FINANCING THE GREAT COMMISSION

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Category: John Fifteen

FROM THE AUTHOR

This book is dedicated and addressed to the student of the Word.

Not every Christian is a student of the Word, though each should be. I define a student of the Word as: *a serious inquisitor into the ways of God by the study of the Bible for the purpose of embracing those ways into his or her life in a determined effort to obey the Lord Jesus Christ.*

The student of the Word does not study that he might know, but that he might do. He not only says, *"Your word have I hid in my heart"*, but he says, *"Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you.*" He is not on a head trip. He is not a hearer only.

There are certain qualifications required to be a student of the Word. The student of the Word is free. Spiritual freedom is actually a rare commodity in the body of Christ. Paul was free and he said so: "*I am free from all men.*" If man is master, one is not free to follow after God. Prejudice, partisanship, fear of man – each of these disqualify the Christian from being a student of the Word. Such is merely a student of man.

The student of the Word loves God more than anyone or anything. *"You shall have no other gods before me.*" A person follows after the one he loves. The Holy Spirit is continually leading into truth, but only the one who loves God will follow. If man loves his church more than God, he will only follow the Spirit into truths having the endorsement of his first love, his church. No one will be able to say, "Excuse me, Lord, I didn't know", for He could well reply, "You didn't know because you refused to be taught. You refused to be taught because you preferred deception. You preferred deception because you loved another more than Me."

The student of the Word has a settled confidence in the Bible. He is convinced the Bible is the pure, infallible Word of God. If there is a crack in one's conviction, satan will surely find it. The student of the Word is a rare breed even though it is so easy to become one. Make this your prayer and you will become a student of the Word:

"Father, I come to You in Christ's matchless and holy name. Forgive me for the times my mind and

heart were closed to Your truths. I hereby declare before You that I choose in my heart of hearts to be a student of Your Word. I will obey the truths of Your Word as the Holy Spirit reveals them to me. I will study the Bible without fear or favor of man. If and when You unveil a misconception in my thinking, I will turn from that misconception and obey Your Word, even if in so doing it will cost me the approval and favor of others. I believe as I say this prayer, You are giving me the strength to be unwavering in this decision, and I receive that strength now, by faith, in Jesus' name. Amen."

You are now a student of the Word. Congratulations! And this book is dedicated to you.

Many times you will be tempted to renege on your decision. It's not easy to be a student of the Word. It's not easy to stay free. It really isn't. But God's grace "*is sufficient for you."* Should you ever stumble, simply get up and get going again.

This book deals with finances.

Your income costs the amount of time it took you to earn it. Spending income is spending life. Your money can buy so much or so little. Hopefully this book will help you spend with wisdom.

No, this book is not like many others you may have read on the subject of finances. It is quite different. You will be challenged as never before. Anyone less than a student of the Word will not finish it.

Now enter into this book. Come on in! I ask you to explore its logic with a free and open mind. Challenge. Sift. Weigh. You are responsible for you.

Note: The King James Version is used with some variance; *thou* and *ye* has been changed to *you*, *hath* to *has*, *as he purposeth in his heart* to *as he purposes in his heart*, etc.

To God be the glory !

CHAPTER ONE

- **DOES THE CHURCH OWE THE WORLD? HOW MUCH?**
- **WHO IS RESPONSIBLE TO FULFILL THE GREAT COMMISSION?**
- **WHAT IS *THE SYSTEM*?**

IT IS REQUIRED

1 Corinthians 4:2: **it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.**

Each Christian is a steward. One is either a faithful steward or a slack and/or insubordinate steward. A faithful steward is obedient to the Master's Word. "*It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful*" to the instructions of the Lord God in all areas of his life including finances.

Money can be very expensive. Income costs. A man invests a certain amount of his life to attain a

certain income. Spending that income is spending life. Spending money is spending time.

Time is precious. There is so little of it. How one invests time is crucial. And that is why the whole matter of finances is so important to the steward wanting to be found faithful. When an individual drops a sum of money into a collection plate, he is actually contributing that portion of his life it took to earn that money. A wise and faithful steward is choosy as to which collection plate he honors. He knows he is accountable.

Matthew 28:19, 20: **Go therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost;**
Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you:

This is the Great Commission. The church has been given the awesome responsibility of reaching the world for Christ. Each Christian is obligated to God to invest in the Great Commission.

At this very hour there are possibly as many as five billion souls on that "*broad…way, that leads to destruction*" . Five billion is a staggering sum. It is equivalent to five thousand cities each with a population of one million. Financing the Great Commission is a very costly enterprise. Funds are required for everything from tracts to transportation, pencils to computers. Missionaries and evangelists must be sent and sustained.

Unfortunately, so little of the money contributed to various spiritual and religious programs and projects is directed toward the Great Commission. This is criminal. It is shameful. It is sin.

Money, well invested, results in souls for Christ. Entrusting money to the right person or organization will increase that person's or that organization's ability to reach the lost and desperate. Or simply investing in quality tracts will bring fruit. A bicycle donated to a zealous native of a Third World country could result in the salvation of dozens or even hundreds of souls . These are just a few ways of responding to the demands of the Great Commission.

LOVE FOR THE WORLD

John 3:16: **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,**

A man will not finance that which he does not love. A Christian will not give consistent support to the Great Commission unless he loves the world for which Christ laid down His life.

In the above verse, the word 'loved' is past tense. God 'loved' the world. But God also 'loves' the world . God loves the world as much now as the day He "*gave his only begotten Son.*" If it were necessary for the salvation of the world, He would give Him again, such is God's love for the masses who walk in darkness.

If one truly loves a friend, he will help that friend's children, if asked, even if those children are not particularly lovable. Likewise, if a person truly loves the Father, he will surely have a place in his heart for the world that Father loves dearly. Anyone not having a burden for the lost does not

appreciate his own salvation. He has forgotten from where he has come.

Matthew 7:12: **all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even so to them:**

If a hunter was lost he would certainly hope, and even expect, someone was out looking for him. How would he feel if he somehow discovered no one was searching? His friends could have at least financed a search party but didn't care enough.

Jesus said, "*whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do even unto them.*" To ignore the plight of the spiritually lost is willful disobedience to Christ.

Matthew 5:7: **Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.**

"*They"* shall obtain mercy. Who? The merciful.

Matthew 7:17: **every good tree brings forth good fruit;**

"*Every"* good tree produces good fruit. A tree that does not produce good fruit is not a good tree. A good Christian produces Christians. Sheep beget sheep. Every Christian having possessions to sell or money to spare can readily produce good fruit by simply investing in the Great Commission.

Matthew 10:8: **freely you have received, freely give.**

Give without charge. Give freely. Give generously. Give.

Matthew 22:39: **And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbour as yourself.**

Who is "your neighbour"? When Jesus told the story of the man robbed and beaten on his way to Jericho (Luke, chapter 10), He asked this question, "*Which now of these three , was neighbour unto him that fell among the thieves?*" The answer is obvious, "*He that showed mercy on him.*" Jesus then said, "*Go, and do likewise.*"

Jesus is merciful and He demands mercy from His disciples. *"Blessed are the merciful,"* He said, *"for they shall obtain mercy."* If there is a crust of indifference around one's heart , one should immediately repent before King Jesus.

Luke 12:34: **where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.**

If one's treasure is not in the Great Commission, neither is one's heart in the Great Commission. A pastor cannot expect an assembly to forward all of its donations into building programs, staff salary, maintenance, social activities, etc. – and expect that assembly to maintain a concern for the lost.

If students of the Word want to monitor their heart, they merely have to catalog their spending. You spend the most on that which you care the most about, whether it be the Great Commission, self, church, religion, or whatever. What matters least, receives least.

John 3:16: **For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son,**

He gave His Son to the world. Should not the Christian give to the world? It was for the world Jesus laid done His life. Shouldn't the Christian spend at least some of his life for the world? Jesus came to planet Earth "*to save that which was lost."* Shouldn't the body of Christ be moved with the same passion and compassion for the same lost people? Jesus said, "*My meat is to do the will of him that sent me."* It is the Father's will that none *"should perish, but that all should come to repentance."* In the light of these words, in light of the fact every believer once was where they are, how can the church be callous toward the Great Commission.

THE VALUE OF A SOUL

Matthew 16:26: **For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?**

By these words Jesus taught one person is worth more than the whole world and all it contains. What is the value of five billion people?

1 Corinthians 4:2: **it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful**

The faithful steward, the student of the Word, the Christian who takes the mandates of the Lord seriously should ask him/herself an obvious question:

"Is an acceptable portion of my substance and income being invested in the Great Commission?"

APPENDAGE

God has no alternate plan for bringing the world into His kingdom. The heathen are dependent solely upon the obedience of the redeemed. Should the church fail the lost will stay lost. Eternally.

The Great Commission is a costly undertaking. There is, however, no lack in God's kingdom. He owns *"the cattle upon a thousand hills."* It is not in the justice of God to commission without providing.

God has always provided. Tragically, these provisions are spent elsewhere. Swimming pools and tennis lessons. Vacations and stamp collections. Diamond rings and saunas. Church buildings, salaries, and parking lots. The problem is not lack, the problem is misappropriation. Christians are hoarding. Christians are building.

The world is like that. There is enough, but distribution is askew. Some plunder, some hunger. But that's to be expected of the world for they know not Christ. Such selfishness and shortsightedness should not be found amongst God's people. The example of generosity is before the church and will be a witness against it: Father gave His Son; Jesus laid down His life.

It is my observation the church is actually taught to misappropriate. The new convert is quickly introduced into what I call *The System*.

The System is the term I have coined for the financial structure and the mentality adopted by many fundamentalists. *The System* is the accepted method of collecting and distributing funds. *The System* generates and controls the flow of multi-billions of dollars.

The System is hailed as sacred by the denominational and the interdenominational, by the charismatic and the evangelical, by the traditional and the liberal. *The System's* most ardent lobbyists are those paid a salary by *The System*.

The System builds buildings, provides organs and sound systems, finances the pastor and, generally speaking, provides quite well for the local assembly and denominational headquarters. As far as the Great Commission is concerned, however, *The System* is intolerable and God hates it.

While the pastor is relatively secure, the evangelist must soon learn the art of fund raising. He is the ox that is muzzled as he treads out the corn. The pagan nations perish from lack of knowledge and yet he is not sent. He is admonished to "wait upon the Lord", or, "*if* God is in your ministry, He will provide a way."

The local church declares itself the "storehouse" and therefore God's collection agency. The pastor perpetuates *The System*. He is the first to challenge the believer after payday, faithfully passing the plate under the believer's nose every Sunday, not once but twice. Often this man has no sympathy for the evangelist and resents him coming to town.

If the Great Commission is ever to be properly financed, *The System* must be overthrown.

Tithing is the cornerstone of *The System*. Someone has reached over to the other side of Calvary, pulled the tithing statute out of the Law, built upon this cornerstone *The System*, and highlighted it to such a degree that the Great Commission has become very, very secondary. If ever *The System* is to topple, the cornerstone must be removed.

Tithing is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER TWO

- **DOES THE BIBLE INSTRUCT THE NEW COVENANT PERSON TO TITHE?**
- **IS THE CHRISTIAN WHO DOES NOT TITHE ROBBING GOD?**
- **DID THE EARLY CHURCH TITHE?**

TITHING AND THE LAW

Leviticus 27:30, 32: **And all the tithe of the land…is the Lord's:
it is holy unto the Lord.**

And concerning the tithe of the herd, or of the flock…the tenth shall be holy unto the Lord.

Tithe means a tenth part. When one says he tithes, it is generally understood he regularly gives a tenth of his income to his local church, probably in obedience to the above verses.

For one to say, "I tithe ten percent" indicates a lack of understanding of the word *tithe* because it is impossible to tithe anything except ten percent. One cannot tithe fifteen percent, twenty percent,

etc.

It is most important that the student of the Word does not confuse the words *tithe* and *tenth* with the words *donation*, *offering*, *gift*, etc. if you hope to comprehend the logic of this chapter and this book. Tithing is not a donation, tithing is a demand.

Tithing is a holy regulation of the holy Law. Everything God decrees is true, right and holy, and tithing was certainly no exception. In the light of that, however, there are two questions for the student of the Word to consider:

- Did God decree or intend tithing be applied to the New Covenant person ?
- If the conclusion is 'no' , how will it affect my own spending?

