

FINANCIAL TRUST ON GOD

(EQUALS OUR WEALTH IN HEAVEN)

The First-Century Gospel Church/Philadelphia

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The majority of people of the world have already placed their trust on laid-up finances, or have some other human being, or place, or a thing to depend on, instead of depending on God, before they come to a knowledge of the Truth (which will reveal God's plan of trust for 'believers' to learn about, understand, and follow in their life.

Jesus laid out the basis of God's financial plan for us, when giving His teaching in His 'Sermon on the Mount' (Matt.chapt, 5-7) "Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth", "for where your treasure is there your heart will be also."

Jesus knew that the human heart of mankind (in its natural state of unbelief), would not put trust on God's promises to provide for us, unless all other people and things to trust on had been removed (and the only place left for trust would be on God's promises). That is why Jesus told His followers to get rid of their laid-up treasures that could be depended on (so they could turn to God in faith). [That is the 'place of trust' on God where the widow of Zarephath had to come to, (and her meal never ran out after that). Also, why Abraham had to leave his father's home and set out to be led by God to an unknown destination, while trusting God for his daily needs to be supplied, and, for years he "dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise;" (as "a stranger to a strange country.") To be brought to God's 'place of trust'. It is also why Isaac and Jacob had to trust God to support them during times when they had to travel and to live in tents (instead of "having a home with all that they needed to depend on", and house-servants to fulfill requests).

God led each of these (and other) Bible characters on a 'pathway of trust', to which if they remained committed to it, it would lead them to His Kingdom. The Bible refers to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as having already received their Heavenly reward.]

Jesus assured His true followers that they need not be anxious about their daily needs, because God knows their needs and He would provide. (Luke 12:22-23) "Then turning to His disciples (those who would believe on His almighty power to provide for them) He said, "For this reason I say to you 'Dismiss all anxious care for your lives, inquiring what you are to eat, and for your bodies, what you are to put on. For life is a greater gift than food, and the body is a greater gift than clothing." (In other words, do not worry about laying up ahead or storing things for tomorrow). "Observe the ravens. They neither sow nor reap and have neither store-chamber nor barn. And yet God feeds them. How far more precious are you than the birds!"

Jesus told everyone (in plain language) to sell instead of buying (vs.33), "Sell your property (possessions) and give the proceeds to the poor". And, He said, "Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near, and no moth destroys.

After the apostles received the Holy Spirit, (Acts.2:44-45) they sold their property and gave to the needy "Now all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need."

They not only obeyed Luke 12:33, but it enlightens us to know what Jesus' teaching meant, and how it is to be applied. It meant that they sold 'real estate' (and of course anything else they were convicted to get rid of), while believing that they would receive a hundredfold reward from God for doing so. God's command means to sell anything that we could depend on for our living (so that we would not have to pay rent). That is why (Acts 4:37) informs us that the apostle Barnabas (a Levite) sold a farm which he had (his real estate), and he brought the money and gave it to the Apostles" (to be distributed to poor and needy situations).

Aside from that, after they had received the Holy Spirit, we are told (Acts 4) that "they had all things in common", (vs.32 says) "Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." (They considered other true Christians who received the Holy Spirit, as having a right to their goods, just as they did themselves. That was indeed loving God with all your heart and loving your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus' conversation with a young man (Mark 10), provides clear and positive teaching on the subject of "getting right with God" in financial circumstances (and the Holy Spirit can make that real and plain to anyone else with an open mind). That young man asked the most important question a human being could ever ask, (vs 17) "Good Rabbi, what am I to do in order to inherit the Life of the Ages?" Never was a more important question asked, and never one asked of the 'One' who was more capable of giving the right answer, Jesus Christ, Himself, (Who was given 'authority' from God, to determine where each one of us will spend eternity.)

