



GC, EAST- CENTRAL AFRICA **DIVISION**

STEWARDSHIP MINISTRIES EMPHASIS WEEK, 2016

THEME: "DO NOT USE THE CUPS"

Prepared and compiled.

By



Pr. William .K. Bagambe

**Stewardship & Trust Services Ministries.
East-Central Africa Division**

"The Wise Shall Understand"

Day 1 (SABBATH)

DO NOT USE THE CUPS! Daniel 5:1-30

(By Pr. William K. Bagambe, ECD Stewardship & Trust Services).

5 King Belshazzar gave a great banquet for a thousand of his nobles and drank wine with them. 2 While Belshazzar was drinking his wine, he gave orders to bring in the gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink from them. 3 So they brought in the gold goblets that had been taken from the temple of God in Jerusalem, and the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines drank from them. 4 As they drank the wine, they praised the gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone. 5 Suddenly the fingers of a human hand appeared and wrote on the plaster of the wall, near the lampstand in the royal palace. The king watched the hand as it wrote. 6 His face turned pale and he was so frightened that his legs became weak and his knees were knocking.

Beloved of God, mere reading the above verses, if you are spiritually functioning, will send you into fear and wonder.

First and foremost the verses give an environment that does not at all permit spirituality to thrive. It is an atmosphere full of drunkards including the king, concubines, wives and nobles. The environment is such that praises are given to the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stone. There is total disconnection from the creator, a total miss-link with heaven, a fertile ground for the evil one to plant his vices into human life, a life that was only created for the glory of God. No wonder while he was still drinking, King Belshazzar gave orders to bring in the holy gold and silver goblets that Nebuchadnezzar his father had taken from the holy temple in Jerusalem, so that the king and his nobles, his wives and his concubines might drink wine from them.

By this act or order, Belshazzar's mind lost cognizance of the fact that he was dealing with holiness of the holy GOD, now he was blaspheming the glory of God that was attached to the holy vessels. These were holy items from the holy temple of the most Holy God. When the mind gets into such spiritual miss-licks, there is no spiritual mistake one cannot get into, because every stage is set for a spiritual mistake anyway. Stage managed by the devil, one begins to take decisions against God and praises get directed to the adversary, the devil. As you can observe or understand, in the verses under our consideration right now, after getting drunk, praise went to the gods of gold, silver, bronze, iron, wood and stone. At this moment life is in a total mess and at stake spiritually!

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Brother/sister, holiness is holiness; there is nothing else you can call it. And it can only be ascribed to God almighty, the creator of heaven and earth and the springs of water. Do not allow any environment around you that will diffuse this holiness out your heart, mind and life.

Tithe is holy like the Sabbath is holy, like holy matrimony, and other holy items. This holiness was there, it is there and it will be there.

You mess up your life when you use tithe for purposes that it is not intended for. And am sure, soon God the owner of holiness in that tithe will send writing on the walls of your life. It is unfortunate that when such writing appears in your life, your face will definitely turn pale, your legs will become weak and you can be sure your knees will knock. Like it was with Belshazzar! Please do not use the cups!

It is true that many of us have created environment that has thwarted the activities of God and the Holy Spirit in our lives. We have messed our lives up by these environments of drunkenness. We are drunk with the cares of this world, borrowing (loans), and concubines of all sorts, partying, showing up and creating competition in the way we run our lives. When we get drunk, we call for tithe to be used in partying, in servicing loans, in buying houses and many other expenses. We praise the gods of gold and silver and our attentions are fully stolen into the world and God is cast out of our lives, forgetting that our total life is in HIS hands! He is actually the owner of life. Never loose sense of the holiness of God in any way, because if you do, there is nothing wrong that you cannot do. Do not use the cups! Let the holiness in the tithe be only for God alone. Do not join Belshazzar in his unspiritual acts and self-created dark environments.

After watching the fingers writing on the wall, Belshazzar messed up again, he summoned the enchanters, astrologers and diviners. Then he said to these wise men of Babylon, “Whoever reads this writing and tells me what it means will be clothed in purple and have a gold chain placed around his neck, and he will be made the third highest ruler in the kingdom. “Then all the king’s wise men came in, but they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant. So King Belshazzar became even more terrified and his face grew more pale. His nobles were baffled.

Note! The writing on the wall was done not by ordinary hands, it was not by human design, and it was not communicating human messages. Humanity had no hand in the stake of this transaction. It was God, the holy one who came in to arrest and thwart the actions of blaspheming His holiness. Once His holiness is blasphemed, God will always step in to stop the intentions and process. Check if you have anything like this in your life, of blaspheming God’s holiness, my brother or sister, please stop! What will do when His hand writes on the wall of your life?

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It was quite unfortunate for Belshazzar that when that happening occurred, he called on enchanters, astrologers and diviners, thinking they were wise, instead of calling on God almighty, the owner and custodian of wisdom! “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom” Psalm 111:10, Proverbs 9:10. Diviners, enchanters and astrologers are never at right angles with God. They have nothing to do with God. This was a total miscalculation on the part of the king. Such a move will not get you to anything right. Any matter from God (spiritual) must be handled to and with God please. You cannot take God’s affairs to diviners and expect anything positive. I mean those of us who purport to be members of the Church of the holy God and yet still consult diviners, magicians and others to get some situations explained or clarified. Please that is just building castles in the air. That’s why when all the king’s wise men came in, they could not read the writing or tell the king what it meant.

Today, if you cannot read the word of God and tell the meaning, you have lost all understanding! This is the genesis of all our current spiritual darkness and shortfalls and that’s the reason people are using the holy cups for their selfish ends and end up blaspheming the holiness of God. It’s important to read the word and know it and live by it and be doers of it.

Simple question may arise, if they failed to read and tell the meaning of the writing, then where was their wisdom. Any way there are some people who enjoy being called wise when they are not, others enjoy being called strong when they are actually weak, and others want to be called Christians and spiritual, when they are not. Others want to be called good when they are not. It is the events and situations that always prove these points. Soon our Lord is coming; this event will prove each one of us right or wrong on matters we profess.

If something is of God, please consult with God. Stewardship is about consulting with God all the time and in every aspect of life. Total dependence on God!

When you critically look at the prizes the king promised those who would read and tell the meaning of the writing, it was gold and power, items that have devastated human minds and lives including members in God’s house in contemporary times. Place God and gold on the table and ask anyone to choose one of the two, it is most likely that one will choose gold instead of God. You see and observe such choices in human dealings today. The prizes are also suggestive of the fact that those were the only available prizes, that’s all the environment could provide. Minds were clogged with gold and power. Like it is today. People have no place for God but have plenty of space for gold and power.

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The Queen

10 The queen, hearing the voices of the king and his nobles, came into the banquet hall. “May the king live forever!” she said. “Don’t be alarmed! Don’t look so pale! 11 There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. 12 He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”

Next to the problem lies a solution! There is always someone who knows what to do, when and where to go in times of trouble and uncertainty. Never think everyone is ignorant, do not think everyone is unfaithful, and don’t ever think everyone uses the holy cups or does not return the holy tithe to the Holy God almighty. Some people know the right place to go when the writing appears on the walls of their hearts. They know the right people to consult when their lives are at stake. “If kings do not know, at least queens know”. As a matter of fact there are such people in the Church of the holy God who know that tithe only belongs and is holy unto the Lord. Only that they constitute just a minute fraction of the bigger membership. Please brother and sister, join this group of the remnant in matters of holiness.

