

Prosperity Through Grace

By

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Introduction

There has been much written about prosperity in the many years since the faith movement. Essentially, the doctrines and teachings of prosperity are Scriptural but they lack two things: they neglect the fact that there is also a false financial prosperity which is empty and from the devil, and secondly that it is not necessary to be full of material blessings to prove God's grace and favour upon one's life. Many times those who grasp at such teachings are those with greed in their eyes and mammon in their hearts. Even worse, ministers who in the name of God and Christianity rob from their own flock; not only taking from them precious gold and silver but also fleecing the flock, barbecuing their meat and keeping them still barely alive in a mad religious condemnation bondage of tithes and offerings.

Yet, at the same time the Bible is clear that God does provide for those who look to Him

- Psalm 23

The Lord is our shepherd; leading us to green pastures, still waters, a table prepared for us in the midst of our enemies, goodness and mercy every day.

- Matthew 6:33

He who cares for the sparrows and the grass of the field cares even more for us.

This book seeks to provide a balanced teaching. It is for those who have been hurt by prosperity teaching; who wonder how to reconcile the many wonderful and beautiful passages of God's Word of abundant provision without going to the extreme of rejecting such wonderful truths of biblical prosperity. Despite the many abuses of such teachings, there are also those good and upright ministers who seek to help their flock trust in God and succeed in their daily lives. There are also many Christian businessmen and businesswomen who are crying in their hearts for the correct and balanced application of these powerful truths of prosperity to their own lives and businesses. This book seeks to show the path to true success and prosperity without compromising your character and spirituality. It also seeks to answer the many questions of those who have tried such teachings and wonder why these truths are not working for them.

This book is written after many visions of the Spiritual World and seeks to view prosperity from the spiritual perspective while understanding the needs of dealing with the financial realities of physical life.

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CHAPTER 1

BLESSINGS AND CURSES OF WEALTH

Through much of the Faith Movement in the latter part of the 20th Century, the understanding that material wealth and prosperity is a part of God's Will in a believer's life has been well expounded and brought to the forefront of Christian consciousness. Thus by the end of the 20th Century, it was a common assumption that all wealth is good wealth. There are sufficient Scriptures to show that it is definitely a part of God's perfect Will to provide abundantly for His people (Deuteronomy 28; Proverbs 3:9, 10; Matthew 6:33; 2 Corinthians 8:9-15; Philippians 4:19; 3 John 2).

Additionally, there are examples in the Bible of people of God who were blessed with great wealth and position (Abraham - Genesis 13:2; Isaac - Genesis 26:12-14; Jacob - Genesis 30:43; Joseph - Genesis 41:40-43; Daniel in Daniel 2:48). Even when the Israelites left their slavery in Egypt, they were blessed with great wealth (Genesis 15:14; Exodus 12:35, 36). All these blessings were, of course, conditional blessings based upon their obedience to the Lord.

Unfortunately, many Christians have not been told that there is also a curse of wealth – wealth that comes from the devil. Firstly, we need to establish the fact that although all the silver and gold and the cattle on a thousand hills are the Lord's - yes, indeed, the whole earth is the Lord's - and although every good and perfect gift comes from the Lord, the Lord because of the free will of men and because He allowed (due to His permissive Will) evil to continue to exist upon this planet temporarily, has also allowed the devil to bestow upon men great wealth and power; which, although it looks like a blessing in the physical eyes of men, is actually a curse that will eventually destroy them.

When Jesus was tempted by the devil, He was offered all the wealth and power of the world (Matthew 4:8, 9). And to those who through unbalanced faith teaching say that the devil cannot make this offer any more to humans because of his defeat at the cross of Calvary, may I remind them that after Jesus' resurrection, Paul still says that the devil is the god of this world (2 Corinthians 4:4).

The paradox that Jesus has all the keys of heaven and hell, and all the power and authority in heaven, on earth and underneath the earth, and yet the devil is still running around with some semblance of power as the prince of the power of the air, is easily explained by the fact that there are humans still giving authority and living their lives under the devil. Over such, he

rules and works among them (Ephesians 2:2). It should be no surprise then that he can still offer the part of wealth and power which is still under his control to entice people to follow him.

The Curse of Wealth

Everyone accepts the fact that the devil comes to steal, kill and destroy (John 10:10). What they fail to see is that he might not *directly* steal, kill and destroy. He might pursue the same end *indirectly* through wealth instead of a direct attack of poverty. Whilst the blessing of the Lord does not contain sorrow (Proverbs 10:22), the curse of wealth from the devil contains much sorrow.

A blessing can become a curse (Malachi 2:2); especially if the Lord is not in it. When anyone loves the world, the love of the Lord is not in his heart (1 John 2:15, 16). Cursed wealth becomes the hindrance to the entrance of God's kingdom (Matthew 19:23, 24). Cursed wealth becomes a mammon and a master over its possessor (Matthew 6:24). Before you claim the blessings of wealth in Matthew 6:33, you need to reject the curse of wealth in Matthew 6:24.

It is pure greed that causes people to take on themselves cursed wealth in their lives. Achan brought the curse of death upon himself and his whole family (Joshua 7:23-27). He also caused the defeat of Israel in Ai and the loss of thirty-five lives (Joshua 7:1, 5). The curse of ill gotten wealth caused Gehazi and his descendants to suffer the leprosy of Naaman (2 Kings 5:27). Lot looked at all the outward wealth of the land but ignored the curse upon the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah where the wealth was (Genesis 13:10). He lost his wealth the first time when his cursed lot was thrown in with the conquest of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah; and Abraham had to rescue him (Genesis 14:11, 12, 16). Finally, he lost all his wealth, lost his wife and nearly lost his own life (Genesis 19:24-30). He wanted to live in luxury in the cursed fertile valley but ended up in an empty cave.

Recognising the Curse of Wealth

It is obvious that in this world, one can lie, cheat and rob others to gain worldly wealth. There are three areas that determine whether the wealth comes from God or from the devil – a blessing or a curse. Even if only one of these areas were true, the curse would be upon the wealth. Wealth from the devil involves wealth from acts of sin, is maintained by acts of sin and propagates more acts of sin. The source, the upkeep and the goal of the supply of this money is evil. All wealth that involves the breaking of the Ten Commandments is wealth from the devil. It continues to sustain the

breaking of the commandments of God and encourages others to be wealthy by the same wicked means.

In the New Testament, this includes wealth that promotes selfishness and lust for the world. The love of money is the root of all evil (1 Timothy 6:10). All that is in the world – the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life – *is not* of the Father but is of the world (1 John 2:15, 16). If you have an offer of wealth or position that involves any one of the above areas, they are not blessings from God. They are the offers of wealth from the devil tempting you in the same manner as he tempted Jesus (Luke 4:5-7).

The question is often asked as to what to do with the money that is accumulated when one who is wealthy through the above evil ways becomes born again and wants to remove it from their life? All wealth that is obtained through such means usually robs and steals from victims of the same particular type of sin or evil indulged in.

Personally, I think that such money that is tainted with sin and blood should be given to the poor or if possible into an area of ministry that directly helps people come out of that same particular sin or wickedness that the wealth was originally obtained from. Although some of the victims might have died long ago, it at least helps other new victims of the same sin. There would be a sense of returning to the original “owner” what was taken from them; although in this particular case the “owners” are those newly affected by the propagation of the same sin.

There are five groups of people who deserve the help of the wealthy: the poor (Luke 4:18; 18:22), the sick (Matthew 25:38, 39; Luke 14:2), those in prison (Matthew 25:36, 43-44), the widows (Deuteronomy 24:17; Acts 6:1; 1 Timothy 5:3-16) and the orphans, especially children (Deuteronomy 24:17-19; James 1:27; Matthew 18:6). The rich are encouraged to be rich in good works (1 Timothy 6:18-19). It is in giving that those who have the blessing of wealth will be made perfect (Matthew 19:21).

In the church in Acts, the wealth that one had was distributed to those who did not have (Acts 2:44, 45). The abundance of those who had was distributed to those who had none (2 Corinthians 8:14). For those who worry about the mismanagement of such distribution and the abuse of such a system by those who are lazy and not worthy of such help (2 Thessalonians 3:6-10; 1 Timothy 5:5-16), then let those who have the blessings of wealth retain ownership of the wealth but be in charge (or through their personal appointees) of the distribution themselves. In this manner, they can be in control (as it is their gifting), of both the accumulation and the distribution of wealth.

Learning to say 'No' to the Curse of Wealth

Many are the prophecies of these last days as being the times of God raising His Joseph generation, His Joshua generation, His David and Daniel generation. No doubt such men and women of God who prosper in the dimension of wealth in the physical world by spiritual means will rise. But each of them will first be tested like those before them in the Bible.

