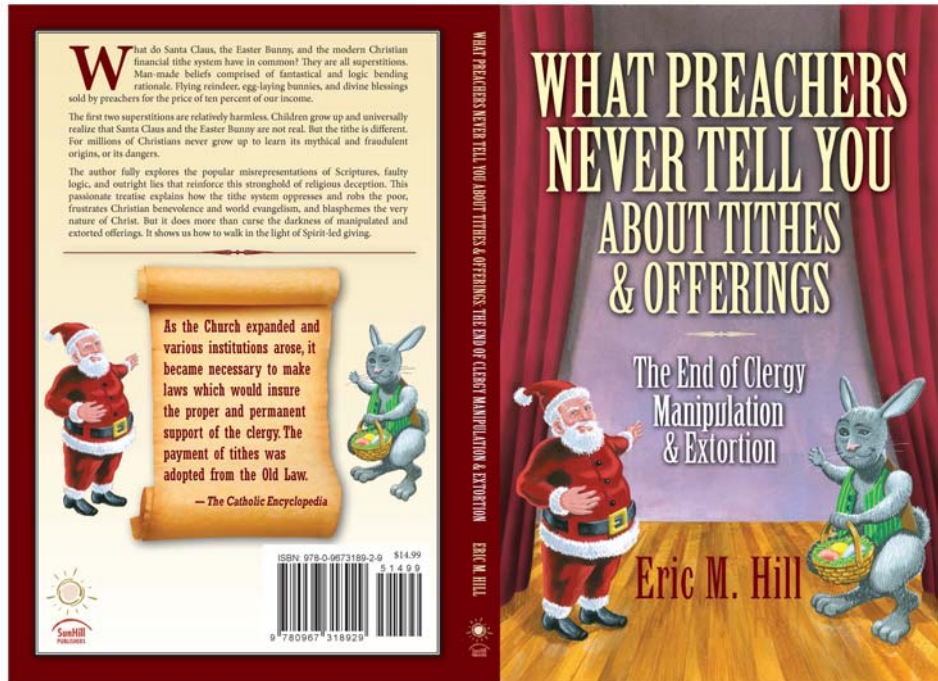


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Thank you!



The Gospel of Covetousness #3 by Eric M. Hill

Eternal Perspective Influences Behavior

What single thing most determines whether a person serves Jesus Christ and others or greed? It is eternal perspective. There's nothing mysterious about eternal perspective. It is simply your perception of spiritual truth. And spiritual truth is simply truth that is uniquely identified with God and eternity. If you don't see eternity, you will not live with eternal values. For your behavior reflects what you see, what you understand about eternity.

Christians who see eternity are generous. They form the backbone of the Church and are extremely faithful to it. Christians, however, who see little of eternity are more of a liability than an asset. Their minds are so full of this world that they can't properly serve God. A mind that doesn't see heaven or hell is ruled by selfish thoughts. It places more importance on things that are passing away than that which lasts forever. Actually it is hostile to heavenly or spiritual thoughts. ***"Because the carnal mind is enmity [hostile] against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be,"*** (Romans 8:7).

Carnal, worldly Christians are inevitably selfish and greedy. They can't help it. They are blinded to the eternal glories of heaven. So by default they live for this world. Of all people, they are the most contradictory. ***"They profess to know God, but in works they deny Him, being abominable, disobedient, and disqualified for every good work,"*** (Titus 1:16). But there is an even greater evil in the Church. It is the hungry cancer of carnal preachers.

Carnal Preachers

A carnal Christian is a small campfire; a carnal preacher is a raging forest fire. Carnal, worldly preachers, destroy everything within their reach. They devastate the Church with their covetousness and self-worship. These satanically anointed preachers stop many people from entering heaven. How is this done? Simple—by false doctrine. Covetous preachers thrive in atmospheres of greed. Yet this can only be created with false doctrine. What are some of these doctrines? Glad you asked.

The "Hundredfold" Heresy

I stated in *The Gospel of Covetousness #2* that a heresy is a doctrine with some truth and some error. The hundredfold doctrine is a heresy that was created by prosperity preachers to increase their offerings by appealing to the greed and ignorance of their followers. The doctrine is a distortion of Mark 10:28-30:

Then Peter began to say to Him, "See, we have left all and followed You." So Jesus answered and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake, and the gospel's, who shall not receive an hundredfold now in this time--

houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age to come, eternal life.

