



Bezael Enlite

GRACE TO PROSPER

2ND EDITION

The Word of God on Financial Prosperity
and the Christian's Use of Money

Pastor Bankie








Dr. Bankole Olusina, fondly called **Pastor Bankie**, is a teacher of the Word of God. He teaches from the platform of Kingdom-Word Ministries. The emphasis of his teachings is the separation of the church from the world by the obedience to the truths of God. He is happily married to the wife of his youth and partner in ministry, Ufuoma.



Success has a spiritual foundation. The first stones in the foundation are laid by aligning our thoughts with those of the Lord concerning the purpose and method of attaining success.

The way the Lord defines true prosperity is very different from that of the world, but the ways of the Lord are higher and better than those of the world. Every Christian must therefore learn the ways of the Lord.

In this book, Pastor Bankie teaches the mind of God as it relates to material prosperity and how to lay the spiritual foundations for it. Among many, he explains such subjects as...

-  *Breaking the curse of poverty and failure.*
-  *Prosperity in the covenant of Christ.*
-  *The cause of problems for the believer.*
-  *The vow of prosperity and the vow of poverty.*
-  *How to spend money as it pleases God.*
-  *How to give to God.*
-  *Why Christians must be fruitful and multiply.*

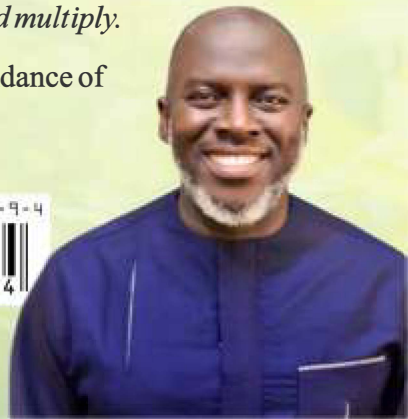
Reading this book will release the abundance of God into the lives of many.

Bezael Enlite

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Bankole Olusina

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Grace To Prosper (2nd Edition)

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Contents

<i>Preface</i>	<i>vii</i>
<i>Introduction</i>	9
Chapter 1: A Covenant of Prosperity.....	13
Chapter 2: The Curse of Poverty is Broken	25
Chapter 3: Christians and Problems.....	37
Chapter 4: The Power Belongs to God	51
Chapter 5: Who is Rich?	65
Chapter 6: A Covenant of Service	71
Chapter 7: Power to Get Wealth.....	85
Chapter 8: The Vow of Prosperity.....	101
Chapter 9: The Assignment of God	113

Chapter 10: The Vow of Poverty	129
Chapter 11: Rich Toward God	143
Chapter 12: Why We Give to God.....	151
Chapter 13: How to Receive from God	165
Chapter 14: God’s Love and the Cheerful Giver	173
Chapter 15: Cheerful Givers and the Work of Faith	187
Chapter 16: The Art of Giving to God – 1	203
Chapter 17: The Art of Giving to God – 2.....	217
Chapter 18: The Giving Lifestyle - 1	229
Chapter 19: The Giving Lifestyle - 2.....	247
Chapter 20: The Giving Lifestyle - 3	259
Conclusion.....	265

Preface

2ND EDITION



I wrote the first edition of this book 17 years ago, in 2007. When it was released to the public two years later, in 2009, it got mixed reactions, and I found some of the reactions strange. Even though it was well received by many Christians, some did not like it. The reason, I deciphered, was that I seemed to say they were doing some things wrongly, and that they did not have the sort of control over life they thought they had. This control was supposed to be through the power of their seed. Some felt I was attacking the source of money for churches. Yet, all I did was to teach the same things the reader will find in this current edition. As part of teaching on true prosperity, I sought, and still do seek, to bring correction to some excesses in the body of Christ. These excesses made Christians give under compulsion and with motives that God never blesses. I sought to teach about walking in the love of God and how to interpret the scriptures accurately on certain matters. Apparently, that did

not sit well with some. Many however discovered the liberty of the Spirit from it.

Those truths are still in this book; I have not had any cause to change them over the years. I believe this is because they are founded on the scriptures which I studied over a period of close to 20 years before the first edition was released. During that period, I prayerfully and studiously examined many doctrines related to the subject. I have however arranged the truths slightly differently in this edition, and I have sought to explain them in an easier way so as to aid better understanding.

Many new chapters have been added to this edition, while a number of chapters, and notably the appendix, have been removed. In all, more truths have been added, while none has been removed. I believe that both reading and understanding the book have been made easier.

Please be blessed by reading this, and receive the Holy Spirit through the entrance of the word.

Introduction



The aim of this book is to teach Christians the mind of God about money and material prosperity; the hope is that the believer will read it and understand how to relate with money and prosperity, and use these in a manner pleasing to God.

Money, prosperity, giving, and related subjects are major topics in the body of Christ in the world of today, and I think it will remain so. This is not new anyway; even the Lord Jesus taught much about it. The love of money was a problem in the times of the Lord Jesus and of the early apostles too.

Despite how important and ever present these issues are, many are not willing to hear anything that has to do with money being spoken of from the pulpit. The surest way to lose many during a message is for the preacher to start talking about money. They feel this way, not because they are wicked, but because they think too much emphasis

has been laid on the subject. This is mainly the result of the work of those unscrupulous preachers who try to get as much money as possible out of people. However, no matter the excesses, the truth is the truth and must be preached and taught.

The truth about anything in life, including the matter of money, is to be found in the word of God. For this reason, preachers and teachers of the word of God must talk about it, just as the Lord did. If we neglect to talk about it, Christians will have no choice but to live by what they learn from the world, and that will not be good. They will end up living below the standards of God. What we learn without the teaching of the word is not the fear of God. Indeed, there is the fear of the Lord to know concerning how we relate with money and material things. Such knowledge of the fear of God can only come when Bible teachers teach on the subject.

Prosperity is an integral part of the gospel of Jesus and has to be preached. To teach Christians to give is good and necessary; it is an important expression of the life of God in us. It is an important sign of true faith. Giving like God is not a natural instinct; it is a thing that must be learnt. We should not avoid talking about money matters just because we have

witnessed the excesses of some preachers. We should rather learn the balance of the word of God on the subject. That is my aim in the following chapters of this book.

Caution!

I understand that such a title as this book has will attract many covetous and worldly Christians, but the work is not for them. They will not be able to receive the spirit that it is commissioned to release. That spirit—the power to get wealth—will only fall upon those whose hearts are sold out to the Lord Jesus, and who are sanctified in their thinking. Among these ones, the power will fall especially on those who have a calling in certain areas regarding material prosperity. They will be filled with the Spirit.

CHAPTER 1

A COVENANT OF PROSPERITY



Prosperity Defined

Let us start by defining what prosperity is. I understand prosperity to mean that you are successful in whatever you are doing, and that you have all you need to satisfy your needs in life. By success I mean you are meeting the aims of your work or endeavour, and that you are growing steadily in those goals.

Prosperity also means that you have enough to fulfil the work that God has placed in your hands, to satisfy the godly desires of your soul, and to have so much extra that you are able to freely give to others so as to help them.

Now, prosperity comes in the three levels of life. There is prosperity of the spirit, which is to have a relationship with God the Father, and to have the

righteousness that comes only through faith in the Lord Jesus. This prosperity is the one that gives eternal life from God and guarantees that we will have an eternal abode with God. It is the guarantee that we will not be condemned with the devil and his angels.* This is the most important form of prosperity and the foundation of the other levels.

The next level of prosperity is that of the soul. It is a prosperity of the heart and mind. It is to have peace with yourself and your environment, especially your family and loved ones. It is to be free of mental stress, depression and emotional turmoil. This prosperity comes as you cast your burdens upon the Lord. It comes as you walk in love, in forgiveness and as you refuse to worry about tomorrow. It is next in importance to the prosperity of the spirit, and is, of course, more important than the next level.

The last level of prosperity is the physical or outward one. It is prosperity in the flesh and material things. It is the one in which God keeps you in perfect health and supplies all your material needs in abundance. In this book, I will speak

* Matt 25:41

mostly about this prosperity because it is the topic at hand.

God of Abundance

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed,... you will be enriched in everything for all liberality... 2 Cor 9:8-12

Notice that God does things with the abundance mentality. He does not stop at supplying us with just enough to get by; His way is to pour out an abundance of supplies so that there will not be any room for lack. Barely getting along is not the perfect plan of God. No wonder Jesus commended the woman who poured on Him that jar of costly perfume, all at once.* It is just like God to do such things. He does not have cost constraints; to Him belong all resources, so He is a generous spender.

The Lord has always emphasized on blessing people in such abundant measure that they will have much more than they can use or even effectively store. He said to His people that...

...I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour

* Mark 14:6

out a blessing so great you won't have enough room to take it in! Mal 3:10 NLT

When He was to promise Abram the blessing, He also displayed this attribute of His.

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing. Gen 12:2

The blessing of God on Abram was to be so much that not only would he be blessed but other people would enjoy it with him. That is what it means to be a blessing.

I am pointing out all these to remind us that it is a very true statement that, "Our God is not a poor God."

The Grace of Abundance

Now, please notice something about the covenant God made with the children of Israel.

But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deut 8:18

For God, giving the children of Israel the ability to get wealth was a confirmation of the covenant He made with their fathers. The people entered into the same covenant through circumcision and by obedience to the Law. The God-given ability to get wealth was a part of the covenant.

Under the New Covenant, abundance is also part of the package. Jesus said that He came so that we can have life in an abundant measure.*

It is the grace of God that saved us, and that grace does many things for us as part of the salvation package. Salvation includes ending poverty and lack, and bringing the abundance of divine provision to us. It is written:

And God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed. 2 Cor 9:8

See, poverty, or even just having enough, is not at all God's plan for His children under the New Covenant. Paul, by revelation, explained this to us as follows:

* John 10:10

For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though He was rich, yet for your sake He became poor, so that you through His poverty might become rich. 2 Cor 8:9

To be rich means to have plenty, enough for all those needs. We do not have to make this verse say what it does not say by redefining what rich is; God does not disapprove of wealth as long as it is in the right hands, controlled by a clean heart, and is being used for the right purpose. God's plan for you is that you will not stop at having enough but that you will have more than enough. That is the will of God. As we read above, the same grace that saved us from sin is the same that brings supplies to us. Paul said when this grace abounds towards anyone, it makes them not only to be absolutely sufficient in all things but also to have so much that they can easily get involved in every good work.

Now, let us look at good works for a moment.

Good Works

God's purpose on the earth will be executed by people He chooses; that is the way He does things. He uses people. The people that He primarily uses are His own people—the church. That is His first choice.

Now, the summary of the purpose of God on the earth is the establishment of His kingdom everywhere.

The kingdoms of this world are become the kingdoms of our Lord, and of his Christ; and he shall reign for ever and ever. Rev 11:15 KJV

We are not just talking about spiritual kingdoms, but also about social and physically tangible ones. See, spiritual happenings and physical ones are always tied together. In fact, the physical ones are the results of the ones in the spirit. I am saying that God's plan is that even the kingdoms we can see will be dominated by the Lord. His kingdom must spread into every corner.

God's kingdom comes in subtly, like leaven, but it works itself into the whole dough. His desire is that His kingdom will literally take over the kingdoms of the world. His influence should be felt in the area of business, economics, international trade, school systems, legal systems, politics, etc. You will not see angels come down to start walking the streets as a manifestation of this influence; the plan is that God's people will become empowered to influence these areas. Is it the Lord's kingdom or that of Satan

controlling an area? The evidence is in who the persons in control are subject to. Jesus reigns through His people.

My point is that the plan of God for the spread of His kingdom involves economic empowerment. He will not send us to do this without proper enablement.

Thus says the LORD of hosts, "My cities will again overflow with prosperity, and the LORD will again comfort Zion and again choose Jerusalem." Zech 1:17

So, we have to do the good works associated with spreading the kingdom. Paul said we will abound unto every good work. For doing those great works, we will have super-abundance.

Poor or just-sufficient people cannot give scholarships to the poor nor can they adopt orphan babies. People who are hardly getting by will struggle to sponsor missions and ministers. For the people of God to be effective in this life for Jesus, we need to have abundant provision, both spiritually and materially. No child of God can fulfil this plan of God by having only enough for himself.

Someone Must Pay

I remember talking with my mother once, and she was remarking that there were no collections taken during a particular evangelist's crusades. Of course, that does not mean that those massive crusades don't cost money; it just means that some people, who we do not know, are paying. These are persons who have been empowered by God for good works; they are not just barely getting along. They may not be listed in the worldly magazines as some of the richest, but they are certainly blessed of God to be able to do these things.

Sometimes we preach as if God's *ultimate* plan is for the believers to be giving out of their lack, but it is not so. It is certainly true that each person must prove to be faithful; just like the Macedonians, we must demonstrate our faith and our love for brethren by giving out of our necessity,* but it is not God's ultimate. Such a situation can be likened to a wilderness experience, which is designed to be transient. God's best is always that people have so much that they give out of their abundance.

...always having all sufficiency in everything, you may have an abundance for every good deed... you will be

* 2 Cor 8:1,2

enriched in everything for all liberality... 2 Cor 9:8,11

If you read the story of Elisha, you will notice that God used a wealthy family to take care of him. The woman could ask her husband to build something extra in their home to accommodate Elisha. When Elijah came to the house of the widow of Zarephath, God sent him with an anointing to produce abundance in that home. (Actually, his going to that home was not so that he might be taken care of, but so he could preserve the life of the widow and her family). Even Jesus, when He sent them out two by two, told His disciples to choose carefully where they stayed. It was to be a home where they would eat meals without being an unnecessary inconvenience to the hosts.* My emphasis is that God loves abundance in support of His work; if you are going to do His work effectively, you need to have access to His abundance.

The Gospel to the Poor

The covenant of Jesus is a covenant of abundance; He never preached nor inferred that it was good to be poor; in fact, one of the signs of the coming of the kingdom was that the poor heard a gospel of

* Luke 10:7

hope—something that would change their state. The Lord Jesus said, *“the poor have the gospel preached to them.”**

The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are downtrodden.

Luke 4:18

What is the gospel to the poor? It is that poverty has been broken by the mercy of God. Notice that each group was to receive the opposite of their prevailing condition. It was sight to the blind, release to captives, and freedom to the oppressed. It follows therefore that, for the *poor*, it had to be prosperity.

See, the gospel to the poor is that they can have God's abundance. Poverty is a curse and is a long-term consequence of sin.

Take it by Faith

Why am I taking the time to explain these things? It is because God's promises and provisions must be activated by faith. My hope is that every Christian

* Luke 7:22

will read this and that faith will be stirred up in their hearts to take hold of that Promised Land. I am not preaching covetousness or worldliness here; I firmly believe that it is wrong for children of God to measure their value in life by material things. However, I want Christians to understand that it is necessary to believe God's promises so as to activate their fulfilment. This is righteous and necessary. Abundance is the will of God.

Have you believed in Jesus? If so, get ready for an abundant life. Get ready for an end to poverty and a borderline life. You will receive enough to meet all your needs and to make you generous. Get ready to have power released into your life—the power to create wealth.

CHAPTER 2

THE CURSE OF POVERTY IS BROKEN



One of the most important points I wish to make in this book is that the curse of poverty has been broken in Christ Jesus. I want to tell anyone reading this, who is a believer in Christ Jesus, that every curse in their lives has been broken by the shed blood of Christ Jesus. It is part of that spiritual foundation of prosperity we mentioned in the previous chapter. This is a fact, no matter what your experience might have been.

Curses are Real

Let me state that curses are real. It is not possible to believe in spiritual things and not believe in curses. Many speak as if believing in curses is only for primitive people and superstitious modern ones, but it is not so at all. The word of God teaches us clearly that curses are real. Many individuals,

peoples and nations are poor because of a curse. No matter how hard-working or determined a person is, it is hard to swim against the force of a curse, or lift its oppressive weight when it is holding such a person down.

Let us see a few examples of curses from the scriptures:

Then to Adam He said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat from it';

*Cursed is the ground because of you;
In toil you will eat of it
All the days of your life.
"Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you;
And you will eat the plants of the field;
By the sweat of your face
You will eat bread. Gen 3:17-19*

These words meant life was going to be hard for Adam and his descendants. They would struggle to get by and achieve only little for much effort. That is a curse.

When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth. Gen 4:12

That was the curse on Cain. It was going to be a rough life for this son of Adam. It came as judgment for murdering his brother who he envied. All these resulted from his refusal of instruction and correction. He added sin unto sin and he was cursed as a result.

At a time, the people of Judah came under a curse for neglecting the house of God.

You have planted much but harvest little. You eat but are not satisfied... Your wages disappear as though you were putting them in pockets filled with holes!

*...Look at what's happening to you! ... You hoped for rich harvests, but they were poor. And when you brought your harvest home, **I blew it away**. Why? Because my house lies in ruins, says the Lord of Heaven's Armies... It's because of you that the heavens withhold the dew and the earth produces no crops. **I have called for a drought** on your fields and hills—a drought to wither the grain and grapes and olive trees and all your other crops, a drought to starve you and your livestock and to*

ruin everything you have worked so hard to get."

Hag 1:6-11 NLT*

There are times we look at people with financial problems and we assume it is a result of laziness. Those who think so are mostly those who have laboured and seen positive results in their lives. Things have worked out well for them. But such a thought is not always right. See, life happens to people. We know there is the so-called bad luck, which Solomon called time and chance;** it happens to people.

If you bother to look closely at the earth today and observe the peoples on it, you will notice that some races are low down, and certain nations seem not to be able to prosper. People who don't understand will always look for social and political reasons behind these things. I don't wish to provoke contention by discussing human history now, so let me stick with the Bible. Read the scriptures, and you will see that nations rise and fall according to the decree of God, and not just the determination of the people. Many determined nations have failed.

* Bold letters added for emphasis

** Eccl 9:11 GNT

If... the Edomites, say, "Our towns have been destroyed, but we will rebuild them," then the Lord will reply, "Let them rebuild — I will tear them down again. People will call them 'The evil country' and 'The nation with whom the Lord is angry forever.'" Mal 1:4 GNT

Noah Stratified the Peoples

A curse was released at a point in human history by Noah, and it forever separated the major races on this earth. It is a major force at work even today. It explains many events involving various races, tongues and nations over millennia. There have been, and will continue to be, mitigations to its manifestation, but it is persistent. This curse is very powerful, and is only obliterated in Christ Jesus.

Cursed be Canaan;

A servant of servants

He shall be to his brothers. Gen 9:25

A servant of servants is the lowest rung of the society. They are not only slaves but also poor, downtrodden people, without hope of getting out of that zone. When the world's nations are stratified, they will be the poorest and least developed ones. They will depend much on handouts. The citizens will become migrant,

mostly unskilled, labourers. When you stratify a society, they will be lowest of the classes. They will be mostly poor, poorly educated and miserable. It is a terrible curse. One of my dear brothers said he is waiting to see Noah one day; he wants to ask how he could have been so angry as to release such a curse on anyone.

I don't wish to go into details about it; even though the curse superficially seemed addressed only to Canaan, it actually belonged to the house of Ham, and so it affected not only Canaan, but also Put, Cush, and Mizraim — all brothers of Canaan. It is at work till today.

The Work of a Curse

Solomon looked at it and said,

I realized another thing, that in this world fast runners do not always win the races, and the brave do not always win the battles. The wise do not always earn a living, intelligent people do not always get rich, and capable people do not always rise to high positions. Bad luck happens to everyone. You never know when your time is coming. Like birds suddenly caught in a trap, like fish caught in a net, we are trapped at some evil moment when we least expect it. Eccl 9:11-12 GNT

Curses activate bad luck for people. They work hard but things go wrong.

It is when they plant that the rains will not fall. They miss that crucial appointment, even after years of planning, simply because a tiny battery in an alarm failed at that critical moment. So they overslept or missed the train.

He marries a bad wife who makes his life miserable. He's a nice chap otherwise, but her presence makes sure he can't succeed.

He hires a sly thief as an accountant. They make wrong choices thinking they are right. Just think of Rehoboam for a moment.* The decree of failure had gone against him, and he was headed for losing the throne, and it could not be stopped. That was why he was making wrong decisions.

Everything seems to go wrong in the life of the person.

The existence of curses is a fact in life. It is a spiritual force.

* 1 Kgs 12:13-15

My message, however, is that Christ Jesus took care of all of it for the believer. He took care of the Adamic, Noahic, ancestral and personal curses.

The Redemption in Christ Jesus

Thank God for the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. Because of Him, I am free of all curses. You are free of all curses if you are a believer.

There is no condemnation now for those who live in union with Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit, which brings us life in union with Christ Jesus, has set me free from the law of sin and death. Rom 8:1-2 GNT

All descendants of Ham are now free of the curse of Noah. All gentiles are now free from the curse of exclusion from the commonwealth of God's people.

Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ... 2 Cor 5:17-18

But Christ has rescued us from the curse pronounced by the law. When he was hung on the cross, he took upon himself the curse for our wrongdoing. For it is written in

the Scriptures, "Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree." Through Christ Jesus, God has blessed the Gentiles with the same blessing he promised to Abraham, so that we who are believers might receive the promised Holy Spirit through faith. Gal 3:13-14

Because of Christ Jesus, no one is more blessed than another, but all are blessed *only* in Christ. Sometimes I hear people describe how blessed a Jew is. Yes, he was specially blessed as a result of the blessings of Shem, Abraham and Jacob, but those blessings were only shadows of what is in Christ Jesus. Now, every person, from every race, tribe and tongue on the earth has access to those blessings. The blessings are only confirmed in Christ Jesus,* and we can all enter by faith.

Now the promises were spoken to Abraham and to his seed. He does not say, "And to seeds," as referring to many, but rather to one, "And to your seed," that is, Christ. Gal 3:16

Now that we have been put right with God through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ. He has brought us by faith into this experience of God's grace, in which we now live. Rom 5:1-2 GNT

* 2 Cor 1:20

What I am saying is that all spiritual justifications to remain poor have been broken by the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross. Once you accept Him by faith, you are declared free.

If you have not been baptized in water, I recommend it because it will be a beautiful point to mark your deliverance from curses.

The Way of Deliverance

You do not need any special deliverance service from curses. You do not need to discover where your placenta was buried. There's no need to go and uproot any tree in your father's compound. If that tree is the problem, it will die from the roots on its own because of the blessing of God in your life. That blessing will kill it as it overcomes the curse.

Many times, I hear pastors say they want to deliver someone from a curse of poverty and bad luck, but I don't think it is necessary. You only need to acquaint the person with the deliverance he has already in Christ Jesus. Let him know that he has been delivered already. If he is walking in sin, he should repent. It is information and faith that the believer needs to live free of curses, not prayers of deliverance.

And you will know the truth, and the truth shall make you free. John 8:32

Some even say you should give an offering for your deliverance, and they are referring to the offering of money or some material thing. That is so unnecessary. The only sacrifice needed to deliver you from the curse is the sacrifice of Jesus. His blood was shed as an atonement for your sins, and as a consequence, you have been set free.