Malachi 3:8-10: **Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed me. But you say, Wherein have we robbed you? In tithes and offerings.**
You are cursed with a curse; for you have robbed me, even this whole nation.
Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in my house,

It was a serious offense to hold back part of the tenth that God's Law demanded. By so doing, one actually brought a curse upon himself. The question for the student of the Word to consider is: Would God speak those same words to the New Covenant person who does not tithe?

Many would argue that the Christian who neglects or refuses to tithe is indeed robbing God. It is a widely accepted supposition that tithing belongs on both sides of the cross. Some even suggest that such a Christian is "*cursed with a curse."* This chapter challenges these suppositions.

PETER AND PAUL

Galatians 2:14: **I said unto Peter before them all, If you, being a Jew, live after the manner of Gentiles, and not as do the Jews, why compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?**

Peter, although *"being a Jew"*, no longer conformed to Jewish practices, but rather lived *"after the manner of Gentiles."* It is common knowledge the Jews tithed and the Gentiles did not tithe. It is very difficult to come to any but the following conclusion: *Peter did not tithe.*

At one time Peter was a devoted Jew. Acts chapter 10 verifies this. When the Lord commanded Peter to *"kill and eat"* that which was not permitted by the Law to eat, Peter replied, *"Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten any thing that is common or unclean."* But now Peter no longer adhered to the Law. If Peter really did observe the Law, whether it be in matters concerning foods, circumcision, the Sabbath, tithing or whatever, Paul could not have made the statement that Peter no longer *"live after the manner of…the Jews."*

Paul challenged Peter: *"why compel the Gentiles to live as do the Jews?"* The same question could be asked of those in leadeship today: "Why do you compel Christians to live as do the Jews?"

2 Cor. 8:12-15: **For it there be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.**
For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened:
But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may be a supply for their want, that their abundance also may be a supply for your want: that there might be equality:
As it is written, He that had gathered much has nothing over; and he that had gathered little had no lack.

These words reveal that *Paul did not endorse, and was not sympathetic toward, the tithing system.* Paul never speaks of a tenth or a percentage, but rather a principle of equality and generosity.

Now Paul was *"a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee."* He was raised with a 'tenth' mentality. Tithing had been ingrained in him as a lifestyle since childhood. And yet there is not the slightest hint in all of his letters that 'tenth' or 'percentage' had a place in his born-again persuasions.

TITHING AND THE EARLY CHURCH

Acts 15:28, 29: **For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;**
That you abstain from meats offered to idols, and that from blood, and from things strangled, and from fornication:

This was the situation: *"The apostles and elders came together"* to discuss whether or not *"it was needful to circumcise them , and to command them to keep the law of Moses."* After *"much disputing"*, they decided to write letters *"unto the brethren which are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia"* to tell them they were not required to keep the Law. In those letters they wrote, *"Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls , saying You must be circumcised, and keep the law; to whom we gave no such commandment."* Also included in the letter were the above verses, *"For it seemed good to the Holy Ghost, and to us…"*

From these verses certain conclusions can be made:

1. "*It seemed good to the Holy Ghost"* not to impose the tithe upon the early church.
2. "*It seemed good"* to the apostles and elders to likewise not impose the tithe.
3. Those who try to impose the Law upon Christians are guilty of "*subverting…souls."*

2 Cor. 9:7: **Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.**

The saints in Jerusalem are encountering hardship. The church of Corinth has already indicated a readiness to help. In this second letter Paul encourages the Corinthians to follow through on their good intention. In chapters eight and nine Paul gives the student of the Word much insight into God's will concerning finances.

From the above verse we learn:

1. Each person was free to decide for oneself the amount to give for the cause of the saints in Jerusalem.
2. A tenth was not requested, suggested, or mentioned.
3. They were not to give *"of necessity"* . No one was to apply pressure or demand a set amount or a percentage.
4. Whatever the amount, large or small, the sacrifice was to be pure – no reluctance or self-pity.
5. God loves a cheerful giver, one who shares what one has even though not compelled to give, and does so with a cheerful heart.

Paul didn't give instructions to take this contribution from the tithe funds. Why? Why did Paul not say one way or another? The answer is obvious - *there was no tithe money*. There is no other conclusion. After studying Paul's instructions regarding the collection, it must be apparent to the student of the Word that if the Corinthians really did tithe, Paul would certainly have given instructions to either use or not use this tithe money. To not do so would cause confusion.

1 Cor. 16:2: **Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.**

It was not conventional to have collections on Sunday. If that were the practice Paul would have written something like this: "Save the money you receive from your weekly collections for the saints in Jerusalem so that you do not have to have a collection for this cause when I am with you." Sunday was, it is generally understood, the day Christians gathered. If at this time there was no regular collections, when did they collect the tithe money? No, *there was no tithe money*.

THE NEW COVENANT

Hebrews 10:16: **This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord; I will put my law into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.**

There are many of God's laws imprinted on the heart and mind of each Christian at rebirth. These laws could be termed *New Covenant laws*. Tithing is not one of them.

A Christian may have been quite adept at overlooking the needs of others before meeting Christ, but now finds himself caring and responding. Why? Because of the laws that God has *"put…into their hearts"* and wrote *"in their minds."* That same Christian, however, would never think of giving ten percent because God never put a percentage in his heart or mind. Tithing is taught by man. Therefore tithing cannot be a New Covenant law.

Hebrews 8:6: **now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.**

The Christian has a much more superior covenant with God than any other person in the history of

man. Who else but the Christian can say, *"Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God"* (1John 3:1)? Can an angel? Could Adam? Abraham or Moses? No. Only New Testament believers have been made sons through the *"better covenant"* of which the Lord Jesus Christ Himself is mediator.

This *"better covenant"* is not based on percentages, portions or numbers. Tenth mentality is foreign to the heart and intent of this agreement.

Percentages, days, and numbers belong to the Old Covenant. *"In that he says, a new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away"* (Hebr. 8:13). Every feature of the New Covenant is either zero percent, one hundred percent or comparative. For example:

Zero percent. *"Their sins and their iniquities will I remember* no more*"* (Hebr. 8:12).
"*Fornication, and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it* not once *be named among you"* (Eph. 5:3).

"*There shall* in no wise *enter into it any thing that defiles, neither whatsoever works abomination, or makes a lie"* (Rev. 21:27).

100 percent. *"Having obtained* eternal *redemption for us"* (Hebr. 7:25).

"*Whom he called, them he also justified* (100%): *and whom he justified, them he also glorified* (100%)" (Rom. 8:30).

Comparative. "Whatsoever *a man sows, that shall he also reap"* (Gal. 6:7).

"Every man shall receive his own reward according to *his own labour"* (1 Cor. 3:8).

"According to *your faith be it unto you"* (Mat. 9:29).

Gal. 4:5-7: **that we might receive the adoption of sons.**
And because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father.
Wherefore you are no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ.

A Christian is a son or daughter, adopted by the Father at rebirth. Sonship is eternal. Today he is a son residing on planet Earth, tomorrow he will be a son residing in the New Jerusalem in heaven.

Now a son is a son. One cannot become more or less of a son. One will not be more of a son when he moves to heaven. Now the way the Father relates to His child will be the same in heaven as on earth. It will not change because of a change in location. The demands He makes on His son here, He will make there. If God really did require a tenth here on earth, He would also require it in heaven.

Imagine what a huge storehouse He must have!

Hebrews 10:9: **He takes away the first, that he may establish the second.**

The old era is gone. The regulations on which it is built are gone. *"The second"* era has arrived and is in effect. *"Old things are passed away; behold, all things have become new"* (2 Cor. 5:17). The Christian does not have to obey the regulations of the Law. Here are just a few verses to emphasize this truth:

Rom. 6:14: *You are not under the law.*
Rom. 7:6: *Now we are delivered from the law.*
Rom. 10:4: *Christ is the end of the law.*
Gal. 3:24, 25: *The law was* (past tense) *our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.*
Gal. 4:5: *To redeem them that were* (past tense) *under the law.*
Gal. 3:10: *As many as are of the works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, Cursed is every one that continues not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.*

Rom. 8:14: **as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.**

The most exciting and most fruitful way to live is to be led by the Spirit. A friend was about to drop a certain amount of money into the collection plate at his church one Sunday when the Holy Spirit suddenly stopped him. A short time later, the Spirit prompted him to give it to a person he met in his business affairs. The amount met the need exactly, an assurance he really was led by the Spirit.

Had this friend been enslaved to the tithe mentality, he would have dropped that sum of money into the plate regardless of what the Spirit was saying. A Christian who tithes to his church is not being *"led by the Spirit of God",* not in the amount he gives or the place he gives it.

Gal. 3:2, 3: **This only would I learn of you. Received you the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?**
Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now made perfect by the flesh?

The *"foolish Galatians"* were turning from a life in the Spirit to a life governed by the Law because of the subversion of certain Jews. Paul writes, *"There are some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ"* (Gal. 1:7).

Paul presents to the Galatians simple logic: "*Having begun in the Spirit , are you now made perfect by the flesh* ?"

Paul writes to these people, *"if righteousness came by the law, then Christ is dead in vain"* (Gal. 2:21). Today many are still trying to impose the Law upon those who have *"begun in the Spirit."* That is why some attend church on Saturday. And that is why so many tithe. Those who impose or in any way perpetuate or condone these conditions are those who "*pervert the gospel of Christ."*

TITHING VERSUS CIRCUMCISION

John 7:22: **Moses therefore gave unto you circumcision; (not because it is of Moses, but of the fathers;)**

There is a saying among some advocates of the tithe system: "That which comes *before* the Law comes *after* the Law." This aphorism is meant to explain why the regulation of tithing is brought over into the New Covenant while all other regulations are left behind. The fact that tithing was Lawful is in itself no reason to believe that it should traverse the *Crossline* . If that were so, all other regulations of the Law should come over as well, i.e., honoring the Sabbath , purification and diet requirements, circumcision, sacrificial rites, etc. But, it is argued, tithing came *before* the Law and that sets it apart from the other regulations of the Law. Thus the saying, "That which comes before the Law comes after the Law."

The fact of circumcision, however, blows that hypothesis to pieces. Circumcision, like tithing, is not *"of Moses* , *but of the fathers* ," and yet circumcision is not brought over the Crossline.

Paul wrote some very categorical statements regarding circumcision: *Circumcision is nothing"* (1Cor. 7:19), *"neither circumcision avails any thing"* (Gal. 5:6), *"let him not be circumcised"* (1Cor. 7:18), *"if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing"* (Gal. 5:2).

Circumcision therefore proves a regulation in effect before the Law does not necessarily come after the Law. If tithing really was meant to be the only regulation to be part of the New Covenant era the New Testament writings would most certainly declare it. They do not. On the contrary, there is much evidence that tithing, like all other regulations of the Law, did not pass over the Crossline.

EVERY NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCE TO TITHING

Matthew 23:23: **Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matter of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**

Luke 11:42: **But woe unto you, Pharisees! For you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God: these you ought to have done, and not to leave the other undone.**

Luke 18:12: **I fast twice in the week, I give tithes of all that I possess.**

Hebr. 7: 1-10: **For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;**
To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of Peace;
Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginnings of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abides a priest continually.
Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.
And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though

they come out of the loins of Abraham:
But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.
And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.
And here men that die receive tithes; but there he received them, of whom it is witnessed that he lives.
And as I may so say, Levi also, who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.
For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

Some are so desperate for a basis to justify and promote the tithe that they claim the fact the word 'tithe' can be found in New Testament writings is evidence that tithing is a New Testament principle. This is either very shallow reasoning or outright trickery. Actually, the words 'tithe,' 'tithes,' and 'tenth' is written a sum of ten times in the New Testament. Comparatively, the word 'sabbath' is written sixty times, and 'circumcision' fifty-seven times.

The above verses are the only New Testament verses that use the words 'tithe' and 'tenth'. There are no more. In these verses there is not the slightest suggestion the Lord is teaching, promoting or condoning the usage of the tithe for the New Covenant person. Let us review these verses:

In Matthew 23:23 and Luke 11:42, Jesus is denouncing the Pharisees for their hypocrisy and shallowness. The Pharisees are not the church. Jesus is not addressing New Covenant people. He is speaking to Jews living under the Mosaic Law.

Jesus is not telling the Pharisees they ought to tithe. He is telling them they ought to 'have' tithed . *But woe unto you, Pharisees! for you tithe mint and rue and all manner of herbs, and pass over judgment and the love of God; these you ought to have done , and not to leave the other undone."*

In Luke 18:12, Jesus is comparing a Pharisee who was declaring his righteousness before God with a publican who *"smote upon his breast, saying, God be merciful to me a sinner"* (Luke 18:13).

