

Part I

# GIVING, TITHES AND OFFERINGS

You are welcome to this edition of light in the evening time. We are continuing in our meditation on God's Pattern Church. We have come to a very vital subject in our discussion. There can be no way God's church and the ministry of the Local church is discussed without an appropriate consideration of "giving". In this edition, we will be talking about Giving, tithing and Offerings, and we will be doing so first by examining some Old Testament provisions. In another edition, we will be examining the New Testament teachings on the same subject. Perhaps, in a third edition, we will concentrate on an aspect of the discussion. The main thrust will consist in a consideration of 1 Corinthians 9, Galatians 6:6, 1Corinthians 16, II Corinthians 8 and II Corinthians 9.

Now, let us go straight into the discussion. Turn with me to Exodus 25. We will be taking verses 1, 2 and 8. We intend to show the relatedness between giving and building up the sanctuary of God (that is raising up a sanctuary unto God). We also intend to establish the relatedness between giving and the manifest presence of the Lord in the midst of his people. Have these two set goals in mind, as you follow the reading. Exodus 25:1,2,8.

**"...And he LORD spoke unto Moses, saying speak unto the children of Israel, that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly with his heard ye shall take my offering.**

*And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them. ..."*

The offerings are listed in verses 3 through 7. From verses 2 and 8 however, we see a close connection between the offerings of the Lord's people and the building up of the house of God. That is important and should be taken note of. Secondly, the purpose of building the sanctuary is that God's great presence, which is usually hidden from the carnal, might be revealed in the midst of his people.

Now, before we go into the mainstream of the meditation, let us take note of something in verse 2, at least in passing. Exodus 25: 2

***“...Speak unto the children of Israel that they bring me an offering: of every man that giveth it willingly... not coerced, but willingly... with his heart ye shall take my offering. ...”***

As we shall see, giving is a priestly responsibility. It is an act of worship, acknowledging his right in creation, saying “*all we are, and all we hope to be is and shall continue to be by his grace, and what we have and what we hope to have is and shall continue to be by his provisions*”. It is a priestly responsibility, an act of worship. And it pre-supposes that the individual is in covenant relationship with God.

Now, let us go into the discussion taking the very first occurrence of the word offering in scriptures (Genesis 4). As you will discover, whenever a subject is mentioned in the first occasion, there are certain elements that are either very visible or implied, which governs the understanding that we should have as we meditate on the same subject, going through all scriptures.

Now, in Genesis 4:3-5, we meet the two sons of Adam and Eve bringing offerings to the Lord. But, there is a phrase that closes verse 4 that is of interest. We will just read verses 4 and 5 and then come back to verse 4 to bring out the phrase of interest, Genesis 4: 4-5.

***“...And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering:  
But unto Cain and to his offering he had no respect....”***

Now, the phrase of interest is what we find in verse 4: *and the LORD had respect unto Abel and to his offering*. Giving will always revolve round these two major elements: the person that gives the offering, and, the offering itself. The LORD hath respect unto Abel as a person, and again, unto his offering. In other scriptures we find that the offering is usually placed upon the altar. We shall soon prove that the altar and the individual are related. Also, the offering must be made after the prescribed manner. Let us keep these two elements in view as we move on. Abel and his offering were received of God, but unto Cain and his offering, God had no respect.

The second scriptural reference is Genesis 8. The first known world had been brought to a close through a process of judgement, in what is familiarly referred to as the “*waters of Noah*”. After that judgement, Noah comes out, and the first thing he did is quite suggestive both as to the place of offerings in God’s dealings with man, and the attitude his people should have in acknowledging God’s rights in creation Genesis 8. It will be sufficient for our purpose to read just the last three verses, Genesis 8:20-22.

**“...And Noah builded an altar unto the LORD; and took of every clean beast, and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt offerings on the altar....”**

There is the fact of the altar and then the man who raises the altar. The altar says “*God has right in all of his creation, he is God of all the earth, he must be acknowledged*”. And then the kind of offering put upon the altar. Verse 21

***“...And the LORD smelled a sweet savour; and the LORD said in his heart, I will not again curse the ground any more for man’s sake; for the imagination of man’s heart is evil from his youth, neither will I again smite any more every thing living, as I have done. ...”***

Verse 21 brings two things to light. God had placed a curse upon the earth, “*Curse is the ground for thy sake*” God told Adam in Genesis 3:17. Then, he again judges all the earth with a flood. But here in Genesis 8:21, God is saying that Judgement shall no longer be sweeping covering the whole earth and removing everything. He interposes a restriction. He does not remove the curse placed upon the earth for man’s sake. That curse remains but there is a selective deliverance that some are to come into. And he tells us in verse 22 how this selective deliverance, this glorious deliverance and preservation, is to be secured by man. Verse 22.

**“...While the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease. ...”**

Now, in verse 21, God said, he shall no longer destroy everything living, Judgement shall be selective. So also, deliverance shall be selective. But, who may be delivered? And in verse 22, he says, while the earth remaineth, seed time and harvest... through the process of giving (for an allusion is made to what Noah had just done. Of the things that he hath, he took one seventh of it and lays down on the altar as a burnt offering unto the Lord. Not of the unclean beasts, but of the ones the Lord has called clean) the one that is in covenant relationship with God can secure to himself divine blessings and deliverance from the curse and all of its effects.

In other words, giving is an instrument, which reveals a consecrated living in an individual that is in covenant relationship with God and secures to him divine blessings and divine deliverance. This is important and should be noted. As we continue in this series, this truth shall be further established.

Thus, while in Genesis 4, the gift and the giver are the two elements, the third element shown here in Genesis 8 is that “*giving*” is the means by which a man acknowledges God’s right over his life and over what he owns, and God responds by blessing him further.

Now, the next passage of interest is Genesis 14, verses 15-23 are important, but since the passage is averagely familiar, we will just give a little background and read some of the verses. Lot, Abraham’s nephew had followed him in the call of God. But at some point, Lot lost the vision and journeyed to Sodom and other kingdoms round about the same location. And, certain nations came to fight against the four nations round about the valley of Sodom. They took to captivity the people and riches of those kingdoms, including their kings. A word goes to Abraham; he comes to work a work of deliverance. Being in covenant relationship with God, God delivered the five kings into his hands. He set the people free and brings them home. Out of apparent gratitude, those kings, delivered from captivity were reaching out to Abraham with gifts, offerings of silver and gold. But, just before they do this, something happened. We read this in verses 18 through 20.

**“...And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the Most High God. ...”**

This mysterious personage (Melchizedek) is a type of the Son of God, a divine personage in type. He comes as a priest ministering the bread and serving the wine to Abraham. Of course, Abraham’s spirit was able to recognise the personage before him, and there was a transaction. And, from the words of the blessing, Abraham knew that God was making himself known in a way that will secure blessing unto him. Now, follow the reading

**“...And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abraham of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: ...”**

The blesser invokes the name of the Lord of all creation, the possessor of heaven and earth, bless Abraham. And he said, “*Blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand*”. And he (Abram) gave tithes of all he had to this divine personage (Melchizedek). Then, there is a return in the narration; to what those four kings were trying to do.

**“...And the king of Sodom said unto Abram, Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself.**

***And Abram said to the king to Sodom, I have lift up mine hand unto the LORD, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth,***

***That I will not take from a thread even to a shoelatchet, and that I will not take anything that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich:...***

Now, the following things are implied in the answer that Abram gave. One, he recognised that his source is the most High God. Two, he knew that he should not associate himself with any gift that could be possibly used to cause distraction in his walk with God. We are told that Abram said that he has entered into covenant with God that he would not take from the riches of Sodom. Sodom represents the flesh, the world and such practices that are abomination in the sight of God.

