



## **The Great Delusion**

By David C W Burgis

“An intriguing insight into the Christian faith”

“A roller coaster ride of fun and frivolity featuring small rodents that lay siege to a nuclear waste dump...oops, that’s another book, sorry, this book is a study of the modern Christian church.....”

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# Preface

Today is a very hot day at our place. I placed my two year old daughter in her little swimming pool and watched her joyfully splash around with the garden hose. Then she did an interesting thing, submerging the gushing hose under the water, she smiled at me and said “it’s stopped”. Of course, the flow of water hadn’t stopped, but because the hose was under the surface, it appeared to have.

Pondering this seemingly trivial event I realised it’s relevance in regard to the issue I’ll attempt to tackle in this book. There’s a big hole in the foundational doctrine of many Christians. That hole exists, primarily, because of false teaching, sometimes taught by people with selfish, ulterior motives and sometimes taught by people who are simply ignorant of the flaw in their understanding of God’s word. Many of these teachers are not inherently bad or Godless people, they’ve just believed a lie. This particular lie was thought by many to have gone away but I realised today it’s simply been submerged. The delusion is as real and powerful today as it ever was and slowly we’re seeing the hose being brought out of the water. It’s a hose that has done tremendous damage to the body of Christ and will continue to do so unless we turn off the tap.

So, what is this great delusion? Well, you’ll have to read the book and find out.....

# Chapter 1 : Feelings

The first problem I face as I sit down at my keyboard is how to tackle this issue with the right balance of compassion and justice. God is certainly a God of mercy and long suffering, but at the same time he's also a God of justice and judgement. As I'm just a rotten, old sinner saved by grace, I better lean towards compassion. Help me, Lord!

Any book focused on delusion could not overlook the scripture in 2nd Thessalonians Chapter 2:

“Now brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering together to him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though the day of Christ had come.

Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God.

Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you these things? And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time. For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains will do so until He is taken out of the way. And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.

The coming of the lawless one is according to the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders, and with all unrighteous deception among those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth, that they might be saved.

And for this reason God will send them strong delusion, that they should believe the lie, that they all may be condemned who did not believe the truth but had pleasure in unrighteousness.

But we are bound to give thanks to God always for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God from the beginning chose you for salvation through

sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth, to which he called you by our gospel, for the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, brethren, stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle. Now may our Lord Jesus Christ Himself, and our God and Father, who has loved us and given us everlasting consolation and good hope by grace, comfort your hearts and establish you in every good word and work.”

Well, I probably didn't need to quote the entire chapter but I wanted you to get the whole context of what the Lord is saying. The first interesting point from this Chapter is that Christ will not return until there's been a great falling away and the 'man of sin' is revealed. Neither of these things have happened yet, but the shadows are certainly there to be seen. The second interesting point is that the 'lawlessness' on earth at this point, is described as a mystery. Have you ever seen a vandal at work and asked "Why do people act like this?" Don't stress about it, not all mysteries will be revealed until heaven.

Thirdly, and most importantly (for the purpose of our study), we are told that God himself sends a great delusion upon them. Is this the same delusion that we'll be studying in this book? No, as that delusion only comes after the events I just mentioned, but the delusion described in this book is, once again, a shadow of things to come.

Some would say that these things happen after we've been raptured (the "Jesus Comes Back Twice" or "Pre/Mid-Tribulation" doctrines) whilst some would say these things happen, in varying degree's, whilst we're still on the earth (the 'post' tribulation doctrine). Fortunately, this book will not be discussing these things, but in regard to this issue I'll make one statement: "Before we go to be with the Lord, we may or may not go through some really, really hard times".

What we do know is that the 'man of sin' has not yet been revealed, therefore, neither yet has God sent the 'Great Delusion' spoken of in 2nd Thessalonians.

Many Christians from all denominations seem to think that they understand delusion and interestingly it's always "that person over there" who's in it. I used to think this way so you can imagine my shock when I realised the person in delusion was me! The delusion we will look at in this book probably affects just about all of us, so don't think you're above it! Before I get to the 'great delusion', let me first take some time to dispel some common myths. In their efforts to uncover delusion, some groups of Christians take it upon themselves to attack just about anything they don't understand. Feelings and emotions, for some, have become a totally unacceptable part of Christianity. We're not allowed to cry, we're not allowed to laugh, we're not allowed to dance, etc, etc. These poor brothers and sisters continually use phrases like "you're just feeding on your emotions, brother" and this type of thing. Well, if you think like that, I've got good news for you! God has emotions and he uses them all the time.

That means you can too! If you don't believe me, read the Psalms, Job, and the Song Of Solomon. The removal of emotions from Christianity is not biblical, it's cultural. There's a big difference. I grew up in the Australian culture and found it emotionally stifling. We went to church, but everyone seemed to be under a spirit of fear. Every week I'd sit and watch the Minister nervously give his well prepared sermon. He wasn't the world's greatest preacher but I could see he'd put a lot of effort in. From start to finish, the congregation would remain stone faced and silent. Every week, I wanted to clap at the end just to encourage him, but I was too scared. Eventually, I just stopped going. There certainly wasn't the 'freedom in Christ' that the bible talks of.

Let's take a look at 2nd Samuel, Chapter 6 (Verses 12 - 23):

Now it was told King David, saying, "The Lord has blessed the house of Obed-Edom and all that belongs to him, because of the Ark of God." So David went and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with gladness. And so it was, when those bearing the ark of the Lord had gone six paces, that he sacrificed oxen and fatted sheep.

Then David danced before the Lord with all his might: and David was wearing a linen ephod.

So David and all the house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with shouting and with the sound of the trumpet. Now as the ark of the Lord came into the city of David, Michal, Saul's daughter, looked through a window and saw King David leaping and whirling before the Lord; and she despised him in her heart.

So they brought the ark of the Lord, and set it in its place in the midst of the tabernacle that David had erected for it. Then David offered burnt offerings and peace offerings before the Lord. And when David had finished offering burnt offerings and peace offerings, he blessed the people in the name of the Lord of hosts. Then he distributed among all the people, among the whole multitude of Israel, both the women and the men, to everyone a loaf of bread, a piece of meat, and a cake of raisins. So all the people departed, everyone to his house.

Then David returned to bless his household. And Michal the daughter of Saul, came out to meet David, and said, "How glorious was the king of Israel today, uncovering himself today in the eyes of the maids of his servants, as one of the base fellows shamelessly uncovers himself!"

So David said to Michal, "It was before the Lord, who chose me instead of your father and all his house, to appoint me ruler over the people of the Lord, over Israel. Therefore I will play music before the Lord. And I will be even more undignified than this, and will be humble in my own sight. But as for the maid-servants of whom you have spoken, by them I will be held in honour."

Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death.

What a marvelous picture this story paints. The King of all Israel dancing before the Lord with all his might. David was indeed a passionate man and we should certainly admire him for that. This passage confirms beyond all doubt that God was in favour of his servant publicly dancing for joy in the presence of the Lord. But, alas, as with any good party there always seems

to be some wet blanket sulking on the side line. People who are so stiff necked, judgmental and hypocritical they refuse to believe God would ever let them, or any one else, dance and sing for joy. In this case, the wet blanket was Michal and she paid a heavy price for her despicable attitude, remaining barren until the day of her death.

Indeed, I must confess, dear reader, I'm pleased God gave us emotions and I have no desire to suppress mine any longer. Many of the Psalms actually encourage us to make loud and joyful shouts to the Lord (Psalm 32, 33, 35, 47, 66, 81, 95, 98 and 100), so why is this no longer encouraged in church? Once again, we'd prefer to be politically and culturally correct rather than biblical.