The queen came and told the king “do not be troubled there is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners. 12 He did this because Daniel, whom the king called Belshazzar, was found to have a keen mind and knowledge and understanding, and also the ability to interpret dreams, explain riddles and solve difficult problems. Call for Daniel, and he will tell you what the writing means.”

The queen was simply saying, in the same kingdom where there is a problem right now, there is a solution at the same time. There is a man! This man is Daniel. Remember Arioch the commander of the army during Nebuchadnezzar reign also described Daniel as a man, Daniel 2:25. You are not a man until you are with God. Beloved it’s God who makes you what you are! Without Him we can do nothing, John 15:5. You are only somebody when you have God with you.

According to the queen a man is constituted by the following; spirit of the holy God, insight, intelligence and wisdom. This is absolutely right. If we had the spirit of God, spiritual insight, intelligence and wisdom from above, we would be men and therefore, we would not be using the holy cups of the Lord for our selfish ends. I mean the Holy tithe and even offerings would be directed to the right cause of God alone.

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Daniel had been seen to be in possession of all the above mentioned qualities. On top, Daniel had a keen mind, knowledge and understanding and the ability to interpret dreams. Because of that, the queen had all the confidence, trust and hope that if Daniel was called in, he would clear the cloud of fear and trembling that the writing had caused in the life of the King and the rest of the people in the palace. And so she suggested that Daniel be called in.

Beloved, Daniel is now the only man left to be trusted and depended on by the entire Babylonian Kingdom. He was a true steward of God! Can we be this Daniel? Oh yes we can, that's what God is waiting for in us. In fact am looking forward to a time when the whole world will wait and depend on the Adventist Church for the explanation of the oracles and mysteries of God. This is and will be possible only and only when we gain possession of the spirit of God, spiritual insight, intelligence and wisdom from above.

Daniel's Speech to Belshazzar.

13 So Daniel was brought before the king and he refused the king's prizes. I will read the writing for the king and tell him what it means, said Daniel. 18 "You're Majesty, you remember what happened to your father Nebuchadnezzar, when his heart became arrogant and hardened with pride, he was deposed from his royal throne and stripped of his glory. 21 He was driven away from people and given the mind of an animal; he lived with the wild donkeys and ate grass like the ox; and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he acknowledged that the Most High God is sovereign over all kingdoms on earth and sets over them anyone he wishes.

22 "But you, Belshazzar, his son, have not humbled yourself, though you knew all this. 23 Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways. 24 Therefore he sent the hand that wrote the inscription.

25 "This is the inscription that was written: mene, mene, tekel, parsin

26 "Here is what these words mean: Mene: God has numbered the days of your reign and brought it to an end.

27 Tekel: You have been weighed on the scales and found wanting.

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28 Peres: Your kingdom is divided and given to the Medes and Persians."

29 Then at Belshazzar's command, Daniel was clothed in purple, a gold chain was placed around his neck, and he was proclaimed the third highest ruler in the kingdom.

30 That very night Belshazzar, king of the Babylonians was slain, 31 and Darius the Mede took over the kingdom, at the age of sixty-two.

From verse 13 all the way to verse 29, is Daniel's Speech to King Belshazzar. If you read it with your heart like the word of God is supposed to be read, first and foremost you will notice that Daniel has dismissed corruption, not need of prizes and there is nothing good or promising for Belshazzar. Everything is dark and black. Although he is giving gifts and power to Daniel, after the reading and interpretation, essentially there is no good reason for giving gifts, but he is just acting like any drunkard would do. Every line and word in every line was against Belshazzar because of his conduct and disregard of God's holiness. Are we any better in our stewardship responsibilities? Think through these words.

Belshazzar was not humble and he set up himself against God of Heaven when he called for the holy cups so he could drink wine from them. He did not honor God when he praised the gods of silver, gold, bronze, iron, wood and stones. Belshazzar forgot that God is the one who held his life in His hands. Everything is negative for Belshazzar at this point in time. Finally, that very night he was slain. Oh no! Are we not heading for the same destination? May God forbid!

But you cannot use the holy items of God for your selfish ends and stay alive, I mean it's dangerous, they are just but holy and that holiness is only ascribed to God the only holy of holies. Please do not use the cups! Because what comes after is not life but death.

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DAY 2

The Holly Ark, (By William Bagambe, ECD Stewardship & Trust Services)

From The Wycliffe Bible Dictionary, the ark was a chest made of acacia wood, about four feet long, two and a half feet wide, and two and a half feet high. It was overlaid with gold inside and out (Ex 25:11) and a ring of gold at each corner or foot through which poles were passed to carry it. The lid of the ark, the kapporeth or "mercy seat" (Ex 25:17), was made of pure gold. At each end of the mercy seat was cherubim made of hammered gold.

According to Unger's Bible Dictionary, the ark had several names; It was called the "ark of the covenant" (Numbers 10:33; Deuteronomy 31:26; Hebrews 9:4; etc.), because in it were deposited the two tablets of stone upon which were written the Ten Commandments, the terms of God's covenant with Israel; "the ark of the testimony" (Exodus 25:16, 22), the commandments being God's testimony respecting His own holiness, and the people's sin; "the ark of God" (1 Samuel 3:3; 4:11), as the throne of the divine presence. It was a critical part of the temple or tabernacles contents because of its holiness.

Question: "Why did God strike Uzzah dead for touching this Ark of the Covenant?"

Answer: The story of Uzzah and the Ark of the Covenant is found in 2 Samuel 6:1-7 and 1 Chronicles 13:9-12. As the ark was being transported, the oxen pulling the cart stumbled, and a Levite named Uzzah took hold of the ark. God's anger burned against Uzzah and He struck him down and he died. Belshazzar died in our first study in day 1 because of tampering with the holy items of God, Uzzah is dead here as well basically because of the same. Guess who is dying next! The unfaithful! Uzzah's punishment does appear to be extreme for what we might consider to be a good deed. However, there are the reasons why God took such severe action.

First, God had given Moses and Aaron specific instructions about the Tent of Meeting and the movement of the Ark of the Covenant. "After Aaron and his sons have finished covering the holy furnishings and all the holy articles, and when the camp is ready to move, the Kohathites are to come to do the carrying. But they must not touch the holy things or they will die. The Kohathites are to carry those things that are in the Tent of Meeting" (Numbers 4:15).

Brother/sister, we should learn to heed to the instructions of God. If God's instructions label an item holy, like they have done to the tithe, let us treat it as such. Special warning goes to those who have been charged with collecting, keeping and managing the holy tithe and offerings in His Church, please! Stop or do not touch these holy articles for personal use, like many are doing today. That is a perilous move you have chosen my brother or sister. You will surely die! Do only the work of the Kohathites.

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No matter how innocently it was done, touching the ark was in direct violation of God's law and was to result in death. This was a means of preserving the sense of God's holiness and the fear of drawing near to Him without appropriate preparation.

