

Unless otherwise stated, all scripture quotations are from the World English Bible (WEB). All emphasis are mine.

Copy right © 2018 by Feikoab Parimah.

All rights reserved. No part of this work should be reproduced in any form, for the purpose of merchandise. However, parts of this work can be reproduced without prior permission of the author, and source duly credited as spiritual and academic honesty demands. If reason(s) are contrary to this, then approval should be sought from the author before any action is taken. Piracy is theft and it attracts eternal consequences even if one escapes the grips of the law. For this reason, all concerned should take note.

Publisher:

Living Scroll Publications
P. O. Box WY 423, Kwabenya, Accra-Ghana

Design by: Akrofi Sanakey & James Attiogbe

Typeset: Adelaide Adzimah & Fredrick S. A. Midodzi

Contact the author via: feikoabparimah@gmail.com

2

DEDICATION

To Chief Jacob K. Parimah, a selfless man.

CONTENT

INTRODUCTION	5
Chapter 1 - Covetousness	7
Chapter 2 - The Mystery of Vessels	21
Chapter 3 - Marks of False Preachers I	29
Chapter 4 - Marks of False Preachers II	33
Chapter 5 - The Balaam Syndrome	41
Chapter 6 - Unbrokenness	51
Chapter 7 - The Third Steward	56
A call to be faithful	64
ARE YOU PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S	
SECOND COMING?	67
OTHER TITLES	70

INTRODUCTION

This piece is written for the contemplation of these: Children of God in general, preachers of the gospel who have already sold the truth for "thirty pieces of silver", and young preachers wanting to proclaim the truth. To the children of God because they have to guard themselves against the sin of covetousness, to preachers because they have to repent of the sin of covetousness if they have been found culpable, and to young preachers so they will not follow in the steps of Judas Iscariot.

In this book. I will endeavor to touch on one of the modern day believer: common sins of the covetousness. The book seeks to bring to light the fact that at every level of betrayal of the course of Christ is the embedded sin of covetousness. Although it is one of the sins that can easily ensnare the preacher, and believers in general, it is nevertheless one which many have not been cautious of. In effect they have fallen prey to it. It was the love of money in the life of Judas which crushed his love for Christ such that he eventually betrayed Him for "thirty pieces of silver".

Gleanings from scripture reveals that before a man will betray the truth, there is normally a lingering disposition in such a man which causes him to do so. Christ through His apostles forewarned that in the last days, men will heap for themselves teachers who will preach to them what they want to hear. Moreover, the apostle projected that such men will make merchandise of many. Surely, the one who makes merchandise of others in the house of God will sacrifice the truth for sordid gain. People normally fall prey to the schemes of such men because the idols in their heart are the same idols hidden in the heart of such preachers.

It was covetousness that spelt the doom of Balaam. The discerning believer will notice that it is the same Balaam syndrome that has affected most modern day preachers of the gospel. Balaam sought riches, honour and fame, which made him turn his back on the truth. If he had been broken, he would not have sacrificed the honour of God for the honour of men. It is therefore important that we also guard our hearts against greed which slays the truth in our hearts. If we don't, then we will also follow in the steps of Judas and betray the truth for "thirty pieces of silver'.

Chapter 1

Covetousness

In this chapter, I will endeavour to throw light on the devastating sting of the bosom sin of many believers today: *Covetousness*. I will further link my thoughts with the life of Judas Iscariot, who betrayed our Lord Jesus for just thirty pieces of silver. Although covetousness is one of the sins that most believers indulge in, it is probably one greatly unnoticed by a large section of believers. Blatantly, scripture calls it idolatry.

In connection with a man who came to Jesus demanding that He becomes an arbiter in the claiming of some property, Jesus cautioned that:

"... Beware! Keep yourselves from covetousness, for a man's life doesn't consist of the abundance of the things which he possesses" Luke 12:15.

In this scripture, Jesus was pointing out to this man that he should be wary of the sin of covetousness. This is personified in an insatiable desire for gain. There is normally the temptation that, the more we amass, the better our lives will become. On the contrary, Solomon revealed that;

"He who loves silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he who loves abundance, with increase: this also is vanity" Ecclesiastes 5:10

Considering Colossians 3:5, the sin of covetousness is equated to idolatry. Those who serve money are idolaters. I mean those who cannot do without it, and cling onto it even in the face of death. A simple scenario is the man who refuses to give his money to armed robbers who attack him. In the process of resisting, he is killed, and they still abscond with his money. Do not be subservient to mundane things. Someone once said that, "Civilization is the multiplication of unnecessary necessities". Moreover, Henry Thoreau has stated

elsewhere that a man's level of wealth is directly proportional to the amount of things he can do without. To me, such statements should slay man's morbid desire for sordid gain. People who use others for their own ends, not valuing their human dignity are captured in the jaws of covetousness. Would it not be good to agree with Paul that;

"... those who are determined to be rich fall into a temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful lusts, such as drown men in ruin and destruction" 1 Tim 6:9

Scripture talks about seeking first the Kingdom of God, and then the things we crave for will become a mere consequence of our obedience (Matthew 6:33). Paul advised Timothy to pursue godliness, faith, love, etc. I wonder how our Christian lives will turn out if the same passion with which we pursue earthly gain are redirected into pursuing these afore-mentioned virtues. Moving on, Mathew 13:23 gives a clear diagnosis as to why some believers or people are unproductive in their spiritual walk with the Lord. Riches has in it some form of deception. It is deceptive to think that the more I make gain, the happier my life will become. You will be

surprised to learn that a number of people who have what you may crave for are not really happy people. The motive for the pursuance of wealth should be for the advancement of the gospel and invariably the good of mankind. It is only within these parameters that we can be truly liberated from the love of money. If you love people more than structures, then you are free from the bondage of *covetousness*. However, those who value things more than humankind are covetous. Through covetousness, Judas Iscariot betrayed our Lord Jesus for thirty pieces of silver;

"... Then one of the twelve, who was called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests, and said, "What are you willing to give me, that I should deliver him to you?" They weighed out for him thirty pieces of silver. From that time he sought opportunity to betray him" Mathew 26: 1-16.

How could a man sell his master for thirty pieces of silver? Judas' scenario is not different from that of so many people in our age. Some, for the love of money have betrayed their own soul and ultimately the Lord himself. It is clear from scripture that from the time he made the demonic transaction with the Pharisees, the chief priest and elders, he sought an opportunity to betray Him. Thus, a covenant with the enemy is a manifest token that one has decided to be economical with the truth. Truth, in Judas' case was certainly sacrificed on the altar of covetousness. If you open scripture, and all you are seeking for is verses that will help you gain or preach "prosperity", then I submit to you that you have betrayed our master and Lord Jesus Christ. In this generation, all that so many unregenerate preachers see when they open the Bible is money, which they call the prosperity gospel. The prosperity gospel is a gospel of greed and prodigality. We will continue to trumpet this truth and expose such deception in the house of God to the honour of our master Jesus Christ.