Yes, you have a duty now to claim your deliverance through confession of the truth of the word of God and through walking away from the deeds of the flesh. A constant walk in righteousness is essential; but know for sure that the devil has no more right to hold you in bondage. All the payment necessary has been made by the Lord Jesus Christ. You claim this work He has done by giving your life to Christ.

Poverty was broken by Jesus. That was why He came to *preach the gospel to the poor*.

Now, the blessing of Abraham is yours.
The earth is not cursed anymore for you.
In whatever you do, now you can prosper.

CHAPTER 3

CHRISTIANS AND PROBLEMS



Problems Happen

Many people think they are cursed because they have problems. Yes, curses are real and do cause problems, but they are not the only cause of problems. The fact that you, as a believer in Christ, have been delivered does not mean you will not have any challenges. The greatest challenge this life ever saw was that of the Lord Jesus going to the cross. Going to the cross was going to be a terrible experience, and the Lord Jesus knew His disciples were likely to interpret it as the work of the devil, or the result of a curse. So, He warned them beforehand not to think like that.

...the ruler of the world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. John 14:30

Satan could not touch Him; yet He was going to suffer a terrible death on the cross. Why?

He explained to them that it was in obedience to the command of the Father. He had to obey because He loved the Father.

He therefore suffered because He loved the Father, and the suffering was for us all.

The Lord says,

*"It was my will that he should suffer;
his death was a sacrifice to bring forgiveness."*

Isa 53:10 GNT

Paul had similar experiences of suffering;* he suffered hunger, shipwrecks, much persecution and many other forms of distress; he said it was because he was doing his part to complete what still remained of Christ's sufferings on behalf of the church.** Paul's part was in telling of the Good News of the freedom that we have in Christ. He had to go to difficult places, face terrible obstacles and suffer many things, all as a true soldier of Christ. It was not because he was under a curse.

We therefore see that problems are not necessarily proof of the existence of a curse in the life of a

* 2 Cor 11:23-29

** Col 1:24

believer. Jesus Christ and Paul suffered as part of the assignments they received from the Father.

Now, apart from such reasons as we have seen in the lives of the Lord Jesus and Paul the apostle, there are three main reasons Christians may have challenges or problems in their lives; these are ignorance, trial of faith and a 'just recompense of reward'* for disobedience. I will explain them in the following paragraphs, but only briefly.

Ignorance causes problems

My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge. Hos 4:6

One major reason Christians have troubles is lack of understanding of what is rightfully theirs as children of God.

You see, if God gives you something and you do not know about it, it may never come into your hands. This is why Paul said something was lacking in the suffering of Christ for His body; he understood that if people don't know about it, the sacrifice of Jesus would have no consequence in their lives. So, he was sent by God to fill that gap by spreading the knowledge to all.

* Heb 2:2 KJV

Also, if you know about it but do not lay claim to it deliberately, it also may never be yours. Many times, you will have to fight for what God has already given. The Promised Land may be yours but the giants will not want you to come in and possess your rightful inheritance.

Look! I have given Sihon the Amorite, king of Heshbon, and his land into your hand; begin to take possession and contend with him in battle. Deut 2:24

You will notice that the Lord described the extent of the inheritance He gave to the children of Israel; this was so they would know what to fight for. This is how it is with us as believers also—the Lord has given us promises so that through the knowledge of them we will know what is ours. We are to then lay claim of those promises and take them by spiritual battle. Our battle is fought through meditation, prayer and constant release of the prophetic word from our lips.

Ignorance of the promises of God is a major cause of the problems in the life of Christians. They settle for diseases and poverty because they do not understand the power of the redemption they have in Christ. That redemption has lifted them from the

level of diseases and poverty. Sometimes when Christians are told about these things, they argue that God does not heal now, yet they seek healing from hospitals. They rail against the gospel of abundance; yet they work hard to earn money. They deny their own inheritance and the grace to bring good into their lives, and then they claim they are under a curse. Anyway, they are partly right, because once you disagree with God concerning your ability to enter into the Promised Land, you come under the curse placed forever on those who conspire against the Lord. The fact that you saw the giants in the land is not an acceptable excuse. This was what led to the premature death of the adults among the Israelites in the wilderness—they rebelled against the Lord. As a result of that rebellion, all of them died in the wilderness and never got to enter into the Promised Land.

“I, the Lord, have spoken! I will certainly do these things to every member of the community who has conspired against me. They will be destroyed here in this wilderness, and here they will die!” Num 14:35 NLT

As a believer, you have a duty to delve into the scriptures and fill your heart with the knowledge of what God has done for you in Christ. You need to

know what promises are yours. All God's provisions are tucked in His promises. His promises were given to us so we can partake of the things He prepared for us. Ignorance must be fought because it is an agent of destruction. You must take the scriptures and pray like David:

"Open my eyes, that I may behold wonderful things from Your word." *

The promises must create expectation for you, which is what is called *hope*. Hope propels you to prayer and to wait on the Lord. You wait on Him and keep His word on your lips, until His promises are fulfilled in your life.

Your rights may have to be fought for; the delay in fulfilment is not necessarily a sign of a curse. The period of delay is the period for the building up of your faith. You need spiritual strength to carry the glory of God, and that delay is for that purpose—to build up your faith. Abraham waited 25 years from the time he was called till Isaac arrived. It was not a curse but a period of tutelage.

* From Psa 119:18

Trial of Faith

Another reason why we may have problems as Christians is the trial of our faith. In this case, we are to endure until the trial passes.

Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. Jam 1:2-4

Many issues that come to us only come to test our resolve to follow the Lord. I have heard of people who threaten the Lord with backsliding if He wouldn't do something for them quickly. Actually, they failed the test when it had hardly started. By such threats, they only prove that their faith was never genuine.

You see, God cannot be threatened. Those who wish to backslide will only backslide into their own judgment. Their sin will only come back to hurt them. They can never by their disobedience diminish God's throne or His majesty.

He wants to know who is really for Him. Caleb said, "I followed the Lord my God fully." The

prophet Hanani said the eyes of the Lord run *to and fro* over the whole earth, looking for those whose hearts are completely His.* Trials show those who are irrevocably committed to God and to righteousness. It is those who love righteousness for the sake of righteousness that He anoints.

*You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness;
Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You
With the oil of joy above Your fellows. Psa 45:7*

The resolve for righteousness will be tested. The person committed to righteousness will be faced with hunger to see if he will steal. Many give their hunger as an excuse for stealing, but God says the problem is that they do not love righteousness enough. Many have used economic hardship as a justification for corruption and other evils, such as practising prostitution, but God says it only shows they are not fully committed to the ways of God—they do not love or fear Him enough.

You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin. Heb 12:4

* Josh 14:8, 2 Chrn 16:9

True overcomers love Him and fear Him exceedingly. They will rather die than disobey the Lord.

And they overcame him because of the blood of the Lamb... and they did not love their life even when faced with death. Rev 12:11

Just look at the life of the Lord Jesus. After being anointed, He was faced with hunger, and the devil came to see if He would use His power to feed His own needs. He was tested when He was hungry. He was not allowed to use the hunger as an excuse for displeasing the Father.

One of the most awesome tests of the Bible was that of Job. He lost everything, but he refused to fall for the temptation of Satan, refused to speak against the Lord, and God was gloried.

To prove our love and fear of God, we will be tested; the testing does not mean we are cursed. In the midst of all your trials, make sure you are committed totally to the ways of God; do not compromise your righteousness to gain comfort or relief from the troubles. Remember that *that* is the aim of the test anyway. Eventually, that trial shall pass.

A Just Recompense

The last reason that I wish to explain concerning why Christians have problems is that, sometimes, it is simply because their way is not right.

You see, whether you are a Christian or not, if you decide to drink boiling water, your mouth will get burnt. If you don't stop, you will walk about with pain in your mouth and in your throat. Being blessed is not an excuse for doing what is fundamentally wrong, whether physically or spiritually. The main blessing that God gives His children in this regard is correction.

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded... Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. Jam 4:8, 10

Here, James was writing to Christians, and he called some of them sinners. Many love to think that because we are called saints we can never be called sinners, but it is not so. It is true that we are not sinners in the sense in which unbelievers are called sinners, but if we are habitually committing sins, we qualify to be called sinners. There is a just recompense for disobedience.

God never blesses disobedience. He never does. Many times, He blesses us *despite* certain amounts of disobedience in our lives, but the extent of the disobedience is why the blessing cannot be full. God is always looking for how to bless His children, but the only blessing He can give to a disobedient child is correction. Without accepting to be corrected, there is no moving forward.

So, many problems we have are nothing but the inevitable consequences of our ways. A person who is lazy and unfaithful does not need any special curse to be poor; he is poor because he is lazy and unfaithful. If those things are changed, the problems will go away. God is actually waiting for us to notice that something is definitely wrong so that we can come to Him for correction. Many so-called generational curses some people experience are nothing but results of generational bad habits.

Many men and women pass on their bitterness to their children through complaining and storytelling, and as a result, family breakdowns become generational. The bitter woman produces bitter daughters who eventually poison their own homes with bitterness. A man probably taught his sons how to be 'men', but in that process they

became sons of Belial who cannot keep a home. Of course, curses may get propagated through this method, but a Christian who has been delivered will experience such problems if he or she does not depart from these evil ways. The woman must get rid of bitterness otherwise, curse or no curse, the problem of a dysfunctional home will remain. The man must understand what God actually calls a man, and be the real man that God created him to be, otherwise the family breakdown that plagued his ancestors will be his experience too.

Let me explain two main advantages we have as Christians. One is that God teaches us His ways, as it is written:

Those who have reverence for the Lord will learn from him the path they should follow. Psa 25:12 GNT

A lot of people are living life using wrong principles. It is called walking in darkness. But that is not to be our portion as children of God.

The second advantage we have as believers is that we have the grace to do what is right. Knowing something is good and being able to do it are two different things. In Christ Jesus, by the Spirit of God

in us, we have the ability to do what is right.

These two keys are vital to our freedom in life. Problems come to people, curse or no curse, if they walk wrongly.

Apart from being lazy and unfaithful, many are broke simply because they do not know how to manage their financial affairs. They do not need a curse to keep them down if they will not learn what is right to do. Again, note that the only advantage children of God have in such cases is that they will know the right thing to do and will have the power to do it.

Summary

In summary, I have sought in this chapter to show that even though believers in Christ Jesus are truly delivered from all curses, they may still have problems and challenges in their lives, but that does not negate the fact that all curses are broken in Christ Jesus. Deliverance comes through knowledge, repentance from evil ways, and patient endurance.

CHAPTER 4

THE POWER BELONGS TO GOD



God Can

Thus says the Lord:

I will call for the grain and multiply it, and I will not bring a famine on you. I will multiply the fruit of the tree and the produce of the field, so that you will not receive again the disgrace of famine among the nations.

Ezek 36:29-30

Poverty is not the will of God. Christians need to believe in the grace of God to make them materially prosperous. We need to go beyond just telling ourselves that we believe in prosperity; we need to know that the power of God to make His children abundant in goods is available.

Let us be clear that we are discussing the viewpoint of the Lord and not that of the world. Wealth, from the Spirit's and Christian perspective, is the ability

to produce and control material resources. It is having the ability to get things done without being afraid of cost. It is being able to get the best resources and services for what you need done. It is having what is necessary to nurture a seed-dream into reality.

True wealth is not the same as being famous or having a lavish lifestyle, or being trapped by the vanity of what the world calls luxury. Luxury oftentimes is nothing more than paying to distinguish yourself into a class while getting next to no real extra value. It is all vanity. If you need the label of whatever you are using or wearing to be on it for you to be satisfied, then you are trapped in vanity luxury. If the value was really in it, the logo being on it should mean nothing to the user. The logo should only be a seal of authenticity at the point of purchase, and so you would not care if anyone knows what brand it is, as long as it is providing the service you need.

True wealth does not involve a vanity lifestyle, in which the person indulges in 'designer' goods and luxury items. No. True wealth is the ability to get good and necessary things done.

But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deut 8:18

What God gives is the *power* to make wealth. The literal meaning of that word wealth is *strength*. It is the material ability to get great things done.

Many Christians claim to believe in prosperity but do not yet fully grasp that there is a realm in which the Lord puts one person in charge of ten cities, figuratively speaking. That is control. And with God it is possible. It is not by the strength of the believer or his pursuit after material wealth, but it is an endowment from above.

Don't Limit God

Many times, you hear people talk, and it is clear they are limited in their horizon; they can't seem to see far into the realm of divine possibilities. Many believe it is righteous to only trust God for small things. Many people believe that great wealth is tied to corruption and worldliness. To them, righteous living is not compatible with having the power of wealth in your hands. But that is a sad

mindset; one that says Satan can, but God can't. It should not be so with Christians.

The reason why many people have this limited view is that they have laboured greatly in what they believe is the legitimate fashion, yet they have accomplished only averagely. They cannot accept that they failed, so they deceive themselves that they are poor just because of their righteousness. It feels good to their minds. It is unfortunate that this is the way many Christians are. Once they hear someone teaching that Christians could be greatly blessed, they immediately assume you are encouraging them to love money and put their hands into evil. It is all a product of a lack of understanding. Abraham did not love money nor did he do evil, yet God made him very great. That was the story of Job, too.

There once was a man named Job who lived in the land of Uz. He was blameless—a man of complete integrity. He feared God and stayed away from evil ...He was, in fact, the richest person in that entire area. Job 1:1, 3 NLT

It is a Blessing

I am not at all advocating that Christians should run after riches, which would be a sinful thing to

do, but that their hearts must understand that God gives the power to create wealth. Adjusting your thinking process is the first key to the release of grace, which is the power of God.

See, it is possible to be greatly blessed materially while walking with God. That is not a new thing for Him to do anyway. The greatest of material wealth is only possible by the blessing of God. Any wealth that evil has produced is nothing compared to what righteousness can produce.

It is the blessing of the LORD that makes rich, and He adds no sorrow to it. Prov 10:22

God does put great riches into the hands of those who He is pleased with and who He considers faithful and trustworthy. Remember again Job and Abraham, they were richer than all the men around them and their wealth came as a result of the blessings of God upon their lives.

A child of God can be endowed with wealth for service while walking righteously. Do not let anyone tell you otherwise. Men tell you things like “the rich are not happy”; that is true, but we are not trying to achieve happiness by it. As believers, we

understand that only those who already have their joy in the Lord can be greatly blessed with material things. No, there is no joy for us except in the Lord, and we have this joy whether we have much or little.

Every believer must understand that God has abundance for them, and this is better than lack. Note that it is possible to achieve peace of mind and be rich only if God is the one blessing you.

It is that blessing of God that I am preaching to you in this book. Many of the great industries and financial empires you see today were founded and owned by children of God who He blessed. For some of them, their companies today are worth billions of US dollars; their descendants to the third generation will feel the effect of this great wealth. Most persons like these are quiet and you may never know who they are. They are not usually preachers, so you rarely hear their stories. They sponsor great works of the gospel but you rarely hear their name. It is the unbelieving rich ones who are typically loud and so are the ones most people hear about; this is probably one of the reasons why many think you cannot be righteous and be endowed with wealth.

A Personal Story

I grew up in an average middle class family. Both of my parents were civil servants who were salaried people, and so it was with most of my friends' parents and the people in the town I lived in. In the years of economic downturn in the country that accompanied the Structural Adjustment Programme in Nigeria,* things became quite difficult for civil servants and such salaried people. Prices went through the roof while wages remained stagnant. It was as if everybody was broke. That was when Nigerians started importing and using used cars, electronics and such. After some time, if one saw a brand-new or recent model car, you assumed it belonged to the government or a big company, despite the fact that the cars my parents had then had been bought brand new, but that was years before.

After a while, the Lord arranged for me to move into areas where people were in big business and controlled plenty. I found out that the economy being down did not mean that everyone was down with it. I saw that the people who received the largest amounts of money were not the hardest

* From around 1986

working ones. I saw people take advantage of simple opportunities and righteously earn huge sums of money. I saw people use information and earn what I could only earn after some ten years of working as a young doctor, and they did it in a few weeks.

See, I did not get anything materially at that time; in fact, it was a season in which I was on a kind of spiritual retreat, but after that season, my eyes were opened to the fact that material wealth is controlled by forces different from human struggle. It was about this time that the promise of great abundance came to me from the word of God. It said, "Behold, I will cause prosperity to flow toward you like a river, and the wealth of the nations like an overflowing stream."* That word, coupled with the experience I had been through, ended struggles in my life. I realized that a man receives abundance only because God gives it to him. Struggles don't guarantee it, and those who cannot wait for God often put forth their hands to do evil. While we wait for the Lord, we keep working, proving faithful in whatever is placed in our hands.

* see Isa 66:12 RSV

I immersed myself deep into the word of God because I knew that all I needed was to fear the Lord and to obey His commandments. I came to understand that the assignment which the Lord has given me is all I need to care about. I needed to take heed to the ministry that I had received of the hand of the Lord to fulfil it. I was to train myself to have my satisfaction in God only. If I would do my part, He will certainly do His.

I see men struggle every day to gain wealth, but it is hard and actually unnecessary. Wealth is an endowment; it is not a product of struggles. You can struggle for daily bread and a little bit of extra, but great wealth has to be given to you by a power that is beyond you.

I want you to know at this time that God's covenant with you is that kind that can take a person into the place of great wealth, *especially* when His assignment for that person requires it.*

A Covenant

Grace is part of the new covenant we have in Christ Jesus. Grace is God's enablement for anything we

* Please note that we have different assignments from God, and this will affect what He sends to us.

have to do. The grace to prosper is part of the covenant.

But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day.

Every covenant has two parts. One is man's part while the other part belongs to the Lord. This is an underlying principle that governs all covenants with the Lord. It is written thus:

But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless... Exo 23:25

So, yours is to serve Him, and His part is to bless you.

Serving the Lord does not mean trying to do some work for Him in the hope that He will give something back for the work. That is a misconception that many are walking by. Actually, serving God means to be *totally committed* to Him, and consequently to do all that He commands you to do. Paul gives us a clear description of how it is in the New Covenant:

...and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 2 Cor 5:15

As we shall see in a short while, God's abundance will be released only upon those who have gotten their acts together and have truly given their lives over to the service of God the Father and the Lord Jesus. God is not trying to satisfy your lusts and your quest for riches; He wants to bless you so that you can be a blessing in the service of Him.

You shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless...

The one God blesses is he who understands that his life is not his own but is a life that is set apart for the use of the Master alone. That is the meaning of sanctification. God releases His abundance on the person He has called to carry His glory in certain areas; that person is one who He has tested with small amounts and who has been found faithful in the little things.

As a child of God, you are under the Lordship of Jesus. Your life is not your own. You do not owe God just 10% of your income; you owe Him *everything*. If you understand this and are ready to

walk accordingly, then you are ready for the abundance of God.

Be Converted

It is important that you recognize and accept what I am explaining here, that the covenant is one of abundance. If you continue to imagine in your heart that righteous living is not compatible with an abundant life, then you will either settle for poverty or put forth your hand to do evil; either way, you will displease the Lord. You must accept that God can, and that He will wipe out lack from your life, and make you so abundant that you will be helping others. You must accept that He is taking you somewhere great. You must forsake the lies of the ignorant.

Yes, we may have trying times as part of the trial of our faith, but we must never think that poverty always goes with righteousness. Israel went through the wilderness, but the plan of God was for the land where they would have no scarcity.

In his kindness God called you to share in his eternal glory by means of Christ Jesus. So after you have suffered a little while, he will restore, support, and strengthen

you, and he will place you on a firm foundation.

1 Peter 5:10 NLT

Therefore, you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, to walk in His ways and to fear Him. "For the Lord your God is bringing you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and springs, flowing forth in valleys and hills; a land of wheat and barley, of vines and fig trees and pomegranates, a land of olive oil and honey; a land where you will eat food without scarcity, in which you will not lack anything... Deut 8:6-9

CHAPTER 5

WHO IS RICH?



You Want to be Rich?

People have asked me if it is a sin to want to be rich. Now, I will tackle that question by first trying to understand what the enquirer may have in mind. Words as simple as being rich may mean different things to different persons.

For some, and I dare to say this is how most people are, to be rich means to have a lot of money and material goods so that there is no risk of lack for them and their household. To them, to be rich means that they can have all the so-called good things of life anytime they want it. They want to be in a position where no one can look down on them or oppress them. They want to have money so that they will be among the 'big' people of the society. They want to wear expensive clothes, use expensive accessories, and dine in exclusive restaurants. They want to fly first class or on private

jets. Now, if that is what you call rich, then wanting to be rich is indeed a sin. Notice that I have not described anything in those desires that may seem evil to most people, but it is a sin because God says it is. You may not realize it but such desires are nothing but signs of trusting in money. Such persons want money as a defence, as it is written...

*A rich man's wealth is his strong city,
And like a high wall in his own imagination. Prov 18:11*

Truly, money has power and many want the power it affords them.

If your current state makes you feel inferior, vulnerable and incapacitated, then your desire to be rich is iniquity.

If you want to be rich so that you can have a feeling of safety and security for the future of your household, then your desire to be rich is a sin.

You see, for a true believer, to be truly rich is to have your whole satisfaction and confidence in the Lord. He is to be your security for tomorrow. Your sense of self-worth must come from your relationship with Him. Knowing Him is what you may boast

about—that is to be your confidence.* You must understand that there is nothing the future can frighten you with because the Lord is on your side. Your assurance concerning the security of your household must be in Him alone. Money or no money, the Lord who is God, is on your side.

*“The Lord is my portion,” says my soul,
“Therefore I have hope in Him.”
The Lord is good to those who wait for Him.
Lam 3:24-25*

The Lord is for me among those who help me. Psa 118:7

Most times, our desire to be rich is nothing more than faithlessness toward God. We want to see our security rather than believing in Him who is unseen. When we pray for riches thus, we are only asking God to replace Himself with money in our lives. It is pure idolatry.

Another Answer

Now, if in desiring to be rich, you mean your desire is to be fruitful and continually multiply in whatever God has given you, then it is good. If you mean making the earth that God has given you

* Jer 9.24

charge over to be fruitful, then it is good. In fact, we will be judged on how well we did that.

The first servant reported, 'Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!' 'Well done!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a good servant. You have been faithful with the little I entrusted to you...'

Luke 19:16-17 NLT

God is pleased when we have the desire to be fruitful. He wants to make us fruitful. He wants us to be involved in that dynamic process of blessing, in which we are multiplying what He gives to us through faith and diligence, and we are using the fruits for His intended aims. It is not about amassing riches but about the activities involved in executing this will of God. We take no pride in being rich but in knowing that we are pleasing God in how we multiply and use His blessings.

The plenty that God gives has a reason. In the story of the so-called rich fool, we saw God gave him plenty, as his land was made fertile and as it yielded plentifully.* But the man decided to lay up the plenty, so God called him a fool. He missed the

* Luke 12:16

purpose for which God gives plenty, and he died for it.

We must be careful to follow the purpose of God for what He gives. We cannot desire to amass riches on the earth. We must hold everything material very loosely. One of the marks of maturity as a Christian is knowing how to balance receiving plenty from God with not having a mind of amassing riches. Our hearts must be set primarily on the things of eternity. Everything on the earth is temporal and has uses determined by God.