Abraham had to say 'No' to the wealth offered by the king of Sodom before God's pronouncement of great blessings upon him and his generations was revealed (Genesis 14:22-24; 15:13-14). He had taken an oath that he would not even take a thread or a shoe string. He only wanted wealth from God and not from the devil.

Joseph had to say 'No' many, many times to daily temptation but he ended up being the most powerful and wealthy man after Pharaoh (Genesis 39:10-20; 41: 40-45). Besides suffering the rejection by his brothers, he endured humiliation in prison but remained faithful until the day of his exaltation by God.

Moses had to say 'No' to all the wealth and riches of Egypt but through the Lord's power ended up inheriting all the wealth of Egypt for the people of God to build God's house (Exodus 3:21, 22; 12:35, 36; Hebrews 11:24-27). He was completely emptied of all ambitions of wealth, fully contented with his humble lot before God deemed him ready to receive great power and might (Exodus 4:12).

David had to say 'No' to getting power, wealth and might by his own hand twice but he inherited the entire nation of Israel and built it into a wealthy nation for God (1 Samuel 24:3-7; 26:10-12). By saying 'No' he endured many years of suffering, pain and rejection but he became the standard by which every other king of Israel and Judah was measured. He laid aside his wealth for the building of God's house (1 Chronicles 22).

Daniel said 'No' to all the rich foods and privileges of the Babylonian palace but received the gift of wisdom which promoted him to become the most powerful man in the Babylonian empire after the king (Daniel 1:8, 17; 2: 48). Even in his great power and wealth, riches still meant nothing to him (Daniel 5:17).

Jesus said 'No' to all the temptations of the devil, even his offer of the whole world but instead conquered the devil by his humility at the cross and inherited all authority in heaven, on earth and under the earth (Matthew 4:1-11; 28:18; Luke 4:1-13; Philippians 2:9-11).

All the mighty men of wealth in the Bible had no interest, nay, not even a thread of a desire, for wealth and power that comes through the devil. They had been offered a short cut, a compromise but they chose not to accept it: rather enduring the greater difficulty of receiving the blessings of wealth correctly; making sure that the source was God, the accumulation and maintenance of wealth and power be from God, and the end use of the wealth was for the glory of God.

The Gift of Giving – A Gift of Prosperity

It is an error of modern Christianity to teach that God wants all His people to be millionaires or to handle great wealth. God does promise to be our shepherd and abundantly meet all our necessary wants and needs (John 10:10; Psalm 23:1; Philippians 4:19). When writing to the Corinthians (to whom Paul said that Jesus became poor that we might be made rich - 2 Corinthians 8:9), Paul acknowledged that there were not many noble or mighty among them (1 Corinthians 1:26).

Paul himself does not seem to have been a financial millionaire, instead making mention of his hunger, thirst, and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:27). He even went as far as saying that he was poor while making many (not all) rich (2 Corinthians 6:10). He could not be a man of great means if he had to rob other churches (or rather take wages from them) to minister to the Corinthians (2 Corinthians 11:8). If it is God's Will for everyone to be a millionaire, then why didn't all the New Testament Christians under the greatest of the apostles become the richest and most powerful people on earth?

Instead Paul acknowledged that some of them had abundance and some of them had lack; and he encouraged those who had to share with those who had none (2 Corinthians 8:12-15). The key teaching of Paul in regard to finances was that we should learn to be contented with what we have (1 Timothy 6:6-8), and be willing, without being burdened, to share (2 Corinthians 8:12; 9:5-8). Paul warns that those who desire to be rich fall into many temptations and snares (1 Timothy 6:9).

Let the warning thus be sounded that it is NOT God's Will for every one of His people to handle great wealth. To those who do not have the gift or calling to handle great wealth, they will be destroyed and be unfruitful spiritually. Like thorns, the wealth will stifle their spiritual life (Luke 8:14). In the Spiritual World, they are paupers even though they are physically rich in the world. There are far too many good and noble people who are totally

destroyed by the love of money. It is possible to gain the whole world and lose one's soul (Mark 8:36).

The following Scriptures express the value of things better than money:

It is far better to be poor and have your integrity than to be rich and have no integrity (Proverbs 19:1).

It is better to be poor than to be a liar (Proverbs 19:22).

He who has mercy on the poor is happy (Proverbs 14:21).

He who mocks and oppresses the poor reproaches God (Proverbs 14:31; 17:5).

Better is a little with the fear of the Lord, than great treasure with trouble (Proverbs 15:16).

Better is a dinner of herbs where love is than a fatted calf with hatred (Proverbs 15:17).

He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit than he who takes a city (Proverbs 16:32).

Better is a dry morsel with quietness, than a house full of feasting with strife (Proverbs 17:1).

He who has compassion on the poor lends to the Lord, and He will pay back what he has given (Proverbs 19:17).

Whoever shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry himself and not be heard (Proverbs 21:13).

He who loves pleasure will be a poor man; he who loves wine and oil will not be rich (Proverbs 21:17).

There is no difference between rich and poor in the eyes of the Lord (Proverbs 22:2).

Better is the poor who walks in integrity, than one perverse in his ways though he be rich (Proverbs 28:6).

The rich man is wise in his own eyes but the poor who has understanding can see through him (Proverbs 28:11).

He who gives to the poor will not lack (Proverbs 28:27).

The king who judges the poor with truth will have his throne established forever (Proverbs 29:14).

Blessed is he who considers the poor, the Lord will deliver him in time of trouble (Psalm 41:1).

Better is a poor and wise youth than an old and foolish king who will be admonished no more. For the former can emerge from a prison to become king; while the latter, even though born to kingship, can become a pauper (Ecclesiastes 4:13, 14).

The end of a thing is better than its beginning, and the patient in spirit is better than the proud in spirit (Ecclesiastes 7:8).

Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice (1 Samuel 15:22).

Having clarified the above, it would be appropriate now to mention that there is a genuine gift of prosperity. This gift is called the gift of giving in Romans 12:6, 8. Not everyone is called to this area for this is a definite and unique call to handle prosperity. It is an anointing to handle prosperity as a steward of God. Just like the preparation of any other fivefold gift, the calling to this gift and ministry of giving involves a process of purification. Not everyone who is wealthy has wealth as a result of this gift; for if they had, they would be greatly involved in the ministry of giving. On the other hand, if one has this gift, then wealth is a natural result with the heart remaining pure and undefiled.

CHAPTER 2

THE GIFT OF PROSPERITY

Not all prosperity is produced by the gift of prosperity. Much of it is through the mere obedience to the law of God (Mark 10:17-22; Deuteronomy 28:1, 2). Although we have the benefits of the fulfilment of the law in Christ (Matthew 5:16-17), the New Testament has been categorically classified by the New Testament writers as the better covenant (Hebrews 11:40). It is better in two areas: through the new spirit and through the new heart (Ezekiel 36:26; 2 Corinthians 5:17). With the laws of God written in our hearts and minds (Hebrews 8:17-13; 10:16-17), this newness of the New Covenant implies a new motivation of love (Romans 13:8, 10; Galatians 5:14; 1 John 3:16) and a new energising of love (Galatians 5:6; Ephesians 3:14-20; 1 John 4:15-21).

Difference between the Works of the Law and the Works of Grace

The difference between the works of the law and the works of grace are within and not without; although eventually it will become self evident through the failures of the works of the law versus the success of the works of grace. Outwardly, the works of the law and the works of grace may look similar but internally and eternally, within the spirit and within the soul, they are like the difference between light and darkness.

The main difference in the New Covenant is the supply of the grace of God to energise us and motivate us from within (1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 2:20). This grace would produce the works of grace which have been prepared beforehand (Ephesians 2:10). From the subjective experience of this objective truth, one would experience a great motivation of the love of God to do the works of God as well as a new spiritual energising that comes from within the new-born spirit through the power of the Holy Spirit that enables the ease of doing the works while experiencing the rest in Christ (Hebrews 4:10). In application to the laws of prosperity, this implies that the following would be the works of the law:

1. Tithing in order to receive prosperity (OT¹ motivation with elements of self)
2. Giving in order to receive (OT motivation with elements of self)
3. Sowing in order to reap (OT motivation with elements of self)
4. Planting 'seed faith' or firstfruits in order to gain (OT motivation with elements of self)

¹ OT – Old Testament

At best the above would produce some prosperity (based on OT principles which still operate in the NT) and at worst they would lead to frustration and failure. Many of those who seem to succeed in the above commonly taught financial principles succeed because they happen to have the correct motivation and have some dependence on the Lord's energising. The outward methodology and the laws themselves are still operating but the true fulfilment in the New Covenant is to allow the energising love of God to empower us to:

1. Tithe because of our great love for God and His kingdom
2. Give because we love God and love those we are giving to
3. Sow because we want to sow love in other lives.
4. Plant seeds of gifts and firstfruits because we love God and love those we give to.