Some of us take this posture because such preaching advances prodigality and not faithfulness and true spiritual stewardship. Does God prosper His people? Yes, but not through the so-called prosperity gospel. Just being diligent in one's pursuits can make the person wealthy, as in line with the principles of life set by God. If all that the gospel can achieve for us is financial empowerment, then there is no need preaching that kind of gospel to those in oil rich

countries. They do not preach prosperity, but yet they are rich. Therefore the prosperity gospel is a total deviation. Never be deceived when an "apostle", or "prophet" or "man of God" preaches the prosperity gospel. It is not new, Judas founded that ministry. Judas is their general overseer. They are mere imposters masquerading as the original proponents of it. The deception is in deliberately stopping at "I am called" but not transcending and getting positioned among the "few that are chosen". The apostles of old have made us to understand that wolves often spring forth from among the church. They might have been with us, but now they are not one with us. In the process of time, the distinction is always made between the true servants of our Lord and the "brothers of Judas". In the days of Nathan, there was a Levite who visited Micah and was employed as his priest:

"There was a man of the hill country of Ephraim, whose name was Micah. He said to his mother, The eleven hundred pieces of silver that were taken from you, about which you did utter a curse, and did also speak it in my ears, behold, the silver is with me; I took it. His mother said, Blessed be my son of Yahweh. He restored the eleven hundred pieces of

silver to his mother; and his mother said, I most assuredly dedicate the silver to Yahweh from my hand for my son, to make an engraved image and a molten image: now therefore I will restore it to you. When he restored the money to his mother, his mother took two hundred pieces of silver, and gave them to the founder, who made of it an engraved image and a molten image: and it was in the house of Micah. The man Micah had a house of gods, and he made an ephod, and teraphim, and consecrated one of his sons, who became his priest. In those days there was no king in Israel: every man did that which was right in his own eyes. There was a young man out of Bethlehem Judah, of the family of Judah, who was a Levite; and he sojourned there. The man departed out of the city, out of Bethlehem Judah, to sojourn where he could find a place, and he came to the hill country of Ephraim to the house of Micah, as he travelled. Micah said to him, Whence come you? He said to him, I am a Levite of Bethlehem Judah, and 9 go to sojourn where 9 may find a place. Micah said to him, Dwell with me, and be to me a father and a priest, and I will give you ten pieces of silver by the year, and a suit of clothing, and your food. So the Levite went in. The Levite was content to dwell with

the man; and the young man was to him as one of his sons. Micah consecrated the Levite, and the young man became his priest, and was in the house of Micah. Then said Micah, Now know I that Yahweh will do me good, seeing I have a Levite to my priest" Judges 17.

His pay check was 10 shekels at the end of the year together with other fringe benefits: Suit and some food. These category of priests have always been around. A would-be man of God should ponder over what Jesus said, that "You cannot love both God and Mammon". An attempt to do so will amount to spiritual suicidality, a direct attempt at overthrowing the authority of scripture. The Saviour's prescription is, you either love God or money as there is no middle ground. Although this does not suggest that you will not get wealth when you love God, it however reveals your attitude towards wealth and how you appropriate it. Nevertheless, loving God does not necessarily guarantee that you will be wealthy in this world's goods. I think this position is clear in scripture, with history attesting to this truth.

Scripture (i.e., Zech 11:12-16) throws more light on the issue of covetousness especially among preachers;

"I said to them, "If you think it best, give me my wages; and if not, keep them." So they weighed for my wages thirty pieces of silver. Yahweh said to me, "Throw it to the potter, the handsome price that I was valued at by them!" I took the thirty pieces of silver, and threw them to the potter, in the house of Yahweh. Then I cut apart my other staff, even Union, that I might break the brotherhood between Judah and I srael. Yahweh said to me, "Take for yourself yet again the equipment of a foolish shepherd. For, behold, I will raise up a shepherd in the land, who will not visit those who are cut off, neither will seek those who are scattered, nor heal that which is broken, nor feed that which is sound; but he will eat the flesh of the fat sheep, and will tear their hoofs in pieces"

From the verse 4, you will realise that he started talking about staves he had in his hand. One was the staff of favour or beauty and the other was the staff of bands. Further, it is observed that the prophet broke the first one which was the rod or staff of favour. From this, we gather that, immediately you begin to weigh, transact, and sell your saviour for "thirty pieces of silver", what happens is that you lose the favour of God upon your life. Moreover, you lose the beauty, glory and grace of

the living God.

Additionally, the scripture gives us the picture of the foolish shepherd. A thorough study reveals those who live immorally, the false prophet, false teachers, etc., showing us how their ministries look like. Per the scripture they will not care for the "sick", thus, those who have problems with their souls. Scripture in essence is making us to appreciate the fact that such preachers will not take the welfare of the souls of the flock to heart. They will rather be self-centred. It is apparent that they will feed on the flock by taking advantage of them. Peter puts it this way that "In covetousness they will exploit you with deceptive words: whose sentence now from of old doesn't linger, and their destruction will not slumber" 2 Peter 2:3

In our days we do see such people around. It is all about their welfare and not that of the masses. By appearing on various media, they never cease to beg for money for their "projects" and not for the welfare of people. I honestly think the welfare of people should be on top of the scale of preference of every true man of God. This spirit is in consonance with that of our saviour and the early disciples and faithful church fathers. Not

surprising, it is very difficult for them to prompt the people of God about the second coming of Jesus Christ. Anyone who betrays our saviour for "thirty pieces of silver" will never be ready for the second coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. By betraying Him, you cannot preach about the second coming of the Lord. What the so-called prosperity gospel has succeeded in doing is that it has led many into believing that godliness is a means to gain (1 Timothy. 6:5-12). In that way many betray our Lord and saviour Jesus Christ.

Betraying Jesus amounts to *not* living the Christlike life. Unfortunately, those with a resolute conscience to conform to our saviour are scarce in supply. Contrary to economic laws, their demand is low, a consequence of lukewarmness among professing believers. Without recanting, anyone who does not want to live like Christ ties his theological strings to the antichrist whether by omission or commission. The apostle declared that if one does not have the spirit of Christ, then he is none of His. Implying that, if you do not long to look like Christ then carefully weigh your spirit. It might be that you are found wanting. There is the call to carefully examine the motives for which we preach certain messages since we will definitely account for them. Let us not betray

Christ in our messages. Do not trade the truth for mammon. Many, like the apostle Paul said "have been drawn into perdition" because they have betrayed the saviour for thirty pieces of silver. After selling his saviour for thirty pieces of silver, he concluded his life with suicide. That is why in our days many are punctuating their lives with diverse lusts and sorrows. You kill your soul when you betray your saviour for "thirty pieces of silver". Judas betrayed Jesus Christ not only to the priest, but also to the people. In that sense if one also subscribes to preachers who betray the saviour, let it be known that such a person has conspired to sell our saviour for "thirty pieces of silver".

