

Where is your
HEART

V O L U M E 2

J O S E P H A . C O R T E S

The Giving Series, Volume 2

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10,000%

In this chapter we will be reviewing what the Bible teaches about rewards. But first I want you to understand, these rewards are not based on salvation, the gift given to us by Jesus Christ, which you cannot earn nor do anything to obtain. All our efforts fall short, only Christ could fulfill the necessary requirements for eternal salvation. Salvation is a gift that we did not deserve, but God loved us so much that He was willing to send His only Begotten Son to die for us. The punishment that we should have received, Christ took upon Himself, which is why we have hope that our time on this earth is not all there is. If Christ had not stepped in, eternity would be devastating. However, because Jesus Christ provided salvation we have a hope that is eternal with the Son and the Father.

With that in mind, this chapter is about rewards as compared to the subject of judgments from the chapters in Volume 1 of this series. If you recall, the judgment seat of Christ is where believers all will stand someday. This is not to judge whether we enter heaven or not, that has been decided already through the salvation Christ provided. The judgment seat of Christ is there so we can now redeem what He has promised us as rewards throughout scripture. Again, these rewards have nothing to do with salvation. You can do everything the Bible requires, but it would be of no benefit if you deny the Son, Jesus Christ, and not recognize who He is, what He did for you, and start trusting Him and His Word.

To receive our rewards from Christ in eternity, here are a few of the things that Christ has asked us to participate in.

- 1) ***Employing the Word of God***, done through generous giving, as seen in Matthew 6:19-20, and 19:29. Here the Bible teaches about a 10,000% interest of return.
- 2) ***Showing compassion to the needy***. Luke 14:34.
- 3) ***How we deal with our enemies***. Yes, there are even rewards for that, which we will read about in Luke 6:35.
- 4) ***Endurance in difficulties***. Hebrews 10:34-36.
- 5) ***Persevering under persecution***. Luke 6:22-23.
- 6) ***Extending hospitality***. Luke 14:14 and Galatians 6:9.

Again, before I go any further, it is important to remember that these rewards are separate from our entrance into heaven. Christ has already accomplished that requirement if with trust and faith in Him. In the list above are some of the things that the Lord wants us to participate in for several reasons. Even though these things may make you feel good in the here and now, they also glorify the Son. In addition, Christ is also looking out for our best interest in eternity to come, which is the true prosperity doctrine. These rewards are not for our life on this earth, which is not even measurable when compared to eternity. These rewards are all inexhaustible rewards and that means they will be there for us

throughout eternity.

First, let me share with you what one author says:

“Two men owned farms side by side. One was a bitter atheist, the other a devote Christian. Constantly annoyed at the Christian for his trust in God, the atheist said to him one winter, ‘Let’s plant our crops as usual this spring, each the same number of acres. You pray to your God, and I’ll curse Him. Then come October, let’s see who has the bigger crop.’ When October came, the atheist was delighted because his crop was larger. ‘See you fool,’ he taunted, ‘what do you have to say now for your God?’ ‘My God,’ replied the other farmer, ‘doesn’t settle all of his accounts in October.’ A day of judgment is coming upon all men. God promises great reward for all who have served Him faithfully (Revelation 11:18).”

With the premise in mind that God “doesn’t settle all of his accounts in October,” let us take a closer look at the rewards that Christ has promised. To begin, most Christians think that they have to be rewarded here and now. That is being a disciple on your own terms and falls outside of what scripture teaches. I call that the “Bible of big mouth and know it all,” not the Holy Bible, which is God’s Word. They want the here and now prosperity doctrine that so many are preaching these days. They do not want to wait for eternity, because what if eternity does not happen? Remember, your short life on this earth can hardly even be measured when compared to an eternity that never ends. Most of us have been brainwashed with the system that focuses only on the here and now. You would think pastors and churches would cleanse you from this by using God’s Word, but they do not. Most pastors actually want you to prosper in the here and now so they can prosper, because they are also concerned with only the here and now.

Furthermore, is “a day of judgment coming upon all men,” as this author has stated? Let us verify this in the Book of Revelation 11:14. *“The second woe is past; and, behold, the third woe cometh quickly. And the seventh angel sounded; and there were great voices in heaven, saying, The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. And the four and twenty elders, which sat before God on their seats, fell upon their faces, and worshipped God, Saying, We give thee thanks, O Lord God Almighty, which art, and wast, and art to come; because thou hast taken to thee thy great power, and hast reigned. And the nations were angry, [Because they wasted their lifetime in the here and now, rather than with concerns of eternity.] and thy wrath is come, and the time of the dead, that they should be judged and that thou shouldest give reward unto thy servants [or bondslaves, from Eph.4] the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name, small and great; and shouldest destroy them which destroy the earth.”* These verses verify the destruction, or a day of judgment, that will come upon those that are concerned only with the here and now. On those who do not put their eyes, focus, and lives on Jesus in the here as they prepare for eternity. Verse 18 also lists three different groups who are promised reward, *“...give reward unto thy bond slaves [literally] the prophets, and to the saints, and them that fear thy name...”* I find it amazing that soon after His return and the time period when the dead are judged, there are some rewards given by Him to

the ones that are going to be experiencing everlasting life in heaven. And I can guarantee, none of those who Christ rewarded denied the Son of God, Jesus Christ. All of them put their faith in Him.

“He will reward every loyal servant for works done in this life: ‘At that time each will receive his praise from God’ (I Corinthians 4:5). God rewards generously, promising a return of ‘a hundred times’ (Matthew 19:29).”

Remember, these works do not earn you salvation, they earn you reward because of your participation. To understand the praise we will receive from God, let us go to I Corinthians 4:1. ***“Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God.”*** If you think this verse does not refer to you because you are not a minister or a steward, you should know the Greek word for ‘steward’ is “one who manages a house and is accountable to the owner.” Christians are called ‘stewards’ in that they have been entrusted with the mysteries of God, which is the Gospel message. The footnote I have in my Bible is, “It is a responsibility for which believers are held accountable,” and that is accurate. Verse 2 in I Corinthians says, ***“Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.”*** Meaning you are not just accountable to the mysteries of God as a steward, hopefully a good steward, but it is a requirement is that you remain faithful in distributing the Word however you are called to do this. Some of you are going to be placed as preachers or pastors, but most of you are going to be placed as participants in ministries and churches.

Verse 3 continues, ***“But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man’s judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord. Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord come, who both will bring to light the hidden things of darkness, and will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*** So you see Christ will make manifest the counsels of the hearts including how you carried out your stewardship and how faithful you were to that commission. Not just the ministers but the stewards, and that includes everyone. What you might be able to keep in the dark in time is going to be revealed and brought into the light. Who better can do that than Jesus Christ Himself? He ***“...will make manifest the counsels of the hearts: and then shall every man have praise of God.”*** In a sense that is a reward too if you really think about. What better words to hear when we get there than, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” What praise to be received! You need to stay strong to keep the connection to the vine, Jesus Christ. But also, there is a second part of the commission; to love one another, and an expression of that love is sharing those mysteries in the way God has called you. Most of you will participate with friends and family, but also with ministries that get the Word to the world so that it is continually preached and declared.

The first area of participation required by Christ is: ***Employing the Word of God***, which is none other than generous giving of your tithes, offerings, and yourself and will return 10,000% interest in eternity. In heaven, God rewards generously a return of a hundred times your investment. If your concern is about money and possessions that you can

receive in the here and now, you had better find yourself some good financial advisors, but even then you still cannot get that kind of return on your investments. Banks only give one to two percent return, but Christ is talking about 10,000% that is inexhaustible and goes throughout eternity with you as a reward.

This promise of 10,000% can be verified in Matthew chapter 19, where Jesus is dealing with the rich young man. The real problem was that this man could not give up his possessions to follow Christ. Not everyone has to give up everything to follow Christ, do not misunderstand me, but even if Christ had wanted him to give up only a portion of his fortune, he probably still would have had difficulty doing that. The real problem is the man still wanted control of his life in the here and now. Just in case Christ failed him, he still had his money and his possessions. Verse 27 of that chapter states, *“Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?”* Peter was saying, “We gave everything up. What is our reward?” The disciples did not truly understand what Christ was saying until after He died and rose again. And even though people get mad at Peter, what would you have said at that point? I probably would have stood there with Peter and said, “Yeah, I agree with him,” if I had not asked the question first. Verse 28 continues, *“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration [of being reborn into a new life] when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, [which is still yet to come] ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive [in this time yet to come] an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life.”* A ‘hundredfold’ does not fully explain the complete meaning. A hundredfold is 10,000% interest.

These disciples not only gave up their possessions but in most cases, they gave up their families, their lands, and their houses to follow Christ. Here Christ is telling them, “The time is coming when you are going to receive 10,000% interest.” Christ did not make a mistake there. This is not a here and now promise. To employ the Word of God, Christ wants you to give up your money and possessions to the level that He requires, but that level is different for everyone. That is what the disciples were assigned to do; to employ the Word of God. To do that, they had to give up more than most. Most of you will never have to give it all up. The Lord will allow you to keep most of your money and possessions. Then you can decide how you want to prepare yourself for eternity. Whatever you decide to give, above tithes and offerings, there is a 10,000% interest return **minimum** that is coming to you in eternity.

Unfortunately, this is not taught in most churches today because the here and now is more advantageous to build the crowds and coffers. Yet, Christ has promised a 10,000% interest, which is really far out of proportion to the amount that you or I will ever invest. How good is our Lord? How great is our Lord? How generous is our Lord? Christ was already the ultimate sacrifice for mankind. Nothing could supersede that, but He is asking you to participate in employing the Word of God, just as He asked the young rich man to do. Of course when it came to giving up his money and possessions, he could not. Again, most of you will never be put in that position, but nevertheless you are still given the

same promise. Whatever position He puts you in you are still going to receive a return on that investment which far exceeds any amount invested by you or me. We serve a wonderful Master.

God expects to reward us for the employment of the Word of God, because it is part of His giving plan when it comes to money and possessions. The tithes and offerings are continued from the Old Testament into the New. We know this because Jesus said you ought to have done that anyway, meaning to continue the practice, do not stop it. I have told you before, tithes and offerings are the minimum. Many New Testament Christians that I have been reading about understood this and were so captured they gave all their money and possessions away. But that was out of choice, not as a requirement.

Of course, we also find God rewards us for our good works. Once again these good works have nothing to do with salvation. They are part of denying self, taking up the cross, and following Jesus.

Matthew 16: 24-27 reads, ***“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”***

These verses are showing us several things. First, if you want to find the will of God look to Jesus as an example. When Christ was in the garden before His death on the cross, He was thinking maybe there was another way. As He was pleading to His Father, He came to the conclusion there was not. There is nothing wrong with being tempted, as Christ was, thinking there may be a possibility of doing something a different way. But Christ did not follow through on those thoughts. Satan would have rejoiced if He had. Instead, Christ went to the cross, sweated blood, and agonized. But He made the trip. As He was praying to the Father in the garden, Christ concluded, “not my will but thine.” If you want to find out the will of the Father, the will of God, consider where it starts. It starts at denying yourself and taking up the cross as a benefit to others, because we are to follow Christ in His likeness.

In these verses Christ also refers to rewards. Not the reward of salvation, but the rewards we will enjoy throughout eternity that He wants us to have as a result of our participation in spreading the Word of God. Preachers are failing in their commission to give you this information so you can understand and see it for yourself. If your pastor is not showing you these things in the Bible, you are missing out. You need to give according to God’s program so you can have these benefits throughout eternity. Do you remember Matthew 6 as we started this series? It says, ***“Lay up treasures for yourselves.”*** The participation from this will have its benefits in the here and now when you take up the cross for the sake of others. That is why it is important to give your tithes and offerings to ministries that work toward the commission Christ gave us. This is not being taught that way, because many ministries have developed doctrines over the last several centuries that are

not based on the Word of God.

In Matthew 16:27 Christ says, ***“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”*** Interestingly, the Greek word for ‘works’ in this verse is not ‘*eragon*’; employment of the Word. It is ‘*praxis*,’ which is where we get our word ‘practice.’ So to correctly translate, this verse would read ***“...according to his practice (praxis)...”*** As an example, we can see this word in the medical world. If a doctor opens up an office somewhere, it is called his ‘practice’ because that is where he is offering his medical skills and knowledge. Literally, the word actually means ‘office.’ So this verse could also be read ***“...according to his office...”*** This means we will be rewarded according to the place, position, or capacity that He has put us in to participate. In eternity we will receive the rewards that He has outlined in scripture based on our involvement in our personal life, or with a ministry or church. But let me just read you something else.

Here is what another says on this subject:

“Those who follow Jesus will be rewarded by Jesus when He returns in glory with His holy angels. Some people think the idea of rewards is an unworthy motivation. They think following Christ should be altruistic and idealistic, but Jesus knows of frailties and does not seem to be ashamed to hold out the promises of rewards. Deprivation and sorrows here, but rewards in heaven. Here a cross, but there a crown. Can anyone reasonably suppose that he or she will somehow come out on the short end by following Jesus Christ?”

So the question is raised; By following Jesus Christ do you believe you are going to suffer a loss, or are you going to start trying to understand all these rewards He has promised? He wants to give them to us if we participate. He wants us to be involved. Not everyone is going to be involved in every single activity in which they could possibly receive a reward. But most of you can in some way participate. There is no shortage of opportunities to earn rewards in God’s Word. You may like the fact that you just have to wake up in the morning and figure out what you are going to faith in, give, and be done. But you are missing out on everything that the Lord has made available to us, on how He can reward us in eternity.

The earlier verse that I read in 1Corinthians 4:5 makes sense now, ***“and then shall every man have praise of God.”*** I think part of that praise is going to be reflected upon when Jesus remembers what we did according to His Word to prepare ourselves for eternity; that we had faith and trust that His promises are true. The Bible says we participate so that someday we can stand in front of Him in eternity and thank Him for his free gift of grace. Jesus made that sacrifice because He loved us and wanted us with Him in eternity. And what is more, He will pull out the scroll with our rewards because we were faithful in all things. We did not just getting up in the morning, say we have faith, and send money to a ministry, even though those are good basic foundational practices that you should be involved in. As Matthew 16:27 states, ***“For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to***

his works,” meaning your practice, office, or how you have been called to participate. Those who are part of this group in Matthew 16, also have to be prepared to deny themselves, take up the cross, and follow Christ in His likeness.

By now you should understand Matthew 6:20 where Christ said, *“But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...”* By investing here and now through employing the Word of God you will receive a return of investment that yields a **minimum** of 10,000% interest. How generous a Lord we serve! So generous He gave up His own life and suffered beyond what anybody can imagine. It was not just an ordinary death on the cross. You have no concept what Isaiah 53 was saying if you think it was. He suffered everything on that cross that man could ever experience. He not only giving us the free gift of grace and salvation, but we can do nothing for this gift, except trust in Him. We can never live up to His standard. God had to send His only Begotten Son to do that for us. Even now God’s Word tells us that he is still giving. Except now He has given us the opportunity in addition to salvation to store up benefits for eternity by participating in ways that glorify Him. On this matter, I agree with Paul. In his letters Paul only focused on carrying out his commission so he could be faithful to Christ and one day hear Christ say, “You fought the good fight of faith, Paul. Well done. Thank you for being a good bond slave of Me. Now let me open my scroll and start reading out your rewards. Get ready.” I think most of us will be shocked when we see how generous our Lord Jesus is. I hope you really comprehend it.

People talk about the “abundant life” and how they want to be part of it. But you cannot exclude what is yet lying ahead for us throughout eternity. That is where the abundance really begins. We are lucky to be a part of that because of what Christ did for us, and thank God He did. Never lose your focus, keep your sight and eyes on Jesus, keep faithing and trusting in Him, and know His Word. Too many think they know His Word, but they are missing out, which is a shame because it has eternal implications.

Other chapters that follow in this series will continue to explain how we earn rewards by: *showing compassion to the needy, how we deal with our enemies, endurance and afflictions, perseverance under persecution, and extending hospitality,* just to name a few. It is all described in the Bible, but is ignored by preachers because all these areas do not benefit us in the here and now. It is in the afterlife that these rewards are received.

To be continued. . .

10,000% and Beyond

Open your Bibles to Matthew 19. Part of the last chapter was about the rich young man who denied Jesus' offer to follow Him because he didn't want to give up his riches. After that parable, Peter speaks up in verse 27 and says, ***“Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?”*** Peter was reminding Christ that they had given up everything materialistic, and asked what their reward would be for that. ***“And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”*** This day is still yet to come. Jesus' answer continues, ***“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold...”*** There are different interpretations about what the Greek says is a 'hundredfold.' Each dictionary and lexicon will have their own definition for this word.

Most of what is taught in churches today focuses on the here and now, which is unfortunate. Are there blessings for us in this life? Sure, the Lord will bless who He wants to bless. There will be all types of blessings. For example, some of you will make a lot of money. Unfortunately, the more some have the more they want to hold onto. Why, because they begin focusing on the here and now only. Society brainwashes people to attain as much as they can in the here and now. Furthermore, after you are gone they tell you that you should leave something behind for your family. I am not saying it is wrong, but it just demonstrates more concern for the here and now, even after you are gone. I have said this before; the best thing you can leave your kids is your Bible full of notes so they can understand and know what you were about and where you went when it ended.

A listener wrote a message expressing that although to receive the monetary value of 10,000% return is all very well, what if we receive this percentage of return in non-monetary ways, such as through a good wife or husband or good kids that grow into honorable adults. The caller believed the reward we receive is our blessings from the Lord in this life. However, this person missed the whole point completely. Nothing that I was referring to in the last chapter was about the here and now. The last chapter was about activities you are involved in here and now which carries forward in life everlasting throughout eternity. This is why most people never become hilarious givers. They only have a 'here and now' perspective. I have seen it too many times over the course of years. Most cannot let go of the here and now, because this life is what they can relate to; what they can see, what they can feel, what they can touch, what they can hear, or what others are obtaining. They cannot let go to be hilarious givers, because they still need a foundation of the here and now to build their lives upon. This person's message is saying that rewards are good, but there are other blessings also, and I agree. However, nothing about the 10,000% is a reward we receive in the here and now. You will see this as we progress in this series about giving. The rewards we receive from Christ are all things in the hereafter. Which again, is why there are very few people can hilariously give; they cannot understand that the rewards are in the hereafter in eternity.

This caller's message was thanking God for the blessings we might get down here, that they are sufficient. But I keep telling you, the Lord wants to give you inexhaustible treasures. If you do not believe that, you had better find some scripture that says why it is not true. When you begin to believe Christ's promises, you can see the pattern in the Bible where the Lord constantly keeps reminding people about the rewards that still lay ahead in eternal life, because they are important. Those rewards are throughout scripture to encourage us and to let us know that we will receive rewards, maybe some here and now, but definitely in eternity. Otherwise, why are we reminded constantly about these rewards in scripture if they are not important to understand? Why does Jesus say this in Matthew 19:29, ***“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold and shall inherit everlasting life”***?

The Book of Luke has its own version of this parable, which of course reads a little bit differently. Luke 18:28 reads, ***“Then Peter said, Lo, we have left all, and followed thee. And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, There is no man that hath left house, or parents, or brethren, or wife, or children, for the kingdom of God's sake, Who shall not receive manifold more in this present time, and in the world to come life everlasting.”*** This is not exactly a correct translation of this verse and this phrase is why those who teach the prosperity doctrine have made God's Word a mockery to be criticized and laughed at because of fools behind pulpits that do not do their homework. The phrase ***“in this present time”*** should read ***“in due measure”*** and the phrase ***“and in the world to come”*** should read ***“forever established”*** So this verse correctly translated should read, ***“. . . Who shall not receive manifold more in due measure, and forever established life everlasting.”***

Now I am going to take this verse further and define the language even more. Luke 18:28 says, ***“Who shall not receive manifold more in due measure [and now add] at a fixed and definite time, forever established [not ‘life everlasting,’ instead add] without end.”*** This verse can now be correctly read as, ***“Who shall not receive manifold more in due measure at a fixed and definite time, forever established without end.”*** This verse also translates the same in Matthew as well.

In addition, another caller sent in a lengthy message comparing the 10,000%, or the hundredfold in Matthew 19:29, to the Parable of the Sower in Mark 4:8. This caller was concerned because I did not explain the math that results in this 10,000% reward from God. They felt that those not familiar with this ministry may think this is some church gimmick used to wrestle dollars away from the naïve and innocent, because they know nothing on earth returns an interest rate of 10,000%. First, I did not explain how a hundredfold equals 10,000% at that time, because I knew I would get back to it in this message to explain it completely. Furthermore, even more confusion is caused by this verse because many Bible translations are terribly incorrect by translating “shall receive an hundredfold” as “will receive many times as much.” This caller felt I was giving the impression that you should not worry, because you will get it all back later. Nothing could be further from the truth. These two verses, Matthew 19:29 and Mark 4:8 focus on

two different things entirely. Mark 4:8 is referring to the seeds that are sown from the Parable of the Sower. In that Parable, there are seeds sown, which are the Word of God, that return. In relation to giving, as we see in Matthew 19:29, the reference is to the rich young ruler prior to Peter saying, "Well, we gave all this up." But the rich young ruler did not give anything up, he just walked away. I can see Peter asking, "What are we going to get for all this?" Then Jesus says, "***ye shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.***" Now if you take those same words that I translated for you in Luke 18:28 it almost concludes the same way here in Matthew.

I also want to share with you another source before I go on and explain that although this is an inexhaustible reward, you really can put into numbers. And actually, this 10,000% interest is just a small amount compared to what your rewards will actually be.

So to quote from another source:

"A mathematical performance for determining return on giving: If the Bible promised us a mathematical formula for figuring the return on our giving, one could give \$1 and if multiplied one hundred times, he would have \$100. Then if \$100 is given and multiplied one hundred times, he would have \$10,000. If a third time he gives the \$10,000 and it is multiplied one hundred times, he would wind up with \$1,000,000. Said another way, a promised mathematical formula of return on giving would mean that a person could take \$1, turn it over three times, so to speak, and become a millionaire. No one believes that, and the Bible does not promise that."

Not only is this person calculating one hundredfold incorrectly, this person is also only speaking of the here and now. I am not saying giving is going to return American dollars to you. I am not saying the return on your giving is going to be a monetary return in heaven. I am however, telling you what God's perspective of value is and how He is going reward you based on that perspective. If you apply these verses just to the here and now and do not properly translate the verses in the Bible, then you will have only a here and now perspective. But Jesus spent most of His time letting us know we are going to go through much tribulation here just to get to the thereafter, but the thereafter is promising. That is why He finishes the Book of Revelation (John being a scribe really for Jesus) by telling us what is still coming. Christ concludes with the wonderful news of a New Jerusalem and some of its benefits that are listed in those latter chapters of the book of Revelation. Some of you are so hardheaded and think you have it all figured out. You want to continue giving your 10%, but I do not care what percentage you think you should give. Jesus said that you ought to tithe and participate in the offerings, and that is just the starting point.

The second caller quoted Mark 4:8 and the 30, 60, and 100-fold return, which is the spiritual seed sown by providing the true Word of God. Just as sowing seed is a spiritual matter, so is giving. Remember, one of the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit is '***agathosune,***' which is literally "generous giving." Because you have the Spirit of God in you generous giving becomes an expression of the Spirit that you cannot hold back. That attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit is placed in you by the Lord Himself so you can be a

generous giver. *'Agathosune,'* or giving with liberality, is an act of obedience. God's Word says you are to give tithes and offerings as the very minimum. *'Agathosune'* is also placed in you by God so you can participate in spreading God's Word, obviously for the benefit of others here so they can hear the Word themselves.