When the apostle Paul was teaching the above principles, he was not teaching the above laws in order to motivate the Christians to gain by these works, rather he was teaching them to use them *as expressions of love*:

1. In Corinthians, he made mention of the law of sowing and reaping to teach them to do so as an *expression and proof of their love* and the grace of God within them (2 Corinthians 8:24; 9:14).
2. In Galatians, he made mention of the law of sowing and reaping not because of wanting them to have the motivation of worldly gain but rather that they fulfil *the law of Christ (the law of love)* by not being weary in sowing because they would reap everlasting life and have the opportunity (privilege of love) of doing good to the household of faith (Galatians 6:8-10). In the New Testament, natural gain is always *only secondary* (a bonus and not a motivation) to the greater gain of spirituality and love (Matthew 6:20, 33).
3. In Philippians, Paul expressed how much he appreciated the *care (and love)* he had received from them and spoke of their needs being met as a consequence of what they were doing (Philippians 4:10-19). He was not motivating them to become carnally motivated each time they sent help to him but rather he kept emphasizing that it was a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice (of their love to God).
4. In 3 John 2, the apostle John wrote that the prosperity of Gaius was a consequence to his *walking in love* (the reason why his soul prospered). He loved the brethren and strangers and the church bore witness of his love to everyone (3 John 6). *The greatest prosperity of the soul is its transformation into the character of the love of God.*

The development of our Christian character (and who and what we really become as a person) is the progressive result of all our thoughts, motivation and acts through the years. Imagine if we continually think and act selfishly and carnally, wouldn't that result in a more and more selfish and carnal person as we grow older? Instead, if we are careful to always be motivated and empowered by the love of God, through the years our love for God and for people would grow and love would become the key character in our lives.

If we continually tithe, sow and give out of selfish desire to gain material prosperity (no matter how minute the desire), then we will become more and more selfish and carnal with time. On the other hand, if we continually tithe, sow and give out of great love for God and a great love for those we give to, our character would become love through the constant acts of love.

Prosperity through the Finished Work of Christ

The next time you tithe, sow and give, forget about what you are trying to get out of it. Just focus on your act as an expression of pure love for God and for those you are giving to. The material world is only temporary and passing away, only the transformation of love remains when the physical becomes dust in the light of eternity (Matthew 6:19; James 4:14; 1 John 2:15).

Take *no thought* for this earthly life, what you shall eat or what you shall drink (Matthew 6:25). Seek to grow in love with each act of tithing and giving rather than to grow in wealth. Forget *all* natural motivations for your tithing and giving and seek to experience *the love of God in the heart* each time you tithe and give (Romans 5:5; 2 Corinthians 9:7). Each experience of the release of money from our lives should be an experience of God's love in you towards God and towards others.

The greatest fear that people have is that if they do not have in mind a specific return (as a misconstrued form of faith exercise) that God will not bless them. Yet by doing so, they are holding themselves back from the more powerful and abundant New Testament gift of prosperity and only living in the OT laws of reception. Jesus assures us that the Father knows that we need all these things and that all these things shall be added to us (Matthew 6:32, 33).

The question is whether you want to be like the rest of the Gentiles or be living the truly New Testament realm of the gift of prosperity (Matthew 6:32). The statement that we have to be blessed in order to bless is also not true in the New Testament (Genesis 12:1-3). In the New Testament you

ARE ALREADY BLESSED IN CHRIST (Ephesians 1:3; Galatians 3:13-14).

The key understanding in the difference between the New Testament gift *of* prosperity and the Old Testament works *for* prosperity are the following:

1. Jesus has sown the greatest seed faith for all our lives that will take us this life and the rest of eternity to keep enjoying the harvest of what He sown. Jesus became poor that we through His poverty might become rich (2 Corinthians 8:9). We don't have to sow in order to receive, Jesus did it for us. **We reap what Jesus has sown!** The New Testament grace of prosperity (gift of prosperity) is purely the reception and the action of this grace that Jesus has given to our lives.
 - a) When the Macedonian churches tapped on the grace of prosperity, they were able to give richly and abundantly beyond the natural limits of their poverty (2 Corinthians 8:1, 2).
 - b) This abundance in grace has the power to create abundance in all things for every good work (2 Corinthians 9:8).
 - c) It increases the fruit of righteousness and causes one to be enriched in everything (2 Corinthians 9:10-11).
 - d) The supply for *all* our need is *according* to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus (Philippians 4:19). These riches in glory are the riches of His grace through Christ Jesus (Ephesians 1:3, 6, 7; 2:7).
 - e) One may ask, why then should tithing and giving be practiced any longer in the New Testament? It is done *not* for material gain but as a way to release love and grace (Matthew 23:23; 2 Corinthians 8:1-2, 6-8, 24; 9:8; Romans 12:6-8; 1 Peter 4:10; 1 John 3:16-19).
2. Before the fall of mankind in Genesis 3, mankind was blessed and enjoyed the abundant provisions of God in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 1:28-31). The curse of having to work and toil for provisions came *only after* the fall (Genesis 3:17-19). Jesus Christ came to remove all the source, cause and results of the fall of man and to inaugurate the dispensation of grace (Romans 5:12-21; Ephesians 3:2-5). The gift by the grace of the one Man Jesus Christ now abounds to many (Romans 5:15).

Like mankind in the Garden of Eden before the fall, we now work from a position of blessedness and not for a position of blessedness. We are already blessed in Christ and have received the riches of His

grace (Ephesians 1:3; 2:7). Our living and our giving are the good works of grace prepared beforehand that we should walk in them (Ephesians 2:10). This implies that:

- a) The works of the law work *to receive* prosperity while the works of grace work *to distribute* prosperity from a faith (grace) position of prosperity. For this reason the Macedonians were enabled, despite their deep poverty, to freely, willingly and urgently give to the ministering of the saints (2 Corinthians 8:1-5).
- b) All the teaching to sow, plant seed-faith, give and tithe *in order to receive* or *to be blessed* or *to be prosperous* is based on the works of the law. True New Testament giving is from a position of blessedness. We are already blessed in Christ therefore being empowered by this grace we walk in the works of grace. The Macedonians received this grace first and then only were they moved to give liberally (2 Corinthians 8:1-2). The grace must abound before the good works abound (2 Corinthians 9:8).
- c) Although Christ has given the grace of prosperity to everyone of us (2 Corinthians 8:9), the gifts of God, differing according to the grace given, would cause some people to operate more in some areas of ministry while others would operate powerfully in the grace of prosperity (Romans 12:6-8). All the gifts of God (gifts of Holy Spirit, ministry gifts and fivefold gifts) are purely the result of His grace and the performance of every gift should purely be an act of love and charity to the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:7, 16).
Through the finished work of Christ, who has taken all our infirmities and sicknesses on the cross, all of us can exercise the authority to lay hands and pray for the sick but some would have the grace to do miracles and perform gifts of healings more than others (Matthew 8:17; Mark 16:18; 1 Corinthians 12:4-11).
Similarly, through the finished work of Christ, who has taken all the curse of the law and poverty on the cross, all of us can receive His abundant provision for us but some would operate more powerfully in the grace of prosperity than others (2 Corinthians 8:9; Galatians 3:13-14; Romans 12:3, 8; 2 Corinthians 8:14; 1 Corinthians 1:26; 2 Timothy 6:17-19).
- d) One does not have to give beyond the measure of grace given and received. Paul advises each person to have a willing mind but to give according to what one has and not what one does not have (2 Corinthians 8:12). Since the proportion of prosperity is directly proportional to the abundance of grace

(2 Corinthians 9:8), one needs to give in proportion to the grace (Romans 12:3, 8).

A Better Covenant

All the benefits of the Old Testament are fulfilled in the New Covenant but the New Covenant is supposed to be better than the Old Covenant (Hebrews 11:40). All the principles of tithing and blessing, sowing and reaping, giving and receiving and firstfruit blessings are all present in the Old Testament. Any one practising these laws receives their blessing in the Old Covenant.

What difference then is there between someone who faithfully practises these principles in the Old Covenant from one who does the same in the New Covenant? What is *better* in the New Covenant when the Old Covenant includes blessings that even potentially can raise the Old Covenant people to be the head and not the tail, blessed them with lands and houses that they did not build and barns overflowing with the blessings of the Lord? (Deuteronomy 28:1-14; 6:10-11; 8:7-10; Proverb 3:9-10).