Here, a third element appears. Remember, the first element is the man of the offering, the second the offering itself, the offering upon the altar, and giving being God's means of acting in selective deliverance towards his people, saving them away from judgement and blessing them. The new element revealed in the above passage is that the Lord's people must be careful whom they receive offerings from.

Not just any offering will do. It is a priestly responsibility, and, there must first and foremost being an acknowledgement of God, and a commitment to the God upon whose altar the offering would be placed. Coming to the altar simply means saying to God: *"you have right over my life. I can only live my life the way it pleases you"*. And Abram said, *"I cannot receive any thing from you, God is my source, God is my blesser"*.

Now, it will appear that in the various church systems of our day, as is often visibly the justice: *"the name of the game is money, go get it"*. And, all kinds of launching are done. God's need for a sanctuary in the midst of his people, and the Lord's people's need to raise up a sanctuary unto the Lord, will always be met by divine provisions made available to those who acknowledge God in their lives and are willing to honour his son Jesus Christ through saving faith. This must be noted carefully.

Now, we come to the matter of tithing. We recommend two passages to you for close study. Numbers 18:20-32 and Deuteronomy 14:22-29. These two passages discuss two types of tithing, all of which were demanded of the children of Israel by divine commandment. We go to the first.

Numbers 18 discusses the first of the two tithes, which is a tenth of a man's several earnings. One-tenth of such earnings is taken and given to the priesthood. The priesthood receives this, gives a tenth of that tithes to the Lord in acknowledgement of the Lord's goodness to them, and live on the remaining nine-tenth of the tithes of the children of Israel. We can go ahead to see God's purpose in that provision. First, it is for maintenance of the priest. And, it has its root in

this. The priesthood under the Old Testament was forbidden from having any inheritance among the children of Israel. When the children of Israel got the Promised Land and the land was to be divided, no portion was allocated to the tribe of Levi. They were not to have any inheritance. Since they were not to farm, they had no need of land. In Numbers 18, we are told the tribe of Levi shall have no inheritance among the people, their inheritance was to be the tithe.

Now, reading a bit on, we will find that the reason for that provision was because of a question asked in the closing part of Numbers 17. So much death was taking place among the people, and, the people were asking, why all these destruction? Why the death? Should we all die, anybody that comes nigh the tabernacle dies? And, the Lord said yes, this provision is made to deliver you from death. Only the priest should come nigh to the tabernacle to do the service of the tabernacle. But all other Israelites are excluded. They could go do their secular work and come to be ministered to. Spiritual responsibilities will rest on the shoulders of the priesthood only. This is important.

Some were forbidden to do any secular work. These were priests. And the rest of the people were forbidden from taking on any spiritual duties or responsibilities. These were the rests of Israel. It is in that context that the first of the tithing is introduced, which is one-tenth of the earnings of the children of Israel. A little later (in another edition), we will be talking more concerning this. But let us move on to the second type of tithing.

Now, after the Israelites have tithed one-tenth of his earnings, he takes another one-tenth and accumulates it. We are told in Deuteronomy 14 that there is a year of tithing. It occurs every three years. The second type of tithe are gathered within the period of the first year and expended on certain occasions in the manner God has prescribed. We will touch on that. Now, in the second year, the second one-tenth is gathered throughout the course of the year and expended the same way the one of the first year was expended. (That means that it was only four-fifths of the Israelites earnings that was allowed him for his personal use. Of the remaining one-fifth, half: that is one tenth of the earnings; is to go to the priests while the remaining half is to be expended in a particular way). But in the third year, there is a difference. All these second categories of tithes gathered throughout that year (the year of tithing) were dispensed in a described manner.

To help our understanding, we will go into this second type of tithing in some little details. God said to the people, you are called to be mine. My purpose and goal in calling you to be mine, is that I may use you, as my means of reaching the ends of the earth, that you might know me increasingly. The three major conventions or conferences you have every year expend these accumulated tithes in a way that will make you come to spiritual increase. Eat it and increase in my fear.

There three major contentious called feasts in the Old Testament where the feast of Passover, the feast of Pentecost and the feast of tabernacles. All male children of Israel were required to go from where ever they were in the land of Palestine, to Jerusalem to celebrate these feasts. The money they were to use during these time periods, to buy the necessary things were to be accumulated over the intervening period. This is all they did in the first year with the first tithe. This is what they did in the second year with the second tithe. May the Lord help our understanding.

But, in the third year, the Israelite is told, the tithes you are gathering this year, both the first and second type of tithes, gather all of those tithes and use it within your home. But invite the fatherless, invite the widow, invite the orphans, invite the strangers, invite the poor. Let them come into your home, and let them eat of the abundance with which I have blessed you. This is quite important. These two divisions of tithes were given to the children of Israel as a commandment and, they used it all throughout their generations unto the close of the Old Testament age.

Let us take a little bit of recap. We said giving is an act of worship. It is an acknowledgement of God's rights over his creation. And secondly, it is saying to the Lord: "*what I am, what I ever hope to be is by your grace and will continue to be by your grace*". The man that gives the offerings is the first issue in the matter of giving. And, this is also revealed as such in the New Testament. Then, the second is the offering itself. Then, the third. We said that in a world plagued by the diverse effects of the fall, some can know deliverance from poverty, sicknesses, diseases, insecurity of life and property, because of a covenant relationship with God made active through a process of giving. We found this in the life of Noah. And then this great law of Genesis 8:22, which says "*as long as the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease*".

The fourth element is that the Lord's church must be selective in receiving offerings from the people. Offerings is a duty that is fulfilled by those who have known the Lord in covenant ties, or putting it in the language of the new testament, who are born again and long after God.

Then, we looked at God's purpose in tithing, which we find in Numbers 18 and Deuteronomy 14. First, it is for the maintenance of the priesthood: a priesthood who did nothing secular to earn a living. All that they did was to serve the Lord. And even when they receive the tithe from the children of Israel, they were to regard those tithes as their own earnings and were to tithe a tenth of the tithes and live on the remaining nine-tenth. This was a provision to stop the great occurrences of death among the people (Numbers 17:12, 13). Only the Levitical priesthood was allowed to do the work of service. All others were excluded. They could go and do secular work, come back and sit down while the priest will minister to them.

Then, the second type of tithing which the Lord also established that the Israelite himself might know how to expend money for his own spiritual benefit and for the care of the poor. This second tithe the people gather and kept by themselves and expended it according to the will of God. First, they expended it for their own spiritual increase. Take note of the link between the gathering of the tithes and spending it on their own spiritual increase on the one side, and, the milk of human compassion flowing towards the poor and the underprivileged in the society, as a provision made by God to indicate his commitment to all of his creation.

The Lord bless you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you. In Jesus name.

