

**Investing for Eternity – Part 1**  
**Putting God First in Our Lives**  
Spilman Memorial Baptist Church  
Dr. H. Powell Dew, Jr.  
January 4, 2026

Text: Deut. 26:1-4, 10b, I Kings 17:1-17

Purpose: When we put God first and tithe: we possess our possessions, we prepare for the future, we place faith over sight, and we allow God to work on our behalf.

A man went to his dentist because he feels something wrong in his mouth. The dentist examines him and says, "That new upper plate I put in for you six months ago is eroding. What have you been eating?"



The man replies, "All I can think of is that about four months ago my wife made some asparagus and put some stuff on it that was delicious...Hollandaise sauce. I loved it so much I now put it on everything -- meat, toast, fish, vegetables.

"Well," says the dentist, "that's probably the problem. Hollandaise sauce is made with lots of lemon juice, which is highly corrosive. It's eaten away your upper plate. I'll make you a new plate, and this time use chrome."

"Why chrome?" asks the patient.

To which the dentist replies, "It's simple. Everyone knows that there's no plate like chrome for the Hollandaise."<sup>1</sup>



I hope you have enjoyed Christmas and New Year holidays. Yes, it's true, there is no place like home for the holidays!

Someone once said, "The way a person thinks about money will determine the way they think about God." We can reverse this to also say, the way a person thinks about God will determine the way they think about money.



We find as we grow older in life, especially here in the United States, the more focused we become upon material wealth. Every Christmas, I get the opportunity to watch the classic movie, "It's a Wonderful Life." In that movie the theme of material wealth was clearly evident – the wealthy trying to take advantage of those less fortunate in their neighborhoods. There is a movement among people in financial institutions today that are out to strip people of any wealthy they may accumulate and line their own pockets from the usury they inflict.

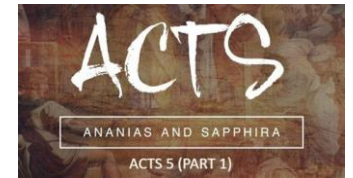
The Bible has a lot to say about material wealth. We see Lot and Abraham's servants squabbling about the abundance of possessions and they headed in separate directions. We read of Esau selling his birthright for a bowl of soup. Joseph was sold into slavery for silver instead of being killed by his brothers. Under the leadership of Moses, the Israelites plundered the wealth of Egypt when they left. Later they used that wealth to fashion an idol in the shape of a bull to worship while Moses was up on the mountain receiving the Ten Commandments. Ruth and Naomi didn't have any money but they found favor in God's eyes and Boaz took Ruth to be his wife.



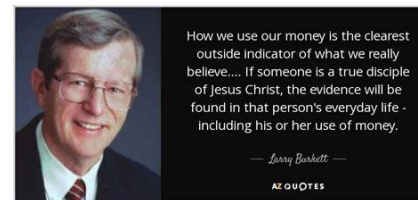
David went from rags to riches while Solomon went from wealth to idol worship.



In the New Testament we find the Pharisees, the religious leaders, were preoccupied with wealth while Jesus had no where to lay His head. (It appears some things never change!) Ananias and Sapphira lied to the early church as recorded in the book of Acts and were struck dead for failure to give money they promised. The Bible even says one day, when we walk the streets of heaven, they will be paved with gold.



How should we think about money and the possessions we have? How should we be good stewards of the things entrusted to us? Some churches focus upon money to the point they sound greedy. Spilman is on solid financial grounds because many of you have been faithful for years in giving a part of your wealth back to the ministry of this church. So don't worry, I am not trying to turn up the heat and get you to give more!



I guess what I want to accomplish this morning in this new sermon series, "Investing for Eternity" is for us to realize that our material wealth and how we use it is a reflection of our commitment to God and His will and purposes for us. This series title is not unique to me. David Jeremiah taught a series by that name several years ago and I wanted us to explore it over the next few weeks.<sup>2</sup>

## Deuteronomy 26:1-4, 10b

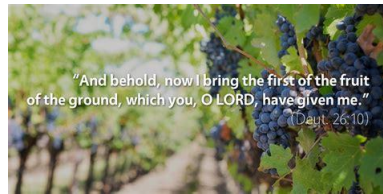
The passages of scripture that I read this morning was taken from two different passages.

