

Funding and the Kingdom of God: A Biblical Blueprint

By Dr. Henry Krabbendam

Contents

- I. Introduction
 1. The Kingdom of God
 2. Kingdom Funding
 3. Barriers to Kingdom Funding

- II. Biblical Range of Kingdom Funding
 1. Percentage Giving
 2. Benevolence Giving
 3. Mercy Giving

- III. Biblical Models of Kingdom Funding
 1. Barnabas
 2. Macedonians
 3. Christ

- IV. Biblical Principles of Kingdom Funding
 1. The Proportionate Principle
 2. The “Downpour” Principle
 3. The Equality Principle

- V. Biblical Patterns of Kingdom Funding
 1. The Sowing-Reaping Correlation
 2. The Purpose-Entrepreneur-Correlation
 3. The Output-Input Correlation

- VI. Biblical Dynamics of Kingdom Funding
 1. The Principle of Willingness
 2. The Principle of Readiness
 3. The Principle of Joy

- VII. Biblical Donors in Kingdom Funding
 1. The Rich
 2. The Poor
 3. Equal Participation

- VIII. Conclusion
 1. Gospel Holiness
 2. Gospel Worship
 3. Gospel Vision

I. Introduction

1. The Kingdom of God

The Kingdom of God is based upon his absolute ownership (monopoly) of all of reality by virtue of creation (1 Chr. 29:6; Is. 40:21-26) and IS ensured of its absolute realization (execution) in all of history by virtue of His providence (Gen. 50:20). It stands for His absolute reign (control) (Ps. 96:10) and rule (say) (Ps. 115:2) over all created reality and all its providential history (Ps. 33:9-11; Dan. 4:34-35). As a reflection of God's sovereignty His reign covers everyone and everything anywhere and anytime (Eph. 1:11). As a reflection of His holiness His benevolent rule was imposed in the old covenant in terms of His law (Dt. 33:4-5) by virtue of his love (Dt. 33:2-3). As a treasure of infinite price and a pearl of infinite value this rule was implemented in the new covenant by virtue of his grace (Mt. 13:44-46; 2 Cor. 3:6). This new covenant entails the gifts of regeneration, justification and sanctification (Ez. 36:25-27). It was first promised (Jer. 31:31ff) by God the Father, then personified (Is. 42:6) by God the Son, and finally personalized (Is. 59:21) by God the Holy Spirit. In their regeneration the citizens of the Kingdom become recipients of Jesus' heart, in their justification, recipients of Jesus' righteousness (2 Cor. 5:21; Phil. 3:8-9), and in their sanctification, recipients of Jesus' holiness (Eph. 2:10; Hebr. 10:10). The latter covers the totality of life in all of its phases, facets and aspects, and includes the funding of the Kingdom.

2. Kingdom Funding

The funding of the Kingdom is a (new-)covenantal activity by which the citizens of the Kingdom are, from the heart, intent on providing all necessary and possible finances, as a requirement of God's law and a fruit of the Holy Spirit, to strengthen and advance the Kingdom of God. Freely they have received; freely they give. The internal targets are the pastoral and edifying ministry of the Word, the care for the needy, as well as any and all projects that will solidify the Kingdom. The external targets are the missionary and evangelistic ministry of the Word, the outreach to the destitute, as well as any and all projects that will extend the Kingdom.

3. Barriers to Kingdom Funding

The biblical blueprint, presented here, as to how the Kingdom of God can and ought to be financed is rooted in two fundamental convictions.

The first conviction is that lack of funding is arguably the greatest *objective* barrier to the spread of the Gospel both at home and abroad today. After all, it is a statistical fact that opportunities abound and potential missionaries present themselves in greater numbers than ever before. But where is the funding? The Church can only enter into a fraction of the open doors in terms of beckoning places and available manpower.

Of course, this conviction assumes that the three main fundamental principles of a true Christian Church are in place and function properly. That is to say, the dynamic of *prevailing prayer* is in clear evidence (Acts 1:12-14; Rom. 15:30). Further, *the presence of the Holy Spirit* is powerfully experienced (Acts 2:4; 4:31). And finally *the Word of God* is brought to bear upon any and all audiences as the key to the Kingdom, that is, with discriminating power upon unbelievers with call to repentance (Acts 2:37-38), and with applicatory power upon believers with a summons to holiness (Rom. 15:16-18). If these essential elements are not present, they will have to become the first and overriding concern.

After all, Kingdom funding can only come into its own as the evidence of a healthy and strong Church.

The second conviction runs parallel to the first one. The failure to display true sacrifice in the service of others, including that of funding the cause of God, is arguably the biggest *subjective* obstacle to the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad today. In the light of the near unlimited opportunities, where are the hearts for God willing to part with their properties, their possessions, and their cash? It is a proven fact that statistically the Church as a whole in its giving does not even reach the level of the tithes.

Of course, this conviction comes with an assumption as well. It presupposes that the three main governing principles of a truly Christian life are fully in place and function properly. That is to say, *God's ownership*, that everything belongs to Him, is acknowledged without any reservation (Ps. 24:1; 1 Chr. 29:16). Further, the principle of *man's dominion taking*, that everything is under the responsible control of individual believers, is clearly recognized (Acts 5:4). And finally, the importance of *stewardship*, that man's possessions, as well as skills and talents for that matter, are there to share with others, is thoroughly affirmed in principle as well as practice (Eph. 4:28). Once again, if these three governing principles were to be absent, the first order of business would be to get these foundation blocks in place. Full-blown biblical funding presupposes their presence.

It hardly needs to be argued that Kingdom funding cannot but be robust when both the fundamental and the governing principles go hand in hand and so produce a flourishing Church.

4. Conclusion

Arising from these two convictions the biblical data regarding financing the Kingdom of God will be summarized and presented under the following six main headings and their subheadings with a conclusion and its subheadings at the close of this biblical blueprint.

- II. Biblical Range of Kingdom Funding
 - 1. Percentage Giving
 - 2. Benevolence Giving
 - 3. Mercy Giving
- III. Biblical Models of Kingdom Funding
 - 1. Barnabas
 - 2. Macedonians
 - 3. Christ
- IV. Biblical Principles of Kingdom Funding
 - 1. The Proportionate Principle
 - 2. The "Downpour" Principle
 - 3. The Equality Principle
- V. Biblical Patterns of Kingdom Funding
 - 1. The Sowing-Reaping Correlation
 - 2. The Purpose-Entrepreneur-Correlation
 - 3. The Output-Input Correlation
- VI. Biblical Dynamics of Kingdom Funding
 - 1. The Principle of Willingness
 - 2. The Principle of Readiness
 - 3. The Principle of Joy
- VII. Biblical Donors in Kingdom Funding
 - 1. The Rich

2. The Poor
 3. Equal Participation
- VIII. Conclusion
1. Gospel Holiness
 2. Gospel Worship
 3. Gospel Vision

It may be well to emphasize at this point that while this blueprint encourages biblical generosity in funding, its aim is not to concentrate upon any particular ministry or facet of ministry. Its focus, rather, is to stimulate ever increasing giving for all purposes on the part of all the constituents of the Church of Christ, whether wealthy or not, as a matter of Gospel holiness and as an indispensable part of the worship of God. In this context also various ways and means are explored and spelled out to arrive at that objective.

