

FROM THE DEPTH OF MY HEART...

OUR ADDRESS

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Dearly Beloved of God,

Greetings in the mighty name of our Lord Jesus Christ!

We thank you so much for your valuable prayers for our Holy Ghost Explosion seminar in Hyderabad, Andhra Pradesh. God made this seminar a great success. Around 3000 people from all the districts of Andhra Pradesh and Telangana attended this seminar. People were filled with the Presence of God and the Holy Spirit manifested Himself powerfully. People testified that they had never heard such truths and revelations before. All glory to the Lord! Continue to pray for the next Holy Ghost Explosion seminars in Bhopal, Madhya Pradesh from 22nd Oct to 25th Oct and Pune, Maharashtra from 27th Oct to 31st Oct. Please encourage all your friends and relatives in those regions to participate in these seminars.

Our three months School of the Holy Spirit ended with a grand graduation. All the students were powerfully equipped by the Holy Spirit for a powerful, miraculous, Jesus-kind of ministry. The Holy Spirit worked very deeply in each and every one of them and transformed them totally, according to His promise from 1.Sam.10:6 for these schools. Continue to pray for the students to shake the nations with power and to be a testimony for God's glory.

Our one month School of the Holy Spirit for women starts Nov 3rd and will end together with our prayer seminar on Dec 5th. Women are applying from different parts of India. Pray for a mighty work and move of the Holy Spirit in this school. Sister, if you are hungry for God, if you want to bless the world, if you want to do a powerful ministry, it is not too late, you can still apply immediately. We want to give you a chance to fulfill your destiny. Book your ticket and avail this opportunity. Your life will never be the same. This is the testimony of all our ex-students.

We need your sincere prayers for the completion of our TV studio and the New Testament commentary work. I have a strong push in my spirit to start recording immediately. Pray for divine health and wisdom for us to do this work. I believe this will be one of the hallmarks of our ministry and a legacy for coming generations.

From Dec 1st to 5th. we will have our Prayer Conference in our Poondi Campsite. This conference is open for all. Our nations need our prayer like never before. The spirit of prayer and intercession will be released from your life and change your nations.

As this year is coming to an end, remember how God has been so

faithful to us all throughout this year in His words and deeds. When Naomi heard that the Lord had visited His people by giving them bread, she decided to move from Moab, the cursed land, back to Bethlehem, the blessed land (Ruth 1:6). When Israel heard that his son Joseph was alive, his spirit revived (Gen.45:26). That is the power of the good news. What news you are hearing? What words are coming out of your mouth? They can be either edifying words or destroying words. The Bible clearly states that life or death is in the power of your tongue (Pr.18:21). Check your tongue. Take a decision to speak and hear only the good news. The Gospel is the good news. Jesus has finished everything for you on the cross! This is the good news. He has already blessed you with all spiritual blessings! This is the good news. You are the carrier of that good news. Don't forget, you are called to proclaim the good news. Never be a devil's agent. You are a Holy Ghost agent. Join with Him and bless the nations.

Remember our families, counselors, leaders, and office staff in Poondi and our Chennai Headquarters in your prayers.

May the Lord use you mightily in this End Time harvest and empower you to face all your challenges victoriously.

Your brother in Christ,

Abel Francis



TV PROGRAMS

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SELFLESS TONGUES

Dr. Ezekiah Francis

The Bible clearly says there are different kinds of tongues. We have seen the kind of tongues that edifies our individual life, but now we must study how tongues edify entire congregations.

All our spiritual experiences must ultimately lead to the edification of the Body of Christ. The reason we are strengthened is to strengthen the Church. We grow to grow the Church. God wants us to use everything He gives us to benefit the Church. A Christian life is lived out for others. The person that only enjoys his own Christian life, edifying himself, enjoying the Presence of Jesus, is still a baby Christian.

Take some time to observe children. A child is primarily self-centered. A child lives in his or her own world all the time demanding attention, sweets, new clothes, toys or other things. He cries if he doesn't get what he wants.

