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God, through His Son Jesus, provides eternal grace for our failures and human limitations.

Tithing and Giving

In the

New Testament.

(2013)

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But also shows how you can know God for yourself.

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Tithing and Giving in the New Testament.

Topics.

- When you give to the needy give in secret.
 - Many who have left houses or family will receive a hundredfold.
 - The widow's mite.
 - Give and it shall be given shaken together and running over.
 - Give according to your ability.
 - For your sakes Christ became poor, that you might become rich.
 - Give according to what you have, not according to what you do not have.
 - Let each one give as they have made up their own mind.
 - God who supplies seed to the sower will supply and multiply your seed.
 - I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.
 - God will supply every need according to his riches in glory.
 - God chose those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith.
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INTRODUCTION: since the focus of this study is upon Scriptures that speak of tithing, giving and money in the New Testament and the primary purpose is to discover how Jesus and the apostles viewed money and giving it does not give every detail of the verses that are being viewed, but only those details that relate to worldly riches, money and wealth.

Matthew.

When You Give to the Needy Give in Secret.

Matthew 6:1-4 ----- ¹"Beware of practicing your righteousness before other people in order to be seen by them, for then you will have no reward from your Father who is in heaven. ²"Thus, when you give to the needy, sound no trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may be praised by others. Truly, I say to you, they have received their reward. ³But when you give to the needy, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing, ⁴so that your giving may be in secret. And your Father who sees in secret will reward you.

The principal Jesus is teaching is do not give with the motivation of seeking praise of others or of the one you are giving to. God knows, we can give to receive praise and pats on the back for a good deed done. Ego and pride crave glory of others giving in secret denies ego and pride. Jesus is saying, "Don't feed the craving of ego and pride by seeking the praises of others, but give in secret as though you are giving to God.

That's not to say it is wrong for someone to know you are giving to him or her, there are occasions when this maybe the only practical way you can show you love and care about a person, nor is it wrong for people to express the gratitude and thankfulness for such help should they know where the help came from.

The contrast Jesus is shining a spotlight on the motive of the heart, he is contrasting giving that is given from honest heartfelt love and caring and giving that is given for the sole purpose of appearing to be a righteous, compassionate and kind person, but all the while the true motive is to be esteemed as such and to receive praise from others. This person's giving is not because they have love and compassion toward the one they are giving to, but because they are driven by ego and pride.

Some Brought Forth a Hundredfold, some Sixtyfold, some Thirtyfold.

Matthew 13:3-7 ----- ³Jesus spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow ⁴And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side and the fowls came and devoured them up: ⁵Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: ⁶And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. ⁷And some (seeds) fell among thorns and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: ⁸But other fell into good ground and brought forth fruit some an hundredfold some sixtyfold some thirtyfold.

The words, some brought forth an hundredfold some sixtyfold some thirtyfold have been used to support the worldwide success and prosperity Gospel. Certain religious men teach their followers if they by faith sow their seed (being money to the church) God will multiply it back to them a hundredfold, sixtyfold or thirtyfold depending on the faith they sow their seed amount with.

Clearly this is a total distortion of what Jesus is saying and an absolute abuse of the Scriptures, but it is a good example of how most false doctrines are established. Simply lift verses out of their context surround it with human reasoning and you have a doctrine that not only sounds biblical, but also deceives the mind especially if it appeals to self, ego, pride and greed as this doctrine does.

THE PARABLE: this parable is full of tremendous blessings and spiritual richness to those who love the Lord Jesus Christ and are setting their minds on the things that are above and not those things that are below (i.e., the things of this world). The entire context of this chapter is God's word being sown into the hearts of those who receive it.

Some reject it while others hear the same words and perceive and understand the truth spoken and respond to its message and are saved. The words, "Some a hundredfold some sixtyfold and some thirtyfold means that those who received the gospel into their hearts produced even more fruit. In this context fruit primarily applies to saving more people to eternal life, but can embrace any act or deed that produces godliness in a believer or extends the Kingdom of God.

Jesus continues expounding the parable making the meaning even clearer: -

Matthew 13:15 ----- ¹⁵For this people's heart has grown dull and with their ears they can barely hear, and their eyes they have closed lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears and understand with their heart and turn, and I would heal them.'

Later in this chapter Jesus says: -

- As for what was sown among thorns, this is the one who hears the word, but the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it proves unfruitful. ²³As for what was sown on good soil, this is the one who hears the word and understands it. He indeed bears fruit and yields, in one case a hundredfold, in another sixty and in another thirty" (Matt. 13:22-23).

NOTE: healing them (v15) in this context means save them from their sin and from death to eternal life and everlasting Glory.

The seed sown in this parable clearly has nothing to do with money (as some teach).

Further on in the parable Jesus says, that mammon (money) was one of the things that robbed the seed from these people (Matt. 13:22). The whole context of the parable is about the Gospel of Jesus Christ and salvation being sown in the hearts of people and then those people going on to save others who do not know the love and grace of God.

Jesus in this parable is saying that we should not expect everyone to achieve the same thing, we all have different personalities (some are bold others are timid) we all have different levels of religious education and all come from different backgrounds, cultures and all come to the Lord with different depths of past baggage so we should not expect everyone to attain to the same level of ministry, evangelism, but everyone should be evidencing some degree of spiritual growth.

Every faithful brother and sister in Christ will multiply the seed of the Gospel sown in heart and the fruits of the spirit to others in Varying degrees and at different levels.

NOTICE.

For these particular people it was the deceitfulness of worldly wealth and riches that choked the word.

To Enter Life, Keep the 'Commandments.'

Matthew 19:16-19 ----- ¹⁶a man came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, what good deed must I do to have eternal life?" ¹⁷And he said to him, "Why do you ask me about what is good? There is only one who is good. If you would enter life, keep the commandments." ¹⁸He said to him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not murder, You shall not commit adultery, You shall not steal, You shall not bear false witness, ¹⁹Honor your father and mother, and, You shall love your neighbor as yourself."

In answer to a young man's question, "What commandments should he keep to enter eternal life," Jesus said: -

- Do not murder or commit adultery.
- Do not steal or bear false witness.
- Honour his father and mother and love your neighbour as yourself."

The following are all other commandments Jesus gives throughout the New Testament: -

- Jesus said, "The great and first commandment is this 'You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and the second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. ⁴⁰On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets" (Matt. 22:35-40).

In the book of Mark Jesus adds, There is no other commandment greater than these (Mark 12:29-31).

- Jesus said: "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another (John 13:34).
- Jesus said: "This is my commandment that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that someone lays down his life for his friends" (John 15:12-13).
- James and certain brothers wrote: "It has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well" (Acts 15:28-29).

- Paul said: "The one who loves another has fulfilled the law. ⁹The commandments, "You shall not commit adultery, You shall not murder, You shall not steal, You shall not covet," and any other commandment are summed up in this word: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself" (Rom. 13:8-9).

Since Jesus said: "Whoever loves him will keep his commandment" and whoever knows and keeps his commandments manifests their love for him and whoever loves him will be loved by his heavenly Father and Jesus will love those loved by the Father and manifest himself to them" (John 14:15). (John 14:21).

It is clearly important for brothers and sisters in Christ to know what Jesus commandments are so the following is a brief overview of Jesus and the Apostles commandments that are relevant to us today. They are love God, love the Lord Jesus Christ, love each other and love our neighbour. Abstain from sexual immorality and adultery and to never murder, steal or covet or lie about others and honour our parents.

Jesus said: -

- Love does no wrong to a neighbour; therefore love is the fulfilling of the law" and James wrote, "If you really fulfil the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself," you are doing well" (Rom. 13:10) (James 2:8).

This means that all any brother or sister in Christ has to remember and do concerning all the commandments of Jesus, is to live in love. Love toward God and love toward our brothers and sisters and love toward those who do not yet know the love and grace of God. If we do this James the brother of Jesus says we are doing well.

In the New Testament there is no teaching or mention of tithing in Jesus commandments his famous Sermon on the Mount, the parables or the Gospels. Tithing is totally absent from any teachings of the new covenant or New Testament.

NOTICE: there are no Scriptures that refer to keeping the Sabbath day in any of Jesus commandments or anywhere in the entire New Testament.

Many who have Left Houses or Family will receive a Hundredfold.

Matthew 19:21-26 ---- ²¹Jesus said to him (a very rich man), "If you would be perfect go, sell what you possess and give to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me." ²²When the young man heard this he went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. ²³And Jesus said to his disciples, "Truly, I say to you, only with difficulty will a rich person enter the kingdom of heaven. ²⁴Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich person to enter the kingdom of God." ²⁵When the disciples heard this, they were greatly astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" ²⁶But Jesus looked at them and said, "With man this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Jesus tells this very rich man to give to the poor and then says, his reward will be in heaven that is why he was sorrowful he wanted the worldly rewards money can buy now in this world. God didn't say, "Sell all you have and I will multiply it tenfold now in this world," but that the man's treasure and reward would be in heaven. This man's worldly possessions owned him.

NOTE: since the poor do not have this great hold upon their heart that riches can bring they should not judge the rich, but be thankful that they do not have the same temptations hindering them from following the Lord or luring them away from God.

Matthew 19:28-29 ---- ²⁸Jesus said to them, "Truly, I say to you, in the new world (in the regeneration in the KJV) when the Son of Man will sit on his glorious throne, you who have followed me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. ²⁹And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or lands, for my name's sake, will receive a hundredfold and will inherit eternal life.

Jesus says, in the regeneration (KJV), meaning a new life, or a restoration of things to a pristine state. It carries the idea of a renovation or a renewal and restoration of life after death and the English standard Bible say in the new world.

This renewal and regeneration of the world will take place when the Lord returns as King of kings and Lord of lords to establish God's Kingdom of righteousness, justice, joy and peace on earth.

When Christ returns glorious changes of all things for the better will occur. The fact it is a future event is further confirmed by the words "You shall also sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." This will not take place until after Christ's visible return. This means that the hundredfold reward in this context refers to the new world and not this world.

The Scribes and Pharisees, Tithe, but Ignore Justice, Mercy and Faithfulness.

Mathew 23:23-25 ----- ²³Jesus said: "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness. These you ought to have done, without neglecting the others. ²⁴You blind guides, straining out a gnat and swallowing a camel! ²⁵"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you clean the outside of the cup and the plate, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence.

The Old Testament ended with the prophet Malachi rebuking the priesthood and now in the beginning of the New Testament the Lord Jesus Christ is rebuking the priesthood. The leaders of God's chosen people Israel (the Pharisees, Chief Priests and Scribes) lacked judgment, mercy and faith they had become hypocritical in their lifestyle of excess, wealth, importance, and control and power. They loved the praises of the people so they practiced outward religious works to be seen as holy and righteous before others.

Remember prior to the death and resurrection of Jesus Israel was still under the Law of Moses so of course Jesus is going to tell them that they should have been doing what the law commanded. The Old Covenant was not totally abolished until the death and resurrection of Jesus. This tragic and glorious event changed religion and spiritual life in the world forever because it sealed in blood the New Covenant of grace.

