

Store Houses, Versus Empty Houses Part 3

“20 There is treasure to be desired and oil in the dwelling of the wise; but a foolish man spendeth it up.” (Proverbs 21:20 KJV)

***“3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.”
(Malachi 2:3 KJV)***

Speaking about storehouses and treasuries, we have already studied earlier that the method of collecting tithes and offerings in the past and present, the record of the proceeds, their organization and allocation for various purposes, reflect the maturity of the church and the attitude of the people who are in charge of serving the Lord in the church.

* There are churches, especially independent churches that spend all their money without keeping any reserve for a rainy day. They don't have the mind of saving and keep aside for the future needs and for the emergencies. They have many excuses and reasons to strip the church treasury of its finances. Usually, these churches are shallow in stewardship and that reflects the immaturity of those who administer these churches. * They are lavish at their food festivals, fellowship meetings, more flattering, more in fun, but shallow in their teaching, shepherding, and discipling of the flock. They compromise with the blemished sacrifices of the people, and they overlook people's shortcomings and instead focus on social gatherings and exorbitant parties in church. In the book of Malachi, the Lord spoke the following about those priests who loved throwing lavish parties emptying the storehouses of God. ***“1 And now, O ye priests, this commandment is for you. 2 If ye will not hear, and if ye will not lay it to heart, to give glory unto my name, saith the LORD of hosts, I will even send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings: yea, I have cursed them already, because ye do not lay it to heart. 3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.” (Malachi 2:1-3 KJV)***

They have empty houses instead of storehouses. They are in debt, paying loans; their finances reflect no grace of God in their lives. That is why God said that He will spread the dung of their solemn feasts on their faces. Such churches spend all that they have collected on food and their members are assured that if they offer tithes and offerings, then the church will cater to their plates after every service. All the money collected in the name of God is ultimately eliminated as excrement. That is why God said to the leaders of such churches, ***“3 Behold, I will corrupt your seed, and spread dung upon your faces, even the dung of your solemn feasts; and one shall take you away with it.” (Malachi 2:3 KJV)***

Mature churches have storehouses, immature churches have empty houses and empty pockets.

If I hear from a church that their account of money is almost bankrupt and nothing is left for the future, to me, it is not a coincidence. It is an iceberg that should not be overlooked, an emergency that needs to be investigated, for much work needs to be done for that church.

The church should be aware that the way the church leaders set the example to spend their finances will be the pattern adopted by their members. Financial mismanagement is sin equal

to the sin of adultery and will result in destruction. Financial mismanagement leads to poverty and poverty lead to:

- Generational curse of poverty
- Slavery
- Low socio-economic condition
- Bad housing and poor accommodation
- Famine and starvation
- Sickneses and lack of medical care
- Lack of education and the inability to finish schooling and colleges
- Borrowing, inability to pay loans, dishonesty, stealing and cheating
- Immoralities and prostitution
- Broken families, separation, divorce, remarriage