Jesus answered (vs 19-21) "You know the Commandments— 'Do not murder; Do not commit adultery; Do not steal; Do not lie in giving evidence; Do not defraud; Honor thy father and thy mother.' "Rabbi," he replied, "all these Commandments I have carefully obeyed from my youth. Then Jesus looked at him and loved him." [That remark is significant, because if we love someone, we will have their best interests at heart, and will want to help them the best way that we can. That young man was very fortunate to have these Truths brought to His attention, and most (if not all of us), are also fortunate and we appreciate having these same Truths brought to our attention). If there was ever anything we ought to appreciate knowing about, it is the conditions for us to receive Eternal Life. If any one of us were ever so unfortunate to end up in the Lake of Fire, we would then know for sure how much we should have appreciated Jesus having so much love for us, that He informed everyone (in His answer to the rich young man's question about what he must do to receive Eternal Life). That is, we all must get rid of laid-up possessions that could be depended on. Therefore, Jesus, not wanting the man to go unrepentant to the Lake of Fire, told him, "One thing is lacking in you: go, sell all you

possess and give the proceeds to the poor, and you shall have riches in Heaven; and (then) come and be a follower of mine."

We should all realize what Jesus meant for him to be a 'follower' of His, which is, that he would have to trust God for his living, just as Jesus did. Jesus trusted God for His daily supplies (just as He instructed us in the Lord's Prayer to pray for the needs of this day), and God provided for Jesus every day. Scripture says it about as plain as language can make it (1 John 2:6) "He who says he abides in Him, ought himself also to walk just as He walked." (That is really all that Jesus told that rich young man to do, to trust God alone for his living, and walk with Him in faith as His disciples walked with Him).

The young man had great possessions and owned lots of property, however, so he went away very sorrowful. (The Bible does not indicate if he may have later repented to be saved from eternal destruction).

After the young man walked away sorrowful, "Jesus looked around and said to His disciples (vs 23), "How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!" (vs 24-25) "And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again (to clarify what He had said, but without diluting the importance of His statement), as He said to them "Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

This was so opposite to anything the disciples had ever before heard, so they said to Jesus, "who then can be saved?" "But Jesus looked at them and said (vs 27) "With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible."

Jesus did not mean that they could go to Heaven in their present 'spiritual condition'. But it did mean that if they would give their lives to God, He would teach and cause them to develop spiritually, so much so, that they would be glad to sell their property (possessions), and give the proceeds to the poor, and, then to trust on the living God alone for daily needs, (and for all other Scriptural requests in their life to be supplied by God).

After Peter then reminded Jesus (vs 28) "Remember that we (His disciples) forsook everything and have become your followers." Jesus reassured them (vs 29-30) "In solemn truth I tell you, that there is no one who has forsaken house or brothers or sisters, or mother or father, or children or lands, for my sake and for the sake of the Good News, but will receive a hundred times as much now in this present life; houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children, lands; and persecution with them—and in the coming age the Life of the Ages."

Jesus' teaching makes it very clear that God's 'financial plan' is always coupled up with Eternal Life, just as He told the young man that he would go to the Lake of Fire unless he got rid of the stored-up money he was depending on. It would be the same as if we allowed someone else to lay up for us on earth, (or to use any money that had been laid up for us: pension money, social security, insurance money)

The late Pastor was saddened to remember the case of a man whom he had been asked to visit (a man who previously attended services of the 'full Truth' for years), but he never became a member of the work. He owned several houses, kept them, and lived off the income from those houses. When I visited, I found him very ill, blind, and a

terrible sore on his body (the direct result of not accepting the Truth right, and of not obeying Luke 12:33-34) (one of the things he would have to obey in his life), that is, "sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide yourselves with purses that will never wear out, a treasure inexhaustible in Heaven."

It was a sad thing to look upon that man, he said, and to see that he was in the jaws of death, the gates of the Lake of Fire. That is always a result of not accepting God's full Truth (which includes His financial plan of trust on Him for everything in our life).

In opposite cases, he said, "we have noted people who had obeyed God's Word, sold their possessions and given the proceeds to the poor, and we have noticed their prosperity, how they have been blessed financially, and they had God's blessing of prosperity.

We trust that these examples from Scripture will enlighten each one of us, to know that if we have possessions that could be depended on in our life, that we are to sell them and give the money to the poor (not to the Church, nor to the Pastor). If a person would sell a house, they do not have to give tithe on the proceeds, but every penny would go to the poor (as God guides and enables them to distribute it).

In the Garden of Eden, God was the full supplier of the needs of His people. Adam and Eve did not even have to earn it, as it was all freely provided by God. It was not until man sinned and became possessed with self and the devil, that man had to work to stay out of mischief and earn his bread "by the sweat of his brow."