II. Biblical Range of Kingdom Funding

Biblical Kingdom funding is threefold. It ranges from percentage giving, to benevolence giving, to mercy giving.

1. The Tithes

The rock bottom percentage is represented by the tithes. The tithes are mentioned in Genesis 14:20; 28:22; Numbers 18:26; Leviticus 27:30ff, Deuteronomy 12:17; 14:22ff; 2 Chronicles 31:5; Nehemiah 10:38; 13:12; Malachi 3:10; Matthew 23:23; Luke 18:12; and Hebrews 7:4, 8. Since they are paid by Abraham (Genesis), and therefore precede the Mosaic economy, they cannot be lightly dismissed as merely a passing OT phenomenon. Without making the tithes necessarily an *explicit* part of the Abrahamic covenant, there is every reason to insist that the holiness of Abraham is and should be the model for the holiness of Abraham's children as well. This inevitably leads to the question why the tithes should be an exception, especially in the face of explicit opposition to the continuation of the tithes as a binding biblical principle? In fact, it seems appropriate to argue that the tithes are Abrahamic because they were pre-Abrahamic, and that through the Abrahamic model they became fully part of all post-Abrahamic covenant history. Besides, the hermeneutical principle should prevail that OT truth is fully authoritative unless it is abrogated in the NT. Even the opposite conviction that OT truth is no longer authoritative unless it is revalidated in the NT is of little help to those who put a question mark behind the tithes. After all, the Lord Jesus commends the paying of the tithes (Mt. 23:23; Lk. 11:42), and the Book of Hebrews refers to the tithes as a legitimate practice (Hebr. 7:4, 8). The preponderance of the NT evidence appears to indicate that the tithes are still with us, even if the question remains why the NT does not emphasize the tithes more specifically. This is duly noted at this juncture, and is fully discussed below.

The Law of Moses stipulated that every first, second, fourth and fifth year of the seven- year cycle the tithes must be deposited in Jerusalem to cover the cost of the Levitical and Priestly service. In the third and the sixth year, they had to be distributed among the local poor (Dt. 26:12). Since they are evidence of the ownership of God, they may not become the object of a voluntary vow. No binding obligation ever could turn into such vow. Tithes must be *paid* (Lev. 27:30), and they must be paid *joyfully* (Dt. 26:14). Intentional refusal or conscious failure to surrender them to their rightful Owner constitutes robbery (Mal. 3:8ff). It therefore amounts to a serious moral delinquency as well as a lack of personal holiness. This is underscored by the New Covenant promise of God that his law will be written on the heart of God's people. Anything short of heartfelt and joyful obedience in

paying the tithes and so returning God's possession to himself (1 Chr. 29:14) apparently fails to meet the standard of God's holiness without which no one can see the Lord (Hebr. 12:14).

But there is more! This enters into the picture in the light of the following legitimate question. If the tithes are such a significant part of covenant history, why then does Scripture not use contexts, such as 2 Corinthians 8-9, to emphasize the need for the surrender of 10% of one's annual income? It seems to be puzzling, indeed, that Paul does not capitalize on this opportunity to forcefully drive home to his readers what appears to be one of the central tenets of Kingdom funding in the OT. Most of today's preachers would not have missed this opportunity! Why, then, did Paul? The answer to this question is much simpler than may be imagined. It also puts anyone to (open) shame whose opposition to the tithes is rooted in the (hidden) desire to pay less!

When John the Baptist (Lk. 3:11) indicates that the possession of two coats demands the surrender of one, when faced with a situation that would require such, he turns 50% into the benchmark. Of course, it does not require a lot of thought to recognize that this could quickly turn into 66.67%, indeed, 75%, or 80%, etc., depending on whether one possesses three, four, or five, etc., coats. After encountering two, three, or four, etc., situations of need, whether simultaneously or consecutively, the owner will still be left with only one coat! It becomes immediately evident that Kingdom giving and Kingdom benevolence in John the Baptist have arrived on a new plateau. (Incidentally, as will be shown below, this is also quite apparent in 2 Corinthians 8-9.) The NT appears to dwarf the OT giving and benevolence pattern. While the 10% remains the rock bottom reality, the age of the Holy Spirit breaks in a much more imposing freedom in Christ. But, frankly, even John the Baptist does not present us with the final benchmark. When the widow deposits her two coins in the treasure chest, she ups the ante to 100% (Lk. 12:41ff). It may be that Jesus took to that widow because in a sense she foreshadowed himself. After all, he eventually would give it (more than) 100% as well.

The message is clear. The tithes are non-negotiable. Refusal to pay them is grand theft (Mal. 3:10). This verdict must continue to stand. There is no indication in the NT that Malachi's moving denunciation has become a paper tiger. In fact, the final verdict is much more serious yet! It betrays the state of one's heart (compare Dt. 26:14). Refusal to pay the tithes joyfully puts anyone basically in the same ballpark as the rich young ruler. His possessions had captivated his heart. That marked him as an idolater. Once again, the payment of 10% of one's income is not a debatable issue. In the NT, exhilarating Kingdom funding comes into view that is well beyond the 10% level. It runs the range from 10% up to 50%, indeed, up to 100%. Participation in such exhilaration, as will be further explained below, depends on the extent and quality of the experiential and activating presence of the Holy Spirit. This makes Kingdom funding, whether through giving in general or benevolence in particular, a matter of Gospel holiness rather than legal obedience. Of course, the law of God cannot and will not vanish from the scene as the legal *standard* or *substance* of personal godliness, but it cannot and does not function as the *source* from which obedience springs. That is the prerogative of Christ only through the presence of the Holy Spirit. In fact, the fullness of the Holy Spirit appears to be its own anesthetic, since the joy of his presence fully takes any and all pain out of sacrificial giving. In fact, this presence appears to produce exultation precisely through sacrifice (Acts 4:36-37), indeed through losing everything (Jam. 1:10).

2. Benevolence

While the NT therefore outdistances the OT by far, the OT itself is already "pregnant" with indicators to that effect. One such indicator is benevolence giving. The festal gifts during the big three annual feasts (Ex. 23:14-15; Dt. 16:16-17) and free will offerings at special occasions, such as the construction of the tabernacle and the temple (Ex. 35:20-29; 1 Chr. 29:1-9) qualify as such. The sums of money offered up to the Lord at these occasions are nothing short of staggering. Ironically,

even at the occasion of the Golden Calf (Ex. 32:2-3), and Gideon's Ephod (Judg. 8:24-27) the liberality of the people was significant, if not overwhelming!

3. Mercy Giving

But the OT "pregnancy" extends itself beyond benevolence giving. It also includes mercy giving. When people go hungry, they must be granted gleaning privileges (Lev. 19:9-10; 23:22; Dt. 24:19; Ruth 2:8,17; Job 24:6; Is. 17:5). Furthermore, when people are impoverished, they must be given anti-poverty loans that may carry no interest (Ex. 22:25; Lev. 25:35-37; Dt. 23:19), and must be forgiven after seven years (Dt. 15:7-11). This same mercy is also in evidence during the Sabbath Year and the Year of the Jubilee (Lev. 25:10-13, 23-28). These two occasions provide all covenant people with a fresh start in life. Those who had surrendered themselves into (biblical) slavery by surrendering their future income and labor to some else's jurisdiction would once again be free to pursue their own course of action. Those who had sold (the yield of) their land holdings once again would regain the final say over it.

