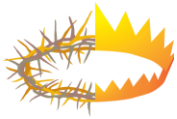




NEW BRITIAN NEW IRELAND MISSION



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES EMPHASIS WEEK 2019

THEME: "STONES IN THE BAG"

1 Samuel 17:48, 49

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PNGUM is sharing the impact of economic dilemma that is hitting the world church including PAPUA NEW GUINEA UNION MISSION CHURCHES ALL MISSION WIDE. Few missions have been hit very hard. We NBNIM wish to convey our sincere thanks and gratitude to God for the faithful church members, young people, private business men, and women, public servants, self-employed and employees who continue to faithfully give to support the Lords work in NBNIM through their tithes and offerings and their use of their resources. Thank you so much indeed.

We noticed, we have the potential to do more than merely ***evangelizing by the Word of God through preaching***, what we've been doing all along...

Now NBNIM aspires to use other means of evangelism such as by means of media, radios, buildings and infrastructure for schools and health services and other services but cannot because of the need of resources both in money and non-monetary wise.

Our obligation to faithfully return Gods money through tithes and offerings remains our biggest challenge.

The huge giants; selfishness, pride, and greed must be overcome to not only allow people to give but more so allow people to taste the blessings as promises for GOD. Many Christians who have not been faithful in returning Gods tithes and offerings needed to. Many who give but may not be doing it rightly need to do it correctly. Many who need to come board and taste the goodness of God in this area needed to come on board too. These are but some of the giants which these week reading will assist us by the help of the Holy Spirit through Christ to rid them off from within our life.

It my earnest prayer that the Holy Spirit through this reading assist us to re-examine our stewarding of the Lords finances thus we can faithfully fulfill our missions together destroying all the different giants that challenges Gods church and His work to advance in other lines of evangelism fulfilling Gods mission to many other uninterred areas.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 1- Sunday

STONES IN THE BAG

1 Samuel 17:49: “*And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground.*”

The biblical account of David and Goliath is one of those that keeps many spirit-oriented humans alert about how God works with His determined and faithful people, especially those who are willing and ready to put resources to work for the glory of God.

In the exposition, you might never have realized that David was not motivated by any human being to attack and annihilate what had become Israel’s menace. He did not take a selfish move; his stepping out to attack was motivated purely by his desire to give honor and glory to the God of Israel. This is clearly exemplified by the question he posed: Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? (see 1 Sam. 17:26).

By all accounts, David’s reason to attack was to stop the defiance, mockery, curses, and blasphemy Goliath and the rest of the Philistines were pouring on the holy nation of Israel and God Himself. *It should be recalled that God’s glory and Holiness is preserved and promoted by members of His holy nation Israel, the Church. They do it using the very blessings God has endowed them with. Beloved, use all the blessings for His glory.* David had the will and the stones; he used both and faced the uncircumcised giant.

Be careful with your size, in terms of material wealth, popularity, educational attainments, and otherwise. These important titles and accomplishments may not work to your advantage when placed before your enemy, the devil. When your size is big, your enemy can easily target you for anything, including death. Unfortunately, many of us rejoice and brag when we attain these accomplishments, forgetting that we acquire them for the glory of God; we need to keep and use them as such (see 1 Cor. 10:31). Bragging makes us vulnerable to the attacks of our archenemy, the devil.

Goliath’s size was not of any advantage when David joined the battlefield. In fact, it’s probable that Goliath’s size motivated David to attack. The bigger you are in any respect, the higher the risk that you will be attacked or targeted. The only place to hide your size is under His wings. For in Him we live, move, and have our being (see Acts 17:28).

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

David came under His wings! (see 1 Sam. 17:45). David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied.” It’s interesting to note that after those statements of determination, David reached into his bag and got one of the five stones.

People who do things in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, do them with their hands in the bags! They pull out stones to use in attacking the enemy. Even after prayer, the hand must get into the bag (our financial and other resources), because that’s where the blessings of God are kept. As a matter of fact, prayer precedes giving and returning to God.

It’s unfortunate that Saul the king, David’s brother Eliab, and other men of Israel were only making statements of discouragement and were not concerned with the stones in the brook.

Interestingly, in preparation for the battle, David did not go anywhere to borrow or to make appeals for any kind of assistance. He used the available blessings (resources) that God had endowed him with; the stones, the sling, and his willingness to attack. Stones, slings, and the will all come from God! But until we are willing to put to use the blessings for His glory, Goliaths will always be there to threaten us and blaspheme God. Use only what the Lord blesses you with! Only that counts with God!

After David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied,” he reached into his bag and pulled out one of the five stones. This is 20 percent of his resources that he pulled out for mission. Only 20 percent is sufficient for mission!