A mature person, however, helps himself and others as well. Similarly, some people use the gifts of the Spirit only for themselves until the grave. This is one of the heart-breaking curses of today's Church.

The Corinthian church was zealous for spiritual gifts, but only for themselves. That is why it was a carnal baby church (1.Co.3:1-3; 14:12).

Whenever they gathered together, instead of concentrating on the edification of others, they edified themselves by speaking in tongues. They were very happy with their own excitement. Paul rose up against it and rebuked them, ***“Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be***

mature” (1.Co.14:20). If you carefully read the entire 14th chapter, you will discover his heartbeat for the edification of the entire church.

Though he spoke in tongues more than others, Paul said, ***“yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue”*** (1.Co.14:19). He longed more to speak at least five words to strengthen others than to speak ten thousand words in his private life. So to say, he sought the edification of the church more than his own edification 2000 times more! This is Paul's heart cry.

Yes, beloved, thank God for the grace given to you to speak in tongues! God wishes for all of you to speak in tongues, but He wishes all the more for you to interpret your tongues and edify the church. You have climbed the first step of speaking in tongues. Now better climb another step!

Paul makes it very clear: ***“I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies is greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification”*** (1.Co.14:5).

You have decided to accomplish His wish concerning tongues; how much more should you decide to fulfill His greater wish concerning interpretation! Speaking in tongues is excellent; but interpreting to build up the church is far more excellent. According to Paul, the man who lives for the church is far better than the man who lives for himself. Paul's verdict was, 'Greater is the giver than the receiver'.

His Body

Beloved, it is your solemn responsibility to interpret the tongues for the edification of the church. A lover of Jesus is a lover of His Body. Christ and His Body are one and the same. He is the Head; the Church is His Body. When you get this revelation, your self-centeredness is totally consumed. Only then, all our gifts bless others.

Paul had this Body revelation even on the way to Damascus. He heard the pain-filled voice of the Savior, ***“Why are you persecuting Me?... I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting”*** (Ac.9:4-5). These words echoed in his heart and he understood: ‘Persecuting His Church is persecuting Christ Himself’. This Body concept transformed his life totally. He found out that very day: ‘To be used for the Church is to be used for Christ’.

That’s why he lived and died for the Body of Christ. He dedicated his life to the Church as he dedicated it to his Master. He suffered for the Church as he suffered for the Savior.

Yes, we don’t live for ourselves, nor do we die for ourselves. We who live, live for the One who died and rose again for us (2.Co.5:15). Since the moment Christ became our life, we are sold out for Him and His Church. Now we are no more a stinking, stagnant pond, but flowing, fresh rivers. We are a species that moves in the world only for the benefit of others. We no longer live for ourselves, our families, our own edification or our selfish lifestyle.

Fruitful tree

We are trees planted for the Lord and His Church. We are God’s garden. Our Gardener guarded us watchfully until now. He watered us, tended us, fertilized us and put a hedge around us (Isa.5:2; 27:3). What for? Just to make people happy through our fruits. Do you see the purpose?

He has the right to cut every tree that doesn’t benefit the Church (Lk.13:7), but He graciously kept us alive until now. He is sparing our lives hoping that at least from now onward, we would live for the edification of others. The tongues we

speak are God’s fertilizer given to us. When we use it to bless the church through our interpretation, people are built up and comforted. That’s the fruit of tongues. Ask Him to bless your tongues to bless others.

Building

Tongues build up our spirit man. That is like building a house for us, but when we use tongues for the church, we are building His house. Yet we neglect God’s house by our own self-centeredness. If every tongue-talker realized this truth, the Church of God would have increased a thousand fold both in quality and quantity. Alas, the Church of God lies in ruins because of selfish people. In great anguish God’s heart cries out to us, ***“Why are you living in luxurious houses while My house lies in ruins?”*** (Hag.1:4, New Living Translation).

