

A SHEPHERD'S TRIAL: Feeding or Fleecing the Flock of God?

An examination of the relationship today's
pastor has with the congregation.

David W. Voyles

Edited by my daughter, Sonya Voyles.



Eloquent Books

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Contents

<i>Part I:</i>	Introduction.....	1
<i>Part II:</i>	Opening Argument	7
	Fleecing the Flock	9
	Training Conference	12
	Fund-raising	14
	Fried Chicken	17
	Visitation Pastor	18
	Birthday Bash	19
	Prosperity Preachers	20
	The Lear Kings	29
	The Hook Up.....	31
	SEEDS.....	32
	Sympathy applied to the purse strings ..	35
	The Burden of the Lord.....	37
	Building Fund	39
	Express Church	43
	Healing Service	45
	Satellite Church.....	47
	What Bible?	50
	This is not a Bible Study	54
	Full Time Ministry	59
	Retire.....	60
	Vacation.....	62
	The All Powerful Audience of One	63
	Positive Thinking.....	65
	Numbering	67
	Slain in the Spirit.....	68
	Denominations.....	70

<i>Part III:</i>	How To.....	75
	Example.....	75
	Prayer	78
	Priests Duties.....	81
	Provision.....	82
	Dress	84
	Teaching	87
	Holiness.....	88
	Family Time.....	90
	Preach.....	92
	Repentance.....	102
	Forgiveness.....	108
	Tithes and Offerings.....	110
	Fellowship.....	115
	Born Again.....	118
	The Least of These	122
	Love	129
<i>Part IV:</i>	Conclusion.....	133
	Message to the Sheep	134
	Message to the Shepherds	136
	Message from Dave	140
	Scenario 1	141
	Scenario 2	142
	Scenario 3	142
	Glory to God.....	143

Part I

Introduction

I am writing this book because I think that the hypocrisy and extortion from the shepherds of the church have gone on far too long. These shepherds were given the precious job of protecting, guiding, and nurturing God's people while they are on their pilgrimage between heaven and earth. But instead they abuse that power by preaching the word sparsely and vaguely, thereby, leaving the sheep exposed to the elements without a shield of protection. The ministers jump from book to book without purpose or direction so that the people cannot follow, not even explaining the verses with any semblance of understanding.

The poor flock goes out more lost and dismayed than when it entered. The pastor's main goal these days seem to be fleecing the flock for all it is worth. The ministers take and take and take, until the sheep are left skinny and naked, not strong enough to withstand the people of the world, much less the schemes of the devil. Enough is enough.

I have set up a mock trial for these shepherds so that they can see what the consequences of their actions will produce. The Apostle Peter explained it this way, "For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God. . ." (1 Pet. 4:17). How is God ever going to be able judge the unbelievers if His leaders are not even living right? They tell the people that God wants you

to be rich and not poor, like it is a sin. But Job 34:19 says, “How much less to him that accepteth not the persons of princes, nor regardeth the rich more than the poor? for they all are the work of his hands.” God accepts us all based on us being His handiwork, not because of our bank accounts. Maybe their ignorance of not knowing the truth is the greatest crime. Either way, we will see if they can handle the truth by checking their lives against the Word of God to see if it is in compliance with His standards.

This book is set up like the Word of God. In 2 Timothy 3:16-17 it says, “All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” So therefore, it begins with God’s position on this matter, a criticism of the errant acts and then instruction on how to do the work for God correctly. Some scriptures will be used more than once to witness the truth in similar areas but in separate chapters.

The purpose of this book is to set forth principles to the shepherds. Principles for a right relationship with God so that they can live and tell others how to live; warning against the chastisement of God for being disobedient, and repairing the mistakes made in performing the duties of a shepherd. I will also present teachings on how to follow the right directions, not only for themselves, but to their congregation on how to please God with their life and through their works while on earth.

The Apostle Paul was instructing his young pastor; Timothy, to receive and use the Word of God so that he would be a good worker for the Lord. More importantly though, this was to remind him that he had the knowledge of salvation. Paul reminded young Timothy, “And that from a child thou hast known the holy scriptures, which are able to make thee wise unto salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:15). This was to put him into remembrance of what he was taught and why he was taught. He was now supposed to pass these scriptures on to the congregation that he was chosen to oversee, so they could choose to be saved by God’s grace. This is what the shepherds are supposed to be doing.

Some people reading this book will ask, “Who are you to judge?” The answer is simple. I am nobody. That is why this book

is purposely overflowing with scriptures that bring indictments to the guilty. It is God's Word that will be judging. If there is a problem with the scriptures given, then you need to take it up with Him. These holy scriptures especially apply to pastors.

I do not believe that God has created and called anyone into His service for condemnation. Therefore, I do not condemn anyone. But I can no longer allow the thieving, deceitful, abusive and manipulative practices of preachers to continue unchecked. They scatter the flock of God into the devouring mouths of the wolves of this world. Does God not hear the cries of His people? Who else is He going to use for this correction. It has to come from someone inside the church. Therefore, the number one underlying theme is correction; fixing that which is wrong, so everyone may go forward as the healthy flock of God.

I know that sometimes people cannot see the problem because they are in it. So, it helps to have those deficiencies pointed out to them so they may be able to decide for themselves if there is a problem that can be corrected. I heard a Preacher say once, "If one person calls you an 'ass' (mule or stubborn person), take it for what it is worth. If more people call you an 'ass', then maybe you should consider investing in a saddle." This is a gut check for Pastors to not only see if they have a problem by God's standard, but by those they have offended and come in contact with as well.

Ministers can be a proud and hard to reach bunch if they have been taken over by greed and believe the hype that the good message delivered by their mouths from God's Word actually belongs to them. This book is for the proud, self-centered and greedy shepherds that claim they know God, but deny Him through their actions. The church needs to stand up and tell them that they are not going to take it anymore.

I am hoping that you are as fed up with this upside down way of leading the church as I am. So, I am hoping that you will come along side of me to try and affect this change within the Body of Christ. I do not believe that those preachers will run out to buy this book to add to their library. Therefore, if you people in the church know this type of shepherd and desire to make this message available to them, then I suggest you buy this book anonymously from either a bookstore, Internet site, or from the

publisher and have it shipped to them.

Most places will allow you to add comments in the remarks section before shipping. Examples might look like this: "Please read Chapters 1 & 2," "See pp. 32-45 and pp. 50-64", or "Please read the entire book carefully and change your wicked ways. I will be praying for you." If you do not want to be that specific, just send the book. If enough of these books show up on their doorstep, they should get the message to change their ways. If they don't, you might consider buying a saddle and sending it to them.

As a pastor, I am one of those that have seen both sides of the fence, therefore I can sympathize with both. I was one of those scattered sheep that was tired of being used and abused by preachers. I'd seen all the scandalous acts of the 80's and 90's. My conviction was that church was not a place I wanted to be with all those hypocrites leading it. I was then faced with a problem that was bigger than I could handle. Someone invited me to church and I was willing to hear the Word of God preached from an upright Pastor. One that cared about my soul and could care less about my money.

I witnessed first hand how the Word of God could change a person's life, as long as it is ministered with clean hands and without deceit. For that, I am grateful. I am hoping this book will produce more workers for the Lord like that.

I have but two disclaimers: Any time the word "shepherd," "minister," "priest," or "pastor" is used, it refers to the office that God has set up for the leadership of the church. It will not always refer to their ability or performance, but it is giving respect to that office. The terms are used loosely and interchangeably and may or may not be capitalized in referring to that office depending on how I feel the subject is performing at that time. The second, is that some might think that I am out to take down ministers. They might even quote in their pastor's defense saying Psalms 105:15, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm."

My intention is not to do harm and I will not touch them as long as they are not within arm's reach. I desire that the crooked ones would change back to the pliable clay vessels that God began with, so they may be shaped into the instruments He intended. I hope and pray that even now, they would honor the calling of

God and be the purged vessel of honor that He wants to display.

I am proud to say such a man, a vessel of honor, Vince Corpis, taught me. For that, I dedicate this book to his honor. He made the decision early in his ministry to take heed to the scripture that says, "A good name is rather to be chosen than great riches, and loving favor rather than silver and gold" (Prov. 22:1). He would not water down the Word of God for no amount of bribery or flattery. He chose working with his hands in the construction field as a Mason to provide for his family's needs while preaching the gospel free of charge. He was not getting paid for doing the work of God. I pray that his heavenly reward will outweigh any treasures an earthly king can give. I hope that at the end of my life, I too will have obtained that, "good name" with God.

Part II

Opening Argument

Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel, prophesy, and say unto them, Thus saith the Lord GOD unto the shepherds; Woe be to the shepherds of Israel that do feed themselves! should not the shepherds feed the flocks? Ye eat the fat, and ye clothe you with the wool, ye kill them that are fed: but ye feed not the flock. The diseased have ye not strengthened, neither have ye healed that which was sick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye sought that which was lost; but with force and with cruelty have ye ruled them. And they were scattered, because there is no shepherd: and they became meat to all the beasts of the field, when they were scattered. My sheep wandered through all the mountains, and upon every high hill: yea, my flock was scattered upon all the face of the earth, and none did search or seek after them. Therefore, ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; As I live, saith the Lord GOD, surely because my flock became a prey, and my flock became meat to every beast of the field, because there was no shepherd, neither did my shepherds search for my flock, but the shepherds fed themselves, and fed not my flock; Therefore, O ye shepherds, hear the word of the LORD; Thus

saith the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against the shepherds; and I will require my flock at their hand, and cause them to cease from feeding the flock; neither shall the shepherds feed themselves any more; for I will deliver my flock from their mouth, that they may not be meat for them (Ezek. 34:2-10).

God presents his Argument as the Prosecutor to the Accused in Ezekiel 34:2, by opening with "Woe be to the shepherds . . ." Woe means a warning. I am here to let every pastor know that an indictment against the greedy, slothful and false shepherds has already been issued from God. He is not a respecter of titleholders. Do you think God means business? Just look down the annals of history and inspect His record. Everyone that has ever lived has had a judgment day.

Keep in mind the general charges being laid to these false shepherds to determine if any of these apply to your pastor, leader or organization. The end of each chapter will have the different charges aligned to the offenders in the beginning. After awhile, I have left you to try and determine what offenses are being committed, if any. You will then be able to determine if the leadership at your church is Shepherd Trial proof. Are you ready to take the challenge?

The charge also to you during this trial will be to gauge the severity of punishment these false shepherds deserve. We know the ultimate false shepherd that is prophesied in Chapter 11 of Zechariah, will rise up in the last days as the Antichrist. He will be thrown into the fiery pit of hell for all eternity. Until then many false shepherds and antichrists will be his forerunners by displaying the same character traits, ". . . shall not visit those that be cut off, neither shall seek the young one, nor heal that that is broken, nor feed that that standeth still: but he shall eat the flesh of the fat, and tear their claws in pieces. Woe to the idol shepherd that leaveth the flock! . . ." (16-17). Should they receive the same fiery pit of judgment or the lesser end of the spectrum that has them pay back that which they have deceitfully gained through restitution?

Fleecing the Flock

God uses the prophet Ezekiel to describe these shepherds as those that eat the very best and ensure they have clothing, yet those sheep that do eat, they kill off and starve the rest. They do nothing for those that have afflictions and did not help make them to be strong in the Lord. Do these sound familiar?

Today's shady shepherds are not as overt as the various headline scandals of the 80's and 90's. "Air conditioned gold-plated dog houses", "tax evasions", "God holding the pastor for ransom" and the "adulterous sex escapades," are but a few of the more popular examples. Nowadays, their moneymaking schemes are more covert.

One example of today's money scams that defraud Christians is the mail order paraphernalia, prayer cloths for healing. These shepherds try to capitalize on the gift that was given to the Apostle Paul, "So that from his body were brought unto the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:12). That was a specific miracle given to Paul. Unfortunately the false shepherd's desire for money gets these items mass-produced without any spiritual significance. When the buyer receives the product they are expecting a miracle because of the \$19.99 plus shipping and handling that is suppose to assure them of quality merchandise.

These items could no more rebuke a cockroach much less evil spirits that infirm the human body. The same goes for the Holy Water, Holy Oil, etc. . . If they really cared about people, they would offer it without charge. The Apostle Paul never charged anyone, yet these charlatans claim to be modern day apostles. Whose example are they following?

Pastors seem to think they are special because they have a minister's license. That license and four dollars will get you a cup of coffee at the local deli. You can take a lighter to that piece of paper and it will go up in smoke. You do not need a license to preach the gospel, eulogize a funeral, lead public prayer or speak about God at an official function. Anybody can do that.

To marry a couple is the only thing that requires you to have that license. Now, if a minister has been commissioned and licensed from an accredited seminary, they can marry couples

in different states. If licensed only by the local church, they may only marry within that state.

There are ministers that take advantage of being able to marry in Hawaii. The island of Lanai has international and continental tourist that come to get married. They charge \$300.00 and up to perform the ceremony. They are not worried if the couples may need pre-marital counseling. Making sure that the marriage is one that will last is none of their concern. They just make sure the names are correct for the state registry. Besides, if they get divorced six months later, there is always the possibility of repeat business.

These pastors even perform multiple ceremonies at once under the guise of trying to be good stewards of their time. Six weddings at \$300.00 a pop equals \$1,800.00 for 15 minutes of work. Their conscience is not pricked even a little. That is a shame whether it is Hawaii, Las Vegas or Niagara Falls.

There is another pastor known around Honolulu that is associated with the "Word of Faith," movement. Also known as "Gospel of Wealth," or "Prosperity Gospel." He is only seen shopping in the most expensive stores, eating in the most pristine restaurants, driving the latest SUV, and has one of the premier houses in the state. This is intentional and he makes no excuse for it. He has been known to use every gimmick known to man to squeeze a buck out of his parishioners.

He does this believing that he has a responsibility to show his flock what a "Blessed by God," life looks like. Somehow he seems oblivious to the fact that he is able to live this type of lifestyle because of the exorbitant salary he draws from the church, after the people have given their tithes and offerings. By what means he justifies his salary is beyond me since he only preaches a few verses a week.

This shepherd is right in believing that he is an example to the sheep. He is also right in the aspect that the community notices him; believers and unbelievers alike. We usually get his ex-members or people that were generally put off by his constantly asking for money. They come to church complaining of his actions he did somewhere in the community or at the pulpit. Their usual complaint is that they have been robbed by pressure giving to religion.

The only instruction that we can offer is that when they give, don't grumble because then God cannot bless their offering. God will punish that pastor, but God desires a willing heart that gives from them. The scripture says, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver" (2 Cor. 9:7). The heart needs to be at peace when giving to the Lord. Regardless, of how the money is spent.

Another complaint they have about this person is the financial questionnaire they are given as new guests to the church. It is hidden in the application to becoming a member of the church. This comes under the guise of helping them figure out the burdensome task of their tithe, based on their income. It also asks what financial institutions they have their money in. They present them with the modern, automatic deduction, taking away the burden of getting the money out of their pocket. It also allows them to reach in and help themselves. There is also a section asking about their employer. What happened to presenting the Gospel or asking about their immediate prayer needs? The application also asks if you own a business. This information is used for the pastor's vacation. I mean, conference purposes. Allow me to explain

Before the pastor goes on a trip to a seminar or conference he has invited himself to, he gathers the business leaders together. How does he know who these people are? Oh yeah, by that all-inclusive questionnaire, I mean the church member application. He asks that these leaders give at least a thousand dollars each for the purpose of him attending this convention and he cannot go with less than \$10,000.00. Of course, he will be going to get the latest in advanced preaching and teaching skills to effectively lead the congregation. So therefore, it is a good investment. It's true, he's read it in the brochure. A week later, he calls the wife to gather the business leaders up again because he ran out of money. To bad they were not teaching stewardship at the conference.

This is typical of many pastors that hear of a conference on, "How to better shepherd your flock." Especially if they are associated with nationwide organizations. So he fleeces the flock before he goes by explaining the importance of this seminar is for their favor. During the conference the pastor usually learns how

to separate the church attendee from their pocketbook by using scriptures that promise showers of blessing from God to those that give. So then he comes back selling religion and blessings to the susceptible. He fleeces the flock again by defrauding them with hype from scriptures taken out of context. The pastor evaluates the effectiveness of the conference by measuring the difference of giving in the offering plate. Increase in giving means it was a good conference.

Training Conference

The bigger denominations like the Baptist, Methodist, Episcopalian, etc. . . get together to vote on whether they are going to allow non-biblical practices like gay marriage, gay pastors, and drunkenness in the church. Why are these conferences needed in the first place? These things should not even be considered because God speaks expressly against these in the Bible. There is no gray area for discussion. Yet, every year they gain popularity for reasons to have another convention. This is also a ploy the world uses to desensitize and tempt the church. Because they argue that these topics are joining conditions for them to be members of the church. For the greedy pastor, they are willing to compromise the Word of God to allow these situations in the church. Its business. More people equals more money to them.

Some might argue saying the scripture says, "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counselors they are established" (Prov. 15:22). But that does not mean that you have to travel to another state to get that counsel of many, or even out of the congregation. The scripture even advises not to go far off. It says in Proverbs 27:10, "Thine own friend, and thy father's friend, forsake not; neither go into thy brother's house in the day of thy calamity: for better is a neighbor that is near than a brother far off." What are the elders or board members for? A pastor is supposed to be studying the scriptures so that God can direct him through His Word on how to lead the congregation. God is not going to direct the pastor to go hundreds or thousands of miles away from the church to learn from others that do not even know one person in their fellowship. Does that make sense?

What treasures did he get in the seminar that he could not

have gotten by following God's Word. God uses Solomon to write this fatherly advice to His followers:

My son, if thou wilt receive my words, and hide my commandments with thee; So that thou incline thine ear unto wisdom, and apply thine heart to understanding; Yea, if thou criest after knowledge, and liftest up thy voice for understanding; If thou seekest her as silver, and searchest for her as for hid treasures; Then shalt thou understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD giveth wisdom: out of his mouth cometh knowledge and understanding (Prov. 2:1-6).

Solomon did not get instruction from God on how to lead his people at a seminar. No, he humbled himself and cried to God, "Give me now wisdom and knowledge, that I may go out and come in before this people: for who can judge this thy people, that is so great?" (2 Chron. 1:10). Oh, that pastors would seek God's wisdom today so that they can lead the people to Christ. Instead, the pastor gives the congregation man's wisdom in psychobabble to develop self-esteem or worse.

The shepherds of today seem to have forgotten where they came from. They forgot how they were once sheep that came to God seeking God's help for their troubled life. The troubled life came as a result from what they chose to make of it in their corrupt living. A shepherd was patient with them while they were getting their spiritual knowledge and preached the Word that would change their corruptible living habits.

But now most get taught from professors in a college school setting that do not believe the Word of God or other charlatans at the conference. Their excuse for not wanting to teach the congregation is they do not want to force anyone or don't want the people to choke from too much information. So they give the members one or two verses, five or six jokes and their carnal interpretation. Is that the Biblical exposition methods taught at cemetery? Oops, I meant to say seminary.

If the pastors were paying for these sessions they would feel cheated or at least disappointed in the lack of Biblical teaching that goes on in a church service. And yet, they still think they should be handsomely rewarded for their studying and information gathering in preparation for the sermon. They boast that they read four books, researched six hours on the Internet, and ten

hours in prayer to get ready for the 45 minutes of preaching.

Nowadays these sermons are called sermonettes or missals. Some examples would be: 5 points to a successful life, 4 ways to spiritual enlightenment, and their favorite, 3 reasons to tithe. They do the latter one at least once a month and find a way to insert "giving" into any message they preach. This is what they learn at the Training Conferences. Since they are getting a percentage of the offering, do you suppose their motives are pure? I think not.

I do not say that all training conferences are bad. Leadership, prophecy and evangelistic conferences can be good for strengthening and equipping the Body of Christ to fulfill its commission to, ". . .preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). There is something really wrong if they are talking about tithes and offerings in that type of conference. That will tell you where their heart is in relation to teaching the Word of God.

Fund-raising

Why do most organizations do Fund-raising? Most do it to raise funds that they cannot obtain or is not available through conventional means. I became well acquainted with this method of support in my youth. As a young Boy Scout I sold fifty Pancake Breakfast tickets in order to go to one of their camps. At church, I cleaned people's yards, mowed their lawns and picked up trash around the church to raise money for attending a youth camp. I learned that if I did not have money for something I wanted; and others did, they would not give up their hard earned money for nothing. I needed to provide a service like labor or trade something of value for it. This way, the person got something from giving and would also feel some form of benevolence because they were helping out a moral and worthwhile cause.

Most people have the understanding that the money given to charitable organizations will not be stolen or used in a profane way. That allows people to feel good about giving and allows their heart to work as it intended. But when this avenue of giving is perverted, people's hearts shut down and their ears close to people's needs. The Bible says, "A brother offended is harder to be won than a strong city: and their contentions are like the bars of a castle" (Prov. 18:19).

I knew a woman some years ago that was constantly doing things at one of the churches around the area. She would be advertising car washes, bake sales, and every other thing. I was impressed by her zeal. Because before coming to church, she had been one of the biggest drug dealers and users around. Now, she was using her talent for what I thought was something holy.

I later found out that the people of her church were constantly doing fund-raising to pay for the pastor's salary, mortgage and groceries. Apparently the tithes and offerings did not meet the needs for him and his family. He wanted more. He let the congregation know that he was looking to pastor in other churches that had bigger congregations that would be able to support him. They were doing this hard labor every weekend, in hopes that he would sacrifice a little and stay on as their pastor. They did not want to be a flock without a shepherd. Their labor of love fell on deaf ears.

The pastor got the salary offer that he wanted and was gone within a week. The members helped him and his family pack up their belongings and watched them leave with tears in their eyes and sorrow in their heart. They had tried to keep a shepherd for their flock. But as the scripture says in John 10:13, "The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling, and careth not for the sheep."

My sister and brother-in-law were attending a church in Texas when a pastor demanded that the church build him a \$100,000.00 home. This offended them. The congregation had already agreed to build a \$40,000.00 dollar home but he would not settle for that. They began to sell over-priced plate lunches in order to supplement the necessary funds to build this mansion. Unfortunately, they became disgusted with the ordeal of trying to provide for a greedy pastor's desire when they were already doing everything they could to maintain payments for their own home. They left the congregation and do not attend church anywhere.

Do these people have legitimate complaints? Are they right in feeling cheated and angry by these examples. Now we know why the Apostle Paul was a Tent-maker by trade. He did not want to " . . . hinder the gospel of Christ" (1 Cor. 9:12). He was on a mission to try and save all men. He realized this took hard work and suffering, but he was willing to endure this light affliction. He did not want to bring any shame to the gospel message he was

preaching. The abuse has definitely gotten out of control within the church these past couple of centuries.

This is why most non-profit organizations go belly up. The administration costs for the CEO at the top drain off the proceeds until only a trickle gets down to its intended beneficiaries. The need is either arrested by another organization or the people do no longer need it because they are dead or moved on. Will the church cease to exist because the leaders have left it ineffective by draining off all the funds?

I wonder how pastors justify million dollar homes? A religious leader came to Jesus wanting to follow Him, "And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. 8:20). He was telling him that he needed to count the cost of following because there was a real possibility of being homeless. Do leaders today consider this cost before entering the ministry? Don't think so. Most are looking what is available in the housing brochures before considering to take a parish. The cost they are counting is the affluence in the church's membership for fund-raising purposes to get their own house.

Some have suggested that the church lose its tax-exempt status. It was originally given the exempt status because of the social services it rendered to the poor and needy. The church had these resources ready because of the promise God gave in Malachi 3:10, "Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house." God wanted the church to help those in need so that they can see the benevolence of God and understand as the Apostle Paul did, "God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4:19). The government now provides those services to the poor and needy because the pastors were turning them away. After all, the money was now being tied up in the pastor's salary, mortgage and retirement fund. After embezzling the money for his purposes, there is not enough left for the poor, widows and the fatherless. So, what do we do with these pastors? What is a just punishment?

Fried Chicken

There is a well-known practice; especially in the South, of inviting the pastor over to the member's house for dinner. There is much speculation on how this started. Some say that it began as a substitute for the Old Testament practice of the priest getting a portion of the sacrifices offered to God. They used to get a portion of the meat, grain and drink offerings that were brought into the house of the Lord. But these are meals served in the homes of people attending the church. So that does not apply.

Some say it is a way to show hospitality. I believe that everyone should be doing this to others in the congregation or other saints in general for fellowship, not just the pastors (see Rom. 12:13 & 1 Pet. 4:9). The leaders in the church, especially the ministers are to have a reputation of demonstrating hospitality and not receiving it (see Tit. 1:8 & 1 Tim. 3:2).

So then why do they have the pastor over? Well, you never know when you might need to call in a favor. In Proverbs 21:14 it says, "A gift in secret pacifieth anger: and a reward in the bosom strong wrath." Maybe they think this will be their "Ace in the hole," on judgment day.

Bribery used to happen all the time in the Old Testament. In Micah 3:11, "The heads thereof judge for reward, and the priests thereof teach for hire, and the prophets thereof divine for money: yet will they lean upon the LORD, and say, Is not the LORD among us? none evil can come upon us." The priest and the people thought they were safe from God's wrath, but retribution for their sins was on the way. God would later use the Chaldeans of Babylon to come in and destroy their evil works.

Judgment will come from God. It will not matter whether it is for the indulgences that the priests has sold in the past or the money they receive today for giving the people a license to sin. Can all the money they receive on earth be able to mitigate God's judgment? What gift can they offer? None. Job's friend Eliphaz speaks to this end in Job 15:34, "For the congregation of hypocrites shall be desolate, and fire shall consume the tabernacles of bribery." God's Word is sure and it will come to pass.

Visitation Pastor

My grandfather has many health afflictions that makes his mobility difficult. He used to go to one of the “prosperity” churches in Texas before it became too hard for him to continue. So he was left to the steady barrage of false televangelists that are on most TV channels. I was hopeful that things were changing when I heard that my grandfather had a minister that would come to check on him at his home. I felt that with this pastor would be able to minister to his needs on a personal basis since he did not have to put on a show or hype for the masses.

The minister was called a Visitation Pastor. He is designated as the pastor that goes out to visit members at home or in the hospitals that are elderly or disabled. The second visit that he came out to my grandfather was a new low, even for these guys. He did not come out to uplift him, encourage or ensure him of his salvation. No, just the opposite. He came out to talk about money. More specifically about my grandfather robbing God because he was not paying his tithes. When I spoke to my grandfather, he was agreeing with the pastor that he needed to start paying tithes from home off of his social security check that was barely covering his rent.

The guilt that this extortionist used had worked on my grandfather and he was worried about being a sinner that was headed straight to hell because he had taken from God. I tried to encourage him otherwise, because God knew of his fixed income that was barely sustaining him. He did not sound sure of his salvation.