David had a mission to get rid of all the curses, blasphemes, and lampoons the Philistines poured on the holy nation of Israel and God Himself. It was good that he was blessed with some stones. All he had at that time were stones in the bag—but with God’s blessing, that was all he needed!

In Matthew 28, the church of God has been given a mission to take the good news of salvation to all kindred, tongues, and people. This is an imperative from Jesus Himself. We are to bring them in and baptize them in the name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Mission priority, its harvest time. You must be aware that in the course of doing this, we are faced with challenges, or Goliaths.

The Goliaths are manpower, church administrative expenses, infrastructure developments, preaching, and witnessing, to name just a few. We are also racing against the tides of principalities that press us down, the forces of the evil one. All these Goliaths are looking

at us, mocking us, ridiculing us, and challenging the Israel of today. They are asking whether we have a God that we worship. Some of us are afraid of these challenges. Because of that, the Goliaths are still standing before us untouched!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

The reason the Goliaths are still standing is because the stones are still in the bag. No one is reaching inside the bag to pick the one stone. You and I should emulate David. Reach your hand into the bag and pick just one stone of the five the Lord has blessed you with so we can conquer the Philistines, beginning with Goliath.

The church of God is under ridicule, blasphemy; the glory of the Lord is trampled upon because the stones are still in the bags—in bank accounts, in pockets, in gardens, in the farms. Get them from there and do mission in the name of the Lord. The reason the church is stagnating is because people have not dipped their hands into the bags. The stones are still idle! As long as no hand is getting into the bag of the blessings, Goliaths will remain standing. Be ready to spend for mission as Paul did (see 2 Cor. 12:15).

If we emulate what David did by setting 20 percent of our incomes aside for mission (i.e., 10 percent tithe to God and 10 percent for offerings to the Lord), we will have no more Goliaths; in fact, we will prosper as a church, and the glory of God will be made manifest.

Ellen G. White says, “There is means enough in the hands of the believers to amply sustain the work without embarrassing any, if all would do their proportionate part” (Testimonies to the Church, vol. 5, p. 630).

Ellen White also says that “in His providence, the Lord has ordained that the work in His vineyard should be sustained by the means entrusted to the hands of His stewards” (*Testimonies to the Church*, vol. 3, p. 117).

All of us are called upon to join in pulling stones out of our bags so Goliath can be hit and smashed. **(Total member involvement is pulling stones from the bags.)**

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving” (Col. 3:23, 24).

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

The day the stones are pulled out, we will celebrate and dance—like the women of Israel did when David did it!

1 Samuel 18:6, 7: “It happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments.”

Beloved, we have no reason to celebrate when stones are still in the bags, nothing to celebrate when the money, the blessings from God, are still locked up in banks, when all resources are sealed off and nobody is releasing them for mission. Reach into the bags and put the blessings to use for the glory of the Lord, from whom all blessings flow.

The following verses should never apply to any of the members of God’s flock:

James 5:1-3: “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten. . . . Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.”

Revelation 18:17: “For in one hour such great riches came to nothing. . . .” Let your bag have no holes (see Hag. 1:2, 6, 9).

David’s faith was in the Lord, and he knew from experience of God’s faithfulness. David’s faith was born out of his experience of God’s grace and mercy in his life. The Lord had delivered him out of dangerous situations in the past, proving His power and trustworthiness, and David relied on Him to deliver him from the Philistine. Whether it took one stone or five, David recognized that the power was not in his sling or stones, but in the Lord of hosts. As David wrote later in Psalm 21:13, “Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might.”

Likewise, the power is not in the money we give or return to the Lord but in the mighty power of the Lord Himself, the One who blesses us with the money. Our role is to honor Him with our wealth. “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops” (Prov. 3:9).

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today” (Deut. 8:18).

Yes, the power is in the Lord and not in what we surrender to Him for mission. But when we give or return for mission, it becomes evident that we have totally surrendered all to Him, and we are right on course!

Pull the stones out of the bag!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 2 -Monday

The Role of Obadiah.

1 Kings 18:3, 12:

“3 And Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord). **12** I don't know where the Spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. ***Yet I your servant have worshiped the Lord since my youth.***”

When these two verses are spiritually examined, it can be deduced quickly that Obadiah was a man who had his trust in the Lord. He was fully aware of who God was. He worshiped God, and that remained his motivation for doing good to the extent of hiding 100 prophets in caves and providing for them. The act of hiding the Lord's prophets alone amounted to treason to the state at that time. But as long as it was about the Lord, Obadiah did not hesitate to do it. Stewardship and faithfulness begin with trusting in the Lord. Only true worshipers of God can do right. All stewards of the Lord ought to be true worshipers and servants of the Lord. This happens when one releases his blessings to bless others.

When Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the Lord, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water. This height of stewardship is rarely found among the people who serve in the palace of the highest kings. But Obadiah did it!

Hiding a hundred people in a cave and providing them with food and water is not at all a simple undertaking. It takes a devoted and faithful person to take on a task of this scale. And it is not done by flesh and blood but by the spirit. This clearly indicates that Obadiah's stones did not remain in the bag. You cannot do this daunting task when the stones are still in the bag. You must pull them out, something Obadiah must have done. He must have spent; he must have paid. True love and faithfulness call for spending and paying. You cannot provide food and water to 100 prophets of God without spending. This is what God is calling us to do. Give and provide!

It's time to join Obadiah's camp, people who have hearts motivated by God to save lives, people who are ready to release resources, the blessings from God for the good of God's people, thus building the kingdom instead of building structures just for personal use. God rejoices to work with men like Obadiah. Can you imagine how God kept blessing Obadiah with resources to provide for 100 people every day? God has a way to keep us blessed if we do not forget the source of the blessings.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Elijah and Obadiah, I Kings 18

“1 After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: ‘Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.’ **2** So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab.

“Now the famine was severe in Samaria, **3** and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord. **4** While Jezebel was killing off the Lord’s prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.) **5** Ahab had said to Obadiah, ‘Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals.’ **6** So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another.

“7 As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down to the ground, and said, ‘Is it really you, my lord Elijah?’

8 “ ‘Yes,’ he replied. ‘Go tell your master, “Elijah is here.” ’

“9 ‘What have I done wrong,’ asked Obadiah, ‘that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death? **10** As surely as the Lord your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. **11** But now you tell me to go to my master and say, “Elijah is here.” **12** I don’t know where the Spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn’t find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the Lord since my youth. **13** Haven’t you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord? I hid a hundred of the Lord’s prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. **14** And now you tell me to go to my master and say, “Elijah is here.” He will kill me!’ ”

The conversation between Obadiah and Elijah deserves our most profound attention.

First, the words of Obadiah depict how knowledgeable he was about God. Obadiah knew how powerfully God worked with His faithful people, such as Elijah. Obadiah was aware that God could carry Elijah away by the spirit. Obadiah implies also that God can hide His own from their enemies. And when God hides, no one can find. Factually, Obadiah also had knowledge of how fierce Ahab was.

It is at this point of knowledge that Obadiah had trust in God and proved faithful.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

It takes knowledge to be faithful to the Almighty God. Many of us fall short in the area of faithfulness simply because we make little or no effort to know or understand who God is and what He is capable of doing. It is at this point that trust in God develops and grows into faithfulness. This is what stewardship requires! At this spiritual vertex, one begins to ask questions like: ***“What shall I return to the Lord for all His goodness to me?”*** (Ps. 116:12). One becomes open and true to himself and puts God at the center of his life. In such a spiritual atmosphere, our connection to our Creator thrives. It is then that you can say, “I give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever” (Ps. 107:1). Each of us today needs to reach this spiritual height. God bless you as you connect to your Creator.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 3 - Tuesday

THE ALABASTER WOMAN

Key Text: John 12:3

“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

Close observance and commentaries of the Gospels about this woman seem to elicit multiple opinions of who she was. John records her name as Mary. Other gospel authors refer to her as just a woman. One fact that runs throughout the gospels is that it was a woman. To me this is sufficient! This exposition does not pursue the name of the woman and has no interest in the name, but only in what the woman did to and for Jesus.

Stewardship is about what a sinner does to and for Jesus after receiving and experiencing salvation through and by Him.

For purposes of fleshing out this study/presentation, I will draw lessons from all the Gospels.

First and foremost, this woman was not invited to the dinner. When your situation is bad, like many of our situations are, you do not need to wait for an invitation to get to Jesus. After all, He said, “Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest” (Matt. 11:28). Go to Him today for spiritual healing!

Based on what transpired at the dining table, it is evident that the woman knew who and what Jesus was. With her expensive gift, she directly went to Jesus and focused only on Him. She did not confuse Him with any other person. This means she clearly identified the Savior. She was clear about who Jesus was.

This clarity of who Jesus is to us individually is critical because this is foundational to our trust in God the Father and His son and our Savior, Jesus Christ. In stewardship and other matters of spiritual nature, God is never confused.

When Jesus is clearly captured in your mind, then giving and returning to Him what is His is not burdensome. One does not consider the expense of the gifts we give to Jesus. Faith in the Lord becomes louder than anything else. “*When your faith is so loud, you cannot hear what doubt is saying to you. Let your faith roar.*”¹

What made the gift the woman gave to Jesus especially exciting was its fragrance, which filled the entire house. Nothing provides an aroma of faithfulness in the house of the Lord like giving or returning to the Lord. Giving to the Lord provides a fragrance of peace and freedom in the heart of the giver; it gives strength and growth to the entire house of

¹ <https://www.pinterest.de/pin/541065342704464207/>

spiritual Israel.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

When you enter a church that gives to the Lord, you can't miss the fragrance of worship, love, spiritual strength, and, finally, the readiness to meet the Savior when He appears the second time.