In Hebrews 7:1-10, the writer is relating to the greatness of the priest Melchizedek because Jesus is *"a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek"* (Hebr. 7:21). *"Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils."* Some teach Christians ought to tithe their income to Jesus because Abraham tithed to Melchizedek and Jesus is *"after the order of Melchizedek."* The fact Scripture does not teach such logic means nothing to such teachers, many of whom depend on the tithe to finance their salaries.

Scripture does not record Abraham tithing his income to Melchizedek; he tithed, on one occasion, the spoils of battle.

The weightiest evidence against the tithe system is the fact there is nothing in Scripture to suggest such a practice. The Bible, that which is *"profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness",* does not instruct the Christian to tithe. Jesus never taught it. Nor did

Paul. Nor any other New Testament writer. There is not one precedent to be found. Not one. And there is certainly nothing in Old Testament literature to suggest that tithing should traverse the Crossline.

APPENDAGE

Why then has tithing been so widely accepted?

Why is it that fundamental churches are divided over other Biblical doctrines , and yet seem to be in agreement on the subject of tithing?

Why have other regulations of the Mosaic Law been shunned and this particular regulation so warmly embraced?

There are no nice answers.

Tithing is not a Scriptural teaching, tithing is a *convenience* teaching. It has been adopted because it is so very convenient. The tithing practice helps generate a tremendous flow of money through the local assemblies, and that is the only reason it has been so readily accepted.

Tithing is the cornerstone of *The System*. On this cornerstone other stones of logic are added. For example, where there are tithes there must be a storehouse. (*"Bring all the tithes into the storehouse"* Mal. 3:10). What is the storehouse? It is assumed the local assembly is the storehouse. What else could it be?

On top of this another stone is added. Who has the authority to dispense the tithes of the people? Obviously, it must be church leadership. Who else can it be?

There are many stones of unwritten rules and mentalities regarding the allocation of the millions of dollars of tithe money collected every week . Thus we have *The System*, the accepted method within evangelicalism of collecting and distributing funds, and all the logic used to justify and promote these methods of collecting and distributing funds.

Jesus taught, *"The tree is known by its fruit"* (Mat. 12:33). *"Every good tree brings forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree brings forth evil fruit"* (Mat. 7:17). In the light on His words, some of the attributes of *The System* are listed for the student's consideration.

- Almost all funds collected by the assembly are spent on the welfare of the assembly.
- The pastor is on salary. The evangelist must learn to be a fund raiser.
- *The System* is largely responsible for many apostles, prophets, evangelists, and teachers 'turning' pastor.
- *The System* robs from the Great Commission.
- *The System* seriously decreases an assembly of its passion for souls.
- *The System* provides the local church with air conditioning, a sound system, and an organ but does not provide tracts for the lost.

- *The System* is the evangelical's alternative to being led by the Spirit.
- *The System* does little for the poor.

All these points are dealt with in other areas of this book.

CHAPTER THREE

- **MAY ONE TITHE OUT OF CHOICE?**
- **IS TITHING BUILDING ON THE ROCK OF GOD'S WORD?**
- **IS IT WISDOM TO HAVE OTHERS DECIDE HOW TO SPEND ONE'S OWN MONEY?**

THE INFALLIBLE WORD

2 Tim. 3:16: **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:**

Some people profess to tithe out of choice and not obligation. There are churches encouraging ten percent as a guideline or a minimum, but do not impose tithing as a requirement. Is this permissible?

Scripture *"is profitable for doctrine…for instruction in righteousness."* Scripture is God's Word to redeemed man. Scripture is God's standard. There is no other standard. God has given no person liberty to offer an alternative. The only alternative to obedience is disobedience.

It must be realized only teachings proceeding from the Word should be accepted by the student of the Word. It is not sufficient to retain a teaching or a custom until someone proves that teaching or custom to be false. Such should never have been embraced in the first place.

One cannot adopt a traditional practice out of choice; a person surrendered that right when he first called Him, *"Lord, Lord."* Accepting the lordship of Jesus is a decision to do things His way. His ways are Scriptural. Jesus is His Word.

Gal. 3:15: **Brethren, I speak after the manner of men; Though it be but a man's covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disannulls, or adds thereto.**

It is not legal to change a ratified agreement between two people. Who would be so presumptuous to add to the covenant between God and man of which Jesus Christ Himself is the mediator?

Psalm 12:6: **The words of the Lord are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.**

God's Word is beyond refinement. It is pure. God's Word does not encourage tithing as a guideline, as a minimum, or as a choice.

Gal. 1:8: **though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which**

we have preached unto you, let him be accursed.

It is a very serious matter to *"preach any other gospel." "Any other gospel"* is any gospel that Paul had not preached to the Galatians. Paul never preached tithing as a guideline, a minimum, or a choice.

2 Thes. 2:15: **Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the tradition which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle.**

The epistles of the New Testament do not teaching tithing. The *"traditions which you have been taught…by word"* are the same traditions taught by letter. The exhortation is to *"stand fast, and hold"* to these teachings and none other.

Rom. 11:34: **who has known the mind of the Lord? or who has been his counsellor?**

Who can say to the Lord, "I have a better idea"? Who can add to God's Word? Who would dare?

OBEDIENCE TO THE WORD

Mat. 7:24: **whosoever hears these sayings of mine, and does them, I will liken him unto a wise man, who built his house upon a rock:**

The*"rock"* is the sayings of Christ, the Word of God. The "*house"* in this case is one's financial affairs. A wise man is one who builds his financial affairs upon the rock of Christ's Word.

Mat. 7:26: **And every one that hears these sayings of mine, and does them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand.**

A "*foolish man"* builds his "*house"* upon the sand. What is sand? Sand is anything and everything that is not the Word of God. Sand is traditional thoughts and patterns contrary to the thoughts and patterns of the Bible.

The one who uses anything other than the Word as a guideline for one's finances is a "*foolish man."*

Luke 6:46: **why call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?**

"Why do you call me, 'Lord' and do not do the things I tell you. I find your lip-service insulting. Do not call Me by that title until you are prepared to be obedient to My Word. Only then will you have the right to call Me, 'Lord, Lord.'"

Gal. 5:2-4: **Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing. For I testify again to every man that is circumcised, that he is a debtor to do the whole law. Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace.**

That which applies to circumcision also applies to tithing . It is certainly not the *act* of circumcision that would cause one to be "*fallen from grace* ," but rather *reliance* upon circumcision for salvation or sanctification.

Paul would have been very suspicious if a Galatian would have told him, "I want to be circumcised. No, not because it is a requirement, I just choose to be circumcised." Paul might have asked such a person, "Why do you choose to be circumcised?" The same question should be asked of those who tithe out of choice, "Why do you choose to tithe?"

Is it possible people who tithe 'out of choice' really tithe 'just in case'? Just in case God requires it. Just in case it will keep them in man's favor. Just in case it will help keep their salvation. Just in case it will make them a better Christian. Just in case the blood of the Lamb itself is not sufficient to save. Christians who tithe 'just in case' have a real problem; all that Paul wrote to the Galatians could well apply to such people:

"*Behold, I Paul say unto you, that if you* (tithe)*, Christ shall profit you nothing.*
For I testify again to every man that (tithes) *that he is a debtor to do the whole law.*
Christ is become of no effect unto you, whosoever of you are justified by the law; you are fallen from grace."

Mat. 15:3: **Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?**

Jesus was scolding the scribes and Pharisees for teaching that people were free from the responsibility of spending money for the care of their parents if they gave that money to God, a traditional teaching contrary to God's command, *"Honour your father and mother."*

Many Christians are guilty of the same sin. They have accepted the traditions of men over the Word of God. They feel dropping their tenth into the collection plate dissolves themselves of the responsibility of being obedient to God's Word. They are no longer obligated to feed the poor. Or help their neighbor. Or support the evangelist. Or give to the widow.

The Word of God must have preeminence in one's life. The otherwise is disobedience.

APPENDAGE

Every believer must give an account to God for the way he handled finances entrusted to him. It is essential that the student of the Word spend wisely. You are to decide for yourself how much goes where. It is foolishness to surrender this privilege and responsibility to others, to allow others to decide where to direct your funds. "Trust us", they say. "We have discernment. Let us decide how to spend your money." And yet they won't be standing with you when you give your account to the Lord. It matters more to you than anyone else how your money is spent. Therefore you should direct your own givings.

It is wrong to tithe. Tithing is not building on the Word. Tithing is choosing another way. It must be obvious, therefore, it is also wrong to collect tithes . As a matter of fact, it is the responsibility of leadership to denounce the practice , and to instruct the people to decide for themselves the amount to give and where to direct their contributions.

A person who has tithed all his Christian life may be at a loss as to how to handle this area of his finances for himself. Such a one may be wise to open a bank account for the sole purpose of managing the finances to be directed toward the word of God. Such a venture could prove to be exciting.

Every entry into this account becomes God's property. It cannot be taken back even for emergency purposes. This money is holy unto the Lord. All funds given for the extension of God's work goes through this account. Checks are written on everything spent, helping the individual record exactly how much of his income has gone into the Lord's work and also how these funds were spent on financing the Great Commission, supporting the pastor, helping the poor, etc.

Now that the believer has something to give, the Lord can direct. One must learn to be led by the Spirit, to differentiate between a 'good idea' and a prompting of the Holy Spirit. This walk in the Spirit will improve with time, experience and prayer. If money entered into the account is spent as the Holy Spirit so directs, there will be much fruit forthcoming.

If there is more money coming into the account than going out, it could be that God wants the account to build up for a special purpose, for example, to finance an evangelist's trip to India, to cover the cost of a printing press for a Third World church, or whatever.

This account could also be used to underwrite one's own work for the Lord. If the Lord has led you into a ministry of witnessing on the streets or door-to-door, you may be wise to invest in tracts and/or Bibles. If there is a needy family in the neighborhood, a hamper of food might be an effective witness to the love of Christ.

A bank account could help every Christian be a better steward.

CHAPTER FOUR

- **WHAT IS GOD'S PERSPECTIVE REGARDING HIS CHURCH AND THE GREAT COMMISSION?**
- **IS THE GREAT COMMISSION BEING PROPERLY FINANCED?**
- **WHERE ARE THE FUNDS REQUIRED TO FINANCE THE GREAT COMMISSION?**

IT IS REQUIRED

1 Cor. 4:2 **it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.**

A wealthy landlord receives news that his homeland people had been stricken by a deadly epidemic. Fortunately, he has in his possession the antibiotic to combat this ravenous disease. He immediately sends a number of his servants to their rescue and entrusts to his servants a large sum of money to meet the expenses they will surely incur. He instructs these servants to minister the medicine and to care for the stricken however they are able.

The servants love their good and generous master. And they know the antibiotic is powerful to save

the sick and dying because they themselves have once been cured from the same disease by this same medicine. And so with much fervor and compassion in their hearts, they set out for the master's homeland.

When at last they arrive at their destination they discover that the awful reports of the condition of these people were not exaggerated. Oh, what a pitiful sight! Multitudes of people – men, women and children – helpless, hurting, confused, dying in their sickness.

The servants decide among themselves that before they begin the enormous task of ministering to the sick, they should establish a camp for themselves. After setting up camp, they elect a leader, a man with a shepherd-like heart who will care for them and give direction. The leader shoulders the responsibility of caring for the stewards and proposes a permanent headquarters be constructed, a place where they can rest periodically from the difficult task they will soon be encountering, a place where they can come together and encourage one another. Some are very enthused with this proposal, and some object. After some debate, a vote is taken and a building committee formed.

The building committee embraces the challenge with enthusiasm and designs an edifice that will not only satisfy their needs but also give glory to their good and generous master. The passion burning in the servants' hearts for the landlord's commission is now temporarily diverted into an enthusiasm for the building project. At the urging of the gifted and determined leader everyone gets involved. Soon the foundation is laid and, brick by brick, the headquarters complex begins to take shape.

Unhampered, the epidemic rages. The increasingly pitiful cries of the helpless people can occasionally be heard over the clamor of all the building activities, so much so that some of the stewards lay down their tools and bring some of the precious medicine from the stock to give to them. They also take a portion of the master's money to purchase bandages and blankets and other medical equipment. The leader is alarmed, fearing everyone will abandon the building project. He admonishes the mutinous stewards, pointing out their action is causing division. He calls an emergency meeting and makes an impassioned plea for unity and commitment to the group. Many of the dissident stewards repent of their rash behavior, and almost everyone pledges commitment to the group and to leadership. Some, a few, resist peer pressure and continue to minister to the masses.