Selfish tower

Any gift that is not used for others becomes a sin. It is sin to use tongues only for our own edification all the time. I said that tongues is a prayer language. If we pray only for ourselves, it is sin ***“Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you...”*** (1.Sa.12:23).

What is the cause for the curse of Babel? God commanded His people to multiply, be fruitful and fill the earth, but they wanted to restrict themselves saying, ***“Come, let us build ourselves a city, and a tower whose top is in the heavens; let us make a name for ourselves, lest we be scattered abroad over the face of the whole earth”*** (Ge.11:4). God came down and scattered them.

Beloved, it’s enough that you lived only to build your own life. I agree it’s extremely important to build up your spirit man, but the very purpose of it is to build up the Church. Never forget this! Let your heart pump for others to be built up. That is God’s real blessing for you and His plan concerning you.

The Holy Spirit is inviting us to build up the fallen walls of Jerusalem. It’s high time we built up the Church of God with full speed. Our Bridegroom is waiting for His Church, Zion, to be

built up so He can appear in His glory (Ps.102:16). The King of Glory will come when His palace is completely built.

This is His very reason for bestowing His gifts upon us. Time is up. The Church, like a decorated Bride, will meet Jesus in midair. God has determined to use you for that. He gave you the building language to build up the ruins. He commands you lovingly to build up His Church as you build yourself up.

Riches

We have seen tongues are precious treasures given to us. That treasure is not given for ourselves. He has made us stewards of His riches. We must use them for the edification of the Church and give account to Him one day. Paul, who spoke in tongues more than others, built up the Church more than all the others.

I remember the story of Lazarus and the rich man. I really could not find out the sin the rich man committed in his earthly life. He ate delicious and sumptuous food, dressed splendidly in fine linen, and lived luxuriously. Nothing else is recorded. What was his sin? He didn't think about poor Lazarus who was begging at his gate. He was not moved by his hunger. No sympathy for the blood oozing out from his sores. He was immersed in his own pleasure.

Oh! We live like him! We are swimming and enjoying His anointing, His power and blessings, and His exciting languages, all the time forgetting the needy believers we meet in every service. How many come to our church with broken hearts. How many are depressed and discouraged. How many are wounded and weary. How many are struggling for their survival, living like zombies. Oh my God! We just pass by them without any care. Forgive us!

We live fully satisfied, proud that we spoke in tongues one hour this morning. We are not anxious to see others as edified as we are. We don't cry to God to make us a consolation to everyone we come across.

Good Samaritan

The oil of the Holy Spirit is flowing in us, but

we fail to pour it on the wounds of the wounded around us to heal them. We fail to pour at least a drop of the wine that's making us happy into the wounds of the people to make them glad. We didn't bear the weakness of the weak. The nature of the Good Samaritan is not developed in us. So the enemy is devastating the Church, and the Church is fallen and powerless.

May the Holy Spirit open our eyes at least now. Let us decide to bless others through every gift we enjoy. Let us seek the gifts that will build up His Body. Let us long for these gifts to flow and edify at least a few. Let us take an oath that the power we receive from the Holy Spirit is used to witness in our Jerusalem, Samaria, Judea and the ends of the earth.

Today's tragedy

Just see the tragic condition of our church services. We all assemble together, sing some nice songs and hear a good sermon. Then we go back home with a good benediction. If there are hundred people in a church, only one leader will lead everything. Maybe the choir sings, few ushers take the offering; that's it. Almost 95% of the participants come and sit and go as spectators.

If it is a Spirit-filled church, all speak in tongues making a big noise, but nobody is edified by it. How would it be if the flute or harp or trumpet and all musical instruments were played without any distinction in their tunes (1.Co.14:7-8)? That is what our tongues sound like to others. It is a real pity for those who attend that service without a clear knowledge of the gifts of the Spirit. This is the reason why many Spirit-filled churches seem crazy to others. The church that is supposed to attract the whole world looks pathetic today.

Instead of helping one another as members of the same Body, we behave like strangers to one another (v.11). Even good saints are scared of spiritual gifts because there is no time given for the edification gifts in the church, neither do we know to encourage such gifts.