If you think about it, the Word of God would never have spread if there was no New Testament church of true givers who gave just about everything. So giving not only benefits others here, but it is also for your preparation for what still lies ahead. That is why Jesus said, *"Lay up treasures in heaven for yourselves."* And He is there waiting for the time when we get to the judgment seat of Christ where these rewards will be distributed. Why else is there a judgment seat of Christ in the first place? The white throne judgment is for the unbelievers who are not found in the book of life and are ultimately thrown into the lake of fire. But believers never face this judgment. Christ paid that price and if we faith in Him, we are in.

Unfortunately, most Christians have been led to believe that all they have to do is have faith to get their rewards in heaven. Although you must have faith, the problem becomes what you have been choosing to have faith in to receive those rewards. There is more information about how you receive those rewards in scripture than just having faith. Do you think because you have faith in getting a new car, for example, that Christ will provide for you and somehow you will get some return reward for it? I wish it were that easy. It is much easier to keep preaching a prosperity doctrine. Its focus is always on you, your wants, your needs, and your return here on earth, when true hilarious giving has nothing to do with that.

Most of you understand what a hundred is, but what is a hundredfold? The problem is how "fold" has been defined. Does it use some multiplication of doubling or math similar to what the author above described? To find out, try this activity.

- First, I want you to get a sheet of 8 ½ x 11 paper and fold it from top to bottom. Now open it up and count how many parts you have. You should have two.
- Next, re-fold the paper from top to bottom again, and then fold it a second time in half. Open it back up. There should now be four parts.
- Now, once again re-fold the paper twice, and now fold it a third time. What do you get once you open it up again? You should have eight parts. Three folds equal eight parts.
- Last, re-fold the paper three times, and if you can, now fold it a fourth time. Open it up and count the parts. You should now have 16 parts. That means four folds equal 16 parts.

As you can see, the parts in every fold doubles with the next fold. We could not possibly continue folding this paper one hundred times, but I am doing this to prove a point. This is the best way that I can express to you how a hundredfold is a number that is so

outrageous, so unbelievable that you would think this was a trick that I am showing you. Those who teach the prosperity doctrine should do this to understand what a hundredfold means. Not by looking it up in some dictionary, but really understand what it means, whether it is Greek or English or whatever language you want to use. This shows you what a “fold” means here in scripture and a hundredfold is doing this simple exercise of folding paper one hundred times. Obviously, we could not, but without doing this exercise to see what a hundredfold is, you would probably end up with some kind of multiplication formula, as many of the translators did in this case for the 10,000% interest.

To put differently, have you ever heard that if you save a penny one day, 2 pennies the next, four pennies the next, and continue to double that amount every day, in about thirty days you will have a lot of money. Now if you noticed when you folded the paper, it doubled in number with each fold. It is compounded by 100% with each fold. One fold equals two parts, two folds are four parts, three folds are eight parts, etc. However, what happens when you fold it one hundred times? First, let us see what happens when you fold it just thirty times. Do not take my word for it, do the math for yourself as well.

Thirty folds equal: 1,073,701,884, or in words that is: one billion, seventy-three million, seven hundred one thousand, eight hundred, and eighty-four. That is only for thirty-fold!

What do you think a sixty-fold number would look like? Would that be twice the thirty fold? If you double thirty fold, you get about 2,147,000, and that is absolutely wrong. The folding exercise showed you that there is not a doubling effect.

Actually, sixty folds equals: 1,151,973,021,073,889,216, which to say is one quintillion, one hundred fifty-one quadrillion, nine hundred seventy-three trillion, twenty-one billion, seventy-three million, eight hundred eighty-nine thousand, two hundred sixteen.

Maybe you are starting to see what these inexhaustible treasures are. How minute of us to put a figure of 10,000% interest. When you study the language and if you understand “*without end*” as we saw in Luke, you should begin to understand what these treasures are. So what is one hundredfold?

One hundredfold equal: 1,201,064,595,207,167,685,882,431,343,616, which is one nonillion, two hundred one octillion, sixty-four septillion, five hundred ninety-five sextillion, two hundred seven quintillion, one hundred sixty-seven quadrillion, six hundred eighty-five trillion, eight hundred eighty-two billion, four hundred thirty-one million, three hundred forty-three thousand, six hundred sixteen.

This is what goes with you throughout eternity. The 10,000% interest I told you about before is such a small amount even if you apply the thirtyfold return, the sixtyfold return, or the one hundredfold return from Mark 4:8. What are these 30s, 60s and 100s that the book of Mark refers? If you take the example of the spiritual seed, which is the Word of God being sown in the Parable of the Sower, there were different soils. However, in regards to spiritual matters of giving, you also invest depending on whom you are giving

to and what you are giving for. In other words, you will receive different amounts of return, the 30, 60, or 100 fold, but if you throw your money away in something that God does not approve of, you are going to get zero return. Likewise, if God approves of your giving and the message you are supporting, there will be at least a 30-fold return for you, according to the verse in Mark 4:8. We are required to be a good steward with our giving. For example, you could give with a good heart, with good intentions, but because you were not a good steward, you might not get the return you were expecting. No one ever wants to contemplate there may be a negative side to giving, or that you might be sowing seed, the Word of God, on negative soil producing negative results. We put limits on God's Word, because we only evaluate things in the here and now, but when you understand what Jesus said, what He was trying to communicate, and a correct definition of what a hundredfold is, we see these are inexhaustible treasures. Imagine what an inexhaustible treasure would be!

The rich young ruler in Luke did not want to give up anything even though he would have gained in eternity. Just like him, we cannot really compare our sacrifices here to what we gain in eternity. There is just no comparison, but the rich young ruler refused to give up his possessions, because his heart was not in the things of heaven, not in the things of God, not in pleasing the Lord, or showing the Lord he was a willing servant. God sees your heart and your willingness to be His servant. He has promised us inexhaustible treasures. Maybe now these verses will capture your attention and you can depend on them for yourself.

Remember what Luke 18:30 says, ***“Who shall not receive manifold more in due measure at a fixed and definite time, forever established without end.”*** How can you compare what Jesus promises to what you give up in the here and now? These rewards are there ***“at a fixed and definite time”*** in their ***“due measure”*** when they are going to be issued out as a reward, probably at the judgment seat of Christ. Christ also promises they will be ***“forever established”*** throughout eternity as an inexhaustible treasure ***“without end.”***

If I had been Christ's disciple at that time, I would not have understood this parable either. Even one hundredfold in the simple way they understood it, left the disciples confused. Do not use a simple definition to understand what one hundredfold is. You need to understand what the original language is saying and how to calculate that. When we apply the correct definition then we are able to calculate the numbers I shared with you. Using the easy illustration of folding a piece of paper a few times shows how rapidly a number increases. And all we did was fold the paper four times.

In later chapters, I will illustrate how giving for the wrong reasons, without being a good steward also has negative effects on rewards. That is why it is your duty and responsibility, as a steward, to make sure your participation is sown properly in the right places not using the gimmicks of today seen in the religious world. Some of these organizations may even have good intentions, but they have been indoctrinated with lies and deception. Nevertheless, you are not without responsibility.

Giving is an act of obedience showing the Lord's worth by giving tithes and offerings. Because you are a willing participant, and hopefully a hilarious giver, this giving will not only benefit you in the hereafter, but it will benefit people in the here and now when they have an opportunity to hear the true Word of God. When we appear at the judgment seat of Christ, when the rewards are going to be issued out, giving is just one way to receive rewards, and there are other acts of giving that are not involving money. In Matthew 6:19 not only does Christ tell us to, "**lay not up your treasures upon earth. . . but in heaven. . .**" the promise is also there in verse 25 through 34 that He will give us what we need for the here and now. Christ's provision is to take care of us when we participate as He wants. If you think otherwise, you are being your own servant, writing your own terms as to what a disciple ought to be, based on what you want it to be. The truth of that is it is a dead end road going nowhere.

The question is what kind of reward do you want? God will return your investment for your participation in getting the Word of God to the world. Inexhaustible rewards are a terrific return and makes 10,000% look like a very small reward in comparison. We have inexhaustible treasures that go with us throughout eternity. This is what the Lord wants us to receive as rewards, and not just for giving, but for other things also. Why is it difficult for believers to understand this giving principal? I believe because some ministries are nothing more than salesmen with tricks and gimmicks trying to teach you that you can give to get in the here and now. That is a twisting of God's Word and will gain you nothing toward feeding your soul. Giving is a spiritual matter and how you will receive rewards in the hereafter as an inexhaustible treasure.

Jesus was not talking about the here and now when he said, "**Who shall not receive manifold more in due measure in this present time in due measure at a fixed and definite time, forever established without end.**" If your attitude is that you do not really care about rewards as long as you get into heaven, you will be surprised when you get there, because of your lack of participation and desire to be rewarded by Christ himself.

The only thing Jesus adopted from Old Testament giving was tithes and offerings, but He added and clarified so much more through the New Testament. Do you want what Jesus has promised? Christ wants you to open your heart and be a hilarious giver beginning with tithes and offerings, but tithes and offerings do not include houses, parents, brethren, wives or kingdoms for the kingdom of God. Those things went way beyond. Christ was telling His disciples that if they gave up what was beyond tithes and offerings, there are inexhaustible treasures waiting for us.

Do not tell me you are going to be satisfied with whatever God gives you here and now. Yes, be thankful for it, but do not let that be the excuse for why you are just a casual giver when Christ tells us to strive for the inexhaustible treasures throughout scripture.

To be continued. . .

More Rewards - Part 1

The last chapter discussed *employing the Word of God*, which is generous giving of your money and possessions, and for that, there are rewards. As the Book of Matthew tells us, ***“lay not your treasures here on earth, lay them up in heaven for yourselves,”*** because there will be inexhaustible rewards as a result. I also showed you a number so remarkably long that when I wrote it out on the board, most of you could not even read it. I am willing to bet that most of you have never heard of the number ‘nonillion’ before. It goes way beyond millions and billions and trillions and quintillions. To equal a hundredfold, the number extended all the way to nonillion.

This chapter begins in Matthew 16:24 where it states, ***“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.”*** First, you will notice I left the word “man” out of this verse. This word is in italics, which means the word was not in the original text and was added by the translators. The words “follow me” are also important. They mean you are to be a follower ‘in Christ’s likeness.’

If you are one of those people always asking, “I wish I knew what God’s will was for my life,” quit worrying about all the specific details. This verse is a general outline or principle of where you should start. Focus on this before you expect any more specific details. I guarantee, most of the people that go around wishing they knew God’s will never even thought that maybe they should start by denying themselves first and letting Him take charge of their life. “. . .***And take up his cross,***” just as Christ took up His cross for our benefit, we are to do this “in His likeness,” not just to benefit ourselves, but for the benefit of others also. Verse 25 continues, ***“For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.”*** Literally, this verse says, ***“and whosoever will kill and destroy his life for my sake shall find it.”*** In other words, you should put yourself in your proper place, making sure you are not first, but Christ is. Your wants are not first, His are. This is counting the cost, if you remember. You better count the cost and decide if you have enough desire to let God take control so you can finish your course.

Matthew 16:26 and 27 say, ***“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.”***

These verses are telling us that you can have everything under the sun, or be as rich as the richest man in the world and still lose your soul, because money and possessions cannot buy you a place in heaven. Even though you may think you are deserving because of your achievements or intelligence, so what. They mean nothing if you have ignored the Lord. In addition, this verse also shows us that we are constantly reminded from Jesus’ own words, as well as the apostles, that there are rewards, but these are conditional rewards.

You must be in the race in order to receive these rewards, and once again, this has nothing to do with salvation, which you cannot earn or work to gain.

Verse 27 ends, “. . .**and then he shall reward every man according to his works.**” In this case, the word used for “works” is not “*eragon*,” but the Greek word “*praxis*,” which is where the word practice or office comes from. So you should read this verse, “**and then he shall reward every man according to his practice,**” or what you have been called to do. Here Christ is explaining that you have to be faithful in the capacity God has put you in to carry out your commission. Jesus did not say this just because it sounded poetic, exciting, or hopeful for whatever future that might be. What Christ is talking about takes involvement and participation now. *Eragon*, or *employment of the Word*, is not used in this verse because rather than employing the Word of God, your works, or “*praxis*” happens when you use your money and possessions to take up your cross and follow Christ in His likeness. You do this to benefit others and trust Christ will give you the necessary supply so you can remain active in that participation. You must trust in that. If you do not trust that Christ will supply your needs, then why are you a Christian in the first place?

I want to make something else very clear. This word works “works,” which is “*praxis*” does not affect our destination. Our redemption is already secure by the work of Christ, what He did on the cross for our benefit. You need to faith, trust in Him and what He did for you. You need to faith and trust in the instructions He left behind, telling us what we need to faith in. Stay active, which is part of the personal connection to the vine. You cannot be severed from the vine and think you are going to exist as a branch outside of the connection. Your connection must be faith through Christ. Works, “*praxis*”, does not affect our destination based on salvation, because of the security that we have in Jesus Christ if we faith in Him. This is a different kind of works I am talking about now, the “*praxis*” works. The kind of works I am describing will earn you the rewards, not entrance to heaven. Christ and only Christ provided the entrance. The works that I am talking about is what He wants you to participate in because once you arrive at the judgment seat of Christ He wants to say, “Well done, good and faithful servant. I have good news for you. You were obedient to the commission and this is what I want to reward you with.” Parents should understand this. When your child does something that astonishes you, even though you do not have to, at times you just want to reward that child. Your love for that child just becomes overwhelming. It is the same way with Christ.

To repeat, works do not affect our destination, but works (or practice) do affect our reward experienced at that destination. We know this because Matthew 16:27 tells us, “**For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father and with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.**” I believe it will be at the judgment seat of Christ. That is why there are two judgments, the believer’s judgment and the unbeliever’s judgment, which I have already taught on in previous chapters. The believer’s judgment is not based on whether you are going to get in, that has been fulfilled through Christ if you faith in Him. That would mean the believer’s judgment seat of Christ is to reward you for your acts or works of faith. Just as there are eternal

consequences to our faith, if you faith in Christ, your destination is certain. If you do not faith in Christ, your destination is also just as certain; and you are not going to want to be there. Just as there are eternal consequences to our faith, there are also eternal consequences to our works (*praxis*). Pray that the Lord brings to you the opportunities and when the opportunities come, there is your chance to please Him.

Chapter 1 of this volume listed several areas where we can receive rewards through our work, which is *praxis* or practice. They are:

- 1) *Employing the Word of God*
- 2) *Showing compassion to the needy*
- 3) *How we deal with our enemies*
- 4) *Endurance in difficulties*
- 5) *Persevere under persecution*
- 6) *Extending hospitality*
- 7) *Gal. 6:9*

I have already discussed *Employing the Word of God* in previous chapters, though I will return to the subject throughout this series. This chapter will discuss *showing compassion to the needy* and *extending hospitality*. You may be surprised that you can earn rewards for that, but if you carry out God's instructions, it is possible, even though it is not as easy as you may think. Today we are so exclusive in our own little worlds. Some of you do not even know your neighbors. I know I am guilty of that. I have also been guilty of the opinion that the less I know about other people, the fewer problems they will be in my life. I am the first one to tell you I am guilty of that. All this is a work in progress in your life and mine, but if you are asking Christ to keep working on you, I guarantee you He will. The opportunities will come and then you will see for yourself whether you are ready and willing to participate.

To begin, go to Luke 14:7. There is probably not a person that has been a Christian for a while that has not read this before. Luke 14:7 through 14 includes both *showing compassion to the needy* and *extending hospitality*.

Verse 7 begins, ***“And he put forth a parable to those which were bidden, when he marked how they chose out the chief rooms (or seating arrangement for significant persons); saying unto them, When thou art bidden of any man to a wedding, sit not down in the highest room; lest a more honourable man than thou be bidden of him; And he that bade thee and him come and say to thee, Give this man place; and thou begin with shame to take the lowest room. But when thou art bidden, go and sit down in the lowest room; that when he that bade thee cometh, he may say unto thee, Friend, go up higher: then shalt thou have worship in the presence of them that sit at meat with thee. For whosoever exalteth himself shall be abased; and he that humbleth himself shall be exalted. Then said he also to him that bade him, When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours; lest they also bid thee again, and a recompense be made thee. But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind. . .”***

First, Christ is saying, do not look for the best seat in the house. Take the lowest seat, the one furthest away from the person that is hosting the party. If the host decides to move you to a better seat, then there would be no shame, but if you have already chosen the best seat and the host decides to move you to a lower seat, that would be embarrassing.

When Christ says in verse 4, ***“When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends, nor thy brethren, neither thy kinsmen, nor thy rich neighbours. . .”*** it does not mean you can never invite your friends. Just do not have the attitude that all you would ever invite is your friends, your acquaintances, or the people with whom you are comfortable. You could read this and say, “I can’t wait to show compassion to the needy and extend hospitality. Let me at it!” Really? The verse says, **“When thou makest a dinner or a supper, call not thy friends.”** Friends, relatives and rich neighbors, do not call them. Even if those are the people you are comfortable with or have things in common. Who are you to call? **“...the poor...”** Jesus is trying to move the disciples out of their comfort zones, because there would be no church today if they remained in the fellowship of their brethren, or if they remained in the fellowship of the people that they knew and became friends with.

I know many Christians today are just not comfortable reaching outside their group, but that is why the church is dying. The church itself has become an entertainment center where you do not even have to go into the secular world for any of your activities. There is movie night, game night, and bingo night. There are all kinds of church activities, dinners, and banquets. Because of that however, you miss the opportunity to share why you are so full of the joy of the Lord. I am not saying you should go and start evangelizing, but if someone could see in you this joy and were curious, it would open a door of opportunity where you could share.

“But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.” You may think if you call these people, then your friends and rich neighbors and so forth are not going to want to come. They do not like associating with these individuals, because they are the have-nots. They are the low class because their need has put them there in some cases.

As an example of this, let me tell you about my grandparents. Both of my mother’s parents came to America from Portugal and then became citizens of this country. In the late 20’s during the Prohibition period when it was illegal to sell alcohol, they got involved as transporters with the Mafia-like families that illegally sold alcohol. Their business was based out of Rhode Island and had transportation routes from New York City to Maine. My grandparents made a fortune and invested in the stock market. Most people thought the stock market was a good investment in those days, but most of you know what happened between 1929 and 1930, the stock market crashed. As a result, my grandparents lost a good part of their fortune, but they had enough to retire if they went back to Portugal, and that is what they did because the currency values were quite different. A dollar back there stretched a long way in Portugal. There they were considered the rich family in the area of Portugal where they retired. My grandparents

believed they were good Catholics, and did not see anything wrong with being involved with those illegal transactions, although I am not telling you what they did was right.

With that background, one story my grandfather told me really caught my attention. After retiring to Portugal, my grandfather got bored of retirement and opened several bakeries. He did not do any of the work. He hired the people to do it and being in the business of producing food, he took advantage of filling a need in the area. The bakeries were outside their home and they also had quite a large area of land for vineyards and other crops. Once a month they would invite everyone they could to a feast, the poor, the have-nots, all were invited. What attracted me to the story was that everyone in my grandfather's home had to be involved with not only feeding these people, but also preparing the meals, and in addition to provide any kind of clothing they needed. Also, for men and women they would even hire barbers to cut their hair and things of that nature. That story attracted me, because we have lost that in today's world.

What my grandparents did was a common practice not that long ago, but this hardened world is only getting harder. Our hearts are hardening and becoming stone, where no compassion, no hospitality is shown to people considered by Jesus to be poor, maimed, lame, or the blind. People like my grandparents, who were not taught from the Bible about how that was the right thing to do, carry that out. You may think it was nothing special because they were rich enough to do this, but they did not have to invite the whole town and everyone from the surrounding towns to participate. They could have just invited a few of the needy. We are champions at making excuses. I am not saying this is what you should do, but I am saying that in today's environment, the way things work in our society today; there will be times you should show hospitality and compassion. At the same time you have to be careful, because there will be people that will take advantage of your hospitality and compassion, you are going to have to figure out what their motives are. Those people will either make you bitter or affect your desire to participate this way, but then you will be the loser, not them, because you are going to miss some rewards Christ will provide. If you wonder how I come to that conclusion, read Luke 14:13 again, ***“But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind.”*** These are the ones the world considers the have-nots.

Also from the Bible, the have-nots came to the cave Adullam when David was in hiding in I Samuel 22. Verse 2 of that chapter does not mention any rich people. I am not against rich people, but your responsibilities, if you understand them, are even greater. However, the temptation to run from those responsibilities is even greater as well. Too many run from the responsibility of what God wants you in your *praxis*, in the Greek, or your office, which is the capacity in which you are called to participate. Ask yourself, “What has running from your responsibility produced?” It has produced a society that is dependent upon government to take care of them. I am not talking about social justice. I am not talking about fairness. I realize there is going to be some that have more than others, but if you are one of those that has more than others, and you are following the Lord Jesus Christ, He is given that supply to you for a reason. You are to *employ the Word of God*. Most often, it will be by supporting ministries and churches that provide to the needy. In addition, you are to be a good steward and participate in ministries that are

doing that.

Luke 14:14 continues with, ***“And thou shalt be blessed...”*** Remember the beatitudes, the opening verses of Christ’s Sermon on the Mount. The word “blessed” is repeated over and over. Blessed does not mean “happy.” The best English translation for the word “blessed” is ***fully satisfied***. This is one of those times the King James translators got it right. At one time in Old English this word meant, ***bathed in the blood***. How more ***fully satisfied*** can one be if they are ***bathed in the blood*** of Jesus Christ? If you know what that blood truly means, it is an outpouring.

“And thou shalt be blessed; (fully satisfied) for they cannot recompense thee (or pay you back) ***for thou shalt be recompensed*** (paid back) ***at the resurrection of the just.”*** Why would Christ go out of His way at the conclusion of this parable to say this if it was not true? Christ is telling us we will be rewarded for following Christ’s instruction. For showing the ones in need our compassion and extending hospitality. It is up to you to be grounded in the Word of God and make sure you are not being taken advantage of, because believe me, there are a lot of scam-artists, fakes, phonies, and insincere people. Take yourself out of the comfortable circle you are in if God gives you the opportunity to reach out to others. You are not to go out and make your own opportunity. That is not what Christ is saying here. The point He was making was when the opportunity does come, you have an opportunity to receive rewards at the judgment seat of Christ. You shall receive ***“the resurrection of the just”*** as verse 14 states at the end. These are rewards that He will distribute for your participation, or ***praxis***, in what He is asking you to do when the opportunity is available.

I guarantee you there will be opportunities. It is easy to say you want to help the needy; it is harder to put those words into practice. This is why we are a work in progress.

I will give you another small example. There is a Hearer of Faith, who supports this ministry. She is an elderly woman, 80 years old, and lives in Mexico across the border from this state. I do not think she will mind me saying this; she has to live there for financial reasons. Her family has pretty much neglected her and I pray every day that that changes. However, other Hearers of Faith in the area are close enough that if I asked them to go check up on her to see if she needs anything, they would go and help out anyway they could. There are plenty of other listeners that could also seize this and other opportunities to be an extension of this ministry.

Luke 14:13 is just one scripture. Another scripture is in Galatians 6:10 when Paul says, ***“As we have therefore opportunity let us do good unto all, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*** In regards to the Hearer of Faith in Mexico, part of helping her may include just going and having lunch with this person, because I know she really does not have anyone in the household of faith in which to share the joy of the Lord. We have become bitter and if allowed our hearts turn to stone. I am not talking about the people that want to take advantage of you. I am talking about people with a need for some hospitality and compassion that are not trying to take advantage of you.

If you really think about it, Christ is like a parent waiting for a time to reward us for

following His instruction. He cannot wait to see us seize the opportunity. We are truly blessed, meaning, *fully satisfied*, and not only *bathed in the blood*. Take advantage of the opportunities to please Him. The more you start pleasing Him, the less you think about the rewards that are coming at the judgment seat of Christ. You are so full of joy and happiness that you forget about the rewards, but those are still going to come. The best words you will ever hear is, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”*

Remember, it is not all about you. You have to keep connected to the vine that Christ spoke of in John 15. If you sever yourself from it, you are not going to have any personal relationship with Christ. Christ begins with you and your connection to Him, then He includes the commandment of loving one another, which is just another expression of what that love looks like. When you do this, God sees that you took His Son seriously and you were obedient to His commands. In this case, the command from John 15, which is loving your neighbor, includes *showing compassion to the needy* and *extending hospitality*. However, pancake breakfasts, bingos, movie night, game night, and entertainment night is not part of this commandment.