The legalisation and acceptance of homosexuality is all tied to money. Moreover, at this confluence any so-called pastor, apostle, prophet etc. who sells "anointing oil, water etc." is false. Nowhere in the Bible is it stated that any of the prophets or apostles did that. If one genuinely wants to perform miracles with such tokens, then it should come from the people themselves. Thus, such tokens could be blessed for such purposes as in consonance with scripture. Beside this, I carefully raise the red flag of caution.

When it is all said and done. Bible declares that some will stand before the Lord saying "did we not do miracles ... in your name?" then He will reply that "get away from me you worker of iniquity ..." That is not to say that I am in any way diminishing the need for genuine miracles anymore. Brethren, there is, but unfortunately most of the ones we see these days are fake. My litmus test has always been that, if a man does not preach holiness and righteousness and yet is performing miracles he is not deserving of my attention. Brethren, you may join me in taking this posture. "Seek ve first the kingdom of God and His righteousness ..." the sequential priorities are, preach the Kingdom, uphold righteousness, and then the things we need will be a consequence. The Kingdom of God is not "meat" and "drink" but righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Ghost.

"... and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish..." 2 Thessalonians 2:10.

By implication, such people will never hammer on righteousness among the people of God. "Because they receive not the love of the truth that they might be saved..." These are people in our days who have pleasure in unrighteousness in church. To such, God's verdict is an abandonment to strong delusions to woo them unto damnation. Such find themselves in the matching company of foolish shepherds, who are given by God for His own purpose.

In the last days people will heap up teachers who will teach them what they want to hear because of itchy ears. A man of God once made the point that, the duty of the preacher is to feed the sheep and not to entertain the goats. It is goats who need to be entertained. "Entertainment Christianity" will not save anyone in these last days. It is a sinking ship which will eventually drown the faith of many.

Brethren, in condensing my thoughts, I beseech you to live a life free from the love of money. Judas was initially one of the chosen apostles, but because of the love of money he sold our saviour for thirty pieces of silver.

Chapter 2

The Mystery of Vessels

"The word which came to Jeremiah from Yahweh, saying, Arise, and go down to the potter's house, and there I will cause you to hear my words. Then I went down to the potter's house, and behold, he was making a work on the wheels. When the vessel that he made of the clay was marred in the hand of the potter, he made it again another vessel, as seemed good to the potter to make it. Then the word of Yahweh came to me, saying, House of Israel, can't I do with you as this potter? says Yahweh. Behold, as the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in my hand, house of Israel. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation,

and concerning a kingdom, to pluck up and to break down and to destroy it; if that nation, concerning which I have spoken, turn from their evil, I will repent of the evil that I thought to do to them. At what instant I shall speak concerning a nation, and concerning a kingdom, to build and to plant it; if they do that which is evil in my sight, that they not obey my voice, then I will repent of the good, with which I said I would benefit them I Jeremiah 18:1-10

This particular verse of scripture reveals two important truths about vessels. Thus, a vessel can either be made inferior or superior. It all depends on the dispositions and demeanour of the vessel in question. When God has an agenda to execute, He seeks for a vessel to use. If He decides to do something with your life and your lifestyle is not tailored towards obeying His word, there is the possibility that you could be made into an inferior vessel. However, if you decide to obey His word, then He could make you into a superior vessel. It all depends on you. Moreover, the word of God reveals that God in His own divine purpose decides to make some vessels the object of His wrath (Romans 9:22). For why He chooses to do that, my finite knowledge is yet to grasp it. Nevertheless, we can conjecture that

since He is a just God whatever He does is best and right. With His foreknowledge, it could be that there is an inner disposition of such vessels that make them the object and instrument of God's wrath. Similarly, the word of God came to Ezekiel in the following fashion:

"Son of man, these men have taken their idols into their heart, and put the stumbling block of their iniquity before their face: should I be inquired of at all by them? Therefore speak to them, and tell them, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Every man of the house of Israel who takes his idols into his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet; I Yahweh will answer him therein according to the multitude of his idols; that 9 may take the house of Israel in their own heart, because they are all estranged from me through their idols. Therefore tell the house of Israel, Thus says the Lord Yahweh: Return you, and turn yourselves from your idols; and turn away your faces from all your abominations. For every one of the house of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn in Israel, who separates himself from me, and takes his idols into his heart, and puts the stumbling block of his iniquity before his face, and comes to the prophet to inquire for

himself of me; I Yahweh will answer him by myself: and I will set my face against that man, and will make him an astonishment, for a sign and a proverb, and I will cut him off from the midst of my people; and you shall know that I am Yahweh. If the prophet be deceived and speak a word, I, Yahweh, have deceived that prophet, and I will stretch out my hand on him, and will destroy him from the midst of my people Israel. They shall bear their iniquity: the iniquity of the prophet shall be even as the iniquity of him who seeks to him "Ezekiel 14:3-10"

We gather from these verses that there are times God would prevail upon a "prophet" to prophesy to His people in line with the idols in the heart of His people. In the first place, there is the presupposition that God will decide to use a particular vessel because the idols in that prophet's life are the same idols in the hearts of God's people. In this sense, such a vessel becomes an inferior vessel and an instrument of God's wrath. Judas Iscariot was first chosen as an apostle, but due to the dispositions of his heart, he was the one that eventually availed himself to betray the son of God. There were traces of the love of money in his heart (John 12:6). Scripture makes us know that he was the son of

perdition.

In the same way, in our days, God has already declared in His word that men will not pay heed to sound doctrine, but rather heap for themselves teachers that will tell them what they want to hear (2 Timothy 4:3). Just like the scenario in Ezekiel 14: 3-10, God will give them such preachers because the idols in the heart of those preachers are the same idols in the heart of the people. If one wants to pamper his bosom sin of drunkenness, there is surely going to be a ministry or preacher who does not see anything wrong with drunkenness. A careful diagnosis will definitely show that that preacher is also given to that particular sin. Further, if one is involved in sexual immorality, there are chances that he or she would locate a place where these sins are treated lightly. Presumably, the "chief shepherd" himself is heavily bound by such sins. The idols in the heart of such a person will definitely determine the emphasis of the preacher. Some may over-emphasize certain things or messages because they tend to feed their lust. A man is bound to betray and sell his master for "thirty pieces of silver" when his heart is filled with the god of mammon.

