

“Blessed 13”
Daily Meditations
toward
BIBLICAL PROSPERITY
IN SPIRIT, BODY, MIND & MONEY

By Bien A. Llobrera

“BLESSED 13” DAILY MEDITATIONS TOWARD BIBLICAL PROSPERITY

By Pastor Bien Llobrera

INTRODUCTION

The world talks about “Lucky 13”. That world continually bombards you with the idea that prosperity consists in having big cars, big houses, a mountain pile of money in the bank and lots and lots of material stuff. This booklet gives you “BLESSED 13” DAILY MEDITATIONS TOWARD BIBLICAL PROSPERITY. Read one meditation daily for the next 13 days to discover God’s way to true prosperity in spirit, body, mind and money.

Day 1: NOT PROSPEROUS ENOUGH

Sometime ago the magazine *Christianity Today* ran an article about the “PROSPERITY GOSPEL” that’s taking Africa by storm. Quoted below are the first two paragraphs of the article.

PASTOR MICHAEL OKONKWO rises from his gold-coated throne before 4,000 onlookers in Lagos, Nigeria. “Hallelujah!” bellows the self-proclaimed “father of fathers, pastor of pastors,” wearing a glittery green gown. The crowd stands and roars.

A 62-year-old former banker and graduate of the Morris Cerullo School of Ministry in San Diego, California, Okonkwo touts a seminar called “Financial Intelligence:; if you’ve missed it, he encourages you to buy the tapes. Okonkwo describes the “intelligence” he preaches in his book Controlling Wealth God’s Way: “[Many] are ignorant of the fact that God has already made provision for his children to be wealthy here on earth. When I say wealthy, I mean very, very rich.... Break loose! It is not a sin to desire to be wealthy.”

Pastor Okonkwo is promoting the so-called “Prosperity Gospel”. He learned it from American televangelists who promote a “health-wealth-positive-thinking personal success gospel”. Essentially these preachers tell you, “Believe in Christ, become a Christian, and you will become healthy, wealthy, successful and happy!” Prosperity Gospel preachers remind their audience that many of God’s people in the Bible were rich. Abraham, for example.

As disciples who wish to follow our Lord Jesus Christ, who said, “Foxes have holes, and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head” (Luke 9:58), we need to ask one serious question:

- Is the “Prosperity Gospel” biblical? Does it represent the true message of Christianity?

Most evangelicals consider the “Prosperity Gospel” as a distortion of the true biblical Gospel. It is true that many religious scam artists (especially on tv) are misusing the Gospel for their selfish purposes. It is also true that many credulous though honest, well meaning “believers” end up sadly disappointed and many more or less turned away from Christianity.

But there are also documented cases where people have truly experienced their faith rewarded with a better standard of living for themselves and their families. What do you think?

When I asked some friends the question above, the responses that I received fell under two categories:

- (1) Negative: No, the Bible does not teach the Prosperity Gospel.
- (2) Positive: I’m interested to know how I can enjoy prosperity from God.

Let me share with you what I’ve discovered from the Bible:

The Prosperity Gospel doesn’t go far enough! It tells you to ask for peanuts. God created us for the throne, to rule over all His creation and to own and enjoy all the blessings of His creation. Let’s use the illustration of 3 Circles:

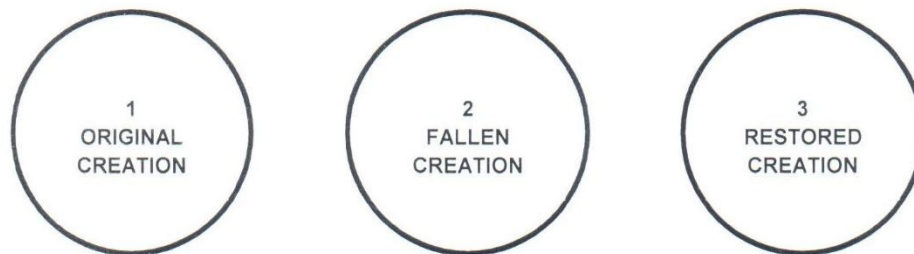


FIG. A

Circle 1: Original Creation: what we lost

1. God originally created humanity perfect, and He placed our first parents as rulers over all God's creation

2. Our first parents had ALL their needs provided -- physical, mental, sexual, emotional, social, moral, spiritual, purpose & meaning, life work (Genesis 1:18; 2:8-9, 18-25). Note that in the Garden of Eden God planted different kinds of trees – trees for food (physical needs); trees beautiful to look at (mental and psychological needs); tree of life (spiritual needs); tree of knowledge of good and evil (moral needs). And above all God instituted marriage and family (sexual, emotional, social needs). And then God placed our first parents, Adam and Eve, as rulers over all God’s creation.

3. God gave our first parents the whole world as their rightful inheritance. Think of this: They owned the whole world. THAT’S ABSOLUTE PROSPERITY! And God intended that

they should pass that inheritance to all their children. The tragic truth is that they lost everything because of sin. This brings us to Circle 2.

Circle 2: Fallen Creation: our present condition

Humanity is enslaved to Satan, sin, sickness, suffering, sorrow, poverty and death

But there's good news. It is into this Circle 2 of fallen creation that Christ came, proclaiming "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is hand. Repent and believe in the gospel!" (Mark 1:15). The gospel is good news; what is the good news? The good news proclaims the following amazing truths:

1. Through His death, resurrection, and ascension, Christ REGAINED all that our first parents lost. This is the meaning of His royal proclamation in Matthew 28:18: "All power in heaven and on earth has been given to me..."

2. Christ is holding everything IN TRUST for us. You know how the legal document called TRUST works. A wealthy parent prepares a TRUST FUND for his child, usually with stipulations such as "he/she will receive the money at such and such years old" or with conditions such as "after he/she finishes college". Or it works the other way around. I read about a wealthy parent who designated so much money every year for as long as his son was in school. The amount was more than what the son would make if he were working at a regular employment... so guess what the son did? He kept going to school... a professional student!

3. But regarding Christ and us: Through His death and resurrection and ascension Christ had ALREADY BOUGHT BACK all that Adam and Eve lost plus more. However, He holds these riches IN TRUST while He prepares us to properly enjoy these riches. Someday God will restore to us completely what Adam and Eve lost.

4. This brings us to Circle 3. The "TRUST" contains this provision: That we will receive all our inheritance AFTER we have graduated from God's 3 Step Recovery Plan.

Yes, God wants you to be prosperous! But you must first graduate from GOD'S 3-STEP RECOVERY PLAN!

Day 2:
LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY

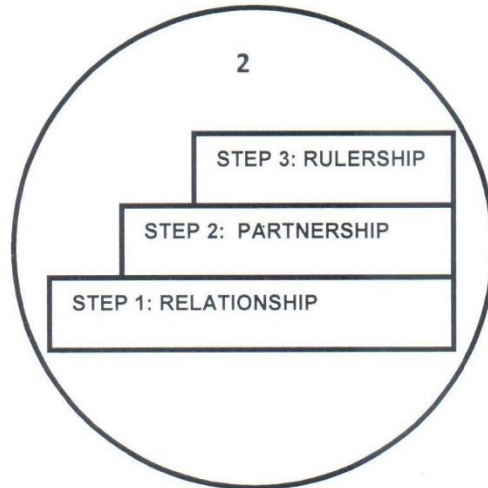


FIG. B

1. In our previous study we learned that Christ REGAINED all our lost inheritance through His death and resurrection. But before He gives to us our full inheritance, we have to go through the 3-STEP RECOVERY PLAN in Circle 2.

2. Circle 2 consists of 3 Steps:

Step 1: Relationship

Step 2: Partnership

Step 3: Rulership

3. The parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24, please read story printed at the end of this book) provides us with a powerful illustration of these three steps. When the Prodigal Son was restored, his father gave him three things: a new robe, new shoes (sandals), and a ring.