Such fragrance does not start diffusing from outside but rather inside the giver's heart, the seat of worship and love. The aroma that filled the entire house of the Pharisee first filled the heart of the woman who gave the gift, and it propelled her to give to Jesus. What fills one's heart is what fills the house he or she occupies.

When you see a dry and poor church—which might have a financially rich membership—the obvious deduction is that the members' hearts are equally dry and poor and devoid of the presence of the love of the Savior. This condition should never be seen or encouraged in the house of the Lord or in the hearts of believers.

The woman's gift itself was very expensive and full of fragrance, the Bible says. Without this fragrance, there is no worship! Remember that even in the Old Testament, offerings were burned in order to offer a fragrance to God in heaven (see Lev. 1:9). Does your giving or returning give any fragrance to the house of the Lord, or are you there only to provide the opposite?

The alabaster woman possibly could have been the only person in the house worshipping the Lord. She is the only one who is seen giving something to Him, and the Lord appreciated her gift. It's important for Jesus to appreciate your actions, steps, and ways. That is all you need in your spiritual journey. The Lord's appreciation of the gift does not revolve around material expense but rather the spiritual intension and motivation imbedded in the gift. Make sure your spiritual intensions are pure whenever you give to Jesus.

In pouring the contents of her alabaster jar on Christ's feet, she was saying, **“I have no future but You. I have no value but loving You. I am Yours.” She spoke all these things at the same time in the gift. Giving to the Lord speaks volumes of what the Lord means to you. It is by giving that your heart speaks to the Lord.**

The oil was very expensive. It is generally accepted that its cash value was worth one year's wages. All of it was poured on Jesus' feet for worship! **When Jesus pours love and salvation to you, you pour appreciation by giving and returning. You have not worshiped Him at all until you give.**

Many opinions were running through the minds of the people in the house of the leper when the woman entered the room. After she poured the oil on Jesus, the disciples began complaining of the wasteful giving by the sinful woman. You cannot worship in a complaining environment. Simon, the owner of the house, also muttered that Jesus was dealing with a sinner. Judas's remarks were full of corruption because his intentions were

to embezzle.

The house of the Lord is full of all these groupings. Some people are in the church just to complain about what others do. Others are there only to blame. The worst group, however, is the one that exists to embezzle (Misappropriate), steal, or rob that which is given or returned by those with faithful hearts to the Lord. Unfortunately, such groupings have frustrated all the stewardship efforts injected into the ministry.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Spiritual growth and development have all been curtailed. You can be sure there is no worshiping taking place under these negative circumstances. It just can't happen! Jesus cannot appreciate such creations, and He has no intention of functioning under such settings. Beloved, we are so busy doing wrong, running fast in wrong roads. "What is the use of running if you are not on the right road?" (German proverb).

Jesus' Comments on the Act

“10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them [the groupings], ‘Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. 11 The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. 12 When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. 13 Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.’ ”

Have you ever looked at these comments made by Jesus about this woman with sufficient spiritual attention? I get excited personally at the defense Jesus mounted for the woman against her critics. This affirms the fact that Jesus is our real defense when we are criticized by our enemies. Jesus made positive comments about a sinner because she did right for and to Him.

Giving to the Lord is beautiful and leaves a legacy or a mark that explains your faithfulness to the Lord. Jesus said, **“ ‘Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her.’ ”**

If Jesus were to talk about you as an individual, what would He say? Can Jesus say you have done beautiful things for Him?

For this to happen, stones must be pulled out of the bag! Giving can make good spiritual stories and legacies.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 4 - Wednesday

TWO STEWARDS AT THE BURIAL

John 19:39-42

“Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate’s permission, he came and took the body away. **39** He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. **40** Taking Jesus’ body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen.”

The meeting Nicodemus had with Jesus at night did not leave Nicodemus the same. He began looking at life differently. In fact, their discussion was so spiritually deep that Jesus told him that he must be born again. For us to be good stewards of the Lord we must be born again, and we need that deep contact and relationship with our Savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved, when you meet Jesus face-to-face, mind-to-mind, heart-to-heart, you cannot remain the same. You begin to work with Jesus; then you can even think about Him And most important, you join the givers’ club. It is spiritually impossible for anyone to meet Jesus and remain a non-giver.

