

THE CRY OF
WITHHELD
WAGES



Compiled by Dr. Harold Bollinger

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Forward

The powerless and poverty-stricken are often looked upon as incompetent or lazy when, in fact, they may be victims of oppression and circumstance. God says we must do all we can to help these needy ones.

Christian leaders need money to live and to support their families; missionaries need money to help them spread the gospel; churches need money to do their work effectively.

It is the *love* of money that leads to evil (1 Tim. 6:10) and causes some people to oppress others in order to get more. This is a warning to all Christians who are tempted to adopt worldly standards rather than God's standards (Romans 12:1-2) as well as an encouragement to all those who are oppressed by the rich.

Allow the Holy Spirit to speak to you concerning your view of money.

Chapter 1



Give wages on the day of work.

Deuteronomy 24:14-15

"You shall not oppress a hired servant who is poor and needy, whether he is one of your countrymen or one of your aliens who is in your land in your towns.

“You shall give him his wages on his day before the sun sets, for he is poor and sets his heart on it; so that he will not cry against you to the LORD and it became sin in you.

Throughout the Old Testament God told his people to treat the poor with justice. The powerless and poverty-stricken are often looked upon as incompetent or lazy when, in fact, they may be victims of oppression and circumstance. God says we must do all we can to help these needy ones.

His justice did not permit the Israelites to insist on profits or quick payment from those who were less fortunate.

Instead, his laws gave the poor every opportunity to better their situation, while providing humane options for those who couldn't. None of us is completely isolated from the poor. God wants us to treat them fairly and do our part to see that their needs are met.

God's people were instructed to leave some of their harvest in the fields so travelers and the poor could gather it.

This second gathering, called gleaning, was a way for them to provide food for themselves. Years later, Ruth obtained food for herself and Naomi by gleaning behind the reapers in Boaz's field, picking up the leftovers (Ruth 2:2).

Because this law was being obeyed years after it was written, Ruth, a woman in Christ's lineage, was able to find food.

Do not rob your neighbor of his wages

Leviticus 19:13

'You shall not oppress your neighbor, nor rob him the wages of a hired man are not to remain with you all night until morning.

This law was a protection for the poor and the alien (foreigner) and a reminder that God owned the land; the people were only caretakers.

Laws such as this showed God's generosity and liberality. As people of God, the Israelites were to reflect his nature and characteristics in their attitudes and actions. Ruth and Naomi were two people who benefited from this merciful law (Ruth 2:2).

God instructed the Hebrews to provide for those in need. He required that the people leave the edges of their fields unharvested, providing food for travelers and the poor. It is easy to ignore the poor or forget about those who have less than we do.

But God desires generosity. In what ways can you leave the "edges of your field" for those in need?

"Do not. . ." Some people think the Bible is nothing but a book of don'ts. But Jesus neatly summarized all these rules when he said to love God with all your heart, and your neighbor as yourself. He called these the greatest commandments (or rules) of all (Matthew 22:34-40).

By carrying out Jesus' simple commands, we find ourselves following all of God's other laws as well.

Calculate from the year of jubilee

Leviticus 25:50

'He then with his purchaser shall calculate from the year when he sold himself to him up to the year of jubilee; and the price of his sale shall correspond to the number of years. It is like the days of a hired man that he shall be with him.

On the year of jubilee, the captives were set free.

Mark 6:37

But He answered them, "You give them something to eat!" And they said to Him, "Shall we go and spend two hundred denarii on bread and give them something to eat?"

In this chapter different people have examined Jesus' life and ministry: his neighbors and family, Herod the king, and the disciples.

Yet none of these appreciated Jesus for who he was. The disciples were still pondering, still confused, still unbelieving. They did not realize that Jesus could provide for them.

They were so preoccupied with the immensity of the task that they could not see what was possible with God. Do you let what seems impossible about Christianity keep you from believing?

When Jesus asked the disciples to provide food for over 5,000 people, they asked in astonishment if they should go and spend eight months' wages on bread.

How do you react when you are given an impossible task? A situation that seems impossible with human resources is simply an opportunity for God.

The disciples did everything they could by gathering the available food and organizing the people into groups. Then, in answer to prayer, God did the impossible.

When facing a seemingly impossible task, do what you can and ask God to do the rest. He may see fit to make the impossible happen.

The price of the perfume

Mark 14:5

"For this perfume might have been sold for over three hundred denarii, and the money given to the poor." And they were scolding her.

Where Mark says "some of those present," John specifically mentions Judas (John 12:4-5). Judas's indignation over Mary's act of worship was based not on concern for the poor but on greed. Because Judas was the treasurer of Jesus' ministry and had embezzled funds (John 12:6), he no doubt wanted the perfume sold so that the proceeds could be put into his care.

John 12:5

"Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii and given to poor people?"