The basic heresy is this: If you give anything to God, He is obligated to literally give you back a hundred times what you gave. This doctrine attracts multitudes of foolish Christians who don't understand God. Yet it is like poison that is sweet in the mouth, but bitter in the belly. All who consume it rot from the inside out.

As usual the prosperity preachers overlook the character of God and the testimony of the Scriptures to justify their greed. It is assumed by a *casual* reading of Mark 10:29, 30 that God committed Himself to make financially rich anyone who has the sense to take advantage of this unbelievable deal. Yet a *careful* reading of that passage and its parallel passage, Luke 18:28-30, adds light. Instead of saying *hundredfold*, Luke uses the word *manifold*. Hundredfold and manifold mean the same thing, abundance. Neither means 100 x 1.

Why do prosperity preachers use hundredfold instead of manifold? It is because hundredfold is more easily manipulated for greedy purposes. The greedy heart can more easily picture 100 x 1 (hundredfold) than simple abundance (manifold). Manifold isn't enough for the greedy heart. It's too inconclusive. In God's eyes manifold could be only 10 x 1 or 3 x 1. Think about it. If you were covetous and arrogant enough to think God owed you a return on your giving, would you choose a hundredfold return or one to be determined by God? The greedy, arrogant heart will choose 100 x 1 every time.

Scriptures such as Luke 17:10 are ignored: ***“So likewise you, when you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do.’”*** These types of Scriptures are rarely quoted. And if they are, they are twisted to support covetousness. This is so even though the peculiar interpretation invariably violates God's character.

Why the Hundredfold Heresy is a Doctrine of Hell

First

This doctrine is blasphemous. Anyone who thinks God owes him anything except everlasting punishment reduces God to his servant instead of his King. Religious sinners routinely change the truth of God into a lie. Their love of sin won't allow them to accept God's holiness and sovereignty; so they simply create another god. They give

him the name of the true God, but the nature of a false god. This is the graven image of the American Church. Anyone who believes in the hundredfold heresy is guilty of serving a false god.

Second

This doctrine is ungrateful. It is impossible to be grateful to someone for giving you what is rightfully yours. The hundredfold heresy fills us with fleshly pride. It makes us feel superior to God by convincing us that we can obligate Him to satisfy our lusts. I am amazed and heartbroken at the number of Christians who are bitter against God because “He hasn’t come through for them.”¹

What utter nonsense! Hasn’t come through for them? When the Almighty God and Creator voluntarily strips Himself of divine power and comes to live on the level of a created being, and lives in total obscurity for thirty years, and climaxes His love for His enemies by offering Himself to be beaten, humiliated, tortured, mocked, and finally murdered by the slow and cruel death of crucifixion to save them from their sins, do we arrogantly answer His unearned love by accusing Him of not coming through for us? We do if we believe God owes us anything besides everlasting fire! Thus the hundredfold heresy seduces Christians into judging God as morally inferior to themselves (i.e., “I’ve done my part; God hasn’t done His.”).

Third

This doctrine is man-made. Do you really believe in the hundredfold heresy? Why? Is it because you have done an exhaustive biblical study and concluded this doctrine is of God? I can tell you boldly and without fear of refutation that you have done no such thing. You have taken the word of a blind teacher. You, like so many others, have been mesmerized by the manipulations and concocted testimonies of greedy preachers.

Who do you know who can prove the hundredfold heresy is working in her life? Who do you know who can show you his tax return and prove he has ever received a hundredfold increase on his financial giving? The only people who can do this are preachers who teach this heresy. And why does it work for them? It works because they have mailing lists of several hundred thousand greedy and gullible Christians who

¹ I believe this bitterness against God is a strong proof that many of them were never children of God.

regularly answer their requests for money. I guarantee you that if you give me a mailing list of a hundred thousand gullible Christians, I can make the hundredfold heresy work for me! It doesn't take a genius to figure this out.

Fourth

This doctrine is inaccurate. The text of Mark 10:30 obviously refers to spiritual and not natural returns. Jesus promised that whoever leaves everything and follows Him will receive in this life a hundredfold of whatever he leaves. Jesus mentioned houses, siblings, parents, spouses, children, and lands. It may be heretically possible to squeeze a hundred-acre return out of this Scripture. But what about the rest of the verse? Was God literally promising 100 x 2 parents, 100 x 1 spouse, 100 x 1 little brother? This ridiculous interpretation doesn't fit so snugly after all, does it?

