

Giving Honors God and Man



God's Abundance (Part 14)
by Derek Prince

It's good to be with you again, as we continue with our rich and inspiring theme for this week: God's Abundance.

We've seen that through grace, God makes His abundance available to His redeemed people. We've looked at two verses in 2nd Corinthians. The first, 2 Corinthians 8:9:

> "For you know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that you through his poverty might become rich." (NIV)

That's the exchange that took place at the cross in respect to the poverty curse. Jesus took the poverty curse that in return God's abundance might be made available to us through grace. And remember, grace comes only through the Lord Jesus Christ and only through the cross.

And in 2 Corinthians 9:8, Paul describes the outworking of that grace. He says:

> "God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, having all that you need, you will abound in every good work." (NIV)

Notice, God's grace abounds. It's not stingy. It's not limited. It's not restricted. It's very full and very free. And God's grace can abound to us at all times, in all things, that we'll have all that we need and that we may abound to every good work.

I pointed out yesterday we cannot earn God's grace but on the other hand we must fulfill the conditions to receive it. And I spoke yesterday about the primary condition which is by faith. The faith is the only basis for righteous living.

In Romans 1:17, Paul says:

> "For in the Gospel the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, 'But the righteous man shall live by his faith.'" (NASB)

So the only way we can lead righteous lives acceptable to God is by living in faith.

And in Romans 14:23, Paul states the opposite:

> "Everything that does not come from faith is sin." (NASB)

This covers the whole area of finance. The only way in which we can be financially righteous before God is by basing our finance on faith and not acting out of unbelief. So that's the first and primary principle for receiving and enjoying God's abundance is living by faith.

Today I'm going to share with you another very important principle that relates to the way we handle our finances. The principle is this: giving of our substance (our finance or whatever) is a way ordained by God to honor both God and man. That's a truth which I believe many Christians have failed to grasp, that the way we use our money, our finance, is a way that we are required to honor both God and man.

In Romans 13, verse 7, Paul makes it clear that there are those to whom we owe honor. He says:

> "Give everyone what you owe him: If you owe taxes, pay taxes; if revenue, then revenue; if respect, then respect; if honor, then honor." (NIV)

Paul says there are four things we may owe: taxes, revenue, respect, and honor. We're all familiar with the idea of owing taxes or revenue, but Paul also says we may owe respect and honor, and whatever we owe, we're obligated to pay it. Now one way that we pay the honor that we owe is the way that we handle our finances. First of all, we honor God Himself by the way we handle our finance. Proverbs 3, verses 9 and 10:

> "Honor the Lord with your wealth, with the first fruits of all your crops; then your barns will be filled to overflowing, and your vats will brim over with new wine." (NIV)

Notice, we honor the Lord with our wealth by giving Him the first and the best of everything and the scripturally appointed way to make sure we do that is to give the Lord the tithe, the tenth, the first tenth of all our income. Then the promise is that God will return it to us in abundance—"Your barns will be filled to overflowing; your vats will brim over with new wine." That's abundance in the area of barns and new wine but it begins with honoring the Lord with our wealth, with bringing Him the first and the best of that which we have in the area of finance and our material possesions. And let me point out something which is clear by implication; we can either honor the Lord with our wealth, or we can dishonor Him. If we don't give Him abundantly and freely, we are dishonoring Him. Really, we're left with only the two possibilities—either with the use of our wealth we honor the Lord, or we dishonor Him. But if we honor Him, it will come back to us in abundance.

The same is brought out in Malachi 3:8 and 9:

> "Will a man rob God? Yet you rob me. 'But you ask, 'How do we rob you?' 'In tithes and offerings. You are under a curse—the whole nation of you—because you are robbing me.'" (NIV)

See, there disobedience brings the curse. If we don't honor God with the tithe, with the first tenth, then, instead of being blessed, we are under a curse,and really there's nothing inbetween. We either honor God or dishonor Him with our wealth. We either enjoy the blessing or we endure the curse.

And then, secondly, Jesus made it clear that we can honor our parents with finance. In Matthew, chapter 15, He had a discussion with the Pharisees. They accused Him and His disciples of not keeping the traditions of the elders and He said, "On the contrary, you don't keep the Word of God." I'll read that passage, Matthew 15:1 through 6:

> "Then some Pharisees and teachers of the law came to Jesus from Jerusalem and asked, 'Why do your disciples break the tradition of the elders? They don't wash their hands before they eat!' Jesus replied, 'And why do you break the command of God for the sake of your tradition? For God said, 'Honor your father and mother' and 'Anyone who curses his father or mother must be put to death.' But you say that if a man says to his father or mother, 'Whatever help you might otherwise have received from me is a gift devoted to God,' [in other words, they take money that they should have given to their parents and claim to have given it to God instead] he is not to 'honor his father' with it. Thus you nullify the word of God for the sake of your tradition.'" (NIV)

Notice, by giving of our finances to our parents, if they are in need, we fulfill the commandment to honor our parents. But if we withhold from our parents that which they need when it is in our power to give it, then we dishonor our parents. So notice again, what we do with our money, not only to God, but also to our parents, constitutes either honor or dishonor.