4. Conclusion

The conclusion appears to suggest itself. Already in the OT, 10% is only the minimum rock bottom reality. Proper generosity more than exceeds this level. The NT simply expands on this dramatically. In short, 10% appears to be the minimum biblical requirement in the OT as well as the NT (Lk. 11:42), while 50% turns out to be an inevitable certainty (Lk. 3:11), and 100% more than a distinct possibility (Lk. 21:2ff)! That is to say, 10% is an obligation, and anywhere from 10% to 100% reflects the extent and quality of the Spirit's presence, as will be extensively argued from Scripture below.

II. Biblical Models of Kingdom Funding

Three prominent biblical models come quickly to mind. They are Barnabas (Acts 4:36-37), the Macedonians (2 Cor. 8:1-5), and the Lord Jesus Christ himself (2 Cor. 8:9).

1. Barnabas

Barnabas (Acts 4) is said to be "*full* of the Holy Spirit." The meaning of this phrase can only be appreciated against the backdrop of three other phrases that occur in the NT: the baptism with the Spirit, the gift of the Spirit and the filling with the Spirit. The baptism with the Spirit is a once and for all historical event at Pentecost (Acts 1:5; 2:33). The gift of the Spirit is a once and for all personal event following repentance and the forgiveness of sins (Acts 2:38). The filling with the Spirit is a repeated historical event, when new situations require such filling (Acts 4:31), as well as a repeated personal event, when the Spirit is grieved or quenched (1 Th. 5:19; Eph. 4:30; 5:18). The fullness of the Holy Spirit, attributed to Barnabas, is clearly the Mount Everest of the Spirit's presence. It indicates a permanent state of fullness that is evidenced by a continual overflow. Barnabas' life is a demonstration of the streams of living Holy Spirit water that, according to the Lord Jesus, would flow from the innermost being (lit. "belly") of Christians who thirst for and drink of him (John 7:37-39). The NT record predicates this "fullness" of only one other individual. That is Stephen (Acts 6:5; 7:55). While the latter surrendered his life with his face glowing, Barnabas sold a tract of land undoubtedly with the same glow to meet needs in the Kingdom (Acts 4:36-37).

Incidentally, in doing so he was not alone. Many other members in the early Jerusalem congregation joined in.

The presence of the Holy Spirit clearly does not simply bring a person's "belly" (John 7:38b), a symbol of self-centered, if not selfish, "intake" (John 7:38c), to a state of tranquil contentment, but actually turns it into an overflowing source of the purest rivers of water. In fact, it only needs to dawn on someone what the "return" of any "belly" is all about in order to recognize what a miracle of grace the outflow of such water is. The word miracle is neither lightly chosen without giving it its due weight, nor glibly selected to "over-dramatize" the situation. In blunt terminology, it is meant to underscore that apart from Christ even the believer can only produce "vomit." In fact, this is mild terminology in the light of James who speaks about the untamable tongue that by itself can only spread hell fire and only produce deadly poison (Jam. 3:6-8). However, as believers abide in Christ they cannot but yield the freshest of all water streams, the clearest of all Gospel lights, and the most nourishing of all spiritual foods. The term *miracle* is in place in this context, if anywhere!

Furthermore, it stands to reason that the inner joyful power THAT accompanies the awesome presence of the Spirit, outstrips and outclasses any possible kind of pain and sorrow involved in the self-denying and self-sacrificial action of the sale of property. In fact, the presence of the Spirit of God is, in the final analysis, not only its own anaesthetic; it is the driving power that joyfully embraces any kind of pain or sorrow in order to be effective in the Kingdom. Just as parents gladly sacrifice themselves to secure the life of their children, so Spirit-filled Christians joyfully surrender everything to effect life. Failure to do so should never be met with "law." Of course, the law exposes and condemns sin. In doing so it can and must have a sobering impact. But it never can add one iota of Gospel holiness to anyone's life. No, failure should ever be met with "Gospel" only! Believers should be invited to thirst for and drink of Christ. That only, but at the same time inevitably, will lead to exhilarating Kingdom holiness, inclusive of Kingdom funding.

2. Macedonians

If at all possible, the Macedonians take a step beyond Barnabas (2 Cor. 8:1-5). They are going through an ordeal of affliction, and possibly as a result of it, they find themselves in extreme poverty. Nevertheless all that is offset by their quite apparent and abundant joy in the Holy Spirit to such an extent that they literally overflow in the riches of their liberality, that is, well beyond their ability. They give the non-existing shirts of their backs, and regard this as a privilege and a favor! They apparently had to beg Paul for permission to do so. Paul seemed to have been quite reluctant at first, and, when they insisted and eventually came through, he appeared quite surprised about their total giving. The secret of their giving apart from having the joy of the Lord, and more specifically of the Spirit, as their strength (Neh. 8:10) is that they first gave themselves, that is their hearts and their lives, to God *and* their fellow believers, radically, fully and joyfully, without holding anything back. In short, theirs was a life of total surrender to the Lord and the neighbor, note well, in the joy of the Spirit. No wonder, that all their earthly belongings followed suit! Once you truly give yourself to someone, totally and without reservation, the rest is a cinch. And Jesus is the undisputed model!

3. Christ

In all this the Macedonians walked in the footsteps of Jesus himself (2 Cor. 8:8). Although he was wealthy beyond comparison, he became poor equally beyond comparison. He owned no home, did not have any of the usual earthly possessions, and lived off the hand-me-downs of people. In short, he lived what he preached. His life of "poverty" was neither anti-establishment nor anti-social. Nor was it an end in itself. It symbolized unreserved self-denial and limitless sacrifice as the (only) means

to reach his objective: the display of the sum total of his Father's perfections in and through the salvation of sinners. As such his death was simply an extension of his life. In Jesus' own words, "unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone. But if it dies, it bears much fruit" (John 12:24). Of course, his poverty was not merely physical in nature. It reached its zenith on the cross. No one can begin to fathom the poverty that hit him when his Father forsook him. Not even the damned in hell will ever fully know. For they experience the wrath of God for their own sins only. Jesus bore God's wrath on behalf of an innumerable multitude. He did all of that in order that this multitude, to which he had committed himself totally and without reservation, would become rich (once again) beyond comparison! At times these riches undoubtedly includes material prosperity as a divine blessing upon obedience. But it all comes into its own in the riches of union and communion with God. That glory is inexpressible!

To sum it all up, while clearly the Macedonians took a step beyond Barnabas, the Lord Jesus leaves the Macedonians in the dust.

