



discover tribute

*Uncover a practical life plan that partners with God
and discover personally the joy and security this brings*

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How then shall we live? This is a good question when we consider the full salvation that God has provided for us.

FORMER SLAVES

As we have studied, humans have been involved in a long warfare, a very psychological one as well - the great controversy between Christ and Satan. And as we have seen, through Jesus, we have been given the victory - the victory over Satan, over eternal death, over slavery to sin and to self. We are no longer slaves to a cruel taskmaster, and we need to view ourselves that way as well.



Therefore if the Son makes you free, you shall be free indeed.

John 8:36



Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. For he who has died has been freed from sin.

Romans 6:6-7

This doesn't mean that we live perfect lives. Jesus is the only one who has ever done that. The great news of the gospel is that, through the amazing grace of the Lord, Christ's perfect life, His perfect record, becomes credited to us, by faith, as if our own. His perfection, His righteousness, His holiness, are all given to us, and we stand before God in the perfection and righteousness of Christ.

That is what it means to be justified by faith - to be born again, to have a new life, a new existence in Jesus. We, indeed, are no longer slaves to sin, to death, and to Satan. This is the heart and soul of the Christian faith.

And, as we have seen, when these things happen to us our lives will change, often even drastically!



Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

2 Corinthians 5:17

THE CONTRAST

Yes, we have a whole new existence in Jesus, with purpose, meaning, and direction. Thanks to the good news of the gospel, this epic story we find ourselves in doesn't have to end as a tragedy.

In the 1700's, a famous British philosopher named David Hume, who rejected Christianity, wrote about the confusion of life in general. He said that life presented so many questions, and it seemed - at least to him - offered so few answers, if any. He wrote:

I am ready to reject all belief and reasoning, and can look upon no opinion even as more probable or likely than another. Where am I, or what? From what causes do I derive my existence, and to what condition shall I return? Whose favour shall I court, and whose anger must I dread? What beings surround me? And on whom have I any influence, or who has any influence on me? I am confounded with all these questions, and begin to fancy myself

in the most deplorable condition imaginable, environed with the deepest darkness, and utterly deprived of the use of every member and faculty.

What a contrast to these words:



For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptised into Christ have put on Christ.

Galatians 3: 26-27

And these:



Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.

1 Peter 1:3

See also Ephesians 3:14-19.

THE GREAT COMMISSION

The question for us, though, is - *How are we supposed to live, knowing that we are Christ's, first by creation and then by redemption?* What does God ask of us, having given us so much, and free of charge too?

Just before Jesus ascended to heaven, He said to His followers:



And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising

them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen.

Matthew 28:18-20

These verses have been called *The Great Commission*, and they have spurred on millions of believers in Jesus to go all over the world, teaching people about Jesus and what He has done for them.

Of course, not everyone can pack up their bags and move to a far-off land and spread the gospel. But everyone who claims to serve the Lord has been called by God to use their gifts and abilities for Him, and what better way than to seek to reach out to others with the good news of salvation?



But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.

1 Peter 3:15

There is no greater privilege than to be a link in the chain, sharing the good news we have heard from God with others. In fact, it becomes unstoppable. *For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.* Acts 4:20

Jesus told a parable that started like this:



For the kingdom of heaven is like a man travelling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another

two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey.

Matthew 25:14-15. Please note that in this parable a talent is an item of currency.

Notice he gave to each *according to his own ability*. Not everyone was given the same thing, and thus not everyone was expected to do the same thing. But all were expected to do something.

When the parable ends, however, the one with the least, who did nothing, was the one who was punished. He had two problems. Firstly, he thought one was insignificant, and secondly, he did nothing. All we have is from God - there is nothing insignificant.

THE GIFT OF TIME

We have studied the Sabbath, and have seen that God commands us to keep that special time holy. Remembering to keep the Sabbath holy is our practical acknowledgement that all our time - every moment of our lives - belongs to God.

As Paul said, *For in Him we live and move and have our being.* Acts 17:28

In whom we live, move, and have our being? How much more ownership over us could God have?

In 1 Corinthians 12, Paul used the analogy of the different organs of the body as symbols of how each of us, with our different gifts and talents, must use those gifts and talents for the betterment of the church and for witness to others. Whether ministering to the poor, clothing the

naked, feeding the hungry, helping the sick, or teaching, or preaching, or whatever, we have been called to be servants, ministers to a dying world.

GIFTED PEOPLE

Western culture idolises really talented people and their abilities - people with the X factor. Psychologists tell us that we see in them what we would like to be ourselves. But God says we are all gifted; and the kinds of gifts we have, and how much and how many, all come from Him. When we take our eyes off the stars - the really gifted people featured in the media around us - and stop comparing ourselves with them, we begin to see our true potential. What God has entrusted to us may be small or large, it may be few or many. Whatever it is, it's God's trust to us. And all God asks of is faithfulness.



Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful.

1 Corinthians 4:2

God has gifted us to be a blessing to others, to serve. What a contrast to using God's gifts purely for self and for the pursuit of fame.



And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:17

The question we need to ask ourselves is: *What legacy will we leave once this world is gone?* What will the X factor mean then? Or what will medals, or honour, or fame, or fortune, matter then? God simply wants faithfulness.

All that will be left from this world will be ourselves and others like us - saved by the blood of Jesus - souls who might not have known about Jesus were it not for us and our efforts to reach out to them!

THE TEN PER CENT SOLUTION

There's an old, trite saying - but the triteness of the saying arises from the blatant truthfulness of it: *Put your money where your mouth is.*

And that works with faith as well. God says it like this:



For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also.

James 2:26

After all, anyone can profess faith. Talk is cheap. Putting your money where your mouth is, or where your faith is, however - that is a powerful way of affirming for yourself just how much you believe in the words you profess.