Fifth

This doctrine is silly. Several years ago I heard a tape by a Southern California money preacher exhorting his followers to keep a record of what they had given God so they would know how much was in their heavenly bank account. This is beyond ridiculous. It's downright stupid. Only the most ignorant and gullible person imaginable would seriously consider such foolishness. Covetousness, however, has a way of stripping us of common sense.

Plus, this doctrine is silly because it requires us to deal with God as a legalistic banker instead of a compassionate Father. We can receive from the Banker only what we have contributed (times 100, of course). I ask you the questions the apostle Paul asked the Galatians. ***“O foolish Galatians! [prosperity saints]. Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth?...Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?”*** (Galatians 3:1, 3).

You who prefer God as a legalistic banker have placed yourselves under the law. You have refused His grace for a system of rules and human perfection. There is no place for mercy in the legalistic system of prosperity preachers. You either become a spiritual lawyer, an expert in manipulating and flowing with impersonal laws that supposedly rule the universe, or you suffer the consequences. Thanks, but no thanks. I prefer the grace and mercy of God instead of the mystical legalism of money preachers.

If you insist on dealing with God as a banker, you better hope you never get a fatal disease. Why? You've never contributed health to God, so how can you get a return? Unless, of course, you've found a way to convert some of the money Almighty God owes you into a cure. That would solve your problem. But how would you determine how much of your money to give Him for the cure? *Where's my ledger? Let's see...hmmmm, what's the going rate on cancer of the pancreas? God owes me \$3,464,929.13, 200 cups of water, 100 hammers, 100 Frisbees, 100 yo-yo's, 300 hospital visits, 100 fake Rolex watches, 6,000 meals, and 200 rides to work.* Do you really want to go down that accounting road?

Sixth

Sixth, this doctrine is unscriptural. Even if we use Mark 10 instead of Luke 18, it is obvious that prosperity preachers are either spiritually ignorant or dishonest. I believe they are both. If you read Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30, you clearly see that Jesus had just used the example of the rich young ruler as a warning for us to flee covetousness. Yet, surprisingly, money preachers teach that Jesus was actually trying to make the rich ruler richer by leading him into the hundredfold heresy. Prosperity preachers are stunningly blind to even the most obvious spiritual truths. Deliver yourself from their evil influence, or be led into eternal ruin! Get their books out of your house! Destroy their tapes and magazines! Their good doesn't justify their bad. It only takes a little poison to harm you.

The “As It Is In Heaven” Heresy

When the apostles asked Jesus to teach them to pray, He gave them a model to follow:

Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.

Matthew 6:9-13

As usual, the prosperity preachers ignore Scriptures that don't help them get into our pockets. The above prayer model plainly tells us to pray for God's kingdom to come,

not man's (*Your kingdom come.*). It also instructs us to live modestly (*Give us this day our daily bread.*). The Lord further tells us to pray that we be not led into temptation (*And lead us not into temptation.*). But wouldn't you know it? These truths aren't emphasized. What is emphasized is a twisting of "Thy will be done on earth, as it is in heaven."

The way money preachers explain it, God desires to lavish us all with unlimited material and financial wealth prior to His glorious return to earth. The proof, they say, is that He asked us to pray for His will to be done on earth as it is in heaven. And since everyone in heaven is undeniably rich, God obviously wants every Christian on earth to be rich. Only then can that Scripture be fulfilled, so they say.

There is, however, another way to interpret the above prayer. We can do it without violating God's character, without contradicting the Bible, and without placing ourselves in unnecessary danger of being seduced by riches. But this requires us to forsake the *new* truth of the prosperity preachers for the *old* truth of the Bible.

Let's just go with the obvious. There's no unrighteousness, hatred, racism, selfishness, sickness, war, or death in heaven. Nor is there anything else that conflicts with the rule of God. When we pray for God's kingdom to be done on earth as it is in heaven, we are asking God to intervene in the affairs of the world and to minimize the effects of sin. We are asking Him to frustrate Satan's efforts and to increase His own. In a prophetic sense, this type of prayer goes beyond our immediate needs and requests and anticipates the literal and physical return of the Lord to establish His kingdom on earth. Isn't this better than a pocketful of money? If you don't think so, you need a major spiritual tune-up—maybe even a rebuilt engine or an entirely new one. Hint, hint... **"You must be born again,"** (John 3:7).