Up until the death and resurrection of Christ the Jews were still under the Old Covenant of law, but when Jesus ascended to his heavenly Father the entire Old Testament Levitical Priesthood and the commanded law of tithing was abolished as was keeping the Sabbath Day and the ceremonial rites, the sacrifices, feast days and all the Levitical laws of purification etc.

You Gave Me Food, You Gave Me drink, You Clothed Me, You Visited Me.

Matthew 25:34-36 --- ³⁴Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. ³⁵For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.'

Matthew in these verses shines a brilliant spotlight on what Christ considers important and upon what we will all be judged upon when we stand before the Lord. The underlying spirit of these verses is compassion for the poor, those in need and the less fortunate. If any brother and sister in Christ wants to hear the words of Christ, "Well done good and faithful servant" we should give our life to showing compassion not only toward our brothers and sisters in Christ, but also toward the poor and the less fortunate and those who do not yet know the love and grace of God.

There is no Scripture in the entire book of Matthew that commands or teaches tithing. It is interesting to notice the following two things: -

1. There is no mention of the apostles, the disciples or brothers and sisters in Christ giving to church buildings (especially opulent religious buildings) in the entire New Testament this is because the early church met in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters.
2. All financial giving was given to faithful brothers and sisters in need and the poor.

The Global and Worldwide Church of God.

Jesus said, "Where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I among them" (Matt 18:20). Though there is in the secular global world today a mindset that the church is a Sunday meeting in a religious building it should always be remembered that the church does not need a building to exist it should never be limited to the established religious institutions, denominations or church buildings though they may form a part of the body of Christ they are not the only part.

There are many individual Christians in all countries of the world who meet in coffee bars, social outings and mostly their own homes (as the early church did) to give thanks to Christ and share their discoveries of God's word and their spiritual experiences with Him. Many of these people are helping others and simply manifesting the reality of their faith to the people that come into their lives.

God is not limited to any one pattern or organisation; He is far too creative for that. Jesus church is global and is manifested in a vast variety of ways across the face of the earth. In many third world countries church is held outside under a tree (for shade) with its members sitting on the dusty ground often with dogs, chooks and other animals roaming around.

Building God's church is not about financing opulent mega million dollar buildings, but rather about people gathering together to share their faith in any place they are able, nevertheless a building maybe required for practical purposes (i.e., the size of the congregation, protection from whether etc.).

Building God's church is about becoming more Christ like, and living in the will of God. New Testament Christianity is fluid and not restricted to a particular building or even a special day.

The Christianity Christ taught is so exciting and real, it cannot be contained. It has no limitations and overflows into every moment of a Christian's life, thus the New Testament church is global, moving and manifested in the lives of all those who are faithful and who belong to the Lord Jesus Christ.

The body is the reflection of Christ on earth and therefore those who belong to it
should be walking in the same Spirit of love, kindness, compassion
and grace etc., that Christ walked in while on earth.

Mark.

They will Receive a Hundredfold in this Time and Eternal Life.

Mark 10:29-30 ----- ²⁹Jesus said, "Truly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or lands, for my sake and for the gospel, ³⁰who will not receive a hundredfold now in this time, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions, and in the age to come eternal life.

Did Peter or any of the apostles or believers literally receive more houses, sisters, mothers and children while they were ministering in this world? Of course not. In the book of Hebrews many faithful brothers and sisters who suffered extreme persecution and loss when they stood up for their faith in Christ are highly commended (Heb. 11:36-38).

The Bible says that whosoever believes in Christ shall be saved and become part of the global family of God and world-wide the body of Christ. In this spiritual sense Christians do receive many more brothers, sisters, children, mothers, fathers, and their houses are opened to all the faithful. During the New Testament many believers sold what they owned to help each other and a true converted believer will be closer in spirit to another faithful brother or sister in Christ than they are to their own biological family who denies the Lord.

Christian brothers, sisters, mothers and fathers are all over the world, the family of God is global it is not limited to one household or even one church the Christian family extends throughout the world and continues on into the eternal Kingdom of God. It is in this sense that those who know the Lord will receive in this world, a hundredfold houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children and lands.

NOTICE: persecutions are included in the hundredfold list of things to be received.

The Widows Mite.

Mark 12:41-44 ----- ⁴¹Jesus sat down opposite the treasury and watched the people putting money into the offering box. Many rich people put in large sums. ⁴²And a poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which make a penny. ⁴³And he called his disciples to him and said to them, "Truly, I say to you, this poor widow has put in MORE than all those who are contributing to the offering box. ⁴⁴For they all contributed out of their abundance, but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

Jesus in these verses is not saying that all Christians should give everything they own away. He is simply teaching his disciples who may have been speaking well of the rich because of the very large amounts of money they gave to the temple and probably said very little if anything at all about the widow woman since the amount she gave was very small and probably seemed almost pointless in compassion to the very large amounts others were giving.

Jesus is using the widows' mite to show that the God has a different way of counting money to the worldly system of mathematics. The Lord counts giving no matter how small, by the attitude, the motivation the devotion and joy in which the sacrifice is made.

Jesus is saying as good as it was that the rich were giving very large amounts the widow woman was actually giving more in the sense that it was all she had to live on. This story teaches that a very small amount given with great sacrifice is more precious to God than very large amounts given from such abundance that it doesn't affect a person's daily lifestyle.

The spirit of the world exalts the rich and it is almost certain if a billionaire entered certain religious groups and gave a million dollars and a single Mum supporting three children gave from her weekly budgeted five dollars it would be the man who gave the million dollars that would be highly esteemed and not the woman.

Jesus is using the widow's mite to teach his disciple against this worldly spirit of esteeming people because of the large amounts of money they give and encouraging those that are financially struggling that even the very small amount they may give is not counted as being a very small amount by the Lord.

NOTE.

Jesus is not teaching that unless you give until it hurts (as some teach) then the giving it is not acceptable to God. Jesus did not condemn the rich in this story since all giving is good giving when it goes to help the poor and extend God's Kingdom, Jesus is simply shining a spotlight on the attitude of those who may think they are giving more simply because they are giving far larger amounts than others, he is highlighting the truth that this is not how God counts the worth and value of a person's giving.

Luke.

Woe to the Rich for they Have Received their Consolation.

Luke 6:20-26 ----- 20 Jesus lifted up his eyes on his disciples, and said: "Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God. 21 "Blessed are you who are hungry now, for you shall be satisfied. "Blessed are you who weep now, for you shall laugh. 22 "Blessed are you when people hate you and when they exclude you and revile you and spurn your name as evil, on account of the Son of Man! 23 Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy, for behold, your reward is great in heaven for so their fathers did to the prophets. 24 "But woe to you who are rich for you have received your consolation. 25 "Woe to you who are full now, for you shall be hungry." Woe to you who laugh now, for you shall mourn and weep. 26 "Woe to you, when all people speak well of you, for so their fathers did to the false prophets.

The poor in these verses are those who are following Christ. This is all about those who belong to Christ suffering loss and persecution and about rewards being stored up in heaven (not on earth). Jesus in these verses is shining a spotlight on the truth that the blessings of his disciples, is in not great financial riches and wealth here and now. Their blessedness and joy is in the promise that their struggle here in this world will one-day be over and they will receive a great reward that has been stored up for them in heaven in contrast to the final destiny of the rich who have denied Christ and made their great wealth their god joining the dead in the eternal darkness of the grave.

Jesus is saying that wealthy who have not been rich toward God and instead use their great wealth to indulge self in a lifestyle of luxury and excess have their reward here and now in this world, but will be most miserable when they realize that their great material riches and wealth have no power to offer any comfort when they are facing death and the grave and an eternity of darkness and total extinction. In contrast to the rich who have lived solely to satisfy self is the faithful who have struggled through life and suffered loss or persecution because of their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ not only receiving eternal life, but also eternal rewards.

The Christian faith should be the least materialistic faith on earth, but has in some circles become the most materialistic of all faiths. This is because certain religious leaders have distorted the Gospel of Christ by lifting Scriptures out of context and twisting others to proclaim a Gospel of worldly success and prosperity here and now so that it will be more appealing to the masses. These teachers have turned the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ into a Gospel that focus on gaining what Jesus called the mammon of this world (i.e., worldly wealth and riches), this type of Gospel appeals to self, pride an ego so it has great success.

Jesus Christ did not suffer a brutal, bloody and cruel death so those who believe in him could prosper in this world, Christ died to save us from our sin and deliver us from death to eternal life and everlasting glory and not so we could have a life of worldly riches and wealth here and now.

The New Testament is a spiritual book that deals with a person's
Salvation their sin and their relationship to God and
Eternal life and not worldly riches.

Give and it Shall be Given Shaken Together and Running Over.

Luke 6:38 ----- 38 give and it will be given to you. Good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap. For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you."

This verse has been grossly abused by certain religious teachers who proclaim a Gospel of financial prosperity to their followers.

These leaders to extract money from the undiscerning use this verse to support their teaching that whatever amount of money a person gives to God (the church) God will abundantly multiply the financial amount they have given back to them.

If we put the verse in the context of Jesus entire conversation we see that it is about, loving others, doing-good to others, forgiving others and not judging others. It is about our responses to other people. Jesus is teaching his disciples that they must respond in good regardless of how others may treat them. He is saying that an evil act toward a brother or sister in Christ does not give that brother or sister the right to respond back toward them in evil.

This is not about money, Jesus in this conversation is shining a spotlight on the principal that how we treat others and what we do to them we will reap back, he is saying if we treat others with evil we will reap evil, but if we treat others with compassion and do-good we will reap good from others.

This Scripture as with all Scripture is to be read in the context of all the surrounding verses when we do this we see that it is about how we treat other humans. Jesus is saying if we show love, kindness, mercy, grace and do-good to others generally we will be treated the same way. There is nothing in the verses about giving vast amounts of money expecting to receive a greater amount back in fact the very opposite is true Jesus says, "Lend hoping for nothing in return" (v 35).

In verse thirty-one Jesus expressed the words, "For with the measure you use it will be measured back to you" in the following way, "As ye would that men should do to you, do you also to them likewise" (Luke 6:31).

Jesus tells the Apostles Take no Money for their Journey

Luke 9:1-4 ----- ¹Jesus called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money and do not have two tunics. ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart.

Prior to Jesus death and resurrection Jesus told the apostles that they were to take nothing for their journey not even to prepare a message. While Jesus was here on earth with his apostles and introducing the New Covenant he gave his apostles power to heal and deliver people from all kinds of sickness. While Jesus was with the apostles they did not need to worry about clothing or money for their journey. This is most likely because God supplied all that the apostles needed while Jesus was dwelling on earth with them. Later the Lord appointed seventy-two disciples to go two by two, into every town and place where he himself was about to go and told them the same as he told the apostles: -

- Carry no moneybag, no knapsack, no sandals, and greet no one on the road and whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace be to this house!" And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest upon you. But if not, it will return to them. remain in the same HOUSE eating and drinking what they provide, for the labourer deserves his wages. Do not go from house to house, and whenever you enter a town and they receive you, eat what is set before you (meaning don't worry if it is clean or unclean food according to the Levitical Law) (Luke 10:1-8).