But we are citizens of heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ lives. And we are eagerly waiting for him to return as our Savior. Phil 3:20 NLT

So, our hearts are on the things of heaven. We know, however, that when Jesus comes, He will check what we were busy with in His absence. He will check what we did with the talents and minas that He gave to us. He will check if we took care of the earth under our care, to make it blossom. He will want to know what a blessing we were to the people around us. For this reason, we strive to be faithful in using the gifts and talents He gave to us.

We make sure we are fruitful and we multiply as commanded.

It is true that amassing wealth is never acceptable to Him, but so is being complacent and docile, not caring about the affairs of your present location and place of abode. None of these is acceptable.

We have His commandment to be fruitful, to be productive and to make the earth blossom. We are commanded to spread the blessing of God, and to be the salt and light of the world. It is as we do this that God endows us with resources for function. If that is what someone defines as being rich, then it is good. That kind of wealth is a gift of God.

CHAPTER 6

A COVENANT OF SERVICE



A Conduit

When God needs something on the earth, He sends it through someone. He holds that person accountable for delivery to the place where the thing is needed. God is looking all the time for faithful people who will deliver as appropriate.

Everything God places in your hands has specific intended uses, and it is faithfulness to use them as appropriate. This is why I am uncomfortable when preachers say that a tithe of a believer's income, which is a tenth portion, belongs to the Lord. This is something we never heard the Lord Jesus or any of the apostles and prophets of the New Covenant say. When I hear preachers and Christians say such, I ask who owns the rest. That claim gives the impression that the rest belongs to the person to use as he or she wishes. Nothing could be farther from the truth. Everything you have belongs to the Lord

and every bit must be used according to His pleasure. You cannot hand Him a portion and then claim the rest.

Who shall He send?

He is always asking, "Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?"* Many people's blessings are delayed until they recognise this fact. Hannah, the mother of Samuel, only experienced release from barrenness when she keyed into the purpose of God. At that time, God needed a prophet and a judge in Israel. This was the time in which Eli's sons had messed things up. Hannah was barren until she said to God, in effect, "Use me." As long as she was occupied with the worldly mentality concerning being a mother, she remained barren. In her desperation, she keyed into the purpose of God. She went to God with a promise.

She made a vow and said, "O Lord of hosts, if You will indeed look on the affliction of Your maidservant and... give Your maidservant a son, then I will give him to the Lord all the days of his life..." 1 Sam 1:11

She consecrated the child to the Lord even before he was born. By that dedication, she fitted herself into

*Isa 6:8

the order of God for His covenant people. God's covenant people are people chosen to serve the Lord. His blessings are tied to their readiness to serve Him.

"But you shall serve the LORD your God, and He will bless your bread and your water..." Exo 23:25

The blessings of God are tied to the covenant of service. The moment Hannah came to that point of accepting to serve the Lord even with her child, she received him. This is why Jesus told us to seek first the kingdom of God, and all other things will be added unto us.*

See, the blessings of God always come when we are ready to fit ourselves into His order. As a believer, until you come to understand that the blessings of God are matters of responsibilities entrusted into your hands, you will not receive many things from Him.

And I will make you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great; and so you shall be a blessing... and in you all the families of the earth will be blessed.

* Matt 6:33

A blessed person will receive abundant blessings from God and use it to bless people. God does not expect that the person He is blessing is where the blessing will stop, but that the person will be a *channel* for the blessing to reach others.

God's Order – Seed and Bread

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness. 2 Cor 9:10

Usually, anything God sends you has two parts—*seed* and *bread*. The bread is the portion you consume on yourself, but note that there is also the first portion, called seed. The seed is meant for purposes such as giving and *investing* into people and things. It is foolish to eat your seed and wrong to sow your bread. Faithfulness is to know what each part is meant for, and to use it so. To do otherwise is misappropriation.

Seed

The seed is the portion that we give out, and the bread is the portion that we *give in*. When I say *give in*, I mean the one that you give to yourself.

Every Christian must be a giver. Every believer

must be a continuous sower of seeds.

I believe it is necessary that each person has some places and causes that he or she is committed to in giving on a regular basis. Your local church or fellowship is one necessary place. Do not give spontaneously only, as in when a demand is made, but make a personal commitment to give regularly, and be faithful in doing so. Giving should generally be planned. As much as possible, each person should give as they earn.

On every Lord's Day, each of you should put aside some amount of money in relation to what you have earned and save it for this offering. 1 Cor 16:2 NLT

If you are a monthly earner, then give your major offerings monthly. Give to your church and also to some special outreach or work, like a ministry or mission, charity organization, etc. It is good that these be budgeted into your regular expenses. If you have to, send money to your parents on a regular, planned basis. It is good to put someone's schooling on your budget. There are charity organizations that receive monthly donations to care for children in poor places; they often ask you to adopt a child. Your money is used to feed, care

for, and educate this child. You may never meet the child except you have a desire to. It is a good thing that we should all take part in these things, if we can. All these are fields into which we can plant seeds.

A planned giving life is very helpful; if you do not have one, you are likely to give little because personal expenditure tends to come up and claim both your bread and your seed. You should not allow that.

As a regular giver, your seed should be large. The Lord will show to you the places to plant the appropriate seeds because they may be several. We will examine this further later in this book.

Bread

Your bread is the portion that is meant for you to spend on yourself. It is the portion that is meant to satisfy your soul with gladness.

Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. Eccl 5:19

I have seen people who will give anything to anybody but will not buy themselves even good clothes to wear, or a good car, or some other pleasant things in life. That is not at all a godly practice. It is good to sacrifice, but you must also take care of the servant of God which you are. God has given you wealth to enjoy and it is nothing but disobedience to God to punish yourself and be always *extra-prudent*. There is a time to lavish some good and costly things on yourself. Use a nice car, live in a nice place and wear good clothes. Look good and let God be glorified.

If you are married, as a man, your wife is part of you—the finer part. Buy her nice things. Don't use the excuse of doing the work of the ministry to deny your wife, who God created for beauty and for your glory, the beautiful things of life.

See, good things are good. Fine ornaments are good, so, dress your wife with them. A good car is a good thing; get one for her when God gives you the opportunity. Good things are good.

Note that what God hates is not the use of good and costly things, as Jesus used them without feeling unrighteous. What He hates is when they are too

high up in your scale of preference. See, there were times that the Lord would throw a lavish party for the children of Israel. He would do this by asking them to take what was rightfully His, the tithe, and eat it in the presence of the Lord. They were to eat and drink whatever it was that they liked; the only rule was that they had to finish the whole tithe.* Interestingly enough, that was the primary way the tithe was spent under the Old Covenant.

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 1 Tim 6:17

I want you, Child of God, to know that for you to enjoy life is part of God's plan for you. What we need to know, which is what the Lord emphasizes again and again, is that you must be a very generous person. You must never be one that serves himself first.

There was a song I used to sing with kids those days when I used to teach the children's Sunday School; the song went thus:

* Deut 14:23-27

J O Y, J O Y. This is what it means:
Jesus first, Yourself last and Others in between.
J O Y, J O Y. This is what it means:
Jesus first, Yourself last and Others in between.
J O Y is joy, J O Y is joy, J O Y is joy
and this is what it means.

We sang it with the tune of the Christmas song,
Jingle Bell.

Very nice song, and it is all the Lord is asking for in
your attitude.

There is seed for the sower. And there is bread to
eat.

Higher Levels of Service

Remember that I explained that everything we
have belongs to the Lord and that we are only
custodians, and that we are actually sons that serve
the Father. Now, there are different levels of
service. Many times, what we call abundance is
actually a call to a higher level of service.

There are two parables of Jesus that explain this
thing explicitly. In the parable in Luke 19,* the

* The second parable is in Matt 25

master gave equal amounts to his servants as he was leaving, and he commanded them to each use it well.

He said therefore, "A certain nobleman went to a distant country to receive a kingdom for himself, and then return. And he called ten of his slaves, and gave them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business with this until I come back.'" Luke 19:12-13

Further down in the passage, we see that different ones of the servants multiplied the money given to them to different degrees. One gained ten more, another five and so on. What I want us to note is what the rewards to the various ones were.

And the first appeared, saying, 'Master, your mina has made ten minas more.' And he said to him, 'Well done, good slave, because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.' And the second came, saying, 'Your mina, master, has made five minas.' And he said to him also, 'And you are to be over five cities.' Luke 19:16-19

Each person's reward was to have authority over cities in accordance with their demonstrated ability; they became greater administrators. They

remained servants to their lord but with greater levels of authority. I believe their new levels of authority were to be used in the new kingdom which the master had just returned from receiving.

God's order is always that of promoting you in matters of responsibility as you demonstrate your faithfulness.

The master said, 'Well done, my good and faithful servant. You have been faithful in handling this small amount, so now I will give you many more responsibilities.' Matt 25:23 NLT

This principle was demonstrated in the life of Joseph.

Joseph was called of God to be a ruler, not to lord it over people but to preserve lives. You see, you need some degree of authority to be able to do a lot of good.* God made him a ruler so that he would have the ability to do the thing he was born to do.

God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant in the earth, and to keep you alive by a great deliverance.
Gen 45:7

* Heb 13:17

Before he arrived on the throne, he went through many trials. The trials were used to train him and to prove his faithfulness towards the great task ahead. His entrance into the palace was not a reward of rest at all; rather, it was to fulfil his real destiny of service to his family and the nations of the earth.

Why Some Don't Receive

I am saying all these to help us to see that we are blessed to be a blessing, and also that the blessings of God are matters of responsibility. We have not been given the blessings just so as to demonstrate that we are blessed. We are administrators of God's substance. Your ability to properly administer great abundance is demonstrated in small things.

You were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things.

I'm sure you have seen people who boast of what they plan to do for God and for people around them when they get to have a lot of money, but the same persons find it hard to give to anyone out of the little they have. Their excuse, of course, is that they only have little. However, the truth is that if they will not give little out of their little, then they will not give much out of their abundance. It is in the

little that you will demonstrate what you will do with the abundance.

This is why those who are not givers may not receive abundant blessings from the Lord. It is not that He is punishing them; rather, it is because His abundance has a purpose, and He has not found those fellows faithful in little things so as to entrust them with much. He doesn't trust them to do what will please Him. So, we easily understand the words of James here.

You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures.

Jam 4:3

Many are asking only to lavish it on their pleasure. That is a wrong motive. They want to show off the big cars, the designer clothes and their palatial homes. They want to stand tall in the gathering of people and feel that they have accomplished much. This is the kind of spirit that does not allow God to give to us when we ask. God's abundance is not for just our pleasures but to be used for His pleasure.

CHAPTER 7

POWER TO GET WEALTH



It is from God

As a Christian, you cannot struggle into wealth. There are two reasons for that. One reason is, as we have seen, the desire to be rich, as most people think of being rich, is against the will of God. The second reason is that wealth does not answer to human struggles; it is a gift from the Lord. He told the children of Israel this:

But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth, that He may confirm His covenant which He swore to your fathers, as it is this day. Deut 8:18

Wealth is not a product of a person's natural background or environmental condition; it is an endowment from God. Either He gives it, or He does not. You cannot lay claim to it because you think you are smart or you are strong. Only God

decides who He will give it to. There are many people who have received it but who failed to understand how it came. They thought it was a result of their wise planning or strength. Such a person was Nebuchadnezzar, until God taught him him a lesson.

...until you recognize that the Most High is ruler over the realm of mankind and bestows it on whomever He wishes. Dan 4:32

Not Evenly Spread

Another point we must bear in mind is that the wealth in any place is never evenly distributed. One major reason is that the ability to handle it differs among people. That was why the master gave different talents to different ones of the servants. Even when the servants in the other parable started out with the same amount, they ended up in charge of different numbers of cities.* People simply have different abilities, and no matter how hard you try humanly to evenly distribute wealth, it will always gravitate in the direction of those who the Lord has committed it into their hands and who have the capacity to handle it.

* Matt 25:15; Luk 19:16-18

Also note that the one with less material resources is not necessarily inferior to the one with more. Each person has a different assignment for their life, and each must be careful to focus on and fulfil the assignment.

What I am saying is that, as a child of God, you cannot just decide to be rich and work hard to get it. God either gives it to you or He doesn't. A lot depends on the assignment He planned for you to do. If He called you primarily to teach young people in righteousness and train future ministers for Him, He is not likely to give you the same amount of material resources as the person who He called to set up factories, employ thousands and finance missions. The person on the mission field as an apostle, or as a teacher of the word, is not to be bugged down with management of money. Peter warned about it. Such an apostle is to focus on prayer and the ministry of the word.*

The only thing one can do to receive anything, especially if called by God to that office, is to get ready to use it properly. What qualifies you to receive wealth from the Lord is faithfulness.

* Acts 6:2

Remember, faithfulness is being trustworthy with money and pursuing the purpose for which God gives something.

The Power

There is a spiritual force described as 'the power to get wealth.' It is an anointing, or an enablement. It is a grace that the Lord gives to a person that makes creating wealth and being financially abundant easy. He seems to be able to read the market accurately; he seems to know when to buy and when to sell. Where others struggle, she has ease. People call to give her information that end up producing huge returns. It just appears that in whatever business he does, he is blessed. The things around him seem to love to cooperate to make him succeed. Everywhere may be dry, but when he plants, it begins to rain.

The story of Isaac in Genesis 26 is a good illustration of this.

There was famine in the land, so Isaac went to Gerar in the land of the Philistines. There the Lord appeared to him and said, "Do not go down to Egypt; stay in the land of which I shall tell you." Apparently, it was Egypt that Isaac was planning to

go to. I believe that was the place most people were heading at that time because of the prevailing circumstances.

Now, Isaac obeyed the leading of God and the force of wealth within him was manifested.

Now Isaac sowed in that land, and reaped in the same year a hundredfold. And the LORD blessed him, and the man became rich, and continued to grow richer until he became very wealthy. Gen 26:12,13

Note a quick lesson here. Wealth, or blessing, is not dependent on the geographical location but on where God has appointed you to be. You cannot change locations in search of prosperity. You must always look to God. He may decide you move from one place to another, like He did with Abraham, Jacob and Elijah,* or He may say, “Stay put; I have a blessing for you right here,” as He did with Isaac. He will bless you in His own way in the place He chooses.

God blesses through various ways, and the power to get wealth comes in many forms. The Lord may give someone the ability to make inventions that

* Gen 12:1, Gen 28:15, 1 Kgs 17:8

will constitute huge wealth. He may bless through creative ability in the arts, such as music. It may be the books the person writes. Some have real estate from which huge amounts are paid to them in royalties. In whatever form, the thing that the person does or has creates great amounts of resources for him with relatively little effort on his part. It is usually an error to try to copy a person's vehicle for the flow of wealth; it may not be the one God ordained for you. To get to your own destination, you may have to stay on a path which no one has used before. These things are spiritual.

I once read the story about a man who the Lord gave the inspiration to design and make a drink that is still popular all over the world today, more than 100 years after. He became very wealthy. This made him generous, and his generosity to the society caused him to be made a Lord in his nation. He became a voice who brought a lot of reforms to the legal system of his nation. His wealth abounded to many generations so that his descendants continued his legacy of generosity, sponsoring many charities and mission work. That is the power to get wealth of which I speak.

I have encountered even ministers of the gospel that the Lord gave this power to get wealth. The Lord has caused such a grace to rest upon them that people give much to them. They do not sell anything or invent; all they do is preach the gospel and the people that hear it are moved by the Spirit to give generously to them. They do not cajole anyone, neither do they have to use specially designed fables to raise offerings.

You have to understand that the person that has the power to get wealth sleeps well. This power is with him at all times and is working for him even while he sleeps.

For He gives to His beloved even in his sleep. Psa 127:2

Soul Power

Please note again that wealth is a spirit and the transfer of material resources is spiritually controlled. This is why the heathen can enter into cults, perform some sacrifices and consequently become rich. These things actually happen. Don't dismiss it as superstition when you hear of people making strange sacrifices for wealth. Even though most of the cases people speak of are likely unfounded, there is a truth behind such a practice.

The control is spiritual. It is spiritual power that matters most in the movement of wealth.

The commonest and simplest source of spiritual power that people everywhere use to get wealth is their own souls. Human life has a value in the realm of the spirit, and that value can be tapped by the owner of the life to produce wealth on the earth. Such a person is very hardworking, but also cunning, quick, smart and often ruthless. He gets a sizeable amount of wealth but uses up so much of the life force in him so that his flesh begins to fail. Don't forget, it is the same force of the soul that sustains his flesh. Sickneses set in; he becomes hypertensive or develops a mental illness such as severe depression, and ultimately, he dies in the prime of his life. He gains the world but suffers the loss of his life. He died, not as a punishment, but from spiritual and physical exhaustion. He has literally laid down his life for others, howbeit unknowingly. The scripture is then fulfilled that says, *"He amasses riches and does not know who will gather them."**

Beware lest it be that you are burning up your soul-life in exchange for material wealth. It may work,

* Psa 39:6

but it has a bad return on investment. You are spending a precious thing for vanity. What God expects from us is that we will spend our soul energy to seek Him, and then He will add all other blessings to us through the working of His grace.

The Grace Power

Now, in contrast to those using soul energy, there are those who use the energy of God. It is the case in which God takes from His own life-force, which is inexhaustible, and sends it into the life of a person. That force is called the Spirit of God, and this Spirit produces wealth for that person here on the earth. He is partaking of the power to get wealth. It is God's ability working on behalf of a person. It causes him to get much more result than his fellows who expend much more effort. Paul describes it as the grace of God working in a person.*

You see, just as there is grace for apostleship in the ministry of the word, there is also grace for wealth creation and management. Indeed, for many Christians, wealth creation and management is their own ministry or apostleship.

You understand why this person anointed by the

* 1 Cor 15:10

Lord will not die young as a result of excessive labour. You can easily see why he or she will forever continue to excel because of this power working on their behalf. It is the power of God.

All the things that other people try to achieve, using their soul-life, are given to him as a gift of God. She has favour with men because of the favour that she has with God. The spiritual force that is bringing good into his life comes from the life-force from God. God's angels are all the time at work on his behalf; they guard and guide him into the relevant networks and frustrate all his enemies' plans against him.

What are the angels, then? They are spirits who serve God and are sent by him to help those who are to receive salvation. Heb 1:14 GNT

When this blessed person sleeps, he or she dreams of ideas. The Spirit of God gives him inspiration concerning business, investments and inventions.

But there is a spirit in man: and the inspiration of the Almighty giveth them understanding. Job 32:8 KJV

To him it is almost effortless; he does what he does

naturally without much strain. God makes people love his products. He makes people to give to him.

See, this fellow has *the power to get wealth*. It comes from the Spirit and life of God, so that he himself is not at all depleted of strength. He lives and does not die. He seems to be able to gain the earth and retains his soul. He lies down and sleeps because the Lord alone causes him to dwell in prosperity.

It is the power to get wealth.

Examples

To show the way this power to get wealth works, I will tell a story of a brother. He testified once of how he was struggling in his business, waking up early and retiring late. All these efforts yielded him little. Then one day, the Spirit of God told him to put the first things first. So, he began to leave home late, spending quality time in the mornings to worship the Lord and to study the word. At this time, he said, business began to come; people would wait for him to have him do their jobs. He was paid just what he would ask for. People paid him completely for a job even before he commences. He said he made more money than he was even wishing for at that time. All of this was because he obeyed the

Spirit of God and decided to prosper according to the power of God working in him. That is the power to get wealth.

I read a story told by Mary Kay Ash, founder of Mary Kay Cosmetics. She was explaining that you cannot out-give God.

On a particular Sunday, following a request by the pastor of her home church, she spoke in church to encourage the congregation to give towards the children's church building work. The construction had been dragging because of lack of funds. The Spirit of God had told her beforehand to offer to match every dollar that everyone else would give that day. The instruction had come as a strong thought she had while dressing for church. According to her, that was one day she heard directly from the Spirit of God. So she made the promise. Now, she thought the contributions would amount to a few thousand dollars at most. That was reasonable since previous appeals had hardly ever turned up anything close to that.

Well, she finished speaking and the people responded. When everything was counted, she had the shock of her life—they had collected over a

hundred thousand dollars. All were in cash and cheques; pledges were not accepted, according to her appeal. That was the amount she had to match immediately.

The church elders tried to release her from the commitment as they understood she had not expected such a response, but she insisted on following through with her promise. Her plan was to take a short loan from her bankers.

Well, less than an hour after the phone discussion with the church elders, her son, who was not aware of this whole thing, called to inform her that two oil wells she invested in a few months before had struck oil. Also, her share of the proceeds in the first month was to be over a hundred thousand dollars. That was in the first month only. The son wanted to know how come everything his mum puts her hands into seems to turn to gold.

It was the power to get wealth; it caused Mary Kay herself to tremble before the Lord as she went to fulfil her pledge. She testified that the fear of God came upon her.

A Warning

This power is so sweet that people often lose sight of where it came from, and still comes from. This is why the Lord warned thus:

But you shall remember the LORD your God, for it is He who is giving you power to make wealth...

As long as the person remembers and so gives all the glory to God, that power will abide with him. If he forgets, he stands the chance of losing it all.

A major way to constantly remember the Lord as the source is in proper use of the wealth. Such a one must remain faithful in personal character, walking in the fear of God, and be a relentless giver. He or she must never trust in the power of wealth. The trust must continue to be in the One who gives the power to get wealth. The power of wealth must be used only to fulfil the plans of the Lord.

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share. 1 Tim 6:17-18

Men who are cheerful givers acknowledge the source of their wealth in each act of giving. You cannot be 'tight-fisted' and not have forgotten who made you great. We will see more on the cheerful giver later.

CHAPTER 8

THE VOW OF PROSPERITY



The fact that the Lord has given you something does not make it all into your hands automatically. There is need to take possession of anything that the Lord has given to us. Usually, we must activate the release of things that are rightfully ours.

When the Lord gave the Israelites the land He promised to their ancestors, He told them to go in and *take possession* of it. It was not going to fall into their arms just because they came near there.

“Speak to the sons of Israel and say to them, ‘When you cross over the Jordan into the land of Canaan, then you shall drive out all the inhabitants of the land from before you, and destroy all their figured stones, and destroy all their molten images and demolish all their high places; and you shall take possession of the land and live in it, for I have given the land to you to possess it.’” Num 33:51-53

Correct the Heart

To receive what God has given, the work starts in the heart. The heart is the major battle ground. It is our hearts that determine whether God's grace will flow or it will not. For grace to flow, the heart must be corrected. The heart is the thought processes and value system we have. If we have wrong thoughts and wrong values, the grace of God will not flow. Israel did not enter the Promised Land, not because of the giants or the problems of the land, but because their hearts rejected the land.

When it comes to the issue of prosperity, the first thing you must do is to reject poverty and lack as normal, embrace the truth that God wants you to have abundance, and accept that He can do it no matter the circumstances around. You must determine to settle for nothing less than God's best for you. Just by accepting the facts presented thus far in this book, you are attracting the power of God towards you. Your thinking process, having been conformed to the will of God, causes spiritual forces to re-align around you.

