FAITH Meets FINANCIAL MANIPULATION



MUNASHE SOKA

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By
Munashe Soka

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Chapter 1
Souls Not Dollars

For many of us, giving to God's work is a sacred act that brings us closer to God, but what happens when our generosity is met with manipulation or guilt?

Giving our money and resources to the church is good, biblical, and right. However, there are people who have been hurt before when it comes to giving. Such individuals have been bruised, felt used, or didn't see any benefits from it.

Due to their negative experiences with giving, they have shut their hearts towards contributing to God's work and often speak negatively about it. They might even try to teach or preach about giving in a bad way, using scripture to discourage others. I totally understand them. Many people are hurt when it comes to giving money in church.

Sometimes pastors use fundraising methods that may turn out bad and hurtful to others. Some do it with pure hearts, believing God is backing them up, even when He's not. It is just their great faith in

God, that eventually make them overlook the impact of their fundraising methods because they think faith will definitely move God to work miracles for us.

Sometimes, it is the fundraising method that makes giving look entirely bad and unscriptural. But some preachers, because they so much have faith in giving itself and see the good side of it, they ignore the impact of the fund raising method they might decide to use. Such fundraising methods are not only hurtful, but can actually suffocate true faith in God. People are then left with a pseudo faith that doesn't work at all

These preachers might encourage their followers to have the same faith and conviction they have about giving, but their methods can still hurt others, while at the same time, presenting a certain kind of faith which is not faith at all but a mere emotion — greed, fear and guilt.

On the other hand, there are preachers with hidden motives who use fundraising for selfish gains. They don't care about the people they're hurting; they only want to enrich themselves or achieve their goals.

We have Christians who have turned

their backs on tithing, church contributions, offerings, and other common forms of church fundraising because they've been bruised, hurt, pressured and felt lied to. One person who read one of my books, Faith in the Money Realm, contacted me and shared with me their experience of being dictated to by their pastor regarding how much to give.

He said to me that his pastor used to calculate what he was left with after tithing and then expect him to give a specific amount out of the remaining 90%. At first he didn't notice that all the money his pastor told him to give was within the range of what he had left after tithing and it always happened soon after he payed his tithe.

The pastor would definitely set a figure in his mind the next church service they would be having some fundraising. If this brother said that he was willing to contribute a certain amount, the pastor would immediately tell him to raise it because the pastor probably assumed that he still had that remaining 90% which he knew very well how much it was.

He said this happened for years, causing the person to reduce his tithes because he

suspected the Pastor was judging what he earns based on his tithing. But the Pastor didn't realize that his members had many other financial commitments. So this person after reducing his tithes he then eventually stopped giving altogether. I didn't judge him, I only listened to him, because I know how some church fundraisers can leave people with scars.

The pastor might have been trying to stretch his followers' faith (as I have heard being preached somewhere), but he didn't realize the damage he was causing. I'm not sure what pastors mean by "stretching someone's faith in the area of money," when they push you to give more each time you make a pledge. Is it about the person's faith or the accomplishment of the church project? Either way, it can leave people with scars, making them feel used.

This book, however, is about trying to balance faith, grace and financial giving. I have seen people are confused reconciling these three virtues and thereby moving out of grace or suffocate their faith and make it powerless.

Remember, I support financial giving in

church. I really want people to give, but there are these impurities that have crept into our beautiful doctrine of giving that I just want to address so that we restore true faith and understanding in the area of giving.

I really want people to give cheerfully to the work of God with hearts filled with grace, faith and willingness without our ministry projects being affected by a lack of giving. That is why I have come up with this book on giving the right way according to my understanding and view of the word of God.

If you think what I wrote here is biblically sound and correct, follow it. But if you think I didn't explain the Word of God in the right way, then it's up to you to accept or reject my thoughts. Let me first of all talk about forced pledges, one of the most common carnal fundraising methods.

Forced Pledges

Many churches I've attended use this approach where you're forced to pledge what you know you're not comfortable with. This is what keeps certain people from

coming to church when there are things like purchase of some big church equipment building projects or on Pastor's appreciation days. (I have several people who told me straight in my face the reason why they were not coming to church, and I had to think though what they said.)

They force you to make a pledge, and when it's due, they condemn you for not honoring it. That's when they quote Ecclesiastes 5:4-6. Let's read it:

> *Ecclesiastes 5:4-6*
> *When you make a vow to God, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed—Better not to vow than to vow and not pay. Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?*

Before you vow, they don't use the word "vow" because it would scare many people. Instead, they use the words "pledge" or "financial commitment." They don't mention

Ecclesiastes 5:4-6 when you're making a pledge, but they do when it's due. Then, they put fear in you, judge you, and condemn you for not honoring your pledge, as if they'd given you the freedom to pledge what you're capable of. Yes, I know the reason for not giving people freedom is that if people give what they can afford, our church projects won't have enough money.

I want you to look at this scripture from 2 Corinthians 8:12-15.

> *2 Corinthians 8:12-15*
> *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*
> *For I do not mean that others should be eased and you burdened;*
> *but by an equality, that now at this time your abundance may supply their lack, that their abundance also may supply your lack—that there may be equality.*
> *As it is written, "He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack."*

It's clear that Paul understood that in the church, people don't earn equally and don't have the same financial commitments. He gave them the freedom to give what they were able to give. If you give like this, you give cheerfully and according to how God has blessed you or how the Holy Spirit prompts you to give.

I know there are people who will then begin to give less than they're able to give simply because they say they have the freedom. I give as much as I am able because I see my money as a tool by which our churches can keep functioning well, and people can get blessed by the church ministry or by our benevolent giving. I think that if people are continually being given more and more reasons why it's necessary for them to give, we can have the resources we need to reach the world with the Word and love of God.

I also personally think that if we focus on growing people spiritually in the Word of God, the grace of God, and in being sensitive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit within our hearts, then with time, people will begin to give as they're moved by the Holy Spirit.

All selfishness, where someone gives less than they're able or where someone gives more than they're able just to please people, will be removed when believers grow spiritually.

According to that scripture, Paul gave the Old Testament example where people gathered different amounts of manna, but still, nobody lacked, and no manna was wasted. Look at verse 15: "As it is written, 'He who gathered much had nothing left over, and he who gathered little had no lack.'" Paul was trying to teach us that even though some people in the church give little according to what they have, and others give more according to what they have, in the end, our financial goals as a church will be met.

We don't need to fear that if people give what they have, they'll give less than our targets. When God really moves among people and they give according to the direction of the Holy Spirit, then we'll see the blessing of the Lord in our giving, where all our targets will be met. The other believers who don't listen to the Holy Spirit will cease to be a factor.

Understand that it takes time for someone to grow spiritually and be able to give by the direction of the Holy Spirit. Patience with some believers is required. They need to be taught all aspects of the grace of God, and at some point, they'll begin to listen to the Holy Spirit.

(Yes, it's possible for our ministry goals to not be met as well after we give, because some people can still give selfishly. And the other reason is that we might have just been setting our ministry goals in the flesh. I shall talk about this. And we might just be required to exercise a little bit more patience. The devil might also be fighting us. There are many other factors.) Also, if what we're giving toward is led by God, then we don't need to worry. We can only worry if we've put up a church project or something else that God isn't in, because surely God will never lead anyone to give toward that.

Do you understand the miracle of the feeding of the 5,000? The Bible says the disciples told Jesus that the money they had wasn't enough to feed all the people. Perhaps it was the offering they'd collected that wasn't enough. They were so worried.

But when Jesus was told about a boy who had two fish and five loaves, he ordered all people to sit down. What did he do? He thanked God for the bread and fish and then blessed it. That little offering Jesus blessed it..

Most of the people there were poor, and the money the disciples had was all they'd collected from willing people (it's my thinking since the Bible says Judas was the treasurer, so he might be the one collecting the ministry's offerings—just my thinking based on connecting Bible facts, not a doctrine).

If Jesus had used carnal methods, forcing and coercing people to give more than they're able just so he could have enough to feed all people, they wouldn't have seen the blessing of God in that miracle. We've gotten so used to carnal methods in fundraising, holding people by the neck so they give, that we've blocked the flow of God's blessings and the miracle of multiplication.

Let me say this again: if the project at hand, what we're raising money for, is something initiated by God or something that's biblical enough to be backed by God,

then God will truly take care of the financing of that project and cause. God will definitely move people's hearts; He already knows how each person should give to meet that target. If the target isn't met, we can still thank God for what we've received and bless it, just as Jesus did.

However, this doesn't mean we should fold our hands and not ask people to give. We obviously need to keep telling people about the importance of the money we're raising and give them good enough reasons for them to give—only reasons that are biblical and don't kill faith or violate other doctrines of the Bible. We don't need to force people to give when they haven't made up their minds and conditioned their hearts to give willingly.

We've blocked God's miracles because we want to take matters into our hands. Forced pledges are not biblical; they're burdensome. In the long run, they leave people with scars and bruises. Some have been made to pledge beyond their means, ended up in debt, weren't able to provide for their families, sold properties, and other things they own without willingness of

heart. (I didn't exaggerate my statement; I know what happens in certain churches—I don't want to say much here.) When people didn't see the blessing of God or a return on their giving, they stopped coming to church completely.

Faith Not Sight

I think I need to discuss this. I've observed that churches that don't demonstrate the power of God, where preachers don't minister charismatically in the gifts of the Holy Spirit or through dramatic ministrations of God's power, tend to have fewer givers (it's just my personal observation). However, when a pastor starts casting out demons, prophesying to people, or demonstrating power in other ways and then asks people to sow a seed, claiming there's a grace or anointing for prosperity, people will give.

In their minds, they'll think that with all this demonstration of God's power, if they give—as the preacher says there's a grace to give—it truly means God is speaking to him. It's just psychological; many times, it's not God calling people to give and be blessed,

but the preacher taking advantage because the church believes what they see and feel.

We should give because of our faith and trust in God, regardless of seeing any manifestation of His power. Faith has nothing to do with feelings; true faith doesn't respond to dramatic manifestations. Faith believes the unseen. The Bible says we walk by faith, not by sight. A church full of spiritually immature people is one that's moved by manifestations of power to give.

If you truly have a relationship with God, you give when He tells you to, even without physical signs of power in the church. Faith isn't about what we see physically but what the Word of God says. Some pastors who don't know how to demonstrate God's power try to make a show of it in the flesh, forcing it (and even faking it) so people will give in response.

True faith comes from hearing the Word of God, not from seeing physical manifestations. If you teach the Word of God and help people understand why they should give, that Word will steer faith within them without needing to force some spiritual gifting..

Does The Reason for Giving Make Sense?

Another thing I've noticed is that people want to give to church projects or programs that make sense to them. If the reasons don't make sense, they may not give.

For example, I was in another church where they had invited a preacher to preach. He preached and began to demonstrate the power − his term for making people fall down, which was all he did. There wasn't a single person healed, delivered, filled with the Holy Spirit or who received a tangible miracle that could make me qualify his displays as a real demonstration of God's power according to my personal opinions. All he did was make people vibrate and fall down and that was all.

Afterward, he told people to rush to the altar and give specific high amounts. He said it was the time for them to give their seeds and that was all. Nobody moved. As an invited guest, he didn't know the church he was ministering to. Watching this, I thought to myself, "This man is about to embarrass

himself. In this church, people don't give without knowing the reason for which the money should be used." And I was correct.

There are certain churches that don't give without solid reasons for giving, knowing what the money will be used for, and considering other factors first. You might think people don't want to give, but are your reasons worth their money? This invited guest thought the church would be moved by his display of power, but maybe his display wasn't worth people's giving in their minds. And he didn't explain why he asked them to sow a seed.

Chapter 2
The Root Cause of Doctrinal Errors

Whenever I give to the church or work of God, I think about the people who will be blessed by the ministry of that church—their sound biblical teachings, how they reach out to the lost and get them saved, how they restore hope through scriptures to people in difficult situations, the lives that are transformed spiritually, and how they encourage righteous living and good deeds in people's lives. When I think about these, I'm motivated to give to such a church or ministry. This is what I think giving should be all about—blessing people.

So, to me, giving works in the sense that it keeps me motivated to spread the Word and keeps me in the love of God towards nations. In my entire life, I've never given anything just so I could get rich. I understand the Word of God differently, and this is my subjective belief.

Yes, there are many moments when some preacher really motivated me to give in order to get rich or to break demonic curses

or some other motivation that arouses emotions like greed, fear, and guilt. Whenever I was told to give in response to these carnal emotions, I didn't really give because of the reasons the preacher gave me. I only gave because I was thinking, "After all, the PA system we're buying is going to help spread the gospel to people." Or, "The tithe I'm giving also contributes to the Pastor's salary, so it's a good thing to feed the Pastor who is dedicated to feeding us with God's Word and has oversight over our spiritual well-being."

Or, "Still, we have to pay this church's rentals because this church really preaches the good Word of God and promotes right living and spiritual growth. It deserves to be supported." So, if you see me responding with my money, even when the preacher is manipulative, I have things that I first think about regarding that person's ministry and church. If I have good enough reasons to give, I give—but not in response to manipulative words.

The only moment I don't give is when the preacher tries to push me to give what I don't have or when they try to force me to

make a big pledge that I know I cannot fulfill. I cannot guarantee my response when it comes to that.

Preachers can sometimes force you to make a pledge that's beyond what you can give. After really forcing you, when you fail to fulfill it, they begin to quote the scripture in Ecclesiastes, which says, "When you make a vow, delay not to fulfill it, for God has no pleasure in fools" (Ecclesiastes 5:4-5). They now call you a fool and begin to pronounce threats of curses because you can't fulfill your pledge. But they forget that they had forced you.

Yes, indeed you are a fool because you gave in to pressure and pledged when you knew you didn't have. I'm not condemning you; I've been a fool too in the past. The more you keep giving in to some pressure and manipulative motivations, the more you're encouraging such a fundraiser to keep doing that, because they know people will eventually give in.

To me, giving is something I do motivated by two things: love and faith. I'll explain these two motivations in this chapter, and they'll be the basis for most of

what I'll be talking about in this book.

