

The Laws of Prosperity

Foundational Truth Volume 5

By Peter Tan

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PREFACE

Prosperity includes more than just financial prosperity. Spiritual and soul prosperity must always precede financial prosperity (3 John 2). The ability to handle money is an important part of the Christian foundational life (Matthew 6:24). It is obvious that if the love of money is the root of all evil, then our attitude towards finances and our skills develop in handling money would demonstrate the dominance of good over evil (1 Timothy 6:10).

The teachings in this foundational series Volume 5 is only an introduction to the Christian approach to finances and prosperity. More teachings in this area are covered in the book, Prosperity through Grace. This book is designed to merely cover the basics of the laws of prosperity. Sadly, there has been too much emphasis on financial prosperity in our modern church. Nevertheless, it is still important to cover the basics of biblical principles of prosperity.

May the blessings of Deuteronomy 28:1-14 be upon your life as you begin to make the Lord Jesus truly lord over your finances.

Pastor Peter Tan

CHAPTER 1

THE WILL OF GOD IN PROSPERITY

Prosperity has always been the perfect plan of God for His people. God's provision in the Garden of Eden is an indication of His perfect plan for all mankind. There was an abundant provision to cater for all of Adam's need (Gen. 1:29). Poverty began only after the fall of Adam and Eve. Since then, men have experienced poverty and lack in spirit, soul and body.

The Prosperity of Jesus

Contrary to what traditions taught, Jesus was prosperous when He was on this earth. However, He did not gather prosperity for His selfish use. He was born in a humble manger but was visited by kings who brought presents of gold, frankincense and myrrh to Him. His earthly ministry was supported by rich women who ministered to Him of their substance (Lk. 8:1-3). Boats, houses, guest rooms and donkeys were at His disposal (Lk. 5:1-3; Mk. 14:12-16; 11:1-7). His body was placed in a rich man's tomb (Mk. 15:42-46). Jesus even had a treasurer and apparently, He supported the poor regularly (Jn. 12:4-8). Jesus is not opposed to our being rich. He is opposed to covetousness. The only time when Jesus was made poor was when He took the curse of poverty on our behalf on the cross; dying on the cross for our sins, sicknesses and poverty (Gal. 3:13). Even the robe that He wore was gambled away by the soldiers guarding the execution site (Jn. 19:23, 24).

Paul reminded the Corinthians in his epistle to them that Jesus, though He was rich, was made poor so that we through His poverty might be made rich (2 Cor. 8:9). The context of the passage is financial provision. He made reference to the financial giving of the Macedonian churches (2 Cor. 8:1-7). Jesus took the curse of financial poverty upon Himself so that we might be made prosperous through the grace of His atonement; not that we might be selfish but that we might have abundance for every good work (2 Cor. 9:8).

The Causes of Poverty

Anyone who strives for financial prosperity, through keeping the laws of prosperity alone, without getting rid of any open door to poverty is only deceiving themselves. It will not work. Neither can we blame our poverty upon original sin. The book of Proverbs explains clearly the causes of poverty.

There are six causes of poverty:

1. An evil eye that seeks after riches no matter what laws or principles are broken. Poverty is the end result (Pro. 28:22).
2. A selfish nature that does not recognize God's hand in their being blessed nor shares the blessing with others (Pro. 11:24).
3. A lazy nature invites poverty. Those allergic to hard work but try to receive prosperity through 'claiming the promises' may die of starvation (Pro. 6:9-11; 20:13; 24:30-34).
4. An unteachable attitude that refuses to learn from the mistakes and wisdom of others. Such people will repeat the mistakes of others to their own destruction (Pro. 13:18).
5. A hasty and frivolous attitude that seeks worldly pleasures and luxury. This is an obvious misuse of wealth. With little or with much we should learn to be good stewards of the wealth that God has blessed us with (Pro. 28:19, 20; 23:21).
6. Hidden sins will lead to much poverty. People seem to get away with sin for some time but in the end judgment falls and poverty overtakes them (Pro. 28:13).

Wrong Methods to Prosperity

It is God's Will that His people prosper and be in health. However, this does not mean prosperity by any illegal and unbiblical methods. Some people buy lotteries and put them in their Bible hoping that they will strike rich one day. Others are ever hoping to receive a 'word of knowledge' to bet on the right number or on the right horse.

Such sudden riches are usually destructive. An inheritance gained hastily at the beginning will not be blessed in the end (Pro. 20:21). The wisdom and hard work involved in gaining wealth is also necessary in the wise spending of that wealth. A foolish man squanders wealth and ends up destroying himself (Pro. 21:20). He who hastens to be rich will not go unpunished (Pro. 28:20).

There is no such thing as a 'get-rich-quick scheme.' All such schemes are unscriptural and usually illegal. The laws of prosperity outlined in this book are not quick little schemes to get rich. If such is your attitude, it will not work. The laws of prosperity are life changing principles that demand discipline and diligence. They demand a change in life-styles, morality and character for its successful operation. Those who are faithful in least will also be faithful in much (Lk. 16:10).

Prosperous Men in the Bible

Being prosperous is not in conflict to being spiritual. Many of the spiritual men in the Bible were prosperous. Abraham was rich in cattle, silver and gold (Gen. 13:2). Joseph was the prime minister and right hand man of Pharaoh (Gen. 41:39-46). Job was the greatest and one of the richest men in the East (Job 1:3). Daniel was the right hand man of three kingdoms (Dan. 2:48; 6:1,2;10:1). The Apostle Barnabas was a rich man who owned much real estate (Acts 4:36, 37).

