

## **THE TRUTH (ie what the Word of God says)**

I have come to the place where I feel it is necessary to share what I believe the God's Word teaches about TITHING and the PROSPERITY/ BLESS ME doctrines which seem to pervade many churches today.

I believe that the Word clearly teaches that our giving today should be led by the Spirit and that it should come from a generous heart rather than being demanded by a law.

About a year ago I had an encounter with God ...after having been a born again Christian for about 30 years. God literally stopped me in my tracks with His Word ...

**“WHAT PROFITS A MAN IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD BUT LOOSES HIS SOUL”**

(Question What do you think God would say to you about the way your priorities and attitudes to wealth and the way you handle your money? ..... Would he say “Well done good and faithful servant? ..... I believe many in the Church would be as shocked as I was about his opinion)

In looking with an open heart into what Jesus taught about worldly riches and His life along with the teachings of the Apostles and the practices of the early Gentile churches a stark distinction seems to exist with what is currently taught in many churches which could (with tongue in cheek) be illustrated as follows:-

Luke 18:18-23            to the Rich Young Ruler

Jesus said            “Sell all you have and distribute it to the poor and you will have treasure in heaven and follow me”

vs

Today                “Sell 10% of what you have and give it to God (ie us) and you will have treasure on earth and join our church”

## **Unpopular Teaching**

What we seldom hear in today's church is what Jesus actually says about money ie

Mat 6:19            “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.....”

Mat 6:21            “For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.....”

Mat 6:23            “No man can serve two masters.....You cannot serve God and Mammon (ie riches)”

My great concern about tithing and the prosperity doctrine as taught today is that **when** Gods people get into reading his word they will arrive at the conclusion that they have not been taught the **whole truth** by their Churches

The second concern about tithing and the prosperity doctrine as taught today is the impact it has on the poor....those who Jesus loved and came to help. They are left to feel that they cannot participate in Gods blessings as they are unable to tithe (if not possibly going to hell because they are thieves) and that God isn't real or maybe doesn't love them because they are not rich which is totally contrary to Gods word.

Luke 6:20 **Blessed are you who are poor for yours is the kingdom of God**

Jesus says 'I am the Way, the **TRUTH** and the Life'

.....there must never be any question that God's Word is compromised to teach a convenient rule or an appealing/compromising doctrine

Jesus says 'You will know the **truth** and the **truth** will set you free' (Jn 8:32)

'Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'

Mat 13:18-23 The parable of the sower explained gives a clear explanation of where much of the church is at....

'Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.

If we don't want to find ourselves choked and unfruitful in the kingdom the only answer is to learn to receive your **needs** from God thru faith and for **riches** to be viewed as a blessing from God to enable us to be generous and to sow into the kingdom!

# TITHING

In no way shape or form do I believe that Word teaches that “Tithing” is the **required** basis of giving for New Testament Gentile believers.

This is best verified by diligently going through the various Covenants which God had with his people and addressing the sacrifices, firstfruit offerings and tithing that occurred.

## 1. The Adamic Covenant (from the Fall to the Flood)

Gen 3:15 God promised a seed who would crush the serpents head

Gen 3:21 God sacrificed an animal to cover Adam and Eve’s nakedness

Gen 4:4 Abel offered a sacrifice of the **fat portions of some of the firstborn** of his flock ...this is clearly not a tithe. It was accepted because it was the best of the firstborn of his flock which was later reserved for burnt offerings ..it also speaks prophetically of Christs sacrifice.

Cain’s sacrifice of ‘some of the fruits of the soil’ was probably rejected as a mediocre sacrifice and of the work of his hands

It should be noted that there was no tithing mentioned at all and there was no priesthood to whom it might have been given

## 2. The Noahic Covenant (from the Flood to the call of Abram)

Gen 8:20 Noah built an altar and taking clean animals and birds sacrificed burnt offerings on it

Gen 8:21-22 God was pleased and covenanted a blessing of ‘seed time and harvest’

Gen 9:8-17 God covenanted a promise of no future worldwide flood and provided the rainbow as a sign

It should be noted that there was no tithing mentioned at all and there was no priesthood to whom it might have been given

3. **The Abrahamic Covenant** (from the call of Abram to the giving of the Law)

**Sacrifices**

- Gen 13:4 Abram made an altar and (presumably) offered a sacrifice on it
- Gen 22 God tested Abram and he was prepared to obey God even to the extent of sacrificing his only son
- vs 8 'God himself will provide the lamb' – this speaks prophetically of God providing his son Jesus Christ as our sacrifice

**The Tithe (FIRST MENTIONED)**

Gen 14:11-24 Abrams nephew Lot was carried off and his possessions along with the goods of the people of Sodom and Gomorrah

Abram rescued Lot and was blessed by Melchizedek on his return

Abram gave him a tenth of everything

NOTE As Abram was on a war/rescue mission he did not have any of his own wealth with him. Hebrews 7:5 makes it clear that all he gave was a tenth of the **PLUNDER**. He therefore **gave only of that which was not his own** and returned the rest to Lot and those it was stolen from!