> *1 Timothy 6:10*
> *For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.*

If we're not careful with our motivations in the area of finances, we can really stray from true faith. Paul told Timothy to flee these things. I'll talk more about this. The love of money, which most prosperity gospel preachers seem to unintentionally promote, is one reason why we've really strayed from true faith.

Please read carefully; I've written all this from a heart that really wants to see us living by the true and pure faith that our Lord desires we walk in. This book isn't meant to be a critic but an encouragement to live by true faith and help get rid of some impurities that have crept into our blessed gospel.

Are We Building on the Foundation Laid

I've written about the fact that giving helps us release our faith in some of my previous books: "Faith In the Money Realm," "Tithe Revelation," and "You Said, 'It is Useless to Serve God'." I know I've never really explained my point in those books as I shall in this book.

What drove me to want to really explain this was the fact that certain preachers use the same kind of statements to pressure people into giving beyond their means. This is where a preacher forces someone to give, arguing that they're doing so to stretch that person's faith in the area of finances. I felt that people might think that's what I also meant when I say giving activates faith. So, I decided to explain my position and view.

Everything I teach is grounded on a certain doctrinal foundation that I've known and believed for all my life. I try by all means to write books on different topics so that people might somehow see through the lines and see the doctrinal foundation from which

I build my doctrine.

I can never properly teach this subject of faith and financial giving without first grounding you on the foundation that I'm grounded on. From this point until the end of this chapter, read carefully—twice, if necessary. I'll be giving you the solid foundation upon which all doctrine should be grounded, according to my understanding of the Bible.

The Foundation of Christ

> *1 Corinthians 3:11*
> *For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.*

All doctrinal errors, extremes, and even financial manipulations are a result of us moving away from the true doctrinal foundation, which I'm going to talk about in this chapter. Apostle Paul said that there is no other foundation that any man (preaching the gospel) shall lay (or is permitted to lay) other than the one that has been laid, which is Christ Jesus.

Let me explain this foundation according to my understanding and what I've seen in the Bible. This is what Jesus Christ did for us: He died for us (or in our place), was buried, resurrected, and ascended into heaven for us (or in our place). When you say you want to be born again, you mean that you've realized you're in sin and spiritually dead (or separated from God), and you have this conviction of sin within you that pushes you to repent and accept Jesus Christ's sacrificial work on the cross on your behalf.

You choose to have what Christ did for you (or in your place) become a reality in your life. This foundation is crucial for all we believe or teach about God to the church. You'll see how important it is when it comes to all we do as believers and even to financial giving as well.

Innocence: The Original State of All People

Romans 7:9
I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.

Every person who comes into this world comes innocent as an infant; your spirit at that time will be having no sin in it, and at the same time, we cannot say it has righteousness. It is just innocent. Righteousness means right standing with God. Right standing with God means being in a state of being compliant with God's laws and requirements. It is when any charges against you are dropped. Righteousness can only be attained when you receive Christ into your spirit because He is the righteousness of God.

But every baby born into this world is NOT born with Christ inside of them. They need to make that choice later in life when they grow. At birth, they are born innocent before God and not righteous. They don't have any sin either. Let me say this again in short: every baby born into this world is not born a sinner or with sin, as opposed to what many people teach. But this doesn't mean they are born in righteousness. They are born innocent but waiting to then be declared either righteous or a sinner (or in sin).

So babies grow up, and at a certain age,

their conscience opens up, and they begin to know what is right and what is wrong. At that stage, if they do what is wrong, they've broken the law of God and are now condemned as a sinner, with the same sin as Adam, and they die spiritually (they're officially sinners now, and Adam's sin begins to rule over them). Don't ask me about what age this takes place; it varies from child to child.

This is what Paul meant in that verse from Romans 7:9 when he said, "I was alive once without the law, but when the law came, sin revived, and I died." He was born into this world neither a sinner nor righteous (he was spiritually innocent), but as he grew up as a child, he got to a point where he consciously knew the laws of God and broke them, and then his spirit died and was condemned.

However, God gives you another chance to repent and get born again (but this time into righteousness, not innocence). Your spirit needs to be born again because it was once born innocent, alive, and without sin when you were a baby, but eventually died in sin as you grew up. (When sin enters your

spirit, God sees you as dead, just like Adam's spirit died the day he broke God's laws).

So the reason we preach the gospel is just so we give people a second chance on their spiritual lives. They need to repent from their works and accept the life of Jesus into their spirit. Jesus died for our sins on the cross. He took everyone's sin and then died in that sin, just like Adam died from his own sin.

When Adam died in his sin, he only needed to resurrect back into life to get back into fellowship with God. It was only spiritual death that separated him from God. To regain fellowship and right standing, he needed to resurrect his spirit, but he couldn't. He had no power to spiritually resurrect.

This is the state of every person on this earth. When you die spiritually in your sin, there's nothing you can do on your own to get back into spiritual life. The moment you die spiritually, you're destined for hell, because hell is for those who are spiritually dead. But if you could resurrect yourself from spiritual death before physical death, you wouldn't go to hell.

The question is, how do you resurrect your spirit before your body dies? The answer is, no one can. Not even Adam could resurrect himself. No matter how hard you try to obey God's law and do right, you'll never give your spirit life again.

This is why Jesus, who is God, came as a man. Jesus had the power to resurrect from both spiritual and physical death. He is the Resurrection and the Life, with God's life in Himself. He could die and resurrect with God's life.

Jesus, the Second Adam —Our Saviou

John 11:25
Jesus said to her, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.

John 10:17-18
"Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This

command I have received from My Father."

When we talk about receiving Jesus, this is what we mean. There's no one like Him—no prophet, religious leader, or great man who spoke like Jesus. He had the power to die and resurrect with God's life because He's God who became a man—the Son of God, the visible representation of the invisible God, God's own product of Himself.

Jesus died in our place; His death on the cross was a substitute for us. When He died, it was as if the whole world died with Him. Then, He resurrected from the dead with God's life and Spirit in Him—something only Jesus, the Son of God, could do.

When I say Jesus is the Son of God, I mean He's the manifestation of God's essence, made visible for humanity's sake. Everything Jesus did was done in our place so we could experience the same. But Jesus didn't come to restore us to innocence; He came to give us something better—righteousness, right standing with God, and God's life and Spirit inside us.

When you're born again, you're given a higher life than a newborn baby's spiritual life. You now have God's Spirit living in your spirit, you're made like Christ, raised to heavenly glories, and seated with Christ in heavenly places.

Jesus did everything for us; all we need to do is acknowledge our sin, repent, and believe that Jesus died in our place and resurrected to give us God's life. As you believe and accept His death for your sin, you need to confess with your mouth that Jesus is now Lord over your life—a prayer to ask Jesus to become your Lord.

By confessing, you're rejecting the devil as your master and choosing Jesus as your new master and Lord. Once you do that, you're born again in your spirit with God's life, and heaven becomes your guaranteed destination—as long as you don't deny Jesus as your Lord and fall from grace again.

> *Romans 10:9-10*
> *that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved.*

> *For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.*

I've preached this salvation to many people because of my passion for soul winning. If you didn't know this, but you're a Christian, then I don't know what you believed when you got born again. Most doctrinal errors result from not understanding these basic foundations of Christianity.

We have Jesus Christ living inside us; we've passed from death into life. The kind of life Jesus has is the same kind of life we have. We're just like Jesus, which means the love of Jesus is within our hearts, and we're expected to show it to the world. That means the righteousness of Jesus is within our spirits, and we're expected to show it to the world.

> *1 John 4:17*
> *.....that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.*

You'll see how this relates to giving money in church or anywhere. This is the foundation. If you don't understand and strongly value it, you'll build wrong doctrines on it.

Applying This Foundational Knowledge

When I say, "If you have faith, you'll see the power of God in your life," I might be misunderstood by someone whose view on spiritual things isn't grounded on the same foundation as mine. Someone might think I mean that if you have faith, God will move into your life with His power because He's responding to your faith. But that's not what I'm trying to convey.

I have a different doctrinal foundation than many people I've met. My foundation is that in Christ, there's nothing we as humans do to make God move and respond to us. The only human work God ever responded to was what Christ did on the cross. Jesus did everything for us, and all that's left for us to do is respond in faith, receive what Christ

purchased for us, and live the life of God practically.

Do you think we do good deeds and walk in righteousness so God sees it and gives us salvation? No! That's not what the Bible says about us in Christ. In Christ, we're already made righteous and holy by the cleansing of Christ's blood. We live righteous and holy lives because we have His righteousness within us.

If you're not practically applying God's holiness and righteousness in your life, then either you're not truly born again or you haven't been taught the Word of God well. God's righteousness within us should never be dormant and passive. We were made righteous so we could practically live in righteousness.

There are people who think being born again and having God's righteousness within them is just an insurance for heaven. They don't make an effort to live right and holy lives. They live in sin, thinking they're okay spiritually. If that's your thinking, you've completely misunderstood grace. Chances are high you'll fall from faith and deny Jesus as your Lord if you can't put your

faith into practice. We've been empowered to live right because of Christ's righteousness within us.

A Better View of Salvation

> *2 Corinthians 5:21*
> *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.*

We're already righteous because we received it by faith. We didn't do anything for God to declare us righteous except receive it by faith. Now, why did God think it best to justify and recreate our spirits with His righteousness when we were born again?

Let me ask you: Does God lie, sin, or do evil? I'm sure your answer is no. God is good; He does righteous things. James said every good gift comes from the Father of lights. God doesn't bring or do evil.

If the Word of God says we're now the righteousness of God in Christ, what does that mean? Does it mean we were made righteous just to enter heaven, regardless of

sin, because our righteous nature doesn't change? I don't think so. God's purpose in making us righteous was so we'd live like Him, and giving us His nature was so we could live like Him on earth. He made it easy for us to live according to His standard of righteousness.

In the Old Testament, people were given the Ten Commandments, but they still had the nature of sin within them. So, while God desired for them to live right, they were at a disadvantage. But for us who are born again, we've been given God's righteousness within our spirits, and the truth is, we're at an advantage if we really want to live right. We can't make excuses to God for not walking in love and holiness. We have the righteousness of God and the Spirit of God within us—what more do we need?

If you're living in sin, you're taking God's grace for granted. You have all the tools you need to live the life God wants you to live. You don't have any excuse before God. When God gave us His nature and Spirit, it was so He could extend His Kingdom on this earth. Giving us His righteousness was an empowerment to do

right things, just as He always does.

Without God's righteousness in us, we'd struggle to live right and avoid sin. But with it, living right and holy lives becomes easy. That was God's idea in making us righteous in Christ—to live according to that new nature. A dog behaves according to its nature; we too have been made alive to righteousness, which is now our new nature.

That alone makes us live right as long as we have faith in our new nature. If you didn't know that, then at least you're justified if you were loving sin. But now that you know, God expects more from you. Most Christians who are enlightened sin willfully because they think God's grace allows them.

My brother and sister, a life of sin is dangerous to you; it will never do you any good. As long as we keep the knowledge of our new nature in our minds, we find it hard to sin. We only sin when we focus on our flesh and physical bodies, which aren't born again, and convince ourselves we're still weak and sinful, and that curses, iniquities, and evil spirits from our forefathers still have power over us. The moment we start

believing that, we're defeated and fail to live up to the standard of God's righteousness within us.

But if we constantly listen to, read, and study the Word of God, we keep the knowledge of who we truly are in Christ fresh in our minds, and that alone keeps us in wanting to live in God's righteousness.

> *1 John 5:18*
> *We know that whoever is born of God does not sin; but he who has been born of God keeps himself, and the wicked one does not touch him.*

Why did God decide to create man in His image (the image of Christ, which is righteousness)? Was it not for man to replenish, dominate, and subdue the earth? The creation of man was the physical extension of God's Kingdom on earth.

We were recreated in His likeness and image (in Christ) so that we live like God on this earth. When angels and all God's creation see us, they'll see God working through us. The creation will see the righteousness and goodness of God through

us.

> *1 Peter 2:9,11-12*
> *But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.....Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul, having your conduct honorable among the Gentiles, that when they speak against you as evildoers, they may, by your good works which they observe, glorify God in the day of visitation.*

Understanding What Grace Truly Is

All I've said above about living with God's own righteousness is what's called grace. Many people think grace is just the forgiveness of sins—where you sin, but God keeps loving you. That's not really what the Bible means by grace. That's just God's unconditional love for us, whether we live right or not.

When it comes to grace, it's different

from just forgiveness of sin. Grace is being empowered and given a new nature and the life of Christ, which He resurrected with. Grace is inheriting all the victory Christ gained from dying and resurrecting. You're given the new life He resurrected with, raised to sit with Him in heavenly places, and made the righteousness of God in Christ.

Grace transforms you into a new person because of Christ's work. By grace, you have the power to live right, and God knows you can do it because that's your new nature. Inside, you're like God—you love what He loves, hate what He hates, and think like Him. You only need to keep listening to and reading the Word of God to be reminded of who you truly are, so you don't live below your standards.

> *Colossians 3:1,3,5,9-10*
> *If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God.....For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.....Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth:*

> *fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry.....Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him,*

Grace is not a license to sin. The grace of God is an empowerment to live right, to walk in God's love toward people, and to show God's goodness to the world. God wants His Kingdom to dominate the kingdoms of this world. We've been empowered to live in holiness and righteousness, to heal sicknesses, and to minister Christ to the world.

All we do as Christians is a result of who we are in Christ. God's righteousness in us isn't just passive; it's active. If you think about the righteousness of God in you as just an insurance to enter heaven while living in sin and being as evil as the world, then I have doubts about your salvation. It's either you're not truly born again, maybe you just joined a church without being truly born again, or perhaps you're born again but

choose to live in sin deliberately.

Or maybe your pastor's messages aren't focused on explaining grace accurately. If that's the case, that's one reason for this book. Preachers sometimes fail to represent God well, making believers think wrongly about faith, grace, God's love, giving, and other Bible doctrines. That's why I titled this book "Faith Meets Financial Manipulation."

