

# The Tithe

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**Bible Text:** Malachi 3:10; 1 Corinthians 9:13-14  
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All right, let's go to the old part of the book. Go to Matthew and take a left, and let's look at Malachi. Malachi 3:10. So I'm I've got it ready, but I'm postponing the remainder of the message from our study through Titus until after Christmas, and there's several reasons for that. First of all, I want to, I I love preaching on the incarnation. I love the birth of Christ because to me, once he enters our realm, it's on. I mean, it's on. He's here. And I just love preaching on it. But secondly, for you young expositors and pastors out there in internet land or wherever you listen, uh you need to be careful to address the things the world's attacking. That's why we've camped so long in Titus on marriage, the family, the home, because it's being so attacked and we need to give a very clear, certain sound on those things. And then also, is there anything that's more attacked as far as what it really means than Christmas? It's commercialized, it's sensationalized, it's mythologized, mythologically uh misinterpreted, if you will. There's all kinds of attacks on the truth of Christmas and I just love preaching on it, so we're gonna do some of that.

But at this point this morning, I I was praying and thinking about this Sunday, and thinking about our gifts that we're challenging one another to give this next week and I thought about my own pilgrimage of financial stewardship and it just became resoundingly clear in my heart and mind what made the difference in Jeff Noblit and Pam Noblit's lives about purposing to be faithful in financial stewardship? And it's just one simple thing. This made all the difference. Are you listening? This one simple thing just drew a line in the sand for me individually, for Pam individually, then us as a married couple, very early on, and that was tithing. My spiritual mentors when I was just a baby Christian, strongly taught me that you return 10% to the Lord. That's what God wants you to do. It's biblical and it's right. And so, I and then Pam and I just drew a line in the sand and just committed and determined that, and that's been what, 44 years or so now? That that's gonna be done. That that's just where we're gonna start and um it's amazing how God's been faithful back to us. Matter of fact, I have a number of sermons where I chronicle times when we've returned the tithes and offerings by American definitions, maybe even sacrificially given from time to time, and God just flood it back to us. You know, there's a difference in having God blessed wealth and God cursed wealth. There's a lot of wealthy men in the world that God has allowed to be wealthy, but it's not blessed wealth. They don't end well. Ever seen some of these leftist, liberals, atheist types who are wealthy? The most bitter, sour, grumpy, mean-looking dudes you've ever seen. George Soros, those kind of guys. Don't tell George he's got a lot of power and influence.

He might get after me. You know how that goes. Then you have some liberal in the pulpit. He'll put somebody in my place that don't believe like we believe. But I'm just saying all that to say you end well when God has gotten involved in blessing you back because you've been faithful to his work.

So saying to you that that was so critical and I felt somewhat convicted because it's been a number of years since I simply preached on the tithe. So you're gonna get it this morning. Um probably I've been negligent in my duty because that blessed Pam and I so much because it was taught to us so clearly and I owe it to you to teach it to you clearly to revive our hearts about it, but also younger Christians or maybe not so young Christians but you've not quite gotten there yet and I can push you over the bell curve, if you will, to say that's where I'm gonna be. I'm going to be at least a tither.

All right, Malachi 3:10, Malachi 3:10, and then we'll go to 1 Corinthians 9:13 and 14. Malachi 3:10, the prophet is speaking to the nation of Israel. He simply says, "Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse," that translates for us into the church, local church house, "so that there may be food in My house," meaning that the tithe was brought into the temple, the storehouse of the temple, to take care of the priest. The Levitical priests did not have a vocational income. They were committed to be the priests on behalf of all the people, so all the people would bring tithes so they could be sustained materially and taken care of. Then he says something interesting, the last part of the verse, because evidently many of them were not tithing, "'Now test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows.'"

All right, then we have the New Testament, one of the few texts that shows the parallel principle applies over into the church age. 1 Corinthians 9, if you'd look at that, uh probably be on your screen. I don't know if it will or not. I don't think it will be, matter of fact. 1 Corinthians 9 verses 13 and 14. Let me give let me read verse 12 to get the flow of the context. Paul writing to the stingy, immature, carnal Corinthian church says this, "If others share the right over you, do we not more? Nevertheless, we did not use this right, but we endure all things so that we will cause no hindrance to the gospel of Christ." Here was the point: they were begrudging and uh contemptible toward Paul for even wanting material support from them and Paul simply says, "Well, don't I have a right to receive compensation materially since we are investing spiritually in you? We brought you the gospel, of all things." And then he backs up his point with verses 13 and 14, "Do you not know that those who perform sacred services eat the food of the temple, and those who attend regularly to the altar have their share from the altar?" He said, "Don't you know from time immemorial it's been God's principle for His people that those who are ministered to should receive back materially from those they ministered to earlier, if you will." Verse 14, "So also," New Testament church age, "the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel," i.e. your pastors, "to get their living from the gospel."