NOTE It is not recorded that Abram/Abraham ever 'tithed' or 'gave a tenth' again

THIS CANNOT LEGITIMATELY BE ARGUED TO CONSTITUTE A PRE-MOSAIC SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE OR TITHING AS IT IS TAUGHT IN THE CHURCH TODAY

Gen 29:20-22 Jacobs Vow..... 'If God will be with me and will watch over me....then the Lord will be my God....and I will give you a tenth'

NOTE God bless me first and then I will give!

NOTE As there was no priest mentioned the tenth was probably given to the poor and sacrificed to God and eaten by Jacob and his extended family as per Deut 14:22-27

THIS again CANNOT LEGITIMATELY BE ARGUED TO CONSTITUTE A PRE-MOSAIC SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLE AND IT IS NOT RECORDED THAT THIS WAS EVER DONE AGAIN (IE AS A VOW)

4. **The Mosaic Covenant** (from the giving of the Law to the death of Jesus)

**Sacrifices (Hebrews 10:8-14 Christ's sacrifice has once and for all set aside all sacrifices)**

Leviticus and Deuteronomy - Numerous types of offerings including Firstfruits offerings were to be offered at the annual feasts (Lev 2:12 and Exodus 23:16 – Firstfruits is clearly NOT A TITHE)

Tithes (Hebrews 7:5 ....'Now the **LAW** requires the descendants of Levi.....to collect a tenth from the people' (Not a pre-mosaic spiritual principle)

The LAW refers the Mosaic Law which was given by God to Moses at Mt Sinai and was recorded in the Books of the Law (TORAH) by which all Jews (including Jesus) lived and still do today

Lev 27:30 'A tithe of everything **from the land** , whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees belongs to the LORD: it is holy to the LORD

NOTE What is to be done with it is spelt out later in Deut 14:22-26

Num 18:21 'I give to the Levites all the tithes (as later detailed for Deut 14 and 26) as their inheritance in return for the work they do while serving....'

NOTE The tribe of Levi had no **land** given to them and therefore no means of income.

NOTE As detailed in Deut 14 and 26 ALL the tithe in the third year was given to Levites (and the widow and orphans and aliens). This equated to 10% divided by 3 (ie every third year) = **3.34% per year!**  
Levi had 22,000 people out of 603,000 total Israelites = **3.68%**  
(Num 1:32 and Num 3:39)

NOTE Today as New Testament believers **WE ARE ALL PRIESTS**  
(1 Pet 2:5 and 2:9 and Rev 1:6, 5:10 and 20:6)

Deut 12 :5-12 (bring your burnt offerings, sacrifices, tithes etc .....)  
Vs 7 there in the presence of the Lord your God **you and your family shall eat and rejoice** ...because the Lord your God has blessed you

Deut 14:22 Be sure to set aside a tenth of **all that your fields produce** each year

NOTE The tithe always **specifically referred to produce of the fields only**  
No reference is given to tithes being required from Israelites that had other occupations ie workmen, skilled craftsmen, weavers, designers,

or carpenters (or being Jews – merchants, bankers, and lawyers or doctors) under the LAW

Deut 14:23-26 **Eat the tithe** of your grain, new wine, oil...in the presence of the Lord your God at the place He will choose

NOTE This was to celebrate religious feasts as a spiritual family and community holiday (ie Passover, Weeks and Tabernacles)

Deut 14:27-29 .....**At the end of every THREE years bring all that years produce and STORE it** (does this remind you of the **storehouse** in Mal 3:10?) in the towns so that the Levites (who have no allotment or inheritance of their own) and the aliens the fatherless and the widows who live in your towns may come and eat so that the Lord your God may bless you in all the work of your hands

NOTE Only on the **THIRD YEAR** was the tithe brought to the store (house) in the city

Deut 26:1-11 ...(vs2) take **some** of the **firstfruits** of all that you **produce from the soil** ...and put them in a **basket**...(vs11) and you and the Levites, and aliens shall rejoice in all the good things (ie EAT) that the Lord your God has given you

NOTE Firstfruits are clearly not tithes ...ie a **basket** which contains some of the firstfruits (See also Lev 2:12) (this can be verified in a bible dictionary)