Judas used a pious phrase to hide his true motives. But Jesus knew what was in his heart. Judas's life had become a lie, and the devil was entering him (John 13:27).

Satan is the father of lies, and a lying character opens the door to his influence. Jesus' knowledge of us should make us want to keep our actions consistent with our words. Because we have nothing to fear with him, we should have nothing to hide.

Judgment will come to those who oppress the wage earner

Malachi 3:5

"Then I will draw near to you for judgment; and I will be a swift witness against the sorcerers and against the adulterers and against those who swear falsely, and against those who oppress the wage earner in his wages, the widow and the orphan, and those who turn aside the alien and do not fear Me," says the LORD of hosts.

God's patience seems endless! Throughout history, his people have disobeyed, even scorned, his laws, but he has always been willing to accept them back.

Here, however, the people have the nerve to imply that they never disobeyed ("How are we to return?")! Many people have turned their backs on forgiveness and restoration because they have refused to admit their sin. Don't follow their example. God is ready to return to us if we are willing to return to him.

The cry of the wage earner has reached to the Lord

James 5:4

Behold, the pay of the laborers who mowed your fields, and which has been withheld by you, cries out against you; and the outcry of those who did the harvesting has reached the ears of the Lord of Sabbath.

James proclaims the worthlessness of riches, not the worthlessness of the rich. Today's money will be worthless when Christ returns, so we should spend our time accumulating the kind of treasures that will be worthwhile in God's eternal kingdom. Money is not the problem;

Christian leaders need money to live and to support their families; missionaries need money to help them spread the gospel; churches need money to do their work effectively.

It is the *love* of money that leads to evil (1 Tim. 6:10) and causes some people to oppress others in order to get more. This is a warning to all Christians who are tempted to adopt worldly standards rather than God's standards (Romans 12:1-2) as well as an encouragement to all those who are oppressed by the rich.

Innocent men were defenseless persons, probably poor laborers. Poor people who could not pay their debts were thrown in prison or forced to sell all their possessions.

At times, they were even forced to sell their family members into slavery. With no opportunity to work off their debts, poor people often died of starvation. God called this murder.

Hoarding money, exploiting employees, and living self-indulgently will not escape God's notice.

Who to him who uses his neighbor's service without pay.

Jeremiah 22:13

"Woe to him who builds his house without righteousness and his upper rooms without justice, who uses his neighbor's services without pay And does not give him his wages,

Workers agreed to the amount of pay.

Matthew 20:2-4

"When he had agreed with the laborers for a denarius for the day, he sent them into his vineyard. And he went out about the third hour and saw others standing idle in the market place; and to those he said, 'You also go into the vineyard, and whatever is right I will give you.' And so they went.

This parable is not about rewards but about salvation. It is a strong teaching about *grace*, God's generosity. We shouldn't begrudge those who turn to God in the last moments of life, because, in reality, *no one* deserves eternal life.

Many people we don't expect to see in the kingdom will be there. The criminal who repented as he was dying (Luke 23:40-43) will be there along with people who have believed and served God for many years.

Do you resent God's gracious acceptance of the despised, the outcast, and the sinners who have turned to him for forgiveness?

Chapter 2



Masters grant to your slaves justice and fairness.

Colossians 4:1

Masters, grant to your slaves justice and fairness, knowing that you too have a Master in heaven.

He who will not work is not to eat.

2 Thessalonians 3:10-12

For even when we were with you, we used to give you this order: if anyone is not willing to work, then he is not to eat, either. For we hear that some among you are leading an undisciplined life, doing no work at all, but acting like busybodies. Now such persons we command and exhort in the Lord Jesus Christ to work in quiet fashion and eat their own bread.

Paul was writing here about the person who is lazy. Paul explained that when he and his companions were in Thessalonica, they worked hard, buying what they needed rather than becoming a burden to any of the believers.

The rule they followed was, “If a man will not work, he shall not eat.”

There’s a difference between leisure and laziness. Relaxation and recreation provide a necessary and much needed balance to our lives; but when it is time to work, Christians should jump right in.

We should make the most of our talent and time, doing all we can to provide for our dependents and ourselves.

Rest when you should be resting, and work when you should be working.

Some people in the Thessalonian church were falsely teaching that because Christ would return any day, people should set aside their responsibilities, quit work, do no future planning, and just wait for the Lord.

But their lack of activity only led them into sin. They became a burden to the church, which was supporting them; they wasted time that could have been used for helping others; and they became “busybodies” (2 Thes. 3:11).

These church members may have thought that they were being more spiritual by not working, but Paul tells them to be responsible and get back to work.

Being ready for Christ means obeying him in every area of life. Because we know that Christ is coming, we must live in such a way that our faith and our daily practice will please him when he arrives.

Both bond and free are to render service to the Lord

Ephesians 6:7-8

With good will render service, as to the Lord, and not to men, knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord, whether slave or free.