## Part II

# GIVING, TITHES AND OFFERINGS

This edition of light in the evening time will be a continuation of our series of meditations on God's Pattern Church. We will like for you to always hold this in view, because these series derive from that reading that we took from Isaiah 28. If you will turn with me to Isaiah 28, we will read verses 16 and 17

**“...Therefore thus saith the Lord GOD, behold, I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.**

*Judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweep away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. ...”*

You will recall that in discussing God's pattern church, we said that Christ is the pattern, and that, Christ, the church, is an expression of that pattern. And, because Christ is the pattern, whatever expression in life and ministry of the Lord's people, in the building up of the house of God (that is, in their spiritual development) must be measured against this pattern, against this foundation. And, that is what the prophet is saying here. God will measure our lives through the use of Christ as instrument. Two things he will do. He will sweep away the refuge of lies. That is a reference to certain erroneous teachings that abound among God's people. God's work is to be done through the enabling graces of the Holy Spirit. But when man intrudes, into the things of God by using his carnal senses, certain things are set forth as doctrines (and teachings) which are contrary to God's word. In the passage of time, these erroneous teachings are institutionised, and men come to them and relate to them as though that is the very truth of God's word.

The refuge of lies consists of certain erroneous teachings, and, here, we are told that God's power in judgement shall sweep away the refuge of lies. We will be dealing with the sweeping away of the refuge of lies in future editions.

The second thing God does is to allow the waters of his word, the waters of judgement to overflow the hiding places. This refers to certain erroneous practices that abound among God's people. And we have been dealing with some of these erroneous practices. We have talked of the clergy-laity distinction: officialdom in the ministry, that arrangement in God's house, that makes some to consider themselves as priests and separate themselves from their brethren while the rest of the Lord's people are considered as laymen. And we have shown that that is erroneous. It is only in the Levitical priesthood that we find a particular family lineage brought into the priesthood and every other family was excluded. And, that we said, that order belonged to the Old Testament era.

Again, in the last edition, we talked about Giving, Offering, and Tithing. And, in our reading from Exodus 25, we found that these three things relate to building the house of God. And in dealing with the three, we made reference to some scriptures from Genesis down through Deuteronomy. We examined the Old Testament scriptures so that we can see this subject matter from the viewpoint of the Old Testament teachings.

In this edition, we shall be going into the New Testament. We have already seen that giving involves the offerer (the individual) first and foremost, and then, his offering. We also saw that even though God's word has said, in that divine sentence that came upon man in the fall, "*cursed is the ground for thy sake*" (and that answers to adverse circumstances, man labouring and not getting a good output for all his labour, the circumstances of man has been cursed). But in Genesis 8, we find that there is a selective deliverance for some class of people from the power of the curse. All of that is secured in the person of Noah and what he did after that great flood that swept away the first world.

We read that God said, as long as the earth remain, he will no longer wipe out all humanity; seed time and harvest shall not cease. And, consecration, whose active expression is giving, secures the blessings of God upon a man's life. Furthermore, in Genesis 14 we saw that receiving offering must be performed in a discriminatory manner, those who are not in covenant relationship with God are excluded. Abraham simply said "*I will take nothing from you. You may say you have made me rich. I have lifted up my hands to Jehovah El-Elyon, the possessor of the heaven and the earth that I will continually regard him as my source*"

Then, when we came to Numbers and Deuteronomy, we saw tithing in its two divisions. The first one-tenth the children of Israel gave to the priesthood. The priesthood itself was to give one tenth of that tithe unto the Lord. That is important, and a little later we shall be able to say what all of that means. Then, in the second type of tithing, the individual expended that tithe for his own spiritual benefit, in a way that conduce with his spiritual increase; increase; in the fear of God (Deuteronomy 14: 23).

Now, in coming to the New Testament consideration of this subject, we will first of all say what practices are not contained in the New Testament, then, we will go to the scriptures to lay a foundation as to what the practice should be in the New Testament. We will be using Malachi 3 (a very popular passage) to enter into this meditation. Turn then with me to Malachi 3:8-10, our emphasis will be on verse 10.

***“...Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.***

***Ye are cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, even this whole nation.***

***Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house and prove me now herewith, saith the LORD of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. ...”***

Here God says he is robbed of his glory in his house. The reason he gives is because the people did not bring tithes and offering. Now, let us go again to verse 10 to see God’s exposition of these two-fold practices. In verse 10, God says *“bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house”*. Then the next thing that follows is that God will move in blessing upon the people. The first thing we want to talk about is the tithe. Secondly, the house of God, and thirdly, the blessings that follows.

First of all, we have to understand that the purpose of the tithing in the Old Testament was for the maintenance of the priesthood. We have said several times over that only one family, out of the numerous families of the house of Israel, was entitled to the priesthood and hence the tithe of the people’s earnings.

We said, in the New Testament, that laity-clergy division is collapsed, all are called to be priests. In IPeter 2:5, 9, we are shown that all of the Lord’s people that have known the Lord Jesus Christ in redemption and are Spirit-filled are priests unto the most high God. Whereas under the Old Testament, all were excluded from moving into the three divisions of the tabernacle but had to stay without, waiting for the Levitical priests to come and teach them of the things of God, in the New arrangements, Hebrews 10: 19 assures us, all are to come into the presence of God and come to spiritual increase through the fellowship of prayers, praise and worship of the most high God. That is important because since the priesthood is no longer restricted to a particular class tribe, then the maintenance of a self instituted priesthood and the arrangement for that maintenance are invalid. The practice is removed, the purpose is retained, and in the next edition, we will be examining that. But, here, we are noting that, that system of things that has to do with printing of tithe cards, writing names and receiving tithes weekly or monthly from fellow believers is alien to the spirit of the New Testament age, and is nowhere taught from the book of Mathew to the book of Revelation. It is one practice that makes possible the perpetuation of the clergy-laity distinction in the house of God.

Now, let us return to Malachi 3:10. He gave an instruction “*bring ye all the tithes into my storehouse*”, and the purpose is that “*there may be meat in mine house*”. Again we say, whereas under the Old Testament, the house of God was a physical structure made of brick or mortar or concrete in the New Testament, God’s house is God’s people. This is important. When the tithe is paid, there will be meat in God’s house. Under the Old Testament, that refers to grain or fruits or whatever were the proceeds of the people’s labour. But, under the New Testament, meat is a reference to the word of God.

Turn with me to Mathew 24, we will be reading from the forty-second verse. We are showing something very vital, that God’s glory might not be obscured from his house. When the tithe is paid, God’s glory is seen in his house. We have talked about the house, and we said it is the Lord’s people, individually and collectively. And, we said the meat is not money or fruit or whatever you may think of as it was in the Old Testament age. But the meat is to God’s word, both the Spirit of the word and the word of the Spirit. The Word of God and the Spirit of God are the two agencies by which God builds his house and manifest his glory.

In Mathew 24:44-46, we read the following;

**“...Be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh. Who then is a faithful and wise servant whom his Lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season? Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing...”**

Meat in due season is the equivalent of meat in the Old Testament. What is meat in due season? It is the teachings of Christ through an exposition of his word that has the capacity of keeping the Lord’s people ready for more and more of the unveiling of Christ, and keeping them ready for his coming. This is of vital importance. The question is asked “*who is that faithful and wise servant whom the Lord has set over his household to give them meat in due season?*” So, the prophetic scriptures (and indeed all scriptures, for the spirit of prophecy is actuated as Christ is preached), all scriptures as they are ministered to us through the teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit so that in them we can see Christ, his person, his purposes and his kingdom and all such arrangements he has made for our perfection, constitute meat in due season. We are told that when we pay our tithes, there shall be meat in due season in the house of God.

What then, in this regard, is paying the tithe? We again say that wherever we see a shadow in the Old, the substance in the New is something larger and more glorious. For example, the children

of Israel sacrificed physical animal; hundreds of them were offered for sacrifice in the whole burnt offering, the peace (or fellowship) offering, the trespasses and sin offerings. But, in the new, there is an elevation of the nature (character) of the sacrifice. It was no longer brute beast as it was in the old. But we are now told, “*behold, the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29).