What had motivated that pastor to come out and visit my grandfather? Compassion . . .? I don't think so. Greed is more like it. Does he get a cut of whatever he brings back? Is his pay dependent on the revenue he brings in? Is he like a salesman that gets a combination of salary plus commission for his efforts? What would motivate someone to be this cruel to the feeble?

Why would a few dollars cause this pastor to put so severe a doubt in a person that it jeopardizes their salvation? That is why Paul preached to Timothy to warn him of the perils associated with money. He told him in 1 Timothy 6:9-10, “But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many

foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows." Who then pays the price for "the love of money?" Everybody loses. What judgment should befall that Visitation Pastor for the charges of extortion and racketeering?

Birthday Bash

We had a couple that moved to California because of the man's job situation. They were encouraged to find them a church to attend as soon as possible. They found a church within a short time and shortly thereafter some members approached them wanting to do something for the pastor's birthday. The spokesman for the committee approached them and asked if they would donate \$500.00 to the effort. She knew that they both had good jobs.

I know that California is one of the more expensive areas of the country to live in, but what are you going to buy with that much money? If only 50 people gave that amount out of their small congregation, it would total \$25,000.00. That is one heck of a birthday party, even by California standards. What kinds of presents are given? A new car? Several round-trip tickets to Jerusalem?

I wonder what the pastor thought of when he was receiving the presents? They must really, really, really like me? Do you think he even considered for a moment what hardships his birthday caused for the members because a few people on the committee wanted to look good in front of him? No, that would require discernment. It is a gift that is lacking among many in the pulpit today.

Who are these people that will be looking good? It is the ones handing over the presents for him to open. Will this ensure their deacon-ship or other coveted titles? Did they give the same as everyone else? More? Less? Hmmm. Is this any different from the lobbyist that buy off congressman?

Simon the Sorcerer had offered to bribe Peter for the gift of the Holy Ghost. I am sure that he was not expecting Peter's

response in Acts 8:20, "But Peter said unto him, Thy money perish with thee, because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money." If only today's pastors would shun earthly gifts like this so that they can rebuke members that are trying to buy their favor. The pastor should hold all his members as equal; without partiality, so they can all go to heaven.

Prosperity Preachers

In some churches today you will hear of "Guest Speakers," or "Visiting Pastors." You should be asking the question, "Why are they a guest that has traveled from afar? Why are they visiting?" Who is taking their place at the congregation they just left? It is probably your pastor. He has invited this person to get his congregation in more of a financial giving mood while he tries to "milk," the other man's cash cow. The fact is that they are traveling salesmen. They are selling the "prosperity" message that brings people in droves to hear about the "blessings," that God has in store for His people.

The two pastors usually meet in a training conference or by reputation. For some reason a lot of them want to visit Hawaii. How do you figure that one? There are definitely some perks in wanting to come to Hawaii, as opposed to Cleveland. Especially, during the winter months.

These pastors set a date to switch pastor-ship for a day or two. Sounds like wife swapping to me, don't you think? I thank God that adultery is still punishable in the military and over half of the United States. Should capitol punishment be a deserving judgment in these cases? It is the same principle of you giving another man the authority to do whatever he wants to someone you are supposed to love. I am sure that you get the point now so I will not go any further with this sickening, but apt analogy.

These salesmen come with a briefcase full of "prosperity" sales pitches. If you are in the mood to buy "prosperity," it will cost you dearly. Depending on your apparent need of prosperity will directly correlate to the lack of cash you leave with. It is a casino without the spinning wheels. You don't leave totally empty. You have a promise of prosperity, like an "I Owe You." The promise makes you feel full of prosperity for a little while, until the reality

of bills being due sets in. You later realize that your bill money is hopping onto a plane with the "visiting pastor," on his way back home.

The "Prosperity Preachers" (PPs) have their favorites verses they use. For those of you that have been to a few of these "guest speaker," sermons you will remember a familiar pattern with these scriptures. It might surprise you to know that you could probably preach one of these sermons in your sleep.

The sermon usually starts out in Genesis to give the illusion that it was God's plan from the beginning to "bless," you. They usually give the example of God causing the wicked to even prosper you like the ungodly Pharaoh did in Egypt to Abraham. After Abraham left Egypt; of which the children you are, he was described as being, "very rich in cattle, in silver, and in gold" (Gen. 13:2). His servant proclaimed to Laban, ". . .the LORD hath blessed my master greatly; and he is become great: and he hath given him flocks, and herds, and silver, and gold, and menservants, and maidservants, and camels, and asses" (Gen. 24:35). Abraham's son, Isaac fared much better in the land of the Philistines, "Then Isaac sowed in that land, and received in the same year an hundredfold: and the LORD blessed him. And the man waxed great, and went forward, and grew until he became very great: For he had possession of flocks, and possession of herds, and great store of servants: and the Philistines envied him" (Gen. 26:12-14). That sounds pretty good, huh? Being the envy of those around you. Does that fulfill a fleshly satisfaction or a spiritual desire? The riches are material, so it is the flesh of course.

Another fleshly hook the PPs use to draw a crowd is, "Becoming debt free." Most of us in the land of the free are in bondage to some kind of financial debt. Mostly, with credit cards. We really like the charging part. Take home to enjoy now and pay later. But the paying back can have a person burdened with substantial debt for a very long time. They tell the people that God wants to bless you and does not want you burdened with this debt. He offers his proof text from Proverbs 10:22, "The blessing of the LORD, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it." The PPs then offer the example of the Exodus to set people free of this financial burden. The Israelites were in bondage one day and

then they came out rich the next. "Yes," they say, "it can happen in one day."

The PPs sure-fire money magnet phrase begins with asking who in the audience is in need of a "miracle" today? When you think of a miracle it is something supernatural and extraordinary. Yet these PPs give the impression that these "miracles" are natural and ordinary and at the end of their fingertips if the price is right. But it is for the faithful ones that tithe and give all to their special offering. It becomes quid pro quo.

Their next scripture given is, "... and the children of Israel sighed by reason of the bondage, and they cried, and their cry came up unto God by reason of the bondage. And God heard their groaning, and God remembered his covenant with Abraham, with Isaac, and with Jacob" (Exod. 2:23-24). They let the people know that God hears their cries and has a plan to deliver them from this debt. They proclaim, "You came into this meeting in debt but you will go out rich and highly favored of the Lord." A thunderous applause follows. It is true that someone will leave with full pockets. They know this from the last "flock fleecing," they performed.

The PPs continue in Exodus with, "And the children of Israel did according to the word of Moses; and they borrowed of the Egyptians jewels of silver, and jewels of gold, and raiment: And the LORD gave the people favour in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they lent unto them such things as they required. And they spoiled the Egyptians" (12:35-36). They begin to show how this scripture pertains to the situation of financial debt.

The world system is a symbol that can be equated with Egypt of the Old Testament. God will miraculously cause the world system to give you favour and riches. To prove their claim, they use Proverbs 13:22, "A good man leaveth an inheritance to his children's children: and the wealth of the sinner is laid up for the just." See! The sinner's wealth is their waiting for you to take it. They never explain how and who this sinner is that has agreed to give up his wealth to pay off your debt or even when this is going to happen. So the person gives their "miracle" offering to the PP and then leaves the meeting all hyped up for that miracle that probably will not come on this earth.

The problem with today's congregation is that they have a short memory and lack God's Word for discernment. As soon as one PP declares that the people will receive a miracle leaves, another will takes his place. Instead of the people standing their ground and waiting for that promised miracle from the previous hireling, they listen to this new con artist that wants to clean them out entirely. They start rationalizing in their mind if only they had given enough money to buy the previous miracle. So the new hireling gives them remembrance of two scriptures about sacrificing all to obtain the favor of God.

The first one is the passage about Elijah and the widow:

And Elijah said unto her, Fear not; go and do as thou hast said: but make me thereof a little cake first, and bring it unto me, and after make for thee and for thy son. For thus saith the LORD God of Israel, The barrel of meal shall not waste, neither shall the cruse of oil fail, until the day that the LORD sendeth rain upon the earth. And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat many days (1 Kings 17:13-15).

These preachers use this to show the people that you need to take care of God's prophets first and then God will supply their needs. How presumptuous can one be to assume they are in the same category as Elijah. When was the last time these so called prophets; that are only interested in profits, cause it not to rain by the word of their mouth or raise any child from the dead (see 1 Kings 17)? They offer no proof to establish themselves as God's chosen and yet people still give willingly without discretion.

The second one they use is in Mark 12:42-44, "And there came a certain poor widow, and she threw in two mites, which make a farthing. And he called unto him his disciples, and saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That this poor widow hath cast more in, than all they which have cast into the treasury: For all they did cast in of their abundance; but she of her want did cast in all that she had, even all her living." See? If you want to be acknowledged by God for your giving, then you need to give it

all. They really don't care if a person gives all and does not have a way to support their means until the next payday. The main thing is that they will be taken care of.

If they would only stick around a couple of weeks for counseling after preaching, they might have a different perspective on their flippant speeches. The family members and friends of those affected by their false teaching can attest to the damage left behind. We are left to explain what God really meant in the context of the scriptures given by these con artists. It is hard. What do you tell someone that asks the questions, "Why doesn't God show up? I'm a faithful tither. I was obedient to give all that I have", "Why does it still look like the devil is in charge and using these crooks? Why doesn't God do something about my cancer, finances, boss, etc. . .?"

I wonder how their conscience does not bother them? The Bible says, "...there is no new thing under the sun" (Eccles. 1:9). Jesus was using the scripture about the widow's mite in the book of Mark to rebuke the scribes and Pharisees in their hypocritical practices. Just before He talked about the widow's mite He condemned their practices by saying, "Which devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers: these shall receive greater damnation" (Mark 12:40).

I had attended a couple of services while I was visiting my grandfather one summer in Texas. During one evening service the associate pastor felt like God was telling him to take up a second offering during the same evening service. It was the grossest display of begging and outright greed that I have ever witnessed. My grandfather decided to stay there even after I had pointed out to him how wrong it was.

God is not kidding about condemning those that practice these money making schemes to get people to even sign their houses over to them. God says in Deuteronomy 27:19, "Cursed be he that perverteth the judgment of the stranger, fatherless, and widow. And all the people shall say, Amen." These scam artists will get the punishment they deserve from God. Not soon enough to satisfy my fleshly desire for justice.

Another popular gimmick they use is the ever-popular doctrine of "increase." Increase appeals to everyone's baser desire. Who doesn't want increase? But the Bible speaks clearly

on when will man be satisfied and say, enough. Proverbs 27:20 states, "Hell and destruction are never full; so the eyes of man are never satisfied." The natural man will always want more.

The PPs knowing this fact, love to preach about increase. Their favorite scripture is in Psalms 115:13-16, "He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. The LORD shall 'increase' you more and more, you and your children. Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men." They explain to the people that God wants to not only increase them but their children as well. They then work the people into a frenzy by having the audience to shout out after him, "Increase! Increase! Increase!" One of those "increase" blessings is being able to inherit the earth.

How does one inherit the earth? They will take the audience back to the very first book of the Bible to show God's intention. In Genesis 1:28 it says, "And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth." This shows that the first male and female had possession of the whole earth and had rule over it. They will acknowledge that the first couple lost that dominion when they committed the first sin and brought the curse upon all creation (see Gen. 3). But, Jesus came to set us free from the curse. True. But does that mean the curses in this temporal realm will not affect us? We are all still feeling the effects of the curse. It says in Romans 8:22, "For we know that the whole creation groaneth and travaileth in pain together until now." That is until Jesus give us our eternal inheritance in the future.

Let us look at the example of the thief on the cross, since I believe that is the shortest life-span example of someone living after having acknowledged and accepted that Jesus as his eternal King and Savior. Jesus tells him, ". . . Verily I say unto thee, Today shalt thou be with me in paradise" (Luke 23:43). His blessing or inheritance did not happen while alive on this earth. Did God's promise go void of blessings to them that fear God? No, God's Word will never go void. So Ephesians 1:3 tells us, "Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath blessed

us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ:" We receive these blessings in "heavenly places" when we are in Christ. But no one wants to hear that. They want their blessings in the "here and now."

So what about the promise of the children of men inheriting the earth? 2 Peter Chapter 3 tells us, ". . . the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up" (v. 10). So it cannot be this present earth. Why would God give us our inheritance to only have it burned up soon after? So it must be the future one created by Jesus in Revelation 21:1, "And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away. . ."

The prosperity preachers have apparently chosen Hawaii as their favorite harvesting ground. So how do they get to Hawaii? A plane ticket to Hawaii, hotel, rent-a-car and all the other expenses that come with the trip are not cheap. Especially in this uncertain economy. So how does it get paid for? Are these traveling salesmen paying for it from their hard-earned money they had before becoming a preacher? No, don't think so. So who pays for it?

It is usually prearranged for a certain amount to be given to the traveling salesman by the host church. There will be an additional bonus if he really did a good job of convincing the people to really give. Sometimes the arrangement is that the church gets the checks and he gets the cash.

To get this bountiful harvest the PPs conclude the service with a miracle offering. They feel the "presence," of God's Spirit wanting to do a miracle. They ask the people in the audience, "Who in here needs a miracle for their financial situation? Afflictions? Relationships?" The list continues until they have spread the biggest net possible to encompass everyone's problem. Translated, it means God is not going to perform this miracle for free. They are calculating on the correlation of the audience giving is dependent on how bad they need the miracle? Preying off the destitute, downtrodden and afflicted. It is the same victims from the lottery. The Book of Proverbs says, "He that oppreseth the poor reproacheth his Maker. . ." (14:31). Where is there love for God and His people. Is there an ounce of conviction left in their soul? Has the pursuit of riches eradicated all of their compassion

for others? What lies do they tell themselves at night to sleep?

The PPs also use the Seeds Doctrine (see SEEDS). Or they can rely upon Old Faithful. Their favorite well spring is, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again" (Luke 6:38). The message is give your money now and "men," will give it to you later. Of course, when and how are not defined.

The problem is they take the scripture out of context and used it wrongly to describe money (see Preaching). Jesus spoke these words in context of mercy, forgiveness and being set free from bondage to anyone. Jesus tells His disciples and those that would follow Him, "Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful. Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:" (Luke 6:36-7). It calls for action on our part to initiate kindness in order to reap these spiritual benefits afterwards in verse 38 with an overwhelming capacity.

That is why we have to be discerning to spot these modern day Pharisees before they rob us of our existence. Jesus warned us through a parable by saying in Luke 6:39, "Can the blind lead the blind? shall they not both fall into the ditch?" Do we want to be led by the blind? Do you see the grave consequences of being tricked? It is time for the Church to open its eyes to these scams.

The PPs will be long gone with your money on an airplane ride to their next conquest before you find yourself in the dilemma of figuring out how to pay the rent with no money left. Do not give emotionally to those that would stir up the greed that is within you. It is a hard lust to control because it is never satisfied. The PPs know this all too well. Instead of controlling their own lust they choose to manipulate the desire of the sheep until the entire fleece is gone from the sheep.

This type of pastor personally affected me, when my mother was turned off from attending church. Like most new believers, I started praying that my parents would return back to the Lord. My mom was invited by her friend to go to a contemporary "booming," church. She was so excited that she was going to hear that gospel message she had heard as a child but instead she got

to hear a “prosperity preacher.”

The prosperity preacher that was now before her had recently received a “vision” from the Lord. God had informed him that he would soon be vacationing in Hawaii. The message delivered that day was constructed in a manner to make the people feel like they were working in conjunction with God for this “vision” to come to pass. Their part would entail them to be sacrificially giving to this worthy cause. This was also to be an example to the rest of the congregation that they too would get a “vision” when God felt they needed to be blessed because of their obedient offerings. He of course referenced one of the prosperity preacher’s favorite verses in Luke 6:38.

Needless to say, my mother did not return because she was so offended by the blatant manipulation techniques the preacher used to get money and then blaspheming God’s name by attaching Him to the authorship of this scheme. My mom had not been in a church for a while but she could tell this was false teaching. That pastor will no doubt pay one day when he answers for her blood on his hand, if she does not make into heaven. There is a great responsibility God gives to the watchman of His flock. He tells the watchman to preach His message from Ezekiel 33:8, “When I say unto the wicked, O wicked man, thou shalt surely die; if thou dost not speak to warn the wicked from his way, that wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at thine hand.”

The watchman is to preach repentance so that a person’s heart is open to receive Christ; not to use God’s name and pastorship office for his own selfish gain (see Luke 24:49). God warns of offending those beginning to seek the Lord in Matthew 18:6, “But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.” Yes, that especially means a pastor. That does not mean the shepherd waters down the Word so that it is not offensive. It means that his motives are not to be so selfishly driven that he cares only for his gain and not the eternal welfare of the sheep.

The Lear Kings

The latest status symbol ministries use to compete with one another and declare a blessed life is the Lear Jet. This luxury item is what they spend the ministry's money on instead of seeing how many people they can convert to Christianity or to build the faith of God in others. They go zooming all over the world; especially Hawaii, under the cloak of doing God's will. The competition is which one has the fastest, newest, gets used the most, and who gets the right of way to land while coming into the same airport.

These jet setters for God usually come into a city a few days prior to their scheduled day to preach. In Hawaii, they usually hop around to the other islands to enjoy the amenities of this plush vacation spot to rub noses with the elitist of this world without preaching. They will do the whole tourist role of shopping, sightseeing and golfing, even though they had already been here a few times within the past year. On the last day, they will agree to do two or three services at the biggest prosperity church in the area. They then take a greater portion of the tithes and offerings that were collected on that day. Or they have an understanding that the host pastor will send a check in the mail to their headquarters. Within a few hours of the last service they are up in the blue skies headed to destination: Cash Out.

The justification given by one of the ministry moguls was that he needed the convenience offered by the Lear Jet in order to effectively minister for the Lord. He cannot afford to wait in long screening lines, have his flight canceled, or deal with lost luggage. His time is that important compared to the rest of us. I don't think so.

The minister should understand that he was given the job to help people and remember that, "The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. . ." (Ps. 37:23). There are reasons that God allows us to be in long screening lines, having flights canceled or dealing with lost luggage. We are in that predicament so that His hands can reach out to hurting people that are praying to God and need Him.

The Lord can place a person next to the Pastor in a screening line that is going home to a dying loved one and desperately needs to hear that things are going to be all right. He will delay or

cancel a flight so a person can spend time with a pastor to answer their questions that have caused them to doubt God's Word. He will put him in front of that airline service representative to help encourage them to continue to have compassion on their clients and realize they are doing a great service by helping others to find their possessions. It can get to be a real burdensome task of always giving out and feel that no one notices his or her work. That encouragement might fill their emotional tank long enough between church services for another hundred customers.

The pastor can be in the Lord's service in these and so many other areas. Jesus told those that would follow him that they were to be, "... the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid" (Matt. 5:14). He does not want us to be ducking and dodging the people that are in need. But these celebrity preachers think that they are beyond having to deal with the common folk since they have a jet. So they try to hide and be sheltered from doing common tasks like the rest of us.

These pastors then get up in front of the congregation and brag about their jet and who has the biggest and the best. What is that supposed to do for the people? Anyway, a couple of the short pastors include their competition with one another in their sermon. I don't know if they use this jesting as a filler for time. To me, it was a waste of time.

They begin their braggadocios spiel by proclaiming that they are at least an inch taller than the other one. One of them, making fun of the contest, likens it to, "Two shrimps fighting." Then they go into how envious the other one is of their jet. What does that have to do with Christianity? They claimed that spreading the Gospel was the main reason they got the aircraft, but now use it as a status symbol. They forgot that it was not their money that bought it. The people paid for the jet. It was their successful fleecing of the sheep and constant barrage of tithing sermons that provided enough extra money for the luxury item.

The Bible speaks of a short man named; Zacchaeus, that used his position to defraud the people. He did this so that he could become rich. Jesus came along and told him that He was coming to his house. He understood that he needed to repent of his sinful ways so that the Lord could come into his house. The Book of Luke says, "And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the

Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold" (19:8) For that gesture, Jesus declared, "...This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham" (19:9). Will these men be saved?

I pray that these two, wee little men, would get the message of repentance. It would be nice to see them auction off the aircraft, give half of the proceeds to the poor and the rest be used to give back "fourfold," to the individuals they defrauded. They know who these people are. They have receipts on file of the money given for tax purposes. It will be interesting to see if they choose salvation, by Jesus coming to their house, or hang on to the ill-gotten Lear Jet. The Bible says in Proverbs 16:18, "Pride goeth before destruction, and an haughty spirit before a fall."

The Hook Up

Everybody loves a good discounted hook up from our family and friend connections. Especially if it is in the posh restaurants, ritzy hotel upgrades, First Class flying, and luxury items. Employers also know the people they hire usually have the benefits in mind when they apply for the job. So the boss will usually detail an allotment for the amount of times the worker can use the benefit. It is particularly awkward if someone you do not even know tries to demand your privileges.

One of the prosperity preachers had his car; some in the community called it his "Pimp Mobile," break down on the freeway. He called a tow company and was given a price quote for the service over the phone that he agreed to. The person telling us the story was dispatched to recover the vehicle. He was not serving God at the time but he knew who the pastor was from his flashy reputation. He thought he would honor him by knocking off ten dollars from the total towing price.

Was the preacher grateful about this favor? No, he complained the price was still too high and asked if he could get some more taken off the price. He wanted an insider's illegal discount to scam the tow company. The price given was already cutting into his salary and could not drop the price any lower. The person used this obviously greedy preacher's attitude as an

excuse to stay away from the Lord even longer.

Everyone likes a “hook up”. But not everyone is entitled to give one, especially if they are not the owner of the company. Some don’t even get a discount themselves. Most people work or are in a business to make money. This pastor is now asking someone outside of his congregation; someone not even in a relationship with God, someone he is supposed to be reaching out to through evangelism, to finance his lap of luxury. He was supposed to be an example to that man of what a life with God entails. God told the people in Deuteronomy 15:6, “For the LORD thy God blesseth thee, as he promised thee: and thou shalt lend unto many nations, but thou shalt not borrow; and thou shalt reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over thee.” The pastor was supposed to be reaching out to help rather than receive. He should have been ashamed of asking something from the unbeliever. But he has proven that he is shameless.

That pastor is hoping to get through this life without having to pay for anything and begging for freebies. He just might. But there will be a payday. The Apostle Paul speaks about this in 1 Timothy 5:24, “Some men’s sins are open beforehand, going before to judgment; and some men they follow after.” One day he will pay. What excuse will be sufficient in that day?

SEEDS

Prosperity Preachers think they are the example to their flock by how much wealth a person can amass when God blesses them. They go and buy million dollar homes, the nicest vehicles and are never seen shopping in nothing but the nicest clothing stores. They say, “Give and it shall be given back unto you some 30, 60 & 100 fold.” They explain this is a universal truth of sowing seeds. Whatever you sow, that will you also reap. That type of preaching, (I use that term loosely because of the office they hold, not on their performance in speaking) certainly fills the money coffers but does nothing to enrich the spiritual growth of the congregation. Again, they use scriptures taken out of context to enlarge their pockets.

The scripture he is referring to is the parable of the Sower and the Seed in relation to God’s Word. This is found in Matthew

13:3-23 and Mark 4:3-20. God thought it important enough to give it again in another book to witness to the first message so we do not get confused under what context the seed is being referred to. Again, He was talking about the Word of God being the Seed. His Word is the only thing in heaven or earth that comes with a promise that when it goes forth, it does not come back void (Isa. 55:11).

You can ask any experienced farmer and he will tell you that sowing seeds does not always guarantee a crop. There are number of events that can happen to prevent that crop. Such as: not enough water (drought, heat evaporation), too much water (hail, monsoon, flood), unproductive earth (too hard or not firm), biological threats (canker worms that eat, stampedes of animals that trample), and the malicious intent of man by vandalism. Any one of these is enough to cause the crop to be a failure.

Unfortunately, the sheep that know this will still try to play the odds like placing several bets on a roulette wheel. They will give to several different ministries hoping that their fortune will be harvested in one of their gambles. It is like the person that carries all the different religious medallions hoping that one of them is right. In doing so, the sheep are committing the sin. Their spiritual adultery is with money. Because they are not trusting in God to sustain them by giving for the kingdom's sake. But instead, they are relying on their own formula for financial prosperity. The shepherds that teach this will also pay.

Another scripture used in conjunction with Seeds Doctrine among prosperity preachers is Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Their explanation on how this will benefit a person seeking the hand of God is, "Give a thousand dollars and ten-thousand will come back." Giving money in the offering plates, equals more money given back. A supernatural growth takes place with the money they planted in the offering plate. These preachers say, "It is not addition but the law of multiplication." As noted before, when you look at the message in context, it is describing mercy and forgiveness that runs over in abundance in contrast to judgment and condemnation. There is nothing there about giving

money. Which do you think God was trying to produce from His Word? A chosen people that forgives or a worshiper of the ATM? A people that is aligned with His forgiving nature of course.

There is nothing wrong with the flashy houses, cars or items from the merchandise outlets that these preachers flaunt. I am sure they are all quality items that retain their resale value (because they pride themselves in being good stewards). But in actuality, who is paying for this? The flock of God. The pastor is getting richer and the sheep are getting poorer by thinking their financial blessing is coming around the corner. At least, that is what the pastor preaches to keep encouraging the sheep to hang on for another week. It is right around the corner, he assures them. That is so that they can drop off some more “seed” money. What does that produce? A slaphappy rich pastor, whose bank account is growing, and a congregation that is disappointed, poor, and haters of God.

The congregation will not admit their frustration from this type of preaching right away if asked about it. But the frustration does come out around the time to pay the bills. They cannot see God but they see his representative. They figure they must be doing something wrong because it only appears that the pastor is getting blessed. They then feel the promises of God must be only for the pastor because he had the most faith. He must have had the only faith lottery ticket that won. But most of those pastors do not have the same financial worries as their sheep.

The pastor lives in a house provided by the church, either in mortgage allotment or they are sometimes outright given the deed by the elders or board. All the while the members are sometimes struggling to pay rent in the worst parts of the city. The pastor is driving the latest luxury car or stylish SUV, while the city bus is dropping off the members and then they end up walking some distance to the church. The pastor is showered by the elders with groceries or given an allotment for that purpose, while the members have to fast in order to have enough money to give an offering in the collection plate. That money is a peace offering just in case they might bring on the wrath of God for not tithing. They remember all too well, what the pastor has been preaching for the past fifty Sundays. The other two Sundays are for the Christmas and Resurrection message.

They remember how the preacher pounded the pulpit against those dead beats that would “rob God.” They use that well-known passage out of Malachi 3:8 with searing accuracy. The people believe they are breaking the 8th commandment by not tithing. They will pay their tithes, skip meals and borrow money for their rent so that they can still hope to have a chance of making it into heaven. Surely, they will make it into heaven before these scandalous preachers.