Paul's instructions encourage responsibility and integrity on the job. Christian employees should do their jobs as if Jesus Christ were their supervisor. And Christian employers should treat their employees fairly and with respect. Can you be trusted to do your best, even when the boss is not around?

Do you work hard and with enthusiasm? Do you treat your employees as people, not machines? Remember that no matter whom you work for, and no matter who works for you, the One you ultimately should want to please is your Father in heaven

Work heartily as unto the Lord

Colossians 3:23

Whatever you do, do your work heartily, as for the Lord rather than for men,

Since the creation, God has given us work to do. If we could regard our work as an act of worship or service to God, such an attitude would take some of the drudgery and boredom out of it. We could work without complaining or resentment if we would treat our job problems as the cost of discipleship.

Do not take money from anyone by force.

Luke 3:14

Some soldiers were questioning him, saying, "And what about us, what shall we do?" And he said to them, "Do not take money from anyone by force, or accuse anyone falsely, and be content with your wages."

Tax collectors were notorious for their dishonesty. Romans gathered funds for their government by farming out the collection privilege. Tax collectors earned their own living by adding a sizable sum—whatever they could get away with—to the total and keeping this money for themselves.

Unless the people revolted and risked Roman retaliation, they had to pay whatever was demanded. Obviously they hated the tax collectors, who were generally dishonest, greedy, and ready to betray their own countrymen for cold cash.

Yet, said John, God would accept even these men; God desires to pour out mercy on those who confess, and then to give strength to live changed lives.

John's message took root in unexpected places—among the poor, the dishonest, and even the hated occupation army. These people were painfully aware of their needs.

Too often we confuse respectability with right living. They are not the same. Respectability can even hinder right living if it keeps us from seeing our need for God. If you had to choose, would you protect your character or your reputation?

These soldiers were the Roman troops sent to keep peace in this distant province. Many of them oppressed the poor and used their power to take advantage of all the people. John called them to repent and change their ways.

The hired laborers will be grieved in soul.

Isaiah 19:10

And the pillars of Egypt will be crushed; all the hired laborers will be grieved in soul.

Egypt was noted for its wisdom, but here its wise men and officials were deceived and foolish. True wisdom can come only from God. We must ask him for wisdom to guide our decisions, or we will also be uncertain and misdirected. Are you confused about something now? Ask God for wisdom to deal with it.

Wages will be put in a bag with holes.

Haggai 1:6

"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."

God asked his people how they could live in luxury when his house was lying in ruins. The temple was the focal point of Judah's relationship with God, but it was still demolished. Instead of rebuilding the temple, the people put their energies into beautifying their own homes.

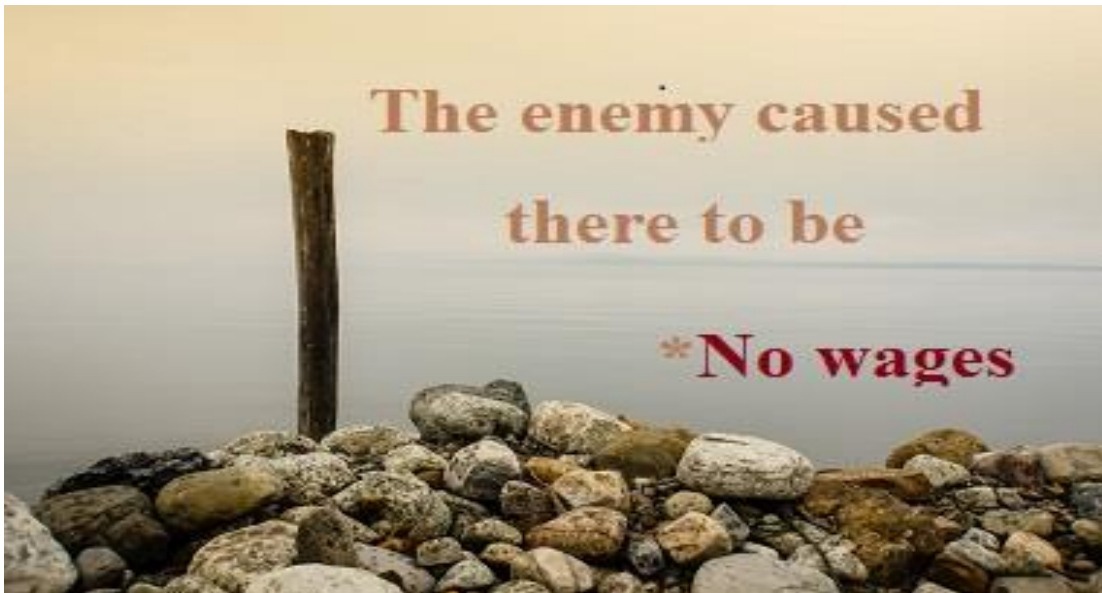
However, the harder the people worked for themselves, the less they had, because they ignored their spiritual lives. The same happens to us. If we put God first, he will provide for our deepest needs.