However, every child of God who got back into God's will with their life, ... had conditions of the Garden of Eden restored in their life. Their needs were supplied by the power of God, and they didn't have trouble to get it, by laboring and being heavy laden. God taught them that they did not have to plan for the future, nor 'take thought for the morrow' when they became truly spiritual. They learned to trust God (as in the Garden of Eden before man fell into sin).

God wanted to save Israel, and, to bring them into the real spiritual teaching that only He could give them, so He took all of Israel out of their homes (just as He had done with Abraham). They were taken away from all the things they had to depend on in Egypt, the houses they lived in, the gardens they ate from, etc. They had to leave all those things and be led into a desert, where God taught them how to trust Him for needs of the next day. "God made known His ways unto Moses, and His (methods) unto the children of Israel" (Psalm 103).

Of all the ways that God taught the Israelites to trust on Him, none were more prominent than the financial lessons that He taught them. Importance of us being right with God in financial circumstances is emphasized in the way Israel had to get rid of all the human things they were depending on for their living, ... and learn to trust on God alone like they did in the Garden of Eden. God had to teach them those lessons, ... so for forty years they had to go to bed at night (except one night a week), without a single thing in their dwelling for breakfast. They were forced to trust on God, day by day.

God taught them that man does not live on bread alone (Deut. 8:1-3) "Every commandment which I command you today you must be careful to observe, that you may live and multiply, and go in and possess the land of which the Lord swore to your fathers. "And you shall remember

that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So, He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord." (God is determined to save us all from eternal destruction, because of false places of financial trust, and stored up things that could be trusted and depended on.

The 'widow of Zarephath' may seem to some like a pathetic case, but it was God's 'financial plan' all summed up for us in one example. She was at the point of death by starvation, and she had an only son living with her (also waiting to die). However, God sent Elijah to board with her. Why? Because God knew there was not one widow in Israel who would have accepted His financial plan for their life. They all opposed it, rather, to trust on seen things, people, and places of trust to depend on, but God could see that this Gentile woman might accept it, so He gave her that opportunity to choose to obey His Word given through the prophet. Jesus said (Luke 4:25-26), "But I tell you in truth that there was many a widow in Israel in the time of Elijah, when there was no rain for three years and six months, and there came a severe famine over all the land; and yet to not one of them was Elijah sent: he was only sent to a widow at Zarephath in the Sidonian country." (God gives each one of us opportunities for us to choose to obey His Word about 'financial trust' on Him).

We might ask why? Because it was as it is today, the people of Israel bitterly opposed God's financial plan. Thus, they had no faith nor knowledge of God, nor did they know the wonders of following His plan. (We could never be finished praising God for leading us into His financial plan, and to know how delightful and glorious it is for this life on earth and has Eternal Reward. By God's grace, when we are taught by Him, we would not give up His financial plan under any circumstance whatever (nor for all the stored-up money in the world). We would not want to have one cent of stored up money (and we should want to give God all the glory for teaching that to us).

It can take drastic measures for God to teach us that lesson, but it is in His merciful love to save us from the Lake of Fire. Think of the widow of Zarephath who probably would have died within a few days, starving to death, but still filled with self and the devil, and gone straight to the Lake of Fire. How pathetic and tragic. But Elijah went there (sent by God) and found her gathering sticks, asked her for a drink of water, and as she went to get it, he asked her for a cake (when her handful of meal for a cake was the last meal she would have before dying). You would not think it possible that God would not let her have that much. It seemed cruel from a human standpoint, that she was not allowed to have a handful of meal and a spoonful of oil of stored up things to depend on. But it would have taken her to the Lake of Fire.

It was God's 'Word' that Elijah gave her to obey, and that is something for each one of us to consider. The widows of Israel were going to the Lake of Fire for the lack of obeying it.

Elijah gave her God's plan (just as Jesus did for the rich young man). (1 Kings 17:13-16) "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 your-self 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.' So, she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days. The bin of flour was not used up, nor did the jar of oil run dry, according to the word of the Lord which He spoke by Elijah."

That was God's 'financial plan', and through obeying it she and her son could be saved from eternal destruction, and, brought back to enjoying the conditions of the Garden of Eden. They didn't even have to work to get the oil and meal which they needed daily. (Pray for this day, Jesus taught us to know and to follow).

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