

a Bible Lesson from PROVERBS 3:9-10:

HONOR THE LORD WITH THY SUBSTANCE AND YOU SHALL BE BLESSED!

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## I. A SCRIPTURE

### PROVERBS 3:9-10

<sup>9</sup> Honour The LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase:

<sup>10</sup> So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine. <sup>1</sup>

## II. INTRODUCTION

How is it, that we are commanded to honour The LORD with “the firstfruits of all thine increase?” this is a most crucial question, for we see an “if, then” relationship between PROVERBS 3 verses 9 and 10: IF we honour The LORD with all our substance, and IF we honour Him with the “firstfruits” of our increase, THEN “shall our barns be filled with plenty” and THEN shall our presses “burst out with new wine.”

So we see a clearly straight line dependency here. The blessings which we are promised in verse 10 are given to us by the hand of The Almighty ONLY if we meet the criteria set down in verse 9. So we shall see!

## III. MATTERS OF DEFINITION

PROVERBS 3:9 tells us we are to honour GOD with our “substance,” the word in The Hebrew Text - הוֹן - HON, meaning our “wealth” or “riches,” those things of “price” and “value” that are given to us by The Almighty to serve as “sufficiency” for our needs.”<sup>2</sup> How are we to honor The Eternal Giver of all good things with our wealth? It begins by obeying The Biblical Command, valid for both Israel and The Church, to tithe a tenth of our riches to The House of GOD.<sup>3</sup>

PROVERBS 3:10 tells us we are also to honour GOD with the “firstfruits” of our increase. So as our wealth and riches increase, The LORD commands that we give back a tithe of that as well to The House of GOD for The Kingdom’s work on earth. The word for “firstfruits” in The Hebrew Text - רֵאשִׁיִּית - RE’SHIYTH, meaning our “first, best, chief and choicest parts” of our gain.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> 1, KJV, PROVERBS 3:9-10.

<sup>2</sup> 2, Strong Data, 1952 הוֹן HON. Meaning: “1) wealth, riches, substance 1a) wealth 1b) price, high value... 2) enough!, sufficiency.”

<sup>3</sup> 1, KJV, LEVITICUS 27:30, “And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is The LORD’S: it is holy unto The LORD.”

<sup>4</sup> 2, Strong’s Data, 7225 רֵאשִׁיִּית RE’SHIYTH. Meaning: “1) first, beginning, best, chief 1a) beginning 1b) first 1c) chief 1d) choice part.”

#### IV. WHY THIS A CONDITION FOR DIVINE BLESSINGS?

This really is the wrong way to ask this question. By our very existence in body, mind and soul – with every breath of life we draw into our chests – The Creator has already blessed us with the gift of life. And with that is good in our lives, He then provides further, in order that we have “sufficiency” for our daily bread. He blesses us with His Law to convict us of sin and keep us from it. And He blesses us with salvation from the wages of sin – earthly and eternal death – at The Cross of CHRIST.

So Saint James says of our Father in Heaven in JAMES 1:17-18, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from The Father of lights, with Whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. Of His own will begat he us with The Word of Truth [JESUS CHRIST, The Word Incarnate], that we should be a kind of firstfruits of His creatures.”<sup>5</sup>

If we do not acknowledge The King of the universe, give Him thanks for the many blessings He gives us and provide for the work of His Kingdom as He commands, why should he bless us further? To those who receive much from His hand, from them He expects proportionately more!

Randy Alcorn, in “Money, Possessions and Eternity,” says of our tithing of our wealth and increase to GOD’s House that they testify of a living Faith: “We give our first and best to you, Lord, because we recognize all good things come from You. In doing so, we recognize our responsibility to sustain the spiritual leadership provided for us” in Your Church on earth.<sup>6</sup>

#### V. THE PURPOSES OF GOD FOR HIS PEOPLE TITHING TO THE CHURCH

Should not GOD’s people provide for the needs of those who GOD sets in The Church to minister to them in His Name? What then of the work of The Kingdom of GOD on earth, The Church Militant? So The Apostolic Constitutions of The early Church declare, “Give to the Priest those things that are due to him – the first-fruits of your [threshing] floor and of your wine-press.”<sup>7</sup>

The prophet Samuel said to the unfaithful King Saul of ancient Israel in I SAMUEL 15:22-23, “...Hath The LORD as great delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices, as in obeying The Voice of The LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams. For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry. Because thou hast rejected the word of The LORD, He hath also rejected thee from being king!”<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> 1, KJV, JAMES 1:17-18.

<sup>6</sup> 3, Alcorn, “Money, Possessions and Eternity,” p 175, paragraph 2. “The Firstfruits.”

<sup>7</sup> 4, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, “tithes, tithing,” p 645, 8<sup>th</sup> entry. “Apostolic Constitutions (compiled c. 390, E), 7.413.”

<sup>8</sup> 1, KJV, I SAMUEL 15:22-23.

This is indeed a frightful warning to all of GOD's people: First, that The LORD desires that our hearts offer up sacrifices of righteousness and faithfulness along with our outward religious observances! And second that, that if we turn from The LORD, though His patience in pursuing is Great, there may come a time when His Mercy must give way to His Justice!