I want to address the financial side of giving in church that's been wrongly taught and presented, affecting our faith in God. Giving has been taught and done in a way that moves people away from the foundation of Christ, affecting their faith and understanding of grace. We'll see things clearly in the next chapters. A perfect understanding of grace will definitely move someone into wanting to live a life of righteousness and holiness because they'll understand who they are.

> *Titus 2:11-12*
> *For the grace of God that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts,*

we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age,

The Application

In Christ, we've been recreated as new creatures. Old things have passed away, and everything about us is now new. The old us is gone. Inside, there's a new recreated spirit created in true righteousness and holiness. We've been created again with the nature of love. We're just like Christ within our spirit.

There's no power, curse, or ancestral spirit from our forefathers that can overpower our righteous nature. Never lie to yourself that you want to marry a second wife because polygamy is strong in your ancestry and you can't win over it. You know the truth—that adultery and fornication are your choices and lusts, not any force from your bloodline.

It's sad that some preachers want their followers to believe they still have generational curses making them poor. (I have a deep understanding of how evil spirits operate. Yes, they're there and can influence us, but certain preachers have hyped them at the expense of knowing our

authority in Christ. If it's about understanding demons, I tell you, I have almost perfect knowledge—more than some deliverance ministers I've seen.)

Why do we run from responsibility over our lives, decisions, and outcomes? Why blame dead people for our failures, decisions, and laziness? Your bloodline can't make you live in sin unless you decide to consciously. And in most cases, your bloodline can't make you poor. I know exactly what I'm talking about.

If your spirit is truly born again, it automatically desires to live right because righteousness is your new nature. We should accidentally do what's right more than what's wrong because we used to accidentally fall into sin when we had a sinful nature. Now that we have a new righteous nature, the opposite should happen.

We Do All Things By Love And Faith

Do you understand faith? Faith is believing something and acting on what you believe. If you believe you're a new creature

in Christ, that faith will automatically make you live like one. Ephesians 4:24-25 shows us that we put away lying and tell the truth because we believe we've been born again with a new righteous and holy nature—that's who we are.

If you don't believe you're a new creation in Christ, it's shown by living contrary to your new nature. That shows you either don't have faith about who you are or just don't want to live by faith. Faith is acting on the true realities of the spiritual world. The Word of God tells us who we are in Christ, and we use faith to believe and act on it.

If the Word says we'll receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon us, then the moment you receive the Holy Spirit, you know you have power. I don't beg God to send His power; I just act on the Word by faith. I've prayed for sick people to get healed without feeling the power of God in me because I know I have the power to heal sicknesses. I prayed, and many got healed—that's faith in the Word.

We act on who we are. This is why I say faith doesn't move God—we're not applying faith for God to do something. We're

applying faith because we know what we already have in Christ. We're already blessed with all spiritual blessings, rich with the riches of Christ, victorious over sickness, the devil, and sin because of our place in Christ. These things are our present state realities; we just activate our faith and enforce them into our lives. We don't need to beg or manipulate God to move in response to our faith.

So, all I do as a Christian, I do by faith and by the consciousness of who I am in Christ. We should easily walk in love because when I was born again, the love of God was shed abroad in my heart by the Holy Spirit.

> *Romans 5:5*
> *.....because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.*

We can't pray to God and say, "God, please fill me with love so that I walk in love." No, we can't pray like that—it shows we don't have faith in what the Bible says we have. Such a prayer is usually done by

someone who wants to run away from responsibility. They want to cheat, defraud people, not forgive, hurt others, and then give as an excuse that they don't have God's love in them because God hasn't given it.

They sin willfully and then go before God, saying, "Lord, make me righteous. Fill me with your love." In other words, they're trying to blame God for their actions, saying they're living in sin because God isn't giving them His love or making them righteous. How hypocritical that is!

Mind you, I'm not writing these things because I'm perfect. Everyone, when not focused on the Word of God and the Spirit of God, eventually falls into sin. Yes, sometimes we may get into the flesh and sin, but we need to keep ourselves in the Word and the Spirit. What I'm against is when someone willfully sins and shifts the blame on God for not making them righteous.

We already have God's love in our spirit—it's a present state reality. We just need to believe that this is who we are—loving children of a loving God. We activate faith and begin to love people. We practice faith, practice righteousness, and do the

Word.

> *James 1:22*
> *But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.*

In Christ, we do the Word. We activate faith and live as the Word of God says we should. We're not like those in the Old Testament who were told to obey the commandments. In Christ, we're told to do rather than obey. They were told to obey because they had a sinful nature that didn't allow them to live right, so they were forced to obey.

In Christ, we have a new nature that's not opposed to what the Word says. God wants us to walk in love, and our spiritual nature in Christ is already that of love. God wants us to do good and walk in holiness, and our nature is already in line with that. We simply do the Word, practice righteousness, and walk in love. Everything we do as believers is supposed to be done because that's our nature in Christ.

Whether it's giving money, preaching the Word, walking in love, praying, or

fasting, we should do it from the new nature we have in our spirits. We don't give so God sees our giving and rewards us. No, we give because we have the love of God within us. We're moved by God's love, and we give because we love people and God. It's just our lifestyle—that's who we are.

Our faith is based on acting and living as Christ has recreated us. Faith makes us do the Word. In the next chapters, I'll explain how a misunderstanding of this foundational knowledge can cause discord in giving. When preachers drive us away from this foundation, that's where financial manipulations begin.

Some popular church fundraising methods have robbed us of our true view of faith. The grace of God becomes confusing when related to fundraising. We can teach about faith, Christ, and our new life, but when giving money kicks in, some preachers stray from the foundation of Christ. In the next chapter, I'll explain unbiblical church fundraising methods and show how to correct these impurities in the body of Christ.

Chapter 3
Giving By Itself Doesn't Guarantee God's Provision

All my giving since I was born again was never for the goal of getting blessed after giving. I never gave money or anything just so God would supply my needs. I've been a member of different church assemblies and under different pastors. Some pastors used promises of blessings and abundance as reasons to give, but little did they know my giving wasn't based on their promises. Their promises were like empty words to me, even though I kept giving for other reasons.

Understand my foundational beliefs about who we are in Christ and what Christ gave us. Look at the following scripture:

> *1 John 4:17*
> *Love has been perfected among us in this: that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world.*

The Bible says, "As He is, so are we in this world." Do you really know what transformation took place in your spirit when you got born again? You were raised from spiritual death and given the exact same kind of life that Jesus has. You were also made to sit together with Christ in heavenly places.

> *Ephesians 2:5-6*
> *even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,*

You were made a joint heir with Christ. All that belongs to Jesus belongs to you too. You were blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus.

When you pray, ask yourself, "Would Jesus pray these words?" Imagine Jesus praying, "God, bless me, remove the demons from my life. With this seed, break the spirit of poverty." If Jesus prayed such a prayer, our faith in Him would crumble. How can the Son of God, above all powers and

principalities, blessed and glorious, pray such a weak prayer?

Even demons would feel empowered to attack Jesus because He's shown them He's not conscious of His power or who He is. That's exactly the picture we portray when we pray like that. Angels, God, and spiritual forces see Jesus when they look at us—children of the Most High God, the body of Christ.

The moment we talk like weak people, they're confused.

> *Ephesians 5:30*
> *For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.*

> *Ephesians 3:10*
> *to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places,*

We're the body of Christ, sons of God. Heavenly beings, principalities, and powers—whether on God's side or the devil's—think highly of us. They expect us to

think, talk, and live like Christ. We must live up to that. They should see the wisdom of God through us. We're kings and priests of God.

There are things we shouldn't be heard asking God for. We can't be heard begging. How can someone washed by the blood of Christ, delivered from darkness, and given the Holy Spirit think that money can offer deliverance from poverty and demons? Some sermons and teachings are amazing—reducing the blood of Christ below the power of money!

Imagine reducing God's love, provision, and care below the power of an ordinary dollar. God cares for us. Jesus said God makes the sun shine on both the evil and the righteous, gives rain, feeds the birds, and clothes the flowers better than Solomon's wealth. This God provides for us without needing our money. We've reduced God's love and care below the power of fiat currency, thinking we can bribe God into meeting our needs with an offering. Which Bible are we reading?

NB: Let me say this at this point. You might use my writings to go out and look down upon every pastor who preaches that if you are a giver, you will move out of poverty, and then start mocking them because of their doctrine. I said before that when someone is an evangelistic type of preacher−those who preach loud and on top of their voices; who have no space in their sermons to explain things−they may say things that, if left unexplained, will paint a different picture in people's minds than what they had originally intended to mean.

I myself have made such statements (on few occasions) when I only had 5 minutes to speak. So, I said at some point that giving can break the spirit of poverty, without thinking about the implications my words have. But in my mind, I wasn't thinking about the spirit of poverty as an actual demon that's there to block money from coming to you. To me, what I referred to as the spirit of poverty was just the spirit of fear−like fear of lack, where you want to hold onto your money when God tells you to give because you fear going into lack if you give.

This is what I was thinking in my mind;

I was seeing the spirit of poverty as mere selfishness, where you only trust in your ability to supply your needs and don't want to give to someone in need because you only think about yourself. This selfishness extends even to the point where you don't trust in God as the source of your blessings. You just don't believe that God cares for you.

You worry so much about tomorrow and have this fear that what if you lose everything and become poor tomorrow. So, you try by all means to be stingy. Jesus said that you should not worry about what you'll eat tomorrow or what you'll wear. He wanted you to have faith in God. When you're selfish, you believe more in your efforts and abilities than in God's care.

You don't want to give even a portion of your money to church because you think it's your money that you worked for yourself. You don't realize that it's God who gives us life, wisdom and strength to work, and could have been involved in you getting that job or having those clients buy your products. This lack of trust in God and selfishness is what I meant by the spirit of poverty (not an actual demon, but only a spirit of fear.)

But my listeners could have been thinking of something different. When I said that giving can help bring you out of poverty, I was talking about the fact that people who give are people who trust in God and walk in love. They give because they love and have mercy on the poor, and they love God and give to church so people can receive the Word of God and be saved.

What I believe causes God's blessing when we give is the fact that God sees our hearts and what we're doing with the little resources we have. We're probably using what we have to show love towards people, sharing with the needy, and supporting God's work. So, God knows that if we had more resources, we might do even more good works and He blesses us for the sake of what we could potentially do my (the righteous works.)

God looks at the heart, whether we have genuine love or not. If we're selfish, God knows that even if our money increases, our selfishness and pride will increase too. To me, the blessing when it comes to giving is about the condition of our hearts rather than the giving itself. Giving doesn't make God

bless us; it's our heart that God is after.

He sees our heart by our attitude when we have few resources. If we're faithful in little, God knows we can be faithful in much. Imagine if I only said that giving brings you out of poverty without explaining it–you might think giving is like magic and give with the motive of getting rich. My statement could end up being a false gospel, even if that wasn't my intention.

I'll discuss this further in chapter 6 onwards. Here, I wanted to clarify my view on the spirit of poverty–it wasn't what many people think. Because there might not be time to explain myself fully, I might be misquoted. I've stopped using the phrase "spirit of poverty" completely due to potential implications. The Bible doesn't mention such a spirit either. There are preachers who say certain things but might intend for you to think differently.

> *Matthew 6:30-32*
> *Now if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more*

> *clothe you, O you of little faith? "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.*

Do you know that there are many sinners in the world who don't go to church but have wealth? If giving makes someone rich, what do you say about sinners who have never given a dollar in church and yet have thriving businesses?

I know you have many questions to ask, and I'll answer them all (perhaps). I've known and believed this subject since I was a little child. My biological father helped me so much as I grew, grounding me in the solid foundation of Christ, faith, and grace. I've just now decided to write about this subject.

It takes a lot of courage to write what I wrote here. Don't worry about the questions you have; I know all that's preached in churches about prosperity and giving, and I know how certain scriptures were twisted to say what they don't say just to get people to

give with wrong motives.

Before you think I'm attacking preachers, let me say this: not every preacher who attaches giving to financial prosperity is doing so to take your money. Many preachers are genuine; they're not trying to get rich off your money. They just interpret the Bible wrongly or say statements without explaining their position.

It happens when we preach—sometimes there's no time to explain. Someone might say, "The widow of Zarephath gave her last meal, and the flour multiplied." Isn't that what happened? Yes, it is. But there are many other details in that story that might need time to explain.

When you hear your pastor preaching, don't be quick to judge. He might not have enough time to explain, and he might be preaching a sermon rather than giving a teaching. When I was a teenager, my father would say about my pastor that he's not a crook at all; he has faith that God will bless us if we give because that's what he thinks the Bible says.

We all, including me, have doctrines and Bible verses that we interpret wrongly, but

God knows our hearts are pure. That's why God may sometimes grant us miracles out of mercy, even when we've applied Scripture wrongly. However, most of the time, our faith will keep failing until we make adjustments.

How can we give so that we break the spirit of poverty? Oh my God, we've stooped so low, and that's why the devil keeps defeating us because we've shown him how ignorant we are of who we are. How can someone who's already blessed with all spiritual blessings in Christ be heard praying to God that with their seed, they want God to bless them and open doors?

I might sound like I'm attacking giving, but I'm attacking false teaching about giving that's killed our faith. I'm contending for the faith; I stand to defend it.

I'm a giver myself and have given a lot to the gospel, to other people, and to preachers, but I've never allowed my giving to kill my faith. It's faith that works, not giving. Giving by itself doesn't work, but the faith behind it does. If you have a wrong understanding of faith, you might put the wrong faith behind your giving and get undesirable results.

Many sermons about giving have actually killed the faith that should accompany it. We misquote Scripture and preach giving in a way that kills faith. There's a popular teaching that says you're not a giver who deserves prosperity until you've given a thousand dollars, just like Solomon gave a thousand bulls. That statement isn't biblically correct because it puts a law that you need to give a thousand dollars for God to bless you.

However, that doesn't mean there's no element of truth in the statement. Solomon gave a thousand bulls, and I think God spoke to him because of his heart in giving, not necessarily because of his gift. Some fire preachers who aren't teachers sometimes know the Bible but say unexplained statements that can become heresy if left that way, even if they didn't mean to preach heresy.