Sympathy applied to the purse strings

It is the oldest con game done religious style. It goes something like this. It begins with a sad story; usually a vulnerable woman is at the center. A member of the audience is experiencing difficulty in finances, health issues, a funeral or unforeseen living expenses. If it is not staged, they usually get it from the prayer requests slips that the people fill out as they come in the door. The person is called up to the stage to give a short synopsis of the situation. Then comes the ploy. He asks the audience to search their hearts and ask how much would they want someone else to give them if they were in that predicament. Most people would give whatever is in their pockets or write out a check for a substantial amount.

That would be enough to get a sizable amount of money if that was all that was done. But a con man that is at the top of his craft will have the ushers equipped with 5 gallon buckets, not offering plates. Then you need a collection point that ensures quick access for the ushers to drop off the money and then get back to collecting with minimal delay time. The music score will be slowed down and especially crafted to touch the heart and bring out the benevolence in everybody.

The most pathetic I have ever heard came in the late 90's during a well-known televangelist's crusade in Hawaii (Why is it that they can discern God leading them to Hawaii, but hardly any to New Jersey? Are Hawaiians bigger sinners than Jersey people?). His plea for money went out to the audience to help a poor woman with her electric bill. It had gotten over a thousand dollars and the power company was going to shut it off if the bill was not paid soon. Even a lame excuse like that will get the average

Joe to want to help out a little. So they will give \$5, 10, 20 or more. In an audience of just 15,000 people, a collection can be made of \$75,000.00, if everyone just gives \$5.00. Of course, everyone does not give \$5. Some don't give and others give more.

The person is brought back on stage and presented with a check from the ministry for \$2,500.00, to cover future expenses that might occur while they are trying to get back on their feet. The minister gets the audience to applaud that they were able to help a member of the church when it mattered most. What happened to the remaining \$72,500.00? Well that goes to his ministry. Because a Lear Jet is not cheap to maintain, moths eat clothes, and yada, yada, yada . . . Suddenly the money is gone and forgotten. You won't find a magical vanishing act performing that well in Las Vegas.

Just recently, I attended a service that a traveling televangelist was sharing on how tough his life is compared to us working stiffs. His last predicament had him deciding on going to either a church of 30 members or 3,000 members because he was invited to share on the same date and time. His dilemma; he explained tearfully, was based on the lack of offerings he would receive at the smaller church. He wanted the audience to share in his pain because he felt that the smaller church needed him more so he went. He quickly transitioned into a plea for a special offering that he felt the Lord leading him to gather up to help support the drought of funds that he suffered from that sacrifice.

There is no doubt that the people that gave with a willing and cheerful heart will be blessed by God. But there are some people in the audience; possibly con artist themselves, will recognize the ploy and get turned off from serving God because they are seeing the minister get away with this sham. They wonder where is God's judgment against such loathsome practices. There will be a judgment day for these pastors. Not soon enough, for most. So, there are those in the audience that get angry and stop serving God.

God did not leave us helpless against these charlatans. He gave us His Word to warn us against these predators. Paul was used to speak prophetically before leaving Corinth. He said:

Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock. Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn every one night and day with tears" (Acts 20:28-31).

As we study His Word, we will receive discernment through the gift of the Holy Spirit to guard against these merciless wolves. The key again, is learning God's Word. If only God's people would understand the benefits of knowing God's Word.

The Burden of the Lord

You might hear some preacher use this term, "The burden of the Lord. . ." when they feel like they can tap into a person's feelings of patriotism or righteous indignation against an immoral issue. They feel like God has Armageddon-anger against acts of abortion, adultery, homosexuality, flag burning, racism and the list goes on and on. It is true that these issues certainly grieve God, as all sin does, but they want to use Him to push their agenda. They will speak what is on their mind and then use a couple of scriptures to back up their message.

The pastors will say things like, "This issue weighs heavy upon my heart" or "There is a heaviness in my spirit." They will use these themes to loosen up the listener's wallet and then comes the clincher that seals every one's doubt that maybe this is some kind of moneymaking scheme, "This burden is from the Lord!" "Please send your donations to help fight this cause for the Lord," they proclaim. Well, you can't argue with that since it is from the "Lord." Can you? Yes, you can. God tells us to proclaim that warning from Him in Ezekiel 13:2-3, "Son of man, prophesy

against the prophets of Israel that prophesy, and say thou unto them that prophesy out of their own hearts, Hear ye the word of the LORD; Thus saith the Lord GOD; Woe unto the foolish prophets, that follow their own spirit, and have seen nothing!" That "Woe," is a warning that punishment is coming.

The warning is backed up by consequences. God will discover their treachery they have conceived. They proclaim that they are doing this to build protection for God's people. They will soon be discovered and God declares the end of the matter for the obstinate will be, ". . . ye shall be consumed in the midst thereof: and ye shall know that I am the LORD" (Ezek. 13:14).

Something crooked is going on when they plead for money rather than repentance from the congregation. That is one of the first indicators that they are not on the level. God says in Psalms 50:10-12, "For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof." God is not broke, neither does He need money to fight His battles.

God got tired of these false prophets in the Old Testament of always saying, "The burden of the Lord." He tells the prophet Jeremiah to say:

Behold, I am against them that prophesy false dreams, saith the LORD, and do tell them, and cause my people to err by their lies, and by their lightness; yet I sent them not, nor commanded them: therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the LORD. And when this people, or the prophet, or a priest, shall ask thee, saying, What is the burden of the LORD? thou shalt then say unto them, What burden? I will even forsake you, saith the LORD. And as for the prophet, and the priest, and the people, that shall say, The burden of the LORD, I will even punish that man and his house (Jer. 23:32-34).

They were making up their own message from God. He told them to stop saying, "The burden of the Lord." Did God change His mind?

God said that he would, "...punish that man and his house" for trying to speak for Him. God takes it serious when people misrepresent Him. It is on His Top 10 Don't List. Number four of the Royal Law is, "Thou shalt not take the name of the LORD thy God in vain; for the LORD will not hold him guiltless that taketh his name in vain" (Exod. 20:7). Clear enough? The punishment for breaking that law is death. Does someone still want to profess God speaks to him or her in contradiction to His previously recorded Word?

Building Fund

The infamous "Building Fund" is the classic moneymaking scheme that insatiable pastors never seem to tire of. The pastor has a vision of expansion that gets money going into a specific fund but nothing is ever accomplished. After the amount of money that was desired is reached, the pastor goes back to the congregation and lies to them about how the deal fell apart at the last minute. The few people that wake up from this bad dream get disheartened when they realize that the money had been used to fill greedy pockets.

See if these scenarios seem familiar. The pastor approaches the congregation with a glow all around his face. They think the glow comes from him being so spiritual. But he is so excited about thinking how soon the coffers will fill up. Nothing gets people excited like free money. He explains that he had been in a deep meditation with the Lord, (because that is what holy people do) and God had spoken to him through a vision.

God had given the pastor a sure Word of prophecy from either Jeremiah 32:7, "Behold, Hanamel the son of Shallum your uncle shall come to you, saying, Buy you my field that is in Anathoth; for the right of redemption is yours to buy it."; Joshua 1:11, "Pass through the midst of the camp, and command the people, saying, Prepare food; for within three days you are to pass over this Jordan, to go in to possess the land, which Yahweh your God gives you to possess it."; Isaiah 54:2-3, "Enlarge the place of your tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of your habitations; don't spare: lengthen your cords, and strengthen your stakes. For you shall spread aboard on the right hand and on the left; and

your seed shall possess the nations, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited” or similar passages that speak expressly about possessing a parcel of land or a building expansion project.

In order to accomplish this vision from the Lord; special offerings need to be taken up. These offerings are for the miracles, “building fund” and the double and triple tithe offerings. A normal person would say, “Is he crazy?” But, because he is the shepherd and they are the sheep, they are hoping that God is leading him. In context of the scriptures above, because God was initiating the message, Jeremiah and Israel did possess the lands. They did not keep it long though. History tells us that possession of the land changed many times after they possessed it. This does not apply to the New Testament church in regards to obtaining land, because we are just passing through this world as pilgrims on our way to possess our true reward in heaven (Heb. 11:13-16).

One example of this “building fund” farce happened in my sphere of Christian circles that I fellowship with. Some of the members of that church would come unto me asking if I could pray for a parking lot for their church. They were told by their pastor to spend so much time in prayer for this. They believed this to be an important part of God’s work; the parking lot. Their pastor had come to them saying God led him to believe that the church is supposed to purchase this parking lot. But in order for that to happen everyone will need to make sacrifices (this did not include him). He was asking them to double and triple their tithe offerings. On top of that were special love offerings, miracle offerings and the so-called “building fund” offerings.

The pastor kept the fervor of the giving up by telling them to have faith, believing that they will be receiving their rewards for this plan by sowing their “Seed” money (see SEEDS). After a year of these special offerings and much prayer he came to explain to the church that the deal fell through. He did not explain where all the money went or will go, that was gathered during this time. The people were left dangling with no further explanations. They could still see him and the wife driving the nicest cars and see them going on many trips. They began to question certain things. So if this was God’s will, to lead them in a direction and then drop them, what about the other things they were laboring in? Like giving to missions, praying for the sick and trying to evangelize

their family and friends. Will this work also be unfruitful?

The people were really perplexed when they found out later the other particulars. It turned out to be even less of big deal than just a parking lot. The pastor was supposedly bidding on one floor of a parking garage. It was not even a lot. It was just one floor. And he still could not even by a floor after that many months of taking up money from these offerings. This parking lot was not paved with gold. So what happened to the money?

The church is always mentioned as a body of believers in the New Testament and not a building. The apostles and believers did not seek after possessing land. No, just the opposite happened. They were giving it away to those that needed. Luke writes in the Acts of the Apostles, "For neither was there among them any who lacked, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet, and distribution was made to each, according as anyone had need" (4:34-35). It was given to the needy and not the greedy. That was so that every one could be equal. It was explained earlier like this in Acts 4:32, "The multitude of those who believed were of one heart and soul. Not one of them claimed that anything of the things which he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common." The possessions were not to be hoarded by one man when other believers still had needs.

I am not against going into big and beautiful churches. Some are designed with a theme to set the mood for teaching, holiness, God's majesty, and splendor. These themes sometimes add to the worship experience. But at what cost does it come to the believer? Is the attention supposed to be about a big comfortable church or God? You don't need a big building to present the Gospel. The Apostle Paul was able to conduct his ministry unhindered by saying that he, ". . . didn't shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, teaching you publicly and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks repentance toward God, and faith toward our Lord Jesus" (Acts 20:20-21). He did this by going house to house. I am sure that he had no problem erecting a tent when he needed to since he was a tent-maker.

There is no need for the emphasis to be on a big building or piece of land. What will happen to this church building when

the Lord comes for His body of believers; the real church (see Matt. 24:40-41, John 14:3, Col.3:4 and 1 Thess. 4:16)? Solomon certainly knew the folly of this when he penned, "Yea, I hated all my labour which I had taken under the sun: because I should leave it unto the man that shall be after me. And who knoweth whether he shall be a wise man or a fool? yet shall he have rule over all my labour wherein I have labored, and wherein I have shewed myself wise under the sun. This is also vanity" (Eccles. 2:18-19). Satan will probably make the church house into an abomination by turning it into a brothel or slaughterhouse after the Rapture. Who will withstand him once the believers are taken out before the Great Tribulation begins? He will reign in power to vex any soul that has a shred of decency left in them during those last seven years of human history. So why should we leave a nice beautiful building that was built by the blood, sweat and tears of the saints for use during the Great Tribulation?

God never asked people to build a big building. He questions King David in 2 Samuel 7:7, "In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" The answer is no. He only let Solomon build the temple in order to show the folly of trusting in buildings.

The Israelites soon made the temple a thing to trust in. It became an idol (see Ezek. 24:21). God desires obedience that builds our spiritual temple rather than sacrifices that builds a physical one. The Israelites felt that as long as they could go to the physical temple that was still standing they could get away with pretty much anything. They found out differently:

Behold, ye trust in lying words, that cannot profit. Will ye steal, murder, and commit adultery, and swear falsely, and burn incense unto Baal, and walk after other gods whom ye know not; And come and stand before me in this house, which is called by my name, and say, We are delivered to do all these abominations? Is this house, which is called by my name, become a den of robbers in your eyes? Behold, even I have seen it, saith the LORD. But go ye now unto my place which

was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did to it for the wickedness of my people Israel (Jer. 7:8-12).

God had removed his presence from Shiloh and then later Jerusalem because of their wickedness of making the temple to be like a "den of robbers." The wicked leadership of Eli and his two sons had caused the "glory of Lord" to depart from Shiloh (see 1 Sam. 2-4). The same will happen to the churches that have thieving pastors that continue to use scams like the "Building Fund."

Express Church

The newest edition to a busy world is Express Church. It makes the claim of being able to get you in and out of the church experience within an hour. What is a person supposed to "experience," within that hour?

It is the last service of the morning, just before lunch. The worship leader begins with a few songs, announcements are made, an offering is taken up and then a brief message for 20-25 minutes. Something light and fluffy about family or relationships. It is the drive-thru equivalent for religion. The people pull up to the church menu and ask to skip the meal because they are only interested in the dessert.

I became disturbed when I had first heard this being advertised on the radio. I conducted a phone interview with a woman from the church. She explained that this is done for two reasons. The first was so that the people that had set up for the first and second services could have the opportunity to sit down, pay their tithes and hear a message. The second reason was to provide a place for those that are not ready for the full church experience. She explained that if the seekers like what they see, they might come back. Hmm? Come back to the express version or the regular one? Lets see if that rational holds up to scrutiny.

The church is where God had established a place where believers could come and hear the Gospel in hopes that the saving knowledge gained might be sustained, extended and perpetuated throughout all generations. How is this accomplished in twenty

minutes? It's not. Where is the fellowship? Hi and goodbye? In one door and out the other. Just keep the blessings coming God. See Ya'.

The leaders of the church that are doing this are making the assumption that the seekers for the shorter church experience will eventually start attending the earlier church services, because. . .? Because. . .? Well, why would they change? The person would have to feel like they are missing out on something from the express version to want to leave it. They say that the Express Service is the fastest one growing. Does not sound like many people are leaving that service. They are actually leaving the other services. So what is the person getting from the Express Church experience that they are not getting from the regular service?

Maybe, it is for the person to be able to say they went to a church, without having to take up too much of their personal time? They went somewhere to a place that identifies itself as a church. Well, they did call it an Express Church. They were singing church songs, then took up a money collection and someone spoke to the people using a couple of verses from the Bible. Sounds like they are describing a church. But it is not. As mentioned earlier, its sole purpose for existing is for those that are not ready for the "real church." So it is not being identified as a church, but only an "express" version. That is so they can get a taste of the real thing. The only question left from this confusion is; who is fooling whom?

It sounds like the services are being rendered for a fee. It's back to the Dark Ages. In those days you could buy indulgences. The payment would take care of the nagging guilt of their conscience. The person comes in to drop off money into the coffer and listen to a message that is not convicting and so watered down that it has no effect on the hearer. A person can go into a service an unbeliever and come out worse than they went in. Because now they think they are going to heaven because someone up there must have put an attendance star next to their name for being in church.

But God is not fooled. If there is no application of the Word in a person's life, how can they be called, believers? Jesus put it this way in His Sermon on the Mount, "And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?" (Luke 6:46). It

is not enough for a pastor to go through the motions and speed through a church service for convenience when there is no impact accomplished in their lives for the kingdom of God. What should happen to that pastor that uses a gimmick to willingly defraud the churchgoer of their opportunity to have a relationship with God?

Healing Service

There are pastors that boast that they will heal all the sick that come unto them. Some even choose particular days this will take place. You have probably seen the signs, "Healing Service on Tuesday from 630 pm to 830 pm." The Bible teaches in James 5:14 that when a person becomes sick or afflicted, ". . . let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord:" It does not matter which day, He is a God that heals every day. The pastor is not the only prayer force available in the church. He can be one of those bringing the afflicted before the elders of the church. It states in James 5:16 to, "Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that ye may be healed." Does not even mention him; much less, making him the focal point. Every one is to be in humility by coming to one another asking each other to forgive.

Who knows if it is the person needing to be prayed over or the person praying is holding a grudge or ought towards the other? Everyone needs to make right with one another, then God can be in the midst. If they are unwilling to forgive, then God cannot work with an unrepentant sinner. In Isaiah 59:2 it says, "But your iniquities have separated between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you, that he will not hear." A person must be in a right standing before the Lord so that He can hear their prayer. That is why James goes on to say, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jas. 5:20). A right heart is the necessary qualifier for a "righteous man."

Which one of the elders or pastor has that gift of healing or faith at that moment? If the pastors are found to be in sin, how about the elders? Are all in right standing before God when the prayers are needed? Is forgiveness even being taught before the service begins? But you have prideful ministers today saying,

“Why I got to forgive? I was forgiven a long time ago by Christ?” Will God hear their prayer? God warns us that there is greater condemnation for teachers in the book of James. James explains the judgment this way, “For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body” (Jas. 3:2). If he had not sinned before that, he certainly would offend me by him telling me; the sick person, that I must confess my sins and ask for forgiveness and he does not. He gets to play “Holy, Holy,” expecting the angels to come fly around his throne next. I don’t think so.

God had us all come under sin so that we could be equal. Yes, even the pastor. No one is of higher value than the other. We are all sinners. We all need to abide by God’s holy scriptures. No matter if the person holds the title of Evangelist, Bishop, or Pope. God uses the Apostle Paul to write, “For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God;” (Rom. 3:23). Pastors tend to use that word to condemn and judge people rather than remind themselves that they are part of the “all.”

You see, there is a good reason we cannot read with the written pages turned away from us. We can only read it when it is facing us. That is so we can acknowledge it for ourselves, first. If the Word is not good for us, how can it be good for the next person? That is how you know if the person is ministering with love, if they take it for themselves first. Then that will enable them to minister boldly because they have that confidence that the Word is good. God’s Word says in Matthew 7:5, “...first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother’s eye.” If the minister does not clean out his own eye first, then Matthew 7:2 applies to him or her, “For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.” The Word of God does not care what title you hold. He makes this clear in Colossians 3:25, “But he that doeth wrong shall receive for the wrong which he hath done: and there is no respect of persons.” A title does not exempt a person from being under the authority of God’s Word.

There is a reason why God allows miraculous works of healing in the church. It is so that He alone can get the glory. He says in Isaiah 42:8, “I am the LORD: that is my name: and

my glory will I not give to another, neither my praise to graven images." There is no one person that can say, "I did the healing." Another reason is so that everyone can be edified by being used as instruments for His wondrous works. It gives the parishioner a feeling of purpose when they are part of the works by praying and laying of hands. Peter tells the elders to take on this responsibility willingly (1 Pet. 5:2). It should not be for the money so that they become some kind of healing extortionist. The motives of the Pastor need to be pure.

Satellite Church

One of the newest fads in Christian circles is the Satellite church. It is where the leader of a church movement does not plant other churches but instead rents buildings and plays broadcasts of his service. People can get that from watching the service in their own homes via the television set from the cable programs. But then there is no way to collect any money that way.

These Ministers will branch their church services off into different locations and make a live satellite feed of their service to come into that building. This is not Biblical. They give men under them titles of Pastors but do not allow them to do the job. Those so-called pastors are put there to set up the broadcast screen, give announcements, relay messages back to the Head Pastor, and collect the funds for this money laundering scheme. They conceal the destination of where the money is going. They are given a minor role so that the attention is again not taken off of the Head Pastor.

Pastors will try to justify their actions and salary by saying, "The people come because: 'I'm funny' or a 'Great Teacher', a 'Faith Healer' or 'God uses me to draw the souls.'" None of those excuses are found in the scriptures. They are supposed to be coming to worship and serve God. The scripture says, "And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto me" (John 12:32). The "I," and "me," refers to Jesus and not the pastor. So soon they forget. Tsk.

That is total pride on their part. Pride is of the devil. Pastors are doing what Lucifer did those many years ago by saying, ". . . I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon

the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will be like the most High" (Isa. 14:13-14). They want the church worship service to be about them.

The pastors will sometimes use the excuse that they are following the advice that Moses' father-in-law gave him to justify their actions. In Exodus it says:

And thou shalt teach them ordinances and laws, and shalt shew them the way wherein they must walk, and the work that they must do. Moreover thou shalt provide out of all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place such over them, to be rulers of thousands, and rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens: And let them judge the people at all seasons: and it shall be, that every great matter they shall bring unto thee, but every small matter they shall judge: so shall it be easier for thyself, and they shall bear the burden with thee (18:20-22).

At that time they were all in one camp in the desert, not satellites. Moses gave the people able men that knew what they were doing in order to handle matters according to knowledge of the ordinances and laws. One of the greatest requirements I can see is that they, "hated covetousness." Oh, if only that would be a requirement today.

In the New Testament the people were to be equipped in how to preach to the ends of the earth. The Apostle Paul instructs Timothy and Titus to ordain Bishops, Pastors and Elders in all the churches to do the work of God. One of the deciding factors for them to be chosen is that they would be, "Holding fast the faithful word as he hath been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Tit. 1:9). He tells Timothy, "And the things that thou hast heard of me among many witnesses, the same commit to faithful men, who shall be able to teach others also" (2 Tim. 2:2).

These church leaders were to be taught the "faithful word," by "faithful men." It was so that they could hold their own in a debate and depend on God rather than Paul. The sheep deserve a pastor that can shepherd them in proximity to their needs. You

do not want to put a person out in front of a congregation that has only had 10 courses on, "Bible Basics and Audio/Visual System Setup."

The Pastors will do this so that the attention is continuing to be focused on them. Their pocketbooks get inflated in direct proportion with their ego. And if this is a true proverb. How about the person that does not get paid? He follows God's Word that says, "And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give" (Matt. 10:7-8). That means he is still humble. Because he understands that the Word he preaches is not his. It is God's. Pastors have got to understand what they read. The scripture says in Matthew 11:29, "Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls." When we learn about God, it is to humble us.

My pastor has always had that belief of doing everything for the glory of God without any thought for money. When I was invited to church, I came with the mentality that minister's are only in it for the money. After I learned that he did not take any money, I could not judge him. That meant I had to listen to the Word being preached because his motives were based on love. That allowed the Word to accomplish its task of breaking down the stony heart and make it into a heart of flesh.

It says in Psalms 19:7-9, "The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes. The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether." I needed a pastor with clean hands to preach the "word," with conviction so that it could change my soul. I know it was by the Spirit of God that led me to him. How glorious it is for those that can be set free of their sins by the preaching of the pure Word. This is what pastors are to teach and promote in the start up of leaders in the planting of new churches.

What Bible?

Nowadays, a Bible seems obsolete in a church setting. Not even the self-righteous that like to cup it under their arm to look holy are toting them. They instead concentrate more on their wardrobe. The church attendee now relies on a missal that is handed out by the ushers as you enter. The pastor puts this out to follow along with his sermon. The missal is a one or two page colorful scripted presentation of that day's topic.

The topic will be something like family, relationships, or their favorite, money. The theme will be presented at the top. Next will be five to seven sentences with a blank that needs to be filled out somewhere in the sentence. How do you fill in the blank? By going to the scripture they put alongside it? No. You have to listen to his message. The pastor will key you into when you need to write the answer in the blank.

What is supposed to be the impact of being able to fill in a blank? Maybe, to keep the listener's attention so they feel that they have a purpose in coming to church? The participant thinks they went to a Bible Study when truthfully they went to a Blank Study. It's true. You ask the person on Monday what they studied at church or even the message and guess what happens? You get a blank stare and rarely you get an explanation on what the blank was about. Most times they only remember a joke that was given somewhere in the monologue.

If you ask where in the Bible the blank came from? No answer. They either say that it is written down in their notes for them to study later or truthfully that they did not care. Will they study it later? No. You ask them on Friday if they had found out what they were supposed to study? Same blank stare. Even if you ask them again the next week. It is the same thing 999 times out of a 1,000.

When do you think the people go back to the Bible to study it? If they don't bring it with them to church then they are not going home to study it. It still remains on the shelf collecting dust because they get busy doing other things. So the pastor has the perfect opportunity to teach from the Bible in church, if the people bring one. So why are the people not bringing a Bible? Is the pastor telling them not to bring one?

Yes, in more ways than one. The pastor is teaching the people by his actions. He begins by passing out the missals and then teaching from them instead of the Bible. The Bible states that, “. . . faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). So then what happens to them that are taught from missals. The scripture gets changed to: Faith in the pastor comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of the pastor.

The next message he teaches is that you don't need a Bible. He is in front of the congregation without a Bible. The pastor has a scripted presentation he wants to give that does not allow for the Holy Spirit through God's Word to instruct the congregation. The people notice if he does not hold on to or cherish the Word of God. They follow their leader's example.

Who then is responsible for God's people learning about a blank rather than His Word? The shepherds are accountable to God. This was also happening in the Old Testament. God used the prophet Hosea to tell them, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children” (Hos. 4:6). Pastors that forget God's law and start teaching their own doctrine will lose His protection over their family and incur His wrath.

There is not even any protection for the other children within the church. The pastors do not even teach the difference between children of the light and darkness. The light they are supposed to be carrying is Jesus. He says in John 8:12, “. . . I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life.” Without being taught the Word, (John.1:1) the people in the congregation do the same things as the world and suffer the same consequences.

Therefore, God has a problem with the priests of this generation also. He says in Hosea 4:1-2, “Hear the word of the LORD, ye children of Israel: for the LORD hath a controversy with the inhabitants of the land, because there is no truth, nor mercy, nor knowledge of God in the land. By swearing, and lying, and killing, and stealing, and committing adultery, they break out, and blood toucheth blood.” The people do not know about the important things that separate them from God and align themselves with the world. They do whatever their flesh tells

them is right.

There is a preacher in Hawaii that told a story during his message of how he was frustrated of not hearing from God. He explained that he felt like he was going through a dry season. So he decided he would go off to the beach to camp out and be alone with God. So he takes the church's money in order to accomplish this. He goes out and buys all new camping gear; tent, lantern, sleeping bag, etc. . . He believed that while he was spending their money, he was doing this for the church. He reiterates during the message that he was on this hiatus so that he could hear from God on how to best lead the congregation.

How about the shepherd reading and studying God's Word? Novel idea, huh? How about being available to the congregation and his family? No money is being spent that way. But instead, these pastors are supposedly studying how to perfect their message into a dynamic presentation on, "How to present an effective prayer to God so that you can persuade Him to give you what you want!" How many more camping trips is that going to take? Messages on how to seek God's hand will certainly bring the masses in to fill his pockets. But he will continue to have undernourished and immature sheep. But does he care? He knows one thing. As long as he is the pastor he can get away with going camping while everyone else is at work.

