

10-16-22 Message
THE GOAL OF THE GREAT COMMISSION
YE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS

Luke 24:44 And he said unto them, These [are] the words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you, that all things must be fulfilled, which were written in the law of Moses, and [in] the prophets, and [in] the psalms, concerning me.

Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

Luke 24:46 And said unto them, Thus it is written, and thus it behoved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day:

Luke 24:47 And that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

Luke 24:49 And, behold, 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.

Luke 24:50 And he led them out as far as to Bethany, and he lifted up his hands, and blessed them.

Luke 24:51 And it came to pass, while he blessed them, he was parted from them, and carried up into heaven.

Luke 24:52 And they worshipped him, and returned to Jerusalem with great joy:

Luke 24:53 And were continually in the temple, praising and blessing God. Amen.

This is missions month and with all that has been going on I have not had much time to share any messages on missions. Yet every year we take this month to focus in on the great commission and that of being a witness for Christ. Jesus said, YE ARE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS.. This statement condenses what missions month is all about.

THE GREAT COMMISSION IS ALL ABOUT
BEING A WITNESS OF THESE THINGS

- I. BE A WITNESS OF WHAT YOU WERE BEFORE YOU KNEW THE RESURRECTED CHRIST
- II. BE A WITNESS OF HOW HE CAME TO YOU AND OPENED YOUR UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WHO HE IS..
- III. BE A WITNESS BY BEING COMPELLED TO TELL OTHERS OF HIM..

- IV. **BE A WITNESS BY KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES AND PROVING WHO HE IS..**
- V. **BE A WITNESS BY BEING OBEDIENT TO HIS COMMAND TO SUPPORT THIS COMMISSION YOU NOT ONLY BELIEVE IT YOU LIVE IT..**

**THE GREAT COMMISSION IS ALL ABOUT
BEING A WITNESS OF THESE THINGS**

I. BE A WITNESS OF WHAT YOU WERE BEFORE YOU KNEW THE RESURRECTED CHRIST

This whole passage is about how the a group of depressed downhearted followers of Christ had to meet the resurrected Saviour, and be transformed into witnesses for him.

Luke 24:1 Now upon the first [day] of the week, very early in the morning, they came unto the sepulchre, bringing the spices which they had prepared, and certain [others] with them.

Luke 24:2 And they found the stone rolled away from the sepulchre.

Luke 24:3 And they entered in, and found not the body of the Lord Jesus.

Luke 24:4 And it came to pass, as they were much perplexed thereabout, behold, two men stood by them in shining garments:

Luke 24:5 And as they were afraid, and bowed down [their] faces to the earth, they said unto them, Why seek ye the living among the dead?

Luke 24:6 He is not here, but is risen: remember how he spake unto you when he was yet in Galilee,

Luke 24:7 Saying, The Son of man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.

Luke 24:8 And they remembered his words,

Luke 24:9 And returned from the sepulchre, and told all these things unto the eleven, and to all the rest.

Luke 24:10 It was Mary Magdalene, and Joanna, and Mary [the mother] of James, and other [women that were] with them, which told these things unto the apostles.

Luke 24:11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

Before you believed and received the resurrected Savior, you were in unbelief. You did not have the power of God on you. You lived a defeated life. I don't care who you are and what background you came from. I doesn't matter if you were a religious person. You would have been a religious person who did not have the resurrected Savior in your life.

I don't care if you were a base sinner. You would have been a base sinner who was in unbelief.

Everyone of us need the resurrected Saviour in our life..

Here we have the disciples of the Lord. They walked with him, and were taught of him yet they were in unbelief.

Luke 24:11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

Many people view the power of this book as idle tales. The power of the resurrection these words seem like idle tales.

Philippians 3:10 That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death;

The word witness comes from the Greek word MARTUS

martus, mar'-toos; of uncert. affin.; a witness (lit. [judicially] or fig. [gen.]); by anal. a "martyr":-martyr, record, witness.