Church gathering in the light of God's Word

Paul clearly depicts how the church services

should be conducted. He had more revelation about the church than any other. Listen to his admonishing: ***“How is it then, brethren? Whenever you come together, each of you has a psalm, has a teaching, has a tongue, has a revelation, has an interpretation. Let all things be done for edification”*** (1.Co.14:26).

Paul humbly accepts the Corinthian church is a mere infant church (1.Co.3:1). Even in that infant church, everyone had something to offer for the edification of others. When he talked about ‘each of you’, he means the believers, not the clergy. Today, however, only one hero conducts everything from beginning to end. In the Corinthian church, however, every time they gathered together, one believer will rise up and sing a prophetic song. That song would stir up the hearts of the people. Another will rise up and bring out a message to the church through tongues. Someone else will rise up to interpret it. The broken people there will hear the soothing words

of the Holy Spirit. Few others will get revelations. They will publicly speak them out. Such revelation would be a healing balm to the participants. Then another will rise up with a small teaching by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.

Wow! What a beautiful scene! What a rare sight of every member functioning in the Body! The whole church service would be like a little heaven on earth.

To the church leaders

Beloved co-laborers, God expects more from you. It’s an awesome responsibility to lead the Spirit-filled churches. It’s in your hand to stir up and exercise all the gifts in your assembly. The church service is not just singing and preaching. It’s an undeniable truth: you alone cannot edify the entire church. Prophecies, tongues and interpretations, revelations are inevitable for the edification of the church. This is biblical truth.

Every believer has something to offer for the

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and do not know how being at home?***



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edification of the church. Your church can never grow if your church service doesn't follow the principles of God's Word. You may have a thousand believers but all will be in the infant stage only.

Will you be happy if your believers are immature and infants? Do you long to see them grown up, mature and strong in every area? Remember, you are the parents to raise your children into all maturity and stability. You are God's stewards to supervise whether they enjoy everything God has given them. You are God's coach to teach and train your people to exercise the gifts of the Spirit.

Let it first be manifest in your own life. Build up your spirit man by speaking in tongues for hours before you conduct the church service. Go with prayer for God to help you interpret your tongues to lead the sheep.

Covet to prophecy. Earnestly desire prophetic utterances to gush out of you in the pulpit. Be flexible and totally yielded to the leading of the Holy Spirit. When the members see the gifts of the Spirit flowing through you, their faith will grow. Come out of the traditional bondages of thinking your job is only to preside church services and preach.

With this burden, Paul went to the congregation every time, ***“But now, brethren, if I come to you speaking with tongues, what shall I profit you unless I speak to you either by revelation, by knowledge, by prophesying, or by teaching?”*** (1.Co.14:6). For him, a church service is not just preaching and teaching. According to this verse, this is only one fourth of the service. I assume, in the Corinthian church, it was even only one sixth (v.26). How about Jesus' ministry? Preaching was only one sixth of His ministry (Mt.11:5). I don't say it as a rule, I just try to challenge you to give more room to the Spirit.

I don't say it as a strict rule; it is my assessment. Yet at the same time, we cannot take this principle lightly. The Holy Spirit is not bound to our views, but when we give Him total control, He moves in our churches and

manifests as He wills. Let us expect Him to move.

It is not enough if only you keep manifesting the gifts. Then it would become a one-man-show. Every member of Christ's Body must be allowed to function in the church. At times, you may have to control your revelations and encourage others to step into that realm.

For example, it is well and good if you interpret your own tongues in the church, but you should not end the service without giving them an opportunity to try it themselves. Many times, unconsciously, we are carried away by manifesting our own gifts.

In my seminar on the gifts of the Holy Spirit, I constantly need to fight this temptation. At times, I demonstrate the gifts by calling somebody and interpreting my own tongues for them. Immediately, the Holy Spirit will whisper in me, 'give opportunity to the people to demonstrate it by themselves'. Then I divide the people into groups and make them interpret their tongues to one another. I am always amazed by the deep longing of the Holy Spirit to see His Body in action.

