

Wrong Resources for Church Money Part 2

The following incident from the book of Judges speaks to us clearly about what is going on in the churches today:

“1 And there was a man of mount Ephraim, whose name was Micah. 2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son. 3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee. 4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah. 5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. 6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes. 7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8 And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed. 9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. 10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. 11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. 13 Then said Micah, Now know I that the LORD will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest.” (Judges 17:1-13 KJV)

Here we can see how the ministry started. A woman, who had money stolen from her, probably knew that it was her son Micah who had done it. She cursed the one who stole and that made Micah afraid and so he went to his mother and confessed it to her. *“2 And he said unto his mother, The eleven hundred shekels of silver that were taken from thee, about which thou cursedst, and spakest of also in mine ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. And his mother said, Blessed be thou of the LORD, my son.” (Judges 17:2 KJV)* Micah was the thief, and the mother forgave him and blessed him.

“3 And when he had restored the eleven hundred shekels of silver to his mother, his mother said, I had wholly dedicated the silver unto the LORD from my hand for my son, to make a graven image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it unto thee.” (Judges 17:3 KJV) When the mother received the money from her son, she vowed the entire money to God for her son to make a graven and molten image. **We find here wrong principles and foundation for ministries. Just because the people have money, it doesn't mean that they can do their own will and promote their own idols and practices that contradict the Word of God.**

“4 Yet he restored the money unto his mother; and his mother took two hundred shekels of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made thereof a graven image and a molten image: and they were in the house of Micah.” (Judges 17:4 KJV) She took two hundreds shekels of

the money and gave it to the founder, and the rest of the money was given to support Micah to do the ministry. The founder was willing to satisfy her request as long as he was paid. **Is it not painful to know that idol worship that was prohibited in Israel was approved by the founder and by Micah just because they would receive money? Their god was their belly and their glory their shame.** Paul was heartbroken and wept about such bad practices. *“18 (For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 Whose end is destruction, whose God is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame, who mind earthly things.)” (Philippians 3:18-19 KJV)* Even today, many walk in this manner and they don't know what exactly is the written Word of God in the Bible and we find them starting new and independent ministries based on wrong principles promoted by their own desire and will.

Micah was a man with no principles and his focus was to receive material blessings rather than to please God, and for him, the ministry was only a business and a source of income. *“5 And the man Micah had an house of gods, and made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest.” (Judges 17:5 KJV)* Micah made for himself an ephod and teraphim that he could use to inquire from God if someone approaches him for counsel and advice. He also taught his son and used him to sustain his ministry that was based on idol worship and greed. **We should be discerning whom we chose to serve God. We are called to look for the faithful in the land and those who fear God and serve the Lord with them.**

“6 In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes.” (Judges 17:6 KJV) We are living in those days now. People are immature and greedy with a distorted view of life. Even the church is weak and her leaders lackadaisical and complacent, and they do their own, what is right in their own eyes, based on covetousness and worldliness.

Birds of the same feather flock together. Micah's folly was backed up by another greedy person who too was looking forward to doing his own will. *“7 And there was a young man out of Bethlehemjudah of the family of Judah, who was a Levite, and he sojourned there. 8 And the man departed out of the city from Bethlehemjudah to sojourn where he could find a place: and he came to mount Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he journeyed.” (Judges 17:7-8 KJV)* When greedy people come together to do the ministry, it is not a sign of God's approval nor can be used as a sign to confirm that what they are doing is right. This is totally untrue.