These are the practices that continue in the church, just like in the world, because there is no knowledge of God in the church. There is only the latest thinking of man's doctrine. When was the last time he preached from the Word? Without knowledge of mercy or forgiveness, hate is bred and grows out of check in the church. Everyone is ignorant and blissfully thinking they are going to heaven. Without the truth being preached to set the people free, they continue in the bondage that enslaves them to this world.

The pastors would rather counsel whatever fancies their emotions instead of what the Bible teaches. I had a male prisoner come up to me during work and asking what he should do with a Pastor from his church. His wife was currently working as the Treasurer of the church. One of the Associate Pastors was counseling the wife to get an annulment of the marriage. The pastor's reasoning for this counsel was because they had recently

got married and already the husband was back in prison for lying to his Parole Officer. He told her that, "Once a liar, he will always be a liar."

I wonder what fable or fairy tale the pastor gathered this wisdom from. The Bible teaches in Romans 3:4, ". . . let God be true, but every man a liar. . ." That even includes him as a liar. I do not condone the man for lying but God is the only one that can be trusted. We cannot even trust our own selves. The Book of Proverbs says, "He that is of a proud heart stirreth up strife: but he that putteth his trust in the LORD shall be made fat. He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool: but whoso walketh wisely, he shall be delivered" (Prov. 28:25-6). I wonder what motive he had by telling her to annul the marriage with her husband. Did he forget or has he ever learned, (he holds the title of the Tithing Pastor?) that Matthew 19:6 says, "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder." A Pastor can counsel separation for a time being to keep the peace and safety in abusive situations but not for divorce unless it is for specific reasons detailed in the Bible.

The specific reasons for divorce are not given as a command but guidelines for an option. A person can still remain in the marriage if they can forgive and work on restoring the love. Jesus said in Matthew 19:8-9, ". . . Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so. And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery." He understands that the heart can get hardened after adultery enters into the relationship. Next, God uses the Apostle Paul to counsel that a person is no longer bound to the marriage if the unbeliever abandons them. He says in 1 Corinthians 7:15, "But if the unbelieving depart, let him depart. A brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases: but God hath called us to peace."

God gave us these scriptures to be able to live in peace with others and ourselves. But to counsel divorce outside of this is leading the person into sin. God can forgive adultery and abandonment. He will allow the person to choose without coercion. A pastor that is telling that person to leave their spouse

for lying is making himself or herself a liar also. How so? Well, in just about every Christian wedding there is a part that asks for a vow of commitment to each other until death do them part. Both parties responded, "I do." So which one is the greater sinner now? The conspirator or the one acting as directed? Neither, both have the same eternal destination if they are not willing to forgive (Rev. 21:8).

Man's wisdom is teaching these days that you bring the couple in individually to counsel them. They then get to hear them individually talk trash and their dislikes about the other person without being interrupted. They then have them write down on paper their past hurts the other person has done to them.

This does not solve their problems. If anything, it makes it worse by bringing up past hurts and opening up the wounds. The individual then begins to wonder why are they even bothering with this person after they remember the emotions that come back from the time the other person was hurting them. This is not the counsel of God that helps couples.

Pastors cannot arbitrarily pull counsel out of their hind parts when a person's eternal soul is at stake. That is why the Apostle Paul wrote, "And my speech and my preaching was not with enticing words of man's wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power: That your faith should not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God" (1 Cor. 2:4-5). We cannot stand on the "wisdom of men." Paul later explains that it was man's worldly wisdom that crucified Christ (see 1 Cor. 2:8). So you can see that a pastor and a congregation that is not being taught the Bible is free to slander and crucify one another.

This is not a Bible Study

We had a couple from our church move to the Big Island of Hawaii to be closer to help out her folks in their twilight years. One of the main things they missed after leaving was having the access to a Bible Study that was open every night of the week. When the couple found a church, they expressed their desire to learn more of God's Word. They were told that we don't do that here because they are considered a "Harvesting Church." Meaning, they are just interested in bringing in new people to the

church.

What purpose are they bringing them in for, if not to teach them about Jesus? Must be to harvest their money, obviously. They certainly don't care if the sheep are fed. The couple then asked what could they be involved in.

The couple was then introduced to a program called "Lifestyles." Where do you find that in the Word of God? I guess studying the Bible sounds too boring for some. It seems to be a ploy to sound contemporary and upbeat? Other churches have their own versions. Whether it is called, Lifestyles, Lifegroup, or any other thing, it definitely is not supposed to be associated with the Word of God. Lifestyles, is really the pastor's agenda coupled with a few verses from the Bible to back up what he wants to teach. It is mostly about giving money. Their agenda will never produce life. Jesus proclaims in John 6:63, ". . . the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." None of us can have a Life-anything without the Word of God being taught with understanding.

Anyway, the couple became involved with what little the church had to offer but was not satisfied with the amount or content of Bible-teaching in the meetings. They were normally given a few scriptures from different parts of the Bible and a time limit of one hour. They would later find out how adamant the church was about the one hour.

The couple then began testifying of how our church would meet every weeknight for Bible Study and would not leave until everyone was satisfied with the message. From their testimony, others had gotten a desire for the same thing. The couple then prayed and was led to open their own Lifestyles group. This entailed inviting people over to their home to study God's Word on a Monday night without a time limit.

Our couple had finished the short guidelines on the lesson plan put out in the church flier by nine o'clock. But after the people heard the Word being expounded with understanding they wanted more. The reason anyone is supposed to go to a Bible Study is to build his or her faith in God. The Bible says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). They were hungry for more of the Word. So they continued the meeting, answering their questions so the people would leave

satisfied. The Apostle James speaks about the Christian's duty to the starving soul. He says, "If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed and filled; notwithstanding ye give them not those things which are needful to the body; what doth it profit? Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone" (Jas. 2:15-17).

The word got out that there was a place that you could actually study God's Word. The people began to multiply and the church leader's curiosity also grew. They began to think that this couple was trying to steal souls and take their job away. When the job was theirs they did not want it. The church was closed on Monday night, anyway. So they were not trying to steal the souls and no money was taken up. So it came down to the issue of pride.

The church leaders called them into the church office and told them that they had heard of their Bible studies and asked them to stop teaching because it did not line up with their program of "Lifestyles." They also heard about their teaching lasted beyond one hour and was unacceptable. Before this they were being asked to lead another one of the church's Bible Study groups. They were now being asked to also step down from that teaching post for a season. So they were now supposed to leave the hungry souls without someone to feed them, again. You would think the church leaders would recognize there was a need not being met and volunteer their time on Monday night at the church to teach. But this did not happen since football season was coming up.

In Acts chapter 20, Paul continued preaching after midnight. The disciples did not tell him that he could not preach, even after the person went to sleep and fell down dead from the loft. So what do these people use to justify their actions of stopping the people to preach? They said the couple needed to acknowledge their place as "harvesters" and not teachers. Only for a season, until they would acknowledge the church requirements for time constraints on a Bible Study and strict adherence to their lesson plan. If not, they had their permission to leave. Interpreted: If you don't like it, Get Out!

Should we send those that are hungry and naked away because it is a church rule to do so? Are we to have faith that the

people will come back when tomorrow does not belong to us? Or should we exercise our faith by works of feeding the people while it is still called today? They were following the example they had seen in our Pastor. Sometimes, he would serve the people all night by ministering and then makes his lunch and head off to the construction work site and do a full days work there.

Watching a movie is a good analogy to use in explaining how God's Word is to be taught. A person does not usually go to a theater to watch a particular movie and then set down to watch it skip to several scenes from five or six different movies being shown elsewhere. Most people would like to know what else happens in the movie they were watching or at least the ending. Wouldn't a person leave angry with the establishment or at the very least confused. That is what happens in most churches today.

Now take that analogy to how most Bible studies are structured. If a person brings a Bible, they set down and are told to turn to Saint John Chapter 6. They then deliver the message in the beginning of how Jesus miraculously fed the multitude and then skip to other miracles that Jesus performed in the other Gospels. Why would they do that? I don't know. But in doing so, they skip the message that Jesus was trying to teach. He told those that followed after him for the miraculous feedings in John 6:35, ". . . I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst." He was trying to get them to understand that believing in Him meant that He would bring satisfaction to their desires for eternity. They are many more messages in that chapter. The main one being that He is the "I am."

The "I am" means that He is the becoming and eternal One. Jesus wanted to be everything to those that would eat and drink of His Word. Not to be there for a lunch that satisfies for only a few hours. Why are people then coming for a message from God and leave wondering why they were only given glimpses to confuse and frustrate them? It is not God's fault.

God has set up His Word to be followed line upon line, from verse to verse. Just like any other story or book. It flows from thought to thought. So why are the leaders cutting the message before the thought is finished or jumping from book to book

like some wild schizophrenic? I understand there are times for topographical studies but certainly not every week.

No one would should ever leave with a questions or doubt. Because we know that the Word says, “. . . for whatsoever is not of faith is sin” (Rom. 14:23). Should we then tell those that are hungry for more understanding, “Go figure it out yourself.” Most Bible studies these days are conducted like that. They have a script they follow from the church or denomination and then shut it down afterwards. The church leaders have got the teachers and students under bondage when their rules supersede the Spirit of God trying to teach (see John 16:13).

A similar case in the Bible was portrayed in Acts Chapter 5. The disciples were doing many wondrous works and being obedient to the Spirit of God. The religious leaders did not like the multitude following the Apostles and not them. It says in Acts 5:17, “Then the high priest rose up, and all they that were with him, (which is the sect of the Sadducees,) and were filled with indignation, . . .” They became so angry that they put them in prison. But God sent his angel to release them with instructions to, “Go, stand and speak in the temple to the people all the words of this life” (Acts 5:20). There is a purpose for God setting us free. It is to go and preach. Not to leave the bondage of sin only to come under the heavy yoke of religion.

Our ex-members were preaching, “all the words of this life.” But man will try to keep others in bondage and submission to their authority. Just like how the church leaders were doing to this couple. Maybe those church leaders should be put in prison to set them on fire?

When God was restoring His people after captivity He desired that the leaders have the “Book,” be read to them in Nehemiah Chapter 8. The Levites, the teachers of the Old Testament, were to spend time teaching the people so they could understand what was being preached. It states, “So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading” (v. 8). It takes time and patience to do this task correctly, because God gives these instructions. In Nehemiah 9:3 it says the priests, “. . . stood up in their place, and read in the book of the law of the LORD their God one fourth part of the day; and another fourth part they confessed,

and worshipped the LORD their God." How can they say that an hour is too long? Maybe they should read what the Bible says about studying (see Teaching)?

Full Time Ministry

Be careful when you hear someone say, "I quit my job. I feel that God has called me into full-time ministry." The interpretation of that means, "I'm tired of working. I'm going to go around using God's name for my plan to stop working. I will make people feel guilty so that they will support me." There is a reason they are saying it in front of you. Don't think for a moment that they do not know what they are doing. They have an agenda. It is so that you will be the one to feel guilty and support them or be the first one they judge as not being spiritual enough to support the work of God. They will use you as an example in their upcoming sermons.

They will even invite themselves to churches so they can use their ploy to enlist congregations to support them. The way they get up to the pulpits is by announcing that they have a message to preach from the "Lord." How are you going to say no to a message from the "Lord?" Somewhere within the message they will throw out that they have a family. This is so that every one can identify with them and see that there is more at stake than him not being able to eat or be sheltered. These types of self-appointed evangelist are very crafty and good at their scam. He understands that if people are not giving to his cause then he will have to go back to that four-letter word, "Work." He does not want that to happen.

Every believer has been given that Great Commission to preach the Gospel in Mark 16:15-16, "And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned." It is supposed to be a full-time ministry for everyone. It is not only for those select few that stand behind a pulpit. They are expected to equip the Body of Christ for this mission and then send them out into the world.

So what is the right context of a full-time ministry? Jesus tells us to, "Occupy till I come. . ." (Luke 19:13). We are to be citizens

in His kingdom and work and live next to those in the kingdom of darkness, hoping they will be converted. This continues until He returns to judge our work. In the parable, He rewarded those that were diligent and faithful. But to the one that did nothing, He called him a “wicked servant. . .” (Luke 19:22).

Jesus wants us to be diligent and faithful in whatever profession we choose. He tell us to “walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called” (Eph. 4:1). Whether it is as a Mason that lays bricks or a Cashier that bags groceries. How are we to light that candle to a dark world if we only stay in the church? Not all of us have the same job, but we are to have the same goal, “For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12-13). Until then, we are all called to a “Full Time Ministry” that has you working and preaching alongside your fellow man.

Retire

In some Christian circles you hear of the pastors bragging about retiring before they are 50 years old. That is some retirement plan to envy. Work a couple of days a week and retire at least 10 years before everyone else does.

Is it right that the congregation support the retirement of pastors? How many pastors is the church supposed to support on retired leave status along with the already burdensome task of the regular staff? How much percentage of the tithes and offerings need to be set-aside for this purpose? Do these proceeds go into a 401K in order to maximize the final outcome? What guidelines have been set forth to deal with this? There is nothing in the scriptures.

These are the hard problems that arise from the church having to support able-bodied men. The church was instructed in 1 Timothy 5:9, “Let not a widow be taken into the number under threescore years old, having been the wife of one man.” They were only to take in widows that were over 60 years old that were faithful in things of God and did not have any family to support them. Even the government that is equipped with the

most qualified financial minds has problems trying to keep Social Security retirement plans afloat. What problems do you think can arise from trying to support retirement plans for multiple pastors within a body of believers that are simple farmers?

When these problems come up, whom do the pastors blame? They blame God for not providing enough wisdom, finances and sheep to keep them in the lap of luxury. They are faced with the dilemma of keeping the people entertained so that they don't feel the pinch in their wallets. But God did provide answers for the congregation. But those are the consequences when we do not read every Word of God and are dependent on pastors that are selective in using scriptures that are beneficial to their future retirement.

Pastors do not want just any old retirement plan. They want a house to be included also, preferably someplace warm like Florida. There has to be a food stipend given too so that any money they have can be spent on fun. After all, they did work for God.

The Bible only speaks about retirement from sacrificial service in Numbers 8:25-26, "And from the age of fifty years they shall cease waiting upon the service thereof, and shall serve no more: But shall minister with their brethren in the tabernacle of the congregation, to keep the charge, and shall do no service. Thus shalt thou do unto the Levites touching their charge." This was due to the pastors having to wait continually on the temple sacrifices and ordinances that were kept according to the Law of Moses. After age 50, slaughtering animals from the morning to the evening can take a toll on a person's body. Since Jesus came on the scene as the High Priest and the Ultimate Sacrifice that fulfilled the law, there is no need for these ceremonies (see Eph. 2:14-15). Even after 50 years of age they were still required to "minister with their brethren" until the day they died. The duties have changed and there is no manual labor to tax the physical body. So why are they tired of ministering? Was it ever a labor of love?

How do you retire from God? You hear pastors say that they heard God's voice calling them in to the ministry. Does it work like that for retirement? Don't think so. Whose voice are they hearing? I believe they hear themselves.

God is not going to go back on His Word. He says in Matthew 9:36-38, "But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the laborers are few; Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth laborers into his harvest." He wants to keep his shepherds in active service since there already is a lack of "laborers."

The Bible gives us the example of Moses in his service to the Lord as being, "hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated" (Deut. 34:7). God was able to sustain him for the work prepared for him. Besides, how hard is it to tell people of the goodness of the Lord? Pastors that teach have also got to remember that they were called to be doers. The Psalmist instructs his people; especially pastors, "O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people. Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works. Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD. Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore" (Ps. 105:1-4). So pastors should continue to preach until God takes them home to glory or in rare cases, need to be replaced because of senility.

Vacation

Everyone loves a vacation but that does not mean that everybody can afford one. How about a Pastor? Should he be able to take a vacation with his family? By what means does he use in deciding where he should go and how much money can he spend?

Let us contrast two people in the congregation in order to determine the fairness of the judgment in determining the answers to these questions. On one hand, we have the Pastor that has a salary paid by the church of \$3,000.00 a month (a conservative amount by some standards). The other person is the Janitor, also on salary with the church at a \$1,000.00 a month. With the cost of living, can this Janitor afford a vacation? Not if he wants to continue eating and having a roof over his head. Of course people make choices in where they live, the bills they want to pay and

how much they are willing to save. But you can see that the Pastor has a lot more to work with.

They both have salaries paid by the church. How is that salary generated from the church? From the tithes and offering of course. How many people in the church does it take to finance these salaries so that they can go on vacation (see Scenarios)? Is the Janitor one of those people giving his tithes and offerings to finance the pastor's vacation? Doesn't it look like a disparity here? Since the Janitor is helping to pay for the pastor's vacation shouldn't he have a say in how many times little Suzie can ride the roller coaster? Can he set a limit to how many times little Jack can rent the Jet Ski? I think we all should if we are helping finance the vacation.

The only solution would be if the Janitor were equal to the Pastor. Neither would get paid a salary but volunteer their services to the kingdom of God. Again, a novel idea. They both would have jobs in the community like the early church. The Apostle Paul writes about his work as an equal in 2 Thessalonians 3:8, "Neither did we eat any man's bread for nought; but wrought with labour and travail night and day, that we might not be chargeable to any of you." He did not want to give a free handout while everyone else worked hard. He provided his own way. If the Pastor or Janitor is a Writer, Administrator or Social Worker that generates a salary of \$3,000.00, should not they be able to plan and have that fun, lavish, and refreshing vacation anyway they choose? They should also have a clean conscious doing it since they have honestly worked for it.

The All Powerful Audience of One

The Spirit of God is always going to direct the pastor to hear from God's Word. This is how He wants to speak to all of His children. But today's pastors are making the message to be about them. They say God is going to use them to do some great miracle in the future or how He has used them to channel a new message to the church. Most of these messages are far from lining up with God's already written Word.

You don't have to be around Christian circles long before you hear a pastor or a self-proclaimed messenger from God say,

"God spoke to me." Sometimes they will preface it with, "I was spending time with the Lord in prayer," in order for them to look more spiritual. How are you going to reproach that? You would have to call them a liar to their face and say, "God, never said that." Their response would then be, "How do you know that? Did God talk to you?" But God still speaks to us through the Word.

You really have to know the Word before you deal with this type of charlatan. This type may not want money but would rather have the drunkenness of power. After all, he claims to be plugged into God's hot-line messaging system. These few that boast of this divine intimacy have rarely got pulled on to the carpet to prove it. But God has got more than one answer for them. One of those is Hebrews 1:1-2, "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds." In the past, God spoke by the, "prophets." But now He speaks to us by His "Son (the Word)," Jesus.

Those of us that are learned know Jesus is the Word. How? Saint John 1:1 says, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." That "Word," took on human form in Saint John 1:14, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth." God speaks to us by the scriptures and not by the fanciful imaginations of man.

I guess they are expecting a response like, "Wow! You and the Big Guy really talk to each other?" It definitely is a pride issue. A closer look into the lives of the cult leaders reveal that they were not the most popular people growing up in school. Usually loners and some might even call them losers. But when they found the power that comes from the simple phrase, "God said . . .," they were convinced this was their ticket to fame. They were close. Infamy is like fame, except without the honor. People know the name but wish they did not.

That fame bubble is depleted really quickly when you hear what God supposedly said to them. It will be something outrageous that immediately evokes a response of, "That's crazy!" Most of us remember the time that the Preacher said, "God told

me that if I did not raise 10 million dollars for him, He is going to kill me." But because of the title they have, most people try to give them the benefit of the doubt.

They begin to make their case by bringing an obscure verse from the Old Testament that is totally out of context. They explain that it has a hidden meaning by going on to say, "In the original Hebrew text, it could mean this . . ." They are counting on people to be too lazy to search the scriptures or feel he or she is far too trustworthy because of their education to doubt them.

God is still trying to get the shepherd's attention because apparently they are holding the office but not hearing His message from the Word. Many shepherds today are going on their own understanding or being dictated what to preach from the denominational leaders that they are under. God warned the minister at the church of Ephesus that He would remove their candlestick if they did not repent (see Rev. 2:5). He ended that warning with, "He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. . ." (Rev 2:7).

God wants to instruct His shepherds at all times. This comes from the pastor's being continually in His Word and open to the Spirit of God. It says in Proverbs 15:31-33, "The ear that heareth the reproof of life abideth among the wise. He that refuseth instruction despiseth his own soul: but he that heareth reproof getteth understanding. The fear of the LORD is the instruction of wisdom; and before honour is humility." That is a pretty powerful rebuke when He says that the person that refuses to hear, "despiseth his own soul." This verse also gives us a litmus test so that we can tell if the shepherd is in God's Word. Is the pastor's message full of fearful humility or exalting him or herself? The proof is in the pudding, or in this case, their preaching.

Positive Thinking

One of the most popular doctrines in today's churches is replacing faith with positive thinking. Some might say they are the same thing. I hopefully will be able to present a clear distinction on these two subjects.

Faith is clearly defined in Hebrews 11:1, "Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen."

It is a person's belief that there is a God that cannot be seen but the preponderance of evidence gives them confidence that He exists. To obtain and continue to grow in this faith a person must listen to the scriptures. The Bible also says, "So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God" (Rom. 10:17). The Apostle Paul goes on to say in Romans 15:4, "For whatsoever things were written afore time were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." We are to take comfort and remain faithful through the rough times because the heroes of faith also went through similar struggles in their lifetime. Through their trial of faith they remained hopeful. So a believer's faith believes with confidence that God is working the circumstances in their lives for a greater good in conjunction with His master plan.

Positive thinking believes that persons' circumstances will change according to their own thoughts. Just by the power of their mind's will, they will be able to cause the problem to succumb to them. But if the person or anyone around them has negative thoughts, then it can jinx the whole outcome. They use the blame game on others if it does not work to make excuses on why the person continues to have that same problem, affliction, or suffering.

Those that teach this doctrine tell their followers to make sure they order their environment to be totally positive. That order comes from getting rid of the negative influences in their life; people. They need to surround themselves with others that walk and talk like them and cut ties with the doubters. The reason they use to justify cutting off friendships is because these negative influences will only pull them down from "soaring like eagles." Everybody should be able to soar like eagles, right? If there positive thinking philosophy was true then they would only have to think about flying and then they would be up in the blue skies. I still have not seen anybody flying around like a bird.

I understand that some people might say, "What is wrong with only thinking about the good things? Doesn't it say in Philippians 4:8, 'Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue, and if there be any praise,

think on these things.'?" Yes it does. Therein lies the problem if only that scripture is remembered. People might think that only the good will come if they separate themselves from every one and only think good thoughts. Church, go to your happy place.

Good things don't always happen to the godly. Church tradition teaches that even the Apostle Paul was be-headed for his belief. Positive thinking did not get him out of the consequences of speaking against an evil ruler or living in a fallen world.

If the teachers would only preach the rest of the chapter in Philippians it would be apparent that Paul had learned a valuable lesson in the times that he suffered. Yes, even the bad things in life come also. No amount of positive thinking will change the events that will be. He learned to be content in whatever state the Lord allowed him to be in. That took faith in a Living God. It was through those experiences of the ups and downs that he gave us the most famous of all encouraging scriptures, "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me" (Phil. 4:13). So, should we believe God's Word or the illusionists of positive thinking?

Numbering

The Bible speaks expressly about not numbering the people but pastors continue to do so. David was guilty of this in 1 Chronicles 21:1, "And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel." Not only did David sin but this passage also lets us know that Satan; our adversary, is also involved with his schemes of destruction every time we number the people.

The way Satan works his destruction is by pride. He gets the pastors thinking the more people there is, determines his popularity and subsequently the money that is sure to follow. Next thing you know, they have the trappings that come with wealth and power.

Some of those trappings are material possessions, sexual appetites and the greatest aphrodisiac is the power to control people. One can probably make a case that David sinned in all these areas. This last one caused the most destruction to those in his charge.

We see in verse 14 that David's sin had caused the deaths of 70,000 men. We should know as pastors that we cannot expect to

sow to our lusts and not reap destruction. James tells us, "Then the lust, when it has conceived, bears sin; and the sin, when it is full grown, brings forth death" (1:15).

The flesh will always tell us there is greater security in numbers. But God has always done more with a few than with a great multitude. He says in Psalms 147:10-11, "He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy." God uses the few that fear Him so He can get the glory.

We see that story played out over and over in the Bible. God uses the nation of Israel, Gideon, Samson, and David to show even with just one person and God, it becomes a victory. No matter how many numbers are on the opposing side. He ends the last annals of human history with the great battle of Armageddon that takes place with armies of heaven against the armies of the earth. The only one that uses a sword and gets the victory is Jesus Christ (see Rev. 19:14-21). That is why it is a sin to trust in numbers rather than trusting in God to do the miracles with the numbers that are available.

Pastors need to learn how to just love and appreciate those who are available rather than be discontented in how small the congregation is. They need to remember that the church began and continues in the same way. Luke the physician explains it this way in Acts 2:47, ". . . And the Lord added to the church daily such as should be saved." It is God's job to add the sheep and our job to feed them. Even if it is only two or three gathered in His name (see Matt. 18:20).

Slain in the Spirit

Slain in the Spirit is the newest fad to hit the church. It has been around in many forms throughout the years but has come up like an epidemic within the past few decades. Pastors are readily accepting and spreading this virus in their congregations without having any firm scriptural basis for this practice. It infects the members with a fever that desires to have an experience rather than a relationship that has any relevance with God. The experience becomes the focal point of the worship service rather

than a reverent thanksgiving and praise to God.

Churchgoers come seeking the thing that they feel has been missing from the service. Most have gotten tired of the same weekly plea for money, that they are dying to hear something new. Their pastors tell of a new experience they had at their recent conference, (see Training Conference) or from others across the world they see on television. The people are then primed for anything. And of course, anything and everything does come.

The pastors preach you are deeper in the spirit, depending upon the stranger the animal sound you make or the length of time spent in an unconscious state. The pastors then begin laying hands on the people, now they have been taught how to react. Their experiences mimic Far East religious rites from the oldest religion of Animism. It ranges from animal-like utterances, altered states of consciousness and even unconsciousness. The members have unwittingly opened themselves to their suppressed imaginations and every kind of devils dwelling in high places. No wonder the world is afraid to meet God through the church experience. They decide to stay home and pray rather than go to church and get more possessed.

People cannot blame God for this blight on Christianity because the Bible warned of just this type of experience. But this is what happens when the pastors and congregation trade the truth of God's Word for a lying wonder. The Apostle Paul speaks prophetically about these last days, "And for this cause God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie: That they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness" (2 Thess. 2:11-12). This practice does not draw people closer to God and in some cases the opposite has occurred.

The Apostle Paul warns the young Pastor Timothy to, "Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep thyself pure" (1 Tim. 5:22). Today's pastors feel that they do not need scriptures from the Holy Bible. So, they lay hands on every Tom, Dick and Harry without preaching the Gospel or receiving a confession or profession of faith. It is all about what new demonic manifestation will take place that they can contribute to God.