Now, I., under the simple title of the tithe, the tithe is an exact percentage. I mean, in its base definition, a tithe means 10%. Whatever you increased the last week, 10% is considered the tithe. Now you can donate 20%, you can donate 30%, you can donate 2%

or 7%, but those are not tithes. A tithe must be 10%. It's a 10th part. Uh Leviticus 27:30 under the Old Testament law, "Thus all the tithe of the Lord of the fruit of the tree is the Lord's. It's holy to the Lord." Now by all the tithe he means a full 10%, not eight and a half not twelve and a half but in the most literal sense 10%. Of course the spirit and the tone of the Bible is you never do the minimum, that's just the starting place and we'll elaborate on that in a moment. Same sense in our text Malachi 3:10, the whole tithe bring it into the storehouse. What's the point? The full 10%. And then again, in 1 Corinthians 9, our text that we drew from, now we come over to the New Testament era and the way that the Old Testament priests were taken care of by the people tithing is the way the New Testament gospel pastors are to be taken care of. But you know, actually in ancient Israel scholars tell us that the Israelites gave about 23% back to the Lord's work or back to their national treasury every year. There was a tithe for the priests or the Levites. There was a tithe that covered all their special events or their festivals. And then every third year there was a tithe that took care of the orphans and widows. So it averaged out to about 23% a year of what God required or requested of them. Well, request would be a little mild way to say it, what God required of them in supporting the work of the Old Testament. But just the basic premise, the tithe is literally a tenth part, is 10%.

II. Tithing is a perpetual statute. Now, there are good men, and I appreciate their ministries, who would say, well, tithing is no longer God's will for his people. I just think that's ridiculous. I just think it's ridiculous. God's principles and God's law is always applicable. Am I getting ahead of my notes here? Let me do it this way. First of all, to show you the perpetual status of tithing, tithing was practiced by holy men before the law was given through Moses. So some people would say, well, now tithing was taught under the law. We're not under the law. No, we're under grace and under grace, you always do more than the law requires. But even before the law came, men of God tithed. Genesis 14:20, Abraham paying tithes to Melchizedek, "And he blessed, be God the most high who has delivered your enemies into your hand and he gave him a tenth of all." It was just the way they thought. It was just ingrained into their DNA, if you will. The tapestry of men's makeup is that we return 10% to our God creator before the law was even given. Genesis 28:22, Jacob at Bethel, where he met with God says, "This stone, which I have set up as a pillar, will be God's house, and of all that You give me I will surely give a tenth." Now again, it hasn't been spelled out anywhere in prophecy, it hasn't been spelled out in the law, but the men of God of old, before God gave the law to Moses, returned a tithe.

Matter of fact, anthropologists tell us that this is found in all ancient civilizations, or let's say most ancient civilizations. For example, tithing was practiced among the pagans in Egypt, among the Chaldeans, the Syrians, the Chinese, the Greeks, the Romans, the Arabians, all tied to their gods. I think it's one of those uh universal principles of mankind or you might call it part of natural law, uh that that just people in in common throughout antiquity all basically believed this way. One of the things that men basically believed about was that there is a God, there is a creator. They may have believed in multiple gods, but they believed there was someone outside of themselves. That's established in all of antiquity. Uh the structure of marriage in the home. There's a man and a woman. Up until we had some lunatics in our Western culture, that's always been the view of

marriage, a man and a woman. Matter of fact, it's interesting, before Pam and I went to Greece, I did some study on on Greek history and though the ancient Greeks and Romans were very sexually immoral, very involved in homosexual practices, they never dreamed of calling marriage the relation of one man with one man or one woman with one woman. I thought that's bizarre. Natural law teaches you that's not marriage.

So that's one of those universal laws and the fact that the men protect and provide for the women and the women have the children and nurture the children, it's kind of a universal law, but I would add to that, studying antiquity, that it's been basically true that all mankind returned tithes to their God, or their gods. It's just kind of woven into the DNA of our fabric, if you will. So it was practiced before the law by the godly men we see in the Scriptures and even throughout antiquity across the world. Secondly, not only was it practiced before the law, it's commanded under the law. It's commanded under the law. Leviticus 27:30, "Thus all the tithe of the land." Now, notice how exhaustive this is, "from the seed of the land," that'd be the least valuable thing probably they had in their possession, "or the fruit of the tree," that's things that were much more valuable, "all of it is the Lord's. It is holy to the Lord."

