



EAST CENTRAL AFRICA DIVISION



STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES EMPHASIS WEEK, 2017

THEME: "STONES IN THE BAG"

1 Samuel 17:48-49

Prepared

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“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 1

STONES IN THE BAG.

1 Samuel 17: 49: *“And David put his hand into his bag and took from it a stone and slung it, and struck the Philistine on his forehead. And the stone sank into his forehead, so that he fell on his face to the ground”.*

The Biblical account on David and Goliath is one of those that keeps many spirit oriented humans alert about how God works with His determined and faithful people, especially those that are willing and ready to put resources to work for the glory of God.

In the exposition, you might have ever realized that David was not motivated by any human being to attack and annihilate what had become Israel’s menace. He did not take a selfish move; his stepping out to attack was purely motivated by the honor and glory he had for the God of Israel. This is clearly noted by considering the question he posed. Who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God? **1 Samuel 17:26.**

By all accounts, David’s intent to attack was to stop the defiance, mockery, curses and the blasphemy Goliath and the rest of the philistines were pouring on the holy nation of Israel and God Himself. *“It should be recalled that God’s glory and Holiness is preserved and promoted by members of His holy nation Israel, the Church. They do it using the very blessings God has endowed them with”. Beloved use all the blessings for His glory.* David had the will and stones; he used both and faced the uncircumcised giant.

Be careful with your size, in terms of material wealth, popularity, educational attainments and otherwise. These very huge titles and accomplishments may not work to your advantage when placed before your enemy, the devil. When your size is big, your enemy can easily describe, target, plan or advertise you for anything including death. Unfortunately, many of us rejoice and brag when we get these accomplishments, forgetting that we get them for the glory of GOD and we need to keep and use them as such. 1 Corinthians 10:31. It is this bragging that exposes us into the hands of archenemy the devil.

Goliath’s size was not of any advantage when David joined the battlefield. In fact it’s probable that Goliath’s size excited David’s curiosity to attack. The bigger you are in any respect, the more risky it becomes for you to be attacked or targeted. The only place to hide your size is under HIS wings. For in Him we live, move and have our being, Acts 17:28

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

David came under His wings! **1 Samuel 17:45** David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. It’s of utmost interest to note that after those statements of determination, David reached his bag and got a stone out of five stones.

People, who do things in the name of the Lord Almighty the God of the armies of Israel, do them with their hands in the bags! Pulling out stones to attack the enemy. Even after prayer, the hand must get into the bag, because that’s where the blessings of God to us are kept. As a matter of fact prayer precedes giving and returning to God.

It’s unfortunate that Saul the king, Eliab David’s brother and other men of Israel were only making statements of discouragement and minded less about the stones in the brook.

Interestingly, in preparation for the battle, David did not go anywhere to borrow or promote for any kind of offering or make appeals for assistance. He used the available blessings (resources) that God had endowed him with. The stones, the sling and his willingness to attack. Stones, slings and the will all come from God! But until we are willing to put to use the blessings for His glory, Goliaths will always be there to threaten us and blaspheme God. Use only what the Lord blesses you with! Only that counts to God!

After David said to the Philistine, “You come against me with sword and spear and javelin, but I come against you in the name of the Lord Almighty, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied, he reached his bag and pulled out one stone out of five. This is 20% of the resources he pulled out for mission. Only 20% is sufficient for mission please!

David had a mission of getting ride of all the curses, blasphemes and lampoons the philistines poured on the holy nation of Israel and God Himself. Good enough he was blessed with some stones. All he had at that time was stones in the bag!

The Church of God has a mission of taking the good news of Salvation to all kindred, tongue and people. And this is an imperative from Jesus Himself. We are to bring them in and baptize them in the name of the father, son and the Holy Spirit. “Mission priority, its harvest time”. You must be aware that in the course of doing this, we are faced with challenges (Goliaths).

The Goliaths of manpower, Church administrative expenses, infrastructure developments, preaching and witnessing, name them. You should as well recollect we are racing against the tides of principalities that press us down, the forces of the evil one. All these Goliaths are looking at us, mocking us, ridiculing us, and challenging us Israel of today. Asking whether we have a God we worship. And this has taken time for sure! Some of us are afraid of these challenges. Because of that they are standing still before us untouched!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

The reason they are still standing is because the stones are still in the bag. No one is touching inside the bag to pick the one stone. You and I should emulate David. Reach your hand into the bag and pick just one stone of the five the Lord has blessed you with so we can hit the philistines beginning with Goliath.

The Church of God is under ridicule, blasphemy; the glory of the Lord is trampled upon because the Stones are still in the bags, in bank accounts, in pockets, in gardens, in the farms. Get them from there and do mission in the name of the Lord. The reason we are still stagnating in Church, is because people have not dipped the hands in the bags. The stones are still idle! As long as no hand is getting into the bag of the blessings, Goliaths will remain standing. Be ready to spend for mission beloved like Paul, 2 Cor 12:15.

Doing something in the name of almighty simply means reaching your bags, pockets, bank accounts, gardens, firms etc. because that's where stones are kept. Get the stones from the bags and attack! Use these stones to hit all the stumbling blocks on the way of mission. 1 Samuel 17:40.

