

ACTS

Advocating Christ The Savior
July / August 2011

CAN WE SEE GOD'S BLESSINGS?

What is the True Word of God in the
Bible - Part-Two
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ACTS

ADVOCATING CHRIST THE SAVIOR

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Statement of Beliefs:

1. The Bible to be the inspired Word of God, God the Father is the supreme Deity, Jesus Christ is the only begotten Son of God, and the Holy Spirit is the promised Comforter.
2. In the deity of our Lord Jesus Christ; His virgin birth; His sinless life; His miracles; His vicarious and atoning death; His bodily resurrection late on the Sabbath day; His ascension to the right hand of God in heaven; and His personal return to establish His kingdom and rule this earth in great power and glory.
3. The only means of being cleansed from sin is through repentance and faith in the precious blood of Jesus and obedience to our Lord's command to be baptized (immersed) in the Name of Christ for the remission of sins.
4. That by faith we may receive healing for our bodies.
5. The Scriptures enjoin the observance of the Ten Commandments, including the observance of the Seventh Day Sabbath (commonly called Saturday) to be observed from sunset on Friday until sunset on Saturday.
6. The Lord's Supper and foot washing should be observed once a year at the proper and appointed time.
7. In the resurrection of the dead, both of the just and the unjust, the just to eternal life and the unjust to eternal death.
8. The dead are in a state of no consciousness.
9. The true church organization taught in the Bible is local autonomy and that the Bible name for the church is THE CHURCH OF GOD.
10. That the tests of Christian fellowship are the Commandments of God and the faith of Jesus.



Howdy!

I hope you are doing well and are seeing God's blessings all around you in your life. Though they sometimes are as hard to see as Joseph's slavery, they are always there if we are walking in His Word.

I have been enjoying the blessing of a new addition into my family, a baby boy named Daniel. All of us are happy to have him and spend hours each day holding him and playing with him. He is a very talkative and joyous baby (most of the time, anyway!) and we love him very much. It is a lot of fun to be a dad.

What's new in your life? We always enjoy hearing from each of you, reading the letters several times. It helps us feel more in touch with you, reading about your lives and I am grateful for each letter. I encourage you to send us a letter letting us know how you are doing, if there is anything we can pray about for you, or just to let us know what's going on in your life.

This issue's *ACTS* is a combination of several ideas centered around blessings. Sometimes, the things we think of as blessings are actually curses, and sometimes the things we think of as curses are actually blessings. Just like with Joseph going into slavery being a blessing to him, sometimes things we wish didn't happen can be our greatest blessings.

Who doesn't wish they had a little more money? A little more to fix up the house, buy a car that runs better, be able to do things that we couldn't afford before...etc. Monica Muffley's article shows us how being rich can actually be a curse, not a blessing in his article "*The Rich Fool*." Maybe that new car isn't so important, after all!

John Leier's article "*What is the True Word of God in the Bible?*" continues his previous article with an explanation of what salvation and eternal life are and the blessing of understanding the scriptures the way God wants us to understand them.

Are you faithful with what God has given you? Pastor C. V. Ledger writes that tithes are a blessing to both the giver and receiver, allowing the work of God to come to completion through the people He appointed to do His work. He also states it is also obedience to God and should be done cheerfully.

I hope that God continues to bless all of you in both the seen and unspoken ways He works.

God bless!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Craig Moore'.

Craig Moore, Editor, *ACTS* Magazine

“WHAT IS THE TRUE WORD OF GOD IN THE BIBLE?”

Part Two
By John Leier

OUR JUST GOD

Please read Revelation 20:4-15, with careful consideration given to verses 5 and 6. Note that there is a thousand years between the first resurrection and the second resurrection. What follows is a revelation from God. He reveals something that is strange to those of us that were taught that only those in the first resurrection are saved.