The Bible tells us that the early church that was under the apostles received funds from the believers to support the various needs. ***“44 And all that believed were together, and had all things common; 45 And sold their possessions and goods, and parted them to all men, as every man had need.” (Acts 2:44-45 KJV)*** ***“34 Neither was there any among them that lacked: for as many as were possessors of lands or houses sold them, and brought the prices of the things that were sold, 35 And laid them down at the apostles' feet: and distribution was made unto every man according as he had need.” (Acts 4:34-35 KJV)*** Now we know also from Acts 8 that the church underwent severe persecution. ***“1 And Saul was consenting unto his death. And at that time there was a great persecution against the church which was at Jerusalem; and they were all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judaea and Samaria, except the apostles.” (Acts 8:1 KJV)*** And later on in Acts 11 we can read the following event: ***“27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul.” (Acts 11:27-30 KJV)*** Now based on the prophecy of Agabus, the disciples in the church of Antioch felt the responsibility toward their brethren in Judaea, and every one according to his ability contributed to help and provide relief to the brethren. ***It is very good to have such a concern towards one another. It is also good that all the churches and the congregations would have financial concern toward their mother church.*** The apostles in Jerusalem and the brethren in Judaea hadn't requested for help but the Gentile churches were quickened by the Holy Spirit to send them help on hearing the prophecy of Agabus. Now the question to be raised here is this: Did the church in Jerusalem and the apostles of Jesus who were leading the church have storehouses? Now I know that some who read this may say that the apostles lived by faith on God, the Provider. ***It is true that God will provide. But God will provide through what He promised in His Word.*** Almost all the churches believe in tithing according to ***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.”*** * Now if we apply ***Malachi 3:10***, then we need to bring the whole collection of tithes into the storehouses and not put them into our pockets or tummies. So if we collect tithes according to ***Malachi 3:10***, then we need to abide by the principle pertaining to God's storehouses. What we collect of tithes, offerings, firstfruits, vows, and gifts should go

and stay in the storehouse and not be immediately fly away. * The principle of storehouses entails us to be systematic, organized, and well disciplined pertaining to finances. * No doubt the Lord will provide for us and for His church miraculously but we should not ignore and put aside the principles of stewardship and thrifty living mentioned in God's Word.

Now regarding the church in Jerusalem and the brethren in Judaea, they might have had storehouses and hence were not in need, but if we search the Scripture we can see that Apostle Paul in a few places in the Scripture was burdened to collect help and send to the saints in Jerusalem. This gives the impression that they were not well prepared to meet emergency situations concerning money. **But we cannot contribute that lack of preparedness in Jerusalem to negligence, because there was another reason for the apostles, the church, and the saints in Jerusalem to be in need and lack of savings, and that reason was persecution.** They were heavily persecuted by the Jewish and were excommunicated from their society; being prohibited from practicing their work or business, they were deprived from their income. They were also faced with the confiscation of their property. The writer of Hebrews said, **"34 And took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."** (Hebrews 10:34 KJV) Persecution was the main reason of making them being in need. It contributed to the confiscation of their goods and caused them to be in need. And that is why we can also conclude that Apostle Paul was consistent to send them help because he was conscious that they were in need due to persecution. **But today, many Christians are never being persecuted, but they are perishing in poverty. Why? Mismanagement of finances is the reason. Therefore, we cannot use our finances to supply people who are not willing to repent and live thriftily. The following are the verses of Scripture that show that the saints in Jerusalem had received help from the Gentile churches through Apostle Paul's ministry.**

1. **"24 Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you: for I trust to see you in my journey, and to be brought on my way thitherward by you, if first I be somewhat filled with your company. 25 But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints. 26 For it hath pleased them of Macedonia and Achaia to make a certain contribution for the poor saints which are at Jerusalem. 27 It hath pleased them verily; and their debtors they are. For if the Gentiles have been made partakers of their spiritual things, their duty is also to minister unto them in carnal things. 28 When therefore I have performed this, and have sealed to them this fruit, I will come by you into Spain."** (Romans 15:24-28 KJV)

2. **"1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me."** (1 Corinthians 16:1-4 KJV)

3. **"1 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; 2 How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality. 3 For to their power, I bear record, yea, and beyond their power they were willing of themselves; 4 Praying us with much intreaty that we would receive the gift, and take upon us the fellowship of the ministering to the saints."** (2 Corinthians 8:1-4 KJV)

4. **"1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting."** (2 Corinthians 9:1-4 KJV)