Success and prosperity in the lives of these men have always been because of their obedience to God and God's laws. Joseph had the opportunity to sin but he chose moral uprightness (Gen. 39:9). Joshua was told that his success and prosperity would depend upon his faithfulness in meditating upon the law of God (Jos. 1:8). King Solomon's riches were the direct results of God's blessings upon his life (1 Kgs. 3:13).

In His rebuke and correction of King David for his adultery, God makes mention of the fact that David's prosperity came from Him (2 Sam. 12:7, 8). An interesting point to note is that God mentioned that if it (the prosperity) had been too little, God would have given much more to David! (2 Sam. 12:8). It is not how much God can give but rather it is how much we dare to believe God for. The blessings of God are not limited by God; they are limited by our faith in God! As long as we do not see it as the Will of God to prosper us, we will not be able to receive that which is our covenant right and privilege. Sincere people have lived and died without seeing the blessings of prosperity because they have never seen it as God's Will for their lives. They have not because they asked not (Jam. 4:2). Others have not because they ask to spend it on their pleasures (Jam. 4:3).

The Gospel of Stewardship

Sometimes Christians have branded those who preach that it is God's Will for Christians to prosper as a 'prosperity cult.' First of all, I think it is not right for any Christian to call another believer a 'cult' if they believe in salvation through the atonement of Jesus Christ. The word 'cult' should only be used for those who completely reject the deity, humanity and the atonement work of Jesus Christ and for those who reject the Bible as the Word of God - the sole authority for doctrine and practices.

Some of the accusations have arisen because of the abuse of prosperity and an unhealthy emphasis on money during public meetings. The opposers of the teaching on prosperity have often swung to the opposite extreme of

ignoring the need for Christians to prosper and have enough for their needs as well as more than sufficient to support the work of God.

Because they do not teach prosperity to Christians, the opposers of this teaching have experienced financial needs in their churches and ministries. In their need for finances, they have resorted to unscriptural and worldly methods of fund raising like lotteries and other worldly activities. Can you imagine the apostle Paul having a lottery draw to finance his missionary journey?

The balanced position is to teach Christians that it is God's Will to prosper and at the same time teach them the importance of being a good steward of money. Christians must learn to be bold to exercise faith for great prosperity while learning to be faithful in handling money. The gospel is a gospel of prosperity and stewardship.

Being Economically Balanced

Prosperity does not mean being uneconomical. In prosperity, we should still seek to get the most out of our spending. Prosperity does not mean waste. Jesus obviously does not believe in wasting. This is seen by the fact that the twelve baskets full of leftover bread was collected after His miracle with the five loaves and two fishes (Matt. 14:20).

On the other hand, I have seen people who are penny-wise and pound-foolish. They scrimp to buy the cheapest things which are of the poorest quality. They end up paying more for many replacements. We should economize and buy quality at the lowest prices.

In regard to this, I would caution anyone against being critical of the spending habits of others. Judge yourselves first. Most families tend to scrimp on some areas while they have more liberal spending for other areas. The problem arises when one family happens to be spending niggardly on the same area which another family is spending liberally. The first family tends to criticize the second for waste. The second family could probably find areas in the first family that they consider waste. Moreover, if a family is living within their means and their level of prosperity, one should not be too quick to judge; if they can afford to enjoy some areas of luxuries that they have worked hard for, without compromising their ability to give generously to others.

The danger of waste comes in when a family begins to spend lavishly on all areas or when the love of money and worldly goods take a hold of their hearts. The test of an economically balanced family is not just how much

they have but rather how generous they are to others. Generosity expresses a detachment from worldly goods and an unselfish desire to share.

The Life-Style of a Minister

I personally believe that when a person has obeyed the call of God to the ministry, he has chosen to live an exemplary life-style. He has chosen to live in a glass house where his public and private life-style is an example that points to Christ. He must not be so poor that people say that God cannot supply his needs nor take care of His servants. Neither must he live in such great luxury that people say that he does not have eternity in his heart. This is especially so if the income of the ministry is 100% derived from the ministry; for people would want an accounting for how wisely the money they gave is spent. However, if the ministers' income comes from their own resources outside of the ministry, then it is their own to determine its use.

In proportion to their personally acquired wealth and the ratio of average in each country, it is recommended that a minister should live as average as possible to relate to the community. If a minister lives too high up the social ladder, he will not be able to reach the poor. If he lives too low down the social ladder, he will not be able to reach the rich and super rich. A minister should be able to reach those who live in cardboard homes and those who live in palaces with wall to wall carpet. He should strive to reach to both poor and rich alike without fear or favour.

Paul said that he became all things to all men that by all means he might save some (1 Cor.9:22). This does not mean that it is wrong for a minister to prosper or to have a multi-million dollar ministry. He can be as prosperous as he has the faith to believe God for wealth. However, in his prosperity, he should retain the ability to reach out by word and by example to all men (1 Tim. 4:12).

Living an exemplary life-style is not only commendable to a minister but it is also commendable to all Christians who are millionaires and billionaires. Christians must never lose perspective that this world is not our home but we are just passing through it as pilgrims awaiting the city of God (Heb. 11:13-16). Many such Christians would probably be 'booed' at by the world for doing so but they will surely be added to the roll of faith in Hebrews chapter eleven - which would be a greater treasure than this world can offer.