Of course, some emotions can be detrimental if used in the wrong way. A classic example would be yelling and screaming at others in anger, a sin I've been guilty of several times. The bible warns against "outbursts of wrath", denouncing this type of behaviour as unholy. In such matters, common sense needs to be applied, the problem being that common sense is not all that common. Perhaps we should call it 'rare sense'?

Overall, we need to be biblical in these matters rather than intellectual. God is a passionate God, he encourages us through his word to laugh, cry, dance, sing, shout and be passionate with him. We know Jesus himself wept whilst on earth. Follow his example rather than continually holding back what you feel. By the way, it's perfectly OK to have feelings, God put them there.

So often we allow ourselves to be persuaded by the opinions of others rather than the word of God. Remember what Paul said to the Galatians (Gal 1:10): "For do I now persuade men or God? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Christ".

Was David seeking to please God or men when he danced before the Lord? He was seeking to please God. His heart was filled with joy at what the Lord had done. He could not hold it back. In the same way, Jesus has opened the door for you and I to live forever. Is your heart filled with joy as a result, so much so that you want to leap and dance and shout it to the world? If it is not, then you, dear reader, may be a victim of the "Michal

Syndrome”. Some Christians claim to have the joy of the Lord in their heart but seem to have forgotten about notifying their face.

If you choose to hold back your God-given emotions, week in and week out, just so as not to upset other people’s apple carts, you’ll never walk in the fullness of spiritual blessing God has for you. If you go one step further and despise in your heart those who are passionate about God’s kingdom, then, just as Michal did, you’ll bring a curse upon yourself.

## Chapter 2 : Healings

Hopefully, some common myths surrounding emotions have been cleared up for you. To cover the subject comprehensively would take another entire book. Don’t be scared of emotions, just be discerning. If you’re confused about what is and isn’t Godly in this area, ask the Lord to reveal these matters to you, remember Jesus said his sheep hear his voice (John 10 :4).

So, as we wind our way toward the ‘great delusion’, let’s first dispel another common myth. The reason I’m working through these bones of contention one by one is so that in the end, hopefully, only one will be left (well, that’s the plan, anyway). There seems to be a growing group within the body of Christ today who have formed the opinion God no longer heals. They say healing was only for the apostles and we should just go to a Doctor. Let’s face it, it’s much easier to not believe God heals, that way when people around you are sick, you’ll have no responsibility to pray. Even better, you can save yourself unnecessary embarrassment. Why, imagine if you prayed and they didn’t get healed, whew, they could blame God. Even worse, they could blame you!

When considering this issue a key scripture to keep in mind is Hebrews Chapter 13 Verse 8 :“Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.”

So, keeping in mind the Lord has not changed one bit, what was his attitude to healing when he walked the earth. Well, you can open at almost any page in the gospel’s of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and you’ll find Jesus healing someone. For anyone to claim that Jesus doesn’t have a heart to heal is nothing short of heresy. Most of his ministry was given over to preaching repentance and salvation, healing the sick and casting out

demons. Not forgetting, either, that casting out demons often relates to healing the sick as demons often cause sickness (As an example, see Matthew Chapter 17). There are too many scriptures that confirm this to start quoting them, it's easier for you to simply read all four gospels for yourself and note the number of times Jesus heals.

Our mandate, as disciples of Jesus, is to pray with faith for the healing of the sick. It's not our choice, he's commanded it. When Jesus healed the sick during his earthly ministry, he would often make a reference to the person's own personal faith. Undoubtedly, there is an indisputable link between faith and healing. Unfortunately, some so-called "faith healers" have tried to make a mockery of this, but let's not 'throw out the baby with the bath water'.

Whenever God's doing something good, the devil will always try to make a mockery of it, but take heart, Galatians 6:7 tells us "Do not be deceived, God is not mocked ; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap".

God is not talking here about a material principle, he's talking about a spiritual one. The next verse says "For he who sows to his flesh will of the flesh reap corruption, but he who sows to the Spirit will of the Spirit reap everlasting life".

So what's this got to do with healing? Everything. When you see those around you are sick, you need to sow into their lives with prayer and supplication. In Matthew Chapter 10, Verses 6-8, Jesus commands the following to his disciples, "but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. And as you go, preach, saying 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand'. Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give".

The disciples did not have a choice in these matters, they were commanded by the master to do these things. Is Jesus your master? If he is then you should do like wise. But, brother, you say, I prayed for old uncle Wally and he died anyway?

Perhaps he did, but does that mean God is not righteous? Remember it's God who holds the keys to death and Hades (Revelations 1:18). We first need to acknowledge that no matter what happens, God is righteous. Our

faith in God's righteousness cannot be swayed by our circumstance. I remember a night when both my wife and two daughters were terribly sick with high fevers and continual vomiting. It was a terrible night. I prayed and prayed with all the gusto I could muster, but nothing happened. Just as my faith was beginning to falter, I collapsed on my bed and cried out "God, no matter what happens, I just want to tell you that you are righteous!" The moment I spoke those words I regained my peace. I'm not going to tell you what happened after that because if I do you'll miss the point of the testimony.

We must believe, in faith, that God is righteous in all circumstances. The bible clearly indicates we are to lay hands on the sick and they will recover. In fact, God said to the Israelites in Exodus 15:26 ; "If you diligently heed the voice of the Lord your God and do what is right in his sight, give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you which I have brought on the Egyptians. For I am the Lord who heals you."

Here God makes a wonderful promise to his people regarding healing, but with the promise comes responsibility. The Israelites at that time failed to walk in the healing power of God because of rebellion and unbelief. Are we so much different today? In fact, God goes on to say, in Hebrews Chapter 3, that what kept them out of the promised land was their unbelief.

A variety of things can cause sickness. In the story of the man with the withered hand we see sickness as a direct result of personal sin. Therefore, in healing the man, Jesus said "your sins are forgiven you" (Matt 12:10).

In John Chapter 9, we see a different scenario, a man who was blind from birth. The disciples ask whether he or his parents have sinned (indicating once again that sin, both our own and other people's, can cause sickness), but in this case Jesus replies "Neither this man nor his parents sinned, but that the works of God should be revealed in him". What an amazing event, God allowing this man to be blind from birth so that in healing him he could bring glory to himself and use the man's testimony to lead others unto salvation. Remember, God works in mysterious ways and it is always his desire for all to be saved and come to a knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 2:3).

The word of God clearly shows us that it is God's will to heal our sicknesses and that was an integral part of our Lord's journey to the cross, so we should never despise or reject it. It's true that certain things can block healing, the obvious one being lack of faith. Other things also come into play like unforgiveness, unbelief and false repentance. Remember Jesus himself could not do many miracles in his home town because of their unbelief. Despite all these factors, we must stand on the word of God which says we will lay hands on the sick and they will recover and that in His name we will cast out demons (though some will only come out through prayer and fasting). Interestingly, you may note the two scriptures I've just quoted come from Mark 16:18 and Matthew 17:21. Not surprisingly, some theologians have attempted to cast doubt over these two scriptures being the word of God. Believe me, God is really, really big. If he didn't want them in there, he would have removed them. Has it ever occurred to anyone that all the scriptures such as these, that are surrounded by contention, happen to relate to the believer's authority over the devil?

I think it's fairly obvious where the contention's coming from, don't you? Of course the devil wants to confuse us, of course he doesn't want us to know the actual authority we have over him. If we knew that, we might get courageous enough to use it. Don't be fooled by the pseudo-theologians who tell you the great commission isn't biblical, that's just their droll little way of justifying their own failure to fulfill it.

