.

But what they neglected was the freewill giving of offering “alms,” for which JESUS chastises them severely in LUKE 11:41. He saw that, while their minds were in overdrive concerning their minute analysis of The Law of GOD, their hearts were in shutdown mode concerning love of GOD and men, for they thought they were done when they gave their tithes. They lacked charity and mercy in their hearts, and so they neglected to “give alms of such things as ye have.” The word for “alms” here in The Greek Text is - ἐλεημοσύνη - eleemosune, which refers to the “mercy [and] pity” we are to have in the giving of “charity” and “donation[s] to the poor.” ⁵

Randy Alcorn, in “Money, Possessions and Eternity,” comments, “The tithe was explicit and objective.” It is clearly stated in The Law of GOD as a Commandment, applicable today in The Church as it was then in Israel. “Though GOD desired His people to do it joyfully [then as much as now], it required no heart response.” Men can fulfill The Biblical Command to tithe mechanically, feeling under duress, to keep the letter of The Law, but all the while not out of love for GOD and neighbour. “But the freewill offering was [and is] entirely different. It involve[s] the joy of a heart touched by GOD’s Grace!” ⁶

² 1, KJV, LUKE 11:42, “But woe unto you, Pharisees! for ye tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and The Love of GOD: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.”

³ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 23:23, “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.”

⁴ 2, Strong’s Data, 586 ἀποδεκατόω apodekatoo - Meaning: “1) to give, pay a tithe of anything 2) to exact receive a tenth from anyone.”

⁵ 2, Strong’s Data, 1654 ἐλεημοσύνη eleemosune - Meaning: “1) mercy, pity 1a) esp. as exhibited in giving alms, charity 2) the benefaction itself, a donation to the poor, alms.”

⁶ 3, Alcorn, “Money, Possessions and Eternity,” p 177, paragraph 2. “Voluntary Offerings.”

V. TITHES AND ALMS IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

We can go to The Old Testament to NEHEMIAH 13:10-12, where Nehemiah chastises the neglect of tithing for GOD's House and GOD's servants by GOD's people. "And I perceived that the portions of the Levites had not been given them: for the Levites and the singers, that did the work, were fled every one to his field. Then contended I with the rulers, and said, Why is The House of GOD forsaken? And I gathered them together, and set them in their place. Then brought all Judah the tithe of the corn and the new wine and the oil unto the treasuries."⁷ The word for "tithe" here in The Hebrew Text is - מַעֲשֵׂר - MA"ASER, which means "tenth part."⁸

Compare this with the voluntary and additional freewill "offerings" made by the Israelites for The Tabernacle out of the abundance of their hearts EXODUS 36:3-7. They gave so much that the people had to be told to give their extra giving for GOD's work a rest! O, that we should have such a problem in The Church today! "And they received of Moses all the offering, which the children of Israel had brought for the work of the service of the sanctuary... And they brought yet unto him free offerings every morning. And all the wise men, that wrought all the work of the sanctuary... spake unto Moses, saying, The people bring much more than enough for the service of the work... And Moses [said]... Let neither man nor woman make any more work for the offering of the sanctuary. So the people were restrained from bringing. For the stuff they had was sufficient for all the work to make it, and too much."⁹ The word for "offering" here in The Hebrew Text is - תְּרוּמָה - TERUMAH, meaning "contribution" as "an offering to GOD... of grain, money, etc."¹⁰

What do we see in the joyful giving of GOD's people in EXODUS 36 here? As Alcorn observes, it "...shows the results when people earnestly seek GOD's pleasure by giving freely. The amount collected was huge, far more than what was needed. Even after the need had been met, the people kept giving, out of joy. They recognized that giving wasn't simply to benefit the cause, but to benefit them as givers. It was an act of worship... The giving was contagious..."¹¹ Why? Because the people's hearts were filled with the joy of The LORD! And they took joy before The Almighty with each other in being able to give for the work of The Kingdom! Should we do any less today?

⁷ 1, KJV, NEHEMIAH 13:10-12.

⁸ 2, Strong's Data, 4643 מַעֲשֵׂר MA"ASER or מַעֲשָׂר MA"ASAR. Meaning: "(1) tithe, tenth part 1a) tenth part 1b) tithe, payment of a tenth part."

⁹ KJV, EXODUS 36:3-7.

¹⁰ 2, Strong's Data, 8641 תְּרוּמָה TERUMAH or תְּרוּמָה TERUMAH. Meaning: "(1) contribution, offering 1a) a heave offering 1b) any offering 1c) an offering to God 1d) an offering (of grain, money, etc) 1e) contribution."

¹¹ 3, Alcorn, "Money, Possessions and Eternity," p 177, paragraph 3. "Voluntary Offerings."