The people's experiences differ just as much as the experiences

that happen to the pastor. Some die in the pulpit and others are strengthened to promote the movement to newer and greater heights. They then get the reputation of having an “anointing,” on their life because someone gets healed or testimonies of other works being done in the lives of those that had been slain in the spirit. The fruits that come out from the experience can be used to judge if it came from God or the devil.

It would be more convincing of a Biblical practice if the pastor were to become more humble. But just the opposite happens. They become more prideful by announcing themselves as having the Healing Ministry of, “So and So.” Like it was the pastor doing the healing work in the person’s life.

A pastor came to our church confessing it would make him feel powerful by pushing as many people down as he could. If any resisted, the harder he would push their head, until they fell. He would then feel like he had won the battle of the wills by him showing he was stronger. He could see the other person laying on the ground. This pride is from the devil himself.

The question to ask the person receiving this free-falling experience is, “What did you take away from falling on the ground that cannot be achieved from the preaching of God’s Word?” Some say, “rest.” Most people get that every night sleeping in their bed. So you were able to take a break and sleep while in church. People do that all the time also without a sanctioned gimmick. Others say, “A greater trust in God, knowing that He will have someone there to catch me.” There are many that have felt that way and have hurtfully found out that the concrete is a very painful experience when nobody catches them. Some are too ashamed to say anything afterwards and are still experiencing headaches while others are suing churches for their discomfort and blaming God at the same time.

Denominations

I will not get into which denomination has the worst corruption among its leaders. Denominations are already wrong from the root. So it stands to reason that the fruit of a tree will be rotten because the root is corrupt. Denominations only work to divide the Body of Christ anyway; so, noting the differences in

leadership will only lead to more divisiveness.

Neither will I single out the differences in the denominations. Generally, the more off center the building is from the original plan of design the more crooked it will be the higher it goes. The blue prints for building the Kingdom of God has been clearly drafted in the Bible. So there margin of error depends on how far off center they build their sect from the Bible. If they have ever been accused of being a cult it is probably because they have deviated from the core beliefs of historical Christianity. It gets even more crooked when it begins trying to merge other cult foundations with Jesus.

Christianity began with Christ being the center and emphasis of everything we do. Jesus is the only, “. . . way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me” (John 14:6). He does not need His mother, leader, formula, religion, or pseudo texts to aid in His saving work. Most of the time, these cloud Him and hinder the work that is already in progress. Cults will have an additional or wrong interpretation of the scriptures as it pertains to Jesus.

Most cults will have part of the truth to back up their position as it pertains to Jesus Christ. The problem is they try and reconcile their false assumptions that were gained by reading a few select verses with the rest of the Bible. Only when we can accept the whole counsel of God's Word, do we see clearly the personage of Jesus in relation to His function in the Trinity (see Preach).

God does not want us to have these differences, so He gets the Apostle John to explain the reason we have these scriptures is so we can understand correctly whom Jesus is. In John 20:31 he writes, “But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name.” He says it again in 1 John 5:13, “These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God.” If we still never get the message, “Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me” (John 5:39). He is the only begotten Son of God that can give us eternal life through belief in His name (see Acts 4:12).

Be weary of anyone that begins their conversation by

advertising their religion. They are giving you a heads up that religion comes along as a package deal with knowing them. If you do not know and accept their religion; you are not accepting them. If they introduce themselves as a Christian, then you will have a greater chance of friendship because you have Jesus in common. Remember, how followers of Christ have been known to the world, “. . . the disciples were called Christians first in Antioch” (Acts 11:26). We should identify ourselves as believers so the world and other believers can know how to approach us.

A person beginning their conversation with, “Hi. I’m a ___” (religion), shows how Biblically inept they are. Because, “Hi” is for unbelievers. A person that begins their greeting with, “Praise the Lord!” Is letting you know he or she is a Christian. This is an acceptable and Biblical greeting.

God uses the psalmist to instruct us to, “Let every thing that hath breath praise the LOR D. Praise ye the LORD” (Ps. 150:6). He also says in Psalms 115:17-18, “The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence. But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.” So if anyone is born-again of the Lord, then God’s Holy Spirit will give him an unction to, “Praise the Lord!” For anyone that thinks they are excluded, He again has the psalmist write:

Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps: Fire, and hail; snow, and vapour; stormy wind fulfilling his word: Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars: Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl: Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth: Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children: Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven. He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD (Psalms 148:7-14).

It is commanded for all creation to praise Him. This is the right way to begin a conversation and give glory to the creator of all there is through applauding His work. His glory will not be shared with any church, religion, or denomination.

Most churchgoers are not taught this doctrine by their pastor. This is a shame to that leader and will testify against him on that Day. It is not surprising most people are ignorant of why,

who or what they believe in. Pastors are satisfied to dumb down the masses so that it is easier to make off with their money.

Even when you ask a cultist why their denomination practices certain false doctrines of: polygamy, failed prophecies, prayer beads, etc. . . They usually respond with, "I don't believe that." If that person wants to be identified as belonging to the organization, they should have to stick to what that religion has published as their official doctrine. Most, will instead try to make up their own theology on the spot. By the end of the conversation, it turns out to be a whole new religion than when they started to try and differentiate between what they do and don't believe.

God calls us unto one "faith," because there is one "Lord," unto whom He has put us under one "baptism" (see Eph. 4:5). So God does desire that we become one. We should pursue unity in our desire to work for Him. Jesus tried to explain this to the Apostle John, "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us" (Luke 9:49-50). The key to remember in fellowshiping with other denominations is: Whose name does they come in? If is to glorify and represent Jesus, then remember what He said, "... for he that is not against us is for us."

On the other hand, if they are creating a division by emphasizing anything else but Jesus or has changed the definitions of Biblical terms, Jesus then said, "He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad" (Matt. 12:30). Again, emphasis is added, Jesus does not need leaders, formulas, religions, pseudo texts, or His mother to aid in His saving work. Most of the time, those works cloud Him and hinder the work already in progress. Got it?

God uses the Apostle Paul to put us in remembrance that the Spirit prophesied in the latter days there will be a turning away from these core doctrines of the faith. Paul writes:

But the Spirit says expressly that in later times some will fall away from the faith, paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons, through the hypocrisy of men who speak lies, branded in their own

conscience as with a hot iron; forbidding marriage and commanding to abstain from foods which God created to be received with thanksgiving by those who believe and know the truth (1 Tim. 4:1-3).

He maintains that the apostasy of believers begins with, "... paying attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons" (1 Tim. 4:1). There is demonic activity involved in separating believers into different sects through false doctrines. The Body of Christ is then divided from other believers and their unity with God. The devil has done his job. It then becomes easier for him to come in and perform his destroying work. Those that will teach these doctrines will pay for following devils.

Part III

How To

Example

This next part of the Trial is the evidences that present the case on how a Shepherd's job should be done. The expert witnesses are the many scriptures that will define the acceptable standards for a pastor's performance of his duties. How to perform these duties needs to come from a desire within a pastor. He needs to be like King David that asked, "Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths. Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day" (Ps. 25:4-5). If the Pastor wants to lead God's sheep then He will supply direction through the Holy Spirit. The Spirit reveals the truth by the Word.

Paul set a good example of a Shepherd in the early church by working alongside the people because he did not want to be burdensome to any (see 2 Thess. 3:8-9). He also told them if any would not work, they should not eat (v.10). He realized he had the power to be supported by others but the Gospel was too precious to him to have it defamed by him preaching one thing and then doing another.

Paul also told the Corinthians that, "It were better for me to die, than that any man should make my glorying void" (1 Cor. 9:15). He knew the heart of man. I too used to believe preachers were only after your money. That is why the Apostle Paul preached for free. He said in verse 18 "When I preach the gospel, I may make the gospel of Christ without charge, that I abuse not my power in the gospel." Why would Paul say that charging money for the gospel would be abusing his power in authority as minister if it were not so? And yet, when it is preached in pulpits today, this scripture is glossed over by excusing it as pertaining to only that particular church age. Oh, how I wish that all pastors would have that same mind of Christ within them as Paul did.

He did not want to be like the hypocrites in the book of Matthew that were looking to get their reward on earth by man (see Matt. 6:1-16). But Jesus says, "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24). The previous verses of 19-23 were describing the eye and the heart. If the eye is evil; like seeing greed, then the whole body is evil. What ever the eye looks at, so goes the heart. If their eye is on the earthly treasure, so is the heart. If it is on the heavenly things pertaining to God, so is the treasure. It will be waiting for them when God welcomes them into his loving arms saying, "Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord" (Matt. 25:21). Pastors need to choose where their heart is and know full well the consequences of that choice.

Paul had to eat like the rest of us. So what did he do to provide for his needs if he did not live off the sweat of others? We find out from the scriptures that Paul was a tent-maker (see Acts 18:3). He worked alongside Aquila and Priscilla who were also teachers of the Word. We find them in verse 26 teaching Apollos, ". . .the way of God more perfectly." Paul, Aquila and Priscilla were three examples of the early church on how ministers are to work and teach alongside the people. It seems live a novel and archaic way to some people today, but it was good back then, it should be good today. God's Word does not change with every passing generation.

I understand that making tents is not the ideal job that everyone is looking for in most cities. Some other examples of working ministers that might be more contemporary are: motivational speakers, writers, teachers or college administrators. There are others. But the main focus should be that it does not involve getting something for nothing or making the pastor the charity case of the congregation.

Some lazy pastors might even be inclined to say they would be too tired to preach a sermon after giving their all to the world during the time spent at the office? Lets see what Paul did. Well, not only did he work hard but also he preached sermons long into the night; even unto the next morning (see Acts 20:7). Does this sound like a dedicated preacher that is sold out for Jesus? My Pastor worked as a Mason; laying concrete, five to six days a week and then preached every night.

The Apostle Peter writes, "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:2-3). Peter could preach like this because he was aware of what Jesus had told all of his disciples in Matthew 10:8, ". . .freely ye have received, freely give." He had also been told three times personally, ". . .Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep" (John 21:18). Do you think God knows the thoughts of a man's heart? If they are motivated by money, what do they do with the question God asked Peter? If and when they do feed the sheep, God will know if they are motivated by money, a pat on the back, or have a true love for Him and the, ". . .people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. . ." (Ps. 95:7).

Pastors have to realize as an example to the flock, they are one of the main pillars that upholds the church. They cannot give up easily their position by quitting, being caught up in sexual immorality or consumed by greed. Not only the congregation is watching but also the world. This great responsibility of being a leader for a church should not be taken without a resolve to endure the trials and spiritual warfare that continues until the

end.

Because we are light in this dark world, the Bible says, “. . . and he that is upright in the way is abomination to the wicked” (Prov. 29:27). So this is a rare joy that the devil and the world have when a Christian leader fails or falls into sin within their midst. This really makes their day. That is why much prayer is needed with the job.

Prayer

A Pastor needs to learn how to pray first before becoming a leader of the church. He will definitely use this tool in order to handle all the situations that arise within and against the church. The Shepherd will also need to be the example in prayer. He needs to lead in prayer and teach others to pray. Prayer gets the Holy Spirit in action. Anyone that sticks around churches very long will hear these adages: No prayer, no action. Much prayer, much power. Less prayer, less power.

Prayer is our means of communicating with God. Communication takes place in three phases. The sender transmits the message; the receiver interprets the message and then transmits a response. Prayer is the transmission of our message to God. God then receives and perfectly interprets our message based upon what we asked for, the intents of our request based upon His knowledge of the deepest and darkest recesses of our heart and what is best for us. He then responds to us by His Word. He chooses to speak to by His Word, first and foremost because it explains fully His good and perfect will that does not change with the times and circumstances. If God finds us unwilling to listen to the Bible; then He will use people, circumstances and other things to get our attention to His response to our prayer.

As believers we need the power of prayer to be our mighty weapon against the enemy because of the battle for our life and that of our families and friends depend on God fighting for us. We are flesh and blood and cannot do battle with the devil, which is a spirit being. The Apostle Paul probably knew more about this than anyone, besides Jesus. He instructed the believers in Ephesus to prepare for battle against the devil by putting on the full armor of God (Eph. 6:10-17).

Paul then continues the battle plan by telling them in verses 18-20, "Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints; And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel, For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak." Apparently, the armor is only the preparation for battle but prayer is what begins the fight.

Paul was detailed in asking the believers to pray in a specific manner. He was like a General giving orders to his troops on how to attack the enemy's schemes so that the spiritual strongholds can be brought down. He had already taught the Corinthian Church, "For though we walk in the flesh, we do not war after the flesh: (For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty through God to the pulling down of strong holds;) Casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ;" (2 Cor. 10:3-5). Prayer is the first phase in ordering our thoughts into the obedience of God's will in hopes of battling the enemy.

Paul then goes on to inform them of his strategy by telling them to continuously pray for their list of requests, "in the spirit." I do not believe that "in the spirit," means speaking in an unknown tongue. The Apostle Paul used reasoning to help instruct the Corinthian church, "For if I pray in an unknown tongue, my spirit prayeth, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is it then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will pray with the understanding also: I will sing with the spirit, and I will sing with the understanding also" (1Cor. 14:14-15). What would be considered a fruitful or successful prayer? I believe if we sow prayer in a known tongue that is understandable then we reap the fruit or results by acknowledging the prayers when they are answered.

Also, I believe that praying "in the spirit" is the power that comes by the new spiritual man in being, "born again." That new Spirit in a believer gives us an access to God that our flesh could never hope to attain. Jesus explained this truth to the Samaritan woman like this, "But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true

worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth: for the Father seeketh such to worship him. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth" (John 4:23-24). God desires us to seek Him with a spiritual relationship and sincerity; not with religion.

So, what do we pray for when we seek God, "in the spirit" and with sincerity? I once heard it explained this way: Pray everywhere, every time for everyone. This is how we watch each other's back on the battlefield. When we pull a slack in prayer, we leave our fellow brethren open to attacks.

Finally, Paul asks prayers from the believers for himself. Did he ask for a new house, buried treasure, or other items that he could consume on himself? No, he asked for the power to speak boldly about his imprisonment for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. He wanted to be emboldened with courage to speak about God when the time came.

So, we as Pastors are to be desirous that God will make the way for an opportunity to preach the Gospel for us and those in the congregation, no matter what situation we are in. When we do this, we are then teaching by example for the congregation to do the same outside the walls of the church building. Some believe that Paul was writing this letter to the Ephesians while he was waiting for his audience with Caesar, chained to a Roman guard. I believe that every Roman guard chained to him got to hear about Jesus. How about us? Do we use every opportunity to tell others about Jesus? Someone once told me, "If they are in your face for more than a few minutes, it is because you are supposed to preach Jesus unto them."

Paul showed us a good example on how to pray for opportunities that God can use us. Remember, the Bible says, "And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he heareth us:" (1 John 5:14). It is the will of God for us to preach the Gospel. So do not be surprised when God divinely creates an opportunity to answer your prayers to preach.

Prayer changes things. The believers had to be praying for God to do something about Paul's persecution of the church. Paul was forever changed on that road to Damascus. By God changing that one life, it has affected others for eternity.

Paul's reach had even extended into the home of the highest ruler of the known world and enemy of the church by the end of his life. Writing from Rome, Paul told the Philippi Church, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Caesar's household" (Phil. 4:22). God was already transforming the enemies of believers into new soldiers for His army. Who will be the next Paul? Don't forget to pray.

Priests Duties

The duties of a priest have changed with the coming of Jesus Christ. He has fulfilled the office of High Priest eternally, after the order of Melchisedec. He is forever the Priest that attends to the heavenly sanctuary and also became the blameless sacrifice that the Father required (see Heb. 7:1 & 10:11-14).

Paul pleads with every believer in Romans 12:1, "I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that ye present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service." This is so that the believer can ". . . prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2). So what do pastors do today since there are no sacrifices to attend to in the earthly temple? In Ephesians 4:11, the pastors are among a list of co-workers whose mission is, "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:" (v. 12). They are to be about the business of building up the Body of Christ.

The Apostle Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 4:1-2, "Therefore seeing we have this ministry, as we have received mercy, we faint not; But have renounced the hidden things of dishonesty, not walking in craftiness, nor handling the word of God deceitfully; but by manifestation of the truth commending ourselves to every man's conscience in the sight of God." The pastors having received mercy are not supposed to continue being crafty and deceitful. They are to be blamelessly preaching the truth so it will go forth to present the good news. Then the pastor will not be at fault for the person not receiving the message.

So who will be at fault if the message is not received when the ministers are doing their job? It will be because, ". . . the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest

the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4). That is Satan's job to distort the message of God. God will judge him accordingly. Our job is to preach the gospel. If the pastors are doing the works of the devil by continuing to be dishonest, God will remove them and move the sheep to another place to feed them (see Ezek. 34:10).

Provision

Thus speak unto the Levites, and say unto them, When ye take of the children of Israel the tithes which I have given you from them for your inheritance, then ye shall offer up an heave offering of it for the LORD, even a tenth part of the tithe. And this your heave offering shall be reckoned unto you, as though it were the corn of the threshing floor, and as the fullness of the winepress. Thus ye also shall offer an heave offering unto the LORD of all your tithes, which ye receive of the children of Israel; and ye shall give thereof the LORD'S heave offering to Aaron the priest. Out of all your gifts ye shall offer every heave offering of the LORD, of all the best thereof, even the hallowed part thereof out of it. Therefore thou shalt say unto them, When ye have heaved the best thereof from it, then it shall be counted unto the Levites as the increase of the threshingfloor, and as the increase of the winepress. And ye shall eat it in every place, ye and your households: for it is your reward for your service in the tabernacle of the congregation. And ye shall bear no sin by reason of it, when ye have heaved from it the best of it: neither shall ye pollute the holy things of the children of Israel, lest ye die (Num. 18:26-32).

The Lord had allowed the priests to receive a tenth of the tithes and a portion of the offerings in the Old Testament because they were always in the house of the Lord tending to the continual sin offerings, burnt offerings, trespass offerings, wave offerings, and also attending to the incense and lamps that were never to go out. What offerings are the minister's providing today? There are no more sacrifices because Jesus was the last, "the Lamb of God" (see John. 1:29). The incense was a symbol of the prayers of the saints that they now perform in their prayer closet continuously (see Matt.6:6). The lamp was a symbol of the Holy Spirit that is to be stirred up in every believer (see 2 Tim.

1:6). The individual believer replaces the temple in Jerusalem (see 1Cor. 3:16). In a general sense, every believer is called to perform these duties as a priest (see 1 Pet. 2:9). So what is then left for the pastors to do today?

The Pastor is called to be the expert example in the church that cultivates the relationship a congregation has with God. He does this through the life he lives and the education and training he provides in the preaching of the Word. The example most pastors want to provide today is to stay home and study the Bible until Wednesday and Sunday come around. They then take the suit off the hanger and drive into church to entertain for a few hours. The members are usually successful in replicating this example of putting up a religious front, with the exception of them having to work the rest of the week while he is at the local golf course teeing off with their money. They would like to follow the rest of the example this pastor demonstrates but they remember him preaching to them from 2 Thessalonians 3:10, "... we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat." The congregation has to work since they have grown accustomed to eating regularly.

How come the pastor thinks that he can preach a message to the congregation about working in order to provide for their own meat to eat and then expect others to shoulder the burden for his appetite? With someone that proclaims insightful knowledge of the heavenly realm, how come they cannot discern the disparity in that message that they preach?

The Lord told the Levitical priesthood they were not going to receive an inheritance on earth. Moses wrote in Numbers 18:20, "And the LORD spake unto Aaron, Thou shalt have no inheritance in their land, neither shalt thou have any part among them: I am thy part and thine inheritance among the children of Israel." So why are they insisting on their own houses now? Times have certainly changed. It seems to be for the worst.

I believe it is greed entering into their heart. Especially, when they expect the congregation to provide for their provision of house and staple rather than they themselves be willing to work for it. Are the members supposed to be viewed as their personal welfare support system? The Apostle Paul demonstrated his love for the people by working along side of them. He understood

what the Psalmist meant when he said, "I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread" (37:25). God will provide for the pastor if he is willing to work for his needs and not wanting to become professional freeloader hiding behind religion.

Dress

I live in Hawaii and I still see pastors wearing three-piece suits. Why? I do not know how they can stand the heat. Maybe they were taught that in their higher education or religious upbringing. In Hawaii it is at least 70 degrees year around, yet they insist on sweating in those hot garments. Sweating was one of the things the priests were not to teach the people.

God instructs the prophet to write in Ezekiel 44:18, "They shall have linen bonnets upon their heads, and shall have linen breeches upon their loins; they shall not gird themselves with any thing that causeth sweat." They are not to get excited and sweat doing the work of God. Nobody else wears those suits. Even bank presidents have the sensibility to wear Aloha shirts.

The pastors might be using a passage in the Old Testament to justify this excess clothing. In Exodus 29:8-9 it says, "And thou shalt bring his sons, and put coats upon them. And thou shalt gird them with girdles, Aaron and his sons, and put the bonnets on them: and the priest's office shall be theirs for a perpetual statute: and thou shalt consecrate Aaron and his sons." Why don't they use the bonnet or hat? I personally would love to see the girdles. That would be cute. If it is just for Aaron and his sons, why do they expect the rest of the men to dress with coats and three-piece suits? They already expect a clothing allowance to be given unto them. Where is average Joe supposed to get the money for their ensemble? Who and what suffers for this man's tradition? It has never been the outward adornment that God is concerned with (see 1 Sam. 16:7). It is the inward intentions of the heart that God is concerned with.

I have been in those churches that have these man-made traditions of the men wearing suits. It becomes a competition to see who can out dress the next person. Judgment and comparison then becomes the priority rather than coming to hear the Word of

God. So nobody hears the message on how to serve one another better. There are also the wolves that come in among the sheep with their own motives.

The wolves are trying to dress sharp so that they can be known as the "players" in the congregation. Looking to trick and seduce the gullible women into thinking that they are the holiest of the crowd. Church is then modeled after the nightclub scene without the alcohol. The "player" will finally reveal his true nature as the wolf when the woman is vulnerable and within his grasp. Unfortunately, most of the "players" in the church are already married. Church then becomes more of soap opera than a place of worship.

I wonder how many people will have eventually gone to hell because of this tradition of man? A person that cannot afford a nice coat does not feel welcome in a church like that. Because truth be known, there are carnal people in church that do not want to let those people into their, "club." This is not the church that Christ had died for. He came for the naked, destitute sinners that were in need of a Savior. James rebuked the congregation for having a higher regard for the nicely dressed while mistreating the poorly dressed. He explained afterward that God had chosen, "...the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the kingdom" (Jas. 2:5). To further illustrate this we find a comparison between a beggar named Lazarus and a rich man in Luke Chapter 16. The rich man that was clothed in purple and fine linen was carried away into Hell when he died to be tormented. But Lazarus; the poor man, was carried away to his inheritance by angels.

God did not give a dress code requirement at the door to get into church. That is man's idea. God uses the prophet Isaiah to proclaim:

Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon. For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts (Isa. 55:7-9).

He did not ask the wicked to change his clothes. He asked him to change his ways and thoughts and then return unto the

Lord.

You do not need nice clothes to get into church because this life will soon be past. The main thing is to come. You and I as believers will be given new garments when we enter heaven. This is what the Apostle Paul yearned for in 2 Corinthians 5:2-3, "For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked." It is a faint comparison that the best of earthly clothes will be to the heavenly threads to come.

I am not saying that the pastor should come in naked. Then everyone else would have to repent for his or her thoughts. Because most pastors today carry a portly frame that would be "too much information," for most people to handle. But God had instructed the Aaronic priesthood to make garments for themselves (Why do they insist on shopping for clothes already made if they are supposed to make it themselves?). In Exodus 28:40-43 it says, "And for Aaron's sons thou shalt make coats, and thou shalt make for them girdles, and bonnets shalt thou make for them, for glory and for beauty. And they shall be upon Aaron, and upon his sons, when they come in unto the tabernacle of the congregation, or when they come near unto the altar to minister in the holy place; that they bear not iniquity, and die: it shall be a statute for ever unto him and his seed after him." The garments were to be for the glory and beauty of their office. They were to wear it coming into the Holiest of Holies. Today, there is no Temple in Jerusalem, no Holy of Holies and thus no Aaronic priest-hood. That is why those requirements are not applicable today, especially for Gentile pastors.

The pastor should come in the same as everyone else. If the congregation is wearing Aloha shirts and he comes in with a coat and necktie; then someone should feel out of place. If the congregation becomes too laid back and the worship seems to be suffering, then he may want to instruct the members to dress up a bit to bring them back into remembrance of reverence before the Lord. The pastor should lead his congregation by an example of holiness and not to a fashion show.

Teaching

Aaron had been the instrument God had called to be a Priest unto the people. The name Aaron means a teacher, or lofty. He was to be a teaching priest. He was set above the congregation in authority to teach them how to please God. The prophet writes in Ezekiel 44:23-24, "And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean. And in controversy they shall stand in judgment; and they shall judge it according to my judgments: and they shall keep my laws and my statutes in all mine assemblies; and they shall hallow my sabbaths." The Pastors are to teach the acceptable ways a people of God are to follow.

The Apostle Peter in the New Testament is teaching that we need to have the knowledge of God in order for us to become more like him. He writes a general letter to all believers in 2 Peter 1:3 that says, "According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge of him that hath called us to glory and virtue: Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." He explains that it was by knowledge of Jesus and His saving work that is making us more like Him. The Pastor cannot expect the hearer to be made perfect in one sermon or by preaching the same sermon over and over. The shepherd in the natural world needs to lead his sheep into different pastures in order for them to be healthy and have something to graze on. If not, you will see skinny, sickly, and weak sheep trying to graze on barren ground. The wise Pastor will take heed to this example.

Peter tells the pastors they need to continue growing and adding to this knowledge so the congregation can become transformed. He continues his message to believers, "And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue; and to virtue knowledge; And to knowledge temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience godliness; And to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2 Pet.

1:5-8). So what do think happens to those that don't go to church or hear the Word of God? Yes, barren and unfruitful to God.

The Apostle again gives us a warning that we are already on the path to returning to the old life if we lack these. He continues by saying, "But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his old sins" (2 Pet. 1:9). He then encourages believers, "Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall." (2 Pet. 1:10). As a Pastor, it is our job to let the sheep know of the potential pitfalls and what will ensure a steadfast hold on eternal life.

Just like the runner approaching the end of a race, we can see the cheering coach and fans. They are not silent, but joyous and encouraging to the runner. The coach is telling the runner they can do it by instructing them to run harder and faster because they are almost at the finish line. The fans are clapping and yelling at them to finish the race. We will also be congratulated and welcomed into heaven after this earthly race. That is why Peter says, "For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (2 Pet. 1:11). Pastors are to continue coaching and encouraging the congregation even if they are already in the race and nearing the finish line. Only those that finish the race get to receive the prize.