Dear friends, give time in your services for everyone to speak in tongues. When one speaks in tongues, you might get an interpretation, but don't tell it immediately. Ask others to attempt. Wait for some time. If nobody steps forward, only then you begin to interpret. Gradually, you step back and promote the church to action. You are not a musician; you are the director of the orchestra.

Fear not!

It's a fact when gifts are allowed to manifest in our churches, some confusion might arise, for our prophecies are influenced by our human limitations. Sometimes, the interpretations could be wrong. I myself have seen some people badly affected by wrong use of the gifts of the Spirit. Can such failures be an excuse for setting aside the example of the Holy Spirit? Can our bitter experiences nullify the principles of God's Word?

If a tottering baby attempts to walk and falls, can the mother keep it on her lap lifelong without

allowing it to try walking again? Just because playing children make a mess in the house, can we bind them with cords permanently?

Just because a car had an accident, can we ban all cars? Just think about it! Because of such attitude, our churches suffer terrible loss! We as leaders must give account of it to God as stewards. Only when the gifts are publicly used by every believer, the church can be edified, and those who practice the gifts will also grow. The one who uses the gift is excited about it and rejoices in the fact that he is also a useful vessel. His faith and self-image grow. He realizes he needs to prepare himself in the spirit before coming to the service, just as the pastor does.

You leaders, don't be afraid to allow the manifestation of the gifts. Boldly encourage it. God will surely honor you.

Practical tips

Gifts must be manifest in the church, but it should be within the bounds. Gifts are like a sharp knife. It can cut the vegetables, but if we are careless it can cut the finger. You as church leader must be vigilant and diligent here (Ro.12:8). We cannot expect perfection when people attempt to interpret their tongues. Likewise, we should not expect distinct prophecies right at the beginning.

This explains why we should give clear teaching on gifts. We should never allow the church to be ignorant of spiritual gifts (1.Co.12:1). See the way Paul explains the gifts, taking much pain and effort. You need to do it in your church.

Encourage the church to expect the operation of the gifts in every service. Instruct them to stir themselves up by speaking in tongues before coming to the service. If they come to the service fully prepared in their spirit man, the gifts in them will certainly bless the congregation. Point out this truth to them.

When you teach on the gifts, always teach them the pitfalls that could happen. The Holy Spirit alone is not responsible for the manifestation of the gifts; it is also under our

control. ***“And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets”*** (1.Co.14:32). Impress this truth deeply upon them.

The importance of judging the prophecies and interpretations must be clearly emphasized. If a person refuses any evaluation, beware of him (v.29)! Teach them the need for coming under leadership and covering. No matter how highly gifted a man may be, he must have the humility to undergo the scrutiny of mature leaders.

When people function in the revelation gifts, as elders of the church weigh it carefully. When you sense something wrong, talk to the person in private and explain to them sweetly. If they make mistakes, don't expose them publicly making them ashamed. After that, they will never open up for the gifts anymore. Once bitten, twice shy. Here, your maturity and patience is needed. If you have to explain it to the church publicly, speak the truth in love.

What if thousands gather in our assembly; is it possible to exercise gifts? Yes. When revival comes, thousands will fill our churches. At least two or three must be given opportunity to prophecy and interpret, even in such big gatherings. Once in a while, teach on gifts of the Spirit, even in your regular Sunday service.

If some show greater interest in the gifts, have special weekday meetings for them. Give much time to exercise gifts in such meetings. If some excel in it, make them leaders of small groups; but remember, the responsibility of overseeing everything lies with you. It is my great burden and desire to conduct seminars on the gifts of the Spirit to guide the leadership in practical training. We will help one another in this end time harvest!

We have reached the time where the gifts of the Spirit will work in every congregation. We should be careful not to shut our doors against it. I remember the severe warning our Lord gave to the Pharisees: ***“But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in”*** (Mt.23:13). Oh God, save us from this horrible danger!