There is evidence that Nicodemus did receive mercy. He came on this occasion “by night” for fear of the Jews, but at the end of the Gospel he openly purchases the necessary spices for the anointing of Jesus’ body (see John 19:39). The Master Steward had done His work. He had brought a Bible teacher into the kingdom of God! Jesus’ contact turned Nicodemus into a steward. Nicodemus did not leave stones in the bag. In fact, it pleased him to do service. Believers, we need to get to Joseph’s and Nicodemus’s level of spending for our Lord Christ Jesus.

You see, friends, Jesus is an incomparable and matchless giver (see 1 John 3:16; Gal. 1:4). Getting into contact with Jesus definitely makes you a giver because you are then connected with Heaven, the main fountain of giving. Faithful giving to the Lord is a clear testimony of one’s connectedness with Heaven.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

As a crucified criminal in the eyes of the Law, what kind of burial do you suppose Jesus of Nazareth would normally have received?

His body would probably have been thrown into a common grave set apart for criminals. It would be risky to ask for the body of a crucified criminal so that the deceased could be given a proper burial. For anyone to obtain such a corpse, permission would have to be granted by the proper authorities, but it could be dangerous to ask for that permission.

Two influential Jewish leaders were willing to take that risk. One of these men was the wealthy and honorable Joseph of Arimathea, and the other was Nicodemus. Two great stewards took on this responsibility.

After Jesus died on the cross, Joseph courageously approached Governor Pilate and begged that Jesus' body be given to him. Pilate granted his request.

There was another secret disciple who risked his reputation that afternoon. His name was Nicodemus. One night, before this sorrowful day, he had privately interviewed Jesus under cover of darkness, perhaps for fear of being observed.

Joseph of Arimathea owned a new tomb he probably planned to use for himself. That is where he and Nicodemus placed the body of Jesus. Nicodemus brought a mixture of expensive myrrh and aloes to use to prepare Jesus' body for burial. Myrrh is a type of gum resin that acts as a kind of glue. Aloes is sweet-smelling oil used for medicinal purposes, as a fragrance, and to use to bury the dead.

The two men worked together spreading this mixture between the encircling layers of a long linen cloth purchased by Joseph. Joseph and Nicodemus met all the funeral expenses.

They wrapped the fabric around and around His body until it was completely sealed with the fabric cocoon and perfumed resin. They also wrapped an additional cloth around his head. After they were satisfied that they had properly prepared Jesus' body for burial, Joseph rolled a large stone over the cave's opening. They spent until they were satisfied that what they had done befitted their Lord. This is a real stewardship spirit!

These men publicly declared they were Jesus' friends! Their last act of love for Him is recorded in the Gospels. They both risked their reputations and more to give their Friend a proper burial. After love comes spending or giving. Some believers who have matured in grace, say, "Jesus is everything, and we can do anything for Christ because He did everything for us." We all need to get to this level of faithfulness. Let us do all things for His glory.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus could not have known at the time that they were participating in the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy from the book of Isaiah. Here is the scripture telling about the Messiah written more than 600 hundred years before Jesus' crucifixion: "But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave" (Isa. 53:8, 9). **Your giving or spending can fulfill some prophecy.**

"ALL FOR HIS GLORY"

To their great joy, Jesus did not remain in Joseph's tomb for long! He rose from the dead three days later and is alive forever! If Nicodemus and Joseph managed to spend lavishly on Jesus when He was dead, how much do we need to spend on and for a living Savior? If Jesus appreciated the alabaster woman when she brought a very expensive perfume and poured it on Him, I am sure He appreciated Joseph and Nicodemus for their sacrificial giving, as well.

It is still expensive to stand up for Jesus today, but His true friends are willing to pay the price, by God's grace. And they will never regret it!

John 3:8

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. When Jesus finds His way into the life of a sinner, you will hear the sound of that salvation, you see the effect of salvation, you will feel that salvation. You will see that person make himself available for Jesus, and giving and returning to Jesus. Nicodemus and Joseph are excellent examples of such people. And they never keep the stones in their bags.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 5 -Thursday

ISREAL RUNS A SURPLUS BUDGET

Exodus 36:5-7

5 “ ‘The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.’ **6** So Moses gave a command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, ‘Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.’ So the people were restrained from bringing, **7** for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.”

The whole story starts when God said, “Let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them” (Exod. 25:8).

God has always wanted to stay and work with His people (Israel). God blesses people so they can use those blessings to do His will and complete His mission.

God uses people to accomplish His mission of sharing the gospel message with the world. He does this because He wants to dwell among them. Even today God longs for His presence to be felt by His people through working together. Remember, you cannot work with God without spending, because God is a spender. This is blessed spending! Blessed expenditure!

We often miss the fact that when God tells us to do something that necessitates spending or giving, His intention is to stay connected with us, to dwell with us. There is nothing that connects us with the Creator like returning or using His blessings according to His instructions. When we do this, we remain heavenly focused.