Notice how David took men with him to collect the ark, rather than allowing Abinadab and his sons to bring it to him. That was a great mistake, since it ought never to have been put upon a cart, old or new. It was to be borne upon men's shoulders, and carried by Levites only, and those of the family of Kohath (Exodus 25:12-14; Numbers 7:9), using the poles prescribed. Failing to follow God's precise instructions would be seen as not revering God's words when He spoke them through those such as Moses, whom He had appointed; having an independent attitude that might border on rebellion, i.e., seeing and acting on things from a worldly, rather than a spiritual, perspective; or disobedience.

Second, the ark had stayed for a period of time at Abinadab's house (2 Samuel 6:3), where his sons, Uzzah and Ahio, may well have become accustomed to its presence. There's an old saying, "familiarity breeds contempt," that could apply in this case. Uzzah, having been around the ark in his own home, could very likely forget the holiness that it represented. There are times when we, too, fail to recognize the holiness of God, becoming too familiar with Him with an irreverent attitude. Like we have had many times people talk, preach and write about tithe and offerings or the Sabbath and we may think they are no longer holy unto the Lord. No, do not be familiar with the holy things of God, their holiness still stands.

Third, the account tells us the oxen stumbled. The cart didn't fall and neither did the Ark, just as the boat carrying Jesus and the disciples rocked fiercely in the storm, though it wasn't necessarily in danger of sinking (Matthew 8:24-27). And yet, just as with the disciples who failed to put their faith in their Master, Uzzah, for a moment, felt it was his responsibility to save the integrity of God, and that our almighty God somehow needed Uzzah's assistance. He presumed that, without his intervention, God's presence would be dealt a blow. As Job asks, "Can you fathom the mysteries of God?" (Job 11:7). "His greatness no-one can fathom" (Psalm 145:3). "His understanding no-one can fathom" (Isaiah 40:28).

Never attempt to assist God, because God is sufficient without you brother or sister. Just go by His instructions please! He does not need your help instead you need His. The tithe and offerings we give back to Him is but a connection or bridge to keep us bound with Him in terms of our body, soul and mind. It's by His grace that He calls us to work with Him in this aspect of giving and returning. It's us who benefit when give and return, because then we remain firmly connected to Him and grow. Giving and returning just cement our relationship with Him.

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Moses lost his right to enter the promised land because he felt his intervention was needed when he struck the rock, instead of speaking to it as God had commanded (Numbers 20:7-12). We need to listen carefully to what God has to say to us, and in obedience strive to do all He commands. Yes, God is loving and merciful, but He is also holy and He defends His holiness with His power, and affronts to His holiness sometimes bring about His holy wrath. "It is a dreadful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:31).

Something of God's presence in the Ark of the Covenant seems to be lost in the church today. In the time of Moses, the people knew the awesomeness of God's absolute holiness. They had witnessed great miracles when the ark was with them. They respected that God's ways and thoughts are much higher than ours (Isaiah 55:8-9). In truth, the more we try to bring God down to our worldly way of thinking or reasoning, the further away He will seem to us. Those who would draw near to God and have Him draw near to them are those who approach Him in reverence and holy fear. Uzzah forgot that lesson, and the consequences were tragic. Remember, it's this holiness that makes Him your God.

Can we pick from here and get back to the right spiritual footing. There is no sin God cannot forgive, there is not burden God cannot lift, there is not mountain He cannot climb, He at least climbed MT Calvary for us. If He was willing to die, why are you not willing to live? He paid the price.

1 John 1:9, NKJV. "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." We should confess now!

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DAY 3

STRENGTHEN ME JUST ONCE MORE! (By William Bagambe, ECD Stewardship Ministries)

Judges 13:3

Manoah had a wife who was childless, unable to give birth. The angel of the Lord appeared to her and said, “You are barren and childless, but you are going to become pregnant and give birth to a son. Now see to it that you drink no wine or other fermented drink and that you do not eat anything unclean. You will become pregnant and have a son whose head is never to be touched by a razor because the boy is to be a Nazirite, dedicated to God from the womb. He will take the lead in delivering Israel from the hands of the Philistines.”

Are you not aware that Seventh Day Adventists do not drink wine or eat unclean things, according to the instructions of God? And our heads should not be contaminated by anything worldly except the word of God? And that as a church we have been called to spread the 3 angels message to all nations to rescue people from this world which is philistine in nature? Come on people of God! Wake from the slumber! Basically, the angel was calling the wife of Manoah to get baptized into the Adventist class before he took any step into executing the assignment from the holy source. You have to be a true and faithful Adventist for you to do anything sensible before the Lord. It matters to be an Adventist and not a philistine. A philistine will use the holy cups for selfish desires but an Adventist will maintain and preserve the holiness therein”

Samson was not anybody around, he was chosen of God with a special assignment of delivering Israel from the tyranny of the philistines. Like this Church, it is not any Church, I think you know that, it is a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, to proclaim the excellences of Him who has called us out of darkness into His marvelous light. As a Church we are not anybody on the street or market place, we are God's people, with a spiritual statement of mission to work with.

After Manoah's wife followed the divine instructions, Samson was born with incredible strength, whose exploits are recorded in the book of Judges. Samson's strength was legendary, unlike anything that was seen before or since. He singlehandedly struck down 1,000 Philistines using only the jawbone of a donkey (Judges 15:15), by the power of God's Spirit he tore a lion to pieces (Judges 14:6), he went out and caught three hundred foxes and tied them tail to tail in pairs. He then fastened a torch to every pair of tails, 5 lit the torches and let the foxes loose in the standing grain of the Philistines.

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He burned up the shocks and standing grain, together with the vineyards and olive groves (Judges 15:4-5), and he uprooted the gate of the town of Gaza and carried it up a hill (Judges 16:3). All of Samson’s mighty acts were done in opposition to the Philistines, with whom he had a bitter, long-standing rivalry, described in Judges 14 and 15. The Philistines were always trying to understand Samson’s strength and find a way to defeat him. They were always thwarted—Samson was just too strong—until they teamed with Delilah, who eventually became Samson’s downfall.

Can you imagine how strong this Church would be if only we did everything according to God’s instructions?

Samson was incredibly strong until he opened up his life to the claws of the world. He went in for prostitutes; he ceased to pay attention to the guidance provided by his parents until he forgot his history. Brother/sister, do you remember your history? Do you remember where God picked you from?

Delilah in the Bible is best known as one who brought about the ruin of Samson. Delilah lived in the Valley of Sorek, which lay on the border between the territories of the ancient Philistines and the Israelite tribe of Dan. Samson, one of the judges of Israel, had an affair with Delilah, and she betrayed him to the Philistines (Judges 16:19).

Samson’s spiritual quagmire set in when he chose to have an affair with Delilah, the betrayer. Similarly, our current deplorable spiritual state stems from the fact that we have chosen to have not only an affair but affairs with the world, our arch betrayer. We have stopped anything to do with God almighty; all our minds are set and focused to everything the world is offering today. We are heading for a fatal dose of betrayal in our lives! Please let us run our affairs with God almighty. Give no opportunity or reveal no secrets of your spiritual strength to the world.

When Samson began consorting with Delilah, the Philistine leaders saw an opportunity. They came to Delilah with an offer: “See if you can lure him into showing you the secret of his great strength and how we can overpower him so we may tie him up and subdue him. Each one of us will give you eleven hundred shekels of silver” (Judges 16:5). It was an offer she couldn’t refuse, and she began to seek a way to subdue her beau.