Thirdly, C, practiced before law was given. It's commanded under law. Thirdly, it's affirmed by our Lord. Tithing was affirmed clearly by Christ in the New Testament. Matthew 23:23. Jesus rebuking the scribes and Pharisees says, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cummin," the tiniest of herbs, of seeds, you're so careful to make sure you return 10%, "but have neglected the weightier provisions of the law such as justice and mercy and faithfulness," note what he says here, "but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the rest." His point was the tithing was right but you can't take a cold uh uh duty and devotion to the law and just check those boxes off and mistreat your brothers and sisters when it comes to justice and mercy and loving each other. "Do it all," Jesus says. "Make sure your heart of love for your brethren is there and keep on bringing the tithe." That's basically, you know, the Lord very easily could have said, "And now in My new covenant, you are no longer asked to bring tithes to the Lord's work." He didn't do anything like that. You know, there's some things that are just spiritual common sense and Paul addresses it, now Jesus addresses that it's spiritual common sense that the way God supported his work in the old covenant, the old dispensation in in Jewish law through tithes going to the priest is the same way, basically speaking, God expects the New Testament church to function also.

Well, D, it was taught by the early church. Tithing was clearly taught by early church fathers. I suppose in the first 500 years of Christian history, there's no church father more influential or esteemed than Augustine and church father Augustine said this, and I quote, "Tithes are required as a matter of debt and he who has been unwilling to give them has been guilty of robbery. Whoever therefore desires to secure a reward for himself, let him render tithes, and out of the nine parts, let him seek to give alms." So Father Augustine, early in the church age says God's children should tithe as a matter of duty and obligation.

All right, III. We've talked about the tithe is an exact percentage. We've talked about the tithing is perpetual, before law, under law, reaffirmed by Jesus, taught by the early church. Thirdly, the tithe is many is meant to be the beginning point of stewardship. Someone might say, "Well now pastor, you know, I've got my own views on this and I I don't feel led to tithe." You don't have to feel led to do anything. It's your duty to tithe. We got some police officers in our church, go 100 miles an hour down Avalon Avenue and just say, "I just didn't feel like doing 35 today." Not gonna work. It's God's will. "Well, well, I will pray about it." You don't need to pray about it. You need to do what God said to do. I'm so glad it was taught to me this way. I just had a heart to want to do it and uh it's just been a great blessing to my life all these years. Someone said it this way, tithing demonstrates obedience, voluntary offerings above the tithe demonstrate love, joy, and worship.

Now, we do have some examples in church history, even in the Old Testament, of people who gave in a joyous, uh generous way above the tithe. That's Exodus 36:5 through seven. I don't know that we've ever been here. Maybe we have and I don't remember it. I don't know. Exodus 35:5 through 7 and they said to Moses, "The people are bringing much more than enough for the construction work which the Lord's commanded us to perform." So Moses issued a command and a proclamation was circulated throughout the camp saying, "Let neither man nor woman any longer perform work for the contributions of the sanctuary." In other words, quit giving so much money. "Thus the people were restrained from bringing any more, for the material they had was sufficient and more than enough for all the work to perform it." You see, the principle of tithing is is God's plan to lead us further into the joy of giving. Did you hear that? Tithing is something you just mark that off and say, "That's what I'm gonna do." And then God uses that to bring you into joy. I've never seen a joyous, stingy Christian. They don't exist. It's just a component that's essential to true Christian joy.

It it's a starting place. Two men perhaps were in church one day and they were in the hallway out there, let's say, and they were talking and and one of them quite possibly said, "Well, I I'm a tither." And the other one said, "Oh, oh, you're still a baby Christian. You got to the starting place and you hadn't gone anywhere. Hadn't increased anymore." In simple obedience, we give the tithe and as one author said, the tithe is the training wheels of giving. You don't focus on the tithe, it just keeps you up until you can travel off into the joy of riding all by yourself. Of course, Christian truth is that Christianity functions on the principle of doing what the law required and then always more. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spelled this out so precisely. He said, "You've heard that you love your brethren and hate your enemies." He said, "Oh no, no, no. You don't just love your brethren, you love your enemies too. You do what other folks would do and then some." He said, "You know, when when you're bringing your gifts, if you'll give generously, then God will bring it back towards you, good measure, pressed down, running over, men will pour into your laps."