At the second resurrection, the whole world will be resurrected and the books are opened including the book of life, and whosoever is not found written in the book of life will be cast into the lake of fire to be destroyed, that is to perish. Note that those in the first resurrection are already judged, the book of life had already been opened to them in the first resurrection, and therefore, it will be opened again to those in the second resurrection. Everyone will receive a just judgment and a just reward, and the wicked will go to an everlasting death. Those who then accept Jesus Christ at that time are forgiven unto a righteous judgment unto everlasting joy.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works”
Revelation 20:12.

Note this is at the end of the thousand year reign of Jesus Christ and His saints.

WE KNOW BY THE WORD OF GOD THAT WORKS DO NOT SAVE YOU

“For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God, Not of works, lest any man should boast” Ephesians 2:8-9.

You can see the eternal wisdom of God, He knows the end from the beginning, and God knows all who love and obey Him and keep His commandments, because they love Him and are worthy to be in the kingdom of heaven. God knows who will be happy with Him as their constant ruler. God knows the wicked ones who refuse to obey and would be unhappy with Him as their constant ruler. Their evil thoughts, their anguish, bitterness, and selfish ways, will come to an end. They will be no more.

“For the living know that they shall die: but the dead know not any thing, neither have they any more a reward; for the memory of them is forgotten. Also their love, and their hatred, and their envy, is now perished; neither have they any more a portion for ever in any thing that is done under the sun” Ecclesiastes 9:5-6.

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” Revelation 20:6.

And, in the end Satan will be destroyed, this is the only way revealed in the Scriptures. See Ezekiel 28:13-19.

“All they that know thee among the people shall be astonished at thee: thou shalt be a terror, and never shalt thou be any more” Ezekiel 28:19.

WE NEED TO KNOW THE TRUE MEANING OF WORDS

We find many mistranslated words that lead us to believe differently, and we may have been brought up to believe a certain way, so when we come to the truth, it may be very difficult to recognize. We may find it is a fearful thing to change our thoughts to those of the truth. It comes to us, that if we should believe something different than the way we were

raised-up to believe, we would burn for all eternity (as many pagan religions believe). Is that not a religion of fear? Christianity however, is a religion of love, joy, peace—it is **not** a religion of fear.

“There is no fear in love; but perfect love casted out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love”
I John 4:18.

It is total commitment to trust in God and our Savior, Jesus Christ. Is it not written that we should not sorrow over the death of a loved one, as those that are without hope?

“But I would not have you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning them which are asleep, that ye sorrow not, even as others which have no hope”
I Thessalonians 4:13.

God is merciful. Death is a release of this cruel world of mistrust in God; however, it remains an enemy because of our human nature.

GOD ONLY HAS IMMORTALITY

“Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honor and power everlasting. Amen” I Timothy 6:16.

Scripture tells us that only God has immortality. We are mortals subject to death. Death is ceasing to live or to exist in a life in another form or dimension. Scriptures reveal that those who love God know the truth: and that they will be given life after death, only in the resurrection. Read I Corinthians 15:42-54 and then note that in verse 53 it states,

“For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality.”

To believe that we do not totally die, to cease to have life, is to believe the lie that Satan told Eve in the Garden of Eden.



Believe what the Bible teaches, the Scriptures tell us that we are mortal and only in the resurrection and transformation of the saved shall we receive immortality. Remember also, and consider that the Scriptures tell us that only God is immortal.

“Which in his times he shall shew, who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings, the Lord of lords; Who only hath immortality, dwelling in the light which no man can approach unto; whom no man hath seen, nor can see: to whom be honour and power everlasting. Amen”
I Timothy 6:15-16.

Scripture reveals to us that only our Lord has immortality and that man is yet to put on incorruption and immortality. We can only conclude that man is a mortal being.

ONLY A COMFORT IN THE WISDOM OF GOD

By revelation in the Holy Scriptures we are told that if someone should not come to the knowledge of the truth by his or her own free will and having turned back to the sinful way of life, forsaking the grace of God, then he or she will not suffer for all eternity, but for a short time, to reveal his or her shame.