- The ROBE symbolizes restoration of RELATIONSHIP;
- The SHOES (sandals) symbolize a new walk or new lifestyle, characterized by PARTNERSHIP;
- The RING symbolizes RULERSHIP.

4. Let's take a close look at STEP 1: RELATIONSHIP – A NEW ROBE.

5. In the biblical view of prosperity, the first thing that Christ restores to us is our relationship with God as our heavenly Father. God is the Creator, Sustainer, and Sovereign Owner and Controller of the whole universe. When we are restored to a Father-Child relationship with the Owner of all things, we don't need to have money, cars, houses, lands in our possession. It's like being taken to an expensive restaurant by a multi-millionaire friend, who tells you, "Everything's

on me; order anything you like, sky is the limit.” As a guest of this multi-millionaire friend, do I need to have money in my wallet? Of course, not. I may be the poorest person in the world, but with my millionaire friend taking the tab, I can order the most expensive item on the menu.

6. This is what Christ wants us to know and to have and to experience. He restores true prosperity to us by restoring to us God as our heavenly Father. This is the ROBE of relationship that He puts around me.

7. True prosperity is, first of all, not having money, cars, houses, lands, and other properties, contrary to what the so-called “PROSPERITY GOSPEL” televangelists are telling us. True prosperity is having God as our heavenly Father. What’s included in this “Father-Child” relationship? A lot! But let’s mention three wonderful treasures:

- TREASURE #1: Because I’m a CHILD OF GOD, I’m LOVED Unconditionally! (John 15:9; 17:23)

Jesus assures us in John 15:9: As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in my love.

This is mind-boggling. Jesus loves us WITH THE SAME KIND OF LOVE with which the Father loves Him!

But there is something even more mind-boggling! The Father loves us WITH THE SAME KIND OF LOVE with which He loves Jesus!

John 17:23: That the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me.

To have this treasure that I’M LOVED UNCONDITIONALLY makes me very prosperous and very rich!

Let us enjoy this treasure beginning today. Memorize the two verses, John 15:9 and John 17:23 and meditate on these two verses as often as you can. And keep thanking God with a prayer like this: “Lord Jesus, thank You for loving me like the Father loves You. Father God, thank You for loving me like You love Your own Son Jesus!”

Day 3: SUPPLIED ABUNDANTLY

In our previous study we discovered that genuine prosperity restores to us, first of all, our relationship to God. And this relationship gives us three treasures. We already talked about treasure #1.

- TREASURE #1: Because I'm a CHILD OF GOD, I'm LOVED Unconditionally! (John 15:9; 17:23)

Now, we will talk about...

- TREASURE #2: I'M A CHILD OF GOD, GOD IS MY HEAVENLY FATHER; AND HE WILL SUPPLY ALL MY NEEDS FAITHFULLY AND ABUNDANTLY.

When I receive Christ as my personal Savior and Lord, the second treasure that Christ restores to me is that the faithful heavenly Father promises to provide for all my needs.

The Gospel of Matthew chapter 6 is a key scripture regarding this, particularly verses 8-34. This week, we should memorize and meditate on Matthew 6:26, 30 and Philippians 4:19:

Matthew 6:26, 30 (v. 26) ...Your heavenly Father feeds [the birds]. Are you not of more value than they? (v. 30) Now, if God so clothes the grass of the field... will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Philippians 4:19 - And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

To make His meaning absolutely clear, Christ had to bring His words down to the most basic human level of understanding. For example in Matthew 7:8-11 He uses the example of earthly fathers to hammer home the goodness and faithfulness of the heavenly Father.

Matthew 7:9-11: (v. 9) Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? (v. 10) Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? (v. 11) If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

In a way Christ seems to be insulting His hearers. He says, "If you then, who are evil..." But He is actually using a worst case scenario: Even the most notoriously derelict, deadbeat human father is still capable of giving good things to his children; there is still something inside the worst human fathers that moves them to give their children something good. The conclusion is: "If the worst earthly dad can do good for his children, HOW MUCH MORE will the best Father of all, the heavenly Father, who loves you totally, unconditionally, eternally, give you all the good things you need!"

