

BIBLE FOUNDATIONS LESSON NO. 7

PROSPERITY

One of the many great characteristics of Jesus Christ is unselfishness. In John 6:38 He said, "...I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me." An important way for us to practice unselfishness is in our giving to God. We are told in Malachi 3:10-11 to bring our tithes and offerings to God's house and "...prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it. And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, and he shall not destroy the fruits of your ground..." God promises to bless and prosper those who put their trust in Him and faithfully tithe.

Tithing is one of God's fundamental principles. The tithe, which is the tenth of one's income, should be given cheerfully and not grudgingly (2 Cor. 9:7). As we seek to put God first in our lives, He promises to add all things unto us (Matt. 6:33). When we give of ourselves—our time, talent, and money - we find a greater fulfillment in Christ, for we read in Luke 6:38, "Give, and it shall be given unto you, good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again." Our motive in giving to God must be based on our love of God and our desire to be obedient to His Word. He, in turn, desires to bless us in every area of our lives.

MEMORY VERSE: Matthew 6:33

TRUST IN GOD

1. What two things does **Matthew 6:33** tell Christians to seek first?

- (a) _____ (b) _____

2. When Christians seek the Lord first, as in **Matthew 6:33**, what does He promise to add to us?

3. What happens to those who trust in the Lord? (**Psalm 125:1**)

4. What resulted when Hezekiah, Solomon & Uzziah sought and served God with all their hearts? (**1 Chron. 22:13, 2 Chron. 26:5, 31:21, 32:30**)

5. What three things will God do for those who walk uprightly? (**Psalm 84:11**)

- (a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____

6. What three things must we do to receive the desires of our heart? (**Psalm 37:4-5**)

- (a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____

7. To be blessed, what five admonitions [3 negative, 2 positive] are we given in **Psalm 1:1-3**?

- (a) _____ (b) _____ (c) _____
(d) _____ (e) _____

8. According to **Ps. 34:10**, they that seek the Lord shall _____.

9. According to **Psalm 35:27**, the Lord takes pleasure in _____.

10. What is the wish expressed in **3 John 2** (It reflects God's desire toward us)?

Lesson #7, cont.

TRUSTING IN AND HONORING GOD THROUGH TITHES AND OFFERINGS

11. What does **Malachi 3:10** tell us we can do to prove (test) the Lord?
12. When we prove the Lord according to **Malachi 3:10-11**, what does He promise to do for us?
13. Israel robbed God by not giving _____ and _____ (**Mal. 3:8**)
14. As a result of robbing God, what happened to Israel? (**Mal. 3:9**)
15. What should be our attitude when we give? (**2 Cor. 9:7**)
16. If we sow sparingly, what will happen? (**2 Cor. 9:6 & Luke 6:38**)
17. In Paul's exhortation in **1 Corinthians 16:1-2** everyone was to give according to what measure?
18. With what should we honor the Lord? (**Prov. 3:9**)
19. To whom does the tithe belong? (**Lev. 27:30**)

TITHING – GOD'S PRINCIPLE, EVEN BEFORE THE LAW

20. What did Abram (Abraham) give to God's priest, Melchizedek? (**Gen. 14:18-20**)
21. Who is our high priest after the order of Melchizedek? (**Heb. 5:5-6, 6:20 and all of Heb. 7**)
22. What did God do for Abraham? (**Gen. 24:1**)
23. What five things did Jacob want God to do for him? (**Gen. 28:20-21**)
 - (a)
 - (b)
 - (c)
 - (d)
 - (e)
24. What did Jacob promise to give back to God? (**Gen. 28:22**)
25. Why did Joseph prosper? (**Gen. 39:2**)

DANGERS OF PROSPERITY OR COVETEOUSNESS

26. What chokes the Word (what do the thorns represent) in **Luke 8:5-15** or **Mark 4:1-25**?
27. What does **Psalm 62:10** say about the increase of riches?
28. What two things happened to those who coveted after money, according to **1 Timothy 6:10**?
 - (a)
 - (b)
29. When God prospers us, of what should we beware? (**Deut. 8:10-14**)
30. What are the three commands to those who are rich in **1 Tim 6:17**?