A witness (testimony) may refer to facts about which a person is firmly convinced by faith and for which that person would willingly die. In this last sense such a person would be referred to as a martyr. The distinction between witness (marturion, marturia) and martyr (martus) consists only in the degree of their testimony, since both words are cognates of the same Greek verb meaning, "I testify/bear witness" (martureo).

What is a witness? The light we need here is light that we have by our common use of the Anglicized form of this Greek word "martyr." "Ye shall be martyrs." I do not wish to suggest that Jesus meant necessarily that these men would all die for Him. We have come to use that word "martyr" as referring only to such as seal their testimony with their blood. I am not suggesting that we should abandon that particular use of the word, for it is a great and glorious use of the word today. The men who sealed their testimony with their blood were martyrs, but they were martyrs before they died. Smithfield's fires never made martyrs: they revealed martyrs. Persecution never makes a martyr: it finds him out and wraps him in the glory of flame that we may see him for evermore.

Paul the Apostle was a great witness for the Lord, because he often referred to what he was before he believed in Christ.

He said,

1. He persecuted the church of God

I Corinthians 15:9 For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Galatians 1:13 For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews' religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it:

2. He was a Pharisee and zealous to keep the vain traditions of his fathers

Galatians 1:14 And profited in the Jews' religion above many my equals in mine own nation, being more exceedingly zealous of the traditions of my fathers.

3. He was a blasphemer and injurious to Christians

I Timothy 1:13 Who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did [it] ignorantly in unbelief.

4. He gave approval of Stephen's stoning and imprisoned believers

Acts 22:19 And I said, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on thee:

Acts 22:20 And when the blood of thy martyr Stephen was shed, I also was standing by, and consenting unto his death, and kept the raiment of them that slew him.

A powerful part of our witness is to tell how we were converted to Christ and were once unbelieving of this message..

Luke 24:11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

John 9:25 He answered and said,... whereas I was blind, now I see.

People think that those early disciples just fabricated this story of the resurrection. That was not possible. They had to be convinced and their eyes needed to be opened just like ours do.

They could not have stolen away the body of Jesus. What good is a dead body?

They were on the run..

They did not even believe when the first heard the news of the resurrection.

Luke 24:11 And their words seemed to them as idle tales, and they believed them not.

So it is a powerful witness when you tell people you were a skeptic yourself. Yet God opened your heart and mind to believe.

II. BE A WITNESS OF HOW HE CAME TO YOU AND OPENED YOUR UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WHO HE IS..

Luke 24:16 But their eyes were holden that they should not know him.

Luke 24:17 And he said unto them, What manner of communications [are] these that ye have one to another, as ye walk, and are sad?

Luke 24:18 And the one of them, whose name was Cleopas, answering said unto him, Art thou only a stranger in Jerusalem, and hast not known the things which are come to pass there in these days?

Luke 24:19 And he said unto them, What things? And they said unto him, Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, which was a prophet mighty in deed and word before God and all the people:

Luke 24:20 And how the chief priests and our rulers delivered him to be condemned to death, and have crucified him.

Luke 24:21 But we trusted that it had been he which should have redeemed Israel: and beside all this, to day is the third day since these things were done.

Luke 24:22 Yea, and certain women also of our company made us astonished, which were early at the sepulchre;

Luke 24:23 And when they found not his body, they came, saying, that they had also seen a vision of angels, which said that he was alive.

Luke 24:24 And certain of them which were with us went to the sepulchre, and found [it] even so as the women had said: but him they saw not.

Luke 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Luke 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:28 And they drew nigh unto the village, whither they went: and he made as though he would have gone further.

Luke 24:29 But they constrained him, saying, Abide with us: for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent. And he went in to tarry with them.

Luke 24:30 And it came to pass, as he sat at meat with them, he took bread, and blessed [it], and brake, and gave to them.

Luke 24:31 And their eyes were opened, and they knew him; and he vanished out of their sight.

Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

Do you know when you get saved, God has to open your heart and mind to the Scriptures.

We need to be a witness to that fact that God opened our hearts and minds to receive Him when were you converted.

A witness is someone who has seen something.

A witness is someone who has experienced something..

Jesus said, to the maniac of Gedara,

Mark 5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

Mark 5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

Mark 5:20 And he departed, and began to publish in Decapolis how great things Jesus had done for him: and all [men] did marvel.

Jesus needed a witness in the country of the Gadarenes and this man who was delivered of those legion of demons became that witness. Gadara was a region south east of the sea of Galilee and in the area of the inheritance of God that was taken over by Romans and Gentiles.. they worshipped Zeus there and the pigs were used to sacrifice unto Zeus. It is right that the demons of that land entered into Zeus's sacrificial pigs and drowned.

What is your witness of how God opened your eyes to the gospel?

Some of us were like the maniac of Gedara.

III. BE A WITNESS BY BEING COMPELLED TO TELL OTHERS OF HIM..

God said to the maniac of Gedara..

Mark 5:18 And when he was come into the ship, he that had been possessed with the devil prayed him that he might be with him.

Mark 5:19 Howbeit Jesus suffered him not, but saith unto him, Go home to thy friends, and tell them how great things the Lord hath done for thee, and hath had compassion on thee.

People need to know what great things the Lord has done for you and hath compassion on you..

I went to a hospital to visit a lady who was dying. I brought my Bible, and and I went to open my Bible and the lady said, no, no, I am not interested. I said, well I just wanted to show you a picture of my family. I had that picture in our special invitation tracts. Then I handed her the tract and began to share my testimony how God saved me out of the world and I meet my wife and how God gave us a wonderful marriage and 4 beautiful children. I gave God all the credit and told how I was running from God but he showed me he was real and I gave my life to him and then married my wife and come to Bible college and graduated and came to the Elkdale Baptist Church and have been here ever since. I told her this was all because I gave my life to Christ and he changed my life. I was no longer involved with the drinking, drug crowd and I was thankful for that.

You see witnessing is as easy as telling your life story and what great things Jesus has done for you.

This you have experienced. Who can argue against your experience. People like to hear other people's life story. We have a great story to share. Let us share it.

When the apostle Paul was taken by the angry mob in the temple. He said let me speak. When he spoke he told his story. After he was done telling his testimony, some of them said this..

In Acts 22:1 they listened to his testimony. This was a witness. In fact when he went to trial there were some who said,

Acts 23:9 And there arose a great cry: and the scribes [that were] of the Pharisees' part arose, and strove, saying, We find no evil in this man: but if a spirit or an angel hath spoken to him, let us not fight against God.

The greatest tool you have in your arsenal, of weapons for God is your testimony which is a witness of what God has done for you personally. Who can argue against this. USE IT AS A WITNESS..

Paul said this:

I Corinthians 9:16 For though I preach the gospel, I have nothing to glory of: for necessity is laid upon me; yea, woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!

Paul was compelled to be a witness. He said woe unto him if he did not preach the gospel.

God help us.. what kind of people would be not to share the gospel.

The first time I heard this message and the simplicity of the gospel. My exact words were.. WHAT KIND OF PERSON WOULD I BE IF THIS IS TRUE IF I DID NOT SHARE IT WITH EVERYONE..

This is the logical conclusion we all would have to make,

We need to be sharing a witness to all.

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

There are about 200 million non-churched people in America, making America one of the four largest 'unchurched' nations in the world." --John Piper, in a Jan 31 sermon titled "I will build My church." Quoted in World February 27, 2010 p.16
Illustration by Jim L. Wilson and Rodger Russell

Conclusion

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- II. BE A WITNESS OF HOW HE CAME TO YOU AND OPENED YOUR UNDERSTANDING ABOUT WHO HE IS..**
- III. BE A WITNESS BY BEING COMPELLED TO TELL OTHERS OF HIM..**

This is missions month and missions must start at home.