4. Conclusion

The question may well be asked whether the Church, in being confronted with these models, in good conscience can lower its sight and be truly content with anything that falls short of its total and unreserved input in the Kingdom of God. After all, both the Macedonians and the Lord Jesus are held out as explicit and compelling models to the Corinthians! Of course, they could also have taken a close and hard look at Paul. He possibly more than anyone else walked in the footsteps of Jesus by "completing what was lacking in the latter's suffering" (Col. 1:24), in fact, by carrying not just the suffering, but also the death of Christ in himself (2 Cor. 4:10-11). "I die daily," he exclaims (1 Cor. 15:31), clearly to experience, also possibly more than anyone else, the effectiveness of Jesus. One close and hard look at Paul would have revealed to the Corinthians the identity as well as the nature of God's "pipeline" that led to their abundant riches both of life and in life (2 Cor. 4:12). With such vivid embodiment of Christ in the person of Paul, one may well wonder whether the Corinthians had any other choice than to produce "rivers of living water," also if not specifically in the funding of the Kingdom. Of course, a close and hard look at all the biblical models discussed thus far would soon reveal that not simply the Corinthians, but every segment of the Church is left without an alternate option.

At any rate, in the light of the service of Barnabas (the son of consolation!), the heart of the Macedonian, the suffering of Jesus, and the ministry of Paul, the tithes look rather puny to put it quite mildly. In fact, these models dwarf the 10% by a country mile. They make it pale into insignificance. That is undoubtedly the reason why Paul does not remind the Corinthians of the tithes in 2 Corinthians 8-9. What the Church of Christ would and does regard as progressive in our day and age (namely the paying of the 10%) would have been utterly regressive to the apostle Paul. Talk about something sobering to consider! Incidentally, all this implies that one may *in practice* salute any "opposition" to the tithes that is rooted in the recognition that the NT outdistances the OT by far, as long as it is coupled with the insistence that one should transcend the 10% level in order to be a biblical Christian. Nevertheless, *in principle* opponents of the tithes from a narrow NT perspective would have served the Church much better if they had left the tithes alone, and gone on with a vengeance to expound the rich and convicting NT message of overflowing Kingdom giving. It is hoped that no one who comes face to face with the NT teaching will remain unaffected by this message. This leads to the next section that deals with some major principles of Kingdom funding.

III. Biblical Principles of Kingdom Funding

Three principles of Kingdom giving figure prominently in the biblical teaching on the subject. They are proportionate giving (1 Cor. 16:1-2), “downpour” giving (2 Cor. 8:14), and equality giving (2 Cor. 8:15).

1. Proportionate Giving

Giving should be in keeping and proportion with one’s income. This reflects the principle of tithing, but in a NT garment. That is to say, the OT principle of proportionality remains fully in tact. But it adds NT flexibility. Starting from the 10% benchmark as non-debatable, the believers have total freedom (Acts 5:3-4) to exceed it. Perception of needs as well as the quality and extent of the presence of the Spirit will determine how far believers will move toward the 100%. Both in principle and in practice, the 100% should always be recognized as achievable. In the history of the Church, there undoubtedly have been many believers like Paul who in the area of Kingdom financing have experienced the joy of the resurrection power, as well as the suffering and death of Christ. There is no reason to believe that the future will not produce any such believer. In fact, there is every reason to believe that all Christians who come face to face with the Biblical teaching and especially with Christ as a compelling model, will say, “Why should I not enjoy the resurrection power and experience the suffering and death of Christ?” And if they do not say it, they ought to recognize that they should say it. The woman with her two coins may well have been the greatest recipient and showcase of the fullness of the blessing of the Gospel during the lifetime of Jesus (Lk. 21:2-4). In fact, the Church would do well to hold her out as such on a consistent basis. That she took the spotlight before the outpouring of the Spirit is a telling indication of what can happen in the present as well as the future.

2. “Downpour” Giving

Paul indicates that the flow of giving should go in a specific direction. The trajectory always should run from the ones who have more to the ones who have less. That may have caused Paul’s reluctance to accept contributions from the Macedonians for the impoverished congregation in Jerusalem. They most likely were in a worse shape than their brothers and sisters in the mother congregation. In the political arena it seems to be a perennial issue to reach some kind of equality by redistributing the income of the nation through progressive taxation or by encouraging benevolent entrepreneurialism through lowering taxes. The first solution favors the governmental siphoning-off approach with a view to the common good. The second solution opts for the private trickling-down effect to raise the standard of living of the common man. Scripture transcends both solutions. It rejects both the siphoning-off method and the trickling-down process. When the government siphons off, it goes the route of heavy-handed compulsion and resorts to legalized theft. When the individual decides to trickle down, he invariably stays in his comfort zone. The biblical Christian neither siphons off, nor trickles down, but *pours* down. Just as Christ pours out the Spirit (Acts 2:31) and inundates the Christian, so the Spirit filled Christian pours out his life and inundates the world around him. He is fully prepared to leave his comfort zone and to sacrifice his standard of living. He becomes a *lifeline*, not in the last place in Kingdom funding.

3. Equality Giving

The equality that results from this is neither a forced reality, unavoidable when Big Government runs the show, nor a calculated risk, always possible when the Free Market fails to govern itself. It is

Christ's guarantee that becomes a reality by means of a biblical servant heart. The plenty of the one Christian becomes the supply of the other. When the need shifts, and the shoe is on the other foot, the roles are simply reversed. The principle that determines this is awesome. It is both biblical and universal. "He who had gathered a lot had nothing left, and he who had gathered little, had no lack" (Ex. 16:18). The surplus of the young and the energetic in their prime made up for the lack of the weak and the aged in their declining years. This principle is lifted from the desert episode, when the Israelites collected the manna each morning to meet the need for their daily sustenance. Those who ended up with any excess of that mysterious food were always happy to part with it in the evening. In fact, they may have been too happy. Since at the midnight hour the manna would go bad, the one who would take it off his neighbor's hands prior to that time virtually functioned as a garbage collector. It would save the owner a trip to the local dump. To "get rid of it" earlier in the evening, therefore, was hardly a noble act! The proper equivalent, both in the present or in the future, would be to hand over our greenbacks in case of an equivalent need as if they were garbage, even if after the midnight hour they would still be as crisp and useful as earlier on during the day. In fact, when the clock strikes midnight in the Day of Judgment all of created reality will be treated as garbage. It will be burnt as well as totally replaced! The OT universal principle, applied to the analogous situation in the NT is clearly not as harmless, as it appears at first sight! Scripture is crystal clear. There is no excuse for believers to maintain any and all bank accounts that do not have a Christian rationale or a Christian purpose. Such accounts should be liquidated to fund the needs of the Kingdom. It would not be surprising, if in the Day of Judgment too much human as well as Christian "gold" will prove to "rust" in the vaults of self-interest and self-service (Jam. 5:3). This would not be so scary, if it would not be an all too eloquent witness that its "owners" blatantly failed to execute their stewardship properly. It would not be too difficult to identify individuals, or corporations for that matter, who perished or simply did not make it, in support of such damning charge. In short, the equality in view in the present passage and fully achieved following death or the Day of Judgment is beneficial to all believers. It will give them a platform for social security in the fullest sense of the word. It is not a yoke that is government imposed. Neither is it a matter of wishful thinking dependent upon the fickleness of selfish sinners. It is a luminous evidence of the presence of God, who succeeds where human efforts will invariably fail.

