

TRUTH SERIES

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Unnecessary



savings

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I thank the Lord who through His example of surrender showed us how to fight the spirit of avarice and misery that confronts us in our faith and our willingness to sow freely and abundantly in God's work.

I dedicate this book to the thriving sowers and workers of God's harvest.

“So take the talent from him, and give it to the one with the ten talents. For to all those who have, more will be given, and they will have an abundance; but from those who have nothing, even what they have will be taken away. As for this worthless slave, throw him into the outer darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 25: 28-30)



INTRODUCTION

In this book, we will address an issue that has disturbing many sincere servants of God. Although they have managed to pluck out this evil from within themselves, they remain surrounded by carnal people who, by their cowardice and negligence with His Word, prefer to keep these harmful characteristics inside them, giving gaps for the enemy to rob, to kill and destroy the divine project. They are instruments of the devil, frustrating the hopes of those who are workers, simply for refusing to accept the truth and ‘picking up the plow’ along with these ones.

The damaging characteristics that have delayed the action of the Spirit in many of His children are, mainly, the misery and avarice, taking the unsuspecting to a false economy and an unnecessary expense with what has no value to God. Misery and greed or avarice not only relates to the financial area, but also the emotional, in what relates to the donation of oneself to the Lord in a more complete way; hence, to the neighbor. A miserly person is not only attached to money; he is equally jealous with everything he feels that is his, including material goods, people and relationships, religious and moral concepts, and even his natural and spiritual gifts. This person locks the free flow of God’s Spirit and prevents all those around him from progressing materially and spiritually. Being beside such a person becomes a burden, for the joy in serving God in a more free way is blocked.

In the dictionary, avarice is placed as a synonym of misery. However, in practice, there is a very subtle difference, such as: a miserly person withholds what he has, but there is usually a stock, that is, he has something to give. The more he has, the more he wants. The miserable person has an even greater degree of this illness, to the extent of being so small and petty that reaches the brink of poverty, penury, not having anything else to give, really. Then he limits, holds and retains what is already little and destroyed.

Avarice can dress itself with the beautiful clothes of conservatism or traditionalism. A very conservative person, who likes to keep souvenirs, antiques and relics, is a miserly person with a chic name because he didn’t learn to divest of something, to recycle, to clean and renew.

The world teaches us how to gain, to retain and to consume; the kingdom of God teaches us to liberate, multiply and bless, as He always does with us. Economy and prudence are not synonymous with avarice. Detachment, sowing and conscious investment are not synonymous with loss, financial mismanagement or ‘a step toward bankruptcy.’

Some secondary characteristics participate in the process of avarice and misery: the spirit (the tendency; the temper) of greed, envy, covetousness; retention of what belongs to others, omission, spirit (the tendency; the temper) of theft, laziness, lack of concrete action, vain words, not to practice the word of God, lack of wisdom, to want to create blessings for oneself, false scales versus fair weight (two weights, two measures), to put trust in wealth, sowing with the worst seeds, anxiety, misery and consumerism.

In the dictionary the word ‘spirit’ has many meanings, including:

- 1) The immaterial part of man.
- 2) Supernatural entity as angels and demons.
- 3) Person endowed with intelligence or kindness above the ordinary.
- 4) Imagination, cleverness (inventive power), intelligence, finesse.
- 5) Temper, attitude, disposition
- 6) Grace, mood.

- 7) Predominant idea, meaning, sense.
- 8) Faculty of understanding, to know and to accept things.
- 9) Idea, thought, mental capacity.

In the situations that will come next we are not referring to a spiritual entity itself, but to liveliness, disposition, temper, tendency, predominant idea, meaning and sense. In the Church it is customary to drive out the spirit of ‘this or that’, but actually they are works of the flesh, tendencies, temperaments transmitted by heredity and that cannot be expelled; they must be healed before the cross with great determination, working on them daily, contradicting the flesh and making room for the Spirit of God to act.