David had 5 stones in the bag but used only 1 stone. Percentage wise, he used only 20% of the blessings.

If we emulate what David did, by setting 20% of our incomes aside for mission i.e. 10% tithe to God and 10% offering to the Lord. (*10% offering is proposed based on what David used blessings*), we will have no more Goliath, in fact we will fly as a Church and the glory of God will be made manifest.

Mrs. E G White says “*there is means enough in the hands of the believers to amply sustain the work without embarrassing any, if all would do their proportionate part*” 5T 630.

Ellen G. White says that, “In His providence, the Lord has ordained that the work in His vineyard should be sustained by the means entrusted to the hands of His stewards” (*Testimonies*, Vol.3, p.117).

All of us are called upon to join in pulling stones out of our bags so Goliath can be hit and smashed. (***Total member involvement in pulling stones from the bags***).

Colossians 3:23-24.

“Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters, since you know that you will receive an inheritance from the Lord as a reward. It is the Lord Christ you are serving.”

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

The Day the stones will be pulled out, we will celebrate and dance. Like the women of Israel did when David did it!

1 Samuel 18:6-7 “it happened as they were coming, when David returned from killing the Philistine, that the women came out of all the cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet King Saul, with tambourines, with joy and with musical instruments”.

Beloved, we have no reason to celebrate when stones are still in the bags, no celebrations when the money, the blessing from God almighty is still locked up in banks, when all resources are sealed off and no body is releasing them for mission. Reach the bags and put the blessings to use for the glory of the Lord from whom all blessings flow.

These verses down below should never at all apply to any of the members of God’s flock.

James 5:1-3 describes it this way: “Come now, you rich, weep and howl for your miseries that are coming upon you! Your riches are corrupted, and your garments are moth-eaten . . . Your gold and silver are corroded, and their corrosion will be a witness against you and will eat your flesh like fire. You have heaped up treasure in the last days.”

Revelation 18:17 “For in one hour such great riches came to nothing . . .” Let your bag has not holes, Haggai 1:2, 6 and 9

Of course David’s faith was in the Lord, and he knew from experience God’s faithfulness. David’s faith was born out of his experience of God’s grace and mercy in his life up to that point. The Lord had delivered him out of dangerous situations in the past, proving His power and trustworthiness, and David relied on Him to deliver him from the Philistine. Whether it took one stone or five, David recognized that the power was not in his sling or stone but in the Lord of hosts. As David wrote later in Psalm 21:13, “Be exalted, O LORD, in your strength; we will sing and praise your might.”

Like wise, the power is not in the money we give or return to the Lord but in the mighty power of the LORD HIMSELF, the one who blesses us with the money. Our role is to honor Him with our wealth, “Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops”, Proverbs **3:9**

“But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth, and so confirms his covenant, which he swore to your ancestors, as it is today”. Deuteronomy 8:18.

Yes the power is in the Lord and not in what we surrender to Him for mission. But when we give or return for mission, it becomes evident that we have totally surrendered all to Him for mission and we are right on course!

Pull the stones out of the bag please!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 2

The Role of Obadiah.

1 Kings 18:3 & 12

3 and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord) **12** I don't know where the Spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn't find you, he will kill me. ***Yet I your servant have worshiped the Lord since my youth.***

When these two verses are spiritually looked into, it can be deduced quickly that Obadiah was a man who had his trust in the Lord. He was fully aware of who God was. He worshiped God and that remained his motivation for doing good to the extent of hiding 100 prophets in the caves and providing for them. The act of hiding the Lord's prophets alone amounted to treason to the state at that time. But as long as it was about the Lord, Obadiah did not hesitate to do it. Stewardship and faithfulness begin with trusting in the Lord. Only true worshipers of God can do right. All Stewards of the Lord ought to be true worshipers and servants of the Lord. This happens when one releases his blessings to bless others.

For when Jezebel destroyed the prophets of the LORD, Obadiah took a hundred prophets and hid them by fifties in a cave, and provided them with bread and water. This height of stewardship is rare to find among the people who serve in the palace of the highest kings. The king of kings and the Lord of Lords. The palace of Palaces. But Obadiah did it!

Hiding a hundred people in a cave and providing them with food and water is not at all a simple undertaking. It takes a devoted and faithful person to do a task of this scale. And it is not done by flesh and blood but by the spirit. This clearly indicates that Obadiah spent and stones did not remain in the bag. You cannot do this daunting task when the stones are still in the bag. You must pull them out something Obadiah must have done. He must have spent, he must have paid. True love and faithfulness call for spending and paying. You cannot provide food and water to 100 prophets of God without spending. This is what God is calling us to do. Give and provide!

It's time to join Obadiah's camp, people who have hearts motivated by God to save lives, people who are ready to release resources, the blessings from God for the good of God's people, thus building the Kingdom instead of building structures. God rejoices to work with men like Obadiah. Can you imagine how God kept blessing Obadiah with resources to provide for 100 people everyday? God has a way to keep us blessed if we do not lose cognizance of the source of the blessings.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Elijah and Obadiah, I Kings 18

18 After a long time, in the third year, the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go and present yourself to Ahab, and I will send rain on the land.” **2** So Elijah went to present himself to Ahab.

