

GRACE GAZETTE

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Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

Hebrews 12:12-13

MONEY IN THE FISH'S MOUTH

He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers? Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free. Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee. Matthew 17:25-27

As the LORD went about HIS ministry among men there were many who tried to find fault with HIM and to trip HIM up. The Pharisees especially were intent on detracting from HIS work and smugly thought they could discover some duplicity in HIM. HIS disciples witnessed this constant barrage of naysayers and no doubt were quite puzzled at many of HIS answers to these men. Peter was perplexed with how to answer those who sought tribute (tariff or toll) and as he pondered his response, the LORD, knowing what was going on in his mind, taught him a valuable lesson which many well meaning religious folks today would do well to heed.

Almost without exception, today's "bible teachers" and "preachers" are in lock step agreement when it comes to admonishing GOD's people to tithe. They may have great disagreements about finer points of doctrine but they all seem to see eye to eye when it comes to laying burdens and guilt trips upon the saints concerning the paying of tolls and tributes. In fact it seems that some "ministries" exist for the sole purpose of the "extortion" of money from the faithful. I was just listening to a well known radio "preacher" who basically said that if a man did not tithe, he wasn't a child of GOD. Others have been known to weep and plead with men to send in their money in order to keep the kingdom of GOD from folding up like a two dollar suitcase or laying out outlandish promises of blessing and prosperity for the man who will "sow seed" into these "ministries" (better known as the deep pockets of deceivers and charlatans). Any man who will predicate the blessings of GOD on the paying of percentages by GOD's children is a false prophet or at the very least extremely ignorant of the freedom and subsequent blessings which JESUS CHRIST has purchased for HIS own elect sons and daughters.

The LORD told Peter that the paying of tributes was not required of those who had a rightful citizenship in that country. The children of the kingdom are free from this duty. The old testament law laid the burden of tithing upon the children of Israel and they were called "thieves" if they did not pay every cent they owed under this law. (see Mal.3:8) Were we still under this law then indeed the tithe would be demanded of us also. But JESUS CHRIST has purchased our complete freedom setting us free from the law of sin and death; delivering us from all of the requirements and duties that were demanded by such. (see Rom.8:1,2; II Cor.3:6) No where in the New Testament can be found any instruction or demand for tithing or the paying of money as a duty or requirement to be laid upon the sons of GOD. (see II Cor.8:12; I Pet.4:9)

The true sons of GOD serve HIM not out of duty or any obligation except that of love. They are not bound by external laws nor is any toll to be exacted from those whom JESUS CHRIST has

purchased with HIS own blood. When the new covenant mentions the giving of money by the saints of GOD it is always set forth before them as a privilege and an act which is to be done with a cheerful heart. The man who gives any gift without such has departed from grace and is treading the laborious path of the deadness of law. (see II Cor.9:6-15; Rom.12:8)

There is no mention of money being collected in the church for anything other than specific needs of GOD's people. (see I Cor.16:1-4) The concept of continual gatherings of money or seeking of offerings for anything other than these specific needs is not even mentioned. Ambitious building projects often place great burdens upon men. Nowhere in the new testament can the support of such projects be found. If men desire to build buildings to meet in, there is certainly nothing wrong with that, but to liken contributions to such projects or their maintenance as being gifts to the LORD is an invention of men's minds. It is no more a gift unto the LORD to build a meeting house than it is to build the house we live in everyday. It may be a necessity for brethren who meet together to share the cost of maintaining the facility that they meet in but it most certainly does not in any way render aid to the kingdom of GOD.

The rise of a professional clergy (men paid for serving and preaching) has also necessitated a continual collection of funds. GOD is able to provide for those whom HE sends to the work of preaching and HE often does so by moving upon the hearts of HIS people to be generous to them out of the abundance with which HE has blessed each one, in proportion to the blessing that those servants are to the church. (see Phil.4:10-19) But nowhere does the scripture confer upon any man the absolute right to demand money from those whom he is gifted and called to serve. Paul gave this example, *"What is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel. "* (1 Cor 9:18) Because a man has this gift or calling does not excuse him from the responsibility of seeking to provide for his own needs. Paul was not one whit behind the chief apostles yet he forever set the standard for those who are called and gifted with this ministry. (Acts 20:32-35)

The LORD said, *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."* (Matt 6:21) Just as GOD provided the coin in the fish's mouth so does HE provide us our daily bread. The men of this world regard their possessions in a different light than the free born sons of GOD. Those who are acquainted with HIS grace know that there is nothing that they have which was not given to them by the LORD. They are mindful of the fact that they are but stewards of any earthly treasures HE may have placed within their hands. *" Whether therefore ye eat, or drink, or whatsoever ye do, do all to the glory of God."* (1 Cor 10:31)

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