When we speak of avarice or greed, we are not referring only to the material things, but the avarice of giving oneself to the other; of giving the technical conditions or knowledge that one has to help a brother; a word of encouragement, comfort or tenderness in moment of pain; a phone call or to write a letter to a friend who is in need, just because this entails a financial expense. All this generates dryness in the relationships and does not allow the flow of the Holy Spirit. The bible says in Eph. 5: 5 on greed, linking it directly to the idolatry; this comes to corroborate what was said above: when we give a greater value than that is due to money, it becomes a god, and the true God, who is Jesus, ceases to occupy His place of Lord in our lives.

I hope you have the Holy Spirit as your companion in this reading, writing down His revelations and asking for help to the Lord to straighten your ways.

I wish you the peace and freedom of the Lord in your life!

Tânia Cristina

Notes:

- Words or phrases enclosed in brackets [] or parenthesis (), in *italics*, were placed by me, in most cases, to explain the biblical text, although some verses already contain them [not in italics].
- The version used here is the New Revised Standard Version, NRSV – 1989 (1995)
- NIV = New International Version (it will be used in brackets in some verses to facilitate the readers’ understanding).

AVARICE AND MATERIAL MISERY



Avarice, greed, envy, covetousness, retention of what belongs to others

• *Prov. 1: 19*: “Such is the end of all who are greedy for gain; it takes away the life of its possessors.”

• *Prov. 3: 28*: “Do not say to your neighbor, ‘Go, and come again, tomorrow I will give it’ – when you have it with you.”

• *Prov. 10: 3*: “The Lord does not let the righteous go hungry, but he thwarts the craving of the wicked.”

• *Prov. 11: 24*: “Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want.”

• *Prov. 11: 26*: “The people curse those who hold back grain, but a blessing is on the head of those who sell it.”

• *Prov. 21: 26*: “All day long the wicked covet, but the righteous give and do not hold back.”

• *Prov. 28: 22*: “The miser is in a hurry to get rich and does not know that loss is sure to come.”

• *Lk. 18: 18-30*: “A certain ruler asked him, ‘Good Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life?’ Jesus said to him, ‘Why do you call me good? No one is good but God alone. You know the commandments: you shall not commit adultery; you shall not murder; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and mother.’ He replied, ‘I have kept all these since my youth.’ When Jesus heard this, he said to him, ‘There is still one thing lacking. Sell all that you own and distribute the money to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; then come, follow me.’ But when he heard this, he became sad; for he was very rich. Jesus looked at him and said, ‘How hard it is for those who have wealth to enter the kingdom of God! Indeed, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God.’ Those who heard it said, ‘Then who can be saved?’ He replied, ‘What is impossible for mortals is possible for God.’ Then Peter said, ‘Look, we have left our homes and followed you.’ And he said to them, ‘Truly I tell you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of

the kingdom of God, who will not get back very much more in this age, and in the age to come eternal life.”

- *1 Cor. 6: 9-12*: “Do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived! Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers – none of these will inherit the kingdom of God. And this is what some of you used to be. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God. ‘All things are lawful for me’, but not all things are beneficial. ‘All things are lawful for me’, but I will not be dominated by anything.”

- *Gal. 5: 19-21*: “Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry [*money is a god* – *Eph. 5: 5-7*], sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.” (*1 Sam. 15: 22-23; 1 Cor. 6: 8-10; Eph. 5: 3-7; Col. 3: 5*)

- *Eph. 5: 5-7*: “Be sure of this, that no fornicator or impure person, or one who is greedy (that is, an idolater), has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes on those who are disobedient. Therefore do not be associated with them”. Greed = idolatry and does not inherit the kingdom of heaven.

- *Col. 3: 5-6*: “Put to death, therefore, whatever in you is earthly: fornication, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed (which is idolatry). On account of these the wrath of God is coming on those who are disobedient.”

- *1 Tim. 6: 7-10*: “for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.”

- *Heb. 13: 5*: “Keep your lives free from the love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, ‘I will never leave you or forsake you.’”

- *Jam. 1: 12-15*: “Blessed is anyone who endures temptation. Such a one has stood the test and will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love him. No one, when tempted, should say, ‘I am being tempted by God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil and he himself tempts no one. But one is tempted by one’s own desire, being lured and enticed by it; then, when that desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin, and that sin, when it is fully grown, gives birth to death.”