4. Conclusion

Of course, all this does not condemn the type of entrepreneurialism that creates well-financed as well as income generating foundations, funds or endowments on whatever scale for the specific purpose of starting, promoting, supporting or insuring the future of Christian projects or causes whether short term or long term. Prudent and cost effective allocations or pay-outs by their managers, that keep the principal in tact and at the same time provides a steady stream of funding ought to be applauded. Such regular allocations and pay-outs ensures continuity. Besides, with the retention of the original capital, many a foundation, fund, and endowment have in the course of the years paid out well in excess of their beginning net worth. The advantage for the cause of Christ in those cases HAS been undeniable. In short, while such entrepreneurialism is not mandated in Scripture for everyone, neither is it to be condemned. As in all other instances where Scripture does not enjoin or forbid, Christian liberty must be allowed to have free range (Rom. 15: 10-13; Jam. 4:11-12). Of course, caution should be taken that dependence upon a human instrument does not replace trust in God. Caution should also be taken that ministries that have basically dried up do not continue simply because of readily available funds. There may at times be need for repentance or for some drastic decisions. But all this does not undermine the beneficial use of properly operating foundations, and prudently used funds or endowments.

Neither does it condemn riches. The blessing of God is promised in abundance upon covenant obedience. While the poor will never disappear from the Christian community (Mk. 14:7), and at

times severe, trying or even extreme hardships can befall individual members, generically Christians can (in fact, *should*) anticipate riches (Dt. 28:1-13). The question how to deal with riches is more extensively answered below. But it should already go on record at this juncture that beyond the tithes, which must be paid as a matter of obedience, every individual believer is free under God to dispose of what is entrusted to him or her, whether in terms of time, energy or possessions, without judgmental interference by anyone. This is the clear teaching of Scripture. It is indicated by Peter (Acts 5:4) and driven home by James (Jam. 4:11-12).

IV. Biblical Patterns of Kingdom Funding

Three significant patterns are taught in Scripture as well. First, there is a correlation between sowing and reaping (2 Cor. 9:6). Second, giving should not be haphazard, but purposeful (2 Cor. 9:7). And, third, God's input is determined by man's output (2 Cor. 9:10).

1. The Sowing-Reaping Correlation

To sow sparingly is to reap sparingly. At the same time, to sow copiously is to reap copiously. This is a principle that covers the waterfront of life. Scripture admonishes its readers to proceed with all of one's might. That is, it is and should be the integrity of the Christian always to give it "one hundred percent." This includes time, energy, and effort, but it applies to Kingdom funding as well. Invariably the return ON an investment is determined by the quality and extent of this investment. This is the message of the life of Jesus, of Paul and of numerous others, who followed in the footsteps of Christ. It is also the message that is held out as a standard to unbelievers, such as the rich young ruler (Mt. 19:16ff; Lk. 18:18ff), to the disciples (Mt. 25:14ff), in fact, to all Christians throughout the history of the Church (Rev. 14:13). Only radical and total obedience will do, and only radical and total obedience can expect copious returns. No one who will give up father, mother, husband, wife, children, indeed, his own life as well for the sake of the Kingdom of God, will fail to receive his or her reward in this life already, in terms of fathers, mothers, etc. (Mt. 19:29).

It is hardly surprising that Paul holds this out before the Corinthians in the area of Kingdom funding as well. He does not set a specific benchmark. "Please, shoot for x number of dollars." That would blunt their initiative. It is exciting to see Paul appeal to the personal responsibility of the readers. Go as far, and as fast and as furious as you can in the Kingdom of God. In this way, be imitators of me and of Jesus (1 Th. 1:6). But the decision is and remains yours! This was the approach of Moses (Ex. 35:4ff), David (1 Chr. 29:6ff), as well as Peter for that matter (Acts 5:3-4). The result was breathtaking then. It should be illuminating today. Cast your bread upon the waters, and you will see a return. The more voluminous the bread that is cast, the greater the return will be. Individuals, families as well as churches should take aim at the highest possible level of giving, and increase that level as the Lord prospers. With 10% as the inviolable starting point Christians should set their sight on 20%, 30%, 40%, 50%, 60%, 70%, 80%, 90% and even 100%. The latter may not be reached until one's will is executed!

2. The Purpose-Entrepreneur Correlation

All giving should tie in with one or more specific purposes (2 Cor. 9:7). These purposes literally could cover the waterfront as long as they effectively promote the cause of Christ, whether in campus evangelism, overseas missions, Christian education, leadership development, or mercy ministry, to name only a few possibilities. Since donors are to give account of all the funds that have been entrusted to them, it would be the better part of wisdom to avoid languishing ministries that

may not merit support. It would also be wise to insure in advance of any gift that an acceptable accountability system is in place. Of course, donors often have preferences in sharing their wealth. All things being equal, they should not hesitate to follow their heart's desire. It is well known among professional fundraisers that people give to people rather than causes. This suggests that the choice of a specific focus for which individuals take individual responsibility may well be worth its weight in gold. It wisely decentralizes the ministry of the Church to the point of personal involvement.

Further, any kind of grass root entrepreneurialism that is enthusiastic in its support of a specific Kingdom project should be encouraged, approved and supported as much as possible. Such entrepreneurialism can assume several forms. It could eye the start-up of a business that would support one or more projects with part of the profits. It could plan to raise funds in an innovative manner for such projects. It could go the route of a foundation or an endowment. The possibilities are legion. In general, visionary planning, its detailed blueprint, and the strategy to implement it should always and by definition be applauded, encouraged and promoted, unless God clearly stops it (Rom. 1:13; 15:22). In other words, the response to any proposal should out of biblical principle never be, "No, unless . . . either God or the circumstances permit," but rather "Yes, unless . . . God forbids, whether through circumstances or otherwise." More often than not, people are killjoys. Too often such individuals have destroyed the heart of a Christian entrepreneur. It is one thing for folks to stop themselves in their dominion taking, to see barriers where God does not put them, such as non-existing lions in the street (Pr. 22:13). This is tantamount to committing Kingdom "suicide." But it is quite another to make oneself the measure of all things and to put up barriers for others in their legitimate, properly aggressive, God-centered, entrepreneurial joint-obedience to both the "Cultural Mandate" and the "Great Command" (Mt. 28:19). This is tantamount to committing Kingdom "murder." Of course, no one should (be encouraged to) be foolish or go off half-cocked, but even in giving assistance to a planning process that may have been less than perfect, the properly motivated entrepreneur may receive much needed encouragement at the right time in the right manner for the right goal. It is the mark of a Christian not only to take dominion but also to support dominion taking by others. Both Kingdom "suicide" and Kingdom "murder" should be avoided "at all cost." This is precisely what Christ appears to indicate (Lk. 14:26-27). In short, the righteous are not fearful of non-existing lions, but as bold as lions they enter into the battle of life recognizing the possibility of casualties (Pr. 28:1).