Peter continues with, "Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting you in remembrance;" (2 Pet. 1:12-13). People may become complacent and forget they are running a race to win a prize. The prize is to be with our Lord Jesus Christ. Are you in the race?

Holiness

A holy God requires a specific way to be worshiped. Most Pastors believe they know God and assume their style of coming any old way is good enough for God's standard of worship. If the Pastor does not have a standard the congregation can follow, then how will he then be able to lead an obstinate sinner into a holy relationship with God? Truth be known, most people don't

really care what God thinks. They feel He owes them anyway for bringing them into this imperfect world. Most people are just like the rebellious blame-shifting teenager that makes the statement, "I didn't ask to be born!" All the while neglecting the fact they are fortunate enough to be alive and talking.

Holiness calls for a believer to be in a state of being that is perfectly prescribed by God. Moses writes in Leviticus 21:6, "They shall be holy unto their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the LORD made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy." God's leaders are to present a holy example to the congregation in everything they do.

The Bible gives us an example of an offering that was not prescribed by God. Moses writes in Leviticus 10:1-2, "And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, took either of them his censer, and put fire therein, and put incense thereon, and offered strange fire before the LORD, which he commanded them not. And there went out fire from the LORD, and devoured them, and they died before the LORD." They tried to offer what they wanted to God in a manner convenient for them. God showed them He did not approve. God showed His disdain by firing them. This He will do to all that think they will get into heaven by doing whatever they want apart from the will and sanction of God.

This is not to say that a man has to be perfect. None of us are. The Bible says in Romans 3:10-11, "As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one: There is none that understandeth, there is none that seeketh after God." A Pastor is to teach how a person can become righteous or holy before God. It is a process of growth in holiness. If the Pastor cannot lead by example, what will be produced from his corrupt fruit? More corruption.

Aaron began to show the holy example in the Old Testament by teaching the people that there is one way and only way to enter into holiness with God. When Jesus came to bring the Jews into that New Testament or covenant with God, they would already understand the exclusiveness that God reserves for a relationship with Him. Jesus then said in John 14:6, ". . . I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me." This was not a new concept. They only needed to believe that He was "Emmanuel," prophesied in Isaiah 7:14. Jesus would be

the Holy God with them. He proved this by the miracles that He performed on healing the sick, causing the blind to see, the deaf to hear and the dumb to speak. After proving these things, He proclaimed that, "I and my Father are one" (John 10:30).

Jesus did all of this to show that we have to go through Him and His righteousness in order to come before the Father. Pastors are to teach that Jesus is our holiness. He is the missing link needed to reconnect with God in our sinful state. We need someone holy to intercede on our behalf. This Jesus does in Hebrews 7:26, "For such a high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens." The Apostle Paul preaches in 1 Timothy 2:5, "For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus." Pastors are to be steadfast and not wavering on this specific point. Jesus allows us to come before a Holy God. The only way to God and heaven is through Jesus. If anyone preaches any other doctrine they are to be accursed (see Gal. 1:6-8).

Family Time

Some pastors today say that God is first, then family, and lastly the congregation in order to justify spending more time at home and away from the church. An appointment has to be made in order to speak to him. That means you can only have a problem at the pastor's convenience. This is not how it should be. So what is the Biblical approach for pastors in dealing with the congregation?

What about family? How does a pastor stand up and preach on Sunday to the congregation, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you" (Matt. 6:33), and then not do it. How does a man or woman lead a ministry and have a family at the same time? Both husband and wife have to be in agreement. Peter says the ministers are to be, "... ensamples to the flock" (1 Pet. 5:3).

How about the kids? In most congregations the preacher's kids are usually known as "PKs". When PKs are mentioned, it

is usually to describe some kind of dastardly deed that nobody else in their right mind would do. PKs have been rowdy from the beginning. Take for instance the first children, Cain and Abel. Can you imagine the anguish of the first parents? First they found out that one son had just been murdered. Then they found out that the murderer that was to be exiled by God was another one of their children.

Next, are Jacob and Esau. The younger son tricks the father into giving the older son's blessings away to him through deception. After that, you have in 1 Samuel 2 the two sons of Eli; Hophni and Phineas. Their sins caused the people to hate giving offerings unto the Lord so much that the people sinned even more. David certainly had a motley crew. His sons were sleeping with their sister, killing each other, and trying to kill him, while at the same time usurping his throne. There will always be the potential they will go wrong. Even God's Word says in Isaiah 53:6, "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all."

A Pastor has to hold on to the Word of God for hope during the time of raising a family and taking care of a congregation. In Proverbs 22:6 there is a great message of hope to those parents trying to raise a godly seed, "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it." The other scripture that gives a lot of encouragement is Joshua 24:15, that says, ". . . but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

Pastors are to hang onto God's Word and not let circumstances with spouse or children sway them from their duty to serve God. Jesus told His disciples in Matthew 10:37-39, "He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me. And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me. He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it." If we but follow Him, we shall be saved and at the same time, probably giving the only example our household and congregation will have to follow as a pattern for their salvation.

Preach

A Preacher is someone that delivers God's message and advises moral principles and conduct on how to be right before God. It seems to a forgotten art these days with ministers trying to fill up the service time with movies, plays and other media hype. These devices may be used to help deliver a message but they can never replace the effectiveness God's Word has on changing lives. That is why He calls for Shepherds to, "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Tim. 4:2-4).

God uses Jeremiah to describe the power of His Word, "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:29). A minister should be excited to be able to wield this power that can change lives for the better. The problem is ministers do not want to preach or worse, they do not know how. That leaves a congregation of unchanged, mangy and quarrelsome sheep. It is not their fault.

I was in that predicament before. I began questioning my salvation because of my evil thoughts and the desire to act upon them. I had been told by a Sunday School teacher that all that you need to believe is one scripture, "For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life" (John 3:16). So, I had enough confidence from the teacher and a few scriptures to think I could do anything I wanted since I had my fire insurance from Hell. The leaders were afraid to preach the truth. I soon became lulled back into my sin nature, but this time I had a license to sin without consequences from a religious leader. Or so I thought. But the consequences did catch up to my lifestyle.

I was a full-blown alcoholic with the most wicked thoughts in my heart that occasionally made it into conscious decisions. They were ruinous to my family, work, and relationships with people that were unfortunate enough to come in contact with me. I realized I needed help, and fast. Because I was about to become

divorced for the second time. God led me to a church where the Pastor was Spirit-filled and not ashamed to preach the Word of God without watering it down.

I remember him asking if I believe the Bible? Not just some of it, but all of it? I knew somewhere inside me believed that the Bible was actually the Word of God. Then he threw in this scripture that I had never heard preached from the pulpit. He asked, "What do you do with the scripture that says, 'Know ye not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God? Be not deceived: neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor abusers of themselves with mankind, Nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners, shall inherit the kingdom of God' (1 Cor. 6:9-10)? The Bible says, 'Be not deceived.' You are deceived if you are still doing these things and think you are going to heaven. Do you want to go to heaven? Then you need to make a decision." Of course, he was preaching to the congregation but it hit me like a rock between my eyes.

I had to make a decision to change my life and do it God's way or continue deceiving myself and go to Hell. A Pastor needs to preach the whole counsel of God in order to effectively reach all of God's people. He needs to simplify the message so the hearer can understand what God is saying. He also needs to be bold and direct so the message touches the heart. How are they ever going to make the decision on where they want to spend eternity if they don't even understand the question in God's Word?

In most churches today, the pastor preaches a feel good message that is topical in nature by using a few different scriptures from all over the Bible. The message is usually on relationships. The pastor will pick a verse from Matthew, Colossians and Philemon and then use it to make the people feel good about having friends. But Jesus did not give us this example to follow. A chapter in the Bible may speak about having and making friends but is not exclusive to the message in the other verses of that discourse.

The greatest sermon ever given was recorded for us in the Book of Matthew; Chapters 5-7. The Sermon on the Mount is legendary. That is three whole chapters! It covered many different topics and yet it was done at one sitting. The pastors of today like to spread out this same message over a year. The people usually

forget the beginning goal within the first month. Most cannot recite a summary of what was studied. They just like boasting they spent that much time studying one thing, even if they cannot remember what the one thing is.

The pastors will sometimes use the excuse they are breaking it up into so many segments so they can be giving an in-depth exposition of the text. Doesn't the Bible say, "Let another man praise thee, and not thine own mouth; a stranger, and not thine own lips." (Prov. 27:2)? Does the parishioner ever say the pastor gave an "in-depth exposition of the text?" Usually the blank stare tells it all. But they will agree it sounded good, even if they did not understand the sermon.

Most people come to church realizing they cannot change themselves and are sincere in seeking help with their faults. The Apostle Paul explains this predicament by saying, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things" (Rom. 10:14-15)! So the responsibility is on the Preachers to proclaim the good news.

God is looking to change lives. He gives Jeremiah another beautiful message to tell His people:

Call unto me, and I will answer thee, and shew thee great and mighty things, which thou knowest not . . . Behold, I will bring it health and cure, and I will cure them, and will reveal unto them the abundance of peace and truth. And I will cause the captivity of Judah and the captivity of Israel to return, and will build them, as at the first. And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity, whereby they have sinned against me; and I will pardon all their iniquities, whereby they have sinned, and whereby they have transgressed against me (33:3-8).

God promises the repentant believer a privileged insight into secret knowledge they would not have without Him. God

had chastened His people to get their attention. He did not want them continuing in their sin. Now that He had their attention, so they would be seeking His help, He also promised to reveal unto them an, "abundance of peace and truth" with their healing. An abundance is a lot.

Ministers have got to be ready to preach the whole counsel of God, not just a select few favorite scriptures. The people also need to know God has forgiven them. God uses another prophet to correct the corrupt priests by saying, "For the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth: for he is the messenger of the LORD of hosts" (Mal. 2:7). Who else is going to deliver His message?

A Minister must learn to give answers to every kind of problem there is. The Word of God explains the growth process like this, "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God;" (Heb. 5:12). The writer of Hebrews was rebuking God's people for not having matured to the state of a teacher. You must become teachable in order for this to happen. This is how a Minister is built and in turn able to build others.

The answers do not come out of the air. These answers come from hard work and hunger for God's Word, "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye may grow thereby:" (1 Pet. 2:2). Righteous Job had obtained that character trait by making God's Word his priority. He had confidence that God knew that he had not, ". . . gone back from the commandment of his lips; I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food" (Job 23:12). How come the stature of most ministers today is fat? It is because they should be spending more time with God's Word instead of at the buffet.

God likens our physical and spiritual bodies to containers or vessels (see Isa. 45:9; 65:8, Jer. 18:6, Rom. 9:21 & 2 Tim. 2:20-21). Ministers are to fill their vessel full of the Word of God until it begins to overflow like a full cup. When we seek the Word of the Lord like the Prophet Isaiah says in Chapter 58:11-12, "And the LORD shall guide thee continually, and satisfy thy soul in drought, and make fat thy bones: and thou shalt be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose waters fail not. And they that shall be of thee shall build the old waste places: thou

shalt raise up the foundations of many generations; and thou shalt be called, The repairer of the breach, The restorer of paths to dwell in." Ministers will need to have that abundant supply of living water in their vessel, in order to be used by God to help fix the many problems existing in a normal congregation.

These many problems cannot be fixed overnight. It takes time and making full proof of God's Word. Joshua even preached after a victorious battle. In Joshua 8:34-35 it says, "And afterward he read all the words of the law, the blessings and cursings, according to all that is written in the book of the law. There was not a word of all that Moses commanded, which Joshua read not before all the congregation of Israel, with the women, and the little ones, and the strangers that were conversant among them." There is no reason why a Pastor should not be able to preach the whole counsel of God.

I recently heard from someone that had gone to a Wednesday night church service and there was no Word preached during the service. Not one nor a mention of God. They were subjected to a slide show presentation of the church activities during the summer. Don't they use slide show presentations as part of the torture techniques at Guantanamo? How does this help a person get closer to God or fix the problems in their life? What if a first and only time visitor had come to church that day? Is there a way to transition into an alter call after a slide show?

By preaching the whole counsel of God, you include the whole Body of Christ in the sermon. Usually a chapter in the Bible consists of an introduction to the problem, consequences to continuing the current course and a solution that has results with rewards for obedience and punishment for obstinacy. The Bible describes it's function in Hebrews 4:12, "For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any twoedged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." The Word of God effects everyone differently because it is exposing the hidden conflicts within the heart of each believer. The people will not get the heart-transforming message by preaching half a verse or a string of loosely inter-related scriptures, or even the pastor's supposedly "in-depth exposition" of the text that drags on and on.

I attended a fellowship once where the minister started out talking about God having guidelines and rules the Christian needs to follow in obedience in order to receive blessings from God. Sound familiar? Then he came up with a beautiful analogy of getting a new bicycle out of a box. It comes with a manual of instructions to follow in order for the bicycle to be complete and in working order. It makes sense that the bicycle will not work or become damaged if steps are left out, done out of order, or the warnings are not heeded. That is sound advice.

The Pastor then asked the congregation to turn to Deuteronomy 28. He only preached the first 13 verses. The verses the pertain to how God is going to bless you if you are obedient to His commandments. He then concluded the service without finishing the rest of the 55 verses in the chapter that talked about God's cursing on disobedience. He did not even say if he would conclude the chapter at the upcoming services.

What was wrong with the rest of the chapter? Is it important for God's people to know the whole counsel or instructions of God? Apparently not to this pastor. The Word of God says, "All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17).

The word "All," is very inclusive because it means everything. If "All," presupposes that every Word is needed to make the servant of God "perfect," then there are a lot of imperfect Christians walking around. Ministers that preach only some of the Word are to blame for the unstable, lame and ineffective Christians in the church.

Let us ask the question; why do they choose to minister this way? The reason a pastor will pat the hearers on the back and tell them they are doing fine; when they are not, is for the money. That is the plain truth after being stripped away of the excuses. The pastors' claim that they are worried about offending someone and the sheep might leave the church. The truth is that the sheep's money might leave the church. It is the pastor's next greens fees for golfing the following week or the gas money for their Lear Jet. Who will pay for these luxuries, if no one is left in the church?

Is it any wonder that more and more people in the church are

going to secular reasoning resources to help with their problems? They know they will at least get some type of treatment plan for the situation rather than affirmation for the wrong practices that caused the problem and then told not to worry about it. The message they get from the pastors is, "Just keep tithing and God will pour out a blessing for you." What is wrong with giving a real message from the Word of God?

The pastor's problem today is pride. It gets in the way of the message coming from God. They really like to take ownership of the message when speaking to the people. Did they forget? They did not write it. They begin their sermon by naming the message's title like it came divinely inspired also. It begins like this: "I have titled my message this morning as, 'Paul gets knocked off his high horse.' Please turn with me to Acts chapter 9."

It is apparent during their message that they spent all their time trying to figure out a clever title rather than studying the text. The message is directed in a way to teach the topic they have chosen rather than the plain message from God's Word. If they try to expound from the text in front of them it will detract from what they want to say. Of course they will need to leave that text and jump to other scriptures to try and make their point. Their point is usually trying to convince the people to give more money. That cannot be the only topic taught in church.

In today's churches there also seems to be a race against time to get out. Noontime seems to be the agreed upon time. Who said, "You have to be out of service by 11:30 or 12:00 on a Sunday morning service?" God did not dictate this doctrine. So how did it come about?

A frustrated and anxious sportsman leaned over to his wife during a pastor's long sermon and says, "What is a clock to a Pastor?" Perplexed by the question, she replied that she did not know. He said, "Neither does he." It is true that God has set the shepherds over the congregation to be the "watchman" (Ezek. 33:6). It does not mean that he is to watch the clock. Granted, there are some pastors out there that are long-winded and wind up saying nothing throughout the whole sermon. But the "watchman" has the responsibility to deliver God's message by blowing the trumpet of a sword, if not heeded by those in the congregation, it will cause him to be "... taken away in his iniquity."

The Pastor should not feel rushed in having to deliver the sermon in an allotted time not given or sanctioned by God. This is God's time anyway. Especially, on a Sunday Service. The "in-depth exposition," is the excuse given as a reason most pastors feel rushed and believe there is not enough time to preach a whole chapter from the Bible.

For some reason the pastors feel like it is their eloquent speech that will save someone. It is probably the other way around. The unnecessary jokes and leading the discussion down rabbit trails away from the text is what causes more confusion. These distractions take the focus off of God's Word. It is a wonder anybody can discern where God's Word even fits into some pastor's messages.

Did the sports enthusiast gather together and agree that God does not have the right to extend His reach into a believer's life past kickoff time? Did the cooks agree that the weight of the roast in the oven will dictate how long the message will be? Is God's Word now become subject to our flesh? Is this backward? Yes it is. So how come this is the norm in most churches.

Preachers have come to the conclusion you need to keep the people happy and their needs met, rather than please God. Otherwise, you might not have a congregation to preach to. Pastors should not be discouraged by this thought because God has already let us Pastors know that everyone will not make it. Jesus says in Matthew 22:14, "For many are called, but few are chosen." He then uses Paul to ask this telltale question in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." By pleasing God you can serve the people. By pleasing the people you are of no service to either.

Many shepherds will compromise the message in order to keep the people coming back to learn nothing over and over again. It fills out their pockets and that, at least makes the pastor happy. God uses the prophet to declare, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God . . ." (Hos. 4:6). Not only will they cease being priests unto Him but they will also have to give an account for the sheep they failed to shepherd. God uses the

Prophet Ezekiel to declare His judgment against the negligent shepherd by saying, "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand" (33:6). Who desires the office now? Preach the Word.

There is no reason why a semi-skilled shepherd cannot preach a chapter of the Bible within an hour. Unless of course, it is Psalms 119 or some chapters in Luke. That should take considerably longer due to the amount of verses and the importance of it magnifying and giving commendation to God's Word. The reason a pastor cannot preach the Word is usually due to either too much of the pastor's ideology or the focus is on their theatrics.

These theatrics are meant to work the people's emotion up into a frothy crescendo of jubilation that will motivate the people to empty their bank account into the offering plate. They will take a single verse like John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing; the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." Their false interpretation is the words that we speak are life.

The words being described in this passage are God's Word that truly gives life. Again the focus is God's life-giving Word and not on the people. But they continue their errant explanation of the text by telling the people to speak "life" into their problem. Finances? Speak words of "life," to your wallet and then watch it fill up! Speak! Speak!

Grown people speaking to inanimate objects hoping that it will grow because of the power of command they give to their speech? No wonder the world thinks the church has taken a vacation to Nuttsville. Unfortunately, this is foundational doctrine for most churches and they have taken a considerable amount of time teaching it to change the text's plain interpretation. Who is then accountable to correct these false teachings? How long will it take?

Most preachers today are also known to shirk their responsibility to God and their congregation by having guest speakers come in every other week. Or they will divide their congregation into smaller groups during the week and pass the

responsibility off to laymen. It is a shame if a new member to the church has never even seen the pastor after coming for the whole month. Don't you think? The shepherd is supposed to be there to feed and tend to the sheep and not leave it for the hireling (see *Traveling Salesman & What Bible?*).

If a minister does not preach the Word, there are 10 more philosophers that will take his place in trying to win the hearts of the people with their New Age fables. Those of us watching the tide of current events have seen what seemed to be the most sensible people, fall prey to these lies. Even though they were raised in a conservative Christian teaching, they are willing to pursue a myth because it is new.

The New Age philosophy is of course an old lie. You can reach your greatest potential without God. You can make your own way into heaven by just transforming your thoughts into dreams of success. It did not work in ancient Babylon and it will not work today (see Gen. 11:1-9). Most cults have their roots starting from Babylon, which means confusion. There is an appeal to what these self-help gurus teach. They think they can totally reject the sin issue. But it has to be dealt with before going to heaven.

The philosophers sugar coat the sin issue as mistakes that were made before enlightenment. The person only needs to forgive themselves for not coming to their teachings about the truth earlier. That takes care of the person's conscience. With guilt and shame comes from others doing something horrible like molestation, they only need to forgive the person for not finding enlightenment. This is a great message because it empowers the person to release that burden they have hung onto since that incident. Jesus has had this message all along.

Jesus showed the perfect example by being wronged even unto death without ever committing one sin. On the cross He says, ". . . Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do. . ." (Luke 23:34). He also says in Mark 11:25-26, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses." By His sinless life becoming a substitute for the wrongs of the whole world. Past, present and future. He is

able to set us free from any burden and at the same time reconcile relationships. The Apostle Paul writes, "And, having made peace through the blood of his cross, by him to reconcile all things unto himself; by him, I say, whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven" (Col. 1: 20). How will the people know about this saving reconciliation through forgiveness unless it is preached? Jesus wants peace to reign in our lives.

The devil will continue using human vessels to influence Christians in falling away from the truth with these lies, because that is his job. The Apostle Paul writes, ". . . the god of this world hath blinded the minds of them which believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine unto them" (2 Cor. 4:4). He uses crafty means to do this. He dissuades believers from the truth by using these pawns to spread his lies as being truth. Paul continues in the letter to the Corinthians by explaining his subtle cunning, "And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (11:14-15).

How will they know about the enemy of their soul unless it is preached? The Shepherd has to help the people to hone their weapons of warfare against a very seasoned foe. He cannot be up in the pulpit playing patty cake with the people when there is eternity at stake. The devil has been at this game quite a while and knows what he is doing. The people need a skilled commander directing them on the battlefield in order to be victorious.

Repentance

You don't hear preachers warning the congregation about sin, especially fornication and homosexuality anymore. These are very relevant and culturally important issues to preach. Before Jesus left this earth He gave His disciples specific instructions on how to preach. Jesus commanded the disciples to first preach repentance in Luke 24:47, "And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations." That is the first order of business.

While Jesus was on earth, He was teaching the disciples that His name meant "Savior." He had come to save the people from their sins. He gave them many signs to witness to them the power of the Spirit so that they would have confidence in preaching to sinners to repent unto a Holy God. He was even going to give them the Holy Spirit to empower them to accomplish this task. That is why we have so many wimps in the pulpits today because of their lack of the Holy Spirit. Without the power from the Spirit, the minister lacks conviction and courage to preach unto a hard-hearted and stiff-necked people.

Because sin is not put in check by the preaching of the Word of God, it is running rampant in the body of Christ. In some churches there are more people living together than married. Sexual sins like pornography and pedophilia are going unchecked from the pulpit. This is harmful to the name of Christ and hinders the preaching of the Gospel from the saints by the reputation it spreads.

The sexual sin most notable in the Old Testament was David's adultery with Bathsheba. The prophet Nathan rebuked David; after pronouncing God's judgment on David's house, by saying in 2 Samuel 12:14, "Howbeit, because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the LORD to blaspheme, the child also that is born unto thee shall surely die." The innocent suffer because the nations around the body of Christ were asking God what is the difference between the Christians and them? Why go to church, anyway? So why are the pastors not preaching the truth that it might set people free and stop the mouths of the unbelievers? Money! Money!

The pastors are worried about losing the money being put in the offering plate. If the person gets offended by the preaching of the Word then they will not come back. That means a loss of revenue and less spending money for their special interests or hobbies. They do not care about the soul. If the preachers did, they would no doubt preach the truth so it would set them free from sin and death. God calls the pastors "watchmen." He warns them in Ezekiel 33:6, "But if the watchman see the sword come, and blow not the trumpet, and the people be not warned; if the sword come, and take any person from among them, he is taken away in his iniquity; but his blood will I require at the watchman's hand."

This means that God will hold that greedy pastor accountable for the sins of his congregation. A pastor that has spent any time in the Word has got to know this. So, again why doesn't a Preacher; preach the Word for repentance sake?

The excuse you hear from most pastors today is they do want to be accused of judging. It would not be the preacher judging anyway because the Word of God does that. According to John 12:48 it says, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day." Jesus also said "he," speaking of Himself and the Holy Spirit, judges and convicts the person, "And when he is come, he will reprove the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgment:" (John. 16:8). So God has already taken responsibility for any judgment that comes from preaching the Word because it belongs to Him.

How does the Spirit and the Word do this? The Word and the Spirit work together by bringing conviction and conversion in the Body of Christ because of their symbiotic relationship. It says in John 6:63, "It is the spirit that quickeneth; the flesh profiteth nothing: the words that I speak unto you, they are spirit, and they are life." They stimulate the believer into choosing to accept God into their life so that He can transform it into the vessel that He created. But somebody has to preach it in order for this effective combination to be set in motion.

The pastors certainly don't use that excuse for not preaching the Word when it comes to giving them money. They will even condemn a person to hell for not giving them money by saying, "You are not even a Christian if you do not tithe." There is definitely something corrupt with that logic.

The Apostle Paul also warns believers by writing in 1 Corinthians 6:18-20, "Flee fornication. Every sin that a man doeth is without the body; but he that committeth fornication sinneth against his own body. What? know ye not that your body is the temple of the Holy Ghost which is in you, which ye have of God, and ye are not your own? For ye are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's." Does it make sense for these messages being overlooked when they preach the Gospel? We cannot leave the sheep defenseless and ignorant of this fact.

Proverbs 13:21 states, "Evil pursueth sinners: but to the righteous good shall be repayed." There is a reason why we should teach repentance. All the bad things a person has done toward others and God will come to fruition. Whatever you sow, you reap. It is on its way to pay the person back in spades. Only by coming to God in repentance and asking forgiveness will cause the evil to be stopped. We must encourage those that think there is no hope. If they come to God with an apologetic heart, He will not turn them away. It says in Psalms 51:17, "The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise." Man might tell them to beat it, but God will never reject the penitent. He is faithful. 1 John 1:9 says, "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and righteous to forgive us the sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." But if we are unwilling to repent, He is under no obligation to forgive us.

God is not suggesting but He is commanding repentance. Paul preaches in Acts 17:30, "And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent." Yes, God winked at our sins before because we were ignorant of the truth. But none of us can say that we don't know. We know the sins of our own heart. God uses David to write after his adultery with Bathsheba, "For I acknowledge my transgressions: and my sin is ever before me" (Ps. 51:3). We know when we are doing wrong.

God presents this question in Ezekiel 18:31, "Cast away from you all your transgressions, whereby ye have transgressed; and make you a new heart and a new spirit: for why will ye die, O house of Israel?" Is there ever a reason to hang onto sin so we can die? He asks us to throw away all our sins that we do against our God. Putting it far from us. And then afterward we can start anew. A new beginning. Isn't that great? The new life comes from surrendering our will to God and choosing to let Him create that new heart and new spirit within us. Letting Him shape and build us into the vessel that He wants to use. It is still our choice to let Him. What will we choose? He asks, ". . . for why will ye die?" That is the consequence for continuing to follow on the same path of doing life our way.

God pleads to His people through the prophet Isaiah, "Let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts:

and let him return unto the LORD, and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon" (55:7). God wants us to turn away from our wicked ways, never more to turn back unto them. He knows it is hard. So that is why God wants us to return to Him so that He can help us. Pastors must encourage the congregation to trust Him. Because He has already started to help us by giving us mercy and then abundantly pardoning whatever sins we have committed.

