

76 - Test Me in This – 10-11-2011

We're going to take a side road tonight, off the path along our study in Galatians, and into an instruction that the Lord has directed me to present. It's an uncomfortable lesson for me to deliver, as you'll discover. So much so, in fact, that I asked Barbara to join me and give her perspective and whatever word the Lord might have her share.

Barbara, would you bring us into the presence of the Lord tonight?

Allow me first, to give you some background:

Last week, the Lord gave me a word to deliver to a dear Brother in Christ. It was a simple word, but it concerned money; something the Lord knows I hate getting into with anyone. This was the word:

The Lord says, "Place a value on what you have received," meaning what he has received over many months from Barbara and me.

Even then, I did not understand the importance of that word, but within minutes of obeying the revelation God had given me and delivering His word for my Brother, the Lord miraculously restored access to an email account, which had been hacked and used in an attempted fraud in which hundreds of emails were sent from my address to me entire list of contacts, many of which I've had since establishing the account in 2006, and prior to which I never had a single problem. Three solid days had already been occupied with attempting to stop the fraud and recover the account...all of which proved unsuccessful, until immediately AFTER I took the only step the Lord had directed.

A few days later, I was required to make another call to someone in the body of Christ, for whom Barbara and I are accountable to God as shepherds, guides, mentors. if you will, as we are to our Brother whose story I just related. The word of the Lord was a direct reminder that disaster loomed because of an unfulfilled vow and God—in His most loving manner that Barbara and I have ever seen toward anyone—wanted this person to avoid going down a completely unnecessary and painful path.

Both messages concerned money. Both were opportunities presented to the individuals, members of the Body of Christ, who have hearts for God and have openly expressed their desire to hear anything and everything He has for them to live their lives in a manner most pleasing to Him. Both words were revealed to prevent potential disaster, remove a curse on finances and lives, and give the individuals revelation from the Lord, awaiting the necessary steps of obedience, and which were met with almost immediate confirmation and will be followed, if they have not already been, by blessing.

What only two people on Earth know is that for days preceding the second phone call I was required to make, I began developing a sty on my right eyelid. Somewhat painful and weepy, it progressed until the day after the second phone call, during which the Lord made it clear that He was requiring me to address this very subject in this “Light Up The Scriptures” forum. Over that day, the condition improved markedly and has progressively improved today as I prepared this study.

Why was my right eye affected? God knows this is a subject I want nothing to do with, especially in any way that would call attention to Barbara or me. Anyone who has ever accused us of being after money knows nothing about our lives that are poured out for people on God’s behalf. God has even judged some of those individuals severely – that’s nothing to do with us – these things don’t affect our lives at all. God has and will continue fill our **“every need in accord with His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”** (Philippians 4:19)

As you may know, Barbara and I work for God—literally. We go where He sends, say what He says, and the Lord goes before us to prepare hearts and minds, and follows up with signs and wonders, just like when Jesus sent out the 12 in Mark 16. Our Father in heaven also fills our **“every need in accord with His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”** (Philippians 4:19). We don’t ask anyone for anything, including money. We trust God. God has established a guiding principle for our lives: we look only to Him for everything, and I do mean everything. Our next meal depends on His faithfulness. Everything we have is God’s and He has been faithful to provide everything we need every day. Barbara has lived this way for over 20 years. It’s only been 3 for me.

Because of the position God has placed Barbara and me in, as stewards and, dare I say, Apostles and prophets for Him in the Body of Christ, what people do to us—how they treat us—is what they’re doing and how they’re treating the Lord! We are, whether we like it or not, **“the least of these”** that Jesus talked about in Matthew.

Matthew 25:40 and 45

40 'Verily, I am saying to you, In as much as you do it to one of these, the least of My brethren, you do it to Me.'

45 In as much as you do it not to one of these, the least, neither do you it to Me.'

This study tonight is a gift from God, our Father and the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is on His behalf to the Body of Christ, the “complement,” Paul says in Ephesians 1, 3, and 4—that which completes. I’m just the mouthpiece; one charged—“constrained” is the word Paul used—with the tasks of revealing God’s heart in the area.