The "Jesus Was Financially Rich" Heresy

One of the more ridiculous doctrines of the money preachers is that Jesus was rich. Yeah, this is crazy, but they have to teach stuff like this to support their covetous gospel. Wouldn't it appear contradictory to preach covetousness in the name of Jesus if Jesus taught and lived moderation? Yes, it would, and it does contradict the biblical Jesus. Therefore, these deceivers *modify* the record of Jesus' financial worth and material tastes.

Modification #1: Jesus Had Rich Parents

Money preachers often authoritatively state that Jesus had rich parents. Obviously this is to convince us that He was raised in privilege and possibly inherited wealth. Since He is our example, we would then be more inclined to desire money. And the more we desire money, the easier it is for money preachers to manipulate us. This is yet another astounding example of them taking us for fools. Do they not know there are Bibles everywhere? Do they expect us to believe that a carpenter in a small village had somehow grown rich by making tables and chairs one at a time?² Let's do what they are counting on us to not do—let's actually read the Bible.

Born on the Ground Among Animals

It is common knowledge that Jesus was born in Bethlehem and that He was born in a stable ***“because there was no room for them in the inn,”*** (Luke 2:7). Here's something I'd like you to consider: Since when do rich people live by the same rules as poor people?

“I'm sorry Mr. Trump, I can see that your wife is about to deliver her baby, but the inn is full.”

“Oh, no problem. Just because I'm rich doesn't mean I expect to be treated any differently than a poor person. We passed by a manger on the way over here. I'll see if they have room for my wife to lie on the ground next to animals and give birth to my firstborn. I'm sure that sheep poop and urine don't smell as bad as, say, a monkey's. We'll all laugh about this later.”

Yeah, right. We both know that a rich man would've whipped out a wad of cash, stuffed it in the innkeeper's hands, and *Shazam!*—wudda you know? *“Mr. Trump, I must've overlooked this suite. Here you are, sir. You and your wife have a wonderful evening.”*

Just something to consider.

Jesus' Parents Gave a Poor Family's Offering

Under the law of Moses, a rich family was required to offer a lamb, and a young pigeon or turtledove as a sacrifice for a newborn child (Leviticus 12:6-8). A poor family,

² Joseph and Jesus were both carpenters (Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3).

however, was to offer two turtledoves, or two young pigeons. Luke 2:22-24 says Joseph and Mary gave a poor family's offering. This was about 40 days after Jesus was born. So we know that very shortly after Jesus' birth, His parents were poor.

Wise Men Provided Gifts for Traveling and Lodging

The prosperity preachers also contend that Jesus and His family became rich by the gifts of gold and precious spices that were given to them by the wise men who visited (Matthew 2:11).³ The Bible doesn't tell us how much the wise men gave. So this is obviously self-serving guesswork on the part of money preachers. But this is to be expected. It's what they do.

Yet for the sake of discussion, let's assume that the gifts were worth a lot of money. It may interest you to know that shortly after Joseph and Mary received the gifts, God warned Joseph in a dream to ***"flee to Egypt, and stay there until I bring you word; for Herod will seek the young Child to destroy him...And [the family] was there until the death of Herod"*** (Matthew 2:13, 15). No one knows for sure how long they stayed in Egypt to escape the paranoid ruler of Israel. It appears to have been as long as two or three years.⁴ But the issue is not whether it was two or three years. The issue is God's providential care for Joseph, Mary, and especially their child, Jesus, in an emergency situation.

God caused wise men to provide money for their trip and living expenses, enough for at least two or three years. It's important to note that the money was unsolicited, the trip was necessary, and it was God's idea. How contradictory then for money preachers to use this example as justification to raise money for their lusts by extortion, bribery, and manipulation of God's people.

Modification #2: Jesus Had So Much Money He Needed a Treasurer

One money preacher noted: "If Jesus didn't have a lot of money, He would not have had a treasurer." This light reasoning doesn't even deserve a yawn, but I'll do it anyway—aauhaauugghmmm. *Excuse me.*

³ Which is it, money preacher? Did they get rich by Joseph being a carpenter, or by the gifts of the wise men?

⁴ The actual administration of the tax census/inventory occurred in 7 B.C. This is what caused Joseph and Mary to travel to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born (Luke 2:1-7). Six or seven weeks after the Lord's birth, the family fled to Egypt to await King Herod's death, which occurred in 4 B.C. That's a difference of 2 – 3 years.