Now the famine was severe in Samaria, **3** and Ahab had summoned Obadiah, his palace administrator. (Obadiah was a devout believer in the Lord. **4** While Jezebel was killing off the Lord’s prophets, Obadiah had taken a hundred prophets and hidden them in two caves, fifty in each, and had supplied them with food and water.) **5** Ahab had said to Obadiah, “Go through the land to all the springs and valleys. Maybe we can find some grass to keep the horses and mules alive so we will not have to kill any of our animals.” **6** So they divided the land they were to cover, Ahab going in one direction and Obadiah in another.

7 As Obadiah was walking along, Elijah met him. Obadiah recognized him, bowed down to the ground, and said, “Is it really you, my lord Elijah?”

8 “Yes,” he replied. “Go tell your master, ‘Elijah is here.’”

9 “What have I done wrong,” asked Obadiah, “that you are handing your servant over to Ahab to be put to death? **10** As surely as the Lord your God lives, there is not a nation or kingdom where my master has not sent someone to look for you. And whenever a nation or kingdom claimed you were not there, he made them swear they could not find you. **11** But now you tell me to go to my master and say, ‘Elijah is here.’ **12** I don’t know where the Spirit of the Lord may carry you when I leave you. If I go and tell Ahab and he doesn’t find you, he will kill me. Yet I your servant have worshiped the Lord since my youth. **13** Haven’t you heard, my lord, what I did while Jezebel was killing the prophets of the Lord? I hid a hundred of the Lord’s prophets in two caves, fifty in each, and supplied them with food and water. **14** And now you tell me to go to my master and say, ‘Elijah is here.’ He will kill me!”

The conversation between Obadiah and Elijah deserves our most profound attention.

Firstly, the words of Obadiah depict how much knowledgeable he was about God. Obadiah knew how powerfully God worked with His faithful like Elijah. Obadiah was aware God could carry Elijah away by the spirit. Obadiah implies also that God can hide His own from their enemies. And when God hides, no one can find. Factually, Obadiah also had knowledge of how fierce Ahab was.

It is at this point of knowledge that Obadiah had trust in God and proved faithful.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

It takes knowledge to be faithful to the almighty God. Many of us fall short in the area of faithfulness simply because we take little or no effort at all to know or understand who God is and what He is capable of doing. It is at this spot that trust in God develops and grows into faithfulness. This is what Stewardship requires! At this spiritual vertex, one begins to ask questions like; “what shall I return to the Lord for all his goodness to me?” Psalm 116:12. One gets open and true to himself and gets God at the center of Life. In such spiritual atmosphere, our connection to our only creator thrives. Then you can say I give thanks to the Lord, for he is good; his love endures forever, Psalm 107
Today we all need to get to this spiritual height. God bless you as you connect to your creator.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 3

THE ALABASTER WOMAN

Key Text: John 12: 3

“Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus’ feet and wiped his feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

Close observance and commentaries of the gospels about this woman seem to elicit multiple contentions about who she was. John records her name as Mary. Others gospel authors refer to her as just a woman. One fact that runs through out the gospels is that it was a woman. To me this is sufficient! This exposition does not pursue the name of the woman and has no interest at all in the name except in that which the woman did to and for Jesus.

Stewardship is about what a sinner does to and for Jesus after receiving and experiencing salvation through and by Him.

For purposes of fleshing out this study/presentation, I will draw lessons from all the gospels.

First and foremost this woman is not invited to this dinner. When your situation is bad, like many of us are, you do not need to wait for invitation to get to Jesus. Get there anyhow; after all He said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. **Matthew 11:28. Get to him today for spiritual healing about unfaithfulness please!**

Based on what transpired at the dining table, it is evident that the woman knew who and what Jesus was. With her expensive gift, she directly went to Jesus and worked only with HIM. She did not confuse Him with any other person or anything. This means she would clearly identify the savior. She was clear about who Jesus was and how He looked like.

This clarity of who Jesus is to us individually is critical because this is quite foundational to our trust in God and His son and our savior Jesus Christ. In Stewardship and other matters of spiritual nature, God cannot or is never confused with any other item or human.

When Jesus is clearly captured in your mind, then giving and returning to Him becomes none burdensome, and more so spiritually motivated. One does not consider how expensive gifts to Jesus are. Faith in the Lord becomes louder than anything else. *“When your faith is so loud, you cannot hear what doubt is saying to you”*. Let your Faith roar”

What makes this gift very exciting is its fragrance that filled the entire house. Nothing that gives an aroma of faithfulness in the House of the Lord like giving or returning to the Lord. Giving to the Lord gives a fragrance of peace and freedom in the heart of the giver; it gives strength and growth to the entire house of spiritual Israel.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

When you get into the Church that gives to the Lord, you can't miss the fragrance of worship, love, spiritual strength and finally, the readiness to meet the savior when He appears the second time.