An interesting side note: my right eye started watering more than it had been all day as I wrote this last section. God knows that neither Barbara nor I want to call any attention to us, but that the only one visible to anyone is Jesus Christ, The Lord of Glory, and The Father, who called us and positioned us, by his sovereign will, for such a time as this.

I pray, on behalf of the Father, and of the Lord Jesus Christ, that you may receive His instruction tonight...not mine. If you feel offended by anything you hear tonight, you'll have to take it up with Him. Barbara and I just want to go to sleep tonight, in His presence, knowing that, as far as we are aware, we did what He gave us to do today. And we'll either wake up in His presence literally, or we'll open our eyes tomorrow and knows there's more to do.

OK, that's the background to set the context for where we are in the word fo God tonight.

There is nothing touchier than the subject of money, when it comes to the Body of Christ. Almost any other subject – even sex – is easier to deal with than money. Somehow, it strikes us at perhaps the place where we are most vulnerable to attack, distortion—indeed, stratagems of the adversary—as well as within our own minds because of our training, our conditioning, and our upbringing, in this area.

And yet, it is here that God offered to show up in the lives of His people. He invited them to do something that appears only one place in the scriptures:

Malachi 3:10

“Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty

In four words, God put Israel on notice—and I believe He is doing it again today with the Body of Christ—that if we can hear Him about money, we can hear Him about anything; but if we won't—not can't, WON'T—hear Him about money, we won't hear Him about anything.

The Body of Christ has been beaten up with Malachi 3—and we're going to read it shortly, and put it into a righteous perspective, with the aid of the Holy Spirit. I've heard preachers misuse Malachi 3 as a bludgeon to extort money from the ecclesia of God.

In Dallas, Texas, I saw a pastor, who looked like something out of GQ magazine, with a Hollywood publicity-style, poster-sized picture at the entrance to sanctuary where you would hope to worship the Lord. Instead, I witnessed Him speak to an audience of thousands like animals trained to perform. His guest, over several days of meetings just

like this one, was an internationally known “Prophet.” After a Las Vegas-style music performance by the worship team, the pastor let everyone know that we would all have opportunities that evening to, as he said, “be blessed.” That turned out to be code for, “we’re going to take several offerings, and this is only the first.” He proceeded to call for the first offering, encouraging the audience to give generously—and this is a direct quote that is seared into my memory: “As you have been trained.”

You can imagine my horror. At no time, during the 2-hour service, was the presence of the Holy Spirit invited. God was left standing outside...until the very end, when the big-name prophet ended his message by praying, asking God to be with us. “Finally,” I thought, “someone is inviting God to be a part of this. It’s about time!” The horror show wasn’t over, however, because the prophet, now playing something on the piano like a night club act, invited the pastor back to the stage to finish off the crowd with another offering for HIM—the prophet!

So, if you have been in a church where Malachi 3 was used as a “shakedown” tactic, that was not, and has never been, God’s intent.

Money is so personal. Growing up, I was learned never to discuss earnings with anyone. Money was treated like a sealed, private matter, and only between spouses was income and expenses known (including tithes to the church).

And yet, God established a statute, in the law of Moses, requiring a tithe—a tenth—of everything the land produced, both crops and livestock.

Leviticus 27:30, 32

³⁰ “A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD.

³² Every tithe of the herd and flock—every tenth animal that passes under the shepherd’s rod—will be holy to the LORD.

Even before the Law was handed down, Abram honored Melchizedek with a tenth of everything he had won after defeating an alliance of Kings . . .

Genesis 14:

¹⁷ After Abram returned from defeating Kedorlaomer and the kings allied with him, the king of Sodom came out to meet him in the Valley of Shaveh (that is, the King’s Valley).

¹⁸ Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine. He was priest of God Most High, ¹⁹ and he blessed Abram, saying,

“Blessed be Abram by God Most High,
Creator of heaven and earth.

²⁰ And praise be to God Most High,
who delivered your enemies into your hand.”
Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything.