And indeed if they had been thinking of that country from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. Heb 11:15

How you think decides the opportunities that come to you. If you think in accordance with the abundance of God, there will be opportunities to walk into it.

You see, poverty is first in the heart of a man before it can hold him firmly on the outside. If you give a man who is poor at heart a lot of money, it is just a matter of a short while before you find him back where you met him. Poverty is a disease of the heart.

Vow to reject poverty; you must determine to accept the word of God concerning God's plan for abundance. This is the first step to receiving the abundance that God wants you to have. It is just to say yes and amen in your heart. It is not about running around looking for abundance.

I have noticed that a lot of people are content with poverty or barely getting along; they become complacent with just having enough to meet their needs. They get a job and hope never to lose it; they hope the job will give them a good pension. This is nothing but a poverty mentality.

A person with a prosperity mentality is grateful for

the job he has but deep inside his heart, he looks forward to giving jobs. Being an employee is alright but he understands that he also needs to be an employer. We should not confuse contentment with complacency.

Contentment is a good thing; it is a spiritual trait that helps you walk with God, one step at a time. A content person is full of joy and thanksgiving in every phase of life. Contentment means you understand that God has given you something in this season; for it you are grateful and in it you are faithful. It also helps you know deep inside that He is planning to increase you at a due time—the time He will be 'back.'

"Do business with this until I come back." Luke 19:13

A complacent person, on the other hand, is the person who buries the talent the master gave him. He is not multiplying it. To him, it is "just keep this job, and don't ruffle any feathers or disturb the waters, and all will be well." Complacent persons are always looking for someone else to solve their problems. They are usually the chief-grumblers.

On the other hand, a content and faithful child of

God, who believes in prosperity, is like Jabez. He is happy for this season but he has a vision.

Now Jabez called on the God of Israel, saying, "Oh that You would bless me indeed and enlarge my border, and that Your hand might be with me, and that You would keep me from harm that it may not pain me!" And God granted him what he requested. 1 Chrn 4:10

Here was someone whose name had been 'son of sorrow', but who was not content with the place that life had placed him and so reached out for the place where the Lord only could place him. If it was not an honourable request that he made, God would not have granted it the way He did. In fact, the scriptures testify that "Jabez was more honourable than his brothers."* It is a good thing in the sight of the Lord to desire to become great.

Born to be Great

As children of God, we need to determine to walk with God so that we can be so blessed that we will be blessings to those around us. It is service to God and to humanity that I am talking about.

There are some persons reading this who the Lord

* 1 Chrn 4:9

is waiting for them to get up and face the vision and dream that He has placed in them long ago. The jobs they are doing right now do not allow them the liberty needed to work on the visions, so they need to resign and get going. The current job has placed a cap on where they will ever be able to reach.

For some of these ones, God has planned that they will own companies that will pay as much as five times what they are earning right now, but because they look like they are well paid and well respected, they have stifled their destiny in a place of mediocrity. They are happy to be average but are risking going through life without an impact.

Someone needs to believe God to make him one that feeds thousands of families through wages paid. Ask God to keep you, not just for your wife and children's sake, but also for the sake of the multitudes that will die in poverty if you do not arise and manifest. Believe God that you will not die just another average man.

Use the Gift

Many reading this need to get up and get out of that place of mediocrity. There is a thing that God has placed in you that He will use to bring you to that

place of being a blessing; He wants you to take that thing and begin to use it.

Some are gifted teachers and authors, but something else has taken their focus because it is giving them immediate gain. They have lost their visions for greatness in their place of destiny. Meanwhile God is saying, “if only you had paid attention to the things I want to do through you, then your well-being would have been like a river, and your prosperity like the waves of the sea.”* Your books would have sold more than 20 million copies; your influence would have been worldwide. But you are short-sighted. You have limited the Holy One of Israel.

See, every new venture will have the days of small beginnings, but if it is born of God, it will definitely prevail.

For whatever is born of God overcomes the world; and this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.

1 John 5:4

If you will arise, the Lord will definitely arise with you.

* Is 48:18

There is something that the Lord has placed in you that He will use to distinguish you. One man of God said this: "there is a place where you are the best; what are you doing where you are average?"

If I am going to be distinguished in life, then I have to locate the position of my strength and put my energy there. I am careful to do this because I have been taught that when I move away from my strength, I move towards my weaknesses.

In the place of your weakness you are vulnerable, you can easily be cheated, and you can lose. In the place of your strength, no one can defeat you. In that place, every setback is nothing but an opportunity to recharge. Here, you are the champion and no one else can be like you since you are the best at being you.

A Shaking May Come

Many may suffer the loss of jobs soon. When it happens to you, don't panic if you are a true child of God, for it is the angels that have been dispatched by God to rustle you out of your dangerous rest. You had come to rest in such a place as to frustrate the plan of God for you; a place that may lead to premature death. No, the Lord is not pleased and

He has come to unsettle you so that you can walk into His destiny. Do not panic, give Him thanks and rejoice for the salvation of God is near. Get up, tighten your belt; it is time to pursue that vision that you have abandoned for so long. God has just saved your life. Don't worry, move; the Lord is with you.

Children of God, we all need to vow to God that we will not settle for mediocrity. We will not settle for just being average. We will not settle for being mere employees. Even if we must be employees by His command, we will be ones with a difference. We will arise with God and climb to the top. We will become entrepreneurs and employers. We will take on the promises of God and use them to dispossess the kingdom of darkness. We will enthrone Jesus as Lord of the earth.

Nothing Can Stop God

Let me point out that there is nothing big enough on this earth to hold you back if you are indeed ready to walk with God into greatness. I want you to know that He holds all the powers of this universe in His hands. All that can stop God is when we refuse to take hold of His promises by faith; when we refuse to follow when He calls. It limits Him.

Yea, they turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. Psa 78:41 KJV

God can only do very little if we will not believe Him. He has said He will make you great. You have a choice to believe that or to believe what your circumstances are telling you.

Some believe that the situation in their country cannot allow them to overcome; others believe that they are not educated enough nor do they know enough 'big' people. It is to you only according to your faith.

I choose to believe that I will get anywhere I desire, walking with God; it does not matter the situation of my country or that of my history. It is irrelevant who I know or who I don't.

My brother and my sister, there is a great enterprise that the Lord wants to start through you. The place that you have placed your hope will disappoint you; you do not need a secure job.

There are many companies today that have been there for over a hundred years; they were started by men that chose to follow the path of God for their

lives. Those companies are still growing and waxing strong. They were born of the Spirit of God and so have been overcoming the world since.

The Higher Purpose

To want to prosper does not at all mean you are covetous; it should mean that you have realized that you are a blessing that God has sent to your generation. It means that you are thinking of more than yourself.

I read a story somewhere several years ago about a rich industrialist who saw a fisherman reclining lazily under a tree late one morning, smoking a pipe.

“Why are you not out fishing?” he asked.

“Because I have already caught enough fish,” came the reply.

“Go and catch more fish,” he advised.

“What would I do with it?”

The rich man went on to explain to this man how he could sell the excess fish and possibly buy an extra boat and maybe even fit in outboard engines. This, he went on to explain, would produce more catches as it would then be possible to go into deeper

waters. All these excess fish can be sold so that eventually this fisherman will be a rich man with a fleet of fishing trawlers.

“What will I do then?” The poor fisherman wanted to know.

“Then, you can really enjoy life!”

“And what do you think I am doing now?”

The problem with both of them was in not understanding the purpose of wealth. The rich man missed to explain to this fisherman that those extra boats would be manned by scores of fishermen who would then have a good life. He would have rescued them from poverty. Enjoying life is not the issue; he was right in claiming that he was already doing that. After all, this thing called enjoyment is in the mind. The issue is that in that his lowly state, he couldn't afford to sponsor someone else to enjoy with him. He is indeed poor.

If he were rich, he would provide jobs, give out to charity, help the environment and get the satisfaction of seeing that many more people can enjoy life with him.

That is my vow of prosperity.

CHAPTER 9

THE ASSIGNMENT OF GOD



So we see, as Christians, we are to have a different attitude from the world towards wealth and material resources. For us, these things do not validate us, they do not measure our worth, and they do not determine if we are successful or not. We see them as tools to serve the purpose of God.

The purpose of wealth, as we have seen again and again, is to be a blessing to others and to humanity around us as a whole. We are to use the resources that God gives to create godly atmospheres in the lives of people. We are to sponsor the advancement of the kingdom of God on this earth. We support ministries and we make sure the ministers are well taken care of. The gospel is to be advanced by our generosity.

Also, we honour the people the Lord commanded us to honour. We honour our parents and the people who minister the word of God to us. Honour involves giving; so we give to our parents and to those who God uses to bless us with spiritual things.*

As we saw earlier, the portion of our resources which we use to do all of the above is called seed. It is a choice portion of what the Lord gives us.

We have seen also that there is a portion that is called bread, and this is meant for us to eat, drink, dress, drive, live in, etc. We use that portion to enjoy life; we do this and overflow in thanksgiving to the Lord.

Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. For he will not often consider the years of his life, because God keeps him occupied with the gladness of his heart. Eccl 5:19-20

These are the things that we fulfil and we are judged to be faithful as servants of the Lord.

* Gal 6:6

Now, there is another kind of seed that I need to point out.

Creators of Wealth

You see, most times that God wants to give anything into the earth, it comes as a seed. What we get initially is usually small when compared to the real thing that the Lord wants us to have. It is then our responsibility to cooperate with the Lord to make it grow and multiply until it becomes the real thing. We must understand therefore, that there is something small in someone's hands right now, but that thing is actually a seed for a great thing that God is sending.

Think of it, when God said to Abraham that "A father of many nations I have made you,"* He gave him only a few children. But those children later become great nations. That is just the way God does things.

What I am saying is that the great resources God has for you is in your hands right now, but it is present only as a seed. You need therefore to learn how to make it grow.

* Gen 17:5

... it is He who is giving you power to make wealth...
Deut 8:18

God wants us to create wealth. Wealth refers to the goods and services which have a positive impact on the lives of people and on the environment. Money is not wealth but may be used to measure it. It is nothing unless it is a reflection of true wealth being produced.

Most crooks and uninformed worldly people just want money, but truly successful people have a product or impact they are working to actualize; money is only a by-product of that real wealth. In fact, when someone's wealth is being calculated in civilised societies, it is not based on the cash the person possesses, but on the perception of the impact of their products. For most people listed as billionaires in this world, what constitutes most of their wealth is the perceived value of the companies they own. Those companies are actively affecting the lives of people by their products and by employment of many. Money is secondary.

What the Lord really wants for His children is that they be *creators of wealth* and not just possessors of money. Creating wealth involves making the seed

God gave you to multiply. The seed must be planted for wealth to come out of it. The seed will bear fruit, and from the fruit, more seeds for planting will be available. These will again be planted, until many rounds of multiplication have happened. That is how wealth comes.

A Commandment to Increase It

We must understand that making wealth to come out of the seed is a ministry for many believers. In most of the parables of the Lord Jesus about money, the emphasis was on the discipline of labour that makes it grow.

The first servant reported, 'Master, I invested your money and made ten times the original amount!' 'Well done!' the king exclaimed. 'You are a good servant....
Luke 19:16-17 NLT

As we have come to understand, what the Lord doesn't want is the attitude of laying up money. Our tomorrow is not secure because of money laid up. To think it is, is worldly thinking. We are to use money for what it is meant for, and also make it grow; that is what He wants.

It is important to God that His children have

dominion in life. It is important that they can receive and handle enough from Him to lend to the nations. Having spiritual dominion eventually manifests as physical dominion. Dominion comes after multiplication of the wealth of God.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion... Gen 1:28 KJV

Plant the Seeds

Every tree seed is a potential forest, so don't despise that little amount of money that the Lord has sent to you. The Lord is already sending seeds for you to plant into businesses and into owning your own companies. There is seed for you to sow right now in your hands.

You are not likely to wake up one day and discover that a rich man who just died left all his worldly goods for you. It is possible, but it rarely happens. You will not wake up and discover wealth in your hands that you do not know how it came. Rather, what is more likely to happen is that you will plant a seed and that seed will multiply. Invest the small moneys as they come, little by little, and you will be

surprised to see what the blessing of the Lord can turn them out to be.

But remember the LORD your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth.

Friends, plant that seed in that vision. If it is born of God, it will overcome. I am of the opinion that your personal God-given vision should be the premium choice in your investment portfolio; the first before all the blue-chip companies. God is sending the resources to you now as seeds. Seeds are by nature small. From these small seeds will come forth those great things that we are yet seeing afar off.

Rather than buy a car, rent a small place and start that training centre or school. At the beginning, it may only teach extramural classes with only one teacher (you), offering only one subject. Believe me when I say to you that it will end up as a world renown institution with its own university.

Buy that commercial transport bus or small haulage truck, and put it on the road. It will end up as an international airline.

Forget the fancy home theatre for now; buy those

chicks and start that small poultry. It will end up with over 100,000 birds.

The problem is that too many people eat their seeds for temporary pleasure.

Child of God, God has called you to be a creator of wealth. He is sending the seeds into your hands daily. Plant them. They will surely multiply. With the seed in their fruit, you will plant seeds in other vineyards. You will become a major shareholder in other companies by reason of the fruit of the seed from here. This is the implication of "be fruitful and multiply." You are first fruitful in what the Lord has given you as your own personal seed, then you multiply by planting the seeds from your increase here and there.

As an example, you may be fruitful as an author, and from the money that comes to you as you do your writing, you may become a major shareholder in a bank. Many people stop at the first round of fruitfulness and do not plant further to increase the power of their seed. As your seed begins to bear children, begin to plant them in other vineyards so that they can bear grandchildren of all types for you.

Prosperity for the Land

As a child of God, you are an answer to prayer. When God wants to bless a land, He sends someone to do something. People pray and God answers, but the process of manifestation involves the proper use of the seeds of God.

*Restore our fortunes, Lord,
as streams renew the desert.
Those who plant in tears
will harvest with shouts of joy.
They weep as they go to plant their seed,
but they sing as they return with the harvest.*
Psa 126:4-6 NLT

From the above portion of the scriptures, we see that when people are praying for prosperity, God says they must sow into the land they are praying for. Your prayer for prosperity is ineffective if you are not willing to sow into the land.

God has given the commandment to be fruitful and to multiply to every person He places in a garden; that instruction was not limited to Adam. You have a commandment from the Lord to create jobs; you must multiply the seed that the Lord has given to you. He did not give you money just so you will

have something to eat; He gave it so that you can have resources to sow into the land and make the land productive.

The man with the power of wealth is the one who speaks in the world of economics and in the markets, and these are a huge part of life and society. A lot of us are waiting for the prophets to come to speak in the places of commerce, but that does not happen often. The real prophet that will speak in an industry on *a regular basis* is the child of God that has investments in the place. It is the one that has significant holdings that will speak the word of God in most board meetings. That is a major way by which the Lord spreads righteousness. It is how the leaven of the kingdom spreads to the whole loaf.*

Arthur Guinness

I made a reference to the following story sometime earlier. It is the story of the man, Arthur Guinness, who made his dark coloured drink in fulfilment of the reported word from the Spirit to him that said, "Make a drink that men will drink that will be good for them." Before then, Irish men were getting

* Matt 13:33

drunk on whiskey and gin and such strong drinks, and he had been crying to God to do something about it. He made a drink so full of nutrients and low in alcohol that it was a blessing to the health of the drinkers of it. God caused him to prosper. He and his descendants became renowned for their acts of great generosity. Their wealth sponsored many missionaries and took care of charity.

I am telling his story to bring a point out. I read that because of his philanthropy and the use of his wealth he was elevated to the House of Lords. As a Lord, he instituted many changes in the judicial system of his country. He hooked Biblical principles to the judicial system. He was a young entrepreneur who changed the judicial system of his country through applying Biblical principles. He was heard, not just for his wisdom, but largely because of the influence through business success which the Lord granted him.

Solomon has said it to us, that no matter the wisdom, the world is slow to listen to the poor man though he may be wise.

There was a little town without many people in it. A powerful king attacked it. He surrounded it and prepared

to break through the walls. Someone lived there who was poor, but so clever he could have saved the town. But no one thought about him. I have always said that wisdom is better than strength, but no one thinks of the poor as wise or pays attention to what they say. Eccl 9:14-16 GNT

All the solutions that you have for the problems of your nation may not be useful if you do not have a voice. The nations of this earth are not looking for prophets that are wearing robes and collars. The Daniel of the Bible worked essentially as a wise civil servant. Many of us are fixated on church titles, such as Deacon, Elder or Pastor; but these titles will not get you much relevance outside the church, in reaching out with the truth of God. In fact, a lot of times, those titles give the impression to business people that the bearers do not know much about the so-called *real* life. That is not the plan of God.

The Job Example

See, Job was a man who was respected in the society. He was a man of godly influence.

"When I went out to the gate of the city, when I took my seat in the square; the young men saw me and hid themselves, and the old men arose and stood. "The

princes stopped talking, and put their hands on their mouths; the voice of the nobles was hushed, and their tongue stuck to their palate. Job 29:7-10

This is what the Lord wants to do in your life. You will affect your generation because the Lord will make them listen to you. The world may not listen to the pastors and the prophets; those ones were sent primarily to the church. The Bible says they are to equip the saints in preparation for the work God has for them. Their duty is to build up the body of Christ.* They are not at all the instruments by which the kingdom of the world will become the kingdom of Jesus; this assignment is for every single Christian.

Many persons reading this have been called to be business evangelists. Some have been called to be pastors to their factory workers. There is an apostle to the boards of those great business empires out there. I know a teacher of righteous business principles is reading this. You have been sent to the business world. This is how the influence of righteousness will spread. It is the leaven principle.

* Eph 4:12

More Than Church Activities

We Christians often forget the job outside the church which the Lord gave us to do.* The only form of seed we seem to know is the one that we put into the offering basket. No; those seeds are good but they will not take over the land. Many of us have been sowing such seeds and the Lord is ready to bless us, but we are not ready to go out into the place where He wants to do it.

The advantage of the Holy Spirit indwelling you as a Christian is not just to speak in tongues. He helps you to make sound business judgment, to invent machines, to solve political problems, and to create solutions to economic crises.

You will succeed where others are failing. The Lord will strengthen your arms to do battle against those that the world calls strong, and conquer them.

Imagine praying in the Spirit before a board meeting. Imagine wetting your premises with the dew of heaven before work starts for the day. That dew is the word of God. Imagine sprinkling it over your premises.

* For more on this, please read my book, *How to Work For God*

See, the kingdoms of men are in the hands of God and He can deliver them to anyone He wants. Just be available by having a right attitude and exercising yourself in your work.

I pray that we will take hold of the power of God, go beyond church and the programs thereof, and take this power into business, into engineering, into law, into medicine, and into the creation of wealth. That is when we will see what is called the glory of God.

THE VOW OF POVERTY



Many years ago, as a young student of the word under the Word of Faith movement, I learned the gospel of prosperity. In the circle of people around me there was a lot being said about a certain practice of the ministerial orders of the Roman Catholic Church. You see, to serve as a Catholic nun or priest, you were required to take this vow called 'the vow of poverty.'

Be Quick to Listen

Now, as a young person, you tend to follow what everyone says, and so I believed, as everyone else of my type, that to take a vow of poverty was a product of ignorance of divine truths and that one should rather believe in prosperity.

As years pass, one learns, so I continued learning. Some years after those initial years, I picked up a Catholic magazine, and in it I saw, actually for the

first time that I could remember, an advert calling for young people to come join some orders and to come take the vow of poverty. Well, in this advert the advertiser took time to explain what the vow of poverty is supposed to be. I was indeed surprised to see that it was perfectly in line with the principles of being a disciple of Christ, as I understood it. To me, it was a sound biblical teaching.

I found out that, if taken in the proper light and applied correctly, it is not a vow reserved for persons in any special order but a vow that every child of God should take. I cannot now remember the exact words that were used in the bulletin but I do recollect that the implication of the vow of poverty is that you own nothing, live a life of self-denial and generally be detached from the things of the world. I understood that what was being sought after was a life the owner accepts to live totally in the service of God with no regards for personal achievements.

I am not at all commenting on the practical side of it among the Roman Catholic orders, but I want to show that a vow of poverty, if properly understood and practised, is a necessary thing. I believe that every Christian should take it. Note that taking this

vow of poverty is not against taking the vow of prosperity, which we just saw in a previous chapter; both of them must go hand in hand to have a balanced Christian life.

Prosperity with Poverty

Prosperity means that you have all that is required to fulfil every plan of God for your life. It means you are able to glorify God in the beauty and the glory that surrounds you. Prosperity means that you have enough for all good things, and more than enough for all good works. You are able to meet needs that are not your own. To use the words of Paul, it is having all sufficiency in everything and having an abundance for every good deed.*

However, when you take a vow of poverty, you are acknowledging and affirming that what you seem to own is not actually your own but that they belong to the Lord who made you and who sent you into life. You are vowing before God that you will never be tied to anything material in this life. A vow of poverty means you are saying to God that you will gladly leave all the material things behind if that is what He requires at any time. Your hope is

* 2 Cor 9:8

not in any material thing. You don't trust in money. You are not the kind of rich person whose wealth is his defence.* As far as you are concerned, you are not rich but are only a faithful steward of someone else's goods.

There was a young man I met once who had just gone into doing business; he testified that after seeing the amount of effort he had to put in to make any money he makes, he found it very hard to give anybody anything. It is evident that he thinks all the things came forth by his power. He has not taken this vow yet.

Examples

The life of John G. Lake illustrates well this detachment from material things. At the time the Lord called him to go to Africa, he took all he had in material possessions, sold them and gave them out so that he could pursue the purpose of God wholeheartedly. He was not attached to those things though he was very wealthy. This was what the rich young man that the Lord said should go sell all that he had could not do. He did not have this vow of poverty working in his life.

* Prov 18:11

Also, I recently heard the story of a young man who, together with his friends and associates, owns a company which the annual turn-over is to be measured in hundreds of millions of US dollars. This chap was backslidden as a believer, but when he rededicated his life to the Lord, the first question he asked the Lord was whether He wanted him to leave everything so as to follow Him fully. He thought the Lord might be calling him into the ministry of the word. He was ready to give up everything if that was what the Lord would require. Now that he is still in the business, he realizes that it does not belong to him but to the Lord.

The vow of poverty that I am recommending for every child of God is that which says to the Lord that the wealth that comes your way will be used only according to God's ordinance since you know that it has come by the power of God. It will not be for any personal glory; it will not be for proving any carnal point to anyone.

And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 2 Cor 5:15

A man that is totally sworn to this 'poverty' knows that even his life is not his own but must be lived in a manner that is glorifying to the Lord.

You understand therefore that this person cannot help but be a cheerful giver; after all, the money is not his own.

