

GOD'S RENEWAL FOR HOUSEHOLDS

"Part XXII: Renewing Household Families: Skillful Financial Management - Adequate Household Employment"

Introduction: (To show the need . . .)

Many people today, though possibly financially secure, are very concerned about their financial futures:

(1) The Baby Boom generation no longer believes that the Social Security system with Medicare will be able to support them in retirement, and so are dumping huge trillions of investment dollars into stock mutual funds. Their bet is on making enough money through stocks to handle the drop in benefits sure to come due to governmental red tape and political quagmires against fixing Social Security.

(2) In the January 27, 1997 issue of Newsweek, Tom Morganthau focused on America's coming demographics in his article, "The Face of the Future" to show a coming financial crisis in our land. He wrote, "The trend that scares even optimists is the growing income disparity in the United States. Simply put, the rich are getting richer while middle-income families are staying put -- and the poor are significantly worse off. In 1968 the top fifth of the population earned about six times more income than the bottom fifth. By 1994, that ratio was nearly 10 to 1. The growing isolation of the poor in inner cities further compounds the problem -- and leads demographer Douglas S. Massey of the University of Pennsylvania to predict something close to a 'Blade Runner' scenario . . . I think there is a tremendous potential for racial and ethnic strife and political instability in the United States."

(3) Lester C. Thurow, writing in the January 27, 1997 issue of USA Today the same day as Tom Morganthau's article appeared in Newsweek reported on changes currently taking place economically. In America, 32% of all men ages 25 to 34 earn less than the amount necessary to keep a family of four above the poverty line. In fact, Thurow writes that "many men, perhaps a majority, are being told that they should not plan to have a family since there is no probability that they will be able to support a family."

(4) Probably close to once every two weeks, I have had discussions with heads of households on the challenge they face in making a living for their families. ***Keep in mind that Connecticut has the highest income per capita of any state in the nation!***

With the economic pinch many fight just to keep the family above water, what are we to do to cope?

(We turn to the sermon's "Need" section . . .)

Need: "It seems that we never quite have enough money to go around to pay the bills, let alone to use just to enjoy life once in a while! Is this the way it is SUPPOSED to be, or not, and WHY?!"

- I. **A shortage in livelihood provisions is the result of sin in mankind:**
 - A. Before man sinned, all of his needs were met in Eden, Gen. 2:4-15.
 - B. However, when man sinned, he lost his employment in Eden, and had to work hard against obstacles just to make a living, Gen. 3:23, 17-19.
- II. **Accordingly, God has USED man's struggle for a livelihood security as a MEANS to address SIN to produce SALVATION:**
 - A. Jesus told His listeners not to worry about a livelihood, for God knew of man's living needs and wanted to fulfill them, Mtt. 6:25-32.
 - B. Man's part was to 'seek God's kingdom' as a **priority**, and all of his livelihood needs would be supplied **as** God's reward, Mtt. 6:33-34.
 - C. By way of application, 'seeking God's kingdom' involves the following:
 1. One must believe on Christ as personal Savior from sin to become a member of His coming, eternal kingdom, John 3:16; 1:11-12.
 2. As a member of that kingdom, he is to live uprightly as follows:
 - a. He must confess daily sins that he practices, 1 John 1:9.
 - b. Then he must depend upon the indwelling Holy Spirit for behavior control to live uprightly, Gal. 5:16-23.
 - c. In this way, he is equipped and responsible to obey Scripture to live a righteous life as a subject of Christ, his King, 1 Jn. 2:3-6.
 3. When one thus 'seeks God's kingdom' as his life's priority, his financial needs are met by God's financial oversight, Mtt. 6:33-34.
- III. **However, though God OFTEN wants Christians to live FREE of material needs (2 Jn. 2), exceptions to such a state of well-being occur to advance one's power for serving God, 2 Cor. 12:7-10.**
- IV. **Thus, to address realistically his responsibility to earn a living, a believer must START by focusing on God's WILL re: his JOB:**
 - A. James warns believers **against** establishing their occupational employment plans independent of **God's directions!** (James 4:13-15)
 - B. In doing so, he shows as follows how comprehensively the believer's employment decisions are subject to God's interests and oversight:
 1. **Where** a believer lands a job is **God's** concern, James 4:13b, 15.
 2. **When** a believer **begins** work at a job is **God's** concern, 4:13a-15.
 3. **What** he **practices** at the workplace is **God's** concern, 4:13d-15.
 4. **How LONG** he works on this project is **God's** concern, 4:13c-15.
 5. The **amount of income** from the job is **God's** concern, 4:13e-15.