Last week, we saw how, because of Israel’s unbelief and our faith in Jesus Christ as God’s son, who came, died, was raised from the dead, and ascended to the right hand of the Father in heaven, we have become the true seed of Abraham, the father of faith, who **“believed God and it was reckoned to him for righteousness”** (Romans 4:3).

Let’s look at Malachi 3, without the stigma of religion. Let’s look into God’s heart for His people and see what we can learn from the vital principle of tithe and offering today.

Malachi 3

¹ “I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come,” says the LORD Almighty.

We’re dealing here with “the Day of The Lord,” that Paul so often talks about. How do we know? Read on...

² But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner’s fire or a launderer’s soap. ³ He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the LORD will have men **who will bring offerings in righteousness**, ⁴ and the offerings of Judah and Jerusalem will be acceptable to the LORD, as in days gone by, as in former years.

These offerings will be brought IN RIGHTEOUSNESS – not grudgingly, not in response to some kind of demand, cloaked in a smarmy appeal with a slick serpent’s tongue; not even in response to a commandment, but voluntarily, joyfully, even jubilantly, as an act of worship and gratitude to God.

Withholding Tithes is actually breaking covenant with God!

Covenant means, “a disposition, arrangement, of any sort, which one wishes to be valid; a compact, a testament.” Thayer

⁶ “I the LORD do not change. So you, the descendants of Jacob, are not destroyed. ⁷ Ever since the time of your ancestors you have turned away from my decrees and have not kept them. Return to me, and I will return to you,” says the LORD Almighty.

“But you ask, ‘How are we to return?’

⁸ “Will a mere mortal rob God? Yet you rob me.

“But you ask, ‘How are we robbing you?’

“In tithes and offerings. ⁹ You are under a curse—your whole nation—because you are robbing me. ¹⁰ Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, that there may be food in my house.

I need to stop right here for a moment. Here’s where preachers err in their interpretation of this scripture. “The storehouse,” into which The Lord directs tithes to be brought, is not the church. It *WAS* the temple – in Jerusalem – in which whole rooms were kept to store the tithes and offerings (thank offerings, fellowship offerings, free will offerings, in addition to the tithes).

So, if it’s not the Temple today – and certainly not the church, as is so often preached in order to support a building that Jesus, Paul, Peter, John, James – no one – built or ordered to be built. What is, or where is “the storehouse” where we can bring our own tithes and offerings? I’ll answer the question with another one: where was Israel fed spiritually, throughout its history? Who fed the children of Israel—who served them—spiritually throughout their history? So, today, I believe the Lord is saying, bring your tithes and offerings into “the storehouse” – into the lives of those who are entrusted with your spiritual food and stewardship, no matter where they are located or whether they occupy a church building or not.

Now, here comes the unprecedented invitation from God:

¹⁰ “Test me in this,” says the LORD Almighty, “and see if I will not throw open the floodgates of heaven and pour out so much blessing that there will not be room enough to store it. ¹¹ I will prevent pests from devouring your crops, and the vines in your fields will not drop their fruit before it is ripe,” says the LORD Almighty. ¹² “Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land,” says the LORD Almighty.

As I said in the beginning, there is no other scripture where the Lord says, “Test me.” Quite the opposite! Testing Him earned the Israelites a 40-year lap around the desert, where the entire generation died whom He had brought out of Egypt with signs and wonders everywhere daily!

¹³ “You have spoken arrogantly against me,” says the LORD. “Yet you ask, ‘What have we said against you?’ ¹⁴ “You have said, ‘It is futile to serve God. What do we gain by carrying out his requirements and going about like mourners before the LORD Almighty?’ ¹⁵ But now we call the arrogant blessed.

Certainly evildoers prosper, and even when they put God to the test, they get away with it.”

Someone once asked me, “Why do people, who don’t even know the Lord, seem to prosper, while I struggle?”

The answer is another question, “What does that have to do with you? What is God telling You to do? Are you doing it, in every area of your life? Are you seeking Him first? Are you trusting Him only? Be honest now and search your heart. Ask God what is keeping “the blessing of the Lord that brings wealth without painful toil for it,” away from you?