Wow, that was a heavy one. Did I say I was going to lean towards compassion? Look, the bottom line is that God still heals the sick today by the power of his Holy Spirit. From different parts of the world we still hear testimonies of people being raised from the dead in the name of Jesus. God's word is as dependable today as it was when it was written. Not all get healed, I'm the first to acknowledge that, but it doesn't mean we stop praying or give up. If anything, it should mean we pray more. When someone doesn't get healed, we have to stand on the principle I highlighted earlier and declare that God is righteous in all circumstances. And remember, it's by his stripes we are healed, not by the magnetic stripes on the back of our 'Medicare Cards'.

"Well" you ask, "what about these 'mass healings', surely they're not scriptural?" Guess again, dear reader, actually they are. In fact, rather than guessing, let's go straight back to the word of God. The best place to start

might be back with our old friend Moses out in the desert with his fellow Israelites. From the book of Numbers, Chapter 21, beginning at verse 5: And the people spoke against God and against Moses: “Why have you brought us up out of Egypt to die in the wilderness? For there is no food and no water and our soul loathes this worthless bread.”

So the Lord sent fiery serpents among the people, and they bit the people: and many of the people died. Therefore the people came to Moses, and said “We have sinned, for we have spoken against the Lord and against you; pray to the Lord that He take away the serpents from us.” So Moses prayed for the people.

Then the Lord said to Moses, “Make a fiery serpent and set it on a pole; and it shall be that everyone who is bitten, when he looks at it shall live”. So Moses made a bronze serpent, and put it on a pole; and so it was, if a serpent had bitten anyone, when he looked at the bronze serpent, he lived.”

Here in this passage of scripture we see a marvelous example of sin causing sickness, repentance giving God a chance to heal them and those who look to the cross being healed. I say the cross because John 3:14 shows us that what Moses lifted up was indeed a proto-type of the cross. And, check it out, all who looked to the cross were healed. All who looked! Not one missed out. You see, the serpent, the thing that had bitten them, was dead on a pole and all who looked were healed. God didn't discriminate, he provided an opportunity for all to be healed.

There are many examples in scripture of Jesus healing a great multitude all in one go. Take this example from Matthew 12: 15 : But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew from there. And great multitudes followed Him, and He healed them all.

Or another example, from Matthew 14:14 ; And when Jesus went out He saw a great multitude; and he was moved with compassion for them, and healed their sick.

I prefer the second example as it not only confirms that Jesus does perform mass miracles, but it shows why. The reason He does it is because of His

compassion for us. Jesus doesn't need to heal to prove how clever He is, He heals because He loves us. Did you notice that the scripture did not say "He healed some of the sick", it said "He healed them all" or "healed their sick". Once again, just like the Israelites in the wilderness, none were left out.

Anyway, just for a little while, we'll digress and go off on a little tangent. One of the most common phrases of the 20th century amongst many Christians is "Slain in the Spirit".

Now, of course, there was a case in the New Testament of two people being 'slain in the spirit', their names were Ananias and Sapphira. Unfortunately, they did not get up after their "carpet time". What people really mean when they use this phrase is "falling down in the presence of God". Now, this is biblical and it happened quite a few times, although mostly people fell on their faces.

So, do I believe people still "fall to the ground" today when confronted with the intense presence of God. Yes, I think sometimes they do. Now I'll come to the bit that mildly amuses me. In some churches I see the "God's knocking me over" phenomenon and at the back of each recipient is one or two bulky "catchers". This simply isn't realistic. It seems unlikely to me that God would knock a person over and forget to catch them at the floor. If God wanted to break your arm, He wouldn't have to knock you down to do it. Some people seem to think that if they don't fall down, God hasn't touched them. This is just religious ritualism. Show some faith, dear reader, if God knocks you down, he'll catch you, too.

What doesn't amuse me quite as much is when preachers pray for me with a hand on my head and actually try to push me over, so it will look as if God's working through them. The next preacher who tries that one on me may find himself falling to the ground without the aid of God (just kidding).

Despite my occasional mild amusement in this area, I do not despise these things either. As already stated, I believe in many cases people do fall over as a result of a touch from God's Spirit. In saying this, I still think all churches should get rid of the 'catchers'. This would bring a greater sense of reality to the whole scenario. In no way am I against God doing supernatural things, that's normal to me, He's a supernatural God. For instance, Paul knew a man caught up into the heavens', he knew not in nor

out of his body, and Philip was ‘beamed’ by God from one place to another. Do these things still happen today? Well, they’re certainly biblical and I believe they do. Does God still heal people physically, emotionally and mentally through miraculous signs and wonders? Of course He does.

So, the ‘Great Delusion’, what is it? Ahhh, patience, dear reader. Patience is a fruit of the spirit, as you know. A fruit that I could use a whole lot more of, to be perfectly honest (my Bible actually says “long suffering” but I figure they sought of go together). Anyway, before we get to that, I feel there’s one last myth I need to dispel. This one shouldn’t take long, I hope.

### Chapter 3 : The Red Herring

Not long after returning to the Lord at the age of twenty six, God bestowed on me the gift of speaking in tongues, angelic tongues, no less. Not having been involved with any church whatsoever since the age of 12, I really had no preconceptions about this or any other biblical gift. I found it a glorious gift and spent many wonderful hours in the garden shed praying to the Lord in this manner.

A few weeks after receiving the gift, I had the unfortunate experience of being present at a bible study attended by representatives of a conservative church and representatives of a pentecostal church. I was a very young Christian and had done what I thought was the right thing by inviting a non Christian to the study in the hope that she’d find Jesus. This wasn’t to be. To my horror, these unfortunate souls spent the whole night bickering and arguing over the question of tongues. The anger and hatred that manifested on both sides was shattering. I couldn’t see how God would let any of these people into heaven. If he did, thought I, heaven was certainly looking to be a very unhappy affair. For some years afterwards I remained a little confused on the issue, and at one point prayed that if the gift were not from God it be taken away from me. The gift remained.

Ever since, I’ve basically managed to completely avoid the issue, until now, that is. Lately, I’ve not been praying in tongues much and the Lord has been gently reminding me that I need to use this gift on a daily basis. 1st Corinthians 14:22 tells us that tongues are a sign to unbelievers. My

personal experience has been that this is very true. Many times I've prayed for an unbeliever in tongues and God's touched their heart in a mighty way.

More and more I'm starting to realise and appreciate the power and potential of this God given gift. I think the people who struggle the most with this gift are Christians who try to work out everything with their own mind. Every time their mind hits on something they can't fully understand, they throw it in their spiritual garbage bin. This is really just self righteousness, to presume that we can work out all the mysteries of God with our own sinful minds. It's true that our minds are being transformed into the image of Christ, 'being' is the operative word here. It is not yet given to us to know all the mysteries of God, many we must accept by faith. The gift of tongues is clearly mentioned in the bible, more than once, so we must believe it (actually, if it were only mentioned once, we'd need to believe it).

Now, on the other hand, there is another ludicrous doctrine floating around that you must speak in tongues to be saved. What a load of rubbish. Salvation comes through repentance and belief in the Lord Jesus Christ, he said "I am the way, the truth and the life". I've met people who promote this doctrine with the same enthusiasm as any demonic cult member I've ever met. In these cases, I do wonder about the source of their "gift", keeping in mind that the devil will often imitate things God does.