Remember: We are talking about biblical prosperity. To give us prosperity, Christ does not begin by giving us material things like money, cars, houses, and lands. Rather, He restores us into relationship with the heavenly Father, who will supply all my needs. This heavenly Father supplies the needs of the birds and the grass of the field; how much more will He supply my needs.

HOW DOES GOD SUPPLY MY NEEDS?

Now, it is important to understand HOW God supplies our needs.

(1) GOD SUPPLIES OUR NEEDS THROUGH GOD-ORDAINED WORK. First of all, God supplies our needs through the normal means of honest work.

Many people think that work is a curse imposed by God upon people because of sin. No, the curse was that, because of sin, WORK was going to be laborious and difficult and no longer optimally productive because of the changed conditions of the earth. After Adam and Eve fell into sin, the earth was cursed with thorns and weeds and things that would try to oppose and thwart a fruitful harvest.

Before the fall into sin, Adam and Eve were given work to do in the ideal conditions of the Garden of Eden... no weeds, no thorns, no pests to destroy their harvest. So work is a part of the divinely ordered activity for human beings.

For the Christian today, the blessing comes in that his work will be blessed and protected by the heavenly Father. Of course, God wants His children to work hard and work faithfully. God will not bless a garden full of weeds.

(2) GOD SUPPLIES OUR NEEDS THROUGH PRAYER. Secondly, when the product of our labor is not enough to meet all our needs, God gives us the privilege of prayer, whereby we ask the heavenly Father for our needs. This is actually the context of the scripture we quoted earlier about the comparison between earthly fathers and the heavenly Father. Let's quote the passage in full:

Matthew 7:7-11: (v. 7) Ask, and it will be given you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. (v. 8) For every one who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened. (v. 9) Or what man of you, if his son asks him for bread, will give him a stone? (v. 10) Or if he asks for a fish, will give him a serpent? (v. 11) If you then, who are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good things to those who ask him!

Prayer is spelled: **A**(sk), **S**(eek), **K**(nock).

- (a) Prayer is ASKING. There are times when all you have to do is ASK (then do nothing but wait) and the answer will come to you.
- (b) Prayer is SEEKING. There are times when the Lord will direct you to SEEK (do something), and as you DO SOMETHING God will help you to find the supply for your needs. For example, a young Filipina Navy wife knew that her husband's Navy paycheck was not enough for their needs. She did not just ASK God to supply her family's needs. She decided to SEEK to do something that she was able to do... she could iron clothes for others. So she went around to her Navy neighbors and offered to iron their clothes for a little fee. She also did the third thing: KNOCK.

- (c) Prayer is KNOCKING. There are times when the Lord will direct you to KNOCK at someone's door (go to someone who can help you with your situation), not necessarily to beg for help, but just ask advice and assistance.

But you ask, "Why do we have to pray? Why doesn't God just give us a million dollars in the bank, and that way we are set for life?"

God want us to pray for at least two reasons:

Reason 1: Prayer brings us closer to God. In prayer we learn to seek God for Himself, not just for what He gives us.

Reason 2: Prayer gives us to opportunity to see God's love and wisdom and power at work. And the more we see Him at work, the more we will love Him and thank Him and worship Him and serve Him. When we pray, we will see miracles.

If God gave us a million dollars today, it is likely that He will not see us again until the money runs out. And it is guaranteed we will never see Him do a miracle in supplying our needs.

George Mueller was a Christian who lived in the 1800s. God put in Mueller's heart the passion to prove the power of prayer. God led him to put up an orphanage whose needs would be supplied through prayer alone; he would not appeal to people for help; rather he and his staff would lay out their needs to God through faithful, regular prayer, everyday, several times a day. And they experienced miracles regularly, like this one:

One time all the food was gone; but Mueller told his staff to set the table for breakfast anyway as usual. And he prayed the usual grace for breakfast. When he said "Amen" someone knocked at the door. It was the breadman; his wagon broke down in front of the orphanage and because he could not deliver the bread to his customers he decided to give all his bread to the orphanage. Then another knock, it was the milkman. Same story; the wagon broke down so he was giving the milk. Mueller lived to be more than 80 years old, and towards the end of his life he testified that God always answered his prayer, that God always supplied, in answer to prayer, the needs of hundreds of orphans that came through his orphanage.