“9 And Micah said unto him, Whence comest thou? And he said unto him, I am a Levite of Bethlehemjudah, and I go to sojourn where I may find a place. 10 And Micah said unto him, Dwell with me, and be unto me a father and a priest, and I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in. 11 And the Levite was content to dwell with the man; and the young man was unto him as one of his sons. 12 And Micah consecrated the Levite; and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah.” (Judges 17:9-12 KJV) The Levite should have been the one to rebuke Micah for his idols because he knew the law of God, and he should have dissuaded him from going against God's will and command. *“4 Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. 5 Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them: for I the LORD thy God am a jealous God, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children*

unto the third and fourth generation of them that hate me.” (Exodus 20:4-5 KJV) Possibly, that was the first incident of idol worship mentioned after the Israelites entered into the Promised Land. The Levite should have explained to Micah that there was a place for worship and there were priests appointed by God to do the service of God and to serve the people according to the will of God. But how would the Levite have done that for he was greedy for material things and a comfortable lifestyle? He was drooling over the money that Micah had offered him, ten shekels of silver by the year, a suit of apparel, and also provision. *“I will give thee ten shekels of silver by the year, and a suit of apparel, and thy victuals. So the Levite went in.” (Judges 17:10 KJV)* * Many corrupt ministers would hover around people offering them a living and would be willing to compromise with them and overlook the sin of the giver, as long as their needs are met. This is what Isaiah spoke about such ministers. *“10 His watchmen are blind: they are all ignorant, they are all dumb dogs, they cannot bark; sleeping, lying down, loving to slumber. 11 Yea, they are greedy dogs which can never have enough, and they are shepherds that cannot understand: they all look to their own way, every one for his gain, from his quarter.” (Isaiah 56:10-11 KJV)* * Church leaders are the watchmen and they should be alert to discern the sins of people and help them to realize and repent. They should rebuke the people and restrain them with the Word of God from running wild, as the dogs bark to restrain thieves while they are on the watch. If they fail to abide by that, then they have an ulterior motive, every one for his gain, and they are not after God’s will and purpose. They are lazy, greedy for gifts and money, and eager to be invited to eat at people’s banquets.

Such kind of ministers when confronted and asked why they choose to compromise, will say that God is forgiving and so they have to minister to the people in gentleness but the Bible says, *“3 Take heed to yourselves: If thy brother trespass against thee, rebuke him; and if he repent, forgive him.” (Luke 17:3 KJV)* They will also say that all people are sinners but they forget what the Bible says. *“19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; 20 Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.” (James 5:19-20 KJV)*

That Levite would have been more blessed if he had followed God; his needs would have been met in a better way. He misled others by teaching them how to earn their living. This is cheating and money from such a resource is cursed by God.

God definitely would not expect such behavior from a Levite. His covenant with Levi was a covenant of peace and he would have expected him to lead others. People approached the Levites and the priests to be instructed in God’s Word and to get the right direction from them. *“4 And ye shall know that I have sent this commandment unto you, that my covenant might be with Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 5 My covenant was with him of life and peace; and I gave them to him for the fear wherewith he feared me, and was afraid before my name. 6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity. 7 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.” (Malachi 2:4-7 KJV)* Therefore when church leaders and workers behave as that Levite behaved, then God’s anger will be stirred up and He will take action. *“8 But ye are departed out of the way; ye have caused many to stumble at the law; ye have corrupted the covenant of Levi, saith the LORD of hosts. 9 Therefore have I also made you contemptible*

and base before all the people, according as ye have not kept my ways, but have been partial in the law.” (Malachi 2:8-9 KJV).

The story of that Levite did not end there; his greed and covetousness progressed further to produce something worse. Let us read in the book of *Judges 18* how this Levite blessed the five men who were sent by the tribe of Dan to find a new place to replace the place of their inheritance.

