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MINISTRIES INTERNATIONAL

Teaching Letter

People - Purpose For Abundance



Part 3/6

God's Abundance
By Derek Prince

Our concluding teaching in the *God's Abundance* series on God's abundance focuses on the purpose of abundance.

The last portion of 2 Corinthians 9:8 says:

> That you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

The purpose for which God supplies abundance is not merely selfish indulgence. Don't get me wrong. I believe God likes to see us enjoying His provision. It makes Him happy. But that is not the ultimate purpose. Rather, it is that we will have abundance "for every good work." The purpose of abundance is that we will be able to do everything God asks us to do with complete sufficiency.

One of the remarkable attributes of the Christians in the New Testament is that they never said, "If we have enough money, we will do this." They just said, "We will go here ... we will go there ... we will do this." Money really was not the question. Though they had much to say about money and were very practical in handling it, their plans did not depend on money. That is very different from the contemporary church, where so much of what is planned is dependent upon money.

The Primary Good Work

One specific good work for which God provides abundance is the primary 'good work': that we may provide Him a dwelling place. The purpose of God from creation onward has been to dwell with man. We often talk as though the ultimate for us is to get to heaven. However, in reading the Bible, I find that the ultimate is to get heaven to earth. In the closing chapters of the Bible, we do not find earth going up to heaven; we find heaven coming down to earth. The ultimate thrust of God's purpose from creation onward is to dwell with man.

Consider two historic examples in the Bible where God asked His people, Israel, to provide for Him a dwelling place. The first dwelling place is the tabernacle of Moses. The second is the temple of Solomon. In each case, God provided His people with abundance in advance, that out of their abundance they might return to Him all that would be

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needed to provide Him a dwelling place suitable to His glory.

God also gave precise specifications as to the kind of dwelling place He wanted. He did not leave anything to chance. Everything was precisely specified, and everything was of the highest quality. There was nothing cheap or shoddy in anything God required for His dwelling place. I believe that agrees with the very nature of God.

First, let's examine God's provision for the tabernacle of Moses and the way it came about. Then let's look at God's provision for the temple of Solomon and the way it came about. After that, we will conclude by giving an up-to-date application of these examples for you and me.

The Tabernacle of Moses

In Genesis, God made a covenant with Abraham and gave him a preview of the captivity of Israel in Egypt.

> God said to Abram, "Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions." (Genesis 15:13–14, nasb1995)

The Living Bible says, "they will come away with great wealth." When God predicted the captivity of Israel in Egypt and their subsequent deliverance, He emphasized that when they were redeemed and delivered, they would come out with great wealth. This was not an accident. It was part of God's foreordained purpose. We see this prediction fulfilled in Exodus 12. It came as the immediate result of the Passover night, when the families of the Israelites had been spared and every firstborn of the Egyptians had been killed.

> Now the sons of Israel had done according to the word of Moses, for they had requested from the Egyptians articles of silver and articles of gold, and clothing; and the Lord had given the people favor in the sight of the Egyptians, so that they let them have their request. Thus they plundered the Egyptians. (vv. 35–36, nasb1995)

The Living Bible says, "they stripped the Egyptians." The fact is that the Israelites took everything the Egyptians had —gold, silver, raiment. Anything they set their eyes on and asked for, they got. Why? Because the Egyptians were so frightened that all they wanted was to get rid of these people, no matter what it cost. There is a beautiful description of the deliverance of Israel out of Egypt in Psalm 105:37: He also brought them out with silver and gold, and there was none feeble among His tribes.

Redemption makes total provision for the needs of the redeemed. For Israel in Egypt, it all came through faith in the blood of the Passover lamb. That faith released the supply of every need—spiritual, physical, and material. Some three million people marched out of Egypt. Not one of them limped, not one of them hobbled, not one of them used a cane or a crutch. In the church today, we have a long way to go to attain that standard, but I believe it is God's standard. I believe redemption is complete and that it covers every area of our lives.