3. The Output-Input Correlation

The tapestry of Paul's wording is precise and far-reaching. The sower is not merely told to distribute his available seed. Rather he is informed that when he sows God will supply him with the necessary seed. In a word, the output of the believer will determine the input of God. Believers must step out in faith. At that juncture they will experience that God is faithful and will show in a tangible way that he rejoices over their initiative. You will receive according to your faith (Mt. 9:22; 15:28; Mk. 5:34; 10:52; Lk. 7:50; 17:19; 18:42). The violent will take a hold of the Kingdom by their violence (Mt. 11:11). To bring this down to earth, only when they start their engine of ministry of whatever sort and aggressively lay themselves, their time, their skills, their energies, and their possessions on the line, will they discover that God will place all the necessary fuel to pursue their ministry at their disposal. In fact, the more they dedicate themselves to widen the circle and broaden the scope of their ministry, the more copious their fuel supply will be. It is a biblical promise and a historical fact that such ministries will spiral upwards. While God takes away from them who do not have, he will give more (and more) to those who do have (Mt. 13:12; 25:29; Mk. 4:25; Lk. 8:18; 19:26). Of course, this does not take anything away from proper planning. No one who goes to war or constructs a building should do so without carefully counting the cost (Lk. 14:28). But God's war is already in progress, and God's building is already being constructed. All of God's people must join in to the utmost, that is, step up to the firing line with all the fire power they can muster, and add as many

bricks as fast as they can. God will rejoice to supply the ordnance and the mortar.

4. Conclusion

The combination of this triad of patterns makes for powerful Kingdom funding. It is copious, imaginative as well as self-abandoning. The abundance of generosity is a perfect fit both in the OT and the NT. So is the imagination that supplies ways and means to relieve needs, assist the poor, and take care of the sick. The Macedonians illustrate how true Christianity implies self-denying and self-sacrificial sharing of one's time, talents and treasures.

V. Biblical Dynamics of Kingdom Funding

The threefold dynamic is that Christians always ought to be willing (1 Chr. 29:9), ready (2 Cor. 8:11-12), and cheerful (Dt. 26:14; 1 Chr. 29:9; 2 Cor. 9:7) in their Kingdom funding.

1. Willingness

Christians should always be desirous to give as an evidence of their regenerated heart. Furthermore, their whole heart should be in it. David marvels when he sees the willingness of the people of God to contribute toward the construction of the temple. The same desire Christians have toward their God (Ps. 73:25) they should have toward the funding of his Kingdom. In fact, their desire for God will set their desire toward the Kingdom, its growth and its funding into motion. There will be no biblical willingness without Gospel motivation!

2. Readiness

Christian also ought to be ready to give. This is clearly implied in Ephesians 4:28, verbalized in 1 Corinthians 16:1-3, and underscored in 2 Corinthians 8:11-12; 9:2-5.

The Ephesians passage provides the broad foundation. Negatively, any sort of stealing, whether OF property, time or otherwise, must be renounced. Positively, there is no other option than to settle down in hands-on labor. However, the added redemptive principle or rationale is both evident and telling. Not only should vocations and jobs be pursued, but also wage and salary increases be sought in order to have something to share with others, to supply needs and to meet opportunities. It would be explosive if the Church would recognize this biblical pattern and seek to display it. Christians would not aim to amass wealth, but to give their wealth away. In the process God will amass wealth in the recognition that it will "provide seed to the sower." This may not immediately leave anyone with a huge bank account. But at the same time, there is no one who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother or children for Christ's sake who shall not receive many times as much in addition to eternal life" (Mt. 19:29). This translates into riches galore both on earth and in heaven. This kind of riches is clearly a return upon one's Kingdom investment, which in one way or another will be reinvested.

The Corinthians passages furnish the superstructure. The readiness to give is on display in setting funds aside in advance. When the time comes to deliver, there should be no need for a whirlwind of chaotic activity to give the appearance of being ready. This, of course, does not militate against the use of all impassioned live appeals for funds. Long-term needs must be met in a long-term manner, quietly and orderly. But there is no reason not to meet short-term needs in a short-term fashion,

passionately and quickly. Just as Christians should be ever ready to meet their Maker, so they should be ready for holiness in general, and Kingdom funding in particular. The conditions will dictate whether they should be ready instantaneously, over a long time, or anywhere in between.

3. Cheerfulness

But there is one more step to take. Finally, to be a co-worker of Christ in Kingdom funding should be a joy (Dt. 26:14; Neh. 12:43). This can never be achieved without the presence of the Holy Spirit. The Kingdom of God is not food or drink, but the righteousness of Christ, a peace treaty with God the Father and, consequently, the joy of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). Joy is a heartfelt sense of delight and exultation. The performance of duty without cheerfulness at best comes down to legal obedience, and is literally poles apart from Gospel holiness. More than that, legal obedience following justification is woven of the same cloth as works righteousness prior to justification. It is formal, cold, and lifeless. This may not be recognized on the surface. But God who knows the heart can, does, and will determine whether someone has the reputation of being alive, but has the pall of death hanging over him (Rev. 3:1).

VI. The Donors in Kingdom Funding

No one is exempted in Kingdom funding. There is a role to play for both the rich and the poor. On the one hand there is a vast difference, but on the other hand, there is an even greater equality. There is clearly no comparison in the extent of their participation. But the mode is identical!

1. The Rich

Riches in Scripture has two connotations. On the one hand, it is a more relative term. Individuals who possess more are rich compared to those who have less to show for. This came into view when Paul stated that the former always must share with the latter, and not *vice versa*. The flow is a one-way street. The ones to whom God has entrusted more are the donors. The ones to whom he has entrusted less are the recipients. On the other hand, it is a more absolute term. The rich in the more absolute sense enjoy a lavish independence and self-reliance by virtue of their wealth. They are neither dependent upon nor answerable to anyone. They can pretty much do what they please. In short, they are people who've got it made!

This puts them, according to Jesus, in a potentially dangerous situation. After all, he makes no bones about it that it is more difficult for an independently wealthy, self-reliant individual to enter the Kingdom than for a camel to go through "the eye of a needle" (Mt. 19:24). This must be hardly encouraging to the rich. In fact, the disciples conclude that this makes entrance into the Kingdom pretty much impossible for everyone. Jesus does not deny that, but uses this occasion to tell his disciples that man's impossibility is God's possibility (Mt. 19:25-26).

In the light of all this the question must arise how to deal with riches. For one thing, while the rich young ruler, due to his idolatry with money, is being counseled to exchange all that he owns for a pass into heaven and an apprenticeship with Jesus, this counsel and offer is not applicable indiscriminately to all rich people. Jesus faces and addresses a unique individual in a unique situation. Apprenticeships with Jesus are presently no longer available. However, this does not mean that Scripture is devoid of all counsel to the rich. Far from it! Paul informs all the relative rich (the haves) to go to work for the specific purpose of sharing with the have-less and the have-nots (Eph. 4:28). At the same time he counsels the independently wealthy not to lead an arrogant life, and not

to idolize uncertain riches, but rather to be generous and ready to share (1 Tim. 5:17-18). James adds that purposeless accumulation of wealth, payment of shameful wages, a life of luxurious self-indulgence, and wanton murder to safeguard riches (Jam. 5:1-5) prepare one for the judgment of God.

The Biblical counsel to the rich is basically no different from the counsel to all believers. With the tithes as starting point, they must be known for their generosity. But up to what percentage point they exceed the 10% is fully their choice and decision. They must be on guard, however, not to let their wealth become an idolatrous and destructive snare. The only way to accomplish this, according to James, is for the rich to exult in the fact that all their possessions will be taken away. Then they are in the same position as the poor. They have only Jesus left as their total sufficiency (Jam. 1:9-11). This is radical medicine, but apparently the only medicine that works. In short, the rich must learn that he is no fool who gladly surrenders what he cannot keep in order to gain what he can never lose. The rich young ruler fell short of the mark. Although he was a lovable individual (Mk. 10:21), he is like the proverbial handwriting on the wall for all wealthy believers to consider.