That heresy can damage someone's faith and give them a wrong view of God. If one is a fire preacher and not a teacher, they can say things that you think are heresy simply because there's no time to explain in preaching. I want us to examine Solomon's

offering of a thousand bulls.

A Thousand Dollar Seed

People like to quote Solomon's example and say that God responded to his gift of a thousand bulls, but I think there are things in Solomon's story that they miss. I believe Solomon didn't give a thousand bulls to be blessed; here's why I think like that:

1. Why didn't he ask God for what he wanted when he was giving, if he gave because he was looking for wisdom? Why would God need to come to his dreams and ask him to ask? To me, that means when Solomon gave the sacrifice, he wasn't giving because he wanted wisdom or something. He was just worshipping God. Why would he offer such a big sacrifice and forget to make his request?

2. The other reason is what we see in 2 Chronicles 1:3-6. The Bible says Solomon went to the Tabernacle to

offer his sacrifices on the bronze altar.

> *2 Chronicles 1:3,6*
> *Then Solomon, and all the assembly with him, went to the high place that was at Gibeon; for the tabernacle of meeting with God was there, which Moses the servant of the Lord had made in thwilderness.....And Solomon went up there to* ***the bronze altar*** *before the Lord, which was at the tabernacle of meeting, and offered a thousand burnt offerings on it.*

He was just offering a thousand bulls in worship. If you know your Bible very well, you'll understand the kinds of offerings that were offered on the bronze altar, as written in Leviticus 1-5: **Burnt** offerings, **Sin** offerings, **Peace** offerings, and **Guilt** Offerings. The law never said to bring an offering to the bronze altar so God would bless you; there's no such scripture.

This is why Solomon didn't give his thousand offerings because he wanted to ask God for something. He was just worshipping and not taking his giving as a tool for God to give him wisdom. Based on

Leviticus' description of these offerings, Solomon most likely offered a **burnt** offering, symbolizing total surrender to God or dedication and atonement. He was simply worshipping God and surrendering his all to His God, showing and expressing his love for God, not thinking about a 48-hour miracle as people preach.

But today, we've twisted the whole meaning of this and taught that Solomon gave a thousand bulls and God had no option but to bless him. When God spoke to Solomon in the dream, did He refer to the thousand bull offering as the reason why He asked him to ask anything? I think you've gotten your answer. This doctrine about a thousand-dollar seed doesn't have biblical basis at all. It kills and violates the foundational basis upon which our faith should be based.

A number of preachers I met didn't even know what faith really is. They confuse emotion for faith. They think if they tell you that if you sow a seed right now you will get a 48 hour miracle. They think that if someone really believes in a 48 hour miracle then that person has faith. No!—a big NO! That is not

faith, that is ambition, presumtion and its just greed.

This is the same promise you get from scammers online, those who tell you that if you invest your money in their business it is multiplied back to you doubled in 2 days. Is it not the same kind of faith people have in lottery or in sports betting or any speculative investment where they are really assured of a return? Do you think that is truly faith or just human greed, an emotion?

We have encouraged emotion rather than true faith. True faith is grounded in the foundation of Christ, who we are in Him and what he has done for us. If we give from true faith, we have victory. In the next chapter let me give one portion of scripture some preachers use to encourage giving for a financial miracle: The story of the widow of Zarephath.

Chapter 4
The Wdow of Zarephath Didn't Give To Get A Miracle

> *1 Kings 17:8-9*
> *Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."*

I've heard a certain big Nigerian preacher (or he maybe was Ghanaian, I don't know. I just judged based on his accent and size of congregation), and he was commenting about the story of the widow in Zarephath. In his teaching, he boldly stated that the man of God has the authority to tell you to give a specific amount of money and then cause a breakthrough in your life. He actually said, "You don't give out of your heart, because your heart is already selfish and sinful. You wait for the man of God to tell you what God wants you to give."

This is a well-known preacher with thousands of followers, and with that kind of teaching, imagine how many people are instantly manipulated and their faith made weak.

It's biblically wrong and doesn't make sense in light of our new creation realities in Christ for a prophet to dictate our decisions. We have the Holy Spirit, and God doesn't just speak through a prophet without saying anything to us through His Spirit who dwells in us.

Another thing about the giving of that woman that preachers wrongly teach is that her giving broke the spirit of poverty. But the Bible is silent about anything like that. The reason preachers are wrong when they teach about the giving of that widow is that they don't consider the verse that says God had commanded the widow to provide for Elijah.

God first spoke to the woman, not Elijah. When Elijah came to the woman, his message wasn't a prophetic command for a breakthrough but a confirmation that he was the one God meant when He spoke to her. It was like he said, "Hey, you don't want to bake that bread. Okay, how does this sound:

'The flour or the oil shall not be finished until the day the Lord sends rain'? Isn't that what God said to you?"

With those words, the woman remembered what God had spoken to her and knew that the same God had spoken to the person she was going to provide for. Let's read on.

> *1 Kings 17:10-14*
> *So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink."*
> *And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand."*
> *So she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."*
> *And Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me;*

> *and afterward make some for yourself and your son. For thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.' "*

If you read through the lines, you see that this woman had a close relationship with God. God had already spoken to her that she should provide for someone He would send. That shows how she was in close fellowship with God; she was a person who heard God and obeyed Him.

A Lesson on Obedience

She was a vessel of God who had a heart that cared for other people and didn't mind sharing with someone else from the little she had. So God saw her as a vessel He could work through to feed Elijah. The miracle happened because God knew that if this type of woman received abundance, she would share it because she had proven herself worthy of blessing by sharing the little she had.

She had complete faith in God and didn't

care if she was giving the last meal she had; as long as God told her to do something, she would do it. She had both faith in God and obedience, and it's when we obey God that we see His provision. Her obedience and faith in God are what caused the miracle of provision, not the giving.

Some preachers preach that if you want provision from God, you should give. I beg to differ. It's not giving that guarantees provision; it's obedience that guarantees provision. Why? Because if we read the same chapter 17 of 1 Kings, we see that Elijah was fed by ravens, but there's no record of him giving something to a man of God for the ravens to feed him. He simply obeyed God, who had told him to go to the brook Cherith.

> *1 Kings 17:2-6*
> *[Then the word of the Lord came to him, saying,*
> *"Get away from here and turn eastward, and hide by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.*
> *And it will be that you shall drink from the brook, and I have commanded the ravens to feed you there."*

> *So he went and did according to the word of the Lord, for he went and stayed by the Brook Cherith, which flows into the Jordan.*
> *The ravens brought him bread and meat in the morning, and bread and meat in the evening; and he drank from the brook.*

My question is: Did Elijah give a seed to any man of God or an offering to any priest for God to send the ravens to meet his needs? No! There's no record of that. He was provided for because he obeyed God, who had sent him to proclaim the famine and then go to the brook Cherith.

So the question is this: What really guarantees provision—giving or obedience? It's obedience, of course. That woman's giving was what God had commanded her to do, just as Elijah was commanded to go to the brook Cherith and got provided for. But today's preachers have completely removed the aspect of obedience and faith in God's provision and replaced it with only giving.

They think it was giving that provoked the miracle. What if God is telling me to do something else and go somewhere to see the

provision? Sometimes God can tell you to do nothing at all and just watch Him provide for you. At one time, He said, "Be still and know that I am God." You might have done everything you think should be done to make ends meet or have some resources, but nothing comes out of your efforts. Then God steps in and tells you to stop worrying and just sit and trust in Him.

I have had many such experiences in my life. If you obey God, then you can see His provision. Please understand that God's provision isn't something He decides to do for you today. No! God's provision is something He already knows you will need before you even get into that situation. God already knows what you'll need in 10 years' time. God knows what you'll need tomorrow, even when you don't have such a need yet.

God knows your future, so He has already provided for all we need in this life at a particular time. God sent Joseph to Egypt before Pharaoh had that dream, knowing there would be a great famine and that the king would have a dream that probably only Joseph could interpret.

Joseph had to be in Egypt in time. Of course, he didn't get into Egypt or prison in a nice way, but he remained faithful with the ability God had given him—the ability to interpret dreams, including those of people in prison. That faithfulness to his God and love for people opened a door for him to interpret Pharaoh's dreams.

God had given him the ability to interpret dreams, and he stayed faithful doing God's work. In the end, he saved the world by interpreting Pharaoh's dreams. Now, back to 1 Kings 17, about Elijah and the widow at Zarephath—God already knew that at the brook Cherith, the ravens would drop food, and Elijah needed only to be there in time. God told him to go there because perhaps that was the place God had decided beforehand to command the ravens to drop food. The widow of Zarephath had her own instructions from God: to give what she had left to a stranger whom God would send. By obeying God, she would have aligned herself with God's provision.

It's not giving that makes God provide for us; God's provision is already there. We only need to hear and obey what God tells us

because it's God who knows where the provision is. Preachers have tried to make people believe that it's only giving that makes God provide for us, but that's not true.

There are many people who give thinking God will provide and bless them, but they're just throwing away their money based on some preacher's promises that don't materialize. You can't bribe God with your giving; our giving doesn't move God to bless us. God's blessing is already there, and His provision is already there. If we can walk in close fellowship with God, He leads us where the provision is.

> *Isaiah 1:19*
> *If you are willing and obedient, You shall eat the good of the land;*

The Bible didn't say, "If you are willing and give your money to God, you will eat the good of the land." That's not what the Bible says. We've limited ourselves to only giving alone, thinking that's the only obedience God wants.

Now, we give and give and give, to the

point of breaking ourselves, thinking God will one day respond. God might be trying to tell you to do something else, which is not giving, for you to see His blessings, protection, and provision. But we've closed our hearts and ears to anything else except giving.

And truly, God might be trying to tell you to give, but we miss Him on the amount and on what He wants you to give. Financial provision is about obedience and faith in God, rather than only giving, as preachers want us to believe.

Remember that preachers prefer all your obedience to be on the giving side because it also benefits them. I don't want to say much about that statement; you already know.

The Widow's Faith

> *1 Kings 17:9*
> *"Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you."*

Let's go back to 1 Kings. Keep in mind

verse 9, where God told Elijah that He had commanded a widow to provide for him. When you read verses 10-14, you might draw wrong conclusions that the woman had lost all hope of life and gave to Elijah because of his declaration of abundance.

The woman's giving wasn't about the declaration from the man of God; it was because she had discovered that this particular man knew what God had told her. She didn't even know he was a prophet until later, when he raised her son from the dead (1 Kings 17:24).

I'm saying this to let you know that she didn't act simply because she was obeying a prophet's voice, as we often do today—gambling our money for a prophetic promise because it comes from a preacher we highly regard. She had been expecting to meet the man God had said would come, and she wasn't going to give that bread to anyone else except the person God told her would come.

That is obedience to God's voice. Obedience is better than sacrifice. If it was about just giving that made her see the miracle, she would have gone straight to the

temple and given to any priest for a financial breakthrough. But it wasn't the giving that was the issue; it was the obedience.

It's clear that God had told her the bin of flour wouldn't be depleted nor the jar of oil run dry until the Lord sent rain. When Elijah said those words, she quickly responded positively—it was a confirmation to her that this was the man. She wasn't responding to a declaration, as preachers want us to believe.

Today, preachers can come and tell you to give, promising that God will bless you, heal your disease, give you a big contract, and deliver you from demonic forces after you give. They use this chapter in 1 Kings as an example, but the situation with that widow was different.

This woman had a good relationship with God and faith that God provides for her needs. When God told her about the miraculous provision, He obviously told her to feed the man He would send. She was probably waiting for the person she would feed, as God had said. It takes faith to feed another person when you barely have enough for yourself, and it also takes the

love of God.

She knew there was a famine in the land, and many people were starving. She had love and care for another person, but God had specifically told her to feed only one person. When you're led by the Spirit to give, God sometimes tells you who to give to and what to give—if you listen to Him. You don't need anyone to tell you what to give; God has to speak in your heart. That's giving by the leading of the Spirit, not by the leading of a preacher.

Giving by God's Direction

God is not after your money; He owns silver and gold. God is after your heart and obedience. God can tell you to give $10.33—does that make sense? God usually works that way. We'd round it off to the nearest 10 or 5, but when God tells you to give a specific amount, He has a reason.

There are people who have given me the exact amount I prayed for, boosting my faith that God truly provides for my needs. I remember when I was at Faith World Bible School and needed $3 for transport.

Someone gave me exactly $3, unaware of my prayer.

Imagine someone praying for $43.13 to pay off interest on a loan, with one day left before the amount doubles. If God tells you to give that person $43.13, and you do, that person will know it wasn't a random amount. Their faith in God would be greatly boosted, and you'd make a significant spiritual impact.

You'd impact lives more by giving exactly what God instructed than by giving a rounded amount. Perhaps that person is still learning if God can answer prayers exactly as prayed. I have great faith in God; I've seen Him provide exactly what I prayed for.

If you give by the leading of the Spirit, you impact lives. Obedience is better than sacrifice. God isn't after your giving, but your obedient heart. Preachers say the more you give, the more God blesses you, thinking God is after our money.

They think giving 100% of everything is what God wants, and that giving should hurt. Which Bible are we reading?

Hosea 6:6
For I desire mercy and not sacrifice, And the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings.

God is not after our money. He just wants obedience. He can tell you to give a very small amount but for a purpose.

The Importance of Obeying God in Giving

I know many preachers don't like the idea of people giving what they feel led by the Spirit to give because we might give less than their targets. Let me tell you, I'm a preacher myself. We often set financial targets for our ministries based on how we want them to grow.

We'd prefer someone to give the entire amount at once, but sometimes that person isn't there. Our wishes might not come to fruition because the devil is fighting our ministries, or perhaps we're not flowing well with God's leading. We might be too ambitious and dependent on people rather

than God.

We set financial targets based on the number of people and their potential earnings, but our ministry goals might not attract God's full backing because we're operating in the flesh. We might even abuse our authority over people's free will, which is a common challenge for preachers.

I've seen this in many church assemblies. Leaders divide the amount they want to raise by the number of people in church, expecting each person to give an equal amount. This approach might work, but it puts pressure on some people and a lesser burden on others.