Will you be God's ambassador to your friends loved ones and family and community?
Let us work together to this end.

**SUNDAY NIGHT 10-16-22
YE SHALL BE WITNESSES OF THESE THINGS**

Luke 24:48 And ye are witnesses of these things.

IV. BE A WITNESS BY KNOWING THE SCRIPTURES AND PROVING WHO HE IS..

Luke 24:25 Then he said unto them, O fools, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken:

Luke 24:26 Ought not Christ to have suffered these things, and to enter into his glory?

Luke 24:27 And beginning at Moses and all the prophets, he expounded unto them in all the scriptures the things concerning himself.

Luke 24:45 Then opened he their understanding, that they might understand the scriptures,

To be effective witness for the Lord we need to know the Scriptures so that from Moses and in the prophets we need expound through the Scriptures all things concerning our Lord.

Romans 10:17 So then faith [cometh] by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.

People need to hear the word of God and believe the word of God.

To be a witness we need to know and share the word of God to people who are in darkness.

I Cor. 15 says it all ..

The gospel is this.

I Corinthians 15:3 For I delivered unto you first of all that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures;

I Corinthians 15:4 And that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day according to the scriptures:

Jesus was seen of many witnesses as recorded in Scriptures.

I remember when Carl Shanosk witnessed to me at Peter Accardi's house way back in 1973..

I remember he started in Genesis 3:15 and told how that verses was the acorn of the gospel. It was the seed from which sprang the messiah.

Genesis 3:15 And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

I remember that night how Peter and Carl Shanosk shared the gospel story from Moses through the prophets.. to the New Testament. on into the book of Revelation.

Look I did not want to be saved. I was being polite in listening to them. I had no intention of getting saved. I did not want to be saved. I actually came there to talk Peter out of what he was doing.

Jeremiah 23:29 [Is] not my word like as a fire? saith the LORD; and like a hammer [that] breaketh the rock in pieces?

Isaiah 55:10 For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater:

Isaiah 55:11 So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper [in the thing] whereto I sent it.

The Bible will convict men..

The Bible will convert men..

The Bible will pierce through the stony hearts of men..

We just need to find ways to present the Bible to people.

Look how seed can take root in the strangest places. You see trees hanging off of cliffs.

You see plants growing in the strangest places.

So too the word of God will bring fruit. Let us just share it wherever, and however we can. Let us plant the seed of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

V. BE A WITNESS BY BEING OBEDIENT TO HIS COMMAND TO SUPPORT THIS COMMISSION YOU SHOULD NOT ONLY BELIEVE IT YOU SHOULD LIVE IT..

1. We Should Be Obedient To Give A Verbal Witness as Listed Above..

2. Our lives should be a witness

The way we live should be a witness..

People should know that we not only talk the talk but we walk the walk..

II Corinthians 3:2 Ye are our epistle written in our hearts, known and read of all men:

II Corinthians 3:3 [Forasmuch as ye are] manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart.

We need people to be witnesses, but we also need people to be consistent witnesses of Christ. We need to put our faith into action.

We do this by how we live and what we do.

We need not only believe the Gospel.

We need not only to preach the Gospel.

We need to live the gospel..

3. TO BE A WITNESS WE NEED TO SUPPORT OTHERS WHO PREACH THE GOSPEL

Not only do we need to witness but we need to face the facts that we cannot go everywhere, and often the Lord chooses some men to go where we cannot go and do things we cannot do.. We can be part of their ministry by supporting them.

II Corinthians 9:9 (As it is written, He hath dispersed abroad; he hath given to the poor: his righteousness remaineth for ever.

II Corinthians 9:10 Now he that ministereth seed to the sower both minister bread for [your] food, and multiply your seed sown, and increase the fruits of your righteousness;)

II Corinthians 9:11 Being enriched in every thing to all bountifulness, which causeth through us thanksgiving to God.