Such fragrance does not start diffusing from outside but rather inside of the giver's heart, the seat of worship and love. The aroma that filled the entire house of the Pharisee first filled the heart of the woman who gave the gift, and it propelled her to give to Jesus. “What fills one's heart is what fills the house he or she occupies”.

When you see a dry and poor Church but made up of the rich, the obvious deduction is that members' hearts are equally dry and poor and devoid of the presence of the love of the savior. This condition should never be seen or encouraged in the house of the Lord or in the hearts of believers.

The gift itself was very expensive and full of fragrance the Bible says. Without this fragrance, there is no worship! Remember even in the Old Testament offerings were burnt to get this fragrance to God in heaven; **Leviticus 1:9**. Does your giving or returning give any fragrance to the house of the Lord or you are there only to provide the opposite?

If you check on the worshiping in this house, it is possible that the only person who worshiped the Lord at this time was this alabaster woman. She is the only one who is seen giving something to the Lord and the Lord appreciated her. It's spiritually important if Jesus can appreciate your actions, steps and ways. That is all you need in the spiritual journey. The Lord's appreciation of the gift is not about material expense but rather the spiritual intension imbedded in the gift. Get your spiritual intensions straight with the Lord whenever you give.

In pouring the contents of her alabaster jar onto Christ, she was saying, “I have no future but you. I have no value but loving you. I am Yours.” She spoke all these at the same time in the gift. Giving to the Lord speaks volumes of what the Lord is to you. It is by giving that your heart speaks to the Lord.

The oil was substantially expensive. It is generally accepted that its cash value was worthy one year's wages. All of it poured unto Jesus for worship! When Jesus pours love and salvation to you, you pour appreciation by giving and returning. That's the only fair way to HIM. “You have not worshiped Him at all until you give”

At this time, many opinions were running through the minds of the people in the house of the leper when the woman entered. The disciples were complaining of the wasteful giving by the sinful woman. You cannot worship in a complaining environment. Simon the owner of the house also muttered that Jesus was dealing with a sinner. Judas's remarks were full of corruption and intentions to embezzle.

The house of the Lord is full of all these groupings. Some people are in the Church just to complain about what others do, others are there only to blame and worst of all there is a group that exists to just embezzle, steal or rob that which is given or returned by the faithful hearts to the Lord. Unfortunately, such groupings have frustrated all the Stewardship efforts injected into the ministry.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Spiritual growth and development have all been curtailed. You can be sure there is no worshiping taking place under these negative circumstances. It just can't happen! Jesus cannot appreciate such creations and He has no intention to function under such settings. Beloved, we are so busy doing wrong, running fast in wrong roads. "What is the use of running if you are not on the right road?" German Proverb.

Jesus's comments on the act.

10 Aware of this, Jesus said to them (groupings) "Why are you bothering this woman? She has done a beautiful thing to me. **11** The poor you will always have with you, but you will not always have me. **12** When she poured this perfume on my body, she did it to prepare me for burial. **13** Truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

Have you ever looked at these comments made by Jesus about this woman with sufficient spiritual attention? I get excited personally at the defense Jesus mounted for the woman against her critiques. This affirms the fact that Jesus is our real defense in times of blames, and before our enemies. Jesus made positive comments about a sinner because she did right for and to HIM.

Giving to the Lord is beautiful and makes you leave a legacy or a mark that explains your faithfulness to the Lord. Jesus said, truly I tell you, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her."

If Jesus were to talk about you as an individual, what comments would He say? Can Jesus say you have done beautiful things to Him?

For this to happen, stones must be pulled out of the bag! Giving can make good spiritual stories and legacies.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 4

TWO STEWARDS AT THE BURIAL.

John 19:39-42

Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away. **39** He was accompanied by Nicodemus, the man who earlier had visited Jesus at night. Nicodemus brought a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about seventy-five pounds. **40** Taking Jesus' body, the two of them wrapped it, with the spices, in strips of linen.

Many of us comprehend how expensive funerals can be. There must be good reasons for one to begin meeting funeral expenses. It doesn't just happen! It is propelled by concern, responsibility and love.

The meeting Nicodemus had with Jesus at night did not leave Nicodemus the same. It made him start looking at life differently. In fact the talk was so deep that Jesus told him to be born again. For us to be good Stewards of the Lord we must be born again and we need that deep contact and relationship with our savior and Lord Jesus Christ.

Beloved when you meet Jesus face-to-face, mind-to-mind, heart to heart, you cannot remain the same. You begin to work with Jesus; then you can even think about Him no matter the condition you find him. And most importantly you join the givers club. It is spiritually impossible for anyone to meet with Jesus and he or she remains a none –giver.

There is evidence that Nicodemus did receive mercy. He came on this occasion "by night" for fear of the Jews, but at the end of the Gospel openly purchases the necessary spices for the anointing of Jesus' body (John 19:39). The Master steward had done his work. He had brought a Bible teacher into the kingdom of God! Jesus' contact turned Nicodemus into a steward. He did not leave stones in the bag. He made sure there is no any sort of blasphemy on his master, teacher and savior even when He was dead. In fact it pleased him to do that service. Believers, we need to get to Joseph & Nicodemus's level of spending for anything about our Lord Christ Jesus.