Regardless of this, we should still sing our praises to God with heavenly tongues every time we meet. Those who don't sing in tongues can simply sing in their own language. We should not ban an entire gift from our meetings just in case there's one or two demons amongst us. Singing powerful praises to God will drive demons away anyway, they can't stand to hear it. On the other hand, to suggest that ALL must sing or speak in tongues is not biblical. The bible indicates that the Holy Spirit delves out the gifts as He sees fit. So, the test of being filled with the Holy Spirit is NOT speaking in tongues, the test is 'do you have love?' That's the point.

Whilst pondering this issue I couldn't help but notice the heading in my New King James Bible above Chapter 12 of 1st Corinthians, it reads "Spiritual Unity of Believers". The devil must really be laughing at us all over this one, the 'tongues' issue has probably caused more disunity

amongst believers this century than any other issue. Well, perhaps there is one other issue, but we're leaving that until last, as you know.

With regard to the interpretation of tongues, Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 14:13 "Therefore let him who speaks in a tongue pray that he may interpret". Paul does not say we must interpret but encourages us to pray that we 'may' be able to. Neither does Paul ban us from speaking in tongues in Church but he encourages us that five words in our own language that teach others can sometimes be more profitable. He qualifies this by saying "I would rather" instead of "you must all do it this way".

Once I was reading 1st Corinthians from a New King James Study Bible and discovered that above verse 6 of 1st Corinthians, Chapter 14 someone had written the heading "Tongues Must Be Interpreted". No where in this Chapter or anywhere else in the Bible does God say that. Be careful of Study Bibles, you'll inevitably read something in the notes from time to time and later on think you've read it in the Word of God. Remember, even the headings are not written by God but by men. My advice to new and old Christians alike is this : When you sit down to read the Word of God, never do so from a study Bible, it will lead you into confusion. The Holy Spirit is more than capable of giving you understanding.

Concerning this subject I must take a short detour and tell you what happened to me once in a Christian bookstore. I was standing at the counter and the young salesman was processing my payment for a Bible. I opened the book at the counter and noticed the first five pages were all 'preface'. I looked up at the young man and said "This isn't the Word of God, my Bible must start with 'In the beginning'!" Upon saying this I ripped the first five pages from the book and said to the young man "Here, throw these in the bin for me, will you?". He looked at me very dismayed and timidly said "You know you wont be able to get a refund?" With a big smile on my face I replied "Who'd want a refund on the Word of God? "

Obviously, I'm not against people writing books, I'm writing one myself, as you may have noticed; But, let them be kept separate from the Word of God so that the Bible remains distinctive and unique. In fact, if you're keen enough, 'white-out' the Chapter headings, too, as these are not originally the Word of God, either; yet are often read out at Bible readings as if they are.

Anyway, let us return to one of the Western world's more delicate issues, speaking in tongues.

For me, I'll never stop speaking in tongues and singing in tongues. I love it. And why shouldn't I love it, tongues are a precious gift from the Holy Spirit. Now, I have some good friends who don't have this particular gift but instead have other wonderful gifts from the Holy Spirit. That's fine with me. I cannot find any scripture that says every believer will speak in tongues, in fact, 1st Corinthians 12:11 says "But the one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills". It seems some people can start to look down on those who don't have the same gifts as them. This is a very dangerous practice, it's called pride. The same thing that got Lucifer kicked out of heaven. Keep in mind also that the gifts are without remission of sin. So having a particular gift, spiritual or otherwise, is not a confirmation that you're walking with God.

Whatever you choose to believe concerning this issue, be extremely careful with the way you treat your fellow brethren as a result. Remember that as you measure it unto others, so it will be measured unto you. Make sure you've got the blood of the Lamb in your eyes and not the blood of Cain.

The wonderful words of Paul in 1st Corinthians 13 sum it up; "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I have become sounding brass or a clanging cymbal.

And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profits me nothing.

Love suffers long and is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, it is not puffed up; does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

Love never fails."

Well, it seems like we've covered all the "easy subjects" and hopefully dispelled a few myths along the way. Now, I guess it's time to get to the

meat. Make sure you chew it properly, friend, we wouldn't want you to choke.

Let's start with a few nice common evangelistic phrases you've all probably heard before.....

“Who wants to prosper? Come on now, put your hand up if you want to prosper? Three, four hands.....surely we can do better than that, shout ‘Amen’ brothers and sisters, if you really want to prosper.....you can't ‘out give’ God.....”

Heard that one before? Let's try another one.....

“Today, friends, just before we take up the tithes and offerings, I'd like to speak to you for a short time, forty five minutes or so, on tithes and offerings. Now, please understand, brothers and sisters, I'm not trying to twist your arm or anything like that. I'd like you to turn in your bibles to the book of Malachi, Chapter 3, starting at verse 8.....”Will a man rob God?” Well, brethren, will you etc etc”

Heard that one too? What's that? You've heard it preached more than John 3:16. Don't worry, we all have. As we move on to the final chapter, What about this one.....

## Chapter 4: Problems & Answers

“Yeah, Brothers and Sisters, Whooooaaaaa, Gimme a biggg ‘Amen’ because today I'm gonna talk about the big M, money...hey,hey,hey...the reason I'm jumpin' up and down is ‘cause I'm a whole lot more excited about money than I am about Jesus!!!”

Well, I guess around about now, there may be some people reading this book who feel like closing it, just in case they don't like what they're about to hear. If you're in that boat, I'd like to challenge you with a scripture from 1st Thessalonians Chapter 5: Verses 20 and 21 : Do not despise prophecies. Test all things; hold fast what is good.

I encourage you to read all of this book and test it. That's right. Don't simply take my word for it. Go back and study the scriptures I've mentioned. Pray to the Lord and ask him if the doctrinal values outlined in this book are right or wrong. Once again, to seek God and test carefully what you've heard or read is the biblical thing to do.

As you've probably guessed by now, in the last part of this book we're going to be taking a close look at what has been affectionately termed by some "The Prosperity Doctrine". I prefer to call it the "Mercedes Benz Doctrine", I somehow feel that has a more contemporary flavour. It's the doctrine that suggests God wants all of us to be rich in material goods, to drive nice cars, live in big houses and to have more than enough cash. Sounds good, doesn't it? No wonder it's such an easy doctrine to peddle, unfortunately, it's just not biblical.

To even begin to get a grip on the revelation I'm about to present you, the primary issue you need to understand is that God is building a spiritual kingdom, not a material one. That's why Jesus says that the kingdom of God is within us (Luke 17:21) rather than 'around' us. So often we step into a big church and think 'ooh, isn't it wonderful, we've stepped closer to the kingdom of God'. Sorry, but that's rubbish. The bible clearly teaches that we carry the kingdom of God inside our hearts, this is what makes us lights in the darkness.

This is not to say that we shouldn't respect the temple of God and treat it as Holy Ground, but for goodness sake, don't worship a building! In actual fact, some of the best meetings I've been to have been held under trees or in people's lounge rooms.

In order to begin understanding how deception has crept into our teachings, let's start with some common scripture we're all familiar with. How about Matthew 6 :33, we all know that one : "Seek ye first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness and all these things shall be added unto you".

Wow, that sounds good, hey? What sought of 'things' do you think God is talking about here? Perhaps a new car or a set of golf clubs? You're not really sure, are you? Therefore, in your mind you just allow "things" to mean whatever you'd like it to mean. The reason many of us do this is because we've never been taught the context of the verse. In actual fact the

Word of God tells us exactly what these “things” are that will be added unto us.

Instead of starting at Matthew 6: Verse 33, let’s go back a little and start at Verse 31 (remembering this is Jesus himself speaking) : “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’

“For these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But, seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.

Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about it’s own things. Sufficient for the day is it’s own trouble.”

When we look at the bigger picture, the Bible makes it very clear what these three things are : Food, Drink and Clothing. Nothing else! The promises of God are very specific in this passage of scripture. In relation to material (or physical) needs, God makes no other promises to believers other than food, drink and clothing on a daily basis. In other words, in relation to our physical needs, he promises us only what we actually need to survive. Most of the promises of God are spiritual, but we’ll get to that in due course. The whole idea that material possessions and load’s of money are the inherent right of every Christian is refuted by the Bible time and time again.

Let’s take a look at another section of scripture made popular by the advocator’s of material prosperity, Psalm 103: Verses 1 to 5:

“Bless the Lord, O my soul; And all that is within me, bless His holy name! Bless the Lord, O my soul,  
And forget not all his benefits;  
Who forgives all your iniquities,  
Who heals all your diseases,  
Who redeems your life from destruction,  
Who crowns you with lovingkindness and tender mercies,  
Who satisfies your mouth with good things,  
So that your youth is renewed like the eagle”.

Once again, here we find the benefits of God clearly listed for us. Let’s take a closer look : the forgiveness of sin (spiritual), the healing of our diseases (physical, soul and spirit), redemption from destruction (soul and spirit),

lovingkindness and tender mercy (spiritual and emotional), good things for our mouth (physical), the renewal of our youth (soul and spirit).

Here in this much quoted passage we see only two promises that effect us physically. The first is the healing of our diseases, which we should completely believe in, as already discussed earlier, and good “things” for our mouth. Unless God is talking about lipstick, which I sincerely doubt, we can only conclude that this is a plain and simple reference to food and drink. Once again, this scripture matches up accurately with Matthew 6: 33, God's Word is always consistent. In this case, clothing is not even mentioned, simply just food and drink, our two most basic necessities.

Once I heard a preacher convince a congregation, using the above passage, that God had provided their new car. This preacher was so effervescent and bubbly about the whole issue that I was nearly convinced, but when I went back and read the passage, the only reference I could find to physical provision was in relation to healing of the body and food and drink for the mouth. Nothing else! Let's face it, there are millions of heathen driving around in new cars who blaspheme the name of Jesus on a daily basis. Are they too reaping the benefits of walking with the Lord? Of course not, and to suggest all our material goods come from God is equally as ridiculous. Many of our material goods come as a result of our own greedy and sinful natures.

We need to keep going back to the statement I made earlier; “God is building a spiritual Kingdom, not a material one!”

Now should we provide food and drink for the full time Ministers that work amongst us? Well, the apostle Paul tells us in Corinthians 9 they have a right to this, in fact he says “If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things?” The ‘things’ he’s talking about are shown in Verse 4 “food and drink”, Verse 7 “fruit and milk”, Verse 9 “grain” and verse 13 talks about ministers being allowed to eat food from the temple and altar. So, once again, ‘things’ turn out to be our most basic physical needs. There may come a time when a congregation feels led to shout their Pastor and his family a holiday in Bali, God’s not against that, as long as that Pastor hasn’t told his congregation it’s his “God given right”, because it’s not. In fact, even though Paul conceded full time ministers the right to food and drink, he himself did not even claim this right, instead

choosing to work hard as a tent maker. By doing this, Paul was leading by example rather than just words.

This is a difficult subject for me to write on as I too come from a fiercely materialistic culture, and even as I write these things I'm continually feeling pangs of conviction in relation to my own inherently greedy nature. Some people would say "oh, forget it, that's just condemnation, brother!" No it's not, it's conviction. Remember those words of Jesus, "My sheep hear my voice".

Before we continue to search the scriptures, let me take a brief interlude to tell you a personal testimony. Remember, we overcome by the Blood of the Lamb and the Word of our Testimonies.

Some years ago I was living happily in a medium size city with my wife and one small child ( we now have five). Anyway, we had a modest house in a poor suburb, two cheap cars (one each) and I had a part time job that paid average wages. We were also pastoring a small church and were involved in several other small ministry projects. We had very few material possessions (by Western standards), but were really quite content. The fruits of the Spirit, in particular love, joy and peace, were just starting to grow in our lives. We had lots of good Christian friends and were enjoying their company regularly. We were continually witnessing God manifest his power and love.

One day I received a phone call from a friend. He wanted me to help him sell a fancy car he had no further use for. I must mention here that I'd been very materialistic as a young man. During my teenage years and early twenties I'd been an avid collector of old cars and motorcycles. I started to picture myself hooning around on the weekends in this fancy hot rod.

My wife, who is very discerning, knew straight away God was not in it. She gently tried to dissuade me but my mind was made up. I rang my friend back and offered to take the car on a "pay you later" basis. From that time on my walk with the Lord started to falter and pretty soon I was more interested in cars and bikes than my Bible. In due course, I stopped giving to the poor completely as I needed more money for repairs. Soon I had about six cars.

Becoming more and more frustrated, I stopped fellowshiping and moved out of town. Old anger and frustration problems started to manifest. There

was more to it than just materialism, but the bad fruit of materialistic idolatry certainly contributed heavily to the chain of events. Eventually, I had a nervous break down and took a full year to recover.

The door to destruction was opened when I chased something I didn't need, but coveted. The devil saw the opportunity and trampled me. I'm not blaming the devil, he was only doing his job. The full responsibility for those events lay with me, no one else to blame. Greediness and materialism does most certainly lead to destruction, and later on we'll look at some scriptures that confirm this.

You know, I'm so thankful to God that he allowed my family and I to go through that dark tunnel (believe me, they were in it with me, through no fault of their own). How much more terrible would it have been to have remained in that deception for another 30 or 40 years like some Christians do?

Although we cannot blame the devil for our own mistakes (See 1st Corinthians 10: 13), it is still good to understand a little bit of the nature of our enemy. A good soldier always studies up on the character of his enemy before going into battle. Ezekiel Chapter 28: Verses 13 to 19 show us that Satan became a horror before Kings because of the iniquity of his trading:

“You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty. You were in Eden, the garden of God; every precious stone was your covering; The sardius, topaz and diamond, beryl, onyx and jasper, Sapphire, turquoise and emerald with gold. The workmanship of your timbrels and pipes was prepared for you on the day you were created.

“You were the anointed cherub who covers; I established you; You were on the holy mountain of God; you walked back and forth in the midst of fiery stones. You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you.

“By the abundance of your trading, you became filled with violence within, And you sinned; Therefore I cast you as a profane thing Out of the mountain of God: And I destroyed you, O covering cherub,

From the midst of the fiery stones.

“Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty; You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendour:

I cast you to the ground: I laid you before Kings  
That they might gaze at you

“You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities,  
By the iniquity of your trading;

Therefore I brought fire from the midst; It devoured you  
And I turned you to ashes upon the earth, in the sight of all who saw you.  
All who knew you among the peoples are astonished at you;  
You have become a horror,  
And shall be no more forever.”

This incredible piece of scripture is most certainly a reference to Satan himself. Earlier on in that chapter the reference is to the prince of Tyre, but then the passage switches across to focus on the one who had been influencing the prince, Satan. We know this without doubt because of the reference to him walking through the fiery stones on the mountain of God. The prince of Tyre never did this. The passage seems to indicate that all these events took place before Adam and Eve come on the scene in Genesis Chapters 1 and 2. There is quite a lot of scripture to support this theory but it's not relevant to our study. What is relevant is that this passage makes two key references to the link between Satan and sinful trading. This is what caused him to fall. The pride of his own sinful buying and selling was the crack in his foundation from the start: “You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, Till iniquity was found in you. By the abundance of your trading, You became filled with violence within, And you sinned”.