“For thou shalt be blessed; (fully satisfied) for they cannot recompense (reward) thee for thou shalt be recompensed (rewarded) at the resurrection of the just.” In other words, there is no reward or compensation that they can give for what you have done for them. Wherever you turn in the Gospel Records or in the New Testament letters, we are reminded constantly to be active in the participation with these rewards, because Christ wants us to receive them. Nevertheless, to receive them, you have to be in the race and you have to finish it.

To be continued. . . .

More Rewards - Part 2

I have been pointing out that your motive for giving your time, talent, or your money should not be to gain riches or rewards in the here and now. Many are preaching this prosperity doctrine today; give so you get rich in the here and now. As a result, you end up giving for the wrong reasons. That is not what I am teaching. I have been showing you Christ wants you to have rewards, and there will be rewards given at the judgment seat of Christ, but not everyone is going to get the same rewards. That is stated repeatedly throughout the Bible. If you are someone who believes we all earn the same rewards in heaven, then you need to show me some basis in scripture to prove it to me.

Today's world the church is dying, because churches cater to what people need and desire in the here and now. However, any teaching on New Testament giving has to include what Christ wants us to know, which is if you remain faithful, He will reward us, and you should want to remain faithful out of obedience. To ignore that and not participate in what God wants is really going out of God's will.

In addition, I have been emphasizing that when speaking of rewards, it is not a reward to obtain salvation. I repeat this quite often, but I want you to understand, works do not affect our destination. Too much of Christianity thinks that you can work your way into heaven, but you cannot. You cannot even give your way into heaven with money, time, and talent. If you are obedient, you are going to give of your money and yourself. However, when you are talking about salvation, works do not affect the destination. Only the works of Christ secured our redemption, so there is nothing you can do to earn your salvation. Our works, however, will affect our reward experienced at the judgment seat of Christ and throughout eternity.

Remember that "reward" is the Greek word "*praxis*," which is where we get our word "practice." The list below shows some of the ways we earn rewards in eternity.

- 1) *Employing the Word of God - Matt.6:19-20 and 19:29*
- 2) *Showing compassion to the needy - Luke 14:34*
- 3) *How we deal with our enemies - Luke 6:35*
- 4) *Endurance in difficulties - Heb. 10:34-36*
- 5) *Persevere under persecution - Luke 6:22-23*
- 6) *Extending hospitality - Luke 14:14*
- 7) *Gal. 6:9*

I have also discussed what our reward is throughout eternity, the 10,000% interest. I proved it to you, and showed you a very long number exemplifying that our rewards will be far beyond 10,000% interest. In fact, it is a number we cannot even calculate. Finally, in the previous chapter we looked at earning rewards through *showing compassion to the needy* and *extending hospitality*.

In this chapter, however, will focus on *endurance in difficulties, perseverance under persecution, and how we deal with our enemies*. Although you may be surprised, there are rewards for those things.

Let us begin in Luke 6:20, also known as the Beatitudes. Throughout these verses, Christ is continually ‘blessing’ others. If you remember from the last chapter, this blessing is an Old English word that means they are *fully satisfied or bathed in the blood* of Jesus Christ. Verse 20 begins, **“And he lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said, *Blessed be ye poor: for yours is the kingdom of God.*”** In Matthew it is recorded that Christ said “poor in spirit,” referring to people who are spiritually bankrupt and need to change that condition. Only through Christ is that going to happen. Verse 21 continues, **“*Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.*”** Why is there weeping? The following verses explain it is because of the persecutions and difficulties that are involved in being a true disciple of Jesus Christ.

Almost every day I am criticized, just as those in verse 22 of this chapter were criticized. Not as severely as Jesus, Paul or the apostles, yet those from within the Christian group criticize me and it can be discouraging. Mostly I am criticized because I make other Christians uncomfortable with the truth of God’s word. Many think discipleship should be easy, even desirable if you understand that you have been chosen. However, discipleship is not an easy road. There are going to be difficulties and persecution. Unfortunately, many people in the western part of the world, where religious attitudes are more tolerant, do not even understand what persecution means. You must know you have been called and chosen for something bigger. If you ever begin to feel criticized or persecuted, the only thing I know how to do, and the only thing really you need to do, is go back to God’s Word. Listen to it being preached correctly to fix the negative attitude you are in, because that attitude is not what Christ wants. You have been called for a purpose and it is not to crawl in a hole somewhere and feel sorry for yourself all day long. You must have the trust and confidence that He is going to be there with you no matter what you face.

You may wonder what this has to do with the following verse Luke 6:21, **“*Blessed are ye that hunger now: for ye shall be filled. Blessed are ye that weep now: for ye shall laugh.*”** Do not wonder though. There are people laughing now, but for the wrong reasons, and there is weeping, for the right reasons, the spiritually right reasons. However, the weeping that drives Christ away from you is weeping for the wrong reasons.

Let us continue with Luke 6:22, **“*Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you and when they shall separate you from their company* (because of your trust and belief in Him), *and shall reproach* (or speak abusively to) *you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake.*”** Here Jesus is specific. You are hated and reproached for many things. For example, the stand that you take in your life, who you believe and have faith in; Jesus Christ, what the Word of God declares who He is, what He did for you, and what is still yet to come, and that He wants to bless you, not only here and now, but also more importantly in the hereafter.

Paul refers to this separation in Romans 1:1 when he says, ***“Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God.”*** In this verse, “separate” means to actually separate or cast out of society or a group as a wicked and abominable person. You go against the group. Not only its identity, but also what it stands for. The Pharisees, the sect in which Paul belonged to before his conversion, is what Paul is referring to here in Romans 1:1. Paul was separated from the pharisaical group that he was a part, the group that condemned Jesus. Paul did not necessarily separate himself, but once they heard of Paul’s conversion after being blinded and living in the desert, they did not want any part of him. In this case, God did the separating through the Pharisees, and then God sent Paul on a mission that would establish the church world.

Just like Paul, many people may disassociate with you. They might not even know your views, or how you live your life trusting in Jesus Christ, but they will separate from you nonetheless. These are people that you may share a common understanding with, but since you strayed away in their eyes from that common understanding, they do not want any part of you, so they choose to separate themselves from you. This happens because you preach or you believe in the Son of God, the only begotten Son Jesus Christ, without all the rules the established church has placed on Jesus Christ. In this case, they would cast out your name as evil, just as every apostle has also experienced. If you recall, every apostle but one was spoken abusively of and killed.

You should rejoice, however, in the day they separate themselves from you. Verse 23 declares, ***“Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven: for in like manner did their fathers unto the prophets.”*** Those who persecute you know what you believe in. They know what you faith in, both in the *pistis* and the *pisteuo* level of faith. If they elect to separate from you because of it and in the process ***“speak abusively, and cast out your name as evil”*** because of Jesus Christ, well then remind yourself daily of what Christ said, ***“Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy: for, behold, your reward is great in heaven.”*** Why is your reward great in heaven? Because you did not follow the mob, you stood firm because of what you have heard. You were persuaded when you started trusting in and having confidence in Christ and what the rightly divided Word of God says about Him, what He did for you, what He is still doing for you. Do not think about them, instead rejoice and leap for joy. Remember to remain faithful even though they cast you away. Just remember, ***“...your reward is great in heaven.”***

Matthew 5:10 says the same thing. ***“Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness’ sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted?”***

Often I ask myself in the morning, “Are you going to be the salt of the earth today or

not?” I do not care how tough it gets for you or for me. Those are the choices you have, to be the salt of the earth or not, and if you lose your “savour,” then you are a spiritual dud. Unfortunately, it is sometimes a lot easier to be a spiritual failure. As Matthew says, you are good for nothing, if you are a spiritual failure. I believe we only have one choice and that is to be a salty disciple for our Lord’s purpose.

Difficulties and persecutions are expected. The world, your friends, your acquaintances, and your family are sometimes your worst enemy which can be used as pawns by an unseen wicked spiritual army. Our unseen enemy does not sleep. By the time you wake up, they have a battle plan set for the day. Before you can even open your eyes, they are ready to go. What I am preaching tonight is nothing new. We are in a spiritual fight hopefully warring a good warfare as the salt of the earth. So I repeat, are you going to cry and moan and be a spiritual failure, or will you be the salt of the earth, realizing it was not easy for any previous Disciples of Christ as well?

Just as Luke 6:23 told us to rejoice verse 24 continues with a warning, ***“But woe unto you that are rich! for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”*** Here, Christ is speaking to the church and church leaders, which Paul writes of in other letters as well. He was separated from the Pharisees, from their company, and what he grew up believing was correct.

To further understand whom Jesus was talking about, compare Luke to Revelation. In Revelation chapter 3:15, Christ is speaking to the last church of the seven churches, which is the rich church in the end time. Verse 15 begins, ***“I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew [or vomit] thee out of my mouth. Because thou sayest, I am rich [spiritually rich], and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked: I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich[spiritually rich]; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed...”***

In both verses, Christ is speaking of the same end time period. So to combine the verses we could read, ***“But woe unto you that are rich! for you have received your consolation [or reward here and now]. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger”*** (Luke 6: 24-25). ***“Because thou sayest, I am rich [that is, spiritually rich], and increased with goods, and have need of nothing”*** (Revelation 3:17).

Now, who is the “rich” Christ is referring to? Because all of this has a spiritual meaning, it is not those rich in money. No, that is not who Jesus was referring to. Here Christ is referring to the Pharisees and the Sadducees of His time, those groups of people who would separate themselves from the believing Disciples of Christ who were called evil and spoken about abusively, all because of the Son of Man’s sake. These groups then, were the Pharisees and Sadducees, they thought they were rich in the knowledge of what God really wants, but they did not even know how to recognize the Son of God when He

walked on this earth. Actually, they mocked Christ, His disciples, and His apostles. The warning in Luke 6:24 is for those groups. ***“...for ye have received your consolation. Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger. Woe unto you that laugh now! for ye shall mourn and weep. Woe unto you, when all men shall speak well of you! for so did their fathers to the false prophets.”*** This is the same praise many preachers long for these days who are not preaching the rightly divided Word of God.

“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you, Bless them that curse you, and pray for them which despitefully use you.” I have told you this before, the best illustration of loving anyone, including your enemies, is sharing the rightly divided word with them. He expects us to love one another, including our enemies. In addition, Jesus said in Matthew 6:14, ***“For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.”*** Not only are you to ask for forgiveness for your sins, and I sin daily, but you need to remember what Christ even proclaimed on the cross, ***“Forgive them; for they know not what they do”*** (Luke 23:34). This is a daily activity in my life. I am a sinner saved by grace daily. Not only am I asking for forgiveness of my sins, but I am also asking for forgiveness for the ones that I think have sinned against me.

Stephen from the Book of Acts understood this. Over the course of my Christian years following Christ it always amazed me how Stephen addresses the crowd and preaches his sermon. However, when he finished, was stoned. Paul was standing nearby, by the way. At that time, Paul was the Pharisee of the Pharisees. Acts 7:58 begins, ***“And cast him out of the city, and stoned him: and the witnesses laid down their clothes at a young man’s feet, whose name was Saul. [Paul] And they stoned Stephen, calling upon God, and saying, Lord Jesus, receive my spirit. And he kneeled down, and cried with a loud voice, Lord, lay not this sin to their charge. And when he had said this, he fell asleep.”*** In his dying breath he said, ***“. . .lay not this sin to their charge.”*** He did not say, “Lord kill my enemies, eliminate them, send a plague on them,” no matter how tempting that may be, that is the flesh talking. I am not preaching some self-righteous message here. I understand if you are not at that point in applying the principal in the Acts story. To be honest, I have wish on several occasions the plague on my enemies. However, it does not change what the Word of God says.

Luke 6:27 says, ***“But I say unto you which hear, Love your enemies, do good to them which hate you. Bless them that curse you and pray for them that despitefully use you.”*** Pray for your enemies, for the Son of Man’s sake, even the ones that cast you out from their group. Verse 32 explains, ***“For if ye love them which love you, what thank have ye? for sinners also love those that love them. And if ye do good to them which do good to you, what thank have ye? for sinners also do even the same. And if ye lend to them of whom ye hope to receive, what thank have ye? for sinners also lend to sinners, to receive as much again. But love ye your enemies, and do good, and lend, hoping for nothing again; and your reward shall be great, and ye shall be the children of the Highest: for he is kind unto the unthankful and to the evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.”***

We are not only to *extend hospitality* to the fellow churchgoers that you have something in common with, but also to those who are outside of those you know. That is how we deal with our enemies in the church or out of the church. Those that think they are rich and have need of nothing; they will get their reward based on the here and now, which is sad because they have no concept of eternity. Remember the warning in verse 21, ***“Woe unto you that are full! for ye shall hunger.”*** They are the ones that are going to be mourning and weeping. But what are we to do if we love them? Pray that they see the light of the Gospel of the Good News of Jesus Christ. See it for what it is and what it proclaims. Put it in God’s hands, but do not give up. The Lord still wants you to be a giver to the poor and even lending to your enemies, if that is possible. He knows if you could at least do that simple little thing of praying for and lending to your enemies, you are not going to get bitter, become hardened, or separate yourself from the rest of the world and your enemies because they hate you. No, in fact, you are going to be praying for them. You might not have anything left to say to them, but you still could supplicate on their behalf so they too someday could be the salt of the earth, instead of a spiritual failure caught in manmade traditions. Or if they are not a Christian, you could pray that they see for the very first time why it is important to recognize who Christ was.

To see what this has to do with afflictions and persecutions go to Hebrews 10:32. ***“But call to remembrance the former days in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions; Partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock [a spectacle] both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions [or co-sharers] of them that were so used.”*** Here Paul is saying that because of whom you identified with, you were made a spectacle and given your share of afflictions.

In verse 34 he goes on to say, ***“For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods [or material things, the ‘plundering’ literally] knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better [or a superior] and an enduring substance [or wealth]. Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.”*** So both Christ and Paul are telling us that our reward for this will not be in the here and now, but in heaven.

Often people tell me that they do not want to “give to get.” I know that nobody gives on unseen promises and rewards with the thought that they are going to give to get. Giving is based on material things in the here and now. That is why the prosperity gospel is so overwhelming and influential in the church world today, beyond anything I ever imagined it could be, but it has taken hold. It is a cancer and a disease in the church world.

That is why you should remember what Paul said in Hebrews, ***“Cast not away therefore your confidence...”*** Those who supported Paul by plundering their own goods, knowing that in keeping Paul’s ministry alive and well, they were keeping the Word going out through His messengers. Because people thought they were a spectacle, and made fools out of themselves for supporting Paul, those supporters received their own afflictions, hardships, and reproaches because of their association with Paul. In Hebrews, Paul is

reminding them to remember why they were supporting him. They should have confidence in the here and now benefit of others hearing the message so they too can be persuaded and start trusting and faithing in Christ. Paul was saying, “You plundered your own goods, because you understood what Christ preached and taught when He walked on this earth.” Remember, we are to lay up our treasure in heaven for ourselves. Hebrews 10:36 goes on to say, **“For ye have need of patience, [or endurance] that, after ye have done the will of God [by denying yourself, taking up the cross, and following Christ in His likeness] ye might receive the promise. For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.”** This is not the promise of salvation, because Christ has already paid the price for you. The promise here is the promise of a superior and enduring wealth that is being stored in heaven, which Paul referred to in verse 34. These verses in Hebrews is also telling us to not lose confidence that those rewards are coming, and do not let anybody convince you otherwise. There is a purpose for your participation in the here and now. Most people give because they are acting obediently without knowing the real reasons for their giving. As a result, they are missing out. Yes, they are acting obediently, but they do not understand the other reasons and purposes for their giving that Christ wants to share with us in eternity.

Paul continues speaking in Hebrew 10:38 and 39, **“Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.”** In this verse, “believe” is the Greek word *‘pistis.’* In the context of this verse, Paul is saying, “You are hearing and being persuaded that what you are hearing is the truth. In hearing the truth you are persuaded and now have confidence and trust in Christ, what He said, and what He has promised you for your faithfulness, and that you are a part of His plan now, to get the message out.” Some think that in Paul’s day there was no giving in the New Testament. There was giving all right, they plundered their goods joyfully as verse 34 tells us **“...knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a superior and an enduring [everlasting] wealth.”**

II Corinthians 4:8 confirms how we should deal with our enemies, how they perceive us and cast us out. Endurance is necessary in afflictions and reproaches so you *persevere under persecution*. Just look at what Paul experienced: beaten, whipped, stoned, running for his life, lowered down the side of a wall, shipwrecked, mocked, tortured, and bitten by snakes, among other afflictions. That is why verse 8 tells us, **“We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair [literally not altogether without help]; Persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed. . . (verse 17) For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us [literally renders one fit] a far more [literally, beyond measure throughout] exceeding [again, beyond measure] and eternal weight of glory [or praise and honor.]”**

Personalize this verse and remind yourself, **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, renders one fit beyond measure, throughout beyond measure and eternal weight of praise and honor.”** In this case, we know whose praise we desire, the only one that counts, Jesus Christ, the one who will issue out the praise and honor that He wants you to receive. Not everyone in eternity will hear the words, **“Well done, good and**

faithful servant.”

Ask yourself when you wake up tomorrow morning, “Are you going to be a spiritual dud?” Christ warned us in His scriptures to expect the difficulties, but it is a light affliction. I am not trying to make light of your troubles we all have them. I am just saying you need to change your mindset and perspective. We have troubles for a reason, but we cannot just sit and cry over them, and I am speaking to myself as well. We need that light affliction sometimes, but I will not bend the truth to cater to myself, which is what you have to do as well. Whether you like it or not, you are in a heavenly program to make you ready, to make you fit, not in the physical sense, but in the spiritual sense. **“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, renders one fit ...”**

II Corinthians 4:18 continues, **“While we look (or fix our eyes) not at the things which are seen, (the here and now) but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal.”** Your rewards, the kind of rewards that scripture is speaking about, are not things that you are going to see here and now. You might receive some blessings but these are not rewards. Blessings are attached to some type of purpose that He wants you to accomplish or experience. Do not confuse the two. Blessings are seen here and now, rewards are seen in eternity.

Continuing on to Chapter 5, verses 1-5, **“For we know that, if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven.”** In other words, even though we cannot have our eternal reward now, we groan for it because we have to wait for eternity to receive it. Reading on to verse 3, **“If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle [our body] do groan, being burdened not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life. Now he that hath wrought us for the selfsame thing is God, who also hath given unto us the earnest [in the Greek, the down payment] of the Spirit.”** Paul is saying here that because sin is still a part of our bodies, the Holy Spirit in its totality cannot dwell in us. That is why Christ has given us a down payment through His blood. His blood also came with a purpose that Paul wrote of in Galatians 5:22 and 23 called the Fruit of the Spirit that comes with all its attributes to achieve His purposes. This goes along with chapter 4 of II Corinthians, of the light afflictions, the things that are seen and not seen, the distresses and the persecutions. We have been given an earnest deposit, or down payment, to deal with those things to uplift us, to encourage us, to enlighten us through His Word as the Holy Spirit relates to it to bring us to a point of understanding that He is there and He is real. Here and now, we will continue walking by faith and not by sight, because we have been persuaded to believe so, to trust and labor in that faith.

Returning to the text, we are still in II Corinthians, 5:6 which says, **“Therefore we are always confident, knowing that, whilst we are at home in the body, we are absent from the Lord: (For we walk by faith, not by sight:)”** Meaning, we become persuaded not on the things that we see, but the things that we start having trust and confidence in. The

evidence then builds up, and we gain confidence that it is true and some day we will be receiving or reward. Continuing to verse 8, ***“We are confident, I say, and willing rather to be absent from the body, and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that, whether present or absent, we may be accepted of him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ...”*** Paul is saying all we are going through will eventually have a reward. He then goes on to say in verse 10, ***“that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”***

Keep in mind there are two places of judgment, one for the believer and one for the non-believer. The great white throne is for the non-believer. The judgment seat of Christ is for the believers. Obviously, the blood that Christ spilled gets you into heaven. If you have faith in Christ’s blood, it gave you redemption so you could be reconciled back to the Father. However, once you get to that judgment seat you ***“...may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad.”*** You may wonder what happens if you did more bad than good. Well, this world may be generally an equal opportunity society, but in eternity, rewards will not be equal for everyone. There will be a judgment seat of Christ so ***“that every one may receive the things done in his body.”*** Many people are honest enough to think if they just get into heaven, they will be happy. However, that is not what Christ wants for you, so why not work to obtain everything that Christ wants you to have?

As I close this chapter, I want all of you to understand, you have to do only one thing to earn salvation. But what about everything else that goes throughout eternity with us ***“from beyond measure to beyond measure.”*** We find the answer in verse 17, ***“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, renders one fit beyond measure, throughout beyond measure and eternal weight of praise and honor.”*** Christ will give to His servants everything possible seen through God’s Word, so they can receive everything that Christ wants them to have with nothing left out. Have the attitude that Christ wants us to grasp our eternal rewards and understand how this is done for His purposes, for His glory. Without that attitude, you have a spiritual problem and you are in a dangerous place in your Christian walk. I understand that this message does not serve the purpose of those preaching the prosperity gospel for their own purposes, for their filthy lucre gain, for their own success. They say that because they are successful, they must be in God’s will, but Christ will say, “I never knew any of you. You pretended to be in my name but you preached a false doctrine, another gospel, another Jesus.” That is the danger of looking for rewards in the here and now. A disciple of Jesus Christ wants to be just that, a disciple. Be obedient and do not be left out of anything that Christ tells you to accomplish. Be ready to move and march on to the things that Christ wants you to have. The choice is yours.

To be continued. . .

Giving and Capitalism

The last few messages in this series have been about rewards. However, this chapter will be about capitalism, because you hear a lot about how capitalism is a horrible thing. Many say that it keeps people poor and a system that takes from the rich to distribute for an equal plain is necessary. I am not saying the poor want to remain poor or do not use opportunities to better their condition. I do believe however that there needs to be a desire to strive forward or else people will find themselves in a faithless, and eventually, godless frame of mind. Christ promised in Matthew 6 that He would provide the necessary things; clothing, food, and necessities of life, which by the way, take us out of that classification of poor. Being poor in the United States is much different than what is considered poor in other countries, so it is important to put the right definition on what is poor. However, what does the New Testament say about our responsibility for the poor? What plan did God have for the truly poor?

Before going to the Bible, read what one author says:

“In his essay on self-reliance, Ralph Waldo Emerson writes, ‘Do not tell me, as a good man did today, of my obligation to put all poor men in good situations. Are they my poor?’ Emerson’s attitude reflects our national spirit of independence. Few of us wish harm to the poor. We just don’t want to be held responsible for them. But Emerson’s question is a valid one. Are the poor my poor? Am I responsible for their plight? More than one evangelical writer would have us believe that because we ourselves are not poor, because we have money and possessions others don’t, we are at fault for their poverty.”

I say, “No,” we are not at fault for their poverty. In dealing with the poor, the Lord wants us to recognize how He has provided for us. We have a Lord that encompasses more than any of us ever could imagine. One of those things is compassion and if we are in Christ and becoming like-Christ, some of those attributes have to come out, which we see through the Fruit of the Spirit. Only the Lord can determine how much you have, and if He has given you much, it is because He wants you to do something with it. He does not want you to hoard it here where moths and rust can get to it. He wants you to store it in heaven, which means you have to spend it here. Know though, there is no reward for spending your riches on yourself. Remember, it was Christ who said in Matthew 6, **“Lay up treasures for yourself.”**

We give out of obedience, and Christ promises rewards because of that obedience. Some have a hard time with that concept, but if you give out of obedience, you already understand that you know giving pleases Him. The more you please Him, the more you want to be a part of what pleases Him. I agree with this author when he says we cannot blame the rich for the condition of the poor.