The apostles were to enter a city and find a family or someone that was willing to take them into their home and feed them while they ministered to that city. Once the apostles found a 'HOME' to lodge in they were to stay in that house until they had finished ministering to the city.

This does not mean that all the apostles stayed in the same home. Jesus sent them out two by two so it is most likely that in most cases only two were staying in the one house. It is certain that in many instances these houses became one of the churches in that city.

BUT: after Jesus death and resurrection when Jesus appeared to the apostles in his glorified body he told them: -

- When I sent you out with no moneybag or knapsack or sandals, did you lack anything?" They said, "Nothing." He said to them, "But now let the one who has a moneybag take it, and likewise a knapsack. And let the one who has no sword sell his cloak and buy one (Luke 22:35-36).

Things changed for the apostles after the death and resurrection of Jesus they received the indwelling Holy Spirit as do all New Testament believers, but now they had to provide for themselves and rely on the goodness and generosity of others.

NOTICE: Jesus said, "The labourer deserves his wages" (Luke 10:7). It is not wrong for ministers to accept wages for their spiritual service, but it should be noted that the wages of the apostles and the seventy-two disciples was what they needed to live and not so they could buy designer clothes, Rolex watches, top of the range cars, stay in the best hotels and live in indulgence luxury and excess as some believe today.

Life does Not Consist in the Abundance of Possessions.

Luke 12:15 ----- ¹⁵Jesus said to them, "Take care, and be on your guard against all covetousness for one's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions."

In this context covetousness refers to the desire and craving for worldly gain. Jesus is warning his disciples to be careful they don't allow the riches and wealth the luxuries and indulgence of this world to draw them away from their faith.

The Spirit of the world is to judge and measure a person's worth and value by the wealth, riches, possessions they own and by the fame they have this is the Spirit of the world and not the Spirit of God.

Christians have to be very careful not to fall into the temptation of judging another brother or sister's value and worth by this same worldly Spirit. God judges people by who they are as a person on the inside and not by what they have outwardly attained in this world.

Everyone who belongs to the body of Christ will be judged by their faithfulness and devotion toward the Lord and by the fruits of the spirit that they have manifested toward others (i.e., love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness and such like things) and not by the riches and wealth they have acquired or by the fame they have attained to in this world.

A Rich Man Lays up Treasure for Himself and is Not Rich Toward God.

Luke 12:16-21 ----- ¹⁶Jesus told them a parable, saying, "The land of a rich man produced plentifully ¹⁷and he thought to himself, 'What shall I do, for I have nowhere to store my crops?' ¹⁸And he said, 'I will do this: I will tear down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. ¹⁹And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.' ²⁰But God said to him, 'fool!' This night your soul is required of you, and the things you have prepared, whose will they be?' ²¹So is the one who lays up treasure for himself and is not rich toward God."

Being very rich is not a sin nor does not mean that a rich person cannot inherit eternal life. The man in this story has vastly more than he needs he has an abundance of wealth, but instead of using his abundance to help the less fortunate and the poor he chooses to live a totally selfish-life it is in this sense that he is not being rich toward God.

This man is in a position where he can afford to give and help those that are poor, in need and suffering, but rather than help others from his abundance he chooses to pamper himself in the pleasures and indulgences of this world. This man has been abundantly blessed, but thinks only about himself and sets about planning a totally selfish-life for many years to come.

The Lord refers to this man as a fool because no amount of money can purchase eternal life nor can riches and wealth protect a person from death so to give God who has power over life and death no thought is very unwise and foolish indeed.

NOTE: this is not about putting money aside for old age that it being a good steward, Jesus focus is upon being worldly rich, but not rich toward God.

Where your Treasure is, there will Your Heart be Also.

Luke 12:32-34 ----- ³²"Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions and give to the needy. Provide yourselves with moneybags that do not grow old, with a treasure in the heavens that does not fail, where no thief approaches and no moth destroys. ³⁴For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

These verses shine a spotlight on the truth that every time a believer does a good deed for the poor or for a brother and sister in need and expects nothing in return, that brother or sister has deposited treasure in heavens storehouse. It is a natural principal in life that where our treasures and possessions are that is where our heart will be.

Biblical Christian giving does not expect any financial return it is a sacrifice made to help the poor or needy. The reward is in the blessing it brings to those that are in want and need. This is why the Bible says, it is better to give than to receive it is the joy you are able to give to another human that is the blessing.

Though giving with this heartfelt attitude does not yield interest in the banks of this world it will yield eternal interest in the treasure house of heaven. God's rewards concerning giving to help others are eternal and heavenly and will be handed out accordingly when Christ returns.

NOTICE: so far all New Testament Christian giving has been to brothers and sisters in need and to the poor. Nowhere have we seen any giving that makes a man in God's service personally rich and wealthy.

The Unrighteous Mammon and True Riches.

Luke 16:11-15 ----- ¹¹If then you have not been faithful in the unrighteous wealth who will entrust to you the true riches? ¹²And if you have not been faithful in that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own? ¹³No servant can serve two masters, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and money." ¹⁴The Pharisees, who were lovers of money heard all these things, and they ridiculed him. ¹⁵And he said to them, "You are those who justify yourselves before men, but God knows your hearts. For what is exalted among men is an abomination in the sight of God.

Unrighteous Wealth: refers to the money system of this world.

True Riches: refer to forgiveness of sin, salvation and eternal life etc.

The following are two reasons a person cannot serve God and money:-

1. The mind of those who have the love of money sitting as king on the throne of their heart will be consumed with discovering new ways of increasing and securing their wealth and riches.
2. All the time of those who love money will be consumed on making more money.

Those whose heart is consumed by the love of money will hate sacrificing their time to serve God when they could be using that same time to increase their riches and wealth. This is why Jesus says, "No servant can serve two masters because they will either, hate one and love the other.

Today there are certain religious leaders who proclaim a prosperity Gospel yet here we see Jesus rebuking the religious leaders of his generation (the Pharisees) who were lovers of money because they were exalting money in their hearts. Their defence against Jesus was to ridicule and mocked him.

The spirit of the world and its system exalts riches and wealth yet Jesus said that his heavenly Father considers these things an abomination. That which is highly esteemed before men refers to great wealth and the abundance of material possessions that money brings. This is counterfeit riches when it comes to the things of God. True Biblical riches are salvation in Christ, the forgiveness of sin, the grace of God, deliverance from eternal death to eternal life and the undeserved love of God and Christ for each believer.

God measures a brother and sisters value by the faithfulness and devotion in their heart toward the Lord Jesus Christ and how they treat other humans and not by their dollar value or outward success, riches and fame, nor does God measure the worth of a church by its opulent building, but by its faithful service to the Lord and ministry to the poor and the less fortunate.

A Pharisee and a Publican Pray.

Luke 18:9-14 ----- ⁹Jesus also told this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous and treated others with contempt ¹⁰two men went up into the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector. ¹¹The Pharisee standing by himself, prayed thus: 'God, I thank you that I am not like other men, extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even like this tax collector. ¹²I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I get.' ¹³But the tax collector standing far off, would not even lift up his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me, a sinner!' ¹⁴I tell you, this man went down to his house justified, rather than the other. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, but the one who humbles himself will be exalted."

The Pharisee: had not committed adultery, fasted twice a week and paid tithes on everything he got and believed he had not cheated anyone and was a just man yet he treated people with contempt meaning he treated people with disdain disrespect and scorn and was full of pride and self-righteous because he religiously and outwardly did all the right things concerning the laws of Moses.

The Tax Collector: was fully aware of his sin before God and that he had no righteousness of his own that could save him from his sin and to eternal life.

One of these men pleased God and the other did not, "Why?" Simply this it is not adhering to outward ceremonial rites, holy days and keeping religious customs and traditions or the giving of tithes, that God looks at and is moved by, but the honest inward heartfelt attitude of humbleness and repentance before God and sincere devotion and faithfulness toward Christ.

Zacchaeus Gave to the Poor.

Luke 19:8 ----- ⁸Zacchaeus stood and said to the Lord, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor. And if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I restore it fourfold."

The following are two things that stand out in this verse: -

1. No one has to give away all they own to be approved of by the Lord Zacchaeus was able to give half of his goods it's not about how much we give, but giving what we are able to help those who are struggling.
2. Zacchaeus is giving to the poor not to an unwise mega church loan that lays heavy burdens on its congregations and puts those preaching the Gospel and their people under oppression and tempts them to compromise the truth to keep and attract others to the church to pay the oppressive loan.

The Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is about forgiveness of sin, deliverance from death and salvation to eternal life and helping and giving to the poor, not opulent church buildings that suck all the money given by the faithful to pay worldly banks the monies and interest owning so that there is no money available to help those in need.

Religious buildings especially opulent ones are visible and clearly seen whereas acts of kindness and compassion are often hidden and unseen. This principal can distort our thinking in that we put more value on bricks and mortar than we do on acts of charity.

It should always be kept in mind that God's greatest heartfelt concern is in saving people from death to eternal life and helping the poor and those in need and that the acts of charity of a church that meets in a rented hall who help the poor and the less fortunate is seen as a far greater temple in heaven than an opulent temple can ever be no matter how magnificent if all the money of the faithful is sucked up in the bricks and mortar of the building and paying off a mega loan.

For further information see the title: -

- The Global and Worldwide Church of God following (Matt. 25:34-36) (above).

John.

Whoever Serves the Lord God will Honour.

John 12:26 ----- ²⁶Jesus said: If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

This verse shines a spotlight on the truth that the reward of the faithful who serve the Lord is not worldly riches, but honour respect and admiration from his heavenly Father. What greater reward could those who serve the Lord receive than the honour of the God?

Jesus had Finances for his Ministry.

John 13:28-29 ----- ²⁷Then after Judas had taken the morsel, Satan entered into him. Jesus said to him, "What you are going to do, do quickly." ²⁸Now no one at the table knew why he said this to him. ²⁹Some thought that, because Judas had the moneybag Jesus was telling him, "Buy what we need for the feast," or that he should give something to the poor.

Jesus had finances for his needs, the needs of the apostles and for the needs of the poor.

Acts.

Believers Sold their Possessions and Gave to those in Need.

Acts 2:44-47 ----- ⁴⁴all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favour with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

The Jews had the synagogues, but those who accepted and taught the Lord Jesus Christ were not welcomed in them so they would attend the Old Testament Temple services and have communion together in each-others houses. It is interesting to notice the following two things concerning the New Testament: -

1. There is a total absence of any mention of a New Testament church building.
2. There is no mention of giving to build a church.

This no-doubt is deliberate since if there had been it is almost certain that some dogmatic and legalistic religious teachers might be tempted to say that unless a group had a building they could not call themselves a church. The fact the New Testament does not make any mention of church buildings means that all Christians of all generations and all nations clearly know that though a building maybe convenient for various reasons it is not important to Salvation and Eternal life or even to fellowship since all these things are independent of anything this world has.