One time a critic told Mueller, "It seems to me that you are living a hand-to-mouth existence."

Not a bit embarrassed, Mueller replied happily, "Yes, from God's hand to my mouth."

So, from today, let's regularly remind ourselves: **I'M A CHILD OF GOD; GOD IS MY HEAVENLY FATHER; AND HE WILL SUPPLY ALL MY NEEDS FAITHFULLY AND ABUNDANTLY.**

And let's memorize and meditate on these verses:

Matthew 6:26, 30 (v. 26) ...Your heavenly Father feeds [the birds]. Are you not of more value than they? (v. 30) Now, if God so clothes the grass of the field... will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

Philippians 4:19 - And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

And let's faithfully ASK – Ask, Seek, Knock – in prayer to our heavenly Father for all our needs.

Day 4: EMPOWERED LIMITLESSLY

Let's remind ourselves of the treasures contained in our restored RELATIONSHIP with God.

- TREASURE #1: Because I'm a CHILD OF GOD, I'm LOVED Unconditionally! (John 15:9; 17:23)
- TREASURE #2: I'M A CHILD OF GOD, GOD IS MY HEAVENLY FATHER; AND HE WILL SUPPLY ALL MY NEEDS FAITHFULLY AND ABUNDANTLY.
- TREASURE #3: I'M A CHILD OF GOD, I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST

Let's unwrap this third treasure, what it really means.

In restoring us to true biblical prosperity God also gives us the power and ability to live as He wants us to live.

John 1:12 is a key verse; in the King James Version it reads: "But as many as received him (Christ), to them gave he power to become sons of God, even to them that believe on his name." Greek scholars rightly point out that the word POWER in this verse means "right" or "authority" rather than "ability"; as in "through faith in Christ I have the right and authority to claim that I am a true child of God, not an impostor."

On the basis of that right and authority I can and I may go on to claim the rights and privileges of being a true child of God, among them the ABILITY to live as a worthy child of God. To whom God gives the right, He also gives the ability.

Among the things our first parents lost was this ABILITY to live up to their God-given position and destiny. This loss of ability, passed on to us by our first parents, is unwittingly but

accurately admitted when, upon being confronted with God's high moral demand such as "Love your enemy", we excuse ourselves by saying: "I can't do it; I'm only human."

But the moment God restores to us the robe of relationship with Him as His child, the moment He gives us the full right and authority to claim that standing in His family, in that very moment He removes from us the excuse of saying "I'm only human". Once we believe in Christ as our Lord and Savior, we are no longer ONLY HUMAN; we are now HUMANS INDWELT BY CHRIST in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Instead of saying, "I can't do it; I am only human", we now can and may say with the apostle Paul, "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me!"

Americans pride themselves as a people with a CAN DO SPIRIT. Christians (whatever their color or race) are divinely given this CAN DO SPIRIT, though they have to undergo training in its use. The divine training program in this biblical CAN DO SPIRIT begins at the moment of our spiritual rebirth in Christ. For too long the devil has successfully told us this lie and we have believed him: YOU CAN'T DO IT!

Let me remind us one more time: We are talking about biblical prosperity. Indeed, God has material blessings prepared for us out there. God's Word guarantees us: "Command those who are rich in this present age not be haughty, nor to trust in uncertain riches but in the living God, who gives us richly all things to enjoy" (1 Timothy 6:17). We should be careful to read this verse properly; it does not condemn riches, rather it condemns the wrong use of riches; neither does it teach that poverty is virtue; rather it magnifies a generous God and heavenly Father who gives richly to His children.