The author also goes on to say:

“This perspective is a ‘zero sum’ philosophy, the belief that wealth cannot be created but only distributed, and that for every winner there must be a corresponding loser. For example, if there are eight people at a party and a pie is cut in eight pieces, and I take two or three pieces for myself, then I’ve taken what belongs to the others. They have less because I have more. Those holding this position apply the pie analogy to the world. There’s only so much wealth in the world, they say, and everyone’s entitled to his share. If I have more than someone else, essentially I’ve stolen from him. Karl Marx taught this concept, dividing all men into ‘the oppressors and the oppressed.’ Those who have much are oppressors; those who don’t are oppressed. However, unlike the finite pie that cannot be made bigger, wealth is not limited- it can be reduced and enlarged. Scripture tells us, ‘Remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth’ (Deuteronomy 8:18). Wealth is being produced every day as a result of ingenuity and hard work. One person’s prosperity can take place at the expense of another, but it need not. Is capitalism to blame for poverty? Some would claim that although we may not directly exploit the poor, we’re voluntarily part of an economic system that exploits them. Therefore, we’re culpable. In this view, capitalism is a supposed enemy of the poor. Every discussion of the plight of the poor involves economics, so I need to address the subject at least briefly. Capitalism is a free-market economic system that operates without exterior control. ‘Control’ is left to what economist Adam Smith called ‘the invisible hand.’ According to this theory, the marketplace naturally orders itself around the needs and wants of the population. The principle of supply and demand determines what sells at what price. The greater the competition, the more goods there are to choose from and the more reasonable prices will be. It’s difficult to understand how one particular system (capitalism) can be blamed for a problem (poverty) that has existed in every country with every economic structure in human history. A capitalistic society can certainly foster greed and allow the poor to be exploited, but it can also give an opportunity to the poor to do what many have done in the free-market economies- work themselves out of poverty.”

Some may think the reason some poor do not work is that there are not enough jobs. I cannot speak for the non-Christian, but if you are a trusting, believing Christian, my Lord says He will provide. There are plenty of people in the world who do not have the opportunities we have in this country. Too many people are more concerned with having the latest “thing” that can be bought or having items whether we can afford them or not. God’s Word says either you are going to trust Him or not. Yes, He will provide, but it is human nature to define what that provision should be, you have set your own definition for poverty.

Christ promises to take care of you and He will determine what you need, because He sees your heart, and what you will do with what He provides you. For example, many people claim to support this ministry, but send no money to us. I wonder why they keep listening to what I teach. One day they will face the Lord and what will their excuse be? Were they waiting for a time when they had enough left over to give? I wonder though if debt stops them from buying the latest gadget out there or from over-eating.

“Capitalism results at times in exploitation, because no system can eliminate sin. But capitalism is not built on exploitation; it’s built on common interest. In a truly free market all parties will ultimately get what they want. For example, when you bought this book, presumably you were satisfied with the transaction- you profited from the exchange of currency for ideas and principles. Who else came out ahead on the transaction? One would hope would be the bookseller, the publisher, the author, as well as the loggers, the paper company, the printer, truckers, and others who took part in the process. When you buy milk, who profits? You do- you get the milk that you wanted. . . All parties involved can profit in the buying and selling of goods. One’s profit is not the expense of another. The major alternative to capitalism is socialism. Some outspoken Christians still suggest it’s a better alternative. Socialism is an economic system controlled by the state. It supposedly spreads out the goods to all, preventing the formation of a rich, land-grabbing elite that would oppress the poor.”

That sounds like a good system, but it depends on what is distributed and how much there is to spread around to everyone. However, I do not think many who like this system know history. Often they are taught by college professors that are so liberal and progressive that they want a socialistic economy where everybody gets a little of something. They believe that even if there were not much, at least we would all be sharing something. On the other hand, what happens if God wants you to have more because He has seen that you are a faithful steward? Christ did say in Luke 12:48, ***“Where much is given, much is required.”*** Perhaps you are a funnel for His purpose of getting the message of the Good News of His Son out to the world. Under a socialistic economy, you would not be able to participate. Socialism removes New Testament giving from the equation.

As a Biblical example, Joseph’s son Ephraim was selected by God to be a powerhouse. In order to do that, he needed to fulfill plenty of scripture, including backing up a brother in Judah, or Israel, to fulfill events in 1948. That was one of the prophetic accomplishments that had to be fulfilled. In order to spread the Good News of the message of Jesus Christ around the world a system such as capitalism is required. Capitalism does not keep everybody at the same economic level socialism does.

This author goes on to explain this further:

In socialism, economic power is centralized in the governments so that no individual can become rich at the expense of others. Unfortunately, somebody has to run this system. And because power tends to corrupt, these caretakers of the system inevitably become the rich and oppressive elite. Under capitalism, a large number of the rich get richer- but so do some of the poor. Under socialism, a small number of the rich get richer, but the poor stay poor. Those who laud socialism ignore the fact that historically the poor usually fare better in capitalist economies. They also fail to recognize that when the profit incentive is removed from labor, someone must find another way to motivate people to work. There’s only one other way that works- and that’s coercion. The capitalist says, ‘You scratch my back and I’ll scratch yours.’ The socialist says, in effect, ‘You scratch my back or I’ll break yours.’

Can capitalism involve exploiting the poor? Of course!. Does socialism lead to the oppression of the poor? Inevitably! The point isn't that capitalism is a perfect system, but that the alternatives are worse. It isn't a systemic problem, it's a sin problem."

This is why there are always the kingdoms and destruction of those kingdoms throughout history. Usually the destruction is because of greed, power, and out of control spending. In reality, none of these systems works ideally when sin is still in existence. That is just the way it is. A perfect solution does not exist.

Under capitalism, the rich get richer because they were born rich, persevere, work hard, get a few breaks, are in the right place at the right time, or invent something. This is ingenuity. Occasionally, there is a monopoly on a product, which increases wealth. The computer companies Apple and Microsoft are just two examples of this. Only in capitalism, would there be an opportunity like that. In a socialistic society, what is invented? China, one of the wealthiest nations in the world, has become wealthy only because they learned how to copy and make products cheaper. Although they have invented nothing, they are wealthy only because of the workers who work 12, 16, 18 hours a day, share bedrooms, and share beds on a rotating schedule. There is not much opportunity for the workers to become wealthy.

The point is, capitalism is not a perfect system, but the alternatives are worse. To return this to the subject of New Testament giving, only in capitalism is there the opportunity to earn more and to give more. When that opportunity is taken away from you, it affects how you please the Lord. He knows what you have and what you will do without in order to give more. That is why this country, being a son of Joseph, with the promises of the lost tribes, became a powerhouse. Only in the United States, along with England as another lost tribe, could there be the financial backing and power to get the Word out to Christians around the world, or even to care about providing the rescue plan that Christ has provided to bring salvation. Unfortunately, we have a part of society in today's United States that wants that taken away, because they are faithless, and there is no other way to say it.

I am sure this is not the giving message you were expecting in this chapter, but giving is not a simple formula in one neat little package. I want to open a new heart about what New Testament giving is. Many in this country think the answer to our financial problems is to have the rich pay more taxes. The point really is, though, if you have such a heartfelt belief that you should be paying more taxes, then go ahead and do it. If you think you should not be one of the few who are giving more in taxes, keep in mind God's Word. It tells about the true heart of repentance and those who exploit their riches.

We see this in Luke 19, in the story of Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector who, even though he became very rich, knew he was missing something; inside he was spiritually dead. His riches did not fill the hole in his heart, and his mind haunted him. Verse one begins, ***"And Jesus entered and passed through Jericho. And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich. And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of***

stature. And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycamore tree to see him; for he was to pass that way. And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for today I must abide at thy house. And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. And when they saw it, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken anything from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold.”

Now, these murmuring people were complaining that Jesus was catering to the rich. From this record in Luke, we do not know what happened between Christ and Zacchaeus from verse 7 to verse 8. All we do know is that when Zacchaeus saw the Lord he invited the Lord to his home. However, Jesus did not just go to his house without saying anything. Something had to be said. Whatever Jesus said had reached this man’s heart causing him to make a confession of this sort. If you had a true heart of repentance because you feel like somehow you got your riches by taking advantage of the poor, I am giving you scripture tonight that you should apply to your own life. You do not need to wait for the government to take it through taxes from you. If you truly believe and you have a change of heart, scripture says and shows us what a true changed heart of a rich man is like.

Read what is said in verse 8, *“And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor . . . fourfold.”* Do you remember how we folded a piece of paper in another chapter to illustrate one-hundred fold? We were not able to complete many folds, but you could see how the number expanded with each fold. The Old Testament law, under which Zacchaeus was still living, required only the principle plus 20% for repayment of anything taken falsely. But Zacchaeus imposed upon himself a harder penalty than even what the Old Testament required. He imposed the penalty that was only comparable to the crime of robbery. Verse nine tells us Jesus’ response, *“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come...”* Riches were ruling Zacchaeus at any cost, including taking advantage of the poor. An economic system did not change his heart, as they do not change anyone’s heart. Only Christ and those who look into His Word will have a changed heart. Zacchaeus is the case in point.

You do not have to be rich to have a giving heart. This rich man, Zacchaeus, was changed by what Jesus said to him. Christ’s words changed his perspective. The same Word being preached to you. Do not wait for the government to take it from you, have a changed heart now. God knows. I do not care if you are rich. Be rich, but do not be a hypocrite, be the example.

To continue with Luke 19:9, *“And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forasmuch as he also is a son of Abraham. For the Son of man is come to seek and to save [or deliver and rescue from bondage] that which was lost.”* Riches keep you in bondage if you do not know how to handle those riches. God might make you the richest man in the world, but He has a reason for it, which is not to lay treasures down here on this earth, but He has given you the treasures so you can store them in heaven. He has given you a grand responsibility. In fact, Jesus says it is hard for a rich man to get to

heaven, and Zacchaeus is just one example of why. A lot of rhetoric is said these days from those who want to find a man-made solution to the world's problems. The rich are not the problem, however. They have their own problems with the Lord, just as Zacchaeus did. If their heart is not right, God will deal with them. Be concerned about yourself and your relationship with Him. Look at life through the Lord's perspective, not yours based on what your neighbors have. If that is your concern, then you are living in a non-satisfied condition of heart and mind.

Christ said in Matthew 6:26-34, ***“Do I clothe the lilies? Do I feed the birds? Aren't they taken care of?”*** The answer, obviously, is yes. ***“O ye of little faith? Therefore take no thought, [or do not be anxious] saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?”*** Christ told us if we trusted in Him, He would provide those things. He knows our necessities, and tells us in verse 32, ***“For after all these things do the Gentiles seek: for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.”***

Stop insulting Christ with the attitude that He does not know how to take care of you. Christ reminds us in verse 33, ***“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you. Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself.”*** Tomorrow will come, so either you are going to trust in the Lord or you are going to trust in the riches of this world. The choice is yours. Do not think an economic system will improve your situation. Historically, all other economic systems, outside of capitalism, have proven to be a failure in how they deal with the less fortunate. Only capitalism provides the opportunity to give more. Do your homework and find it out for yourself. Know your history, but more importantly know what God's Word says about stewardship. There is no better system, even though flawed because sin is still here, but that is why you need Christ. Your first concern is not how capitalism will affect you. Your first consideration should be how it is going to affect the message going out to the world. That means you are either operating in the here and now or the eternal perspective. Here and now is just that, here and now. Eternity is forever.

To be continued. . .

Generosity

Before teaching from the Bible, let me read what one author says about generosity in the early New Testament church. This church was established throughout the book of Acts as Paul writes letters to the churches across Asia Minor and other places.

“One of the notable qualities of the early church in the New Testament was their generosity in giving. In Acts 2, the early church is described as one that continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine, in fellowship, in breaking of bread, in prayers, being together, having all things in common and one that has a generous heart to give. We read in Acts 2:42 and 45, ‘And they continued steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, and in breaking of bread, and in prayers. And fear came upon every soul: and many wonders and signs were done by the apostles. And all that believed were together, and had all things common; and sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.’ In Acts 4:34 to 35 their generosity is again displayed, ‘Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and laid them down at the apostles’ feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.’ And again in Acts 11:29, ‘Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judea.’”

During my life as a Christian, I have often heard those who believe the apostles and disciples all lived communally. In my research however, all I was able to find was this same opinion by different authors and different preachers, with no scriptural reference to support this opinion. The apostles and disciples sold their lands and houses for Jesus, but you cannot find any evidence that they lived in a communal situation. That is an unverified opinion assumed fact only because it was written about so often. What we do know as fact verified in the Bible is that daily people were captured and changed by the message, the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Sometimes thousands of people’s lives were changed in just one day. You see that in the early Acts record where 120 to 3,000 people, seemingly overnight, were changed. There is also some evidence that there were wealthier individuals also captured by the Gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, what He did, when He came, when He died, and when He rose again.

Let me continue reading:

“Today, while we find the church emphasizing on doctrine, fellowship, breaking of bread and prayers, there is a very obvious want in the area of giving. The cheerful and generous giving that best described the early church is just missing in many of today’s churches. Yes, that quality of giving that moved the early Christians to sell their possessions and goods to be able to give to the Lord and support the work and their fellow believers is obviously lacking in our time. Thus, the need for today’s Christians to learn from the generosity of the early church.

Among the early churches, it was the Macedonian church (comprised the churches in Philippi, Berea, Thessalonica) that was well known in the area of giving. Though known to be poor, they had been generous in their giving and contributed with great cheerfulness and liberality. In his second epistle to the Corinthians (in chapter 8), the Apostle Paul was trying to encourage the brethren to contribute and give liberally . . . citing the good examples set by the churches of Macedonia.”

These Christians in Macedonia were poor, but they were not going to lose the opportunity to give. On the other hand, there are those today who say they support this church, but have yet to send any monetary support. In my opinion, they do not have the spirit of the Christians from the early church who were truly captured by the attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit, *agathosune*, or generous giving, which is found in Galatians 5:22.

“The Apostle Paul described the Macedonian churches in 2 Corinthians 8:1- 2, ‘Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; how that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.’ Even when they themselves were in the midst of great difficulties and deep poverty, their joy abounded to move them to give generously. They did not allow circumstances to hinder them from giving. Generosity in the midst of poverty!”

I have heard ministries tell people who have bills, to pay off the bills first then give! That sure goes against what Paul was saying here in II Corinthians. In spite of their poverty, the Macedonians found giving joyous and generously gave. They were being obedient, knowing that giving was a ‘well pleasing odor offering.’ Later in this chapter of 2 Corinthians, Paul uses language that described giving as a sweet smell odor offering when it reached God’s nostrils. God was pleased because of it. That is why the act of giving is obedience, because it pleases your Lord and Master.

You may think you do not have to give any more because we no longer live under the law of the Old Testament. However, giving was before the law; so what is your excuse now? Christ did not stop giving after He died and rose again, did He? He sent the Comforter. He still gives to you through the fruit of the spirit. Because of giving to please Him, He rewards us through the treasures we store in the hereafter, not in the here and now. That is why the prosperity doctrine is an abomination; it destroys that act of worth-ship. This doctrine corrodes true giving to the core and goes against everything in scripture. The point is, Christ died, He rose again, and your sins are covered if you are faithing in Him. He did not have to do anything else, but He knew that for us to make it through the here and now, we are going to need the Spirit from Galatians 5:22 to help us grow and get through these trials and afflictions of life, to be more like Him in His likeness. Christ said, as Paul recorded, that Comforter, that Holy Spirit, was only a down payment of what is yet to come. Christ is not here in the flesh any longer, but in the Spirit He is here through The Comforter who envelopes us. From the Spiritual Warfare series in Ephesians 6, we know He surrounds us with the armor that is necessary to get us through life.

As I have already said, we do not give to get. We give out of obedience, knowing that it pleases Him. We are following the example that Christ already began exemplifying why it is important to give. The rewards are in the hereafter, throughout eternity. Christ wants only to bestow blessings and gifts on His faithful creatures, us.

Many people believe through trust and faith in Jesus Christ they will get all these rewards. That is wrong. If trust and faith alone earns rewards, then why did Christ teach the Parable of the Talents in Matthew 25:14? In that parable, a man gave three of his servant's talents, or an amount of money, after which he went to a far country. To paraphrase, the man (Christ) told his servants, ***“Keep living life with what I've given you. See what you can do with the talents given you. When I come back we will see what happens.”*** When the man returned from his journey, the servant that did nothing with his talents had all talents taken from him and given, with extra, to the servants that did something with their talents. This Parable is another example of how Christ will reward us at the judgment seat of Christ when He returns. No matter where you look in scripture, these examples are there. My goal is to show how the New Testament Christians' giving is Christ centered.

I know many Christians like formulas and to be told how much to give. Remember, you cannot give to get into heaven. The only way to get into heaven is through the redeeming work of Christ, Romans 3 makes that very clear. You have to trust and have confidence in His redeeming work. If you do and you turn your life over to Christ and say, *“Now I want to be your disciple. Not on my own terms, but on yours,”* salvation is given to you. It is a gift and there is nothing you can do to obtain this, including giving. If you think giving will get you into heaven, then you fall right back into the Old Testament law of works, which is dead. Not giving, however, will keep you from earning rewards in the hereafter. This includes Christ telling you, ***“Well done, good and faithful servant.”***

To continue with this author,

“Though being poor is often the reason why many of God's people hold on to what they have and excuse themselves from giving, we ought to realize that it is possible for one to be poor and still be generous in giving. They willingly gave as much as they were able. [You see that in] 2 Corinthians 8:3, ‘For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves;’ The churches in Macedonia acted spontaneously and did not wait to be urged and pressed to give. Paul testified that they gave beyond what could have been expected from them or beyond what would have been thought possible in their condition. This kind of giving is similar to that of the widow who by giving her two mites did more than the rich man who gave out of his abundance. The Lord Jesus said in Mark 12:43- 44, ‘. . . Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living.’ Generosity is best measured not by the sum of what was given but by the sacrifice that comes with it. The Macedonian Christians were willing to forego of that little that they had for the sake of others, trusting in the Lord to provide for them.

They were determined to give to help to meet the needs of the others. [You see in] 2 Corinthians 8:4, 'Praying us with much entreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints.' They insisted that Paul should receive their contribution and pass it on to the poor and needy brethren probably in Jerusalem. They have strong interest and intense desire to relieve the needs of others! Generosity comes from a sincere and a pure desire of the heart to give. When you have the genuine concern for the brethren, as constrained by the love of Christ, you will naturally want to give and to give generously. They first gave their own selves to the Lord. [You see that in] 2 Corinthians 8:5, 'And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God.' Their generosity is founded in true piety and on right priority. They first yielded their own selves to the Lord- an act of total surrender of one's life and one's possession to God. Only after they had given themselves unto the Lord, that they gave themselves unto men according to the will of God. Learn that he that does not totally yield himself to the Lord will neither yield his possessions to Him. But he that joyfully gives himself will keep back nothing that the Lord requires from him. And it is only when we give ourselves wholly to God that we are able to sincerely give ourselves and our possessions to others. They generously gave to support the work of the Lord. [In] Philippians 4:10, 'But I rejoiced in the Lord greatly, that now at the last your care of me hath flourished again; wherein ye were also careful, but ye lacked opportunity.' Philippians 4:15-16, 'Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only. For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.'"

These Christians were not one- time givers to God. They gave, "...*once and again unto my necessity.*" It goes on to say in Philippians 4:17, "*Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*" Where is that account being stored? Galatians tells us it is not in a bank account in the here and now, but in the bank account of heaven, where your treasures are supposed to be stored.

"Of all the churches in Macedonia, it seems that the church of Philippi was the most distinguished for its generosity. Paul commended them for their care and concern which obviously included their commitment to support him in the Gospel work, as he mentioned in Philippians 4:18 of 'having received from Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God.'"

Meaning their giving did reach heaven's bank account, God got a sniff of it, and he was well pleased. In addition, their giving really gave Paul two gifts, one for the work of the ministry and one for the needy in Jerusalem.

"Generosity knows no boundaries. They generously gave to the poor brethren in Jerusalem and went out of their way to send Epaphroditus to bring their gift to Paul who was then inside the cold prison in Rome. This is far beyond today's 'Out of sight,

out of mind' attitude pertaining to the manner of giving to support the workers of the Gospel . . . Learning of the generosity of the early church, it would be well to examine ourselves. Have we been generous in our giving? Consider what Paul said in 2 Corinthians 8:7, 'Therefore, as ye abound in everything, in faith, and utterance, and knowledge, and in all diligence, and in your love to us, see that ye abound in this grace also.'"

Here, Paul is referring to the grace of giving. Today we have many people saying, "Well I have faith, I have faith, I have faith" claiming they have knowledge and they love everyone. Remember, however, there is no greater expression of that love for someone, according to Jesus, than your willingness to die for that person. However, most of us will never be in that position. A second opportunity comes by spreading the Word of the Lord taught correctly, so the world can live and grow in the mind of Christ, in His likeness.

This author concludes:

"Generosity is a wonderful blessing, which when acquired, could lead to the receiving of other blessings. 'And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work' (2 Corinthians 9:8). [Work here is 'eragon,' the good employment of the Word.] Remember, God loves a cheerful [or 'hilaros,' in Greek] giver!"

In Galatians 6, Paul is telling them to not forget the grace of giving and be generous or liberal with their giving. Paul also wrote about giving to the Corinthians. Even though they were a different church, he was saying that in the grace of giving remember you are going to sow what you reap. What you reap is not in the here and now, but in the hereafter.

In Galatians 6:6 Paul says, ***"Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things."*** "Communicate," in this verse is "share" in the Greek. Paul is telling them to share all good things with the one that teaches you, just as the Philippians were doing. The Philippian church was sending their offerings by messenger to Paul in prison, without the thought that Paul may never get out. They knew that Paul was a good steward of their gifts, their offerings, and somehow Paul would accomplish what he was meant to do. Verse 7 continues, ***"Be not deceived [or 'lead away from the truth']; God is not mocked [sneered at] for whatsoever a man soweth that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh [meaning in the here and now] shall of the flesh reap corruption [literally, things that perish]; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting."*** That is also what Jesus said; do not store your treasures in the here and now where moth and rust get to it and destroy it causing it to perish, you cannot take it with you.

Verse 9 goes on to explain, ***"And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not."*** Let me take the time to explain this verse completely. Often Bible readers use handy tools like Webster's or a Greek dictionary to understand words or phrases. However, to understand verse 9, we need to look at the everyday Greek

language that the Christians used to communicate with at that time. With that in mind, in the Greek, ‘weary’ literally means ‘to lose heart or courage.’ ‘In well doing’ is translated, ‘in proportional balance acting rightly.’ Lastly, the phrase ‘in due season’ would be read as ‘a fixed and definite time.’ With that understanding, we now know this verse is read: *“And let us not be a coward in proportional balance acting rightly: for in you there is a fixed and definite time we shall reap, if we faint not.”*

This translation agrees with what Jesus said, but not with the prosperity doctrine preached in most churches today. The reaping is coming. God might have you reap a little down here, but most of the reward will be reaped in eternity. Look at the previous verse 8, *“but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting,”* meaning in eternity. For *“we shall reap...”* at the fixed and definite time, which verse 9 says is in the hereafter in eternity, *“if we faint not.”* That means you cannot give to get rich here in this life. Nowhere in God’s Word is that claim made.