PROSPERITY

***Matt. 6:19-20, 24-33, *Matt. 4:4**

**I. PROVISION - Ps. 34:10, 2 Cor. 9:8,
Phil. 4:6-7, Ps. 37:25, 2 Peter 1:3, 4a**

Examples {
1. Israel/Wilderness - *Deut. 8:2-4, 10-18
2. Prophets - 1 Kings 17:4-6, 9-16, 2 Kings 4:1-7, 3:15-20
3. Jesus - Matt. 2:11, Luke 8:1-3
4. Disciples - Matt. 17:27

II. THE LAW OF PROSPERITY - Defined in Hebrew & Greek

***Rom. 8:15-18, *3 John 1:2, Ps. 35:27**

O.T. Examples

***Deut. 28:1-6, 11-13, Job 36:11**

***Ps. 1:1-3, Ps. 122:6**

III. DANGERS OF PROSPERITY - COVETOUSNESS

**Ez. 28:16, Matt. 4:8-10, Eph. 5:3-5, 2 Tim. 3:1-5
1 Cor. 6:9-10, *Rev. 3:14-22**

EAR → HEAR → HEART



Hosea 13:6b

MAJOR SPIRIT IN AMERICA

Solomon's Wisdom from Proverbs & Ecclesiastes

Ecc. 2:8, 2:10, 5:10, 5:13, 5:19, 12:13

Prov. 30:8, 13:7, 1:32 - "The prosperity of fools"

***Luke 12:15-21 Parable of the Rich Fool**

BEWARE OF COVETOUSNESS

*Luke 8:5-15 & 18 - choked by riches

Heb. 13:5 - be content, Ps. 62:10

*1 Tim 6:6-11 [17+19], **GODLY CONTENTMENT**



of Gold - or God

IV. TITHES [& OFFERINGS] - Gen. 14:18-20, 28:20-22, 33:11, Matt. 10:10,

Lev. 27:30, *Prov. 3:9-10

***Mal. 3:8-11 PROVE GOD - DON'T ROB GOD!**

Isa. 5:52

TITHE \$, TIME, TALENTS, EVERYTHING

*2 Cor. 9:5-10, *1 Chron 29:2, 3, 6, 9-17

V. GOD OWNS EVERYTHING - WE OWE HIM EVERYTHING

Haggai 2:8, Ps. 24:1, Deut. 8:18,

1 Cor. 4:7, Jer. 29:23-24

VI. INVESTMENT IN HEAVEN

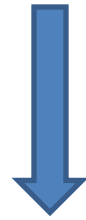
*Matt. 6:19-21, Luke 6:38

STEWARDSHIP (handout)

**Christ is either LORD of ALL
or He is not LORD at ALL.**

God's Provision

GOD



YOU

God's Prosperity

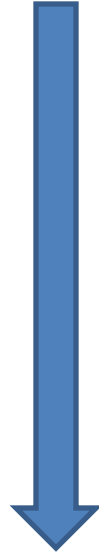
GOD



YOU

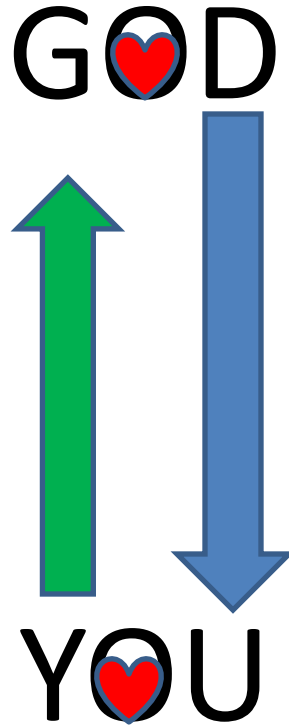
Tithes & Offerings

GOD



YOU

Stewardship



STEWARDSHIP

A Higher Way of Thinking

Christ is either Lord of all or he is not Lord at all.

Definitions:

- A. Hebrew 4943 - to hold or possess, partnership.
- B. Hebrew 376 - mighty champion, soldier, valiant.
- C. Hebrew 1129 - builder, to make repairs, set up.
- D. Hebrew 1121 - *ben* = son or grandson (David ben Gurion, Ben Hur - son of Hur) - adopted son (Rom. 8), relationship, anointed one, appointed one, branch, worthy servant.

Quick Examples:

Gen. 15:2 - Abraham asked God if his steward **Eliezer** should be his son/heir. The answer was no. However, in Gen. 24 Eliezer was instructed to find a bride for Abraham's son Isaac, and he was sent out with much of Abraham's wealth – 10 camels loaded with gold and jewels to obtain a bride. Eliezer proved himself to be faithful, wise, discerning, and a man who worships God and had Abraham's heart.

