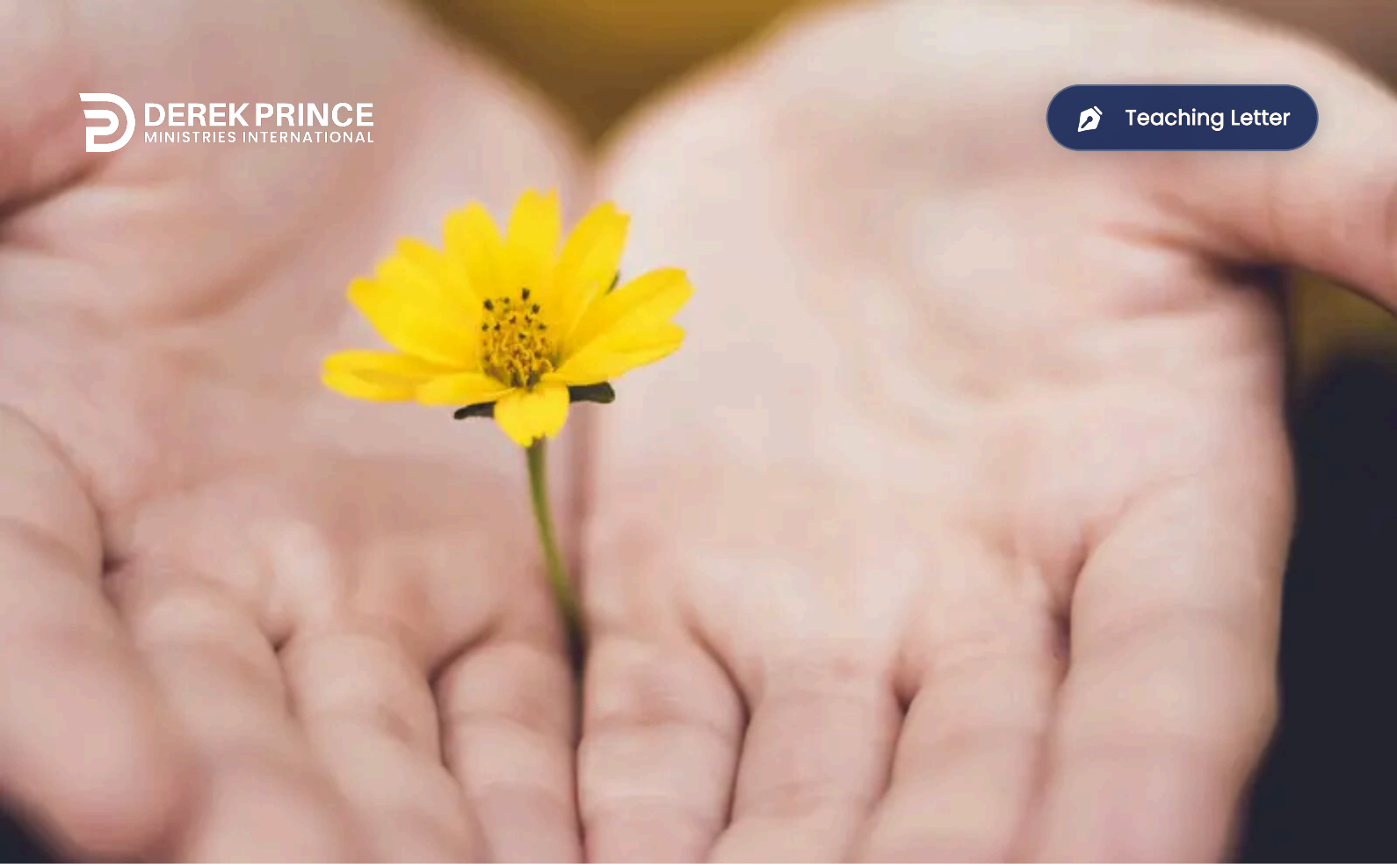


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Teaching Letter

Meeting the Conditions



Part 4/6

God's Abundance
By Derek Prince

The theme of God's abundance cannot be understood or appropriated unless it is revealed by God. In my previous letters on this topic we established from Scripture that the level of God's provision for His people is abundance. This provision is made available to us through His promises. We also examined the specific promises found in Psalm 34:9–10 and Psalm 84:11. We saw that God will not withhold anything good from us, provided that we meet three conditions: first, we must fear the Lord; second, we must seek the Lord; and third, we must walk uprightly.