Let us examine the word “season.” This word occurs in verses nine and ten in Galatians chapter 6. Verse ten states, *“As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”* What is especially interesting in this verse is that the word “opportunity” is the same Greek word used for “season” in verse 9, although it has been translated differently in English. To read verse ten correctly then, it should be read, *“As we have therefore at a fixed and definite time, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*

Paul and Christ are both saying that we will reap in eternity. That is why it is wrong to think, *“Well, all I have to do is just get into heaven.”* Yes, you have to get there, but you also must hear the words, *“Well done, good and faithful servant.”* Additionally, what are we reaping in eternity? Of course, the assumption is that we are reaping everlasting life, so then verse 9 should be correctly read, *“for at a fixed and definite time the Spirit shall reap in eternity, if we faint not.”*

Remember the context of these verses from verse 9 forward is giving. Verse 8 tells us, *“but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.”* Next to this verse in my Bible I have a note which says, “In eternity all of the highest and best which Christ is, and which He gives to the saints.” This note reminds me that He is planning to give something to the saints. He is analyzing His best rewards and when we get there, He plans to give them to us, but this requires faithfulness. This has nothing to do with salvation and the entrance into heaven, but has everything to do with what happens after we get there. That is why I told you there is no socialism in heaven. Not everything is going to be equal.

I am not telling you to be like an early Christian in the New Testament church and sell everything you have. I am not saying that at all, but you need to have a frame of mind and understand that Christ’s spirit is in you and it is flowing through you. This Spirit is an attribute (*agathosune*) of the fruit, and you should be looking for every opportunity you can, not just once, but repeatedly to please Christ. As I have said before, many people believe there is no giving in the New Testament, but they have only blinded themselves

from the truth. Read in Romans chapter 12:1, ***“I beseech you [or call you to join me] therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice [meaning service and praise], holy [or set apart], acceptable [literally, well pleasing] unto God, which is your reasonable [and divine] service. And be not conformed [or fashioned] to this world: but be ye transformed [changed] by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.”***

Paul continues after verse 2 onto the subject of giving as part of our reasonable and divine service, listing this gift along with the other graces, or gifts. In verse 4, he writes, ***“For as we have many members in one body, and all members have not the same office: So we, being many, are one body in Christ, and every one members one of another. Having then gifts [or graces] differing according to the grace that is given to us, whether prophecy, let us prophesy according to the proportion of faith; Or ministry . . . or he that teacheth, on teaching; Or he that exhorteth, on exhortations: he that giveth, let him do it with simplicity [actually liberally or generously] he that teacheth, on teaching.”*** This verse is showing us that it is Christ who dictates when we receive a grace or gift. Most Christians do want gifts from the Holy Spirit, except when it comes to giving. That one they can wait to receive. Do not be a hypocrite. The gifts are His doing, not ours.

In verse 12-13 Paul explains why we are given these graces. ***“Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.”*** As an example of this, I have told you all along; when you give to this ministry, the purpose is to get the Word of God to the world, but also I designed this ministry after what Paul’s life was like. This ministry not only spreads the Gospel, but it also helps people that are in need. I will give you two illustrations of this. Once, an elderly person needed money for gasoline for their car. This person needed to receive therapy because of a painful accident, but was on a limited income. I do not know if this person ever supported this ministry or not, but somehow found our website and sent in a prayer request about this need. This person did not ask for anything, but when I saw that message, I could not help being moved. After investigating the situation, I decided to make sure this therapy happened and to make sure she had gas in her car to get there. In another situation, I again received a prayer request from a senior citizen in the Midwest. Like the first prayer request, I did not know if this person watched or supported this ministry. The request stated they were also on a very limited income, and their electricity was going to be shut off within the week. Like in the first situation, this ministry also stepped in to assist the person.

Especially for the minister of God’s Word, New Testament giving had two responsibilities, and in today’s world, the same responsibilities exist. A ministry or a church is to; first, get the good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ out to the world, to help the world grow in Jesus Christ. Second, Paul wrote in Galatians 6:10, ***“As we have therefore at a fixed and definite time, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.”*** Paul in this verse was speaking to both minister and saint. Part of this ministries responsibility is to respond if you have a need. Obviously, some requests are analyzed to distinguish between desires and needs, but this ministry

will be the first to line up and ask, “How can we help?” Ministries are responsible for this, because like Christ, before He went to the cross, He also brought the Word of God to the world and He helped those in need as well. We see that when Christ fed the 5,000, in addition to the time He preached and healed. Christ was not going to let the needy leave his presence un nourished.

Remember what Paul said in Galatians 6:9, “***Let us not be weary***” meaning, “***let us not lose heart in proportional balance.***” Paul told the Romans in Chapter 12:1, about our “***reasonable [and divine] service.***” Combining this with Paul’s Galatian letter, we are, “***acting rightly: for at a fixed and definite time we shall reap, if we faint not.***”

I am telling you, do not faint, act rightly, and fulfill your giving responsibilities, as the New Testament church did. Stay away from those that are preaching another gospel, another way of giving to get now. That is damnable heresy. What Christ wants is for you to prepare in the here and now for what He has in store in eternity. If we are faithful throughout the journey here, one day Christ will tell us, “***Well done, good and faithful servant.***”

To be continued . . .

Materialism in the Church

There are two purposes for this chapter as one author will explain.

1) ***“The master is the true owner of our assets,”*** and our lives I would add. He is the creator of all things. He allows us to have assets, and He wants us to use our assets, but they are really His assets just as we are His people. He has ownership of both, and He wants us to be good stewards of what He has given us.

2) ***“Because [we] don’t own these assets, the servants are accountable for them to the master. They will stand before him one day to explain why they invested as they did.”***

In Luke 19, Jesus introduces a Parable in verse 12 by saying, ***“A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.”*** Jesus is speaking of himself here when after His death and resurrection, he returned to heaven saying He would one-day return to us. Verse 13 begins and we learn that He called his ten servants and He gave to them pounds, actually silver, that they were to put to good use for spiritual aspects of the work of Christ. Then he tells us, his servants, to ***“Occupy till I come,”*** meaning to carry on participating in spiritual things as God has called us, which is what Luke 19 in addition to other parts of the gospel records declare. We will answer to the master, and that makes us accountable for how we use the assets He has given to us. Simply putting your tithe in the offering plate or sending it in the mail, does not mean your job is done. The New Testament declares completely the opposite. In fact, your job is not done until we reach eternity. Remember, ***“They will stand before him one day to explain why they invested as they did.”***

In Luke 19 when the master comes back, he wanted an accounting to see what they did with the silver he gave his servants. Not what they did with the silver in worldly business interests, but spiritually. As the author I will share with you has stated, ***“Because we don’t own these assets, the servants are accountable for them to the master.”*** If Christ had no ownership over our assets, then we would not owe Him any accounting. We could do whatever we wanted with them and Christ would not hold you accountable, but that is not what scripture says, and that is the underlying concept of Luke 19:12 through 27. It is important to understand what a good steward is only in our master Christ’s eyes, not anyone else’s.

In today’s church world, there is an unfortunate lack of accountability especially in the last 30 or 40 years, and not just with the leadership, but also with the participants. Many Christians believe that once they give it does not matter what happens with the money. The responsibility is out of their hands, because God sees them as an obedient servant of His with a desire to participate. That is true, but that is only half the equation. The other half is not taught in the church world, and after reading about accountability, some of you

will be in an uncomfortable position because you thought you had giving all figured out.

So with that introduction, let us move forward, to what one particular author writes.

“When Christ walked the earth, religion had been turned into big business in Jerusalem by money changers who made their profits exchanging currency and selling ‘convenience’ animals for sacrifice in the temple. They charged an excessive price and probably engaged in loud haggling that destroyed the climate of worship (John 2:13-17).”

Unfortunately, what we see today is nothing new. This type of business has happened before many times, and as we see even during Christ’s life 2,000 years ago. John 2:13-17 say that Christ went into the temple and was upset at what was happening. The businesses were selling animals for people to sacrifice. They were providing a service, making it convenient so they did not have to bring their own animals to sacrifice.

Go to John chapter 2:13 to read of the event. ***“And the Jews’ passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem, And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves. . . and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money.”*** Christ drove them all out, but before He did that, verse 15 says, ***“And when he had made a scourge [or whip] of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers’ money, and overthrew the tables.”*** These businesses did not have paper currency as we do today, but coin. Imagine those money-changers seeing their coins being spilled out all over the temple floor. Coins have a tendency to roll when they hit the ground. I can see the Jews running and scattering trying to collect their money if they could. My guess is however that Christ made sure, through His whip, that they were not successful. Verse 16 concludes with Christ saying, ***“And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father’s house a house of merchandise.”*** Another gospel records it as ‘a den of thieves.’

This story is found in more than one gospel record. In fact, you can find it in Matthew, Mark, and Luke. Jesus was angry about how the things of God were treated. He was angry that the offerings presented were really an abomination according to “thus saith the Word of the Lord.” Not only were people making a profit off the community of saints, but also the saints allowed that to happen. It was not only the moneychangers’ fault. Yes, there were individuals making those conveniences, but there were individuals also taking advantage of those conveniences by paying money to make it easier on themselves.

“Jesus was outraged that people would see the community of saints as an opportunity to make a profit. After driving the salesmen and their animals out with a whip and overturning the money tables, the strong-armed carpenter from Galilee rebuked the stunned materialists with words that could be heard in the streets, ‘Get thee out of here! How dare you turn my Father’s house into a market.’ (John 2:16). Is Christ any less outraged by materialism in the church today? [No, if anything, He has more of a reason to be angry.] Are we less deserving of His wrath than those two thousand years ago? Will God hesitate to turn the whip on us any more than He did on them? Christ is

jealous for His bride. The church is his, not ours. Those who would exploit the bride of Christ for material ends do so at their own peril. In the 1990's and early 2000's many ministries and churches were rocked by scandals, but it was back in 1987 and 1988 that the public gained an unprecedented look at the inner workings of three of the major Christian television ministries. What happened then still has much to teach us. These scandals may represent the whip of the outraged Son of God disciplining and purging the modern Christian community for our materialism."

You may wonder why this author is discussing church scandal. However, God's Word has a way of pointing out the good and the bad in even the heroes of faith, as a lesson for all of us. For instance, did God really have to include in His Word that Paul was the individual persecuting Christians, and perhaps involved with Stephen's own death? Paul watched Stephen stoned to death only because he was a follower of Jesus Christ. Likewise, could not have Peter's failures been left out? How about Moses' failure at the end of his life when he struck the rock after being told not to? Because of that, Moses did not get to see the Promised Land. In a politically correct world, we want to cover the flaws and hide the negative. However, if seeing failures can instruct you and help you grow, then why not use them as an object lesson?

The religious persons this author writes about are not to be mimicked. Some of you may have participated in their ministries. That is not the point. I am telling you that what they presented as truth was actually false. What they taught was nothing based out of God's Word. Unfortunately, they just adopted and implemented marketing schemes in their ministry under the guise that the bigger their ministry was the more they would get the Word to the world that Jesus saves. To them the end does justify the means. As a result, they twisted God's Word more than ever. Rather than use a whip like Christ did, the only thing that we can use is God's Word as instruction why this is something not to be emulated, mimicked, or copied. We should stay away from these kinds of ministries, because no matter how obedient your service is, you are still responsible and accountable to the master when He returns and asks, *"What did you do with it? Explain to me how you invested in the spiritual aspect of what I have given you, because I control it, I own it, and while I was gone I left it to you to be a good steward of what I left you in charge of."* No one will escape accountability for those that call themselves a faithful Christian. Not only will rewards happen at the judgment seat of Christ, but also accountability. Just as there is accountability in the business world today, Christians need to realize they are accountable to Christ, even if they would claim, "I am just a man." However, we all have access to Christ if we fall short. I fall short daily, but Christ gets me on back on my feet. I am a sinner saved by grace, just as you are also a sinner saved by grace. I am not passing judgment on any person's relationship with Christ. I am however passing judgment based on what I teach you from God's Word. That is my requirement as a person in a leadership position.

To return to this author:

"In each of the three scandals I'm about to refer to, I believe the Christian leaders involved were originally sincere and honestly devoted to their Lord. But that does not

take away from the force of what happened to them or the seriousness of the wrong thinking that characterized their lives and ministries. If their attitudes and actions were no longer a part of the Christian landscape today I would gladly let the scandals rest. Unfortunately, the same seeds of self-destruction that took them down are still being widely planted today.”

Like this author, I do not mean to use these individuals as an example in order to mistreat them, but only to use them as a good object lesson. I hope that some of them have recovered and now walk with Christ again. In fact, I know after spending some time in jail, at least one of them is trying to carry on a ministry. However, even if their actions were not intentional, it was still their responsibility to act correctly in their position. Those acting in authority in a ministry will be judged by a worldly court, not to mention a heavenly court. Also, their actions put a black eye, or negative view, on sincere ministries, churches, and pastors because the outside world wants to put us all into the same group, saying if this one is like that then that one must be the same. In actuality, there are good ministries and churches, so not everyone should be looked at the same. Unfortunately, many ministries continue to twist scripture to justify their prosperity doctrine nonsense. This is far worse and far more self-destructive and as a result allows so much more criticism by Christians and non-Christians alike.

God wants you to give, and God wants you to be accountable and responsible to whom you give to. Just thinking that you do not give, because you do not know who to trust will not change your responsibility. If you do not know if someone is trustworthy, you can pray the Spirit of God will lead you to an understanding, which means you may ultimately attend another location that teaches the verified Word of God.

“For years, the PTL network headed by Jim and Tammy Faye Bakker, maintained a superficial wealth-oriented emphasis, replete with heavy makeup, large flashy jewelry, expensive clothes and frequent mention of trips to exotic places. The Bakkers had their lavish homes, limousines, and endless fringe benefits from viewer contributions, including heated and air-conditioned doghouses and chandeliers in their walk-in closets. Yet all the while, they made frequent pleas, sometimes in tears: ‘Please send more money for our ministry.’ The message was evangelical, but the life styles and values were Hollywood- a baptized Hollywood dressed in a Sunday suit. Many observers couldn’t help but believe that beneath the surface of this ego-feeding opulence and showiness was a serious spiritual and moral erosion just waiting to be revealed. It was revealed, in a story involving adultery, payoffs, addictions, power struggles, and opulence even beyond what was imagined. All this is the stuff which soap operas are made, but this time the soap opera was sponsored and funded by the evangelical community, which was pouring \$100 million a year into the PTL network, not including revenues from the Heritage Theme Park, ‘a Christian Disneyland,’ and Tammy Faye’s books and records.”

Reading what this author has written may make you wonder if this really happened, so let me tell you a story. While I was in my late teens, PTL was part of the ministry I belonged to at the time and I became what they called back then a PTL counselor. I knew all the

PTL counselors, there were about 20, and I was one of the youngest ones. Since most of the people there were older than me, probably 40 years old and older, they were kind of amused that I was there and participating and they became friendly with me and wanted to talk to me. As a result, I got to know all these people and their reasons for being there. I also remember PTL having a telethon at one time. They were raising money using threats, but of course never using God's Word to justify any of it, and the prosperity gospel or doctrine was profound. During this telethon, they were asking for \$1,000 pledges at the time and everything leading up to that appeal for the \$1,000 pledge was how God was going to bless you with riches in the here and now. Of course, even then, I wanted to know where in the Bible this was, but at the time, I just took their word for it. By the way, that doctrine is so much more self-destructive today, because now ministries use the Word of God, but usually out of context twisting scripture, and of course, gullible Christians just take it as fact.

However, during this telethon, there was a lady sitting next to me who was about 40. It struck me odd that she made this \$1,000 faith pledge, and just looked at the benefit that was promised for giving money. Even though she made the pledge for that \$1000, she was struggling. I have no doubt she wanted to participate, even though she probably did not have \$100 to her name. Nonetheless, she put a faith pledge out there for \$1,000, not even concerned about why she was giving the money. The point of this story is, unless you twist scripture, you cannot support her action anywhere in God's Word. The goal of the telethon was to reach \$50,000 in \$1,000 pledges. Each night, when the \$50,000 in pledges was not reached the person conducting the marathon telethon, would rip up all the pledges, though I do not know what he planned to do after that. The next night he ripped up all the pledges again and pretty much the program ended in failure. Eventually, a pastor then took over the ministry that some of you are familiar with, and that is where the Festival of Faith started.

What PTL did was nothing new, but the individuals in places of leadership will be responsible for the false teaching and for the illusion they created about why you should give so you can find some benefit here and now. They treated giving in a worldly sense, as some investment opportunity, but if that was the case, the apostles were failures, since none of them became rich while spreading the message of the Good News of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

If you still wonder what was wrong with what the Bakker's did, I will tell you. Not only did their prosperity doctrine show where their heart was at, Jim Bakker defrauded the investors, especially in Heritage Square while he was "living it up" all in the name of God.

Whether they were rich or not is not the point. God had made them rich for a purpose, which was to be a funnel, not to be someone that hoards treasures here on this earth. Show me anywhere in scripture where Christ or the apostles instruct us to hoard our riches on earth. That is why so many concentrate on the Old Testament to know how much to give. Old Testament giving specified what to give, but Jesus changed the equation when he stated, *"lay not your treasures here on earth but lay up for*

yourselves.” Remember, He wants you to have treasure, just not here. We cannot take earthly treasures with us, but these treasures are accumulating in eternity.

To continue:

“Meanwhile, television evangelist Oral Roberts stepped into the show, defending the Bakkers, telling the Christian public to ‘send more money than ever to PTL,’ and rebuking a third television evangelist for supposedly plotting a takeover of PTL. (Interestingly when Oral Roberts came on television to defend Jim Bakker, a thunderstorm suddenly cut off the telecast. Was God trying to get a word in edgewise?) The man who revealed Jim Bakker’s exploits to the Assembly of God officials was well-known television evangelist Jimmy Swaggart. This was significant for several reasons, including the fact that a year earlier Swaggart had similarly exposed prominent New Orleans pastor and television evangelist Martin Gorman, who admitted to one adulterous affair but filed a lawsuit against Swaggart for accusing him of other immoral relationships (this became an important factor later in the story). Swaggart, accused of trying to eliminate his television competitors and take over the PTL empire, publicly declared Bakker’s perversions and stated, ‘Jim Bakker is a cancer on the body of Christ.’ Only days before his questionable intervention in this scandal, Oral Roberts had received a \$1.3 million gift from a wealthy dog racer (his fortune made in the same gambling arena that Roberts publicly opposed for years). This strange benefactor then told the press that Roberts ‘needs psychiatric help.’ The ‘life saving’ \$1.3 million from the dog racer climaxed what might be the most bizarre fund-raising attempt in television history (which is no small claim). Oral Roberts had publicly announced that God had told him He would take his life unless by a certain date he could raise \$8 million for a medical scholarship program.

The implications of this fund-raising scenario were far-reaching. As a world without Christ looked on, God was cast in the role of a ruthless money-loving gangland figure, who was it ‘works,’ holding Oral Roberts for ransom and threatening to kill him if someone didn’t cough up the dough. A Celestial Loan Shark, God the Father (or was it the Godfather?) was portrayed as even more capricious and vindictive than the Mafia, since Oral Roberts, presumably, was not a double-crossing weasel, but one of God’s faithful ‘boys,’ one of his own gang! The only thing that can be said for this fund-raising technique is that, unfortunately, it worked. And that is the scariest thing of all; for in a materialistic system, if it ‘works,’ if it makes money, then it is okay. Unfortunately, Oral Roberts story did not end there. Less than a year later, Roberts called off the medical scholarship program he had been ready to die for. Apparently, either God or Oral had changed his mind. After the bad publicity this generated, Oral- or was it God?- changed his mind once again and said that God had called eighty thousand followers to give \$100 each to raise the \$8 million per year the program required. Finances eventually got so bad that Roberts had to sell his \$3.25 million Beverly Hills mansion. Meanwhile, after receiving an anonymous tip, former pastor and television evangelist Martin Gorman, still outraged at Swaggart for exposing his adultery, hired a private detective to follow him. Swaggart, his castigation of Jim Bakker’s perversions was still fresh in the public mind, was then confronted with

pictures of himself with a prostitute.”

These are leaders in the church world, supposedly men of God, leading congregations. I am not saying they must be flawless, or they should not sin, and I am not saying we are their judges. However, I am evaluating them based on God’s Word and declaring how wrong their actions were. I am reacting to their actions as Christ would, but unfortunately, we live in a passive generation where everything has to be politically correct; God help us if we offend anyone. When it comes to the Christian world, many believe we should not go against the body of Christ. Even though these church leaders may have begun with good intentions, when their leadership went wrong as it did, they were no longer the body of Christ. Their actions led to the destruction of those ministries, and I have a dislike for anyone that comes in the name of the Lord with teaching not based or verified in God’s Word. In that case, it is Christ-like to come against them, just as Jesus became so angry with the moneychangers in the temple. Some may think Jesus’ actions were not very kind or friendly either. The story in John 2:13 showed that it is obvious how Christ feels when we default on our responsibility to be a good steward. When we default on our responsibility and drift away from what the Word of God instructs, how are we supposed to carry out that responsibility in that stewardship position? Do you think that pleases Him and He wants their actions hidden? Christ made their actions known.

As an example, in the book of Acts, some disciples lied while under the stewardship of possessions and died on the spot. They said they gave everything when they had not. Likewise, these church leaders will answer for choosing to have chandeliers in their closets or air-conditioned doghouses. They will be accountable, because their actions went way beyond having riches. These three ministries were hypocritical, and Jimmy Swaggart was the worst of hypocrites for accusing a fellow minister of a sin that he was guilty of as well. These ministries were very competitive and wanted to become the biggest and the best according to a worldly standard. Because of that, they became worldly corporations disguised as churches and ministries pretending to be Christians. Just as this author has stated, I do not believe these ministries started out worldly and hypocritical, but possessions have a way of taking over if you forget they are not yours in the first place; they are God’s, He has given them to you.

[When Swaggart was caught] *“Seeming to express genuine repentance, yet defying his denomination’s attempt at discipline, Swaggart was back in television ministry only three months later. (Oral Roberts assured the public that he had- over the phone-healed Swaggart of his lust problem.) By this time it was hard to tell the difference between ministries and mini-series. To those who understand the ingredients of unchecked materialism, such scandals were predictable, if not inevitable, long before they surfaced.”*

My question upon reading the above is, why not go to Christ for that kind of healing instead of someone that sees a 700-foot Jesus? In addition, the word “unchecked” is important here. Many people think that the government should be the checking source for what a church or ministry can or cannot have, but that is not how it works in true New

Testament giving. These ministries grew to the point of destruction, but it could have been avoided if they had not let their own egos twist scripture to justify their illegal actions. Just like in the temple, if Jesus were here today, he would walk through their doors, turn their tables upside down, pour out their offering bags, and whip them until they ran for their lives. In a sense, we have lost that kind of fire and brimstone understanding and expectation from everyone that is part of a ministry. In those three ministries, everyone was responsible for what was going on, including the contributors, because as a contributor, you are responsible for what you do with your assets. This responsibility takes time, concern, and effort, the same as it did for givers in the Bible. They might have had to travel a distance to Jerusalem to make their offering in the temple area, but look how convenient the moneychangers made it for them. If they did not look for the shortcuts, they could have put those moneychangers out of business.

As part of this ministry, many of you now give tithes with offerings in addition to your tithes, and that is wonderful. Your act of obedience will gain you rewards, laying up treasures for yourselves in heaven, by participating in the here and now for the purpose of taking the Word to a world that is lost. That is wonderful. You cannot just give your tithe anywhere, and hope that person does not misuse it. Some of you have heard that as long as you give it is no concern of yours if that person dumps the money in the ocean, but that is dead wrong. Remember, Jesus not only chased away the moneychangers, He also chased away the animals and people making those purchases. No one was excused.