Balanced Prosperity is God's Will

In this chapter we have seen how God is interested in our prosperity. We have also seen that there is much need to teach Christians how to handle prosperity God's way. The love of money is the root of ALL evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Paul did not even say that it is the root of some evil. He said pointedly that it is the root - the foundation - of ALL evil. How we relate to money and how we handle it will determine whether we are evil or not.

It is also important to note that should a Christian be guilty of all the causes of poverty in his life as listed above, he should correct them first before he attempts to apply the principles of financial prosperity that we shall discuss further in this book.

We recognized that Bible prosperity does not refer to just financial prosperity. There is spiritual and soul prosperity as well. Our other books cover teachings to build prosperity in the spirit and in the soul. The purpose of this book is to briefly cover only the principles in regard to financial prosperity.

CHAPTER 2

THE LAW OF TITHING

Each law of prosperity that we will cover effects different areas of financial prosperity. Each law determines a separate spiritual area of blessing. The law of tithing determines whether we are living under the curse or under the blessing. To be under the curse means that we are left to our own resources. To be under the blessing means to have the favour of God in everything that we do.

The Beginnings of Tithing

Some people are of the opinion that the law of tithing began during the giving of the Mosaic Covenant. Tithing was first recorded in the book of Genesis. Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek (Gen. 14:20). Abraham practiced tithing even before the law was given. Tithing, therefore, is only not part of the Mosaic Covenant but rather part of the Abrahamic Covenant. The law of tithing was expanded and explained in greater detail during the Mosaic Covenant.

The New Testament actually is a fulfilment of the Abrahamic Covenant. We are therefore called children of Abraham (Gal. 3:7). The blessings of the gospel that we have received are also called the blessings of Abraham (Gal. 3:13, 14). Part of the blessings of Abraham is the blessing of tithing.

Some Christians argue that they are in the New Covenant and therefore above the law of tithing. This is usually just an excuse to avoid giving more to God. The fact of our being in the New Covenant does not mean that we can break the moral laws of the Old Testament. We are to live up to the moral code and also above it. In the New Covenant, we are to fulfil the law of the tithe and also go beyond it.

The Definition of the Tithe

The word 'tithe' is from the Hebrew word 'maaser' and from the Greek word 'dekate' which both mean a 'tenth.' A tithe would therefore mean specifically one tenth of our possessions. Anything less than or more than ten percent would, strictly speaking, not be classified as a tithe. In the Old Testament, every ten percent of the people's finances, produce or cattle would constitute their tithe.

God claims ownership of all tithes. He declares that the tithe is holy unto the Lord (Lev. 27:30). Since the tithe does not belong to us at all, we do not give tithes but we bring our tithes to God. We cannot give what does not belong to us in the first place. In fact, to hold back the tithes would be robbing God (Mal. 3:8).

Because the tithe belongs to God, the Old Testament people were not allowed to choose which animals to bring to God. They were to pick every tenth animal at random and bring them to God (Lev. 27:32, 33). If they try to exchange the tenth animal, both the one exchanged and the tenth animal belongs to God (Lev. 27:10). If they want to buy the tenth animal back from God, they have to add one-fifth (twenty percent) to the value of the animal and pay it to God (Lev. 27:31).

God's interest rate for touching His tithe is twenty percent. Some Christians try to replace their tithe in kind rather than in finances. In whatever form your tithe comes, you should give it as it is. The tithe does not belong to you. You have no right to exchange, convert or even to use it. In our modern society, money has become the main commodity of exchange. It is wrong even for a Christian to use their tithe to buy some material things to give to the church or to God's minister. The tithe does not belong to us. We have no right to use it or change it into some other commodity. Pay your tithes in whatever commodity it came in and the blessings of God will be upon you.

The Practice of Tithing

There are two groups of Christians who struggle with the paying of tithes. The first group is the poor or the needy. This group hardly have enough money coming in each month to pay for their food, clothing and shelter. To bring their tithes may mean missing some meals. To this group we challenged them to be bold to claim the blessings of God in tithing. When we bring our tithes, the remaining ninety percent will go further with God's blessing. It is far better to have a blessed ninety percent than a cursed hundred percent. Without the blessing of God, the devil would probably steal more than the ten percent through sicknesses, calamities and other evils.

The other group that struggle to pay tithes are those who are rich. The tithe of one hundred dollars is only ten dollars and the tithe of a thousand dollars is only one hundred dollars. However, the tithe of a hundred thousand dollars is ten thousand dollars and the tithe of a million dollars is one hundred thousand dollars. The tithe of ten million would be one million dollars. When this group compute such numbers, they refrain from bringing

their tithes or they split their tithes. Some of them are even guilty of converting their tithes to give it in other commodities.

Remember a tithe is a tithe is a tithe. It belongs to God and the size of the tithe is irrelevant. In fact if such people touch or make use of the tithe, they are indebted to pay God an additional twenty percent of the tithe. It is foolishness and dangerous to meddle around with God's tithes.

Bringing in the Tithes

In the Old Testament, God gave all the tithes to the Levites (Num. 18:21). Notice that the tithes were given to them not just because they were Levites but rather for the work which they perform.

"Behold, I have given the children of Levi all the tithes in Israel as an inheritance in return for the work which they perform, the work of the tabernacle of meeting." - Numbers 18:21

Who then are the Levites in the New Testament? Those who do the work of the tabernacle. The modern tabernacle, of course, would be the church of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Levites in the Old Covenant were dedicated to the service of the tabernacle. They gave up their secular vocation to serve in the tabernacle. Naturally, these would point back to the fulltime ministry in the church today.