True giving that works is when people have the freedom to give cheerfully and by the direction of the Holy Spirit, not the church leadership's direction. I'm not saying we shouldn't set targets and tell people the amount we're looking for; we definitely should.

However, the decision about what amount an individual should give is dependent on that individual. They already know what we're targeting. I often teach about the feeding of the five thousand. The

disciples thought in terms of how much money they needed to raise to feed the people, believing that more money would help them accomplish their ministry goals.

But Jesus believed in God.

> *Mark 6:37*
> *But He answered and said to them, "You give them something to eat." And they said to Him, "Shall we go and buy two hundred denarii worth of bread and give them something to eat?"*

The disciples thought the ministry would function flawlessly if they could raise a lot of money, but Jesus had a different view. Sometimes we're like the disciples, fighting to reach our financial targets and pressuring people until they break themselves or borrow what they can't pay back.

We don't understand that Jesus fed the five thousand with just a small boy's lunch—He had faith in God. It's not money, and lots of money, that moves our ministries; it's faith in God. We keep telling people the importance of giving and why we need

money for our ministries, but even if what they give isn't enough, we shouldn't worry.

God is bigger than money can purchase. We should turn our attention to God, bless the money we have, and expect the miraculous. I write, publish, and print books, often giving them away for free when it costs me money to produce them.

I've been doing this for years, and my ministry keeps reaching people in different countries. If I considered only the income from book sales, I'd have been discouraged and stopped publishing. But I always print and publish, even when the income is below production costs.

I turned it over to God, but that doesn't mean I don't ask people to partner with me or donate if they wish. Jesus needed that boy's small lunch, and your ministry needs the small amount of money from your followers—whatever they can give. It's faith in God, not the amount of money, that keeps the ministry moving. (I know this is highly debatable. So let me just say that this is my subjective belief and I don’t mean to impose it on anyone, because you might go and try to implement my ideas and then you fail to

have the kind of faith that I have and your ministry projects fail.)

God isn't concerned about our money; He's concerned about our obedience to His voice. By obeying God, He leads us to where our provision already is. Don't think that if people don't give, the gospel won't prosper—it will. God works in ways beyond us.

Paul preached to many people in many places without modern conveniences like cars, trains, airplanes, or PA systems. He didn't use expensive decorations, screens, or beautiful auditoriums.

When I say our ministry financial goals might be driven by ambition, I'm referring to myself. After publishing my first book nearly 10 years ago, I wanted to print 1 million copies. I prayed for this and had what I thought was faith, but it was actually ambition.

I wanted the gospel to reach many people, but I was too ambitious, and it wasn't God leading me. I wanted to prosper and see success without exercising patience. After praying for months with no response from potential partners, I got confused, but

it taught me valuable lessons.

Why did I want to print 1 million copies? Was there a big demand for my books? Were there millions of people calling for my book or willing to join my Bible study sessions? Were there millions of visitors to my blog? These questions made me realize it wasn't the devil fighting me or my faith failing—I had confused ambition for faith.

I wasn't thinking of selling 1 million copies; I wanted to give them away and sell some to facilitate printing more. I'd always given my books to people hungry to learn God's word. I had a Bible study group, met with others occasionally, and had an online following.

But when I counted my potential followers, I barely reached 500 people, including virtual followers and new converts from evangelism. Yet, I was thinking of printing 1 million copies and expecting some of these people to partner with my vision. I was overthinking the demand for my writing ministry—I was crazy and foolish.

I've read one of Reynard Bonkee's books about his journey in ministry, and I

discovered one of the most humble men of God I've ever read about (judging based on how he narrated his story. I didn't know him personally, so my judgments are only based on his writings). He never targeted big tents or PA systems out of desire; it was always out of a real need in his ministry.

The demand for his ministry was bigger than what he could offer, so he had to continually look for ways to expand—purchasing bigger tents, PA systems, chairs, and equipment to keep up with the demand. His desire for these things was driven by faith, not competition with other ministers.

In contrast, some ministers of the gospel—and I was one of them nine years ago—want the most expensive equipment, decorations, church buildings, and even luxury vehicles when there's not even a demand for their ministry. We chase luxury, and when people give less than our targets, we think the devil is fighting us, preventing money from coming in to cripple God's work.

Sometimes we think God's work won't prosper without certain things, but we might just be looking for luxury or wanting to

quickly reach the level of that big church in our city. What does expensive church decoration have to do with preaching?

We burden our small number of followers with financial targets that are too big for them. (I'll stop there, as some people might feel attacked, but I'm sharing this because I was once like that, wanting my small following to sponsor my ambitious vision. What I am saying may not apply to everyone as it is only based on my little experience.)

Thankfully, I didn't pressure them when I saw little response. Instead, I chose the path of patience, which can be painful, especially when you strongly desire success. However, the more you seek God, the less pain you feel, and the less you focus on getting to the top. (I don't have the best and perfect journey in ministry. There are mistakes that I have made in following God, and I keep falling and rising. It is part of walking with God. We are all learning.)

You start to enjoy the present moment, knowing you're doing God's work and seeing people transformed. The rest, God should worry about that.

Chapter 5
Beware of Scammers! Giving Doesn't work Like That!

> *2 Corinthians 9:7*
> *So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Sometimes we don't give to the people God tells us to give to because they might not mention their need to us, and we end up giving to anyone who convinces us. I've made such mistakes, giving in the flesh rather than by the direction of the Spirit.

I don't claim to be perfect in obeying God's directives; I keep falling, dusting myself off, and rising again. When the widow gave to the right person, as directed by the Holy Spirit, God supernaturally multiplied the flour and oil.

We shouldn't give just because a prophet tells us to, even if they say God instructed them. We should only consider giving if God

has already spoken to us or if we sense in our hearts that God is truly speaking to us through the prophet, without feeling guilty, condemned, or pressured.

When God speaks, you know it—God isn't confused. As believers, we have the same Spirit and can be led by Him. God wouldn't tell a prophet about you giving money without also telling you beforehand. When it comes to money issues, clarity is key.

I'm not saying you shouldn't give if God hasn't spoken to you. I give to ministries that preach the true word of God, save the lost, and encourage godly living. I support their work even when God hasn't specifically told me to.

If I'm giving out of generosity, I don't want to be pressured or manipulated. Certain high amounts require faith, and that's where God should be involved. Do you think the widow would have given her last meal to anyone if God hadn't spoken to her? She needed to hear from God to give it away.

You can give out of generosity or mercy as long as you're not breaking yourself by

giving beyond what you can afford. Breaking yourself means giving away money meant for your family's needs, causing them to struggle due to your foolishness in giving.

This usually happens when we're pressured to give higher amounts, being told that God values larger sums. I've heard of preachers who are so authoritative that they instruct their members to borrow large sums of money and give to their ministry.

After giving, you're left with a debt you can't pay back, all because a preacher promised a blessing. I once overheard a business owner discussing firing an employee for stealing. It turned out the employee was stealing to give to his church and pastor, becoming one of the pastor's favorites due to his generous giving.

The pastor didn't care how the employee got the money, as long as he gave it. Many Pastors know what some of their members earn, but they don't bother question when certain of their members suddenly begin to give very high amounts that are beyond their salary, because they just know the giving is benefiting the church. This man lost his job

because of his extreme giving. Which Bible are we reading?

> *2 Corinthians 8:12*
> *For if there is first a willing mind, it is accepted according to what one has, and not according to what he does not have.*

Paul said that our giving is accepted according to what we have, not what we don't have. The problem is that we think God values money and cares about the amount. But He's after our hearts, not our money.

When you borrow money you can't afford to pay back just to give, you're giving what you don't have, and according to Scripture, your giving isn't acceptable to God. Similarly, if you steal to give or give without a willing heart just to please a preacher, your giving isn't acceptable.

When giving becomes this extreme, you're breaking yourself. This is often caused by wrong teaching from the pulpit and a misunderstanding of grace and faith. We don't give to move God to bless us; we're already blessed in Christ.

God has provided for all our needs, and we just need to obey His leading to access those provisions. When it comes to God's provision, the Bible is clear: when God created Adam, He first created a garden for him to tend. Most of what we pray for is already available on earth.

The money is there; if you work with your hands, you'll be paid. If you buy and sell things, you'll have the money. Even if you do some menial jobs, you will be paid.

God's provision is already here on earth; sometimes, you just need to look for work or start small. Many people are lazy, unwilling to work, and ashamed of humble jobs. Instead, they prefer gambling on seed faith, hoping for a miracle rather than putting in the effort.

I'm sorry to say this, but some (not all) preachers capitalize on lazy people who believe in giving and being blessed. Their ministries receive the most money when they have plenty of gamblers in their churches. Christians with a speculative mentality will go to any extent to give and become rich, even breaking themselves, borrowing, stealing, or selling everything.

If I were after people's money and advancing my ministry at all costs, I'd prefer a church with such people. I'd easily raise funds for anything. However, I've learned Christ differently. When it comes to making money, just work hard, get a better education, and find a better-paying job.

Giving has little to do with God making you rich. The Bible doesn't promise many blessings for giving; instead, it promises blessings for walking in obedience to God. I'll address some scriptures commonly used to motivate people to give in order to be blessed.

You might be upset with me right now, but I'm not attacking giving. I want you to understand the Bible, faith, and grace. I don't want wrong teaching about giving to kill your faith.

It's About The Will of God, not the Giving

You wonder why you keep giving but don't see God's supply in your life. It might be because you're not being led by the Spirit to give. Sometimes we give out of emotion when someone shares a sad story, and we

respond with mercy without the Spirit's leading.

If you're truly sensitive to the Holy Spirit and know who needs your love and compassion, you won't fall for scams. I once gave to someone who turned out to be a crook—begging was his business. He fabricated touching stories to get money from people like me.

We have preachers who are skilled at fundraising. They plan and rehearse their speeches, studying what moves you. If they know you're motivated by promises of blessing, that's what they'll offer. If not, they'll threaten curses or guilt-trip you.

Some might be genuine, but the fact remains that our giving is often driven by persuasion rather than the Spirit's leading. The best reason to give is when the Holy Spirit inspires you or out of pure love for God.

I give to ministries that have fed me with God's word and contributed to my spiritual growth. I'm grateful for their impact on my life, and I want them to help others too. I also give to ministries doing good work, preaching God's word, and supporting their

efforts.

This doesn't mean that I have a long list of churches that I give to. I am just telling you my considerations, if I am to give.

In addition to my other giving, I sponsor my father's book, "Saints Made Merchandise," which is available for free download on my blog. My father taught us the word of God from a young age, explaining salvation and leading us to be born again. He covered almost the entire Bible with us.

When I sponsor the publication of his book, I'm giving back to his contribution to my spiritual life. Not many fathers are like that. May his soul rest in peace. As I mentioned earlier, when giving offerings or tithes to any ministry, I consider the impact they're making.

I ask questions like: Are they preaching the good word of God? Is their teaching pure? Are people growing spiritually? Are they manipulative? Are they saving souls? And most importantly, is their teaching edifying me spiritually? If a ministry doesn't meet these criteria, they receive little to no

financial support from me.

We've given money in the past because someone made us feel guilty or implied we lacked faith if we didn't give. The widow of Zarephath was cautious, only giving when she heard words from Elijah that aligned with what God had told her.

The more we don't act on the Holy Spirit's impressions in our hearts, the worse we become at living by faith. My father's book, "Saints Made Merchandise," provides a relevant example of persuasive and manipulative preachers, written between 1989-1993 but still relevant today.

I published it in 2016 and republished it in 2025 after recovering the files. Here's a quotation from the book that illustrates this point.

> Quite often, we're tempted to sacrifice this standard of a willing heart, thus turning offerings into some form of taxes. We often impose and practice cutthroat giving, further sacrificing the principle of giving according to ability. I was in a certain church movement when I observed both

principles being sacrificed simultaneously. There was the preacher at offering time ordering all those with a hundred dollars and more—then one hundred dollars was the highest denomination of bank notes in the country—to walk up to the pulpit and give their freewill offering. Not a single soul responded. The preacher, realizing this, started to pronounce promises of prosperity, stating that that was the right time to take a bold step of faith by giving God the hundred dollars or more and prove Him at His word and see if prosperity would not pursue and overtake the obedient giver. Still, no one took the bold step of faith. Maybe members of the congregation were still counting the cost of proving God at His word by taking the bold step of faith. Maybe they were waiting for the preacher to lower the figure, but could he possibly do so after he had just preached a heart-rending, fiery sermon never before heard?

The inevitable finally came when the preacher, at long last, said, 'I will not lower God's standard to the level of stingy and unbelieving hearts.' Threats of curses to those who were holding back God's offerings were straight away pronounced. Promises of prosperity to the obedient saints who would give the hundred dollars or more, irrespective of their financial position, were again pronounced. If the obedient didn't have the money, they could write on pieces of paper promises of the amount to be brought. At that stage, scores of people started to walk down the aisle with their offerings and promises. Some had the actual money, others brought cheques, and the rest brought the written promises. They were all taking the bold step of faith; or was it a bold step of faithlessness? — Bold stop of faith.

As they walked down the aisle, the preacher triumphantly urged them to wear smiles because God loves a cheerful giver, and they indeed

smiled and sang joyous songs. But were they cheerful and willing givers? This group, having cheerfully obeyed God, or rather having responded to the call to give due to severe fear of curses, the preacher later called all those with bank notes to come forward, calling denomination by denomination. Coins had no place because they are anathema. After all had given, you would have thought that the preacher had finished, but he still wasn't done yet.

He called for all those who had given to come and give some more. He stated that God was instructing that His people should give again. A fast-beat chorus was thus sung in dance while those who were obedient to the latest 'message from God to give' started up the aisle again to give again because they could not ignore God's word; maybe the threats of curses were still performing the offering-time magic. Was that the Bible style of giving? Even a sin-hardened atheist would have discerned beyond any

> reasonable doubt that such manner of giving does not in any way display the simplicity of Bible faith.

The widow of Zarephath's giving wasn't the reason for the miraculous provision; it was her alignment with God's will, practical application of faith, and love towards those in need that activated the miracle.