After some time the complex is finished. It is indeed a fine edifice. The stewards have proven themselves to be master builders. The project, however, ran over the estimate, as building projects often do, and the master's money is depleted. A message is sent back to the master requesting more funds. The master agrees to allocate a certain amount of money to the stewards every month. The leader forms a committee and they immediately draw up a monthly budget.

It has already been decided the competent leader should be given a salary. And he will certainly require a secretary. And an office and stationary. The new building requires chairs, comfortable

chairs for the stewards who will soon begin the arduous task of ministering to the sick. The grounds around the complex are in dire need of landscaping. And there is need of musical instruments to give inspiration to their weekly meetings. And then there is money needed for taxes. And maintenance. And…

Well, the master's monthly allocation is simply not enough to meet the budget and supply these immediate needs. The stewards approach the moneylenders who gladly respond to their plight for a mere ten percent interest.

At least twice a week the leader dispenses a dosage of medicine to each in his flock so there will be no chance anyone will contract the terrible disease growing more rampant with every passing day. By now most of the stewards' hearts have become crusty toward the master's commission. They become more demanding and selfish. Their ears become deaf to the sick and dying just outside the headquarters walls. Dress and fashion become more and more relevant. They involve themselves in social functions which had the effect of fortifying the commitment each had made to the group.

Word got back to the landlord that very little of his precious medicine has been given to the sick. The landlord was deeply troubled. His beloved homeland people are dying needlessly, and the stewards he trusted have proven themselves unfaithful. He writes a letter and sends it to his unreliable stewards.

My dearest children,

I want to express the undying love I have for each of you. Without hesitation I would lay down my life for you, and I gladly share all that is mine to meet your every need.

I am, however, distressed beyond measure and beyond description at the evil reports I have recently received about the way you have squandered my money. This money was not meant to build buildings or to comfort yourselves. It was meant to meet only your immediate needs and the needs of the sick and dying people. I had instructed you to minister my precious medicine to these people, but you have kept it to yourselves even though there is enough for everyone. I expected you to lay down your life for this cause but instead you have sought your own comfort and misappropriated my funds. You have turned my money into blood money.

Because I love you with an undying love, I chasten you and call you to repentance. Give up your dead works. Complete the task I have given you. Be filled again with compassion for the hurt and dying people.

Remember, one day I will call each of you back to give an account. Each of you will be rewarded on the basis of what you have done and did not do. And remember my words I have given you, "It is required in stewards that a man be found faithful."

Your loving master.

Some stewards weep grievously at their beloved master's words. How could they have been so blind? They turn from their selfishness and go out to minister love and compassion to the sick and dying people, bringing to them the precious medicine and passing on to them almost every penny of their share of the master's money, keeping for themselves only enough to meet their most essential needs. Others are indignant against their master's words and harden their hearts against them. Had they not built this edifice to the master's glory? How can he be so insensitive to their zealous endeavors? They refuse to abandon their programs and social activities, convinced he simply did not mean what he said. And they continue to grow in self-centeredness, blind to the fact that one day they must give an account.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the landlord. The epidemic is sin-sickness. The people who have contracted the deadly disease are the world, perhaps as many as five billion people – helpless, hurting, confused, dying in their sickness. The precious medicine is the Word of God, the good news of Jesus Christ, the only antibiotic able to combat the raging epidemic.

The stewards are the church, the body of Christ. The landlord's instructions to tend to the sick and dying is the Great Commission. The master's money is the Master's money. Whether it comes into the Christian's hands through income or inheritance or whatever, it is still the Master's money. Much of that money has been provided for the purpose of fulfilling the Great Commission.

As the story suggests and as history verifies, the church has been guilty of misappropriation of funds. Money allocated to the Great Commission was never meant to build buildings or comfort the Christian. The church has turned this money into blood money. Jesus is distressed beyond measure. The world is dying needlessly in sin and most of his trusted stewards have proven themselves unfaithful.

The letter is this book. It is a chastening and a reproof, a call to repentance. It is Rock. Some will repent and turn from dead works. They will begin to use resources entrusted to them to take the Master's medicine to the lost. Others will be indignant. They will harden their hearts and keep the traditions held sacred for so many years.

The message to everyone is clear and emphatic: *"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

APPENDAGE

The crux of this analogy is simple: The Great Commission must be financed.

It is not in the justice of the Lord to give a commission without providing the substance to accomplish that commission. The otherwise is unthinkable. Sufficient resources are, and always have

been, available to the church. The church has always had funds in its possession that God has intended to be used for the salvation of those dwelling in darkness. The world doesn't know it, but there is a steady and substantial flow of resources allocated by God for their salvation.

This abundant stream of money is entrusted to the church. It flows through Christians' hands. If that money is spent on something other than the Great Commission , then the church is guilty of misappropriation of funds. If because of that misappropriation people die in their sins , this money becomes blood money – their blood in on the hands of those who misspend.

If these words offend, let them offend. The world is going to hell and the church is discussing whether to pave the parking lot this year or wait until the air conditioning system is paid off. The world sends men to the moon and subsidizes a multi-trillion dollar defense budget, and yet the church, *"heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ",* has not yet come close to completing the commission given almost two thousand years ago. The church must awake to the reality of heaven and hell, and the value of a soul. The church must learn obedience.

From God's perspective salvation of men comes before church building programs and social activities. This is not to say God could not and does not instruct a people to build a building. But if that church building and all expenses it entails is built from and maintained by money designated by God for the Great Commission, that is nothing less than theft. That assembly is stealing. That money was meant to bring perhaps thousands into God's kingdom. It is not a matter of how much money that church building cost, but rather how many souls it cost.

The Great Commission must be financed. The otherwise is sin. Jesus has said, *"Verily, verily I say unto you, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God."* The gospel must go forth. *"How shall they preach, except they be sent?"* The hour is late, the stakes are high, the message is clear: *"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

CHAPTER FIVE

- **IS EVERYONE OBLIGATED TO HONOR THE COLLECTION PLATE EVERY SUNDAY?**
- **IS *THE SYSTEM* FAIR TO THE EVANGELIST?**
- **IS IT WISDOM TO HAVE THE PASTOR GIVE OVERSIGHT TO MOST OF THE CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE SAINTS?**

LIFE IN THE SPIRIT

Romans 8:14: **as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.**

One of the attributes of sonship is a willingness to be directed by the Holy Spirit through all life's happenings. The New Covenant person must submit himself to the Spirit of God in his financial affairs if he hopes to be fruitful. There is no alternative.

Throughout history man has proven to man that he can't. He is unable. His lot is pain and failure. *"There is none that understands…there is none that does good, no, not one"* (Rom. 3:11,12). Man is deficient to bear good fruit.

"*With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible"* (Mat. 19:26). It is possible to know, to be able. With God it is possible. The Holy Spirit makes the impossible possible.

John 16:13: **when he, the Spirit of truth, has come, he will guide you into all truth:**

Twenty-four hours a day, every day, the Holy Spirit is leading into truth. He never rests. And He never leads into error. If a person miscalculates, misappropriates, overemphasizes, neglects or falters, it is because that person has not been sensitive to He who leads *"into all truth."*

Gal. 5:18: **if you are led of the Spirit, you are not under the law.**

This is a very definite statement. Who cannot understand? These words should be memorized. They are two-edged. It should be wielded against those who would impose laws and regulations.

This *"law"* in the above verse is the Mosaic Law, the Law given to the Israelites through Moses. The "*foolish Galatians"* were submitting to the Mosaic Law due to subversive teachings of certain Jews. Now if one *"led of the Spirit"* is not under this God-given Mosaic Law, he certainly is not under any other law , written or unwritten, old or new. If one is submissive to a law, a code, an ethic, or someone's vision, that person is not led by the Spirit. If he must ask another, "May I?" he is not led by the Spirit. If he calls another 'captain,' 'leader,' or 'shepherd' he is not led by the Spirit.

Romans 8:16: **The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:**

The same Spirit who *"bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God"* also *"bears witness"* where to give, how much and how often. It is a fact the Holy Spirit does give witness to the will of God. It is the Christian's obligation to recognize or 'pick up' this witness of the Spirit.

The Holy Spirit does not force. He simply leads. One must be tuned in to the Holy Spirit or he simply will not arrive at truth. He will miss the will of God.

Only God knows. Man does not know. The Christian does not know his neighbor is in financial difficulties. Or a certain evangelistic campaign is doomed for failure and therefore should not be supported financially. Or God wants a certain young man to be sent to Bible school. Or how much of his income should go into the Great Commission. The Christian does not know, but God knows. And the Holy Spirit is continually leading the Christian into that knowledge.

PEER PRESSURE

Gal. 3:1: **O foolish Galatians, who has bewitched you, that you should not obey the truth,**

The *"foolish Galatians"* are prime examples of Christians who were not led by the Spirit. They had entered into spiritual bondage. Spiritual bondage is simply lack of freedom to be led by the Holy

Spirit. They had lost that freedom when they yielded to the Law, the Law that was replaced by the New Covenant.

A foolish Christian is one who, like the Galatians, has entered into bondage to a law or an accepted mentality or a traditional pattern. A man who submits to the regulation of tithing has much in common with the *"foolish Galatians."* He needs to repent and recommit his financial affairs to God. He must learn to be led by the Spirit of God.

It is difficult to stand against the opinions of the majority. Peer pressure is just as real within the body of Christ as in the world. It is not always necessary to stand against public opinion, but it is always needful to be willing to take a stand.

The majority is often wrong. Winds of doctrine come and go, and the body of Christ has proven itself susceptible. Such was the case with the Galatians. They were united in error. It would have taken real courage for an individual Galatian to declare before his peers, "It is not right to yield to these regulations, and I refuse to be a part of it." Such a person would risk persecution and even expulsion, accused of spiritual arrogance and declared guilty of causing division. There is a price attached to discipleship.

The apostle Paul wrote, *"I am free from all men"*(1Cor. 9:19). Paul was free from being swayed by peer pressure. He had no need for man's approval or man's applause. He was free to stand against public opinion. He was free to be led by the Spirit of God.

Gal. 2:11-14: **when Peter came to Antioch, I withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed. For before certain men came from James, he did eat with the Gentiles: but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those which were of the circumcision. But when I saw that they walked not uprightly according to the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, If you being a Jew, live after the manner of the Gentiles, and not as the Jews, why compel the Gentiles to live as the Jews?**

Peter allowed himself to be motivated by peer pressure from "*certain came from James."* This resulted in an increase of peer pressure upon the other Jewish Christians, and they in turn bowed to group persuasion. With this, peer pressure again swelled, so much so that Barnabas joined in on their hypocrisy. Now Paul stood alone. The pressure to go with the flow must have been heavy. But this was the man who once declared, *"I am free from all men."* He was free to do that which was right. He *"withstood him to the face, because he was to be blamed."* Paul was not a man-pleaser. "*Do I seek to please men? For if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ"* (Gal. 1:10).

This is an instance when the group was united in error. And Scripture reveals other such happenings. When Jesus was arrested, *"all the disciples forsook him, and fled."* In Acts chapter eleven, the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem rebuked Peter for preaching Christ to the Gentiles. Paul wrote to Timothy, *"All they which are in Asia are turned away from me."*

The majority is not always right. God never taught majority rule. Rather He demands obedience to His Word.

2 Timothy 3:12: **Yes, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.**

It is possible Paul suffered persecution for his stand against Peter *"before them all."* But not Barnabas though it was he who compromised. Barnabas was not behaving *"godly in Christ Jesus."*

Much persecution comes from within the body of Christ. From casual acquaintances and close friends. From relatives. From leadership. Christians, it is sad to say, persecute Christians. Persecution is usually directed against the one opposing accepted unrighteousness.

It is a fact that those who live *"godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution."* Sooner or later a sacred tradition or an accepted mentality will be trespassed and some of the group will show their indignation.

A man-pleaser makes a very poor disciple. His master is man. His teacher is man. The spiritual freedom inherited at rebirth is gone. He is part of the problem.

FREEDOM IN CHRIST

Gal. 5:13: **brethren, you have been called unto liberty;**

The believer has *"been called unto liberty"* to be *"led by the Spirit of God."* Freedom is precious. One should be diligent to protect that freedom. There are many who would snatch it away.

2 Cor. 3:17: **where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty.**

Many Christians have lost their liberty to one degree or another. It isn't easy to remain free. There is always peer pressure to bow to corporate decisions. Many follow the crowd rather than the Spirit of truth. Barnabas is the norm, Paul the exception.