You see friends; Jesus is an incomparable and matchless giver. 1 John 3:16 & Galatians 1:4. Getting into contact with Jesus definitely makes you a giver because then you connected with heaven the main fountain of giving. Faithful giving to the Lord is a clear testimony of one's connectedness with heaven.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

As a crucified criminal in the eyes of the Law, what kind of burial do you suppose Jesus of Nazareth would normally have received?

His body would probably have been thrown into a common grave set apart for criminals. It would be risky to ask for the body of a crucified criminal so that the deceased could be given a proper burial. For anyone to obtain such a corpse, permission would have to be granted by the proper authorities, but it could be dangerous to ask for that permission.

Two influential Jewish leaders were willing to take that risk. One of these men was the wealthy and honorable Joseph of Arimathea and the other was Nicodemus. Two great stewards took this responsibility.

After Jesus died on the cross, Joseph courageously approached Governor Pilate and begged that Jesus' body be given to him. Pilate granted his request.

There was another secret disciple who risked his reputation that afternoon. His name was Nicodemus. Once one night, before this sorrowful day, he had privately interviewed Jesus under cover of darkness -- perhaps for fear of being observed.

Joseph of Arimathea owned a new tomb he probably planned to use himself. That is where he and Nicodemus placed the body of Jesus. Nicodemus brought a mixture of expensive myrrh and aloes to use to prepare Jesus' body for burial. Myrrh is a type of gum resin that acts as a kind of glue. Aloes is sweet-smelling oil used for medicinal purposes, as a fragrance, and to use to bury the dead.

The two men worked together spreading this mixture between the encircling layers of a long linen cloth purchased by Joseph. Joseph and Nicodemus met all the funeral expenses.

They wrapped the fabric around and around His body until it was completely sealed with the fabric cocoon and perfumed resin. They also wrapped an additional cloth around his head. After they were satisfied they had properly prepared Jesus' body for burial, Joseph rolled a large stone over the cave's opening. They spent until they were satisfied what they had done befitted their Lord. This is real Stewardship spirit!

These men publicly declared they were Jesus' friends! Their last act of love for Him is recorded in the Gospels. They both risked their reputations and more to give their Friend a proper burial. “After love comes spending or giving” Some believers who have matured in the grace, say, “Jesus is everything and they can do anything for Christ because He did everything for us”. We all need to get to this spot of Faithfulness. Let us do all things for His glory.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus could not have known at the time that they were participating in the fulfillment of an ancient prophecy from the book of Isaiah. Here is the Scripture telling about the Messiah written over 600 hundred years before Jesus' crucifixion: "But he was struck down for the rebellion of my people. He had done no wrong and had never deceived anyone. But he was buried like a criminal; he was put in a rich man's grave." Isaiah 53:8-9. Your giving or spending can fulfill some prophecy.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

To their great joy, Jesus did not remain in Joseph's tomb for long! He rose from the dead three days later and is alive forever! If Nicodemus and Joseph managed to spend on Jesus when He was dead, how much do we need to spend on and for a living savior? If Jesus appreciated the alabaster woman when she brought a very expensive perfume and poured it on Him, I am sure He appreciated Joseph and Nicodemus for the spending they underwent.

Today too it's expensive standing up for Jesus, but His true friends are willing to pay the price through God's grace. And they will never regret!

John 3:8

The wind blows wherever it pleases. You hear its sound, but you cannot tell where it comes from or where it is going. So it is with everyone born of the Spirit. When Salvation sets in, when Jesus finds way into the life of a sinner, you will hear the sound of that salvation, you see the effect of salvation, you will feel that salvation. You will see that person available for Jesus, you see that person giving and returning to Jesus. Nicodemus and Joseph are excellent examples of such people. And they never keep the stones in their bags.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 5

ISREAL RUNS A SURPLUS BUDGET

Key text; Exodus 36:5-7

5 and said to Moses, “The people bring much more than enough for doing the work that the Lord has commanded us to do.” **6** So Moses gave command, and word was proclaimed throughout the camp, “Let no man or woman do anything more for the contribution for the sanctuary.” So the people were restrained from bringing, **7** for the material they had was sufficient to do all the work, and more.

The whole story starts when God said “and let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them”. Exodus 25:8.

From time immemorial, God has always wanted to stay and work with His people (Israel). God blesses man so man can use the very blessings to do God’s will and mission. He ensures that every assignment He wants to accomplish, He does it with man. I wish we grasped God’s intention in doing so. God’s main intention was so He could dwell among them. Even today God wants His presence to be felt by His people through working with us. Remember you cannot work with God without spending, because God is spender. This is blessed spending! Blessed expenditure!

More often than not, we miss the fact that when God tells us to do something that necessitates spending or giving; His intention is to keep connected with us, actually dwelling with us. There is nothing that connects us with the creator like returning or using His blessings to us according to His instructions. It keeps us together with our creator and we remain heavenly focused.