Haggai 1:5-7

Now this is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways. ⁶ You have planted much, but harvested little. You eat, but never have enough. You drink, but never have your fill. You put on clothes, but are not warm. You earn wages, only to put them in a purse with holes in it.”

⁷ This is what the LORD Almighty says: “Give careful thought to your ways.

Malachi 3

¹⁶ Then those who feared the LORD talked with each other, **I believe that’s what we’re doing right now. It is certainly what went on during the two phone conversations I referred to earlier.** and the LORD listened and heard. A scroll of remembrance was written in his presence concerning those who feared the LORD and honored his name. **Thank you, Lord!**

These last 2 verses tell the outcome of obedience:

¹⁷ “On the day when I act,” says the LORD Almighty, “they will be my treasured possession. **I will spare them, just as a father has compassion and spares his son who serves him.** ¹⁸ **And you will again see the distinction between the righteous and the wicked, between those who serve God and those who do not.**

Read that last part again...

The Body of Christ seriously needs this word today...

If we can’t hear God about money, it is questionable whether we can hear Him about anything! I we can hear God about money, we can hear Him about anything.

- Revelation – Obedience – Confirmation – Blessing
- Revelation – Conviction – Repentance – Forgiveness – Correction

- Revelation – stubbornness = rebellion = disobedience - judgment

Barbara says so often, Heaven's view is so different:

Mark 12:

41 And Jesus, being seated facing the treasury, beheld how the throng is casting the coppers into the treasury. And many rich cast in much.

42 And one woman, a poor widow, coming, cast in two mites, which is a quadrans.

43 And, calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, "Verily, I am saying to you that this poor widow casts in **more than all** who are casting into the treasury.

44 For all cast out of their superfluity, yet she, out of her want, cast in all, as much as she had -- her whole livelihood."

Do you think Jesus sat facing the treasury by accident? He did nothing accidentally. He was nowhere coincidentally. Jesus was watching, examining the hearts of all – He is still watching today...right now.

No one knows, except the Lord and the Father, what goes on behind the scenes here as we intercede on behalf of those God places in our care. Lots of energy is expended here that is strictly between us and God on behalf of the Body of Christ, among whose members we are and whose members – some very specific ones – we serve, watch over; into whose lives we are accountable to speak the truth, as unto the Lord. The Lord is pouring out our lives – investing them in many of you, 24-7, and we carry you in our hearts.

Jesus is seated facing

Whatever it is and whatever you do with it and us.

If God can't use you for His purposes and will, it really doesn't matter if you're sick or well, rich or poor. He protects what belongs to Him.

Check your heart?

Matthew 6:23-25

23 Yet if your eye should be wicked, your whole body will be dark. If, then, the light that is in you is darkness, how dense is the darkness!

24 "Now **no one can be slaving for two lords**, for either he will be hating the one and loving the other, or will be upholding one and despising the other. You can not be slaving for God and mammon. **(The personification and deification of wealth)**

25 "Therefore I am saying to you, Do not worry about your soul, what you may be eating, or what you may be drinking, nor yet about your body, what you

should be putting on. Is not the soul more than nourishment, and the body than apparel?

26 "Look at the flying creatures of heaven, that they are not sowing, neither are they reaping, nor are they gathering into barns, and your heavenly Father is nourishing them. **Are not you of more consequence than they?**

Whose kingdom have you built? Whose kingdom are you building? God's or yours? How many and how large must you build your barns?

Luke 12:

15 Now He said to them, "See and guard against all greed, for one's life is not in the superfluity of his possessions."

16 Now He told them a parable, saying, "The country place of a certain rich man bears well.

17 And he reasoned in himself, saying, 'What shall I be doing, seeing that I have no where to gather my fruits?'

18 And he said, 'This will I be doing: I will pull down my barns, and greater ones will I build, and I will gather there all my grain and my good things.

19 And I will be declaring to my soul, "Soul, many good things have you laid up for many years. Rest, eat, drink, make merry."

20 "Yet God said to him, 'Imprudent one! **without reason, senseless, foolish, stupid, without reflection or intelligence, acting rashly**

In this night your soul are they demanding from you. Now, what you make ready, whose will it be?'