The first was from Deuteronomy 26:1-4, 10b which laid the groundwork for the people of Israel to support the work of the priesthood and the temple. They pledged together, just before Moses died, that they would share their tithes and offerings in Jerusalem and in their local assembly. These offerings pointed out the fact that they put God and the community of faith first in their life. Their failure to give would point out their failure to put God first.



The nation of Israel was a very agriculturally based society. Their whole economy was dependent upon the rain to allow the crops to grow. If it didn't rain, then the crops would fail and the people would perish. Life depended upon the growth of their crops. One of the festivals in Israel was called the Festival of the First Fruits. Each crop they raised, they were to bring the first portion of their crop to the temple. They were to give the first portion of the grain, olives, cattle, sheep, goats, and wheat.

God told them *if they would trust Him* in this matter, that they would enjoy the blessings and promises of God. When they did that, it is as if they were saying, "I am putting You first in my life and I am being reminded that everything I have comes directly from you. I give this first fruit back to you as a sacrifice unto you." As long as Israel continued to do this, God blessed them. When they stopped, sin and



decay slowly began to creep in and destroy their community.

## I Kings 17:1-17

The second passage of scripture was taken from I Kings 17:1-17 which gives us a story from the life of Elijah. From this story we can see that a poor widow trusted God and this prophet of God and put God first in her life.



The nation of Israel was in the midst of its darkest time. They had turned their backs on God and returned again to worship the god Baal. King Ahab and his wife Jezebel were instrumental in leading Israel in the northern kingdom away from the one true God, to worshipping the god of rain, lightning, and nature – Baal.

As a way of punishment, God told Elijah to tell the people there would be no rain on the land for three years. Elijah made the announcement and was told to go and hide by the Brook Cherith. There God provided for him by sending Ravens with bread and meat for him to eat and water there in the brook. After some time, (the scripture doesn't say how long this took) the brook dried up. God sent him word to "*Arise, go to Zarephath, which belongs to Sidon, and dwell there. See, I have commanded a widow there to provide for you.*" The Brook of Cherith was located east of the Jordan River while the city of Zarephath was located along the far northern coast of the Mediterranean Sea.



David Jeremiah said the city of Zarephath was located at the center of Baal worship. God was sending His prophet into the heart of enemy territory. Ahab and Jezebel had been searching high and low in order to kill him and now he was living in their back yard.



Not only was the location illogical, the way in which Elijah would be supported defied good reasoning. How could a widow, with limited resources, provide for Elijah in the midst of a drought? God had a plan and Elijah trusted God's provision.

*So, he arose and went to Zarephath. And when he came to the gate of the city, indeed a widow was there gathering sticks. And he called to her and said, "Please bring me a little water in a cup, that I may drink." And as she was going to get it, he called to her and said, "Please bring me a morsel of bread in your hand." So, she said, "As the Lord your God lives, I do not have bread, only a handful of flour in a bin, and a little oil in a jar; and see, I am gathering a couple of sticks that I may go in and prepare it for myself and my son, that we may eat it, and die."*

What a sad situation! Elijah was asking this poor widow for the first portion of the only bread she had in her house. She was planning to finish off that small supply of flour and then she and her and her son would then sit down and starve. Elijah was asking for the first bite of their only biscuit.



Elijah said, *"Do not fear, go and do as you have said, but make me a small cake from it first, and bring it to me; and afterwards make some for yourself and your son."*

If you were the widow, you might think to yourself, "This man doesn't understand how desperate my situation really is. We are starving and now we have company?"

But Elijah said, "Make me a cake of bread first."

But don't we feel the same way about God asking us to tithe to support His work and ministry? Put God first – Ha! I have a mortgage, the light bill, a grocery bill, a tuition bill, a credit card bill, my car payment, a medical bill, a phone bill, a cable bill ....

In the midst of all of that .... God says, "Put me first over these things." It is as if God is saying to us ... "Make me a cake of bread first." Trust me with your first fruits.

### 1. **When We Put God First and Tithe – We Possess our Possessions**



When Elijah met the widow of Zarephath, her only possession was that small portion of flour and oil. Maybe we can identify with her. But Elijah knew something that she didn't know – Elijah knew the One that was the source of supply. Elijah needed her to trust him. That is why he said, "Make me a cake of bread first."