If giving alone caused the miracle, she would have given to anyone. Giving itself doesn't work; it's the motivation behind it that matters. The widow was motivated by her trust in God's provision, selflessness, and obedience to God's voice—these were the main reasons for the miraculous provision.

Is it genuine love for God that moves you, or is it guilt instilled by a street beggar or manipulative preacher? Is it pure love for God or promises of abundance and threats of curses? As my father wrote, what some preachers call a "bold step of faith" is actually a "bold stop" of faith.

Chapter 6
Faith Meets Financial Manipulation

Some years ago, I watched a certain preacher giving out his testimony about paying tithes. I don't remember his exact words but as far as I can remember I think he said that at some point in his life, he delayed paying his tithe to church (he just kept it at home, planning to give it a few days later), and during the week, his house caught fire when he wasn't there. But fortunately, the fire was put out by the fire company before it had destroyed much.

So, this preacher said that he wasn't happy before God about such a tragedy because he was a tither. And so, he asked God why He allowed the devourer (talking about the fire) to devour his house, and God told him that it was because he hadn't paid his tithes in time. So, he said to God that he didn't eat his tithe, he just kept it inside the house for a few days until the next church service when he would give it. But God said, as long as that tithe is not paid, it will not protect you [Malachi 3:10-12].

When I heard his story, I was confused so much, because in my life, I had kept my tithe in my house for a few days until the next Sunday when I would give it, but no tragedy ever happened to me. I tried to match what he was saying with the Bible, and I concluded that he was probably lying to us. In the Old Testament, at some times, people were told to bring their tithes to the house of God (probably when there was a feast in Jerusalem) and this would require some of them to walk for days until they reach their destination [Deuteronomy 14:22-27].

My question is this: That festival tithe (also known as the second tithe), where you were supposed to wait for the feast days to come and then go with your tithes, what if the feast days were weeks away from the day you reserved your tithes? Or what if you live far, far away from the Jerusalem that it would take you days to travel there with your tithe? Were you going to see the devourer strike you because your tithe hasn't been paid yet since the day you got your harvest?

These were the questions I asked myself,

and I concluded that that preacher was most likely giving a false testimony. I have now come to know that preachers do give false testimonies a lot when they want to motivate you in some way. Threats of curses are the most common method of motivating people to give that I have seen in church. I heard a certain preacher saying, "No matter how hard you work, if you are not a giver, you are going to die in deep poverty!" Imagine. If you are not moved by such threats, preachers begin to try and use promises of blessings and telling you that if you give, your money will be multiplied back to you hundredfold (100 times), and you will have a blessing that you will not have enough room to contain. They are just encouraging greed and making you want to treat the offering basket like a casino.

Before we go any further, I am not against any preacher. I am just trying to help you to begin to give with the right motive and heart attitude [2 Corinthians 9:7]. Some preachers are not bad people or crooks at all when they motivate you wrongly. They are just human beings who are trying to do fundraising and are afraid that if they don't

put fear in you, you might not give enough money that they need to run the church.

The Right Heart Attitude in Giving

If you're giving because you're trying to avoid the curses that will follow you if you don't give, then your giving doesn't profit you anything before God. God loves a cheerful giver. God loves it when He knows that your giving is out of a willing and cheerful heart, and when you're giving because you have the love of God within your heart.

If you're giving to the church to support its projects and ministry towards people because you love God and the people being helped by the church, that's the kind of heart attitude that really positions you to receive a blessing from God. And if you're trusted by God to give, it doesn't matter if your gift is too small—as long as that's what you're capable of giving, and your heart is truly filled with love for God's work and love for God's people. With time, God will begin to trust you with more money to give.

Jesus pointed to a certain poor widow who gave only two mites—the smallest amount of money (probably a couple of cents). But Jesus said that widow gave more than everyone else because she gave the highest percentage of what she had (and obviously, her heart was truly happy when she was giving). She had a good heart; she wasn't giving to show off to people. She was true to herself because that was what she had.

It's the attitude of your heart that matters more than your giving. God looks at your heart, and when you keep giving with a good heart, God will truly begin to trust you with more resources to give. Some preachers like to manipulate people to give by frightening them with threats of curses or by motivating their greed and promising them that if they give, their money will come back to them multiplied. They're just encouraging greed in your heart. If your heart isn't right, whatever you're giving will never benefit you anything. It will just benefit the person you're giving to.

Chapter 7

Twisted Scriptures About Giving

The following scripture has been misinterpreted regarding financial giving. Some preachers use it to say that giving a small amount (sowing sparingly) yields a small return, while giving a larger amount (sowing bountifully) yields a bigger return. Let's examine the scripture:

> *2 Corinthians 9:6-7,*
> *He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*

Notice that Paul isn't discussing the size of your gift but rather your willingness to give. Giving bountifully means giving wholeheartedly and cheerfully. If your heart

isn't fully invested, if you're giving under pressure or to avoid trouble, you're sowing sparingly (not from a whole heart). On the other hand, if you give freely, without pressure or guilt, with a heart full of love and trust in God you're sowing bountifully (with wholeheartedness.)

The scripture doesn't mention the size of your gift; it's about your heart's attitude. You can give a large amount with reluctance or a small amount with joy and generosity. Paul emphasizes cheerfulness, not the amount given. If Paul meant the size of the gift, he should have specifically said it. You can give a substantial amount or all you have with a willing heart, without pressure or guilt, and that's giving bountifully.

Returns of Giving According to Scripture

Let's continue with the same chapter and examine other verses that are often misinterpreted. These verses concern the returns of giving. Some preachers promise

huge financial returns based on Paul's teaching in this chapter. But did Paul actually say that giving guarantees financial blessings? Did he say that buying your Pastor a car will result in God blessing you with a car? Let's look at the following verses for clarification.

> *2 Corinthians 9:7-10*
> *[7]So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver.*
> *[8]And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.*
> *[9]As it is written: "He has dispersed abroad, He has given to the poor; His righteousness endures forever."*
> *[10]Now may He who supplies seed to the sower, and bread for food, supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness,*

When you give to a church ministry or others, what you receive is more spiritual

than physical. It's the grace that enables us to continue doing good things, not material prosperity. Many men of God describe this grace as material riches, but the Apostles never said that. Look at verse 8: "God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency, may have an abundance for every good work." Did he say, "God will give you the grace to become a millionaire"? No, he said God will give you more grace to keep doing good things.

Yes, this grace does include some material blessings, so that you can be able to use those material resources to touch more lives with your giving, but it isn't limited to that alone. It involves you having some other spiritual abilities to help more people and touch more lives. Things like spiritual gifts [1 Corinthians 12:4-11], the grace to show mercy [Romans 12:8], the grace to be able to administer few resources in order to influence more people towards loving God, the grace to show hospitality [Romans 12:13], the grace to serve other people.

This happens because your giving is coming from your heart, and God then puts an abundance of spiritual abilities within

your heart to serve other people. It is your heart that God really works with. He is not really responding to your giving in isolation but to your heart attitude [2 Corinthians 9:7]. We have so much limited our giving to only material blessings because we don't understand the whole purpose of giving and how God views it.

The real returns of giving, according to this passage, are spiritual grace rather than material things. Yes, it's possible that when you give, God gives you the grace to access more resources so you can give more. However, giving itself isn't what causes God to give you more grace; it's the love of God within your heart that motivates you to give. When you put love into action, you want to keep showing God's love.

My parents, demonstrated to us, when we were growing up, what it means to give out of love. They helped people according to their ability, and I don't remember a year when we didn't have someone staying with us or receiving some financial help (only according to what our parents were able to help). The more they helped, the more people showed up, not because they talked

about it, but because, I think, God directed them. My mom would buy groceries for two families at some point, and we'd sometimes have dinner with a pastor in need. It was their love that drove them to give, not the expectation of material reward.

(I'm sharing my parents' example of generosity because they're no longer with us. If they were still alive, I wouldn't have shared this, as they never wanted recognition for their kindness. They'd quote Jesus' words, "When you give, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing." I personally discovered receipts from orphanages where my father would send food, money, farm produce and other items, which he'd keep hidden even from us, his children because he believed that giving should be for the purposes of love and not showing off.)

We weren't living in super abundant wealth, but my father had a decent job, and we had all our needs met (I don't remember a day that I was chased out of school for not paying school fees). The more my father helped, the more he received some other financial opportunities, and even

promotions at work. However, I'm not saying the promotions were directly because of his giving. Many others at his workplace who weren't givers also received promotions. I believe God gave him the grace to recognize people in need and help them instead of pursuing luxuries. That is what I call the grace of giving, or the spiritual blessing of giving. We might all be having abundance in our lives, but if one of us is not a giver, that person doesn't receive the grace to help touch people's lives. Giving is a grace that God gives you. Romans 12 talks about the gift of giving. I believe it could be a grace that God entrusts to those who give out of what they have. It is more blessed to give than to receive. Non givers don't have this grace, where you just find a way to help someone in need even when you yourself doesn't have much. It is a blessing to have this grace. If you are a giver, this grace is increased more and more in your life the more you give. It positions you to be able to show the love of God to the world and to do good works.

It's possible for God to bless you materially because of your generous heart.

Jesus said that whoever is faithful in little will be faithful in much. Sometimes, God may provide opportunities for financial breakthroughs so that you can give more, or He may give you wisdom on how to manage your resources to enable giving. I've noticed that our incomes often cover our basic needs, but it's our management of them that matters. When we try to live beyond our means to show off, our income seems insufficient.

The prosperity gospel has put pressure on many people, making us discontent with what we have and then begin to fire prayers against the spirit of poverty (which the bible never mentioned at all). When Paul told us to be content with what we have, He knew that if God's grace is there what you have can actually do more than you think. We tend to measure spirituality by wealth and luxury, which is misguided. If the prosperity gospel makes you feel pressured and discontent, we've lost the true idea of the gospel. Paul's words to Timothy are particularly relevant here.

1 Timothy 6:6-9
Now godliness with contentment is great gain.
For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out.
And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.
But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

We're called to a life of love, where everything is not about ourselves but about others. If we're not careful, we end up loving ourselves more than we love God and His Kingdom. If you desire to be rich and actively pursue it, you end up falling into many temptations. I believe that God's blessing (in the material sense) comes naturally when we walk in love, and when our focus is on using what we have to serve others and to do good and righteous works. If we're in that state, we can easily see how God blesses our lives.

We don't give to become rich; we give because we want to show love to others and

to see other people getting blessed by the gospel when we partner with it. Some preachers are actually caught in a trap where they want to look rich, drive expensive cars, and make people think that if they're rich, then they have God or they're truly anointed. And they want you to think that if you are poor (or have limited resources as compared to them) then you have the devil and you are living in curses of poverty.

The Bible never said that. In the ministry, there's that pressure where you just want to show off. You want to live in a mansion, and you want the whole world, other preachers, and believers to know that you're a rich preacher. I shall talk about this.

Chapter 8

Faking Blessings

I've met preachers who drive expensive cars that they always struggle to maintain, but they keep those cars simply because they want the world to think that if you serve God, you'll truly get rich. If you are truly blessed by God, you wouldn't be struggling to maintain the blessing. The bible says that the blessing of the Lord makes rich and He adds no sorrow with it. We have people who look rich on the outside, but deep in their lives, they are struggling to maintain that image they have published in public. I'm being honest with you in this book. I'm in ministry, and I see a lot.

Some preachers live in rented mansions that are always a headache to them when it comes to paying rentals. They end up commercializing their ministries just so they can pay monthly rentals on their apartment. They make people pay for counseling sessions; they come up with different kinds of seeds (financial giving); they sell some

"anointed items"; they tell you to pay them if you just want to see them; they want you to pay whenever they preach. They have so many methods to get your money into their pockets.

I know many of them; they're not really crooks at heart. They're good people (I said some of them, not all), and they have good hearts. They truly love to see people saved, but they have a wrong thinking about Christianity in general. They think being rich means being anointed and blessed. So, they try to live a life they can't afford because they think that's what living by faith means. They think faith is always about aiming high..

So when their faith fails and they are not able to keep up with the costs of their expensive lifestyles, they begin to want to find ways to fish out people's money.

I am not in this book judging anyone, I am just trying to explain how we can go into error if we don't understand the scriptures. So because they thought that when you give God has no option than to bless you, they give and then they go for the expensive things they are believing God for. They can even pay a deposit for a very expensive car

and then expect God to 'send someone' to pay it up. Or they take pictures of a car that is at a car sale and show to their members, the kind of car they are believing God for. It is not bad if the church buy a car for their Pastor, but it should be from willing hearts and not pressured hearts.

Some preachers can even go to the extent of putting such pictures on their status and write something like, "If God has spoken to you, don't disobey God. I know that my God spoke to someone to partner with me on purchasing this vehicle."

Because I know how certain preachers think, I am not quick to judge them or think that they are crooks. Some might be in faith. They could have given some money to some other ministry as a seed because they are believing God for a car. Now, because they normally preach that when you give, you need to take a step of faith and go for what you have sown a seed for, so they go for that car and even do a test drive.

Now, because they are preachers, they also believe that when you are in faith, God moves your church members or other people to bless you, which is why they might write

on their statuses. They truly believe God should definitely speak to someone. But in reality, and according to the Bible, it does not really work like that. Faith doesn't really work like that.

They could have had some true principles of faith in action, but their faith might be slightly misdirected. (I have so many books on faith; I can't explain faith here.)

So, in ministry, we have crooks—preachers who are really stealing from you—and then we have honest but scripturally ignorant (or unsound) preachers who have genuine hearts, but because they have wrongly interpreted the Bible, their actions end up looking as if they are stealing from you. All these can influence you to give wrongly, and when your giving fails, it's you who has lost, and not them.

I want you to see this: If truly someone responds to that preacher's status and sowed toward their car, truly he would buy the car, and you know what happens next—he begins to use it as testimony.

Preachers use the example of the kind of life they are living as testimony that giving

works and that serving God works. But the question is this: Did God really bless you because of your giving, or was it because the people who gave to you gave because you promised them a blessing, or you made them feel guilty by telling them that God is speaking to them to sow a seed to you (when He isn't), and because you have scriptures that you misinterpreted about giving that people are responding to?