Many Christians would prefer to give to an organization rather than to the ministers themselves. They forget the fact that God does not call and anoint organizations but rather God calls and anoints men into His service. It is not just the organization of the ministry that is anointed but rather the men themselves. If the anointed men were to leave those organizations, the anointing would leave and all that would be left is the empty shell of the organization. Personally, I have always paid my tithes to the ministers (or their ministries directly) rather than to the organization because I know that the organizations would not function in the anointing without them. It is God's established system to support His ministers in the Old Testament and the fivefold ministers in the New Testament. The tithe of the tithe which was given to Moses in the Old Testament would in the New Testament belong to the ministry over the respective fivefold ministers (Numbers 18:25-26).

Vision of End Time Fivefold Ministries

Andrew. W. Rasmussen, who functioned in the office of a prophet during the Charismatic revivals of the 20th Century, was given a vision of the end

time church (The Last Chapter by A. W. Rasmussen, pages 203-207) as follows:

I was standing before a great unnamed cathedral. Its stately spires tapered up into the sky like poised missiles. Its Gothic arches were graceful and strong. The walls were reinforced with sturdy buttresses and the windows were made of intricately designed stained glass. Every stone in that building was pure granite, and I thought of the vast amount of money which must have been necessary to build such an edifice. What a masterpiece of workmanship it was! But as I gazed at this great cathedral, a voice spoke:

“My son,” the Voice began, “people say, ‘What a beautiful church!’ But I say unto you, this is not My church!”

I jumped ahead of Him, and thought I knew what He was going to say next. But then the vision changed. I saw myself standing on a street in a great city overseas. It was early in the morning. The streets were made of cobblestone. Wobbly two-wheeled carts loaded with produce were rattling down the streets, the owners perched atop, on their way to the market. The streets were in very bad condition. Many of the stones were out of place, others almost totally covered with mud. In some places there were great mudholes. Some of the curbstones were knocked into the street. As I walked along that street, noticing these miserable cobblestones, I was amazed to hear voices speaking out of those stones!

“Come! Oh, come!” they cried. “Come and build us into the temple of the Lord!” They called pitifully, as though in great distress.

Then my vision was drawn to a far horizon. There, in the distance, I saw men of God coming to answer the cry of those poor cobblestones. Many of them were coming intent on plucking these old stones out of the mire and building them into God’s temple. They were running with all their might to answer the call of the cobblestones.

But then I saw that something was hindering them. There seemed to be an invisible wall and they could come just so far, and no further. They tried and tried to get past that wall. They pushed against it; they tried to knock it over; they tried to climb over it. But none succeeded.

“How strange!” I thought. “They want to come but they can’t. I wonder what is hindering them?” Then the Lord began to speak to me distinctly and clearly.

“I will explain the last part of the vision to you first,” He said. “The cobblestones in the mire represent the millions who have not yet heard the word of salvation. Year after year, they live in their sins with none to help them. If someone would only take the message of salvation to them, they would become ‘living stones’ in the Church I am building.”

“I am now pouring out of My Spirit upon many of my servants,” the Lord continued. “My Church is being clothed with gifts and power, and shall be restored to beauty and glory. But even though many are anointed with power and many are hearing the call of the cobblestones, yet they are hindered from answering the call. Before My Church can be restored to her full glory, she must learn the mystery of the invisible wall.”

“Please tell me,” I begged, “that I may tell Your people what it is that hinders.”

“Here is understanding,” He said. “My anointed servants are hindered by lack of funds. The tithe belongs to them. I have appointed it to them for their use. But My people have used the tithes for building great temples and cathedrals, and paying architects. They say, ‘What beautiful churches we have built for God!’ They rob My anointed servants of the tithes, and use them instead to pay of mortgages and interest. And My Church goes unbuilt for lack of funds.”

God Anoints Humans not Organizations

Organizations are the tools by which anointed men carry out the call of God upon their lives. The Bible pattern of God’s working among men has been that God chooses men rather than organizations. No man is indispensable. If the man that God calls does not obey God, God will raise up another man. However, organizations were not meant to self-perpetuate and control men. The Sabbath was made for men and not men for the Sabbath. Organizations were made for men and not men for the organizations.

The fears of many people in tithing to the minister are actually more out of a desire to see accountability and stewardship in handling finances rather than in disagreeing with the principle of God anointing men and not their organizations. I believe that every minister should have their personal finances properly audited and accounted for by a qualified accountant. Or better still, set up their own ministries which people can tithe to. They can then draw a salary from their own ministries and use the balance to perpetuate the kingdom of God.

People are not afraid of tithing to the minister. They are merely afraid of the misuse of finances. If the principles of accountability and stewardship could be established, people would be more willing to tithe to the minister directly. The sad fact is that many ministers have no experience handling large sums of money. Many of them, upon receiving large sums of money, spend it all without investing it back into the expansion of Christ's kingdom. They are like children who, upon receiving pocket money, spend it all on chocolates and ice-creams. This cause many people to bring their tithes to an organization where they can control or monitor the expenditure.

However, monitoring of finances that we have brought to an organization can be brought to the extreme, too. Some people try to control a ministry with their tithes and offerings. The true essence of tithing and giving is that once it is given, it is no longer ours (The tithe is not ours anyway). It is now in the jurisdiction of the receiver.

