

6.

The Church Covenant



The Pledge To Contribute To The Finances Of The Church

The last part of the second paragraph reads;

“to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry, the expenses of the church, the relief of the poor; and the spread of the gospel through all nations”

This portion of the **Church Covenant** has to do with each member’s responsibility of contributing to the finances of the church of which they are a member. Many feel uncomfortable and are disinclined to talk about **money** and the **church**, believing that the two should somehow be separate, but the truth is, IT TAKES MONEY TO SUPPORT THE WORK OF THE LORD’S CHURCH! And each member carries a responsibility to the Lord and to the church of which they are a member to **“contribute regularly”** financially!

I. THE LORD’S METHOD OF FINANCING HIS WORK

Many so-called “churches” and “ministries” have come up with all sorts of gimmicks and schemes, based upon human reasoning to support the financial ends of the **Lord’s** work, all of which detract from the **Lord’s** method of financing His work! None of these financial schemes and gimmicks are necessary or scriptural!

A. God’s Method Of Finance:

Throughout Scripture, and throughout the ages, GOD HAS HAD BUT ONE METHOD OF FINANCE FOR HIS WORK! God’s method is **fair** and **just**, it always **works**, and it is to the **glory** of God!

1. The Method Of God Is Tithes And Offerings:

God owns all things [**Exodus 19:5; Deuteronomy 10:14; Job 41:11; Psalms 24:1; 50:10, 12; Haggai 2:8; I Corinthians 10: 26; I Timothy 6:17**], but **God** has established **tithes** and **offerings** as the method of supporting His work. A “**tithe**” is “a tenth” [**Hebrews 7:2, 4**], and an “**offering**” is that which is “over and above the tithe or tenth” [**Exodus 35-36:7; Luke 21:1-4**]. From this it is clearly seen that ONE CANNOT GIVE AN OFFERING UNTIL THEY FIRST GIVE A TITHE! That **God** holds His people responsible for both the **tithe** and an **offering** is clearly stated in **Malachi 3:8**.

2. The First Mention Of The Tithe Sets The Standard Of Such:

The first mention of the “*tithe*” is in **Genesis 14:20** and was 400 years before the Law was given! This first mention of the word “*tithe*” is connected with *Abraham*, and we read of Jacob **continuing** such [**Genesis 28:22**], and *Moses confirming* such [**Leviticus 27:30**], and *Christ commending* such [**Matthew 23:23**]. This first mention of the word “*tithe*” is very instructive as to what constitutes “*tithing*” It was Abraham who paid these tithes. As “*the father of all them that believe*” [**Romans 4:11**]. He set the example of tithing.

(a). He Paid Tithes Personally To Melchizedek:

”*And he* (Abraham) *gave him* (Melchizedek) *tithes*” Abraham personally “*gave him tithes*” He did not send them to Melchizedek, but he personally “*gave him tithes*” When Jacob spoke of giving a “*tenth*” unto *God* [**Genesis 28:22**], he meant that HE WOULD PERSONALLY DO IT! When *Malachi* spoke of *tithing* he made it personal when he said “*Bring (carry) ye all the tithes into the storehouse*” [**Malachi 3:10**]. Paul instructing the *Lord’s church at Corinth* “*concerning the collection*” [**I Corinthians 16:1**] said “*Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him*” [**I Corinthians 16:2**]. The idea is that THE TITHE IS TO BE PERSONALLY BROUGHT!

(b). He Paid The Tithe To God’s Authorized Representative:

Melchizedek was a *priest* of *God* [**Genesis 14:18**]. As a *priest* He was God’s authorized representative upon earth, and Abraham “*gave him tithes*” When Melchizedek received *tithes* from Abraham, he did not receive them as an individual, but as *God’s* representative! Today the *tithe* is given to *Christ* through His authorized representative, the *Lord’s church*! In **Malachi 3:10** the instruction is “*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse (treasury) that there may be meat in mine house*” Israel was to bring all the *tithes* into the *tabernacle* and the *temple*, and there were storage rooms in the temple for the *tithes* of the field! THE TITHES ARE TO BE PLACED IN THE TREASURIES OF THE LORD’S HOUSE! The *Lord’s* house is His churches [**II Timothy 3:15**].