However, before we are ready to receive and enjoy those material blessings, we must remember that MATERIAL POVERTY is only the result of SPIRITUAL POVERTY. Material poverty is the unwanted child of the negative, defeatist I CAN'T SPIRIT. Material prosperity is the happy child of the I CAN DO SPIRIT. This is true even among non-Christians. People with a negative, defeatist attitude seem usually to end up as miserable, poverty-ridden wash-ups in life. People with a positive, victorious attitude seem usually to end up successful and prosperous compared to others.

How much more is this true when we bring in the biblical principles of prosperity.

So, before God can help us overcome our material poverty, He must help us to overcome our spiritual poverty. He must rid us of the "I can't do it; I'm only human" attitude. And He will put us through the rigorous spiritual regimen that will train us to respond to all situations in life with this biblical positive faith: "I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!"

My father had a favorite saying that he got from some positive thinking book: "You can do it if you believe you can." Later on, as a Christian, he learned that Jesus taught: "With God, nothing is impossible" and "All things are possible to him who believes."

Do you want to start on your road to biblical prosperity today?

Begin today by entering God’s training program in this faith-mentality: “I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!” (Philippians 4:13). Make this your guiding motto in life. Regularly meditate on this truth along with these other two: “With God, nothing is impossible” (Luke 1:37) and “All things are possible to him who believes” (Mark 9:23).

Every morning as you get up, and throughout the day, remind yourself of your three God-given treasures:

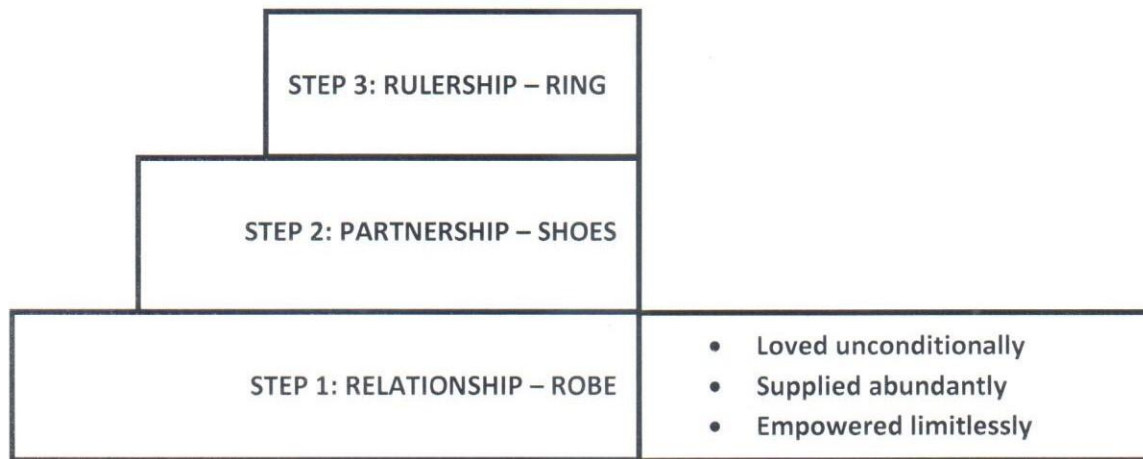


FIG. C

- TREASURE #1: Because I’m a CHILD OF GOD, I’m LOVED Unconditionally! (John 15:9; 17:23)
- TREASURE #2: I’M A CHILD OF GOD, GOD IS MY HEAVENLY FATHER; AND HE WILL SUPPLY ALL MY NEEDS FAITHFULLY AND ABUNDANTLY.
- TREASURE #3: I’M A CHILD OF GOD, I CAN DO ALL THINGS THROUGH CHRIST WHO STRENGTHENS ME!

And because Christ strengthens you, “whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might – and be the best in whatever you do!” It may sound corny but it’s true: DO YOUR BEST, AND GOD WILL DO THE REST!