So we, under Christian truth, we understand it's the starting point of stewardship that we might get into the joy of giving. In fact, I may have been failing you when I've said to you over and over again, give what you can give with joy. It's just not quite all the truth.

It is true, but there's another side to that coin. Do your duty of tithing until it helps bring you to joy, then give in joy. That's a little better biblical balanced truth. Maybe you can just look at the Lord Jesus expiring on the cross and say, "You're not worth more than a tithe to me. I'm going to begrudgingly get it as tight as I can to that 10% mark, and then I'm gonna go on and do my own thing." Maybe you're not a tither, but, sir, you love Jesus more than that. If that's your perpetual attitude, "I'll do the least I can do after all that Jesus did for me," I wanna tell you, sir, I wanna tell you, ma'am, I have no confidence in you making it home. The Apostle Paul told Philemon when he was trying to get Philemon to forgive the debt of Onesimus, his runaway slave, he said, "Now Philemon, by the way, you owe me your life. Not just some money, you owe me your life." And if the messenger of God's gospel is worthy of that kind of honor, how much more the God who came and died on the cross for us?

IV. One thing you can say, the pastor preached on tithing and boy, he went quick because there's a lot of warfare in doing this. Tithing brings God's blessing. Tithing brings God's blessing. Malachi 3:8 through 12, we go back to the old part of the book there. It's on your screen. The prophet writes to the nation of Israel on behalf of God and said, "Will a man rob God? Yet you are robbing Me! But you say, 'How have we robbed You?'" His answer, "'In tithes and offerings. You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you! But bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this,' says the LORD of hosts, 'if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows. Then then I will rebuke the devourer for you, so that it will not destroy the fruits of the ground; nor will your vine in the field cast its grapes,' says the LORD of hosts. 'All the nations will call you blessed, for you shall be a delightful land,' says the LORD of hosts."

So he says here, first of all, not only does tithing bring the blessing not tithing brings a curse. He said, "You folks are cursed because you're coming into My temple and you're not returning the tithes, much less any offerings." How much more is the child of grace today who didn't faithfully return tithes and offerings, how much more are we robbers of God? Some of us this morning are robbers of God. Some of you will go home from church today robbing God. You'll go home from church today wearing clothes you bought with money that you robbed from God. You'll go home from church today driving in cars that you're paying the payment for with money you robbed from God. You'll go sit down in a house that you're paying for with money that you robbed from God. You sit in front of a television that you bought with money you robbed from God. To the ancient Israelites, he said, "When you live like that, I want you to know you're cursed with a curse. I'm holding back My material blessing from you because you've been robbing Me."

You see, one very real sense, tithing is not special. You haven't done anything much when you tithe. Tithing is not special. Tithing just lifts you off of the level of thievery. That's all tithing does. But the true thing is, you're not just robbing God, you're robbing yourself. We rob ourselves when we don't tithe and bring offerings. The Bible talks in 2 Corinthians 9:7 about not giving grudgingly, not giving grudgingly, then he just has the phrase, not giving grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. But I

forget there's a reciprocal thing there, as you learn through tithing to have joy in giving, also by that giving it returns joy back to you. Have you ever noticed as we get older, I'm in that getting older realm, that your joy comes by blessing others? Your joy comes by blessing others. It gets all about the kids, it gets all about the grandkids, it gets all about others. The same way when our pilgrimage with our Lord as we give and joyously give, it brings joy back to us and then of course, prosperity. Haggai 1:1 through 11. Haggai chapter 1:1 through 11. What a statement this is here. This should be on your screens. "In the second year of Darius the king, on the first day of the sixth month, the word of the LORD came by the prophet Haggai to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Jehozadak, the high priest, saying, Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'This people says, "The time has not come, even the time for the house of the LORD to be rebuilt."' Now he's saying, your heart attitude is we'll get to fixing up God's house later on. It's not time for us to give these gifts and fix God's house up. That's what they're saying.

Verse 3, "Then the word of the LORD came by Haggai the prophet, saying, 'Is it time for you yourselves to dwell in your paneled houses while this house," the Lord's temple, "lies desolate?' Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Consider your ways! You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes.'" In other words, things aren't working out for you materially and financially because you're dishonoring the Lord.