(c). He Paid Tithes Upon All His Increase:

”*And he gave him tithes of all*” [**Genesis 14:20**]. The word “*all*” has reference to the “*goods*” [**Genesis 14:11; Hebrews 7:4**]. The measure of the *tithe* is increase. Paul said in **I Corinthians 16:2** “*let every one of you lay by him in store (this a definite and predetermined act, rather than a spontaneous impulse, for the purpose of bringing it to the treasuries of the Lord) as God hath prospered him*” This signifies a definite proportion of the income, in a proportionate way, according to a percentage basis! The percentage being a *tithe* (10%). This *tithe* is to be **laid aside for the Lord** “*it is holy unto the Lord*” [**Leviticus 27:30**], and it is to be the **first** part of all increase [**Exodus 23:16, 19; Leviticus 2:14; 23:10, 17; Deuteronomy 26:10; II Chronicles 31:4-6; Nehemiah 10:35-37; Proverbs 3:9**]. The *tithe* is not 10% of what is left after one has paid their other debts, but THE TITHE COMES OUT BEFORE ANYTHING ELSE!

(d). He Paid Tithes As An Act Of Worship [Genesis 14:22].

It is a **thanks giving**, with the realization THAT IT ALL BELONGS TO HIM! The **tithe** is a constant recognition of God's rights! All those who object to tithing by saying "I have debts I must pay before I start to tithe" assume that the **tithe** is not a debt! THE TITHE IS A DEBT THAT IS OWED BEFORE ANY OTHER IF GOD IS TO HAVE A PROPER PLACE IN ONE'S LIFE!

Each and every member regardless of financial status has a **responsibility**, an **obligation** to financially support the **church** of which they are a member! **God's** method of support is the **tithes** and **offerings** of **God's** people, and this method is **fair** because it is not based upon a dollar amount, but a percentage of one's income. An **offering** is above the **tithe**, the **tithe** being **God's** standard for minimum giving, and is the starting point in stewardship! The giving of the **tithe** and **offering** is an act of **worship** paid and done in and through the **Lord's church** where He receives glory [**Ephesians 3:21**].

B. How The Tithe And Offerings Are To Be Given:

The Word of God contains very definite directions concerning this. The **Church Covenant** states "**cheerfully and regularly**" and this is the Biblical principle! Paul speaks of the **spirit** of giving in **II Corinthians 8 & 9**. In **II Corinthians 8:7** he wrote that **God's** people ought to "**abound.....in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love**" And then he added "**see that ye abound in this grace also**" referring to **giving**! In **II Corinthians 8:1-6** Paul writes upon the subject of **giving** and uses the **churches of Macedonia** as an example.

1. They First Gave Themselves:

It is stated in **verse 5** "**but first gave their own selves to the Lord**" True **giving** must be preceded by the **giving of ourselves** (*personal surrender and consecration*). Without the surrender of self one will never give **cheerfully** or **regularly**, and will be guilty of **robbing God**!

2. They Gave Willingly:

It is stated in **verse 3** "**they were willing of themselves**" and in **verse 11** we read that "**there was a readiness to will**" and in **II Corinthians 9:7** we are told that **giving** is to flow from a heart of purpose and "**not grudgingly** (*unwilling and half-hearted*) **or of necessity**" (*not because of the entreaties of others*).

3. They Gave Proportionately:

It is stated in **verse 3** "**For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power**" **Giving** should be according to our ability and **beyond our ability** [**I Corinthians 16:1-2**].

4. They Gave Sacrificially:

The **sacrifice** of their **giving** is stated in **verses 2-3**. They gave "**bountifully**" [**II Corinthians 9:6**]. The word "**bountifully**" means "**unselfishly, benevolently, plentifully, and generously**".

David manifested the true spirit of **giving** when he declared “*neither will I offer burnt-offerings unto the Lord my God of that which doth cost me nothing*” [II Samuel 24:24]. GOD DOES NOT WEIGH OUR GIFTS BY THE AMOUNT WE GIVE, BUT BY WHAT WE HAVE LEFT [Luke 21:4].