Judas was used by God to facilitate our redemption but in the end he was damned. It is not enough to say someone is being used by God. In every great house:

"... there are not only vessels of gold and of silver, but also of wood and of clay. Some are for honor, and some for dishonour" 2 Timothy 2:20.

You can either be used for honourable purposes in the house of God or for dishonourable purposes. Your inner dispositions will determine if you are the best candidate for any task. If a man can purge himself from the filthiness and idols of the heart, then he will be a good candidate for honourable purposes in the house of God. A rag for instance could be useful in a house, but in the end it will only be fit for the dunghill. Paul, knowing this, suppressed the workings of the flesh in his life so that after he had preached to others, he would not be a castaway;

"but I beat my body and bring it into submission, lest by any means, after I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected" 1 Corinthians 9:27. Because of this he was not disobedient to the heavenly vision. He once indicated that because Demas loved the world, he departed from him; "for Demas left me, having loved this present world, and went to Thessalonica; Crescens to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia" 2 Timothy 4:10. It is however interesting to know how fervent Demas was in serving the Lord together with the other apostles; (Col 4:14; Philemon 24). But in the course of time, the idols in his heart became bare. There were times Paul could say that all men forsook him, but only Christ stood by him (2 Timothy 4:17). Additionally, he knew that not all who claimed to serve Christ actually did so with a genuine heart. For some of them, serving Christ was just a means to establishing their own ends (1 Timothy 6:5).

When Paul got to Thessalonica, he made it clear to the disciples there that, he did not preach the gospel with a cloke of covetousness (1 Thessalonians 2:5). By this he sought to reveal that some preached the gospel under the cover of covetousness. They only preached because at the end of the day, there was some underlying financial gain. Some financial blessings may come one's way in the course of preaching the gospel, but that should not be the subtle motive for doing so.

Those who think godliness is a means to gain (1 Timothy 6:5) will definitely betray the saviour for "thirty pieces of silver".

Chapter 3

<u>Marks of</u> <u>False Preachers I</u>

"Enter in by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter in by it. How narrow is the gate, and restricted is the way that leads to life! Few are those who find it. Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravening wolves. By their fruits you will know them. Do you gather grapes from thorns, or figs from thistles? Even so, every good tree produces good fruit; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruit. A good tree can't produce evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that doesn't grow good fruit is

cut down, and thrown into the fire. Therefore, by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will tell me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works? Then I will tell them, 'I never knew you. Depart from me, you who work iniquity"

One key issue that could be noted from this scripture is that the standard of God has not changed and will never change. Moreover, since the way that leads to eternal life is narrow, only few people journey therein. Those who find this narrow way are those who diligently seek for it. There are some peculiar breed of people Christ warned us against in these last days. He called them false prophets. After talking about the narrow and broad way, Christ quickly punctuates it with, beware of false prophets? Thus, He wanted to hint that these false prophets will make the way broad. The key thing to note about these false prophets is that they do not look harmful at all. Their messages are also friendly to the undiscerning heart. They are smooth talkers. Their

words do not provoke one to jealously, to hunger, and thirst for God. They do so because of dishonest gain. To get something from you, they will have to speak what you want to hear. One of the ways of knowing that you are sitting in the tent of a false prophet is that you will not become godly. Their life and messages will inspire you into more ungodliness. You will be going for congregational meetings but there would not be any zeal and passion for holy living.

Another way of identifying a false prophet is by his emphasis or focus. Christ said they will come saying "...'Lord, Lord, didn't we prophesy in your name, in your name cast out demons, and in your name do many mighty works?" Matt 7:22. Approaching Christ with such credentials only tells of their misguided focus. Christ was rather seeking for holiness or godly character in them. They dwell on their "gifts" to the neglect of character. Judas Iscariot was gifted, but had a character flaw in his life which was covetousness. Judas healed the sick, performed miracles and even stampeded demons by the power of the living God. However, beyond all his exploits, there was this deadly monster (i.e., covetousness) he had entertained for a long while. I personally give pre-eminence to both gifts

and character, but will never sacrifice character for the demonstration of gifts or "power". The best posture is to see these two as mutually inclusive. False prophet's emphases are on temporal things and not on those with eternal value. Paul said we do not look at the things which can be seen but those which cannot be seen, for those which cannot be seen are eternal.

Chapter 4

<u>Marks of</u> False Preachers II

In the previous chapter, I demonstrated that those who betray Christ for "thirty pieces of silver" put the cart before the horse. Thus, they make us pursue other things first, with the kingdom of God and righteousness becoming a secondary issue. In this chapter, I will seek to lay bare why they ignorantly or knowingly relegate the Kingdom of God and righteousness to the background. I will do this by initially demonstrating what the Kingdom of God is. The major message of John was repentance and the Kingdom of God;

"...John the Baptizer came, preaching in the wilderness of Judea, saying, "Repent, for the Kingdom of Heaven is at hand!" For this is he who was spoken of by Isaiah the prophet, saying, "The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make ready the way of the Lord, Make his paths straight"

Mathew 3:1-3

In like manner, our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ also started preaching about the Kingdom of God and repentance (Mark 1:14-15). When it got to the early disciples, the priority was still repentance and the Kingdom of God (Acts 8:12). To underscore the importance of the Kingdom of God on the menu of every true man of God, the writer of the Book of Acts chose to introduce it in the following fashion;

"The first book I wrote, Theophilus, concerned all that Jesus began both to do and to teach, until the day in which he was received up, after he had given commandment through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. To these he also showed himself alive after he suffered, by many proofs, appearing to them over a period of forty days, and speaking about God's Kingdom" Acts 1:1-3.

From this scripture, Christ continually preached and taught the disciples about the Kingdom of God for a period of forty days after His resurrection. By this act, Christ placed a lot of premium on the Kingdom of God.

To some extent, we can liken the Kingdom of God to the power of the Holy Spirit in the life of the believer (Matthew 12:28). Moving on from this periphery, we can say that the Holy Spirit comes to demonstrate in us the governing system(s) of God. That is, by the agency of the Holy Spirit, we are to live the Kingdom lifestyle here on earth. In every Kingdom where there is a King, there are rules and regulations that govern the lives of the aborigines of that particular Kingdom. In effect, one cannot live in a particular Kingdom and decide to live the way he or she wants. If such a person defiantly does so, he or she has no option than to collide with the consequences thereof.