If we put him in any other place, all our efforts will be futile. Caring only for your physical needs while ignoring your relationship with God will lead to ruin.

Because the people had not given God first place in their lives, their work was not fruitful or productive, and their material possessions did not satisfy.

While they concentrated on building and beautifying their own homes, God's blessing was withheld because they no longer put him in first place. Moses had predicted that this would be the result if the people neglected God (Deut. 28:38-45).

Chapter 3



The enemy caused there to be no wages

Zechariah 8:10

'For before those days there was no wage for man or any wage for animal; and for him who went out or came in there was no peace because of his enemies, and I set all men one against another.

God had to give the temple workers a little push to get them moving. They had heard the prophets' words of encouragement; at this time they needed to stop just listening and get to work. We need to listen to what God says, but after he has made our course of action plain, we need to "be strong" and do what he wants.

For more than 15 years, God and his prophets had been urging the people to finish building the temple. Here again, God encouraged them with visions of the future.

We may be tempted to slow down for many reasons: people aren't responding; we feel physically or emotionally drained; the workers are uncooperative; the work is distasteful, too difficult, or not worth the effort.

God's promises about the future should encourage us *now*. He knows what the results of our labors will be, and thus he can give us a perspective that will help us continue in our work for him.

God promised to give his people rich rewards, reassuring them that despite the punishments they had endured, he would not change his mind to bless them.

But he also said they had a job to do—"These are the things you are to do." God will be faithful, but we also have responsibilities: to tell the truth, exercise justice, and live peacefully. If you expect God to do his part, be sure to do yours.

Food became very expensive

Revelation 6:6

And I heard something like a voice in the center of the four living creatures saying, "A quart of wheat for a denarius, and three quarts of barley for a denarius; and do not damage the oil and the wine."

The high prices of wheat and barley illustrate famine conditions. But the worst is yet to come.

Jacob worked for a wife

Hosea 12:12

Now Jacob fled to the land of Aram, And Israel worked for a wife, And for a wife he kept sheep.

Hosea leveled his charges against the religious leaders. Who were these religious leaders?

When Jeroboam I rebelled against Solomon's son Rehoboam and set up a rival kingdom in the north, he also set up his own religious system (see 1 Kings 12:25-33).

In violation of God's law, he made two golden calves and told the people to worship them. He also appointed his own priests, who were not descendants of Aaron.

At first the residents of the northern kingdom continued to worship God, even though they were doing it in the wrong way, but very soon they also began to worship Canaanite gods.

Before long they had substituted Baal for God and no longer worshiped God at all. It is not surprising that Jeroboam's false priests were unable to preserve the true worship of God.

An agreement for wages

Genesis 29:15

Then Laban said to Jacob, "Because you are my relative, should you therefore serve me for nothing? Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

It was the custom of the day for a man to present a dowry, or substantial gift, to the family of his future wife.

This was to compensate the family for the loss of the girl.

Jacob's dowry was not a material possession, for he had none to offer. Instead he agreed to work seven years for Laban.

But there was another custom of the land that Laban did not tell Jacob. The older daughter had to be married first.

By giving Jacob Leah and not Rachel, Laban tricked him into promising another seven years of hard work.

Deceitful wages

Genesis 29:25-27

So it came about in the morning that, behold, it was Leah! And he said to Laban, "What is this you have done to me? Was it not for Rachel that I served with you? Why then have you deceived me?"

But Laban said, "It is not the practice in our place to marry off the younger before the firstborn. "Complete the week of this one, and we will give you the other also for the service which you shall serve with me for another seven years."

Jacob was enraged when he learned that Laban had tricked him. The deceiver of Esau was now deceived himself. How natural it is for us to become upset at an injustice done to us while closing our eyes to the injustices we do to others. Sin has a way of coming back to haunt us.

Although Jacob was tricked by Laban, he kept his part of the bargain. There was more at stake than just Jacob's hurt.

There was Rachel to think about, as well as God's plan for his life. When we are tricked by others, keeping our part of the bargain may still be wise.

Nursing our wounds or plotting revenge makes us unable to see from God's perspective.

Levites may eat as compensation for service

Numbers 18:30-31

"You shall say to them, 'When you have offered from it the best of it, then the rest shall be reckoned to the Levites as the product of the threshing floor, and as the product of the wine vat. 'You may eat it

anywhere, you and your households, for it is your compensation in return for your service in the tent of meeting.

Unpaid, the Levites went into the fields to work.

Nehemiah 13:10-13

I also discovered that the Levites had not been given what was due them, so they and the singers who were to conduct the worship services had all returned to work their fields.

I immediately confronted the leaders and demanded, "Why has the Temple of God been neglected?" Then I called all the Levites back again and restored them to their proper duties.