The truth Is that some of the testimonies of prosperity we are hearing from preachers are not true. God never blessed most of them. They just went for an expensive life and then manipulated people (indirectly or directly, or rather, intentionally or unintentionally), and people responded and began to maintain their expensive lifestyles.

In the end, such preachers come and begin to say that they are blessed because they are givers. When they say that, you give to them because you also want God to bless you. But if we truly look into the Bible, you will see that the Bible doesn't really promise what we say it promises about giving. When God gives you the grace to abound in all good works when you give out of pure love

for God, you'll notice that the same income you thought was insufficient is actually enough.

I'm speaking from experience and observation. Giving is a grace you receive from God when you walk in love toward others, enabling you to use every opportunity to do good and to even be able to manage the little resources you have to have something to give out of that.

Special Note

I don't want you to use my book to go out there and look for very rich preachers who are living in luxury and then think that they are the crooks. I never said that. It is very possible for a true and honest man of God to be very rich from ministry by the blessing of God, even when they're not manipulating anyone. Look at this: Paul said that if he's ministering spiritual things, it's also expected of the believers he's ministering to to minister to his material needs [1 Corinthians 9:11].

Now, look at this: if someone has 50 members in his congregation and they're all giving to him some of their money willingly

and wholeheartedly in appreciation of his ministry to them, don't you think that if his church grows to 500 people, his income will also increase? It's just simple (but it might not be as practical as this though). There could no manipulation that he might be doing. Perhaps he's just preaching and teaching the good word of God to grow believers spiritually, in their faith, and encouraging them to walk in love, win souls, and in the way that Christ requires us to live. He probably doesn't pressure them or use carnal methods to take their money.

If there's such a preacher, and he's being paid well by his congregation, chances are high that the bigger his church, the bigger his income, and the more he can afford a little bit more luxurious life. So, we don't judge a preacher based on the kind of life they live. To me, I think I would safely say such a preacher is indeed being blessed by God for being faithful to His work. Paul told Timothy that the elder who labors both in word and doctrine deserves to be paid well [1 Timothy 5:17].

However, if you have a preacher whom you know has brainwashed people and

made them give to him because he's been using carnal fundraising methods, and he indeed began to receive a lot of money—then, to me, I personally think what he might call the blessing of God is not a blessing from God at all, because he was directly involved in coercing people into giving to him.

If he's using the clever method of promises of excessive returns when you give (and make you give more than you are capable of giving); if he's using fear of curses to make people give; if he's threatening them with poverty if they don't give, and if he's lying to them that God told them to give a certain amount (when God hasn't said anything), then if such a preacher becomes rich, I don't think I can wholeheartedly believe that his life is a blessing from the Lord.

Seek Ye First the Kingdom of God….All these things shall be Added

Matthew 6:33
But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

This scripture is used many times by those who have gone into some extremes with the prosperity gospel. By the way, I'm not a poverty preacher. I believe so much in the fact that God wants us to live good lives and have plenty to give and do good deeds in the world, including sponsoring the gospel. He doesn't enjoy seeing us living in poverty and lack. If you check my other books, that's what I teach. It's just that I try to maintain a balance here, and I strive to make sure all our teachings are grounded in the foundation of God's love through us and the realities of Christ in us.

Some preachers preach that if you seek the Kingdom of God first, you'll definitely be prosperous in life, talking about material wealth. When they teach that, they try to mean that if you give your money to the work of God, then you'll be rich. To them, that's what seeking the Kingdom of God means. I even heard one preacher who is well-known for the prosperity gospel teaching that seeking God's Kingdom in that context referred to being born again, and that if you've made Jesus Lord over your life,

you've already found the Kingdom, and now you qualify to begin to pursue all those other things (the wealth).

I have no problem with him teaching that when you're born again, you're already in the Kingdom of God. To me, that's true. But the problem I had with his teaching was that he lost the context in which Jesus was referring to seeking the Kingdom of God. And also, the fact that he then said when you've found the Kingdom, you should now pursue wealth. That scripture didn't say that. It says all these things (talking about the meeting of your basic needs—what you shall eat, what you shall wear, etc.) shall be automatically added to you when your focus is on the Kingdom of God. You don't need to pursue riches.

In Jesus' context, He wasn't really talking about getting born again. He was just generalizing how we should serve God and Him alone. And when we only focus on God, we trust in Him alone and not in any other god. Jesus was talking about serving God versus serving money (which He referred to as Mammon). So, trusting in God for everything that we need in life is what Jesus

was referring to as seeking the Kingdom (only in that context; I didn't dismiss that being born again is actually finding the Kingdom. I'm only talking about the context in that verse).

I want to put the verses before Jesus talked about seeking the Kingdom and having all things added to us. Read the following:

> *Matthew 6:24-26*
> *"No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.*
> *"Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?*
> *Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor Father into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?*

So, this is where it all began. Jesus was

talking about trusting in God and not in wealth. Sometimes we depend so much on our ability that we cut ourselves with many sorrows simply because we want to make money and secure our future. We think that we can make ourselves rich, and we end up depending too much on our strength and on money. Money can become a god in our lives if we're not careful.

So, Jesus was trying to teach people to trust in God first of all. Our Father in heaven cares so much for us. If God takes care of the birds of the air, then He surely cares much more for us than for animals.

The prosperity gospel actually teaches that if you give, you will be rich. It makes you think that it's your effort in giving that makes you rich. You have to make sacrifices and give a lot of money so that you'll be rich. It removes the aspect of the grace of God in our lives. We end up believing in our giving rather than in the love and care of God over our lives.

Yes, there's a very thin line between giving your money away because you trust in God and giving your money because you trust in your money and in your giving.

Whenever you give, ask yourself this question: Am I giving because I love and trust in God and I care for the people, or am I trusting that my giving will make God bless me?

If your giving is motivated by your trust in God and your love for other people, then you're in the right lane. If your giving is motivated by the idea that such giving is you bribing God to bless you, then you don't trust in God's provision; you trust in your money that you've given.

I've heard so many preachers who boast so much in what they've given. They tell you that they gave $100,000 to the work of God and that's why they're rich. Some say that they gave millions and that's why they're millionaires. In other words, the money they gave was what made them rich. They're virtually trusting in their money and not in God.

(I am still not sure if God really blessed them because they gave, or it was just that people gave to them because they had coerced them into giving, and when they received so much money they interpret that as God's blessing. It might be possible. Or,

probably God truly blessed them because they used to trust in him, but when they had been blessed, they entered into pride and begin to boast in their giving rather than in God who had blessed them.)

When they say it, they then quote that scripture and say that if you seek first the Kingdom, all things will be added to you. You end up thinking that they're fulfilling scripture. No, they're not. They're just boasting in their money. They're saying that their money made them rich. If they don't have millions to give, that means they'll never be millionaires.

So, you end up thinking that only if you get money will you be in a position to be rich, because if you give a lot of money, you'll surely be rich. You're trusting in money to make you rich. God doesn't work like that. You might just be wasting your money away. Better if you had spent it than gamble it away in an offering basket. (I am just against the gambling mentality, not the giving. And I didn't say don't give.)

Breaking Yourself Because You Want to Give and be Rich. I Pity

If you go to churches that are big on prosperity, all they say is that the more money you give, the better you're positioned to prosper.

(Mind you, I still believe in prosperity, but not to some extremes that some have gone.)

Most of those churches' members are piercing themselves with many sorrows, thinking about how they can get a lot of money so that they can give. They take big loans at high interest without thinking, because they're taught that the more money you give, the more you can be blessed. To them, giving is all that makes us rich. God is completely left out of the picture.

Jesus didn't say that the birds of the air are givers, and that's why God takes care of them. Jesus was trying to teach us that God loves to take care of us regardless of our efforts. I didn't say that you shouldn't go to work or that you shouldn't give. I just said that you should never trust in your efforts.

When you work and do business, understand that it's only God who has given you such wisdom and ability. Never trust in your business or in your job. Have a job, have a business, but trust in God always. When you give, it should be just because you want to say thank you, God, for providing for our needs. It should be to say, "Thank you, my Father, for giving me this job," "Thank you for influencing people to buy my goods and services." When you're like that, you're kingdom-minded.

God doesn't wait for you to give so that He blesses you. He already takes care of us. He already loves to see you have food, clothing, and shelter. He's a good God. He's not waiting for you to give so that He provides for you. Some people are wasting away their money when they give to get rich.

You should give in thanksgiving to God because having that salary, that profit, is already God's blessing. Why not appreciate God for those blessings? When you give to get rich, you're insulting the grace of God. Because when you receive your salary and when you make those profits in business, God thinks He has already blessed you. Why

are you not appreciating what He's done? Why do you curse God's supply?

We give to celebrate the provision God has given us. Paul said it's more blessed to give than to receive. The moment you're giving, it means you're already blessed. Giving means that you're saying, "I am blessed, and that's why I'm giving." You don't give in order to get blessed. You give because you've been blessed by God already, and your giving is testimony that God has blessed you.

If you have the right motive and the right condition of heart when you give, God can trust you with more money because He knows you understand the Kingdom. When you give out of love for God's work and out of love for people, you position yourself to receive more because you have proved that you are appreciative of any form of blessing God has given you and that you are a good steward of God's resources in showing love to other people.

Chapter 9

A Critical Look at the Give-to-Get-Rich Message

I know you're trying to find examples of some preachers who say they gave thousands and millions to God and God blessed them. You see their cars, private jets, lifestyles, houses, and ministries, and you say, "So, giving truly works." I wouldn't believe that giving to get rich works if it's a preacher who's telling me the testimony. Why? Because many preachers, when they say that if you want to be rich, you must give, the next thing people begin to give to them and their ministries.

What does that mean? It means they've suddenly received more money. They purchase a fancy car. Next time they tell you that giving works, they say, "I gave, and now I have such an expensive car." When you see that, you're motivated to give even more. And guess what? You're giving to them again.

They also give a portion of that money to some other preacher they respect and use that money to acquire more material things. You see that, and they tell you that they gave such an amount to another ministry and God has blessed them again. You're motivated, and you give to them. So, the more they tell you their testimonies of giving, the more they make more money out of your giving.

If you check, they always say that after they gave, someone called them and said, "God told me to give you this." Most of their wealth (or blessing) is coming from people who are giving them money. They don't really tell you that after they gave, they got a business contract. Their blessing is always coming from people who are giving them things. But in your case, you want the blessing to come in your business or at work. You're not a preacher, and you're not in a position to have a random person call to write a huge check.

I've just said this to show you something. So, the gospel of "give and become rich," I won't accept it as long as it's coming from a preacher whose testimonies are about people who are giving to him. I myself am a

preacher. Why should I say all these things if I know that people will become clever and stop giving to us? All I'm trying to do here is to rightly divide the word of God. I want you to have the right motive whenever you give. The right heart attitude in giving is all that this book is centered on, but I have given you practical examples so that you fully understand.

Another Twisted Scripture: Sowing and harvest

> *1 Corinthians 9:11*
> *If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?*

This verse is used to mean that when a preacher preaches to you, you must give to them. Yes, it really says something along that line. The Bible does teach about the church financially supporting preachers, which is commendable. What I think is that the church is supposed to cover most of the basic needs of their pastors. However, if a pastor begins to desire a luxurious life, they have to

support themselves financially.

Someone once said to me, "Taking care of our pastors isn't that hard at all. But the challenge is that some pastors are making themselves too expensive to take care of. They want to live in the most expensive suburbs, drive the most expensive cars, and send their children to the most expensive schools, while expecting their churches to maintain that kind of life." How true that statement was.

The other thing I want you to see from that verse is the fact that Paul said he ministers or sows spiritual things while the church takes care of his physical needs in return. In other words, if we look at it closely, we discover that Paul was actually saying that when you financially support a man of God, you should expect to receive some spiritual grace in return (read the verse again if you want). And also, to the preacher, it means that if you truly feed your church spiritually, that church will take care of you physically.

So, the church sows material things while harvesting spiritual things from their pastor. The pastor sows spiritual things

while harvesting material things. Read it again, and you'll see this.

(I know I didn't really explain this verse. I'm using words like "sowing" money to a preacher in return for some spiritual ministration, as if to say that you pay for their ministry or endorse the idea of sowing seeds to preachers. However, I'm not really on that side. We don't pay for spiritual ministration; we appreciate them for their ministry. We shouldn't be forced to do so, and the pastor shouldn't expect a "seed" or payment whenever they minister. I don't think I have much space to explain my position here—the book is already a thick volume.)

Today's preachers have misinterpreted it. They say that if you sow money into a preacher's life, you'll receive an abundance of money. No! If you sow money to a preacher, he should give you spiritual blessings, mostly the Word of God that grows and nourishes your spiritual life, or some other spiritual grace or gifts (including helping you to be able to exercise your faith in many areas of life, to pray effectively, to minister with spiritual gifts of the Holy

Spirit like healing, and the like, as well as training you to make disciples and walk in love, among other things.)

This is the whole purpose of the Fivefold Ministry gifts mention on Ephesians 4. Pastors should not only end at ministering healing, saving souls or casting out demons, but also should help teach you to be able to do that on your own.

> *Ephesians 4:11-14*
> *And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,*
> *for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ,*
> *till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ;*
> *that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,*

Preachers minister to our spiritual needs first and foremost. Paul told Timothy that the elders (or pastors) who rule well deserve double honor (talking about supporting them materially), especially those who labor in word and doctrine [1 Timothy 5:17]. So the Pastor's job is to minister to your spiritual needs while you minister to their physical needs. They are not magicians who multiply your money when you give to them. It's unfortunate that some are trying to become such.

I want you to look at Paul's words when the Philippian church gave him some material things. I want you to see if Paul said that his God was going to multiply their material seed that they sowed to him.

> *Philippians 4:17*
> *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account.*

This is how it starts. Paul said he wanted some fruit to abound to their account. If you remember 2 Corinthians 9:8-10, which I mentioned earlier, Paul had said that when

you give, God will give you the grace to be able to do more good works. He actually used the term "fruits of righteousness." So, the fruit Paul is referring to in Philippians 4:17 is spiritual. It's the grace for fruitfulness in your Christian walk, where you're fruitful in walking in love, helping more people, living in righteousness, and impacting the world for Christ (by your life, your knowledge of God, and even by you able to operate in the gifts of the Holy Spirit and bring more people to Christ, among other things.)