You, the student of the Word, want to be productive. And you can be productive. If you submit yourself to the Spirit of God. And if you purpose in your heart to *"be free from all men."*

RELATIONSHIP

Proverbs 16:3: **Commit your works unto the Lord, and your thoughts shall be established.**

"*Commit your works unto the Lord."* No, not to a church. Or a project. Or a cause. Or a man. But to God. Then *"your thoughts shall be established."* Then, and only then, will one be free to be led by the Spirit.

If one commits his works to anyone other than God, God will not give direction. Such is a branch *not* abiding in the Vine. Jesus said, *"without me you can do nothing"* (John 15:5). But Paul wrote, *"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me"* (Php. 4:13). Through Christ and by the guidance of the Spirit the student of the Word can be very productive.

Luke 6:45: **of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks.**

A spiritually healthy Christian speaks Christ. If Christ is in the heart Christ is in conversation. Likewise, if 'church' is in one's heart 'church' will be the subject of conversation. If man rules the heart man will be spoken of. *"His mouth speaks"* the overflow of his heart. One can determine what is in his heart by simply monitoring his tongue. An individual's relationship with Christ is relative to the number of times he speaks Christ.

If Christ does not reign the Spirit does not have lordship over one's decisions. There is no liberty. There is no fruit. The fruit a person brings forth is relative to his relationship with Christ.

SUNDAY'S COLLECTION PLATE

1 Cor. 16:1,2: **Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do.**
Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God has prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come.

Some suggest the above verses indicate it was the practice of the early church to have collections every Sunday. Deeper consideration of these verses will show such was *not* the custom. Why tell the Corinthians to put something aside each Sunday if it was already their habit to do so? Paul wasn't suggesting they have a weekly collection, but simply everybody lay something aside, on their own, every week. Paul wanted "no gatherings when I come." But suppose his stay included one or more Sundays? Does this mean the people were to break custom and not have a collection on Sundays? Everything indicates there was no custom of Sunday collections.

This is not to say it is wrong to pass the collection plate every Sunday. The point is that the individual student of the Word is not obligated to contribute to every plate floating by. The above verses cannot be used to suggest otherwise.

Often local church leadership does not encourage the individual to think and discern for oneself. "Trust us", they say. Leadership calls for commitment to leadership rather than commitment to God.

Leadership should always encourage the believer to make his own decisions, to seek for himself guidance of the Spirit, and yes, to make his own mistakes. Because each is accountable for his own choices. No one should be made to feel obligated to anyone except the Lord.

It should be pointed out that it was an apostle and not a pastor who called for *"the collection for the saints."* A pastor's heart is often limited to his own congregation. His shepherd heart does not embrace the world. His pillow is not wet from tears of intercessory prayers for the lost. An apostle also has a shepherd's heart, but he also has the heart of an evangelist. His scope is broader. This makes him more qualified to direct funds.

In this particular collection the funds raised by the group were channeled outside the group . The

pastor's collection, however, is almost always used for the care of the local assembly from which the collection came. *The local church is simply donating to itself.*

Unfortunately it is the pastor who oversees most of the collections within evangelicalism. He not only calls for tithes which he claims belong to the 'storehouse' , but also 'offerings' . Every Sunday the assembly is challenged, not by the apostle, prophet, evangelist or teacher, but always the pastor.

If the apostle and evangelist, in particular, do not receive a share of the collection , it is really the Great Commission being robbed. And robbing the Great Commission is robbing the unsaved.

The System is the reason why many evangelists 'turn' pastor. The pastor is the only one in the assembly on salary. The evangelist is told to "step out in faith." He may grow weary of believing for milk for the children or transportation to the next town, and seek a salaried position as a pastor even though that is not his calling. Again, the Great Commission suffers. The lost stay lost.

The System is at least partly responsible, in many fundamental circles, for the gifting of apostle not to be recognized, claiming this ministry passed away with the early church. This is not so. Ephesians 4:11-13 teaches each of the fivefold ministries will last *"Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ."* Yes, there are apostles today. Many are hidden in the ministry of pastor.

The challenge to the student of the Word is to consider all this before encountered by next Sunday's collection plate.

Acts 5:29: **We ought to obey God rather than men.**

Barnabas bowed to peer pressure. He obeyed man rather than God. He became part of the problem. If the student of the Word submits to the persuasions of a man or a group rather than to the Spirit and the Word, you too are obeying man over God. It takes courage to stand against *The System*. But the alternative is to be part of the problem.

IT IS REQUIRED

2 Cor. 5:10: **For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, accordingly to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.**

The student of the Word will one day stand before "*the judgment seat of Christ"* to give an account of your life. It will happen. The day is approaching.

Each Christian is answerable to Christ the Judge for the way he handled money entrusted to him here on earth. Because he alone is accountable it is so very foolish to blindly trust others with this responsibility.

Money, well invested, can do so much. It can bring forth much fruit to be laid at the feet of Jesus.

Misspent, it will accomplish little. It is bread gone moldy, milk turned sour. Never before that day will the proverb, *"he that wins souls is wise"* (Prov. 11:30), be so meaningful.

1 Cor. 4:2: **it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful.**

A faithful steward is obedient to God. He does not waste. He does not invest in casual men. He has business meetings with God and ever in his mind is the fact he is accountable. His life is a preparation for that day when he will stand before the judgment seat of Christ. His presentation to Jesus will be more than wood, hay and stubble. His will be gold, silver and precious stones.

A faithful steward is led by the Spirit of God. He can resist peer pressure. He is not easily convinced. He refuses to be governed by the opinions of man. He is a student of the Word

APPENDAGE

A summary of this chapter may be helpful.

God has decreed the New Covenant person is to be led through life by the Holy Spirit. This takes discernment. Discernment is the ability to determine the will of God. To be led by the Spirit of God, the New Covenant person must resist influences leading in an otherwise direction. This will only happen if one's relationship with Jesus is healthy. One way the quality of an individual's relationship can be tested is simply by monitoring one's own words. If one speaks Christ, it is because Christ is predominate in one's heart.

It is difficult to resist being swayed by the opinions of the majority. Peer pressure within the body of Christ is a reality. So is persecution. Submitting to the persuasions of the group is not being led by the Spirit. The student of the Word should purpose in his heart to be led by the Spirit of God at any cost. Because he wants to be productive. Because he is accountable. Because *"it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."* Because he loves Jesus.

CHAPTER SIX

- **SHOULD ONLY LICENSED MINISTERS RECEIVE FINANCIAL SUPPORT?**
- **SHOULD THOSE MAKING A LIVING FROM THE GOSPEL EXPECT A HIGH, MODERATE OR MODEST STANDARD OF LIVING?**
- **HOW SHOULD ONE'S ABUNDANCE BE SPENT?**

SCRIPTURE IS PROFITABLE

2 Tim. 3:16: **All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine,**

This chapter investigates New Testament writings for clues as to how God intends the church to direct its finances. *"Scripture…is profitable for doctrine."* The instructions and precedents of New Testament writings will help the student of the Word allocate his personal contributions in harmony

to the will of God. Life should be a preparation for the day when *"we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body."* Hopefully this chapter will make that day more profitable.

2 Tim. 2:15: **Study to show yourself approved unto God, a workman that need not be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.**

The student of the Word must learn to rightly divide Holy Writ. To understand and accurately handle. This learning is a lifetime process. The ability to rightly divide improves as relationship with Christ is enriched. Anyone can divide. But only the Christ-centered, Christ-conscious, Christ-loving student of the Word can *rightly* divide. Only such a one will be led by the Spirit who leads into all truth.

It must be understood that precedents have not been set into New testament writings to put limitations on God's work, but rather to be used as guidelines to ensure that work is accomplished. There is no Scriptural precedent for the purchase of computers, but that doesn't mean computers should not be purchased. Electronics can be used very effectively for the extension of God's kingdom.

Precedents, however, must be honored. *"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught…by …our epistle"* (2Thes. 2:15). *"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine."* The key is the phrase *"rightly dividing."* The Holy Spirit helps the student divide rightly.

THE WORKMAN

Mat. 9:37, 38: **The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest.**

Laborers must be given provisions to live.

Mat. 10:10: **the workman is worthy of his meat.**

The laborer has earned his support. It is wrong to hold back this support from him.

1 Cor. 9:14: **Even so has the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.**

"*The Lord ordained"* this policy. *"They which preach the gospel should live of the gospel."*

1 Cor. 9:4: **Have we not power to eat and drink?**

*They which preach the gospel" g*et just as hungry and thirsty as those who don't. Have they *"not power to eat and drink?"*

2 Tim. 2:4: **No man that wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life;**

The soldier of God should not have to be weighed down with the concerns of feeding himself and his family.

1 Cor. 9:6: **Or I only and Barnabas, have not power to forbear working?**

"*They which preach the gospel,"* seriously and full time, have the right to cease secular employment.

1 Cor. 9:7: **Who goes to warfare any time at his charges? Who plants a vineyard, and eats not of the fruit thereof? Or who feeds a flock, and eats not of the milk of the flock?**

An evangelist goes to war. An apostle plants a vineyard. A pastor feeds a flock. None should do so at his own expense.

1 Cor. 9:11: **If we have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things?**

It is the Christian's duty to provide for those who care for him spiritually.

Acts 7:2: **It is not reasonable that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables.**

It is not reasonable that they who minister the gospel should have to *"leave the Word of God, and serve tables."* Or to be tied to secular employment. The work of God must go on.

1 Tim. 5:17, 18: **Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine.**
For the scripture says, You shall not muzzle the ox that treads out the corn. And, the laborer is worthy of his reward.

The System does not teach that elders in the local church should be recompensed for their services. Tradition decrees only the pastor should be financially supported. The above verses teach otherwise.

"*They who labor in the word and doctrine"* could imply many. They are whosoever. *The System* hints everyone but the pastor should be engaged in secular employment. Scripture indicates many in the early church were involved in the Lord's work on a full time basis, and these received support from fellow believers.

It should be noted that no New Testament person was salaried. There is a vast difference between being supported and being salaried. Paul was supported but not salaried. The fact there is no New Testament precedent for a salaried Christian worker will impact only the student of the Word.

Acts 2:44, 45: **all that believed were together, and had all things common;**
And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.

Surely this exercise of selling *"possessions and goods"* was not merely to feed the poor. There was much money involved. Why would so many have need? Was there an unemployment problem? I

think not. Many simply involved themselves in prayer and ministry to such an extent that the flow of income was seriously hindered. This is why so many *"had need."*

Acts 4:34, 35: **Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold,
And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.**

Utilizing the same logic, was the sale of property for the purpose of meeting a need already existing? Had these people been living in poverty previous to conversion? Or was there many *"among them that lacked"* because they were active ministering the gospel rather than in gainful employment?

1 Cor. 9:14: **Even so has the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.**

This is not limited to pastors. And it is not limited to the licensed. Some very good and productive men and women are without credentials, some out of choice. Christians can be shallow, giving preference to the man with the papers over the man with the anointing. There are many licensed incompetents who have no love for God. There are many without a license who are struggling to obey their calling with very little, if any, support from others. This is shameful. *"They which preach the gospel"* is anyone effectively ministering the Word of God, whether it be with or without man's credentials.

STANDARD OF LIVING

1 Tim. 6:8: **And having food and raiment let us be therewith content.**

In the early church most of the finances were invested in people. In the present-day church much is directed toward buildings and all the expense buildings entail. Before, many received little. Today, few receive comparatively much.

Paul wrote to Timothy, *"And having food and raiment* (clothing) *let us be content."* Paul's logic was simple: *"We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we carry nothing out"* (1Tim. 6:7). Today the minister's salary is often based on the world's standard. Usually the man is not content with mere *"food and raiment."*

Acts 3:6: **Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none;**

Peter had nothing to give to the beggar *"at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful."* He had no silver. He had no gold. Apparently, Peter was also content with *"food and raiment."* He once said to Jesus, *"We have forsaken all, and followed you"* (Mat. 19:27).

Acts 2:45: **And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.**

The word 'need' suggests food and clothing. Surely *"possessions and goods"* were not sold so people would be given enough money to purchase *"possessions and goods."*

1 Cor. 9:14: **they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.**

This is justice. Yet those who *"live of the gospel"* should be willing to choose a lifestyle similar to that of New Testament saints. They should set an example so others might choose a simpler way of life. This way there could be more funds directed toward the Great Commission. If ministers took less more could be supported.