From the very beginning of Delilah’s relationship with Samson, it was clearly her intention to discover Samson’s weakness and report back to the Philistines. Appealing to his supposed love for her, Delilah asked him repeatedly to confide in her the secret of his great strength. Repeatedly, Samson hides the truth from her. He lies about the source of his strength on three different occasions, and on each occasion, Delilah reports his lie to the Philistines and they come to attack

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him, thinking him weakened (Judges 16:5–14). Samson’s response to Delilah’s actions is puzzling. He obviously knows she plans to betray him. Despite her wicked game, Samson stays with Delilah and refuses to acknowledge the danger. Eventually, Samson makes the quite irrational decision to tell Delilah the truth— his strength comes from his long hair, uncut because he was a Nazarite. He tells Delilah that, if his head is shaved, God’s Spirit will leave him and he will become like any other man (Judges 16:16–17). Scripture gives the reason for Samson’s foolish revelation: Delilah was nagging him daily so that his soul was “annoyed to death” (Judges 16:16, NASB).

The wise course of action would have been for Samson to leave Delilah, rather than tell her the truth. He surely must have known that she would betray him—but his feelings for her proved stronger than wisdom. Samson did not leave her; in fact, he fell asleep with his head in her lap, and the inevitable occurred. Please do not put your head on the lap of this world, because you will sleep and once you sleep; you will not wake up alive or the same. Leave Delilah! She is dangerous!

Delilah had Samson’s hair cut, and she betrayed him, allowing the Philistines to bind him, gouge out his eyes, and take him away as a slave (Judges 16:18–21). Once you give in to this world, the first thing the world does is to remove your spiritual eyes so you can no longer see the holy things of God and you become totally enslaved by the world. Frankly, using the holy cups is typical blindness to the holiness of God and total subscription to the world. No doubt about this!

All this she did for a quantity of silver promised her from the Philistines (Judges 16:5). Delilah, the original femme fatale, illustrates the truth of 1 Timothy 6:10, “The love of money is a root of all kinds of evil.” It is this very love of money that lures us into using the holy cups of the temple, the tithe and offerings of the Lord. Do not use the cups! Take them to the temple. They are meant to be in the holy temple for holy use.

23 Now the rulers of the Philistines assembled to offer a great sacrifice to Dagon their god and to celebrate, saying, “Our god has delivered Samson, our enemy, into our hands.” Remember the world has a god called the devil. When the world enslaves you totally, like it has done to many, there are always celebrations.

24 When the people saw him, they praised their god, saying, “Our god has delivered our enemy into our hands, the one who lay waste our land and multiplied our slain.” 25 While they were in high spirits, they shouted, “Bring out Samson to entertain us.” So they called Samson out of the prison, and he performed for them. Once you under tutelage of the world, the world can call upon you to do anything for it. This will make you lose relationship with Christ. If you have no relationship with Christ, you can have a relationship with anything in the world! “If you cannot return a holy tithe and give the best offering to the holy God, as per His instructions, then there is no other wrong thing you cannot do”

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Samson was now there just to give entertainment to the Philistines, the uncircumcised. The world had reduced him to a mere entertainer. Are you not just an entertainer in the Church if you cannot do the will of God according to His instructions? Some of us entertain the church with our presence and words, either in speech or songs. But the eyes to see life in God's perspective were long gouged out. Consequently, our names are not in the books of the returners! Now in this predicament, can you sing song no. 216 in Church Hymnal; "When the Role is called up yonder I will be there"? Or do you still sing "All to Jesus I surrender"? No. 309. If you cannot sing these songs, which other songs can you faithfully sing? Factually, only a handful of the Church membership qualifies to sing hymns to the Lord.

They stood him among the pillars, 26 Samson said to the servant who held his hand, "Put me where I can feel the pillars that support the temple, so that I may lean against them." 27 Now the temple was crowded with men and women; all the rulers of the Philistines were there, and on the roof were about three thousand men and women watching Samson perform. 28 Then Samson prayed to the Lord, "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, strengthen me just once more, and let me with one blow get revenge on the Philistines for my two eyes." 29 Then Samson reached toward the two central pillars on which the temple stood. Bracing him against them, his right hand on the one and his left hand on the other, 30 Samson said, "Let me die with the Philistines!" Then he pushed with all his might, and down came the temple on the rulers and all the people in it. Thus he killed many more when he died than while he lived.

Since Samson was caught and taken by the philistines, you do not hear his speech until verse 26 when he told the servant to help him be put where he could feel the pillars that supported the temple, so he could lean against them. He was totally quiet!

This is so for anyone who is spiritually retrogressing. Everything goes quiet. His voice to God in prayer and praise goes off; his pocket, income base and general increase close God out, the fellowship temperature dwindles. Finally one lies spiritually flat. No more substance. All that is left for him is to entertain the world.

You have not started reasoning or speaking again until you pray to the Sovereign Lord. Samson got to the point of disgust and prayed to the Lord and said. "Sovereign Lord, remember me. Please, God, **strengthen me just once more!**

Before this supplication to the Lord, Samson was completely powerless; he could not do what he used to do. He needed power again. Beloved, we need power again. The only source of power is the sovereign Lord. Let us like Samson ask to be strengthened again so we can do what is right and faithful in the sight of the Lord again. Remember me should be the language and tone of each one of us to the Lord.

“The Wise Shall Understand”

This is the only way we can honor the holy things of God again. We need the power; we need the strength dear brethren and sisters. “Sovereign Lord Strength us once more” so we will kill all the unfaithfulness in our spiritual journeys. Give us power to stop using the holy cups for our selfishness. This is my prayer for the Church of God. Amen!

“The Wise Shall Understand”.

DAY 4

“A Man Called Encouragement”:

By Ronald M. Flowers, Director, General Conference Family Ministry

Summary: The heart of Barnabas’s legacy is that he cared for people. Too often the gospel message is interpreted as a set of doctrinal truths comprehended by the mind. Barnabas reminds us that the disciples of Christ not only abide in the truth, they know how to love and were ready to give for the cause of their master, the holy one.

Our firm decision should be to work from this focused center: One man died for everyone. That puts everyone in the same boat. He included everyone in his death so that everyone could also be included in his life, a resurrection life, a far better life than people ever lived on their own.

Because of this decision we don’t evaluate people by what they have or how they look. We looked at the Messiah that way once and got it all wrong, as you know. Now we look inside, and what we see is that anyone united with the Messiah gets a fresh start, is created new. The old life is gone; a new life burgeons! Look at it! All this comes from God who settled the relationship between him, and us, and then called us to settle our relationship with each other. God put the world square with himself through the Messiah, giving the world a fresh start by offering forgiveness of sins. God has given us the task of telling everyone what he is doing. We’re Christ’s representatives. God uses us to persuade men and women to drop their differences and enter into God’s work of making things right between them. We’re speaking for Christ himself now: Become friends with God; he’s already a friend with you.

‘How?’ you say. In Christ. God put on him the wrong who never did anything wrong, so we could be put right with God (2 Co 5:14-21—Message). The disciples went everywhere preaching this message (Ac 8:4).

Supporter / true Steward to the church of God.