When God redeemed them, He took care of everything in one act—they came out healthy and wealthy, with an abundance of gold and silver and everything that was precious. We must understand, however, that God had a purpose in all this. God gave Moses the plan for the tabernacle where He was going to dwell in the midst of His people. Then He told Moses that the people were to provide the material and labor to build the tabernacle.

> And Moses spoke to all the congregation of the children of Israel, saying, "This is the thing which the Lord commanded, saying: 'Take from among you an offering to the Lord. Whoever is of a willing heart, let him bring it as an offering to the Lord: gold, silver, and bronze; blue, purple, and scarlet thread, fine linen, goats' hair; rams' skins dyed red, and badgers' skins, and accacia wood; oil for the light, and spices ... onyx stones ... All who are gifted artisans among you shall come and make all that the Lord has commanded.'" (Exodus 35:4–10)

The people were to bring their offerings out of the abundance God had provided for them through redemption to make the kind of dwelling God required. He gave them no options about the dwelling place. There was to be gold, silver and bronze. Everything had to be made just the way

He required. However, His requirements were not unreasonable because He had already given them everything they were going to need to comply with His directions. The final result is described in Exodus 36:

> So Moses gave a commandment, and they caused it to be proclaimed throughout the camp, saying, "Let neither man nor woman do any more work for the offering of the sanctuary." And the people were restrained from bringing, for the material they had was sufficient for all the work to be done—indeed too much. (vv. 6–7)

Notice the closing phrase: "sufficient ... indeed too much." By definition, that is abundance. Regrettably, we do not often see such a situation in modern congregations. Redemption provides abundance, but the goal of redemption is a dwelling place for God to dwell among His people. And out of what God gives us through redemption, He asks us to give back to Him that which will provide His dwelling place.

The Temple of Solomon

David is first presented to us in Scripture in a very humble setting—the youngest son in a family of little wealth, out on the rocky mountains of Judah, looking after his father's sheep (see 1 Samuel 16:6–13). Yet, by the end of his life, David had disposed of the equivalent of many millions of dollars. Before his death, he bequeathed to the house of God—to the temple that Solomon was to build—the equivalent of about $126 million out of his own private fortune.

One significant realization we need to make is that during the reign of David there was a huge increase in the wealth of Israel. It's hard to know how to calculate it, but their gross national product must have been multiplied hundreds of times over. What had been a poor, struggling nation that made its living out of agriculture, husbandry, cattle and sheep had become fantastically wealthy by the end of David's reign.

That was no accident. Israel's wealth was partly the result of God's blessing on David. We know that whenever God finds a man after His own heart to lead His people, He will bless His people through that man. But apart from that, God had a further purpose. At the end of David's reign, God wanted Israel to be ready for the construction of the temple Solomon was to build. Again, God's goal was a dwelling place where He could be among His people. And again, every detail of that dwelling place was precisely defined. Nothing was left to the imagination of the builder.

The account of what was given for the construction of Solomon's temple contains some of the most glorious language found anywhere in writing. There is something breathtaking about the words David uses to describe the preparation he had made for the temple:

> Now for the house of my God I have prepared with all my might: gold for things to be made of gold, silver for things of silver, bronze for things of bronze, iron for things of iron, wood for things of wood, onyx stones, stones to be set, glistening stones of various colors, all kinds of precious stones, and marble slabs in abundance. (1 Chronicles 29:2)

Notice the closing word of David's description—abundance. It sums up the provision made for the temple just as it summed up the provision made for the tabernacle. Abundance is, in fact, the level of provision that God always makes for His people. There is nothing limited or stingy about it. He is the God of abundance. Out of his own personal fortune, David provided the equivalent in gold of about $95 million. Not including the silver or the other materials (see vv. 3–4). Further on, we read what the leaders also gave out of their own private possessions:

> Then the leaders of the fathers' houses, leaders of the tribes of Israel, the captains of thousands and of hundreds, with the officers over the king's work, offered willingly. They gave for the work of the house of God five thousand talents and ten thousand darics of gold, ten thousand talents of silver, eighteen thousand talents of bronze, and one hundred thousand talents of iron. (vv. 6–7)

According to my calculation, the figures in this passage amount to $158 million worth of gold. Between them, David and the elders gave the equivalent of $253 million of gold from their own private fortunes. This is apart from the silver, precious stones, wood, marble and all the other items contributed—that is staggering! We need to remember in all

this that David started as a little shepherd boy on the rocky hills of Judea.

God's Ultimate Dwelling Place

The upsurge in the economy of Israel that made possible the building of the temple did not take long—less than seventy years. I believe God is doing a work in our day that parallels what He did for Israel in the days of David, because God has a purpose.

What is that purpose? He wants a dwelling place. He wants to dwell with man. And He is very precise about the specifications of His dwelling place. He is not stingy. He wants everything of the highest quality. However, the dwelling place being constructed for God in this age differs in kind from both the tabernacle and the temple. The distinctive character of God's dwelling place today is described by Paul:

> Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are. (1 Corinthians 3:16–17)

In a similar way, Peter says:

> "You also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood ..." (1 Peter 2:5)

We are talking here about God's ultimate dwelling place, which is not made of gold or silver or of any of the marvelously precious materials that were lavished on the temple of Solomon. There is something infinitely more precious to God, and that is people. When God wants the most precious dwelling place of all, He chooses one made up of people, not materials. And we are the people! We are God's dwelling place!

If God was so particular and so lavish about the tabernacle of Moses, and even more so about the temple of Solomon—both of which were temporary buildings—do you think He will be less particular or less lavish about His ultimate, eternal dwelling place, which is us?

Completing this dwelling place will require both labor and expense far beyond all that went into Solomon's temple. The living stones whom God has chosen must be quarried from all nations on the face of the earth, for God will not be satisfied until "all nations, tribes, peoples, and tongues" are represented (Revelation 7:9). Therefore, God has ordained that:

> This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations. (Matthew 24:14)

I believe there is a reason these examples of the tabernacle and the temple are given in the Old Testament. God wants us to understand how much it is going to cost to complete His ultimate dwelling place in this age. We know, of course, that we cannot pay for our redemption, nor can the salvation of a soul be measured in terms of finance.

But if we take seriously our responsibility to present the gospel of the Kingdom to the billions of people of today's world, it is only practical to acknowledge that it is going to cost billions of dollars. Literal dollars. It is utterly unrealistic to talk about getting the job done without finances.

Filling the Temple

God's provision that is needed for this ultimate dwelling place is revealed in Haggai 2:6–9:

> For thus says the Lord of hosts: "Once more (it is a little while) I will shake heaven and earth, the sea and dry land; and I will shake all nations, and they shall come to the Desire [wealth] of All Nations, and I will fill this temple with glory," says the Lord of hosts. (vv. 6–7)

What temple? God's dwelling place. The Lord is not talking here about the temple that was built in the days of Haggai, because that temple was destroyed nineteen centuries ago. He is talking about the close of this age and His dwelling place at this time. (See also Hebrews 12:25–29.) The Lord says, "I will fill this house with glory." But first He says the wealth of the nations is going to come to provide all that will be needed to build a house suited to His glory. The statement that follows in Haggai 2:8 is extremely important: "'The silver is Mine, and the gold is Mine,' says the Lord of hosts."

When Jesus died and rose from the dead, all the treasures of this entire earth became legitimately His. He is the heir of all things, and we are co-heirs with Him. We share the inheritance. So, in actual fact, we have a legitimate right to

the silver and the gold through Jesus Christ. Continuing on with what God says in this passage from Haggai 2, in verse 9 God returns to the theme of the glory:

> "The glory of this latter temple [the ultimate house of God] shall be greater than the former," says the Lord of hosts. "And in this place will I give peace," says the Lord of hosts.