SUICIDE

- Part 3

Rev. Benita Francis

Judas Ischariot

There is yet another person who committed suicide in a very tragic way. His memory will never be forgotten. He will forever be a hallmark of high treason, betrayal and an awful breaking of loyalty. I am talking about Judas Ischariot.

Trusted task

His life is a real tragedy. He was one of the chosen twelve, and even among this close circle of Jesus' disciples who would become His apostles, he had a special, trusted and treasured position: he was the treasurer (Jn. 12:6)! I wonder how he came into this position. Would Jesus have appointed him to show the world that no matter who is your treasurer, and no matter how many people steal from you, you can still fulfill your calling? Or did Judas maneuver himself into this position because he had a soft corner for money?

Privileged position

Be it as it may, Judas was there, right alongside with Jesus, one of the twelve who saw all His miracles. What a privileged position! And not only that - Judas was doubtlessly also one of those who were sent out by Jesus to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons, even raise the dead (Mk. 6:7)! Please notice that right along with this commission, in the very same verse, Jesus commanded them another important thing: "Freely you have received, freely give" (Mt. 10:8). This shows me that Jesus knew all too

well the danger power and anointing can mean to a greedy, unstable person, and that He warns us even before the temptation arises.

Thief's thoughts

See Judas' heart attitude here. Six days before his betrayal, Judas was with Jesus in Bethany in Lazarus' house. When Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with very costly spikenard oil, Judas couldn't bear it. See his attitude:

4 Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, who would betray Him, said,

5 "Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?"

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it (Jn. 12:4-6)

Judas was not only a thief, he was a master schemer. What a nice, cunning, crooked question! How well he condemned the worshipper who poured out her life, represented in her precious dowry, at the feet of Jesus! In that culture, she might not have been able to ever again save enough money for a dowry. This one sacrifice might mean lifelong loneliness for her, no hope for a husband or children, no hope for a home to belong to! How cruelly Judas considers such worship and service to Jesus a waste of time and money! Beware of people with such an attitude!

Downfall decreed

In our present School of the Holy Spirit, I was prompted to minister on the wiles of the devil and the temptations he will use against God's anointed ones. In one class, I hammered the fact how Lucifer, the anointed covering cherub who had been with God in the garden of Eden and had been perfect from the day he was created could fall and become Lucifer, satan himself. Savor these words for yourself:

12 ...'Thus says the Lord GOD: "You *were* the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.

13 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.

14 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.

15 You were perfect in your ways from the day you were created, till iniquity was found in you.

16 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.

17 Your heart was lifted up because of your beauty. You corrupted your wisdom for the sake of your splendor. I cast you to the ground, I laid you before kings, that they might gaze at you.

18 You defiled your sanctuaries by the multitude of your iniquities, by the iniquity of your trading. Therefore I brought fire from your midst. It devoured you, and I turned you to ashes upon the earth in the sight of all who saw you.

19 All who knew you among the peoples are

astonished at you. **You have become a horror, and shall be no more forever**" (Eze.28:12-19)

How shocking! What a fall! Becoming a horror, being totally wiped out! By money-mindedness and by trading he defiled his sanctuaries, which would mean for us, the inner spirit! What a warning for us today! Remember, Achan and his whole household, servants and animals included, were stoned to death because of the accursed booty he had stolen (Jos.7:20-26). Gehasi and all of his descendants became leprous forever because of his greed (2.Ki.5:20-27). Even in New Testament times, Ananias and Sapphira were killed because of their unfaithful money dealings (Ac.5:1-10). Our Lord Jesus made very clear that you just CANNOT serve two masters, God and mammon (Mt.6:24).

Money minded mischief

Just a few days after my message, two students came to me, heartbroken. A young boy, close friend to our student and almost like a son to our student's father who was a pastor, had sexually molested the pastor's eight year old daughter. When I enquired a little deeper, I learned that the boy had become very money-minded, used church equipment to play music in secular functions and was even seducing the rest of the worship team to come with him! What a perfect picture of Ezekiel 28! How tragic that this downward trend had not been discovered earlier! This sweet little girl could have been protected from the shame and trauma of sexual harassment if her father, a pastor, had been vigilant and used his spiritual discernment. Never forget: Money has a great potential to corrupt people, so beware!