- *Jam. 4: 1-5*: “Those conflicts and disputes among you, where do they come from? Do they not come from your cravings that are at war within you? You want something and do not have it; so you commit murder. And you covet something and cannot obtain it; so you engage in disputes and conflicts. You do not have, because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask wrongly, in order to spend what you get on your pleasures. Adulterers! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. Or do you suppose that it is for nothing that the scripture says, ‘God yearns jealously for the spirit that he has made to dwell in us?’”

To put trust in wealth

- *Prov. 11: 28*: “Those who trust in their riches will wither, but the righteous will flourish like green leaves.”

- *Prov. 23: 4-5*: “Do not wear yourself out to get rich; be wise enough to desist. When your eyes light upon it, it is gone; for suddenly it takes wings to itself, flying like an eagle toward heaven.”

- *Prov. 28: 20*: “The faithful will abound with blessings, but one who is in a hurry to be rich will not go unpunished.”

- *Lk. 12: 13-21*: “Someone in the crowd said to him, ‘Teacher, tell my brother to divide the family inheritance with me.’ But he said to him, ‘Friend, who set me to be a judge or arbitrator over you?’ And he said to them, ‘Take care! Be on your guard against all kinds of greed; for one’s life does not consist in the abundance of possessions.’ Then he told them a parable: ‘The land of a rich man produced abundantly. And he thought to himself, ‘What should I do, for I have no place to store my crops?’ Then he said, ‘I will do this: I will pull down my barns and build larger ones, and there I will store all my grain and my goods. And I will say to my soul, Soul, you have ample goods laid up for many years; relax, eat, drink, be merry.’ But God said to him, ‘You fool! This very night your life is being demanded of you. And the things you have prepared, whose will they be?’ So it is with those who store up treasures for themselves but are not rich toward God.”

- *1 Tim. 6: 7-10*: “for we brought nothing into the world, so that we can take nothing out of it; but if we have food and clothing, we will be content with these. But those who want to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many senseless and harmful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, and in their eagerness to be rich some have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many pains.”

- *1 Tim. 6: 17-21*: “As for those who in the present age are rich, command them not to be haughty, or to set their hopes on the uncertainty of riches, but rather on God who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. They are to do good, to be rich in good works, generous, and ready to share, thus storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the future, so that they may take hold of the life that really is life. Timothy, guard what has been entrusted to you. Avoid the profane chatter and contradictions of what is falsely called knowledge; by professing it some have missed the mark as regards the faith. Grace be with you.”

Anxiety (restlessness), misery and consumerism are works of the flesh that trouble and devastate one's life in the financial area

• *Prov. 15: 16*: “Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble with it.”

• *Prov. 30: 15-16*: “The leech [*symbol of devastation and theft*] has two daughters; ‘Give, give,’ they cry. Three things are never satisfied; four never say, ‘Enough.’ Sheol, the barren womb, the earth ever thirsty for water, and the fire that never says, ‘Enough.’”

A person can be rich or poor; can want wealth or be content with what he has, but often the spirit of misery or greed that dominates him takes away of his soul the need to seek God more deeply. This makes him act in a possessive or jealous way with what is his and does not let the spiritual truths about the prosperity of God penetrate his heart. He gives externally even to show to others, but internally, his heart is still stingy and miserly. He begins to measure the people around him by the profit or loss that they can give him. He does arithmetical calculations in all situations and no longer believes in God's unexpected provision. He is unable to lend anything that is his, by jealousy of that thing is being used and spent. He lives below anxiety and suffers for anticipation by the possibility of an extra expense. He goes to the church and gives the tithe out of obligation, when he decides to give, for he wonders what the pastor will do with his money. He is unable to sow in God's work using any child of His, because “He does nothing more than an obligation!” He refrains from moments of joy and fellowship in the company of someone because they will spend money. He keeps broken things at home or what he no longer uses. He lives in poverty his entire life to save for old age or for his offspring (there's nothing wrong with that, to think about old age or children, unless that behavior becomes sickly). These and other examples can be found when money becomes a god.



Omission, the spirit of theft, laziness, lack of concrete action, vain words, not to practice the word of God

- *Prov. 3: 27*: “Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in your power to do it.”

