

My Thoughts For Sunday, June 1st 2014

"Financial Challenges in These Trying Times."

"Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for whoever loves others has fulfilled the law."

[Romans 13:8](#) (NIV2011)

This is tremendous advice in these trying times; advice that holds great responsibility and even greater promise.

I recently addressed our own congregation with these words as we, like so many other churches and most individuals, are experiencing the same issues. It seems debts always come due with more regularity than the funds to resolve them. This is so true in my life, your life and often the life of our church.

God, through Paul, plainly addressed this problem with a simple statement, *"Let no debt remain outstanding"* You might say, *"That's easier said than done"* and quite honestly you would be right. Regardless, it is a command of God and must be adhered to in order to fulfill our duties of being good stewards of the continuing gifts He gives us. Paul went on to say, under divine direction, *"except the continuing debt of love to one another"*. This word "continuing" has an implication of a never ending activity. We need to continue to love one another, part of God's great commission placed upon us.

What better way of showing our love for one another than fulfilling our financial responsibilities regarding the church and being able and available to share the Word of God with our friends and neighbors as Jesus offered "the saving water of life." In these troubling times as we near the end of the age, we need to be diligent in doing all that is necessary and right to keep an open door policy on the churches that are offering this Word, this Water of Life. Paul ends this command with the comforting words that *"whoever loves others has fulfilled the law."* It is truly comforting to be told that by merely and joyfully showing love to these brothers and sisters in Christ that we are fulfilling the law.

Looking back into the words of God through Malachi we hear God reprimanding His people for stealing from Him by not giving proper 'tithes and offerings.' [Malachi 3:8-11](#) What are these proper tithes and offerings? This is a much argued question among the various churches and peoples still today. We as God's children have the same questions and concerns. However, we as His children, also have His examples and answers.

Let's look at a few simple and plain directions. First, Paul gave us some simple direction and insight in his letter to the people of Corinth prior to his scheduled visit, [1 Corinthians 16:2](#) *"On the first day of every week, each one of you should set aside a sum of money in keeping with your income, saving it up, so that when I come no collections will have to be made."* Notice, he didn't specify a percentage, set amount or any definite figure; rather an amount in keeping with one's income.

I always like to refer to the example given in [Mark 12:41-44](#). Here we see Jesus showing the great importance of the manner of the giving and the condition of the heart rather than the size of the gift..

"Jesus sat down opposite the place where the offerings were put and watched the crowd putting their money into the temple treasury. Many rich people threw in large amounts. But a poor widow came and put in two very small copper coins, worth only a few cents. Calling his disciples to him, Jesus said, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put more into the treasury than all the others. ⁴ They all gave out of their wealth; but she, out of her poverty, put in everything—all she had to live on."

Regarding generosity and giving from the heart" Remember this: *"Whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. Each of you should give what you have decided in your heart to give, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to bless you abundantly, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work."* 2 Corinthians 9:6-8

We must remember that only you and your God truly know of your wealth and also your heart condition. I would have great fear if the Lord would look at me and tell me I were robbing Him. Though I may not be monetarily wealthy, I feel that I am greatly blessed with all the Lord has given me and will continue to willingly return all my gifts, talents and treasures to my generous Lord. He has never left me to starve or left me without clothing or shelter.

You and I should readily rejoice in God's promise, written by Paul to the Philippians, *"And my God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus."* What greater promise do you require than to have ALL your needs met through Christ?