Just like if we were on death row and the only one that can relieve the death sentence is the Governor, the King of Kings and Lord of Lords absolves our death sentence and gives us back our life. No more can it be said of us, "Dead man walking!" By repenting, we can start our new walk on the right side with a clean slate. We cannot begin our walk with God by carrying our sins in tow.

After we have turned from our wicked ways (180 degrees), and change into the new creature, then comes the refreshing. He says in Acts 3:19, "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord." We start out our life in Christ afresh. We are now on His Way!

The refreshing transformation does not come overnight. And it does not happen without a lot of hard work. But just like when you quit smoking. After you quit, there comes the hacking and coughing up of all the mucus. That is a physical example to show us the bad stuff (sin) has to leave the body in order for it to be totally set free. Again, it begins with a decision to quit.

Sometimes a person needs a coach to help quit. Someone that has been there. That is where the Minister is needed to help encourage those that want to put an end of sin in their life. He is there to see them through the rough times. Even to remind them that the alternative is death! Then the breathing comes more freely after a month or two of not smoking. But if you are smoking just a little bit, the refreshing does not take place until you have completely forsaken it for a period of time. Neither does freedom from that sin come until a person has been walking a while in righteousness, away from the sin.

The Apostle Paul justifies his need for correction and a call to repentance from his first letter to the church at Corinth:

Now I rejoice, not that ye were made sorry, but that ye sorrowed to repentance: for ye were made sorry after a godly manner, that ye might receive damage by us in nothing. For godly sorrow worketh repentance to salvation not to be repented of: but the sorrow of the world worketh death. For behold this selfsame thing, that ye sorrowed after a godly sort, what carefulness it wrought in you, yea, what clearing of yourselves, yea, what indignation, yea, what fear, yea, what vehement desire, yea, what zeal, yea, what revenge! In all things ye have approved yourselves to be clear in this matter (2 Cor. 7:9-11).

Anything that God uses to bring us to repentance is for our good. You may be asking, "Why am I in this situation? Why doesn't God bring me out of this trial or temptation?" The examination needs to start within you and not casting judgment on God.

Maybe the call for repentance is even coming from reading this book. The call is meant to bring you into a salvation you are not going to turn back from. If this feeling was from the world, (devil) it would be meant to condemn and kill you. But look what God is doing in your life? He cares enough about you to show you the consequences of continuing in sin.

God brings the sin to the surface so you can thoroughly remove it from your life. It is a refining process to show us the impurities that separate us from a Holy God. Once you do this, you will know that you have confidence and favor with God. King Solomon writes, "The wicked flee when no man pursueth: but the righteous are bold as a lion" (Prov. 28:1). You will know when the sin has been purified in your life. It is because you are not on the same path as death. No longer needing to be ashamed. Now sin and guilt has no power in your life. Then you can preach and teach, "The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid" (Ps. 27:1)?

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is that essential teaching that is needed more than ever in the Body of Christ. Because we do not know when someone is going to be leaving this earth, either by death, or the Rapture. A Pastor is to preach to the people that they should always be maintaining a loving and humble relationship with everyone and Him. Not only for our sakes but also for those we come into contact with.

A simple scenario might be like this. I cut a person off by driving in front of them, narrowly missing their car, causing them to brake quickly. A rash of profanities exude from their mouth, cursing God all the while for creating such an idiot. This causes his anger to escalate into a rage that he now decides to chase me down to give me a piece of his mind. By the time he catches up to me, he has already decided to teach me a lesson by doing the same thing to me. Instead of narrowly missing me, he now bumps my vehicle and then both cars spin out of control. Both of us die. Who is going to heaven, since both claim to be Christian? Neither.

If I keep my pride and will not admit that I was wrong, even if it was not intentional, then the other person is still feeling wronged. Jesus tells us in the Sermon on the Mount to make right the wrong that was done immediately. He urges us to, "Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing" (Matt. 5:25-6). When he pulls up along side me, I need to motion to him that I am sorry and if possible, yell it out the window. It cannot be a half-hearted apology also. God looks at the heart and will judge the sincerity.

Hopefully he will understand that I am trying to ask for forgiveness and not misinterpret the gestures as hostility. Usually it just takes an acknowledgement that the offender was at fault for the healing process to begin. Jesus also asks us to forgive our brethren their offenses when they repent. He says, ". . . if he trespass against thee seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turn again to thee, saying, I repent: thou shalt forgive him" (Luke 17:4). It is not our job to question the sincerity.

If the offended person does not want to forgive but desires retribution then the outcome will not be God's perfect will. Someone will probably go to jail in the very least. James; the half-brother of Jesus, warns us, "For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God" (1:20). God instructs us to, "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord: Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled;" (Heb. 12:14-15). Don't hang onto five minutes ago.

In this life we will be wronged by many people and in many different ways. Sometimes by the same person doing the same things over and over. We cannot hold a grudge on every wrong done to us hoping for justice to be done in every situation. Most of us will agree that we want to be forgiven for the things we do to others and God. But there is a reciprocal and regenerating law God has set in stone. Jesus, speaking to His disciples, said, "And when ye stand praying, forgive, if ye have ought against any: that your Father also which is in heaven may forgive you your trespasses. But if ye do not forgive, neither will your Father which is in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26). We forgive, then God forgives us. Only then are we able to get what we ask for.

Where do you stand today as far as having an aught or grudge against any? How long do you plan to carry this sin of not forgiving? Do you feel that they owe you an apology first? Maybe you were innocent in this incident, especially as a child, and the offender should take all the blame. Forgiving the person will set you free in ways you cannot imagine. I hope you do not think you've never done anything wrong during your entire life. The Apostle Paul would like to dispel that myth in Romans 3:9-10, "What then? are we better than they? No, in no wise: for we have before proved both Jews and Gentiles, that they are all under sin; As it is written, There is none righteous, no, not one."

Did someone come to mind? You have just heard that you need to forgive and be forgiven. Jesus tells those that would follow Him, "Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled

to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift" (Matt. 5:23-24). Go ahead, forgive. Then you can come back to God and offer your gifts of worship to an attentive ear.

Tithes and Offerings

The tithes and offerings are a necessary teaching that cannot be left out from professing the whole counsel of God. But it does not mean that a pastor needs to preach it at every service. The Bible does speak a great deal about how we should handle our finances. So, some time does need to be devoted to these issues. One area of finances is tithes and offerings. What do you think is the fair amount of time that needs to be spent on this matter?

I agree the pastors need to preach this message because of the benefits that God has provided in the Word. The giving of tithes and the offerings comes with a wonderful promise by God. He declares to the people in Malachi:

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, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground; neither shall your vine cast her fruit before the time in the field, saith the LORD of hosts. And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts (3:10-12).

The "meat" in God's house is so the Pastor can distribute help to the different needs of the people. In the Old Testament the priests used to have a portion of the offerings that were dedicated to God. But because of the offerings and continuous ceremonies that took place in the temple have since changed, there is no need for an on-duty priest to be present. (See Provision). Jesus, our High Priest is on duty 24/7 to minister to our needs. In most churches today there is not much money left for God's work because the pastors still insist upon a distribution be given to them from the

dedicated offerings unto God. That is probably the reason for the repetitious sermons on giving. You think?

The Shepherd really needs to look at the longevity of his members in relation to the sermons on offerings. Most mega-churches boast a continual increase of new believers that are coming to Christ for the first time. But they are still having the same amount of members or less attending church. The attrition rate is probably due to the continuous messages about giving money. After awhile, the member sadly makes the decision they cannot afford to come to church. It is a sad day when God sends laborers into the harvest and none of the sheaves make it into the safety of the barn because they are cut down and left in the field by the pastor.

It seems like every church I visit has at least two offerings during the service. It does not matter if it is a Tuesday. The ushers come forward to receive the first offering after the music portion and then there is some excuse to take up another one before the service is done. It is either for a miracle offering, training conference offering, guest speaker honorarium, and the list goes on and on. None of which are found in the Bible. The spirit somehow overcomes the last person with the microphone. It tells them to ask for one more offering. It does not even have to be the pastor. It can even be the deacon giving the announcements. Makes you wonder if somehow the microphones can be possessed? This sounds like the influence from the spirit of greed rather than the Spirit of God.

I have noticed some churches have positions on the staff for Tithing or Offerings Pastor. Where in the Bible are you going to find the basis for that? Not one written by God. These are high-powered salesmen that are specifically titled to illicit tithes and offerings from the people. Their allotted time to speak is devoted to scriptures that pertain only to the giving of money. And like a salesman, their salary is determinant on the amount gathered during that session.

The Tithes Pastor usually comes on after the previous speaker has announced its time for giving! The people have already been conditioned to respond with clapping and a lot of yelling. You might genuinely ask if this is normal? Do people sit at home around bill time yelling and clapping. No. This is one of the

techniques brought back from one of those Training Conferences. Their favorite scripture to teach is 2 Corinthians 9:7, "Every man according as he purposeth in his heart, so let him give; not grudgingly, or of necessity: for God loveth a cheerful giver." So these pastors are telling the audience that giving back to the Lord is supposed to be a happy time. That is the reason for the yelling and clapping. Otherwise, God will not honor your gift.

Another way the pastors' play on the crowd's emotions is by drawing attention to the previous verse, "But this I say, He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully" (2 Cor. 9:6). The people then understand that in order to get, you have to give. For those with real needs, this verse is interpreted by design as a formula for the miracle they have been waiting for. So they give because of their "necessity." The miracle almost never happens. I am sure God provided for their needs but they were expecting to win the lottery. So the person is walking around as a disappointed ex-believer that does not want to hear anything about God.

The few times it does happen, then they become the poster child for that scripture. They don't realize it was their appointed time to receive the rain or blessings that come upon the "... just and the unjust" (Matt. 5:45). The Tithing Pastor loves it when they have a testimony because their selling factor for the sales pitch grows exponentially. Let's face it. Everybody could use a miracle money windfall. Money can't buy happiness but it is necessary to pay the bills.

A person can be clapping outwardly but still have resentment inwardly. They give the emphasis on the last part of the scripture on being a "cheerful giver" when the first part about "not grudgingly," is the key. Because God does examine the heart. The person needs to be fully persuaded before they leave their house on the amount to given in the offering plate. Those quiet moments at home are the time that the believer and God are to be in communion with their tithes and giving of thanks. When a person is settled in their heart what to give before leaving the house then they are less likely to be persuaded by speeches, music, and theatrics that are trying to entice an emotional response to giving.

Emotional giving lends to later feelings that the person

gave, "grudgingly." After leaving they realize that the money given was already earmarked for another bill. It does not make sense to give \$20.00 in the offering plate and then need to borrow gas money for the rest of the week. Plus what kind of witness is that to an unsaved world?

Giving to God is not like playing the roulette wheel hoping your number comes up. It is to be a love offering just because of who He is and your love for Him. Paying your tithes should be like when you give money to your spouse to take of the necessary expenses around the house. You are confident when giving the money it will go to worthwhile causes that will end up benefiting or has already benefited you.

The offerings are like those times you give a box of candy, flowers or special gift to that someone you love to show your appreciation and gratitude for them being in your life. The offering is the "just because," gift to God. Now, don't misinterpret what I am saying. You should not be putting flowers and chocolates in the offering plate when it comes around. I am saying that the monetary offerings you give above your tithes are a free will, non-solicited, thanks giving offering that says to God, "I love you!"

Again, I do not feel that tithes and offerings should not be taught. It should in proper percentage to all the other topics in the Bible. Maybe, ten percent? A tithe? It should not be taught as a high-pressure sales gimmick. Some churches have even went back to a simple plan that was recorded in the Bible. This Old Testament solution gives the people the opportunity to give for the needs of the temple without all the hype.

There was a time in the Old Testament that the priests were not taking in any money from the people. For real! But the temple was looking haggard because nothing was being repaired. So King Jehoshaphat told Jehoiada the priest to start taking the money again for the repairs of the house of the Lord. The Bible says, "But Jehoiada the priest took a chest, and bored a hole in the lid of it, and set it beside the altar, on the right side as one cometh into the house of the LORD: and the priests that kept the door put therein all the money that was brought into the house of the LORD" (2 Kings 12:9).

A simple chest placed at the entrance that has a hole in it. There was no hype or dramatic presentations needed to get the

people to give. This is a simple answer God has provided for churches that need to have their building funded or repaired. Some churches have it mounted on the back wall. That way it is away from high-profile viewing for those that like to make a spectacle out of their giving. Nobody will see their show. It is also private enough for those not wanting anyone to make a big deal out of their giving. People are much more free to give as their heart leads them. Of course, the nosy will always be nosy and try to get a glimpse so they can pass judgment.

Another account of this event is recorded to witness to the fact that there will be more than enough gathered to accomplish the task of keeping the temple in order. It says in 2 Chronicles 24:11, "Now it came to pass, that at what time the chest was brought unto the king's office by the hand of the Levites, and when they saw that there was much money, the king's scribe and the high priest's officer came and emptied the chest, and took it, and carried it to his place again. Thus they did day by day, and gathered money in abundance." God's Word is sure and able to be trusted. There was such an abundance gathered that the faithful priest, Jehoida was able to minister daily before the Lord in all the services required in the temple.

Alms need to be taught as well. Alms are money or food items given to the poor and needy. Unless the church has a specific ministry, like a food pantry for the donations given for that cause, the people should not be giving with anybody else knowing about it. Jesus speaking to the people in Matthew 6:2 said, "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward." This benevolent practice is to be taught as something we do unto the Lord; knowing that only He will repay. The witness to this doctrine is in Proverbs 19:17, "He that hath pity upon the poor lendeth unto the LORD; and that which he hath given will he pay him again" (See also 14:31).

God does see and reward our giving. Give unto the ministries you have a peace about it going to the Lord's work. You may not receive your blessing on this side of heaven. Make sure your heart is okay with it before you give. Then you can say you are truly living a, "Blessed Life."

Fellowship

The Pastors are to bring the people into fellowship with God by preaching the Word they have received. The Apostle John said in 1 John 1:1-3:

That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life; (For the life was manifested, and we have seen it, and bear witness, and shew unto you that eternal life, which was with the Father, and was manifested unto us;) That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ.

That reconciliation we preach is to bring people into a fellowship with God.

The Apostle Paul asks the question, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?" (Rom. 10:14). Preachers are meant to tell the people about the Gospel (good news), so they may know there is a God desiring communication and fellowship with him or her.

The Pastors are to begin teaching believers that God has initiated this fellowship with us. He has called us unto Himself because of this desire to fellowship. The Apostle Paul confirms this in 1 Corinthians 1:9, "God is faithful, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord." The calling goes out to the whole world. He will not reject anyone. It is His desire to have an intense fellowship with us.

The Greek word mostly used for fellowship found in scripture is, "koinonia". It means to have an association with persons with similar interests or occupation. The Apostle Paul says this in 1 Corinthians 1:10, "Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that ye all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly

joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment." In order for us to be perfectly joined together our minds need to be only on God.

The best way for pastors to live out this fellowship is to be among the people in occupation, eating, and housing. The Apostle Paul did this as a tent-maker and was eating and living amongst the people. A pastor cannot do this by working twice a week in the church, living in a mansion, and ordering catered food. There is nothing common about that. Which equals no fellowship.

In Psalms 133:1 it says, "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" This is what God wants to see from us down here on earth. What do you think we will be doing in heaven for eternity? God has designed an emotional reward for the doers that are being obedient to fellowshiping with the brethren. Do you think God is going to force you into heaven to be with someone you can't stand? He will take that person into heaven and tell you to, "Go to hell!"

The Pastor needs to preach to the believer to change their attitude of being in acceptance and fellowship with even their enemies. If they can do that, then God will work on the faults of their enemy to conform him unto Christ or be condemned. Either way, they will be a winner.

The Pastors cannot let the people stay ignorant of their part in seeking fellowship with others. Especially, their enemies. Ignorance of the law does not excuse a violator in a court of law, so it certainly will not work with an omniscient God that knows the deepest thoughts of our heart. If our hearts are still dark through hate for another human being created in God's image, then we are still in our sins.

The Apostle John says, "If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from all sin" (1 John 1:6-7). If we are unwilling to have fellowship with others then something is wrong with our hearts. Pastors need to preach this message to where the listener can really examine if their heart has love or hate inside. Eternity is such a long time to be separated from God over petty differences that were brief in the anguish it caused.

To have fellowship with Christ means we will have common interests and go through similar circumstances. Because He was truth and life to a lying and dying world, He knows what it is to suffer on this plane of existence. A person needs to know they will go through suffering for His name's sake because of their "yoke," fellowship with Christ (Matt. 11:29). The Apostle Paul tells the Philippians that knowing the sufferings Christ went through is the path that we should desire to partake with Him. He says, "That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead" (Phil. 3:10-11).

The beautiful part of being in fellowship with Christ is He understands our suffering because He went through the same thing. The Bible says, "For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren," (Heb. 2:11). Because we could not reach God's standard of existence so we could be called brethren, He condescended to our lowest level to reach all of us. So a person needs to rebuke any doubts entering their mind that God does not care for us.

These doubts come from that great slanderer, the devil. He separated man from God in the beginning by casting doubt on God's Word and His desire for the good of mankind. He told Eve in Genesis 3:4-5, "And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil." By Adam and Eve entertaining this slander; sin and death has entered and reigned in the world.

Pastors are called to proclaim gossip and slander are the dark works of the devil because of its effect on relationships. This is a key issue that cannot be sugar coated. The Apostle Paul instructs the believer in the church of Ephesus to, "Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamour, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice:" (Eph. 4:31). The gossip is to be "put away" with intentions of keeping it away. As believer's in the "light"; we are to, ". . . have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them" (Eph. 5:11). Because the devil is known as, ". . . the accuser of our brethren. . .," those

gossiping are actually on his side and doing his bidding (Rev. 12:10).

Anyone that has ever been a victim of this vile attack can testify of its deep reaching hurt that leaves you devastated. The Bible describes what happens to a person once they hear the things being said about them. It says in Proverbs 26:22, "The words of a talebearer are as wounds, and they go down into the innermost parts of the belly." The sickening feeling in your gut makes you not want to be around anybody. It breaks fellowship with everything. Before long, you are questioning God on how this can be allowed to happen. It takes us back to being the puppet on the strings that the devil used to play with His creation in the garden of Eden. We again, start doubting God's desire for our ultimate good.

God does not take away from us the free will to choose whom we will listen to. But listening to slander is a killer to our fellowshiping with others and Him. Pastors need to preach against this hatred. God puts gossip that separates the brethren at number six and seven among His Top Seven Hate List, "A false witness that speaketh lies, and he that soweth discord among brethren" (Prov. 6:19). He also records in Proverbs 26:24, "He that hateth dissembleth with his lips, and layeth up deceit within him." Now that is the true definition of a, "Hate Crime." Gossip is hatred in action when it "dissembleth," relationships. Many of churches have crumbled from this devilish device. Pastors cannot be squeamish in teaching against this subject. Otherwise, they may not have a congregation to preach to.

Born Again

Jesus is very clear with the fact that we need to be "Born Again," in order to go to heaven (John 3:5). Many people have heard the term but are not sure what it means. Some people think it is a done deal once you believe in Jesus, but that is not the case. Something with such eternal significance needs to be taught regularly from the pulpit.

Most people will tell you they are going to heaven because they believe in God, go to church, and pray. Those are all good works and should be done, but the devils do that too. In Luke 4:33-34 it says, "And in the synagogue there was a man, which

had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God" (see also Mark 5:2-9). We see that the possessed man was in the synagogue; or church, and knew who Jesus was and was talking to Him. So there has to be some other distinction that enables us to go to heaven.

Others will tell you they got baptized in water (dunked or sprinkled). Baptism gives them entrance into heaven. But water doesn't save. Because if it did; everyone that took a shower, dunked themselves in the bathtub, or went swimming would be going to heaven. Take for instance this case. A Baptist preacher had convinced the town drunk one day into thinking he needed to find Jesus before he died. He took him down to the river and told him, "In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost," and proceeded to dunk him in the water. When he came up the preacher asked him, "Did you find Jesus?" The drunk shook his head no, so the preacher repeated the process. This time the preacher shouted, "Did you find Jesus?" To this the drunk replied, "Are you sure this is where he fell in?" The person can go through the motions of baptism, but if they do not know why they are doing it, then it will have no affect on their lives.

The water baptism that John the Baptist called for in the book of Matthew was having the people acknowledge their sins they have committed and then proving they had repented (Matt. 3:6-8). He then told them there was a greater baptism on the way that he was preparing them for. Speaking of Jesus, John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire" (Matt. 3:11). There is a baptism that comes directly from Jesus. Jesus has come; as John had prophesied, so we should seek to have the baptism of the "Holy Ghost, and with fire."

Remember, it was John that put the distinction between the two baptisms. I do not want to be accused of being divisive. God put it there. I want to make clear the difference between the two so someone cannot say I never heard of two baptisms.

The Apostle Paul dealt with this ignorance (lack of knowledge) when he came to Ephesus. He asked the disciples

there, “. . . Have ye received the Holy Ghost since ye believed? And they said unto him, We have not so much as heard whether there be any Holy Ghost” (Acts 19:2). Just like some believers today have never heard of the Holy Ghost. After they heard of the difference and believed, Paul, “. . . laid his hands upon them, the Holy Ghost came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied (Acts 19:6).

The believers in Ephesus did not automatically receive the Holy Spirit from being baptized with water. It was preached to them, they were prepared to receive it by faith, then by believing they accepted it when God used Paul as a vessel to conduit the Holy Spirit to them by the laying on of hands. He explains it to them more fully in Ephesians 1:13-14, “. . . after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that holy Spirit of promise, Which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory.” The process began with them believing in Christ and ended with God sealing them with the Holy Spirit.

1st Century believers would readily understand the seal that the Apostle Paul is speaking of as a sign of ownership. A king or those in authority would put a mark on their slaves to indicate the person belonged to them. God has given us His Spirit to mark us and claim us as belonging to Him.

God says just the opposite is true about ownership, also. He uses Paul again to write, “. . . Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his” (Rom. 8:9). With the importance of eternity hanging in the balance you need to make sure you are Holy Spirit filled. So how does someone get Holy Spirit filled?

The first step in receiving the Holy Spirit begins with asking. Wouldn't you refuse the mailman if he showed up at your door asking you to sign for something you never ordered? You would tell him to return to sender. It is the same way with God. He will not come knocking on the door of your heart if you are not asking. So you need to open wide your mind and heart and ask to receive this wonderful and incomprehensible gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus explains it this way in Luke 11:13, “If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them

that ask him?" God is standing by and waiting to give you that precious gift of the Holy Spirit, "to them that ask him." The asking is the preparation to receiving His Spirit.

There are different ways Christians have received the Holy Spirit; either collectively or individually in the Book of Acts. The disciples were together waiting expectantly to receive the Holy Spirit in Chapter 2. The Apostles prayed for the believers and laid hands upon them in Chapter 8. In Chapter 10, it is Cornelius and all those of his household that believed the Word Peter preached, that were filled with the Spirit. There are other examples that followed but the common thread tying these together is they were all open to receive God in their lives through His Spirit.

It is important you receive the Holy Spirit, not how you receive it. Once, you have the Spirit, you need to realize that there is a purpose the Holy Spirit wants to fulfill in your life. God gives us His Spirit for a reason. The last words Jesus spoke to his disciples were about the Holy Spirit. He tells them, "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). This power was the fulfillment of the words he had spoken to them in Luke 24:49 ". . . I send the promise of my Father upon you: but tarry ye in the city of Jerusalem, until ye be endued with power from on high." So what else was the purpose of this power He was giving to those following Him?

Jesus had already prepared them for the coming of the Holy Spirit before He went to the cross. He told them the Spirit would be a comforter and help them continue to witness for Him. Jesus said in John 15:26-27, "But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he shall testify of me: And ye also shall bear witness, because ye have been with me from the beginning." Jesus also told Pilate, ". . . To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice" (John 18:37). So we are given the Holy Spirit to bear witness to the truth about Jesus. Because He was Truth incarnate (see John 1:14 & 14:6).

Being "Born Again," gives us the opportunity to start our

lives over again with a purpose. Now we are to realize the Holy Spirit gives us that “power from on high,” to witness to the truth. So why is there a need for so much power and what is the truth? The truth we bear witness to is God’s love. How do we do this? Keep this question in mind as we segue into the next chapter.

The Least of These

Jesus has given us His Holy Spirit to witness to the world of God’s love. We as believers are to exhibit benevolent acts of kindness to those in need, especially to those that cannot repay. Charity is love in action without asking for a receipt or reward of the act being done. But there is a reward to come on that final day of judgment. Jesus confirms this by His own words in Revelation 22:12, “And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be.”

Jesus speaks of a reward coming from “work.” The work He is referring to is the one He taught the disciples in the Book of Matthew. He told them:

When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink? When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? And the King shall answer and say unto them,

Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal (25:31-46).

Jesus likened the doing of these works or not doing these works "unto one of the least of these my brethren," as a reflection of our affection for Him. We need to understand they come from His family because of the fact He calls them brethren. Apparently, Jesus makes the division on who the sheep and the goats are by their benevolent acts of charity or lack of, "to the least of these."

The "least of these," seems to imply the lowest degree society esteems any worth to. These would be those on skid row, homeless, runaways, sickly and in prison. These have been written off by society as being hopeless and of no worth to the community. But Jesus sees them as the determining factor in whether we are judged as a sheep or a goat.

These people are in their predicament either by choice, circumstance, or both. Our job is not to judge. We are to meet the people where they are and try to help them see the truth of God's love. They act as a refining or defining factor in determining if we will have heaven or hell as our eternal home (vs. 34 & 41). Do you want to be a good sheep or a baaad goat?

Society looks at these people as a burden or a blight on their perfect worldview. They are looked down upon with disdain and contempt and are judged for being in that condition. Jesus felt this reproach and shame from society when He was on the cross.

The prophet foretells of this event in Isaiah 53:3-4, "He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted." Jesus has felt what these people go through and knows what is like when nobody comes to the rescue.

Jesus is asking us that are filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to come alongside them and show God's love is still reaching out to them. He tells us to meet their physical needs in order to show this love. Even Jesus did not neglect the physical needs of people. Remember, how He fed the multitudes after teaching them the Word (see Matt. 14:15-20, 15:32-38, Mark 8:1-8 and Luke 9:12-17). The Bible says Jesus had, "compassion on them."

I think it is a great idea to give the Word of God first before passing out the food, especially since most people care only for their stomachs. But it does not have to be done that way. You cannot expect a person to hang on until the preaching is done if their body has already turned upon itself and extracting the nutrients from the bone marrow and muscle mass in order to stay alive. They may not have an hour to live or the damage imposed may be irreparable. It hardly sounds like being compassionate if we are that strict.