And once more all the people of Judah began bringing their tithes of grain, new wine, and olive oil to the Temple storerooms.

I put Shelemiah the priest, Zadok the scribe, and Pedaiah, one of the Levites, in charge of the storerooms. And I appointed Hanan son of Zaccur and grandson of Mattaniah as their assistant. These men had an excellent reputation, and it was their job to make honest distributions to their fellow Levites.

Because the Levites were no longer supported, they had returned to their farms to support themselves, neglecting their temple duties and the spiritual welfare of the people.

Spiritual workers deserve their pay, and their support ought to be enough to care for their needs. They shouldn't have to suffer (or leave) because believers don't adequately assess and meet the needs of their ministers.

Chapter 4



Servants will be given wages

1 Kings 5:6

"Now therefore, command that they cut for me cedars from Lebanon, and my servants will be with your servants; and I will give you wages for your servants according to all that you say, for you know that there is no one among us who knows how to cut timber like the Sidonians."

When David offered to build a temple, God said no through the prophet Nathan (2 Samuel 7:1-17). God wanted a peacemaker, not a warrior, to build his house of prayer (1 Chron. 28:2-3).

Solomon drafted three times the number of workers needed for the temple project and then arranged their schedules so they didn't have to be away from home for long periods of time.

This showed his concern for the welfare of his workers and the importance he placed on family life. The strength of a nation is in direct proportion to the strength of its families.

Solomon wisely recognized that family should always be a top priority. As you structure your own work or arrange the schedules of others, watch for the impact of your plans on families.

Those who did the work were given money.

2 Kings 12:11-15

They gave the money which was weighed out into the hands of those who did the work, who had the oversight of the house of the LORD; and they paid it out to the carpenters and the builders who worked on the house of the LORD; and to the masons and the stonecutters, and for buying timber and hewn stone to repair the damages to the house of the LORD, and for all that was laid out for the house to repair it.

But there were not made for the house of the LORD silver cups, snuffers, bowls, trumpets, any vessels of gold, or vessels of silver from the money which was brought into the house of the LORD; read more.

What a contrast between the workmen who needed no accounting of their use of the money, and the priests who couldn't be trusted to handle their funds well enough to set some aside for the temple (2 Kings 12:8).

As trained men of God, the Levites should have been responsible and concerned. After all, the temple was their life's work.

Though the priests were not dishonest, they did not have the commitment or energy needed to finish the work. Sometimes God's work is better accomplished by devoted laypeople.

Don't let your lack of training or position stop you from contributing to God's kingdom. Everyone's energy is needed to carry out God's work.

Deliver the money to the workman

2 Kings 22:3-7

Now in the eighteenth year of King Josiah, the king sent Shaphan, the son of Azaliah the son of Meshullam the scribe, to the house of the LORD saying, "Go up to Hilkiah the high priest that he may count the money brought in to the house of the LORD which the doorkeepers have gathered from the people.

"Let them deliver it into the hand of the workmen who have the oversight of the house of the LORD, and let them give it to the workmen who are in the house of the LORD to repair the damages of the house, read more.

A person's major work for God may have to wait until he is an adult, but no one is ever too young to take God seriously and obey him. Josiah's early years laid the base for his later task of reforming Judah.

Because of the long line of evil kings, the record of God's laws had been lost. Josiah, who was about 26 years old at this time, wanted religious reform throughout the nation.

When God's Word was found, drastic changes had to be made to bring the kingdom in line with God's commands. Today you have God's Word at your fingertips. How much change must you make in order to bring your life into line with God's Word?

If it is good in your sight, give me my wages.

Zechariah 11:12-13

I said to them, "If it is good in your sight, give me my wages; but if not, never mind!" So they weighed out thirty shekels of silver as my wages. Then the LORD said to me, "Throw it to the potter, that magnificent price at which I was valued by them." So I took the thirty shekels of silver and threw them to the potter in the house of the LORD.

To pay this shepherd 30 pieces of silver was an insult—this was the price paid to an owner for a slave gored by an ox (Exodus 21:32). This is also the amount Judas received for betraying Jesus (Matthew 27:3-10). The priceless Messiah was sold for the price of a slave.

Potters were in the lowest social class. The “handsome price” (a sarcastic comment) was so little that it could be thrown to the potter. It is significant that the 30 pieces of silver paid to Judas for betraying Jesus were returned to the temple and used to buy a potter’s field (Matthew 27:3-10).

Judas threw the money into the sanctuary

Matthew 27:3-10

When Judas, who had betrayed him, realized that Jesus had been condemned to die, he was filled with remorse. So he took the thirty pieces of silver back to the leading priests and other leaders.

"I have sinned," he declared, "for I have betrayed an innocent man."

"What do we care?" they retorted. "That's your problem." Then Judas threw the money onto the floor of the Temple and went out and hanged himself.