In the same vein, just as in the old tithing has to do with man’s earnings which were physical things brought into the house of God, in the new, it speaks of the availability of man in seeking the face of God. That practice of seeking his face, the life of consecration, answers to the New Testament tithing. For, it is in the environment of our separating ourselves from other things to concentrate on the Lord that we receive through the Holy Spirit, the teachings of Christ.

Tithing in the New Testament relates to a man giving himself over unto God and his purpose. That is why all the New Testament scriptures that talk concerning giving emphasise first the giving over of the individual himself unto the Lord. If God’s glory is to be seen in his house, if the people are to be built up in the image and likeness of Christ, if the church is to take on more and more of the beauty and power of Christ, if the church is to lead the nations into the pure worship, of God, then, men must create and sustain the habit of taking out time each day to seek the face of the Lord. This is important.

We are talking about tithing, and we are saying that under the New Testament, tithing is not taking one-tenth of our salary and bringing it into the house of God. We are God’s tithes when we make ourselves available to know him, taking out time to study his word, to worship by his word, to pray by the light he gives us in his word, to yield ourselves to those moral cleanings which the word of God indicates. Through the quickened word, we see ourselves as we really are and see him as he is in his glory, and we desire to be like him. In the environment of all of these, there will always be meat in God’s house. We (individually and collectively) are God’s house, there will be meat in due season in God’s house and the preparation of the Lord’s people for the Lord’s coming will be made effectual.

The visible church system is becoming more and more an entertaining organisation. But we know that God is putting all things straight, putting all things right in his church. And God shall sweep away all practices that make a mockery of the church. The average believer today is spiritually dull, and that is an indictment on the visible church systems. As we return to the true foundation, then, the emphasis is lifted from giving things to giving our own very selves. Ephesians 5:1-2 says,

**“...Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; and walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour. ...”**

Just take a reading of Leviticus 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, you will come across this phrase: sweet smelling savour again and again. Christ is said to be an offering unto God of a sweet smelling savour. Man in his availability to God, in living a life of consecration makes possible for Christ to reveal himself to him. Then, there is glory in that house of God and God is not robbed of the demonstration of his presence in the midst of his house.

We take the second reading, II Corinthians 4. We are talking about the house and meat in the house. Later we shall talk of the blessings that follow. Follow the reading from verse 5. It says

***“...For we preach not ourselves... drawing no attention to ourselves, not advertising ourselves.***

***We preach not ourselves as somebody, our focus was to proclaim Christ... we preach not ourselves but Christ Jesus the Lord, and ourselves your servants for Jesus sake.***

***For God who commanded the light to shine out of darkness (Genesis 1:3) hath shine in our hearts to give the light of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ....”***

But how is the outshining of God's life and light into us, how is it obtained? It is by consecrated living? So, he says in verse 7.

***“...But we have this treasure in earthen vessels...”***

Our humanity, our physical frame, our person is here referred to as earthen vessel. He says we have this treasure... the ability to make Christ known to us and to one another... *in earthen vessels that the excellency of the power may be of God and not of us.*

Christ does not make himself known to the believer that lives carelessly, but one who has cultivated the spiritual habit of waiting upon the Lord on daily basis, one, two, three hours, as long as other duties may allow us, especially when we put our duties towards God as first. It is in the environment of all of these things that God makes himself known to us, and there will always be meat in God's house.

The faithful and wise servant does not tell mean stories to the congregation. The faithful and wise servant is one who discovers to the Lord's people what God has discovered to him in his closet, and it always have the direction of leading the Lord's people, to the perfection and glorification God wants to give to the church. This is ought to be noted carefully.

We have seen that the house is not a concrete structure. We must have a place to worship, so that there should be a concrete structure is not what we are witnessing against. But that we are the Lord's people, and as the Lord's people, we are God's house. And that God's glory is side tracked in his house when there are not people who seek him, but when we yield our hearts to the Lord, there is made possible the display of God's character and glory in his house.

There is yet one more thought we want to take before closing. Now, in the last part of Malachi 3:10, he says blessings will abound; he will open up the windows of heaven and pour out much blessing. The understanding is that the principles we need to live successfully in life are ministered to us in the place of our one-to-God fellowship.

We have seen that in this New Testament age, the practice of printing tithe cards, giving it to very members to write their names and you put in money and pass on, is alien to the new covenant. We have said enough, for the time being it is hoped to commend this truth to you.

We will close with the passage we began with in the last edition, Exodus 25. For the present purpose, we will just draw attention to verses 3-7. There, we are shown that when the Lord's people give their offerings, the house of the Lord can be build. When the house of the Lord is built, God's glory is manifested. There is a close connection between giving our offering and the building of the house of the Lord and the expression of the glory of God in the earth.

But, the question is to be asked what did the people give? All of that is listed in verses 3-6 of Exodus 25. We ask again, what in the New Testament is God's house? We say again that the New Testament house of God is God's people. How then may God's house, which is God's people, be built in the image and likeness of God? When men consecrate themselves. What should men give for the building of this house of God? They must give the word of God in his Spirit: the spirit of the word and the word of the spirit. For, the word of God and the Spirit of God are the two agencies by which God builds his house. It does not exclude giving of physical money. But it emphasises to us that when the Lord's people truly give themselves, it makes possible their being built up, and it makes possible for God's glory to be revealed in his house.

In the next edition, we will be concentrating on how the physical aspect of giving money is to be done in the house of God.

The Lord bless you, the Lord cause his face to shine upon you. The Lord make you know that you are morally responsible to God and his church, as much as I am morally responsible to God and his church, to make ourselves available to him that there may be meat in his house.

Part III

# GIVING, TITHES AND OFFERINGS

We will be continuing in our discussion on God's pattern Church.

If you will turn with me to Isaiah 28, we will look again at two verses that form the background scriptures in all of these meditations.

**“...Therefore thus saith the Lord God, Behold I lay in Zion for a foundation a stone, a tried stone, a precious corner stone, a sure foundation: he that believeth shall not make haste.**

***Judgement also will I lay to the line, and righteousness to the plummet: and the hail shall sweepk away the refuge of lies, and the waters shall overflow the hiding place. ...”***

We are talking of God's church, which is the house of God, and here, we are shown that the Lord Jesus Christ is the foundation. We are warranted to so consider this tried stone, this precious corner stone (this foundation), to be Jesus. Of course, direct New Testament scriptures confirm that the stone referred to here is Jesus.

Now, if the foundation is a person, and the whole house, made of lively stones, are persons, then we are talking about building up the Lord's people to be a full expression of God's glory upon the earth. Here, we are shown that in the work of building of the house of God, certain things could be out of harmony with the divine will so, he that is the foundation is also the measuring line. He says in verse 17 "*judgement also will I lay to the line...*". The word Judgement here talks of doctrinal unveiling of the person, power and purpose of Christ. Then he says again, "*righteousness will I lay to the plummet*". This talks about our vertical relationship with Christ our standing in grace. With these two instruments, every local assembly of God's people will be measured. We are told of two things that will be measured when God examines all local assemblies that are called by his name.

In the seventeenth verse, we see that it is the hail that will sweep away the refuge of lies. This is also mentioned in verse 2. The hail is the ministry of the word of God, suitably empowered by the Spirit of God to shine light upon the word of God and bring sweeping judgement upon erroneous teachings. In the natural, hail is very tempestuous. God is saying that the ministry of the word of God will bring such an effect as hail produces in the natural. In later editions, we will be considering certain basic erroneous teachings that hinder the growth of the Lord's people. These are called in verse 17 "*the refuge of lies*". These erroneous teachings have to do with the hope of the believer, things that men take unto themselves as providing refuge for them. Certain erroneous teachings have tended to keep the church in childhood, and we shall be looking at these in future editions.