However, we qualified this aspect of provision by pointing out that there are two ways of looking at "goodness": absolute and relative. Something is absolutely good if it is good in itself. This is invariable. But something is relatively good for us only if it benefits us in our particular situation. This is variable. Relative goodness can be affected by many different factors: our character, motives, understanding, God's timing, or our level of maturity. Therefore, God in His wisdom sometimes withholds from us that which is absolutely good because it is not relatively good for us in our particular situation. Are riches absolutely good? Yes. Revelation 5:12 lists seven things that are absolutely good and that belong by eternal right to Jesus Christ, and through Him, to His people: power, riches, wisdom, strength, honor, glory, and blessing. (See also 1 Chronicles 29:12 and Deuteronomy 8:18.)

Curse or Blessing

My purpose in this letter is to unfold God's way of deliverance from the curse of poverty. One of the great basic truths of revelation is that on the cross a divinely ordained exchange took place: Jesus, the sinless, obedient Son of God, took upon Himself all the evil that was due mankind by divine justice because of our rebellion and disobedience. In return we, through faith, are able to receive all the good that was due to the perfect obedience of Jesus. More simply stated, Jesus took all the evil that we deserved, so that we might receive all the good that He deserved. Scripture unfolds many different aspects of this exchange. For instance, Jesus was wounded that we might be healed (Isaiah 53:4–5).

He was made sin with our sinfulness that we might be made righteous with His righteousness (2 Corinthians 5:21).

He was rejected by the Father that we might be accepted by the Father (Matthew 27:46, Ephesians 1:5–6).

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He died our death that we might have His life (Hebrews 2:9, John 3:16).

However, in this teaching series, we will focus only on that aspect of the exchange that relates to the curses due to our disobedience—and in particular, the curse of poverty.

Paul deals with this specifically in Galatians 3:13–14:

> Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us (for it is written, "Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree"), that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Two words are here set in stark contrast to one another: curse and blessing. On the cross, the curse of the broken law came upon Jesus. He was actually made a curse. The evidence was the very fact that He hung upon the cross (cited from Deuteronomy 21:23). Suspended between heaven and earth, Jesus hung there on the tree that had become a cross—rejected by man and forsaken by God, totally alienated, cut off, alone. We could sum it up in one evil, ugly word: *accursed*.

Jesus became a curse that we might receive the alternative: the blessing. One of the themes of Galatians is that, through faith, we become the children of Abraham. As the children of Abraham, we are entitled to the blessing of Abraham for one main reason: Jesus bore the curse.

In this connection Paul emphasizes one particular blessing: "the promise of the Spirit." There is a practical reason for this. The promised blessing of the Holy Spirit is the key to all the other blessings. Once we put our faith in Christ's atoning death on our behalf, we become legally "heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ" (Romans 8:17). We become members of God's family, entitled to all that was promised to our great forefather, Abraham (Galatians 3:7–9, 29). But the divinely appointed Administrator of our inheritance is the Holy Spirit. He alone can bring us into the full, experiential enjoyment of all that has become legally ours through faith in Christ's death. Without His help, we will fare no better than "orphans," incapable of appropriating all that our Father has provided for us (see John 14:16–18).

Acknowledging our dependence, then, upon the Holy Spirit, we may lay claim to our inheritance. What is "the blessing of Abraham" to which Christ has entitled us? A clear and comprehensive answer is found in Genesis 24:1: "The Lord had blessed Abraham in all things." The blessing of Abraham includes all things—whether temporal or eternal, spiritual or material. Through the death of Christ on our behalf, every area of our lives can be brought out from under the dark shadow of the curse into the full sunlight of God's blessing.

The Poverty Curse

Let's now focus on one particular aspect of the curse that Jesus bore on our behalf—the poverty curse. In our previous letter we saw this curse presented in its most absolute form in Deuteronomy 28:48. It was summed up in four parts: hunger, thirst, nakedness, and in need of all things. And that is exactly what Jesus experienced on the cross.

Years ago, while I was preaching on the theme of God's Financial Provision, I received a revelation from the Holy Spirit that went beyond anything in the sermon outline that I had before me.