Gen. 39:3 - **Joseph**

- Ex. 1 - **Joseph**, steward in Potiphar's house, "*Potiphar saw that the Lord made all that Joseph did to prosper.*" 6 - *grace, goodly person, faithful (not lie with his wife), 9 - not kept back anything of his household,*
- Ex. 2 - steward, overseer of the prison. Gen. 39:22 - "*He committed to Joseph's hands all his prisoners.*"
- Ex. 3 - Gen. 42 - Pharaoh's #2 man - steward of all Egypt, gathers and collects wealth of Egypt. He gathered and collected the wealth of Egypt for seven years. Joseph had a vision to save his family.
- Ex. 4 - Gen. 43-44 - Joseph's steward helped him carry out his master's plan with his brothers.

*Luke 12:41-48 - Parable of the Faithful and Unfaithful Steward - "*41 Then Peter said unto him, Lord, speakest thou this parable unto us, or even to all? 42 And the Lord said, Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his lord shall make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of meat in due season? 43*"

Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing. 44 Of a truth I say unto you, that he will make him ruler over all that he hath. 45 But and if that servant say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming [more on this in Lesson 10 on the Rapture]; and shall begin to beat the menservants and maidens, and to eat and drink, and to be drunken; 46 The lord of that servant will come in a day when he looketh not for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in sunder, and will appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. 47 And that servant, which knew his lord's will, and prepared not himself, neither did according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. 48 But he that knew not, and did commit things worthy of stripes, shall be beaten with few stripes. For unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall be much required: and to whom men have committed much, of him they will ask the more."

Matt. 25:14-30 - parable of the talents

Luke 19:12-26 - parable of the pounds

Luke 16:1-13 - parable of the unjust steward.

Soldiers' and Servants' Mentality:

- No longer his own master - orders from above
- Leave everything behind
- All food, clothes, uniforms given to him (provision)
- After many years of service or life, future rewards
- New family and friends
- The house isn't yours, you live in his home
- Your life isn't yours - you serve the master
- Watch (how and when to serve)
- Work (in lowliness of mind)
- Eat his food and wear the uniform (provision)
- To improve the master's kingdom and not your own
- Loyalty, friendship and kinship with the master is developed
- Control and protect the master's wealth and kingdom
- When the master is out of the house/country, make sure his household runs smoothly and prospers

For a full sermon on Stewardship, go to the Bethel web site and look up Wed., Jan. 14, 2008 by Chuck Mummert.

HINDRANCES TO PROSPERITY

Reasons for Spiritual Hindrances

1. Not seeking God first
2. No faith or expectation – claim your prosperity
3. Not tithing
4. Covetousness
5. Spiritual attack or test – Job

Natural Hindrances

1. Life's normal economic cycles
 - Low income youth – lack of experience or education, part-time jobs
 - Middle age income rises due to experience and education
 - Normal end of career wealth peak
 - Retirement and old age – declining savings and wealth
2. Natural earth catastrophes
 - Climate zones and cycles (floods, droughts, hurricanes, tornadoes)
 - Examples – drought forced Abraham, Joseph, Jews to Egypt
 - Sometimes it is God's judgment in cutting off rain, etc.
 - U.S. "dust bowl" years
 - Earth's many danger zones – earthquakes, volcanoes, tsunamis
 - Don't blame God if you pick a dangerous area in which to live!
3. Sickness, diseases, plagues
 - Some regions of the world are more prone to such ravages (equatorial latitudes especially)
 - Sickness can occur anywhere and can devastate one's prosperity
 - Claim God's covering and healing
4. Individual wrong lifestyles and choices

Examples – drugs, alcohol, gluttony, divorce, promiscuity, lack of education or work ethic, attitudes and sins of many types, etc.

5. Wars and genocidal destruction

- Some areas of the world have historically been devastating to live in.
 - Examples – Europe in the last century and now “the arc of instability” – Africa and the Middle East around the Indian Ocean
- There are many biblical examples of wars being God’s judgment

6. Government – taxes, regulations, and economic decisions

- Many depressions that the U.S. has suffered have been government caused
 - Example – the Great Depression was caused by high government tariffs and the Federal Reserve Bank’s horrible mistakes.
- Higher taxes always take wealth away from our prosperity
- Proverbs 29:2 – *“When the righteous are in authority, the people rejoice, but when the wicked rule, the people mourn.”* God wanted His people to be ruled by His prophets, but the people wanted a king like other countries to rule them; God warned them that over time the result would be oppressive taxes and the enslavement of their children to the government.
- Today many of our people don’t want to be ruled by God’s laws, so we also bring economic oppression on ourselves as a country.