The Bible does say that Jesus had a treasurer (KJV; John 13:29). Or more specifically that Judas *“had the bag.”* The Bible, however, doesn’t say how much was in the bag. I carry a *bag* with me all the time, a wallet, but this doesn’t mean I’m rich. A company has a treasurer until the day it goes broke. The presence of a treasurer, bag, or wallet says nothing about financial status. Do you see the obvious error and deception in this doctrine?

Modification #3: Jesus Had Expensive Transportation

What about the donkey Jesus rode as He entered Jerusalem. One wolf in sheep’s clothing said, “That donkey was the equivalent of a Cadillac. It was the best transportation of that day!” That’s funny. I thought horses were always considered more prestigious than donkeys.

Here’s what the Scripture says, ***“Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey,”*** (Zechariah 9:9). Jesus selected the colt because it was a sign of lowliness, not haughtiness or financial riches. Besides, the colt wasn’t even His; it was borrowed for perhaps less than an hour (Mark 11:1-6). Did your prosperity preacher borrow his or her luxury vehicle?

Modification #4: Jesus Wore Expensive Clothing

Prosperity preachers contend that Jesus wore extremely expensive clothing. Their proof? Here it is: ***“And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots....”*** (KJV; Matthew 27:35). Would Roman soldiers gamble for Christ’s clothing if they were not expensive? they ask. Okay, okay, I’ll give them that one. Jesus did show up at one of His trials and His crucifixion wearing some mighty fine threads. In fact, He wore both a scarlet robe and a gorgeous white robe. But before the money preachers ascend the Olympic podium for their gold medal, they should consider the lap they forgot to run. Remember the colt Jesus rode into Jerusalem? Mmmhhmmm...that’s the one. It didn’t actually belong to Him, did it? Neither did these fancy clothes we’re discussing.

These robes weren't purchased by the tithes and offerings of gullible Christians. Roman soldiers contemptuously put the scarlet robe on Him once they had stripped off His own clothing: ***“And they stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him,”*** (Matthew 27:28). And Herod added to the mockery by placing His own robe on Jesus: ***“Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate,”*** (Luke 23:11). In both cases the robes were put upon Jesus as an act of contempt and ridicule.

These facts didn't require a spiritual Indiana Jones to find them. They're right there in the Bible. How is it that money preachers who claim to be so deep in God and filled with revelation knowledge can be so ignorant of the obvious? Can it be that they're not ignorant? Perhaps they know exactly what they're doing and the only ignorant person here is you. This isn't meant as an insult, but as a reasonable observation. It could be that they know the truth, but are counting on your ignorance of the Bible to keep that cash flowing their direction. Just give it some honest thought.

What Jesus Said About His Net Worth

We see that preachers have lied about the lifestyle and financial status of Jesus, but what does the Bible say about Jesus' net worth? Jesus Himself said, ***“Foxes have holes and birds of the air have nests, but the Son of man has nowhere to lay His head,”*** (Matthew 8:20). This doesn't sound like the testimony of a rich man.

Would Jesus say, ***“Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth....”*** (Matthew 6:19), ***“Take heed and beware of covetousness, for one's life does not consist in the abundance of the things he possesses,”*** (Luke 12:15) ***“One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven,”*** (Mark 10:21) and not practice what He preached? Would Jesus require more from others than He required of Himself? What do we think He is, a prosperity preacher?

The “Give And It Shall Be Given Unto You” Heresy

Remember that a heresy is a mixture of truth and error. The doctrine that God gives to the giver is true. The doctrine that you can manipulate God through giving is false. Yet in many churches this doctrine is preached in a way that inspires false and presumptuous hope. The carnal or false Christian is convinced that his giving obligates God to respond in kind. *If I give God money, God owes me money.*

However, there are many who won't go so far to say God owes them money. This is too obviously foolish. They instead offer logic that says, "When I give, I am tapping into God's law of giving and receiving (i.e., *I give and He gives back to me.*). On the surface there is nothing wrong with the above statement. It is true that when we give, God gives back to us. But there are two things that must be clarified.