This author goes on to say:

“The combination of human depravity and the staggering financial incomes and lack of accountability of these ministries spelled nothing but temptation and could produce nothing but disaster. . . The point is that not all media ministries are bad. Christian publishing is a media ministry with its own share of spiritual accomplishments and scandals. But without it . . . you wouldn’t even have a Bible. There are many fine ministries in television and radio, as well. In no way do I intend to lump them all together or to throw out the good with the bad. Still a fundamental question remains. Of the most obviously shallow, superficial, egocentric, and materialistic ‘ministries,’ many of which are still in business, we must ask, ‘Why did the Christian community support them in the first place? And why do we continue to support them?’ Part of the answer may be that there are many non-Christian contributors trying to ‘buy into’ salvation as one might buy into a real estate deal. But the great majority are at least professing Christians. This forces us to a sobering conclusion- namely, that it is not that these people are superficial and materialistic and we are not. It is that we too are superficial and materialistic and they are giving us precisely what we want. After all, it’s primarily donations by Christians that subsidize this rampant materialism. If supporters would refuse to tolerate wrongful behavior, these ministries would cease to exist, because the money would dry up.”

Actually, I think the supporters were led to believe that what they were hearing about giving was the truth. So few churches and ministries teach giving correctly, they had nothing to compare it to. I also, think there are other reasons, including greed, which we

see today in the prosperity doctrine. We want what they have, and giving is the way to get it. That is why these ministries flash around their riches, so it can lure us into believing that they got it by doing exactly what they are telling us to do. Understand, their behavior was not necessarily wrong, but their teaching was, because of its focus.

Have you ever heard the saying “there’s a sucker born every minute”? It is never truer than in the Christian world, because of the faith put in the minister and what he is teaching. Most ministers read about half a verse and then spend the next two hours selling you some snake oil, and you are convinced that snake oil will turn into riches based on four or five words of a verse without verifying God’s Word yourself. Most church leadership and pastors do not teach the complete Word of God concerning giving, so there is nothing for the church members to verify, to know if what is taught is right or wrong. How to give correctly and stewardship for the most part are not taught. Jesus made it quite clear; when He returns He is going to be a harsh master if you are not a good steward. Do not just give to any ministry. Even if you have good intentions, that is only half the equation. There must be accountability as well.

“Why haven’t people seen through these organizations and invested their money, time, and prayers instead in the many faithful servants of God who elevate Christ’s name rather than their own? ‘But I don’t support such ministries and I never have,’ someone may say. Scripture does not let us off so easily. There is one body of Christ and we are all members of it. I can’t separate myself from the rest of the Church. I must ask how is my life resisting materialism in the Church rather than contributing to it? How am I providing a model that’s a clear alternative to materialism undermine the integrity of the Christian community?”

Here it is important to remember that the church is “out called ones,” not a building, or a ministry on TV. It is people “out called” to serve Him in the position of being a good servant, accountable not only for my life but for the assets He has given me to be accountable for. One way we are accountable is through seeking out the truth. If you do not believe I am speaking the truth to you, then it is your responsibility to seek it elsewhere. You have my full blessing to leave if you do not think I present you the truth of what God’s Word says. But if you go, you are to go with the right attitude, seeking something that makes God’s Word clearer to you.

“Because we allowed (at best) and endorsed (at worse) a false or superficial form of Christian faith, people without Christ judge the church by the three-ring circus they see on television and walk away with one or two responses. Either they feel worse (‘Obviously these Christians don’t have the answer, and I was hoping that they did because I really need an answer’), or they feel better (‘Just as I suspected, they’re all a bunch of hypocrites anyway, and I should feel fine because I’m as good as or better than they are’). Either way, the Church’s folly is the world’s loss.

The only thing worth counterfeiting is what’s valuable. People make counterfeit currency and jewels, not counterfeit bottle caps or garbage. Because the truth of the

gospel is priceless, we should expect it to be continuously counterfeited. Bank employees are taught to identify counterfeit bills by handling the real thing- not by studying all the possible counterfeits. If you're not acquainted with the original, you can easily be deceived by an imitation. But once you're familiar with the genuine article, you will be able to spot a counterfeit. Still, no matter how many counterfeit bills someone might run across, he should never conclude, 'There's no such thing as real money.' What the world needs is a genuine gospel, lived and proclaimed by a genuine Church. Then it will reveal the counterfeits for what they are."

In other words, if you are not acquainted with what God's Word says about your accountability as a good steward, then it is your responsibility to seek out the truth. There are plenty of counterfeits in the world, but do not eliminate the currency, as this author says, or God's Word in this case. Know how to spot the real Word of God and do not eliminate giving, because you may have been fooled in the past or you find you have not been taught the truth. Do not stop giving. Seek out a ministry or church that provides the truth with the right heart.

At the beginning of this chapter, John 2:15 told us Christ made "**a scourge of small cords,**" He drove them all out of the temple; the moneychangers, animals, and people interested in the shortcuts to giving. We do not own the assets, and as servants, we are accountable for them to the master; no shortcuts are allowed. We will stand before Him one day to explain why we invested as we did, just as they will stand who are trying to obtain shortcuts from the moneychangers. Christ will ask, "Why didn't you do what was instructed for you to do to present your offering? Why did you create a shortcut?" In this modern age, it is your responsibility to seek out the truth. Know who is presenting to you the truth and give to those ministries and churches so the Word will allow others to grow in the body of Christ, increasing every day in the knowledge of His Word.

I want to bring accountability back to the ones that receive the gifts, and also to the ones that give the gifts. No one is excluded.

To be continued. . .

Two Masters on Giving

Matthew 6:24 reads, ***“No man can serve two masters for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other.”*** The two masters Jesus is referring to is revealed at the end of the verse, ***“Ye cannot serve God and mammon.”***

As I have pointed out in past chapters, no matter what you think or how hard you try, you cannot keep your priorities on God and serve mammon at the same time. Your connection with Him has to remain the priority or you can find yourself disconnected and slipping back into old ways. Those old ways are whatever hinders your progress in the journey or in the race. Whatever they are for you, you have to answer those questions yourself and work out your salvation with fear and trembling. But one thing is for sure, Christ says when it comes to giving, nothing else in your life should take more of a priority. Christ knows better, and knows the pit we will fall into if we try to change our priorities.

Matthew 6:24 begins, ***“No man can serve two masters.”*** It finishes by describing those masters, ***“God and mammon.”*** In reference to what this chapter says in verse 19, Christ is referring to money and possessions, so if what drives you is possessions and money, they have become your new god.

Now that I have your attention, let me continue sharing with you what another author says:

“Having already spoken of two treasuries and two perspectives, Jesus now speaks of two masters. He says that although we might have both God and money, we cannot serve both God and money. I might have two jobs, three sisters, or five friends, but only one spouse. Some relationships by their very nature are exclusive. The most basic of these is our relationship with God. There’s a throne in each life only big enough for one. Christ may be on that throne. Money may be on that throne. But both cannot occupy that throne.

Mammon is a false god. It is antichrist in the true meaning of the word. The Greek preposition and title does not fundamentally mean ‘against’ but ‘instead of.’ Hence, antichrist is not just ‘one who is against Christ’ but ‘one who is a substitute for Christ.’ When He named it Mammon, Christ personified money to portray its danger. Mammon is a god-substitute, a false messiah. . . Only when we gain an eternal perspective will we eagerly follow our Lord’s command to devote our brief lives on earth to the pursuit of eternal treasure.

Are you investing in the right treasury? Are you adopting the right perspective? Are you serving the right master? There’s nothing wrong with having money. We need it to live on while we’re still in this foreign land away from home, and God graciously

provides it for us all. Still, we must understand its limits. Like Confederate money near the end of the Civil War, it's only good for a very short period of time, and that time is running out. It will be worthless once we get home. We're here on earth on a short-term visa. One day soon it's going to expire. Jesus gave us a choice- a life wasted in the pursuit of wealth on earth, or a life invested in the pursuit of wealth in heaven."

You hear often that we should prepare for economic disaster our country, the United States of America. There are businesses that survive on urgency, on getting prepared just in case disaster strikes. For instance, you will hear talk about a food crisis and that we should store away food. I have nothing against that. Everybody probably should have an emergency kit. However, even though I do not live in fear, there is nothing wrong with being prepared, just do not make it a priority of your life. We are still to lean on Him, He will provide. Remember the remainder of the verses in that Matthew 6 tell us how He will provide and the promises that go with that provision.

Are you preparing for eternity? Those who are not in Christ are in true disaster, what destruction, what a waste of a life that God has given. Those who are Christians, who understand salvation comes by Christ and Christ only, live temporarily on the dot of the here and now. Sadly, many are not so sure how to prepare for the future, because they have never been taught how to prepare for the future, to live for eternity, not just now. They are not preparing themselves. Christ wants you to prepare. He says, ***"lay up treasures for yourself"*** in Matthew 6. Consequently, laying up those treasures will benefit individuals here and now on this dot called earth, hopefully through giving to ministries that teach the Word of God.

Because we cannot see the next eternal stage of our life, understanding that one day our life here will end, we do not even follow through with the simple instructions Christ gave that we can prepare for our existence in eternity by what we do here. Most of us do not want to let go, we want mammon to control us. We like what it produces, because the pursuit of mammon gives most of us a reason to get up in the morning. Like this author says, which I agree with, there is nothing wrong with money. Where people run into problems is how they treat it, how they use it, and how they neglect to consider what the Lord wants you to do here and now with your money to prepare for eternity.

In fact, because of this Giving Series, there have been people leave this ministry because they refuse to believe that what I am saying is true. Listen, I am not the one saying this, Christ is. I just read to you in Matthew 6:24, ***"No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."*** Christ is referring treasures, possessions, money.

This author continues:

"Every heartbeat brings us one moment closer to eternity. Every day, the person whose treasure is on earth is headed away from his treasure. Every day, the person whose

treasure is in heaven is headed toward his treasure. Whoever spends his life heading away from his treasure has reason to despair. Whoever spends his life headed toward his treasure has a reason to rejoice. Where is your treasure? Are you heading toward it or away from it? Do you have reason to despair or reason to rejoice? It's time to start reconsidering your treasure. Only when we gain an eternal perspective we will eagerly follow our Lord's command to devote our brief lives on earth to the pursuit of eternal treasure. An ancient story goes like this: a slave traveled with his master to Bagdad. Early one morning, while milling through the marketplace, the slave sees Death in human form. Death gives him a threatening look. The slave recoils in terror, convinced that death intends to take him that day. The slave runs to his master and says, 'Help me. I have seen Death and his threatening look tells me he intends to take my life this very day. I must escape him. Please, master, let me leave now and flee on camel so that by tonight I can reach Samara, where Death cannot find me.' His master agrees, and the terrified servant rides like the wind for the fifteen-hour journey to Samara. A few hours later, the master sees Death among the throngs in Bagdad. He boldly approaches Death and asks him, 'Why did you give my servant a threatening look?' 'That was not a threatening look,' Death replies, 'that was a look of surprise. You see, I was amazed to see your servant today in Bagdad for I have an appointment with him tonight in Samara.' While the story's imagery is problematic (it's our righteous Master, not Death, who has the power to call us home at his appointed time), the moral is on target. The time of our death is unknown. The way of our death is unpredictable. But the fact of our death is inescapable. The statistics are unwavering, 100 percent of those who are born die."

Well, I do not necessarily agree with the author here. If we are truly living in the last days, for those of us here who hear the last trump, then death is escapable. Death is not escapable if you are around during the last trump and you do not want to see God's Word that reveals His son, His only begotten Son, Jesus Christ, for whom He is. However, if you recognize Christ for whom He is, how exciting and wonderful for those of us still alive when this happen.

Additionally, 100 percent of those born have not died. We know of at least two that did not; Enoch and Elijah, and there are possibly many during the last trump that will never see death, so, the number is not 100 percent, but I understand what this author is trying to say.

"We may spend our lives running from death and denying death, but that won't stop death from coming at its appointed time. 'No man has power over the wind to contain it; so no one has power over the day of his death' (Ecclesiastes 8:8). Talking about death won't bring it a moment sooner. But it will give us opportunity to prepare for what lies ahead. If life's greatest certainty is death, wouldn't it be foolish not to prepare for what lies beyond this life? Any life that leaves us unprepared for death is a wasted life. What does this have to do with our attitude towards money and possessions? Without a doubt the single greatest contributor to our inability to see money and possessions in their true light is our persistent failure to see our present lives through the lens of eternity."

A startling thing has happened among Western Christians. Many of us habitually think and act as if there were no eternity- or as if what we do in this present life has no eternal consequences. How many sermons about heaven or hell have most of us heard lately? How many modern gospel booklets even mention the words heaven or hell? The trend is to focus on our present circumstances instead of our eternal future. . . In those rare times when we do seriously consider the afterlife, it seems strange or dreamlike, so otherworldly as to be unreal. So we come back to ‘reality’- our present lives and possessions that we can see, hear, touch, feel and taste. Things are real, now is real. So we return to the present business of the day, that which is immediately relevant, those all-important matters of the present. These might include what’s happening in Hollywood, on Wall Street, in Washington or London, or the NFL or NBA; or what new self-help technique can make us beautiful or happy; or how can we decorate our house, or what kind of car we want to buy; or where we can get a low interest loan. We live as if these shadowlands were the real world, the ultimate reality. But Scripture tells us they are not. Our devotion to the newspaper and neglect of the Bible is the ultimate testimony to our interest in the short-range over the long range. We fail to ask how expensive clothes, cruises, face-lifts, breast implants, and liposuctions will serve eternal purposes. Such questions are fit for theologians and pious old ladies, perhaps but not for us- which would be true enough if only theologians or old ladies died, met their Maker, and spent eternity somewhere. Being oblivious to eternity leaves us experts in the trivial and novices in the significant. We can name that tune, name that starting lineup, name that actor’s movie debut, and detail the differences between computers or four-wheel drives. None of this is wrong, of course, but it’s certainly revealing when we consider that most Christians, let alone the general public, do not even have an accurate picture of what the Bible says will happen to us after we die.”

Stop to think about that for a moment. Ask yourself, what will happen to us after we die? If you are a Christian, you probably will drive those thoughts in a different direction, hopefully, coming from scripture. If you are not a Christian, God knows what you will think. Some believe there is no afterlife at all. Some believe it does not matter; you will automatically go into the next existence, whatever that is. How many of you have asked yourself, whether Christian or not, what the Bible say about death? What happens to us after we die? Does the Bible tell us what eternity has in store for us? Do the research to find out. That would be a good exercise for some of you.

Christians are not taught to think this way and thank God, you are not tested to get into eternity, because salvation comes through Jesus Christ, this free gift of grace that He provided. Entering eternity or heaven is nothing that we do on our own merit. It is through Jesus Christ. It is recognizing that only through Him we get in, because He paid the price for us on that cross with His precious blood.

There was a period called the Dark Ages in world history about 1300 to 1400 years ago, but I see this present age, as far as Christian knowledge is concerned, very much like that time. I am not talking about secular knowledge; I am talking about Christian knowledge. Too many Christians are still in the dark ages about what scripture says, and I am trying

to change that as fast as I can through God's Word.

“We major in the momentary and minor in the momentous. What does God have to say about our lives here? He says this life is so brief that we are like grass that grows up in the morning and wilts in the afternoon (Isaiah 40:6-8).”

Let us read what it says in Isaiah 40:6. ***“The voice said, Cry. And he said, What shall I cry? All flesh is grass [compared to eternity, which is immeasurable], and all the goodness thereof is as the flower of the field: The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: because the spirit of the LORD bloweth upon it: surely the people is grass.”*** In other words, “here today, gone tomorrow” as they would say today. Verse 8 continues, ***“The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”*** Now look at this verse with a different perspective, one we have already used, ***“The grass withereth”*** could also be read ***“The earth [this dot of the here and now] withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.”*** Meaning, eventually we will all be non-existent on this planet, but the Word of God carries on forever. The people on that line, which symbolizes eternity in the graph from earlier chapters, are the people that are going to live forever, because they took the Word of God and started preparing for that line of eternity.

Let us continue:

“When my friend . . . discovered that she had only a short time to live, she told me of radical changes in her perspective. ‘The most striking thing that’s happened,’ she said, ‘is that I found myself totally uninterested in all the conversations about material things. Things used to matter to me, but now I find my thoughts are never on possessions, but always on Christ and people. I consider it a privilege that I can live each day knowing I will die soon. What a difference it makes!’”

Now the person the author is referring to was older when she came to that perspective, and because she knew her time was short, her priorities changed. She started preparing, even though she probably should have prepared a lot sooner toward that line of eternity. The things of this world were no longer a concern for this person. As I have said many times, and it is worth repeating, you do not see a hearse towing a moving truck to bury your things with you. Those things become worthless when buried in the ground.

David had that same eternal perspective, although he did lose it on occasion. In Psalms 39, Samuel anointed David. At the time, he was still very young, about 22 or 23 years old. Although most people do not begin thinking about eternity until they are older, David was just the opposite; he was already concerned about the end of his life. In Psalms 39:4 David writes, ***“LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days [or, “how long am I going to live and how will it end?”], what it is; that I may know how frail I am.”*** Literally, in the Hebrew, David is asking, ***“what time I have here.”*** Before David allowed the pressures of life, the temptations of life, the distractions of life, and the responsibilities of being king get to him, was more concerned about the things of the Lord. He wanted to know how much time he had here to spend serving the Lord. That

is why he could go into the camp of the Philistines and call out Goliath.

You know most people do not notice this, but David showed such trust, confidence, and faith in his Lord. Even though his brothers and fellow countrymen were cowards and did not want to face the enemy, the Philistines, and one in particular, Goliath, David pretty much said, "Let me at him." If you wonder why, look at the story in 1st Samuel Chapter 16 and 17. Remember, David was not king yet, he was just a young man, and this incident between David and Goliath came after Samuel anoints David. Because of Samuel's anointing, David had faith that he would return from his meeting with Goliath to be king. David trusted someday he would be king, and he would not die in the battlefield by the hands of the enemy, in this case Goliath and the Philistines, without becoming king. What trust and confidence, what faith if you think about it. Sometimes that is overlooked in the story. In a sense what David was proclaiming, *"I'm not going to die. There is no chance of it. It is not my time."*

In Psalms 39, David was concerned about the length of his days, what was going to happen in that length of time, and how long it was going to last. He is full of vigor and faith at this point of his life. He was ready to serve God. Then all the disappointments, the distractions, the temptations happen, and I am sure even possessions took their toll. David's life was like a roller coaster ride, up and down. Thank God he knew where his salvation came from when he did sin and said, *"Unto thee oh God I have sinned."* Even though the ramifications would affect mankind and himself, he was concerned more about how it affected God, and he wanted to know this at a very young age.

There are not many young people like David even concerned about the length of days they will have in this life and what they can do for God. Most of us have all these dreams and visions that are earthly bound and no use in heaven. I am not saying it is wrong. I am saying that God's Word tells us not to make earthly things your priority. Make Christ your priority in all things. You cannot serve things and serve Him. Those are Christ's words, not mine.

David goes on to say in Psalm 39:5 ***"Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth [a small napkin] and mine age is as nothing before thee [or 'here today, gone tomorrow']:*** ***verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity."*** Some translations say "as vapor, or as a breath." We see that in James 4:14, ***"Whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapour that appeareth for a little time and then vanisheth away."*** This verse is saying the same thing David said in Psalm 39 and Isaiah when he used the illustration of the grass.

Men of God, women of God, and children of God that are concerned with the time that you have here and what you do for the Lord during that time, will get God's attention. It demonstrates among other things your concern and preparation for the next life, the life on that line of eternity. David as a young man was already thinking about eternity when he wrote in Psalm 39:6, ***"Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them."***

Think of all you strive for, work hard for to achieve, to obtain, but once you are dead and gone, then what? You will have regrets once you get over there saying, *“You know what? Those things could have been put to use in better ways that was pleasing unto Him and benefited me in the eternal hereafter.”*

When you understand that, you understand the true prosperity doctrine. What Matthew 6:20 tells us about **“laying up for yourselves,”** is the prosperity, and those verses do not talk about prosperity in the here and now. Again, there is nothing wrong if God decides to make you rich. Obviously, He has His reasons. He must trust you to be a funnel with those riches for His purposes. There is nothing wrong with having things, just do not let them control you; do not let them dictate your every move. Do not let them become your passion. Let the things of God here and in eternity be your priority. Those things you can already start working on here and now. Let that be your goal and objective, to store up your treasures in heaven. Just think about it. Many talk about sharing their wealth. Storing in eternity by giving to ministries that spread the Word of God is sharing the wealth of the knowledge of God’s riches of His Word to others. There is social justice in eternity, but not the kind spoken of in the world today. Social justice comes through sharing the wealth of God’s Word.

This ministry is spreading the Word of God to the world. If you want to be part of that, start volunteering your services here. If you are not able to volunteer, then figure out what you can do to help with the things that we need and perhaps give a few extra dollars in giving so you can participate that way. You could also help in areas where others maybe do not have the necessary knowledge or ability. Perhaps there is an invalid and in a convalescent home somewhere, who has a desire to support but they have a limited income. Find a way to help them. There is something for everyone in the body for Christ. You just have to find where you can be best put to use. Some of you have the ability to make money, put that to good use. Obviously, God gave you that gift. No one should say, *“Well I don’t know what to do.”* Find a way to get the Word to the world.

Let us return to Psalm 39:6. **“Surely every man walketh in a vain show: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up [“riches” is not in the original] and knoweth not who shall gather them.”** When your life comes to an end, what treasures could have been put to use for God’s purposes? Those treasures would not only have been an eternal benefit to others, but also our reward in eternity. Look at what was missed because you did not want to prepare and participate. Prepare for eternity by participating now.

Even if you cannot envision eternity, can you envision that the Lord Jesus existed? Then, trust and faith in the Lord. Can you believe what He says in Matthew 6 to be true? If you can, then what is your excuse for not participating? Why not go all the way and say, *“You know what? I’m going to be obedient to His command and start following through. If I can trust and faith that He existed and His Word is true, then why not faith and believe, and be obedient concerning my money and possessions and what He told me to do with them.”*

There are so many excuses mankind creates to avoid giving. What a sad state to be in. Let

me tell you right now, when you do not want to give, you expose the real truth about who you are in Christ and what He means to you. Much in our lives can be mimicked. You can say the right things or you can act the right way, but you cannot mimic giving. Giving shows your true understanding of what Christ wants you to do with your money and possessions. You will be exposed if you are not a giver as someone who serves mammon and not God.

Psalm 39:7 is where David refocuses his priorities by saying, ***“And now, LORD, what wait I for? My hope in thee.”*** David starts thinking about his lifespan, and what he is to do with it. You can see it just oozing out of the scripture, when he brings up the vain show and how man is disquieted about their vanity and what it produces. David says, *“What am I waiting for? This could happen to me also. It’s not a good thing.”* It is at this point he refocuses and puts his eyes on his Lord and declares, ***“My hope in thee, not in the riches, not what gets heaped up, not what people try to accomplish in this dot called earth.”*** David refocuses his attention in the Lord. We have a lot to hope for, we have a lot to live for, we have a lot to prepare for, and we have a lot to accomplish.

Let me conclude here:

“Because this life is so brief, we might easily conclude its inconsequential. Our lives may seem like pebbles dropped in a pond. They create ripples for a moment, tiny wrinkles that smooth out, then are gone forever. Abandoned tombstones with names no one remembers. What do you know about your great-grandfather? What will your great-grandchildren know about you? Our brief stay here may seem unimportant, but nothing could be further from the truth. The Bible tells us that although others may not remember us or care what our lives here have been; God will remember perfectly and cares very much- so much that the door of eternity swings on the hinges of our present lives. The Bible tells us that this life lays the foundation upon which eternal life is built. Eternity will hold for us what we have invested there during our life on earth. Scripture makes clear that the one central business of this life is to prepare for the next.”

You can prepare for the next life by being involved in the here and now where He has assigned you as part of the Great Commission. This involvement will affect you and your life not only here and in the hereafter, but others also. Too many of us act as if there is no eternity. If you now understand there is an eternity, begin acting like it. It is important to start preparing here and now for what is still yet to come, which will last forever. You have to make the choice. Are you going to serve God or are you going to serve mammon? You cannot serve both.