The Scriptures teach that where two or three are gathered anywhere and at anytime in the Lord's name they become the church whether they are in a structure built for religious services, a home, on the seaside, under a tree or in a coffee bar wherever they are gathered in the Lord's name they are the church since they are gathered in Christs name and are able to share their faith and minister to each other's needs.

Peter had No Silver and Gold.

Acts 3:4-7 -----⁴Peter directed his gaze at a lame man from birth as did John and said, "Look at us." ⁵And he fixed his attention on them, expecting to receive something from them. ⁶But Peter said, "I have no silver and gold, but what I do have I give to you. In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk!" ⁷And he took him by the right hand and raised him up, and immediately his feet and ankles were made strong.

The great Apostle Peter had lived and walked with the Lord Jesus Christ he had been given the power to cast out demons and heal the sick and had tremendous knowledge of the Scriptures. All of these together made Peter one of the greatest preachers and evangelist the world has ever known yet he was not a rich and wealthy man.

It is easy to think that the apostles lived in a different age than us in that everyone was poor, but there were rich and wealthy people in even in Jesus age and there is no-doubt Peter and the apostles could have been enormously rich if they had been tempted to entice those they ministered to and healed to dig deep in their pockets and give to their ministry.

Had they acted in this manner they could have lived a life of worldly luxury and had the best of everything, but they knew that to indulge themselves in this worldly manner would not be living from the Spirit of Christ, but the spirit of the flesh.

Cornelius Giving Ascended as a Memorial before God.

Acts 10:1-4 -----³At Caesarea there was a man named Cornelius, a centurion of what was known as the Italian Cohort, ²a devout man who feared God with all his household, gave alms generously to the people and prayed continually to God. ³About the ninth hour of the day he saw clearly in a vision an angel of God come in and say to him, "Cornelius." ⁴And he stared at him in terror and said, "What is it, Lord?" And he said to him, "Your prayers and your alms have ascended as a memorial before God.

The words, "Cornelius gave alms generously to the people means he gave to the poor and the needy." These Scriptures shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that whenever a brother or sister in Christ gives to help the poor and the less fortunate whatever they have given is not only seen by God, but becomes a memorial of their goodness and kindness before His very throne and treasure stored up in heaven that Christ will reward them for when he returns as King of kings and Lord of lords.

Acts 10:29-31 ----- ³⁰And Cornelius said, "Four days ago, about this hour, I was praying in my house at the ninth hour, and behold, a man stood before me in bright clothing ³¹and said, 'Cornelius, your prayer has been heard and your alms have been remembered before God.

God not only sees every dollar given to the poor, but also sees every act of charity that helps the poor and the less fortunate and the reward for such deeds is preserved and kept in God's remembrance. Cornelius was giving money, but his blessing was not money in return (as some teach) rather his blessing was spiritual it came not as an increase in worldly riches, but by Peter bringing him into a greater knowledge of Christ and saving him and his household to eternal life and everlasting glory.

Give According to Your Ability.

Acts 11:28-29 ----- ²⁸And one of them named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (this took place in the days of Claudius). ²⁸the disciples determined, everyone according to his ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea.

Agabus a prophet of God foretold that there was a great famine about to come over all the world so the disciples determined that everyone would give according to their ability to send relief to the brothers living in Judea. This verse shines a spotlight on the truth that New Testament giving is not about legalistically giving a tithe (ten percent every week), but giving according to each person's ability.

Some might say, "Yes but that leaves everyone who belongs to the family of the Lord free to choose what they consider is their ability" and yes it does. Giving is between each individual believer and God it has nothing to do with anyone else. Giving must always be according to our conscience before God and not a conscience that is manipulated or influenced by others.

NOTE: this principal applies to everything we choose to do for the Lord.

The disciples would have collected each person's offering as they travelled from church to church and then given it to those in dire hardship and need to buy food.

Paul Worked to Provide His Necessities.

Acts 20:33-35 ----- ³³I (Paul) coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. ³⁴you yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. ³⁵In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'

These verses shine a spotlight on the reality that Paul not only worked to supply his needs, but also worked to supply the needs of the poor. Paul was a tent maker so it is most likely that he and those with him stopped in certain towns and villages making and selling tents until they have enough finances to support themselves and to help those in need that they came across as they travelled.

Paul did not compare his standard of living with the high-income people of his generation as some religious ministers do nor did he live a lifestyle of financial excess. Paul saw himself as a servant to God, a servant to the Lord Jesus Christ and as a servant to others and as such did not live a lifestyle of indulgence and excess.

It is more blessed to give than to receive for the following four reasons: -

1. Giving to others brings great joy to the person who has been helped.
2. There is great joy in seeing another person's life blessed because of something we have done.

3. Giving to and helping others is storing up treasure in heaven.

4. At the resurrection the Lord will reward those who have helped the poor and the less fortunate.

Paul Brings Alms to His Nation Israel.

Acts 24:17 ----- ¹⁷Now after several years I (Paul) came to bring alms to my nation (Israel) and to present offerings.

The Biblical meaning of alms is a donation to the poor and the less fortunate. It is the showing of mercy, kindness and good will towards the miserable, the suffering and the afflicted, joined with a desire to help them. It is the act of people exercising the virtue of mercy towards others and at the same moment manifests that one's-self is merciful and compassionate. The money Paul had collected on his travels was for the poor and those in need.

Romans.

Contribute to the Needs of the Saints.

Romans 12:8-13 ----- ⁸the one who exhorts in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity, the one who leads with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. ⁹Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹²Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

The above Scripture teaches that giving was to brothers and sisters in need since New Testament churches were in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters they were financially able to help each other since they had no loans or buildings to maintain all their giving went to helping the poor and needy.

The book of Proverbs states: -

- The rich rules over the poor, and the borrower is the slave of the lender (Prov. 22:7).

The Bible very clearly warns against borrowing excessive amounts of money that puts the lender under a heavy burden to pay the debt. Sadly certain churches do exactly this and not only the minister, but the entire congregation is put under oppression to pay the debt.

Even worse than this is the temptation it puts on the oversight to compromise the Gospel and twist and distort Scriptures so that they appeal to self, ego and pride to keep those who follow them in their congregations and to make the Gospel more appealing to the masses to fill more pews and thereby have more people giving to help pay the excessive debt.

The New Testament church did not put themselves under financial bondage to pay interest monies to worldly banks for loans on buildings that would put a further heavy burden on those who were already financially struggling.

NOTICE: all preaching, teaching, exhortation and contributions should all be done in love everything we do should all be clothed in love.

Paul Takes Contributions for the Poor at Jerusalem.

Romans 15:25-28 --- ²⁵At present, however, I (Paul) am going to Jerusalem bringing aid to the saints. ²⁶For Macedonia and Achaia have been pleased to make some contribution for the poor among

the saints at Jerusalem. ²⁷They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have come to share in their spiritual blessings, they ought also to be of service to them in material blessings. ²⁸When therefore I have completed this and have delivered to them what has been collected, I will leave for Spain by way of you.

Saints: in the Bible refers to those who are faithful toward God.

The brothers and sisters living in Jerusalem suffered great persecution because the powerful authorities of the Jewish faith living in the city strongly upheld the Law of Moses and aggressively opposed the Christian faith.

Paul fully aware of this would take up a collection from each church as he travelled around the region and visited the many churches being established in the homes of faithful brothers and sisters. When he returned to Jerusalem he would give this collection to those who were suffering and in need.

1 Corinthians.

Who Serves as a Soldier at His Own Expense?

1 Cor. 9:6-15 ----- ⁶Or is it only Barnabas and I (Paul) who have no right to refrain from working for a living? ⁷Who serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard without eating any of its fruit? Or who tends a flock without getting some of the milk? ⁸Do I say these things on human authority? Does not the Law say the same? ⁹For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox when it treads out the grain." Is it for oxen that God is concerned? ¹⁰Does he not speak entirely for our sake? It was written for our sake, because the plowman should plow in hope and the thresher thresh in hope of sharing in the crop. ¹¹If we have sown spiritual things among you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? ¹²If others share this rightful claim on you, do not we even more? Nevertheless, we have not made use of this right, but we endure anything rather than put an obstacle in the way of the Gospel of Christ. ¹³Do you not know that those who are employed in the temple service get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in the sacrificial offerings? ¹⁴In the same way, the Lord commanded that those who proclaim the gospel should get their living by the Gospel. ¹⁵But I have made no use of any of these rights, nor am I writing these things to secure any such provision. For I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting.

Boasting (Glorying in KJV) can be good or bad, in a bad sense it carries the idea of glorying and rejoicing in self and in a good sense it carries the idea of glorying and rejoicing in God. Paul points out to his accusers, no soldier goes to war at his own expense, everyone who plants a vineyard eats of its fruit and those who shepherd a flock drink their milk added to this even the law of Moses says: -

- You shall not muzzle an ox when it is treading out the grain (Deut. 25:4).

This means do not to stop the ox from eating the grain while it is working. Then Paul makes the point, if God is concerned about oxen being fed while working how much more does He care about those who are doing His work and reminds those he is speaking to that those who minister in the temple eat the sacrificial offerings.

Paul says all this to show his accusers that in the same manner that the soldier, the one who plants a vineyard, the shepherd, the ox, those who minister in the Temple are all supported by the work they do Christ has commanded that in the same way those who proclaim the Gospel should get their living (v14) meaning those that work to provide spiritual food and those that work to provide natural food should be sharing each-others food.

Paul is pointing out to his accusers that it is right that those serving the Lord should be supported by those who are being fed the spiritual food nevertheless Paul and those with him chose not to be supported by others for the following three reasons.

1. So they would not be placing a burden on those they were ministering to.
2. So they would not hinder anyone for accepting the gospel.
3. So that they would not be obligated to anyone and therefore free to proclaim the full gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul would rather Die than be Deprive of his Ground for Boasting.

Pauls words; -

- I would rather die than have anyone deprive me of my ground for boasting (meaning glorying and rejoicing) (v15).

Paul's rejoicing and glorying refers to the fact that he is not placing any burden for his living expenses on those he is ministering to by expecting them to support him, this is why he can glory in his preaching, because he is doing it out of his own will and not for wages so that he does not put any form of obstacle, hindrance or difficulty in the way of the Gospel of Christ (v12).

NOTICE.

It is not his proclaiming the Gospel that he is boasting about but the fact he is able to do it free' of charge we know this because in the following verse he explains to the Corinthians that he cannot boast in the fact he is preaching the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul says that: -

- He will not make full use of his right to be supported by others" (v18) the KJV states it this way, "Paul will not abuse his power in the gospel"

This is referring to being supported by others.

Though it is the right for those serving the Lord to be supported by those they minister to, this does not mean they have the right to live in the laps of luxury, have the best of everything, own excessively expensive and opulent homes, drive only the top of the range cars, stay in the best hotels and wear only designer clothing since it is the money of hard working families many struggling themselves that are supporting them.

Woe to me if I do not preach the Gospel!

1 Cor. 9:16-18 ----- ¹⁶For if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me. Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! ¹⁷For if I do this of my own will, I have a reward, but not of my own will, I am still entrusted with a stewardship. ¹⁸What then is my reward? That in my preaching I may present the gospel free of charge so as not to make full use of my right in the gospel.