“And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt” Daniel 12:2.

Scriptures are silent on the real length of the sufferings of the wicked, or the reasons for the sufferings, however, it does say, “forever and ever.” Note: “Ever” means *ages*, and the true words are, “for ages and ages” and an age does have an end.

God does not reveal to us the reasons for these sufferings of the wicked; perhaps it is for a reminder to us of what we were saved from. God’s ways are above our way of thinking and it is by the grace of God that we will not find ourselves in the state of the unsaved. To see the mercy of the eternal God, consider what the Scriptures say and let us reason together with God, as He reveals Himself to us in the Holy Scriptures.

“Wherefore I say unto thee, Her sins, which are many, are forgiven; for she loved much: but to whom little is forgiven, the same loveth little” Luke 7:47.

“Come now, let us reason together, sayith the LORD: though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool” Isaiah 1:18.

Come now, let God reason with you through His revealed Word. If when we die, a separate part of us goes either to heaven or hell, as is the popular belief, then those in hell will not experience any kind of peace for all eternity. The evil will remain with them. If they should live in such horrendous torture, here on earth, or, in the earth, then it could not be said that the earth is in complete peace and harmony. Would not a large part of the earth be assigned to hellfire? According to popular belief, most people will end up in hell. Also, it is revealed to us in Scripture that only a few will find the way that leads to eternal life.

THE FATHER—THROUGH JESUS CHRIST IS THE WAY

“Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it” Matthew 7:14.

“And I saw a new heaven and anew earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea” Revelation 21:1.

“And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away” Revelation 21:4.

God tells us there will be no more sorrow on earth. How beautiful and wonderful that will be. All bitterness and sorrow will be gone. Even those who were enemies of God will be no more for they will not be suffering any longer. You can understand the love and mercy of our eternal Father when one knows the true meaning of death, which is that “ceasing to exist.” Do not believe the lie Satan told

Eve in the Garden of Eden that she would not die. God’s word tells us that all shall die (perish), with the exception of those who are in Christ and at His coming, they shall be changed. This is speaking of the first resurrection.

“Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed” I Corinthians 15:51-52.

This is at the first resurrection.

There will be a second resurrection. That will be a resurrection unto judgment, a true translation, (not a resurrection unto condemnation as some would say). This judgment will bring condemnation and eternal death to many, and eternal life to those written in the book of life.

HEAR THE WORD OF GOD

“Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years” Revelation 20:6.

Consider this second resurrection different from the first resurrection. These will be raised up to a physical nature, subject to death. Remember that the word “destruction” and “perish” are used along with death: destruction means to take apart, and perish means to destroy.

GOD’S ETERNAL PLAN REVEALED

Understanding the love and mercy of our eternal God goes beyond our comprehension. There is a blindness that our creator God takes full responsibility for, that helps us to understand the second resurrection and the love of God for His creation.

“For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles be come in. And so all

Israel shall be saved: as it is written, There shall come out of Zion the Deliverer, and shall turn away ungodliness from Jacob” Romans 11:25-26.

“And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” Genesis 32:27-28.

Looking in the Hebrew Dictionary from *Strongs Exhaustive Concordance*, looking at “endure” # 3201, means, *might, overcome, have power, prevail*. As a Christian, he or she “endures, overcomes, prevails,” in Christ Jesus. It is helpful for one to know that when the Bible speaks of “all” it does not necessarily mean 100 percent, Jacob was named Israel because he was a prevailer.

“Not as though the word of God hath taken none effect. For they are not all Israel, which are of Israel: Neither, because they are the seed of Abraham, are they all children: but, In Isaac shall thy seed be called. That is, They which are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God: but the children of promise are counted for the seed” Romans 9:6-8.

