

This is Part II of the chronological scenes from “Travesty”, the Illustrated Message that we are reading in church. If you haven’t read Part I, please read it first as it will give clearer understanding to this weeks.

Lots of drama unfolds in the scenes we’ve read! We see Jose, now homeless, being taken advantage of by his fellow Christian employee, Steven’s radical phone call from a long lost friend and a major confrontation with his pastor who confessed to being coerced by Steven’s father, David, to prophecy falsely over him. Here are a few thoughts and scriptures that I’d like to share.

James 5:1-6; *“Now listen, you rich people, weep and wail because of the misery that is coming on you. Your wealth has rotted, and moths have eaten your clothes. Your gold and silver are corroded. Their corrosion will testify against you and eat your flesh like fire. You have hoarded wealth in the last days. Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers who mowed your fields are crying out against you. The cries of the harvesters have reached the ears of the Lord Almighty. You have lived on earth in luxury and self-indulgence. You have fattened yourselves in the day of slaughter. You have condemned and murdered the innocent one, who was not opposing you.”* Here are a few other scriptures you can read; Malachi 3:5, I John 3:17, Leviticus 25:17 and I Thessalonians 4:6.

How often do we see Christian organizations, churches and ministries take advantage of their laborers and employees, while the leadership is generously taken care of? Like Jose, many who serve in ministry have such a zeal for God and can be made to think that it’s all about service and not so much about financial compensation. Even those who are in the mission field are required to raise their own support while their organizations profit and their leaders paid well, but they receive little or no compensation from it. As Christians let’s not oppress the wage earners who serve tirelessly.

How often does God use the foolish things in this world to confound the wise? I Corinthians 1:26-28. It seems as though Rob was a foolish thing in the world’s eyes. Yet Rob was the vessel God used to jolt Steven, it was a wakeup call, a turning point from this simple call from a long lost friend. A few scripture verses I’d like to highlight are the following; Hebrews 13:5, Luke 16:13 and I Timothy 6:9-10. Let’s be careful how we let money influence the decision in our lives.

Many may not know this, but in North America, maybe in other countries also, royalties are paid to songwriters for every song sung in churches. So every worship song you sing, money is being paid to its writer. If churches are not paying the royalties to the singers through the companies who handle royalties, law suits can ensue if so desired. Again I come back to this, what we’ve freely received from the Holy Spirit, the words that are in songs, they’re not to be merchandized like the world does. Take a moment to meditate on I Corinthians 2:10-13. I believe it’s a loose – loose scenario when Christian musicians and bands refuse to minister if they have a certain financial requirements that dictate their yea or nay answers. Those whom they’re to minister to loose and they themselves loose as they are putting a price tag on their gift. Are there costs to get your music (teachings or books) out to the public? Certainly, but as I mentioned last week, if God has called you and gifted you, HE WILL provide for you in unimaginable ways if you walk by faith, not by sight. It might cost you to give of your own money and ministry money advance the gospel through the arts, books, music, publishing etc., but trust the Lord to give back to you as He promised He would in His word when it comes to sowing and reaping principles. Giving not expecting anything in return.

Tasha is quite the character isn’t she! I’d just like to leave this verse with you to read; Ezekiel 34:2; *“Then the word of the Lord came to me saying, ‘Son of man, prophesy against the shepherds of Israel. Prophesy and say to those shepherds, ‘Thus says the Lord God, ‘Woe, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding themselves! Should not the shepherds feed the flock? ‘You eat the fat and clothe yourselves with the wool, you slaughter the fat sheep without feeding the flock.’”*

I’m sure some of the Bible verses that Steven meditated on when he was on his leave of absence and where he was convicted by the Holy Spirit of how he had compromised, merchandized, realizing how backslidden he was, were ones like; I John 1:8-10, I Timothy 6:17-19, Colossians 3:1-2 and Isaiah 55:6-7. Godly sorrow produces repentance, II Corinthians 7:10.

Mark 11:15-18; *“And they came to Jerusalem. And he entered the temple and began to drive out those who sold and those who bought in the temple, and he overturned the tables of the money-changers and the seats of those who sold pigeons. And he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple. And he was teaching them and saying to them, ‘Is it not written, ‘My house shall be called a house of prayer for all the nations’? But you have made it a den of robbers.’ And the chief priests and the scribes heard it and were seeking a way to destroy him, for they feared him, because all the crowd was astonished at his teaching.”* If you haven’t watched the Jesus film, I’d encourage you to do so. The scene of Jesus cleansing the temple is very heavy. What do you think Jesus would do if He came into our church foyers today? What would he see that could cause him to overturn tables and throw out money makers?

This awakening that Steven is going through shows him how he was misled by both his father and pastor. Both were seeking their own interests and ambitions, and not those of Steven. Steven seeing that Jesus is the rock of offense confirms that he's on the right track as he confronts his pastor with his selfish motives for personal gain and prosperity. Even so, Steven and Pastor Gil each confront the other about their misuse of God's gifting and God's money for personal gain. I Peter 2:7-8; *"Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone and a stone of stumbling and a rock of offense. They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed.'"* Jeremiah 23:30-32 says; *"Therefore behold, I am against the prophets," says the Lord, 'who steal My words every one from his neighbor. Behold, I am against the prophets,' says the Lord, 'who use their tongues and say, 'He says.' Behold, I am against those who prophesy false dreams,' says the Lord, 'and tell them, and cause My people to err by their lies and by their recklessness. Yet I did not send them or command them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all,' says the Lord."*

What are personal applications to our own lives? Are you guilty of?

- Being a lover of money ... to make yourself and your ministry rich at the expense of others?
- Mistreating your employees?
- Taking advantage of fellow Christian laborers or volunteers?
- Giving false prophecies, manipulating words for your gain?
- Withholding wages of your laborers?

In the midst of all of this, the Bible makes it clear, that if we confess our sins, He is faithful to forgive us of our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. Ask the Lord to cleanse you today.