Satan speaking

We have already seen that Judas was a thief and didn't care for the poor. He was merciless and hard-hearted. He cared only for his own gain, his own benefit. How many modern preachers decide which invitation to accept by the size of the offering they can expect! Don't be surprised if you hear of depression, destruction and even death in the families of such ministers. Their attitude and actions just open wide the door to satan, the enemy of their souls, and he all too happily comes in.

See the downward spiral of Judas. When did Judas actually go to the chief priests to deliver Jesus? It was after a woman in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper poured very costly fragrant oil on His head as He sat at the table. Jesus refused to rebuke her at the disciples' indignation, but rather commended her (Mt.26:6-13). What was Judas' reaction?

14 **Then** one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests

15 and said, **“What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?”** And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver.

16 So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him (Mt.26:6-16)

It seems to me like Judas lost the hope of easy gain through Jesus when he saw Him permitting what Judas considered “waste”. So he went to find a source of income by other means and, given the promise of easy money, “from that time sought

opportunity to betray Him”. Judas had allowed satan to fill his mind and his heart with his thoughts and ambitions. Money was what he wanted, no matter how. His mind had become darkened. He became a schemer like satan, the father of lies, himself. Satan had successfully filled Judas' mind and heart with his lies. Now only one more step was missing - satan himself entering Judas.

Devil's dwelling

See the scene of the Last Supper. Jesus “was troubled in spirit, and testified and said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me’” (Jn.13:21). Satan had been working on Judas' mind and attitudes for a long time already, and Judas had not resisted him. Then came the moment when satan fully entered him, and he went and betrayed Jesus to the high priest for thirty pieces of silver (Lk.22:3; Jn.13:26-30).

See the coldblooded crime of Judas. With a kiss he betrayed the One who would give His life

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for him and for all humanity! Still, Jesus called him friend - giving him one last opportunity to repent and turn things around, but Judas missed it (Mt.26:48-50).

Future forsaken

Later on, Judas felt remorse and tried to give the money back, but it was too late.

3 Then Judas, His betrayer, seeing that He had been condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,

4 saying, "I have sinned by betraying innocent blood." And they said, "What *is that* to us? You see *to it!*"

5 Then he threw down the pieces of silver in the temple and departed, and went and hanged himself.

Acts 1:16-20 tells us that this suicide was much worse than just hanging. He fell headlong, burst open in the middle and all his entrails gushed out. What a cursed death! His dwelling place became desolate, no one lives in it. And what happened to his beloved money? It was so cursed that it could be used for nothing better than for a graveyard - and even that only for strangers, not for Jews.

6 But the chief priests took the silver pieces and said, "It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, because they are the price of blood."

7 And they consulted together and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.

8 Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day (Mt.27:3-8)

Lose life - live life

Praise God, you don't need to become depressed to the point of such a horrible suicide. Actually, you are commanded to "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Phil.4:4). This strong command has its root in God's heart desire: "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3.Jn.2). Your loving Lord Jesus wants your joy to be FULL (Jn.15:11; 16:24; 1.Jn.1:4; 2.Jn.1:12)! He came to give you LIFE, and LIFE MORE abundantly (Jn.10:10). How do you get to this overflowing, exuberant life?

Choose to be like God! Instead of expecting and scheming to receive, choose to give! Remember, your Jesus said, "It is MORE blessed to give than to receive" (Ac.20:35). Choose to give even your life, as He gave His only begotten, beloved Son (1.Jn.3:16; Ro.8:32). Remember the words of our Lord Jesus: "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it" (Mk.8:35). I guarantee you, as you start forgetting about yourself and seeking God's Kingdom, this desire for suicide will just vanish, and joy and enthusiasm will fill its place. Try it...

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