Therefore, if He says return tithe and give offerings, build Him a sanctuary and spend on anything for His glory, it is prudent that we do it like He has commanded. It helps us to remain connected to the main source of blessings, who is God Himself.

After God commanded Moses to tell Israel to build Him a sanctuary, Moses called the entire Israel and broke the news to them all. God **Exodus 25:2**

Remember at this time Israel is in the desert, no one is employed, none has an income but God is still saying build me a sanctuary so I can dwell among you. People brought items as required by God. Did they build it? Yes! They gave what they had. Always God asks us to give only what we have.

Because every body participated in giving (Total Member Involvement), they brought for the work until the workers on the tabernacle took a report to Moses that what was brought was more than the budgeted amount for the work.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

They gave until there was surplus. Beloved, when is the Church of God going to get to this point of worship? The present Israel is instead in debts! Debts in Church have become commonplace today. Have we lost the spiritual mark?

Sincerely, If people with no income and in a desert managed to run a surplus budget, what about the present Israel made up of Ministers, Members of Parliament, high ranking business people, professionals, professors and lecturers, men and women with financial stature, People who live in remote controlled palaces. Investors with booming investments.

When is the Church going to run a surplus budget like the Church during Moses' time? What actually have gone wrong with us today?

During Moses' time people were refrained from bringing but today people are persuaded to give to the Lord. What a contrast! You have to have a motivational speaker to get things done. People's hearts are so glued to their material possessions today than Moses' time.

You may have realized that God asked them to give from their hearts. And God is asking the same thing today to the present Israel. Do not allow heads and pockets to give to the lord, use only hearts. Because only hearts understand and know God!

May be the reason we are still flat in giving to the Lord, running in deficits is because we are still using pockets and heads to give to the Lord. The day our hearts will begin giving according to God's instructions, we will run surplus budgets. No stones will remain in the bag. Remember only the heart can get stones from the bag!

During Moses' time, people gave out of the hearts everything including their skills and intelligence, because they too come from the lord. Exodus 36:2

Beloved can we ask the Lord to give us the heart He gave Israel of Moses' time? We need it so badly, especially at this time when the events of this world are closing. Only then shall we get a stone out of the bag and accomplish God's Mission, so His glory can be seen.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 6

DO LIKE WISE.

Luke 10:35-37

35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, ‘Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.’ 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?” 37 He said, “The one who showed him mercy.” Jesus said to him, “Go and do likewise.”

Various commentaries on the parable of the Good Samaritan as narrated by Jesus have been written and voiced out. But common to all is the exposition on the love issue. Love your neighbor as your love yourself. This is undoubtedly true. However, it can as well be observed that the same parable relays numerous other lessons including the one on spending. As a matter of fact it’s this very element that gives it the best concluding apex.

Vs. 33 But a Samaritan, as he traveled, came where the man was; and when he saw him, he took pity on him. **34** He went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine. Then he put the man on his own donkey, brought him to an inn and took care of him. The next day he took out two denarii and gave them to the innkeeper. ‘Take care of him, he said, ‘and on my return’ **“I will repay”** you for any additional expense.

The Samaritan had love and compassion extended to this victim of robbery but the effects of that love and compassion were clearly manifested in giving/ spending resources. He spent time, energy and money and used his donkey. We are blessed to save others. Unfortunately only Samaritans know that! I wish religious people grasped it as well. This is Stewardship at its peak! Beloved, is this not what spirituality means? “Love yields giving”.

I enjoy the instructions from the Samaritan to the innkeeper. He said ‘Look after him,’ ‘and when I return, **“I will repay”** you for any additional expense.

The Samaritan is willing to pay any Extra expense. How I wish we believers got to this Samaritan point of giving. At this point we can run surplus budgets in the Church. It’s just possible friends!

Love simply means giving and spending. That’s what heaven did exactly for your salvation. John 3:16.

Paul declared it “And I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; though the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved. 2 Corinthians 12:15

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Jesus climaxes the parable with a profound question to the lawyer. In the parable Jesus itemizes 3 people, the priest, Levite and the Samaritan. The two former did not care for the victim, only the Samaritan did.

36 and so Jesus asked which of these three do you think was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” **37** The expert in the law replied, “The one who had mercy on him.” Jesus told him, “**Go and do likewise.**” You cannot be good until you do good. “You cannot be faithful until you do faithfulness “ *William Bagambe.*

Beloved, Jesus is saying do like wise. Stewardship is doing good and it's being faithful and true to Jesus and what He expects of us.

When grace and Love of Jesus settles into us, all we will see is giving and spending for mission, because we cannot afford to stay like we are not saved! And His grace makes us do it gladly, because His love constrains us, 2 Corinthians 5:14.

The parable of the Good Samaritan is for you!

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

DAY 7

GIVE YOURSELF TO THE LORD FIRST.

2 Corinthians 8:1-5

We want you to know, brothers and sisters, about the grace of God that has been granted to the churches of Macedonia; **2** for during a severe ordeal of affliction, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity on their part. **3** For, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, **4** begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints— **5** and this, not merely as we expected; they gave themselves first to the Lord and, by the will of God, to us.