When we first see this widow, her life was almost at an end – only one biscuit away from starvation. At the end of the story, she completely trusts God. ***The only way we can possess our possessions is to give it all to God.*** If you clutch them tightly in your hands, then the only thing you will ever possess is what is in your hands.

## 2. When We Put God First and Tithe – We Prepare for the Future



Before the widow gave what she had to Elijah, she was ready to die. But when she gave what she had to God, she left her future in God's hands. God took care of her.

Some may say, "I cannot tithe. You don't have all the troubles that I have. If I had more money, then I could tithe." I am here to tell you, the more you have, the more you will fear trusting God. The ones that have the most material wealth actually give the least amount.

When we put God first and give Him what is rightfully His, then we can quit worrying about the future. God will take care of us.

## 3. When We Put God First and Tithe – We place Faith over Sight



The Bible says we are to walk by faith and not by sight. The only people that tithe are the ones that trust God and are obedient to what He teaches in His word. Maybe you have seen the bumper sticker that says, **"God said it, I**

**Believe it, that Settles it."** Those that tithe have the same kind of attitude.

The widow trusted the Lord and Elijah. Verse 15 says, *"So she went away and did according to the word of Elijah."* She understood the word from Elijah was a word from God. It may not have made any sense, but she trusted him.

If you are trying to figure out God and know when the right time to trust Him, you never will. The truth is, we should tithe because we have faith in God – not based upon what we can reason out or understand through our logical reasoning. We should give by faith.

## 4. When We Put God First and Tithe – We Put God to Work on Our Behalf



Elijah told the woman that God would provide for her. Verse 14 and 15 says, *"For thus says the Lord God of Israel; 'The bin of flour shall not be used up, nor shall the jar of oil run dry, until the day the Lord sends rain on the earth.'"* So, she went away and did according to the word of Elijah; and she and he and her household ate for many days."

Can you imagine how amazing it was to find every day enough flour and oil for three people to live off of for days on end. Every morning, she would open her bin and there would be more. Every time she took that flask of oil down off the shelf, it would be full again.

Many individuals that have trusted God can testify of the continual supply of goodness and provision from God. It seems illogical, but God blesses us. That is what God has promised to us if we trust Him.



Matthew 6:33 Jesus says, *“But seek ye first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.”* Don’t wait until everything else is exhausted.

Put God first in your life and you will be blessed.

The widow woman put God first and trusted the Lord and she was a wealthy woman.

I read a story about a woman that died in West Palm Beach, Florida many years ago. She died at the age of 71 of malnutrition. By the time she had died, she weighed only 50 pounds. When the investigators found her, the place she lived in was a virtual pig pen. It was the most unbelievable mess you had ever seen. As they continued to investigate, they found out she had been begging food from her neighbors. She had obtained some clothes from the Salvation Army. From everything that you could see, she was a penniless recluse – a forgotten widow.



As they dug through the apartment, they found two keys. They were to two safety deposit boxes at two different banks. The first safe deposit box contained seven hundred stock certificates, plus hundreds of

other valuable certificates and bonds, not to mention a stack of cash adding up to over \$200,000. At the other bank, it contained over \$600,000 in cash. This poor, malnourished, widow had almost \$1,000,000 in the bank. This woman was a millionaire who died a victim of starvation in an impoverished home all alone.

How many of us live in a spiritual and financial realm – far below the level God wants us to simply because we don’t trust God totally?



God is calling us to trust Him, try Him, and see if He will not open up the windows of heaven and bless you. We do not need to live as spiritual paupers. We are children of the King of Kings and we should trust Him and put God first with our Tithes and Offerings. We should trust him with EVERYTHING we own.

I would also remind us as a church, we should trust the Lord with the use of this property for worship, fellowship, outreach, discipleship, and ministry to each other and this community. Individually and corporately, we can invest in eternity when we trust in the Lord with all our hearts, and lean not on our own understanding. and in all our ways, He will direct our paths. (Proverbs 3:5-6)

## LET US PRAY

### Notes:

<sup>1</sup> Mikey’s Funnies, A Dentist Funny, Dec. 11, 2024

<sup>2</sup>David Jeremiah – Investing for Eternity