Paul makes us appreciate that we are Christ's ambassadors. We are in the world, but not of the world. To Paul, the Kingdom of God is "... not eating and drinking, but righteousness, peace, and joy in the Holy Spirit" Rom 14:17. It is the lifestyle of the children of God. If one professes to be a child of God, then he or she is expected by God to live that Kingdom life: The

life of righteousness. The Kingdom of God is very important as revealed in why for forty days Christ taught nothing but the things that pertained to the Kingdom. Christ in Luke 9:1-6 had earlier instructed the disciples to preach the Kingdom of God. In fulfilment of the command, they rather preached the gospel. Were they wrong in doing so? Certainly not! In looking at the definition of the gospel, Paul had the following to say:

"Now I declare to you, brothers, the Good News which I preached to you, which also you received, in which you also stand, by which also you are saved, if you hold firmly the word which I preached to you—unless you believed in vain. For I delivered to you first of all that which I also received: that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures" 1 Corinthians 15:1-4.

From this scripture, the gospel represents the death, burial, and resurrection of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. By death, everyone that wants to enter into life or the Kingdom of God must first of all repent of his evil ways. Moreover, one has to identify him or herself with Christ's sufferings. This demonstrates that anyone in

the Kingdom of God must have all these pre-requisites fulfilled in his or her life. Further, identifying with the resurrection of Christ symbolises dominion over sin and the hope of making it to heaven at the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. Christ is coming for a church without spot or wrinkle (Ephesians 5:27). The resurrected life (Kingdom life) is an elevation above the systems of the world and its manipulative tendencies.

A betrayal of Jesus for "thirty pieces of silver" will amount to not preaching the Kingdom of God as has been explained in previous paragraphs. Judas did not fix his gaze on eternal and heavenly values. Instead, he wanted to satisfy the cravings for the now. Paul said that, "If then you were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are on the earth" Colossians 3:1-2. In the same vein:

"while we don't look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporal, but the things which are not seen are eternal" 2 Corinthians 4:18. Those who exhibit the characteristics of Judas will surely trade heavenly values for earthly possessions. Such are those who betray Jesus for "thirty pieces of silver". The Kingdom of God is never a priority to them, but one that plays a second fiddle to mundane things.

There are varied reasons why some pursue Christ (John 6:1-27). These people chased Christ around because of bread. Why do you seek after God? Is it possible that when you are x-rayed there is a lurking reason why you are serving Him according to the order of Judas? Is it because of temporal things? Christ said;

"Don't work for the food which perishes, but for the food which remains to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you. For God the Father has sealed him" John 6:27

"I thank God, whom I serve as my forefathers did, with a pure conscience. How unceasing is my memory of you in my petitions, night and day longing to see you, remembering your tears, that I may be filled with joy; having been reminded of the unfeigned faith that is in you; which lived first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice, and, I am persuaded, in you also. For

this cause, I remind you that you should stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God didn't give us a spirit of fear, but of power, love, and self-control" 2 Tim 1:3-7. Paul served God the way his fathers did. He alludes here that his fathers served God genuinely.

Genuine faith is one without partiality: "My brothers, don't hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ of glory with partiality. For if a man with a gold ring, in fine clothing, comes into your synagogue, and a poor man in filthy clothing also comes in; and you pay special attention to him who wears the fine clothing, and say, "Sit here in a good place;" and you tell the poor man, "Stand there," or "Sit by my footstool;" haven't you shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?" James 2:1-4. No matter our social standing. one blood saved us and so there is no need for partiality in the house of God. Most often than not, there is the temptation to be partial in the house of God. This is a clear betrayal of the apostolic ministry. If Christ was not partial, then why should we be partial? James 2:14-26 adds that genuine faith is one that is backed by deeds. There are so many people whose faith only ends in speech but not in deeds. Christ said people profess

Him, but in their hearts they are far away from Him (Matthew 15:8). Judas professed to love the Lord Jesus Christ and the ministry, but in the end he (through his actions) betrayed the saviour.

Chapter 5

<u>The Balaam</u> <u>Syndrome</u>

A gentile who probably carried great potential of becoming a spiritual giant before God was Balaam. It is clear that this man had the prophetic seed in Him. Undeniably, this man had encounters with God and did hear from the Most High. According to his own testimony, he was someone who saw open visions, and heard the words of God: "He took up his parable, and said, Balaam the son of Beor says, the man whose eye was closed says; He says, who hears the words of God, Knows the knowledge of the Most High, Who sees the vision of the Almighty, Falling down, and having his eyes open" Numbers 24:15-16. In spite of these

abilities, he could not become who God designed him to be because of covetousness. It is recorded in Numbers 22:7 that the elders of Midian visited him with the reward of divination in their hand, to entice him to curse the people of Israel;

"The elders of Moab and the elders of Midian departed with the rewards of divination in their hand; and they came to Balaam, and spoke to him the words of Balak"

On the surface, this scripture might suggest that he was initially a diviner. However, in the New Testament we are made to understand that he was a prophet, later turned diviner. God warned His people against diviners and observers of times;

"For these nations, that you shall dispossess, listen to those who practice sorcery, and to diviners; but as for you, Yahweh your God has not allowed you so to do" Deuteronomy 18:14.

The heathen often visited these groups of people for various existential and metaphysical reasons. God's people were rather expected to listen to His prophets. He in effect sent prophets to Israel so they could hear His voice. He promised to put His words in the prophet's mouth, who was expected to do His bidding;

"9 will raise them up a prophet from among their brothers, like you; and 9 will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that 9 shall command him" Deuteronomy 18:18

Initially, Balaam was a prophet; "but he was rebuked for his own disobedience. A mute donkey spoke with man's voice and stopped the madness of the prophet" 2 Peter 2:16. However, he transformed into a diviner by accepting the reward for divination. He became a diviner in that, he chose to listen and do the bidding of men for gain rather than pay allegiance to God. Throughout scripture, God warned His people not to listen to their diviners and prophets; "But as for you, don't you listen to your prophets, nor to your diviners, nor to your dreams, nor to your soothsayers, nor to your sorcerers, who speak to you, saying, You shall not serve the king of Babylon" Jeremiah 27:9. These diviners sought to please the masses thereby deceiving them. They often saw false dreams and gave the people of God false hopes. In our days we do have

such men around who scripture says will declare peace, peace when there is no peace; "They have healed the hurt of the daughter of my people slightly, saying, Peace, peace; when there is no peace" Jeremiah 8:11.