The leading priests picked up the money. "We can't put it in the Temple treasury," they said, "since it's against the law to accept money paid for murder."

After some discussion they finally decided to buy the potter's field, and they made it into a cemetery for foreigners.

That is why the field is still called the Field of Blood. This fulfilled the prophecy of Jeremiah that says,

"They took the thirty pieces of silver—the price at which he was valued by the people of Israel— and purchased the potter's field, as the Lord directed."

Jesus' formal accuser (see Matthew 26:48 note) wanted to drop his charges, but the religious leaders refused to halt the trial.

When he betrayed Jesus, perhaps Judas was trying to force Jesus' hand to get him to lead a revolt against Rome. This did not work, of course. Whatever his reason, Judas changed his mind, but it was too late. Many of the plans we set into motion cannot be reversed. It is best to think of

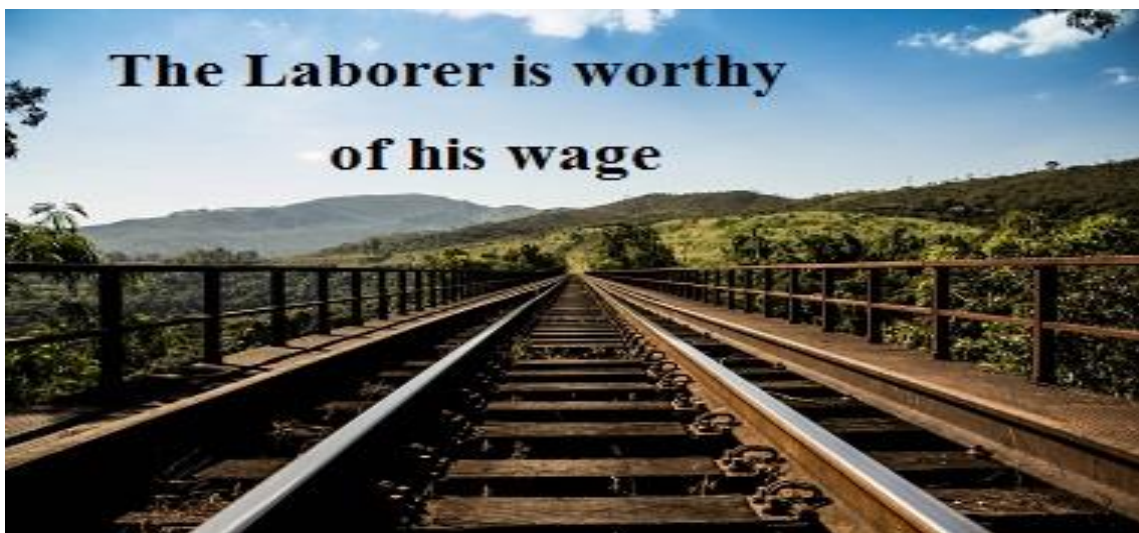
the potential consequences before we launch into an action we may later regret.

The priests' job was to teach people about God and act as intercessors for them, helping administer the sacrifices to cover their sins. Judas returned to the priests, exclaiming that he had sinned.

Rather than helping him find forgiveness, however, the priests said, "That's your responsibility." Not only had they rejected the Messiah, they had rejected their role as priests.

These chief priests felt no guilt in giving Judas money to betray an innocent man, but when Judas returned the money, the priests couldn't accept it because it was wrong to accept blood money—payment for murder! Their hatred for Jesus had caused them to lose all sense of justice.

Chapter 5



The laborer is worthy of his wages.

1 Timothy 5:17-18

The elders who rule well are to be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, "YOU SHALL NOT MUZZLE THE OX WHILE HE IS THRESHING," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Faithful church leaders should be supported and appreciated. Too often they are targets for criticism because the congregation has unrealistic expectations. How do you treat your church leaders? Do you enjoy finding fault, or do you show your appreciation?

Do they receive enough financial support to allow them to live without worry and to provide for the needs of their families? Jesus and Paul emphasized the importance of supporting those who lead and teach us (see Galatians 6:6 and the notes on ■ Luke 10:7 and ■ 1 Cor. 9:4-10).

Preaching and teaching are closely related. Preaching is proclaiming the Word of God and confronting listeners with the truth of Scripture. Teaching is explaining the truth in Scripture, helping learners understand difficult passages, and helping them apply God's Word to daily life.

Paul says that these elders are worthy of double honor. Unfortunately, however, we often take them for granted by not providing adequately for their needs or by subjecting them to heavy criticism. Think of how you can honor your preachers and teachers.

Luke 10:7

"Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

generously.

s' direction to stay in one house avoided certain problems. Shifting from house to house could offend the families who first took them in. Some families might begin to compete for the disciples' presence, and some might think they weren't good enough to hear their message. If the disciples appeared not to appreciate the hospitality offered them, the town might not accept Jesus when he followed them there. In addition, by staying in one place, the disciples did not have to worry continually about getting good accommodations. They could settle down and do their appointed task.