“1 In those days there was no king in Israel: and in those days the tribe of the Danites sought them an inheritance to dwell in; for unto that day all their inheritance had not fallen unto them among the tribes of Israel. 2 And the children of Dan sent of their family five men from their coasts, men of valour, from Zorah, and from Eshtaol, to spy out the land, and to search it; and they said unto them, Go, search the land: who when they came to mount Ephraim, to the house of Micah, they lodged there. 3 When they were by the house of Micah, they knew the voice of the young man the Levite: and they turned in thither, and said unto him, Who brought thee hither? and what makest thou in this place? and what hast thou here? 4 And he said unto them, Thus and thus dealeth Micah with me, and hath hired me, and I am his priest. 5 And they said unto him, Ask counsel, we pray thee, of God, that we may know whether our way which we go shall be prosperous. 6 And the priest said unto them, Go in peace: before the LORD is your way wherein ye go. 7 Then the five men departed, and came to Laish, and saw the people that were therein, how they dwelt careless, after the manner of the Zidonians, quiet and secure; and there was no magistrate in the land, that might put them to shame in any thing; and they were far from the Zidonians, and had no business with any man. 8 And they came unto their brethren to Zorah and Eshtaol: and their brethren said unto them, What say ye? 9 And they said, Arise, that we may go up against them: for we have seen the land, and, behold, it is very good: and are ye still? be not slothful to go, and to enter to possess the land. 10 When ye go, ye shall come unto a people secure, and to a large land: for God hath given it into your hands; a place where there is no want of any thing that is in the earth. 11 And there went from thence of the family of the Danites, out of Zorah and out of Eshtaol, six hundred men appointed with weapons of war. 12 And they went up, and pitched in Kirjathjearim, in Judah: wherefore they called that place Mahanehdan unto this day: behold, it is behind Kirjathjearim. 13 And they passed thence unto mount Ephraim, and came unto the house of Micah. 14 Then answered the five men that went to spy out the country of Laish, and said unto their brethren, Do ye know that there is in these houses an ephod, and teraphim, and a graven image, and a molten image? now therefore consider what ye have to do. 15 And they turned thitherward, and came to the house of the young man the Levite, even unto the house of Micah, and saluted him. 16 And the six hundred men appointed with their weapons of war, which were of the children of Dan, stood by the entering of the gate. 17 And the five men that went to spy out the land went up, and came in thither, and took the graven image, and the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image: and the priest stood in the entering of the gate with the six hundred men that were appointed with weapons of war. 18 And these went into Micah’s house, and fetched the carved image, the ephod, and the teraphim, and the molten image. Then said the priest unto them, What do ye? 19 And they said unto him, Hold thy peace, lay thine hand upon thy mouth, and go with us, and be to us a father and a priest: is it better for thee to be a priest unto the house of one man, or that thou be a priest unto a tribe and a family in Israel? 20 And the priest’s heart was glad, and he took the ephod, and the teraphim, and the graven image, and went in the midst of the people. 21 So they turned and departed, and put the little

ones and the cattle and the carriage before them. 22 And when they were a good way from the house of Micah, the men that were in the houses near to Micah's house were gathered together, and overtook the children of Dan. 23 And they cried unto the children of Dan. And they turned their faces, and said unto Micah, What aileth thee, that thou comest with such a company? 24 And he said, Ye have taken away my gods which I made, and the priest, and ye are gone away: and what have I more? and what is this that ye say unto me, What aileth thee? 25 And the children of Dan said unto him, Let not thy voice be heard among us, lest angry fellows run upon thee, and thou lose thy life, with the lives of thy household. 26 And the children of Dan went their way: and when Micah saw that they were too strong for him, he turned and went back unto his house. 27 And they took the things which Micah had made, and the priest which he had, and came unto Laish, unto a people that were at quiet and secure: and they smote them with the edge of the sword, and burnt the city with fire. 28 And there was no deliverer, because it was far from Zidon, and they had no business with any man; and it was in the valley that lieth by Bethrehob. And they built a city, and dwelt therein. 29 And they called the name of the city Dan, after the name of Dan their father, who was born unto Israel: howbeit the name of the city was Laish at the first. 30 And the children of Dan set up the graven image: and Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh, he and his sons were priests to the tribe of Dan until the day of the captivity of the land. 31 And they set them up Micah's graven image, which he made, all the time that the house of God was in Shiloh.” (Judges 18:1-31 KJV) At that time there was no king, so that Levite took more advantage of the situation. He blessed their journey to find a new place for living in addition to their inheritance. He did that without discretion and without inquiring of God's will. He simply went ahead and agreed to their own wishes. **Many ministers of God nowadays are shallow in their thoughts and words and accommodate sin in any form as long as they receive an income. To make matters worse, they dilute God's infinite Word. The people approach such ministers who will approve whatever they wish.** The five men saw the idols and knew it was wrong. But they approved it because there was somebody, the Levite, going along with their wishes.