V. **Thus, to understand and follow God's leading regarding GAINING employment, here are some MAJOR Biblical factors to consider:**

- A. **Factor One** - Since God's **kingdom** must take precedence over income (Mtt. 6:33-34), the believer should seek to select that career that allows him the opening to use his **spiritual** gift in **ministry** (Eph. 4:12-16) in a church the way **Scripture** indicates God wants it used.
- B. **Factor Two** - How it affects God's **kingdom** advancement should determine how one **improves** his job status. Only when a change in work does not contradict the advance of God's kingdom should one adjust on the job to improve his income in keeping with Matt. 6:33-34.
- C. **Factor Three** - Similarly, if education will advance one's usefulness in **God's ministry** besides helping one's income, or not impede one's involvement in its advance, then may a believer proceed with that step.
- D. **Factor Four** - God's **kingdom** advancement **program** has a priority schedule **within itself** of (1) one's personal rapport with God as first (Deut. 6:5) (2) followed by the needs of one's spouse (Eph. 5:25-29), (3) those of household dependents third (1 Tim. 5:8b), (4) those of relatives fourth (1 Tim. 5:8a) (5) followed by those of believers in the local assembly fifth (Gal. 6:10), and finally (6) the needs of others in the world in ever widening circles of personal contact (Lk. 10: 25-37). We must consult this schedule for all job search/change matters!

VI. **Here are MAJOR rules from God on PERFORMING on the job:**

- A. **Factor One** - Keep our efforts as independent of godless parties as we can to control our retaining a good reputation and best to insure that our quality workmanship yields a sufficient income, 1 Thes. 4:11-12.
- B. **Factor Two** - Work as though our job Supervisor is our ever-seeing, sovereign God, for **He ultimately** rewards job activity, Eph. 6:5-8, 9.

Application: *To deal with income needs regarding employment, seek the kingdom of God first (Mtt. 6:33-34) by (1) trusting Christ as Savior from sin (Jn. 3:16) and (2) fellowshiping with Him as per 1 John 1:9; Gal. 5:16-23 and 1 John 2:3-6. (3) Then, subject all of our livelihood concerns to God's kingdom advancement in making job decisions to find we have all we need to do God's will!*

Lesson: *In God's eyes, we have a job as HIS assignment for the ultimate PURPOSE of advancing His ETERNAL kingdom. Accordingly, we must adjust to that reality to enjoy God's livelihood provision security or have the livelihood insecurity without His help that the ungodly always face!*

Conclusion: (To illustrate the sermon lesson . . .)

During the Great Depression, when the Dust Bowl days hit the midwestern United States, making it hard to eke out a living, a farmer homesteading in Greeley, Nebraska's sandhills found he could no longer make money. Humbled, he went into town and told the banker, "I'm sorry, but I can't make any more payments on the farm." This farmer, named "Jake", briefly went to work as a farmhand of another farmer who was fortunate enough to have his fields in the lowlands where the moisture would collect. Jacob worked for a dollar a day, barely keeping food on the table for his wife and two small sons.

Jake had a bad health problem besides, bad sinuses prone to infection in the harsh Nebraska winters. The doctor told him that if he wanted to live long, he'd have to move to the California climate.

Without money, without a good job, but concerned about doing the best he could for his family, Jake loaded up his Model "A" with all of his belongings and family, and left the homestead for California.

He first settled in the foothills of the Sierra Nevadas in a town called Paradise where he could get work in the local apple orchards.

While there, he went to church as he had in Greeley, Nebraska, with the exception that **this** church presented the **Gospel**. There the family heard for the first time that salvation from sin and eternal death was available by faith alone in Jesus Christ. Jacob, his wife and family believed in Christ as their Savior, and though life was never afterwards "easy" for them, they always had enough. Jacob died on Christmas Day, 1976 over forty years after moving to California!

Jake never got over his failure to pay the banker back in Greeley, Nebraska. He always felt bad about that! Yet, if he had not moved in those hard "Dust Bowl" times to California, he and his family would not have heard the Gospel.

I knew Jake Shell as "Grandpa." **He lived to see God supply for his family: a son went to Africa as a missionary and a grandson ministered the Gospel at the Berean Church in O'Neill, just 50 miles north of his crumbling farmhouse at Plum Creek near Greeley, Nebraska!**

Grandpa found out that if we seek the Kingdom of God as life's first priority, our material needs will be met so that we can perform God's will in spreading the news of Christ to the world!

Need a job and **security**? **Look to the Lord!** He'll come through!