- *Prov. 5: 8; 10*: “Keep your way far from her [*adulteress woman*], and do not go near the door of her house; ... and strangers will take their fill of your wealth, and your labors will go to the house of an alien.”

- *Prov. 6: 6-11*: “Go to the ant, you lazybones; consider its ways, and be wise. Without having any chief or officer or ruler, it prepares its food in summer, and gathers its sustenance in harvest. How long will you lay there, O lazybones? When will you rise from your sleep? A little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to rest, and poverty will come upon you like a robber, and want, like an armed warrior.”

- *Prov. 10: 4*: “A slack hand causes poverty, but the hand of the diligent makes rich.”

- *Prov. 12: 14*: “From the fruit of the mouth one is filled with good things, and manual labor has its reward.”

- *Prov. 14: 23*: “In all toil there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.”

- *Prov. 19: 15*: “Laziness brings on deep sleep; an idle person will suffer hunger.”

- *Prov. 20: 4*: “The lazy person does not plow in season; harvest comes, and there is nothing to be found.”

- *Prov. 21: 13*: “If you close your ear to the cry of the poor, you will cry out and not be heard.”

- *Prov. 21: 25*: “The craving of the lazy person is fatal, for lazy hands refuse to labor.”

- *Prov. 28: 24*: “Anyone who robs father or mother and says, ‘That is no crime’, is partner to a thug.”

- *Prov. 28: 25*: “The greedy person stirs up strife, but whoever trusts in the Lord will be enriched.”

- *Prov. 28: 27*: “Whoever gives to the poor will lack nothing, but one who turns a blind eye will get many a curse.”

- *Prov. 29: 7*: “The righteous know the rights of the poor; the wicked have no such understanding.”

- *Mal. 3: 8-12*: “Will anyone rob God? Yet you are robbing me! But you say, ‘How are we robbing you?’ In your tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing me – the whole nation of you! Bring the full tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in my house, and thus put me to the test, says the Lord of hosts; see if I will not open the windows [*NIV, floodgates*] of heaven for you and pour down for you an overflowing blessing. I will rebuke the locust for you, so that it will not destroy the produce of your soil; and your vine in the field shall not be barren, says the Lord of hosts. Then all nations will count you happy, for you will be a land of delight, says the Lord of hosts.” Whoever omits to give the tithe robs God and gives spiritual legality so that there is theft in his life too.

- *Jam. 1: 21-22*: “Therefore rid yourselves of all sordidness and rank growth of wickedness, and welcome with meekness the implanted word that has the power to save your souls. But be doers of the word, and not merely hearers who deceive themselves.”

We need boldness and courage to say ‘no’ to human laws and customs acquired for centuries, but that are not approved by God. The limiting and unbelieving thoughts in the mind of a believer generate fearful and cowardly emotions and, therefore, attitudes

completely contrary to love and freedom that the Holy Spirit has already given to us. That's why we conquer too little. We speak a lot, pray a lot, 'prophesy' too much, but we achieve and accomplish very little because, in truth, we could not break with the human incredulity that prevents us from living the miracles of Jesus. In *Rom. 12: 1-2* is written, "I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your minds, so that you may discern what is the will of God – what is good and acceptable and perfect." In short, unless we change our way of thinking, taking away of us the world's way in order to accept God's like a child, with innocence, we will never live the full life of Jesus in us. One of the most palpable and clear examples between what the world thinks and what the bible thinks is money. The way of the world to use it and handle it is completely opposite to what the bible says, and when we are willing to take a stand for what God tells us, we find ourselves running in the opposite direction. It becomes a great effort to remove from us the concepts we learned, to put into practice the true ones, to fight against those that come from outside to affront us and prove our mistake, and still have to show that we are right, bringing to reality what the Lord speaks. In other words, it means to break the negativity and disbelief of collective unconscious to show everyone that miracles exist, when we are willing to overcome challenges.