That's why God has established in the Bible what is known as tithing, from a word that means a tenth. And the idea behind it is simple - it's putting your money, or at least ten per cent of it, where your mouth is. Those who tithe, who reach out in faith and return ten per cent of their income to the Lord, know that - more than anything else - tithing is an act of worship.

To take ten per cent of what you earn and give it to God takes faith. Tithing is in itself an act of faith. It is a part of what it means to live by faith.



The just shall live by faith.

See Romans 1:17, Galatians 3:11, and Hebrews 10:38.

And for many people, both rich and poor, faith sometimes stops at the purse or wallet - which isn't true faith at all!

TITHE IN THE BIBLE

Long before the establishment of the nation of Israel, Abraham returned tithe to God. The story reads like this:



Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said: Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth; and blessed be God Most High, who has delivered your enemies into your hand. And he (Abraham) gave him a tithe of all.

Genesis 14:18-20

And he, Abraham, gave the priest, a representative of *God Most High*, a tithe - ten per cent of what he had gained. Thus, long before the nation of Israel was established, tithing was already practised.

The principle was seen again later, when Jacob, an exile and a fugitive, said to the Lord: *Of all that You give me, I will surely give a tenth to You.*
Genesis 28:22

Notice the words of Jacob: *Of all that You give me ...* In other words, Jacob was acknowledging that the material goods that he possessed came from God. Tithing, like the Sabbath, helps us remember that everything good is from the One in whom *we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28), a point that is often very easy to forget. Tithing is a very real and concrete way to help us not to forget. It's also a way of protecting us from greed:



For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

1 Timothy 6:10

The tithe belongs to the Lord - it is His tenth. *And all the tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land or of the fruit of the tree, is the LORD'S. It is holy to the LORD.* Leviticus 27:30. Instead of time as it is with the Sabbath, it's now money. The returning of tithe is our way of acknowledging that all we have ultimately comes from God anyway:



The earth is the LORD'S, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein.

Psalm 24:1

In the New Testament, the concept of tithing is assumed. If something so profound and ingrained were to have been abolished, wouldn't the New Testament have said so, as it did so clearly with circumcision? Instead, there's not a word against it. Also, why would such a powerful antidote to greed and selfishness - something that is so beneficial not only to the community but to the individual believer as well - suddenly be abolished?

When denouncing the hypocrisy of some of the scribes and Pharisees, Jesus said:



Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin (small seeds), and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done,

without leaving the others undone.

Matthew 23:23

The issue here wasn't the paying of tithes - that was assumed. It was instead the lack of mercy and justice on the part of some of the religious leaders. Christ here condemned the abuse of this sacred obligation. The obligation itself - the paying of tithe - Jesus did not set aside. He affirmed it by speaking out against its abuse.

Paul, also, drew upon the ancient Israelite system of tithing, which was used to support the work of the priesthood, when he wrote:



If we have sown spiritual seed among you, is it too much if we reap a material harvest from you? If others have this right of support from you, shouldn't we have it all the more? But we did not use this right. On the contrary, we put up with anything rather than hinder the gospel of Christ. Don't you know that those who work in the temple get their food from the temple, and those who serve at the altar share in what is offered on the altar? In the same way, the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should receive their living from the gospel.

1 Corinthians 9:11-14 NIV

Interestingly enough, one of the few times in the Bible where God tells us to test Him has to do with the tithe:



Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and try Me now in this, says the LORD of hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven

and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.

Malachi 3:10

Because God is the creator, and therefore ultimately the owner of all things, He has the right to claim some things for Himself. We have seen that He did that with time. Right in the beginning, in Eden, God set aside a tree, and said not to touch it. Was the tree poisonous? No. Was it repulsive looking? No. Was it's fruit bitter, sour? No. Then why did God reserve that one tree? It was, as the story unfolded, the point of opportunity for Adam and Eve to demonstrate their trust in God. What would trust be without some way to show it?

It's the same with tithe. Ultimately, all of our material possessions belong to God. To remind us of that, and as a practical opportunity to demonstrate our trust in God and belief that He cares for us, He reserves one tenth of our increase for Himself.

In our western society, where people are measured by the size of their bank balance, or the car they drive, or the house they live in, or their prowess at business, God says, wait. That's not how I see it.



Who (God) fed you in the wilderness with manna, which your fathers did not know, that He might humble you and that He might test you, to do you good in the end - then you say in your heart, My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth. And you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who gives you power to get wealth, that He may establish His covenant which He

swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Deuteronomy 8:16-18

There is nothing that we possess - either material or spiritual - that does not come from God, the great giver. Tithing is our way of saying to God, *I acknowledge you as my God, and all I have comes from you. Thank you.* We can trust God. It's amazing how nine tenths, with God's blessing, goes further than ten tenths without it!

TO WHOM MUCH IS GIVEN

In the end, in Christ, we are no longer slaves, and so we shouldn't view ourselves that way. Instead, we are free; with a new life in Him. Because we can't earn our salvation, all we can do is show our gratitude and thankfulness for it. And we do that by living as God has asked us to live, and by being good managers of every aspect of our life, which includes two of the most precious aspects that we can tend to be most selfish with - our time and our money.

Perhaps the principle that reveals it the best is found in these words:



For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more.

Luke 12:48

In this epic story in which we find ourselves, the issues remain the same. Remember, God gave Adam and Eve the fruit of all the trees except one. It was a test of faith and trust. God was serious.



Then the serpent said to the woman, You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.

Genesis 3:4-5

Is God fair? Absolutely. Is He holding something good back from us? Absolutely not. He provides the very air we breathe. Like the one tree in the garden, with His tithes God gives us the opportunity to show, in a practical way, our trust and dependence on Him. The epic struggle comes right down to the personal level too.



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