Contextually speaking, the peace here deals with peace with God. Before I delve into that, I will like to add that diviners and false prophets are always moved to bring a word to comfort people in these times when there are attacks all over. They have fallen into this trap and promised people better days ahead when indeed there are no better days ahead for the world. We are made to understand that in the last days difficult times will come; "But know this, that in the last days, grievous times will come. For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy" 2 Timothy 3:1-2. Christ cautions that when we hear of wars and rumors of wars, it should be clear that they are just the beginning of sorrows;

"For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be earthquakes in various

places. There will be famines and troubles. These things are the beginning of birth pains" Mark 13:8

Men have succeeded in developing nuclear arsenals more devastating than the ones that reduced the cities Hiroshima and Nagasaki to debris. In fact, daily, trouble and evil is brewed in the hearts of men to the degrading and devastation of humankind. The only hope for the world is Christ. It is to totally rely on Him and follow in His steps. He said that in this world we will suffer many things for His name sake but we should be of good cheer since He had overcome: "I have told you these things, that in me you may have peace. In the world you have oppression; but cheer up! I have overcome the world" John 16:33. Unfortunately, these diviners and false prophets have diverted the whole focus from Christ to themselves. By their very mission, they are not into preparing the children of the Lord for their soon coming king. Going back to Balaam the diviner, Numbers 22:7-21 reveals the deep seated covetousness and honour seeking that was buried in the heart of Balaam. To begin with, Balak sent elders to him to persuade him to curse the people of God but he refused. Following this failed attempt, Balak sent princes more and more honourable than those he sent

initially, all to no avail; "Balak sent yet again princes, more, and more honorable than they" v 15. In addition he promised Balaam that he would promote him to great honour, and even make him his 'god': "for I will promote you to very great honor, and whatever you say to me I will do. Please come therefore, and curse this people for me" v 17. At this point Balaam fell for the bait. Superficially, his response from v18 to v20 might seem he was still standing; "Balaam answered the servants of Balak, If Balak would give me his house full of silver and gold. I can't go beyond the word of Yahweh my God, to do less or more. Now therefore, please wait also here this night, that I may know what Yahweh will speak to me more. God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men are come to call you, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that shall you do". But the subsequent verses showed the true condition of his heart; "Balaam rose up in the morning, and saddled his donkey, and went with the princes of Moab. God's anger was kindled because he went; and the angel of Yahweh placed himself in the way for an adversary against him. Now he was riding on his donkey, and his two servants were with him. The donkey saw the angel of Yahweh standing in the way, with his sword drawn in his hand; and the donkey

turned aside out of the way, and went into the field; and Balaam struck the donkey...The angel of Yahweh said to him. Why have you struck your donkey these three times? behold, I am come forth for an adversary, because your way is perverse before me" v21 - v32. These verses reveal that the heart of Balaam was perverse before God. If Balaam had been wise, he would not have continued with the journey since the green light given him in v20; "God came to Balaam at night, and said to him, If the men are come to call you, rise up, go with them; but only the word which I speak to you, that shall you do" was the same green light given in v35; "The angel of Yahweh said to Balaam, Go with the men; but only the word that I shall speak to you, that you shall speak. So Balaam went with the princes of Balak". With all this drama unfolding before his eyes, he still continued with his journey. One striking lesson we learn from the donkey is that the donkey's loyalty to Balaam was unquestionable from its submission. Can this be said concerning us and our faithfulness to our Lord?

The writer of Second Peter drew from the perverse ways of Balaam, warning us of such people in our days who will speak great swelling words and lead many astray: "For, uttering great swelling words of emptiness." they entice in the lusts of the flesh, by licentiousness, those who are indeed escaping from those who live in error; promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption; for by whom a man is overcome, by the same is he also brought into bondage" 2 Peter 2:18-19. The writer in earlier verses spoke of these men who err through covetousness according to the order of Balaam; "having eyes full of adultery, and who can't cease from sin; enticing unsettled souls; having a heart trained in greed; children of cursing; forsaking the right way, they went astray, having followed the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the wages of wrong-doing; but he was rebuked for his own disobedience. A mute donkey spoke with man's voice and stopped the madness of the prophet" 2 Peter 2:14-16. However, he adds that, those who are clean will not fall prey to such strayed men. Further, scripture talks of the doctrine of Balaam: "But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who taught Balak to throw a stumbling block before the children of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit sexual immorality" Revelation 2:14. God warned the church of Pergamos of this doctrine they had entertained in the church. Remember, this was the church that held fast the name of the Lord and remained resolute even in the face of adversities: "I know your works and where you dwell, where Satan's throne is. You hold firmly to my name, and didn't deny my faith in the days of Antipas my witness, my faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells" Revelation 2:13. The doctrine of Balaam is the doctrine that pushes the children of God into idolatry and encourages sensuality in church. Through covetousness, so many "men of God" sell all manner of things in church for the purposes of so called breakthroughs. By so doing, these "tokens" shift the focus and faith of the children of God from Christ and the power in the word to those "tokens". In effect you see people putting their trust in bungles, stickers etc. for protection, favour, and breakthroughs. Moreover, the doctrine of Balaam is manifest in allowing immorality in the congregation of the children of God. Due to the "game of numbers", which eventually leads to the swelling of tithes and offerings, decency is sacrificed. Holiness within and without is no longer trumpeted in church. The deception is that God does not look at the outward appearance, forgetting that, that which fills the heart is what will eventually overflow and manifest in

deeds. In any case shouldn't the manifestations of people caution that all is not well with the person in the inner man? Rather all sorts of things are encouraged in the house of God in the name of "if they are not allowed to do it in church, they will go and do it in the clubs". The doctrine of Balaam leads to all these in church. It is unfortunate these "Balaams" are made leaders in the church of God. This ought not to be, since elders or leaders are supposed to be free from the love of money or covetousness; "The overseer therefore must be without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sensible, modest, hospitable, good at teaching; not a drinker, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;" 1 Timothy 3:2-3. God knows that if a covetous man is made a leader or an elder, he will eventually sacrifice the truth for gain.

Chapter 6

<u>Unbrokenness</u>

In 1 Corinthians 2:1-2, Paul indicated that;

"When I came to you, brothers, I didn't come with excellence of speech or of wisdom, proclaiming to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you, except Iesus Christ, and Him crucified".

I have come to the consciousness that the greatest philosophy in life is the crucified life. We are in a day and age whereby people trade the power of the cross for eloquence. One could have both, but certainly not trade the former for the latter. Paul looked out for the power of the cross in the life of professing believers as in "I did not want to know anything amongst you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified".

Everyone can talk, be eloquent, but when it comes to the crucified life not all attain to it. If one takes away the cross from his or her life, then he or she robs him or herself the power of change or transformation. Only the cross humbles all of us and brings us to a common denominator. Everyone's knee must be bent at the foot of the cross of Calvary. To me, you can hurl all your stitched jargons and eloquence at me, but it will be of no consequence without the antecedent force of crucifixion. Immanuel sounded it clear enough that "except a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it abides alone".