7. The welfare net often acts like a spider web or a mouse trap; it often causes a person to keep one’s income low, not work at all, or have a multitude of children so that welfare continues. The “protestant hard work ethic” is destroyed, and one lives at subsistence level and reliant on government or others’ charity.

Outline summary from sermon, *What Are the Hindrances of Prosperity,*” Jan. 9, 2013 by Chuck Mummert

THE TEACHING
LEGACY
 OF DEREK PRINCE

God's Abundance
 Tapping the Source, part 1

In this series I will be teaching on the theme of *God's abundance*. In connection with the restoration of Israel, there is a significant Scripture in which God says, "I will . . . reveal to them the abundance of peace and truth" (Jeremiah 33:6). The key word here is *reveal*. I have come to see that you cannot understand or appropriate God's abundance unless He reveals it to you. It comes only by revelation. I pray that God will grant you that revelation.

This first letter will focus on the basic principles that govern God's provision for us. In succeeding letters I will deal with the conditions for receiving God's abundance, and the purpose for which God gives us abundance.

Basic Words

First of all, however, I want to examine some of the basic words or concepts that I will use in this connection. They are all interrelated but not all synonymous, as they have different shades of meaning. I will deal first with the positive concepts and then with the negative. There are four main groups of words on the positive side: rich and riches; wealth and wealthy; prosper, prosperous, prosperity; and abound, abundant, abundance.

Let me point out an important distinction. When we use the words *rich* and *riches* or *wealth* and *wealthy*, we are referring to somebody who has considerable financial and material assets. But when we speak about *pros-*

per and *abound* and their related words, the implication is not necessarily that the person referred to has a lot of money in the bank or owns great material possessions. So there is an important distinction.

Actually, God's promise is primarily that we have abundance rather than that we have wealth.

Essentially, *abundance* means you have all you need plus something to spare to give to others. It is when there is no need in your life and you have more than you need to give to others. *Abundance* suggests always that you are lifted above the level of your own needs and are thus able to reach out to the needs of others.

The word *prosper*, especially as it is used in the Bible, has a connotation of success. But it does not necessarily mean tremendous material wealth or possessions. Let me illustrate this by showing you what I mean from two Scriptures. In his third epistle, John says, "Beloved, I pray that you may prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers" (3 John 2). What a beautiful statement regarding the will of God for the committed



believer! Gaius, to whom the epistle was written, was a model believer. Studying the epistle, you will find that he was walking in all the truth that God had made available. The apostle John, writing as the mouthpiece of the Holy Spirit, said to him, “Beloved, I pray that you may **prosper in all things and be in health, just as your soul prospers.**” This covers all three areas of life: the material, the physical and the spiritual. In every one of them, the will of God is good.

The word translated “prosper” here means literally “to have a prosperous or successful journey.” In Romans 1:10 where Paul is praying that he may “have a prosperous journey by the will of God” (KJV) as he travels to the Christians at Rome, the same word is used. Scripture reveals that God answered Paul’s prayer. His journey to Rome is described in Acts 27 and 28.

However, you will notice from the description of that “prosperous journey,” Paul did not travel first class. He traveled as a prisoner in chains. He went through a tremendous storm. It seemed as if the whole ship and all who were on it would be lost. But through God’s intervention they survived the storm, and no one on the ship was lost. They arrived on an island and had what we would call a “revival.” When they left, the islanders loaded them down with all they needed for the rest of their journey. So, Paul had a prosperous journey, but it wasn’t exactly a comfortable journey, and he didn’t travel first-class.

The point I want to make is that when we use the words *prosper* and *abound*, we are not necessarily talking about people whom the world would classify as being very wealthy or very rich.

Not Just Riches

Let’s just quickly look once again at these four different categories of words. We see that the words *rich* and *riches* and the words *wealth* and *wealthy* are basically synonymous. But they are very different from *prosper*, *prosperous* and *prosperity*, which relate to doing something successfully. In this sense, the opposite of prosperity is *failure*. On the other hand, *abound*, *abundant* and *abundance* mean that you are not living in want or lack or frustration, even though you may not have a great surplus, nor have anything in your bank account.

I always say about Jesus during the period of His earthly ministry that He did not have a big bank account—although He and His disciples did have a bag in which they deposited offerings—but He simply used His Father’s credit card and it was always honored.