Giving will force you to separate yourself from a world that perceives giving as just a gift or token so they can pursue their real goals and their purposes. That is how they view giving; as something that may help someone here and now, with no thought of eternity. You need to put your perspective in the right place. ***“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.”*** Those are Christ’s words. I am not twisting or changing them. ***“Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven . . . for where your treasure is there will your heart be.”***

You will be quickly exposed as to whether you serve God or mammon by the way you give. I cannot make it any clearer than that.

To be continued. . .

Materialism

Can a materialistic world ever be brought to Christ by a materialistic church? That is the question to begin this chapter, which obviously, is a rhetorical question. The church in the western part of the world focuses on the materialistic viewpoint; what can be accumulated in the here and now, and calling those things “the blessings of God.” Usually assorted reasons are provided, mostly based out of the Old Testament, to justify these reasons, and often taken out of context. So I ask, “Can a materialistic world be converted by a materialistic church?” That is a good question, but the answer is obvious.

In Acts chapter 4, Peter and John were brought before the Jewish leaders. Verse 12 begins, ***“Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. [Healed and protected could also be included here.] Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus. And beholding the man which was healed standing with them, they could say nothing against it.”*** Peter and John astonished the Jewish leaders in verses 13 and 14. Although they were not educated like the Jewish leaders, Jesus taught the disciples. However, because the Jewish leaders did not recognize Jesus as someone that was worthy to teach in the first place, they thought these disciples were unlearned.

In addition, note the word “ignorant” in verse 13. In the Greek, ***“idiotes,”*** which eventually became “idiot” in English, is defined as “unskilled in the word or in instruction” or “plain in speech,” which was how the disciples were perceived. The disciples were called ‘idiots,’ unlearned idiots, because they were not trained like the Jewish leaders. Even though they probably thought the same about Jesus, they were wrong about Jesus, and obviously, they were wrong about John and Peter. I believe these men were not uneducated, but rather educated in the right things, the necessary things according to their commission. Although the Jewish leadership perceived John and Peter as ***“idiotes,”*** they understood these men had also been with Jesus, a man they knew had healed others of physical diseases and physical attacks by demons. John and Peter astonished the Jewish leaders, and they took notice of the disciples.

Here is what one author says regarding this subject:

“People were amazed, that the apostles were plain, ordinary men, with no great education or social status. Peter said to the crippled man, ‘Silver or gold I do not have, but what I have I give you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, walk (Acts 3:6).’ To see God’s power and truth coming through uneducated men who weren’t wealthy challenged the observers’ most basic beliefs. The religious leaders in Jerusalem were the rich people. In many instances, their wealth was overwhelming. And many of the poor people felt that this wealth was a result of God’s special blessing on their leaders.”

Many still have this opinion of religious leaders today and often on a grander scale because technology spreads their words across the world. In the Christian segment of Africa, especially Eastern Africa, the prosperity doctrine is spreading quickly. These Christians see this doctrine as their way of escape from poverty and their everyday struggles just to feed their families. When these religious leaders come fill the stadiums, and not just in Africa, but here in the United States as well, people are emotionally attracted to what is preached. People supporting those preaching the prosperity doctrine treat it like a lottery, hoping they will win, hoping that God will respond to them. They think if they give ten dollars, they will get one hundred dollars back from God. Those Christians are not concerned about giving for the right reasons. People who give to those ministries think that the ministry must be teaching correctly. Because of how rich the ministry has become, God must be blessing them. Unfortunately, their real motive is very simple.

“...this wealth was a result of God’s special blessing on their leaders. That was their perception. By contrast here were two former fishermen with very little, but who had the power to heal and the message of salvation that could give eternal life. They couldn’t give eternal life but they could preach them the message of eternal life and they could receive it by and through Christ. The contrast had to be startling in the eyes of those who observed this event. For the first time, many moved from a purely human perspective of a religion to a divine perspective and responded to the gospel. It is understandable why this antagonized the religious leaders in Jerusalem. Although the leaders of the early church and many of its first members were uneducated and poor, perhaps middle class, before long some churches became wealthy and their pastors became educated and moved to the socioeconomic status once reserved for the Pharisees. There’s nothing wrong with education or money, but certain temptations accompany the status that goes with both. The higher our social standing and the more silver and gold we have, the harder it is for others (and sometimes for us) to believe our message that Christ is our greatest asset and the center of our lives.”

I remember as a young man I used to watch people about the same age as myself. They could remain religious as long as they were at the bottom of the socioeconomic ladder. They would profess how they were hanging onto the Lord with all they had, hoping and wishing that the Lord would deliver them from the bottom of the economic ladder. And I cannot tell you how many times I have seen that as soon as those same people are able to save some money, their goal then changes. Something more important arises and they do not serve God because of it, but serve themselves instead. As soon as they think they can survive on their own without the Lord, the Lord just became a passing thought. I watched the same people that would give more when they were poor end up giving very little or next to nothing as soon as they begin earning more money.

People forget that Christ is our greatest asset and He should be the center of our lives. As soon as we think we can make it on our own, we start giving credit to ourselves for the reasons why we are successful, and therefore Christ takes a back seat. He is not necessary any more. Sometimes I wonder if they were ever captured by Him in the first place. They just needed some emotional attachment to get them by during the tough times. Then as

soon as these individuals fail again, they get religious all over. Of course, once they returned to prosperity, they again forget the Lord.

Even the children of Israel followed this pattern. Time after time, the children of Israel found themselves in miserable conditions, barely surviving under their enemies for the same reasons. They had returned to following the false gods, Baal, Baalim, Asherah, and Ashtoreth. Once that happened, God put them under their enemy's control. Over time, the children of Israel would repent and return to the Lord, put Him first and remove everything else in their life that had priority over God. Of course, twenty or thirty years would pass and they would return to their old ways. We can see this repeatedly throughout the Old Testament, and the same thing is happening today. Perhaps you are not worshiping pagan gods, but what else in your life is a priority over God? As soon as you do not need the Lord any more you stop making Him a priority, which puts to question your motives in the first place.

“It’s easy for many evangelical Christians to write off religious materialism as characterizing other groups, denominations, fellowships and traditions, but not ones. Yet many evangelical Bible-teaching ministries sponsor a variety of expensive events for their donors, including luxury cruises. The object is to raise funds for their ministry, [which is not teaching true giving] but is a luxurious setting really the most God-honoring context in which to raise money for a ministry? [This author] recently received an invitation from a . . . ministry that does missions work in some very poor countries. The invitation began by sharing the ‘good news’ of a chance to hear some wonderful Bible teaching, and the ‘even better news’ that the conference would be held in an exclusive top-rated resort in the Bahamas. The luxurious accommodations were then described. All one needed to do was pay plane fare, and the lodging would be provided at no charge- in the hopes that those taking advantage of the deal would contribute generously to the ministry, but . . . is this an appropriate setting to raise funds for evangelizing and disciplining people, some of whom live in abject poverty? Isn’t there something disingenuous about appealing to people’s most materialistic cravings to motivate them to support missions? By subsidizing a conference at an exclusive resort, doesn’t a ministry put its stamp of approval on the lifestyle choices it represents? Inviting people to contribute sacrificially would offer them the opportunity to practice giving as an alternative to materialism. Instead, to get people to contribute, we seem willing and eager to appeal to and foster their materialism.”

The only way organizers attracted participants was by offering luxurious accommodations. After all, it is in the Bahamas! Who would not like to go to the Bahamas and justify it as a good cause? Rather than gathering in the Bahamas, what about sending your offering from home to support these very poor missionaries. Instead, the organizers use coercion in the form of a terrific vacation. Unfortunately, many are willing to give money in this case for the return of a luxurious vacation. This is giving to get, not New Testament giving and not *agathosune* giving. If you recall, *agathosune* is one of the Fruits of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 or 23, which is generous giving.

“Is the Church really different from the world and its treatment of money and

possessions? We have our philanthropists, to be sure, but so does the world. We have charities and relief funds, but so does the world. The world is full of consumers who live for the short term and ignore the long term. The Church should be full of strategic and generous stewards, living for the long term and seeing the short term as a temporary opportunity for eternal investment. Sadly, too often the church looks suspiciously like the world. Why does the Christian community in the Western world bear so little resemblance to the church described in the early chapters of Acts? It's not that we haven't addressed the issues of money and possessions. On the contrary . . . innumerable Christian financial teachers, writers, investment counselors, and seminar leaders have ridden the crest of the wave of our national prosperity. Some take pains to be biblical, but many simply parrot their secular colleagues. Other than beginning and ending with prayer, mentioning Christ, and sprinkling in some bible verses, there's no fundamental difference. They reinforce people's materialistic attitudes and lifestyles. They suggest a variety of profitable plans in which people can spend or stockpile the bulk of their resources. In short, to borrow a term from Jesus, some Christian financial experts are helping people to be the most successful "rich fools" they can be. Not wanting to come across as negative- the unpardonable sin of our day- or to spoil the party for ourselves or others, we've failed to take materialism as a serious threat to godliness."

As not only a threat to the church itself, but also the church people, the out called ones. In Matthew 6, God does want you to be materialistic but not in what you can obtain here, rather in what you can obtain there, in eternity. "*Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*" Materialism is preached in God's Word, it is taught in God's Word, but the emphasis in today's church has been placed on the dot, the here and now; not on the line, eternity. Most people profess they believe in eternal life and what Christ promised, but they do not live like it, they do not trust that promise of eternity in their daily lives. The truth hurts and it should. The truth has been neglected for far too long and many Christians have become rich fools.

"We've rationalized and justified our lust for money and possessions. Worse, we have baptized our materialism, couched it in religious terms and affirmed it as God's plan for our lives. This prosperity theology, the gospel of health and wealth, is destructive. A 'man of God' stands before his audiences and rebukes 'the spirit of poverty,' assuring them of material prosperity. He sends a Christmas letter concerning 'the urgent need you have to get into true biblical prosperity as the wise men did. The money they brought literally meant the financial needs of Mary, Joseph, and the child in that desperate hour.' By sending money to this evangelist in his desperate hour, according to the letter, one may expect to become materially prosperous, just like the wise men who gave generously to the baby Jesus. This man represents a large and visible segment of American evangelicalism that subscribes to what is called 'prosperity theology,' or the 'health and wealth gospel.' This worldview thrives in churches and in the parachurch ministries only because such men have willing supporters, eager to get their share of the prosperity pie. This . . . isn't about some position 'out there' in the world, but 'in here,' in the Church. It addresses the attitudes and lifestyles of millions of mainstream Christians who, to varying degrees and sometimes without realizing it,

have bought into the lie of prosperity theology.”

Often I have been criticized by those saying what I teach is just too hard because giving goes beyond tithes and offerings. But I also teach that we are a work in progress. In Galatians 5, it does say that one of the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit is ‘*agathosune*.’ It is one of the attributes of the Spirit of God placed in us so we spiritually grow. I am not telling you to be like the New Testament Christians and sell everything. There is no requirement stating that needs to be done, but the Spirit of God is a work in progress, just as all the attributes in Galatians 5 are a work in progress. The Lord is taking us step-by-step up the ladder, knowing what we need to achieve. We are all individualized. He knows what our needs are, just as in Ephesians 6, with the spiritual armor, a spiritually designed suit of armor that Christ is designing for us. I cannot wear yours and you cannot wear mine. ‘*Agathosune*,’ the attribute of the Spirit, will have you spiritually grow if the desire is there.

False doctrines are one of the problems that hinder this growth, but the New Testament makes tithing quite clear. If you doubt there was tithing at that time, I could show you in the New Testament as far back as 200 and 300 AD, after Christ’s resurrection, where they still had the concept of tithing and giving offerings. For instance, Paul took up offerings for the church in Jerusalem. The concept was built in, but you do not see it in the letters in the New Testament written by Paul. In fact, you see very little about tithing. However, tithing is mentioned specifically by Jesus when he said, “*that you should have done anyway*,” but New Testament giving goes beyond even that. If you need a title for New Testament tithing, I would use Matthew 6, where it is called “Treasure Giving” because that will include your tithe and offering.

In Matthew 6:19, Christ is suggesting where you should lay up your treasures and likewise where you should not store them. “*Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven...*” He even explains to us why, because no moth or rust is going to get to them there and thieves cannot break in and steal them. The benefit of tithing is also for you, even though it takes effect in the here and now through the people that receive that benefit. “*But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven.*” These are not my words they are Christ’s words.

Christ also goes on to say in verse 21, “*For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*” Heart here is *kardia* in the Greek. Most people just translate it heart, but it is referring to the center and seat of spiritual life. It is what flows in and through you and can only happen if you have the Spirit of God in you. Verse 22 continues, “*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light.*” The word “single” in this verse is a bad translation. In the Greek, this word is *haplous*, which actually translates as “generous.” With that translation, verse 22 should be read, “*The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be generous, thy whole body shall be full of light.*” With the context of these verses still money and possessions, verse 23 reads, “*But if thine eye be evil [really, not generous], thy whole body shall be full of darkness [or spiritually dead]. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness,*

how great is that darkness!” Because this darkness constrains you and you cannot even see in front of you.

As an example of this darkness, there have been supporters of this ministry excited to hear teaching like the Last Day Series or the Spiritual Warfare Series, but as soon as I start teaching on Giving, they disappear altogether. My teaching can be correct in their eyes on subjects like the Last Days or Spiritual Warfare, but not when it comes to Giving. How can that be? How can that be justified? Am I not preaching Jesus’ words?

You may understand the concept of “treasure giving,” and think you give a lot in tithes and offerings, and if you give correctly, yes, but your giving probably does not even come close to treasure giving. Do I think you are going to learn to give correctly overnight? No, very few of you will. Once again, giving is something that the attribute of the Spirit works in you; it is a work in progress. The Spirit is helping you climb the ladder to have that generous type of spirit of giving that illuminates your whole body. Some of you may think that God should be grateful for what you give, but you are really insulting Him. Christ gave us the plan on how to give when he told us to lay up treasures in heaven, where you are going to receive inexhaustible rewards.

Let us look at an example of what “laying up your treasures” might look like. This would be laying up your treasures here on this planet, or the dot, that represents the here and now, versus eternity, the line, which never ends. Earth is where people are storing their treasures, but Christ tells us to store them in eternity so He can give us inexhaustible rewards. In the meantime, what we store in heaven will have an effect on the dot, the here and now. In some cases, the effect will be for us in the here and now, but in most cases, others are going to feel that effect by listening to someone that preaches. The example I use will be for the average American because prices fluctuate depending where you live around the world, but you should use this example wherever you are listening and apply it to your part of the world.

To begin, what is one of the biggest investments the average American could make? For most average Americans, and perhaps anyone around the world, it would be to buy a home. If this person were living in California, a home could cost about three-hundred thousand dollars. Would that be considered a treasure? Even if you do not want to buy a home, your cost for living anywhere, whether rent or a mortgage, is probably your largest expense. But let us assume you are buying a home. That three-hundred thousand dollar home does equal a treasure. The interest the bank adds onto the mortgage will equal about an additional two-hundred thousand dollars, depending on the rate of interest. That amount also applies to the treasure that you are storing up here on the earth, on the dot. In all you end up storing over five-hundred thousand dollars on earth in treasure. When that is pointed out, people become disinterested because it exposes their hypocrisy, thinking that because they gave a small percentage of their income as a tithe, God is pleased with them. Actually, you are a thief, as the Old Testament would label you.

As another example, let us say you have bought about eight cars in your lifetime as a driver. One individual that I do business with owns two or three cars at the same time. If

you buy new, and the average car is approximately twenty-five thousand dollars, you have accumulated another two-hundred thousand dollars of treasure in your lifetime. If you add that to the amount you have accumulated in owning a home, you have now a total of over seven-hundred thousand dollars in treasures stored on earth. And that is only for two items, a home and some cars. Now add to that total vacations, furnishings in your home, or gifts you receive throughout your life. Those items are also treasures, only to name a few things. The only things I would not consider in this group as treasures is food and clothing, because Jesus said he would provide our needs, and those things we do need. How do those things compare to what you have stored up in the heaven where Jesus said you are supposed to lay up your treasures? This is why people get aggravated and do not like to hear this type of teaching. Has anyone ever taught this to you before? This is why it is easier for pastors to rely the Old Testament concept of giving which puts the governor or rules on giving, but Jesus walked on this planet and said, ***“Lay up treasures in heaven, not here on this earth.”*** You may ask if it is wrong to have these things. No, it is not. I am not saying you are going to hell if you buy any treasures here on earth. I am not saying that at all, but Christ wants your heart to be more focused on eternal things than on things of this earth.

Using the example from above, the seven-hundred thousand dollars of treasure accumulated on this earth, my question is, have you even tried to store that much in heaven? That is why this needs to be taught. Spiritual growth is a process directed and controlled by the Holy Spirit. You are climbing up the ladder by spiritually growing into the ***agathosune***, or generous, spiritual attribute of giving. The quality of the person it produces in you to make you a generous giver where your focus becomes totally on the things of eternity, which Christ said to be the center seat of your spiritual life and focus here on eternity, not here on the dot, the here and now. Unfortunately, we have it all backwards. You may have never heard anyone in your life that has put all of the emphasis on what Jesus said. Instead, most keep going back to the Old Testament rules and regulations on giving because they know that puts a governor on giving. The rules and regulations of the Old Testament are more acceptable, even though most do not apply those rules and regulations, but use them as a goal. However, we are supposed to make what pleases Christ our goal. He is waiting and once this is all over with, this planet is finished, and He has come back and set all things new, He is looking forward to giving you and me inexhaustible rewards. The true blessings we should be seeking that comes from Him that we cannot even imagine. We have some glimpses in the New Testament what those could be, but we cannot even imagine what it will really be like. What you need to do is compare your investments on earth to your treasures invested in eternity. What is your treasure total? What will be your answer when you get there, if you get there? At this point, some of you may be thinking that I have no idea what I am talking about or that God should be happy with whatever amount you give. Good luck with that attitude.

Let us look at an event recorded in three of the Gospels beginning with Matthew 26:6. ***“Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To***

what purpose is this waste? For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? For she hath wrought a good work upon me. For ye have the poor always with you, but me ye have not always. For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her." In other words, Christ was telling them to stop bothering the woman, because by her actions she was laying up treasures in heaven.

Mark chapter 14:3 records the same event, although no names are given in this account. *"And being in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper, as he sat at meat, there came a woman having an alabaster box of ointment of spikenard very precious; and she brake the box, and poured it on his head. And there were some that had indignation within themselves and said, Why was this waste of the ointment made? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred pence, and have been given to the poor. And they murmured against her. And Jesus said, Let her alone; why trouble ye her? She hath wrought a good work on me. For ye have the poor with you always, and whensoever ye will ye may do them good: but me ye have not always. She hath done what she could: she is come aforehand to anoint my body to the burying. Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached throughout the whole world, this also that she hath done shall be spoken of for a memorial of her."* This event is to be remembered because she gave her treasure. She knew what was going to happen to Christ. Maybe she did not have total trust and confidence that He would come back to life, but when He was still living she gave her treasure, and in both Gospels what she gave was called precious.

Now the John record brings this event more into light than the first two gospels. Go to John 12:1. This is the same story, but with more detail, telling us exactly who was indignant about the gift. *"Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead. There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him. Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment. Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him, Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."*

Notice, in this chapter the ointment was not called precious, but "very costly." At that time, one pence, a silver Roman coin, was also called denarii or denarius, and could buy you 10 asses. If you take that Roman silver coin which was about the equivalent of 1.375 ounces of silver and multiply that by 300 pence (300 x 1.375), what that alabaster box was valued at, that comes out to the equivalent of about \$1,361.25. That was also about a year's pay at that time, but a lot of people in third world countries do not make much

more than that today in a year. However, in this story, instead of saving this treasure for herself, Mary knew Jesus' burial was happening soon, so she gave her treasure to Him. This treasure of precious ointments she was somehow able to accumulate, when usually it takes a lifetime to save enough money to buy those things.

These verses also identify that Judas was a thief and did not care about the poor or even Jesus. Judas thought what Mary was doing was a waste of a treasure and he did not think that Jesus deserved the ointment either. In a sense, Judas was calling Jesus a bad steward, and essentially saying, *"Look, you're allowing this to happen to you. What about those poor people out there?"* Now Jesus had a lot to say about the poor people and how they should be dealt with. In fact, in the Old Testament if you planted a parcel of land, once you harvested it you were to not harvest the corners of the land so the poor could come in from every direction and harvest it themselves. The food was not given to them free; they had to harvest it themselves with their own labor, but that was the main way the poor were taken care of in the Old Testament in the Nation of Israel.

Know I am not preaching this to make you feel guilty, although most people today do not store in eternal treasures what they spend on the here and now. I am preaching this so you say, *"Lord, help me with this concept. Lord, I really need to understand what New Testament giving is,"* and maybe now you can understand why New Testament Christians gave it all. They were planning for the Lord's return shortly after He went to heaven, but that is what we should be planning for also.

It has been a long time since anyone has been willing to preach this message correctly. Preachers are too dependent on what church organizations and establishments have become to them, which is a job. They are not as concerned with delivering the truth and as a result have become thieves, which is why I preached the messages "Woe to the Shepherds." I also understand why Paul made it clear that those giving to him were not supporting him. Believing that givers support a preacher puts on a certain amount of bondage and governs what can be preached. Preachers know this type of concept can cause people to stop supporting and giving, so rather than teaching what the New Testament says about giving, they ignore the subject of growing with the Holy Spirit and the necessity to be a person that has their mindset on eternal treasures. I find it ironic that John 12:6-8 says, ***"This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein. Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this. For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always."***

The purpose of this series on Giving is to prepare you with the mindset to deny yourself, take up the cross and follow Jesus, ***"in His likeness,"*** and take the focus off the here and now. We receive the benefit of salvation, but it does not stop there. The bigger picture is eternity and who will be with Him throughout the never-ending eons of time.

Remember, this event happened a few days prior to the end of Jesus' earthly ministry. Jesus did not want what Mary did to be forgotten. Matthew 26:13 says, ***"Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall***

also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.” Have you ever heard this message preached with the focus on the treasure that Mary gave and what it meant to her? The ointment was the equivalent of a year’s pay, not some trinket, not some beat up old car. God got mad in the Old Testament quite often about giving sacrifices the correct way and about the things of God. That did not change in the New Testament and the only difference today is we no longer sacrifice animals; Christ paid the price for us. We are forgiven and washed clean by his precious blood, but some things still need to continue. If you think there is no giving in the New Testament, then you are a Judas and do not want to hear the true message because you want to accumulate more here on the dot of the here and now because they give you pleasure. You do not have any concern for the things of eternity or even for yourself, which Christ is urging us to be concerned with in Matthew 6.

It is ironic that after Jesus’ anointment at Bethany by this life treasure, this very precious, very costly treasure, Judas then betrayed Jesus. Each of the gospel records what happened after this Bethany experience and Matthew 26:14 tells us, *“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you?”* It was after he was reprimanded by Christ for criticizing someone who gave correctly that he then betrayed Christ. He did not like the reprimand that he received in verse 10, *“Why trouble ye the woman?”* and he went to deliver the Lord to his enemies for 30 pieces of silver. It is after the anointment and reprimand that verse 16 records, *“And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.”*

There are other principles that could be taught in this message concerning Judas, but the one that is left out far too often is the reason for the betrayal by Judas. He saw what was given to Jesus as a waste. Many churches, preachers, and individuals listen to this message but turn it off. This message comes with conviction that will cause change for the good or for the bad, for eternity with or without Christ is at risk. That choice is yours.

So, where is your treasure? Is it being stored up in the heavens or is it being stored down here on the earth? Those who want to question the doctrine of treasure giving, prove me wrong. New Testament saints understood it. I am not saying to give up everything you have, but you do need to start by saying, *“Lord, help me to understand what agathosune giving is truly all about if your Spirit’s in me. That’s one of the attributes of your Spirit, oh Lord, so make it a work in progress in my life. I don’t want to go in reverse.”* Treasure giving is not about the total amount. It is about where your treasure is going to, things on earth or things in heaven. You must deal with Christ on a personal level. All I can do is preach it to you, bring you the message that either will turn on or turn off your interest in giving correctly. I pray that it turns it on.