Choosing a lesser standard of living could be a most difficult decision. North American Christian is presently steeped in a prosperity mentality. Spirituality is measured in dollar bills. Christians are more enthused to lay up treasures on earth than non-Christians. Externals are paramount. Fruit is secondary.

Mat. 3:4: **John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leather girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.**

If resources is the measuring stick for spirituality, John was a farce. But Jesus said of this man, *"Among them that are born of women there has not risen a greater than John the Baptist"* (Mat. 11:11).

1 Cor. 4:16: **be followers of me.**

Paul knew his rights as a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. Paul could have lived quite comfortably by simply reminding the many Christians with whom he came in contact of his personal needs and his rights as an apostle. He wrote to the Galatians, *"You would have plucked out your own eyes and have given them to me."* These same would gladly have emptied their purses for Paul. But Paul would often forgo his rights for the sake of the ministry. His purpose was to exemplify Christ and to move the gospel throughout the Gentile world. He set the example of selflessness. He said, *"I have coveted no man's silver, or gold, or apparel:* (Acts 20:33). *"Neither count I my life dear unto myself"* (Acts 20:24).

Paul knew he had the *"power to forbear working,"* and yet this tentmaker worked with his own hands. And what he earned he shared. *"These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me"* (Acts 20:34). Paul had one purpose, to *"finish my course"* (Acts 20:24).

Paul wrote to the Corinthians, *"Be followers of me." The System* is not the Christian's standard – Scripture is. And Scripture gives Paul as an example.

The System favors the pastor. This blessing, however, is not from the hand of God. The accepted is not always the sanctioned. The pastor ought not to accept more than his fair share even though tradition encourages otherwise. An analogy might better make the point:

Paul and Barnabas often ministered together. Paul was *"the chief speaker"* (Acts 14:12). Let us suppose that Paul, as *"the chief speaker",* was often blessed with contributions while Barnabas was

overlooked. And Paul says to Barnabas, "Sorry, Barnabas, but that's the way things are. This is God's way of validating my ministry. Are you sure of your calling? Perhaps you should be looking for a job."

The pastor is usually *"the chief speaker."* While he is on a comfortable salary, the evangelist is often overlooked. And the pastor says to the evangelist, "Sorry, Sam, but that's the way things are. This is God's way of validating my ministry. Are you sure of your calling? Perhaps you should be looking for a job."

Every healthy assembly has at least some with enough fire in their hearts to minister the gospel. Leadership should *"observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality"* (1Tim. 5:21).

2 Thes. 3:10-12: **if any would not work, neither should he eat.**
For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies.
Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread.

Laziness should not be sponsored. Busybodies damage the ministry. Such should occupy themselves in gainful employment and *"eat their own bread."*

These verses should not be applied against a true minister of the Word, one who ministers out of obedience. Some hide behind these verses , wrongly dividing the Word to their own advantage. It helps them keep their money in their pocket and justify their hoarding.

The minister of the Word has a right. The Word declares it: *"They which preach the Gospel should live of the gospel."*

SAINTS SHARING WITH SAINTS

Rom. 12:10,13: **Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;**

Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality.

It is God's deep desire that His own love His own. That they be quick to share. That they be hospitable one to another.

Acts 20:35: **you ought to support the weak,**

The human tendency is to disdain the weak. To criticize. To exclude. The Christlike attitude is *"to support the weak."* To edify. To embrace.

James 2:15, 16: **If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food,**
And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be warmed and filled; notwithstanding you give them not those things which are needful to the body; what does it profit?

" I will pray about your need," says one Christian to another. The world is equally loving, "I wish you luck." Jesus must be grieved at this superficial love his children use to sugarcoat each other.

The tithe mentality has helped breed this shallow love that costs nothing. The tenth is an alternative to God's Word. As the Jews were free from caring for their parents if they gave the money that it would cost to do so to God (Mat. chapter 15), so the Christian is no longer required to share his assets with fellow believers if he drops his tenth into Sunday's collection plate. Tradition has been given eminence over the Word. Jesus asks such a person, *"Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?"*

Ephesians 4:32: **be kind one to another,**

Kindness costs. Sometimes it costs time. Sometimes it costs concern. Sometimes it costs dollars.

It is so easy not to notice another's need. Christians should be searching for the brother in want. He is there, he simply has to be found. This takes a real love for the brethren and a sensitivity to the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said (Mat. 10:32), *"Whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward."* Ministering to the servant is ministering to the Master. *"Inasmuch as you have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, you have done it unto me"* (Mat. 25:40).

Acts 20:34: **you yourselves know, that these hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me.**

Paul shared what he had with those who were with him. Instead of imitating the wholesome attitude of sharing, Christians often pamper themselves in self-indulgence. "What I have is the fruit on my labor. It is mine. It is for me and my family. I earned it. I deserve to keep it."

Galatians 6:2: **Bear one another's burdens,**

At least two should carry one's burden. The load is so much lighter that way. A heavy load can break one's resolve. Burdens can steal the Word from the believer's heart, replacing it with discouragement.

"*Bear one another's burdens."* By so doing, Christians help each other accomplish God's purpose in their lives. It seems there is always enough; it is a matter of distribution. Selfishness gums up distribution, leaving some laden with unnecessary burdens.

James 2:20: **But will you know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead?**

There is a perverse and heartless 'faith' message that has assaulted the body of Christ. It is a *"faith without works",* a faith without generosity. This faith prods the believer to sow and to confess his way into wealth. The emphasis is on self and not others. The Word teaches equality, sharing, generosity.

This callous faith message teaches, "every man for himself."

Indeed prosperity is a fruit of faith. Poverty that is a product of unbelief has no integrity. The Word insists on faith. *"Without faith it is impossible to please him"* (Hebr. 11:6).

But the Word equally emphasizes generosity. Yes, finances should come forth but they should also flow past. The Christian calling is that of a river, not a dam. Jesus said, *"Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth."* Paul said, *"These hands have ministered unto my necessities, and to them that were with me."*

The world is divided into the rich and poor. Shamefully, the local assembly is likewise divided. The wealthy associate with the wealthy, the poor with the poor. Such can be expected of the world, but such division should not be found among the saints.

When Jesus *"saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd."* Jesus *"was moved with compassion."* The student of the Word should be motivated by compassion and not by opportunities to reap a reward. The student of the Word should 'see' *"the multitudes."* The student of the Word should reap to sow, not sow to reap.

Luke 3:11: **He that has two coats, let him impart to him that has none; and he that has meat, let him do likewise.**

John the Baptist preached these words, so opposite from some faith-prosperity messages that say, "He that has two coats, keep them both for yourself so you may be an example to those of less faith, and your abundance may be a witness to the goodness of God. And he that has meat, let him do likewise."

I want to make it clear to the student of the Word I am not opposing faith, prosperity, confession, sowing-and-reaping, or any other Biblical principle. I do protest, however, the lack of compassion, emphasis of self, bad motives, and hoarding running parallel to these teachings. It is true that works without faith is an impossibility, but it is likewise true that *"faith without works is dead* ." The abundance of one is to meet the needs of others.

2 Cor. 8:12-15: **if there first be a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man has, and not according to that he has not.**
For I mean not that other men be eased, and you burdened:
But by an equality, that now at this time your abundance also may be a supply for their want: that there be an equality:
As it is written, He that had gathered much had nothing over, and he that had gathered little had no lack.

These verses are rarely quoted. They are a trespass against present-day mentality. Sam and Mary Christian do not want to hear about equality while making plans for their third trip to the Bermudas. It

would be foolishness for Pastor Peter Practical to speak of equality; most in the congregation have incomes less than his own. Brian Broker is perpetually fueled by prosperity teaching tapes and has little tolerance for such a concept. I.M. Rich's idea of being a good steward is limited to securing the highest possible return on his investments. Mrs. Rich takes pleasure in wrapping her wealth around her fingers and hanging it from her ears and around her neck as this is her way of testifying the goodness of God.

"*Your abundance may be a supply for their want."* This is the Christian way. To share. To be generous. To give until it hurts. Christians are soldiers at war. What soldier would not share his bread with his companions?

Most spend their abundance on themselves. They accumulate things. Expensive things. Things that don't matter. Things that must be oiled and repaired and stored.

Rom. 12:10, 13: **Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another;**

Distributing to the necessity of the saints; given to hospitality.

The world should see Christians loving Christians. Jesus said, *"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another"* (Jn. 13:35). The church ought not operate under the same principles as the world. The world says, "Me first." The church should say, "Your needs before mine."

Galatians 5:13: **by love serve one another.**

Jesus set the example when *"he poured water into a basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet."* He said, *"If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you"* (Jn. 13:14,15).

Galatians 6:10: **As we have therefore opportunity, let us do good unto all men, especially unto them who are of the household of faith.**

Nothing less is acceptable to Jesus.

1 John 3:16-18, 4:7-11:
Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
But whoso has this world's goods, and sees his brother has need, and shuts up his bowels of compassion from him, how dwells the love of God in him?
My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue; but in deed and in truth.

Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God;
And every one that loves is born of God, and knows God.
He that loves not knows not God; for God is love.
In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son

into the world, that we might live through him.
Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins.
Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another.

Oh student of the Word, *"If God so loved us, we ought also to love one another."*

THE POOR

Gal. 2:9, 10: **And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision. Only they would that we should remember the poor; the same which I also was forward to do.**

The early apostles did not overlook the poor. The "*pillars"* of the faith did not want Paul and Barnabas preaching the love of Christ without demonstrating the love of Christ. This Paul *"was forward to do."* The poor were in their hearts because the poor were in their Master's heart. *"Christ in you, the hope of glory"* was evident in their lives. Through them the *"light of the world"* penetrated the darkness of the world. Their concern for the poor brought credibility to their gospel.

John 12:8: **the poor always you have with you:**

The poor are always here. They always have been. They accompany the wealthy from generation to generation. They are each an opportunity to *"lend unto the Lord,"* for Proverbs 19:17 declares, *"He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord."*

Some of the poor are poor because of unfavorable circumstances. Some because of laziness. Some have been crushed by tragedies and have lost all incentive. Others have drank or gambled their way into brokenness. The wealthy have a tendency to play judge, cautious to give only to the poor found blameless.

It is better to be poor and to give little than to be rich and give little. *"For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required."* Job declared to God, *"Did I not weep for him that was in trouble? Was not my soul grieved for the poor? If I have withheld the poor from their desire, or have caused the eyes of the widow to fail; or have eaten my morsel myself alone, and the fatherless has not eaten thereof; if I have seen any perish for want of clothing, or any poor without covering; if he were not warmed with the fleece of my sheep; then let my arm fall from my shoulder blade, and my arm be broken from the bone."*

Psalm 41:1-3: **Blessed is he that considers the poor: the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive; And he shall be blessed unto the earth: and you will not deliver him unto the will of his enemies. The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing: you will make all his bed in his sickness.**

"*He that has pity upon the poor lends unto the Lord; and that which he has given will he pay him again*" (Prov. 19:17). How will God repay? The above verses are promises revealing some ways God repays those who give to the poor. Such a person will be delivered when he himself is *"in time of trouble." "The Lord will preserve him."* The Lord will keep him alive. The Lord will keep such a one from falling into the hands of his enemies. If he should take sick the Lord will raise him up.

A wise man builds his house upon the Rock of God's sayings. A wise man *"considers the poor."*

THE WIDOW

1 Tim. 5:16: **If any man or woman that believes has widows, let him relieve them, and let not the church be charged; that it may relieve them that are widows indeed.**

The Christian is to care for widows of their own families and household. If a widow has no such person to care for her, and if she is in need, the responsibility falls upon the local church to meet those needs.

APPENDAGE

It is said over 90% of all licensed ministers serve less than 10% of the world's population. Some nations have been combed many times with the gospel of Christ while others have been barely touched. There are men and women willing to go, but *The System* is not sympathetic. The apostle Paul *"strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named."* If he were alive today he would be preaching to that part of the world never having heard the name *Jesus*. More Christians should be likewise minded and direct the bulk of their contributions to the 90% who are ministered by the 10%.

The Christian's mandate is to give, to share what he has with those who have less. Everyone is responsible for the Great Commission. Financing the laborer going forth is financing the Great Commission. Rewards will be forthcoming.

How much should one give? How much should one keep? That is the subject of the next chapter.