One man who heard was Joseph of Cyprus. Living in Jerusalem, he heard the gospel message and his life was changed. This is the story of that man.

If we carefully search the Acts files, we can put his story together. The first reference to Joseph is found in Acts. Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus . . . sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles’ feet (Ac 4:36, 37). Here, Luke repeats something similar to what he said in Acts 2—the believers shared all things in common. Joseph was an elite estate owner on the island of Cyprus, but he decided to invest in this new cause and sold his Cyprus property.

“The Wise Shall Understand”

What would this mean today? Cyprus could be compared to the real estate of Washington D.C., with property valued in the millions. So Joseph gave generously. For this caring gift to the fledgling church, the disciples named him Barnabas, which means Son of Encouragement (v 36).

When God gets His good news through to the human heart, we have a new focus and are determined to work from a focused center. We support God’s cause and His church. We recognize that we are members of His body. The holy nation of God. His own people. Barnabas would have been embarrassed had anyone pointed out the considerable value of his gift. He lived by the principle that God is the owner and he was His manager. Barnabas realized that by supporting the church, he was putting God’s money to work. His mind pointed to the holiness of the provider, God. He gave beyond percentages. His mind captured the fact that all he had belonged to God.

Our next glimpse of Barnabas is seen in Acts 9. The chapter begins with the story of Saul’s amazing conversion as he approached Damascus. We read how Saul was blinded by the encounter, how friends led him to the city and how God sent a reluctant Ananias to restore Saul’s vision. At once, says Luke, he [Saul] began to preach in the synagogues that Jesus is the Son of God (Ac 9:20). The situation heightens in our minds as we view Saul being pursued by his former friends, Jews who were intent on killing him. But again, he is rescued by his friends—making his escape in a basket lowered through an opening in the wall of the city. And this is where Barnabas comes into the story.

When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple (Ac 9:26). Saul tried to join them—but they did not wait with open arms. What new tactic was this, they thought! Slim chance that anyone like him could change! But Barnabas took him and brought him to the apostles. He told them how Saul on his journey had seen the Lord and that the Lord had spoken to him, and how in Damascus he had preached fearlessly in the name of Jesus (Ac 9:27). Barnabas was just tuned to doing good.

Who was this man named Barnabas? What was he like? We can certainly surmise from this account that he was optimistic about people. He possessed the rare gift of discerning worth in others. Barnabas was quick to recognize the potential of an imperfect person. He was convinced that Saul had changed because of his encounter with Jesus, and he defended Saul. He did not hesitate to hazard his own good name on this risky newcomer to the faith. He expressed confidence and assurance in Saul. And what was the result? So, Saul stayed with them and moved about freely in Jerusalem, speaking boldly in the name of the Lord (Ac 9:28). Barnabas opened the way for Saul to be accepted by the Disciples of Christ. When God gets His good news through to the human heart—we recognize one another as brothers and sisters and put our trust in one another more readily.

“The Wise Shall Understand”

By this we exhibit the holiness of God. That unity keeps the Church strong, fresh and pointed to mission with all we have.

. . . And they sent Barnabas to Antioch (Ac 11:22). The Spirit of God is on the move now, and a group of Joseph’s [Barnabas’s] countrymen from Cyprus—followers of Jesus Christ and converted to the Way—have found a fertile field for the gospel in Antioch. And so the Jerusalem church commissioned Barnabas to go and join the effort there. He was glad and encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts (Ac 11:23). Verse 24 says, He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and faith. The numbers were impressive and Barnabas could have had a good report. But selfish accomplishments were not his concern. He was free from the worry of who gets credit. In verse 25, Barnabas invites Saul to join his team. I’ve wondered why? Probably for a mix of several reasons. Such a rich field would be a good experience for Paul and would build his confidence. Barnabas also recognized that Paul had gifts of Bible study and understanding, of being able to present the truth of Christ in powerful ways. Together they formed a dynamic evangelistic team.

When God gets His good news through to the human heart, self-assurance is no longer based on one’s accomplishments. Self-exaltation is no longer the driving force. We recognize that we have certain gifts and abilities, but they are limited. We need each other and God’s cause needs all of our gifts. We become team players. Is it any wonder that under such leadership an evangelistic explosion ensues? There is so much talk of it around town that the popular name for these believers—Christians—sticks! At the end of Acts 11, Barnabas and Saul are sent to Jerusalem with a monetary gift to relieve the struggling church members there. And in Acts 13, their journey sets the stage for the next episode in the life of Barnabas.

The gospel as a way of life is caught as much as it is taught. When the Spirit called Saul and Barnabas for a special work, they took John Mark, Barnabas’s cousin (Co 4:10), along as their helper. But when they arrived in Perga, John Mark left them (Ac 13). At the time Paul and Barnabas planned their second missionary journey, Barnabas insisted that John Mark be allowed to accompany them. Paul did not agree. Because John Mark had become discouraged and had forsaken them before, Paul felt that he could not be depended upon again (Ac 15). But Barnabas saw it differently. Even though he was disappointed when John Mark left them, Barnabas did not give up on his younger relative. Because of their disagreement, Paul and Barnabas separated. Barnabas took John Mark and went to the island of Cyprus. When God gets His gospel through to the human heart, it kindles a desire to share it with family as Barnabas did with John Mark. We need to build and encourage ourselves and the next generation. Stewardship demands that this spirit covers the church of God, in all aspects including giving for His cause.

“The Wise Shall Understand”

Let us all participate in giving for God's cause as Barnabas did, and please let your name change to a man called Encouragement: it's sweet to be called that name. It's God's desire that we are all called men and women of encouragement in God's Church. Names Change when you give the holy items for the glory of God, when you praise the name of God the creator instead of the gods of silver, gold and others. Let's encourage the growth and development of His kingdom. Brother/sister, get onboard!

"The Wise Shall Understand"

Day 5

THE DONKEY AND THE COLT. (By William Bagambe, ECD Stewardship Ministries)

Matthew 21:1-11

Jesus Comes to Jerusalem as King.

As they approached Jerusalem and came to Bethphage on the Mount of Olives, Jesus sent two disciples, 2 saying to them, “Go to the village ahead of you, and at once you will find a donkey tied there, with her colt by her. Untie them and bring them to me. 3 If anyone says anything to you, say that the Lord needs them, and he will send them right away.”

This was at the triumphant entry of Jesus into Jerusalem. Jesus and the disciples approached Jerusalem and came to the Mount of Olives, at this spot; Jesus realized the need of some transport and function that necessitated some resources. If one is kin to critique the language He used while sending the two disciples, it was all imperative from beginning to end. Look at these imperatives; Go, Untie, bring and Say! The imperative nature of this speech is illustrative of Jesus power and ownership over creation. And Psalms 24:1-2 attests to this fact. Although Haggai 2:8 singles out silver and gold, it essentially connotes a similar idea of His full divine ownership through a declaration. Please note! No faithful steward should lose cognizance of the fact that God maintains power and command over all that is in our possession, command and custody. It all belongs to Him!

In the above text still, you will discover that Jesus employed the word “if” in His speech. This concretely swings the pendulum to a spiritual fact that has stagnated the spiritual growth and development of every steward in the family of the believers. The act of tying that which belongs to the Lord does not at all promote our spiritual growth.