5. They Gave Joyfully:

We read of “*the abundance of their joy*” [verse 2], and Paul stated in II Corinthians 9:7 “*God loveth a cheerful giver*”

C. The Seriousness Of Neglect In The Matter Of Tithes And Offerings:

The seriousness of the matter is seen in the *Lord's* charge against His people in Malachi 3:8. THE WITHHOLDING OF TITHES AND OFFERINGS IS A ROBBING OF GOD AND A MANIFESTATION OF GREAT UNCONCERN FOR THE WORK OF GOD! To withhold *tithes* and *offerings* is to bring upon one the curse of *God* [Malachi 3:9], and manifests great unconcern for the *Lord's* house and work! The *Lord* issues a challenge concerning the giving of *tithes* and *offerings* [Malachi 3:10]. YOU CANNOT OUT GIVE THE LORD!

II. THE PLEDGE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE OBLIGATIONS OF THE CHURCH

A. The Pledge To Contribute To The Support Of The Ministry Of The Church:

“to contribute cheerfully and regularly to the support of the ministry”

1. One of The Main Purposes Of The Tithe Was The Financial Support Of The Men Of God:

In the Old Testament the *Levites* were the **ministers of the Lord** [Deuteronomy 10:8], they were in **charge of the sanctuary** [Numbers 18:3], the **servants of the tabernacle** [Numbers 8:19, 22], they were in **charge of teaching the people** [II Chronicles 18:8-9; 30:22; 35:3], they were the **ministers to the people**, and were responsible to **judge and decide in controversies** [Deuteronomy 17:9; I Chronicles 23:4]. The Israelites had a responsibility to the *Levites* [Deuteronomy 12:19], and the *tithes* and *offerings* were given for their support [Numbers 18:21, 24; Deuteronomy 18:1-2; II Chronicles 31:4-5; Nehemiah 12:44]. This principle of support is carried over to the *New Testament* [I Corinthians 9:7-18; Galatians 6:6; I Timothy 5:17-18]. The *Lord's* method of financing His work is *tithes* and *offerings*, and in this way, the *churches* of the *Lord* are enabled to financially support their pastor.

2. Contributing To The Support Of The Ministry Includes Prayer:

Every member has the **responsibility** and the **obligation**, and should feel the **burden** to pray for the pastor of the church of which they are a member [Ephesians 6:18-20].

3. Contributing To The Support Of The Ministry Includes Encouragement:

An example of this is manifested in Aaron and Hur holding up the hands of Moses [Exodus 17:8-13]. This was a critical point in the history of Israel. It was a crucial time because of the enemy, because of the condition of many of God's people, and because *Moses* their leader was weary. It was at this time that Aaron and Hur performed a vital task [verse 12]. AS A RESULT OF WHAT AARON AND HUR DID THE WHOLE NATION WAS BLESSED! Aaron and Hur

were an encouragement to *Moses*! They stood by his side and said “*We don’t want you to give up*” “*We will not let you give up*” Aaron and Hur could not fill the office of Moses BUT THEY COULD STAND NEXT TO HIM AND HOLD UP HIS HANDS! Israel could not afford for Moses to be weary [**verse 11**]. SO AARON AND HUR STOOD BESIDE HIM AND WERE AN ENCOURAGEMENT TO HIM! Paul had those in his life that were an encouragement to him [**Romans 16:2-4, 6, 9**]. Each member has a responsibility and an obligation, to support the ministry of the *church* of which they are a member, and this includes being an encouragement and a blessing to the pastor!

4. Contributing To The Support Of The Ministry Includes Knowing The Pastor:

The sheep know their shepherd and it is the duty and responsibility of *church* members to know their pastor [**I Thessalonians 5:12-13**]. To “*know them*” is to be acquainted with them, to respect them, to “*hold such in reputation,*” as Paul advises [**Philippians 2:29**], and to love them [**I Thessalonians 5:13**], and to show concern for their welfare.

5. Contributing To The Support Of The Ministry Includes Remembering And Following The Pastor:

This is clearly stated in **Hebrews 13:7**. To “*remember*” is to “*be mindful of them and what they have preached and taught*” Their “*faith*” (inclusive of *faithfulness*) should be followed or imitated!

6. Contributing To The Support Of The Ministry Includes Obedience In Matters Of Faith:

This is clearly stated in **Hebrews 13:17** and includes listening to them, showing regard to their words, being persuaded of the truthfulness of their words, and complying and yielding to the truth that they teach.