Verse 7, "Thus says the LORD of hosts, 'Consider your ways! Go up to the mountains, bring wood and rebuild the temple, that I may be pleased with it and be glorified,' says the LORD. You look for much, but behold, it comes to little; when you bring it home, I blow it away. Why?" declares the LORD of hosts, 'Because of My house which lies desolate, while each of you runs to his own home.'" He said, now you guys are saying that it's not time to fix up God's house, but the prophet says, "Well, I've looked at your houses, they're fixed up pretty nice." Is there not a parallel for us here? Is there not a real parallel for us here as we think about this house? Now, we're not functioning in in temples like the ancient Jews did. I understand that. But this is very true, the ancient temple was fully dedicated to the worship and service of God, and this building is fully dedicated to the worship and service of God. So, the parallel could be, how many of you today are listening to your music in your house on a 25-year-old stereo? How many of you have eight tracks or cassettes? And when you go to listen to music that often plays anything but what's dedicated to God, is it on 25-year-old music systems? Then why should our houses have up to date, decently modern sound systems to play all kind of stuff other than what worships God and the house of God not have the best and most updated sound system because everything here is dedicated to the worship of God. Now I'm not saying this is a legalistic absolute, but hey, that's a thought, is it not?

Jesus said we'll be blessed. Luke 6:38. He says, "If you'll give, men will come back to you and they will press it down. They will shake it together. They'll cause it to run over." In those days, you would often take your outer tunic and you would buy so much grain

and he says, "I'll make sure if you're giving first, I'll make sure they'll come back and they'll keep pouring it. You know, I buy one tunic full of grain." I don't know how they said it, I buy one tunic full of grain, and they keep putting the grain in there, and the guy putting the grain in there grabs your hands and keeps shaking, lets it settle down. He shakes your hands, and he pours you some more in there. He shakes it down, pours you some more, and he starts packing it with his hands while you hold it. "Oh, it's getting so heavy!" He keeps on. He said, and finally, it's running over the edge. God said, "That's the way I will cause men to pour back into your life if you'll give to Me first."

I wouldn't hold that as an absolute. Pam and I have had those seasons where we've tried to give more than normal. I've told you before, Pam and I have never tithed. We've always done more than a tithe. I don't think I'm the best giver in this church. I don't mean that, but we've tried to live what I've preached. In fact, we have lived what I've preached. And we've seen times when it comes back and just blows our minds. Just blows our minds. It's happened to me numerous times through the years. One of our businessmen will say, "Pastor, I want to come by and talk to you and tell you something," and you talk about it. "You know, the offering came up at church and I thought about what I was going to give, then I just gave a whole lot more than that, and then the next three or four months, this part of my business, this part of my business, this land that I own, I've been offered two and three times what I thought I would ever get for those investments." To which I'd reply, "Well, don't stop up the flow. Let's keep it going." But then there are seasons for our good when Pam and I have tried to give above and beyond and it was tight for the next six months, eight months or a year. We could have used that money and God kept saying, "Yeah, why did you give it? Did you give it because you love Me or just because you plug in a formula to try to get something back for you?" That's not how it works. You don't plug in a formula. You love God.

But it's righteous and good. It's biblical to expect God to bless it back to you. I mean this, and I mean two things. Number one, I don't think I'm the best model, but I can say that you cannot explain my situation materially based on what I make and what I've given away over these 43 years. Can't explain it. You cannot explain it. Neither should anyone be able to explain yours. You should have the kind of life when somebody looked at your income and looked at your... That didn't work. It doesn't work unless God gives back good measure, pressed down, running over. They will pour into your lap. Are y'all getting this? It brings back a blessing, joy, and material prosperity. I think sometimes those of us who despise the era of the prosperity theology movement out there, you know, you watch the guys on TV, if you sow a seed, you get all the stuff back, that's false. Well, let's don't get so far out against that that we forget that God does promise these things.