Ultimately, they found the new place to settle and that was Laish and went up to take it with 600 men from the tribe of Dan. They came to Micah's house and took all the idols and the rest of the things set up in his house. They also took the Levite, who agreed to go with them because they decided to make him a priest over their tribe. He was enticed by better payment and better living for that was his priority and reason for serving God. **Nowadays, many are there like that Levite who receives their income from wrong sources, to maintain their living and secure the future of their families. They will hang around the influential and powerful people and feed off them. For them, the ministry is like an auction. In an auction, the source of income is not important; only the highest bidder so that the seller ultimately benefits. These people literally sell the Gospel for their own personal gain. “13 For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. 14 And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. 15 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.” (2 Corinthians 11:13-15 KJV)**

That Levite led that part of the tribe of Dan that dwelt in Laish into idol worship and it was a source of income to him and to his sons after him, till the time the Israelites were led into captivity. **What havoc people who love money can cause in the Church of God! They use their ministry as their meal ticket to buffets; the income for their children in the future. They will go**

to occupy church offices to keep an income and in whatever way. They are not loyal to God, the one who feeds them and gives them their raiment. They oppress the poor and the weak and justify the strong and approve of those who give them a pittance when compared to God's abundance. Their ministry seems to be prosperous and expanding as they go through the broad way, having chosen to bypass the narrow gate. “13 Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat.” (Matthew 7:13 KJV)

The name of that Levite was, “Jonathan, the son of Gershom, the son of Manasseh”, and some commentaries suggest that Gershom was the son of Moses and Moses was the grandfather of this Levite. It is remarkable that the ‘nun’, or ‘N’ in Manasseh, is suspended over the other letters in the printed copies of the Hebrew Bible, and so without it, Manasseh may be read ‘Moses’. The Jews have the notion that this was done in honor of Moses, and to indicate that he was more like the son of Manasseh than of Moses. *** The point that I want to raise from this is how shameful an act this Levite did and it might have been just for the sake of Moses that he was not disciplined or suspended. In the same way, some of those who do wrong and abuse church offices to earn their living might not be disciplined just for the sake of the post that their father or their grandfather had held. * But let us change our way of thinking because if we allow such people to live as parasites inside the Church of God, neither they nor their descendants nor those who are under their care, will be blessed by the Lord.**

Contrary to this Levite, was Samuel another Levite who was so honest when it came to money matters. He challenged the congregation of God and he confronted them: **“3 Behold, here I am: witness against me before the LORD, and before his anointed: whose ox have I taken? or whose ass have I taken? or whom have I defrauded? whom have I oppressed? or of whose hand have I received any bribe to blind mine eyes therewith? and I will restore it you. 4 And they said, Thou hast not defrauded us, nor oppressed us, neither hast thou taken ought of any man's hand. 5 And he said unto them, The LORD is witness against you, and his anointed is witness this day, that ye have not found ought in my hand. And they answered, He is witness.” (1 Samuel 12:3-5 KJV) The testimony of God was kept intact and holiness preserved under the leadership of Samuel because he was very particular not to receive what was not allocated to him, nor to approve of anything that was ungodly and not approved by God.**

Samuel's sons were not like him; they received bribes and were rejected from the office of judge. **“8 And his sons walked not in his ways, but turned aside after lucre, and took bribes, and perverted judgment.” (1 Samuel 8:3 KJV) And with their actions, the testimony of God was affected and the people used that as an excuse to ask Samuel to give them a king.**