B. The Pledge To Contribute To The Expenses Of The Church:

“to contribute cheerfully and regularly to.....the expenses of the church”

Again, the *Lord’s* method of financing His *churches* is through the *tithes* and *offerings* of His people! *God* uses the *tithes* and *offerings* of His people “*that there may be meat in mine house*” [**Malachi 3:10**]. The legitimate expenses of one of the *Lord’s churches* are numerous, varied, continuous and require the *tithes* and *offerings* of *God’s* people, and it is the duty, the responsibility, and the pledge of each member of a local *body of Christ* to contribute to the expenses of the church, by the regular giving of *tithes* and *offerings*.

C. The Pledge To Contribute To The Relief Of The Poor:

“to contribute cheerfully and regularly to.....the relief of the poor”

The Bible teaches that there will always be the poor [**Deuteronomy 15:11; Matthew 26:11**].

1. The Bible Teaches That There Will Always Be The Poor And That Provision Is To Be Made For Them:

James wrote in **James 1:27** “*Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction*” There is a great fallacy in any religion that is

devoid of compassion [Isaiah 58:2, 6, 7]. In the *Old Testament* provision was made for the *poor* and *needy* [Leviticus 19:9-10; 23:22; Deuteronomy 15:7-8; 24:19]. In Hebrews 13:15-16 there is a reminder not to forget to share with others. Sharing with others out of a heart of compassion is evidence of the love of God [I John 3:17], and brings the blessings of God [Psalm 41:1; Luke 6:38]. Solomon in his wisdom had much to say upon the subject of rightly treating the poor and needy [Proverbs 11:24-26; 14:31; 19:17; 22:9, 16, 22-23; 28:27; 29:7].

2. The Bible Gives Examples Of Those Who Were Compassionate To The Poor And Needy:

There is the example of Peter and John, and even though they gave no money, they had enough compassion to share *Christ* with a beggar [Acts 3:6]. There is the example of Dorcas [Acts 9:36]. There is the example of the *church of Antioch* [Acts 11:29-30], and the *churches of Macedonia and Achaia* [Romans 15:26].

3. The Bible Also Lays Down Some Guidelines For Giving To The Poor And Needy:

The support of the *poor* and *needy* is to be shown especially toward the children of *God* [Romans 12:13; Galatians 6:10]. And the *Lord* has guidelines for such as seen in the instruction concerning the aid of widows [I Timothy 5:3-6, 9-11]. The Bible mentions that there are some contributing causes to poverty, such as sloth [Proverbs 6:10-11], the love of pleasure [Proverbs 21:17], and drunkenness [Proverbs 23:21]. It must be stated, that not all who are *poor* and *needy* are so because of these things, but many are as a result of these things. In sharing with the poor and needy, wisdom must be exercised. Our sharing with them should in no wise encourage these things that lead to poverty [II Thessalonians 3:7-13]. The guidelines that are given to direct in sharing materially with the *poor*, do not do away with the fact that the child of *God* is to feel compassion and sympathy for the poor.

D. The Pledge To Contribute To The Spread Of The Gospel:

“to contribute cheerfully and regularly to.....the spread of the gospel through all nations”

One of the purposes of the *tithes* and *offerings* is to contribute financially to the spread of the gospel throughout the world.

1. The Mission Of The New Testament Church:

The commission and command given by the *Lord* to His *churches* is worldwide in its extent [Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-16; Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8]. Though the commission and command is worldwide in its extent, there is a proper order in which it is to be carried out. That order is seen in Acts 1:8 and also referred to in Luke 24:47 with the words *“beginning at Jerusalem”* In Acts 1:8 it is broken down into *“Jerusalem”* (the city in which the church is placed), *“Judea”* (the state in which the church is placed), *“Samaria”* (the country in which the church is placed), and *“the uttermost part of the earth”* (worldwide). This worldwide aspect of the commission is seen in the words *“all nations”* [Matthew 28:19; Luke 24:47], and the words *“every creature”* [Mark 16:15]. THE MISSION OF THE LORD’S CHURCHES IS WORLDWIDE IN ITS EXTENT! TT