The New Covenant is *better* because:

1. It is based on the finished work of Christ and not our own works (Hebrews 11:40 – Hebrews 12:2; Galatians 3:13-14; 2 Corinthians 8:9; Ephesians 2:6-8). There is nothing more that we can add to the finished work of Christ. Our works of grace are merely to bless others from the position of blessedness that we already have in Christ (Ephesians 1:3; 2:10). Having received the unconditional love and blessings of Christ, we bless and love others unconditionally in proportion to the grace bestowed upon us.
2. Being motivated and energised by the love and grace of Christ, we live the life of giving and are transformed to the character and image of Christ. This is primarily because whatever we think and do is based on acting in pure agape love towards God and towards mankind without seeking for any selfish gain or return (Romans 8:28-29; 1 John 4:7-11; 1 Corinthians 15:10).

The motivation for giving is based on the principle that like Christ we should be willing to lay down our lives for others (1 John 3:16-18). The rich young man whom Jesus met was rich through his observation of the works of the law (Mark 10:20). It did not transform his character. He was *still selfish* and unwilling to give his wealth to help others. Jesus clearly pointed to the young man that despite him having all the riches and wealth of the world, he still lacked one thing (Mark 10:21).

What good is it to gain all the wealth in the world and lose one's soul? The greatest value above all the wealth of the world is the pure undefiled character of agape love within one's soul. If one truly walks in agape love, one would purely and altruistically give and share out of the joy of giving and loving without any motivation of gain. Transformation of heart and mind - resulting in transformation in character and life - is the goal of the New Covenant not works (Romans 12:1-2; Hebrews 8:10-12; 10:16-17).

The works of grace are purely the outward flowing of the working of God within us (we are His workmanship); and they are energised by God such that we effortlessly walk in them without struggle (Ephesians 2:10). The transformed heart and mind does not give in order to receive but gives because it is the natural movement of a loving heart and a loving mind to give without thought or motivation of gain. This is true agape love. This is the power of the New Covenant to transform our lives and character to be like the character of God. It is a better covenant.

3. Material and physical provision is an additional bonus and side effect to the real work of growing spiritually and establishing the kingdom of God (Matthew 6:33; Mark 10:29-31). In all our giving, we should focus on giving it forth from a pure heart of love and worship to God and of love towards others (Philippians 4:18-19; John 4:23-24; 1 John 3:16-23). We do not have to worry about our provisions in this physical life because they have been abundantly provided by God (Matthew 6:25-34; Philippians 4:19; Ephesians 1:3; Galatians 3:13-14; 2 Corinthians 8:9).

This does not mean that we become lazy and do nothing; rather exercising faith in the fact that we have been blessed in Christ, we give of our lives and substance to bless others in proportion to the grace that we have received.

In quality and quantity, the works of grace far surpass the works of the law; and they energise a person to do far exceedingly above what he can do on his own as he has the energising of God within him (1 Corinthians 15:10; Ephesians 3:16-20). We seek to walk in the works of grace that God has foreordained for each of us individually (Ephesians 2:10). We have been freed from the curse of having to seek material wealth and provision; we are now blessed to pursue spiritual growth and transformation by releasing the works of grace through our lives (1 Corinthians 15:10). This is indeed the better covenant.

Sanctified Living and Giving

Since ALL blessings have been given in Christ in the New Testament through the finished work of Christ, our motivation and goals are ***no longer*** for this world or for mammon. We are told ***not*** to love the world or the things of the world for if anyone loves the world, ***the love of the Father*** is ***not*** in him (1 John 2:15). This means that we seek to live a sanctified life free of selfishness.

1. Living a daily sanctified life implies a letting go of any worldly motivation in our daily lives. Our motivation and methods are not like that of the world (Mark 10:42-43; Matthew 6:32; 1 John 4:14-17).
 - a. For the fulltime minister this means that one should ***not*** be doing the ministry for the sake of earthly gain (money or recognition). During the apostle Paul's time, there were those who did the ministry work for the sake of selfish gain (Philippians 1:16). In our modern times, there are ministers like those that Paul described whose goal in the ministry is either money or recognition. Some of these will not go where the Spirit leads but only go where the dollar leads. Others would use every opportunity to promote themselves rather than to promote Christ and others before themselves.

All such behaviour is unsanctified and unholy in the sight of God, although the innocent sheep would still get ministered to, in spite of these imperfections; but these ministers have robbed themselves of eternal rewards by focusing on temporal rewards. In the Spiritual World, when a minister lowers his motivation to that of worldly gain, his entire spiritual vibration and light becomes more coarse and lower in quality. The extreme worldly ones radiate darkness around themselves; this means that their messages and lives while helping some are also causing many to be led into the realms of darkness in the Spiritual World.

What then should be the correct sanctified motivation for the minister? He should fulfil the ministry out of a pure love for God and a pure love for his congregation. He should love as Christ loves, willing to sacrifice for those he loves that they may grow and be nurtured under his care. I do believe in the principles of tithing and giving to ensure that a fulltime minister is properly supported but as far as the minister is concerned, with or without worldly gain or reward, he (or she) should seek to do his best to express his love for those under his care by giving his ministry

free and without charge. This is the highest motivation and causes the spiritual light of the minister to grow bright and powerful in the Spiritual World.

- b. For all Christians this means that whether you work or are in business for yourself, you **do not** work **nor** do business for the sake of worldly gain (money or recognition). Jesus told us to **not** be like the Gentiles (people of the world) (Mark 10:43; Matthew 6:32). We are told specifically **not** to love the world **nor** the things in the world (1 John 2:15). We do not serve mammon but rather serve Christ (Matthew 6:24).

Sanctified daily living means that when you go about your professional work life, you do it because you love to do what you are doing; with financial gain being incidental. If you are an architect, you love designing and creating things and work out of a pure love to do so; getting paid at the end of the day is only incidental to you. If you are an engineer, you love doing engineering stuff for the joy of doing those things. If you are a doctor, you love helping others get better with your skills. If you are a clerk or an assistant, you love being an assistant to help others achieve their goals. If you are a business person, you go about doing the business because you see it as a means to help and serve others in that particular area of meeting a need with goods or services; that would be the main eternal reward that you seek – of serving and helping others – with the temporal rewards as incidental.

While outwardly those of the world do the same jobs for the sake of money (they are serving mammon), the sanctified Christian goes about the same jobs for the joy of doing those jobs in themselves; the temporal rewards being incidental. For those who are afraid that they will lose out in the natural because they now focus on the daily eternal rewards, remember Jesus' words that ALL these things shall be added to you because your eyes and motivation are always on the kingdom of God and His righteousness (Matthew 6:33).

Freedom from Mammon

What happens when such a drastic motivational change occurs within all Christians? Firstly, they will begin to find the true place of joy and fulfilment that God wants them to be in. In this life, we are supposed to find our natural and spiritual gifting (everyone has both natural and spiritual

gifting). It may take time for some of us to discover them and also even after discovering them we might require a period of training in them.

Search your heart, those things that God has placed in your heart would be those things that you desire to do; and your training and qualification for them (natural and spiritual) are merely to help you function in the natural and spiritual gifting within you. Once you discover your gifting, your motivation would then be to daily fulfil it for the joy of seeing your gifting become a blessing and avenue of joy to others. This should be the *only* reason why we work.

We should *never, never* work just for money (no matter how much you need it). It will sap your energy and joy; and in the end destroy you and your home and family. Mammon does not a good master make. Jesus is our only Saviour and Master. And He wants us to work out our daily lives by living for Him; which would be using all the natural talent and spiritual gifting He gave us to be an avenue of love and joy to others. This is what it means to do service as unto the Lord and not unto men (Ephesians 6:7).

See yourself as a creative being releasing creatively your gifting on a daily basis. Do not see yourself as a dutiful slave working just for the pay check at the end of the month. The difference between the two is like the difference between light and darkness. One is sanctified, the other is unholy. From the Spiritual World perspective, the difference in the light radiating from a person is great between the sanctified motivation and the unholy motivation (darkness surrounds the unholy motivation). Whatever you do in word or deed, do ALL in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him (Colossians 3:17).

We should always live for eternity, and examine all temporal motivations and goals in the light of eternity. Our motivations are like anchors. When we anchor our motivations to those of God and eternity we are pulled upwards towards glory and light. When we anchor our motivations to this temporal world or on temporal things we are pulled downwards into realms of darkness. Jesus said that the devil is only mindful of the things of men and not of God (Matthew 16:23).

The temptations of Jesus by the devil are all in the temporal realm: satisfying his physical hunger, pride in showing off, kingdoms and riches of this world (Matthew 4:3-8). Where our treasure is, there will our heart also be; and if it is with mammon, then it is full of darkness (Matthew 6:21-24). We are spirit beings destined for eternity and should never lower our motivations to the realm of bread and butter. There should be no fear of the

lack of material needs for Jesus promised to take care of us more than the birds of the air (Matthew 6:26-33).

CHAPTER 3

THE SPIRIT OF GRACE

The gift of prosperity is purely the after-effect, the natural consequence, and the side benefit that comes from the spirit of grace that is received. Spiritual grace is received first, and as the grace works in and through the vessel, prosperity results as a side benefit. The key to receiving prosperity is not natural and outward, but rather it is spiritual and internal.