**Day 5:
WHAT MOTIVATES YOU?**

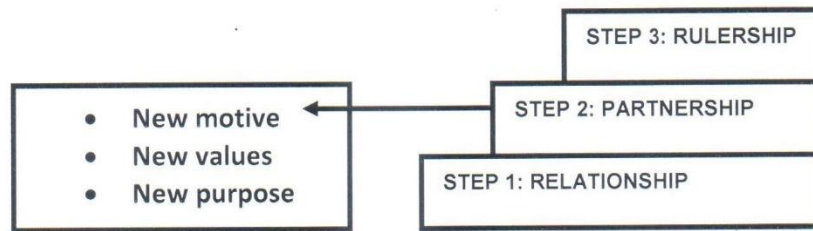


FIG. C

In STEP ONE we learned that GOD has put around us the ROBE of relationship. With that robe we have received THREE TREASURES:

- We are loved;
- We are supplied;
- We are empowered.

Now, we are ready to take STEP 2.

Remember the Prodigal Son? When he returned, his father gave him new shoes (sandals).

We, too, when we become Christians God gives us new SHOES, representing a new walk, a new lifestyle. We may describe this lifestyle as PARTNERSHIP; we may also describe it as STEWARDSHIP. Whereas before, like the Prodigal Son, we insisted on living a self-centered lifestyle. Now, having been restored to relationship with God our heavenly Father, we enter into a new way of life, the way of PARTNERSHIP with God. In Matthew chapter 6, the Lord Jesus shows us that this partnership is practiced in, at least, three ways:

- First, new motive;
- Second, new values;
- Third, new purpose.

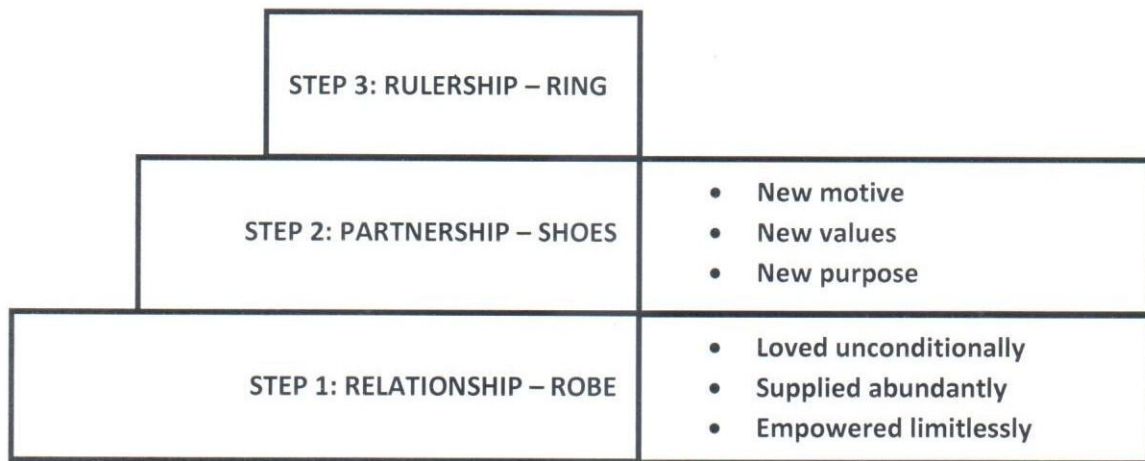


FIG. D

NEW MOTIVE

Let's take a look at our NEW MOTIVE.

Jesus says in Matthew 6:24: “No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.”

According to Jesus, there are only two motives that move people today: They are either ...

- SERVING GOD,
- or
- SERVING MAMMON.

We need to remind ourselves about the meaning of MOTIVE – it's the reason why you do what you do. And Jesus said there is no middle ground: You are either doing what you do for God; or you are doing it for Mammon.

MAMMON?

Mammon? What's that, you may ask?

In the Bible, Mammon literally means money; and by extension, Mammon represents earthly, selfish gain or benefit.

As we put on our NEW SHOES – as we begin our new lifestyle of partnership with God – we must make sure of our motive in doing anything, big or small, in every area of our life. We must

continually ask ourselves: Why am I doing this, to glorify God or to gain money – representing mammon, an earthly, selfish benefit?