Not Trusting in Money

This person knows that he or she has no special advantages just because he has a lot of money. See, the presence of money has not taken away the need to pray and seek the face of God when he has to make critical decisions. He does not think that 'money answers all things' the way some do, but he leaves his trust still in the Lord. He knows that, money or no money, he can only have the things that the Lord will allow him have and that his wealth cannot guarantee him anything.

He does not bribe his way out of trouble nor does he take what is not his own portion just because he thinks that he can pay for it. He does not take anything he wants from others by offering them a price they cannot refuse. That would be coveting his neighbour's goods. He is a righteous man to the core and lives like his money really cannot help him

in the time of trouble. He knows the word of God is true which says that *he that trusts in his riches will fall*.^{*} He has placed his trust in the Lord his refuge and has left it there.

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. 1 Tim 6:17

He does not oppress the poor because he does not feel that in himself he is better than them. He understands the words of Paul,

For who regards you as superior? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1 Cor 4:7

You see, pride is a product of ignorance. I have seen people talk as if the success they have come from their personal prowess or from something inherent within them which is superior to that in other people. They talk as if others failed just because they are not as wise in their ability to plan. They forget that after Solomon observed life wisely, he said,

^{*} Prov 11:28

"I have observed something else in this world of ours. The fastest runner doesn't always win the race, and the strongest warrior doesn't always win the battle. The wise are often poor, and the skillful are not necessarily wealthy. And those who are educated don't always lead successful lives." Eccl 9:11 NLT

Solomon noted that, to the physical eyes, it was time and chance that caused the difference. Paul explained that it was a working of the divine power.

So then it does not depend on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy. Rom 9:16

If you have any idea what Paul and Solomon are talking about, pride will be far from your heart. You will never feel you are better than anyone else. The vow of poverty, as I understand it, is that you never forget those words of Paul and of Solomon.

No Love of Money

If you have taken this vow of poverty, you have sworn before God never to love money.

Now, the desire for greatness and the love of money are two very different things. A person that

loves money is shown by the things that he would do to get it. If necessary, he would pervert justice, steal or even kill, to get it.

Just like a person who loves God lives in a manner that draws him nearer to God and does things that please Him, so does a person who loves money live in a manner that shows that he or she is looking only to draw near to money. This man will do nothing except he has something to gain. He is afraid of poverty and fights it with all his physical might. He is not like a man who has taken the vow of poverty and who only gets wealth by the power of God.

A man that loves money always tends towards poverty. I have discovered it to be true in this life. You see, when people are afraid of poverty and so take some humanly wise steps to avoid it coming on them, it turns out that those steps are often the very things that enhance the arrival of poverty into their lives.

He that hasteth to be rich hath an evil eye, and considereth not that poverty shall come upon him. Prov 28:22 KJV

An example that comes to mind anytime I have to speak on this issue is that of young women and marriage. Many of them think that to marry a rich man is the way out of poverty. If you have this attitude as a Christian girl, you are indeed headed for trouble. Many miss the choice of God for them because the man was not swimming in financial abundance when they first met him. Some eventually get this rich guy except that they are too blinded by their lust to see that they are just walking directly out of the will of God.

Do you want a rich husband? Love the Lord and marry a man that loves Him too, and the Lord will cause you both to prosper together.

Let me tell you something about wealth: it has wings and it can fly! Make sure that God is causing it to fly in your direction. You need to fear God and respect Him alone; this is the only guarantee for an enduring prosperity.

Still talking on the issue of the love of money and poverty, I remember hearing an elderly woman speak about one of her nephews. She said this guy loves money so much that he changed his job several times, stole money and was virtually

sacked from the last place he worked, and the story is that he is always phoning his relatives and asking them for money. He is perpetually broke.

For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs. 1 Tim 6:10

I need to comment on this scripture a bit.

A Root

Notice that the love of money is a root, not a branch or the trunk, of evil. What it means is that the person doing the evil, especially when it is a Christian, never planned to do evil; all that happened is that the evil sprang up from the love of money that is deep inside his heart. When this evil begins to manifest, the person will have no control over it; he will only seem to be under a spell to do it.

You have seen and heard of Christians who are cheats and perpetual liars, and one wonders how it came to be. See, they never planned to be so bad; it was that a root of evil was in them, and it grew wild and out of control. That is why they wandered from the faith. That is why they look like children of the devil.

It is important that we bear in mind that the seed of the love of money is in many more people than know it. A lot who are reading this have it but it has not yet manifested. You need to pray to God to cleanse your heart no matter how good you feel right now about yourself.

Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me and know my anxious thoughts; and see if there be any hurtful way in me, and lead me in the everlasting way. Psa 139:23-24

As you encounter various circumstances that tempt you to do evil for money, it is with your response that the Lord will show you what is in you. As you see your heart reflected in those things that you do or are willing to do, be honest and pray for the Lord to cleanse you of all unrighteousness.

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9

As a child of God, determine that any wealth that God will not give you, you do not want it; that you will rather die in material poverty than have wealth that is not blessed by God.

That is my understanding of the vow of poverty.

See, it will set you free from wandering away from the faith so that you will not be damned for the rest of eternity. It will preserve your life. We read of many griefs, or many sorrows, from the scripture quoted earlier;* many sorrows are real things like hypertension, mental troubles, family troubles and even premature death. You will deliver yourself from all these if you take the vow of poverty.

I will love you to go to the Lord in prayer at this time, armed with the knowledge of the facts in this chapter, and pledge to live your life within the boundaries of this vow of poverty.

Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.

* 1 Tim 6:10

CHAPTER 11

RICH TOWARD GOD



In this chapter, I want to begin to examine the subject of giving to God.

First, let us see what it means to be rich toward God and how that affects our lives on this earth.

And He told them a parable, saying, "The land of a certain rich man was very productive. And he began reasoning to himself, saying, 'What shall I do, since I have no place to store my crops?' And he said, 'This is what I will do: I will tear 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 many goods laid up for many years to come; take your ease, eat, drink and be merry." ' But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your soul is required of you; and now who will own what you have prepared?' So is the man who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God."

Luke 12:16-21

In this parable, the Lord told us the danger in not being rich toward God. Here was a man who got much goods but who thought that it was all supposed to be for him alone. He wanted to enjoy it all by himself for many years to come. God called this man a fool, and he died at the beginning of his abundant life. The reason, according to the Lord Jesus, was that he laid up treasure for himself on the earth and was not rich toward God.

It is clear from this parable that the opposite of storing up treasure on the earth is being rich toward God.

Now if you read the rest of that chapter of Luke, you will find that the Lord told His disciples many things in this regard. One of the lessons He taught them from the story of the rich fool was that they must not worry about tomorrow. Worrying about tomorrow would make them want to lay up treasure on the earth. After explaining the futility in worrying about tomorrow, He then said,

“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom. Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief

comes near, nor moth destroys. Luke 12:32-33

What He was saying in effect is that the opposite of laying up treasure on the earth (which the rich fool did) is to lay up treasure in heaven; this is done by giving generously of what you have. He called it being rich toward God.

Treasure in Heaven

Now, it is necessary that I explain what it means to have something in heaven.

To have something in heaven does not mean that you will get to use the thing after you might have died as a good Christian and gone home to be with the Lord. Heaven is as much a storehouse as a bank on the earth is a storehouse. A person in one country can take money to a bank in another country for safe keeping. It does not mean that the money is useless to him except he goes to live in that other country; he can draw from it from wherever he is almost at any time. So it is with storing treasure in heaven.

Spiritual things control the physical; the treasure one has in heaven is fundamental to sustaining the treasure on the earth. Treasure in heaven causes

more to be produced on the earth and it preserves the life of the owner of the treasure.

As a true believer, you must understand that what goes on in the physical realm is determined by spiritual things. Faith is to understand that those things we can see were framed by a spiritual substance.* The person that does not have treasure in heaven will find it very hard to produce treasure on the earth. Also, such a person is likely to die after striving so hard to get some treasure on the earth. This is the reason why Paul exhorted Christians to seek the things that are above rather than focusing on the things on the earth.** The things that are above, in the words of Jesus, are immune to the degrading forces of this earth. There, no thief comes near nor does any moth destroy.

To have treasure in heaven means that the foundation of your material blessings on the earth is ever secure and cannot be touched by inflation, bank collapse, stock market collapse, or by natural disasters. If adversity comes, it may touch the material things on the earth, but the treasure in heaven will direct the movement of physical things

* Heb 11:3

** Col 3:1,2

to quickly replace the ones lost. In fact, it may even produce double if the owner handles the situation appropriately.

It was this treasure in heaven which Job had and which the Lord used as a foundation for giving him double for all his troubles. It was the foundation that God used to ban the devil from touching his life (recall that the Lord specifically forbade him from killing Job).^{*} Treasure in heaven preserves the life of the one who owns it. It is something that we must consciously seek to lay up.

It Must Be Bought

The Lord Jesus explained that the way by which one lays up treasure in heaven is to give to good causes. Notice that everyone has been given something with which he or she can buy treasure in heaven. You are required to pay a price out of what you have.

"Sell what you have and give... This will store up treasure for you in heaven! Luke 12:33 NLT

The rich young man was very good at doing business, yet he had very little or no treasure in

^{*} Job 2:6

heaven. Jesus told him he had to sell what he had and give to the poor. That would get him treasure in heaven. Everyone has something to use to buy treasure in heaven. It is acceptable according to what each person has and not according to what they do not have. The real price is the spirit expressed in the giving.

Job, whom we mentioned earlier, was a man of extreme generosity. It was the alms and prayers of Cornelius that gave him notice before God.*

Take care to lay up treasure, not on the earth, but in heaven.

It is a Product of Faith

It is important that we understand that richness toward God is first and foremost about faith. It is this faith that manifests in generosity. The foundation is faith towards God. Notice that the Lord Jesus established faith as the foundation. Faith is tied to the knowledge of God and His will, so He said..

Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.

* Acts 10:4

It is a product of our love for and trust in God. Anyone who does not love God cannot effectively lay up treasure in heaven. It is that confidence in God that makes the child of God easily generous.

Another point to remember is that faith must work together with love.* If you do not love the place or persons you are giving to, but are only giving so that you may get something in heaven, it won't amount to much. Love from a pure heart, laid on top of faith in God, must underlie the generosity of the Christian, otherwise the giving is not acceptable. It is important that we understand that selfish motives kill the blessing in our generosity. We will see more of this as we go on.

Having explained the above, let me reiterate that the way of laying up treasure in heaven is by being rich toward God, and this is what I wish to discuss next.

* Gal 5:6

CHAPTER 12

WHY WE GIVE TO GOD



We have seen that treasure in heaven comes from being rich toward God, and this is expressed mostly through faith-based and love-inspired generosity.

Now, why do we give to God?

This is an important thing we must understand, especially in the light of the many wrong reasons people do it these days. There are a lot of faulty teachings out there in this regard and many Christians are walking by them in trying to offer up things to God. Unfortunately, they only succeed in displeasing Him. By following wrong motives, usually touted by preachers trying to motivate people to give, many Christians are denied their reward. Walking by wrong doctrines can make Christians lose their reward.* This is why we need to get our motives right when we set out to do

* Col 2:18

things for God. God checks our motives.

I, the LORD, search the heart, I test the mind, even to give to each man according to his ways, according to the results of his deeds. Jer 17:10

Allow me to set a few things straight.

The Law of Righteousness

Righteousness means to be accepted before God. It means to be able to have a relationship with Him. Righteousness is also having the boldness to approach God in prayer and having the confidence that He listens. In simple terms, we call it *right standing with God*.

It is clear therefore that everyone who believes in God has the desire to attain the state of righteousness. Without it, there is no headway. Now, giving to God is a much-threaded path in the desire to attain righteousness. The reason many people give to God is so that He will look to them with favour. But it is not the Christian way for obtaining acceptance with God.

We do not obtain our right standing with God through giving to Him. Our righteousness is *purely*

on the basis of faith in the person and work of Christ Jesus. We are made righteous by our faith in Christ. We have no righteousness apart from the one that was freely given to us when we believed in Jesus. Our righteousness is a gift of God, which He bestows on all who believe in the Son.

Now to the one who works, his wage is not credited as a favor, but as what is due. But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is credited as righteousness. Rom 4:4-5

Don't Insult the Cross

We do not give to God so He can answer us. It is an insult on the blood of Jesus and the work of Christ on the cross to give something to God hoping that it will make Him answer your prayers and meet your needs.

God is our Father. We attained that relationship through faith in the Son, Jesus Christ. No real Father meets the needs of the family because of what the children did for him, and that is how it is with our heavenly Father. The reason He answers our prayers, gives to us and meets our needs is because He loves us. That is His nature.

In that day you will ask in My name, and I do not say to you that I will request of the Father on your behalf; for the Father Himself loves you, because you have loved Me and have believed that I came forth from the Father.

John 16:26-27

This is not to say that we do not do good works, or that good works have no special reward. Yes, the child of God does good works, and must be careful to do good works. But the reason we do good works and give to God is not because we want to get from Him but simply because we are children of God and therefore we are like our Father. We were created in His image and likeness, and have been re-created in the spirit of holiness and righteousness. The love of God has been shed abundantly into our hearts.*

For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them. Eph 2:10

So, we see that the nature of God, which is a generous nature, is in us, and neglecting to do good works is denying the true faith.

* Eph 4:24, Rom 5:5

But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. 1 Tim 5:8

We all do these works as a natural outflow of the faith in our hearts. We are not trying to attain righteousness and have God answer our prayers because of them. This is the reason why we don't ever quote our good works for God when we pray, hoping to get a reward for them. We do good works, we love doing them, and we continue to do them because we love God and we love the brethren.

Don't Play into the Devil's Hands

Anyone going to God with the confidence that he got from having given an offering or helping a needy person is playing into the hands of the enemy. By so doing, he has entered into arguments of works, and Satan works effectively in that area. It is where he is strong and can bring forth accusations. In this arena, the blood of Jesus is not what is speaking but the works of man. That is the danger in those unfortunate doctrines that many Christians hold on to. People are told to remind God of their seeds, and bring their tithe booklets to the place of prayer, so as to move the hand of God.

See, if you do such, it is the hand of Satan you will move against yourself.

There is a realm of Christ where only the blood of Jesus speaks on your behalf. To abide in this realm, you plead only the mercy of God which is yours in abundance through the Lord Jesus Christ. Here, your confidence for answered prayers is only because you know the love of God and the work of Jesus on your behalf. That is all.

I remember a conversation I had with a brother while I was still a student in the university. A problem had come up for him which I cannot now accurately recollect. So he went to pray. According to him, he reminded God that he had paid his tithes, and told God that He had promised to rebuke the devourer. He said as he was praying, he suddenly remembered that he had not paid the tithe for the last month before the problem arose. So he panicked, realising that his foundation for faith had just been shaken. He said to me, laughing, that he had to begin to plead the mercy of God.

I looked at this brother and asked him, "Why did you not just start with asking for mercy anyway?" Why did he have to go through the rigmarole of

works as the basis for his righteousness? No, it is not right.

We have sure mercy every time we approach in the power of the blood of Jesus and not in the power of our good works.

Are We Sowing So We Can Reap?

Christians are often told to sow so they can reap. Our giving is our sowing, while the blessing that comes as a reward for the good work is supposed to be our reaping. Essentially, a Christian is like a farmer; the seed he plants is the money or any other material things he gives, the fields are the various places he gives into, while the harvest is whatever blessing God gives him back.

The result of this is that Christians start giving with the aim of receiving. By doing this, they miss a major point which we saw earlier, which is that motive counts with God. The motive for such giving is therefore selfish, and cannot be blessed by God.

See, if love for God, for the people of God and the work of God is not your motivation for giving, you will get nothing. If what you will get in return is the reason you are 'planting your seed', please forget it,

because you will get nothing in return. Any giving that is not motivated by the desire to bless the recipient does not get any reward.

And if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing. 1 Cor 13:3

Paul made this statement, and what he was saying is that if all these great sacrifices being made are not motivated by love, then there is no reward.

When God gave His only begotten Son, it was not for the reward but because He wanted to help people. This is the person whose example we are following.

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

He gave so that we may have. It is an inaccurate doctrine to teach people that they should give primarily so that they may reap a harvest. It is true that God the Father received many sons back for the one that He gave, but His *reason* for giving this one Son was not so that He might receive but so that we may have something, which is eternal life.

This same thing can be seen in the life of the Lord Jesus. He received a harvest for His sacrifice, but His aim in giving Himself as a sacrifice was not at all for His own latter gain; He was already great and He couldn't ever be greater than He was before He came to the earth.

If He would render Himself as a guilt offering, He will see His offspring, He will prolong His days, and the good pleasure of the LORD will prosper in His hand. As a result of the anguish of His soul, He will see it and be satisfied; by His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities. Therefore, I will allot Him a portion with the great... Isa 53:10-12

Yes, He received a portion with the great for His sacrifice, but note that His aim in the whole thing was to bear the iniquities of many and to justify them. This is what the Bible calls *the labour of love*—doing something just for the purpose of being a blessing to someone else.* That is what the Lord rewards. Receiving is automatic if the motive for giving is right.

* 1 Thes 1:3, Heb 6:10

Let me say it again; your motive matters to our God. Giving because you want to receive is nothing but a waste of time. Giving should normally be based on seeing a need and the willingness to be a blessing in meeting that need. That way, you will get a reward.

Pray Over Your Offering?

It is nothing but empty babbling to 'pray over your offering' before giving it so that it will bring in harvest for you. The prayers mean nothing! All I do at those times when I'm asked to do so in church services is just to give Him thanks for the ability He has given me to give and for the faith that does not trust in riches.

People are often encouraged to give their offering a name before they give it; this name is supposed to be the harvest they are expecting. These are all strange practices that we indulge in by reason of our lack of understanding. I have heard it preached that you must have a reason for giving any offering you give. Well, I always have a reason—I want to be a blessing to people, honour a man of God or contribute to the church. I want to be a faithful servant of the Lord. If the reason is supposed to be a need which I want met, then count me out.

The Reward for Giving

I am not saying God does not reward those who do good works. There is indeed a spiritual law that says what a man sows he shall reap a harvest from.* I am saying the motive for the good works must not be the reward, otherwise you kill the power of it.

There is indeed a law of sowing and reaping—of seed and harvest. It is a law out there like the law of gravity. It is not a Christian law but a law of life generally. The knowledge of the existence of the law is only an encouragement for the giving heart; it is not an incentive for the one that will not otherwise give. The reason why the Lord teaches about it is not so that we can start abusing it but so that we can have encouragement when sacrifice becomes tough.

Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man is decaying, yet our inner man is being renewed day by day. For momentary, light affliction is producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison, while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. 2 Cor 4:16-18

* Gen 8:22, 2 Cor 9:6, Luke 6:38

The knowledge of the spiritual law of sowing and reaping makes it possible for you to see the things that are unseen. Your ability to make tough sacrifices will be enhanced when you look at the things that are not seen rather than the immediate 'loss' that is seen. Giving oftentimes appears like loss when we look at the enormity of the sacrifice that is being demanded by the Lord through the situation that He has brought us into, but when we understand that there is a law of the spirit that guarantees a harvest, everything begins to appear only like a light and temporary affliction.

I say it again: the knowledge of the law of sowing and reaping is an encouragement for the giving heart, and not an incentive for the one that will not give.

Strange Applications

Many people have come up with all kinds of silly applications of this law. I have seen people do absurd things like going to buy a small Bible and giving it out because they want a big study Bible they cannot afford. All of this is because they think that it is like sowing corn. Some give out their old cars just because they want God to return it as a new one. Some will change naira to dollars and then use

the latter as an offering in church. The reason is so that God can pay them back in dollars. They know the church will have to convert the money back to the local currency before they can use it. Some value is lost in this double exchange, but it doesn't matter to them; all that matters is that they will reap in dollars. So, God is an unthinking computer to them, who only multiples whatever is placed before Him. How silly! It would have been funny if it was not so painful. People say the reason they have many shoes is that they used to give out shoes, or such examples. See, these are all wrong applications. God is not a computer; He knows how to reward people.

The only seed that God recognizes is the spiritual one. He checks the spirit behind the physical act. Every seed has its field, and the only seed that works in this application is a spiritual one. You cannot sow money into an offering basket and expect it to multiply any more than you can plant corn into the same basket and expect a harvest. What God recognizes is the spirit of the seed, which is the motive behind what you do.

Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
Matt 5:7

...for those who honor Me I will honor. 1 Sam 2:30

It is a spiritual seed that counts. Honour and mercy may manifest in different kinds of physical seeds. You may give a preacher money, but the seed is honour. You may give a needy person food, but the seed is compassion or love. When you give to the preaching of the gospel of Christ, the seed is faith. These are the things God will multiply. The fruit will manifest in different ways, and not necessarily with the flesh with which you planted them. The widow of Shunem honoured Elisha, and God gave her a son. She could not predict the reward. Your giving of shoes does not mean God will give you shoes back. He may choose to give you health, which is the need in your life. Let us not be silly.

The fact is that even if a seed is viable, because of the valid spirit behind it, you cannot tell what God would return it as. This is another reason you cannot successfully plant a seed for a particular harvest.

In summary, we do not give to God because of what we want to get in return.

CHAPTER 13

HOW TO RECEIVE FROM GOD



If my seed is not my key to receiving from God, then what is?

Let us see the following scriptures. Please read them carefully and note the emphasis that I have put in bold characters.

According to James:

*You do not have because you do not **ask**. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives...*

Jam 4:2-3

According to John:

*Whatever **we ask** we receive from Him, because we keep His commandments and do the things that are pleasing in His sight. 1 John 3:22*

And this is the confidence which we have before Him,

that, if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests which we have asked from Him. 1 John 5:14-15

Also, according to the Lord Jesus Himself:

Ask, and it shall be given to you... For everyone who asks receives... Matt 7:7-8

I think the answer is quite clear from these portions of the scriptures. The secret of receiving is asking—asking aright, asking in accordance with His will; the kind of asking that comes from the heart that walks in a manner pleasing to Him.

If you need something, go to the Lord in prayer; Jesus Christ has promised that you will be answered. You cannot come to God with your eyes on the 'seed' you have sown. No; the Lord never asked for such a seed ahead.

The reward that the Lord returns to you for doing the good deeds of giving is automatically discharged from Him to you; it is not the basis of His answers to your prayers. The reason He answers your prayer is purely because of His love

for you; it has nothing to do with your 'seed' planted beforehand.

A Sign of Faith

Being a habitual giver is a result of faith—indeed it is a sign of faith. For some people, however, the act of giving may signal the fact that they are now ready to trust in God rather than in riches. People in this category often have to give away a crippling amount of money. All the Lord wants is for them to come to a place of dependence on Him. At such times He probably may not care so much even if they threw the money into the river, as long as they get rid of their trust in it by getting rid of it. Their offering does not at all yield them any credit with God and He is not paying them back for it; He is responding to the faith they now have in Him.

To explain this, I like to tell the story I heard of a man who told a minister that he had been saving for many years to buy a car and yet had less than 20% of the amount needed. The minister told him to go put all the money he had saved in the offering box. He did that, and within a few months he had bought the car. God made abundance flow in his direction. What happened was that the minister helped him take his eyes away from the uncertainty of riches

and place his faith in God.