Now let us read again and examine the way of giving in the church of Antioch: **"27 And in these days came prophets from Jerusalem unto Antioch. 28 And there stood up one of them named Agabus, and signified by the Spirit that there should be great dearth throughout all the world: which came to pass in the days of Claudius Caesar. 29 Then the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea: 30 Which also they did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Saul."** (Acts 11:27-30 KJV) When the need was raised up, we can see that the church did not have money in store to give immediately but, **"the disciples, every man according to his ability, determined to send relief unto the brethren which dwelt in Judaea."** (Acts 11:29 KJV) **Many churches who have no storehouses can easily be identified in the way they handle emergency situations for finances. You can see them passing a collection basket during the church service and collecting special offerings to support a mission or to help brethren who are in need or in trouble.** Now the church in Antioch was newly planted and had not yet reached the level of maturity to keep a storehouse for finances during an emergency. Paul probably learned a lesson on that occasion, that it was not good to collect money last minute. He recognized the importance of collecting finances and keeping them aside and storing them for the day of need. He instructed that to the Corinthian church: **"1 Now concerning the collection for the saints, as I have given order to the churches of Galatia, even so do ye. 2 Upon the first day of the week let every one of you lay by him in store, as God hath prospered him, that there be no gatherings when I come. 3 And when I come, whomsoever ye shall approve by your letters, them will I send to bring your liberality unto Jerusalem. 4 And if it be meet that I go also, they shall go with me."** (1 Corinthians 16:1-4 KJV) So here Paul prepared the church to be ready with their collection ahead of time, to give to the saints. Every week they collected and kept aside so that when the time for his visit arrived, there would be no need to gather for the special offering because the money would be readily available. Apostle Paul further sent Titus and another brother ahead of him to prepare the Corinthian church so that when he reached them their alms collections are ready. **"16 But thanks be to God, which put the same earnest care into the heart of Titus for you. 17 For indeed he accepted the exhortation; but being more forward, of his own accord he went unto you. 18 And we have sent with him the brother, whose praise is in the gospel throughout all the churches."** (2 Corinthians 8:16-18 KJV) **"1 For as touching the ministering to the saints, it is superfluous for me to write to you: 2 For I know the forwardness of your mind, for which I boast of you to them of Macedonia, that Achaia was ready a year ago; and your zeal hath provoked very many. 3 Yet have I sent the brethren, lest our boasting of you should be in vain in this behalf; that, as I said, ye may be ready: 4 Lest haply if they of Macedonia come with me, and find you unprepared, we (that we say not, ye) should be ashamed in this same confident boasting. 5 Therefore I thought it necessary to exhort the brethren, that they would go before unto you, and make up beforehand your bounty, whereof ye had notice before, that the same might be ready, as a matter of bounty, and not as of covetousness."** (2 Corinthians

9:1-5 KJV) Mature churches with mature leadership exercise wisdom in spending and setting aside as well as storing extra finances. Also, we find such churches are not in any state of panic in times of emergency. Such churches will always be prepared for any contingency and will be lenders rather than borrowers. Such churches will not call people to ask donations but will open their storehouses which are full and satisfy the needs.

The wise virgins were ready with their lamps and with extra supply of oil while the foolish virgins ran out of stock and were in dire straits: *“1 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. 2 And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. 3 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: 4 But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. 5 While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. 6 And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. 7 Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. 8 And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. 9 But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. 10 And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. 11 Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. 12 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.”* (Matthew 25:1-12 KJV) * Notice that the wise were prepared for the moment. They had storehouses. They had an extra supply of oil to meet their needs. They were really wise for they didn't cater to the request of the foolish virgins. The foolish virgins were casual in their approach and didn't prepare themselves, and when the hour approached, they were panic-stricken and totally unprepared and lost the opportunity of their lifetime. * Wise churches are always in a state of preparedness while foolish churches are complacent and lazy, splurging on food and functions, spending the last penny without ever gathering or storing to meet the need of the hour.

Attitude is contagious, just like the common cold. Churches that practice the principles of good stewardship in financial matters will set the trend for their members to follow and thrive, whereas churches that do not practice the art of saving in storehouses, will lead their members astray with their bad example.