2. The Poor

This, of course, can never be used by the poor to excuse themselves from generous giving, as the Macedonian model already indicated. The term “poor” can also be used in a more relative and a more absolute sense. The relative poor are at the same time also and by definition the relative rich, depending upon the standard of comparison. When compared to richer folks, they are relatively poor. But when compared to poorer folks, they are relatively rich. In the more absolute sense, the poor are those who have no property to share and no income to tithe. They are the precise antipode of the rich in the more absolute sense of the word. It is incumbent upon both the rich and the relative rich (poor) to look after them. But this is not to say that the poor in the more absolute sense are reduced to being recipients only. It is and remains incumbent upon them to tithe. When their hearts are in the right place, they may use their creative imagination and tithe their time when unemployed or without income. Every Church would welcome their poor members in this sense either to be involved for a specified numbers of hours per week in organized evangelism, or to expend their skills in diaconal services, whether in meeting personal needs, in sprucing up the place of meeting or otherwise. All in all, both Paul and James counsel generosity in the case of the independently wealthy. But the poor are not exempt from such counsel either! To be sure, the least they can do is to abstain from complaining or from nurturing a complaining spirit, which incidentally will not remain unpunished (Jam. 5:7-11). But that only takes care of their sins of commission. They better remember that they are also vulnerable to sins of omission, failure to put their time, energy and skills at the disposal of the Kingdom. This may not fund the Kingdom in the strict sense of the word. But it certainly will fuel the Kingdom!

2. Equal Participation

In line with all this, the leadership of the Church would do well, with lots of input from the congregation, to do some long range planning, in which needs, ministries as well as projects are identified and prioritized. To marshal support for visionary planning and its implementation, Churches would be wise to conduct stewardship Sundays in which the congregation is challenged by the biblical data. Faith pledges as well as capital campaigns can also play a significant role.

Faith pledges focus on human output before the divine input has been received, in parallel with the pattern seen above. Those who pledge commit themselves to the limit of their own sacrificial capability *and beyond*, trusting the Lord for the latter. They will honor their pledge to the extent of

both their capability and the eventual divine input. Clearly in this, both the rich and the poor are on an equal footing in terms of their participation in Kingdom funding, if not in the extent, certainly in the mode of that participation.

Capital campaigns set a specific funding goal which, when reached, would make the implementation of a specific program possible. There is no reason why the poor cannot equally participate with the wealthy in the planning process and in the implementation of the program by contributing their time and energy by praying for it or otherwise promoting it. All of the membership of a Church or Christian organization should be involved in the implementation of its programs in an imaginative fashion.

In due time, of course, it can and must be determined by analyzing the projected income from all sources, which needs can be met, which ministries can be pursued, and which projects can be realized.

It is not a shame to start small. After all, the day of the small things should not be despised (Zech. 4:10). But it is a shame to think small and to plan small. Even what starts as small as a mustard seed, can be anticipated to blossom out (Mt. 13:31-32). In fact, most Christians are ordinary people who are not given to immediate and spectacular progress. Often it takes a long time before their vision catches on, and its implementation takes off. However, the latter can be expected to take place exponentially with an ever-increasing pace. No foothold, therefore, should be given to discouragement. Believer always must continue to step out in entrepreneurial dominion-taking to achieve their goals.

4. Conclusion

It may be well for both the rich and the poor to remember the immense needs of humanity, of a spiritual as well as physical nature. Mankind is bleeding out of so many wounds and broken in so many places that it is mind-boggling. The Lord Jesus saw that immense need, and did something commensurate about it. This is the only way that the depth, width, breadth and height of his self-denying suffering and sacrificial service can be halfway explained. If believers would only gain a glimpse of the indescribable needs of man, and an equal glimpse of the indescribable response of Jesus, it may be possible that all of them, whether rich or poor, would be spurred through the power of the Spirit jointly to fund or fuel the Kingdom to their fullest ability without regard for themselves first.

VIII. Conclusion

The conclusion contains a summary, spells out a culmination point, and presents a challenge. The summary indicates that proper Kingdom giving always is and always should be a Gospel matter, and more precisely a matter of Gospel holiness derived from Christ and activated by the Spirit. The culmination point is that Kingdom funding in the framework of Gospel holiness is ultimately a matter of Gospel worship. The challenge is for the Church of Christ to acquire a vision for Kingdom generosity, and then vigorously to pursue its implementation.

1. Gospel Holiness

Proper Kingdom Giving is a Gospel matter. It may never be presented as simply a matter of law. Scripture is crystal clear. Sin has no dominion over Christians. That is not merely wishful or

prayerful thinking. It is an indubitable fact! And it is a fact for a good reason, no, for the best of all reasons. They are not under “*law principle*,” but under “*grace principle*” (Rom. 6:14). That is, they are not married to the law, perfect and beautiful as the law may be (Ps. 119:140). The law by itself can only expose sin (Rom. 3:20), just like light can only show up dust in a dark room (Rom. 3:20). In fact, one of its purposes is to stir up sin (Rom. 7:8; Gal. 3:19), just like a broom that goes to work in a room with fine dust can only make it swirl. In this way the law points to Christ as the indispensable ground for justification and the equally indispensable source of sanctification. In short, the only hope for believers is to be married to Christ (Rom. 7:4). Due to the power of indwelling sin, the new heart plus the law amounts to nothing, even when it delights in that law (John 15:5; Rom. 7:18-24). Without Christ or the Spirit, it can do nothing (John 15:5; Rom. 8:9). However, with Christ and the Spirit, it can do all things, even facing the alliance of the enemy inside, indwelling sin, and the enemy on the outside, temptation (Rom. 7:25; 15:16; Phil. 4:13). The law that never can and never was intended to be the *source* of holiness will always remain the *substance* of holiness, inclusive of the holiness of Kingdom giving.

To be more precise, proper Kingdom funding is produced by the presence of Christ. As is the case with all practical godliness it consists of “glowing Christ” to be reached through “knowing Christ” with a view to “showing Christ.” The Savior will glow in the Christian when “to live is Christ and to die is gain” (Phil. 1:21). Christ is known to the Christian when there is a thirst not only to partake in the power of his resurrection, but also to participate in the fellowship of his suffering and the conformity to his death (Phil. 3:10). Christ will be shown when in an all-pervasive and all-embracing sense of satisfaction (contentment), appreciation (thanksgiving), and exultation (joy), the Christian engages in abundant Kingdom funding (sharing in giving and receiving) (Phil. 4:6, 10, 11, 15).

