

How God Prospers Believers – Part 1

by Gary Carpenter

We are all fairly familiar with the Lord's plan for providing for the needs of those in full time ministry. Both in the old covenant and the new, full time ministers for the Lord are primarily supported by the offerings of the people. Just a couple of scriptures from the new testament concerning this are:

1 Cor 9:14 Even so hath the Lord ordained that they which preach the gospel should live of the gospel.

1 Tim 5:17-18 Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine. For the scripture saith, Thou shalt not muzzle the ox that treadeth out the corn. And, The laborer is worthy of his reward.

When the Lord called Sue and I into full time ministry, however, He gave us some very unusual instructions. He told us:

"Take up no offerings from these people. Sell no tapes. Mail everything freely and do not even put in a return envelope. Never let a human being know of any needs that you have. I am your Source! If you will precisely obey these instructions of Mine I will speak to the hearts of the people I choose to support both you and the needs of the ministry."

We did precisely as He instructed us, and true to His Word, He began to speak to the hearts of people to send free will offerings. It is hard to describe the gratitude that was in our hearts as we began receiving these financial gifts from the precious people who had heard His voice and obeyed. My heart longed to see them prosper abundantly. I had heard all of the popular teaching that prevails in the body of Christ today concerning how God prospers believers. In a nutshell, they all boil down to the same formula: "The more you give to God, the more He prospers you."

The Lord told me that if I wanted to understand how He really prospers believers that I should study the book of Philippians. I began reading the entire book of Philippians over and over again while praying softly in other tongues. I have learned that most error in the body of Christ comes from lifting a verse out of its context and then making doctrine out of it. To really equip your spirit for "day and night" meditation, the best course of action is always to find the beginning of a subject and the end of the subject and put the entire passage into your spirit. When you are dealing with small books like the book of Philippians, it is best to simply read the entire book over and over to make sure you have equipped your spirit with the raw material of the Word which the Holy Spirit will use to teach you the truth contained in it.

I found that the believers at Philippi were normal Christians who spent the majority of their time with the daily affairs of life. When Paul first preached the gospel to them, he

described their condition as being in "deep poverty." Yet these same believers, once they had learned of the "grace of God" concerning their finances, eventually became Paul's number one financial supporters. He said that their deep poverty eventually "abounded to the riches of their liberality."

2 Cor 8:1-2 Moreover, brethren, we do you to wit of the grace of God bestowed on the churches of Macedonia; How that in a great trial of affliction the abundance of their joy and their deep poverty abounded unto the riches of their liberality.

I must admit that it was a while before I realized that the "Macedonians" Paul referred to in 2nd Corinthians were actually these churches at Philippi. This is the advantage of reading the book repeatedly many times over. On one of my many journeys through the book of Philippians, this verse simply "jumped out" at me;

Phil 4:15 Now ye Philippians know also, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, no church communicated with me as concerning giving and receiving, but ye only.

When I saw the word "Macedonia" in that verse, I could not help but wonder if these were the same people that Paul had written about in 2nd Corinthians. I asked the Holy Spirit to give me another "witness" if this were truly the case and He brought to my mind this verse:

Acts 16:12 And from thence to Philippi, which is the chief city of that part of Macedonia, and a colony: and we were in that city abiding certain days.

Now I was getting somewhere because Paul tells us in 2nd Corinthians that these people went from "deep poverty" to "abounding in their liberality." This is what I had been looking for: To find out how God takes a group of people, bestows His grace upon them, and then prospers them. Notice in 2nd Cor 8:1 that Paul says that the "grace of God" was the key factor in causing their financial turnaround. My excitement continued to build as I went back for further meditation of the book of Philippians. The answer to how God did this had to be in there somewhere.

As I continued to meditate the book of Philippians and pray, it seemed that the Holy Spirit kept drawing my attention to a couple of verses that did not seem to make a whole lot of sense to me. Every time I read these two verses it seemed that the Holy Spirit was giving me a "nudge" in my spirit, as if there was buried treasure in them that I had never seen. In the King James bible, the verses read this way:

Phil 1:9-10 And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That ye may approve things that are excellent; that ye may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ.

The way it is written, I could not make much practical sense of this verse. I was having a hard time understanding what Paul was actually saying to them. I looked up every key

word in both of the verses in my Greek Dictionary and listed them in sequence on a sheet of paper. Here are the words, with the definitions:

Knowledge = Epignosis = Full knowledge, a greater participation by the knower in the object known, thus more powerfully influencing him.

Judgment = Aisthesis = Perception, discernment.

Approve = Dokimazo = To approve after testing. Used especially regarding metals. Coins could be tried by fire to see which were precious.

Excellent = Diaphero = Differ, the highest and best.

Sincere = Eilikrines = Unalloyed, pure of unmixed substances {single minded}.

Offense = To stumble, or to cause to stumble.

After many more hours of mediation and prayer in the spirit, keeping in mind the context of the entire letter, the Lord gave me the following paraphrase of verses nine and ten;

"I pray that as your love for Jesus increases, you will increasingly come to know Him better. You will come to understand what He is doing in the earth and become even more of a participant in His plans, purposes, and pursuits. The mind of Christ Himself will come to have an ever increasingly powerful influence in every area of your life. Your greater depth of acquaintance with Him will result in more comprehensive discernment regarding what to get involved in, and what not. You will be able to test various potential endeavors with the very mind (thinking processes) of Christ to determine which of them contain the highest and best potential for accomplishing His plans in the earth. By this process you will remain sincere, unalloyed, pure and single minded in serving Jesus and not Mammon. That purity and single mindedness will both keep you from stumbling into the world's way of thinking (the deceitfulness of riches and the lust of other things), and it will keep others from stumbling also."(Paraphrased)

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