Jesus told his disciples to accept hospitality graciously because their work entitled them to it.

Ministers of the gospel deserve to be supported, and it is our responsibility to make sure they have what they need. There are several ways to encourage those who serve God in his church.

First, see that they have an adequate salary.

Second, see that they are supported emotionally; plan a time to express appreciation for something they have done.

, lift their spirits with special surprises from time to time. Our ministers deserve to know we are giving to them cheerfully and

Gathering fruit for life eternal

John 4:36-38

"Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal; so that he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. "For in this case the saying is true, 'One sows and another reaps.' "I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored and you have entered into their labor."

The wages Jesus offers are the joy of working for him and seeing the harvest of believers. These wages come to sower and reaper alike because both find joy in seeing new believers come into Christ's kingdom.

The phrase "others have done the hard work" (John 4:38) may refer to the Old Testament prophets and to John the Baptist, who paved the way for the gospel.

Share good things with the one who teaches the word.

Galatians 6:6

The one who is taught the word is to share all good things with the one who teaches him.

Paul says that students should take care of the material needs of their teachers (1 Cor. 9:7-12). It is easy to receive the benefit of good Bible teaching and then to take our spiritual leaders for granted, ignoring their financial and physical needs.

We should care for our teachers, not grudgingly or reluctantly, but with a generous spirit, showing honor and appreciation for all they have done (1 Tim. 5:17-18).

Paul received wages from other churches, so he could preach.

2 Corinthians 11:7-9

Or did I commit a sin in humbling myself so that you might be exalted, because I preached the gospel of God to you without charge? I robbed other churches by taking wages from them to serve you; and when I was present with you and was in need, I was not a burden to anyone; for when the brethren came from Macedonia they fully supplied my need, and in everything I kept myself from being a burden to you, and will continue to do so.

The Corinthians may have thought that preachers could be judged by how much money they demand. A good speaker would charge a large sum, a fair speaker would be a little cheaper, and a poor speaker would speak for free.

The false teachers may have argued that because Paul asked no fee for his preaching, he must have been an amateur, with little authority or competence. Believers today must be careful not to assume that every speaker who is well known and demands a large honorarium is superior at explaining and applying God's Word.

Paul could have asked the Corinthian church for financial support. Jesus himself taught that those who the people to whom should support minister for God they minister (Matthew 10:10).

But Paul thought that asking for support in Corinth might be misunderstood.

There were many false teachers who hoped to make a good profit from preaching (2 Cor. 2:17), and Paul might look like one of them. Paul separated himself completely from those false teachers in order to silence those who only claimed to do God's work.

What you have given is well pleasing to God

Philippians 4:18

But I have received everything in full and have abundance; I am amply supplied, having received from Epaphroditus what you have sent, a fragrant aroma, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God.

Paul was not referring to a sin offering but to a thank offering, “a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God” (Leviticus 7:12-15 contains the instructions for thank offerings).

Although the Greek and Roman Christians were not Jews, and they had not offered sacrifices according to the Old Testament laws, they were well acquainted with the pagan rituals of offering sacrifices.

A man will reap what he sows

Galatians 6:7-10

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

It would certainly be a surprise if you planted corn and pumpkins came up. It's a natural law to reap what we sow. It's true in other areas too. If you gossip about your friends, you will lose their friendship. Every action has results. If you plant to please your own desires, you'll reap a

crop of sorrow and evil. If you plant to please God, you'll reap joy and everlasting life. What kind of seeds are you sowing?

It is discouraging to continue to do right and receive no word of thanks or see no tangible results. But Paul challenged the Galatians and he challenges us to keep on doing good and to trust God for the results. In due time, we will reap a harvest of blessing.

The wages of sin is death.

Romans 6:21-23

Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.

For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.

It is impossible to be neutral. Every person has a master—either God or sin. A Christian is not someone who cannot sin, but someone who is no longer a slave to sin. He or she belongs to God

Suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong.

2 Peter 2:13

Suffering wrong as the wages of doing wrong they count it a pleasure to revel in the daytime they are stains and blemishes, reveling in their deceptions, as they carouse with you.

The feast may have been part of the celebration of the Lord's Supper. The feast was a full meal that ended with Communion.

The false teachers, although they were sinning openly, took part in these meals with everyone else in the church. In one of the greatest of hypocritical acts, they attended a sacred feast designed to promote love and unity among believers, while at the same time they gossiped and slandered those who disagreed with their opinions.

As Paul told the Corinthians, "Therefore, whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of sinning against the body and blood of the Lord" (1 Cor. 11:27). These men were guilty of more than false teaching and promoting evil pleasures; they were guilty of leading others away from God's Son, Jesus.