II Corinthians 9:12 For the administration of this service not only supplieth the want of the saints, but is abundant also by many thanksgivings unto God;

II Corinthians 9:13 Whiles by the experiment of this ministration they glorify God for your professed subjection unto the gospel of Christ, and for [your] liberal distribution unto them, and unto all [men];

Spurgeon's devotional "And ye shall be witnesses unto me."

In order to learn how to discharge your duty as a witness for Christ, look at His example. He is always witnessing: by the well of Samaria, or in the Temple of Jerusalem: by the lake of Gennesaret, or on the mountain's brow. He is witnessing night and day; His mighty prayers are as vocal to God as His daily services. He witnesses under all circumstances; Scribes and Pharisees cannot shut His mouth; even before Pilate He witnesses a good confession. He witnesses so clearly, and distinctly that there is no mistake in Him.

Christian, make your life
a clear testimony.

Be you as the brook wherein you may see every stone at the bottom-not as the muddy creek, of which you only see the surface-but clear and transparent, so that your heart's

love to God and man may be visible to all. You need not say, "I am true:" Be true. Boast not of integrity, but be upright. So shall your testimony be such that men cannot help seeing it.

Never, for fear of feeble man, restrain your witness. Your lips have been warmed with a coal from off the altar; let them speak as like heaven-touched lips should do.

"In the morning sow thy seed,
and in the evening withhold not thine hand."

Watch not the clouds, consult not the wind-in season and out of season witness for the Saviour, and if it shall come to pass that for Christ's sake and the Gospel's you shall endure suffering in any shape, shrink not, but rejoice in the honour thus conferred upon you, that you are counted worthy to suffer with your Lord; and joy also in this-that your sufferings, your losses, and persecutions shall make you a platform, from which the more vigorously and with greater power you shall witness for Christ Jesus.

Study your great Exemplar,
and be filled with his Spirit.

Remember that you need much teaching, much upholding, much grace, and much humility, if your witnessing is to be to your Master's glory.

THE CHURCH'S GREATEST NEED: THE POWER OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

Again.. consider.. There are about 200 million non-churched people in America, making America one of the four largest `unchurched' nations in the world." --John Piper,

While we need to keep looking to the spiritual needs of the world, missions and evangelism start right where we live. Jesus said we are to be his witnesses "both" at home and abroad. (see Acts 1:8)

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PART III

Witnessing through missions giving..

THE WIDOW OF ZEREPHATH AN EXAMPLE OF FAITH GIVING AND OBEDIENCE OF FAITH..

I Kings 17:8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

I Kings 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which [belongeth] to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

I Kings 17:10 So he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, behold, the widow woman [was] there gathering of sticks: and he called to her, and said, Fetch me, I pray thee, a little water in a vessel, that I may drink.

I Kings 17:11 And as she was going to fetch [it], he called to her, and said, Bring me, I pray thee, a morsel of bread in thine hand.

I Kings 17:12 And she said, [As] the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I [am] gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

I Kings 17:13 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.

I Kings 17:14 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.

I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat [many] days.

I Kings 17:16 [And] the barrel of meal wasted not, neither did the cruse of oil fail, according to the word of the LORD, which he spake by Elijah.

Here we have the account of Elijah during a terrible famine in Israel..

It is hard to imagine what it would be like.. in times like these.. where people were dying and starving because of famine..

Did you ever stop and think how different it was in the days of Elijah.. and in fact how it has been for thousands of years.

When you look in your refrigerator and food pantry.. you look at a representation of the world..

Probably your tomatoes are grown in America.. somewhere..

Your milk also probably comes from not too far away ..

So too your eggs..

Bananas could come from South America Panama.. California

Might have beef or chicken from Mexico

Garlic from China
Vegetables from South America
Dates from California
Wheat from Central Plains..

And all you do.. is go into a grocery store and buy these with money..