Is it not a wonderful thing that we as a church grow in maturity and are organized and ready to deal with various emergency situations in response to God's call and do immediately what is in His heart? Therefore, we need to emphasize the point that in church administration and in family management, finances must be well organized and handled.

* In our church, we have storehouses of finances allotted and categorized for various purposes- for the poor and needy, for the mission work and also as savings that can be used for any emergency. * There is a certain percentage in the church budget allotted for these categories, and whatever remains in each of these categories accumulates and piled up over the previous months and years. We don't say 'What we will do with this money?' But we say, 'It is in the storehouse and it will be kept for God and for certain needs in His heart.' * We teach and encourage our disciples and members to budget their finances and have savings that can be used when the need arises so that the Lord would be glorified and the calling of the Lord could be fulfilled. * Empty barns, churches in debt, members with loans and in debt are disgraceful

things that will not glorify God, and we as churches should not allow such shameful things to prevail neither in our congregations nor in the lives of our families and church members.

My dear and beloved: This is what God had promised for those who obeyed Him:

- A. *“10 And ye shall eat old store, and bring forth the old because of the new.”* (Leviticus 26:10 KJV)
- B. *“18 Wherefore ye shall do my statutes, and keep my judgments, and do them; and ye shall dwell in the land in safety. 19 And the land shall yield her fruit, and ye shall eat your fill, and dwell therein in safety. 20 And if ye shall say, What shall we eat the seventh year? behold, we shall not sow, nor gather in our increase: 21 Then I will command my blessing upon you in the sixth year, and it shall bring forth fruit for three years. 22 And ye shall sow the eighth year, and eat yet of old fruit until the ninth year; until her fruits come in ye shall eat of the old store.”* (Leviticus 25:18-22 KJV)

Let us pray

My Prayer: Father God I come before you in the name of Jesus, who died on the cross for my sins and rose from death on the third day to give me eternal life. Lord, thank you for the encouraging Word that we received in this message teaching us to be good steward and wise in handling finances in life and ministry. Lord thank you for the teaching of the storehouses and the importance of saving and keeping the resources for the future needs. Lord thank you for all the resources that you placed in our hands.

Come now to God and repent and renounce all your sins. Repent of your bad stewardship and your lack of preparedness. Repent of unwise spending and using the entire church money for parties and functions without keeping some for the future. Repent of your worldliness and spending your money on worldly pleasures, travels and trips. Repent of your non concern to build God's church and your non willingness to serve God and suffer for Him. Repent of your non concern to care for others who are in need. Repent of doing your own will and plan and not the will nor the plan of God in your life. Lord forgive me I repent of the following sins:

_____.

Lord I commit my life to the principle of thrifty living, saving and stewardship in handling my personal finances and that pertains to the ministry. Lord I commit myself to build the storehouse of the church that will be used according to your will and purpose when the needs are raised. Lord I commit myself to look after those brethren who are in need and work with you to aid them in their lives.

Lord, thank you for all my Brothers and Sisters who had committed themselves to the spiritual principles that we had received in this message, to handle wisely the finances of the ministry and to keep them ready for your works and purpose and to meet the needs of the ministry.

Lord, I pray for us as a church to lead us to apply what we learned in this message, to be prepared and well organized in our finances to be ready to meet the ministerial needs. Lord help us to teach your people and train them to know how to handle their finances. Lord, fill us once again with the Holy Spirit and enable us to evangelize and reach new people with the

Gospel of Jesus Christ and with the Word of God. Lord, we pray that you will enable us to plant new Bible studies and new congregations for the church. Lord we pray for more people to be water baptized and receive the Holy Spirit Baptism. Lord prepare us for your coming, that we are ready when you come. Lord fulfill the vision of the church, 'Multiplication in peace with implementing the whole will of God'. Lord Bless us, enlarge our territory, let your hand be with us and free us from harm so that we will not feel pain. May the grace of the Lord Jesus and the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with us all in Jesus name, Amen.

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