Necessity; means compelled, compulsion, forced, distress, constraint it carries the idea of having needs that must be met.

Paul is saying that just because he preaches the Gospel it gives him no grounds for boasting, since Christ laid upon him a sense of obligation and compulsion to proclaim it. Paul here is no-doubt referring to that moment Ananias told him that Jesus in a vision had told him to go and tell Paul that: -

- He is a chosen instrument of mine to carry his name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel" (Acts 9:3-15)

Paul knows if he proclaims the Gospel willing from his own will he will have a reward, but even if he does not want to do it Christ has entrusted him with preaching it, thus the reason Paul's states: -

- Woe to me if I do not preach the gospel! (v16).

The Lord had not only entrusted Paul to this stewardship but gifted him with revelations and miraculous abilities which meant whether he wanted to minister or not he was compelled to proclaim what the Lord had shown him. The words, "Woe to me" embraces the following two aspects: -

1. The grief Paul might face at his loss of reward at the judgment seat of Christ if he did not proclaim Christ's name.
2. To his great sorrow if he could not preach the gospel.

This is the reason Paul says that his great reward is the fact that he can support himself without having to be dependent on others and thereby be subject at some level to others because of their support.

Paul preferred to remain free to preach the Gospel for the following four reasons: -

1. So that others would have no influence or power over him.
2. So that he would not be a burden to those he ministered to.
3. So he would not hinder anyway (especially the poor) coming to Christ
4. So no one could say he is only proclaiming the gospel for the income he receives.

Everything Paul did he did for the benefit of the Gospel and the benefit of others and the reason he considered it a reward that he did not receive wages for preaching the Gospel was because it meant he was not bound to anyone and therefore he was free to preach the full Gospel and not just what people wanted to hear this is one of the reasons why he considers not receiving wages a reward.

Give as You Have Prospered.

1 Cor. 16:1-3 ----- ¹Now concerning the collection for the saints as I directed the churches of Galatia, so you also are to do. ²On the first day of every week, each of you is to put something aside and STORE it up, as he may prosper so that there will be no collecting when I come. ³And when I arrive, I will send those whom you accredit by letter to carry your gift to Jerusalem.

Paul was going up to Jerusalem and passing through Macedonia so he wrote and asked the Corinthian brothers and sisters to take a collection on the first day of the week as God has prospered them until he arrives to collect it. This group of Scriptures highlights the truth that New Testament giving is not the Old Testament commanded law of tithing, but giving as each brother and sister has prospered in their own life.

This means that they are to give from the monies over and above what they require themselves to cover their own family needs and commitments. Paul did not want to have to take an offering while he was visiting the Corinthians so he told them to store it up each week until he arrived.

Notice the following: -

- The only purpose this money was collected was to help brothers and sisters in need.
- The money collected was not for the church that actually collected it, but for other churches in need.
- The faithful willing gave according to their ability to give.
- Giving is spoken of as a gift (a gift is something freely given with no expectation of anything in return).

2 Corinthians.

Paul Had Nothing, but Possessed Everything.

2 Cor. 6:10 ----- 10 as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich, as having nothing, yet possessing everything.

This single verse shines a brilliant spotlight on the truth that Paul was not a rich man, clearly everyone already knows this, but takes a moment to consider the following thought.

Paul was the greatest preacher and evangelist the world has ever known, yet he was poor. There are religious leaders in the world today who believe because they have enormously large churches they should be paid enormously large wages, the same wages as a secular man or woman who is the C.E.O. of an equally large company who employs the same amount of people in their company as they have in their congregations.

This attitude does not flow from the Spirit of God or the Holy Spirit, but from the Spirit of the world and the Spirit of the flesh. No one serving God can compare themselves with the secular world for the following reasons:-

- Those serving God are called to be servants not dominant authoritative bosses.
- Those serving God are called to give not take.
- Serving God is not about being rich, living in luxury and making a profit, but spending your life for the benefit of others.

This does not mean that a minister of the Gospel has to live in poverty they have families to support and all the other financial needs that their followers have and it is their right to reap wages for the spiritual labour and time they spend upon feeding others spiritually.

The focus here is not whether a minister should be paid wages or not, but upon the attitude of entitlement and expectation of being worthy of excessive wages and the sense of entitlement to live in indulgence and the best this world has to offer (i.e. the best hotels, the best limousines and the best clothing etc.

Added to this a C.E.O. is being paid a wage to run a company that pays wages to those working for that C.E.O. whereas a church leader is receiving wages from honest hard working families of which many are struggling financially themselves and unlike those working for the C.E.O. they receive no financial gain in return. This is why Christian giving is called a sacrifice and a gift.

Here we are told that: -

- Paul rejoiced when he was feeling sorrow (v10).

Whoever, like Paul has Christ seated as the King on the Throne of their heart and the glorious hope of the Christian faith underlying the thoughts of their mind will be filled with God's love.

The following three things: -

1. Faith in Christ as the King of the heart, mind and life.
2. The glorious hope of Christ's return.
3. God's love and grace dwelling in the heart.

Together become a spiritual muscle in the inner most being that quietly and gently infuses and invades the grief and sadness (though very real) with a quiet peace and calm strength that upholds the spirit in joy in the midst of the sorrow.

This is God's gift to the faithful who make His Son the centre of their life and not the things of this world.

They Gave According to their Means.

2 Cor. 8:1-4 ----- ¹We want you to know, brothers, about the grace of God that has been given among the churches of Macedonia, ²for in a severe test of affliction, their abundance of joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. ³For they gave according to their means as I can testify, and beyond their means of their own free will, ⁴begging us earnestly for the favor of taking part in the relief of the saints.

These believers were so filled with joy in the Lord that they were deeply moved in compassion for their suffering brothers and sisters in need so much so that they willingly of themselves gave more than they really could afford. They gave their collection to Paul to give as a gift to help those in hardship, giving of this sort manifest the grace of God and the compassion dwelling in a brother or sister's heart.

Giving beyond their means clearly shows these believers were: -

- Willing to make great sacrifices to help their brothers and sisters in Christ.
 - Not self-seeking expecting anything in return.
 - Had enormous compassion dwelling in their hearts for those suffering hardship.
 - Where not believing in Christ for their-own gain, and advantage.
-

For Your Sakes Christ became Poor, that You Might Become Rich.

2 Cor. 8:7-11 ----- ⁷But as you (the Corinthians) excel in everything—in faith, in speech, in knowledge, in all earnestness, and in our love for you— see that you excel in this act of grace also. ⁹For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich yet for your sake he became poor so that you by his poverty might become rich. ¹⁰And in this matter I give my judgment: this benefits you, who a year ago started not only to do this work, but also to desire to do it. ¹¹So now finish doing it as well, so that your readiness in desiring it may be matched by your completing it out of what you have.

These verses are not teaching that Christ became financially poor so believers can become financially rich (as some teach) the riches in this context refer to the spiritual blessings that come through salvation in Christ (i.e. the gift of righteousness by grace, the knowledge of Christ, forgiveness of sin, favor with God, the abundance of God's grace that He lavishes on all those in Christ, God's love and deliverance from death to eternal life and everlasting glory) these are the riches Paul has in mind and when he said, "Christ became poor that you might become rich."

The Corinthians had decided about a year ago to take up an offering to help the poor and those struggling and suffering hardship. Paul is now encouraging them to complete the offering they began collecting with the same zeal that they started with.

Paul is using the principal that Jesus sacrificed himself so that those who are poor in righteousness because of sin could be abundantly rich in spiritual blessings to teach the Corinthians that they should sacrifice some of their worldly riches so that others who are financially poor would have money to buy food and thereby be abundantly blessed by their sacrifice and their gift of grace. This principal, applies to financial things and even time itself New Testament giving is sacrificial giving and an act of grace because it is giving to bless others. It is called: -

- A sacrifice because all giving cost the one giving something, (usually money, material possessions, labour or time)
- An act of grace because it is not a command of God and no one can force someone to give.

The heartfelt motivation of Biblical giving is to give some of what you have for the purpose of blessing others it is not about giving to bless oneself by getting much more back in return (as some teach).

Give According to what You Have, Not According to what You Do Not Have.

2 Cor. 8:12-15 ----- ¹²For if the readiness (to give) (a willing mind in the KJV) is there, it is acceptable according to what a person has not according to what he does not have. ¹³I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened, but that as a matter of fairness ¹⁴your abundance at the present time should supply their need so that their abundance may supply your need that there may be fairness. ¹⁵As it is written, "Whoever gathered much had nothing left over, and whoever gathered little had no lack."

Paul is continuing to encourage the Corinthian church to give to help other brothers and sisters who are in desperate need. Paul tells them to give according to what they are able to give so that they do not put themselves under a financial burden.

Paul does not expect people to put themselves into hardship so that others might be eased, but rather that each one would determine what they are able to give without putting themselves or their own families under a great financial struggle.

God's purpose for this collection is to help brothers and sisters that are in desperate need. The principal is fairness for all meaning that those who had more than they need to live were to help those who lacked and then when those who were lacking were able to get on their feet they in turn would return the financial help to others in need. The idea was that no one would have abundance while others suffered need and in this manner there would be equality (capitalism is not God's ultimate plan for this earth).

This is one of the reasons Paul said: -

- If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

The principal was that everyone did what they could to support themselves so that others did not have to support them. No one was expected to support a lazy person who was only poor because they were not willing to work, but when a person was willing to work, but there was no work or for some other reason they were in desperate need (i.e., famine in the land, fire, natural disasters or persecution and such like things) then their only help was from other brothers and sisters who belonged to the family of the Lord.

From these Scriptures we see that: -

- The giving was from abundance or what people could afford to give.
- No one was expected to give so much that it would put them in financial hardship.
- The giving was for brothers and sisters to buy food for themselves and their families because they were in desperate need.

Let Your Gift be a Willing Gift and Not an Exaction.

2 Cor. 9:5 ----- ⁵So I thought it necessary to urge the brothers to go on ahead to you and arrange in advance for the gift you have promised, so that it may be ready as a willing gift, not as an exaction.

Exaction means: -

- The act of forcing somebody to give something.
- An unfair or excessive demand for something.
- Something that has been forcibly demanded and obtained.

In the context of these verses it applies to money being obtained by force or demand. Christian giving should be given from the willingness of the heart and given as a gift not expecting anything in return. The amount to be given should be decided from a conscious and deliberate calculation of what a brother or sister can afford to give without putting themselves or their family in financial difficulty.

Paul tells the Corinthian church that he is organizing certain faithful brothers to travel to them to receive the offering that they had been collecting and putting aside to help other brothers and sisters in need.

NOTICE: this collection of money was not for their-own church, but to be taken to other churches and given to those in need.

Let each One Give as they Have Made up their Own Mind.

2 Cor. 9:6-7 ----- ⁶The point is this: whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. ⁷Each one must give as he has made up his mind, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

This shines a spotlight on the reality that the commanded law of Old Testament tithing is not what Paul had in mind when he spoke about financial giving. Paul's concept of giving is for each brother and sister to decide themselves what they will give.