Secondly, we are told that the waters shall overflow the hiding place. Again, if we read verse 2, we find that it is a flood of water that is referred to. It is said that this flood shall overflow the hiding place. There is a hiding place. There is something that make possible certain erroneous practices which combine to give another look to the church other than God intends. We will just read verse 2;

***"...Behold, the Lord hath a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth with the hand..."***

We trust that in this last hour God shall make known unto the church a great company of people who shall come forth in the anointing of the Spirit to be involved in this work of sweeping away the refuge of lies and exposing the hiding places. These shall cast down error with the hand of true ministry. The five-fold ministry suitably anointed of God will be used of him to bring down to a collapse certain system of things that we find in the church today. The hiding place is a reference to erroneous practices. They are founded in some doctrinal errors. But we will separate the two so that we can take them one at a time.

Presently, we are concentrating on Giving, Tithes and Offerings, as a major doctrine perverted element in the hiding place. We have already seen that whereas tithing under the Old Testament was a form of taxation that required the children of Israel to bring one-tenth of their several earnings to the Levitical priesthood. The priests, who did no secular work, had no land, no inheritance in the land of promise. Both they and their spouses and their children did no secular work, they concentrated on the religious duties that had to do with the worship of the nation of Israel. The remaining twelve tribes did no spiritual work in the tabernacle. They left all of that to the priests. They did secular work and brought part of their earnings for the maintenance of the priesthood while the priesthood will look unto God to receive grace to minister to the people. That form of taxation and practice under the Old Testament is completely ruled out in the New Testament. To practice tithing as it was in the old is quite erroneous. This is one of the things that have brought much evil in the house of God.

Now, we cannot modify the laws of God with our carnal senses. If the Old Testament teachings were still to be relevant, then no one who collects tithes from people should do any secular work, both himself and all members of the family. In any case, even if this practice were to be adopted in this New Testament age, it would be alien to what God wants.

In addition, we saw that whereas in the Old Testament, tithes could refer to grains and the produce of animal husbandry etc, in the New Testament, there is an elevation. God's people become the tithe. One purpose of this, as we saw in Malachi 3, is that there might be meat in God's house. We are God's houses, and the meat is a reference to Christ unveiled in the midst of his people through the agency of God's word as it is taught in the midst of his people and God's Spirit as he anoints men to flow in supernatural ministry. All the graces of the Spirit and the teachings of God's word breathed upon by the Holy Spirit constitute meat in due season. And, it will always have a prophetic finger pointing to the event of the last hour associated with Christ's Second Coming.

A question however arises. If tithing is completely taken out of the way in the new testament, how will certain of the Lord's ministers who do no secular work, but because of the great demands of the kingdom upon their time, give themselves wholly to the work of the ministry, be taken care of. We shall be answering this question soon. We believe that the provision that God has made is adequate for the care of his servants.

Now, we want to concentrate on how giving and offerings, the taking of money in the house of God, should be practised. We shall be led into this consideration by looking at II Corinthians 8 and 9. It is quite a long passage. We shall be making reference to a few of the verses.

In the context of these two chapters, Paul was requesting that offering should be taken concerning taking offering of certain of the Lord's people to meet the needs of others of the Lord's people who were experiencing famine in their country. The context is that of ministering to the poor and needy. The welfare of the saints is one of the chief considerations in the ministry of the local assembly. Let us take note of that carefully.

For example, when Paul began his ministry, at some point he had to go back to the rest of the apostles to compare notes. And the one thing emphasised is that they should take care of the poor (Gal. 2:10). Of course, he that giveth to the poor, lendeth to his Maker. This great work should be carried out both by the local congregation and by individuals within the local congregation.

Let us go to II Corinthians 8. The first thing of note is in verse 5. The first law of giving under the New Testament is that the individual must give himself to God and to the work of the ministry. That is the first requirement. Whatever we are going to give must be preceded by the giving of ourselves. In this connection, all individuals are supposed to enter into a transaction with God of giving themselves completely over to the Lord, saying "*Lord, you are my source, I give myself wholly to you. I will identify with anything that concerns your house and the ministry of the gospel*". In verse 5 Paul was writing to the Corinthian Christians admonishing them by showing the example set by the Christians in Macedonia, and he said.

***"...And this they did, not as we hoped, but first gave their own selves to the Lord, and unto us by the will of God..."***

These believers first of all gave themselves unto the Lord. It was a heart committal of their entire lives to God, not only in salvation, but also in consecration. And then they gave themselves to the work of the ministry by identifying with Paul and his fellow ministers. Now, the principle remains that when we give ourselves to the work of the ministry, we will be identifying with the labours of his ministers with whom we are associated.

God responds to such yielded-ness by imparting grace. Giving, like all spiritual duties, requires grace. It is a priestly service, something solemn, and something to be done from the heart towards the Lord, in appreciation of what God has done for us on the cross. With gratitude of hearts, men should give. But of man's own will, he cannot come to that form of life. He must receive an impartation from God. If faithful, God will assist him to grow in that grace. This is important. Being a priestly duty, Christ simply says, let not your left hand know what your right hand is doing (Mathew 6:3). There must be some measure of decorum when it comes to this matter of giving.

Then, the second thing that should govern our understanding of giving and should inform how we perform this priestly service is found in verse 12.

**“...For if there be first a willing mind, it is accepted according to that a man hath, and not according to that he hath not. ...”**

The second law of giving of which again we are here reminded is to be founded upon the first – a willing and cheerful attitude based on the appreciation of God’s love and Sovereignty- says “giving must be according to what a man has and not according to what he has not”. When we give, we are not to attempt to make vows that are not within our capacity. This is what I mean. Suppose an individual who is an applicant and presently unemployed vows to give ₦3000.00 and has no idea in the world how he will get it. It may look like an act of faith, but ought not to make that vow publicly. If he feels a stirring in the spirit, he should enter into a secret transaction with God, saying “Lord, with offerings being collected to minister to the poor in the house or for the work of the gospel, I feel like giving ₦3000, Lord provide for me that I may fulfil it. But, he must not vow publicly.

If all the vow that have been made publicly by Christians in a city were to be collected, the church in that city will stand in need of no offering for the next ten years. Men become presumptions when it comes to this matter. They just put some thing on paper and pass on. They stand publicly, and there is a loud ovation. But, that is an evil it is a snare. And we trust that this teaching will assist those who are in such practices to desist from it. We are told here that giving is accepted, not according to what a man does not have, but according to what he has.

The third thing is that giving must be a reflection of what God has done for the individual. Verse 7 of II Corinthians 9 says, “according to how the Lord has prospered you, so purpose in your heart”. For example, if an individual receives ten thousand naira in a month. And, for the month, he is minded to give ₦50, it is accepted of God unto him, but he does not appear to be a reflection of the grace of giving. For, he has given out of what he has but not according to what he has. But, if he gives two thousand, for example, then he is giving according to what he has.

We hope that the main principle is understood. Each believer is supposed to give according to what he has. If a millionaire give an individual one thousand naira, he has given out of his wealth. But if he gives to a laudable cause five hundred thousand or a million naira, then, he has given according to his riches. That is the third element. Giving is something that should express itself in liberality.