Therefore, if God says to return tithe and give offerings, to build Him a sanctuary, and to spend on anything for His glory, it is prudent (wise) that we do so. It helps us to remain connected to the main source of blessings, God Himself.

After God commanded Moses to tell Israel to build Him a sanctuary, Moses called the entire nation of Israel together and broke the news to them all. (See Exod. 25:2.)

Remember at this time Israel is in the desert, no one is employed, none has an income, but God is still saying, “Build me a sanctuary so I can dwell among you.” People brought items to donate to the building of the sanctuary, as God required. Did they build it? Yes! They gave what they had. Always God asks us to give only what we have.

Because everybody participated in giving (Total Member Involvement), they contributed so much for the building of the sanctuary that the workers reported to Moses that what was brought was more than was needed.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

They gave until there was surplus. Beloved, when is the church of God going to rise to this level of worship? The present Israel, instead, is in debt! Church debt has become commonplace today. Have we lost the spiritual mark?

If people with no income living in a desert managed to run a surplus budget, what about the present Israel made up of ministers, members of parliament, high-ranking business people, professionals, professors, and lecturers, men and women with financial stature, people who live in remote-controlled palaces, and investors with booming investments.

When is the church today going to run a surplus budget like the church during Moses' time? What actually has gone wrong with us today?

During Moses' time people were restrained from bringing, but today people are persuaded to give to the Lord. What a contrast! You have to have a motivational speaker to get things done. People's hearts today are glued to their material possessions.

God asked the Israelites to give from their hearts, and God is asking the same thing of us today. Do not allow heads and pockets to give to the Lord; use only hearts. Because only hearts understand and know God!

Maybe the reason we are still flat in giving to the Lord, running in deficits, is because we are still using pockets and heads to give to the Lord. The day our hearts will begin giving according to God's instructions, we will run surplus budgets. No stones will remain in the bag. Remember, only the heart can get stones from the bag!

During Moses' time, people gave everything from their hearts, including their skills and intelligence, because they, too, come from the lord (see Exod. 36:2).

Beloved, can we ask the Lord to give us the heart He gave Israel of Moses' time? We need it so badly, especially at this time when the events of this world are closing. Only then shall we get a stone out of the bag and accomplish God's mission, so His glory can be seen.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 6- Friday

DO LIKEWISE.

Luke 10:35-37

“35 ‘The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, “Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.” 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?’ 37 He said, ‘The one who showed him mercy.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go and do likewise.’ ”

There are many commentaries on the parable of the Good Samaritan, but common to all is the exposition on the love issue. Love your neighbor as you love yourself. This is undoubtedly true. However, the same parable relays numerous other lessons, including the one on spending. As a matter of fact, it’s this very element that gives it the best concluding apex.

“33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him,’ he said, ‘and on my return **I will repay** you for any additional expense.’ ”

The Samaritan extended love and compassion to this victim of robbery, but the effects of that love and compassion were clearly manifested in giving/spending resources. He spent time, energy, and money, and used his donkey. We are blessed to save others. Unfortunately, most Samaritans know that! This is stewardship at its peak! Beloved, is this not what spirituality means? Love yields giving.

I enjoy the instructions from the Samaritan to the innkeeper. He said “Look after him, and when I return, **I will repay** you for any additional expense.”

The Samaritan is willing to pay any extra expense. How I wish we believers would give as the Samaritan gave and run surplus budgets in the church. It’s possible, friends!

Love simply means giving and spending. That’s exactly what Heaven did for your salvation (see John 3:16).

Paul declared, “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved (2 Cor. 12:15).

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

In the parable Jesus describes three people: the priest, the Levite, and the Samaritan. The first two did not care for the victim; only the Samaritan did.

“**36** Jesus asked, ‘Which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?’ **37** The expert in the law replied, ‘The one who had mercy on him.’ Jesus told him, ‘**Go and do likewise.**’ ” You cannot be good until you do good. “You cannot be faithful until you do faithfulness” (William Bagambe).

Beloved, Jesus is saying to do likewise. Stewardship is doing good, and it’s being faithful and true to Jesus and doing what He expects of us.

When grace and love of Jesus settle into us, all we will see is giving and spending for mission, because we cannot afford to stay like we are not saved! And His grace makes us do it gladly, because His love constrains us (2 Cor. 5:14).

The parable of the Good Samaritan is for you!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 7- Sabbath (Sabbath choice sermon)

GIVE YOURSELF TO THE LORD FIRST

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

“We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; **2** for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. **3** For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, **4** begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— **5** and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us.”