The words, "Not under compulsion," highlight the following two things: -

1. No decision to give should be influenced by manipulative speeches and mood shifting music or by guilt, coercion, obligation and impulse.
2. Every decision to give should be made from a conscious thought-out and deliberate decision.

It is certain that Paul was fully aware that amongst the early church there were religious teachers that were very skilled in the art of oratory and speech making and understood that these religious leaders by their eloquent and persuasive speeches could manipulate the naïve into giving what they could not afford.

Following are two reasons Paul said let each one give as they have made up their own mind and not because of the influence of another: -

1. Whoever gives from guilt, coercion, obligation or impulse, is not giving from their own heart nor will they be giving cheerfully.
2. God loves a cheerful giver.

The reason Paul says each one should make up their own mind what they will give is so that they can give with a cheerful heart and the reason God loves a cheerful giver is because it manifests their honest heartfelt compassion to give to help to the poor and those less fortunate than themselves.

God who Supplies Seed to the Sower will Supply and Multiply your Seed.

2 Cor. 9:8-10 ----- ⁸And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that having all sufficiency in all things at all times, you may abound in every good work. ⁹As it is written, "He has distributed freely, he has given to the poor, his righteousness endures forever." ¹⁰He who supplies

seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness.

God will multiply your seed (i.e. money given) does not mean that God will multiply the money a brothers or sister has given back to them (as some teach).

The concept Paul is teaching is that when a Christian gives to the needs of others in the family of Christ those who have received such kind acts will when they emerge out of their hardship repeat the same kindness that they received and in this sense the Christian giving to others in need who belong to Christ is multiplied throughout the body of Christ as each one repeats to others the good deed done for them.

The Reward of Giving.

Paul says, "The reward of financial giving is grace and all sufficiency" (v8). This means contentment in all things, the words, "All sufficiency" in this context carries the idea of a perfect condition in life where the mind is content with its lot. In another conversation Paul said, "He had learned how to abound and how to be abased," meaning he can live in wealth or poverty with a content mind (Philip. 4:12). Paul had learned to accept whatever state he was in and be content.

In another conversation Paul said, "He can do all things through Christ who strengthens him" (Philip 4:13). This means that whatever state or circumstance Paul found himself in he had learned to handle all situations with peace and contentment.

Giving to Help Others Overflows in Thanksgivings to God.

2 Cor. 9:11-15 ----- ¹¹You will be enriched in every way for all your generosity which through us will produce thanksgiving to God. ¹²For the ministry of this service is not only supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing in many thanksgivings to God. ¹³By their approval of this service, they will glorify God because of your submission flowing from your confession of the gospel of Christ, and the generosity of your contribution for them and for all others, ¹⁴while they long for you and pray for you, because of the surpassing grace of God upon you. ¹⁵Thanks be to God for his inexpressible gift!

The ministry of this service refers to the Corinthians giving to the needs of brothers and sisters in Christ in other churches in the region. Giving to the desperate needs of brothers and sisters produces thanksgiving to God through the thankfulness and joy of those who receive the gift.

God's grace shown toward the brothers and sisters in need was manifested in the collection that other churches had taken up for them. Those who had been helped by this generous gift saw it as a manifestation of the exceeding grace and love of God dwelling in the hearts of those who willingly gave to their need.

Brothers from Macedonia Supplied Paul's Need.

2 Cor. 11:8-9 ----- ⁸I (Paul) robbed other churches by accepting support from them in order to serve you. ⁹And when I was with you and was in need, I did not burden anyone, for the brothers who came from Macedonia supplied my need. So I refrained and will refrain from burdening you in any way.

In previous Scriptures we have seen that Paul and those with him would at times work night and day to raise finances to support himself and those with him and to have money to give to the poor.

Now in these verses we see that there were certain churches that at various times and occasions did give financial support to help Paul in his ministry as he travelled.

Prior to these two verses we see that Paul was afraid that certain so called super-apostles would come and by their cunning and skilful speeches led the Corinthian brothers and sisters astray from a sincere and pure devotion to Christ and from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul with this in mind asks the Corinthians, "Did he make a mistake by using the money that other churches had given him so that he could preach the Gospel to them free of charge rather than place a burden on them by asking them to support him.

It seems that if Paul was visiting a wealthy church they would support him, but if the church was poor he would work and support himself rather than place an extra financial burden on them. Much like the richer churches in the Western world give financial support to the poorer churches in third world countries.

Paul's words, "I robbed other churches" obviously does not mean Paul literally robbed certain churches it carries the idea that if the Corinthian brothers and sisters did turn from the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ to follow the so called super apostles then Paul would feel as though he had robbed these churches who had given to support his ministry because their generosity would have produced no fruit if the Corinthian church turned to follow the so called self-appointed super apostles.

Galatians.

James, Peter, John and Paul all Ministered to the Poor.

Galatians 2:10 ----- ⁹when James and Cephas and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given to me (Paul), they gave the right hand of fellowship to Barnabas and me, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised. ¹⁰Only, they asked us to remember the poor the very thing i was eager to do.

This verse shines a spotlight on the truth that the primary purpose concerning money in the New Testament was to help the poor and needy. When Paul and Barnabas went to minister to the Gentiles James, Peter and John (pillars of the church) told them that they should remember the poor, meaning they should not ignore them, but help them when able. Helping the poor and needy (especially those who belonged to the family of Christ) was part of the apostles and Paul's and those who ministered with him ministry.

Philippians.

I Can Do All Things through Christ Who Strengths Me.

Philippians 4:10-13 --- ¹⁰I rejoiced in the Lord greatly that now at length you have revived your concern for me. You were indeed concerned for me, but you had no opportunity. ¹¹Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation i am to be content. ¹²I know how to be brought low and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. ¹³I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Paul (in prison at this time) is full of joy because the Philippians have shown him genuine concern and kindness which not only comforts him, but evidences their sincere and authentic love for the Lord, thus the reason for Paul's great joy in them.

Paul has learned to be content whether he: -

- Has abundance or lacks.
- Is in prison or free.
- Has wealth or is poor.

Paul's statement: "I can do all things through him who strengthens me" (v13) has been used by certain religious ministers to teach those in Christ that no matter what they choose to do (start a business, a church, a new career etc.,) they will succeed because they "Can do all things in Christ who strengthens them," but this is not what Paul is saying, the focus and context the verse is in is about contentment and having a peaceful mind. Paul is saying, "No matter whether he is rich or poor, has plenty or lacks he is content and at peace since he can cope with any situation or circumstance (good or bad) through Christ who spiritually and mentally strengthens him.

The Secret: Paul's words, "I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need" implies that not every brother and sister in Christ learns this secret (maybe attain to it might be a better phrase). Paul does not speak of this as a secret in the sense that it is hidden, but in the sense that not everyone in Christ attains to it since the power of this secret is in direct accordance to the depth of our surrender to Christ and our exaltation of him as Lord and King not only of our heart, but also of our mind our passions, desires, ambitions, goals and dreams.

The Philippians Supplied Paul's Needs.

Philippians 4:15-18 ----¹⁵you Philippians yourselves know that in the beginning of the Gospel when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me in giving and receiving, except you only. ¹⁶Even in Thessalonica you sent me help for my needs once and again. ¹⁷Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that increases to your credit. ¹⁸I have received full payment and more. I am well supplied, having received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent, a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

When Paul was ministering in Macedonia and Thessalonica it was the Philippians that helped him financially and also shared his troubles and had concern for him. Even though Paul appreciates the financial help and concern that the Philippians gave to him, he is far more thrilled that their gift to him will result in eternal rewards stored up for them in heaven.

The Philippians giving manifested the fruit of compassion and the eager desire to see the gospel spread to others. Giving of any kind to further the Gospel of Christ, manifest the love of God in the heart.

Paul clearly understood that any form of giving is a sacrifice (i.e., giving time to others take time from self, giving money to extend Gods Kingdom or help others denies self-certain luxuries and material things) all giving involves a sacrifice and different levels of dying to what self wants (the greater the giving the greater the dying to self). This is one of the reasons Paul refers to giving as a fragrant offering, a sacrifice acceptable and pleasing to God.

God Will Supply Every Need According to His Riches in Glory.

Philippians 4:19 ----- ¹⁹my God will supply every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.

This verse is most likely one of the most abused verses in the Bible since many religious leaders use it to teach their followers that God will fulfil their dreams, prosper them and fill their bank accounts to overflowing etc. This is not only reading far more into the verse than what Paul is saying, but a good example of taking a verse out of context (mostly to entice people into the church by false promises).

The glorious, royal and majestic words, according to god's riches in glory in Christ Jesus" by far surpass anything this mortal world can offer since anything the world gives can not only be taken in a moment, but is also only temporary whereas God riches in Christ are eternal and no-one can rob them nor can anything take them from a brother or sister in Christ.

God's riches in glory in Christ Jesus refer to those in Christ: -

- Having their sins forgiven.
- Having favour and fellowship with God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.
- Having been adopted into the eternal family of God.
- Having been given the free gift of righteousness by faith in Jesus Christ.
- Having Gods promise of being resurrected to eternal life and everlasting glory.

1 Thessalonians.

Paul could Have Made Demands on the Church as an Apostles of Christ.

1 Thess. 2:4-7 ----- ⁴just as we (Paul and the apostles) have been approved by God to be entrusted with the Gospel so we speak, not to please man, but to please God who tests our hearts. ⁵For we never came with words of flattery as you know, nor with a pretext for greed— God is witness. ⁶Nor did we seek glory from people, whether from you or from others, though we could have made demands as apostles of Christ. ⁷But we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother taking care of her own children.

The words, “We could have made demands as apostles of Christ” means that Paul could have asked the Thessalonian church to support him while he was ministering to them, but rather that be a burden he chose to take care of them like a Mother takes care of her own children.

1 Thess. 2:9 ----- ⁹For you remember, brothers, our labor and toil, we worked night and day that we might not be a burden (chargeable in KJV) to any of you, while we proclaimed to you the Gospel of God.

Paul worked hard to support himself because he did not want to put any burdens on those he preached to. Paul could very easily have become a very rich man had he acted and spoken like the so called super apostles of his generation who were, by their skillful oratory and eloquent speeches no-doubt becoming very successful and very rich from the religion they proclaimed.

Paul in these verses is saying that neither he nor the apostles allowed greed or the desire for gain to influence them in anyway.

They did not fall to the temptation of using flattering and smooth words or distorting and twisting Scriptures so that they would, appeal to human greed, nor did they entice people by using teachings that were pleasing to the flesh (self, ego and pride).

Turning the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ into a Gospel of prosperity is very seductive because it not only appeals to human greed and the desire for gain, but also to the desire to be rich and successful.

Ministers that teach a Gospel that promotes financial prosperity surround the Scriptures with deceptive teachings clothed in covetousness and biblical language.

Aspire to Work with Your Own Hands and be Dependent On No One.