That brings us to II Corinthians 9. We will be looking at verses 5 through 7 in the first instance.

**“...Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty and not as of covetousness.**

**But this I say, he which soweth sparingly shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his hearth, so let him give, not grudgingly or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver. ...”**

The first thing we are to note here, is that giving ought to be regular: a weekly or monthly practice in our assemblies. Giving from the heart to the purse of the church if regular, there would be no “fire brigade approach” to things when a need arises. He says, “it is necessary to exhort the brethren that they will go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty”. He says further that some set of brethren would be coming to take this bounty which has been gathered, together with others collected in the far east, to Jerusalem where there is a famine, to bring relief to the brethren there. Giving must be regular. It must be something one practices say, on a weekly basis, as we come together in fellowship week after week.

But, he goes on to say that this should be done “not as a matter of covetousness, but as a matter of bounty”. That is, not due to some coercion. The atmosphere must be kept in a sanctified condition when offerings are collected. Many hearts are bruised when God’s glory and honour are disregarded, when servants of God turn worship services to all kinds of money collection schemes.

I was in a service somewhere in the eastern part of this country, and, that servant of God simply bruised himself, bruised the Lord and bruised the Lord’s people. He said “I command you bring the offering and lay it at the apostles’ feet”. And for about one and half-hours, he was bullying on the people, saying, “I can’t be a pastor of a poor church, if God sends one to a poor church, I will resign and go to another place”. That behaviour is certainly not a reflection of a man who has not had the proper kind of disposition towards God’s work. It is professionalism in ministry that attracted him there. But, in this last hour, God is going to bring his rod against all schemes, all practices that tend to sponsor professionalism in ministry.

In verses 6 and 7, we find a re-appearance of the third point we observed earlier, that is: we are supposed to give according to how the Lord has prospered us. There, we are told he, which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he that soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully. Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly or of necessity...

An important thing to understand in the matter of giving is that when we give, we should expect to receive from God. The figure of the garden is used. It is said, when we give, we are sowing and we should expect a harvest. Accordingly, when a farmer tills a hectare of land, but sows just some bare twenty-grains, he will get an harvest, but that harvest will be scanty. But, if the farmer possessing indeed much grain were to sow the entire field, then he will have bountiful harvest. This is the fourth point we are to note.

When giving takes on a sacrificial nature, liberality is the word that is used to describe it. Remember, as long as the earth remaineth, seedtime and harvest shall not cease. It secures for you a more abundant blessing than you can imagine. Apart from the financial blessing that accrue; you will be kept from inward dangers such as sicknesses, and outward dangers such as insecurity of life and property. By this outward expression of a consecration that gives the whole heart to God, God undertakes to perform a miracle of showing you practically that the curse has been lifted. He encompasses us with His favour.

Before we go to the fifth point, we want to take note of how II Corinthians 9 closes. It says “Thanks be unto God for his unspeakable gift”. It is important that in discussing giving our attention is drawn to Christ who himself is a gift. There is a close connection between the yielding of our all unto God (what we are and what we hope to be, what we have and what we hope to have,

everything in a sustained consecration unto God) and the increase of our appreciation of God's faithfulness to us in all things.

The fifth point we are pointing out about is that the grace of giving is a living thing; it grows. Whereas all of the Lord's people as they walk in faithfulness to God, shall find this promise fulfilled in their lives – "I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health even as thy soul prospereth" apart from general situation of having your needs met and a little more to spare, there will be some persons in the church, who because of that grace of giving will come to a stewardship in the matter of giving. He says "he that giveth let him do so with liberality". We are talking of men and women who shall be blessed with great substance and will among other things, administer their resources for the blessing of the Lord's people and the furtherance of the gospel. This is the subject matter covered in II Corinthians 9:8-11. In verse 8 it says;

**"...And God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every good work. ..."**

May the Lord bless you and me with such a grace. And may the Lord bless more and more persons with such a grace. There is a position with God in justification in which as we walk with God in gratitude of heart unto him, share with the underprivileged and identify with the work of the gospel, in which we are made sufficient in all things. We can thus abound unto every good work.

Then in verse 9 he says, "Whoever commits himself to God, the event of his giving has blessed some and has abounded in blessing to himself, but the righteousness of that act remains forever". This means that it will attract more of the impartation of divine grace to the individual, exposing him to more of the unveiling of Christ, cleansing his heart from selfish attachments, and bringing him unto a greater commitment to the Lord. It is written in John 15: 2 if we are bearing fruit, he pruneth and purgeth us that we may bear much fruit.

In verse 10, he says what we sow is indeed. To the one who receives our giving it is bread, but to us that gave, it is a seed. We are told, he that ministereth seed to the sower (that is God who supplied the seed in the first instance) both minister bread for your food. (Bread for the food of the one who is blessed by the giving and the one who gave, for it is more blessed to give than to receive. To receive is a blessing, but the one who gives will have an additional blessing). In the closing part of verse 10, he says in effect: "I will multiply your seed sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness". That means God will so bless the giver that he will have a greater and greater capacity to give. If he continues in that grace, there is no reason why he will not be a custodian of divine glory (spiritual riches) so long as he is walking in consecration, and will also be admitted into the stewardship of distributing God's resources that are made available to him for the blessing of the Lord's people and for the work of the ministry.

## Part IV

# GIVING, TITHES AND OFFERINGS

You are welcome to this edition of Light in the Evening time. We are taking the concluding aspect of our meditation on Tithing, Giving and Offerings. And all of these teachings have been part of the series on God's Pattern Church. We are concerning ourselves with certain teachings and practices in the visible church systems that hinder the growth of the church.

In a previous edition, we have shown that tithing, a form of taxation, imposed upon all the children of Israel under the Old Testament, is done away with in the New Testament. And whereas the purpose for that arrangement remains, that is, for the increase of His glory among His people, what answers to it in the New Testament is the whole hearted submission of all of the Lord's people unto Him. For in the New Testament the priesthood is of all believers, and, the operative word in serving the Lord as a priest is consecration. In 1 Peter 2:4, 5, 9 we are told that we are being built up unto a spiritual house and as a spiritual house, offering priestly services unto the Lord. We are a royal priesthood, a holy nation. The call is upon all of God's people to serve Him in consecration. And whereas, as we all relate this way with the Lord, some are drawn to a closer walk with the Lord, nevertheless the responsibility is upon all. The total consecration one believer does not exclude any other from the call to consecration.

We are all called to serve the Lord, and a previous edition, we had stated that one of the purpose of the tithing is that the priests who under the Old Testament were not permitted to do any secular work (they had no land, they had nothing of their own) but to totally give themselves to the work of the temple, might be catered for by the children of Israel. And we ask, "*if tithing is not in the New Testament order, what answers to the care of ministers in this age*". This is the main burden that we will be looking at in this edition. There is a statement in the Old Testament that comes to mind now. God was speaking to the priests, and He said unto them, "*I am your inheritance. Thou shall have no inheritance among the people, but I am you inheritance*". A consideration of what this means brings so much encouragement to true servants of God.

Let us go to 1 Timothy 1:16. There, we are shown that Paul is a pattern disciple. Jesus is the pattern son. What we are to be ultimately, is seen in Him. Jesus is the pattern as to where we are going. He is the goal; he is the end of the journey. We are to become like Jesus in his glory, power and other attributes of his majesty. Jesus is the pattern Son. But Paul is the pattern disciple. It is in him, by a consideration of his life and his teachings that we learn how to follow the Master, how to walk in his footsteps. 1 Timothy 1:16 reads this way

*“...Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all long suffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting...”*

We are going to follow Paul and in him see the two-fold provisions made in God’s word as to serving Him. (Recall our main thrust is to see the provision God makes in the New Testament for the care of His servants).