2. *The Purpose Of Missions:*

The **purpose** of missions is the **proclaiming of the gospel** to the world, and the **uniting the saved into Scriptural churches** (*thus, the establishing of Scriptural churches*), and the **teaching them the things of God**. They in turn do the same, thus carrying on the process, and ensuring the **perpetuity** of the **Lord's church!** The purpose of missions has never been social improvement, nor the improvement of secular education, nor the betterment of society. Though these things are the fruits where the Gospel is preached, believed, and practiced! The purpose of missions is not about medical care, or the improvement of agriculture, or the Americanizing of a people, BUT THE PROCLAIMING OF THE GOSPEL! Such is illustrated throughout the book of *Acts* [**Acts 8:1, 4-5, 25**]. When Paul and Barnabas were sent out as missionaries, the Word of God was preached everywhere they went [**Acts 13:4-5; 14:6-7, 21, 24-25; 15:36; 16:10; 17:1-3, 13, 18**].

3. *The Plan Of Missions:*

GOD HAS A METHOD CONCERNING THE WORK OF MISSIONS! God's **plan** for the **method** of missions is as clear as is His **command** to missions! IT IS NOT A VEILED OR HIDDEN PLAN! We live in a time of human invention and rebellion, when the "*religious world*" is trying to justify their own methods though contrary to God's method! Without a doubt, many of the so-called "*missionary programs*" in the world today were started by sincere men, BUT SINCERITY IS NOT A SUBSTITUTE FOR OBEDIENCE! So how does a local New Testament Baptist Church preach the gospel to all the world? And does it matter how it is done? The book of *Acts* reveals the answer to these questions.

(a). *The Holy Spirit Is The One Who Calls Men To The Work Of Preaching The Gospel:*
"the work whereunto I have called them" [**Acts 13:2**].

(b). *The Holy Spirit Not Only Calls Men To The Work, But He Also Chooses The Field Of Work*
[**Acts 16:6-10**].

(c). *Mission Work Is Intimately Connected With The Lord's Church:*

The **Holy Spirit** said to the **church** located in **Antioch** "*Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have appointed them*" [**Acts 13:2**]. HE CALLED THE MEN THEMSELVES AND THEN HE CALLED UPON THE CHURCH TO RECOGNIZE THEM AND TO SEND THEM OUT! The **church** (*the kind that Jesus organized during His earthly ministry*) is the Lord's **authoritative** body on earth, and when it comes to the **Lord's** work HE DOES NOT BYPASS HIS CHURCH! To form "*missionary boards and associations*" is a bypassing the authority that the Lord gave to His churches! The uniform practice of the churches of the **New Testament** was to do mission work **in** and **through** the **Lord's churches!** THERE IS NO SUCH THING TODAY AS A "FREE-LANCE" MISSIONARY WITH DIVINE AUTHORITY! God expects His missionaries to submit themselves to a **church**, and be sent out by it! The reasons for this: (1) **God** has decreed that the **church** is the place where Christ receives glory [**Ephesians 3:21**]. (2) The **authority** of a **church** helps to prevent false teachers from so readily going out. (3) This authority makes the missionary answerable to the **church** [**Acts 14:26-27**].

(d). *The Holy Spirit Leads The Lord's Churches To Help These God-Called, Church-Sent Missionaries* [**I Corinthians 16:16; II Corinthians 8:1-5; Philippians 4:14-19**].

NO OTHER ORGANIZATION THAN THE CHURCH IS NEEDED IN SUPPORTING THE FINANCIAL MEANS OF MISSIONS! The missionary is sent by the *church* of which he is a member, and that *church*, is to provide as much financial aid as possible, and the *Lord* leads sister *churches* to financially support the missionary. EACH MEMBER COVENANTS TO CONTRIBUTE TO SUCH!

The *Lord's* method of financing His work is through the *tithes*, and *offerings* of *God's* people to His *churches*. Each and every member of one of the Lord's churches pledges and has an obligation to faithfully and regularly bring their *tithes* and *offerings* into the *church* of which they are a member. In this way the **ministry is supported**, the **expenses of the church are paid**, the **poor and the needy are helped**, and the **gospel is preached throughout the world**. TO BE A PART OF ALL THIS IS THE RESPONSIBILITY AND PRIVILEGE OF EACH CHURCH MEMBER! When *God's* people share in this way it is as if the work was done to *God* Himself [**Matthew 25:35-40**], and in this way *God's* people share in the work of the *Lord* [**Philippians 4:14-18**], and *Christ* is glorified in and through His *church* [**Ephesians 3:21**].