So, in Philippians 4:17, he believes that if the church gives to him (out of their love and care for him as their Pastor), they in turn receive some spiritual grace to be fruitful in their walk with Christ (only because they gave out of their hearts, so automatically they have trained their hearts to walk in the love of God and producing the fruits of righteousness). He's not really talking about material blessings here. Now, let's read the next verse:

Philippians 4:18-19

Indeed I have all and abound. I am full, having received from Epaphroditus the things sent from you, a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.
And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Notice that the word "need" there is in singular form, not plural (it's not "needS" but "neeD"). He was talking about one need that the church collectively has (not individual needs). The need that the church had was a spiritual need. I used the New King James Version; the King James Version also says the same.

The question is this: If God shall meet the church's need according to His (God's) riches in glory, what are the riches in glory? Are they US dollars that we have here on earth, or are they some spiritual riches? The needs Paul talked about in Philippians were mostly spiritual needs more than they were material needs. God is a Spirit, and He communicates with us on the spiritual level.

The church may lack certain graces and virtues in their walk, and that is the job of preachers. Paul made it clear that preachers supply the believers' spiritual needs, and the believers, in return, supply for the preacher's material needs. It has been like this even in the Old Testament, regarding the priests and Levites who ministered at the temple.

(Remember, I didn't completely dismiss the fact that God meets your material needs like food, clothing, shelter, and some finances, but I said the return on giving is mostly on the spiritual side. Yes, God does meet our material needs, because Jesus said that we shouldn't worry about what we shall eat or wear, because our heavenly Father knows we need these things. When our whole focus is on God's Kingdom, when we strive to show God's love to the world and live in the righteousness of Christ in us, and when we truly trust in the Lord and not in ourselves, then we don't need to worry about our material needs. God surely can supply our material needs because we also use these physical resources to do good deeds in the world. We still need these material resources and money to finance the

church, give to the poor, and show the love of God to the world. But it all begins with our hearts aligned with God's purposes and mind. This begins when we're truly mature spiritually, able to know how to manage our finances well to the glory of God. So, our spiritual state is what is important to begin with. And it was the area of spiritual maturity that the church really had the most need in.)

The following scripture shows us that the church lacked something in their faith. Those are the needs which he addressed to the Philippians. They were spiritual needs they lacked in their faith.

> *Thessalonians 3:10*
> *Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face and perfect what is lacking in your faith?*

Chapter 10

Ministry or Empire-Building. Where is the line?

1 Thessalonians 2:5-6
For neither at any time did we use flattering words, as you know, nor a cloak for covetousness—God is witness.
Nor did we seek glory from men, either from you or from others, when we might have made demands as apostles of Christ.

Acts 20:33-34
I have coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel.
Yes, you yourselves know that these hands have provided for my necessities, and for those who were with me.

What's wrong with preachers is when they begin to abuse their ministerial offices for personal gain while exploiting believers. I'm against the extremes in the area of giving. There are preachers who now take their

ministries and their right to receive offerings (and tithes probably) only as a way for them to get rich and then boast to be the most blessed people, while the poor in church are the most cursed people who need deliverance, which is wrong. They keep sucking more and more money from their members until they end up hurting them.

Look at Paul; he was a very sensible man of God. He knew when to collect and when not to. To the Thessalonians, he said that he had to work with his own hands so that he wouldn't become a burden to them. He was sensible enough to know when he was becoming a burden. But today's preachers are only concerned about themselves. They can even go to the extent of wanting their members to give everything they have for the gospel, which ultimately benefits the preacher and their ministry.

If you ask such a preacher and say, "I have $400 and that's all my salary, what is God saying I should give?" If he is to tell you what he really wants you to give, he would probably say $800, telling you that he wants all of that and even more. It's just an

example, but I bet you that there are many who have come across such a preacher in one way or the other (especially in the independent give-and-get-rich prophetic ministries). If you haven't faced this, then stay were you are.

I'm saying this because today, many preachers prefer to start and run their own independent ministries. They want a church that they have full control over, where nobody can vote them out of office. Yes, I know it might be their calling and God does call people to start independent churches I believe, but the fact that your church is registered in your name, and your constitution allows you to establish whatever doctrine you feel (and amend it by yourself without anyone else's input), and all church assets belong to that church (which is registered only in your name and family, virtually belonging to you), the chances are high that when you seek church growth, you might just be seeking the growth of your empire.

I'm not trying to criticize anyone who has an independent church or ministry. I'm just trying to say that your chance of being

tempted to want to enrich yourself is extremely high because you know that in the end, it's you who's benefiting. (Please understand that some of my statements are mere opinions and thoughts. I didn't explicitly say that any independent church founder does things like this or thinks like this. There are many honest church founders who run their ministries transparently and with integrity. Here, I'm talking about the potential sources of financial manipulation.)

There are many people who are truly called to start and run their independent ministries, but I'm saying they're in a tight spot. The devil can easily tempt them into wanting to focus on enrich themselves as the church grows. These are the people who should really be seeking God day and night, lest they fall into the huge temptation I've mentioned.

A few of my friends (or acquaintances) in ministry have independent ministries, which they run, and we usually talk about the temptations involved. There's this thinking that "All these properties are mine." It's a temptation that needs to be fought very hard. We should view the church as the

work of God, as a platform through which we reach out to the world with the gospel.

So, many "apostles" (that's what they call themselves) sometimes go to certain extremes when they're moved by the desire to see church growth. Some of them are actually manipulating people and exploiting them financially. They're not sensible; they don't care whether you'll go hungry after your sacrificial giving. All they want is themselves and their own privatized ministries. One popular preacher once taught that if you give to the poor you are sowing seed towards poverty, but if you give to a rich anointed man of God, you are sowing seed toward prosperity. You can't justify such a statement with the bible. Just imagine such extremes.

Believers are told that they should feel pain when they give, and even if that requires them to sell their precious possessions, empty all their savings, neglect paying rent or school fees for their children in order to give, and even take loans that they don't know how they'll pay back in order to give to the ministry. They're taught that if they want their giving to work, it has

to be sacrificial.

Aren't we becoming a burden to the believers? I haven't seen such doctrine with the apostles in the Bible. Many believers have been heavily affected by this kind of teaching. Some ended up closing their businesses after giving everything, including selling their stock at a loss, just so they could get quick money to give in to the demands of an Apostle.

I'm not lying here. I talk to a lot of people, and I've been in different church ministries' fundraising services. Many have told me their sad stories after reading some of my books on giving. I almost cried hearing the sad stories some believers have shared. Some have backslid because of this. They went from rich to poor simply because of sacrificial giving. The properties they attached as collateral when they took loans were taken after they failed to pay back. The preacher had told them that they would definitely receive a breakthrough if they sacrificed.

(Remember, some of these preachers

might not be doing what they do to hurt you. They might just be strongly believing that if you truly sacrifice, God will bless you. They think they are helping you get rich. They just have interpreted the Bible wrongly, so don't be quick to judge.

I personally know the crooks and the genuine, based on my relationships and contacts with certain preachers. I've seen very honest men of God who know nothing about the preacher they're following, trying to copy everything that man does and teaches, thinking that's what God wants or that such a teaching is biblical. There are things I actually know, which are not just opinions. Some pastors are copying what they don't know at all.

You see this preacher on TV doing and saying certain things that are clearly not biblical, but just because he's powerful—he does deliverance, prophecies, and heals the sick—you think whatever he teaches and does is worth imitating. I've seen a lot in ministry in the few years I've been in ministry and in contact with certain highly gifted men of God. Some of them, I know their sources, and I know how they do

things. Don't just copy what you don't know; stick with your calling and do what you know the Bible clearly teaches. I can't be more clear on this because I just can't disclose certain things. So, if you see a pastor beginning to use certain manipulative methods, don't be quick to judge—he might just think it's right and correct because a certain man of God he believes in taught that.)

I saw one well-known preacher recently apologizing to his partners that in the past, he didn't know when he told them to give thousands and receive a 48-hour miracle, which never came. He said he was acting in faith and thought that we would move God into blessing us when we give a lot. Imagine. He is now apologizing for having a misdirected faith. But he has already hurt you. You already lost your money thinking God is a casino. And some other innocent preachers have already copied his doctrine and actions.)

When a preacher begins to think that ministry is a means of gain, they've entered a zone where they'll definitely hinder the gospel.

1 Timothy 6:5
useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

WARNING! Don't Be Quick to Judge any Preacher

Please take note that I'm using the word "some," meaning that I'm not saying all preachers view ministry as a business for their enrichment. So, don't go and begin to think evil of your pastor, apostle, or prophet because of what I've written. There are still many preachers who aren't even thinking of exploiting you financially, even when they pressure you to give. Yes, putting pressure on you to give is very wrong, but it doesn't mean that every preacher who does it is trying to exploit you. Many preachers do certain things because they copy other preachers, and that's all they've seen being done in church. So, they just copy a certain

method innocently.

Don't be quick to judge anyone when they contradict the Bible. They might be doing it innocently. Some preachers might just be aiming for high things in ministry simply because that's what other preachers preach as ministerial success. So, when you have a very beautiful church building with LED screens everywhere, the most expensive chairs, a gym, a museum, and a very expensive sound system, they think that's what God wants us to do because other big preachers who inspire them try to paint luxury as a measure of God's blessing and anointing.

You will have smaller church preachers beginning to set very high financial targets that their members aren't able to meet, and because of that, they put extreme financial pressure on their members to buy and build some luxurious church building. Such preachers might not be thinking about exploiting anyone financially. They do certain things innocently, thinking that's the right thing to do because some bigger preacher who inspires them has endorsed building a very expensive church building as

being great in faith and living in God's blessings. I talk to many preachers, and I know how they think.

Conclusion

> *Philippians 4:17,19*
> *Not that I seek the gift, but I seek the fruit that abounds to your account……*
> *And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.*

Let's go back to this. Paul really meant that the supply of needs comes according to God's riches in glory, which are definitely spiritual, not material. However, I didn't say that material blessings don't come from God. Truly, God can move people to provide you with material things or grant you extra favor when acquiring them, favor in business and favor at your workplace. You might even buy things at a specially discounted price, just for you. Or the little money you have can do great things. Remember the miracle of the multiplication of that widow's flour and oil during a famine which Elijah had pronounced.

Many things can happen because of God's grace and blessing. Jesus said that we

should not worry about what we shall eat or put on, because God truly cares for our needs.

But if giving is going to work, it has to be out of your own love, willingness, faith or obedience to God. Without love, no matter how much faith you put into your giving, it won't work. Faith works through love. When Jesus talked about giving yielding a good measure that's pressed, shaken together, and running over, He was talking about love in that verse, not just giving money to the church. It was about giving in general—whether you give to people, the church, or anywhere else.

The gift isn't limited to money; it can be things like justice, mercy, forgiveness, your time, your love, your strength, your knowledge—anything you give because you care for people. In Luke 6, Jesus was talking about walking in love. So, it's love that really gives us a return on whatever we give out of that love, not just the giving itself.

We've taught so much about giving and neglected love. We think giving is magic and that it moves God. No, it's love that works, and love is about revealing God through us.

Let's read Luke 6:27-38 in context, and you'll see that when Jesus arrived at Luke 6:38 ("Give, and it shall be given unto you"), His focus wasn't about the giving but about love. It's love that works, not giving. If you give out of pressure, a desire to get rich, fear of curses, or guilt and condemnation, you're not giving in love.

Luke 6:27-28,30-38
[27]"But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,
[28]bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.
[30]Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.
[31]And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.
[32]"But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.
[33]And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

[34]And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.
[35]But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.
[36]Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful. Do Not Judge
[37]"Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.
[38]Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."1

According to the following scripture in Deuteronomy, what God really respected about giving was the motive behind it. The motive God ever wanted was when you truly have care and love for another person you're giving to.

Deuteronomy 15:10
You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.

We give to our churches because we love to see them reach the lost and spiritually grow their members. We love believers and don't want any of us to backslide. The church is responsible for ministering to our spiritual needs so that we can maintain our faith and grow spiritually.

When we give to a church that's truly ministering to people's spiritual needs, we're giving because we love the people the church is helping. We also give because we care for our pastors and preachers who minister the gospel. Giving is about loving God and His people, not about getting rich. Love works, and giving only works when it's done out of love.

More Scriptures on Giving Out of Love

Proverbs 22:9
He who has a generous eye will be blessed,
For he gives of his bread to the poor.

Proverbs 11:26
The people will curse him who withholds grain, But blessing will be on the head of him who sells it.

Deuteronomy 15:9-10
Beware lest there be a wicked thought in your heart, saying, 'The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand,' and your eye be evil against your poor brother and you give him nothing, and he cry out to the Lord against you, and it become sin among you.
You shall surely give to him, and your heart should not be grieved when you give to him, because for this thing the Lord your God will bless you in all your works and in all to which you put your hand.

Beware of selfish thoughts. Do not let greed and selfishness dictate your giving

Our actions and intentions in giving determine what people will give back to us. We should give out of genuine love and compassion. People can tell if it's your heart that's given. It's easy to tell sometimes when the gift you receive came from someone's heart.

Paul's Example to the Believers: Selflessness

Acts 20:35
I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' "

He set an example of kindness and compassion. He didn't even burden the believers. He supplied what they lacked in their walk with Christ by teaching them the Word of God. This isn't limited to giving but extends to selflessness in Christian living. We're called to walk in love, and our

actions—whether giving, preaching, building relationships, or operating in gifts—should be done out of love. Love is where the blessing is.

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- *Faith Doesn't Move God*
- ***Spirit Without Measure*** *(Operating the Gifts of the Holy Spirit)*
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- *The Hidden Man of The Heart*
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- *Faith Doesn't Move God*
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- *How to Live With Sufficient Grace*
- *Confronting Sin: Remit, Retain & Deliver to Satan*
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