Giving can indeed be a sign of faith and failure to give is often a sign of unbelief. Sometimes a person that cannot really afford to give something may give it as a sign that the trust is now in God and not in the cash as a source of supplies. This was likely the issue with the widow and her mites* and definitely the thing with the widow of Zarephath (who we shall examine shortly). It is the faith that God is honouring and not the gift itself. God looks at the heart and not the outside.

If you look at the case of the rich young ruler that came to Jesus, the Lord wanted Him to be free of the encumbrance that money had become to him. To encourage his heart, as we mentioned earlier, He told him that the wealth was not lost but that he'll have treasure stored up in heaven. It was in following Jesus that he would find what he was looking for.

When Jesus heard this, He said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." Luke 18:22

* Luke 21:2

His giving to the poor was not what he needed to get this life. No. It was just to free him to follow Jesus; that life was in Jesus alone.

Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life... John 5:24

What that man needed was a relationship with Jesus. Many today still need this and are kept from it by reason of abundance of wealth, and in this day and age that wealth is often ill-gotten. They also need to give all the wealth away so that they may have life.

My point is that it is faith in God that is the key; giving that is valid is only a sign of that faith.

Due Season

When is the due season for the harvest?

In the natural law of sowing and reaping, this is predictable. You know the time of life for the seed you are sowing. In the law of giving and receiving, no one can determine when this will be and should not teach as if they can. The times and seasons are with the Lord. Your part is that of faithfulness, faith and patience. Patience means to continue to do what is right before the Lord no matter how long it

takes for any reward to come. Be faithful in giving and leave the rest to the Lord.

I mentioned earlier that wrong doctrines beget strange practices. Not knowing this matter of due season, people give and start counting the days before the harvest. That is absurd! I heard the story of a man who gave out a car as a 'seed'. Now, this car was not his but his brother's; the car was only in his care while his brother was away. When asked about the car, he said his cars should have started coming about that time. In fact, he was wondering why they were not yet here. His plan was to give his brother a part of the harvest. Crazy! Right? But don't blame him alone, include the fellow who preached that doctrine to him in the blame. It's all a case of wrong doctrines begetting strange practices.

Conclusion

What I have done is to show us that it is not every seed that brings a harvest. If you read that Genesis verse about seedtime and harvest in its proper context, you will notice that it was talking about unfailing seasons. It is that the seasons never fail to come. The season of harvest may come and a man who sowed seeds will have nothing to harvest.

Many things can kill a good seed.

I have tried to show that for the child of God, the surest way to kill your seed is to sow it because you want the harvest. One who gives in this manner is not at all a cheerful giver in the eyes of the Lord. True givers give out of a heart that is full of faith, empty of worries but full of love. It is a heart that is faithful to God. It is not Christian to give because you are broke and want to get, but you can give despite the fact that you are broke knowing that God is faithful. It is all a matter of attitude.

What a child of God must do in the matter of good works is to make giving a habit. It is the secret to sowing seeds that have a good harvest coming. Such a person is the one God loves. That is the cheerful giver.

Sow your seed in the morning and do not be idle in the evening, for you do not know whether morning or evening sowing will succeed, or whether both of them alike will be good. Eccl 11:6

CHAPTER 14

GOD'S LOVE AND THE CHEERFUL GIVER



When God Loves Someone

Let each one do just as he has purposed in his heart; not grudgingly or under compulsion; for God loves a cheerful giver. 2 Cor 9:7

At this point, we should study about the cheerful giver, a kind of person God loves. Let us start by looking at what it means for God to love someone; after that we will see who the cheerful giver is. Please note that to be thus specially loved by God is very desirable, and instead of us praying for God to love us so, let us just be the type of person that He loves. We must therefore strive to be that cheerful giver.

What does it mean for God to love someone?

When God loves and when a natural man loves, we have two totally different things. Man has a different mindset from God.

When a man says he loves something or someone, he has only expressed the desire to have the person or thing for himself. If I were to say to you that I love bread, you would immediately know that I love to eat bread. If a man says he loves a woman, we all understand that he wants her for himself, for example in marriage, because he feels strongly that marrying her will bring him much joy and happiness. So, basically, human love is self-centred.

God's Love

Now, God's love is different. If the Lord says that He loves something or someone, He is not thinking of Himself at all. God never seeks anything for Himself. He doesn't need anything anyway, not even the praise or worship we give. All He ever does is to seek how He can endow His blessings on the object of His love. God's love is *always* manifested by giving—an absolutely selfless type of giving.

He executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and shows His love for the alien by giving him food and clothing. Deut 10:18

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:16

Whenever He loves someone, He desires for the person to have something. This is just the way the love of God is.

He Loves a Cheerful Giver

Now, we can appreciate what it means when the word says that God loves a cheerful giver. It means He wants the cheerful giver to have some things.

It means that He gives abundantly to the cheerful giver.

It means that as the Lord lives, the cheerful giver will not lack anything. The Lord will constantly satisfy him with good things.

This person has a special place in the order of God's provisions. God indeed loves him.

I noticed from the scriptures that when the Lord loves someone, He takes bad circumstances and turns them to good for the person. Words of curses spoken in his direction are turned by the Lord into words of blessings. It is a manifestation of His love. See this here:

Nevertheless, the LORD your God was not willing to listen to Balaam, but the LORD your God turned the curse into a blessing for you because the LORD your God loves you. Deut 23:5

Balak had hired Balaam to curse the children of Israel for him. We see that Balaam could not do this because of the love that the Lord had for the people. That love made what was meant for evil to become a source of blessing for them.

Now, since He loves the cheerful giver, it means that the Lord turns situations around for him too. When people curse him, the Lord will turn those words into words of blessings. It means that there is *no weapon that is formed against him that will prosper.**

A generous person, the cheerful giver, will have events that were meant for evil turned into avenues for the delivery of good. For such a one, all things will indeed work together for good.

Why? Because the Lord loves him. Oh yes, because He loves her.

* Isa 54:17

Some Examples

Let us take an example of this love of God from the life of Solomon. When he was born, the Bible says that the Lord loved him and sent a name through the prophet Nathan.*

Jedidiah means 'beloved of the Lord'. The Lord loved him and appointed him king after his father David. The one who the Lord loves is definitely favoured before Him.

We also see that when the Lord loved Jacob, as it is written, “...*Jacob have I loved...*”, He gave him the blessing and appointed him a superior forever above his brother Esau.

This tells me that the cheerful giver, who God loves, is above only and not beneath. He, like Solomon, has been appointed by the Lord to be a ruler; he or she is a person blessed of the Lord. Like Jacob, the Lord has appointed that others will serve him. He has ordained that people will labour and gather so as to give to him. He will be seen as one upon whom the favour of God is abundantly bestowed.

Imagine walking around knowing that the Lord

* 2 Sam 12:24-25

loves you. One of the greatest things I ever heard in my life was when a man of God, who had just finished ministering a very powerful message, hugged me and said to me by the Spirit of prophecy, "the Lord loves your heart." He hardly knew me. I was blessed by that simple message. It strengthened me. It furthered my persuasion concerning the things that the Lord will be doing through me. I was glad just knowing that the Lord loved me.

By the way, who is this cheerful giver?
Can just anyone become a cheerful giver?
Am I a cheerful giver?

Not An External Assessment

...for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart. ^{**}

God's assessment and description of a person is not external; rather He looks at the inward person, which is the heart. The true person is in how the heart operates. ^{**}

* 1 Sam 16:7

** 1 Pet 3:4, Prov 23:7

So, when the Lord describes a cheerful giver, He is not describing external attributes. He does not refer to the person who laughs as he gives, or the one who dances as he goes forward in church to give an offering. It is not even the one that gives large amounts of money. Now, do not get me wrong; these attributes are good and are quite often seen in cheerful givers, however they are not the things that make the person a cheerful giver. 'Cheerful giver' is a description of the state of the heart of a person.

A person that apparently gives generously may not be a cheerful giver in the sight of the Lord, whereas one who has only given little may be seen as cheerful in His sight. God looks deep into the heart before He calls someone cheerful. Though a cheerful giver gives, he is not a cheerful giver because he gives; rather, he gives *because* he is first a cheerful giver. It is in the heart and comes from the heart. It is the invisible motives and mindsets inside the person that essentially constitute the heart.

The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good... Luke 6:45

*I, the LORD, search the heart,
I test the mind,
Even to give to each man according to his ways,
According to the results of his deeds. Jer 17:10*

You see that a man's deed does not stand by itself in the presence of the Lord but is judged in view of what is in his heart. The reason is because two very different states of heart can produce the same action. Someone may give just to help someone in need, while another may give because he thinks, "you never know tomorrow". This second one is giving to place the receiver in his debt so that he can obtain a favour in return when the need may arise. One gave in the way of the Lord while the other gave selfishly. The Lord's reaction to them will certainly be different.

Various Reasons

So, we know that people give for various reasons. Some give to assuage their conscience while others give to get a name for themselves.

So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Matt 6:2

Many Christians give because they have been taught that it is the only way to having plenty. A young lady spoke with me once, and she described how in a particular year she gave so much and suffered exceedingly as a consequence. She gave *all* she earned to her church so that she hardly had any money for food or for transportation. She survived only because of the generosity of friends. This went on for almost a whole year. I was dumbfounded and I asked why. She replied, "They told us that is how to prosper." Poor girl! She was deceived. I told her God had heard her prayers and so sent her to me for deliverance—deliverance by the knowledge of the truth.

Those who give to get are not at all cheerful givers; all they are doing is investing, and not giving. It is unfortunate that this is the way most Christians today are taught to give. They are taught that giving is to be seen primarily as sowing a seed and that they are to give so as to get a harvest. We have already seen that this is a wrong attitude.

There are yet others who give because everybody else is giving or they have been placed in a public *tight spot*. I have seen situations before in which a man of God calls people up publicly to come and

declare what they will 'give to the Lord' and I have been a victim myself. At such times, many will give just because they have been essentially ambushed.

See, when we are giving, only the Lord can really tell who is really giving with the right attitude. God is not mocked; He sees the heart of everyone and responds to their actions according to what is in their hearts.

Remember that there is only one type of giver that the Lord loves—the cheerful giver.

The Cheerful Giver

A cheerful giver is a person whose giving is motivated by the love of God, love towards others, concern for good causes, and faith in the promises of God. A cheerful giver is the one who sees himself as an instrument in the hands of God, knows that all good things actually come from God, and that he or she is only a custodian of God's goods. He gives because of his faith, which means that he has trust that God is taking care of everything about his own life. He is not afraid of tomorrow.

Grace and Truth, the Basis of Cheerfulness

Being a cheerful giver is a result of the transformation of the heart. One thing that characterizes true Christianity is that God puts the desire to please Him and the ability to do so in the hearts of His people.

And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

Ezek 11:19-20

The people will not merely obey laws, commandments and ordinances, but their hearts will love the things of God. That is the working of grace. Grace is the power to do the will of God.

When the heart has been made right, the right actions will come forth easily. True worship cannot come unless the heart is changed. That is the meaning of worshiping in spirit and in truth.* In this form of worship, all the acts of worship, including giving, are done *freely* from the heart.

* John 4:24

Making laws on giving cannot produce cheerful givers. Making proportions such as the tithe compulsory does not produce cheerful givers.

For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ. John 1:17

The way of the Lord is to teach people the truths of God and give them the grace to follow the truth. It is called writing His laws upon their hearts.* The Spirit reprograms the heart of the believer with the word of God until his own thoughts, desires and attributes are exactly like that of the Lord Jesus Himself. The result is that he does the will of God naturally, without any compulsion.

Effective Grace

A cheerful giver is the child of God who the Spirit of God has done this work of grace on the heart. Now he has the character and disposition of God, and so gives readily without reservations.

This state of the heart is based upon the understanding of the word. The person gives because it is a nature and he or she cannot do

* Jer 31:33

otherwise. Giving flows out spontaneously. He does not just give; he has become a *giver*. 'Giver' is a description for his new personality in Christ. You are not calling him a giver because of his giving but because the nature of Christ is in him. With this nature, he responds easily with liberality if the need to give arises.

CHAPTER 15

CHEERFUL GIVERS AND THE WORK OF FAITH



Receivers and Takers

In this life, most people are essentially the opposite of givers—they are receivers. Among these, some are even worse than being just receivers—they are *takers*. They are forever taking from people.

Most people only want to add to what they have already, while holding tightly to what is in their hands. They believe that other people should give to them. Spiritually, such people repel blessings, and the Lord is not pleased with them.

A giver, on the other hand, seems to always discover avenues by which he can be a blessing. He is thankful for what he has. He does not feel disadvantaged or inferior. He appreciates the mercy the Lord has shown to him in what he has.

He is always full of thanksgiving and for this reason he is forever ready to share.

A cheerful giver has a mentality that he is above only and not beneath, and so is liberal in giving. He has that above-only mentality. He is not a beggar; he is a giver.

A giver may also receive, but he is never a taker. He attracts blessings because the Lord loves him.

Being a giver is not dependent on what one has; it is a nature formed by the Spirit of Christ. The acts of giving is the effect of being a *giver*.

Confidence in God

A cheerful giver is not afraid of tomorrow, and this is because he knows that the Greater One is in him. He understands that God is greater than the circumstances that may try to come against him. He knows the words of the Lord Jesus, that the heavenly Father will certainly take care of him. He knows that the Lord will supply all his needs according to God's riches in glory. He knows that the Lord will not withhold any good thing from them that walk uprightly. He understands that it is

the Lord alone that can give him the power to get wealth.*

See, a true giver is a person of faith and hope—always looking forward to the fulfilment of God's promises. A true giver trusts everything the Lord has said, and for that reason has a firm expectation of great things coming. He gives because there is no fear of tomorrow. He knows that there is 'seed for the sower' and also 'bread for food' in everything that the Lord brings into his hands. He knows that handling these things well will cause grace to abound towards him, so that having all sufficiency in all things he will abound to every good work.

He scattered abroad, he gave to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. 2 Cor 9:9

God will multiply his seed for sowing and increase the harvest of his righteous deeds of liberal giving.

Now He who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food, will supply and multiply your seed for sowing and increase the harvest of your righteousness; you will be enriched in everything for all liberality, which through

* 1 John 4:4, Phil 4:19, Psa 84:11, Deut 8:18

us is producing thanksgiving to God. 2 Cor 9:10-11

All these things are in the heart of the giver. He cannot help but give.

Not a Business Transaction

A cheerful giver does not play 'give and receive', which is an unfortunate habit of a lot of Christians these days. This sad habit is a result of faulty instruction. Many people give because they want to receive from God in return. Their motivation is their own selfish interest and not the interest of others. They are actually *receivers* pretending to be givers. A true and cheerful giver is not like that—he or she is just a faithful servant of his master, Jesus. Giving is a lifestyle to them, and not a way of getting their needs met.

A real giver knows that the God, who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for a sinful humanity, will much more freely give His children all things. He believes the words of Jesus, that the Father knows all he needs before he even asks, and he knows that the Father will supply all those needs. For this reason, giving to get is far beneath him. He knows that when he needs something from the Father, all he has to do is ask, and according to

the promise of Jesus, he will receive.* This is why he ties nothing to his gifts—it is not necessary; he just loves the Lord.

I have described above the kind of person who is a cheerful giver in the sight of the Lord. Whether he dances or not as he gives his offering is not the matter here; what matters is that faith in his heart which makes him faithful in administering the Lord's substance. This is what makes him give gladly!

The Promises and Faith

We see therefore that you can only be a cheerful giver when you have received the promises of God and mixed them with faith in your heart. Cheerful giving is a consequence of your absolute trust in the word of God. Only a person of faith can be a cheerful giver. The faith produces rest in the heart of the giver about his tomorrow and so he is generous with what he has right now. By faith he accepts the responsibility of being a servant, faithfully distributing the Lord's substance. The cheerfulness is not an effort in trying to please the Lord; it is a natural outflow of the faith. Such giving is called a *work of faith*.

* Rom 8:32, Matt 6:8, John 16:24

We give thanks to God always for all of you, making mention of you in our prayers; constantly bearing in mind your work of faith and labor of love and steadfastness of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ...

1 Thes 1:2-3

God rewards works of faith. When Abraham sacrificed Isaac, it was a work of faith. We understand from the scriptures that he did it because he had the promise that his descendants would come through Isaac. So, he considered that God was able to raise him up from the dead even if the young man had to die.* It was a work of faith, and it caused the Lord to swear to bless him.

By Myself I have sworn, declares the LORD, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice. Gen 22:16-18

When the widow of Zarephath gave to the prophet, Elijah, it was also a work of faith. She was

* Heb 11:17-19

responding in obedience to a word that the prophet brought to her.

Then Elijah said to her, "Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first, and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. For thus says the LORD God of Israel, 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.'" 1 Kgs 17:13-14

It is important to note that she was responding to the thus-says-the-Lord from Elijah. Her giving to him was proof that she accepted that word of God. It was a work of faith. It was not just about giving and hoping to receive, but a response to the word of God. God rewards actions of faith.

Anytime God makes a demand on you by His word and you obey, it is called the work of faith. This widow believed the prophet of God and she prospered.*

Labour of Love

We have already seen that love is a major valid motivation for giving.

* Note also that there is also the labour of love in that widow's gift. For more on this, please see my book '*Great Faith Can Be Yours*'.

Love is one of those qualities of the heart that can only be shown by the actions that are produced from it. The labour of love is that which is done just to help someone who is in need. It is that which you do because of your desire to positively touch someone's life. Anyone who is giving because his hope is to have his so-called seed multiplied in return is practising the *labour of selfishness*. Such a one is giving only to receive without focusing on being a blessing.

A cheerful giver labours for love's sake. That was what Abraham did when he entertained angels without realizing it. He simply saw people in need and rose to the occasion. It was later that he realized that it was the Lord on his way to Sodom and Gomorrah. The Bible encourages us to entertain strangers for this reason.

Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for by this some have entertained angels without knowing it.
Heb 13:2

A cheerful giver gives to a poor person just for the sake of blessing the person's life. He helps a lost one find the way. He defends a defenceless person. He finds it hard to pass a person in need without

offering the help that he can give. Jesus was such a person; He often saw the needy and was moved by compassion.

The labour of love, together with the work of faith, is what the Lord rewards.

False Hope Corrupts Good Works

Just as faith is the confidence that stimulates giving, a major reason why many people cannot give is because of fear—the fear of tomorrow. They feel like what they have is part of their security for the coming uncertain days. Some people, after an imbalanced teaching, only begin to give so that their 'seed' of today can multiply for them tomorrow. Their action is still born out of the need to personally make tomorrow secure. We need to be delivered from all these.

See this:

Instruct those who are rich in this present world not to be conceited or to fix their hope on the uncertainty of riches, but on God, who richly supplies us with all things to enjoy. Instruct them to do good, to be rich in good works, to be generous and ready to share, storing up for themselves the treasure of a good foundation for the

future, so that they may take hold of that which is life indeed. 1 Tim 6:17-19

In this instruction of Paul to Timothy is a wealth of revelation.

The main instruction is in the first verse, followed by explanations. The main thing is that men must be careful not to set their hope on material things, which are uncertain, but to be careful to place their trust only on God. Remember that hope is a product of faith. If anyone really has his hope in God, doing good works and generosity will come out of the person naturally and without effort. As we have already seen, that is what makes a cheerful giver.

Notice that this came as a result of the fact that hope is set on God and not on those material things that the fellow possesses. Hope is a person's expectation. It is a result of evidence or information believed.

The wealth that a man has speaks to him; it tells him what his future will be like. If he is a rich person, it tells him to relax and be merry. It tells him that he has enough stored up for the future. He has

enormous stocks, bonds, businesses and real estate. He therefore says in his prosperity, “I will never be moved.”* That is, his hope is derived from the voice of his laid-up riches. This is why he holds on to what he has laid up, and sets his mind on laying up more. You don't blame him — this is his security.

He has forgotten that, *...moth and rust destroy, and thieves break in and steal, and that, the grass withers, the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.***

There is nothing that a man can have on the earth that can guarantee him a future. Physical things are by nature undependable. As a child of God, you must realize that it is only in the Lord that you have security.

So, here Paul was pointing them to that word of God. The word has its own voice, and whatever it says cannot ever fail. Paul was warning that the wealth stored on the earth is uncertain, and that hope must be placed in God.

What has God said that we must put our trust in and build our expectation on?

* Psa 30:6

** Matt 6:19, Isa 40:8

O fear the LORD, you His saints; for to those who fear Him, there is no want. The young lions do lack and suffer hunger; but they who seek the LORD shall not be in want of any good thing. Psa 34:9-10

I believe this word; it gives me confidence for the future; I am not afraid. He has said, *“do not worry about tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”**

This is the reason I can relax. Jesus is saying here that the Father will take care of all that I may ever need. I do not need to worry. I do not need to lay up treasure on this earth. I have confidence in God. This expectation can never fail. The hope placed on physical possessions may fail, but my God will never fail.

I believe this. God is pleased with anyone who believes it. He loves such a person.

Now, because I believe this, I am able to understand that God has sent me enough for the present needs and responsibilities. In what He has sent, there is seed for me to sow, and there is bread for my food.

* Matt 6:34

So, I give what I am to give, and enjoy what I am to enjoy.

Note that my faith in the word of God and the hope I have in Him is the reason for my generosity. It is just natural because fear has been ejected by the word of God.

I no longer struggle to hold things back; I have become a cheerful giver because of faith.

A Testimony

Inability to give freely is a sign of lack of faith. I remember then when I was planning for my wedding and at the same time preparing for the finals in my residency training, I had a great need for finances, far above what I was earning and above what I could expect from things around me. At that time, I was doing what every average person would do—holding on to all I had. I restrained both my giving and everyday expenditure. Then the Lord opened my eyes to this understanding; I realized that what I had been doing in effect was trusting in my own physical resources, which Paul called uncertain riches; I was not trusting in God. I may have been praying, but there was much unbelief in the picture.

As soon as I realized this, I immediately took of the money I had gathered and began to give out. No, I was not sowing seeds so that God could multiply them; it was just that I realized that I had been trusting in my physical resources instead of in God. I even gave myself a treat. As soon as I truly cast my burdens upon Him and started trusting Him to take care, I no longer needed all the money. He met every need with His wisdom.

This is the issue with the child of God and generosity. It is born out of many factors, one of which is the fact that you have the Father's promise for taking care of tomorrow. This is why we have no fear; we have confidence that great abundance is coming and so holding on to the little presently in our hands today is nothing but stupidity. You will only do that if you do not think that the Lord is faithful.

So, we see that inability to freely give is a demonstration of our lack of faith in the promises of the Lord. Your faith in the word of God concerning your tomorrow is what will cause you to be generous today. If you want to see the Christian that does not believe in and is not waiting for the

blessing of God, look for the one that cannot freely give.

You cannot separate your faith from your ability to give freely. It follows therefore that your giving life is a way by which you can assess your own faith. You cannot assess your faith using the amount of knowledge you have; James said that it is possible to deceive yourself if you judge based upon what you have heard.* All knowledge does is to puff you up and deceive you into thinking you believe what you really don't. The only way by which you can know what you really believe is by your actions.