Deut 26:12 When you have finished setting aside a tenth of **all your produce in the third year, THE YEAR OF THE TITHE** you shall give it to the Levite, the alien, the fatherless and the widow so that they may eat in your towns and be satisfied (This was done by bringing it to the STORE in the towns...the storehouse of Mal 3:10)

NOTE Firstfruits were the first part of the produce ....Tithes were not the first as they were **set aside through the year**

NOTE The third year was called **THE YEAR OF THE TITHE** for a reason (In that year **ONLY** was it given to the Levites as per Num 18:21)

Deut 26:13 then say to the Lord ‘ I have removed from my house the **Sacred Portion** and have given it to the Levite the alien, the fatherless and the widow **as you have commanded me**’ (*ie from the third years produce only*)

Note This ties up with Mal 3:8 as to having robbed God by not obeying this command. Ie **GOD had given the Sacred Portion to the Levites .....therefore by not giving it in the THIRD YEAR they robbed God!**

Deut 26:15 'Look down from heaven, your holy dwelling place, and bless your people and the land you have given us.....a land flowing with milk and honey

Note This aligns with Mal 3:12 'open the heavens and pouring out a blessing'

FURTHER REFERENCES TO TITHING IN 2 CHRONICLES AND NEHEMIAH ARE NOT ADDRESSED IN DETAIL AS THESE WERE MERELY PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS OF THE LAW AND DID NOT AMEND THE LAW AS ADDRESSED ABOVE

**Mal 3:8-12** This scripture, because of its current and frequent 'out of context' use, can best be described as '**the sledgehammer to cause fear, guilt, condemnation and confusion**' for Christians today

Note Malachi was an OLD TESTAMENT prophet. Prophets pointed Israel back to THE LAW (read Mal 2 if you don't believe me)...God did not use prophets to re-write the Law!

Note **We cannot be cursed today as born again believers for disobeying the LAW**

Gal 3:13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law by becoming a curse for us as it is written 'Cursed is anyone who is hung on a tree'

Note As New Testament believers we receive the blessings by faith in the completed work of Christ and not by works of the Law (Eph 1:3 and Gal 3:1-14.....a must read)

Note I say 'out of context' use as scripture must be used to interpret scripture and 'in the mouth of two witnesses or three let every word be CONFIRMED' ..... doctrines should not be based on one scripture only (ie Malachi 3:8-12 and ignore the **LAW** as detailed in Deuteronomy 14 and 26)

Mal 3:8 Will a man rob God? You ask how have we robbed you? ..... ie God had set out the law in Deut 14 and 26 which they were not obeying by not giving the Sacred Portion, ie the third years tithe, to the Levites

Mal 3:9 You are under a curse.... ie Deut 28:1-14 were the blessings for obedience but Deut 28:15-68 were the curses Israel put themselves under by disobedience

Note We are not under the Law today ..... see Romans 7:6 'We have been released from the Law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit not under the old ways of the written code'

Mal 3:10 'Bring the **whole tithe** (as per Deut 14 and 26 this clearly means the whole of the **THIRD YEARS TITHE ie the Sacred Portion**) into the **storehouse** that there may be food in my house'

Note The explanation of the 'storehouse' is clearly related to storing the food in the cities for the Levites, aliens, widows and fatherless and never was the local synagogue

Mal 3:12 **Then all the nations will call you blessed**...ie as per the promises of Deut 28:1-14

### **TITHING WAS GODS WAY UNDER THE LAW THAT THE PRIESTS AND THE POOR OF THE NATION WOULD BE SUPPORTED**

#### **TODAY AS GENTILE BELIEVERS WE ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW**

Hebrews 7:5 'Now the **LAW** requires the descendants of Levi.....to collect **a** tenth from the people'

Romans 3:19 'Now we know that whatever the law says it says to those who are under the **LAW** ....' Oh that this would be taught today!

Romans 7:6 'We have been released from the **LAW** so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit not under the old ways of the written code'

Acts 15:5 ...the Pharisees stood up and said 'The Gentiles must be circumcised and required to obey the **Law of Moses**'

Acts 15:28 But the apostles, elders and **Holy Spirit** said.....