Understand from this that those who call upon God are also called of God and God will then have mercy on those who are held in unbelief. The true judgments of God are from His infinite love and mercy to those who desire to show their love of God by keeping His commandments, by and through Jesus Christ. And there is more. We read Romans chapter 11 and see that for those who would believe, God will have mercy upon whom He will have mercy.

“For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out” Romans 11:32-33.

After the first resurrection is accomplished, all those who are in Christ, at His coming are changed to His likeness (immortal). Remember this; it would be necessary for those in the first resurrection to have already been judged righteous, through the

blood of the Lamb, Jesus Christ. They prevailed with God because they believed in Jesus and what He did for us on the cross. Their salvation is secure, in other words, they are not judged again. We know this when the books are opened at the end of the thousand year reign of the saints from the first resurrection. Those who are judged are the resurrected in the second resurrection.

“And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works” Revelation 20:12.

This resurrection is different from the first resurrection in that those who are judged in the second resurrection are judged of works. In the first resurrection those are being judged during this time of the dispensation of grace, it is “now” that we are judged by our faith and not of works. Whatever works we do is the working of the Spirit of God in us through Jesus Christ, while in the second resurrection they are judged according to their works.

THE WHITE THRONE JUDGMENT

We can understand the second resurrection and the purpose for it, you will see, there will be those who will be judged to receive eternal life. At the time of the second resurrection the whole earth will be included in the white throne judgment, that will include all those who have ever lived since the beginning of creation.

“And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them. And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened; and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works. And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works. And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire”
Revelation 20:11-15.

What it does not say is that **ALL** those in the second resurrection are cast into the lake of fire. We do not know the mind of God and His mercy. However, our Father does give us enough knowledge to somewhat comprehend the magnitude of His glorious love for each and every one of us to understand His nature. God’s love is an outgoing concern for His creation.

For any who are called now, we would not wish to wait for the second resurrection. We shall serve our Father in heaven, through our Lord, Jesus Christ, in spirit and in truth. Note this, there is no life beyond for those in the second death.

WE SHALL KEEP GOD’S COMMANDMENTS

To serve Jesus Christ and our Father is to keep His commandments, which are not grievous in spirit.

“Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good”
Romans 7:12.

“For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous” I John 5:3.

“And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people”
Acts 3:23.

“Who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power”
II Thessalonians 1:9.

Note: *“Punished”* here means *“a sentence executed by destruction.”* *“Destruction”* means *“to take apart, extirpate, or completely remove.”*

It is not continual punishing.

See Revelation 2:11: *“He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

Jesus Christ is our deliverer, the love and mercy of our eternal Father in heaven will not permit suffering for all eternity, we can see that God’s desire is that not any should perish.

“The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance” II Peter 3:9. Remember that perish means ceasing to exist.

Also, consider that man was created by divine desire of God. Man is not alive by his own initiative, nor did man ask to be created or born. However, man was given a free choice and it is by this choice that you will receive blessings or destruction, or a curse. It is good also to remember that it is a final destruction to those who do hear Him and do not respond to serving our Lord. It is for those who never had a chance to hear Him, including those that were allowed to be blinded by the god of this world, so that God may have mercy on them. Take a good look at what the apostle John is saying in Romans chapter 11, it reveals to us a lesson that we need to take heed of. We should not be high-minded to think that God has only called us to salvation and that none other will be saved; we can focus in on a better understanding of the mercies of God, our Father.

“Even so have these also now not believed, that through your mercy they also may obtain mercy. For God hath concluded them all in unbelief, that he might have mercy upon all” Romans 11:31-32.

“For I would not, brethren, that ye should be ignorant of this mystery, lest ye should be wise in your own conceits; that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fullness of the gentiles be come in” Romans 11:25.

What a privilege and joy that we, mankind, who were created by God, will be able to behold His sovereign glory for all eternity. Man did not ask to be created, conceived or born; we are conceived by the lust of the flesh.

“Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me” Psalm 51:5.

Now wait a minute!

