

Devotion 20
Test Me and See

Friday, Week 3

“Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house. Test me in this,” says the Lord Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that you will not have room enough for it.” (Malachi 3:10)

In 1987 Gary Hart was a United States senator from Colorado who also happened to be running for President of the United States. At the height of his campaigning, amidst some rumors about extra-marital affairs, he “threw down the gauntlet” to the press, denying that he was or ever had been involved with other women, and challenging them to prove him a liar. He made a solemn promise to the voters of the country that he was telling the truth. The press took up the challenge and, within a short time, not only had strong proof of past indiscretions, but also solid proof—including pictures—of an ongoing one. Gary Hart’s promises could not stand up to the crucible of close examination.

But then again, could any of ours stand up completely? Whether because of sin or circumstances or weakness, we simply don’t know if we will be able to keep all of our promises. I was told of a student in college whose sister was continually angry with her parents. When asked why, he said it was because their parents had promised her she could go to a certain college, but both of them subsequently lost their extremely well-paying jobs, and the promise could not be kept. Such is the world in which we live. It is the world of unforeseen events suddenly throwing lives into upheaval. It is a broken world where nothing is for sure, and seemingly no promise is absolute.

The above text is different. It is a promise from God. In it, He says to His Old Testament people, “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse (the Old Testament commanded 10%), test me in this, and I will pour out the blessings of heaven upon you so that what you have will overflow.” What does this absolute promise mean for us today? Many, many Christians who humbly have practiced Christian life-management give witness that as they gave more and more to the work of the Lord, they had more and more to give. However, to say that it has worked this way monetarily 100% of the time in the lives of Christians is not a true reflection of reality. Faithful Christian stewards, too, have lost jobs and/or benefits, have suffered setbacks in the stock market or other investments, and have seen their earning curtailed by poor health or disaster. What, then, does this promise of God mean for us today as we look to making sacrificial gifts?

First of all, we can trust it. God—the all powerful and all knowing God—keeps His promises. A bloody cross and an empty tomb forever shout to us of this truth! Secondly, we can live by it. While we no longer live under the law of the tithe, our God continues to guide our lives of stewardship, as we have seen, through His Word. (Give joyfully, willingly, proportionately, sacrificially—and finish the work!) This promise, applied to us, says simply that as we sincerely follow His Word and guidance in our lives of stewardship, He will continue to pour out the blessings of heaven in body and soul upon us in His way and in His time, to our ultimate good. He calls us to walk by faith here. The cross and the empty tomb say we can trust Him—and live like it! You can believe it!

Prayer: O Holy Spirit, my Comforter, give to me such a faith that I may joyfully cling to God’s promises, and live by faith my life of Christian stewardship. Amen!