'It seemed good to the **Holy Spirit** and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following **requirements**: that you abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat strangled and from sexual immorality'

#### **NOTE TITHING WAS NOT MENTIONED**

This explains why Paul and the apostles never taught tithing to the gentile churches.....they would not even have known of such practices

#### **....THEY WERE TAUGHT TO GIVE WITH A GENEROUS HEART AS LED BY THE SPIRIT**

(see the next section)

## **HISTORY**

It is important to note that the majority of Christians in the world today either do not worship in churches that preach Tithing or do not practice tithing even if their churches preach it

As far as I can identify Tithing was not a practice in the church until almost 800AD

This would mean that **Tithing was not part of the Apostolic Doctrine** or practiced by the early church (which would explain why it was not taught to the Gentile Church)

(according to preaching that we have all probably heard we would therefore have to conclude that they have all robbed God and, at the worst, would be on their way to Hell as that is the destiny of all thieves, or at the best, would never have experienced the blessing of God as they are disobedient)

The early Jewish church did practice having all things in common (Acts 2:44-45) but this was never practiced by the Gentile Church and is rarely practiced today

**Note** There are claims that multiple tithes were paid ie as taxes to the temple, the Romans, the king, etc but under the LAW only one tithe was ever required. While civil authorities may also have collected taxes (much as is done today) this had no relevance to the LAW of God as set out in the OLD TESTAMENT

# PROSPERITY

To be clear what I meant by this doctrine I have defined the problem area as

‘God wants me to be **prosper** and be rich in **worldly things** and it is OK for me to **accumulate (ie hoard) my wealth**. God desires to make me rich rather than just providing all my **needs** according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil 4:19)

## 5. The Teachings of Jesus

Have you ever thought it strange that none of Jesus’ teachings are used to back up this position :-

Mat 6:19 “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth.....”

Mat 6:21 “For where your treasure is there will your heart be also.....”

Mat 6:23 “No man can serve two masters.....You cannot serve God and Mammon (ie riches)”

Luke 12:16-21 Parable of the rich (hoarding) Fool... ‘This very night your life will be demanded of you’

Luke 16: 14-15 The Pharisees who loved money were sneering... ‘What is highly valued among men is detestable in God’s sight’

Luke 19: 19-25 Story/parable of Lazarus and the rich man

## 6. The Apostles Teachings

The main new testament scripture used to support this teaching comes from almost right at end of the NT ie 3 John vs 2

‘Beloved I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health just as your soul prospers’

This over looks numerous less favourable and unsuitable scriptures

1 John 2:15-17 ‘Do not love the world or anything in the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him’

‘The world and its desires will pass away, but the man who does the will of God lives forever’

And a warning to ‘anyone who teaches false doctrines and does not agree to the sound instruction of our Lord Jesus Christ.....men of corrupt mind who have been robbed of the truth and **who think that godliness is a means to financial gain**’ (1 Tim 6:3-5)

1 Tim 6:9      People who want to get rich fall into temptation and a trap and into many foolish and harmful desires that plunge men into ruin and destruction

1Tim 6:10      For the love of money is the root of all evil, Some people eager for money have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs

Prosperity and Blessing taught outside of the context of generosity to the poor and sowing into Gods kingdom is usually received by the heart of man as a justification for greed and love of the world.

**Greed is defined as idolatry** (ie when we love and therefore serve money more than we love and serve God) (ie Eph 5:5 and Col 3:5)

## **SPIRIT LED GIVING AND A GENEROUS HEART**

As gentile believers what should we be doing?

Jesus made only one or two references to tithing in the Gospels .....indicating that it was not a prevalent practice even among Jews. The Law applied until Jesus died.

Mat 23:23      ‘Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites for you pay tithe of mint, anise and cumin but you neglect the weightier matters of the **LAW**, justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done without leaving the others undone

Note            The Scribes and Pharisee were **under the LAW**

Note            Mint, anise and cumin were **produce of the field** and were required to be tithed **under the LAW**

Note            These **ought YOU** to have done ie **under the LAW**

**Note**            Jesus instructed those who were healed of leprosy (Mat 8:3) **‘to show yourself to the priest and offer the gift that Moses commanded’ because they were under the LAW (we don’t do that today either)**

Rom 6:14      **YOU ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW BUT UNDER GRACE**

### **1) WE NEED TO KNOW WHAT GODS WORD SAYS**

**There is NO pre-Mosaic principle of tithing in the Bible.....there are only two individual cases recorded out of all the people who lived in that period and none of them are in anyway near what is taught as tithing today (refer ‘TITHING’)**

**Malachi was a prophet who prophesied under the LAW...(Mal 2:4)...why is this scripture then used so frequently to coerce gentile christians into if tithing was a pre-Mosaic principle??**

**(Is 5:13            my people have gone into captivity for lack of knowledge)**

Did you receive the Spirit by observing the Law or by believing what you heard?  
(Gal 3:2)

All who rely on observing the Law (*ie including tithing*) are under a curse.....  
(Gal 3:10)

