

CHAPTER 18

The Apostles Condemned Legalism (and thus Christian Tithing) in the Early Church

The book of Acts provides history of New Testament life in the early church. Its narrative shows the good and bad, the strengths and weaknesses of the church. It also provides graphic pictures of the internal and external opposition it faced in the first 30 years of its existence. Without question, the most lethal and insidious opposition came from within the church community.

Prior to the missionary ministry of Paul, the church preached only to Jews. The sole exception was when Peter was practically arm-twisted by the Holy Spirit to preach to Gentiles in Caesarea.¹¹⁶ And he was criticized by Jewish Christians for doing this.¹¹⁷ This is exceptionally important because it reveals the early church's mindset. In fact, Acts 11:19 speaks of Christian Jews who fled persecution and went "as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only." Why did the church preach almost exclusively to Jews in the first 12-15 years of its existence? They were still trying to keep the law of Moses. This is the same mistake of our modern tithe preachers.