When you focus on the outward acquisition of money, you not only pollute your soul but also you become reliant on the natural laws to meet your daily physical needs. When you focus on the acquisition of the Spirit of Grace with a pure motive, you tap on the higher spiritual laws to meet your daily physical needs. Do not love the world or the things in the world; if anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him (1 John 2:15).

On the other hand when you love God with all your heart and seek to abound in His mercy and grace, the overflow of natural blessings far surpasses anything that the lower natural laws can bring into your life. Indeed, it has been hidden from the previous ages but now made known through the New Covenant to principalities and powers in the heavenly places what the great extent of the unsearchable riches of His grace can do for us (Ephesians 2:7; 3:8-10).

It is like the laws of flight and rocket science versus the bullock cart. Would you rather walk on the lower laws of the bullock cart in the daily provisions in your life or would you rather have the higher laws of grace operate in establishing your spiritual life for all eternity while bringing the side benefit of super abundantly providing for your daily needs?

Invisible Grace before Physical Prosperity

Despite his desperate situation of being sold as a slave, Joseph received the grace of God before he enjoyed prosperity. The Bible says that the Lord was with Joseph and he became a prosperous man (Genesis 39:2). He received grace and favour *before* he was given the rulership of the entire household of Potiphar. And when things became worse and he was thrown into prison, Joseph was given grace and favour by the Lord *before* he was given charge of the entire prison (Genesis 39:21). All he had was the spiritual covering of grace upon his life *before* he saw any physical benefits.

There could possibly have been a period of time when the grace of God was operating upon Joseph before he was noticed by his masters. This

invisible powerful and prosperity-attracting grace was working in his life *before* any tangible physical prosperity was his. When Joseph finally stood before Pharaoh, the main thing that Pharaoh noticed was that the Spirit of God was upon Joseph (Genesis 41:38). Joseph then became the ruler over all Egypt under Pharaoh (Genesis 41:40-43).

Daniel, like Joseph, began as a slave after the Babylonian conquest but he was blessed with favour and grace by the Lord (Daniel 1:9). Daniel was not interested in physical pleasure or luxuries but chose to please God alone (Daniel 1:8). This invisible and powerful cloak of grace around him brought him into service to King Nebuchadnezzar while also attracting great power, authority and riches to himself (Daniel 2:48).

Grace from Old Testament to New Testament

The Old Testament Hebrew word for *grace* is *chen* which has the root meaning of *favour*. The New Testament Greek word for *grace* is *charis* which includes the meaning of *unmerited favour from God* but also means *an unmerited energy substance from God* – and, of course, in the New Testament it is based on the finished work of Christ. We need to remember that the grace and favour given in the Old Testament was also given based on the finished work of Christ, except that the Old Testament people looked forward through types and shadows to the finished work of Christ. Because the Old Testament people were not born again nor have the Holy Spirit indwelling in them, they could only receive *grace upon* (positional grace) and not *grace within* - the substance energy of grace (spirit-energy substance grace).

This situation is the same in terms of the coming of the Holy Spirit – He was only upon the Old Testament saints but can be both upon and within the New Testament saints. Thus we have a better covenant because we have all the benefits of the Old Covenant *plus* more in the New. In the experiential and subjective operation of grace in both the Old Testament and the New Testament, the person through which grace is operating would still have to have a sense of the reception of God's love and the outworking of that love.

Even though the operation of grace and favour was limited to positional grace in the Old Testament, it was still a very powerful force that changed people, nations and provided miracles. The story of Joseph in the book of Genesis is a story of the grace of God working. Sold by his brothers into slavery and estranged from his father's love and care, Joseph started at the bottom of the ladder in society and *worked* his way up. The reason I highlight *worked* is because although Joseph was a very hardworking and diligent man, it was not what he did alone that brought him promotion but

rather the grace and favour of God. The most hardworking man without the opportunities or doors that God and His angels open for him would still be nowhere and nothing. I believe in hard work and diligence but it needs to be matched with an even greater surrender and faith in God (Hebrew 11:6).

The Key to Tapping on the Flow of Grace

The key to tapping on the grace of God is to – simultaneously - realise that you are nothing and yet abiding in Him you could be everything (John 15:4-8). It is not a paradox, it is the **only** way – the key - to realise grace and favour in our lives. God was **with** Joseph and he was a prosperous man (Genesis 39:2). His prosperity and success came only **after** the Lord was **with** him. In fact, Potiphar took note of the fact that the Lord was with him and not just because he was a hardworking man (Genesis 39:3). When Potiphar made Joseph overseer (ruler) over his entire house, the blessing of the Lord was on **all** that he had in the house and in the field (Genesis 39:4-5).

When a business, church or country is under a man or woman full of the grace of God, the entire dominion of that same person will be filled with the grace, favour and blessing of God. Unfortunately, the opposite is also true – when a person is under condemnation and curse, everything under that person suffers along: humans, beasts and things. This brings the point that if you are not experiencing the grace of God in your life, you need to learn to humble yourself and fellowship with, or come under the influence or spiritual authority of one who has the grace of God upon their lives – you will begin to experience the overflow of grace from them. Even bad old Potiphar was humble enough to recognise that he was blessed **because** of Joseph (Genesis 39:3-5). Potiphar's **association** with Joseph brought blessings into his whole household.

Importance of Spiritual Association and Partnership in Grace

It is also important to whom we bring our tithes, offerings and support – if it is a ministry that does not walk in the grace of God, you are also responsible for the condemnation that the particular ministry or church continues to propagate – tithes and offerings are the outward expression of our spiritual partnership; you are a partner to whomever you give and will be called to account in eternity.

Giving should never be coerced or compulsory but like everything else in life – if we are careful in what foods we eat, in what clothing we buy, in the expenditure for education, home, etc, in our family; then we should also be careful with whom we become in spiritual partnership. Watch your life.

Have you been blessed with grace with all your sincere and faithful and careful giving? If you have not, although this is not the only cause, of course, check your history of giving and tithing – your spiritual partnership. All things being equal, generally, there should be *more* grace increased in your life – your own in God *plus* that of which you became in spiritual partnership. Humans value money and although the love of money is the root of all evil, stewardship of it is one of the tests of our relationship with God – if one is not faithful with money – mammon – one will not be faithful in the things of God (Matthew 6:19-24).

Love and the Flow of Grace

When Potiphar threw Joseph into the prison, the Lord was *with* Joseph and gave him favour with the chief jailor (Genesis 39:21). No prison or darkest pit can stop the grace of God. Joseph was innocent of his crimes. A lot of people in the world suffer injustices and cry to God. Yet, it is only the grace and favour of God that will redeem and free us as it freed Joseph.

We need to understand what is going on within Joseph's heart. With all that he had suffered, he could have developed unforgiveness or anger, etc. Instead he continued steadfastly in his faith in God and sought to do right even when tempted to do wrong. Doing right seemed to put him in an adverse position in the natural but the grace of God is above all. We could say that Joseph loved God enough to want to please Him in his life in everything. This love that he had also overflowed into his care for others.

Note his love and concern for the prisoners under his care (Genesis 40:6). We can be sure that at the back of Joseph's mind, he would still have the dreams that God gave him (Genesis 37:1-11). It certainly would take the grace of God to establish him to greatness as his situation in prison looked hopeless. Have you noticed how often God allows His people to come to the end of themselves before He acts?

Abraham who was promised a child when Sarah was barren, was still not sterile – as he produced Ishmael with Hagar – when the promise was given (Genesis chapters 15 and 16). He needed one miracle in the opening of Sarah's womb. God waited until he needed two miracles - when Abraham himself was sterile - before He announced the giving of the child (Romans 4:19; Genesis chapter 17).

Why did God do this? So that Abraham would understand that it is one hundred percent the grace of God and there was nothing from him (except faith and trust in God) that wrought the double miracles – the paradox of being nothing in ourselves but still able to do everything in God. Why did

God take His people through the wilderness? It was to humble them and test them (Deuteronomy 8:2). God always wants to bring us to the position where we recognise that we are nothing without Him before He can do miracles through His grace in us. Did God choose the Israelites because they were powerful or intelligent or great? No! He chose them because He loved them and frankly told them that they were the least of all the nations (Deuteronomy 7:6-7). All the nations around them were greater and mightier than they (Deuteronomy 7:1). He wanted to show them His mercy and grace! (Deuteronomy 7:9).

It was only when Joseph was at the lowest point in his life, knowing that nothing he could ever do would make his dreams come true, that God began to work His grace and favour in Joseph's life and create the set of circumstances for His promotion (Genesis chapters 40 and 41). Yes, indeed! It was not Joseph alone, but the grace of God that established and set him up in the position of the highest authority possible in Egypt. Joseph tapped upon the grace of God through understanding that in all circumstances, God still loved him and he still loved God (and loved others).