Actually, *very* wealthy people really do not need a lot of cash. I was with a wealthy man once in a restaurant and he gave me a beautiful meal. At the end he never even produced a card. He just signed his name on the bill. That was enough. The waiter knew it would be taken care of.

So let’s not focus on the idea of having a lot of money in the bank. That is not essentially what we are talking about.

Of course, the opposite of those four positive concepts we have cited is pretty obvious. The words that occur to me are: *poor* and *poverty*; *want*; *need*; *lack*; *fail* and *failure*. We need to keep in mind these two groups of concepts—the positive and the negative—as we proceed to study the principles that govern God’s dealings in this area.

Five Principles of Provision

I am now going to state five basic principles regarding God’s provision which are very important. The first two will appear in this letter—the next three will follow along in the next letter.

The first principle # 1

God’s provision is in His promises. We see this most clearly from 2 Peter 1:2-4:

*Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord, as His divine power **has given to us all things that pertain unto life and godliness**, through the ^{AS} knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue, . . .*

verses 2-3

Note that the Christian life is a life of multiplication. It is not static—just holding on to what you’ve got. It’s not even mere addition. It’s multiplication. This comes through “*the knowledge of God and of Jesus our Lord.*” Everything that we ever need comes to us from God through Jesus. We need no other source of supply and no other channel.

In the tense that Peter uses, “has given,” we see that God has already given us all we are ever going to need for time and eternity, for every area of our lives—for life and godliness. Many times we pray on the basis of a misunderstanding. We ask God to give us something He has already given us. It is not easy for God to answer those prayers because by answering them He would support that misunderstanding. So sometimes we have to adjust

our thinking in order to pray the kind of prayer that God is able to answer. Thanking God is often more appropriate than petitioning Him.

Notice again, “all things” are included in “the knowledge of Jesus Christ.” The Greek says that Jesus “called us to His own glory and virtue.” It is not our glory, but His. It is not our virtue, but His. God has already given us everything we are ever going to need, and it is all contained in the knowledge of Jesus. The Greek word for “knowledge” can also be translated “acknowledging.” It means both “knowledge” and “acknowledging.” It is not enough that we intellectually *know about* Jesus; we must effectively *acknowledge* Him in our lives.

... by which have been given to us exceedingly great and precious promises, ... verse 4

Here’s the key! God has already given us everything we are going to need. Where is it? It is in the *promises of His Word.* God’s provision is in His promises. This is the vital truth that you must grasp: the provision is in the promises. Say it over to yourself until it becomes part of your thinking: the provision is in the promises . . . the provision is in the promises.

Now, we come to another breath-taking statement:

... that through these [the promises] you may be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

verse 4

I just wonder whether contemporary Christians understand that language. I don’t know how to say it any better. It means that “we become *par-*

takers of God’s own nature.” We receive the actual nature of God. We become divine.

Now, you might think that is a risky statement to make, and it is. Yet Scripture supports it. When Jesus was challenged about His claim to be the Son of God, He quoted one of the psalms, saying, “*If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken)*” (John 10:35). This quotation is taken from a psalm which says, “*I said, ‘You are gods’*” (Psalm 82:6). God actually spoke to men and said, “*You are gods.*”

We may find this hard to receive, but Jesus gives us the divine commentary. How could men become gods? What was the basis? It was that the Word of God came to them. “*If He called them gods, to whom the word of God came, and the Scripture cannot be broken,*” the same principle applies to us. Because the Word of God comes to us through the promises of God, we can become partakers of God’s nature. We can become divine.

I realize, of course, that statement could be misused. Nevertheless, I believe that in the way I have presented it, it is an accurate analysis of what Scripture actually teaches.

And then the final part of that revelation is a logical consequence of what has gone before. In proportion as we become partakers of the divine nature, we are delivered from the corruption that is in this world—because the divine nature and corruption are incompatible. The divine nature is incorruptible. Everything in this world is corruptible. Logically, therefore, as we become partakers of the nature of God, we are delivered from the corruption of this world.

I would like to now sum up in my

own words the essence of what Peter has told us in verses 3 and 4 above. It can be reduced to five successive statements that describe principle number one: God’s provision is in His promises.

- God’s divine power has already given us everything we are ever going to need for time and eternity.
- It is all contained in rightly knowing and acknowledging Jesus.
- God’s provision is in His promises.
- As we appropriate the promises, we become partakers of God’s nature.
- As we become partakers of God’s nature, we are delivered from the corruption of this world.