Now consider what it would be like.. if everything you ate.. had to be grown locally or in your garden!

Now you could imagine.. what it would be like to go through a famine..

NO SUPER MARKETS IN THE DAYS OF ELIJAH..

NO FOOD TO BUY.... EVERYTHING WAS GONE..

Now picture.. this a little widow lady..
All she lived on was her little garden and that year nothing grew..
All her chickens gone.. cattle gone.. nothing left.. to eat and no where to buy food..

She was gathering a few sticks together.. and there was a hand full of barley left in a barrel.. and a little oil in cruse..

In comes this prophet.. she could tell he was a prophet by his dress..
Back then there was a certain way that prophets dressed... by the way your dress is your first word you speak to others.

So this prophet shows up in her town little town of Zarephath, a Phoenician town located between Sidon and Tyre..

Here he is in a strange country.. and he asks this little widow lady for some water to drink and she gives it to him..

Then he asks here for some bread.. that is when she tells.. him she has only enough for one little cake.. and she is going to bake it for her and her son and they planned to die after this...

The Elijah says..

I Kings 17:12 And she said, [As] the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I [am] gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

I Kings 17:13 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.

I Kings 17:14 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.

I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat [many] days.

Now think about the faith it took to do this.. to take her last handful of meal and spend it on this strange prophet and then to trust that there would be enough left over for her and her son.. ?

Now think about this... here is a widow lady.. who no doubt.. had been very frugal to the point that she knew she only had one last meal to eat.. and but a little oil to cook her bread with.. This was it..

Now could God ever ask such a thing of her... to give to Him and his prophet first.. and trust her needs second..

I. NOTE THIS WAS BY THE COMMAND OF GOD.. AND ELIJAH WAS JUST HIS SPOKESMAN..

I Kings 17:8 And the word of the LORD came unto him, saying,

I Kings 17:9 Arise, get thee to Zarephath, which [belongeth] to Zidon, and dwell there: behold, I have commanded a widow woman there to sustain thee.

Message is still give to God first..

I HAVE COMMANDED A WIDOW WOMAN TO SUSTAIN THEE...

God still commands God's people to support and sustain his work through their sacrifices and giving.

Now that doesn't change.. when there is a recession..
That does not change in days of famine..

1. SO GOD COMMANDS HIS PEOPLE TO GIVE TO HIM TODAY..

Malachi 3:8 Will a man rob God? Yet ye have robbed me. But ye say, Wherein have we robbed thee? In tithes and offerings.

Malachi 3:9 Ye [are] cursed with a curse: for ye have robbed me, [even] this whole nation.

Malachi 3:10 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].

Malachi 3:11 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.

Malachi 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

2. God has chosen to support his work through the sacrificial giving of his people..

God wants his witness to continue through preachers, missionaries, the church and the work of God.

Elijah was fed by the ravens.. and could have continually be fed by the ravens.. But now he chooses to be feed by a widow lady.

God could have supernaturally provided Manna in the wilderness like he did for the children of Israel ... 40 years.. he sustained them till they entered the promised land.. and then the manna ceased..

Does God need our tithes?

Does he need anything we have?

Consider the sun that God made puts out more power in a minute than all our nuclear plants produce in a lifetime ...

Who put the oil and gas in the ground.. how many billions of dollars do men pay to dig it out.. But God owns it all..

God could support his work by whatever means he chooses.. but he has chosen to use the giving of his people... WHY .. SO HE CAN BLESS THOSE WHO GIVE..

Malachi 3:10 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].

Malachi 3:11 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.

Malachi 3:12 And all nations shall call you blessed: for ye shall be a delightsome land, saith the LORD of hosts.

3. GIVING IS TO BENIFIT THE GIVER MORE THAN GOD...

God has need of nothing..

Philippians 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

Philippians 4:16 For even in Thessalonica ye sent once and again unto my necessity.