Grace and love always work together because grace starts with God's love for us. We then respond with love towards Him and towards others. We must be secure in God's love for us; then we respond by loving Him with all our hearts, minds and souls through all circumstances – and our neighbours as ourselves. In a sense it is not even our love but God's love through us. Holding ourselves in this position produces the firepower of the grace of God upon our lives. No circumstances or any situations can hold us from being freed into the grace of God as long as we keep responding to God's love and never ever doubting His love for us (Romans 8:28).

Total Dependence on the Grace of God

The secret and key to discovering and releasing the grace of God in our lives is in the paradox of understanding that we are absolutely nothing without Him but we can do everything in Him. Paul discovered the grace of God powerfully in his early life and first missionary journey (2 Corinthians 12:1-5 – tracing back fourteen years from the epistle of Corinthians – would be the approximate time as when he was stoned to death in Acts 14:19-20). He learned the secret that when he was weak *then* was he strong (2 Corinthians 12:9, 10). He understood that it was the grace of God in him, through him, and upon him that would make him successful and strong in every area of his life and ministry.

Every minister and every anointed business person needs to discover this truth experientially in their lives. If you haven't discovered that you are

nothing yet, you will never discover the secret of the grace of God. But the day you discover that Christ in you is everything and that there is nothing that you can and will receive based on your own merit – but that it can only be received ***based on the mercy and love of God*** – then and then only will you be able to say ‘I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me’ (Philippians 4:13).

Thanksgiving and the Flow of Grace

To those who read New Testament Greek, there is an expansion of the understanding of the revelation of grace by noting the words from which the root word (*chairō*) for grace (*charis*) is derived. The following are all related to grace (Greek words Romanised for the benefit of non-Greek readers):

- Chairō* – the main root which has a sense of the meaning of joy and well being – to rejoice, to be merry, to be delighted, etc.
- Chara* – joy, merriment, delight, etc.
- Charis* – that which delights, grace, favour, etc.
- Charizomai* – to be delighted, to be favoured, etc.
- Charisma* – a gift of grace, a gift of favour, etc.
- Eucharisteo, eucharistia* – to be thankful or grateful, thanksgiving, gratitude

From the relation in the above words through their root (*chairō*), we can surmise the following:

1. Thanksgiving and gratitude are both the pre-requisites and the after effects of the reception of grace (*chairō* and *eucharistia* being related from the same root).

It is clear from the Old Testament that thanksgiving is the first door into the presence of God (Psalm 95:2; 100:4). Even the general goodness of God becomes cut off when men become ungrateful in their hearts towards God (Romans 1:20-21). Being ungrateful attracts a whole multitude of circumstances that leads from bad to worse into one’s life – whether the person is good or bad.

All things work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). When one is in love with God, one naturally would be grateful and filled with gratitude. All nature naturally sings with gratitude to God but mankind with free will has the ability to deny God and become ungrateful (Psalm 148). The first step towards evil and sin is to lose the ability to be thankful and grateful to people and to God. The path towards life, grace and favour is entered through the gates of thanksgiving and marked by the milestones of grateful praise. For this reason we are exhorted to give thanks in everything (1

Thessalonians 5:18). Never let any circumstance, no matter how difficult or tough, rob you of the ability to give thanks to God.

All the onslaughts of the enemy were designed with one purpose and one purpose alone, to take away your grateful and thankful heart to God and replace it with a heart of dissatisfaction and complaint. Once the devil succeeds in this, you are on the road of sin and destruction (Romans 1:21-24).

Be thankful to God. Be thankful to the people around you. Be thankful in good circumstances. Be thankful in bad circumstances. Be thankful in **all** circumstances. It is not just a little exhortation to keep us happy; it is the **key** which will bring power and grace to **all** your circumstances. It is the **only** way to enter into the road of grace and favour and it is also the **only** way to keep yourself (to maintain) on that road without losing the position of grace and favour.

If you are having problems getting out of difficult circumstances, this is the first place to check. Until and unless you are able to give thanks **while** in your present circumstances, your circumstances will never change. You must change your heart attitude first **before** your circumstances change.

2. To be filled with joy is to be filled with grace; and to be filled with grace is to be filled with joy (*chairo* and *chara* being related to the same root).

When Jesus spoke of the disciples' joy being full, He was speaking of the reception of grace that was to be released upon His finished work (John 15:11; 16:20-24; 17:13). The unspeakable joy that is full of glory, which Peter spoke about in his epistle, is the result of the reception of the grace which the prophets had prophesied would come upon the New covenant people (1 Peter 1:8-10).

The joy of the Lord is the strength for the Old Testament people (Nehemiah 8:10). The grace (and joy) of the Lord is still our strength (and glory) in the New Testament (1 Pet 1:6, 8; 2 Timothy 2:1). The only way to overcome all manner of temptation and trials is through the joy of the Lord (James 1:2). James was not just telling us to keep the right heart attitude; he was giving the **key** to come out of the trials and temptation unscathed.

Faith is the substance of things hoped for (Hebrews 11:1). Abundant hope results in abundant faith. The God of Hope fills us with joy and grace causing us to abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Romans 15:13). If you find it hard sometimes to hold fast in faith, it is because you are holding on by your own strength. When the joy and grace of God is in you, the power of the Holy Spirit enables you

to hold fast in faith because He causes the supernatural abounding of hope. The evidence of the grace of God being in your life would be the joy of the Lord.

The signs of you beginning to depend on yourself, rather than the grace of God within you, is the loss of joy in your life. When you are truly abiding in the vine, the joy of the Lord is your strength (John 15:5-11). Watch your joy-meter every day. If your joy-meter is low, get back into the presence of God where there is fullness of grace and joy (Psalm 16:11; Hebrews 4:16). Jesus conquered the cross through the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). It is the eternal desire of Jesus that His joy be fulfilled in us (John 17:13).

3. Both the pre-requisite for the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit and the result of the operation of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is joy and grace (*chairō* and *charisma/eucharistēo* being related to the same root).

The kingdom of God is the domain of righteousness, peace and joy (Romans 14:17). When Peter raised the lame man from the ground, we can safely assume that the words of Jesus (that he can ask the Father in Jesus Name that his joy may be full) was on his mind when he said that what he had (grace, joy and life) he gave to the lame man (Acts 3:6).

There is no doubt that the tidings of great joy (grace) that was to be upon all people would have included all that Jesus declared would come in the acceptable year of the Lord through the anointing of the Holy Spirit - healing and deliverance (Luke 2:10; 4:18-19). When the seventy returned with joy to report the power of the Lord, it is obvious that the joy they experienced was just the continued result of the power of the Holy Spirit upon them (Luke 10:17).

The miracle ministry of Philip resulted in great joy (Acts 8:8). This is no ordinary joy but the aftermath of the abundance (greatness) of grace/joy that God was working on the whole community to whom Philip ministered. Despite opposition, this supernatural joy and grace continued upon the disciples in Paul's ministry (Acts 13:52; John 16:22). The only thing that Jesus did in releasing the power for the miracle of the bread in feeding the thousands was in giving thanks (John 6:11). This was particularly noted by John in writing the gospel (John 6:23 – they did eat the bread after that the Lord had given thanks). The supernatural filling of the Holy Spirit in our lives enables us to give thanks for all things (Ephesians 5:18-20).

We are told not just to intercede for all men but to also give thanks for all men (1 Timothy 2:1). If we stop in our thankfulness towards

the world, we stop the flow of grace from our lives to all the world. We are the custodians of the New Testament flow of grace; we should be as willing as God to bestow unconditional love and grace towards all men.

The manifold wisdom of God of this dispensation of grace is to be manifested through the church (Ephesians 3:2, 8-10). The devil will seek to make us ungrateful for our country, our leaders, our fellow countrymen, our world so that our prayers for them become ineffective. We should endeavour through thick and thin to have a grateful thankful heart for everyone around us. For the atmosphere and attitude of thanksgiving is essential for the working of the power of the Holy Spirit.

Be thankful for your spouse, your family, your children. Don't let the enemy make you an ungrateful person and hinder your prayers for your own loved ones. The seeds of divorce are found in the attitude of ungratefulness and the lack of thanksgiving. A strong loving marriage is built upon the foundations of thanksgiving and love. Always be thankful for your leaders, your country and your fellow countrymen. For you release the grace of God (and the power of God) upon their lives when you hold them before God with thanksgiving in your prayers.

In the New Testament, this grace of God through Christ is so powerful it can even fill the atmosphere and the whole community. When great grace was upon the early church, great power ensued such that even the shadow of Peter brought healing to thousands (Acts 4:33; 5:12-16). The great growth of the church was called the grace of God (Acts 11:19-23). With the grace of God at work, Gentiles begged to hear the gospel and Paul exhorted them to continue in the grace of God (Acts 13:42-44).