The devil hasn't changed from that day to this. The desire to trade sinfully and violently is inherent in his character. There can be no doubt that his evil influence has permeated God's people in this area.

One evangelist I heard publicly stated that God had told them they needed a Lear Jet. Despite successfully flying around the world for years in normal planes, suddenly they need to spend five or ten million dollars on a Lear Jet.

The premise for this statement was basically that ‘God will provide all our needs’. This type of mentality should basically be called “tailoring the needs to suit the greeds”.

Some “cliche addicted” Christians would say to me “oh, brother, you’ve just got a ‘poverty mentality’ “. My reply would be “Yeah, show me that phrase in the bible?” Of course, they couldn’t, because it’s simply not in there.

There is nothing more dangerous than leading people into Christianity on the basis that God is going to make them materially wealthy. When it doesn’t

happen, they think that God has let them down. Mark 9: 42 warns us “But whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck and he were thrown into the sea.”

For some of you who’ve not understood this side of God before, this study may be making you feel kind of heavy at the moment. You’re asking yourself “Has this guy got any good news?”. Plenty of good news on the way, dear reader, but we all need to tackle these difficult issues first. In fact, in the end, if you’re genuinely seeking God’s truth, then this book will be all good news. Jesus never presents us with a problem without also giving us the solution and we will most certainly cover that before the end of this book. Perhaps you might be thinking “Wow, I know someone who really needs to read this book, they’re just so greedy!”. Well, guess what? This book is not meant to be cannon fodder for your ministry of correction, either. It’s for you, just you.

Perhaps we need to take a look at some of the things Jesus said that are relevant in this area, starting with Luke Chapter 18: Verses 18-30:

Now a certain ruler asked Him, saying, “Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?” So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ Honor your father and your mother.’” And he said, “All these things I have kept from my youth.”

So when Jesus heard these things, He said to him, “You still lack one thing. Sell all that you have and distribute to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” But when he heard this, he became very sorrowful, for he was very rich.

And when Jesus saw that he became very sorrowful, He said, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

And those who heard it said, “Who then can be saved?” But he said, “The things which are impossible with men are possible with God.” Then Peter said, “See, we have left all and followed You.” So he said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or parents or brothers or wife or children for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times more in this present time, and in the age to come eternal life.”

Firstly, let’s consider the end of the passage. Did Peter and the others receive great material wealth in this present time? No, they didn’t. In fact, most of them suffered great trials and tribulation and were eventually killed for their beliefs. So, what was the ‘many times more’ that they received? It was spiritual blessing, the gifts and fruits of the Spirit. The sheer joy that comes from just knowing you are serving Jesus.

If we go back further in the passage we see Jesus make this statement “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God”. By this we see that we certainly shouldn’t encourage anyone to strive after material riches, by doing so we make it harder, not easier, for them to enter the kingdom of God!

What concerns me more than anything about the “Prosperity Doctrine” is it simply encourages believers to put their faith in their houses, their cars, their cash, their visa cards, their job, their business, any of these things other than God. What chance will these people have when true tribulation comes upon them? They’ll be lucky to walk with the Lord a week. Even worse, what happens if they lose all those things? They’ll immediately think God’s punishing them. That’s not the case. He never promised those things in the

first place. Could this be the cause of the 'great falling away' we read about at the start of this book?

To teach people that following Jesus is one, big bed of roses is just not right. Sometimes I think certain teachers say these things just to keep their churches full. They're afraid that if they preached the full gospel most people would go home or join the new age movement. Well, listen, let the 'self-seekers' go. Far better to have five faithful sheep than a hundred "look after number one" goats.

What happens to these people if the 'mark of the beast' is introduced and Christians lose everything? How will Christians who thought God wanted them to have a 'wad of money' handle that? Their hearts simply won't be prepared. I don't want to start making too many predictions about the future because I'm unsure of when some of these events will take place, but, what I am reasonably sure of is that, once again, the shadows are there.

There is a town in England where they are already 'trial running' the "mark of the beast". For those of you who don't know, the mark will come in the form of a silicon chip under the skin. The chip operates on heat fluctuations and will only function effectively on the right hand or forehead. The New World Order has set up a location grid all over the world so they can allocate everyone a six digit location number. The chip will contain 3 six digit numbers. The first will be a location number, the second your date of birth and the third your tax file number/bank account no. When these events will take place I do not know. Revelations 13:16 says "he causes all" not "he forces all" to take the mark. Therefore, I think the mark may actually be voluntary, but those without it (namely us!) will have a difficult time surviving. My belief is that these events are still quite a long way off, but that is only personal opinion.

Whatever you do, Christian reader, if this event happens in your life time, do not let anyone convince you to take that mark. Those who do will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. And the smoke of their torment ascends forever and ever; and they have no rest day or night, who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name (Rev 14: 10b-11).

The reality is that following the Lord on this earth has never been easy, it's our hope and faith in the marvelous and glorious kingdom to come that keeps us going.

All through history we see terrible trials and tribulations for the true followers of God. Many, many years ago, when the Assyrians were persecuting God's people, they would impale them alive on six foot spikes and leave them there to die in agony. The Babylonians were even worse, they had a 'scorched earth' policy. They would ride through a town and destroy everything with fire; the people, the livestock, the houses, even the trees. Nothing was left at all. The Romans crucified thousands of the Lord's people, including the Lord himself. Emperor Nero would cover Christians in tar, set them alight on a stake and use them as lamp posts to shed light on his outdoor dinner parties. I don't mention these things to shock you, but to bring a sense of reality as to what life's often been like for those who follow the Lord.

Today all over the world Christians are persecuted, exiled, jailed and killed for their faith. As King Solomon once said "there is nothing new under the sun". We should prepare our hearts in such a way that we can go through all trials and tribulation with a joy in the Lord. Materialism will block our ability to do this. It will also block God's Spirit working through us. The light and the darkness cannot dwell together.

Earlier this year I travelled into Central India to preach the gospel with some friends at a series of meetings in small villages. Before you ask, we paid our own way and took no money from anyone. Now, of course, in India, lot's of people put their hands out and ask you for money. But it was not like this at these meetings. The people that came wanted something else, not one asked me for money (even though they were extremely poor). What these people wanted was a touch from the Spirit of God. They wanted to know Jesus. Because the desires of their hearts were pure, God certainly gave them what they wanted. The Lord touched every meeting in a precious and beautiful way. People are essentially the same wherever you go, money is not what they need, what they need is Jesus.

Recently I heard an evangelist say this during a tithe and offering speech, "Who'd like to be able to write out cheques to people for a thousand dollars and not have to worry about it?" Some of the people in the audience put up

their hands. I thought to myself, no, that's not what I'd like at all. What I'd like is to be able to offer them what Peter and Paul and all those guys offered them. Let's look at Acts Chapter 3: 1-9;

“Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms from those who entered the temple; who, seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple, asked for alms.

And fixing his eyes on him, with John, Peter said, “Look at us.” So he gave them his attention, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, “Silver and gold I do not have, but what I do have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, rise up and walk.” And he took him by the right hand and lifted him up, and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength. So he, leaping up, stood and walked and entered the temple with them - walking, leaping, and praising God. And all the people saw him walking and praising God.”