Didn't God create us with this passion? Yes, He did and God is taking full responsibility. That is why the word of God became flesh and dwelt among us. However, in it all we must choose, and exercise our free will, to follow God our Father when we are given an opportunity; such as when we hear the Word and when our ears are opened.



THE WORD WAS MADE FLESH

The Son of God is revealed to us in the Bible, having become flesh. He was made a little lower than the angels and He was named Jesus. He was no longer in heaven, but He took on the form of man; in other words, He gave up His abode in heaven and dwelt among men. He gave up His glory with the Father in heaven.

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth"
John 1:14.

"For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour" Psalm 8:5.

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man" Hebrews 2:9.

"Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil"
Hebrews 2:14.

"And now, O Father glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was" John 7:5.

Note: Jesus is asking that His Father return the glory to Him that He once had with His Father in heaven, Jesus knew who He was and what His purpose was.

"And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business" Luke 2:49.

Until this dispensation of time, salvation had not been open to mankind, the sacrifice of animals was only a type of things to come, it could never save, nor did God desire it. In His mercy, even before the world was, there was the Word. The Son of God was looking to the end from the beginning; the Son went willingly to save man from their sins. Now that is real love!

"...although the works were finished from the foundation of the world" Hebrews 4:3b.

"God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect" Hebrews 11:40.

"For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins"
Hebrews 10:4.

If we read verses 4-6 we would also see that in verse 6 God had "no pleasure in burnt offerings and sacrifices."

"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God" John 1:1-2.

"Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world"
John 17:24.

"For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me" John 6:38.

"Who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" I Peter 1:20.

"Saying, Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done" Luke 22:42.

ENDURING TRIALS AND TEMPTATIONS

You see that many of those in the world may live a rather comfortable life, but when they seek after God in their lives and receive the Spirit of God, Satan is right there to upset the way of life that leads to eternal life. If Satan were to win you over, you would suffer a great loss, however, Satan will gain nothing because he and the ungodly will go into perdition, they will lose and be cast away—they will cease to be.

“And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life”

Matthew 19:29.

“Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him” James 1:12.

“But the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men”

II Peter 3:7.

Note: “ungodly” means, #765- *impious or wicked*; “perdition” means #575-*separation, cessation*, #576- *disembark*, #577-*to lose: cast away*. These meanings are from the *Greek Dictionary*.

I reason with you to persevere and take hold unto eternal life through Jesus Christ. Don’t give way to the wiles of Satan, there is too much to lose. The way towards God is to learn and seek the mind of Christ. When you follow Jesus Christ with your whole being, it will be worth it!

“For who hath known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ” I Corinthians 2:16.

THE YOKE OF JESUS IS WORTH BEARING

“Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls”

Matthew 11:29.

The following passages of Scripture illustrate how we gain knowledge in reading the Scriptures that were written by holy men of old and were inspired by God. We also learn by what had been told by Jesus Christ to the Apostles, as they also wrote them down. Through reading the Bible, the Spirit recalls to your memory what you have read in the written word and as you read and learn more about Jesus. I might further explain that anyone can learn from creation that there is a God. However, we can only learn from the written word that there is a Son of God and that He is our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ. It is thoroughly proven in the Scriptures the Spirit of God will make you free, God will not forsake you.

“If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?”

Luke 11:13.

“But the Comforter, which is the Holy Ghost, whom the Father will send in my name, he shall teach you all things, and bring all things to your remembrance, whatsoever I have said unto you” John 14:26.

“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world” John 16:33.

“And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free” John 8:32.

“Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee”

Hebrews 13:5.

“Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you” Matthew 7:7.

“Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him” John 14:23.

These are instructions from Jesus, the Son of God. It is the greatest gift to mankind, just reach out and receive it. Remember, that even though God desires that all should come into eternal life, He will not force you to love Him. It is through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ that we are saved, it is because of His love for us and all who call upon Him, and desire to do His will, which is to keep His Commandments.