CHAPTER SEVEN

- **WHO DECIDES HOW MUCH ONE SHOULD GIVE?**
- **WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO LAY UP TREASURES IN HEAVEN?**
- **HOW MUCH SHOULD ONE INVEST IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD?**

NEW COVENANT PRINCIPLES

2 Cor. 9:7: **Every man according as he purposes in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loves a cheerful giver.**

Under the Old Covenant system God's people were required by the Law to give a minimum of a tenth to God. God wants the New Covenant person to decide for himself the amount to give.

Whatever the sum, it is to be given cheerfully.

A believer cannot allow himself to come under compulsion. Obligatory gifts are not gifts at all. One must resist peer pressure that demands a percentage or a set amount.

Romans 8:14: **For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God.**

The New Covenant person is to be led by the Holy Spirit in all aspects of life, including his givings.

James 4:17: **to him that knows to do good, and does it not, to him it is sin.**

Christians are to be fruitful. Jesus said, *"Herein is my Father glorified, that you bear much fruit." "I am the vine, you are the branches."* Branches are to bear fruit.

2 Cor. 9:6: **But this I say, He which sows sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which sows bountifully shall reap also bountifully.**

In God's kingdom stinginess costs and liberality is profitable. *"For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts"* (Is. 55:9). Christians swath their own path, determine their own future. A wise Christian sows. And sows and sows and sows.

Mat. 6:19, 20: **Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:**
But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

There are two types of Christians, those who lay up treasures on earth, and those who lay up treasures in heaven. The first far outnumbers the second.

The foolish man lays up treasures on earth. He lives for today. He embraces the temporary. His barns are always too small. He is a short-sighted man, forfeiting eternal rewards for momentary gain.

The wise man lays up treasures in heaven. He is an investor. He invests what he has - his abilities, money, time – for a future return. He walks by faith, focusing on the unseen. His life is a preparation for that day he will stand before Christ at the judgment seat.

2 Cor. 5:10: **"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad.**

This fable may cause the student of the Word to have a deeper appreciation for the above verse:

Some years ago three teens of approximately the same age and intelligence responded to an altar call given by a certain evangelist invited to speak at their school. They each wept away their rebellion and embraced the Lord Jesus Christ into their young lives. They have since, all three, entered the business world, lived a full life, and now are with Jesus in heaven. Today is judgment

day. Today they each must, along with every other believer, give an account to King Jesus so they *"may receive the things done in his body, according to that he has done, whether it be good or bad."* This is their story.

Businessman number one entered the business field immediately after graduation, beginning his career as a real estate salesman. He soon learned to recognize a profitable opportunity and often secured property, usually with very little down payment, and then search for a less discriminate buyer. His increasing expertise in realty and this simple policy of quick-turnover-quick-profit eventually made him a wealthy investor.

As a young convert he was determined to never allow business to interfere with his relationship with Jesus. However the pressures of business set in and he spent less and less time *"in the secret place of the Most High",* investing most of his time buying and selling. Love of money crept into his heart, mammon became god, and God became a lost love. Much time and imagination were spent laying up treasures on earth. He grew callous to the needs of others and critical of anyone less enterprising than himself. He spent the entirety of his wealth on himself and his family.

Now he is weeping at the feet of Judge Jesus. All his work is wood, hay and stubble. Oh, if only he shared at least some of his fortune…if only he invested in the Great Commission…if only he had fruit to lay at the Master's feet.

Businessman number two inherited a small construction business from his father and diligently set to work to make the company an impressive and profitable enterprise. In less than ten years he was building everything from multiple family units to shopping centers. Business was often very taxing and yet it never usurped his love for Christ. Over the years he led many associates and employees to the Lord and always dealt fairly with his fellow man. Even though most of his profit was spent on himself and his family – a stately home on the lake, impressive cars, vacations three or four times a year, boats, diamonds, costly wardrobes, etc. – he did support his local church and on occasion contributed to various evangelistic concerns, local and international.

With mixed emotions he approaches the judgment seat of Christ. Yes, he is happy about the eternal rewards Judge Jesus so generously bestows upon him for his obedience and accomplishments on planet Earth. And yet he knows he never came close to fulfilling the high calling of God on his life. He never gave sacrificially but only from the overflow of his abundance. Adulation of men was more valuable than preaching Christ and feeding the poor. More time and energy were spent laying up treasures on earth than securing treasures in heaven. Jesus consoles him and wipes away tears of remorse from his eyes.

Businessman number three spent his entire Christian lifetime preparing for this day and it is indeed a most joyous occasion. He stands confident before Judge Jesus, knowing he had accomplished the work God had given him to do.

This man started a janitorial service after working with his uncle, as a janitor, for seven years. His

rates were competitive, he was always keen to provide efficient service, and he dealt fairly with his employees. He rarely lost a customer and his profit, though marginal, was consistent. Soon he initiated a second janitorial service in a neighboring city, using the first as a model. Eventually he had a dozen such small endeavors, each one showing a profit. He then applied his business experience to other ventures and soon had a chain of painting, gardening and roofing services.

Business was always servant and never master. This man held in his heart a deep affection for his Lord, never to be usurped by profit no matter how sizable. Even when profits began to multiply he lived in moderation, giving as much as possible to the work of God. Ever in his heart was a compassion for the lost and dying, and ever in mind was the certainty of judgment day, the day of accountability. He lived to give and to serve and to testify to the power and goodness of Christ.

There were a few occasions when he made costly miscalculations in his business affairs. He asked God to sharpen his discernment and he purposed to never enter a business opportunity without an inner assurance it was the Lord's direction. One day the Lord gave him a simple insight which caused his diversified businesses to flourish. Instead of fitting a man to a business, he would fit a business to a man. Previously he would establish a business in which he was knowledgeable and then spend much time and energy searching for the right man to manage it. Now he would look for an honest, industrious man and finance a business suitable to his abilities. He hired a young accountant, supplied him with an office, a secretary, and all necessary office equipment and instructed this young man to establish an accounting-bookkeeping service. His own activity in this new business was merely that of consultant. Next he hired a veterinarian and built an animal clinic. And then he hired a printer and a chef and a plumber and built enterprises conducive to their talents. Every year he added to his businesses, some years as many as six, becoming more and more diversified.

This man and his wife and children lived a fulfilling and joyous life. His was a Christ-centered family. Over the years he supported every major evangelical organization in North America, giving to some well over a million dollars. He supported overseas missions and sent a number of young men and women to Bible school. And he was always sensitive to his fellow man, never critical, always encouraging, always approachable. After he died the profits from his various businesses continued to pour into the Great Commission.

Today he receives his bountiful rewards. His cup is full and overflowing. After many years of anticipation, he hears his Master speak those gratifying words, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*

Galatians 6:7, 9: **And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap,**

A Christian should consider himself a full time sower. *"Due season"* is forthcoming. God is a good accountant. The sower shall reap from every sown seed.

Mat. 19:22: **But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.**

This young man kept his money and his sadness and walked away from the Giver of life. Money sends multitudes to hell. Money is a danger to those of both spiritual kingdoms. Money often keeps the pagan from becoming the redeemed and the redeemed from becoming a disciple. Oh, how money costs. How very expensive it can be.

Money brings sadness to the Christian. For a bagful of dollars he forfeits eternal rewards. On judgment day he weeps before his Judge, fruitless.

Mat. 19:27: **we have forsaken all, and followed you;**

Peter spoke those words to Jesus. Every Christian wants to be able to say those same words to the same Person, "I have forsaken all, and followed You."

Romans 14:12: **every one of us shall give account of himself to God.**

This should be a very happy occasion. And it *can be* a very happy occasion. Just a little perception. A little preparation. A little sacrifice. A little wisdom.

Mat. 25:14-17: **For the kingdom of heaven is as a man traveling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.**
And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his ability; and straightway took his journey.
Than he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.
And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.

Both of these men heard their lord say to them, "*Well done, good and faithful servant: you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things."*

"*He that had received the five talents went and traded with the same."* This man invested all that he had been given. Five talents out of five. *"And likewise he that had received two."* Christians ask themselves, "How much should I give?" The answer is, "How much have I been given?" The good servants invested what they had. The apostles *"have forsaken all."* Jesus *"humbled himself, and became obedient unto death."*

Another answer might be, "How much do I want?" The servants were well rewarded. The apostles had stored vast treasures in heaven. Jesus had been given *"a name which is above every name."*

THE FAITH WALK

Hebrews 10:38: **the just shall live by faith:**

Living by faith in not limited to laying hands on the sick and seeing them recover. Or speaking to the mountain. Or exercising authority over powers of darkness. Faith is also focusing on the unseen, preparing for judgment day, being merciful. It has been said that Peter did not walk on water, he

walked on the Word. Jesus said, *"Come"* and Peter came. Jesus said, *"Lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven."* That's the word believers are to walk on. That's faith.

Faith walks on Rock, the Rock of God's Word. Unbelief walks on sand, words of another. Double-mindedness walks on both. People of faith lay up treasures in heaven. Doubters lay up treasures on earth. The double-minded do both.

"*The just shall live by faith."* Faith is to be a way of life. Faith is walking on the Word, taking hold of, and investing in, the promises. Faith is obedience to the One we call Lord.

BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS

Luke 12:15: **Take heed, and beware of covetousness.**

The fruit of greed is pain and remorse and barrenness.

1 Cor. 3:15: **If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss.**

"*He shall suffer loss."* He will experience a degree of destitution. He will be poorer than necessary.

Luke 12:15: **a man's life consists not in the abundance of the things which he possesses.**

Jesus said a man's life is not measured by his possessions. The world disagrees. It believes it is. Many Christians live as though it is. But Jesus said it isn't.

Goods do not make a person valuable. A fool counts his money to determine his worth. Large barns is little faith.

Jesus was born in a stable. He triumphantly entered Jerusalem riding a donkey. He died on a cross. But who could put a value on His life?

Colossians 3:25: **he that does wrong shall receive for the wrong which he has done:**

There are consequences for wrong-doing. Perhaps those consequences are simply losses, rewards that could have been. Perhaps the repercussions will be more serious.

1 Tim. 6:9, 10: **they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition.**
For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

Greed is a forerunner of pain.

LIVING TO SERVE

Acts 20:24: **neither count I my life dear unto myself, that I might finish my course**

Those who count their lives dear unto themselves will never complete their course.

2 Cor. 5:15: **he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him who died for them, and rose again.**

This is the Christian's mandate, to die to self and to live for Him. To live for Christ is to carry on the work He began. Perhaps this is the only reason the Lord does not take His own to be with Him in heaven. There's a job to do. The work is far from finished.

Ph'p. 2:21: **For all seek their own, not the things which are Jesus Christ's.**

Many make an art of self-gratification. Few can say, as did Paul, *"For me to live is Christ."* Or, "*For whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung."*

Colossians 3:2: **Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth.**

This is faith. This is prudence. This is obedience.

Rev. 12:11: **they overcame by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they loved not their lives unto the death.**

Many of the early church *"loved not their lives unto the death."* There is a link between their dedication and their effectiveness. They were very dedicated and very effective. Many welcomed martyrdom, loving *"not their lives unto the death."*

The cost of Christ, in fullness, is a complete death of self . "I" must go. Jesus said, *"Without me you can do nothing"* (Jn. 15:5). The less of self, the more of Christ. The more of Christ, the more bountiful the fruit. If one is not willing to lay down his life he will not have the effectiveness of early church Christianity. His fruit will be limited.

Mat. 23:12: **whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased;**

People can, and often do, exalt themselves by accumulating. The more they have, the more they are coveted, esteemed, exalted.

Mat. 23:12: **and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.**

One cannot humble himself by giving away possessions. One humbles himself by acknowledging his dependency on Christ. A humble man has no need to prove his worth because he has already admitted his inability. His worth is in Christ. There is no exaltation of self. Possessions are not needed. He simply wants enough to fulfill his calling.

John 4:34: **Jesus said unto them, My meat is to do the will of him that sent me,**

"*Follow me,"* Jesus said. *"Where I am, there shall also my servant be."* The true disciple, the good and faithful servant, says:

"My meat is to the will of God. He has a purpose for my life. He needs me. If I am not obedient others will suffer needlessly, some eternally. But I will be obedient. I love God. I appreciate Calvary. I will

prove my love and appreciation by my obedience. I live to serve Him. I love Him above all distractions, more than myself. My entire life is a preparation for judgment day. He will say unto me, '*Well done, good and faithful servant.*'

"I refuse to be distracted by the cares of this world. I turn away from the world's entertainment. I will not surfeit. I will not hoard. I will not play church. I will not be ashamed of the cross. I am a man in a race. I have one purpose, to fulfill God's calling. ' *My meat is to do the will of him that sent me.*' "

John 3:3: **Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.**

This is the bottom line. Unless a man be born again he cannot partake of God's kingdom. Jesus will not sup with him. He will never be clean, whole, sanctified. Never. He will not be invited to the *"marriage supper of the Lamb"* (Rev. 19:9).