I suggest that you do not merely read through this summary once—or even twice. Take time to meditate on it. The revelation is such that you cannot absorb it in just a few minutes. It demands that you expose your whole mind and being to it until it becomes a part of you.

The second principle. *2nd*

The promises are our inheritance. They are what God is bringing us into. There is a very simple parallel between the Old Testament and the New. In the Old Testament, under a leader named Joshua, God brought His people into a promised land. In the New Testament, under a leader named Jesus (which in Hebrew is the same word as Joshua), God brings His people into a land of promises. Old Covenant—a promised land; New Covenant—a land of promises.

Let’s look for a moment at the book of Joshua and see the basic conditions that God gave to Joshua. God first

reminded Joshua, "Moses My servant is dead" (Joshua 1:2). I find that very significant. Before we can come into something new, there always has to be a death of something old. The spiritual life, in a certain sense, is like the seasons of the year. There is a continuing, ongoing cycle of seasons. We have summer with its abundance; then fall, a time of withering; winter, the time of death; and then spring, the time of renewal and resurrection. This is a principle that goes through our lives. God only blesses that which has died and been resurrected. The transition from Moses to Joshua represents one which recurs from time to time in the life of every believer.

"Moses My servant is dead. Now therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, you and all this people, to the land which I am giving to them—the children of Israel. Every place that the sole of your foot will tread upon, that I have given you, as I said to Moses.

Joshua 1:2–3

Recently I noticed something in these verses I had never seen before. The Holy Spirit emphasized the word *all* in "all this people." God was not going to leave any of the people behind. In most circles today, we would be satisfied if we could get 90 percent of the people over. But God said, "Everyone is going to go over." I really believe that is how God views our situation today in regard to His promises. Everybody will have to move in.

Then notice the tenses. God says there: "I **am giving** them the land" (present tense). Then He says in verse 3, "I **have given** you." Once God gave it, it was given. From then on, it was spoken of in the past tense. From that

moment onward, the land legally belonged to the children of Israel. But we have to distinguish between the legal and the experiential.

Many times when we talk to a believer from a fundamental background about being baptized in the Holy Spirit or receiving some further provision of God, he replies, "I got it all when I was saved. There's nothing more to get." One way to answer that is, "If you got it all, where is it all?"

Nevertheless, I do believe, in a sense, they are correct. Legally, when you came to Christ, you became an heir of God and joint-heir with Jesus Christ. Thereafter, the whole inheritance is legally yours. But there is a great difference between the legal and the experiential. You may own much legally, but enjoy very little in actual experience.

I sometimes illustrate this by the following little parable: If Joshua and the children of Israel had been like some fundamentalists, they would have lined up on the east bank of the river Jordan, looked across the river, folded their arms and said, "We've got it all!" That would have been legally correct, but experientially incorrect. If they had been like some Pentecostals, they would have crossed the river Jordan (which I liken to being baptized in the Holy Spirit), then lined up on the west bank, folded their arms and said, "We've got it all!" But actually they would have been just one stage further—still far from their real inheritance.

The interesting thing about the children of Israel taking the Promised Land is that God brought them in by a miracle, and then gave them their first victory over Jericho by a miracle. But after that, they had to fight for every

piece of land they possessed. In the same way, we cannot expect to get our inheritance without conflict!

The way the children of Israel were to gain their inheritance was: "Every place that you put the sole of your foot upon shall be yours." So it is with us also. Legally, it is all ours right at this moment. Experientially, however, we have to move in and assert our claim to what God has given us. We have to put our foot on each promise as we come to it. That is a very vivid picture for asserting: "God has promised this to me, and I now lay claim to His promise."

More to Come

The next three principles will be addressed in the next teaching letter.

TAKEN FROM NEW WINE MAGAZINE,
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 God's Abundance
 Tapping the Source, part 2

In my first letter in the series “God’s Abundance,” we first looked at the words having to do with abundance, giving their specific meanings so we could have a better grasp of what abundance really entails. Then I went on to detail the first two of the five basic principles, which I believe God has revealed to me from Scripture. They are: 1) *God’s provision is in His promises*—these promises are provided for us in the Word of God. And 2) *The promises are our inheritance*—they are legally ours. It is like when Joshua entered the Promised Land. God promised him that every place the sole of his foot would tread would be his—but it was up to Joshua to tread upon it.