Again, it is very obvious that this mention of the temple is not a reference to the temple that was built in the days of Haggai. That temple perished in war. Rather, it refers to the dwelling place of God at the close of this age. What is God's dwelling place at the close of this age? You and me, His people, His completed church, His Body! The Lord promises that for the purpose of building that dwelling, the wealth of the nations will come. Let's look at one last picture in Isaiah 60. Again, these words are spoken to God's people at the close of this age.

> Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear upon you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising. (vv. 1–5, nasb1995)

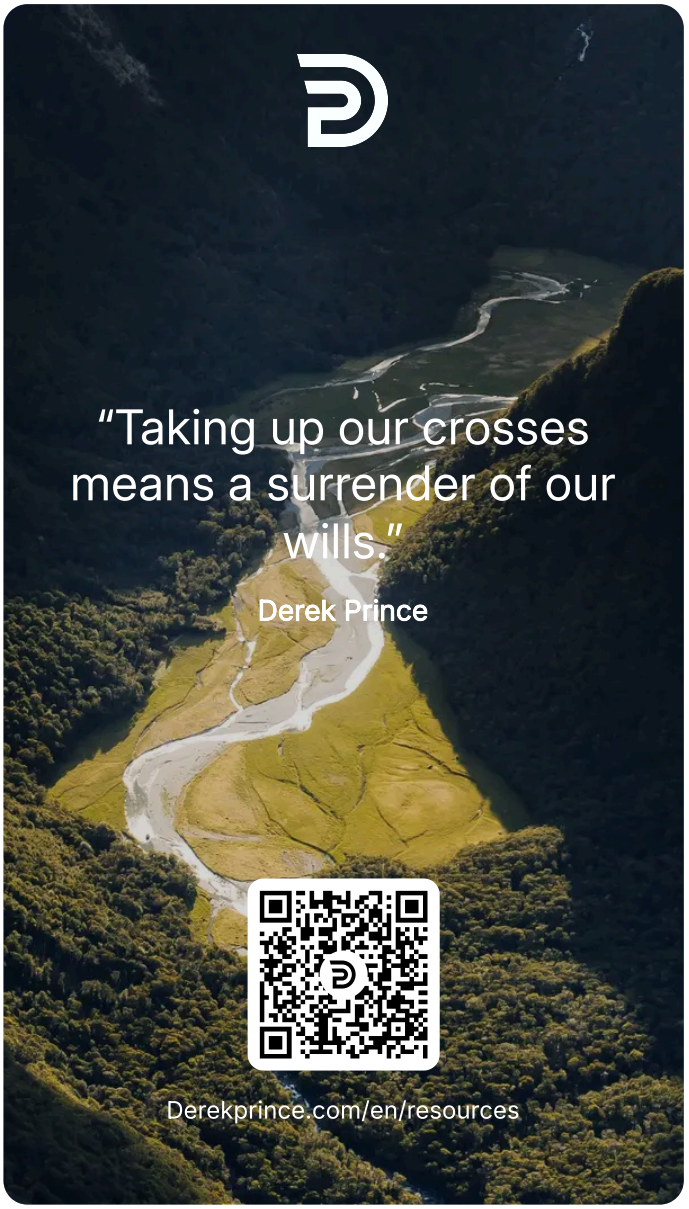
There is a direct connection between the revelation of God's glory and the wealth of the nations. God's purpose is to have a dwelling place suited to His glory. For this purpose, He will make available to His people the wealth of the nations. Do you believe that applies to us today? I do! Why will we need this wealth? So we can complete the dwelling place of God which is made up of living stones. People. Countless millions of people. But many of these have not yet been reached even once with the gospel of Jesus Christ.

- It will cost a lot
- It will cost lives
- It will cost time
- It will cost money
- It will cost everything we have

But God will make all abundance available to us for the work of completing His dwelling place.

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