Clearly no-one is justified before God by the Law (*ie including tithing*) because ‘the righteous will live by faith’ (Gal 3:11)

Heb 7:5 **Now the LAW requires descendants of Levi who become priests to collect a tenth** from the people (speaking of Jews)  
We are all priests today see 1 Pet 2:5 and 9 'You are a royal priesthood'

Note It is the **LAW WHICH REQUIRES TITHING not a pre-Mosaic principle**

Rom 6:14 **YOU ARE NOT UNDER THE LAW BUT UNDER GRACE**

Gal 5:18 But if you are led by the Spirit **you are not under the LAW**

## 2) **WE NEED TO HEAR AND OBEY WHAT GODS SPIRIT SAYS**

Rom 8:14 because those who are led by the Spirit are the Sons of God

Give as you are led :-

if you love the Lord with all your heart and soul and mind and strength you will give generously to his kingdom (Mat 13:45-46 the kingdom of heaven is a fine pearl of great value – the merchant went and sold all he had and bought it)

if you love your neighbour as yourself you will give generously if he is in need (James 2:14-17)

This is best summed up by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians

2 Cor 9: 6 Whoever sows sparingly will reap sparingly and whoever sows generously will reap generously (God is no mans debtor)

2 Cor 9: 7 Each man should give as he has **decided in his heart** to give, (ie Rom 8:14)

**not reluctantly** (this would indicate a heart problem ie 1 Jn 3:17)

**nor under compulsion** (ie under the Law ie tithing)

**for God loves a cheerful giver**

This all springs from the knowledge of how much God first loved us and that nothing we can give back could ever be enough

John 3:16 **'for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life'**

(The "Zaccheus Principle" (Luke 19:5 -9)... When Jesus comes into a house, love of the world goes out and generosity becomes the way of life....without us even needing to be preached to)

3) SUPPORT FOR MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL

While the apostle Paul continued to work as a tentmaker he did teach that ministers of the gospel had the right to be supported

1 Cor 9:3-12            Do not muzzle the ox

Who serves as a soldier at his own expense?

If we have sown spiritual seed among you is it too much that we should receive a material harvest from you?

1 Cor 9:14            Even so the Lord has ordained/commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel

Luke 10:7            The workman is worthy of his wages

Gal 6:6                He who receives instruction must share all good things with his instructor

## **FEAR OR FAITH**

### **(or What is your motivation for giving?)**

I have heard that even people who I regard as great bible teachers have said **'I would be afraid not to tithe'**

I do not believe that we should be motivated by fear to give..... **LOVE** should be our motivation and perfect love (ie Gods love in us) casts out all fear

What we do out of fear is not done in faith.....

and according to Rom 14:23.... 'everything that is not of faith is sin'

It would therefore be a reasonable conclusion that tithing done out of fear is  
SIN....and most certainly will not be blessed by God!

(With this in mind perhaps using Mal 3:8-12 as a sledgehammer will in future be regarded as inappropriate)

## **CIRCUMCISION (a pre-Mosaic covenant)**

The parallel argument for Tithing is Circumcision (except that circumcision actually was a pre-Mosaic principle).....a covenant set by God (Gen 17:9-14)

Note God described this as **an everlasting covenant**

Acts 15:5 ...the Pharisees stood up and said ‘The Gentiles must be **circumcised** and required to obey the **Law of Moses**’

Acts 15:28 But the apostles, elders and Holy Spirit said.....

‘It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us not to burden you with anything beyond the following **requirements**: that you abstain from food sacrificed to idols, from blood, from meat strangled and from sexual immorality’

**Note that in the same way as Circumcision came to an end so also Tithing would have come to an end had it been a Pre Mosaic principle**

Gal 5:1-14 I believe there is good reason to see this text as applying equally to any Law be it of circumcision (or tithing)

Vs 1 ‘Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made you free’

Note I do not know anyone who would describe tithing as a liberty....it is almost always taught as a law and results in bondage

Vs 2 ‘if you let yourselves be circumcised, **Christ will be of no value at all**’

Vs 3 ‘again I declare to every man who lets himself be circumcised that **he is obligated to keep the whole of the Law**’

Note *Christians should seriously consider claiming to tithe (THEY SHOULD RATHER GIVE AS THEY ARE LED) as tithing was clearly as much part of the Law as circumcision and if, as argued by some, also a pre mosaic principle neither circumcision (or tithing) nor uncircumcision (or not tithing) mean anything (Gal 6:15)*