Simon wanted to bribe Peter to receive the power of laying hands on people in order for them to receive the Holy Spirit like what Peter and John did. **“17 Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. 18 And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money, 19 Saying, Give me also this power, that on whomsoever I lay hands, he may receive the Holy Ghost. 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. 21 Thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter: for thy heart is not right in the sight of God. 22 Repent therefore of this thy wickedness, and pray God, if perhaps the thought of thine heart may be forgiven thee. 23 For I perceive that thou**

art in the gall of bitterness, and in the bond of iniquity. 24 Then answered Simon, and said, Pray ye to the LORD for me, that none of these things which ye have spoken come upon me.” (Acts 8:17-24 KJV) Peter was so assertive with Simon and made him understand that by no means he would grant him his wish and compromise for the sake of money. **The church should not swallow the bait of such kind of people who intentionally use their money to bribe the church, the ministers of the church and their leaders for their personal gain. The Lord would be displeased if we do that and the church will be weakened by an infiltration of people who will enter with their influence of money and not by the ordinance of the Holy Spirit.**

Here is another story that teaches us to be discerning about peoples’ offerings: *“13 So she caught him, and kissed him, and with an impudent face said unto him, 14 I have peace offerings with me; this day have I payed my vows. 15 Therefore came I forth to meet thee, diligently to seek thy face, and I have found thee. 16 I have decked my bed with coverings of tapestry, with carved works, with fine linen of Egypt.” (Proverbs 7:13-16 KJV)* This married woman invited a man to share her bed while her husband was on a journey. And the same woman had offered in the morning her peace offering and paid her vows to God, but she did not keep herself holy.

My dear and beloved: * Many may come and go to church and continue to live in sin. Now, if we don’t scrutinize the lives of such people who attend our congregations, then we are not doing well because these very same people will bring their offerings to the Church of God and they will assume that their life is hunky-dory and acceptable to God as long as they pay their vows financially. * Their blood will be on our necks if we just receive their money, but do not point out their sins. Many churches nowadays team with churchgoers who contribute financially but the church shows no concern or awareness of their lives as long as they are contributors. * There are those who say that the larger in number the congregation, the more revenue for the church. To tell you the truth, such churches will never be blessed unless they repent of their wrongdoings and faulty principles.

Therefore we need to understand that if we receive resources from wrong sources and people, then we will be allowing corruption to enter into the church and if that continues without being rectified, then sooner or later the church will deviate and tread into dangerous paths; that will be a costly mistake. 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 the dead to give me eternal life. Lord thank you for your Word and the teaching that we received about the wrong resources for church money. Lord thank you for all the resources that you placed in our hands to do your works and ministry. Lord thank you for all the corrections the rebukes and the admonishments that we received in this message.

Repent and renounce all your sins. Renounce your stealing, cheating, corruption, compromises, idol worship, flattering and condoning sins in doing the ministry of God. Repent of your worldliness, your love for material things, your greed and your love for money. Repent of using the ministry for living and repent of using money to get ministries. Repent of taking and receiving gifts and bribes from people who are in sin and your refusal to correct them or admonish them with God’s Word. Repent of your lack of fear in God and your lack of trust on Him that He will provide all the needs for the church and the ministry. Repent of serving God with people who are not living in holiness. Repent of your non willingness to stand firm on the

Word of God. Repent of your non willingness to suffer for Christ and to serve Him. Lord I repent and renounce the following sins _____.

Lord thank you for all the resources that you had placed in the hand of your church to go on and serve you. Lord I commit myself to stand on your Word and be willing to correct the people and to admonish them with your Word. Lord I commit myself to work with honest people trusting you that you will provide all the needs and you will protect your church from all persecution.

Lord, thank you for my Brothers and Sisters who repented of their sins and decided to live a honest life and serve you with honest people. Lord continue to provide for them and protect them so they will continue to serve you

Lord bless us as your church and help us to continue to teach your Word and your will to your people. Lord help us to continue to combat the sin of stealing, cheating, compromises and corruption in the life of your church and your people. Lord help us to deal with those who are using the church and ministry for living. Lord refill us with the Holy Spirit and give us the Spiritual gifts that we need in our lives to go on and evangelize, and make new disciples and train new workers to go and plant new Bible studies and 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 to go with you when you come. Lord take the message and spread it to bring the fruit that you desire to see in the life of your church and your people. 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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