God tells us to give "the least of these," a love feast. Jesus says in Luke 14:13-14, "But when thou makest a feast, call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee: for thou shalt be recompensed at the resurrection of the just." While feeding the homeless and downtrodden, there will probably be times when you will be led by the love of God or your own bowels of mercy to take the stranger in to your home, family, or shelter.

First you need to make sure you have the love for God necessary to undertake this kind of work. Yes, it is work. Jesus says in Luke 14:26-27, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." Your love for God has to be comparable to hating everything else in order to endure the cross, or horrors, that come

on this road of following Him.

You need to think this out beforehand if you are able to stick with the task. Jesus asks, "For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it" (Luke 14:28)? How long will it take to finish each job He gives us? One year? Two, ten or fifty? Counting the cost means for us to think this through and be willing to stick it out to the end. Realize there are dangers and long suffering that accompanies them as a package deal until they allow Jesus to be Lord over their life.

Remember, as the poor, they cannot pay you or maybe they never will be able to repay you. Those afflicted with physical ailments of being maimed, lame or blind have the medical expenses also. Living on the streets or in the wilderness has a way of also attracting critters to the person and their belongings. Are you prepared to delouse them and then possibly your whole household? Sometimes the problems that accompany the person come in the form of abusive relationships with the current partner or ex-whatever.

With the mentally ill, the abuse comes from themselves or being possessed of the devil. Satan will do his job. He is not lazy. Jesus said in John 10:10, "The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy . . ." We see this operation taking place in the man possessed of the Legion in Mark 5:5, "And always, night and day, he was in the mountains, and in the tombs, crying, and cutting himself with stones." Do you think they might be tempted to cut you if they are already influenced by the devil to cut themselves? You will need God's patience, protection, and love in order to deal with these cases.

The Apostle Paul instructs young Timothy how to deal with these situations. He says, "And the servant of the Lord must not strive; but be gentle unto all men, apt to teach, patient, In meekness instructing those that oppose themselves; if God peradventure will give them repentance to the acknowledging of the truth; And that they may recover themselves out of the snare of the devil, who are taken captive by him at his will" (2 Tim. 2:24-26). The devil has taken captive their mind and has them in confusion. Without them being in control of their faculties he uses them like puppets to do his bidding. That is why there are so many people

in the criminal justice system saying, "The devil made me do it." It did not work with God in the beginning with Adam and Eve. It does not work with the courts today.

God has so many ways He uses physical ailments or imprisonment to accomplish His will. So when it comes to these cases, He tells us to "visit" the sick or those in prison. Once God has your bodies there visiting, then He can instruct us in the purpose for being there. Remember, we are finite beings with limited knowledge of our surroundings, much less, everything happening in the world. The Psalmist reiterates this truth in Psalms 92:5-6 , "O LORD, how great are thy works! and thy thoughts are very deep. A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this."

The worst thing we can do is try to "fix," the problem with our fleshly plans or choose to judge and do nothing in contempt of people. In 1 Samuel 21, it was Ahimelech the priest that wound up feeding the shewbread unto David and his band of men because they were hungry. It would cost him his life and the lives of his family members because he did not inquire of the Lord first. It is very important to pray about it. The disciples began to offer their contribution to the problem by judging the blind in John 9. Jesus had to enlighten them to the fact it was God's will that the man was born blind. Jesus said the reason for him being blind was so, ". . . that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (vs. 3). God had a plan to get Himself glory from this man's visual impairment.

Others down history have been in similar situations that would have fit in the category as the "the least of these." They did not understand God was doing a mighty work through their situation until after their deliverance. We find a story unfolding in Genesis 39-41, where Joseph was being imprisoned falsely as a rapist before God set him up as the second highest ruler in the land of Egypt. The Israelites were in bound in slavery to Pharaoh before God delivered them through the plagues and His mighty hand in Exodus. Daniel was thrown to the lions so he could witness to the king of the mighty God he served in chapter 6.

The Apostle Paul would have to suffer prison, beatings, and eventually death in order to be put in positions to minister to the group he was called to. God instructed Ananias of Paul's lot,

“... for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel: For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake” (Acts 9:15-16). His suffering would end in a prison at Rome. An Angel told him on a prison ship, “. . . Fear not, Paul; thou must be brought before Caesar. . .” (Acts 27:24). Tradition has it that he would be brought bound before Caesar and beheaded for his witness of Jesus Christ. Should we then judge those in prison because of their circumstances or should we pray they be converted to do God's will?

Jesus was the greatest example of being imprisoned. This was done by a Kangaroo Court that had judges with agendas, false witnesses, lack of evidence, and the total abandonment of anyone coming forward on his behalf. Surely, no one today thinks Jesus sinned. But the people judged and mocked Him on the cross with the two thieves by saying, “And they that passed by railed on him, wagging their heads, and saying, Ah, thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, Save thyself, and come down from the cross” (Mark 15:29-30). Many people walk around today in their smugness, looking down their noses at the homeless, afflicted and imprisoned. They do not realize they are doing this unto created in His image.

Jesus had fulfilled the prophecy in Isaiah 53:3, “He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not.” Jesus asks us to now come alongside “the least of these,” because He was also rejected and disrespected. God had the writer of Hebrews to pen, “Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body” (13:1-3). How do you treat those He died to save? Remember, Jesus might send you someone begging for food to test your love for God. “Lovest thou me?”

Every good Pastor will need to develop these ministries within the church. Not only those, but we are to care for the elderly, widowed and orphans. This last group can also include those single-parent families within the church that has the father

or mother missing. The Pastor needs to equip the saints to act upon the Word of God being preached. The Word tells us, "Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jas. 1:27).

The number one need on this group's list of afflictions is companionship. They don't need a long-distance handout. They need an actual person to come alongside them and let them know God has not forgotten about them. That is why He asks us to, "visit the fatherless and widows." Time with someone is a precious gift only we can choose who to give it to. Once it is given, it cannot be retrieved. Use it wisely for the kingdom.

You might be asking where are all these people going to come from to do all this work? Because the able bodied people like to give excuses for not coming to church, God tells us to, ". . . Go out quickly into the streets and lanes of the city, and bring in hither the poor, and the maimed, and the halt, and the blind. And the servant said, Lord, it is done as thou hast commanded, and yet there is room. And the lord said unto the servant, Go out into the highways and hedges, and compel them to come in, that my house may be filled" (Luke 14:21-23). God wants to use anyone willing to work for Him. Again, it is called work because of the various difficulties that comes from every unique individual. Although the labor is taxing, the rewards are eternal.

Jesus uses an example in the Book of Mark of someone once possessed by the devil, but was set free so the he could witness to his community. The man wanted to leave his sphere of influence to travel with Jesus but He told him, ". . . Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee" (5:19). Our ministry to "the least of these," are those that can become the next generation of Christian soldiers sent out to witness of God's love to this dark and lonely world.

Love

The simplest of God's messages is to love. It is also the hardest to teach with the conviction it brings, much less to follow. The greatest asset a Pastor can bring to his congregation is love. Love will help him overcome the un-lovable, pray for the obstinate, and endure the hardness that comes with the cares of the church. By doing these, he becomes the physical witness that everyone is to follow in their service to God. The fruit he then produces is a loving and compassionate people that can be sent out to harvest those looking for the love of God.

Even though it is a daunting task, it cannot be set-aside for everyone to figure it out on their own. Because everyone will have a different standard by which to judge their way of loving as being the right way. It is natural for most of us to think of ourselves as being a good person if we have not killed anyone. Even if a person has murdered someone they were supposed to love, they can usually rationalize the event into it being an accident, a poor choice, or blame the other person as they had it coming to them. But the Bible says, "Every way of a man is right in his own eyes: but the LORD pondereth the hearts" (Prov. 21:2).

While we may justify our deeds as not being as bad as the next person and feel we have love, God uses a perfect scale to measure us against. Proverbs 20:6 says, "Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness: but a faithful man who can find?" All of us fall short of God's perfect love and in doing so we have sinned. Solomon writes the rhetorical question only those that have taken a true moral inventory can answer, "Who can say, I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" (Prov. 20:9). He states the answer in Ecclesiastes 7:20, "For there is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." We need to be taught perfect love.

Contemporary pastors of today like to think of themselves as being a "Life Coach," or someone that encourages others to be the best person possible. This is a job description they have written on their own. It is not the purpose for which God has called them for. If they do not know their purpose, how are they ever going to coach anyone in life? The Preacher finally gets this revelation of why he was put on this earth after gathering all the books he

could find in Ecclesiastes 12:13, "Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God, and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man."

A Pastor needs to teach the congregation what their duty is to first and foremost, fear God. Then the next order of business is to identify what the commandments are. Jesus pronounced in Matthew 22:37-39, ". . . Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." Love is a command. Love God with everything we have and do the same to our fellow man. One of Jesus' closest disciples reiterates this message in 1 John 4:7, "Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God."

We know by keeping the commandments to love we can say we know God. So when people are not loving, it is because there lack of knowing God. The Apostle John goes on to say, "He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love" (1 John 4:8). This fault of not knowing God falls square on the Pastor's shoulders. The Pastors need to be able to motivate the congregation to accomplish this task above all else. The works done after this is accomplished will then be fruitful for the kingdom of God.

So how do the Pastors encourage believer's to make a choice to love God and their fellow man in a hostile world that is constantly trying to provoke you to do otherwise? That goes back to our purpose of being here to, "Fear God." The wise Preacher in the Book of Proverbs says, "By mercy and truth iniquity is purged: and by the fear of the LORD men depart from evil" (16:6). The Pastor has to be patient and preach the truth so it will produce a reverent fear for God. There is no way to get around God's plan to instill love into a sinner. You cannot do it by innovative schemes or fancy power-point technology that distracts from the truth.

Pastors must also teach God's love is greater than the natural man's concept. When compared they can be both seem similar and yet confusing if not explained properly. God uses the Patriarchal example to show us who really does love because it calls for action. God says that a loving father will not let his son get away with passing over the line of measurement that had already been established without suffering the consequences. In Proverbs

13:24 it states, "He that spareth his rod hateth his son: but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes." The son would know the measuring rod's parameters and consequences for violating the length of that "rod," or line of measurement. The loving father will chasten the son he loves for those violations.

Another confusion man brings to the concept of love is parameters. If you love me; you will do this or this and that. But the Apostle Paul desires, "That Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith; that ye, being rooted and grounded in love, May be able to comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height; And to know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God" (Eph. 3:17-19). Our goal is to know the fullness of love which Christ demonstrated to us in His giving.

Jesus showed love by dying on the cross to reconcile us back to God. You see, others died that day, but He, "...for the joy set before him endured the cross. . ." (Heb. 12:2). He sacrificed Himself with joy. God wants us to get to that level of sacrificing ourselves in giving service to others with love and joy. Not that we can attain unto it but we need to try and understand how vast His love is. And with that understanding, Paul writes again to the Philippians, "And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (1:9-10). Our love is supposed to continue growing until Christ returns. How great is your love?

Part IV

Conclusion

The Shepherd's Trial has now concluded its case. The evidence presented through these many pages was to point out the crimes being committed, identify the offenders and then hold them accountable to the Divine Court. The Word of God is the law being used to determine the statutes that all mankind is to live by. The Holy Spirit and the victims are the witnesses proving an offense was committed. God, Almighty is the Judge that will give a fair sentencing because justice demands it.

The prudent thing the guilty can do is to acknowledge their mistakes and throw themselves on the mercy of the Judge. God is plenteous in mercy. God instructs Moses to write in Deuteronomy 7:9, "Know therefore that the LORD thy God, he is God, the faithful God, which keepeth covenant and mercy with them that love him and keep his commandments to a thousand generations;" He has the pardoning capability far above any Governor on this earth. God is more than willing to renew or begin for the first time the covenant with the leaders of His flock.

God calls the shepherds to a higher standard of living since they represent Him to the people. That is why there is greater judgment required at the hand of His shepherds. Jesus warned Peter about becoming a wicked servant in Luke 12:48, "But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be

beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more." There is a different degree of punishment for His pastors that are supposed to know.

The Pastors are called to be servants and not extortionists. The disciples were fighting over who will be sitting next to Jesus in the kingdom age. Jesus told them, "And whosoever of you will be the chiefest, shall be servant of all. For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:44-5). As shepherds, pastors, ministers, priests and teachers we are to follow the example of Christ. We will be judged according to the example of a servant He gave us in the Word.

The hardheaded, greedy, and cold-hearted on the other hand, will receive the stiffest penalty allowed. The Book of Proverbs declares this truth, "As righteousness tendeth to life: so he that pursueth evil pursueth it to his own death" (11:19). This is the end to all those refusing to come under subjection to God's way. What should be the punishment for those continuing to follow their own evil desires? God will be reluctant, but faithful in executing His divine judgment. God declares this promise in Deuteronomy 7:10, "And repayeth them that hate him to their face, to destroy them: he will not be slack to him that hateth him, he will repay him to his face."

All of us will see Jesus face to face. How do we want to see Him at the Great White Throne of Judgment to determine our payment and place for eternity (see Rev. 20:11-14)? Just as the Judge in a court of law has nothing to do with the criminal's participation in the offense but everything to do with the sentencing, so God cannot be at fault for our choices. So remember, today's choices determine what Judge we will have on the bench. His judgment will be just.

Message to the Sheep

How did your pastor, leader or organization rate after going through this book? Can they be convicted of false shepherd status or even criminal? Did the leader show any repentance when indicted with these charges? If convicted, what would be a fair

sentencing for their many offenses? What can you do to help them back to paths of righteousness?

I hope you have not been swayed from following God. Do not be angry to the point you do something foolish. I hope this lets you know that He is aware of the problem with a few wayward pastors and hopes you will draw closer to Him during this difficult time. God does love you very much. He had created you for a purpose and His desire for you is the very best. Unfortunately, people are still allowed to make choices. Even greedy people calling themselves pastors are not exempt from the ability to sin.

You have to identify these people and stay away from them. God's Word says this about them, ". . . men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness: from such withdraw thyself" (1 Tim. 6:5). Do not stay away from God, though. A well-known Proverb is, "In all thy ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths" (3:6). Ask God for His plan for your life and then seek for a place of worship. Not a perfect church, because you will not find one. A place you can learn the Word of God and have the opportunity to apply it to your life.

God will always want you to be safe. But He does not want you to stay away from Him or the Body, which is His church. He has called you into service for His Body, the Church. If the Pastor does not change his ways, you can do one of two things. You can pray for the Pastor and approach him with this book highlighted with the areas identifying the discrepancies with his practices, either face to face or mailed anonymously. You can then watch him allow God to change his ways. Or you can pray for the Pastor and give him this book highlighted and then let God lead you to another body of believers if he is unwilling to change. The main thing is you have prayed for the pastor. God's said He, ". . . will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding" (Jer. 3:15). The reason He called them into ministry in the first place was to use them. He will give them a chance by chastising them first. He will then judge them if they remain hardheaded and cold-hearted to do His will.

The key still is for you to pray for the Pastors you see. That is what God is looking for to take place in your heart. Remember they did not die for you and they sure do not have a heaven or

hell to put you in. You came to God because His message of love touched your heart in some special way. His message does not change because of the selfish actions of a select few. Do not join with a pastor. Do not join a church or denomination. Join with Jesus. He is only way to make into heaven. He says, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me"(John 14:6).

So continue to serve God with your whole heart. He wants to encompass your whole life until He becomes your whole life and reason for being. Salvation is the reason you came to God in the first place. Do not lose your focus on Jesus and your own salvation by these distractions. The Holy Spirit instructs the Apostle Peter to write in 2 Peter 3:18, "But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever. Amen." After that; who knows, you might be called to Pastor a flock?

Message to the Shepherds

I know this book will offend some. There is a true proverb that states, "If you throw a rock into a pack of wild dogs, the one it hits will yelp the loudest." If this hurts, remember I did not mention names. If people are sending you this book it is because of two things. Either they care enough about you that they are helping you change your ways because they see a redeemable quality within you that looks like heavenly material or you really hurt them in a particular way. This last group do it with resentment hoping you will see the reason why you will be justifiably condemned to a fiery Hell.

I pray that you talk to God and ask Him to help you. Help give you the direction you need to take from this point, what practices you need to stop, and who you need to apologize to. I am not asking you to give up the position you now have. You got the job. His Word tells you and I, "For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them" (2 Pet. 2:21). Do the job right. The choice is now yours.

If you want to change, use His Word. It has transformed billions before us. A rock-solid message you can always return to

again and again is, "Remember therefore from whence thou art fallen, and repent, and do the first works; or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will remove thy candlestick out of his place, except thou repent" (Rev. 2:5). Remember, repent and return. Or else. God will never give you more of a task than you can handle. Remember? You preached the message before. Didn't you?

I know it will not be easy for you as a shepherd to change. You might feel you have an image to uphold. Let me give you some insight. If you are getting more than a few of these books then the image is shot already. You just happen to be the last one to know.

It is your steadfastness that makes you a leader. But it needs to be in God's right direction because others are following you. For some, you will need to do a complete 180-degree turn around. It will be hardest for those of you accustomed to a lavish lifestyle and think yourselves to have somewhat of a reputation. You might even have preached it before? It is called, repentance. But before you shrug off that word; saying, "That's not me."

Consider this scripture, "For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt. 16:26; Mark 8:36; Luke 9:25). What are your motives for being a shepherd to God's flock? He put it in three separate places in case hardheaded pastors might have missed it the first time. But still some can't take a hint. The question is: Do you want heaven or a world passing away to be your home for eternity?

The scripture speaks of Manasseh being the most wicked king to have been given the privilege of leading God's people in 2 Chronicles 33. God recorded his deeds for many generations in the future to read, "So Manasseh made Judah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem to err, and to do worse than the heathen, whom the LORD had destroyed before the children of Israel" (v. 9). Some might say, "Didn't God care about His people enough to try and get him to stop leading the people into err." He did. But him and his people were so set in their ways, that they would not change, "And the LORD spake to Manasseh, and to his people: but they would not hearken" (v.10). God is speaking to you. What direction are you leading the flock?

God had tried to get his wicked ruler to stop; but not only

would he not listen but he had taught the people not to listen also. The Rabbis hold the tradition that Manasseh was so displeased with God's messenger; Isaiah, that he had him placed in the trunk of a tree and sawed in half. It is the same way today with rebellious leaders. They say one moment you have the authority to tell them when they are doing wrong by using the scripture to rebuke them. But when you try to use scripture to shed light on their faults, they become defensive and sometimes violent. They accuse you of creating division. The truth is, nobody likes to be told they are doing wrong. Especially avarice and arrogant pastors.

Case in point. One of the many televangelists landing his Lear Jet on an airstrip in Hawaii had a lady come up to him and tell him that he was selfishly wrong for having one of those planes. He became so angry that he really wanted to hurt her. He explained in a church shortly afterwards, his thoughts were, "God, give me five minutes alone so I can brake her leg. You can heal her afterwards." Everyone laughed. But was he really trying to be funny?

It is obvious to see what is most important to him. God's people or his possessions? He does not like people trying to take away his possessions. He explained, that with this jet he can jump on board and go wherever God tells him to go. He has to be obedient to God. He does not have time to book a flight like the rest of us. Did he run out of sinners to preach to around him? I think not. Would he be obedient to God telling him to leave all his possessions and go to the cannibalistic heathen of the South Pacific? This was the case for the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:16-23, Mark 10:17-30 and Luke 18:18-30). I wonder if God has ever asked him to do such a task? Can you imagine the excuses he gave? Do you think selective hearing might be a factor when he considered his wealth?

What is more important to you, people or possessions? It is possible to change if you want to convert your heart back to one seeking after God's will. You don't have to wait until you are chastised. Remember, "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent" (Rev. 3:19).

Manasseh and his people continued in rebellion until God had to afflict them. Manasseh knew what to do then. The Bible

records in 2 Chronicles 33:12-13, "And when he was in affliction, he besought the LORD his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him: and he was intreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the LORD he was God." It took the chains of captivity before he got the message. Please humble yourself before His mighty hand comes upon you.

You and I are held to a higher standard than most because of our calling and knowledge of His ways. I know it is one thing to preach it and then the hardest thing after to live it. But that is why He tells us to be, ". . . ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 5:3-4). We will have our heavenly reward if we choose to do the right thing for this season of temptation. If you choose to be unscrupulous in your practices in the sight of the congregation, what kind of fruit will be produced? Know full well, if you choose your reward here; your judgment will be just. Don't even think you will make it to the Bema Seat; like some falsely teach.

The scriptures given in Matthew 7:21-23 is for those thinking they knew Christ. I would hate for this scripture to be fulfilled in your life, "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity" (v. 23).

What message are you sending to the church? Ask yourselves that. Do you believe it is the right one? If people are sending you this book and telling you what they think of you, can you imagine Jesus being pleased with the work you have accomplished?

Do you think the amount of members in the congregation should be your gauge for judgment? Doesn't Satan have a large following? I think God still chooses quality over quantity. The Apostle Paul writes in Galatians 1:10, "For do I now persuade men, or God? or do I seek to please men? for if I yet pleased men, I should not be the servant of Christ." You are in the wrong profession if you will continue teaching the doctrines of men to please them for filthy lucre. Get Out!

What will you need to do in order to please God? Preach the whole counsel of God by your word and deed. Do you even care anymore?

You see, God does not need you. He will accomplish His task with someone willing to do the job the way He wants it done. Ezekiel Chapter 34 ends with God claiming the “flock,” as His own. You see this happening in verse 27, “. . . when I have broken the bands of their yoke, and delivered them out of the hand of those that served themselves of them.” God will find a way to snatch away those He loves from those of you that would enslave them to a life of servitude to your beckoning. Do you see? The sheep do not belong to you. They do not owe you a living.

The choice is yours. Jesus tell us, “Whoever doesn’t bear his own cross, and come after me, can’t be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). Are you willing to bear this “cross,” of being truthful enough to really be His disciple? Come back home. Trade in your reputation and the gimmicks for the Shepherd’s robe and staff. Come back to the flock that needs and looks for God’s direction to “green pastures,” and “. . . still waters” (Ps. 23:2).

Message from Dave

To all the critics, I apologize. I agree more could have been said on these topics and other areas could have been expounded on more. I also agree my diction and explanations could have been clearer. To that argument, I give you my permission to elaborate on any ideas presented in this book to help in your next project. I pray you will do a better job in getting the leadership’s heart back on track with God’s direction.

I do not think this is the definitive work all Pastors or churches should follow. The ultimate authority is God’s Word, the Holy Bible. That should be every believer’s compass for their conscience and path to follow, regardless of their position in the church. The Psalmist writes, “Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path” (Ps. 119:105). I wrote this book hoping and praying the church leaders would consult with this handbook to determine if they are following God’s plan for The Body. Also, I wanted to give a voice to the congregation to express their grievances with the false shepherds and wolves that lord over and make merchandise of them.

I hope that I have given the sheep an ample warning against the false shepherds in their midst that are hirelings, admonitions

to the shepherds that practice scandalous acts of fleecing the flock, and a clear direction for both to follow after this.

I did not go into the unscrupulous sexual practices pastors do to their members because it is blatantly wrong on so many levels. Not only should you leave that church if this is going on but you should also seek help from the authorities. If this incident can be proven to be an illegal act, you could and should handle it through criminal proceedings. No one is above the law.

If I have offended anyone by my ways, thoughts or actions; I ask that you please forgive me? You can also pray for me that I can be a better example to others. In Jesus' name, Amen.

Scenario 1

It seems like the pastor's main concern is paying the tithe, since they talk about it so much. This is what it looks like for the normal person. 40 hours of work at \$7.00 an hour equals \$280.00 a week and \$1,120.00 for the month. The tithe; or tenth, is \$28.00 a week. The \$28.00 multiplied by 4 weeks in a month equals \$112.00. This tithe is calculated before taxes. How much is left over from the Net to still pay rent, groceries and other necessities? Probably \$800.00 if they are lucky. It is enough to pay the rent on some studio apartments in Honolulu.

Because of the high cost of living in Hawaii, the average 2 bedroom home costs \$300,000.00 to buy or \$1,100.00 to rent. The average unskilled labor position pays \$7.00 an hour. This means for the average couple; one person has to work two jobs while the other works one and takes care of the kids. The single person has to work at least two jobs to be in his own studio. The alternative is to live with family or rent a room. Paradise? It's the price you have to be willing to pay.

Let us try and figure out how much is taken into the church. We have some churches boasting a membership of 15,000. Just for arguments sake, we will just use a thousand. 1000 members giving \$112.00 a month equals \$112,000.00. 2000 members equals \$224,000.00 and 15,000 equals \$1,680,000.00 a month. So what is done with the money given?

Let us suppose the announcement came that the money was going to the mortgage on the property. What if the place cost a

million dollars to build and purchase? It would be paid off before the first year is over. So where is all the other money going? Whose pockets are full? Are they still acting like they need money?

Scenario 2

There was this pastor mentioned earlier in the book that left his job as Vice President of a coffee company with a \$10,000.00 a month salary to come and work for the church as an Associate Pastor. How many members does it take to pay for only one Associate Pastor's salary? If a member has given their \$112.00 a month tithe it would take 89.28 members giving their tithe to pay for his or her salary. Since there is no such thing as a .28 member we will stick with just 89. Eighty-nine people have to work hard so one does not have to work at all. Is that right?

Pastors are supposed to come into the ministry mindful they will be doing a labor of love. It has far greater rewards in eternity, than momentary financial gain. How many associate pastors are there in a congregation of a thousand? How much money is left over for the Lord's work if the money is constantly being spent for their salaries?

Now you know why they have so many different ministries within the church. Everybody is trying to get his or her cut. They are trying to justify putting people on the payroll for what should be a volunteer position. Somehow people are getting paid to be the heads of the Youth Ministry, Singles Ministry, Couples Ministry, Doughnut Ministry, etc. . . It is really that ridiculous. Everyone wants a piece of the pie.

Scenario 3

If the Associate Pastors are getting \$10,000.00, then how much is the Head Pastor getting? Lets just say that he does not esteem himself that high and is willing to settle for \$15,000.00 a month (Some boast of a salary that is over \$900,000.00 a year). How many members does it take to pay for his salary? It takes 133.93 members to give tithe money in the offering plate. All the while, the parishioner believes the money is going for the work of the Lord.

The tithes of 140 hard workers are being given for nothing. It is going to some Fat Cat that hardly does anything and is getting fatter by the week. Some pastors help their conscience by tithing off what they receive as salary.

The pastor might argue that they are being honorable by giving \$1,500.00 back as tithe or even double \$3,000.00, triple, \$4,500.00. Wow! They are really missing the point. They did not work for the money. Their members did. It was not even earned by them in the first place. Shame and not honor.

Glory to God

“But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence” (1 Cor. 1:27-29).