If I give somebody a refrigerator, I cannot say that it is still mine and take it back later. Neither would it be right for me to tell the person how to use the refrigerator. If the person decides to sell it and give it away, I should not get upset because it is now his and not mine. Some people don't really give, they only lend or loan. This is not the law of tithing or offering operating, it is the law of lending.

The monitoring should have been done before the tithing or the offering and not after. We should have prayed and seek the Lord as to where to bring our tithes to. We should have examined our lives to see which ministries have fed us spiritually. The tithe belongs to those that have fed us spiritually. Those who have laboured in the word and doctrine in our lives should receive our tithes (1 Tim. 5:17, 18).

Paul says very clearly that it is the right of the minister of the gospel to live by the gospel (1 Cor. 9:13, 14). Those who sow spiritual things have a right to reap material things (1 Cor. 9:10, 11). There is no doubt that those, who have made the sacrifice and paid the price to draw blessings upon the body of Christ from the spiritual realm, need to be honoured and rewarded.

However, Paul makes it very clear that he has not made use of this right of his with the Corinthian church (1 Cor. 9:15). Here is where ministers need to learn from the example of Paul. It is not right for ministers to take this truth and impose it upon their churches. We should look to God to lead people to support us financially in the ministry and not to lean on the arm of the flesh by demanding support.

The Blessings of Tithing

The law of tithing determines whether we live in the blessings or in the curses. This does not mean that God is responsible for the evil but rather our disobedience opens a door for the devil to work against us. Our situation would be like what the prophet Haggai says of the Israelites in his time.

"You have sown much, and bring in little;
You eat but do not have enough;
You drink, but you are not filled with drink;
You clothe yourselves, but no one is warm;
And he who earns wages, earns it to put into a bag with holes."
- Haggai 1:6

Living under the curse is like running against a blank wall in every venture of our lives. The purpose of God telling us to keep moral laws is not because it will help Him but rather it will help us enjoy the full blessings of a family life. The purpose of God telling us to bring our tithes is not because it will help Him (He owns all the silver and gold on this planet), but rather it will give Him a right to bring His special blessings upon our lives. God is not a respecter of persons (Acts 10:34). God does not show favouritism. He is fair and just to all. What He gives to one He is willing to give to all based on the same principles. In order to be a fair and just God to all men, God has ordained it such that if anyone wants to have His special blessings upon all aspects of their lives, they would have to bring a tenth of their possessions to His storehouse. God's blessings are based on principles.

There are sevenfold blessings when we tithe to God:

1. The windows of heaven will be opened to us.
2. The blessings that come upon our lives will not trickle but pour upon our lives.
3. All our needs will be met and there will be no room unfilled.
4. God will Himself rebuke the devourer and prevent him from coming even near our lives.
5. We will reap of all our harvest without fail.
6. Our vine (our efforts) shall all bear fruit.
7. We shall be called blessed by all around (Mal. 3:10-12).

CHAPTER 3

THE LAW OF OFFERING

The law of offering differs greatly from the law of tithing. Offerings belong to us and out of our free will we give over and above the tithe. Anything over and above ten percent is regarded as an offering. While the law of tithing determines whether we live in the blessings or the curses, the law of offering determines the measure by which we receive our blessings.

"Give and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."- Luke 6:38

The same measure that we use will be measured back to us. If we use a teaspoon measure, a teaspoon measure will be used when our harvest time comes. If we use a large wheelbarrow, wheelbarrow measures will be brought back to us.

Differing Levels of Faith in Giving

Sometimes a person exercises faith for a million dollars when his faith level is not there to receive a million dollars. He may only be able to receive in one dollar measures. It sure would take a long time to receive a million dollars in one dollar measures. Usually, a person will receive sums of money in the multiples of the measure he uses. If he is giving in ten dollar measures, he will receive a harvest in ten dollar measures and not ten thousand dollars or a hundred thousand dollars at one time.

The faith which we exercise in giving is the same faith we will exercise in receiving. If we have faith to give only ten dollars, we will only have faith to receive in ten dollar measures. Only when we have faith to give a hundred thousand dollars will we have faith to receive in hundred thousand dollar measures. Some people who have not even known what it is to give a thousand dollars are trying to exercise faith for a million dollars. Something is amiss. They are not moving according to their faith level.

For this reason, many people have not learned to apply the law of giving correctly and therefore experienced much disappointment. Each time a person tries to move beyond his faith level, his conscience will warn him. We are to exercise our faith under the guidance of our conscience. Otherwise, we will end up in financial shipwrecks (1 Tim. 1:19).

Growing in Giving

Growing in giving is similar to growing in faith. We should exercise our faith to increase our giving a little at a time until our faith-muscles are well developed to handle bigger and bigger amounts. As our giving increases year by year, we will be able to believe God for bigger and bigger amounts. Always remember that the amount you receive is determined by the size of your faith-muscles to give.

Sometimes Christians have experienced a pulled faith-muscle because they have overstretched themselves. They have tried to jump in faith instead of grow in faith. Faith takes time to grow through meditation and acting upon the Word of God. In exercising faith for finances we can increase the measure we give (which will also increase the measure we receive) by applying the law of offering with the law of saving.

The Law of Saving

When I first started my walk of faith, I was unaware of the law of saving until the Holy Spirit showed me that I need to have a storehouse. In Deuteronomy chapter twenty eight, God said that He will command the blessing in our storehouses (Deut. 28:8). The storehouses here do not refer to God's storehouse as in Malachi but to the buildings that the Israelites used for storing goods, harvests and supplies. God expected the Israelites to learn the principles of saving.

