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It did. A few days later the Rogers brothers called him back. There before his eyes a good crop was rising from the ground. God has rebuked the devourer.

A Ray of Light

R.T. Kendall, longtime minister at Westminster Chapel, London, wrote that shortly after he and his wife were married they found themselves hopelessly in debt.

Tithing seemed utterly impossible to them. Some of the bills could not be helped, and others were the consequence of imprudence. Kendall was engaged in secular work at the time, and one day he came home very, very discouraged. He fell on his knees in a sense of desperation, hoping that God would give him a ray of light that would help him through. There on the dining room table lay the large, white Bible, his grandmother had given to him. He picked it up and opened it at random. Instantly his eyes fell on these words: "Will a man rob God?"

He didn't like what he found on bit, so he closed his Bible and sat down to watch the television (for which he still owed). But he was perfectly miserable. He knew that God wanted him to begin tithing, but he postponed it for a while longer; and in the meantime things went from bad to worse. "Although my wife and I were both working, it seemed that paying bills was like dipping a cup into the ocean of debt."

Then one day they made a turn. They took 10 percent of their income right off the top, making tithing the number one priority. He paid their bills with the remaining 90%.

"We were not out of debt in weeks, but we were completely out of debt in less than two years, and those days became the happiest we have known."

Discussion Questions

1) Have you ever gone through a time where your life felt out of control? What happened? How did you get through it? How about a time you even felt under attack by people or Satan? Read together out loud Psalm 27 and Psalm 46. Don't these Psalms radiate confidence in God? Which verse really encourages confidence in you?

2) Are you battling fear about finances right now in your life? Please be honest with each other. Do you believe that God has a financial plan for even difficult times? Read I Kings 17: 1-16 and talk through God's strategy for provision for caring for both His prophet and this single parent.

3) Review God's plan for "Always Enough Peace and Joy." Have you practiced this plan and seen the blessing in it? Has God shown His financial faithfulness in your life? What parts of the plan do you need to work on? Take time to share your real financial struggles with one another and then pray fervently for one another. Finish by reading Psalm 27--then party!!!!



SERMON NOTES: WEEK FOUR



HOPE & HELP FOR HARD TIMES

FINDING PEACE AND JOY IN YOUR PAIN, PROBLEMS AND PRESSURE

Peace and Joy When Things Feel Out of Control

In his book *Proving God*, Al Taylor tells the story of Arlie Rogers of Selma, California, who came to be known as the "Sweet Potato King" because of his vast farming operations in the San Joaquin Valley. Arlie and his brother first arrived in California with little money. By scraping and saving, they finally managed to purchase a farm. At the time, the money crop was cotton, so the two brothers invested every penny they could get in sowing cotton. When the cotton plants were just out of the ground, a great sandstorm blew through the valley, destroying everyone's crops. The Rogers brothers were disconsolate.

Arlie called the church and asked their pastor to visit. As Pastor Burnham walked across the devastated fields, the brothers poured out their troubles. "Everything we had was in that crop. We don't have any money or credit left to replant. We are completely ruined. Now we will lose everything." Pastor Burnham knew these brothers as dedicated Christians, active in their church, and faithful in giving their tithes to the Lord. Squinting at them, he replied, "No, fellows, it's really not that bad. The God we serve raised His own Son from the dead after three days. I know He can raise cotton."

With that, the pastor sank to his knees in the dirt and prayed a simple little prayer. "Father," he said "these men are tithers. You said You would rebuke the devourer for a tither. I am asking You to manifest the power of Your Word and fulfill that promise right here in this cotton field. Bring this cotton back and give these men a good crop in Jesus' name Amen."

He rose, brushed the dust from his knees, and said, "That ought to take care of it."

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Peace and Joy When Things Feel Out of Control

November 22/23, 2008

- 1) Life has moments where you can't control what happens to you or those you love. No matter how hard we try to protect ourselves from those moments they are inescapable.
- 2) Our natural tendency when we feel things are out of control is to try and control more tightly what we can control. Fear causes us to grip things and others tighter trying to find peace by holding on to what we can get control of.
- 3) God wants us to live with confidence in Him especially when things feel out of control. He doesn't want our hearts, our minds or our actions ruled by fear and self protection but by faith and confidence in Him. *Psalm 27:1-6, Psalm 46:1-7*
- 4) Right now we are also under attack. Satan, our enemy, is attacking our peace and joy about God's ability and willingness to provide in hard economic times. But the Word of God is full of examples of God providing for His people in the worst economic conditions. *Psalm 78:13-16, Psalm 78:24-25*
- 5) God has a strategy for every economy and will sustain us as we stay faithful to Him by giving Him what He asks us to give. Putting what we have under His control is how we stretch it to make it enough not clinging tightly to it. *1 Kings 17:8-16*

Always Enough Peace and Joy

1. Transfer complete ownership of your finances to God because He owns everything, including you. *1 Chronicles 29:11-12*
Always remember that it is the Lord your God who gives you the ability to produce wealth. All we are and all we own belongs to Him for all He's done. *1 Corinthians 6:19-20*

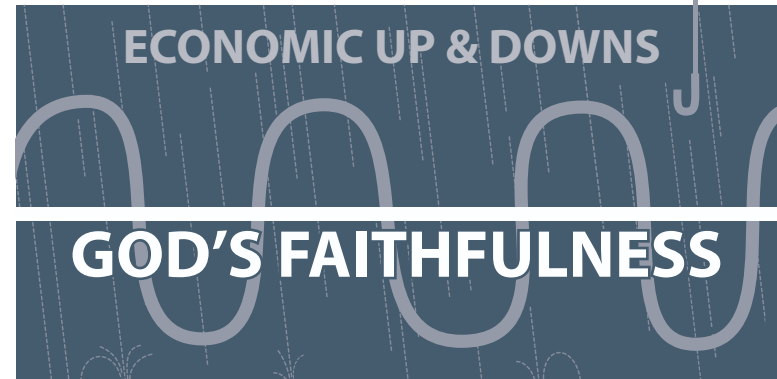
2. Accept and plan for economic realities by implementing God's plan for financial management. *Proverbs 21:5, Proverbs 28:20*

a. Give to God First – If you do what He commands, you can count on Him to do what He promises!

Proverbs 3:9-10, Deuteronomy 14:22-23, 2 Corinthians 9:7-8

b. Save Second – Be prepared for economic ups and downs by developing financial depth and security.

Proverbs 21:20, Proverbs 6:6-8



c. Repay Your Debts – Bad credit damages Christ's credibility in you, but Christ will work with you to redeem you from even financial pits! *Proverbs 22:7, Romans 13:7 - Give everyone what you owe him.*

Psalm 37:21 - The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously.

Psalm 103:4 - Who redeems your life from the pit, Who crowns you with loving-kindness and compassion

d. Enjoy the Rest – Confidently spend on what God directs you to purchase knowing He gives us all things to enjoy!

1 Timothy 6:17 - Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment.

We can live with confidence even when things feel out of control because our lives are under the control of someone who is good and faithful all the time.

Lamentations 3:22-23 - The unfailing love of the Lord never ends! By his mercies we have been kept from complete destruction. Great is his faithfulness; his mercies begin afresh each day.