First, it is God who determines whether our offering is acceptable. If the offering is rejected by God, our whole basis of getting a return is gone. What may disqualify an offering? Several things. Did you give for the praise of man (Matthew 6:1)? Did you give reluctantly, or to mystically get yourself out of a financial mess (2 Corinthians 9:7)? Did you give out of fear (Romans 14:23)? Did you give to make up for the sin you're living in (Isaiah 59:1, 2)? If you answered yes to any of these, your offering was probably rejected by God!⁵

Second, it is God who determines when and how He will repay our giving. It is utter foolishness to think that we can tell God when to pay us back [*Pay us back? "Or who has first given to God anything that he might be paid back or that he could claim a recompense?"* Amplified; Romans 11:35]. There are many who believe they can declare by faith when God will act on their behalf. Let me state carefully that there is a such thing as walking so closely to God that you know His mind, and can speak *at times* with relative boldness and confidence that God will do a thing.

However, this confidence is not the afterbirth of arrogance, ignorance, or presumption. It's the result of being madly in love with Jesus Christ, of devouring His Word, of spending much time in prayer, of crucifying your flesh, of placing His interests above your own, of walking before Him in fear and trembling.

But what of the covetous or superficial Christian who gives to God and believes this gives him a right to declare when God will give him a return? Hear me clearly: God is not obligated to save your home from foreclosure. God is not obligated to pay your bills. God is not obligated to solve your emergency exactly the way you want Him to do it. Let this sink deeply into your heart: God is not obligated to do anything for you. If God blesses you, He does so because He wants to, not because He has to. It wasn't your giving that forced His hand—you can't force the hand of an Almighty God—it was

⁵ For certain, if you gave to impress others, your offering was rejected by God. You can count that one as a bad investment, money down the drain.

His goodness. You must understand that when God tells you to do something and promises to bless you for doing it, He is *allowing* you to take part in His plan.

So what shall we do with this doctrine of giving? Continue to give. Give generously. But be sure to give with a pure heart. Don't give grudgingly. Don't be pressured into giving by the manipulations of tricky preachers. Don't try to manipulate Almighty God with your giving. Give knowing that in God's own timing and in His own way He will reward your faithfulness.

The “Sowing In Famine” Heresy

This is a popular and dangerous heresy. It begins with the story of Isaac in Genesis 26:1-12. There was a famine in the land and Isaac thought to go to Egypt. However, God told him to stay in Gerar, a Philistine land. After **“a long time”** (vs. 8) Isaac sowed seed and reaped a hundredfold in the same year.

The heresy evolved from the fact that Isaac supposedly sowed seed in the midst of famine. Or in other words, he gave when he really couldn't afford to give. This may have happened. But actually the Bible doesn't tell us that Isaac sowed in famine. It says after a long time Isaac sowed. How long is long? Two months? Two years? Five years? Was the famine still there? We don't know because God didn't tell us.

The abuse of this passage is that preachers use it to cause people to give out of their great need. Is this wrong?⁶ Not necessarily. Christians should sometimes give out of their need. Nonetheless, a decision to give when one is in great financial need should be done with pure motives and great wisdom. The poor person who sacrifices greatly to give to God in the hopes that hundredfold riches will inevitably result will find that the only one who is guaranteed to prosper because of his action is the preacher who receives his financial sacrifice.

Sacrificial giving is not a formula to manipulate God. It is instead the activity of a mature and wise heart that loves God and people. It is done by the person who is willing to suffer loss so others may be helped. This is a commendable act of generosity and Christian character.

⁶ It isn't necessarily sinful for Christians to give when they are in need. But in many cases it is unwise and even shameful. It's shameful because they often neglect their family obligations to buy the acceptance of a preacher or religious system that values their money more than their economic, family, and spiritual well-being. I must add that preachers routinely require Christians to give themselves into poverty and crises. They will answer to God for their insensitivity and cruelty. God will punish those who oppress the poor.

Nevertheless, you must be careful that you aren't being led to believe that if you give sacrificially God is obligated to give you a financial miracle. God isn't obligated to meet your deadlines. For every one person who can testify that sacrificial giving has opened the floodgates of financial blessing, ten can testify that unwise sacrificial giving has added to their misery. This is a fact that many preachers would rather not publicly discuss. It could hinder their cash flow. And cash flow is much more important to them than people.

Sacrificial giving should only be done after you have realistically counted the cost. It's foolish to give some preacher your rent money unless you are prepared to live on the street. If you can't handle the immediate loss of the income you intend to sacrifice, you may give yourself into a crisis that destroys you. Never give beyond your level of love, faith, and wisdom. And never do it unless you are absolutely sure the Holy Spirit has directed you to do so. I said, the Holy Spirit, not some preacher, not peer pressure, not emotion.

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