The first provision is serving the Lord with all our lives, yet taking out time to work with out hands to minister to our own needs and to cater for our households. Secondly, not doing any secular work, but committing ourselves wholly unto the Lord, serving the Lord’s people by preaching Christ to them in the power of Christ continuous unveiling of Himself to His people. Paul walked in both of these two provisions.

Majority of the times, he laboured with his hands. But when a special season of ministry sets in, he is so busy with the work of the ministry to be able to do any secular. In this connection, he shows in his walk with God, that as he ministers the Gospel, God meets his needs through stirring up His people to flow in care towards His servant. This is important. Paul is a pattern disciple.

One of the things that enables us to understand the man Paul is seen first in the statements that he made in Romans 13:8; then next in the statement that he made in Romans 1:14–16. So let us take these two references as we go progressively into two a consideration of I Corinthians 9 which discusses the two provisions mentioned earlier.

In Romans 13: 8, Paul simply says *owe no man anything*. Paul teaches against the Lord’s people and indeed all men living in debt. A man owing something should always live in the light of his debt on daily basis, seeing how much he can do to offset that debt. For, here is a law: owe no man anything.

Then he adds this: *but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law*. So he says, we are to owe one another love. But, where comes this debt of love that we have to pay? It is in appreciation of what God has done for us. God has committed himself to our brother; God has committed himself to our sister. God, who has loved us so much and shown us great compassion, has also committed himself to our brother, to our sister, wanting to lift him/her up. God has us as his means of doing that.

Out of a feeling of indebtedness to God, borne out of a deep sense of gratitude for the things that Christ has done for us, we are to serve the brethren. We are motivated by love to serve the brethren. Paul puts it in this why in II Corinthians 4, *“Christ dies so that I might not die”*. *“In that he died, he died for all, so that we who live may no longer live unto ourselves but unto him that died for us and was raised”*. The motivating factor in Paul’s service is love for God and a desire to pay a debt that can never be fully paid. Take this to heart.

Here, he says, *“owe no man anything but to love one another, for he that loveth another has fulfilled the law”*. Then we go to Romans 1. In the fourteenth verse, we are made to see what was

behind all of Paul's labours, why he laboured so much, tirelessly, all throughout the years of his life. In the fourteenth verse, he simply says

*"...I am a debtor both to the Greeks, and to the Barbarians; both to the wise, and to the unwise. ..."*

Then, what is this debt that he has to pay? In verse 15 he says,

*"...So, as much as in me is, I am ready to preach the gospel to you that are at Rome also. For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to everyone that believeth; to the Jews first and also to the Greek. ..."*

God is committed to saving the world of mankind ... the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world.... For God so love the world that He gave his only begotten son that whosoever believeth in him should not perish but that everlasting life. "By myself have I sworn saith the Lord that in blessing I will bless thee, and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed". We find that God in the outworking of His plans and purposes for all humanity lays His hands upon men to whom He makes Himself known. These men are thus empowered to serve His interests on earth.

Paul here is speaking from that realm and saying "*I am committed to serving you, as one who is indebted to you, out of a consideration of God's interest in your life*". This is the kind of heart disposition that should be found in all true servants of God. They are motivated to serve as a result of a consideration of love for God and love for all humanity.

Now let us come to I Corinthians 9. We have said that there are two provisions and that Paul walked in both of these two provisions during his lifetime. We read from the first verse, Paul is speaking,

*"...Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are not ye my work in the Lord? ..."*

Here he says his commission as a minister of the gospel is without any doubt, both by reason of the ministry of the word, and the lives that have been transformed by the powers of the gospel. He continues.

*"...If I be not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are ye in the Lord.*

*Mine answer to them that do examine me is this,*

*Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas?*

*Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working? ..."*

If you read verse 6 over and over again the reference is to the fact that Paul and Barnabas laboured with their hands. But they had an option not to work at all and yet be catered for. He adds in verse 7,

*“...Who goeth a warfare anytime at his own charges? Who planteth a vineyard, and eateth not of the fruit thereof? Or who feedeth a flock, and eateth not of the milk of the flock?*

*Say I these things as a man? Or saith not he law the same also?...”*

Then in verse 9, he quotes a law under the Old Testament.

*“...For it is written in the law of Moses, Thou shalt not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn....”*

He closes that verse by saying when God gave that law in Deuteronomy 25:4, was He merely concerned for the animal kingdom? *Doth God take care of oxen? There is a reason behind this statement made. God was showing that he was committed to the blessing of his ministers”. So he says in verse 10,*

*“...Or saith he it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this (Deuteronomy 25:4) is written: that he that ploweth should plow in hope; and that he that thresheth in hope should be partaker of his hope.*

*If we have sown unto you spiritual things (ministering by the spirit and by the word of God unto you), is it a great thing if we shall reap your carnal things (as love offerings?)...”*

The carnal things here refer to physical, material things. Paul was saying if we have laboured among you and sown to you things of eternal significance, it is not too much for us to receive of you material things. In verse 12, he continues.

*“...If others be partakers of this power over you, are not we rather? Nevertheless we have not used this power, but suffer all things, lest we should hinder the gospel of Christ...”*

We will come to this beautiful way Paul ends verse 12, but continue, verse 13

*“...Do you not know that they, which minister about holy things, live the things of the temple? And they, which wait at the altar, are partakers with the altar?...”*

The next verse (verse 14) brings out the second provision very clearly. It says

*“...Even so hath the Lord ordained that they, which preach the gospel, should live of the gospel. ...”*

It is a provision in the new. In discussing this matter, Paul does not quote a law on tithing, because he knew that was done away with under the New covenant by the introduction of the priesthood of all believers. But he quotes a seemingly obscure scripture “*do not muzzle the mouth of the ox that treadeth out the corn*”. Having said that he goes on to show us the first provision in verse 15, 16, 17 and 18. Remember that the motivating factor in all of Christian service is love for God and love for our fellow men. So, here, we find Paul speaking.

*“...But I have used none of these things: neither have I written these things, that it should be so done unto me: for it were better for me to die, than any man should make my glorying void. ...”*

What he is saying here is that God has also provided that those who serve him in full capacity should minister to their own needs by working with their own hands. And Paul says he walked majorly in this provision. He says he will not allow any body to make his glorying void. And this he does with a strong understanding of what great love God has shown him in saving him and calling him into ministry, and how that this calling to serve in the interest of God must be maintained in its sacred order. That nothing should appear before men as bringing reproach to the gospel of Christ. Verse 16 bears this out further.

*“...For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me...”*

Just as necessity is laid upon the debtor to pay his debt, Paul here says necessity is laid upon him. And then he goes to something very revealing, he says; *yea woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!* Then he says in verse 17 *for if I do this thing willingly...* What does Paul call here doing the Lord’s work willingly? That is serving the Lord and His people, with a heart full of love, not wanting to use his position to an advantage to exploit the people, but ever willing to keep moving, serving the Lord’s people even in the face of personal inconveniences. If in the course of doing all that, there be a supply of his wants, he rejoices in it but if there is no supply, he knows how to abound and to abase (Philippians 4:11, 12). We read verses 16 and 17 again

*“...For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!*

*For if I do this thing willingly, I have a reward: but if against my will, a dispensation of the gospel is committed unto me....”*

God’s hands are laid upon me. I cannot do without preaching the gospel. Whether I like it or not, the divine one, my master, has laid his hands upon me. So, he says in verse 18.