1 Thess. 4:11-12 ----- ¹¹and to aspire to live quietly and to mind your own affairs (do your own business in KJV) and to work with your hands as we instructed you, ¹²so that you may live properly (walk honestly in KJV) before outsiders and be dependent on no one (lack of nothing in KJV).

God's path to prosperity is to work honestly

2 Thessalonians.

Paul and those Ministering with Him Worked Night and Day.

2 Thess. 3:8-10 ----- ⁸nor did we eat anyone's bread without paying for it, but with toil and labor we worked night and day, that we might not be a burden to any of you. ⁹It was not because we do not have that right, but to give you in ourselves an example to imitate. ¹⁰For even when we were with you, we would give you this command: If anyone is not willing to work, let him not eat.

Though Paul had the right not to pay for the food and the meals that others gave he chose to rather to work so he could pay for what he ate for the following two reasons: -

1. He wanted to make himself an example for others to follow.
2. He did not want to place any financial burden on those he was ministering to.

Paul said, "They did not eat any ones food without paying for it." Certain families and people would have taken Paul and those with him into their homes and provided them with daily meals. Paul no doubt greatly appreciated the kindness of these people and did not want to burden their household with extra financial burden so he and those with him paid for the meals and food they ate.

Here we are told that Paul worked night and day to support himself, so that he would not be accountable to anyone. It is certain Paul would not agree with borrowing excessive amounts of money and then putting faithful brothers and sisters under a heavy and oppressive burden to pay the debt.

Paul would certainly not put himself in a position where he would have to compromise the preaching of the Gospel for fear of the church losing people and not being able to meet bank repayments on excessive loans. Paul kept himself financially free so he could preach to please God and not speak out of fear of not having enough money to pay an excessive debt to a worldly bank.

1 Timothy.

Godliness with Contentment is Great Gain.

1 Timothy 6:3-10 ----- ⁵constant friction among people, who are depraved in mind and deprived of the truth, imagining that godliness is a means of gain. ⁶Now there is great gain in godliness with contentment, ⁷for we brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world. ⁸But if we have food and clothing with these we will be content. ⁹But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation into a snare into many senseless and harmful desires (foolish and hurtful lusts in KJV) that plunge people into ruin and destruction. ¹⁰For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evils. It is through this craving that some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pangs.

The words certain men imagined that godliness is a means of gain can carry the following two ideas: -

1. Being rich and wealthy is a sign to godliness.
2. Preaching the Gospel was a way to get rich and wealthy.

Peter when writing of false prophets and false teachers said: -

- In their greed they will exploit you (make merchandise of you in the KJV) with false words (2 Peter 2:3).

During Paul's generation there were certain men (as there are today) who believed that preaching the Gospel was a way to get rich. These men no-doubt were skilful orators and gifted at speech making and it is certain to their followers that they appeared to be righteous and spiritual men (if they didn't no-one would follow them), but Paul says that anyone who images that godliness is a means of financial gain has a depraved and corrupt mind. True godliness is manifested in contentment this is because those who are content are not driven by covetness or for the riches and indulgences of this world.

Content: in this context carries the idea of being satisfied and grateful for what one has in contrast to craving after the excesses, luxuries and indulgences of this world.

There is great gain in godliness with contentment for the following two reasons: -

1. Godliness refers to living a lifestyle that honours God and does what is good and right and whoever lives this way will not only always remain on the right side of the law, but will be rewarded when they stand before the Lord.
2. Those who are content with what they have will have joy in their hearts and their mind will be relaxed and at peace.

The words, "If we have food and clothing we should be content" carry the idea that if we have all we need to survive, we should be content. It does not mean we should not have cars and computers if these things are needed so that we can have food and clothing. So it could be stated, "If we have everything we need to provide us with food and clothing we should be content."

Paul is contrasting those who are content with their life even though they have very little to those who even though they have more than enough to supply their needs are never content, but always craving for bigger, better and more because they are driven by ego, pride and greed.

NOTE: every brother and sister in Christ should always keep in mind that at least a third of the world's population struggle daily just to find food to eat and clean water to drink. For those in Christ there is great danger in craving to be rich since it can consume the mind, bring temptations to compromise ethics and deceive, oppress and cheat others for their own gain. This does not mean that it is wrong for a Christian to be rich there will be certain brothers and sisters in the global family of Christ who God has blessed with brilliant minds, skills and talents that has enabled them to become very rich.

The focus of what Paul is saying is upon craving and desiring to be rich there are no-doubt men and woman amongst the global body of Christ who have become rich without actually craving after it, but simply because of their good decisions, skills and talents.

The difference between those who desire and crave to be rich because of the love of money is that every dollar they earn will be to feed self, ego and pride whereas a faithful brother or sister who has become rich will be spending the excess on extending the Kingdom of God and the poor and those in need and in doing this they will be storing up treasure in heaven.

The following words of Paul bring the balance to wealth and riches: -

- The love of money is a root of all kinds of evils (1 Tim. 6:10).

Money is not evil in itself it is the love of it that is the evil. If anyone doubts this statement consider the three biggest money making business in the world are: -

1. Weapons of war.
2. Illegal Drugs.
3. Human trafficking.

Added to these three are the multinational companies who make mega profits by paying their labours in third world countries a pittance of a wage (many who are only children) while their company makes billion dollar profits. These corruptions are all driven by the love of money (i.e., the love of profit). Paul in this letter is saying that there are those in Christ whose faith; has been corrupted by the love of money and the excessive worldly luxuries, pleasures and indulgences it can bring. Those in the secular world esteem men and woman who are rich, wealthy and famous.

Those in Christ's Kingdom can be in danger of coming under a similar false philosophy that gain, worldly riches and material wealth is a sign of great godliness, but the amount of worldly wealth a minister, church or believer abounds in has nothing to do with their spiritual life before God, even the ungodly and the false religions are abundantly blessed with riches of this world.

Wealth and riches cannot be used as a sign that a church or brother or sister in Christ is spiritual religions such as Islam and the Catholic Vatican are the wealthiest religions in the world and they don't teach the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ added to this there are secular men and woman whose wealth and riches are abundant to the extreme.

The only true measure of a brother or sisters spirituality is their devotion and faithfulness toward the Lord Jesus Christ, their contentment in this world and their compassion toward others, doing-good and their manifestation of the fruits of the Spirit (i.e., love, compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness and such like things). True spirituality has nothing to do with the things of this world.

Perhaps if we all kept the following words of Paul: -

- We brought nothing into the world, and we cannot take anything out of the world (V7).

Uppermost in our minds it would keep us grounded and thankful that we are able to eat every day, have clothes to keep us warm and a pillow to lay our heads upon, especially when we consider there are over a billion people (this includes children) in the world that wake up not knowing if they will have food to eat that day.

In the Western World it is not only very easy to lose sight of the truth that life is not about acquiring a great abundance of material possessions, but it is also very easy to get caught up in the worldly spirit that is never satisfied, but is always craving for bigger, better and more. Faithful Christians pray for their families and those who are suffering, perhaps it might be spiritually profitable to spend a little time in prayer examining our own spirit to see if we are caught up in the spirit of the world without realising it or are resting in what God has given us and being thankful that we are able to eat and clothe ourselves every day.

Especially when we consider those who have: -

- Lost everything to natural disaster.
- Have terminally ill children.
- Suffer crippling diseases.
- Have lost a child or loved one.
- The billions of families in third world countries who struggle just to stay alive.

No man or woman should give all their time to chasing after the things of this world and not be rich toward God because no one gets out alive and no matter how great the riches' wealth and possessions we have acquired in this world or the importance and fame we have attained to it all counts for nothing when we are being lowered into the darkness of the grave to decay and be devoured by worms. The only riches that God will value in this our darkest hour is the richness of love flowing out from our heart toward Christ and toward others in compassion, kindness, mercy, grace, forgiveness and such like things.

James.

Let the Lowly Boast in their Exaltation and the Rich in their Humiliation.

James 1:8-11 ----- ⁸a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways. ⁹Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation ¹⁰and the rich in his humiliation, because like a flower of the grass he will pass away. ¹¹For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So also will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits.

James is saying that the poor are to rejoice in that God has exalted them to a place in the Kingdom of God and eternal life while the rich rather than be exalted in their riches are to rejoice in that they are made low or humble before God because their great riches have no power to save them from their sin and deliver them to eternal life.

The rich should consider that they are sinners before God and remember that without God's grace in Christ they are destined for the grave and that regardless of how much money or success they have they are destined for the grace and have no hope of being delivered from it.

Knowing that everyone is not only destined for the grave, but goes to the grave with nothing regardless of how much wealth they have acquired in this world should protect the rich and wealthy in Christ's Kingdom from the dangers of pride.

Esteeming the Rich and Demeaning the Poor.

James 2:1-4 ----- ¹My brothers, show no partiality as you hold the faith in our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory. ²For if a man wearing a gold ring and fine clothing comes into your assembly, and a poor man in shabby clothing also comes in, ³and if you pay attention to the one who wears the fine clothing and say, "You sit here in a good place," while you say to the poor man, "You stand over there," or, "Sit down at my feet," ⁴have you not then made distinctions among yourselves and become judges with evil thoughts?

Verse one in the King James Bible says: -

- My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons (v1).

Based on this some religious teachers have taught that James is rebuking those he is writing to because they should have the faith of Jesus and if they did they would be able to do the same miracles Jesus did, but this is to isolate the verse and take it totally out of its context, and force it to mean something other than what it actually does mean. (I mention this primarily because it is a perfect example of how false doctrines are established).

Partiality: means to be one-side, to have a bias or show favouritism.

The faith that Jesus had that James his brother is referring to is Christ's lack of showing partiality and favouritism to anyone. It mattered not to Jesus whether a person was noble or lowly, a Bible scholar or lacked such knowledge, rich or beggarly he treated them all with the same esteem. Jesus exalted no-one on the basis of their high standing in society or lack of it.

In the assembly of the Christian church no brother or sister should be esteeming one person above another regardless of whether they are the president of a country or the C.E.O. of a global company all humans are to be treated with the same respect and dignity. No matter whether noble or poor, rich or lowly we are all sinners that need saving and even when saved we are still in desperate need of God's grace. Added to this not one of us is saved or counted righteous because we have made ourselves to be so or are worthy of it, but because of our faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and God's grace so whether noble, rich or poor we cannot even

boast that we have done any great works to earn our own salvation since it is granted to us as a pure gift by God because of our faith in His Son and not because we have made ourselves worthy of it by our worldly achievements and successes.

James is rebuking those who he is writing to because they are setting themselves and those they considered to be noble, rich and successful above the poor and Lowly and in doing this they are not only judging people according to their religious status or their worldly riches and possessions, but also showing that they consider those who are poor and less fortunate to be of lessor value than the rich and wealthy.

This is why James is telling them they do not have the faith that Jesus had, Christ never judged or exalted anyone who came to him in this worldly manner.

Certainly this is the way the world judges those who belong to it, the mind (consciously or unconsciously) of those in the world judge a person according to what they own i.e., the size of their home, car, company, bank account, fame and such like things, should a person be blessed with these they are esteemed as a somebody to be looked up to and exalted whereas those who lack are judged as lower class citizens (i.e., the lessor).