Number five, tithing builds faith. Tithing builds faith. Go back to Malachi, Malachi 3:10, and look at the challenge God issues here in Malachi 3:10. "Bring the whole tithe. All right, guys, come on, stop holding back," Jewish nation, "bring the whole tithe into the storehouse so that there may be food in My house. Take care of God's priest that they're well-fed and taken care of, and test Me in this," says the Lord of hosts, "if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows." God issues a challenge, tithe first and see if it doesn't come back and bless you. And that



builds faith. When we tithe first, it's meant to be a spiritual exercise to remind us every week who has first place in our lives. That's why for the nation of Israel, God said, "Dedicate the firstborn to Me." Why was it just... aren't all of our children to be dedicated to the Lord? Yes, but the firstborn reminds you God's first. And then when it came to bringing their material gifts, Exodus 34:26, you're gonna bring the very first fruits of your soil. Not just the first, the very first. Why? Because it's more than the amount. It's to do something to your heart. It helps you grow in faith. Bring the first. That's why and I just confess, I haven't been real good at this, but I've tried to, the tithe check is the first thing I pay out of my check because it's not just the amount. It's the discipline I need in my heart. It helps me grow in faith. You shall bring the very first fruits of your soul into the house of the Lord." Numbers 18:12, not only that, "All the best of the fresh oil and all the best of the fresh wine and of the grain, the first fruits of those which they give to the LORD, I give them to you." He said, "I give the priest to live off all the things I'm giving to you to give as a tithe."

So here he says, not just the very first, he says, the best of the first. If you have 100 acres of wheat, you think, "Okay, I'm a Christian, I'm dedicated to God, I just start with tithing, I'm gonna give 10 acres of wheat to the Lord this year. But there's 10 acres down on the creek bottom that got flooded a couple of times, and there's some wheat down there, but it's pretty poor. I'm gonna give that 10 acres." God said, "Oh no, no, no, I want the best of the first because it's to do something to your heart. It's a spiritual discipline to build your faith." So not only is it reminding us that God's first place, it builds faith by reminding us that God owns 100%. I've told you this many times, and this sermon's helped me. I don't know if it's going to help you or not, but it helped me and it reminded me that I need to be more consistent in my commitment to pray in a certain way. And I've shared this with you before, but I try to do this regularly. "God, I thank You for Your cars You've given me to drive. I thank You for Your home You've given me to live in. I thank You for Your clothes You've given me to wear." I guess you could do this, "I thank You for Your debt that I'm now paying on, that I borrowed money against something." Anyway, making sure we remind ourselves God owns it all. You know, you're gonna breathe your last breath and somebody else is gonna take your money and buy your suit to put on your body and put you in that casket. You ain't got a thing. You don't have a thing. Job said, "Naked I came into this world and naked I'll return and go out of it." The only thing you'll take with you is what you've done for Christ.

So it reminds us who's first. It reminds us that God owns 100%. We need that faith building exercise. It reminds us afresh that we trust the supplier and not the supply. Well, that's good to know sometimes. The supplier has unlimited resources even when the supply ain't much. And then again, as God blesses back and we see wealth sometimes seemingly come out of nowhere, it builds our faith. Romans 6, the tithe should be given undesignated to the local church. Don't have an absolute command here, but there's not one example in the New Testament, not one example of Paul or any of the early apostles urging individuals in the church to give to certain causes. Over and over and over again, the church as a collective body gave to the treasury, then the elders oversaw the distribution. And that's a lot, lot better. For example, in our benevolence ministry, we give quite a money bit of money away to people who are hurting and who have need.

It's a wonderful thing to do. But it would be wrong for the individuals in our church who have need to try to hunt out individuals and ask them for money. That's that's just not good on a number of levels. But we give to one fund, and men or staff members who are experienced at doing this evaluate and vet the situations and distribute it out. That's far more equitable and on a number of levels far better than just designating things out. There's just no example of anything else. Jesus affirmed the widow's mite at the temple. She gave to the temple treasury. Paul received gifts from the collected treasury of the local church. Paul received the collected gifts from the Gentile churches to go to the church in Jerusalem when it was suffering. It was absolutely the unquestioned practice of the Old Testament and of the ancient world. Now, certainly we give above and beyond our tithes to various things that are designated within the church, but the tithe should go undesignated to a local church treasury. Again, there's just no biblical example of anything else.

Now, let me give you this final exhortation and I'm done. Would you forget Jeff Noblit, forget me, have a clear conscience that I'm not putting anything on you I'm not living, but forget me. Would you say, "Lord, this next year I'm going to draw that line in the sand the pastor talked about he did 40 something years ago, and we're going to start with a tithe because my cold heart needs to be warmed up with gratitude. I need to be more centered on that everything comes from You." But don't just give it, make sure it's a worship. That's why I mentioned earlier to return the tithe first, then do the rest because then you make it two moments of worship, it's a moment of worship when you write out the check, and it's a moment of worship when you give it to the Lord's work at the church. Make it worship. "God, You're first. God, You own 100%. And God, I trust You, not my supply." I trust the supplier, not the supply. That's my charge to you this morning.