* Jam 1:22

THE ART OF GIVING TO GOD – 1



We have already seen that we must be rich towards God, and we have come to understand the proper motives for giving to God. Now we must go on to examine the practical aspects of giving to God.

We must note, as we start looking at this, that though giving to God definitely involves giving in church, to a preacher, or in any other ministry-related area, it is not limited to those. We should not give only where we think God sees it, in 'the house of God', because He is actually everywhere and sees everything.

Obedience

Another crucial point we must note also is that, in the real sense, the only thing that we can give to God is obedience.

God does not like surprises. It is only a human being that we can impress with a surprise package. The only thing that God accepts is what He commanded that we should give to Him. He is not hungry; He is not in need and is not looking for anyone to impress Him with something they can cook up.

For every beast of the forest is Mine, the cattle on a thousand hills. I know every bird of the mountains, and everything that moves in the field is Mine. If I were hungry, I would not tell you; for the world is Mine, and all it contains. Shall I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of male goats? Psa 50:10-13

Any gift that will be pleasing to Him must be given in accordance with His instructions. It is obedience that actually pleases Him.

Please recall the case of Saul, how the Lord instructed him to totally destroy the Amalekites and their goods. Remember that he decided to save some things because, according to him, he wanted to sacrifice them to the Lord. Samuel replied to him thus:

Has the LORD as much delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the LORD? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed than the fat of rams. 1 Sam 15:22

The word of God is therefore the guide to giving. We must discover from His word what to give and offer our gifts as prescribed. We cannot just give things because we feel like it or because an average person would appreciate such a gift; it must be according to the prescription of the scriptures.

An interesting story in the Bible comes to mind to illustrate the importance of following the scriptures in everything. It is about the death of Uzzah, a man who died trying to help God but who was not careful to follow the prescription of the scriptures.

David was trying to bring the ark of the Lord back to its proper place. Now, in bringing the ark of the Lord, he did what he thought was befitting of God, as we often say — He built a new cart for it.

They carried the ark of God on the new cart from the house of Abinadab; Uzza and Ahio drove the cart. Everyone was celebrating, but...

When they came to the threshing floor of Chidon, Uzza put out his hand to hold the ark, because the oxen nearly upset it. And the anger of the LORD burned against Uzza, so He struck him down because he put out his hand to the ark; and he died there before God. Then David became angry because of the LORD'S outburst against Uzza; and he called that place Perez-uzza to this day.

1 Chr 13:9-11

Now despite all the dancing and the fact that they made a brand-new cart for the ark, things still went terribly wrong. Why? It was simply because they didn't do as God said they should. They felt they could impress God with their own generous way. See, God never asked for beautiful vehicles to carry this ark. David took instruction after this sad incident.

*David called in the priests Zadok and Abiathar and the six Levites... He said to the Levites, "You are the leaders of the Levite clans. Purify yourselves and your fellow Levites, so that you can bring the ark of the Lord to the place I have prepared for it. Because you were not there to carry it the first time, the Lord our God punished us for not worshiping him as we should have done."**

* 1 Chr 15:11-13. Taken from GNT; slightly modified for consistency of the chapter.

The ark was supposed to be carried on the shoulders of Levites, and not on a new cart.

The lesson for us again is this: you do not give God just as you please but rather as He ordained.

Here is How

Let us now see the ways by which the Lord said we are to give to Him as His children. I am quite aware that things like praise and thanksgiving are gifts unto the Lord but here our focus is on giving of material things.

The various ways of giving to God are as follows.

1. The Work of Ministry

Whenever the work of propagating the gospel is being done, giving to it is giving to God. Even under the Old Covenant, building the tabernacles of worship and the temple of God has always been by the freewill gifts of the people. Here is an example:

And some of the heads of fathers' households, when they arrived at the house of the LORD which is in Jerusalem, offered willingly for the house of God to restore it on its foundation. According to their ability they gave to the

treasury for the work 61,000 gold drachmas, and 5,000 silver minas, and 100 priestly garments. Ezra 2:68-69

Remember that in the building of the tabernacle in the wilderness, the Lord commanded Moses to receive gifts from the people to do the work.

Take from among you a contribution to the LORD; whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as the LORD'S contribution: gold, silver, and bronze (etc). Exo 35:5

In this case the people gave so much that the workmen begged Moses to order them to stop, as the giving had begun to disrupt the work.

Also, David gave generously and collected generous contributions in preparation for the building of the temple. David described this contribution as people giving themselves to the Lord.*

The work of building the temple in this dispensation of the New Covenant is the spreading of the gospel of Jesus and the building up of the saints of God. The growth of the temple of God on

* 1 Chrn 29:1-5

the earth, which is the body of Christ, is by the preaching of the word for the conversion of sinners. Also, it involves the preaching and teaching of that same word for the building up of the saints. The Lord has no personal need for your money and material things but these things are needed to do this work of God on the earth. Every believer must therefore be actively involved in supporting both evangelism and activities that build up the people of God with the word. Whenever you give towards these purposes, you are giving to the Lord.

You will notice that the Philippian church used to support the missionary work of Paul and were commended for it.

As you know, you Philippians were the only ones who gave me financial help when I first brought you the Good News and then traveled on from Macedonia. No other church did this. Even when I was in Thessalonica you sent help more than once. Phil 4:15-16 NLT

Notice that he related the matter of giving here to the preaching of the gospel. They remembered him when nobody else did and were concerned about his needs. They used to send to him though he did not ask for it; they understood the ordinance of

God. He called their contribution a sweet-smelling sacrifice to God.

At the moment I have all I need—and more! I am generously supplied with the gifts you sent me with Epaphroditus. They are a sweet-smelling sacrifice that is acceptable and pleasing to God. Phil 4:18 NLT

It was in response to this kind of dedication to the Lord that Paul wrote that very famous line, that “*My God will supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*”

It is a fact that every work of God has a reward. The reward tied to the ministry of preaching is not given only to the preacher who does the main work but is also shared with those who sponsor the work. This is what is also known as the prophet's reward. A prophet's reward does not belong to the prophet alone but also to those who give to the prophet in support of prophetic office and work of ministry.* A wise person will connect with as many rewards as is practical for him or her to connect with, so to speak. The easy way to do this is to give once and again to these things.

* Matt10:41

2. Ministers of God

Closely related to giving to the work of the ministry is giving to the minister of the work. The ministers of God are as important as the work they are doing.

Please be aware that ministry is work. We must be careful not to see it as a hobby or pastime. God commanded that they should be adequately recompensed for this by the saints. It is a fact that preachers often have other things they engage in besides preaching in trying to make ends meet, and you can hardly fault them for this, but the word of God tells us clearly that the ministers should still be rewarded materially for the work of preaching.

The Lord has ordained that wages of preachers will come as freewill offerings of the people to whom they are ministering. For you to give to them is actually a duty you owe to God and not something you do because you just like to. If you are not doing it, you are being disobedient and are missing out of the blessing of God. If a minister has been a blessing to you, then return to him a gift of material things. Do it again and again; you will be blessed for it.

How was Jesus sustained in His ministry on the earth? He and His disciples did not survive on

miraculously caught draughts of fish or multiplied bread all the time. See, miracles are not normal ways of living but emergency measures for crisis situations. Jesus lived a normal life as people gave to Him and His disciples because they were ministers of the gospel.

...many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means. Luke 8:3

Whenever someone is on assignment from God and you give to that person, you are giving to God. If God were hungry, He would not tell you, but when His messengers are, He usually requires that someone gives to them.

"He who receives you receives Me, and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me. He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he who receives a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. And whoever in the name of a disciple gives to one of these little ones even a cup of cold water to drink, truly I say to you he shall not lose his reward." Matt 10:40-42

When Jesus sent out His disciples to preach, He talked about their sustenance as a right. They were

to be taken care of by those who would recognize them as ministers of God. He told them, *“Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages.”**

As I mentioned earlier, there is always a reward tied to any discharge of the work of the ministry; that 'prophet's reward' is for everyone who partakes in the discharge of that assignment, both the prophet and those who give to him.

The story of the Shunammite woman in 2 Kings Chapter 4 illustrates it well. This woman used to invite Elisha the prophet and his company into her home for meals. At a time, she persuaded her husband to erect an extra room in the house to serve as the prophet's guest apartment. She did all these because she felt that he was a man of God. In speaking to her husband, she said, *“Behold now, I perceive that this is a holy man of God passing by us continually”*. In the words of Jesus, she received him *in the name of a prophet*. This provoked a divine response through the prophet and she received a son as her portion of the prophet's reward.

* Luke 10:7

There are a lot of blessings attached to giving to a man on the Lord's assignment.

Please Pay Them

Let me state this again that preaching is a job that is deserving of remuneration and children of God should learn to honour ministers. Paul had to tackle this question at a time to settle the issue of ministers, secular jobs and their rights to the support of the saints. Here is a quote of what he said.

Or do only Barnabas and I not have a right to refrain from working? Who at any time serves as a soldier at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard, and does not eat the fruit of it? Or who tends a flock and does not use the milk of the flock? I am not speaking these things according to human judgment, am I? Or does not the Law also say these things? For it is written in the Law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing." ...Yes, for our sake it was written, because the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops. If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we should reap material things from you? 1 Cor 9:6-11

This thing Paul was talking about comes up again and again, even today. I have had several

arguments with people who feel that ministers should get a secular job. I always say that those kinds of thoughts mean that they do not consider preaching as work, and that is a very unfortunate posture for Christians. Even in the secular world, those who speak publicly and teach others are well rewarded for their activities. Why should Christians think less of those who preach and teach the word of God.

Paul's argument is clear—God has ordained that ministers of the gospel should see their ministrations as working and should expect to get 'paid' for it. This is what is meant by *“the plowman ought to plow in hope, and the thresher to thresh in hope of sharing the crops.”* It is a matter of right.

Now, there were times that he and his co-workers took up secular jobs, but it was a matter of forgoing their rights, just like they refused to marry. Paul explained that the times he and his co-workers did those secular jobs, they did so for special reasons. The reasons included the fact that the mission field was new and the people did not yet understand their role in supporting the ministers. Also, they wanted to teach certain principles. Where people understood, they did no such thing. We saw earlier

that he gladly received support from the Philippian church. It is wrong of people to take Paul's sporadic cases of doing secular jobs and set it as a standard for all ministers.

See, anyone who blesses you and you can have access to should receive an offering from you. You are not giving to him because he is in need but because he has given you the word of God.

If we sowed spiritual things in you, is it too much if we reap material things from you? 1 Cor 9:11

Friends, let us learn to give to ministers of the gospel; most of them are too cool and decent to demand their rights, but we must learn it. Give to any minister you know is doing the work of God, especially the ones who have blessed you. When you give to them, give them a substance of honour and not crumbs. (I'll explain the difference later.)*

For they went out for the sake of the Name, accepting nothing from the Gentiles. Therefore we ought to support such men, that we may be fellow workers with the truth. 3 John, vs 7, 8

* For more on the matter of giving to ministry and ministers, please read my book, 'So, Who Will Pay For This?'

CHAPTER 17

THE ART OF GIVING TO GOD – 2



Now, the forms of giving to the Lord we examined in the previous chapter are very important, and most Christians know much about them. There is much teaching along those lines in our churches. But there are more ways to give to God.

3. The Needy

Giving to the needy is also very important when we are giving to God. In fact, the Lord emphasized it again and again.

The Bible makes us understand that the Lord is very concerned about the ones who have no human help. Many of these persons come under the labels of widows, orphans and strangers; the Lord considers them His personal responsibility. For this reason, He considers gifts given to them as having

been given directly to Him, and offences against them as having been done against Him, especially when the offences were done because the offender sees that they have no apparent defence.

A father of the fatherless and a judge for the widows, is God in His holy habitation. Psa 68:5

The LORD protects the strangers; He supports the fatherless and the widow. Psa 146:9

One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the LORD, and He will repay him for his good deed. Prov 19:17

We need to know that whatever we do for the poor is something that we are offering to the Lord. God has always been concerned about the poor. In the Law, He gave specific prescriptions concerning how to keep them sustained. In fact, a large portion of the tithes that the Jews were meant to pay were to be kept for the stranger, the widow and the orphan. The tithes were mostly for the poor and needy. As we will see later, anyone giving to the poor is already practising the spirit of the tithe, even if he or she is not legalistically calculating a tenth of their income.

There was a teaching going around at a time saying that giving to ministers and the work of the ministry is the only one that profits, that giving to the poor doesn't. The error was founded on the principle that *the lesser is blessed by the greater*.^{*} Unfortunately, these teachers overlook the fact that it is not the poor you are actually giving to but the Lord Himself.

*One who is gracious to a poor man lends to the Lord,
And He will repay him for his good deed. Prov 19:17*

We can all agree that He is great enough to bless anyone. He indeed blesses those who give to the poor.

*He who is generous will be blessed, for he gives some of
his food to the poor. Prov 22:9*

*He who gives to the poor will never want,
But he who shuts his eyes will have many curses.
Prov 28:27*

The money you give to motherless babies' homes, old people's homes and to sponsor a poor child's

^{*} Heb 7:7

schooling are all given to the Lord and are not inferior to giving to the work of ministry.

"Then the King will say to those on His right, 'Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. 'For I was hungry, and you gave Me something to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger, and you invited Me in...' Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, 'Lord, when did we...' And the King will answer and say to them, 'Truly I say to you, to the extent that you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, even the least of them, you did it to Me.' Matt 25:34-40

4. Parents and Family

I should point out that any money or material thing that you give as you fulfil the duties that the Lord has placed in your hands is actually given to the Lord. Remember we said that obedience is the actual offering we give to Him. If the Lord gives you a commandment to do something and doing it costs you money, that money is an offering you have given to God.

As an example, I am called as a teacher of the gospel. Many times I travel to go preach at my own expense and receive, voluntarily, nothing from the

people I go to minister to, or what they give is too little to cover my cost; the money I spend on such journeys are offerings to the Lord. It is giving to the work of God. Once it is done without complaining, I know that the offering is acceptable to Him.

In this same vein, when God commands you to take up a responsibility, the cost is an offering to God. For example, He commands that you are to honour your father and mother. Jesus interprets honour to include giving; He condemned the practice of some people who use the excuse of vowing what they have to God to not give to their parents. He said they were cancelling the word of God by those practices.

You skillfully sidestep God's law in order to hold on to your own tradition. For instance, Moses gave you this law from God: 'Honor your father and mother,... But you say it is all right for people to say to their parents, 'Sorry, I can't help you. For I have vowed to give to God what I would have given to you.' Mark 7:9-11 NLT

As far as the Lord is concerned, what you give to your parents is a sign of honour and is a gift to God too. Whatever you give to your parents as you sensibly* meet their needs is given to God.

This same principle also applies to providing for your household. It is important that you know that the care of your household is a ministry that you have received from the Lord and you must fulfil it.

I have outlined these so that we can be careful to do the real work of God.

5. Turning Back

There is one interesting way of giving to the Lord that most people overlook. Most do not realize that He actually demands that we do it. It is as follow:

When God uses someone to bless you, one of the ways you thank God is by giving to the person so used by God. Whenever you receive a material blessing or increase in your life and it comes through the effort or anointing of someone that God sent to help you, the contact you have with God when it comes to thanking Him is *first* that person He used.

Now, this is not that you are not recognizing that it is God that was really at work while using the

* I have used the word 'sensibly' because I have heard of parents who needlessly constitute themselves into heavy loads for the children to carry, making excessive demands on them; this is not what the Lord is supporting.

person, but since you cannot see God and you want to give to Him, then the person that He used is a place to contact God. Please be careful not to confuse this with trying to pay back people for their effort in blessing you. We must be careful to allow God reward the people. It is important that we learn to receive blessings without feeling indebted to the human agents of God's blessing for life. With this in view, we must still be careful to show gratitude to God by going back to the place of the release of blessings. Notice that Jacob returned to Bethel where God had appeared to him. There is something about going back to say thank you to the Lord in that place He blessed you from.

I noticed this from the response of Jesus when a leper He had just healed came to thank Him. Now, this fellow was just one of the ten healed.

Now one of them, when he saw that he had been healed, turned back, glorifying God with a loud voice, and he fell on his face at His feet, giving thanks to Him. And he was a Samaritan. And Jesus answered and said, "Were there not ten cleansed? But the nine – where are they? Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?" Luke 17:15-18

Now, we can see that the main issue here was that of giving God glory. But how was the Lord sure that the other nine were not somewhere rejoicing and testifying to the glory of God? Well, the fact is that *that* would not have been enough. The Lord's emphasis was not just on *giving God glory* but on *turning back* to do it.

"Was no one found who turned back to give glory to God, except this foreigner?"

In my book, *Great Faith Can Be Yours*, I told a story about a man of God who was called upon to minister to a little girl who had been given up to die by the leading specialist hospital in the country at that time. The poor girl had been sent home. He prayed daily for about a week for this child until she was totally made whole. I heard him tell that story; the concluding part of it was that the child's parents, who were Muslims, never came to see him to say thank you.

People who do not understand divine order will wonder what he needed the thank you for, seeing that all the glory belongs to God and the instrument of God should want no part in it. Unfortunately, that is only partially true; the fact that they did not

turn back to give God glory makes us wonder if they gave Him any glory at all!

With God, the turning back is important; it is not about the man of God but about their own faith. Total wholeness comes from giving the appropriate glory, and in this child's parents' case, they should have gone back to the instrument used by God and appreciated the God in him. They were like the Pharisees of old, who were ashamed to be seen with Jesus.

Please remember that this is not about paying the agent of God's blessing for his services; it is about saying thank you to God. When you have to give material things, it does not have to be commensurate with the effort he or she put in on your behalf; it should be according to the blessing you have received and according to your ability.

Tradition and First Fruits

There is a practice that is traditional in parts of Nigeria which I pray we never lose. The spiritual concept behind it is what I am expounding here.

It is customary for a young man or woman to give the first wage earned (usually the first month's

salary) in its entirety to the parents; some share it with uncles and aunts. I believe it is a good thing to use this to acknowledge the people that God blessed you through. I do not believe it is right to take that money anywhere else, not even your church, maybe except for a small portion. The correct order is that the money should be shared among those who the Lord used to bring that person to that position in life; chief of these are the parents and guardians who undertook the upbringing and sponsorship of the person up till that point. Pastors should please keep their hands off it in most cases.

Many young people do not know this, so their first salaries are used to buy clothes, smartphones, home gadgets and such things as to satisfy their personal desires. No, it is not right; the first fruits of your increase should be given out to honour God, and you do this by sharing it with the people that God used to bring the increase your way.

There were people who upheld you with the word of God when you were struggling; you must remember them. Remember those who took you in and fed you when you were engaged in life's

battles. Now that you have settled on your firm ground, you must turn back to those places and offer an offering to God on those altars.

Your father or uncle who paid your way through school is more deserving of your first salary than your church which you joined just a year ago. Please remember to give what is appropriate to each person. I recommend that you prayerfully share those increases among all the people concerned. For the rich man who helped you and whose cash portion may appear small, buy him a bottle of perfume or a suit of clothes; add a card containing a note of gratitude. It is good; you are by this giving to God.

6. You

Last on the line, sometimes giving to yourself is pure giving to the Lord.

Furthermore, as for every man to whom God has given riches and wealth, He has also empowered him to eat from them and to receive his reward and rejoice in his labor; this is the gift of God. Eccl 5:19

I read a story once about two ministers of the gospel who met at a train station; they got acquainted

while waiting for the train. When the train arrived, one moved towards the first-class sleeping coach while the other moved towards the economy coach. They were each amazed at the movement of the other. The more 'prudent' one, who was heading for the economy coach, said to the other, "I am taking care of the Lord's money", and the other replied, "I am taking care of the Lord's servant." That is wisdom.

The LORD be magnified, who delights in the prosperity of His servant. Psa 35:27

The Lord indeed wants you to enjoy life and you will be doing God service if you use some of the money He has given you to do just that, among other things.

THE GIVING LIFESTYLE - 1



It is More Blessed

I believe one of the main purposes of this book is to get us all as believers into the giving lifestyle. Jesus said that it is a better way to live. It is better to be on the giving side.

In everything I showed you that by working hard in this manner you must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He Himself said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Acts 20:35

You have to bear in mind that God's ways are very different from and much higher than man's ways. This means that He does not see as we see. We need to learn to see as He sees. To anyone who has not been taught by God, it is a better thing to receive than to give; after all what you give is taken away from you while what you receive is added to you. But to the one who has learned to see things the way

God does, he knows that what he receives is indeed added to him but that which he gives creates a spiritual addition. The spiritual addition is far better than the material addition.

Notice that Jesus did not just say it is better to give, but that it is *more blessed*. A blessing is the empowerment to succeed. It is a spiritual substance which confers upon a person the power of fruitfulness and productivity. What Jesus is telling us here is that the giver has more spiritual power than the receiver.

A blessing does not only affect your finances but also other parts of your life. It affects your health; it affects your marriage; it affects the health and progress of your children. The man that receives a material thing has become more abundant, howbeit temporarily, in just that one area. For example, if he received money, he has only gotten more money. But the one who gives will receive a blessing, and this covers many more areas. This is why it is more blessed to give than to receive.

So you see that only an ignorant person will prefer receiving to giving.

I have chosen to be a giver.

We have seen that to be a cheerful giver is an attitude that goes beyond just the act of giving. A giver has a giving outlook to life; this outlook is driven both by the spirit and by understanding. He sees an opportunity to give when most people see only an avenue for receiving. For this cause he or she is always giving. Let us here see some of the practices of giving that characterize the life of the giver.

What Do You Give to Who?

It is important to understand what exactly the Lord expects us to give to various persons. In the previous chapter, I explained the various places through which we may give to God, but at this point I wish to explain what belongs to each place.

Sometime ago, a lady told me that because she believes in giving her best to God, when a collection of material things was being taken for refugees, she gave her best pair of shoes. Her reason was that only the best is good enough for the Lord. I thought about it, and I came to the conclusion that *that* was not necessary. You see, giving is not about our sense of accomplishment but about helping the

person who needs it. A refugee is unlikely to be interested in a pair of fancy shoes that cannot withstand living rough. People need to be reminded that giving is not primarily about them but about the person receiving.

You have to know *what* to give to *who*. The Lord Jesus said, pearls are not for swine, and holy things are not for dogs.* I am not calling anyone a pig or a dog, but I have chosen those words of the Lord Jesus to show that certain things belong to certain places. We must learn what is appropriate to give under different situations.

In the Case of Beggars

Let us take a case of beggars. I learnt from reading through the scriptures that I am only required to give 'crumbs' to beggars. The Lord does not require more than that when it comes to giving to those who have made a *profession* of begging.

And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores, and desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table...

Luke 16:20-21 KJV

* Matt 7:6

Crumbs are those things that are so little relative to all that you have that you do not feel their departure from you. In common language, we call them 'change'. Of course, there may be situations that will make you do more, but the *general rule* is what I am taking about. You may also allow beggars to take some of your gleanings, such as old clothes. Gleanings, in my understanding and personal practice, are different from crumbs, and are not meant primarily for beggars, but one may occasionally allow them have of them.