When you read these first 5 verses of 2 Corinthians 8, the first big spiritual point you will pick is that the members of the Church in Macedonia gave themselves first to the Lord. Beloved, for faithfulness to take root in any believer, this is always the first step. Give yourself to God first. In Stewardship matters, it's the Lord first the rest follow. Matt 6:33 But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.

If this spiritual sequence is followed, then giving for the Lord's cause becomes your way of life to the extent that if you don't give or not involved in the exercise of giving, you will feel those gaps of spiritual emptiness and hence cry for it like the Macedonians did. This is a very pivotal spiritual maturity spot that cements one's spiritual relationship with the Lord, which is a critical requirement for spiritual growth and strength.

Times without number we fail in our spiritual journeys and responsibilities because our spiritual endeavors to get to this point are quite less or they are not there at all.

The Macedonian generosity was possible because they gave themselves *first* to the Lord and only then to Paul (v. 5). Their preeminent concern was how best to serve Christ. It is here that they exceeded Paul's expectations. They gave out of their poverty because of the sincerity of their commitment to Christ as Lord. So great was their desire to serve Christ that they would not allow their economic situation to keep them from being involved in the Lord's work. This is why Paul describes the collection as a *service* (v. 4). It is not just a financial obligation. It is a ministry opportunity *to the saints* (v. 4)--those set apart to be God's possession.

Our generosity will only be possible when we give ourselves *first* to the Lord. When we do this, we cease to live by ourselves but the Lord will be in us and since He is the most generous, His generosity becomes our Generosity.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

When people get their spiritual levels high, by getting connected to the Lord first, they crave for giving. They always want to give for the cause of God. And should you dare leave them out of the giving opportunities, they will remind you and press on until they give. This was the case with the Church in Macedonia. Have you ever asked yourself a question, when is my Church getting to this spiritual height of connectedness to the Lord?

If it was possible with the Church in Macedonia, it is possible with us today; all we need is to give ourselves to the Lord first.

Paul says; **3** for, as I can testify, they voluntarily gave according to their means, and even beyond their means, **4** begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints.

People under the grace of Jesus are never poor! They are always rich in generosity. Paul testifies to this fact in the above scripture. Jesus becomes their generosity.

Do not plead for the poverty of members, after all when you receive Jesus into your life, His generosity becomes your generosity, so no one can say he or she is poor any more.

It should be noted that generosity is about giving voluntarily and according to the means available. God does not require anyone to use the blessings he or she does not possess. God anticipates that you use only those blessings He has extended to you and notably use them for His glory.

DAY 8

The Widow at Zarephath.

1 Kings 17:8-9

Then the word of the Lord came to him: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

The story stems from idol worshiping perpetuated and promoted by Ahab and Jezebel. As a matter of fact Ahab and Jezebel were not a good king and queen. Ahab did evil in the sight of the Lord above all that were before him. And they did much to lead the people of Israel away from the Lord to worship Baal the sun god, which was the favorite idol of the people of Zidon. The problem is that we are doing evil before than we do good before the Lord.

One day the Lord sent Elijah to Ahab, to tell him that there would be drought and famine in the land because the people were so evil. For three years and six months there would be no rain.

This was a terrible moment for Israel. The king, instead of pulling the nation to God, he pushed it towards idolatry. This is the worst a leader of God’s nation can do for his people! Israel got completely submerged into idol worship under the reign of Ahab.

“Anything done against the will of God is evil, because righteousness is doing right in the sight of God” William Bagambe.

- God says “Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house”. Malachi 3:10.
- Jesus says *but go, show yourself to the priest and offer the sacrifices* that Moses commanded for your cleansing, as a testimony to them.” Mark 1: 44
- Jesus says “You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things”. Mathew: 23:23 (New Living Translation).
- The word of the Lord says “No one should appear before the Lord empty-handed: Deuteronomy 16:16
- The Bible says, “Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything you produce”. Proverbs 3:10 (New Living Translation).

These texts and many more emphasize giving to the Lord. Brothers and sisters its time for all of us to tithe and give offerings and honor the Lord with the wealth and the best part of our produce. That is the will of God. If we do not do the will of God, whatever else we are doing is Idolatry and therefore evil !

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

Do not forget, when Israel did evil before the Lord, He shut the sky; there was no rain for three and half years. What the Lord did then, I am sure He can do it again!

Please do not miss this fact that it's God who opens your skies for blessings in your pockets and bank accounts, it is Him who opens your skies for farms to produce, and it is Him who opens for you to get jobs and employments. There is no blessing that comes your way, which is not sanctioned by HIM. “Praise God from whom all blessings flow”

But if you do evil before Him, God can shut those skies and no more blessings will flow your way. And I can assure you it will be very dry in your pockets, banks Accounts and firms and there will be famine in your house and entire life. Remember we are dealing with the same God of Israel! Drought will soon hit you if you do not listen this time!

God always sends a prophet whenever evil is done. Actually the message you reading is from a prophet warning you to do the will of God in the area of Returning and Giving before a drought comes by.

God sent Elijah to announce a calamity.