VI. GOD CALLS US TO DO BOTH – TITHING AND GIVING OF ALMS

Now it is better that a man obey GOD's Laws out of fear or mechanical duty, than for him to not obey at all. But if a man only tithes only because The Church requires him to, but has no place in his life to give free-will offerings of charity to the poor – even if that almsgiving is modest according to his means – does this not say something about a deficit of love of GOD and mercy towards one's neighbours?

Now it is better that a man obey GOD's Laws out of fear or mechanical duty, than for him to not obey at all. But it is better to love GOD with all one's heart, soul and might first. This inevitably leads us to love our neighbours as, and above, ourselves second. A man whose heart loves GOD and his fellow man will joyfully tithe to The Church and compassionately give alms beyond that to the poor.

VII. GIVE TITHES AND ALMS FROM OF THE TWO GREAT COMMANDMENTS

Recall the lawyer of The Law of Moses, a very learned man in The Word of GOD in Israel, asked The Lord in order to tempt Him, "Master, which is The Great Commandment in The Law" of GOD?¹² What does JESUS reply? He sums up The Law of GOD in The Two Great Commandments,^{13 14} giving His answer in MATTHEW 22:37-40, "...Thou shalt love The Lord thy GOD with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is The First and Great Commandment. And The Second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On These Two Commandments hang all The Law and the prophets."¹⁵

Take away These Two Commandments from the hearts of men, and the keeping of all The Others becomes vain externalism. For if I have not love, as Saint Paul declares in I CORINTHIANS 13:1, "...I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal."¹⁶ This, no matter what works of righteousness I may do! Yes, it's better that the man who has no love for GOD or his fellow man not murder, steal, rob, rape and plunder for fear of The Judge of the universe and the wrath of upright civil authorities. But CHRIST calls us to more than just this!

VIII. THE RIGHT MOTIVE IN TITHING AND ALMSGIVING

Of tithing, Saint Irenaeus says, "At The Beginning, GOD accepted the gifts of Abel, because he offered with single-mindedness and righteousness. However, He had no respect for the offering of Cain, because his heart was divided with envy and malice. For if anyone will endeavor to offer a sacrifice merely for outward appearances, such... [an offering] will not profit him anything... Sacrifices, therefore, do not sanctify a man.

¹² 1, KJV, MATTHEW 22:35-36.

¹³ 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 6:5, "And thou shalt love The LORD thy GOD with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might."

¹⁴ 1, KJV, LEVITICUS 19:18, "Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am The LORD."

¹⁵ 1, KJV, MATTHEW 22:37-40.

¹⁶ 1, KJV, I CORINTHIANS 13:1.

For GOD stands in no need of sacrifice. But it is the conscience of the person offering that sanctifies the sacrifice when it is pure!”¹⁷

Of almsgiving, Saint Origen says, “If we give alms to men with the thought of appearing charitable before men, and if we desire to be honored because of our generosity, we receive only the reward from men. In fact, universally, everything that is done by someone who is conscious that he will be glorified by men has no reward from Him Who beholds [all things] in secret. For He renders the reward in secret to those who are pure!”¹⁸

CHRIST is saying to us, “Look! If you truly love My Father in Heaven – if you truly love Me – you will not just keep The Commandments externally because you are ‘forced’ to do so. Will you not take joy in keeping Them, looking for ways to obediently return with gladness the tithes of your wealth and possessions to The Church and your voluntary offerings of charity to the poor and needy beyond that? For see all that GOD blesses you with! Should you not then bless The LORD and your fellow man?”

IX. IN CONCLUSION

King Solomon in PROVERBS 19:17 declares, “He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto The LORD; and that which he hath given will He pay him again!”¹⁹ Solomon speaks of the alms given to the poor and needy, as unto The LORD, beyond the tithe to GOD’s House. Saint Cyprian joins hands with Solomon, saying, “By almsgiving to the poor, we are lending to GOD. When it is given to the least, it is given to CHRIST...”²⁰

Tithes and alms. Both matters of obedience. Both matters of the heart. To give the first is commanded by The Law of GOD, tithing. The second is encouraged by The Love of GOD, almsgiving. Both are the duties of the faithful Christian. The Church needs to be funded to do much of the work of The Lord. We are commanded to give back 10% of what GOD has given us to His House. And GOD’s House is to come first. We are then called upon, in loving GOD and thus our fellow man, to have mercy and compassion on those in need whom The LORD places before us. To then offer up charitable giving of alms to the needy.

¹⁷ 4, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry “Tithes, Tithing,” p 645, 4th entry. “Irenaeus (c. 180, E/W), 1.485.

¹⁸ 4, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry “Alms, Almsgiving,” p 10, 1st entry. “Origen (c. 245, E), 9.444.”

¹⁹ 1, KJV, PROVERBS 19:17.

²⁰ 4, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, entry “Alms, Almsgiving,” p 10, 5th entry. “Cyprian (c. 250, W), 5.480.”

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