It will be very difficult for an uncrucified life to lead souls to heaven. The uncrucified life is a betrayal of the cross of Christ. Judas walked with Christ for a while, but was never broken. Thus, the mere amassing of chronological time in "serving" God does not necessarily translate into having spiritual depth. If a preacher or believer is not "dead", he or she may gather people around him, but will never succeed in taking any

of them to heaven. The simple rule is that we produce our own kind. An uncrucified preacher produces uncrucified professors of Christianity. Such lives are unproductive in the kingdom of the living God. People who are dead to the things of the world care about how to please the one who gave His life as a ransom for their sakes. Paul decided to glory only in the cross (Galatians 6:14-17). Contrary to the stance of Paul, many today glory in their earthly possessions and encourage many to do same. This amounts to a betrayal of the cross of Christ. Paul never boasted in anything except the cross. The sign of a child of God or man of God is the crucified life. Paul was not disobedient to the heavenly vision (Acts 26:19). He did not betray the trust of heaven. This dear apostle saw a vision that blinded him to the things of the world. Has the "vision" seen, brought a permanent damage to the cravings for the things of the world?

The Chief priest, scribes and elders mocked Christ prior to His glorification and challenged Him to come down if He was indeed the Son of God (Matthew 27:40-42). Brethren, the point here is that you might have been living a crucified life before but now you have been challenged to condescend to the basic elements

of the vain life on earth. Never come down from the cross since glorification follows it. You need not live according to worldly standards in order to show that you are a child of God. There is no point in following the systems of the world in order to prove anything. Surely, there would be times that you would be challenged to abandon the life of the cross, but never give in to such a demoting agenda. It is a bait set for you to betray your master.

A young man related a particular incident in a big Pentecostal church in Ghana. He narrated to me that one of the apostles in that particular denomination knew how to raise funds, (I mean extort). With such a credential, he was much sought after in most branches of the church whenever the issue of fund raising cropped up. It was said that he would often come into an agreement with the churches as to his share of the booty after every fundraising. Through such merchandise, he was able to construct an edifice for himself. Just about getting ready to move into his magnificent edifice, God slapped him with an ailment which dictated that he spends the rest of his life in the hospital. Whilst in the hospital, I learnt he confessed

that God told him "if that was how the fathers of the ministry lived their lives, would he have met a vibrant ministry like that?" God further told him that although he had built that edifice, nevertheless he will not sleep in it. Conclusively, he slept in the hospital until he died. This man abandoned the call to share in the life of Christ. Jesus made the point that we can only share in His glory if we share in His suffering.

Chapter 7

The Third Steward

Before zooming into the core message of this chapter, I will first of all like to lay some critical foundations. To begin with, in some examinations there are normally compulsory and optional questions. The success or failure of a student is normally tied to the candidate's ability to face those compulsory questions squarely. If after the examinations one realizes that he or she was not able to answer those compulsory questions, then it becomes clear to him or her that failure is inevitable. This is because compulsory questions often attract a large chunk of the marks for that particular paper.

It is equally important to note that before the judgment seat of God, there will be compulsory questions to be answered. These are the weightier matters in the sight of God. Good students always make sure they study within the scope of the syllabus given. Going beyond the syllabus simply means one is wasting his or her time, since at the end of the day questions are set based on the syllabus. Those who do not work within the confines of scripture and adhere to the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints have transgressed, the consequence being hell fire.

As good students learn topics within the syllabus, they also try to discern the likely examination questions. However, best students by the armour of diligence cover the entire syllabus thoroughly, guaranteeing that all questions asked are likely to be answered satisfactorily.

There is the need for the thorough study of the scriptures in the house of God. All of scripture is important, but some are weightier than others. This notwithstanding, one should never teach anything from scripture which he or she cannot defend before the throne of God. God will surely search the hearts of men

and reveal to us the motivation for some of the messages we preached. So always make sure you have sufficient or exhaustive scriptural basis for whatever you preach. Scripture is supposed to interpret scripture, as it is not of personal interpretation (2 Peter 1:20). Paul cautioned Timothy to be careful of what he preached since it could potentially cost him his salvation. Brethren, there are weightier matters in the word of God. For instance, do you know that Christ will never ask us how many people we healed or raised from the dead? That is not to say that raising the dead is sometimes not important. Most of us in our infant Christian life were so fascinated by miracles to the neglect of Christian character. Growing up, the tables have turned. Nevertheless, be rest assured that you will be asked whether you lived a holy life or not. Christ will ask, are you a worker of iniquity? (Matthew 7:23). The false prophets are not aware of these likely questions so they have already failed in advance. Another compulsory question is found in Matt 25:34-40:

"Then the King will tell those on his right hand, 'Come, blessed of my Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry, and you gave me food to eat; I was

thirsty, and you gave me drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked, and you clothed me; 9 was sick, and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then the righteous will answer him, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, and feed you; or thirsty, and give you a drink? When did we see you as a stranger, and take you in; or naked, and clothe you? When did we see you sick, or in prison, and come to you? The King will answer them, 'Most assuredly 9 tell you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me" "Then he will say also to those on the left hand, 'Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire which is prepared for the devil and his angels; for 9 was hungry, and you didn't give me food to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger, and you didn't take me in; naked, and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you didn't visit me. "Then they will also answer, saying, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry, or thirsty, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and didn't help you?' "Then he will answer them, saying, 'Most assuredly I tell you, inasmuch as you didn't do it to one of the least of these, you didn't do it to me. These will go

away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life" Matt 25:41-46

From these scriptures, Christ attached so much importance to feeding the poor. Notice that He tends to highlight evidence to the effect that He does not require that you have to necessarily heal the sick, but to pay them visits and care for them. Since the sheep of God do these things automatically, they even fail to realize that it attracts much importance to Him.

Another issue has got to do with whether we were faithful or not. Therefore Paul declared that it is a requirement that children of God be faithful (1 Corinthians 4:2). Irrespective of who you think you are, when summoned before the throne of God, you will be asked regarding your level of faithfulness. Because it is required, surely it has a high probability of being a compulsory question. Who then is a faithful servant? There are two spheres of faithfulness: faithfulness in the house of God and faithfulness at the work place;

"I will raise me up a faithful priest, that shall do according to that which is in my heart and in my mind: and I will build him a sure house; and he shall

walk before my anointed forever. It shall happen, that everyone who is left in your house shall come and how down to him for a piece of silver and a loaf of bread, and shall say, Please put me into one of the priests' offices, that I may eat a morsel of bread" 1 Samuel 2:35-36

A faithful servant is the one who does what is in the mind and heart of God. Paul said we have the mind of Christ (1 Corinthians 2:16). Thus, a faithful servant labours to know what is in the heart of God so that he or she would obey. Paul however makes us to understand that not all who claim to serve God are like-minded as Christ (Philippians 2:21-22). It was only Timothy who was like-minded and sought that which was of Christ. If we are like-minded, we would not betray the course of Christ. Those who betray Him seek their own.