**GOD WANTS US TO GIVE AS LED BY HIS SPIRIT.....(Gal 5:25)**

**MOTIVATED BY LOVE (Gal 5:14)**

## **THE SPIRIT OF STINGY-NESS**

### **(or What ever happened to the generous heart?)**

It seems clear that in many cases in the word that a meeting with God resulted in a new and generous heart...ie Zaccheus Luke 19:1-10. It should be emphasised that Jesus saw his response of loosening the purse strings as confirmation that he was saved... 'Today salvation has come to this house'

I believe that the church today as a result of obeying the 'Law of tithing' has allowed a pharisaic spirit to develop which is demonstrated in Luke 18:12. It boasts 'I fast twice a week and give tithes of all I possess' but in its heart it says 'and because I have complied with my financial obligations I am right with God and the rest is mine to hoard!'..... ('it is Gods blessing on my life')

My experience is that God says differently..... I would challenge you to say that to God and ask him to speak to your heart about it.

....try praying Psalm 139:23 and 24

'Search me, O God, and know my heart;  
test me and know my anxious thoughts.

See if there is any offensive way in me,  
And lead me in the way everlasting'

### **Robbing Gods people of the blessing and joy of giving**

It is my experience that when we give because we have to do so under a Law, WE ARE ROBBED OF THE JOY OF GIVING. Romans 7 and 8 are a great read. The goal is to be led by the Spirit and as a child of God to participate in his kingdom being preached to all nations and to see others saved and to bless those in need.

It is the greatest joy of a Christian to contribute what he can and be part of Gods purpose.

**When Gods people are not giving 'under compulsion' they are cheerful givers.**

## **THE (RIGHT or) KINGDOM ATTITUDE TO RICHES**

I have asked God many times what should the church do to get His people to understand His ways with money and riches and in my heart there is always and only one resounding answer.... **TEACH WHAT JESUS TAUGHT** without compromise!

'My sheep listen to MY VOICE.. I know them and they follow ME' (Jn 10:27)

Luke 12:13-15 'Watch out! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; a mans life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions'

Note           The applies to covetousness as much as greed - both are defined as idolatry (Col 3:5)

Note           People today with wealth KNOW the emptiness ....it does not bring joy or life!

Luke 12:16-21 The parable of the rich fool has a few key issues by which Jesus undermines the belief that riches will bring joy and security:-

Vs 17           The problem and worries of **safely** hoarding.....esp. when we know what Jesus says in Mat 6:19 'Do not store up for yourself treasures on earth where moth and rust destroy and thieves break in and steal'

Vs 18           Hoarding rather than generosity is greed and selfish...this is clearly not the way of God

Vs 21           Riches hoarded will blind our spiritual focus...and put us in grave danger

Vs 20           The futility 'You FOOL! This very night your life will be required from you'.

1 Tim 6:7       'For we bought nothing into this world and we can take nothing out of it'

**The world today is set up to try and get people to part with their money by internal and external pressures.....and many people in the world see the Church as no different!**

**Jesus makes no compromise but His way is different. Because He says 'Make me the LORD of your life' rather than saying 'GIVE ME YOUR MONEY' people know they have a choice to make...the Kingdom of God or not**

## **The Rich Young Ruler**

Luke 18:18-27 Jews under the Law looked to keeping the commandments as the way to be saved. They saw primarily the external observation as the requirement without looking at the heart. From the question asked 'What must I **do** to inherit eternal life?' it is clear that observing the Law had brought no satisfaction to him.

He claimed to have kept the Law by observing those commandments which involved relationships with people but Jesus by pointing out what he lacked and suggesting the remedy effectively asked the key question 'Is your love of money greater than your love of God?' ....and hit the raw nerve.

Jesus does not compromise on this point 'You cannot serve God and mammon/money/riches'

I got saved 30 plus years ago when I was an almost penniless student but after having an encounter with God last year I realise that this issue is still a 'no-brainer'. If you let money become your God you cannot have God in your life.....HE DOES NOT TAKE SECOND PLACE (Mat 10:39)

**IF YOU HAVE EVER KNOWN GOD YOU WILL FIND NO SATISFACTION IN A LIFE WITHOUT HIM**

To the rich person who wants to find God and thereby eternal life there is no other answer.....you have to accept God as the LORD and your first priority (You shall have no other Gods before me) and you have to follow Jesus (Mat 10:37-39 taking up your cross daily ...ie death to the self centred life and living the God centred life)

**WHAT AN ANATHEMA IT IS TO SEE MINISTERS OF THE GOSPEL WHO APPEAR TO LIVE A LAVISH AND WORLDLY LIFE! (but be honest, they are very few and far between!)**

Vs 25 'How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the Kingdom of God. Indeed it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of the needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God'