One by one, the Holy Spirit went over the four aspects of the poverty curse for me and showed me that Jesus totally exhausted the curse in all its aspects. He was hungry—He hadn't eaten for nearly twenty-four hours. He was thirsty—one of His last utterances was, "I thirst." He was naked—the soldiers had stripped Him of all His clothing and shared it among themselves. He was in need of all things—He had neither a robe nor a tomb to be buried in. He had nothing. Why? Because in the divine purpose of God, He exhausted the poverty curse on our behalf.

Jesus took the poverty curse that we might receive the blessing of Abraham "in all things"—that we might receive our full inheritance, ministered by the Holy Spirit.

Lacking Nothing

This revelation is supported by many other passages of Scripture, in both the Old and the New Testament. We may look, in particular, at two verses from 2 Corinthians. Together these two verses present the full deliverance from the poverty curse that Christ had obtained for us.

> For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich. (2 Corinthians 8:9, kjv)

When did Jesus become poor? Some people suggest that He was poor all through His earthly ministry, but I cannot

accept this as accurate. We need to keep in mind the distinction between riches and abundance. Jesus was not "rich," in the sense of having a large bank account or great material possessions. But He certainly had abundance. Any man who can provide food for a crowd of 5,000 men (the total crowd was about 12,000 counting women and children) is no pauper! Actually, Jesus had much more left over after feeding these 12,000 than He had when He started (see Matthew 14:15–21). What a beautiful picture of abundance!

Jesus was not wealthy, but He had abundance. He never doubted that His Father's goodness would supply everything He needed. And the Father never failed Him. That is not poverty. Poverty is being hungry, thirsty, naked, and in need of all things!

When did Jesus become poor? He began to become poor the moment He was identified with our sins. From that moment onward, He went deeper and deeper into poverty until on the cross He represented absolute poverty.

Let's also face the fact that at this point His poverty was not merely "spiritual." He was physically and materially poor. Therefore, by all the laws of logic, our wealth will not be merely "spiritual" either. Jesus became absolutely poor in the physical, material sense so that we might become rich in the sense of having every physical and material need met —and having something left over for others.

Abundant Grace

God is not stingy. He doesn't give just enough; He gives enough and more. That is abundance.

> "God is able to make all grace abound toward you; that ye, always having all sufficiency in all things, may abound to every [all] good work." (2 Corinthians 9:8, kjv)

In that verse there are two abounds and five alls. I don't know how language can be more explicit than that.

This passage is a description of God's grace. Interestingly enough, in both chapter 8 and 9 of 2 Corinthians, which deal with money, the key word is grace, occurring seven times in chapter 8 and twice in chapter 9. Clearly, it is grace that operates in the realm of money.

Appropriating Material Abundance

Few Christians realize that this applies in the realm of financial and material provision just as much as in any other area of our lives. But as we have pointed out, there are conditions. Scripture warns us specifically against irresponsibility (Proverbs 10:4); against laziness (Proverbs 24:30–34); and against dishonesty (Ephesians 4:28). As long as we are guilty of any of these sins, we have no right to expect God's grace to work in the financial area of our lives. As Christians, we are obligated to be honest, hard-working and responsible.

But all of our hard work and responsibility in itself does not earn us the kind of provision we are talking about here. Such provision cannot be earned. It can be received only by grace through faith. God's grace, when we thus receive it by faith, lifts us onto a higher level than we can ever earn or deserve. This is true in every area of our lives—the financial and material no less than the spiritual.

Recognizing this truth, however, leads us to an important logical distinction—one which is frequently overlooked. It is the distinction between earning God's grace, which is impossible, and meeting God's conditions, which is obligatory. On the one hand, we cannot earn God's abundance, which comes only through grace. On the other hand, we are required to meet the conditions which God has laid down for receiving His abundance through faith. Otherwise, if we do not meet the conditions, our faith has no scriptural foundation. In fact, it is not faith, but mere presumption.

The First Condition for God's Abundance

What, then, are the conditions for receiving God's abundance? I would suggest that there are five main conditions presented in Scripture. We will take a look at the first one in this letter and tackle the remaining conditions in our next installment.

1. Our motives and attitudes must be right.

We would do well to examine our motives very carefully, because wealth is a big source of temptation for wrong motives. What are some of these wrong motives?

- **It is wrong to make wealth our god**. In 1 Timothy 6:10 Paul says, "For the love of money is a root of all evil." The King James says, "The root of all evil." But that is somewhat overstated. What the Greek actually says is, "The love of money is a root of all evil." So out of that evil love of money—that covetousness—all other forms of evil can spring forth in our lives.