Lack of wisdom; to want to create blessings for oneself

- *Prov. 8: 18-21 (referring to wisdom)*: “Riches and honor are with me, enduring wealth and prosperity. My fruit is better than gold, even fine gold, and my yield than choice silver. I walk in the way of righteousness, along the paths of justice, endowing with wealth those who love me, and filling their treasuries.”
- *Prov. 10: 22*: “The blessing of the Lord makes rich, and he adds no sorrow with it.” Do you remember Ishmael? It all happened in Sara’s haste. Look at the Middle East today!
- *Prov. 17: 16*: “Why should fools have a price in hand to buy wisdom, when they have no mind to learn?”
- *Prov. 20: 13*: “Do not love sleep [*ignorance, indolence, unconsciousness*], or else you will come to poverty; open your eyes, and you will have plenty of bread.”

False scales versus fair weight (two weights, two measures)

- *Prov. 11: 1*: “A false balance is an abomination to the Lord, but an accurate weight is his delight.”
- *Prov. 16: 8*: “Better is a little with righteousness than large income with injustice.”
- *Mic. 6: 11*: “Can I tolerate wicked scales and a bag of dishonest weights?”



Sowing with the worst seeds

When we talk about sowing, we're talking of tithes and financial offerings in God's Work as well as an emotional or material assistance to a brother or an investment that we make in our own work or even our spiritual donation to the Lord. In *Lev. 22: 19* is written: "to be acceptable in your behalf it shall be a male without blemish, of the cattle or the sheep or the goats." Defective animals were not accepted; therefore, our offering before the Lord should be with what the best we have, with the firstfruits, not with what's left, with the remains. The same way the tithe should be separated before we spend our money on anything, the offering should be given liberally and with integrity of heart. Bringing 'damaged offering' before the altar of the Lord is to bring our offerings unwillingly, with contempt or another feeling in the heart other than humility, reverence and love. It means to neglect the spiritual food that flows from the altar, thinking only in our personal and material needs, before we put Jesus in the first place in our lives. The same instruction is valid when we bless someone: what no longer serves to us will not be useful for the other too.

- *Prov. 21: 27*: "The sacrifice [*the offering*] of the wicked is an abomination; how much more when brought with evil intent."

- *Deut. 15: 1- 11*: "Every seventh year you shall grant a remission of debts. And this is the manner of the remission: every creditor shall remit the claim that is held against a neighbor, not exacting it of a neighbor who is a member of the community, because the Lord's remission has been proclaimed. Of a foreigner you may exact it, but you must remit your claim on whatever any member of your community owes you. There will, however, be no one in need among you, because the Lord is sure to bless you in the land that the Lord your God is giving you as a possession to occupy, if only you will obey the Lord your God by diligently observing this entire commandment that I command you today. When the Lord your God has blessed you, as he promised you, you will lend to many nations, but you will not borrow; you will rule over many nations, but they will not rule over you. If there is among you anyone in need, a member of your community in any of your towns within the land that the Lord your God is giving you, do not be hard-hearted or tight-fisted toward your needy neighbor. You should rather open your hand, willingly lending enough to meet the need, whatever it may be. *Be careful that you do not entertain a mean thought*, thinking, 'The seventh year, the year of remission, is near,' and therefore view your needy neighbor with hostility and give nothing; your neighbor might cry to the Lord against you, and you would incur guilt. *Give liberally and be ungrudging when you do so [He was referring to be thinking of a later ransom]*, for on this account the Lord your God will bless you in all your work and in all that you undertake. Since there will never cease to be some in need on the earth, I therefore command you, 'Open your hand to the poor and needy neighbor in your land.'" *cf. Mk. 14: 7*: "For you always have the poor with you, and you can show kindness to them whenever you wish; but you will not always have me [*Jesus*]."

What pleases the Lord:



To have compassion for others, to be generous, to have the wisdom to ask God for things, not to serve two masters at the same time [*God and Mammon the god of money*], to trust in God, to let anxiety aside and seek His kingdom first

- *Prov. 19: 17*: “Whoever is kind to the poor lends to the Lord, and will be repaid in full.”

- *Prov. 22: 9*: “Those who are generous are blessed, for they share their bread with the poor.”

- *Prov. 25: 21-22*: “If your enemies are hungry, give them bread to eat; and if they are thirsty, give them water to drink; for you will heap coals of fire on their heads, and the Lord will reward you.”