21 Thus is he who is hoarding for himself and is not rich for God."

22 Now He said to His disciples, "Therefore I am saying to you, Do not worry about the soul, what you may be eating, nor yet about your body, what you should be putting on,

23 for the soul is more than nourishment and the body than apparel.

His purpose or yours?

His money or yours?

What have you done with what He's given you?

With all liberality

Legal and hassels ... sick care or for God and divine health

First need is first claim.

The economy of heaven

Many parts of the body

Seek first the kingdom of God and ALL these things will be added to you.

Are you asking God what He wants to do with everything?

Dead Sea is dead because it takes in but doesn't give out.

Fat babies?

We freely gave, what value do you put on that?

Pay for care, honor ministry

Familiar spirit - family

God won't let us go to NEW England

Blessing or curse?

As you give you will receive

Body of Christ to whom we have been required to minister

501c3 God will not let us be accountable for what you are doing.

1 Corinthians 9:11 (New American Standard Bible)

11 If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you?

You pay for care, you support God's purposes, wherever they're found.

2 Corinthians 9:6-15 (New American Standard Bible)

6 Now this I say, he who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.

7 Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver.

8 And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed;

9 as it is written,

"HE SCATTERED ABROAD, HE GAVE TO THE POOR,
HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS ENDURES FOREVER."

10 Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness;

11 you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through us is producing thanksgiving to God.

12 For the ministry of this service is not only fully supplying the needs of the saints, but is also overflowing through many thanksgivings to God.

13Because of the proof given by this ministry, they will glorify God for your obedience to your confession of the gospel of Christ and for the liberality of your contribution to them and to all,

14while they also, by prayer on your behalf, yearn for you because of the surpassing grace of God in you.

15Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!

Romans 12:1-9 - Dedicated Service

1Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship.

2And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.

3For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.

4For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function,

5so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another.

6Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, each of us is to exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith;

7if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching;

8or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

9Let love be without hypocrisy Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good.

Widow's mite

New American Standard Bible (NASB)

5 Now therefore, thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways! 6 You have sown much, but harvest little; you eat, but there is not enough to be satisfied; you drink, but there is not enough to become drunk; you put on clothing, but no one is warm enough; and he who earns, earns wages to put into a purse with holes."

7 Thus says the LORD of hosts, "Consider your ways!

Ministry and teaching

Giving and respect

Give the Lord's teaching, a book full of wonderful teaching

We were not there as your friends, but as ministers for God. Ministers who minister for God and they are to be respected. Held in high regard,

Sometimes, you don't know it's too late, until it is.

If you don't respect and honor the spiritual gift, then at least pay for the care you receive. Don't they all get paid for what they do?

1 Timothy 5:17-19 (NASB) - Concerning Elders

17 The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages." 19 Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

1 Tim 6:17-21:

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 18 Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, 19 storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed.

20 O Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you, avoiding worldly and empty chatter and the opposing arguments of what is falsely called "knowledge"— 21 which some have professed and thus gone astray from the faith.

Grace be with you.

..When you can hear Him about \$, you can hear Him about **anything!** And, If you can't hear Him about \$, doubt that His voice would be coming through on the lower things! Well done and thank you for your hearts.

May He richly bless, anoint and ordain the works of your hands!

The Widow's Mite was a mighty big thing to God and so was your obedience.

Mark 12:

⁴¹ And He sat down opposite the treasury, and *began* observing how the people were putting money into the treasury; and many rich people were putting in large sums. ⁴² A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which amount to a cent. ⁴³ Calling His disciples to Him, He said to them, “Truly I say to you, this poor widow put in more than all the contributors to the treasury; ⁴⁴for they all put in out of their surplus, but she, out of her poverty, put in all she owned, all she had to live on.”

Matthew 6:23-25

²³ But if your eye is bad, your whole body will be full of darkness. If then the light that is in you is darkness, how great is the darkness!

²⁴ **“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth.**

²⁵ “For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, *as to* what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, *as to* what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing?”