Matt 25:24-30 talks about three stewards who were to give account of their stewardship to their master: "He also who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you that you are a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not scatter. I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the earth. Behold, you have what is yours. "But his

lord answered him, 'You wicked and slothful servant. You knew that I reap where I didn't sow, and gather where I didn't scatter. You ought therefore to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received back my own with interest. Take away therefore the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to everyone who has will be given, and he will have abundance, but from him who has not, even that which he has will be taken away. Throw out the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"

The third servant had very unpleasant things to say about his master. He wanted to play it safe and not to take risks. Such people are most likely to betray their master by been unfaithful. It is required of stewards that a man be faithful. We will surely give an account of whatever gift or talent God has given us. Will we betray the Lord by not preaching the whole gospel like Paul did (Acts 20:26-27) or we preach for the sake of convenience? A hundred percent output is required of us. Take risk in the delivery of the gospel as it will require that you hazard your life. Paul and the other disciples hazarded their lives (Acts 15:26). You will

compromise if you do not risk.

In Matt 28:19-20 we are told to go and "...make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I commanded you. Behold, I am with you always, even to the end of the age". As we make disciples, Christ will continue to be with us. If the vision of a ministry or man is not to make disciples, then he is not like-minded as Christ and has thus betrayed the apostolic ministry. Discipleship is a must for every true servant of God. Christ's command is that we make disciples, teaching them to observe all of what He has taught us. Going by the scripture in 1 Samuel 2:35-36, the faithful servant is the one who does what is in the heart of God. Faithfulness will therefore mean that we do a diligent search for all that Christ has taught us and faithfully teach others also.

A call to be faithful

The surest way of not betraying the Lord for 'thirty pieces of silver' is to love the Lord supremely. If one loves the Lord in that manner, then the possibility of sacrificing the truth for sordid gain is eliminated. It is important to know that this love is not supposed to be contingent on anything. We serve God for who He is and not for what He gives. If our love for Christ is hooked on something, then our love for Him comes crushing down when that thing is taken away. Paul hints that there is nothing that can separate us from the love of Christ: "Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Could oppression, or anguish, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?" Romans 8:35. This love is an unconditional one, showed towards us not for what we did, but by His grace and mercies. Why then love Him conditionally?

There is a warning all of us must pay heed to in these last days. We have been admonished to remain steadfast unto the end. Scripture cautions that we should not fall away from our steadfastness; "For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm to the end..." Hebrews

3:14-15. Paul advised Timothy to keep that good thing that was entrusted unto him, by the Holy Spirit that was in him; "Hold the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. That good thing which was committed to you, guard through the Holy Spirit who dwells in us" 2 Timothy 1:13-14. It takes the right spirit within a man to enable him remain faithful unto the end. What one is filled with is what ultimately drives his or her actions. It was when Judas allowed himself to be possessed by the devil that he eventually betrayed our Lord Jesus Christ. When the apostles were threatened not to speak in the name of Christ, they turned to God and prayed. In answer to their prayer, God filled them again with the Holy Spirit;

"Now, Lord, look at their threats, and grant to your servants to speak your word with all holdness, while you stretch out your hand to heal; and that signs and wonders may be done through the name of your holy Servant Jesus." When they had prayed, the place was shaken where they were gathered together. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the word of God with boldness" Acts 4:29-31.

Men are capable of taking away the truth from you, and eventually robbing you of your crown; "I am coming quickly! Hold firmly that which you have, so that no one takes your crown" Revelations 3:11. If the apostles allowed themselves to be cowed by the threats of the elders and Pharisees, they would not have been faithful with the word of God. From a different angle, listening to false teachers and prophets who have already sold the Lord for "thirty pieces of silver" will also corrupt you, for evil communication certainly corrupts good manners; "Don't be deceived! Evil companionships corrupt good morals" 1 Corinthians 15:33.

In concluding, beware your love for the Lord does not wax cold. A fervent love for the Lord will guarantee your faithfulness to Him, so you will not betray Him for "thirty pieces of silver". May His love fill us by the abundance of His spirit in us. Amen.

ARE YOU PREPARED FOR CHRIST'S SECOND COMING?

Please note that

The first Adam disobeyed God and because of his disobedience sin entered the human race, resulting in the spiritual death and separation of man from God; "Therefore, as sin entered into the world through one man, and death through sin; and so death passed to all men, because all sinned...So then as through one trespass, all men were condemned; even so through one act of righteousness, all men were justified to life." Romans 5:12-13, 18.

The second Adam (Jesus Christ) obeyed God in order to take away sin from the human race; "But God commends his own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us." Romans 5:8.

Your part of the arrangement is to receive the grace or free gift of God's salvation by faith (Romans 4:16-17).

You must understand that faith without works is dead, so God expects you to obey and receive this free gift (but costly) salvation with your free will; "But as many as received him, to them he gave the right to become God's children, to those who believe in his name: who were born not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." John 1:12-13.

The most important decision you have to make now is to be born again (John3:1-8). Being born again is to repent of your sins and to submit yourself to be baptized by immersion (and not by sprinkling) as well as receive the Holy Spirit; "Peter said to them, "Repent, and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit." Acts 2:38.

The grace of God is not a license for you to sin, but rather to receive strength to live in obedience to God's word (Titus 2:11-14).

You therefore have to (as a matter of necessity), live a holy life and walk as Christ did, and not to live in hypocrisy; "However God's firm foundation stands, having this seal, "The Lord knows those who are his, and, "Let everyone who names the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness." 2 Timothy 2:19. "Everyone who has this hope set on him purifies himself, even as he is pure." 1John 3:3.

If you walk in the light of the above scriptures and make 2 Peter 1:2-10 your guiding principle, you will never live a defeated Christian life, thereby ensuring you are found in Christ even at His glorious appearing.

I however caution that you beware of people who preach Another Gospel, Another Jesus and Another Spirit as in line with 2 Corinthians 11:1-4.

For more information, please contact us via the following address:

Revealed Oracles of God
P. O. Box WY 423, Kwabenya
Accra, Ghana-West Africa.
+233 0551 341 495 / +233 0209 043
revealedoracles@yahoo.com

OTHER TITLES

A MESSAGE TO THOSE AT THE CROSSROADS

WAXING STRONG IN SPIRIT

BROKEN VESSELS

BREAD BAKED IN HELL

AWAKE, AND CHRIST WILL GIVE YOU LIGHT

THE CRY OF APOSTLES AND PROPHETS

MAKING YOUR CALLING AND ELECTION SURE

BARGAINING FOR PURE GOLD

CHRISTIAN MODESTY

GOLDEN DISTINCTIONS OF END-TIME SAINTS

IMPORTANT SIGN POSTS FOR BELIEVERS

DEMYSTIFYING PARABLES AND SACRIFICE

THE REALM OF DIVINITY, CONTRADICTING THE

WORLD

THE PARADOX OF MATURITY PRECIPITANTS OF REVIVAL