You see, that's what God wants us to give people, something eternal, something from the Spirit of God. No one would dispute that Peter and John were great evangelists, yet where was their silver and gold? Where were their Mercedes Benz shaped chariots? Where were their Lear Jets? They had none of these things, their pockets were empty. But in their hearts they had something far more valuable, they had the Holy Spirit, they had faith and they had love. So let the poor say “I am rich”, rich in the heavenly manna.

It's true that Matthew 25 does tell us to feed those who are hungry, give drink to those who are thirsty and clothe those who are naked. Once again, we see the three basic necessities with no mention of giving anyone money! As always, God's word is consistent. That passage then goes on and exhorts us to visit those who are sick and in prison. In other words, the three basic necessities are met so God moves straight on to spiritual matters like friendship and encouragement. God's building a spiritual kingdom.

Earlier in regard to healing I quoted from Matthew Chapter 10, “preach, saying the kingdom of heaven is at hand, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raised the dead, cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give.”

I stopped there before so I could come back to the next part at an appropriate juncture. It says “Provide neither gold nor silver nor copper in your money belts, nor bag for your journey, nor two tunics, nor sandals, nor staffs; for a worker is worthy of his food. Now whatever city or town you enter, inquire who in it is worthy and stay there till you go out”. So if a travelling Christian comes to your town, it is biblical to provide them with a love offering. That offering should, once again, consist of nothing more than basic essentials : Food, drink and shelter. Of course, it also doesn't hurt to be friendly.

Let's pause here for a word from our sponsor,

Travelling Evangelist **Franky Smoothie**  
from “The Church Of The Greedy Pigs” .....



Howdy folks, it's your old pal Frankie here with the good news that you don't need to be poor anymore!! That's right! In just a few moments Brother Laurel and Brother Hardy will pass around the Love bucket. Put in a dollar,

folks, and God'll give ya back ten. He guarantee's it , good people, he says "test me". And the more you pay, the more I pray.



That's right, folks, in the kingdom of God, every child wins a prize! Why God's really just like one big casino in the sky.....put in a few dollars and win millions!!!

And you folks today sure are lucky, as chance would have it I've brought along my own video "Frankie Goes To Hollywood", with a bible, of course, friends. And look, what's this in my back pocket? Why it's my latest Christian training cassette valued at \$79.95. Wow, hang on, I nearly forgot, my latest book is here for sale with only 3 million copies left. You better be quick.

Today only, folks, because I love ya, I'm gonna offer you the Frankie Special ; video, cassette and book all for only \$49.95. Why, that's over \$120 in value for only \$49.95.

And you want more, I know you want more.....look, if you run up to the alter now and pay cash, I'll throw in a set of cheap plastic steak knives.....

Don't hesitate, folks, it'll all be worth it. Why, old Frankie here will have a word to the Lord for ya and by Christmas time you'll be sitting pretty in a Mercedes Benz with a fish sticker on the back. You've got the Frankie Smoothie guarantee!

We've probably all had a 'Frankie Smoothie' visit our church at one time or another. Some of us may be unfortunate enough to have his brother 'Sneaky' running our church. Together they're a dangerous pair. There are few things I find more detestable than people pushing their own wheelbarrow's and trading their goods inside the Temple of God (ie: at church). They might be nice little Christian videos or cassettes but it's still buying and selling and God hates it! We meet together to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth, not to buy and sell. This practice is sinful and despicable.

Now for the church to throw a party and invite the poor to eat and drink and enjoy themselves with us, that is biblical and can be found in Deuteronomy 14 : 22-29. Yet we don't eat and drink inside churches anymore because we think we're so religious. Who has bewitched us? True religion is to look after the widows and the orphans, and if that means throwing them a party, fine! Even Jesus enjoyed himself at weddings and celebrations, but he never crossed over the line to greed and materialism.

You know there's only one incident in the bible where Jesus became physically violent, let's take a look at John Chapter 2; Verses 13-16:

“Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. And he found in the temple those who sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the money changers doing business.

When he had made a whip of cords, He drove them all out of the temple, with the sheep and the oxen, and poured out the changers’ money and overturned the tables.

And he said to those who sold doves, “Take these things away! Do not make My Father’s house a house of merchandise!”

Here we see the Lion of the Tribe of Judah rise up and roar. Imagine, meek and mild Jesus physically driving people from church with a whip. Make no mistake, our Lord is radical when he needs to be.

Have you ever been standing in church, joyfully praising and worshiping God, when all of a sudden the music stops and everyone sits down? From out of nowhere, someone is on the stage droning away with one of those boring, premeditated, manipulative speeches on money. You feel your blood start to boil? That’s the Lion of the Tribe of Judah rising up in you. Once again, they’ve quenched the Spirit of God to follow their own, boring hidden agenda. Paul said to the Galatians “Are you so foolish? What makes you think having begun your work in the Spirit you will complete it in the flesh?”

There are certainly times to give to God. God doesn’t want your money, he wants you. He wants your time. He wants your sleeping hours and he wants your waking hours. If you feel led to give money to God for some reason, that’s great! But whatever you do, don’t give that money with the expectation that you’re going to get something back. You see, with a motive like that, it’s no longer giving, it’s a business arrangement and guess what??

You can’t have a business arrangement with God. There’s nothing, not a thing in your wallet that God needs. He already owns the whole universe and more. That type of thinking is as ridiculous as the devil thinking he could tempt Jesus with the kingdoms of the Earth. So, if the Holy Spirit leads you to give something to God, great, give it. But don’t dare give it with the expectation that God now ‘owes’ you something. God doesn’t owe you anything. He gave you everything he had at the cross. Just be thankful that through Jesus we have the opportunity to be saved by grace. That’s more than enough.

This book isn't a loophole to get out of giving, either; but most Christians have been taught giving a thousand times, taught wrongly as well, and are sick of hearing it. People who are looking for loopholes aren't teachable anyway, so why do some churches send the rest of us to sleep with the same old lectures week after week? What's happened to faith?

In fact, tithing is not taught under the new covenant. There are three types of tithes taught in Leviticus, but they're all attached to the old covenant. To teach tithing under the new covenant is simply to put people back under the bondage of the law. I'm simply astounded at the number of Christians who have no concept of the difference between law and grace [see my second book "Myths, Miracles & The Messiah", which covers this topic more comprehensively]. When Jesus talked to the rich young ruler, He instructed him to give his money to the poor, not to the church. Jesus told him to distribute it himself, rather than Jesus or His disciples distributing it for him. You won't hear that mentioned from many pulpits these days.

In fact, when Jesus made a reference to tithes in Matthew 23:23, he gave them little importance, saying the weightier matters were justice, mercy and faith - and that was whilst they were still under law! So how much more ludicrous to teach it under grace. I won't be expounding this issue any further, instead I'd prefer to encourage you to seek the Lord on these matters if you have questions.

Hopefully by now you're starting to get the bigger picture. If this study is helping you to identify things in your heart that need to change, here's some good news from 2nd Corinthians 7:10 : "For Godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death."

We must all seek the Lord earnestly for that Godly sorrow that works away inside us leading to a paradigm shift in the way we think, a complete turn around from the way the heathen think. Don't be satisfied with remorse, that's worldly sorrow and will only produce death. If we seek him earnestly, he will respond gloriously and with power. He'll give us the strength to persevere. We should be different, we should be joyous, we should be radical and we should never be tainted by materialism.

Probably the most instructive chapter in the whole Bible on how we should respond to the “Mercedes Benz Doctrine” can be found in 1st Timothy, chapter 6. Yeah, you’re right, I was saving it until last, and to do this passage justice I’ll need to quote the whole chapter:

“Let as many bondservants as are under the yoke count their own masters worthy of all honor, so that the name of God and His doctrine may not be blasphemed. And those who have believing masters let them not despise them because they are brethren, but rather serve them because those who are benefited are believers and beloved. Teach and exhort these things. If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.

Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content. But those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and harmful lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.

But you, O man of God, flee these things and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, gentleness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold of eternal life, to which you were also called and have confessed the good confession in the presence of many witnesses. I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things, and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ’s appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who alone has immortality, dwelling in unapproachable light, whom no man has seen or can see, to whom be honor and everlasting power. Amen.

Command those who are rich in this present age not to be haughty, not to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy. Let them do good, that they be rich in good works, ready to give, willing to share, storing up for themselves a good foundation for the time to come, that they may lay hold on eternal life.

O Timothy! Guard what was committed to your trust avoiding the profane and idle babblings and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge - by professing it some have strayed concerning the faith. Grace be with you. Amen.”

The Bible talks about two kinds of riches, spiritual riches and material ones. We must always read things in context and discern which is which. Where we see the phrase “Command those who are rich” in this passage, we know from the context, that God is actually referring to material riches (or money). This means that there will actually be some amongst us who are materially wealthy and God gives a list of commands for how they should act.

Not long ago I met a man who God had put in charge of a great deal of money. Note the difference, “God had put him in charge” - he had not put himself in charge. I was impressed by his humility and love. It was evident to me why the job of delegating God’s finances is not given to everyone, but to a select few. The responsibility is great, most of us wouldn’t handle it.

Many of the rich Christians we see around are not delegated that position by God, they have strived for it in the flesh. This is why they’re unable to demonstrate the power of the Spirit. Remember when Paul said to the Corinthians “next time I come to you it will not be with persuasive words of human wisdom, but with a demonstration of the Spirit of power”. For the Spirit of power to be able to flow through us, we must have removed the idolatry from our hearts.

As Charles Spurgeon once said, ‘You cannot have a call to preach unless you first have a call to holiness’. This is an issue we all battle with, trying to get our lives to mirror our words. We need to go back to seeking that Godly sorrow that worketh repentance and allowing the Holy Spirit to work that miracle in us. Be zealous to repent, dear reader. No matter how bad the mistakes seem, God is all powerful to redeem us if we’ll repent. His love conquers all darkness.

The passage from Timothy we just read truly exposes the sinful nature of the “Mercedes Benz Doctrine”. Let me refresh your memory, “Those who desire to be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish lusts which drown men in destruction and perdition.

For the love of money is the root of all kinds of evil, for which some have strayed from the faith in their greediness, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.”

How much clearer does God need to be, dear reader? ‘Destruction and Perdition’. Can we risk this for fellow brethren by ignoring such blatant warnings about these doctrines of demons?

Let’s look at the scripture a little further up to see how we should respond to such things, “men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.”

God’s word is never confusing, His instructions in this matter are clear and precise. When people preach the “Mercedes Benz Doctrine” or start trying to sell their goods at a meeting, get up and leave. That’s right, vote with your feet. I’ve done it several times. Do not be a partaker of their sins. By just sitting there like a lame parrot, you indicate to them that what they’re saying and doing is acceptable in God’s kingdom. If Jesus walked the earth today he would drive such people out of church with a whip!

Two kinds of people will read this book. The wise ones, who hear the word and act upon it, and the foolish ones, who hear the word and do nothing about it. Acting upon what you’ve heard is the key. For you foolish ones I say this; the wind is coming, and so is the rain and the floods, and when your house of cards falls, great will be the fall.

So, if our hope is not put in the prospect of material gains in this life time, then where is our hope? Our hope, dear reader, is in the wonderful promises of a living God. Walking and talking with Jesus on a daily basis. Being filled with a passion for His kingdom. Laughing, dancing and singing for joy as he touches our hearts. Leaping and jumping and praising God, for how marvelous are his works! The heavens’ declare the glory of His name and the firmament the wonder of His handiwork!

You know I once worked out that the earth is travelling continually at over 100, 000 kilometers per hour and yet we feel like we're standing still. Makes a Mercedes Benz look kind of sluggish, doesn't it? Folks, is there anything too hard for God? Let's be honest, we all struggle in the areas covered in this book. God wants to help, he really does. We must lay all our struggles at the foot of the cross and then head for the narrow gate. Few are those who find it. Church is not a numbers game. It's not about how many seats we can fill to impress the church over the road.

The kingdom of God is about people, it's about loving one another, it's about making good friendships and enjoying one another's company.

How many rich people are out there who sit alone in their big mansions and cry themselves to sleep at night, eaten away with loneliness and despair? Do you think God wants to build a kingdom like that? That's the devil's idea of a kingdom. Loneliness and hopelessness are eating away at the souls of the western world. They're collapsing under the weight of these things, barren and empty and lost.

Oh, if there were only human words to express the good fortune of one who knows Jesus. His mercy knows no bounds and his love knows no end.

Some of you reading this book will be trying to work out by now whether or not you actually like it. I remember feeling that way the first time I read a sermon by Charles Finney called "True and False Repentance". It challenged me in a way that I wasn't accustomed to and made me uncomfortable at first. Nevertheless, I knew it was the truth in love. I read it a few more times and still felt equally as challenged but was glad that I read it. So, what is the truth without love? That's going up to someone with a big nose and saying "Gee, what a huge schnoz you've got, I could park my car in there!" It may be the truth, but the motivation was not love.

God will always challenge us. Transformation demands change. When the prophet Amos was sent to the Israelites with a hard message about changing their attitudes, he wasn't very popular. In fact, he was so unpopular that the priest of Bethel, Amaziah, told him to 'go away' in no uncertain terms. For this God punished Amaziah severely, his wife ended up a prostitute, his children were murdered and he died in exile. It's not wise to reject God's messages, even the hard ones.

So, rejoice, brothers and sisters, for you are already rich! Let the poor say “I am rich” and the weak say “I am strong”. Before we were in the womb, He knew us and He has selected us to partake of His riches in heaven, so shout it from the rooftops!

Perhaps the most appropriate way to finish our little Bible study is with the Word of God, from Chapter 55 in the book of Isaiah:

“Ho! Everyone who thirsts, Come to the waters; And you who have no money, Come, buy and eat. Yes, come, buy wine and milk Without money and without price. Why do you spend money for what is not bread, And your wages for what does not satisfy? Listen carefully to Me, and eat what is good, And let your soul delight itself in abundance. Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; And I will make an everlasting covenant with you - The sure mercies of David. Indeed I have given him as a witness to the people, A leader and commander for the people. Surely you shall call a nation you do not know, And nations who do not know you shall run to you, Because of the Lord your God, And the Holy One of Israel; For He has glorified you,”

Seek the Lord while He may be found, Call upon Him while He is near. Let the wicked forsake his way, And the unrighteous man his thoughts; Let him return to the Lord, And He will have mercy on him; And to our God, For He will abundantly pardon.

“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, Nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. “For as the heavens are higher than the earth, So are My ways higher than your ways, And My thoughts than your thoughts.

‘For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, And do not return there, But water the earth, And make it bring forth and bud, That it may give seed to the sower And bread to the eater, So shall My word be that goes forth from my mouth; It shall not return to me void, But it shall accomplish what I please, And it shall prosper in the things for which I sent it.

“For you shall go out with joy, And be led out with peace; The mountains and the hills Shall break forth into singing before you, And all the trees of the fields shall clap their hands. Instead of the thorn shall come up the cypress tree, And instead of the brier shall come up the myrtle tree; And it shall be to the Lord for a name, For an everlasting sign that shall not be cut off.”