But this is not all. Proper Kingdom funding cannot be pursued without the presence of the Spirit. He tops the glowing, knowing and showing of Christ with the “flowing of Christ” (John 7:38). The powerful presence (Acts 1:8) of the Spirit yields *Rivers* of Living Water from one’s innermost being (lit. “belly”) (John 7:38). Those rivers turn the desert into a fertile field (Is. 32:15), a graveyard into a maternity ward (Ez. 37:1-14), and a Dead Sea into a fresh water lake filled with fish (Ez. 47:1-12). In a word, they are life-giving! The presence of the Spirit is clearly decisive. How decisive is indicated by the apostle Paul, when he bluntly states that without the indwelling Spirit of Christ no one does and can belong to Christ (Rom. 8:9). How else can the power of indwelling sin be overcome? The new heart is no match for the enemy on the inside, especially not when it lines up with the enemy on the outside (temptation). Without the indwelling Spirit, our Divine Ally on the inside, it is all over. It behooves every Christian not to quench (1 Th. 5:19), grieve (Eph. 4:30), or even simply to neglect (Rom. 15:30) his presence. Anyone can do that only at his or her own peril. This presence rather ought to be cultivated (Eph. 6:18; Jude 20). How else can the “belly,” that by definition always and only takes in, not just be satisfied (for once!), but begin to *flow*. This is, indeed, a Holy Spirit miracle! As has already been observed, without the Spirit all men are surrounded by a “desert” that will kill them (Is. 32:15), are “graveyards” that constitute them as dead (Ez. 37:1-10), in fact, are “Dead Seas” that will kill everyone else as well (Ez. 47:8-10). It is the height of tragedy unknowingly to overlook the Spirit, but the height of arrogance willfully to ignore him.

The upshot is self-evident. It is indispensable to make Christians aware of all the pertinent teaching of both the OT and NT Scripture, which includes the teaching of the law of God that will be written on the heart (Jer. 31:33). And they had *better* learn fast! Without the substance and guidelines of Scripture the train of the Church has no tracks, and nowhere to go. At the same time, it is equally indispensable to present the teaching of Scripture as Gospel. Without Christ and the Holy Spirit there is neither regeneration (Rom. 6:6; John 3:5), nor justification (2 Cor. 5:21; Eph. 1:13-14). But without Christ and the Spirit there is no sanctification either (Eph. 2:10; Phil. 4:13; Rom. 8:1-4, 12-13; 15:16). Not to teach Scripture in the area of Kingdom funding is criminal negligence. Not to

teach it as Gospel is suicidal. For the Church to grasp this twofold truth is to turn it into a cheering Amen corner!

The more a Christian in repentance begins to turn away from self and sin, and in faith begins to appropriate Christ and the Holy Spirit, the more the life of holiness will blossom out. Barnabas loved Jesus and was full of the Spirit. He promptly and cheerfully signed his property over to the Church (Acts 4:36; 11:24). Stephen equally loved Jesus and was equally full of the Spirit. He promptly and cheerfully surrendered his life to God (Acts 6:5; 7:55). (Apparently to be full of Christ and of the Spirit is its own anesthetic. Any kind of accompanying “loss” does not appear to hurt. In fact, its opposite is in evidence.) David Livingstone once was asked to relate the history of his suffering in Africa as a missionary and an explorer. “Suffering, suffering,” he retorted, “I do not know the meaning of the word.” This makes perfect sense in the context of Scripture, where suffering appears to be a cause for joy (Acts 5:41).

2. Gospel Worship

All this both constitutes and finds its culmination point in the worship of God in “the beauty of holiness” (Ps. 96:9) on the highway of holiness (Is 35:8). Such worship is basically two-pronged. It is worship in deed (Rev. 4:10), and worship in word (Rev. 4:11). Worship in word bursts forth in verbally ascribing all worth to God the Father for his creation and providence, as well as to God the Son for his redemption, whether by speaking, singing, speaking loudly, or continuously speaking for everyone to hear (Rev. 4:11; 5:9, 12, 13, 14). Such worship will easily and spontaneously make believers lift up their hands (Ps. 28:2; 63:4; 143:6; 1 Tim. 2:8). Worship in deed will return every gift, wherewith God has crowned the believer, to God. In the light of the mercies of God the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit in the areas of regeneration, justification and sanctification, sacrificial service is altogether reasonable and appropriate (Rom. 12:1-2). In fact, just like Abraham put his fear of God on display by returning his son to God, so it can be expected that believers who have experienced the full Gospel, cannot but (seek to) turn their lives, their skills, and property over to God. They will recognize in the midst of a world of abject poverty in the areas of the most basic needs that the most simple possessions, such as a pair of glasses, bedding, breakfast cereal, etc. are not inalienable rights. They are not merely gifts humbly to be received. They are to be experienced as “crowns” graciously granted to undeserving “kings” and “queens.” What other conclusion can be reached, when numerous people without glasses cannot read Scripture, without bedding cannot get the proper rest, and without breakfast cannot adequately function? Combine this with the presence of Christ and the presence of the Spirit, and it can be expected that the hearts as well as the check books will open up to spread the Gospel of the Kingdom in word and to display the mercy of the Kingdom in deed. The former is undoubtedly primary. But that should not lead to the neglect of the latter. At the same time, the latter may never be pursued independently from the former. The Gospel of the Kingdom *entails* the mercy of the Kingdom. The mercy of the Kingdom *displays* the Gospel of the Kingdom. Or put in a different way, when the elders of the Church are effective, the deacons will become busy. But when the deacons are busy, they advertise the work of the elders. In a word, the Church must be about the business of the Gospel of the Kingdom, but may not neglect to give it feet in the mercy of the Kingdom. It is the freedom of individual believers to concentrate their energies one way or another. It is both the duty and part of the worship of the Church to attend to both!

3. Gospel Vision

The Church will never display leadership in Kingdom generosity until it acquires a full-orbed biblical vision. Lack of such vision has historically created a vacuum in which other institutions moved by

default. At one time the care for the weak, including the needy, the poor and the sick, was the domain of the Church, of Christian institutions, as well as of individual believers. Routinely the Gospel left food supplies, clothes inventories, employment opportunities, training facilities, as well as hospital chains, etc. in its wake. When the rivers of living water dried up, the government and other secular institutions moved in and took over. This went a long way toward emasculating the influence of the Church. The people of God, corporately as well as individually, will do well to seek to recapture lost ground. In order to do so, it must translate its vision into a readable blueprint, and map out an imaginative strategy. The present paper is a modest effort in this direction. However, all this will be in vain, unless it caps this off with hot and sacrificial pursuit of its implementation. There is no doubt that here is the rub. For a seed to produce life, dying to self is an indispensable condition. This, in turn, will never become a reality without the fullness of the Spirit, as illustrated by Barnabas and Stephen, and without a continuous thirsting for and drinking of Christ as a means to that end (John 7:37-39). When through the Spirit the Church would ever stand in the gap by displaying biblical Kingdom funding, that by definition would be both abundant and sacrificial, arguably both the greatest “objective” and the biggest “subjective” barrier to the spread of the Gospel at home and abroad could be history. In turn, the undoubtedly increased effectiveness of the Church would open an ever-growing number of eyes toward the need and the beauty of Kingdom generosity. It may be left to the imagination of each believer to determine what number of new visionaries could result from the witness of simple, obedient, Christ-centered and Spirit-filled Kingdom funding and its far-reaching effect, and what kind of new visions this could spawn!

Dr. Henry Krabbendam is professor of Biblical studies at Covenant College in Lookout Mountain, Ga.

Written by Dr. Henry Krabbendam, Covenant College, Lookout Mountain, Ga. Copyright 2001. All rights reserved. Reprinted and distributed by permission by Generous Giving, Inc.