God granted signs and wonders only because He wanted to confirm the word of His grace (Acts 14:3). To his dying breath, Paul was willing to testify to the grace of God in his life (Acts 20:24; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Galatians 2:9). It is only the grace of God that can establish us and give us an inheritance among the sanctified (Acts 20:32). Besides being a powerful anointing upon, this grace is also working from within us powerfully (2 Timothy 2:1; Galatians 2:8, 9; 1 Corinthians 15:10).

CHAPTER 4

THE FLOW OF GRACE AND FAVOUR

In God there are no coincidences. Every circumstance that we face is the result of choices made by people before us, our parents or guardians and our own choices. Outside of these choices, when our heart is pure and right in the eyes of God, the angels find room to work to create the flow of grace and favour.

To the world, it would seem like a ‘flow of good luck and good fortune’ (Scripturally, there is no such thing – it is rather the flow of grace and favour). This does *not* mean that one does not have challenges or difficulties in life; rather it means that in the end *all* things *will* work out for good (Romans 8:28). In fact in many of the Bible stories, those to whom grace, favour and fortune flowed were usually tested to see what was in their heart BEFORE the abundant river of grace and favour started flowing.

- Joseph, the man who became the most powerful man after Pharaoh, had his motives and heart tested for thirteen years before he rose to the pinnacle of power and wealth in the land of Egypt (Genesis 37:2; 41:46). From prisoner to prime minister in one day; but behind the public news of his promotion were the private and unknown years of holding on to a clean and pure heart in the most difficult of physical conditions.
- David, the best of all the kings that ruled Israel, suffered under the dominant and harsh hand of Saul for probably ten to thirteen years before he became king. The Bible records David was a youth – probably seventeen to twenty years old – when he faced Goliath and he was thirty when he first ascended to the throne (1 Samuel 17:42; 2 Samuel 5:4). The shepherd boy who became king over all the land of Israel at the age of 37 years old (he was thirty when he ruled over Judah and seven years later over all of Israel) was a man with a good heart, who sought after the heart of God (1 Samuel 13:14).
- Daniel, the prime minister of great authority and influence during the golden age of world empires (Babylonian Empire and Medo-Persian empire), was once a slave boy who chose to do what was right in his heart (Daniel 1:8).

Angelic work in the Flow of Grace and Favour

Good fortune does not come by accident. It is the result of angelic work behind the scenes of physical circumstances. Angels who can work because the people for whom they are working have a good and upright heart. The

angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear Him and delivers them (Psalm 34:7). He who dwells in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; no evil shall befall you because He has set His angels over you (Psalm 91:1, 11). Where is this secret place of the most High to be found? It can only be found in your heart. The Lord says, 'Because he has set his love upon Me, therefore will I deliver him. I will set him on high because he has known my name' (Psalm 91:14). The key is having a good heart filled with the love of God, filled with righteousness, filled with thanksgiving and grateful joy to the Lord.

The power of the angels working upon the circumstances of life is so powerful that even the smallest details are not left to chance. On the very night before the execution of Mordecai which Haman planned, the Lord's angels caused it such that the king could not sleep, caused it such that he would ask for the historical records to be read to him, caused it such that of all the thousands of records that the record of Mordecai's good deed be read to the king, caused it such that the king would seek to reward Mordecai that very day, caused it such that the enemy of Mordecai (who had actually arrived early at the king's court to ask for Mordecai's head) should be shamed into doing the opposite and exalting him (Esther 6:1-11). Think about the many coincidences here and the chances for this sequence of events to happen accidentally. There were no coincidences or accidents, the angels were at work.

Understanding Trials, Tests and Temptations

Life is not all a bed of roses. Sometimes, there are valleys and at other times there are mountain high views. The key is to understand that all the valleys of trials and tears do not come without any reason. No temptation (or trial) has overtaken you except such as is common to man, but God is faithful, who will **not** allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape that you may be able to bear it (1 Corinthians 10:13). What is the way of escape? It is not **from** the lions' den but **through** the lions' den. The key is the final phrase 'that you may be able to bear it.' How shall you be able to bear it? Through the grace which God supplies to you! (1 Corinthians 15:10). His grace is sufficient for you, His strength is made perfect in weakness (2 Corinthians 12:9). Be strong in the grace of God within you (2 Timothy 2:1).

Understand that the temptations, trials and testings are NOT about you or who you are. They come **because** of the Word (Matthew 13:21). The enemy is not interested in you directly, he is interested in destroying the good word of God which you have received. He is interested in destroying **what** you believe in through your knowledge and understanding of the word of God.

This is *not* your battle. This is *not* your fight. The fight has already been won in Christ, you are *more than* a conqueror in Christ's love (Romans 8:37). The only fight left is the fight of faith! (1 Timothy 6:12). This is the fight where you hold on to (rest in) the finished work of Christ. You hold on to what you believe. You allow the word of Christ to take root within you. It is no longer you who live but Christ who lives in you (Galatians 2:20). It is not you but the grace of God within you (1 Corinthians 15:10).

Good heart and Christ within

The first reason for the tests is that your heart be proven (Deuteronomy 8:2). It is only those who have a noble and good heart who will bear fruit (Luke 8:15). The second reason for the test is that you would discover the seed of the word of God within you, the Spirit of God within you, the strength of God within you, the life of God within you, the grace of God within you – that the works be done through the Spirit of God within you and not your own puny strength. When Gideon sounded the call to battle against the Midianites, thirty-two thousand people turned up (Judges 7:1-7).

In line with the instruction of Moses that all those who were fearful in their heart should return home, Gideon gave a chance for those who were afraid and fearful to go home (Deuteronomy 20:8). Over two-thirds (22,000 men) returned home (Judges 7:3). Even with ten thousand men, God said that there were too many and trimmed them to 300 men. The main concern of God was neither the physical capability of the men nor their numerical superiority. He wanted only people with good strong hearts who would depend on Him and not on themselves. His main concern was that He did not want them to claim glory to themselves and say that their own hand (strength or ability) had obtained them the victory (Judges 7:2).

Even up to this day, God is not concerned about our ability or our numerical superiority or our financial capability or our social status or our educational qualifications or our skills and talents or our mental capacity. He is only concerned that we have a good and noble heart and are those who will allow His ability (His strength and Spirit) in us to do the work required. He constantly chose the smallest and least to show us that we should just love Him with all our heart and depend on Him with all within us, and we shall have victory (Deuteronomy 7:7-9). He constantly chose the foolish to confound the wise, the weak to put to shame the mighty, the things which are not to bring to nought the things that are (1 Corinthians 1:27-28) that no flesh shall glory in His presence (1 Corinthians 1:29).

All things will always work together for good to those who love God (Romans 8:28). The only condition is that we should love God with all our heart, mind, soul and strength. And we love Him because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We must have faith that God loves us unconditionally in Christ. We must have faith that upon whomever God sets His love, such will *always* succeed and have victory no matter the odds (Deuteronomy 7:8). It is His love, and faith in His love alone that will bring forth the sunshine of victory in our lives. His love upon us is His face shining upon us and the never ending flow of goodness and mercy, grace and favour upon our lives. We are more than conquerors through Him who loves us (Romans 8:37).

You are the disciple whom Jesus loved

You are the disciple whom Jesus loved. This title does not belong to only John but to every disciple of Jesus. Although our Heavenly Father may love each of us equally, we are not always equally conscious of His love. Our ability to walk in great faith and great grace depends on the greatness of our confidence in God's love; which results in the greatness of our love for God and others (1 John 4:16-19).

Jesus, when He was physically manifested on earth had twelve apostles, hundreds of other disciples and thousands of followers. I am sure that He loved all equally, yet only one disciple wrote that he was the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20, 24). What right had John to call himself the disciple whom Jesus loved? Doesn't he know that Jesus loved all equally? Of course, Jesus loved all the disciples but it was only John who treasured the fact the Jesus loved him and made it his supreme consciousness. He felt special to be loved by Jesus; he felt unique to be loved by Jesus; he knew that God was love and that Jesus was the personification of this special love that God has for us.

Contrast that with Peter. He was always trying to impress Jesus instead of just resting in the love of God through Jesus. Even though Andrew had introduced him to Jesus earlier (John 1:40-41), he continually felt unworthy of the love of Jesus. When Jesus called to use his boat and gave him a miraculous catch of fish, his first words were 'Depart from me, for I am a sinful man' (Luke 5:8). It is never God who shuts us from His love. It is we who through our own fear and doubts shut ourselves from His love.