Some Christians are of the opinion that to walk by faith means not to have any savings but to live from hand to mouth. If their wages or finances were to be delayed for a week, they would either have to starve or get into debt. Yet the very people they borrow from are those who have savings. In times like that, those who have savings become the lenders while those who have not become the borrowers.

Most people save to spend later or save for a rainy day. However, the man of faith saves in order to have staying power, lending power and giving power. Suppose a person name John Smith, earning a thousand dollars a month saves a hundred a month, he would have a thousand two hundred dollars at the end of one year. Let's assume that John Smith gives two hundred dollars a month (ten percent tithe and ten percent offering). The measure by which John Smith has been operating is a two hundred dollar measure.

One fine day at the end of that year, a missionary comes to town and an offering is collected for the missionary. John Smith attends the meeting and

God speaks to him to give a thousand dollars. John Smith obeys and for the first time in his life gave a thousand dollars. In a moment of time, John Smith begins to operate on the thousand dollar measure.

Jesus said that with the same measure we use, it will be measured back to us (Lk. 6:38). John Doe can now expect financial blessings to come in thousand dollar measures. The law of saving has given him the ability to grow in exercising his faith in giving. In all of this, John Doe also has no problem if his cheque is delayed a week. He can make use of his savings (instead of borrowing from others) and later replace it when his cheque clears.

God wants to bless your storehouse (Deut. 28:8). If you have no storehouse, you can't claim this promise. Since money is the main commodity of exchange now, our storehouses is now represented by the deposit accounts in the bank. It would be advisable for Christians to live on seventy percent of their income. Of the other thirty percent, they could give twenty percent into God's ministry (ten percent tithe and ten percent offering) and keep another ten percent into their savings.

As their faith levels increase, Christians can then give thirty percent of their income, then forty, then fifty etc. Some Christians have given up to ninety percent of their income. Others, who have become millionaires, have given a hundred percent of their earnings to the Lord. Jesus said that all who do so have great eternal treasures in heaven (Matt. 6:20; Mk. 10:21). Barnabas, who later became an apostle, was a rich man. He was one of the key men who gave to the work of the early church (Acts 4:36, 37).

Right Attitudes in Giving

Jesus is intensely interested in how well we handle our money. During His ministry, Jesus even sat opposite the treasury box to see how the people gave their offering (Mk. 12:41). Note that He was as interested in how they gave as well as what they gave. In comparison to the poor, the rich gave more than the poor per giving. By percentage, the rich gave less than the poor. The woman who gave the two mites gave a hundred percent of her money (Mk. 12:44). By Jesus' estimation, she gave more (Mk. 12:43).

God judges our giving not by the amount we bring to the offertory but by the percentage of our offering relative to our income. The motivation of our giving and how we give are also important to God. We should not give grudgingly or of necessity (2 Cor.9:7). To give grudgingly means to give out of unwillingness, many times with great complain. One of the reasons why the people in prophet Malachi's time were not blessed was also

because of their complaining against God in regard to the tithes and offering (Mal. 3:13, 14).

Some people do not complain while they give but they give only out of necessity. When a ministry pleads for funds, advertises their needs, or calls for finances under threat of being shut down, these necessity-style givers play the hero who saves the ministry by their giving. Such giving is not motivated by the leading of the Holy Spirit; it is motivated by sympathy and a sense of self-glory.

Preceding all other things, we should find out why the so-called ministry is in financial distress. If a ministry runs into financial problems and has to be salvaged, then something must be amiss to bring it to that point. Whatever it is needs to be corrected. Instead, people sometimes support ministries which perpetuate practices and styles guaranteed to produce financial crises. This is like pouring water into a leaking container. Repair the leak first and then pour the water. If a ministry is doing the right thing, it should never be in financial problems in the first place.

Secondly, if a minister reaches the point where he has to plead, entreat and beg others for money, he probably is not in talking terms with God. If God is real and is our Provider, we can talk to Him without resorting to modern mass marketing techniques. If a ministry has to beg to continue to exist and is under threat of being shut down without our responding to their pathetic cries for money, then we should be tenderly firm enough to let it shut down (much as we don't desire any ministry to shut down). Let us not allow God's Name, God's image and God's glory to be tainted by such so-called representatives of God.

Our giving should not be motivated by necessity but instead be motivated by the leading of the Holy Spirit. We should not determine where to give our offerings by which ministry cries the loudest for money. Neither should we determine where we give our offerings by which ministry is in need for that would be giving by necessity. We should determine where we give our offering by where we get our spiritual food.

The giving of our offerings should be times of great joy. We should be like the farmer who sows with great expectation (2 Cor. 9:6). We should be cheerful givers (2 Cor. 9:7). Our offerings given in a right attitude of heart creates a sweet incense that reaches to the very throne of God (Phil. 4:18). Our physical offering not only ensures the continued expansion of God's work on earth through His vessels but it also enters the spiritual realm as a spiritual offering, well pleasing to God.

CHAPTER 4

THE LAWS OF SPIRITUAL PARTNERSHIP

There are two types of spiritual partnership. One is with God; the other is with the ministries which God has appointed. Partnership with God is also called the law of the firstfruits. In the Old Testament, the firstfruits is usually the first harvest that the Israelites receive at the beginning of the harvest season. The giving of the firstfruits was accompanied by the feast of firstfruits.