Should not GOD's people provide for the needs of the poor, the needy and the destitute through the agency of The Church in His Name? What then of the saving of lives and souls at The Cross of our Lord JESUS CHRIST? So The Apostolic Constitutions further declare, "Let the Bishop use a man of GOD those tithes and first-fruits that are given according to The Command of GOD. Let him also dispense in a right manner the free-will offerings [as well as the tithes] that are brought in for the poor."<sup>9</sup>

#### VI. THE LORD DEMANDS OF US A LIVING FAITH OF MERCY TO OTHERS

Saint James points us to The Mercy of GOD that should shine forth from the lives of those who bear The Name of CHRIST in JAMES 2:14-16, "What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit?"<sup>10</sup> Mere lip service is not enough. We are to give GOD the sacrifices of a true and living Christian Faith!

James continues in JAMES 2:17-20, "Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one GOD; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?"<sup>11</sup> Even the bound demons in Hell confess that The Almighty exists. That is not enough. We are called to put our Christian Faith into practice, as our Lord JESUS Himself shows us, and as The Apostles learned to do by His example!

#### VII. TITHING IN THE LAW OF MOSES APPLIES TO TODAY AS WELL

Now the language used in This Scripture Text speaks with agrarian terms to a time and place when most people survived by the food they harvested from the earth by the work of their hands. In our more supposedly modern age, at least in The West, only a small number of us actually farm today. But the principles of The Bible are ageless. GOD commands that, whatever our wealth is that He blesses us with, the tithe is to be given to His Church first.

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<sup>9</sup> 4, Dictionary of Early Christian Beliefs, "tithes, tithing," p 645, 7<sup>th</sup> entry. "Apostolic Constitutions (compiled c. 390, E), 7.408."

<sup>10</sup> 1, KJV, JAMES 2:14-16.

<sup>11</sup> 1, KJV, JAMES 2:17-20.

In ancient Israel, the entire nation was consecrated to GOD corporately, offering tithes of firstfruits on Passover, Pentecost and The Feast of Tabernacles, The Law of Moses also called for individuals to offer tithes of the firstfruits of various harvests - fruits, wines, dough, oil, and wheat.<sup>12</sup> The individual faithful Jew would offer his tithe of firstfruits at The Temple or Tabernacle before the Priest, in accord with DEUTERONOMY 26:3, in thanksgiving for being brought to dwell in The Land and The Presence of The LORD.<sup>13</sup> "...I profess this day unto The LORD thy GOD, that I am come unto the country which The LORD sware unto our fathers for to give us..."<sup>14</sup>

Alcorn observes that, though the nature of much of our "substance" and increase of "firstfruits" has changed, the same principle applies to our modern money and wealth today as well. Whatever the riches that GOD blesses us with from His hand, "The first 10 percent of GOD's provision... [is] returned to The Lord. GOD was regarded as The Provider of the harvest."<sup>15</sup> He is The Provider of our more modern forms of substance and firstfruits today.

"The firstfruits offering reminded people of GOD's ownership" of all of creation, including them. So it should with us in The Church today. "They saw GOD as The Source of all life and blessing." GOD forbid that The Church today see Him as any less! "Parents hoped that their children, by witnessing this regular, systematic giving of wealth to The Lord, would grow up understanding their infinite debt to GOD, and their need to continuously honor Him by their worshipful giving."<sup>16</sup>

So should parents today, most especially those who name The Name of The Lord JESUS CHRIST! And how tragic a lesson we teach our children within The Church when we disobey The Biblical Commandment to tithe to GOD's House. Should we then be surprised when our own children disobey when they become adults?

## VIII. IN CONCLUSION

If we honor GOD by giving back the firstfruits of our substance and our increase, and bring the tithe into The House of The Lord for the work of CHRIST's Kingdom on earth with glad hearts, shall not our Heavenly King shower His blessings upon us? All that we have that is good is from His hand. If we love The LORD, then we shall gladly obey The biblical Command to tithe to The Church, for much work awaits our obedience!

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<sup>12</sup> 5, Fausset's Bible Dictionary, "firstfruits," 1249.01

<sup>13</sup> 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 26:1-2, "And it shall be, when thou art come in unto The Land which The LORD thy GOD giveth thee for an inheritance, and possessest it, and dwellest therein; That thou shalt take of the first of all the fruit of the earth, which thou shalt bring of thy land that The LORD thy GOD giveth thee, and shalt put it in a basket, and shalt go unto The Place which the LORD thy God shall choose to place His Name there."

<sup>14</sup> 1, KJV, DEUTERONOMY 26:3.

<sup>15</sup> 3, Alcorn, "Money, Possessions and Eternity," p 175, paragraph 3. "The Firstfruits."

<sup>16</sup> 3, Alcorn, "Money, Possessions and Eternity," p 175, paragraph 3. "The Firstfruits."

GOD requires of us, not mere lip service or isolated external religious worship only, but a living Faith that brings The Mercy of GOD into this suffering and broken world. Therefore, as we are commanded, let us obey! As it is written in PROVERBS 3:9-10, “Honour The LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase: So shall thy barns be filled with plenty, and thy presses shall burst out with new wine!”<sup>17</sup> In The Name of GOD The Father, The Son and The Holy Ghost. AMEN!

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<sup>17</sup> 1, KJV, PROVERBS 3:9-10.

IX. REFERENCES

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