Note 'Who then can be saved?' .....ie all men are rich in some way.....we all have things we have to let go of to be able to follow Jesus

Note 'What is impossible with men is possible with God' .....when God draws us he empowers us to make the decision....ie what choice do we really have (Jn 6:68 'Lord to whom shall we go...you have the words of eternal life')

**THE KEY IS THAT OUR SURRENDER IS TO GOD AND NOT TO MEN.....  
WE MUST ACCEPT THAT WE ARE ONLY STEWARDS OF  
THE RICHES AND AS SUCH HAVE A KINGDOM FOCUS**

**Generosity is a non-negotiable response as a reality of having experienced Gods  
gift of salvation through Jesus to us (ie Zaccheus)**

Mat 5:42 Give to him who asks you and do not turn away from the one who  
wants to borrow from you

Note This would not be for his greeds, wastes or to support his addictions  
but for his **NEEDS**

Luke 10:25 The parable of the good Samaritan shows who we should be  
helping.....those who through no fault of their own are in trouble

**GOD PUTS POOR PEOPLE IN OUR WAY TO TEST OUR HEARTS  
ie Lazarus at the rich mans gate (Luke 16:19)**

Heb 13:1-2 'Let brotherly love continue, do not forget to entertain strangers for by  
doing so some have unwittingly entertained angels'

It is not our religiosity which counts but our generosity

**GOD HAS ORDAINED THAT HIS  
MINISTERS SHOULD BE SUPPORTED (1Cor  
9:14)**

Mat 10:40-42 'He who receives you, receives me and he who receives me receives  
him who sent me'

Vs 42 'and if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones  
because he is my disciple, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose  
his reward'

**THE ONLY RICHES YOU CAN TAKE WITH YOU ARE THOSE THAT YOU  
ACCUMULATE IN HEAVEN BY YOUR GENEROSITY ON  
EARTH AND BY SOWING INTO HIS KINGDOM**

Mat 6:1-4 'Be careful not to do your acts of righteous before men to be seen by  
them. If you do you will have no reward from your father in heaven'

'so that your giving may be in **SECRET**. Then your Father who sees  
**what is done in secrete will reward you.**

1 Tim 6:17-19 Charge those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us all things richly to enjoy

Let them do good, that they may be rich in good works, ready to give and willing to share

Storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life

Luke 16:9 'I tell you, use worldly wealth to gain friends for yourself, so that when it (and your life) is gone you will be welcomed into eternal dwellings'

Note In the same way as the dishonest steward did, in the worldly sense, we as children of the light should use our masters wealth wisely with an eye to the future ie eternity

**RICHESS HAVE THEIR GREATEST VALUE WHEN WE CAN SEE THEM AS A MEANS TO BE A BLESSING TO OTHERS AND TO HAVE THE PRIVILEGE TO BE ABLE TO CONTRIBUTE TO THE WORK OF THE KINGDOM....AND FOR THIS WE OURSELVES WILL BE BLESSED!**

### **The Widows mite**

Luke 21:3-4 The key to this is that the widow gave freely all she had.....as an expression of her faith..... 'God I have nothing left to live on ....no wealth of my own and I am trusting you to look after me and supply my need'

The poor should have the freedom to give what they can and as they want to.....so the rich too should freely give what they can....and as they want to

### **The parables of the 'Talents' and the 'Sheep and the Goats'**

Mat 25:14-31 and 31-46 are an essential read.....and very seldom preached today

Please notice the emphasis about these talents is that God expects us to work productively and wisely with what HE provides us in life (ie the 'Talents'). It is HE who provides us with our skills and opportunities .... and servants know all belongs to HIM (Deut 8:17&18)

The sheep and the goats are distinguished by one criteria.....their demonstration of love for those who are need ..physically and spiritually!.

? How much do you want to hear Jesus say "Well done thou good and faithful servant....come and share in your masters happiness" and "Come blessed by my Father, take your inheritance in the kingdom"

**LOVE FOR CHRIST'S BRETHREN & THE LOST EXPRESSED THROUGH  
GENEROSITY TO THEM AND HIS WORK IS NON-  
NEGOTIABLE – IT IS THE PROOF OF FAITH**

(Heard the joke about rich man who tried to take his money with him...and the  
doctor, lawyer & pastor?)