The Law of Firstfruits

When Joshua invaded the land of Canaan, God instructed that all the silver and gold, the vessels of bronze and iron were to be put into the treasury of God (Jos. 6:24). It was a type of firstfruits. When Achan disobeyed, judgment fell on Israel (Jos. 7:11, 12). At the next city, God allowed the Israelites to keep the spoils (Jos. 8:27). At the end of the conquest of Canaan, the land together with the spoils were divided among the Israelites.

The firstfruits is at first a hundred percent of the Israelites' spoils but if they had conquered twenty cities it would only be five percent of their spoils. If they conquered fifty cities, it would only be two percent of their total spoils.

The firstfruits offering is an expression of our acknowledgement that God is our Senior Partner. It expresses confidence that God, who has given us the first harvest, will help us to fully reap the harvest that is due unto us. It is also thanksgiving by faith for the expected harvest that is coming forth.

At every point where I have started some new phase of ministry, I have brought forth my offering of firstfruits to the Lord. This is in addition to all the tithes and offerings that I would give in subsequent blessings that I expect to receive through the new phase of ministry. The firstfruits offering becomes the outward expression of my acceptance and acknowledgement of God as my Senior Partner in all my endeavours.

Partnership with God

If we desire our companies or ministries to have God as our Senior Partner, we would also have to make a covenant with Him to bring a regular tithe and offering to Him from the gross income. My ministry sets a target to give twenty percent from the gross income. Through God's grace, we have always been able to give more.

Partnership with God also involves having Him in our board meetings. We have to listen to what He says. The promise of Deuteronomy chapter twenty-eight is also conditioned upon us diligently obeying the voice of the Lord our God (Deut. 28:1). It is also important to take note that all the board meetings with God are prayer meetings. The ideas and principles by which we run the partnership must be from Him because He is the Senior Partner.

Partnership with God's Ministries

Many people give their tithes and offerings by their whims and fancies. They do not practice planned giving. Because of the haphazard way in which they give, their blessings and income are also haphazard. Sometimes they will give to the ministry which pleads the loudest. They are motivated by their emotions and not by the Holy Spirit. They give out of necessity rather than out of the purposes of their hearts (2 Cor. 9:7).

Our giving should be purposeful instead of helter-skelter. Purposeful giving is giving motivated by the will and not the emotions. As stated in the previous chapters, we should bring our tithes and offerings to the ministries that minister spiritual food to us. We should pray to the Lord and ask Him how much we should sow into their ministries on a regular basis. As God speaks to us, we should then plan our giving into the regular monthly or weekly budget.

Sometimes there will be extra opportunities to give when we attend seminars or Conferences. At such times we should not touch our regular giving to those who sow the Word regularly into our lives. We should instead seek to give above and beyond our regular budgeted giving.

Adhering to a committed giving to those ministries that regularly feed us spiritually would be entering into a spiritual partnership with them. The returns and blessings of this form of giving are far and beyond the haphazard type of giving. The haphazard style of giving has a predetermined amount to give but no predetermined place to sow (Sometimes, the haphazard style of giving does not even have a predetermined amount to give). The partnership type of giving has both a predetermined amount of giving and a predetermined place of sowing.

A farmer who moves around from place to place sowing his seed will not be able to maintain his crops and protect them from the pestilences present in nature. However, if the farmer finds a good ground, tills the soil, sows the seed, waters the field regularly, weeds it regularly, keeps the birds and worms from destroying his crops, he would be ensured of a good harvest.

All the regular work that is required cannot be done if his fields are too scattered.

Partnership in Giving and Receiving

Paul in his epistle to the Philippians speaks of their support for his ministry when he went into Macedonia and in Thessalonica (Phil. 4:15, 16). They were his partners in the ministry. The Amplified Version gives further light on this in its translation.

"And you Philippians yourselves well know that in the early days of the Gospel ministry, when I left Macedonia, no church entered into partnership with me and opened up a debit and credit account in giving and receiving except you only."- Philippians 4:15

A partnership is not just a one way proposal. It benefits both parties concerned. Paul was the one who received the offerings. Yet he spoke of the Philippians being partners in giving and receiving (Phil. 4:15). The benefits the Philippians received were as follows:

1. Fruit abounds to their account (Phil. 4:17).

I believe that Paul was referring to the fruit of souls that were won through his ministry. By being a partner in his ministry, the Philippians were also indirectly responsible for the souls that were won through Paul's ministry. All the fruit of Paul's ministry would also be indirectly their fruit because they supported his ministry. The Philippians would be rewarded during the judgment of believers together with Paul as they were a part of his ministry. Fruit abounds to their heavenly account.

2. The offering they brought to Paul was a sweet incense of worship unto the Lord (Phil. 4:18).

It was as much an act of worship as singing unto the Lord.

3. God would supply all their needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19).

This familiar verse is actually a conditional promise. It was conditioned upon what was done from verses fifteen to seventeen of Philippians chapter four. Having fulfilled all the conditions, Paul continues speaking the blessings upon the Philippians saying, 'And my God shall supply...'

The Hundredfold Blessing

Many are those who have claimed the hundredfold return of their offering each time they sow an offering. Rare are those who actually receive a hundredfold return. The problem is not in the impossibility of the hundredfold but rather the promise of the hundredfold is a conditional promise.

Jesus said that those who have left all for His sake and for the Gospel's will receive a hundredfold return in this life. (Mk. 10:30). Leaving all behind does not mean that we neglect or forsake our responsibilities to the family. Those who forsake the responsibilities of taking care of their family are no better than an infidel (1 Tim. 5:8). Those who do not work (whether in the ministry or in a job), should not eat (2 Thess. 3:10).