When you read these first five verses of 2 Corinthians 8, the first big spiritual point you will notice is that the members of the church in Macedonia gave themselves first to the Lord. Beloved, for faithfulness to take root in any believer, this is always the first step. Give yourself to God first. In stewardship matters, it's the Lord first, then the rest follows.

“But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you” (Matt. 6:33).

If this spiritual sequence is followed, then giving for the Lord's cause becomes your way of life to the extent that if you don't give or are not involved in the exercise of giving, you will feel those gaps of spiritual emptiness and, hence, cry for it like the Macedonians did. This is a very pivotal spiritual maturity spot that cements one's spiritual relationship with the Lord, which is a critical requirement for spiritual growth and strength.

Times without number we fail in our spiritual journeys and responsibilities. The Macedonian generosity was possible because they gave themselves *first* to the Lord and only then to Paul (v. 5). Their preeminent concern was how best to serve Christ. It is here that they exceeded Paul's expectations. They gave out of their poverty because of the sincerity of their commitment to Christ as Lord. So great was their desire to serve Christ that they would not allow their economic situation to keep them from being involved in the Lord's work. This is why Paul describes the collection as a *service* (v. 4). It is not just a financial obligation. It is a ministry opportunity *to the saints* (v. 4)—those set apart to be God's possession.

Our generosity will be possible only when we give ourselves *first* to the Lord. When we do this, we cease to live by ourselves; the Lord will be in us, and since He is the most generous, His generosity becomes our generosity.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

When people raise their spiritual levels by getting connected to the Lord first, they crave to give. They always want to give to the cause of God. And should you dare leave them out of the giving opportunities, they will remind you and press on until they give. This was the case with the church in Macedonia. Have you ever asked yourself the question, When is my church going to reach the spiritual height of connectedness to the Lord?

If it was possible with the church in Macedonia, it is possible with us today; all we need is to give ourselves to the Lord first.

Paul says, “**3** for, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, **4** begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints.”

People under the grace of Jesus are never poor! They are always rich in generosity. Paul testifies to this fact in the above scripture. Jesus becomes their generosity.

Do not plead for the poverty of members; after all, when you receive Jesus into your life, His generosity becomes your generosity, so no one can say he or she is poor anymore.

It should be noted that generosity is about giving voluntarily and according to the means available. God does not require anyone to use the blessings he or she does not possess. God anticipates that you use only those blessings He has extended to you and to use them for His glory.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 8- Sabbath Evening (if you decide to finish during Sabbath service than I suggest you use this sermon)

The Widow at Zarephath.

1 Kings 17:8, 9

“Then the word of the Lord came to him: ‘Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.’ ”

This story stems from idol worshiping perpetuated and promoted by Ahab and Jezebel. Ahab and Jezebel were not a good king and queen. Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. Ahab and Jezebel did much to lead the people of Israel away from the Lord to worship Baal, the sun god, which was the favorite idol of the people of Zidon.

One day the Lord sent Elijah to Ahab, to tell him that there would be drought and famine in the land because the people were so evil. For three years and six months there would be no rain.

This was a terrible moment for Israel. Instead of leading the nation to God, the king pushed it toward idolatry instead. This is the worst a leader of God’s nation can do for his people! Israel got completely submerged into idol worship under the reign of Ahab.

“Anything done against the will of God is evil, because righteousness is doing right in the sight of God” (William Bagambe).

- God says “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house” (Mal. 3:10).
- Jesus says, “But go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them” (Mark 1:44).
- Jesus says, “You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things” (Matt. 23:23, NLT).
- The word of the Lord says, “No one should appear before the Lord empty-handed” (Deut. 16:16).
- The Bible says, “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce” (Prov. 3:10, NLT).

These texts and many more emphasize giving to the Lord. Brothers and sisters, it’s time for all of us to tithe and give offerings and honor the Lord with the wealth and the best part of our produce. That is the will of God. If we do not do the will of God, whatever else we are doing is idolatry and therefore evil!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Do not forget, when Israel did evil before the Lord, God shut the sky; there was no rain for three and a half years. What the Lord did then, I am sure He can do again today!

Please do not miss the fact that it's God who opens your skies for blessings in your pockets and bank accounts; it is He who opens your skies for farms to produce; and it is He who opens the way for you to get jobs and employments. There is no blessing that comes your way that is not sanctioned by Him. "Praise God from whom all blessings flow."

But if you do evil before Him, God can shut those skies, and no more blessings will flow your way. And I can assure you that it will be very dry in your pockets, banks accounts, and firms, and there will be famine in your house and your entire life. Remember, we are dealing with the same God of Israel! Drought will soon hit you if you do not listen to Him!

God always sends a prophet whenever evil is done. Actually, the message you're reading is from a prophet warning you to do the will of God in the area of returning and giving before a drought comes by.

God sent Elijah to announce a calamity.

"Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, 'As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word' " (1 Kings 17:1). It was a hard message to deliver or receive. When the Lord sends you, say or write it like it is.

And surely it did not reign for three and a half years. Because it was by God's power that Elijah Spoke. Beloved, if we continue doing evil in the sight of God, it will soon stop raining in our coffers. This is for sure. Because we have done a lot of evil with the blessings God extends to us, there is nothing left for His glory.

After he delivered the message, Elijah left. Ahab looked for Elijah but God hid him. What a privilege if God can hide you! God had a plan for Elijah. He hid him at Cherith and provided him with food and water by the raven. God is able! He can do it for you in any circumstance! He is never limited by anything! He is GOD!

For three and a half years, it did not rain. There was severe drought, famine, and many other things that go with drought and a lack of rain.

All streams and wells dried up, including Cherith the brook, which God had kept for Elijah. Life was literally at a standstill.

In such severe lack, *the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”*

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

There are times when all brooks dry up, even the one from which God provides you. ***But it is never dry with God!*** One preacher said, “When God shuts the door, He opens a window.” Cherith dried up, yes, but God had kept resources in the house of the widow in Zerephath. It was still drizzling in the house of the widow. With God, it never dries up everywhere! In some houses God is still raining many blessings, including your house. ***Check your house, brother; check your house, sister! Check your pockets, bank accounts, and firms; the blessings from God are still flowing. Those are the stones God wants you to pull from those bags.***

God told Elijah, “I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

One point to note: when God blesses us, He directs us on how to use the blessings. That’s why it’s critical that we listen to His voice. If He directs that we return tithe so there is food in the house, that’s it. Listen to Him before you do anything. Return His tithe before you spend the money on any other item, including leisure and self-gratification.

“10 So Elijah went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, ‘Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?’

“11 As she was going to get it, he called, ‘And bring me, please, a piece of bread.’

12 “ ‘As surely as the Lord your God lives,’ she replied, ‘I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.’

“13 Elijah said to her, ‘Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. **14** For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: “The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.” ’ ”

BELOVED, STEWARDSHIP IS ABOUT GOD FIRST AND THEN YOU AND YOUR RELATIVES NEXT. THIS IS WHAT ELIJAH WAS TELLING THE WIDOW. (Lead from here to issuing God first commitment cards).

God told Elijah “I have directed the widow,” but apparently the widow was not aware that she was supposed to operate under God’s instructions and directions to give food to Elijah. **She gave excuses, until Elijah insisted relentlessly that she do the right thing.**

Don’t we behave the same way? We keep excusing ourselves, we have little, and it is

not enough for us. There are no such terminologies like it's little or it's not enough with God. Whatever you have is enough for God's mission, if you give it according to God's instructions and with love. Just listen to His voice and act accordingly. Remember, God is fully aware of what you have and how much you have, because it all comes from Him. So when He says to give or return, He knows how much you are expected to give. You only do evil if you do not give or return according to His expectations/will.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

“15 She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.

“16 For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.”

Verse 15 is very amazing. It says that she did as Elijah told her. In other words, she listened to the divine voice, instructions, and directions—and obeyed.

We will never be faithful stewards until we learn to obey God's instructions. Stewardship is about obedience.

After she obeyed and gave, the jar of flour that she expected would be used up was not empty, and the jug of oil she was expecting to dry up, did not. Once you obey the divine command, your jars and jugs will never run empty! Amen.

Instead of two people eating and dying that same day, after giving, there was food for three people every day. That's what God can do, friends! He knows what to do with what we have, if we will only allow Him to work with it. He can increase and multiply it!

“Giving does not make anyone poor; it adds more to the existing resources instead” (William Bagambe). Learn this from the widow of Zerephath.

“It's not giving that makes you poor; it is your spiritual poverty that makes you not give” (William Bagambe).

This act of obedience of this widow was quite remarkable. It was done during the time of Elijah, but Jesus still echoes it in His time in Nazareth. This is what Jesus said:

“ I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon' ” (Luke 4:25, 26). This means that Jesus was aware of what the widow did, even though it was many years later.

Are you sure Jesus is aware of your obedience; is He aware of your giving and returning?

He ought to know!

Final Appeal

Will you get the stones from the bags? You cannot unless you first give yourselves to the Lord. Stewardship is about giving oneself to God first then you and your relatives next. This is what Elijah was telling the widow.

Before you close do make an appeal for them to make commitments to faithfully give back the Lords tithes and offerings plus other commitments as captured in the commitment cards. Have the commitment cards given only to those who indicated to get the stones out of their bags. Some may have made similar commitments already. Leave them out but encourage them to faithfully honor those commitments)

*MAY GOD KEEP YOU IN THE LOVING PALMS OF HIS HANDS
Amen.*

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”