“Now Elijah the Tishbite, from Tishbe in Gilead, said to Ahab, “As the Lord, the God of Israel, lives, whom I serve, there will be neither dew nor rain in the next few years except at my word.” 1 Kings 17: 1. It was a hard message to deliver or receive. When the Lord sends you, say or write it like it is.

And surely it did not reign for three and half years. Because it was by God's power that Elijah Spoke. Beloved if we continue doing evil in the sight of God, it will soon stop raining in our coffers. This is for sure. Because we have done a lot of evil with the blessings God extends to us. There is nothing left for His glory.

After he delivered the message, Elijah left. Ahab looked for Elijah but God hide. What a privilege if God can hide you! God had a plan for Elijah. He hid him at Cherith and provided him with food and water by the raven. God is able! He can do it for you in any circumstance! He is never limited by anything! He is GOD!

For three and half years, it did not rain. There was severe drought, famine and many other things that go with drought and lack of rain.

All streams and wells dried up including Cherith the brook that God had kept for Elijah. Life was literary at a stand still.

In such severe lack, *the word of the Lord came to Elijah: “Go at once to Zarephath in the region of Sidon and stay there. I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”*

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

There are times when all brooks dry. Even the one God provides you from. **But it is never dry with God!** One preacher said, “When God shuts the door, He opens a window” Cherith has dried up yes, but God had kept resources in the house of the widow in Zerephath. It was still drizzling in the house of the widow. With God, it never dries up everywhere! In some houses God is still raining many blessings including your house. Check your house brother, check your house sister! Check your pockets, bank accounts and firms, the blessings from God are still flowing. Those are the stones God wants you to pull from those bugs.

God told Elijah” I have directed a widow there to supply you with food.”

One point to note here with God. When God blesses us, He directs us on how to use the blessings. That’s why it’s critical that we listen to His voice. If He directs that we return tithe so there is food in the house, that’s it. Listen to Him before you do anything. Return His tithe before you spend the money on any other item, including leisure and self-gratification.

10 So Elijah went to Zarephath. When he came to the town gate, a widow was there gathering sticks. He called to her and asked, “Would you bring me a little water in a jar so I may have a drink?”

11 As she was going to get it, he called, “And bring me, please, a piece of bread.”

12 “As surely as the Lord your God lives,” she replied, “I don’t have any bread—only a handful of flour in a jar and a little olive oil in a jug. I am gathering a few sticks to take home and make a meal for myself and my son, that we may eat it—and die.”

13 Elijah said to her “Don’t be afraid. Go home and do as you have said. But first make a small loaf of bread for me from what you have and bring it to me, and then make something for yourself and your son. **14** For this is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: ‘The jar of flour will not be used up and the jug of oil will not run dry until the day the Lord sends rain on the land.

Beloved, Stewardship is about God first and then you and your relatives. This is what Elijah was telling the widow.

God told Elijah “I have directed the widow” but apparently the widow does not seem to be aware that she is supposed to operate under God’s instructions and directions to give food to Elijah. She is giving excuses. Until Elijah insisted relentlessly did she do right.

Don’t we behave the same way? We keep excusing ourselves, we have little, and it is not enough for us. There are no such terminologies like it’s little or it’s not enough with God. Whatever you have is enough for God’s mission, if you give it out according to God’s instructions and love. Just listen to His voice and act accordingly. Remember God is fully aware of what you have and how much you have, because it comes from Him before it gets to you. So when He says give or return, He knows how much you are expected to give. You only do evil if you do not give or return according to His expectations/will.

“ALL FOR HIS GLORY”

15 *She went away and did as Elijah had told her. So there was food every day for Elijah and for the woman and her family.*

16 *For the jar of flour was not used up and the jug of oil did not run dry, in keeping with the word of the Lord spoken by Elijah.*

Vs. 15 is very amazing beloved. It says, she did as Elijah had told her. In other words she listened to the divine voice, instructions and directions and obeyed.

We will never be faithful stewards until we learn to obey God's instructions. Stewardship is about obedience please.

After she obeyed and gave, the jar of flour that she expected to get used up did not and the jug of oil she was expecting to dry up did not. Once you obey the divine, your jars and jugs will never run empty! Amen.

Instead of two people eating and dying that same day, after giving, there was food for three people every day. That's what God can do friends! He knows what to do with what we have, if we can only allow Him to work with it. He can increase and multiply it!

“Giving does not make anyone poor, it adds more to the existing resources instead”.

William Bagambe. Learn this from the widow of Zerephath.

“It's not giving that makes you poor, it is your spiritual poverty that makes you not give”.

William Bagambe

This act of obedience of this widow was quite remarkable. Imagine it was done during the time of Elijah but Jesus still echoes it in His time in Nazareth. This is what Jesus said,

“I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon”. Luke 4:25-26,

This means Jesus was aware of what the widow did, even though it was numerous years later.

Are you sure Jesus is aware of your obedience, is He aware of your giving and returning?

He ought to know!

Will you get the stones from the bags please!

GOD KEEP YOU IN THE LOVING PALMS OF HIS HANDS

Amen.