To be continued . . .

Flat Line Giving

In this chapter, I want to share with you a message I received from a listener after preaching the last chapter about materialism. Their message begins,

“The heart of what you are seeking to convey through the giving message last night was expressed when you said in so many words, ‘Lord, help me to understand and enter into New Testament giving, agathosune giving.’ This, as with the rest of our growth in Christ, is a gradual process for most.”

Actually, it is a gradual process for everyone, no one is excluded. I do not think anybody that has received a partial payment of the Holy Spirit and all the attributes of it, just suddenly arrives overnight at what can be achieved as an instrument of God’s work in progress. I have never read, seen, or heard of anyone coming to that point of completion instantaneously, and I have read every autobiography I could find. It is always a work in progress for everyone.

“The agathosune spirit, being it is a Fruit [or attribute] of the Spirit goes beyond tithes and offerings and rises to a lifestyle of not storing up treasures we call ours here on earth, but in heaven. It is a way of being which does not involve the percentages of the gross or the tithe and is not duplicity, at the same time seeking to store up treasures here on earth. To put it in a term some of us may understand that may have ‘even been taught by the best,’ 90% actually is not ‘yours to do with as you wish,’ which I think could be a mindset you are seeking to change.

Now, even though this is the case, the fact remains that Christ instructs us to enter into the agathosune spirit of giving for our own benefit with eternity to come, where the rewards are inexhaustible and compounded, as you showed with the folded paper. But axiomatically, if we continue stagnantly at the 10% mark in our giving, we are no better than Judas, still a thief at odds with Mary, like a giver who found his master was worth nothing more than to hire a female slave (30 pieces of silver). What you have taught in this series has not gone unnoticed. So I want you to know that and I hope I’ve captured the above correctly in what you’re communicating, though I’m not sure if I have. In fact, if we put ourselves into the timeline correctly, this was while Jesus was still alive and what Mary did was give above her tithes and offerings no doubt still giving to Levitical priests serving in the temple at the time. I’m still mulling over in my mind what you taught, because there are just so many comments I could make right here on that. Now that being said, you also made mention last night of those in the New Testament who ‘gave all and lived in a communal life’...”

That is right; some did live a communal life. Do I believe they all did that? No, the

majority did not. However, the closer you get to the mother church at Jerusalem, there was more occasion for communal living to happen than when Paul went through Asia Minor up to Antioch, Athens, Rome, and beyond.

“...which I was quite surprised to hear you say and you stated that as a way to make the particular point you were making. Yet I do recall contradicting prior teaching saying they did not give all or they would not have been able to gather in Mark’s mother Mary’s home. In fact, I remember you asking us directly if we thought saints in the book of Acts gave it all in an opening to a prior teaching. The answer turned out to be ‘no’ and that this scripture was often used to support a social communistic agenda in political circles or what was firstly termed Marxist churches. So have you come across some new information that has caused you to change your mind on this? The simplicity of the teaching is easy to understand, where is your heart? Where your heart is, there your treasures will be.”

No, I have not changed my mind on anything. I have mentioned all those things before, and yes, scripture is used in some churches’ agendas today. In fact, it is happening more and more today. However, let me refresh your memory. Although there is no evidence of communal living, especially the further you get away from the mother church at Jerusalem, some people did live with other people. There is nothing strange about that, but I am talking about a communal group, or community, that included a very small element of people in the mother church, in Jerusalem, who gave everything.

Also, let me remind you, I am not saying that you should give everything. I will not make that decision for you. I just preach the Word of God. I do not really believe the Lord is asking for every little bit of everything you have be given to Him. If that were to happen, where would you live, especially some of you that do not have much to give in the first place? The whole concept of what I have been teaching, what I have been leading up to is, ‘where your heart is.’ That is easy to say, but without the Holy Spirit, it is so hard to do. Christ said, “lay your treasures up in heaven,” store them there. In the last chapter, I listed some of the things that would be considered treasures. Most Christians focus more on what they can store in the here and now because they have this concept of only giving the tithe.

If I asked most Christians to give me three or four sentences to define what tithes and offerings are, I seriously doubt many even know what all the tithes and offerings include. Some people think there is only one tithe, some people think there are two, and some people think there are three. Well, if you are going to be legalistic to the law, the tithe encompasses much more. You may be shocked to learn that, but I can prove it, and that does not even include the offerings. Understanding this will turn your giving world upside down, where you have to be dependent upon the Holy Spirit to grow and provide that spiritual growth in you to be an *agathosune* giver, not a giver based on some formula. You may chose not to be part of this ministry, but so be it, I can start over. I will still be here preaching, and some will still support this ministry.

This person’s message goes on to say they are having doctrinal issues with what I am

teaching. I suspected that, and they are not the only ones to feel that way. At least this person had the guts to tell me and for that, I respect you. Others just criticize and leave. I am not saying you are criticizing. I know this person, who is faithful. This person is seeking and I believe has a strong desire to know the truth.

To continue with this message,

“The doctrinal side is what I’m having issues with when I think of the teachings you have given to date on this subject because they seem to kind of sway back and forth. For example, you have said, ‘Do you think you’re giving hilariously when you give a tithe and first fruits?’ when teaching the difference between alms and other kinds of giving. You have said the tithe is not taught in the New Testament, but they had the concept of the tithe, so you still have to tithe even though you are not teaching us to tithe. Also, the tithe is the minimum and not a ceiling, so why are you staying on the floor of giving and not rising to the ceiling of giving?”

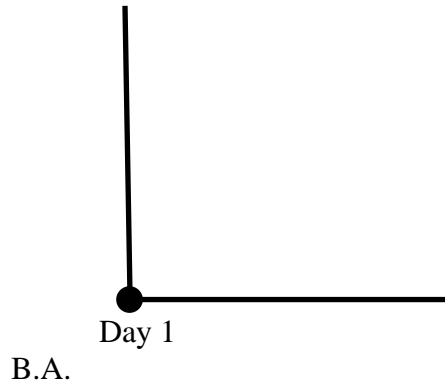
No, what I teach does not sway back and forth. I am giving a lot of information for a purpose. You have probably never heard before in a very simple and general format what I have been teaching. In the end, I will bring it all together, but I am just not there yet, you do not know where I am going with this series. Do not worry, before I even teach what I want you to know, I have to break down all the traditions that have been established for 2,000 years, which are many.

When this caller says, “. . . *but they had the concept of the tithe,*” what is that based on? While Jesus was still alive, He said to the Pharisees in Luke 11:42, speaking of the tithe, “That you should have done.” Jesus was still alive and the law was still in practice no doubt. Do not confuse Hebrews and Melchisedec, as incorporated in the tithe in the New Testament, which has been twisted and interpreted in the most bizarre ways. Show me where Paul has referred to the tithe, other than saying, “it was implied.” Is that your evidence of the truth in God’s Word? If that is, you need to show me something more solid than that. There are too many Christian science-fiction theories that are implied. When studying the Bible, do not forget the principle that I use, the verifiable Word of God, not implications or guesses or hunches. The verifiable truth of God’s Word is what I use.

Part of your message quotes another author I was reading, but my goal in reading other authors is to show what people are teaching about giving. However, you are assuming what I believe God’s Word is declaring, because I can see the verifiable truth in it. That is why I am hesitant to read other sources. You assume I agree with them, when I am trying to show a history of what the church world teaches and what they put into practice. It is unfortunate that most preachers do not know much about secular history, which fortifies what God’s Word says and clearly shows it to be true. Not that it needs it to be to those who trust and have confidence in God’s Word, but for those who do not, proving the Bible historically shows off God’s Word. The lack of understanding of secular history has caused too many preachers to create some wild theories to base their opinions on. What I am telling you is to remember to incorporate what I am reading from other

authors as what others believe. If I agree with them, there will be no doubt about it. And to return to this person's message, in the Old Testament, yes, the tithe was the floor of giving, but in the New Testament, that does not apply.

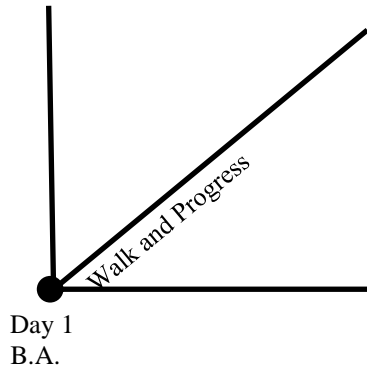
Now I want to use the illustration below to make a point regarding the Fruits of the Spirit from Galatians 5.



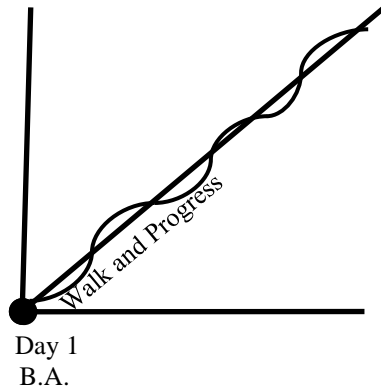
As you can see above, there are two lines. The point where the two lines meet is when we are born again. I know this phrase has become so overused and misapplied that I almost hate to use it, but I am going to use it anyway. In this illustration, I will just call it B.A. This point is us when we become saved by the blood of Jesus Christ. We become a new man, a new creature in Christ, through Christ, and by Christ. This is day one where the vertical and horizontal lines meet.

Now in Galatians 5:22 and 23 we have the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit. We also see them in Peter and other books of the New Testament adding to what is already listed in Galatians 5:22 and 5:23 as attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit. So Galatians 5:22 and 23 is not the complete list, but we have a list. We read in Galatians 5 all the privileges of Christian liberty, and verse 16 tells us, ***“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit.”*** To describe that particular word, ‘walk’, in Greek, you have to add an additional definition to it to make it understandable in the English. This is not just walking, as you would walk down the street, but walking with a stated purpose, and because Christ’s spirit is in you, your purposes are clear. You have stated purposes and you are to progress from day one in all the attributes that you see in Galatians 5:22 and 5:23 from that day forward.

If you were to draw a diagonal line on the chart, keeping in mind the attributes listed in 5:22 and 5:23, the chart would look like this:

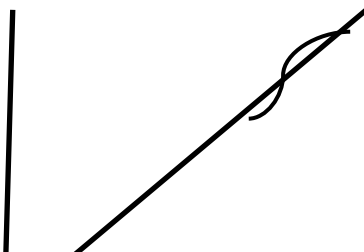


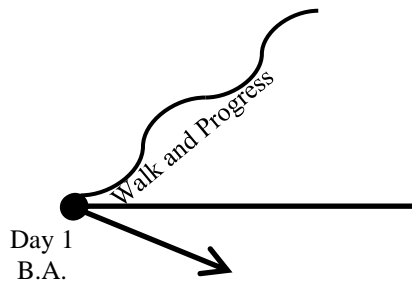
This diagonal line would represent your walk and progress because of all the attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit in you and continues until we reach eternity, our goal. Part of this walk and progress is doing the work that the Spirit calls us to do, and this applies to both you and me. That is why I have said so many times that we are a work in progress. And that progress, God willing, will never stop. Now during that journey there will be ups and downs. Sometimes more downs than ups, because we are still fighting against this “old man” we call the flesh. As a result, our chart will end up looking like this:



I am trying to make this simple, but as long as we are still climbing, with eternity as the goal, we know that He is working with just a partial payment of what was promised to us that is still yet to come. If I was to analyze myself this way, I know I am progressing, I am walking, and I am getting to that goal of eternity.

Now if the line went down after being born again because the desires of the flesh took over, this line is headed toward a never-ending life of spiritual destruction. This new, fast-paced downward slide is probably even faster than before we even received the Holy Spirit.





Obviously, this is not the direction you want to be going, and the Holy Spirit definitely does not want to see you heading down this way, because you are denying what the Holy Spirit wants to do in you. The Holy Spirit changes you through the Word of God with His spirit in you and how you respond to it.

When Galatians 5:16 says, ***“This I say then, Walk in the Spirit...”*** that is progress in the Spirit, not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. This verse continues by saying, ***“and ye shall not fulfil the lust [desires, literally] of the flesh, for the flesh lusteth against the Spirit, [It will send every desire your way.] and the Spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other; so that ye cannot do the things that ye would [referring to that downward line]. But verse 18 says, “But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”***

Verse 19 to 21 lists all the evil things of the flesh, but verse 22 tells about the Fruit of the Spirit working in you and what the Holy Spirit produces. Again, this is not what you produce, but what the Holy Spirit produces. Too many Christians think they will produce what they think the Holy Spirit wants them to produce, but it does not work that way. Galatians 5:22 says, ***“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith.”*** Faith in this verse is *pistis*. The Holy Spirit will put the desire in you to keep hearing the Word of God. Remember, Paul said, ***“faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God,”*** the same person who wrote this book of Galatians. *Pistis* comes by hearing and hearing the Word of God. You will receive faith if you keep listening to ones that preach it, the ones that bring you the news of it. The Holy Spirit will progress in you when you can walk on that upward line from the above illustration, instead of the line that goes down.

“Goodness,” listed in verse 22 as one of the Fruits of the Spirit, is *agathosune* in the Greek. But is this goodness when you are being good to your fellow mankind? Goodness, or *agathosune*, is generosity, being a very generous person, giving in liberality. *Agathosune*, goodness, generosity, is generous giving, which means one of the attributes of the Spirit in Galatians 5:22 is being a generous giver, meaning the Holy Spirit is going to make you a generous giver.

Look at the other attributes of the Spirit. If you have an attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit in you, for example love, you would want this to be on the line moving up. On the other hand, perhaps it is joy, which line do you want it to be on, the line moving down, or the

line moving up? What about longsuffering or gentleness or pistis which is the desire to hear the Word of God? On which line do you want to be on? Of course, you will have the ups and downs of life, but stay on track on the upward slope of this line. Verse 23 tells us, **“Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.”** Prior to this, verse 18 says, **“But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.”** You are not under the law. I questioned a few people recently, and asked them on which line they want to be. Of course, everyone wants to be on the upward line, but when it comes to generous giving, **agathosune**, they want to fall back to the law and give a tithe using Abraham’s tithe as an example. By the way, be careful to understand if it was even Abraham’s tithe to give, there may be another meaning to what he did. Do not confuse tithing with a vowed covenant. However, to return to the illustration, everybody wants the upward line, except when it comes to **agathosune**. When it comes to the tithe, Christians set aside the upward progress of the Holy Spirit working in them to bring them where they should be. They would rather flat line their giving at 10 percent or 20 percent so they have the control, not God.

But Galatians 5:18 says, **“But if ye be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.”** You are not under any Old Testament law. However, if you choose to rely on rules for tithing, you are putting yourself in control and under the bondage of the law; whether you give 10 percent, 20 percent, or however much you decide you need to tithe. Verse 24 continues, **“And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts [or passions and desires]. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** “Walk” in this verse means walking in a line, as soldiers would march. In other words, you are now under a new type of commandment, which the Holy Spirit controls and dictates, not you. Unfortunately, most Christians flat line, or stagnate and do not grow, when it comes to this attribute. As I said, I could preach about any one of the other attributes of the Fruit of the Spirit, and Christians want to be on this upward line of growth, but once I teach on giving, most will stop to reconsider. When teaching is about money and possessions, most want to search the scriptures to find how they can justify giving their 10 percent.

Let me continue with this message:

“I am sure how I just worded the above sounded disrespectful, but that is far from the case. It’s that I cannot in any other way express that swaying impression that teaching seems to have.”

I believe you mean no disrespect, but when I am done with this message, there will be no swaying in your mind.

“Now I’m going to get out on a limb here and assume that you’re not teaching this just to hear yourself talk. You’re looking for a response. I don’t know what others are thinking about the teaching and as wrong as it is to stay in the tithe/first fruits mindset, I don’t think I could have mentally risen above that mindset without first learning the Old Testament way to begin with. Does that make sense?”

No, it does not; it only makes sense to you because you made it make sense to you.

Because of how you have been indoctrinated, you are underestimating yourself. I believe the Spirit of God is in you or else I would not even be reading this message. No matter where you find this type of teaching, if you have never heard the Old Testament way of giving, once it captures you, you become a New Testament giver anyway. You are cheating yourself to justify an old system. For instance, I have testimony from a different person who never even understood anything about tithing or offerings and Old Testament concepts. All this person heard was “treasure giving” and they wanted to be able to give to God with that mindset. They did not know percentages as a starting point. This is how indoctrinated Christians have become. Even good intentioned preachers and pastors have so influenced the mindset of Christianity through doctrinal mistakes in interpretation; mostly because there is no way church buildings would survive without Old Testament giving concepts.

I have a copy of The State of American Giving. Even with pastors and preachers focusing on the percentages of tithes and offerings, America, one of the most generous countries that ever existed in this world, is a disgrace when it comes to giving. America is on that line on the downward slope from the earlier illustration. Not on the upward slope, it has not even flat lined, it is on the line going down.

Let me share some of this with you.

“Before considering what a Christian should tithe today, let’s look at our current giving habits in 2001. The research shows significant trends in giving. Compared to 1999, the mean per capita donation to churches dropped by 19% in 2000. Among born again adults, there was a 44% rise in those who gave nothing.”

That is significant. Forty-four percent of born again Christians, did not even take a first step. Forget about the walk from the illustration, they did not even take a baby step on the upward line. They reduced their giving, which puts them on this downward track. Notice, in the following paragraph, every statistic is a negative number.

“The number of donors to any non-profit or church organization declined by 7%. Four out of every ten adults gave nothing to churches, a rise of 50% among those refusing to support churches. One third of born again adults said they tithed in 2000, but a comparison to their giving versus their household income revealed that only one out of eight actually gave.”

One third is in this stuck level because they are living under the law and are living in bondage. Keep in mind; I said New Testament giving is far beyond tithes and offerings. But since this is an attribute of the Spirit, you could begin with a 10% tithe in your journey. Some people are just so concerned they have not reached the final goal right now, because I have preached about treasures in heaven. It is better to be concerned that you are spiritually growing rather than on the downward line. As long as you walk on this upward line, slowly but surely, you will reach the goal.

I know an elderly person, who is concerned that unless Jesus comes back in the next few

years, the likelihood of this person going to meet her Lord before He returns is very high. She does not have much treasure to leave behind so she can also send treasure forward, storing it in eternity. Christians are not taught to think about death. Yes, prepare for your family and children after you are gone, but prepare for eternity also. So many Christians will leave money and homes to their children after they are gone, but what did you send ahead during your life here? If Jesus comes back before I leave this earth hopefully I am on this upward progression somewhere along the line. If you think I have already reached the final goal, I have news for you, what I preach to you is preached to me first. I am not a completed model. What I preach hits home with me first before it ever gets to you. So go ahead and have a life insurance policy just in case you do go. It could happen to anyone at any time, God forbid. If you do not like to think about death, you really are not when you are preparing for the future. Christ commanded this for all of us to do, but there is no eternal death where you are going, only eternal life.

“The average church joiner contributed a mean \$649 in 2000, down from \$806 in 1989. Married adults are more likely than single adults to donate some money to a church in a typical month, 64% to 42% respectively. Comparing giving to those in their 20s, 40s, and 60s was revealing. Busters are substantially less likely, 36%, than are boomers, 58%, builders or seniors are 68% to give to a church in a given month. Between 30% and 50% of active church attenders gave nothing, and because 70% of Christians have no wills at the time they die, they don’t leave any money to a church or Christian ministries. Many of the remaining 30% who do have wills, designate no money to God’s work. There has been a gradual decline in giving that has continued for 30 years, down 6% to 8% annually, from 1998 to 2000 and down a full 15% in 2000. Since 1975, total charitable giving by Americans has run between 1.6% and 2.16% of income. According to the Gallop Organization, those who attend weekly church services give 3% to 4% of income annually, whereas non-religious people give 1.1% to 1.4%. Other estimates indicate that percentage of income giving by professing Christians to the church to the kingdom causes is between 1.5% and 3.5% of income. The mid-point being 2.5% is perhaps the most accurate figure.”

This information is already dated, but it just gets worse in this report, and the statistics are even worse today. It is almost too discouraging to read. This concept of flat line giving has not created givers. Biographies about men I admire, like Hudson Taylor or George Mueller and others for instance, have shown me that they did not flat line their spiritual growth. Galatians 5:22-23 and other verses that teach about the attributes of the Spirit do not instruct you to flat-line your spiritual growth.

To return to this message:

“I’m not trying to be flowery and I’m kind of worried about my wording, because you were expressing a lot of stuff last night that went beyond just what you were speaking. If people aren’t even tithing or giving first fruits and are not taught what tithing and first fruits is, how can they even rise to agathosune giving? This is where I find it confusing.”

As I have already said, it is a work in progress. If you are reading this, the Spirit drew you to this ministry for a reason, and it was not to keep you at a flat line position, which only demonstrates that there is no spiritual growth in any of these attributes. You have been brought here whether you like it or not. The choice is yours whether you continue to spiritually walk with the intent of progress to be made. If you choose to spiritually grow, that means the Spirit of God and all the attributes that come with it are a work in progress in your life, until you reach eternity and your climb is over. Galatians 5:18 does not say, "But if you are led by the law, then the law will teach you how to give, so then the Spirit will have something to work with." It does tell us, "***But if ye be led of the Spirit, ye are not under the law.***" That means nothing the law provided is a starting point for anything, not then and not now either. If you still find this confusing, hopefully, you will keep reading as I correct these doctrinal traditions.

"My heart is definitely with you and the Word of God and the spirit of His teaching about giving. I'm not missing that point, but I don't know. It's frustrating because frankly, I'm not embarrassed one bit if someone were to ask me if I tithe to the work of the ministry or return to God what is His. I don't think you mean it this way, but it comes off as if there is some type of trepidation about the subject of tithing. Then, on the other hand, you are saying those of us who are tithing and giving first fruits are still thieving Judas' if we don't give more and you sound mad at us about this."

First, the only ones I am mad at are the shepherds who have the correct knowledge, but do not preach giving correctly. However, I did not say you were a thief, but if you read Malachi 3:8 in the Old Testament says it, "***Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.***" That is why I asked you what you think a tithe was. Most people say it is 10%. Or were there one, two, three, or four tithes? And how many offerings were there? If you total up the Old Testament tithes, you get a total tithe of 23.3%, but most Christians stop at the third tithe and do not count the offerings. This is why you need the ***agathosune*** spirit, because I doubt very few have lived up to true tithing and are thieves and robbers. If you are still tithing under the law, the actual tithe is much more than 23.3%, more than 25%. The Old Testament law has strict guidelines and if you do not follow those guidelines, you are a thief and a robber. Do not begin using the law to justify your giving, unless you have a solid understanding of the verifiable Word of God regarding what all these tithes and offerings consist of. Preachers do not tell their congregations this because they are afraid they will lose support from church members. The sad part about that is they are right, so instead of finding ways to get support, they cower under and bend to tradition. To be clear, if you wonder if this affects your entry into heaven, salvation is not based on giving. That is why Paul was very careful how he used his words throughout the New Testament concerning giving.

What this message has demonstrated to me is that giving correctly is the most neglected topic. Not neglected based on Old Testament law and then twisted to include the New Testament, but "treasure giving" based on ***agathosune***. I still ask you tonight, have you stored more treasures on earth or in eternity? You know how to figure it out. New

Testament giving goes beyond tithes and offerings. It is all about how the *agathosune* attribute of the Fruit of the Spirit is progressing in your life. If you are a sincere disciple of Jesus Christ, you want all these attributes to keep working in your life. You might be anywhere on this upward line from the illustration, but I can tell you, I am not at this completed state, so I am not throwing any stones. I am just saying do not be controlled by the law and do not flat line your giving.

To be continued . . .

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