"If ye love me, keep my commandments"
John 14:15.

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love" John 15:10.

Would you give your life to Jesus Christ and let Him have His way with you? May the love of our Father and Jesus Christ, the Son of God, abide in your hearts as you study this article.

O Lord, Hear him who seeks **You** with all his being, and strengthen those who are weak in faith.

John Leier resides in Cambridge, MN.

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The Origin of Tithing and the Blessing of Tithing

By Pastor C. V. Ledger

The Bible is full of promises of blessing upon the condition of obedience. There was a man some called him Mad. The more he gave, the more he had.

Tithing is not just a twentieth century teaching. The first time the word tithe appears in the Bible is in Genesis 14:20—Abraham gave Melchizedek tithes of all things. As we turn to Genesis 14:9-20 Melchizedek, King of Salem and Priest of the Most High God, brought out bread and wine and blessed Abraham, saying:

“Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: And blessed be the most high God which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand”
Genesis 14:19-20.

It is at this point that Tithing comes into the picture and Abraham gave Melchizedek, *“tithes of all.”* Reading of Abraham’s giving Melchizedek tithes suggests that this was done gratefully, voluntarily, but also systematically. Abraham was extremely thankful to God. What a victory and joy he had won.

As Abraham is our example, the one tenth of the increase being the amount that should be given, Abraham’s tithing also provides a pattern for us. To whom did Abraham pay Tithes? Melchizedek. Who was Melchizedek? He was a figure of Christ, he was like the Son of God. The writer of Hebrews brought in Melchizedek because of his discussion of the priesthood of Christ. The writing claimed that Jesus Christ is our great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14). Thus Abraham’s giving to Melchizedek prefigured the New Testament pattern that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel (I Corinthians 9:14).

For the apostle Paul says,

“Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And the labourer is worthy of his reward”
I Timothy 5:18.

The tithes of all, paid by all, would enable every minister of the gospel to live at his standard. Tithes, therefore, should be solely and exclusively for the work of the gospel. Tithes should not be given to charity.

“Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of Hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it” Malachi 3:10.

This great blessing follows on: listen to verses 11 and 12:

“And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of Hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the Lord of Hosts.”

Anyone who does not tithe robs God and the ministry. Abraham’s giving tithes to Melchizedek is enough to demonstrate this principle. Listen to this now Moses later says,

“And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD’S: it is holy unto the LORD”
Leviticus 27:30.

The tithe therefore, should go directly, and only, into the storehouse—the Ecclesiastical service of God. The governments around the world collect income taxes to pay people for service in their work place, how do we stand in the church?

Behind the Apostle Paul’s exhortation to us to be cheerful givers, lies not only the promise of blessing but also a protection against bitterness, should God withhold blessing. If we give cheerfully we will be built-up in the faith to the extent that we give because it is right, not because it pays. We give

cheerfully because “*God is able*” not because of an absolute promise to prosper us. Giving cheerfully is to affirm God’s power and glory. Giving cheerfully then is to show a godly concern and a godly concern envisages the greater glory of God. Therefore, the absence of the blessing will not result in bitterness.

Tithers should possess the “*but if not*” faith. It was the faith of Shadrach, Meshach and Abendego, who refused to bow down before King Nebuchadnezzar’s golden image. They went in faith into the furnace. They said:

“If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace, and he will deliver us out of thine hand, O king. But if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou hast set up” Daniel 3:17-18.

The tithers faith must be exactly like that. Our God is able to bless us, even make us prosper abundantly, because we take Him at His word.

Tithing, or obeying a commandment at a different level, is no different in God’s sight. As the body is the Lord’s so the tithe is the Lord’s. To abuse the body is to abuse the Temple of the Holy Spirit. So also is the withholding of God’s tithe, to rob Him of what is His own. He allows us, on our own honour, whether or not to obey Him.