## NEEDS (vs GREEDS)

**God as our Father is vitally interested in supplying all our NEEDS but his Word clearly tells us that it is not our greeds**

- James 4:3 'When you ask you do not receive because you ask with wrong motives that you may spend what you get on your own pleasures (ie selfish greeds are not needs)
- 1 John 5:14 '...if we ask anything **according to His will** he hears us and if we know that he hears us whatever we ask we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of him'
- Phil 4:19 'My God ... will supply all **your needs** (according to) from his glorious riches which have been given to us in Christ Jesus'
- Mat 6:31-33 'Do not worry for your heavenly Father knows that you **need** them (food, clothing, etc)
- Vs 33 'seek first his kingdom his kingdom and his righteousness and all **these things (ie needs)** will be given to you as well'
- Mat 7:9-11 'Which of you, if his son asks for bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for fish will he give him a snake? (**ie needs**)....How much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!'
- Luke 11:13 'How much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!'..... ie our spiritual **need**
- Luke 11:8 Persistent prayer... 'yet because of the mans boldness (persistence) he will get up and give him as much as he **needs**'
- Note The context of requests to God for 'things' in prayer is almost always in the area of needs.....and the implication is that where it seems to be open it still only applies to needs (James 4:3) or to enable us to have abundantly so that we can be generous

**IT IS NOT GOD WHO HERE TO SERVE US...WE SERVE HIM  
HE IS NOT OUR GOD BECAUSE OF WHAT WE CAN GET  
FROM HIM BUT BECAUSE OF WHO HE IS AND WHAT HE  
HAS DONE FOR US IN CHRIST**

*Eph 1:3 'Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realm with every spiritual blessing in Christ'*

## About the Author

The author claims to be nothing special in his own right.

I have been a born-again Christian for about 30 years. Similar to many I found myself busily trying to make a life and facing the challenges of bringing up 3 kids in world that seems to demand our full attention merely to survive.

My Christian walk was summed up in that I would spend about 5-10 minutes a day praying and/or reading the Word and attending church, although not always regularly.

**BUT GOD**, who is rich in mercy.....(Eph 2:4)

.....one day as I was driving along and exiting a freeway literally STOPPED ME in my tracks with His Word...

“WHAT PROFITS A MAN IF HE GAINS THE WHOLE WORLD BUT LOSES HIS SOUL”

Now for the sceptics who don't believe in God all I can say is that His existence doesn't depend on your limited knowledge.

And to those who don't believe God speaks to people today all I can say is that after He speaks to you, you most certainly will believe.

Let me describe what it felt like.....

It felt as though I had been stopped by the word which was like a huge rubber stamp which hit me right across my chest (though I heard the words clearly as well in a firm but loving voice)...frozen from doing about 60 km/hr ....to nothing!

I felt pinned very firmly into my seat and my first concern (ridiculously) was whether there was a vehicle coming up behind which would hit into me (I actually glanced into my rear view mirror and saw no-one coming).

I also remember silly thoughts like ... 'If I was riding a horse, I would be lying on my back on the ground at this stage' and 'if my car was not a Ford the seat would have probably broken under the force'.

I don't know how long the whole incident took, it was perhaps only a matter of seconds, but when I came to the realisation that it was GOD who had spoken to me and that he was not going to take me home at that time the car suddenly started moving again.

All I could manage was “OK God, I hear” though I don't know if it was just a thought or if I said it aloud.

Some instantaneous realisations came from this experience...

- 1) God is not to be trifled with...He is the one who is to be listened to
- 2) God is loving but very firm
- 3) The very life we have comes from God ...it is His breath within us and every breath we take is by his grace .... our life is but a vapour
- 4) And 'my' money is not the most important thing to me....my relationship with God is!

(this was also backed up in the fact that what I was thinking about when he so graciously 'interrupted' was how to make money and have enough to retire on!)

The new me is now needless to say very different.... God fills my thoughts almost every waking hour. I find myself with an insatiable appetite for His Word. I wake up thinking about what God wants..... hungry to spend time with Him in prayer, worshipping and reading his Word or listening to it on CD and listening to teachings. My every thought is consciously 'before Him' and the great blessing is that I have this sense of His presence with me whenever I turn my thoughts to Him.

I have had a very exciting walk since that day with God doing much in my life but that is another story.

Two teachings in the churches today (which are interconnected) burn within me as major errors that bring the church to the place where many people in it are ensnared by 'the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches'.

- 1) Tithing 10% belongs to God and the rest is mine
- 2) Prosperity God wants me to be rich in this world (and I am therefore entitled to hoard 'MY' money)

**THESE ARE NOT NEW TESTAMENT TEACHINGS OF JESUS OR THE APOSTLES AND WERE NOT THE PRACTICE OF THE EARLY GENTILE CHURCH**

(And I feel with a very strong conviction that God wants me to share His Truth on these matters)

But please, believe nothing that I say...be like the Bereans of Acts 17.....go and see what Gods word says yourself!