*“...What is my reward then?, seeing that this work would and must be done by me, what is my reward then?..... Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel....”*

Paul laboured with his hands that he might make the gospel without charge to them whom he ministered to. In fact, in II Corinthians 12:15, he was bold to say, “*not only do I minister to my own needs by working with my own hands, I make both my life and my resources available to*

*...serving you. I will serve you by the life of Christ in me, I will also make my resources available, even if the more I do this, the less you love me*". This man of God, who laboured abundantly more than all other... For in I Corinthians 15, he himself said though he comes at some later point as an apostle, yet the grace of God upon him made him labour far more than all other apostles, yet not him, but the grace of God in him. This man who was tirelessly serving God, had time to labour with his hands to cater for his needs. He is a pattern disciple. He says in verse 18, what is my reward then? Verily that, when I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel.

Quite often, one is so much drawn in an appreciation of Paul's example to want to live in the same manner. Let us look at Paul. He says "*I don't want any thing that will bring a bad image to the work of the gospel*". Now, one of the things that God's heart is reacting against in the visible church systems is the way this money matter, the collection money in the house of God, has given an impression that the churches are merely financial religions corporations who exist purely for profit making. That is, they run the religious corporation from the standpoint of making money, of making quick business out of the gospel.

Now, we know that quite a number of persons that are seemingly in this odd business love God deeply and are genuinely called of God. But, it all begins with a small deviation: when the call is looked upon as a profession. Next, men are hired to serve as pastors and pay them monthly. And there is officialdom in ministry: paid ministries, paid salaries, in the passage of time what we now see in the visible church systems results.

Note the Lord's teachings in John 10. The hired servant whose own the sheep is not when he sees the wolf coming, flees. There comes a time when because some salary is attached to the work of the gospel, men seek for greener pastures. They move from one ministry to the other, from one denomination to the other. You cannot say they are here because they re fully committed to the vision of that ministry. But they are there as long as their salaries are paid and what is paid seems to meet their needs. Otherwise they seek greener pastures. Another ministry emerges with fantastic offers seeking to draw a cream of God's servants unto their own set-up, and before you know it, there is infidelity.

Brethren, we speak with so much burdens in our spirit. We must break ourselves loose from this situation. Paul says "*I have power to take offering from the people, or expect to live by what the people give, committing myself to the Lord, but I have not used this provision so that I might not abuse my power in the gospel*". If I keep doing it, I will be so drawn to the matter of ensuring that my needs are met by the brethren that I loose the true spirit of a disciple of Jesus Christ. We see Paul labouring with his hands.

From other scriptures, we learn that Paul did not always walk in this matter of tent making. Whereas, the greater percentage of his ministry, the times he laboured serving God and serving God's people, it was clear that he made tents to pay his own expenses, nevertheless, there were times when the demand of the work of the ministry were so great that he practically gave up, even, tent making, in order to concentrate on the ministry. At such times, the way his needs were met informs us of the way those who use the second provision should expect their needs to be met.

One, he did not discuss the situation with any of the brethren. He simply gave up the work. He committed his situation into the hands of the Lord who is his source, saying, “*Lord, so much demand upon me, pay the bills as I do the work*”. And the Lord by His spirit placed the burden upon others, either on individual basis as we can infer from Galatians 6:6, or whole local assemblies identifying themselves with this travelling apostle who keeps coming to lift men up to the ministry of Christ. So Paul committed himself to the Lord. The Lord responded by putting the thought of the care of him in the hearts of individuals and whole congregations.

We find in the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ, this thing also fulfilled. Because he gave himself to God and served the Father, his gifts made room for him. He gave himself wholly, he never did any secular work, but he gave himself wholly. God put the thought of the care of him into the hearts of persons he ministered to. We will like to read Luke 8:1–3 to underscore this thing in the life of Jesus. In any case, there was no church congregation that met regularly from whose offering he was maintained. From what we see in the life of Jesus, we find an example for those who do no secular work today. Luke 8:1–3

*“...AND it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and shewing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the twelve were with him,  
And certain women, which had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities, Mary called Magdalene, out of whom went seven devils,  
And Jonna, the wife of Chuza Herod’s steward, and Susanna and many others, which ministered unto him out of their substance....”*

When a man gives himself to God, there will be men and women who will bind themselves to minister to his needs. It will not be out of any arrangement, not saying “*oh let me go into full time ministry, brethren, you will try to support me*”, no God will place the care of this servant upon his people.

Now, let us go to Galatians 6:6. We said that the commitment should be unto the Lord. And such servants must have given evidence in their own lives that like Paul; they have had time to labour with their own hands. Many of the true servants of God even in our day time are persons who have shown by their lives that they had capacity to work and are fruitful in service, before the demands of ministry brought them to a sphere where they no longer labour with their hands. But the principal thing to note is that even when Paul walked in this dimension, as soon as the burden of ministry lessens, he returns back to his tent making. That is why self employment is recommended for men with hearts for God and the service of His kingdom, for the flexibility in their use of time will enable them fulfil their calling. Galatians 6: 6,

*“...Let him that is taught in the word communicate unto him that teacheth in all good things. ...”*

The thought here is clear. When a man commits himself to the Lord, he should expect that the Lord would also put the care of him in the hearts of the people he ministers to. Whether in a travelling or resident ministry, it is all the same. Paul here is saying to the believers, “*you that are taught, who benefit from the ministry of certain men or women of God, should know that it is your responsibility to communicate to them in all good things; material blessings*”. There is a charge

upon the Lord's people too. As consecration enables some to give themselves more fully to God, those who receive blessings should know that it is their responsibility to see to the maintenance of those whom God is using to bless them. That is the first thought on the human plane.

Then come with me to Philippians 4, as we round up this meditation. Here, we find that whole congregations, can of themselves, take a decision and say "*ah, this man is of great blessing to us, and he does no secular work, how does he feed himself, how does he take care of his family*"? And so decide to identify with that servant of God. We can read all of that from verse 14–18 of Philippians 4. We read,

*"...Notwithstanding ye have well done, that ye did communicate with my affliction.*

*Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.*

*For even in Thessalonica ye set once and again unto my necessity. Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.*

*But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things which were sent from you, an odour of sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well pleasing to God.  
..."*

Then in verse 19, he invokes a blessing upon the people

*"...But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. ..."*

But there was a time that it seems there was a measure of love lost between Paul and the church in Philippi. Verse 10 of Philippians 4 bears that out, a time in which they held back. But after some time their eyes were opened again to identify with Paul.

There was no apostolic arrangement. The people move of their own free will. But the truth in that Paul was maintained. I trust that He who feed the ravens will feed His servants at this last hour. They say under the Old Testament, "*oh we are going to see this prophet, this man of God, what gift shall we take along with us*", for the prophet had no provision in God's word catering for his needs. He arose out of his love for God, not like the priest who received tithes. So, his maintenance was strictly speaking, by what he did with his hands or what God gave to him. The people say, "*we are going to see this man of God, what gift should we take along with us*". We expect that the Old Testament believers will not do better than the New Testament believers. The church, including all of God's servants, should not expect that this ruining of our testimony before the world through this money collecting business would continue to be. God is reacting against this and we trust that we will all come before God in deep repentance. The Lord bless you; the Lord cause his face to shine upon you, the Lord do you good, in Jesus name. Amen.