Malachi states: “*Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation*” Malachi 3:9. It would seem that the people of God in Malachi’s day found other uses for their money, the same as today. Perhaps they couldn’t afford to tithe. Perhaps they thought the tithe really didn’t matter all that much. But Malachi says, “Look around you, haven’t you noticed? You are cursed with a curse, you are in trouble as a nation, and the reason is that you have robbed God.”

Malachi’s message is most fitting and relevant for our day. Every nation under the sun today seems to be in financial difficulty. An unbalanced budget, rising inflation, low cash flow, high unemployment, bewilderment, the story is familiar and common place. I say it again; the root of the problem is the failure of the people of God to tithe. This is not judging anyone, but this is a fact. While a nation totters on the brink of being demoralized, the church

offers no leadership. The failure to tithe is no doubt only one symptom of a deeper malady, and yet I doubt not, that at our fingertips is an opportunity to reverse the trend.

If all of the people of God would begin now to give their tithes to God’s storehouse, two things will happen, 1) the church would come alive and morale would be restored both to the ministry and to the church membership, 2) credibility would be restored to the church, therefore, the world: including that the government would take the church seriously. If only these two things came into play, a third factor of no small importance would also be in operation, God’s own blessing. “*Righteousness exalteth a nation: but sin is a reproach to any people*” Proverbs 14:34.

For when the church is faithful to its trust, God moves in to bless both it and all that it touches. God does it; He has a way of restoring normality, even prosperity. That is the way God works. When the church is rebellious and disobedient, that nation will be in awful difficulty. Government can bring in the finest minds, the most brilliant economist, the most able statisticians, but bewilderment and confusion pervades the atmosphere. But let the church get right with God, “*Amend your ways and your doings*” Jeremiah 7:3 and all the world is affected by it. Tithing is but a beginning, but a most solid beginning. It is within the grasp of God’s people to do something about this matter—right now.

What is the solution? “*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house*” Malachi 3:10a.

The chief motive for tithing! “*That there may be meat in mine house.*” The chief motive for tithing is not the blessing that we will get from obedience, but that we are jealous for God’s work, that we want it to thrive and prosper, that there be no hindrance whatsoever owing to lack of funds. We give because we care, we give because we believe the gospel, and we give because we know God has used men to advance His work.

Tithing is God’s way.

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<http://www.publicdomainpictures.net/view-image.php?image=14722&picture=money-graph>>Money Graph by Petr Kratochvil



The Rich Fool

by Pastor Monico G. Muffley

There is a danger in having too much. Wealth has a high demand on one's time and energy to obtain it – and to maintain it as well. The end is found in wealth taking up one's total attention to reproduce it. It is so powerful that the influence it holds on a person can end up occupying one's entire focus and time and even potentially lead up to the person's love being directed toward the pleasure given by one's possessions. This includes one's wealth beginning to compete with God for the person's heart and affection, immobilizing this person from doing the mission he or she was called by Jesus to do. ⁱ We would do well to learn the lesson of the Rich Fool. The story can be found in Luke 12:13-20.

Then one from the crowd said to Him, "Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me." But He said to him, "Man, who made Me a judge or an arbitrator over you?"ⁱⁱ Luke 12:13, 14

The first thing we notice is that there is *someone* in the crowd of disciples asking Jesus to help him work a problem out; someone just looking for a little justice; an everyday person with needs. And who better could solve his problem than Jesus?

But Jesus' response was not as one would expect:

Take heed, and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses.
Luke 12:15

What?! Where's the justice?! If someone, even a brother, is taking advantage of you, shouldn't something be done about it? Fair is fair, is it not? But God sees life in a way most of us do not.

As in His other parables, Jesus has something to teach here. In this parable, Jesus creatively develops a story of an extreme case to warn against a real danger in the normal day-to-day life. He uses this opportunity to teach the crowd before Him an important moral lesson.