This is one of the reasons that self-worth of those in the world is fickle, it is based on what they have and achieve outwardly and not on who they are as a person on the inside. Their worldly possessions, fame and significance give a sense of importance and a feeling that they are somebody of worth, but the citizenship of those in Christ is not of this world and therefore they should not be acting or judging in this manner.

Dangers of Spiritual Gifts.

Judging others to be of greater or lesser value is not limited to judging according to worldly wealth possessions riches and fame etc., there is a more subtle danger for Christians and that is of judging people to be of greater or lesser value according to their success, authority and importance within the Christian community.

Here the danger is to exalt and esteem those who are blessed with spiritual gifts above those who lack them. This was a great problem the Corinthian brothers and sisters had within their church so much so Paul told them they were not only acting like infants in Christ, but behaving only in a worldly way (1 Cor. 3:1-5).

A second danger of exalting others is that the one being exalted becomes puffed up with pride. When this happens they can be seduced and deceived into feeling that they are not only more valued by God, but also feel superior to those who they are ministering to (especially to those who do the more menial tasks).

Exaltation of those gifted can indirectly result in others in the faith that are not blessed in the same way feeling of less worth not only to the assembly, but to God. James is teaching that to judge people this way is grossly sinful and worldly.

God does not judge those in the family of Christ according to their worldly success or lack of it or according to their spiritual gifts and religious positions of authority, but rather according to the integrity of their heart and the kindness and compassion they show toward others.

The self-worth of those in Christ should never be based on their positions of authority or standing in the world or the church or based on riches, wealth and material possessions, gifts and talents they may have attained, but because: -

- They are accepted by God because of their faith in Christ.
- They are humble and have a heart of integrity and honesty before God and man.
- Their heart is full of love, compassion mercy and grace and such like things.
- The deep desire of their heart is to honour God and the Lord Jesus Christ.

NOTE: this does not mean we should never speak words of credit or of encouragement to someone who has worked hard to serve the Lord or to those who have blessed us in some manner, even the Lord himself will honour and reward whoever faithfully serves him, but giving credit and encouraging a person is a totally different thing to exalting and esteeming someone above others.

God chose those who are Poor in the World to be Rich in Faith.

James 2:5-7 ----- ⁵Listen, my beloved brothers, has not God chosen those who are poor in the world to be rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom, which he has promised to those who love him? ⁶But you have dishonored the poor man. Are not the rich the ones who oppress you, and the ones who drag you into court? ⁷Are they not the ones who blaspheme the honorable name by which you were called?

The rich that James has in mind most likely refers to the Jews at Jerusalem who hold the religious power and authority over Israel and who are opposed to the Lord Jesus Christ and the Christian faith (v7), but what James is saying is not limited to the prideful religious Jewish leaders at Jerusalem, but can refer to the leaders of any established religious church, institution or organization who not only consider themselves to be of greater value to God than those they are ministering to, but also oppress them by their ministry.

James is saying just because these Jews dwell at Jerusalem, have the religious power, wear the holy garments and strictly hold fast to the laws of Moses, the ceremonial rites and religious Jewish customs and traditions does not make them the chosen of God, in fact quite the contrary it is the destitute, the oppressed and the poor God has chosen (referring to the common people).

James is telling all who belong to the Lord, that should we exalt religious leaders or priests above the poor and beggarly simply because of their lack of fortune we are not only debasing, humiliating and bringing shame on the less fortunate, but are transgressing the law and making ourselves a gross offense to God (v8).

A Rich Church and a Poor Church.

Jesus said to the church at Smyrna that he was aware of their tribulation and their poverty and then told them that they are actually rich, meaning rich in faith because they will be given a crown of glory and inherit eternal life and everlasting happiness" (Rev 2:9).

In contrast he said to the church at Laodicea who were worldly rich and had prospered so much so that they were in need of nothing that they without realising it were actually wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked (meaning spiritually destitute) (Rev 3:17).

Pride and Christian Faith.

Judging ourselves better than others or considering others as lessor is a result of pride lurking within the heart. Amongst the religious world we often hear messages that teach against unlawful sexual sins and such like things, but very seldom against pride yet pride is the most dangerous of all since it is not only deceptive, subtle and not always easy to recognize, but self and ego readily embrace it with open arms.

The greatest hindrance to a to a man or woman to receiving Christ and walking in God's ways is pride since it is the enemy of humbleness. Christ the Son of God our perfect example humbled himself before his enemies that God's will would be accomplished through his life.

In chapter four James says, "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6) clearly showing that it is through humbleness God works not pride.

The Royal Law.

James 2:8 -----⁸If you really fulfill the royal law according to the Scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.

The royal law means the most-highest law, the chief law it is the principal law of all laws. Here is the stunning splendor of God's wisdom and the Christian faith all the laws, rules and do's and don'ts throughout the entire Bible can be summed up in the following two laws: -

1. Love God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.
2. Love your neighbour as yourself.

This means do not deliberately do harm to other humans. No sane person deliberately does things to inflict pain on themselves, loving others as you love yourself is not about feeling some warm and fuzzy emotion towards others, it is about not hurting others as you would not hurt yourself.

The thing God hates the most is when we do harm to another person, physically, financially, sexually, verbally, mentally, emotionally or spiritually and the thing God loves the most is when we do good to others.

If you Show Partiality you are Committing Sin.

James 2:9 -----⁹But if you show partiality you are committing sin and are convicted by the law as transgressors.

In contrast to the royal law, "Love your neighbour as yourself," (v8) if we show favouritism in regards to judgment to anyone because we have a bias toward them we are transgressing the law and committing sin. This is because God is a God of justice and justice means doing what is right and fair to all people regardless of our personal feeling or differences toward them.

A Practical Example: a common saying amongst the world is that, "Husbands, wives and friends should support each other regardless of whether they are right or wrong." Certainly this sounds wonderful, but it is worldly and not what God would say.

For those who belong to the family of Christ supporting justice, fairness and what is right for all people regardless of whether they are in God's Kingdom or our friend's justice must override our love and friendship for a person. Not one of us should favour a person who is in the wrong simply because they belong to the family of Christ or because we have an affectionate friendship with them since to do this is to pervert and deny justice and justice is one of the great pillars of God's throne.

1 Peter.

Shepherd the Flock of God Willingly and Not for Shameful Gain.

1 Peter 5:2-4 -----²Shepherd the flock of God (feed the flock of God in the KJV) that is among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but willingly as God would have you; not for shameful gain (not for filthy lucre in KJV) but eagerly; ³not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock. ⁴And when the chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.

Filthy Lucre carries the idea of being eager and greedy for gain. The title filthy lucre does not apply to all money there is nothing wrong with money that has been honestly earned or that is being used for the good of others and to help the poor. Money is referred to in this context as filthy lucre because it is in the context of religious leaders who are greedy for gain.

Rather than the motivation of the heart to proclaim the Gospel and shepherd the flock being one of love and service to the Lord, these religious leaders motivation is worldly gain and to get rich. Peter is warning against letting money be the motivation for proclaiming the Gospel and shepherding the flock. It is very likely Peter saw the following three groups of men: -

1. Men who entered the ministry because they saw it as an easy career path in contrast to working for a living.
2. Men who saw it as an opportunity to get rich.
3. Men who stopped ministering because there was no financial gain.

Those who humbly and faithfully serve the Lord regardless of financial reward will receive an eternal crown of glory when the Lord Jesus Christ returns.

The following words of Peter: -

- Do not domineer over those in your charge (v3).

Shine a brilliant spotlight on the truth that Christian leaders should not be ministering as an authoritarian leader or as a dictatorial minister, who dominates those he shepherds, but should rather be humbly leading and guiding. Paul likens himself and those ministering with him as a nursing mother taking care of her own children (1 Thess. 2:7) and always saw himself as a father caring for his own children.

During the age of the early church there were those amongst the Christian faith who wanted worldly rewards and riches for following Christ here and now in this present sinful and temporal world. They were trading their eternal birthright and promised reward for instant gratification in this world.

3 John.

May You be in Good Health Even as Your Soul Prospers.

3 John 1:1-2 ----- ¹The elder to the beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. ²Beloved, I pray (wish in the KJV), that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul (even as thy soul prospereth in KJV).

Prosper in this context is not about worldly riches, but spiritual riches. This is not a doctrinal teaching concerning worldly prosperity (as some teach), but a prayerful, wishful and hopeful greeting to Gaius. John in this letter is greeting Gaius in the same way that Christians writing today would begin their letter by saying to the brother or sister in the Lord that they love, "May God prosper you and keep you in good health etc."

Revelations.

You say I am Rich I have Prospered Not Realizing, You are Blind and Naked.

Revelation 3:17 ----- ¹⁴"And to the angel of the church in Laodicea write: "The words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of God's creation. ¹⁵" I know your works you are neither cold nor hot. Would that you were either cold or hot! ¹⁶So, because you are lukewarm and neither hot nor cold. I will spit you out of my mouth. ¹⁷For you say, I am rich I have prospered and i need nothing, not realizing that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked.

The church in Laodicea was very wealthy, but the Lord strongly rebukes them saying that they are spiritually blind to the extreme. One of the ideas the word Lukewarm carries in this context is the idea that even though those in the Laodicea

church had faith in the Lord Jesus Christ they were indifferent to the things that matter to God. It means they took no thought upon how their actions would reflect upon God and the good name of the Lord Jesus Christ. They believed in the Lord, but they did not live before him in their mind or their behaviour.

It is most likely they were very much like the brothers and sisters in the Corinthian church who Paul could not speak to as spiritual people because they were still people of the flesh (self, ego and pride) and lived as infants in Christ that he could only feed with milk and not solid food (babies drink milk). These brothers and sisters were full of jealousy, strife, pride (they exalted each other) and were acting in a human way (1 Cor. 3:1-4) because of this Paul had to spend his time teaching them right behaviour and right attitudes (the milk of the word).

In contrast to the church at Laodicea is the church of Smyrna who though they were suffering great poverty the Lord said that they were rich (Revelation 2:9). This shines a brilliant floodlight on the truth that the spiritual well-being of a church cannot be measured by how opulent and magnificent the cathedral or church building might be; how high its steeple is; how beautiful the stain glassed windows; how glorious it is inside and how famous its artwork might be.

The only two ways that the 'SPIRITUAL' well-being of any church can be measured are: -

1. By the faithfulness, devotion and integrity of its leaders and their followers manifested toward God and the Lord Jesus Christ
2. By the fruits of the Spirit (love, compassion, kindness, mercy forgiveness and such like things) in the leaders and their followers manifested toward each other and toward those outside the Kingdom of God.

The New Testament is a spiritual book that is about reconciling sinners with God, forgiveness of sin, deliverance from death to eternal life and everlasting glory. It is about living in a spiritual union of love with the Lord Jesus Christ and godly behavior it is not a manual that teaches certain keys of faith that if practiced will make a person prosperous and worldly rich, this teaching is a total distortion of the glorious Gospel message of Christ.

End