Jesus used the word “if” with full knowledge that there could be someone or people who would deter the move to untie and bring the donkey and her colt for a holy cause and occasion. At the sometime He anticipated some to ask questions, like, where are you taking my animals? Who sent you and why? Perhaps you know the common questions people like to ask when you tell them to untie the resources of God in terms of Tithe and Offerings for mission. Some people are just experts in this. Jesus is aware of such a cluster of people whose work is to thwart that which will advance His mission. He is conscious and mindful of such who decline to return His holy tithe and offerings for the advancement of His cause but instead use them for their own personal contentment and pleasure.

“The Wise Shall Understand”

Am glad Jesus did not send the disciples to go and request but to command and bring that which belongs to the Lord. And consequently notice is hereby given to all spiritual leaders to remember that you are disciples of Jesus and accordingly sent to the villages of your Church territory to untie the donkey and her colt, which actually is tithe and offerings for a holy cause. Please go today and now. If anyone asks any question, the answer is just simple; the Lord needs them.

Beloved there is a lot that is tied in your pockets, in your stores, in your salaries, on your every type of bank account and in your farms. Check and see what the spirit of the Lord is saying to you today and now! After checking, please untie them and bring them because the Lord needs them.

Though the thing was altogether contingent, yet Christ could tell his disciples where they should find the donkey tied, and a colt with her. If you think the Lord does not know everything around you including all that you possess, then you do not know HIM. He knows all the holy items that are tied by you and He is aware of the quantity and the amount and where they are tied. He knows which village, Church, family, home or individual that has all that is tied. His omniscience extends itself to the least detail in your life!

The hearts of the meanest subjects, as well as of kings, are in the hand of the Lord. Christ asserts his right to use the donkeys, in bidding them bring it to him; the fullness of the earth is the Lord Christ's; but he foresees some hindrance which disciples might meet with in this service; and he provides answers.

Vs. 4 this took place to fulfill what was spoken through the prophet: "Say to Daughter Zion, 'See, your king comes to you, gentle and riding on a donkey, and on a colt, the foal of a donkey.'" Zachariah 9:9.

Prophecy should be an integral part of your faith and belief and every faithful steward of the Lord should keep all the prophetic lessons and knowledge at play and in use. 1Thessalonians 5:20-21 New International Version (NIV) 20 Do not treat prophecies with contempt 21 but test them all; hold on to what is good. "Prophecy is history written in Advance" *Jonatan Conceicao*. It tells us the sport where are on the world map of time in regard to world events. So if you unaware, indifferent or indignant about prophetic messages and their consequences, chances are that you are enroute to missing your final spiritually intended destination. And most likely you are losing your sport on the world map of time. This is so because anyone who is prophetically tuned and therefore well placed, this time round would be getting out of Babylon and only worshiping Him who created heaven and earth, the sea and springs of water, Revelation 14:7. This is not time to use holy items for your selfish ends or tie donkeys and their colts when they are supposed to be released to the Lord, the actual owner. Let them do the holy service of the holy one. World events are closing down my beloved! Soon the trumpet will sound, 1 Corinthians 15:52.

"The wise shall understand"

Vs. 6 the disciples went and did as Jesus had instructed them. 7 They brought the donkey and the colt and placed their cloaks on them for Jesus to sit on, At least the disciples went and did as Jesus instructed.

Once you go according to Jesus instructions and in His name, donkeys and their colts will get untied. Jesus is the only motivating factor for untying donkeys and their colts. Whoever is sent, please go in the name of Jesus. All that is tied everywhere will be immediately untied and released to the Lord.

After they were brought, a very large crowd spread their cloaks on the road, while others cut branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 The crowds that went ahead of him and those that followed shouted, "Hosanna to the Son of David!" "Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord!" "Hosanna in the highest heaven!"

Notice this interesting scenario. Once the donkey and the colt were untied, many more other items got untied too, including cloaks and branches of trees which were spread on the road, all for the glory of the Lord. There were celebration, happiness, worship and praise. Beloved, this is the bottom-line of stewardship. Giving is for the glory of God and so is the returning of tithe and the giving of offerings. And anything any faithful steward should do must be only for the glory of God. 1 Corinthians 10:31.

When Jesus entered Jerusalem, the whole city was stirred and asked, "Who is this?" The crowds answered, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth in Galilee."

What stirred the city? It was the celebrations, the happiness, worship and the praise people returned to the Lord of Lords, the King of Kings, Jesus! The day we will learn to return all we have to our Lord, and we do everything for His glory, the world will know and it will ask, why? And we will answer, because of Jesus and for Jesus!

We have not praised and worshiped Him enough! Can we pray and praise like Paul and Silas did it at mid-night in jail, so God will send an earth quark (revival) that can let lose all chains and ropes that are tying God's donkeys and their colts in your pockets, farms, businesses, on bank accounts and your hearts? If He did it for the inmates, He can do it for His holy items that we have chosen to tie. To Him be the glory!

"The wise shall understand"

Day 6

YOU ARE THE MAN! (By William Bagambe, ECD Stewardship & Trust Services)

2 Samuel 12:1-19

Nathan Rebukes David

The Lord sent Nathan to David. When he came to him, he said, "There were two men in a certain town, one rich and the other poor. 2 The rich man had a very large number of sheep and cattle, 3 but the poor man had nothing except one little ewe lamb he had bought. He raised it, and it grew up with him and his children. It shared his food, drank from his cup and even slept in his arms. It was like a daughter to him,

4 "Now a traveler came to the rich man, but the rich man refrained from taking one of his own sheep or cattle to prepare a meal for the traveler who had come to him. Instead, he took the ewe lamb that belonged to the poor man and prepared it for the one who had come to him." 5 David burned with anger against the man and said to Nathan, "As surely as the Lord lives, the man who did this must die! 6 He must pay for that lamb four times over, because he did such a thing and had no pity."

7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! This is what the Lord, the God of Israel, says: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master's house to you, and your master's wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.'

11 "This is what the Lord says: 'Out of your own household I am going to bring calamity on you. Before your very eyes I will take your wives and give them to one who is close to you, and he will sleep with your wives in broad daylight. 12 You did it in secret, but I will do this thing in broad daylight before all Israel.'"

Frankly, as believers belonging to His called out group, the Church, we have done and still do numerous things that displease the Lord. No one can dispute this and no one is free from it! Anyone in his/her spiritual liveliness admits this reality. David did something that was displeasing to God.

"The wise shall understand"

But an allegory of the nature Nathan used in the above exposition to explain and make David understand his evil ways, brings every matter to light even to us today. This mode Nathan chose to employ in disseminating the message of God to David left lasting marks and impact in the life of the king. As a matter of fact, it made the message sink so deep in the heart of David.

At first it did not click with David. He thought it was someone else. He pushed it far off himself. Until the prophet of God blatantly put it to him, and said **“you are the man”** it is very easy to comment, wish, judge, suggest or blame when it is not about you. But when the rubber meets the road, faces begin to fall, bodies begin to shake and shiver, temperatures run into irregular centigrade or Fahrenheit. Knees begin to knock and everything shifts gears for a fall. Do not be quick to comment, wish, judge or blame others. You may be doing it to your own detriment!

Let us face reality now! God has blessed us like He had blessed David.