- **It is wrong to seek wealth by unethical means.** Proverbs 28:8 says: "One who increases his possessions by usury and extortion gathers it for him who will pity the poor."
- **A man may procure a lot of money for himself by crooked means.** But ultimately it will be taken from him and given to a man that will pity the poor. There are laws that govern the utilization of money just as certainly as there are laws that govern the cultivation of crops we plant in the earth.
- **It is wrong to trust in wealth.** Proverbs 11:28 says, "He that trusts in his riches will fall." In my lifetime I have seen that exact result happen to many people who trusted in riches. Likewise, Jeremiah 9:23–24 tells us not to trust in wealth: Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, let not the mighty man glory in his might, nor let the rich man glory in his riches; but let him who glories glory in this, that he understands and knows Me, that I am the Lord, exercising lovingkindness, judgment, and righteousness in the earth. We must be careful, then, not to boast or glory in wisdom, strength or riches. They may all be good things, but none of them must be that in which we glory.
- **It is wrong to use wealth selfishly.** Proverbs 11:24 says: "There is one who scatters, yet increases more; and there is one who withholds more than is right, but it leads to poverty."

There are some generous people who are always giving and always getting richer. Conversely, there are some stingy people who never give and yet get poorer. It's always wrong to use wealth selfishly. In Luke 12 Jesus tells the parable of the rich man who built bigger barns and filled them with his produce. But the Lord said to him, "Thou fool! This night your soul will be required of you" (v. 20). Jesus then added this comment: "So is he who lays up treasure for himself, and is not rich toward God" (v. 21). The first direction in which we need to be rich is toward God.

Attitude Toward the Poor

We have just considered four wrong attitudes in relation to money. Now we want to examine another attitude to which we must pay careful attention. The Bible consistently warns us against despising or exploiting the poor. There are many Scriptures on the subject, but let's look at Proverbs:

> "He who has pity on the poor lends to the LORD; and He will pay back what he has given." (Proverbs 19:17)
>
> "He who gives to the poor will not lack, but he who hides his eyes will have many curses." (Proverbs 28:27)
>
> "The righteous considers the cause of the poor, but the wicked does not understand such knowledge." (Proverbs 29:7)

These Scriptures—and many others like them—place a tremendous responsibility upon us not to be indifferent, but to have a concern for the needs of the poor. One mark of righteousness is that we "consider the cause of the poor." Conversely, a mark of wickedness is that we "do not understand such knowledge." We simply avert our eyes from the plight of the poor. Furthermore, there is a reward promised in connection with caring for the poor. When we give to the poor, Solomon tells us, we are lending to the Lord. I can testify from experience that when the Lord repays our loan, He does not forget the interest!

Psalm 112 paints a picture of "the man who fears the LORD" and of the blessings he enjoys. It is worthwhile to study this picture in detail. For the moment, however, let me just point out some aspects that relate to our present theme: "Wealth and riches are in his house, and his righteousness endures forever. ... It is well with the man who is gracious and lends ... for he will never be shaken; the righteous will be remembered forever. He has given freely to the poor; his righteousness endures forever ..." (v. 3, 5–6, 9, nasb1995). In 2 Corinthians 9:9 Paul applies this last verse specifically to us as Christians. In this picture of the God-fearing man we see three elements woven together: unshakable righteousness, wealth, generosity to the poor.

Remembering the Poor

The New Testament likewise emphasizes consideration for the poor as an essential part of Christian righteousness. In Galatians 2:1–10 Paul describes the confrontation that he and his coworkers had with Peter, James and John concerning the way in which the gospel was to be presented to the Gentiles. The tension was eventually resolved by each group acknowledging the distinctive calling of the other. But there was one point on which both groups were unanimous—to "remember the poor" (v. 10). We see, then, that remembering the poor is an essential part of the gospel message, regardless of the racial group to which it is presented.

As we conclude our examination of the first condition for receiving God's abundance, it will be helpful to review the

principles we have gleaned. We must guard against the following wrong ***motives***: making wealth our god, seeking wealth by unethical means, trusting in wealth, or using wealth selfishly. In our ***attitude*** to the poor we have seen that it is wrong to despise or oppress the poor or to be indifferent to their need. On the contrary, Scripture requires us to show mercy to the poor in an active and practical way.

In our next letter, I will go on to present the remaining conditions for God's abundance.

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