And once again, I doubt whether there's any middle ground.

The third kind of person that we can honor with our finance is the person who ministers God's Word to us. This is brought out in Acts, chapter 28. This describes the end of the great shipwreck which Paul and his companions endured on their journey to Rome. They were cast up on the Island of Malta. They arrived destitute in a rain storm but they were received hospitably by the islanders and after a while, Paul began to pray for the sick. And when the people got healed, then all the people in that area of the island came with their sick and Paul prayed for them and they were healed, and this was the outworking of it.

In Acts 28, verses 9 and 10:

> "And after this had happened, the rest of the people on the island who had diseases were coming to Paul and getting cured. [Paul was ministering to them out of his supernatural gift of healing which God had bestowed upon him, and this is how the people responded. It says:] They also honored us with many marks of respect; and when we were setting sail, they supplied us with all we needed." (NASB)

Where the translation says "marks of respect," the Greek says "honors." The people honored them with many honors. In what way? By bringing them everything they needed for their journey. So, there was a material form of honor with which they responded to those who had ministered to them out of the grace and the supernatural gifts of God.

This is in line with what Paul himself says in Galatians 6:6:

> "Anyone who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with his instructor." (NIV)

So when people are instructed in the truths of God's Word, the Word of God itself requires that they honor those who instruct them, those who minister to them, those who pray for them, out of every good thing that God has given them. So there's another group of persons that we need to honor, those that minister God's Word and God's grace to us.

And the fourth group is those who oversee us in the church. 1 Timothy 5:17 and 18:

> "The elders who direct the affairs of the church well are worthy of double honor, especially those whose work is preaching and teaching. For the Scripture says, 'Do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain,' and the worker deserves his wages." (NIV)

Paul is speaking there of those who govern the church, the elders, the presbytery, the leaders of God's people in the church. And he says, "If they're doing their job well, and especially if they're teaching the Word of God, they're worthy of double honor." And to make it very clear, what he means by double honor, he goes on in the next verse, "For the Scripture says, do not muzzle the ox while it is treading out the grain, and the worker deserves his wages." So the honor that Paul is speaking about there is not just nice words, not just words of appreciation, not just saying "thank you," but it's a very real and material form of honor. It's increasing the wages. It's increasing the financial remuneration of those who serve the people of God well in the church.

So you see, the Bible is a very practical, down to earth book. Sometimes we're so spiritual, we're not realistic. And in four different ways, the Bible teaches that what we do with our finance is a way of honoring; first of all God Himself; second, our parents if they're in need; third, those who minister to us out of God's supernatural grace and gifts; and fourth, those who lead us and pastor us in the church. Of course the two latter classes often are the same but not necessarily. They may be distinct. And remember, that God really doesn't leave us any alternative. It's either honor or dishonor. It's either blessing or curse. If we use our finance right and honor God and our parents and those who minister to us out of the gifts and grace of God and in the church, we're blessed. But if we withhold that which is due, then we come under the curse. So it's either blessing or cursing. It's either honoring or dishonoring with your finance.

Our time is up for today. I'll be back with you again tomorrow at this time. I'll continue with this theme of God's Abundance. Tomorrow, I'll explain the part that God's Word plays in our receiving and enjoying God's abundance.

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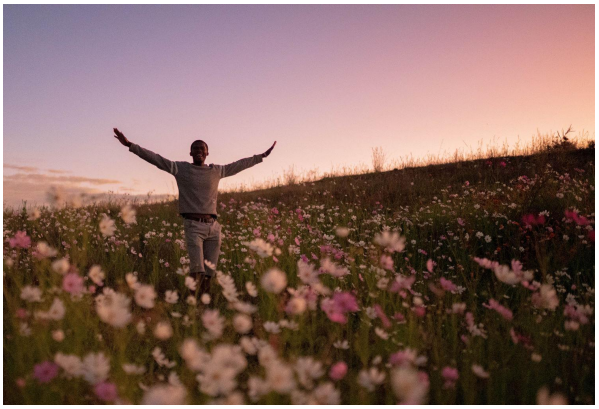

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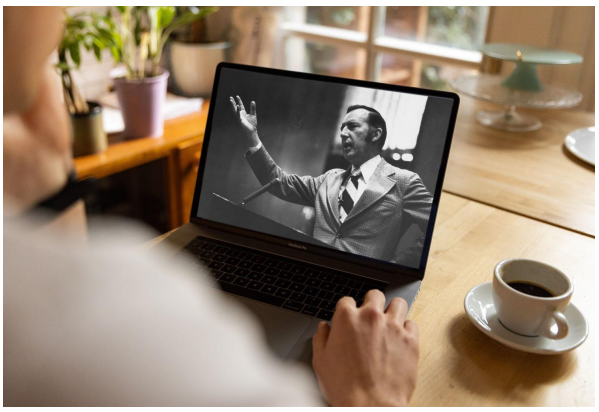

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