God said to David ‘I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Saul. 8 I gave your master’s house to you, and your master’s wives into your arms. I gave you all Israel and Judah. And if all this had been too little, I would have given you even more. 9 Why did you despise the word of the Lord by doing what is evil in his eyes? You struck down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and took his wife to be your own. You killed him with the sword of the Ammonites. 10 Now, therefore, the sword will never depart from your house, because you despised me and took the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your own.’

This is what the Lord is saying to you today; I anointed you, I delivered you from the hand of the evil one, I have blessed you with many, including houses, vehicles, jobs, farms, projects and many other incomes. Life and health are the greatest of all blessings. I gave you land and many other things. And again He says, if those blessings are little, He can still bless you with more. The question the Lord is posing to you today is; with all these blessings bestowed upon you, why do you despise Him by taking even the 1 that belongs to Him, when you have all the 9? Why do you strike down Uriah the Hittite with the sword and take his wife to be your own and killed him with the sword of the Ammonites? Why have you chosen to always use a tenth of the Lord for you own ambitions when actually you have the 9 at your disposal? Yours is 9 times more than the Lord’s. Practically who is richer? Of Course the one with 9.

By doing what we are doing today, we automatically assume the place of the rich man in the narrative above, who happens to be David. This is selfishness, unfaithfulness, and total disconnection from the divine source of true blessings.

“The wise shall understand”

Look at the way the Church of God is struggling with allocating the meager resources that a few worshipers make available for mission. See how the plans put forward for the glory of God are failing. Look at the deplorable and miserable state the Church is in today in many places. Falling structures, unglorifying equipment that the Church is using. Disgraceful look of many church personnel in many places of Church territory. There is almost nothing glorifying God for the fact that almost no heart is glorifying Him. There has always been a recurrent lack of funds/resources in the house of the Lord. There is practically not food in the house of the Lord! This has culminated into continued and severe stagnation of many church activities and work which otherwise would have lifted up the name of Jesus for the salvation of mankind. This condition is like this, just because many people of God are using the ewe lamb, the tithe of the Lord and giving is not part of many.

Question; who is the man responsible for this degenerative condition of the Church today? Nathan says "You are the man/woman"! Please do not push it far off! Because you have chosen to go for the **ewe lamb** of the Lord, to fulfil your selfish and personal desires. No pity for the work of God.

Because of you, no Church runs a surplus budget in our times and yet we worship an awesome God. All that would bring glory to the Lord is spent on leisure and pleasure and only coins or fragments of resources find their ways into the temple treasury. God has sent a Nathan to your life today! Listen to the narrative please!

During Moses's time, the Church operated a surplus budget. Exodus 36:2-7. Then Moses summoned Bezalel and Oholiab and every skilled person to whom the Lord had given ability and who was willing to come and do the work. 3 They received from Moses all the offerings the Israelites had brought to carry out the work of constructing the sanctuary. And the people continued to bring freewill offerings morning after morning. 4 So all the skilled workers who were doing all the work on the sanctuary left what they were doing 5 and said to Moses, "The people are bringing more than enough for doing the work the Lord commanded to be done."6 *Then Moses gave an order and they sent this word throughout the camp: "No man or woman is to make anything else as an offering for the sanctuary." And so the people were restrained from bringing more, 7 because what they already had was more than enough to do all the work.*

When shall we ever come to this point of spiritual satisfaction, worship and submission to God?

The most rewarding caption in this exposition is vs.13. After the prophet put it out clearly to David that he was the man being talked about in the allegory, because of the evil he had done, David realized and felt its veracity so much so that, immediately he returned to God by repenting. He said to Nathan; "I have sinned against the Lord". Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die.

"The wise shall understand"

The good thing is that God does not inscribe our sins on the tablets of stone, if He is to write at all, He writes on sand so that immediately one repents, He blows them off the ground and out of print. This is precisely what Jesus did when He was dealing with the case of an adulterous woman in John 8:6

In this matter, we all stand sinners before the Lord now! It is sinful to spend the holy tithe of the Lord for personal use, and so we must return to God individually with the same sentence David made, "I have sinned against the lord". The good news is that once you run and state it to Him from your heart, you are there and then forgiven and He gives you a new start. We all need this new start this time.

Psalm 51 are the words of a new start, flowing from a new and repentant heart of David. Spare sometime and read through this psalm, you will see the amazing language and the consequences of repentance. Please, take time and write you own Psalm of repentance. Blessings!

"The wise shall understand"

DAY 7

“HE STOPPED BREATHING” (By William Bagambe, ECD Stewardship & Trust Service Ministries).

1 Kings 17:17

Sometime later the son of the woman who owned the house became ill. He grew worse and worse, and finally stopped breathing.

When you delve into the holy word line by line, and in the context of this text, factors about the cause of the son's death do not show up vividly. One remains in suspense about what masterminded the death of this being. Elijah was attacked and blamed for nothing; he is actually not the cause of this tragedy. Some people are falsely accused or blamed for happenings they have no hand in. Little did she know that Elijah's presence was actually a blessing to the point of getting her son back to life. Up to this point, she had not fully understood what Elijah carried with him.

Be careful before you blame the circumstances around you, who knows? Even these words you are reading may be the source of inspiration, spiritual strength and life regaining.

If you have lived to understand the crux of life, you probably do comprehend that when one gets ill, if not sufficiently and completely treated, the condition gets worse time after time, the next step he/she heads for is death. The same is true for any spiritual illness. Once it sets in, if not spiritually treated, it gets worse and worse until one stops breathing spiritually.

Vs. 17 states that the son of the woman became ill and grew worse and worse and finally stopped breathing.

From a spiritual stand point, not only sons of women but daughters as well have become ill now. The use of holy cups for personal use, which has become rampant in the Church of God today, is a typical symptom of spiritual illness that is getting worse and worse and soon many will stop or have stopped breathing.

When one gets ill some systems slowdown in terms of functionality. As the intensity of illness escalates, the state of functionality also gets down until such a time when many of them run flat. When this happens, death becomes the next phase. Judas in the best example.

In a nut shell spiritual illness is a condition in which one casts God out of his/her life. At this point, life is like a broken winged bird that cannot fly. Life is only surrendered to the evil one. And all actions and intentions here are but for the glory of the devil. This kills all the systems, including the spiritual breathing system. Judas did it until he stopped breathing. Mathew 27:5

“The Wise Shall Understand”

Right now people's eyes cannot see letters of scriptures meaningfully. If they ever see them, they are just calligraphy and their hearts do not discern the divine messages enshrined. What used to be called sin then are human rights now and legislation blesses them as such.

People's noses cannot catch the bad smell of sin; their brains cannot separate the abominations from the clean! When you look at events in the world, it's crystal clear that people are progressively and actively casting God out of their lives.

What about in the Church of God today?

One thing I know for sure is that all baptized members of the Seventh day Adventist Church took a vow at baptism. If that is not true, I stand to be corrected. And one thing every baptismal candidate vows to do is to be faithful in returning tithe and giving of offerings to the Lord. This is part of Stewardship which actually is one of the fundamental beliefs of the Church of God, the SDA Church.