We will now move on to the third principle of God’s provision.

The third principle

The promises are the expression of God’s will. God never promised anything that was not His will. We need to understand this important fact.

Suppose I have a young son and I say to him, “If you’ll sweep out the garage, put everything in order and do a good job, I’ll give you ten dollars.” My son agrees and goes in, sweeps out the garage, does a good job and makes everything neat and orderly. He comes back to me and says, “Dad, I want my ten dol-

lars.” What would you think of me if I said, “I never meant to give you ten dollars. It wasn’t my will”? You would write me off as an unreliable and undependable person—a failure as a father.

So it is with the promises of God. Suppose we discover a promise that meets our need, and then we obediently fulfill the conditions that God has laid down. If we then come to Him for what He has promised, He will never tell us, “It’s true that I promised you that, but I never really meant to give it to you. It’s not My will.” Such behavior would be unbecoming even in an earthly father. It would be totally inconsistent with the nature of God as our heavenly



Father. In fact, Jesus Himself has assured us of the very opposite: “If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask Him!” (Luke 11:13). We see, then, that the promises of God are the expression of His will.

When we know God’s will, we can pray with confidence. Let’s look at 1 John 5: “Now this is the confidence that we have in Him [God]” (verse 14). The Greek word here translated “confidence” means literally “freedom of speech.” It was a very important word in the political background of the Greek people. One of the things they fought for in democracy was freedom of speech, which is, of course, very familiar to American democracy.

So the verse could read, “This freedom of speech we have in God.” The implication is that confidence needs to be expressed in what we say. It is not enough merely to “believe in the heart”; we must also “confess with the mouth” (see Romans 10:10).

Now this is the confidence that we have in Him, that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we have asked of Him.

1 John 5:14–15

All successful praying revolves around the knowledge of God’s will. Once we know that we are asking for something according to the will of

God, we know we have it. Not “we’re going to have it,” but “we have it.” In Mark 11:24 Jesus says, “Therefore I say to you, whatever things you ask when you pray, believe that you received them [this is the correct, literal translation], and you will have them.” When do we receive? When we pray. The receiving is in the present—now. The actual experiential outworking of what we have received—the “will have them”—is often in the future. But if we do not receive now, we will not have later.

The teaching of Mark 11:24 agrees exactly with that of 1 John 5:14–15. In each case, the lesson is: we must receive, by faith, at the very moment that we pray. Thereafter, we must boldly express our confidence that we have received—even before the thing received is actually manifested in our experience.

One of the devil’s favorite tactics is to get us to put off to some future moment the thing that we ought to appropriate now. In my book, *Faith to Live By*, I illustrate this with a story that has always been very vivid to me. As a young man of about twenty, while I was studying Greek philosophy at Cambridge University, I was given a grant to visit Greece in order to study the various antiquities on the spot. I went with a friend of mine who was son of the vice-chancellor of Cambridge University. We stayed in a hotel in Athens and went out about the same time every morning for the day’s sightseeing.

Every day when we walked out

of our hotel, there was a little group of shoeblacks on the sidewalk waiting to polish our shoes. Now, if you have never been in the Middle East or the Mediterranean countries, you will find it hard to picture the scene. But in those countries shoeblacks are determined! I mean they are going to polish your shoes whether you want it or not!

Every morning the shoeblacks would approach us and say, “Shine your shoes?” Every morning we would say in Greek, “No!”—“Ochi!” When you say *no* in Greek you say *ochi* and you throw your head back at the same time. The motion of the head enforces the meaning of the word. But every morning the shoeblacks just went ahead and polished our shoes anyhow.

Since this method wasn’t working, one morning my friend decided to try a different tactic. When we got out of the hotel door and the shoeblacks approached us asking, “Polish your shoes?” my friend replied in Greek, “Avrio.” This caught the shoeblacks off their guard. They paused for a moment and looked at us uncertainly. Taking advantage of their momentary hesitation, we got by without having our shoes polished. Can you guess what *avrio* means? It means “tomorrow.”

Many times when you are on your way to appropriating God’s blessings the devil resorts to the same tactic. He does not say, “No.” But he says, “Tomorrow.” As a result, you hesitate just for a moment and so fail to ap-

appropriate the blessing you are praying for.

What does Scripture say is the accepted time? Now! People often say, "Today is the accepted time." But Scripture does not say that. It says, "Now is the accepted time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2). God lives in the eternal now. When you meet God, it is never yesterday and never tomorrow. His name is not "I was," nor "I will be." It is always "I AM." (See Exodus 3:14.)