A beggar begs from many and is therefore not your full responsibility; you are to give to him a little portion of the whole lot. You are not required to solve all his problems; if you try to do it you will only wear yourself out. A real beggar has no plan to stop begging no matter what you give him. To a beggar, begging is the work.

One thing you must not try to do in life is to carry the responsibility that the Lord does not require of you to carry. A lot of times we forget that we are but men and do not have *all power* in our hands. All you should do is what you *can* do and not what you will *like* to see done. If you desire to do much and you

find that it is only a little that you can, then that is all that the Lord requires of you.

There was this church in Lagos that would pack a large lunch once in a while and go to feed the homeless and the destitute on the streets. One day, the pastor of the church was being interviewed on a TV show; one of the callers wanted to know what the church was doing about getting the people off the streets rather than just giving them lunch. That is often the reaction you get from people who think they know how to do things better, but who are doing nothing. Feeding a homeless man occasionally is totally different from resettling him in life. God was happy with what that church was doing; the job of the homeless was obviously not theirs. Even our Lord used to do a similar thing by giving to the poor. The only other thing He did for them was to preach the gospel to them. He never tried to get beggars off the streets—it was not part of His assignment.

We tend to think sometimes that we can make a poor man rich just by deciding to. No, you can't; poverty is far deeper than the lack of money. You can help a person who is in acute financial trouble to come out of it; but a chronic beggar can only be delivered by the Spirit of God through the infusion

of the word. Those who love to beg will continue to do so until you get that begging thing out of them.

Several times in the past, I have had fit and agile young people come to me begging, and when I ask why they are not working, they tell me they couldn't get a job. Well, I never buy that argument because I am of the opinion that if you could descend to the level of begging, then you should have been ready to take just about any job. Any job is most certainly more honourable than begging, and if you are willing to do any job, you will most certainly find an honest one.

The point I am making here is that there is what is called *crumbs*, or change, and that is what you give to those who have made a habit or profession of begging.

The Law of Gleaning

Let me explain further about gleaning, which I mentioned earlier, as part of a giving culture. A look at the relevant part of the Law will help to introduce the subject.

When you harvest the crops of your land, do not harvest the grain along the edges of your fields, and do not pick

up what the harvesters drop. Leave it for the poor and the foreigners living among you. I am the Lord your God.
Lev 23:22 NLT

The Lord commanded His people to leave portions of their fields unharvested. He also forbade them from going a second time over a portion they had already harvested, and they were not to go back to pick up anything that the harvesters dropped.* The purpose of all this apparent inefficiency was to allow the poor people harvest something for themselves and have food to eat. The poor did not have their own fields, or may have, for some reasons, been unable to plant in the season of planting.

Please note that gleaning was not for those unwilling to work. The needy here had to go to the field and participate in the harvest. This was how Ruth took care of her household when they first got back from Moab.** Instead of sitting at home and 'calling friends and family', she went out to glean and ended up in the field of Boaz who then showed her much kindness. Eventually he married her.

* See also Lev 19:9-10

** Ruth 2:1-3

Now, the following are the practical applications of that spirit in today's life.

You don't have to get maximum value personally for your money. You do not have to drive a hard bargain with a low-paid worker. You don't have to extract all the value in your purchases for yourself.

When you pay more than a labourer's due wages, it is gleaning.

When you give out your used clothes, which are still good enough for you to wear, it is gleaning. Please don't wait for the clothes to be faded and showing obvious signs of fatigue before you give them out. I have a personal aversion for giving out clothes that are no longer fit for me to wear. I give them out when I feel they will be more useful to someone else or because I just feel I have worn my portion and it is time to go out and bless someone else. Once clothes show any sign of ageing, I just can't hand them to someone. I get a funny feeling.

There are times you will replace your smartphone so you can give the old one to someone else who cannot buy such an expensive device. That is gleaning. To have to trade in your old devices for an

upgrade may be a reflection of being yet poor or having a poverty spirit, unless you are not part of a community where people less privileged than you exist. If you can, buy a new one and simply give out the old one.

Note that those who receive gleanings don't have to be poor; they are to be people who are working or willing to work. So I wouldn't recommend giving a good smartphone to a lazy man. Give it to that young man or young woman who works or studies around you, but who would not be able to afford such on his income or allowance. Sometimes, you may sell it to someone but at a very reduced price, just to give the person the feeling of having purchased it.

I remember once a young man who asked to buy an old car I had. He later testified that he was led by the Spirit of God. I made up my mind to accept whatever he offered. He offered about a third of the fair market price, and I accepted. He didn't realize he could have offered less and still gotten the car. I had told the Lord I would not again sell a car I'm changing. If I do sell, the money must be used as an offering and to further spread the blessing. It is one of the ways I show my faith for prosperity.

...and I will bless you... and so you shall be a blessing...

There are times you will upgrade your TV or smartphone, not because you are greedy or can't control yourself, but because God has blessed you, and you want to find occasion to give out the old one. You are just that blessed.

They say a good smartphone can be used for up to four years. That may be true, but change yours in the second or third year so that someone will have a few years usage left of it when you do give it out. The receiver will be someone who otherwise would not be able to afford it. Gleaning is one way by which we spread the blessing of God around.

Stop selling everything of value you own, unless you are in need yourself; allow someone else to be blessed by them. Someone who cannot buy a car from the market will own one because of you. This will be a working person who can maintain the car.

Someone will own a house because of your generosity.

The Spirit of Ruth

Now, if you are in the Ruth stage of life, please don't be ashamed to partake of gleanings. There are some people who are too proud to wear someone's old clothes. It makes them feel poor and a subject of charity. It is laughable because they actually do not have; the feeling is one of pride, and that pride keeps them in lack. It is funny when you hear them say it with confidence, as if it is a mark of honour. No wonder pride is a sin; it denies one of God's blessings.

I have encountered people like that many times. They talk big and reject help while having nothing. God looks at them with pity. They wear their old worn-out clothes with foolish pride when a little bit of humility could have turned them to shining stars. They don't want to feel indebted to anyone. It is not a righteous character at all. There is nothing to admire in it.

Please collect the clothes and wear them with joy. Be confident enough to testify of how God supplied it. "One sister called me to her house and gave me from her pile of clothes." Show off that suit and tell the testimony of how a certain brother gave it to you because he wanted to buy new ones. It is

indeed a testimony. It is God's way of providing at a certain stage in life. That was how Ruth and Naomi survived. Your faith, no matter how big you think it is, does not have the privilege of rejecting God's method of supply at a particular season of life. Faith is not designed to accommodate the pride of life. Ruth's faith was shown in how she, with Naomi, accepted her humble state and followed God's order for supernatural supplies.

Circumstances can happen to anyone, and indeed it is how God sometimes humbles people. He wants you to be humble enough to partake of gleaning and so be cured of unnecessary pride.

*Pride ends in humiliation,
while humility brings honor.* Prov 29:23 NLT

Now, let us get back to the matter of what to give to who.

Meet a Need

If you see someone in need and you can meet that need, then do it. That is what the Lord wants you to do. This is very different from the case of a beggar. It is not every poor person or someone who asks for help that is a beggar; sudden difficult times do

happen to people. If you are in a position to meet a need under such circumstances, please do.

As an illustration, a sister walked up to me once and told me that she was trying to raise a particular amount of money for a brother's urgent medical bill. Now, the amount was rather much and she just wanted me to give a significant amount towards it, but she didn't know how to get the rest. Well, I happened to have that amount available, though it was for something else, but I reasoned that the thing could wait. I felt this was a need I could meet, so why let the blessing pass me by. I gave her the whole money. See, she was not a beggar, neither was the brother who needed it; it just happened that there was an urgent need and I was available to meet it.

If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that? Jam 2:15-16

Even when you are not in a position to solve the whole problem for someone, do what is in your power. This is different from giving crumbs, so what you give is more like what we call a *substance*.

The point is that you must be generous and ready to share. We should be quick to meet a need when we see one, especially when it is in our power to do so.

Paying school fees for those who have no capable parents is one of our duties as Christians. Paying medical bills for those who can't is part of it. As brethren, we should watch out for one another's welfare, contributing to the needs of the saints as they arise and as God gives us the ability.

Helping a Stranger

There was this day that my friend and I went to the market. He was to do a lot of shopping, while I was there to show him around, being more conversant with that market. He had travelled down to Lagos for the purpose.

It was one of those wet days, and so the streets were riddled with pools of often muddy water. We were in a shop when we observed a woman walking down with a large open container of bread balanced in the African style on her head, covered loosely with plastic. She was obviously a seller of bread who had just obtained her supply for the day's business.

As she came close to one of those pools of water, she slipped and a large portion of her load tumbled into the muddy water. The loaves were ruined. The woman bent down, grabbed a nearby sympathizer's hand and began to weep on it. It was clear that she couldn't afford to take that loss for she was a petty trader.

My friend turned to me and said, "Are you thinking what I am thinking?" I nodded. We estimated the cost of all the damaged loaves with a little extra allowance, and he counted the money from the one he had brought to buy things with and sent it to the woman. I don't need to tell you how grateful to God she was.

He later testified to me of how he was in a church service one of those days, and he suddenly felt strongly in him to give the lady worshipping beside him some sizeable sum of money. He hardly knew the lady beyond seeing her in church. Anyway, he spoke her shortly afterwards and handed her the money. By her reaction he knew it must have been the Spirit of God. She held the hand with which he gave her the money and began to weep, sobbing profusely. She was in a deep financial pit and that gift was definitely from heaven.

I know of people who would walk into a hospital ward to visit someone, hear of another person's need and simply bring the needed money out of their pockets. It is the godly way to live. A lot of times, those who do these things do them with the last monies they have. Those who do not understand think that it is because they have too much money. The truth is that their faith is in God and their main concern is to do the will of God; that is why they give of their substance.

If you are one that is prone to doing such good, please I implore you to continue and to disregard what anyone may think of your financial status; your reward is with God and not with men. As for the rest who live only to solve their own problems, my admonition to you today is that you learn to be a generous giver as these ones who not only give crumbs but also give their substance.

CHAPTER 19

THE GIVING LIFESTYLE - 2



Gifts of Honour

Earlier, we examined the issue of crumbs, which I explained is what is required of us to give to beggars. I also explained that something like that is what is required when you are not required to be responsible for much of the whole that is needed. We saw also that we are to spread the abundance of God around us through the practice of gleaning. Now, there is another form of giving that involves the giving of something sizeable, and so let us call it *substance*. Many times, when you meet a need, you are giving a substance.

What I call a substance is that which you will give and you know that some virtue has gone out of you. You remember that in the book of Luke, chapter 8, Jesus stopped to acknowledge that some significant quantity of power had gone out from Him. People had been touching Him and drawing small

amounts of power—power so small that He hardly noticed; then this woman of great faith came and drew so much that the Lord noticed. I am drawing a parallel here with the matter of giving. We can therefore say the other people got crumbs of power but she got a substance of power.

Honour the LORD with thy substance, and with the firstfruits of all thine increase. Prov 3:9 KJV

A substance is what you give to someone the Lord has commanded you to honour. If you are giving to a minister of the gospel because of their office, you are not to treat them like a beggar and give crumbs; you should give some substance. If you are giving to your parents, you do not give them crumbs. If you are giving to a person in need, who is *not* a beggar, you give according to his need, that is the much of it you can meet, and you may have to give a substance.

You give to a minister of the gospel because the person is a messenger of God or because he or she has been a blessing to your life. When you do this, you are not to give crumbs but to give something appreciable. Now, I do not mean you should give what you do not have; the Bible tells us that “...if the

*readiness is present, it is acceptable according to what a person has, not according to what he does not have.”**

God gauges your giving according to your size; the Lord Jesus testified that the widow who gave her small mites gave more than everyone else at that time, even though they all gave much more in absolute terms. She gave all she had while the rest gave a lower proportion. It is a matter of proportion; but do not give what is crumbs to you to someone whom you are supposed to honour.

Parents are to be honoured with the giving of substance. As we have seen in previous chapters, Jesus taught that to honour someone involves giving to them. It does not matter whether your parents have or do not, you are to honour them through giving. When you give to kings and to men of God, it is not because they are poor, but because you are commanded to honour them. Everyone loves a gift, even if they have already. Give to them and they will bless you in return.

Many people, because they believe that their parents are rich, keep taking from rather than

* 2 Cor 8:12

giving to them, even after they have started earning. If you are one like this, then know that there is a huge load of blessings that you are denying yourself; you have need of repentance.

Please I am not saying that you cannot receive from your parents; I am only addressing the *attitude* of taking rather than giving. They are to be honoured by you and so must be subjects of your substantial generosity.

Giving by Proportion

The proportion you give to any cause is to be determined by you as the Spirit of Christ inside you leads. There is no compulsion.

Each one must do just as he has purposed in his heart, not grudgingly or under compulsion...2 Cor 9:7

When the widow went to that table to give, she gave 100%. It was her choice and not a rule. When Ananias and his wife decided to lie,* it was unnecessary. All they needed to do was tell Peter they had brought only a portion of the money from the sale of the land. They would not have died. God

* Acts 5: 1-10

does not make these things compulsory. Giving 10% of your income, in what we call tithing, is not compulsory; any amount that your heart freely gives to any cause is what He accepts.

Some say that a tenth of your income belongs to God, and must be given to Him as a matter of priority. Now, that was *only* stated in the Bible under the law of Moses.* There is nowhere else where that was stated or implied. Every other person who gave such a proportion gave it as a freewill offering.** They were following a custom of showing honour to whom it was due. This is why the people of Israel were said to have been *paying* tithes while Abraham only *gave* it.*³ For the people of Israel it was compulsory, so they paid, but for Abraham it was a freewill offering. Once you say it is compulsory, then it is compulsion giving, and that is not the way of grace and Christianity.

The question for the Christian is that if we say God owns 10%, who owns the rest? I think no Christian should ever in his or her heart think they own anything. The fact is that, as a Christian, there is no

* Lev 27:30-32

** Gen 14:19, 20; Gen 28:20-22

*³ Heb 7:4

acceptable proportion of your income that belongs to God if that sum is anything less than 100%.

And He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. 2 Cor 5:15

Maybe for the people of Israel, in previous times, they could say 10% belonged to God, but a Christian cannot say so and be correct. Some say it is to be a starting point for generosity. In that case, it is good, but it makes it a suggestion and not a compulsory idea.

In most practical cases, a generous giver will give far more than that proportion anyway, considering all the various places we have to give in service to God. What God demands is faithful administration and distribution of His resources. Distribute your gifts as you see the need and as your ability allows you.

Everything a Christian has belongs to the Lord. Every bit of money earned or received belongs to the Lord. Let us not take ideas of times past and make them into Christianity.

Some say that you are to take a tithe to the storehouse, taking reference from Malachi,* but where is the so-called storehouse? The storehouse which Malachi referred to was a literal store for meeting the needs of the needy. It was a place for charity. It was not the store in personal homes, and it was not the temple or a synagogue. It was a charity centre where those who had need could go to have their material needs met. It therefore follows that anyone giving actively to the needy is fulfilling the *spirit* of that rule. Indeed, every law has a spirit, and it is the spirit of the law that we should abide by as Christians.

But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshipers.
John 4:23

For we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Christ Jesus and put no confidence in the flesh. Phil 3:3

The *compulsory* payment of a proportion of one's income as a part of worship was only found as part of the laws of Moses. It never occurred anywhere in

* Mal 3:10

the scriptures before or after the Law. All who gave gifts in those times outside the law were cheerful givers. Indeed, the New Testament tither is the cheerful giver.

The Problem of Legalism

Legalism produces confusion. There are so many arguments I have heard on this issue, and they are on such questions as, "What is a complete tithe; is it before or after income tax? Do you pay the government before you pay God?" "Where are you supposed to take your tithe to?" "Can you use your tithe to help someone?"

See, all these questions are products of legalism. They stem from the fact that we have made a tenth a special proportion to be specially offered—a rule that God never made for the Christian. A lot of excesses have been drawn from this *compulsion* teaching.

It is said you cannot prosper if you don't tithe. Well, a true Christian must be operating with the spirit of tithe anyway, so it is not at all a problem. But if that is supposed to mean only those who specially consecrate and dedicate a tenth to a place so as to prosper, then it is an incorrect doctrine. That would

be legalism and making giving a compulsion.

Some have even said things like a non-tither cannot work for them. A preacher once bragged on how he summarily sacked his driver when he discovered he was not a faithful tither. This was after they had a flat tire on a journey. To him, a tither should not get a flat tire. That is indeed a very absurd belief. God can allow anyone have a flat tire, and it may actually save your life by preventing you from getting to a place you are not supposed to get to. The problem is that we like to think we can use these things to control every detail of life when actually God has not given us that privilege or duty.

Women have been counselled not to marry a non-tither, as they are thieves, that they will continue to steal. That, to me, is laughable. I think the most outrageous one I ever heard is that a non-tither is going to be banished to hell.

I have one major response to all these, and it is that if these things be so, then the Lord Jesus was not aware of it. Paul was unaware, and Peter also. James too certainly didn't know about it. Otherwise, how could all these apostles and

prophets have been aware of such a weighty doctrine, and not bothered to warn about it in their letters, especially when some of them extensively addressed things about money and giving?

Indeed, they knew of the *spirit* of tithing, which is a generous and sacrificial lifestyle, and they wrote much about that. It is just that what we are preaching is legalism, which they did not advance.

There is absolutely no injunction spoken at any time to any Christian or church in the Bible to compulsorily calculate a tenth of income and take it anywhere. Tithing for the Christian, is not a calculation of any percentage, but a generous heart that gives constantly.

The Spirit of the Tithe

A true New Testament tither operates by the spirit of the tithe. The spirit of the tithe can be summarized in a few points, as follows:*

- Recognition of who God is: the El-Shaddai and the Provider.
- Expression of gratitude to Him.
- Respect and honour for ministers of the gospel.

* You can decipher them from studying the following portions of the scriptures: Deut 14: 22-28; Gen 14:19, 20; Gen 28:20-22; Mal 3:10.

- Love for the poor and needy.

Anyone who takes care to do the above is fully engaged in the spirit of tithing. The New Testament tither is the cheerful and continual giver. This cheerful giver trait has been much explained in previous pages in this book.*

A New Testament tither is not the calculator of percentages, but the person who makes giving priority in his or her life—a person who is generous and ready to share. He is the one who honours ministers of the word of God by giving to them of his money and material resources. He is the one who is eager to support the work of the ministry and eager to help the needy and righteous causes. She is one who understands that she is not giving so as to rebuke the devourer nor is she giving to get from God. He or she just loves God and gives without attaching any strings to it. These are cheerful and continual givers.

That is tithing by the Spirit.

* I also recommend my books, *How to Work for God and So, Who Will Pay For This?*

THE GIVING LIFESTYLE - 3



The Giving Culture

This giving habit is something we must all form. We have seen the words of the Lord Jesus, that it is more blessed to give than to receive. The one with the giving attitude is always giving because he or she always sees the opportunity.

You see, we have some very commendable customs in this regard. One example is that of giving gifts to couples getting married. Another one is the custom of giving gifts to new babies. These are common but very good customs.

Now there is a custom we have in Nigeria which I have deliberately stopped participating in because it is the opposite of giving. You know, when someone has accomplished a feat, such as buying a new car, completing a new house, passing a very important examination, or even just landing a good

job, we often tell them to 'wash' it. Washing it simply means to celebrate the achievement by entertaining friends. Now, in itself it is not a bad custom as it is good and scriptural to celebrate victory. However, rather than asking someone to come and 'wash', I rather 'wash' for them. If a friend buys a car, I'll give him some money as my own part in filling the financial hole created by the purchase. If someone passes an examination or gets a job, I buy them a drink to commend the effort. If a friend or a relative has an on-going building project or is planning a wedding, I give them some money, even if small, to express my goodwill and to contribute a little to their success. I believe it is a better way to live because the Lord has declared it better to give than to receive.

Those Takers

We saw a bit about takers in the early part of this book. Taking is a terrible lifestyle. It is a fact that we all have to receive at one time or another. Receiving in itself is not bad but it is inferior to giving. On the other hand, taking is a terrible habit. No one loves the company of anyone who is always taking from them.

You see, giving is one of the foundations of life. Anyone that does not give does not radiate life and we tend to get tired of their company. The Bible testifies that every man is a friend to him who gives gifts.* A true giver radiates life, and so attracts people. There are people who are so stingy but love to take from others. Such persons irritate you so much even though you do not want anything from them. They love to take from people.

I remember a fellow like that; in my short relationship with him, I never saw him give anyone anything. There was a time I stayed in the same house with him for about a week; believe me, it was a harrowing experience. He always took small amounts of cash from me, and he never had anything to give, even when only little was all that was needed. One of those days I heard him make a statement, that he knew he was not a generous person. In my mind I said, "That is the understatement of the year; the fact is that you are not only stingy but you are a thief." He was a taker. That fellow was not physically poor; he was just mentally poor. Years later when I heard news of him, he was about to marry and a comment that

* Prov 19:6

slipped from the fiancée's mouth showed that he had not changed. I wondered why she was marrying him.

You may wonder what such people do with their money, and I will tell you. They love to count their money and to acquire properties. They are the vintage miser. But they will never miss a free meal. Some never have because they have spent everything on themselves even before the money is earned. They have bought all their dream things such as expensive clothes, jewellery, cars, smartphones, etc., on credit and are spending all their money paying silly debts. They live for themselves only.

If you are like that and you are reading this, you need to repent.

Be a giver. Be reluctant to take. When you go out with friends, be eager to pay; it is better than behaving like your wallet got stuck in your pocket and wouldn't come out without a fight. It is definitely better to give than to receive.

One of the problems I have had with some of the teachings on giving and receiving is because they

encourage takers, who only think of themselves, to continue in their evil ways. They indeed seem to give as a result of the teachings, but they are only giving because of their own gain, and that is not a sacrifice acceptable before God. That is why many of them give plenty in church, especially in response to motivating messages, but they are stingy outside. They think only the one done in church is rewarded by God. They call it seed-sowing. No, that is not true Christianity.

In Christ, every true believer has been made to be a liberal giver.

Conclusion



Having read all this, the summary in a few words is to fear the Lord, obey His commandments and this is your whole duty. He will cause all grace and favour to flow towards you so that you will have all sufficiency in all things and abound to every good work. You will be enriched in all things for all liberality.

Do not make riches your goal in life; rather let your goal be to be found pleasing in the sight of God.

God will bless you as you are faithful.

Your bread will never fail.

Your water will always be sure.*

* Isa 33:16



ABOUT **Kingdom-Word Ministries**

The author ministers from the platform of Kingdom-Word Ministries, a non-denominational teaching ministry based in Enugu, Nigeria. Activities of the ministry include weekly Bible classes, publication of free teaching tracts, magazines and books, radio/TV broadcasts, and organizing teaching seminars in various towns and cities.

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25. Habit of Faith
26. Let Us Agree
27. Receive the Holy Spirit