Immediately after baptism, spiritual breathing is perfect. But as time progresses into the future, the spiritual heart beat goes on slowing down until there remains no trace of any spiritual beat and finally, functionality ceases. In other words one stops breathing spiritually, this can be referred to as spiritual death, a condition that has gripped the contemporary Church of God. And the signs for this state of affairs are numerous and eminent.

Unfortunately, the situation is not getting any better! The evil current that swept through Sodom and Gomorrah during Lot's time has gained momentum and speed in the contemporary times. People have ceased to breathe spiritually. That's why many have lost regard for the holiness of God and consequently, they end up using the holy cups for the holy temple to drink wine of all types in the world today. The wine of greed, the wine of pleasure, the wine of capitalism etc.

People in God's Church need spiritual resuscitation, but this comes by, when one runs to God and repents.

God says "I will heal their backsliding; I will love them freely; for mine anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew unto Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as his olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon. They that dwell under his shadow shall return; they shall revive as the corn, and grow as the vine."
Hosea 14:4-7 KJV

This time we all need resuscitation. We need to know how to effectively cooperate with the Lord in reviving our spiritual lives to fresh vibrancy. How do we do this?

"The Wise Shall Understand"

There are many similarities between physical resuscitation and spiritual resuscitation. Whether it is a physical emergency or a spiritual one, both need the same care, attention and urgency! Whether we are pulling a drowning person from the murky depths or a drowning Christian flailing in the waves of debt, despair or depression, swift action is necessary. Resuscitation is necessary when we have been rendered unconscious or insensitive to the things of God. Christian service alone does not promote spirit consciousness or spiritual sensitivity. It is the little foxes that spoil the vine and not tending to the spiritual details can lead to flat lines in our walk with God. But unlike a drowning victim who is solely dependent on others for resuscitation, the Christian has the ability to resuscitate themselves, by taking a deliberate and personal initiative to call upon their creator and true source of life.

The key to personal revival is an honest heart check. What is the spiritual pulse of your life? Have you placed something in the throne of your life that is not of God? How is your attitude towards God, others and yourself? How are your zeal and your passion? What is driving you today? Who is at the wheel of your life? You may be surprised!

Read these texts and internalize them.

“Put me on trial Lord and cross examine me. Test my motives and affections.” Psalm 26:2

“Shall not God search this out? For He knows the secrets of the heart.” Psalm 44:21

“Create in me a clean heart, O God. Renew a right spirit within me.” Psalm 51:10

“If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me.” Psalm 66:18 KJV

Is your pulse in sync with the heart of God or has secret sin, wrong attitudes or fostered offenses piloted us off God’s course for our lives? You must judge yourself and allow the Spirit to do His cleansing work as you consecrate yourself. After this, you will definitely regain your spiritual breathing. God bless you as you advance into the posterity of new spiritual experiences.

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DAY 8, (SABBATH).

CONSECRATE YOURSELVES, (by William Bagambe, ECD Stewardship & TS Ministries)

Joshua 3:5, Joshua told the people, "Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the Lord will do amazing things among you."

Leviticus 20:1-7

The Lord said to Moses, 2 "Say to the Israelites: 'Any Israelite or any foreigner residing in Israel who sacrifices any of his children to Molek is to be put to death. The members of the community are to stone him. 3 I myself will set my face against him and will cut him off from his people; for by sacrificing his children to Molek, he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. 4 If the members of the community close their eyes when that man sacrifices one of his children to Molek and if they fail to put him to death, 5 I myself will set my face against him and his family and will cut them off from their people together with all who follow him in prostituting themselves to Molek. 6 "I will set my face against anyone who turns to mediums and spiritists to prostitute themselves by following them, and I will cut them off from their people.

7 "Consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am the Lord your God. 8 Keep my decrees and follow them. I am the Lord, who makes you holy.

Here, it is the Lord Himself telling Israel to consecrate themselves. This was after Israel got disconnected from God. People were offering their children to Molek. Instead of offering genuine and rightful offerings to God. The point is about offerings. To whom are you giving your offerings and what are those offerings, Are you not aware that the deity you offer to become and remains your God? And your heart is resultantly taken and locked by that deity? For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. Luke 12:34.

Brother/sister in the Lord, where your resources go will determine the kind of God you worship, the kind of investment you are making and finally the direction and destination of your heart.

In the book of Leviticus God is kind of pleading with Israel. (like He is doing with you) to return to Him. Only that He is using stern instructions in His call, because He was shielding Israel from an impending punishment for whoever continued in disobedience and profaneness of God's will.

When God says Consecrate yourselves, He is pleading with Israel to think of holiness, do holiness, promote holiness and be holy themselves. So that, this total attribute of Holiness for God is preserved and maintained in the camp. The same God is pleading with us today, just to reconsider the holiness of God, the holiness of His items and the holiness He imputes to us

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and take a deliberate effort to preserve it within ourselves and in the entire new Israel, the Church of God! This will only be achieved by doing and acting according to the Holy word. Let us be managed, ruled, guided and Instructed by only the Holy word of the Holy God.

A person or a Church which is consecrated creates fertile ground for God to act and get His intentions done. It makes mission affordable, successful and very attractive. Thus, hastening the coming of our Lord. It is this consecration that prepares the individual in particular and the Church in general for crossing. Beloved, there is no crossing without consecration. That's why God told Joshua to instruct Israel to consecrate themselves before they crossed Jordan. Joshua 3:5,

Beloved of God, soon our Lord is coming again, this time just to make us cross. Take company in knowing that soon we will cross. So please, consecrate yourself!

Can we join David in his Psalm 52 and let His words be our words as we set ourselves aside for a holy purpose. *(Leaders ensure this is done in a highly organize spiritual environment. Let the Church congregation stand with Bibles. As the leader reads vs. 1, the Church should read vs.2. Then the leader will read vs. 3 and the church will read 4 and so on Until the end of the Psalm).* Lastly, at the close, let a designated shepherd lift the entire Church up to the throne of mercy for a real consecration to take place. While standing sing song 330, "Take my Life and let it be consecrated Lord to thee"

Psalm 51: For the director of music. A psalm of David. When the prophet Nathan came to him after David had committed adultery with Bathsheba.

1 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions.

2 Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin.

3 For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

4 Against you, you only, have I sinned and done what is evil in your sight; so you are right in your verdict and justified when you judge.

5 Surely I was sinful at birth, sinful from the time my mother conceived me.

6 Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.

7 Cleanse me with hyssop, and I will be clean; wash me, and I will be whiter than snow.

8 Let me hear joy and gladness; let the bones you have crushed rejoice.

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- 9 Hide your face from my sins and blot out all my iniquity.
- 10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- 11 Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me.
- 12 Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me.
- 13 Then I will teach transgressors your ways, so that sinners will turn back to you.
- 14 Deliver me from the guilt of bloodshed, O God, you who are God my Savior and my tongue will sing of your righteousness.
- 15 Open my lips, Lord, and my mouth will declare your praise.
- 16 You do not delight in sacrifice, or I would bring it; you do not take pleasure in burnt offerings.
- 17 My sacrifice, O God, is a broken spirit; a broken and contrite heart you, God, will not despise.
- 18 May it please you to prosper Zion, to build up the walls of Jerusalem.
- 19 Then you will delight in the sacrifices of the righteous, in burnt offerings offered whole; then bulls will be offered on your altar.

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