Peter kept swaying in accepting the unmerited favour and love of God for himself. He was the type of person who was bold to risk everything and quick to act (Matthew 14:28). When Jesus blessed him for his willingness to confess Him as Christ the Son of the Living God, instead of resting in His

love for him, He started trying to control and impress Jesus and received a rebuke (Matthew 16:23). When Jesus, who loved all and knew all things, told Peter that He had prayed for him because he was going to experience a test, Peter was confident in himself and boasted that he was ready to go to prison and to even die for Jesus (Luke 22:33).

God is not interested in what we can prove to Him; rather He is interested in whether our Christian-living-and-ministry confidence comes from the consciousness of His love for us or whether it comes from our own self-confidence. We always fail when we are confident in our own abilities. We only succeed when that confidence comes from a deep assurance of God's love for us and His ability to enable us to do what He wants us to do. Thus we tap upon His ability in us.

When Peter was tested, he failed miserably in denying the Lord; when the rooster crowed, the Lord turned and His eyes met Peter's eyes. Peter must have been overwhelmed by the fact that in spite of all that he had done, the Lord still loved him and he wept bitterly (Luke 22:61-62). It was the Lord's prayer for Peter that sustained him through this experience and not Peter's own ability. The Lord had prayed that his faith would not fail (Luke 22:32). Faith in what? Faith in whom? Faith in the love of Jesus for him which would result in faith for everything else! For faith is energised by love (Galatians 5:6 - the word *working* is the Greek word *energise*).

After His resurrection, Jesus sought to restore Peter's confidence in His love by asking him three times whether he loved Him. The Greek words showed that Jesus was asking Peter twice whether he had *agape* love to which Peter only could respond with *phileo* love. On the third occasion, Jesus came down to Peter's level and asked whether he had *phileo* love - Peter still struggled with raising his level of love from *phileo* level to *agape* level (John 21:15-19).

In fact, he seemed concerned, when Jesus revealed that he was to die for Him, about whether John was having a different (maybe better in his mind?) treatment (John 21:18-21). Behind it all, his struggle was the struggle as to whether God and Jesus loved him as much as John. Later in the book of Acts, we see Peter working closely with John - he would have definitely realised by then that God loves him as much as John and everybody else (Acts 3:1). Note that since our ability to love God is directly proportional to God's love for us (1 John 4:19) this test of Jesus on Peter is ultimately a test of whether he was confident in God's love for him.

Faith in God's unconditional Love

In order to flow in this wonderful and abundant river of grace and favour, we need to

- Have a good heart of faith in God's unconditional love for us
- Respond to that love with love towards God and towards all people
- Allow Christ in us to live through us

Note that even in Galatians 2:20 where Paul extols the fact of Christ living through us, he was actually proclaiming Christ's love for us – I live by the faith of the Son of God who loved me and gave Himself for me.

As we conclude this book, I would like to pray this prayer of blessing (Numbers 6:24-26) to start the flow of God's river of love, grace, favour, goodness and mercy flowing to you:

The Lord bless you and keep you
The Lord make His face to shine upon you
And be gracious to you
The Lord lift up His countenance upon you
And give you peace.
Amen.

CHAPTER 5

BEING THE HEAD AND NOT THE TAIL

The promise to the Old Testament people was that they shall be the head and not the tail if they walk with God and fulfil all His commandments (Deuteronomy 28:13). This blessing actually fulfils the blessing to Abraham where God promised that through Abraham and his seed, all the nations of the earth will be blessed (Genesis 12:3). It implies that all the blessings to the nations of the world flow through the seed of Abraham; which in turn means that all the wealth of the world has to be accumulated by the seed of Abraham prior to it flowing to the nations of world. Abraham's seed is the source and avenue for all blessings to flow to all the nations surrounding. The apostle Paul taught that the word 'seed' (singular) applies not just to Isaac but is finally fulfilled in Christ (Galatians 3:16). And through Christ, the Gentiles (the church) are now the receivers and the custodians of the blessings of Abraham (Galatians 3:13-14).

Christ is Always the Head

Even in the Old Covenant, Israel never reached the fullness of the blessings of Abraham such that all the nations of the world are blessed through them. It is only in the New Covenant in Christ that the complete and total fulfilment of the Abrahamic blessings is possible. All things are made in Christ and for Him all things are made (John 1:3). All things were created through Him and for Him and in Him all things consist (Colossians 1:16-17). Christ is the head of the church and risen from the dead so that in all things He may have the pre-eminence (Colossians 1:18). This means that He is the head over all things, spiritual and natural. In the natural it includes every financial blessing available on the planet earth. All authority and power will have to come in subjection to Christ; and this includes the financial power. Jesus must reign until all things are put under His feet and He becomes the head over all things (1 Corinthians 15:24-28).

Under King David and King Solomon, Israel reached a measure of its fullness of Abraham's blessing. It is under Christ in the church age that all the fullness of the Abrahamic covenant is fulfilled. In the Old Covenant, when Moses led the Israelite out of Egypt, they literally plundered Egypt and took all the prosperity in order to bring it to build the Ark and the Tabernacle (Exodus 12:35-36). This plunder was prophesied four hundred years before it took place to Abraham (Genesis 15:14). As Israel came out of Egypt and began the Exodus, the glorious church will come out of the world and begin the Great Exodus to prepare for the Rapture. As the Israelites came out with great prosperity, so the bride of Christ will inherit

great prosperity. This is in order to build the places of refuge and the white buildings of teaching and worship in preparation for the Rapture. There will be a great transfer of wealth that takes place. Christ will show His dominion over all the powers and wealth of men through His church. The glorious church will demonstrate the headship and the lordship of Christ over all things.

The Heights of Wisdom and Grace

The glorious church is predestined to demonstrate the multifaceted wisdom of God (Ephesians 3:9-10). Wisdom always have length of days in her right hand and riches and honour in her left hand (Proverbs 3:16). When one has wisdom, one has riches and honour and abundant wealth as these accompany wisdom (Proverbs 8:18, 21). When King Solomon asked for wisdom, he became the richest king on earth (1 Kings 3:5-13). In his time, there was so much gold that silver was counted as nothing (1 Kings 10:21). When the bride of Christ demonstrates the fullness of God's manifold wisdom, she will also be the head and not the tail, demonstrating the power of wealth in Christ's glorious church.

The glorious church is also predestined to demonstrate the exceeding riches of God's grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:7). When grace was great in the early church, the early church moved into a period of prosperity such that there was no poor in their midst (Acts 4:33-34). Great grace brings great prosperity. When the Macedonian church suffered a great trial of affliction and deep poverty, they did not let go of the spiritual grace but instead re-bounded back in great grace and then received such blessings that they abounded in their liberal generosity (2 Corinthians 8:1-3). The grace and favour of God brought Joseph through his trials as a slave in Potiphar's house and as a prisoner in Egyptian jail until he stood as a prime minister before Pharaoh (Genesis 39:1-4, 21; 41:41-46). The end time church will demonstrate the fullness of great grace and be the head and not the tail.

The Glory of the Lord

The glory of the Lord will arise upon the church such that all Gentiles shall see the glory of the Lord upon His church (Isaiah 60:1-3). And because of the glory of the Lord upon the church, the wealth of the Gentiles will come to Christ's glorious church (Isaiah 60:5, 11). The glory of the Lord was in the Ark of Covenant and when it was in Obed-Edom's house, everything that he had prospered (2 Samuel 6:11-12; 1 Chronicles 13:14). Just the mere presence of the glory of God was enough to cause abundant wealth upon Obed-Edom. In the end times, the fullness of God and His

presence and glory in Christ will be present in His church (Ephesians 2:19-22; 3:19). Christ will demonstrate His fullness and His headship in and through His church (Ephesians 1:22-23). When the fullness of God is upon His church, there will be the fullness of blessings in every dimension of spirit, soul and body.

The purpose of wealth and abundance is to fulfil one of the greatest stories yet to take place – the great Exodus of the church to the places that God designate to be places where He reveals His presence in a tangible manner – similar but greater than the pillar of cloud in the bible exodus. The vision of white building given in regard to the end times are buildings constructed to be ‘heaven on earth’ as places where saints and angels gather in a glorious state of being demonstrating the fullness of God’s glory on earth in the final decades of the church age. Just as the wealth of the Israelites from Egypt was used to build the Ark and the Tabernacle, the wealth of the end time church will be used in the great Exodus and the building of twenty-four hour praise and worship centres throughout all the earth. The finale of the church is in a protracted worship that goes on for nearly a week. In the midst of this week of worship, the church is transformed, glorified and raptured from the planet earth. Just as the four creatures around the throne kept worshipping and proclaiming the holiness and the glory of the Lord eternally, the glorious church will be proclaiming the praises and the glory of the Lord without ceasing until it is raptured. Jesus Himself will be declaring the praises of God to the Father in our midst (Hebrews 2:12).