Wages is not credited with favor, but with what is due

Romans 4:4-5

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness,

All received the same wage.

Matthew 20:9-16

"When those hired about the eleventh hour came, each one received a denarius. When those hired first came, they thought that they would receive more; but each of them also received a denarius. "When they received it, they grumbled at the landowner.

This verse means that if a person could earn right standing with God by being good, the granting of that gift wouldn't be a free act; it would be an obligation. Our self-reliance is futile; all we can do is cast ourselves on God's mercy and grace.

When some people learn that God saves them through faith, they start to worry. "Do I have enough faith?" they wonder, "Is my faith strong enough to save me?" These people miss the point. It is Jesus Christ who saves us, not *our* feelings or actions, and he is strong enough to save us no matter how weak our faith is. Jesus offers us salvation as a gift because he loves us, not because we have earned it through our powerful faith. What, then, is the role of faith? Faith is believing and trusting in Jesus Christ, and reaching out to accept his wonderful gift of salvation.

The income of the wicked is punishment

Proverbs 10:16

The wages of the righteous is life, the income of the wicked, and punishment.

He who sows righteousness gets a true reward

Proverbs 11:18

The wicked earns deceptive wages, but he who sows righteousness gets a true reward.

Righteous people attain life because they live life more fully each day. They also attain life because people usually live longer when they live right, with proper diet, exercise, and rest. In addition, they need not fear death because eternal life is God's gift to them (John 11:25).

By contrast, evil people not only find eternal death, but also miss out on real life on earth.

Chapter 6



Let the work of your hands please the Lord.

Proverbs 31:31

Give her the product of her hands, and let her works praise her in the gates.

The book of Proverbs begins with the command to fear the Lord (Proverbs 1:7) and ends with the picture of a woman who fulfills this command.

Her qualities are mentioned throughout the book: hard work, fear of God, respect for spouse, foresight, encouragement, care for others, concern for the poor, wisdom in handling money.

These qualities, when coupled with fear of God, lead to enjoyment, success, honor, and worth. Proverbs is very practical for our day because it shows us how to become wise, make good decisions, and live according to God's ideal.

Giving even a cup of cold water is blessed

Matthew 10:42

"And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you, he shall not lose his reward."

How much we love God can be measured by how well we treat others. Jesus' example of giving a cup of cold water to a thirsty child is a good model of unselfish service.

A child usually can't or won't return a favor. God notices every good deed we do or don't do as if he were the one receiving it. Is there something unselfish you can do for someone else today?

Although no one else may see you, God will notice.

One who gives will not lose his reward

Mark 9:41

"For whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because of your name as followers of Christ, truly I say to you, he will not lose his reward.

Luke 9:48 states, "He who is least among you all—he is the greatest."

In Jesus' eyes, whoever welcomes a child welcomes Jesus; giving a cup of cold water to a person in need is the same as giving an offering to God.

By contrast, harming others or failing to care for them is a sin, even if they are unimportant people in the world's eyes. It is possible for thoughtless, selfish people to gain a measure of worldly greatness, but lasting greatness is measured by God's standards. What do you use as your measure—personal achievement or unselfish service?

This caution against harming little ones in the faith applies both to what we do individually as teachers and examples and to what we allow to fester in our Christian fellowship.

Our thoughts and actions must be motivated by love (1 Cor. 13), and we must be careful about judging others (Matthew 7:1-5; Romans 14:1-15:4).

However, we also have a responsibility to confront flagrant sin within the church (1 Cor. 5:12-13).

A man's work will remain.

1 Corinthians 3:14

If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward.

Two sure ways to destroy a building are to tamper with the foundation and to build with inferior materials. The church must be built on Christ, not on any other person or principle.

Christ will evaluate each minister's contribution to the life of the church, and the day of judgment ("the Day") will reveal the sincerity of each person's work.

God will determine whether or not they have been faithful to Jesus' instructions. Good work will be rewarded; unfaithful or inferior work will be discounted.

The builder "will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames" means that unfaithful workers will be saved, but like people escaping from a burning building. All their possessions (accomplishments) will be lost.

God is still ministering to the saints

Hebrews 6:10

For God is not unjust so as to forget your work and the love which you have shown toward His name, in having ministered and in still ministering to the saints.

It's easy to get discouraged, thinking that God has forgotten us. But God is never unjust. He never forgets or overlooks our hard work for him.

Presently you may not be receiving rewards and acclaim, but God knows your efforts of love and ministry. Let God's love for you and his intimate knowledge of your service for him bolster you as you face disappointment and rejection here on earth.

To ask Jesus to come into your heart please pray this Prayer: Dear Lord Jesus, I believe you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. I ask you to forgive me of my sins and coming into my heart. I accept you as savior and will follow you as Lord. Amen.

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Additional comments and charts are taken from:

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