- *Prov. 30: 7-9*: “Two things I ask of you; do not deny them to me before I die: Remove far from me falsehood and lying; give me neither poverty nor riches; feed me with the food that I need, or I shall be full, and deny you, and say, ‘Who is the Lord?’ or I shall be poor, and steal, and profane the name of my God.”

- *Matt. 6: 19-24*: “Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust consume and where thieves break in and steal; but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also. The eye [*Greek: the action of seeing, aim, vision that one has*] is the lamp of the body. So, if your eye is healthy [*good, generous*], your whole body will be full of light; but if your eye is unhealthy [*greedy*], your whole body will be full of darkness [*lack of understanding, of revelation, of true knowledge of God*]. If then the light [*the light we receive in the mind, so we must be careful with the ideas that we welcome*] in you is

darkness, how great is the darkness! No one can serve two masters; for a slave will either hate the one and love the other, or be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and wealth [*in Greek, Mammon; or Money in other versions*].”

- *Matt. 6: 33-34*: “But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today’s trouble is enough for today.”

- *Lk. 19: 1-10*: “He entered Jericho and was passing through it. A man was there named Zacchaeus; he was a chief tax collector and was rich. He was trying to see who Jesus was, but on account of the crowd he could not, because he was short in stature. So he ran ahead and climbed a sycamore tree to see him, because he was going to pass that way. When Jesus came to the place, he looked up and said to him, ‘Zacchaeus, hurry and come down; for I must stay at your house today.’ So he hurried down and was happy to welcome him. All who saw it began to grumble and said, ‘He has gone to be the guest of one who is a sinner.’ Zacchaeus stood there and said to the Lord, ‘Look, half of my possessions, Lord, I will give to the poor; and if I have defrauded anyone of anything, I will pay back four times as much.’ Then Jesus said to him, ‘Today salvation has come to this house, because he too is a son of Abraham. For the Son of Man came to seek out and to save the lost.’”

Zacchaeus comes from the Hebrew and Aramaic *Zakkai*, which means *pure*. It may be a reduced form of *Zechariah* (*‘The Lord remembers, the Lord remembered’*). Zacchaeus was a tax collector, in fact, the chief of the tax collectors and rich, very rich. In Latin, a *publican*, or in Greek, an *architelōnes*, that is, an employer of men for the collection of all taxes of Jericho. He had collectors under his orders. Matthew had been hired by one of these. Tax collector (*Latin: Publican; Greek: telōnes*) was a collector of taxes or of customs in favor of the Romans, employed by an employer of the collection of taxes (like Zacchaeus). It was a despised and hated class because it was composed by selfish, greedy and ambitious types, eager for money and for the benefits it offered. The tax collector was reputed unclean because of his continuous contact with the Gentiles. Therefore, an interesting contrast between the occupation of Zacchaeus and the meaning of his name (*Zacchaeus = pure*). When he abandoned the avarice, greed and covetousness of his flesh to give priority to the things of the kingdom of God, he became really pure.

- *Phil. 4: 19*: “And my God will fully satisfy every need of yours according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus.”

AVARICE AND EMOTIONAL MISERY



Emotional misery is to be stingy in the emotions, it is the inability to give oneself to God and his fellow men, is to give love for measure and to save all acts of boon that can help other people grow and have their ways open. Avarice and emotional misery prevent the children of God from being strong. Admitting our own frailty in certain situations is not to deny the faith; it is to know that we're not self-sufficient. "For whenever I am weak, then I am strong" (*2 Cor. 12: 10b*).

The antidote to neutralize this evil is to exercise some basic principles contained in the word of God:

- Sow the good. What is planted is reaped. "Do not be deceived; God is not mocked, for you reap whatever you sow" (*Gal. 6: 7*). If you sow the good you will reap the good.

- Do to others what you want them to do to you. "In everything do to others as you would have them do to you; for this is the law and the prophets" (*Matt. 7: 12*)

- Not to withhold blessings. What is withheld from others will be withheld from the person himself: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained" (*Jn. 20: 23*); "Some give freely, yet grow all the richer; others withhold what is due, and only suffer want" (*Prov. 11: 24* – this also applies to emotional life).