Philippians 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Philippians 4:18 But I have all, and abound: I am full, having received of Epaphroditus the things [which were sent] from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, wellpleasing to God.

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

Philippians 4:20 Now unto God and our Father [be] glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Paul said he rejoiced in the generosity of the saints at Philippi.. because it was a manifestation of their fruitfulness..

4. OUR GIVING TO GOD'S WORK IS AN INVESTMENT FOR HEAVEN.. AND ETERNITY

Matthew 6:20 But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:

Matthew 6:21 For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

The widow of Zarephath gave her last meal to the prophet because he said.. **THUS SAITH THE LORD... & SHE BELIEVED HIM**

If he was just any ordinary human being she would not have done it

WHAT SHE DID SHE DID AS UNTO THE LORD.... How else can you explain her risking her life and the life of her son for a total stranger..

She said..

I Kings 17:12 And she said, [As] the LORD thy God liveth, I have not a cake, but an handful of meal in a barrel, and a little oil in a cruse: and, behold, I [am] gathering two sticks, that I may go in and dress it for me and my son, that we may eat it, and die.

She knew somehow he was a prophet.. and she obeyed his word accordingly.. Showing her faith in the Word of God..

II. THIS IS GIVING AND LIVING BY FAITH....

It took faith on her part to trust God..

A miracle.. is a miracle.. and God could have used any miracle or form of miracle he chose..

But God is looking to recruit a people of faith to serve Him and walk in his ways..

FAITH IS THE ONLY THING THAT PLEASES GOD...

God chose to use the widow of Zarephath to support his ministers.. because of the benefit and reward he can give to those who demonstrate faith..

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

And so it is today.. God could support his work by any means that he chooses.. but his choice.. is through the giving of his people so his people can be blessed..

Why then is this blessing looked on with suspicion. and disdain..

Is it not because so many false preachers and teachers have made merchandise of undiscerning people.. TV Radio...

Misuse of this means of blessing.. does not disannul God's choice of using it..

A WAY WE SHOW OUR FAITH IS THROUGH OUR SACRIFICIAL GIVING..

THE LOCAL CHURCH IS A SAFE WAY TO CHANNEL THAT FAITH..

III. THIS WIDOW LADY REAPED THE BENIFITS AND REWARDS OF HER FAITH...

What was the reward

I Kings 17:14 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.

I Kings 17:15 And she went and did according to the saying of Elijah: and she, and he, and her house, did eat [many] days.

It is God that gives us our daily bread.. and he is pleased to do it day by day..

Hebrews 11:6 But without faith [it is] impossible to please [him]: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and [that] he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

IV. HOWEVER THE TRIALS AND CHALLENGES ON OUR PRESENT LIFE REQUIRE US TO LIVE BY FAITH EVERY DAY.....

There always is a challenge to faith..

If faith does not carry with it a factor of the unknown to us..... it is not faith....

Hebrews 11:1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Hebrews 11:2 For by it the elders obtained a good report.

Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

Faith that is seen is not faith..

Faith that is based on sight is not faith..

So we give by faith ...

So we live by faith..

So we worship by faith...

So our giving is one of the greatest evidences of our faith...

Just like the Widow of Zarephath.. gave her last meal to feed the prophet.. first.. and it seemed that doing so would have hurt her family... yet... she trusted in the message the word of God that said..

I Kings 17:14 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.

So it is today..

Philippians 4:19 But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

NOTE.. this verse was talking about trusting the Lord in the area of giving..

Philippians 4:17 Not because I desire a gift: but I desire fruit that may abound to your account.

Paul is saying as you give be assured that God will supply all your need..

This time of the year each year.. I challenge you once again to pray about your commitment to giving to the Lord's work..

Salvation .. is where it all starts.. 1st step of faith..

Tithe.. is a weekly commitment to give 10% the first fruits to the Lord..

Missions giving is an offering you give each week to help support the Elijah's that go and spread the word of God world wide.. in places where we cannot go...