The fourth principle

All God's promises are now available to us through Christ. As a basis for this principle, let us look at 2 Corinthians 1:20. This is a key verse when we deal with "dispensationalists"—that is, people who relegate nearly all of God's blessings and provisions either to the past ("the apostolic age") or to the future ("the millennium"). There are several different versions of this verse, but it seems to me that the New King James Version says it about as clearly and emphatically as it is possible to say it.

For all the promises of God in Him [Jesus] are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God by [or through] us.

Whatever translation you use, there are certain key words that do not change.

First of all, "all the promises"—not some, but all.

Second, "are"—not "were" or "will be."

Third, "in Him"—there is only one

channel through which God makes His promises available to us. That unique, all-sufficient channel is Jesus.

Fourth, "to the glory of God." Every promise that we appropriate in the will of God glorifies God. God has so arranged His promises that when we appropriate them, He is glorified.

Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." There are different ways of translating that, but in essence I understand it to mean, "By our sin we have robbed God of His glory." How, then, do we repay to God the glory that is due Him? One way is found in Romans 4 where it says about Abraham that he "was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God and being fully convinced that what He [God] had promised He was able also to perform" (verses 20–21). So we give back to God the glory that our sin has robbed from Him by believing His promises. The more we claim God's promises, the more we glorify Him. And all His promises are now available to us through Christ.

Finally, I like the two little words that come last in 2 Corinthians 1:20—"by us." It's not "by the apostles"; or "by the early church"; or "by special Christians—such as evangelists or missionaries." It is "by us." "Us" means you and me. All God's promises are now available to you and me through faith in Christ.

Of course, *are* you do not need all of God promises right now. In fact, you could not claim all of God's promises

in just one moment. But any promise you need that fits your situation is available to you right now. This is the way I sum it up: Every promise that fits your situation and meets your need is for you now.

That's the fourth principle: all God's promises are now available to us through Christ.

The fifth principle

The fulfillment of God's promises does not depend upon our circumstances, but upon our meeting God's conditions. When God gives a promise, it is not limited to a particular set of circumstances. It does not have to be easy for God to accomplish what He promised.

One common mistake we make when confronted with a promise of God is to say, "Yes, I see that is what God says. But in this particular situation it would be too much," and our faith wavers. The truth of the matter is, God's promises do not depend upon the circumstances in which we find ourselves. Circumstances make no difference. You can be a hundred years old and your wife can be ninety years old, but if God says you are going to have a son, you are going to have a son.

It does not depend on anything around you or in you. Nothing physical, nothing temporal, and nothing in the space/time world can change the eternal promises of God. That's the lesson. It is why God so often allowed men of faith to get into totally impossible situations. He wanted to make it absolutely clear that in no

case were His promises dependent upon a favorable set of circumstances. In fact, He usually lets the circumstances become just about as unfavorable as they could be.

Real faith refuses to be influenced by circumstances. For instance, when Elijah wanted the fire to come down from heaven to consume the sacrifice on his altar, he doused the sacrifice in water three times and let the water run around and fill up the ditch. Then he said, "Now let's see what God can do." And when the fire came, it burned up the water, it burned up the dust, it burned up the wood, it burned up the sacrifice. God's fire has no more problem with a ditch full of water than with dry wood. Wet or dry, difficult or easy, possible or impossible—it makes no difference with God.

Perhaps the most remarkable example of this fact is the provision of God for Israel in the wilderness. For forty years He fed them, clothed them, provided for them, and He guided something like three million people—men, women, old people, infants, cattle, everything—in a totally barren desert where there was no water, no food—nothing in fact, except sand and sun. God went out of His way to say, "Make it difficult, and let Me show you what I can do." In fact, He made it difficult. He was the One who arranged the situation.

It is so important to understand that you must not let your focus move from the promise to the situation. Whenever you do that, like Pe-

ter walking on the water, you begin to sink.

The Five Principles

Let's review those five principles just to fix them in your mind, and then conclude this first part of our series. They are:

1. God's provision is in His promises.
2. The promises are our inheritance.
3. God's promises are the expression of His will.
4. All God's promises are now available to us through Christ.
5. The fulfillment of God's promises does not depend upon our circumstances, but upon our meeting God's conditions.

In my next teaching letter in this series, we will be examining how Scripture evaluates each of the two opposites that we are studying—that is, poverty versus riches, lack versus abundance.

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