Then He spoke a parable to them, saying, "The ground of a certain rich man yielded plentifully. Luke 12:16

In the parable this "certain rich man" appears – Jesus' classic way of speaking of nobody in particular. It could be any rich person; could be Donald Trump; could be Bill Gates. Who the man is does not matter. What does matter is what the rich man represents.

And he thought within himself, saying, "What shall I do, since I have no room to store my crops?" So he said, "I will do this: I will pull down my barns, and build greater; and there I will store all my crops, and my goods. And I will say to my soul, 'Soul, you have many goods laid up for many years; take your ease; eat, drink, and be merry.'" Luke 12:17-19

In Jesus' typical, hyperbolic, storytelling fashion, the circumstance of this rich man is one of extreme overabundance. He is doing so well it is necessary to keep building bigger and better.

We also see that this rich man is a shrewd business man. His intentions are probably of one of hoarding for his own gain. This is like a petroleum company that uses a time of national crisis to price gouge. But what might seem like a great business opportunity is damaging to and upsets the well-being of others. *The people will curse him who withholds grain, but blessing will be on the head of him who sells it* (Proverbs 11:26). The Bernie Madoffs of society take advantage of and profit from others for their self-promotion. Likewise, the man in Jesus' parable is only thinking of himself.

Again we see that this rich man has only himself in mind as we see Jesus describing:

And he thought within himself... He has no one – no son, no servant, no manager – to discuss these matters with. He holds this "dialogue" within himself.

The man thinks to himself: “What shall I do since I have no room to store my crops?”, “I will do this. I will pull down my barns... I will store all my crops, and my goods”, “And I will say to my soul...” His attitude is: “Me, me, me, me, me”; a man who is entirely full of himself. He even talks out loud to himself: *Soul, you... take your ease...* Jesus has him saying “soul” – with the meaning of “self” – to emphasize that the rich man is all alone. No heir, not even a slave like Abraham’s Eliezer of Damascus (Genesis 15:1-3), to pass his inheritance on to.

But God said to him, “Fool! This night your soul will be required of you; then whose will those things be, which you have provided?”
Luke 12:20

No one would like to be called a fool, much less by God.

This kind of fool, φρόνις (*aphron*), is not the moronic type of fool. Rather this type of fool holds no regard for the living God of the universe. It is the type of fool found in Psalm 14:1 and Psalm 53:1 – “The fool says in his heart, ‘There is no God.’” He is called a fool because he is unaware that even his very self (“soul”) belongs to God. He is called a fool because the things he possesses, the very ones he thought he had provided, will not be passed on to anyone he would desire to have them.

The rich man in Jesus’ parable is like the one in Ecclesiastes 6:2 who has everything but is not able to enjoy it. As Adam Clarke comments, “A man to whom God hath given riches - A man may possess

much earthly goods, and yet enjoy nothing of them. Possession and fruition are not necessarily joined together; and this is also among the vanities of life. It is worthy of remark, that it belongs to God as much to give the power to enjoy as it does to give the earthly blessings.”ⁱⁱⁱ

In this way Jesus responded to the everyday, run-of-the-mill person in the crowd who wanted his fair share. And Jesus wrapped up by saying, “So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God.”

Jesus was telling the person in the crowd not to be a fool. In contrast, he told the crowd of disciples:

Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat; nor about the body, what you will put on. Life is more than food, and the body is more than clothing...
(Luke 12:22, 23ff).^{iv}

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ⁱ Translated and adapted from *Lecciones para Grupos Familiares*, booklet 4, p. 24

ⁱⁱ All scripture references are from the NKJV unless otherwise noted.

ⁱⁱⁱ Clarke’s Commentary on the Bible, “Ecclesiastes 6:2”

^{iv} Thanks to Argentinean theologian Dr. René Krüeger for teaching us students how and why Luke recorded this parable of Jesus, and what the individual, intricate parts of the parable mean.

“Neither yield ye your members as instruments of unrighteousness unto sin: but yield yourselves unto God, as those that are alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness unto God” Romans 6:13.

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