- To comfort a brother in Christ in his struggles: "Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly; teach and admonish one another in all wisdom; and with gratitude in your hearts sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs to God" (*Col. 3: 16*); "The mouth of the righteous is a fountain of life" (*Prov. 10: 11a*).

Practical examples

- To exercise true communication to avoid loneliness: phone to someone who is alone and needs to talk a little.

- To help the brother in Christ in times of illness.

- To hear and obey the voice of the Holy Spirit asking to intercede for someone.

- To give a feedback to someone who prayed for you at a difficult time and helped you to achieve a blessing.

- To exercise kindness, that is, to greet someone on his birthday, to wish a Merry Christmas and Happy New Year to people, to phone or send an email to someone greeting him for the birth of his baby boy or grandchild.

- To learn to smile. A cheerful face also rejoices those around us and opens our ways; it makes life easier for everyone. When the heart is clean and light, it is easier to smile, and our external appearance reflects the emotional richness of our interior: “A glad heart makes a cheerful countenance, but by sorrow of heart the spirit is broken” (*Prov. 15: 13*); “A cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones” (*Prov. 17:22*).

AVARICE AND SPIRITUAL MISERY



There are believers who don't want to spend anything with God's work, not even buying a bible for them. They don't invest in their own spiritual growth by reading a good book, they stop going to church when they want to save money for the bus. They expect that the leader do everything for them, they want everything in an easy manner, but don't want to seek the throne of God for themselves or their own intimacy with Him. They don't put God's word into practice or the anointing they receive.

The true servants and warriors have within themselves the desire to improve and perfect more their work each day to please the Lord. They don't get discouraged or seek excuses for their failures, but perform their work, recognizing their own limitations and relying on the unlimited power of God. They seek new incentives and accept the challenges to their growth. Here, it is logical that the external incentive is important, because God has made us one body and if one member suffers, all suffer; if one is honored all rejoice together, it is what the Word says. Jesus told us to comfort the afflicted and support the weak in faith and this means to give them strength. In *Prov. 17: 22* it is written that a cheerful heart is a good medicine, but a downcast spirit dries up the bones. What else can make a heart cheerful than a compliment of a friend? So let's adopt the practice of encouraging the brothers to walk, praising, yes, their victories and their achievements so that they have their faith increased and the fire of the Spirit can keep burning in their hearts. Let's stop denying the genuine compliment to others. Do not confuse this with flattery or with seeking glory from men. Jesus commended Peter when he told the Master that He was the Messiah, the woman who anointed Him in Bethany, the Canaanite woman and the Roman centurion for their faith; they didn't get puffed up with pride or felt themselves like God Himself. It is interesting how the human being save love, encouragement and friendly words! But sees no limits to the false accusation, unfounded criticism, the reckless judgment, the humiliation of others, indifference concerning to the plans of his fellow men and words that wound and kill. Unnecessary savings on the one hand, waste on the other.

To live avarice and spiritual misery is to live in sin, without the abundance of Jesus' presence:

• *Rev.3: 17*: "For you say, 'I am rich, I have prospered, and I need nothing'. You do not realize that you are wretched, pitiable, poor, blind, and naked."

EPILOGUE

“Arise, my people, and fight for the values of my kingdom, for all I have said will prevail. I discipline and rebuke the son whom I love and whom I want to do good. All of you have neglected my word, which deeply saddens my heart. You hear it continually, but you behave like deaf that can understand nothing. You see my manifestation in the lives of those who are my vessels of honor, but as blind, you pretend to know nothing. Everything that I have spoken through the mouths of my true prophets will be fulfilled and nothing will shut them up because they are my trumpets on earth. Throw away laziness, greed, unbelief and misery that hamper the work of my Spirit. Cast out the selfishness and private reasons of your flesh, always ready to contend to have reason. You are like inconsequent children who rebel against my call. I am God and there is no other. It is time for me to move, bringing repentance in the hearts and convincing them of sin, judgment and righteousness. Today I break the ties and the chains in the lives of all those who turn to me.”