Jesus was speaking about the total consecration of life and heart. He was speaking about a total love that loves Him more than any other earthly being. When a person has this quality of heart, the multiplication of his offering can reach even to the proportion of a hundredfold. Therefore, the factor by which our offering is multiplied will be directly proportional to the quality of the surrender of our hearts.

The next time you give an offering, examine the surrendered condition of your heart if you want the multiplication factor to work for you. The hundredfold return is available to all who will meet its condition.

CHAPTER 5

SPIRITUAL PRINCIPLES THAT BRING PROSPERITY

The laws of prosperity work together with other spiritual principles to bring prosperity. In fact, without these principles, prosperity cannot be maintained. We will touch on four of the most important of these principles.

The Force of Wisdom

Wisdom and prosperity go hand in hand. The book of Proverbs speaks about wisdom as having length of days in her right hand and riches and honour in her left hand (Pro. 3:16). Riches and honour are the fringe benefits of wisdom. Those who love wisdom shall inherit wealth and their treasures shall be filled (Pro. 8:21). The crown of the wise is their riches (Pro. 14:24).

King Solomon asked for wisdom and God added riches and honour as a fringe benefit to him (1 Kgs. 3:13). King Solomon was the richest and the wisest king of his time (2 Chron. 9:22). He made silver as common as stone so that it was counted as nothing (2 Chron. 9:20, 27).

Everyone who wants to enjoy prosperity needs to seek for wisdom instead of silver and gold. The Spirit of Wisdom will bring forth both the intelligence to accumulate wealth and the intelligence to spend it. The earth was founded by wisdom (Pro. 3:19). Thus, all the intelligence that is required to harness the wealth and the resources of this earth are available through the Spirit of Wisdom. Wisdom is the principle force of the universe (Pro. 4:7).

The Force of Righteousness

Godliness is profitable unto all things (1 Tim. 4:8). Sometimes people emphasized on the fact that they pay a great price for being godly, consecrated and holy unto the Lord. However, it is a greater price when they begin to suffer the effects of unrighteousness and sin in their lives. On the overall, it pays to be godly than to be ungodly. Godliness profits both on this earth and in the next life.

The testimony of King David is that all through his earthly life, he has never seen the righteous forsaken nor lacking bread (Ps. 37:25). Wealth and riches will be in the house of the righteous man who fears the Lord (Ps.

112:1-3). Do not fret if you see the unrighteous prosper temporarily. The wealth of the sinner is being laid up for the righteous (Pro. 13:22). In the end, it is the righteous who will make use of it.

Who are the righteous? Those who believe in Christ and have received the gift of righteousness (Rom. 5:17). We who are in Christ have been made the righteousness of God (2 Cor. 5:21). Those who have received the gift of righteousness shall reign in life through Christ (Rom. 5:17). Reigning in life implies success in both the natural and spiritual world.

For this reason, prosperity is now a gift of His grace (2 Cor. 8:7, 9). Those who abound in the grace of God (the gift of righteousness) shall also abound in prosperity (2 Cor. 9:8). God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus (Phil. 4:19). A study of what the riches in glory mean would reveal that it is the riches of His grace (Eph. 1:7). Moreover, the riches of His grace would include all the riches in Christ which is wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:2, 3). Wisdom and knowledge would, of course, produce prosperity. In the New Covenant, prosperity is the gift of His grace through Christ.

The Force of Joy

A merry heart does not only doeth good like a medicine but those who have a merry heart shall have a continual feast (Pro. 15:15). They shall enjoy continuous prosperity. God warned the Israelites that if they do not serve the Lord with joy and gladness for the abundance of things, they shall suffer affliction and lack (Deut. 28:47, 48). If the devil can't steal our joy, he can't steal our goods.

Even though the Macedonian churches were experiencing financial difficulties, they did not lose their joy (2 Cor. 8:2). Their joy enabled them to give liberally despite their need. Paul wrote to them saying that God shall supply all their needs (Phil. 4:19). The city of Philippi was one of the major cities in Macedonia. The multiplication of our offerings back unto us is dependent on our giving with a cheerful heart (2 Cor. 9:7). God loves a cheerful giver. Joy is the natural and logical expression of faith. Between the time of sowing and the time of manifestation, it is the joy of faith which keeps us in the right attitude to receive (Phil. 1:25).

The Force of Love

God spoke to the Israelites that if they hearken to His voice and obey all His commandments and statutes, they would be the head and not the tail (Deut. 28:1, 13). When Jesus came, obedience to all the commandments

have been summarized to loving God with all our hearts, soul and body and loving our neighbour as ourselves (Mk. 12:39,31). Paul said that all the commandments are summed up in the saying, "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."

Keeping the commandments of God brings prosperity. Keeping the love of God is keeping the commandments of God. Therefore, keeping the love of God brings prosperity. If we do not walk in love, we will not be able to experience the prosperity which comes from God. The generous soul shall be made rich (Pro. 24:25).

Those who do not accumulate wealth by love, gathers for him who will pity the poor (Pro. 28:8). The force of love shall bring great prosperity. Moreover, mountain-moving faith can only be exercised in a love environment (Mk. 11:23-25). Those who walk perfectly in love shall be able to give perfectly in love and thus reap the hundredfold.

Prosperity is not accidental. It is the intelligent keeping of the laws of God and patient practice of spiritual principles. The abundant life is yours if you keep the conditions pertaining to it. Jesus said that He has come that we might have life and that we might have it abundantly (Jn. 10:10).