Unless a man be born again he will go to hell, the lake of fire, the place of eternal banishment. His will be a forever of anguish and remorse.

And so it behooves the student of the Word to do what you can. Share what you have – your talents, your time, your substance. Let go. Spend wisely. Take a stand against peer pressure from those less dedicated. Invest in the Great Commission. Know the value of a soul. The door will soon be shut and those on the outside will stay out there. *"The night comes, when no man can work"* (Jn 9:4).

APPENDAGE

"**For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad" (2Cor. 5:10).**

It will happen.
It will surely happen.
There will be a day.
We will stand before Christ.
To receive rewards.
According to what we have done.
Whether good or bad.

Every knee shall bow.
Every tongue shall confess to God.
All shall give an account.1
Every man's work shall be made manifest.2
Each shall receive his own reward according to his own labor.3
The fire shall try every man's work.4
The Judge will give unto each according to his works.5

Judgment is coming.
It will happen.
There will be a day.
God has decreed.
This celestial arrangement irrevocable.
We will stand before the judgment seat of Christ.

Christ.
Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world.6
Eyes as flames of fire.7
Feet like fine brass.8
Voice the sound of many waters.9
Countenance as the sun.10
Holy, holy, holy. 11
He is our king.12

Christ.
Alpha and Omega.13
First and Last.
He who lives, and was dead, and alive for ever more.14
The Good Shepherd who laid down His life for His sheep.15
Lamb without blemish and spot.16
King of kings and Lord of lords.17
Our Judge.

Order in the court!!
Judgment commences.
The fire is ignited.
Testing begins.
Our works aflame before us.
Gold, silver, precious stones.18
Wood, hay, stubble.
If any man's work remains he shall receive a reward.19
If any man's work is burned he shall suffer loss.20
Whatsoever a man sows that shall he reap. 21
There is nothing covered that shall not be revealed.22
And hid that shall not be known.
God is not unrighteous to forget our labor of love.23
Whatsoever good thing any man does the same shall he receive.24
He that does wrong shall receive for the wrong.25

The Judge has said, I am he who searches the heart.26

The fire continues.
Verses learned on earth flash through our minds:
Let your light so shine before men…27
What you hear in the ear that preach upon the housetops…28
Let every man prove his own work…29
Be partakers of the afflictions of the gospel…30
How shall they preach except they be sent…31
Blessed are the merciful…32
Give and it shall be given unto you…33
Lay up treasures in heaven…34
A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good…35
No man who wars entangles himself with the affairs of this life…36

Flames will soon die.
Will anything survive?
Gold, silver, precious stones?
Obedience, good works?
Did we abide in the Vine?
Bring others to heaven?
Witness Christ?
Were we fishers of men?
Did we lament in prayer over our Jerusalem?
Invest in the Great Commission?
Sound the trumpet?
Stand in the gap?
Were we merciful?
Will our Judge say, Well done, good and faithful servant? 37

(1) Rom. 14:11, 12 (2) 1Cor. 3:13 (3) 1Cor. 3:8 (4) 1Cor. 3:13
(5) Rev. 2:23 (6) Jn. 1:29 (7) Rev. 19:12 (8) Rev. 2:18 (9) Rev. 1:15
(10) Rev. 1:16 (11) Rev. 4:8 (12) 1Tim. 6:15 (13) Rev. 1:11
(14) Rev. 1:18 (15) Jn. 10:11 (16) 1Pet. 1:19 (17) 1Tim. 6:15
(18) 1Cor. 3:12 (19) 1Cor. 3:14 (20) 1Cor. 3:15 (21) Gal. 6:7
(22) Mat. 10:26 (23) Heb. 6:10 (24) Eph. 6:8 (25) Col. 3:25
(26) Rev. 2:23 (27) Mat. 5:16 (28) Mat. 10:27 (29) Gal. 6:4
(30) 2Tim. 1:8 (31) Rom. 10:15 (32) Mat. 5:7 (33) Luke 6:38
(34) Mat. 6:20 (35) Luke 6:45 (36) 2Tim. 2:4 (37) Mat. 25:21

SUMMARY – 39 points

1. The number, even the approximate number, of unsaved people on earth is not known. Estimates vary. It is conceivable there are as many as five billion persons whose names are missing from the Lamb's book of life.
2. Jesus taught one soul is more valuable than the entire world.
3. Before leaving planet Earth, the Lord Jesus Christ gave His church the commission to make disciples of all nations. This mandate is often referred to as the Great Commission.
4. To date, the church has failed to accomplish this task, so much so that many of the world's inhabitants have not heard the name of Jesus.
5. Generally, Christians lack love and compassion for the lost multitudes. Only a relative few really care about the masses marching on that wide road leading to destruction.
6. This apathy reveals a lack of love for Christ and a small appreciation for Calvary.
7. The world's greatest enemy is the church's apathy. Because of this apathy, multi-millions will spend their eternity bathing in anguish and remorse.
8. One of the causes of this apathy is the accepted method of collecting and distributing money. This accepted system of collecting and allocating funds is referred to in this book as *The System*.
9. There are many ill consequences of *The System*, not the least is that *The System* utilizes funds that belong to the Great Commission on other endeavors. This has the effect of depleting the natural passion in men's hearts for soul-winning. A man's money and a man's heart go in the same direction. If his money is not being directed toward the Great Commission neither will his heart be there. *"For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."*
10. Financing the Great Commission is a very expensive enterprise. However, God has always provided. The necessary funds pass through Christians' lives. Sadly, leadership of local assemblies have learned to extract much of this money from the people, spending nearly all it collects on the care of the assembly. In reality, Christians are merely giving to themselves.
11. Each assembly has its master builders. Man is a compulsive builder, itching for a reason to build, to renovate, to expand. Often the builder is the expounder.
12. Some building projects are sanctioned by God. Most are not. Most are built with funds belonging to the Great Commission. Some edifices are nothing more than a monument to a people turned selfish.
13. *The System* is not sanctioned by God; it is the invention of man. Many Christians have accepted the traditions of men over the Word of God. When they drop their tenth into Sunday's collection plate they thereby dissolve themselves of the responsibility of being obedient to God's Word. They are no longer responsible to finance the Great Commission, share with fellow believers, feed the poor, etc.
14. The cornerstone of *The System* is the tithe. Someone has reached over to the other side of Calvary, pulled out the tithe statute from the Law, and applied it to the New Covenant person. This has been done for illegitimate reasons.
15. The most ardent lobbyists for the tithe and *The System* are those paid a wage by *The System*.

16. It is a fact that the Bible does not teach the New Covenant person to tithe. The early church did not tithe. Tithing is foreign to the Father-son relationship established between God and believer through the New Covenant.
17. To tithe is to choose another way and is therefore a wrongdoing. It is wrong to promote, condone or collect tithes.
18. If the Great Commission is to be properly financed the local assemblies must either stop collecting more than its share or forward most of the money it collects into the Great Commission.
19. Regardless if this will ever happen, the individual Christian is responsible to do his part to finance the Great Commission. The Holy Spirit will help the Christian invest wisely.
20. The Christian is not compelled to give all, most, or even much of his givings to the local assembly.
21. Peer pressure is a reality in the body of Christ. Much peer pressure is applied, unintentionally and otherwise, to every individual to conform to the opinions and attitudes and practices of the majority. Both the Bible and history confirm the majority is often wrong.
22. Spiritual bondage is submitting oneself to, or being swayed by, an individual or a group rather than the Word and the Spirit. Spiritual bondage is lack of freedom to obey God. Most Christians are in spiritual bondage to one degree or another.
23. Many who have been convinced by this book that their spending is contrary to the will of God and there is a much more fruitful and profitable way of directing their givings will still, in time, bow to peer pressure and conform to the will of man.
24. Every Christian is accountable to God. Every believer will stand before the judgment seat of Christ to be recompensed for his deeds on earth, good and bad. For some it will be a most joyous occasion. For others it will be a time of remorse and embarrassment.
25. A wise Christian considers his life a preparation for judgment day. It is important to invest one's substance wisely. Investing money is investing life, the amount of time it takes to earn that money. It is foolishness to allow others to decide how this money should be directed.
26. Money, well invested, will result in the salvation of many. Supporting the evangelist will result in a certain number of people spending their eternity with Christ instead of with satan and his fallen angels. Everyone can bear much fruit by simply financing the Great Commission.
27. A Christian will be judged for that which has been entrusted to his care. He who has been given little, little is required; he who has been given much, much is required.
28. Christians should not invest in casual men. Many ministers put an undue strain on the gospel by their high standard of living.
29. The Word decrees that those who minister the gospel should make their living from the gospel.
30. The fivefold ministry, that of apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor and teacher, should be equally financed. Denying support to any of these is a detriment to the Great Commission.
31. *The System* highly favors the pastor. He is the first to challenge Christians after payday, and

often he is the only one on salary. For that reason many sit in the place of pastor who are not called. Because of the lure of a salary many evangelists 'turn' pastor, leaving fewer to herald the good news of Jesus Christ.

32. It is said over ninety percent of all licensed ministers serve less than ten percent of the world's population. (It is the licensed who consume much of the Christians' donations.) Some nations have been combed many times with the gospel of Jesus Christ while others have been barely touched. There are men and women willing to go, but *The System* is not sympathetic. The apostle Paul endeavored to take the gospel to lands that had not heard of Christ. More Christians should be likewise minded and direct the bulk of their contributions for the same cause.
33. There seems to be a link between the dedication of the early church and its effectiveness. It was very dedicated and very effective.
34. The Word has much to say about Christians supporting one another, saints sharing with saints, carrying one another's burdens. This helps each to fulfill God's calling on each person's life. This in turn results in the extension of God's kingdom.
35. The Word instructs the Christian to give to the poor. He who does so is actually lending to God.
36. According to the Word, the abundance of one is to meet the needs of others.
37. The plumber and lawyer do not have a right to a higher standard of living than the widow and preacher.
38. The responsibility of the Great Commission was given to every believer at rebirth.
39. Rich or poor, *"It is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."*

FROM THE AUTHOR

I have addressed this book to you, the student of the Word. I know you have been challenged. *"For the word of God is quick, and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword"* (Heb. 4:12). And I know you have been honed. *"Iron sharpens iron; so a man sharpens the countenance of his friend"* (Pr. 27:17). You will not be the same. *"It shall not return unto me void"* (Is. 55:11).

We are much the same, you and I. We both can't. We try hard but it doesn't work. 'My way' isn't so brilliant after all. We call Him *"Lord, Lord"* but go the *"way that seems right unto a man."* We swing on pendulums. We choose the familiar and popular teaching. The trampled path takes little courage. We like to be tickled.

But we rise again. We are students of the Word. We tire of conformity for conformity's sake. We demand truth. We want fruit. So we resist peer pressure and submit once again to the Holy Spirit who leads into all truth. We ask the Vinedresser to prune away silly notions and inferior motives.

The majority is often right. The majority is often wrong. They misspend, they lay up treasures on earth, they lack compassion for the lost, they are lukewarm. The one clinging to the group will sometimes be right. And sometimes be wrong.

It's not easy being a student of the Word. It's easier to build a house on the sand than way up there on the Rock. It's fun being a hearer only. To "Amen!" everything we hear. The student of the Word challenges the accepted. "Chapter and verse, please!" We are not always popular.

The student of the Word is a doer. *"Your word have I hid in my heart, that I might not sin against you"* (Ps. 119:11). That is our motive. We know anything less is an ego trip. *"Knowledge puffs up"* (1Cor. 8:1).

This book is not bad news. It is good news. It was not written to bring condemnation but rather freedom. Hopefully it will cause you to be better prepared for that day of accountability. I want you to hear Jesus say, *"Well done, good and faithful servant."*

Yes, the truths of this book demand change. Revelation increases accountability. *"Of him shall much be required."* But change only hurts for a little while. You said you wanted to be more productive. Today is your day. You have been pruned by the Word so you can bring forth more fruit.

Choosing the Word is choosing Christ. Your obedience will have the benefit of enhancing your relationship with Christ.

Where will you go from here? I wish you well. I encourage you to work hard at pressing in. Be satisfied with nothing less than the inner circle of fellowship. There's life in the *"secret place."*

To God be the glory !