You may ask: “But don’t we all work for the paycheck? Are we supposed to work for free? Aren’t we supposed to EARN A LIVING – that means working for paycheck, so we can buy what we need?”

GOD’S LAW OF REWARD

Let’s not misunderstand! God has established the law of REWARDS.

For any work, God has established this rule: Luke 10:7: “The laborer is worthy of his wages...”

If you are an employer, you are supposed to pay your workers their just wages; if you are an employee you deserve to receive fair salary for your work.

But in GOD’S 3-STEP PLAN, which we are studying, we work in partnership with God, seeking primarily to do God’s will in order to receive God’s reward. This means that God is really the one who puts us in our place of employment..... to do a special work for Him.

Day 6: GOD OR MONEY?

In earlier times, before our present secularized age, their job was called their VOCATION – their calling from God.

1 Corinthian 7:20-24: “Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called. Were you called while a slave? Do not be concerned about it; but if you can be made free, rather use it. For he who is called in the Lord while a slave is the Lord’s freedman. Likewise he who is called while free is Christ’s slave. You were bought at a price; do not become slaves of men. – Brethren, let each one remain with God in that calling in which he was called.”

Note: According to this scripture, it’s not even about being a slave or free person – it’s about the Lord’s place for me. In other words, if God wants me to be a slave so that I might do a special work for Him in that station, I will stay in that station for the sake of SERVING GOD.

Today, we may not have literal slaves anymore in this country. But some of us are working at employments where we feel like we are slaves. Now, how do you adopt the right motive in that job? The following verses tell us how.

Colossians 3:23-25: “And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. But he who does wrong will be repaid for the wrong which he has done, and there is no partiality.”

WHATEVER WE DO, we are always looking BEYOND the earthly paycheck, to the ETERNAL PAYBACK!

Galatians 6:7 “Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, that he will also reap.”

2 Corinthians 5:10: “ For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether or bad.
Matthew 23:36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give an account of it in the day of judgment.”

JESUS OUR ULTIMATE EXAMPLE

Jesus is our ultimate example.

Let’s study carefully His statement in John 14:30-31: “... the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave me commandment, so I do....”

The earthly enemies of Jesus were about to arrest Him and eventually put Him to death on the cross. Jesus saw Satan as the real evil master mind behind all this. And He assured His disciples, that Satan did not have any power to implement his evil machinations; that it was only because God allowed Satan to do so.

Therefore, what was the attitude of Jesus? He was willing to let Satan and his human instruments arrest Him and kill Him... for what reason? For what MOTIVE? To show that He loved God and to show His love by complete obedience to the Father’s will.

OUR MOTIVE TODAY

The example of Jesus gives us the key to our own motive today.

Though we go to work everyday because we need the paycheck for our daily needs, yet over and above that paycheck, we consider our work to be the MISSION FIELD where God has assigned us to fulfill a special work for Him.

And not only for our jobs. This motive should determine our attitude in doing anything at all. Whatever we do, we must do it heartily as UNTO THE LORD!

This motive of SERVING GOD will save us from the wrong motive of serving Mammon. This new motive, this new lifestyle of PARTNERSHIP with God, will show the world why a Christian is a different creature – a new creature in Christ!

Day 7:

WHAT DO YOU VALUE MOST?

We are looking at STEP 2: NEW SHOES – NEW LIFESTYLE. This step involves three things:

- First, new motive: Serve GOD, not Mammon.
- Second, new values: Treasures in HEAVEN, not on earth.
- Third, new purpose.

We finished talking about the NEW MOTIVE.

Now we look at the NEW VALUES: TREASURES IN HEAVEN, NOT ON EARTH.

This is closely related to the NEW MOTIVE. If we adopt the motive of serving God not Mammon (money), then we will adopt the new value system of laying up treasures in heaven and not on the earth.

Jesus made this clear in Matthew 6:19-21: “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.”

It is very easy to say: “Lord, from now on I will serve You, and not Mammon.”

And the Lord will reply: “Prove it!”

This story is told about one preacher and a businessman, who claimed to be a Christian and who was known for making a lot of unfulfilled promises to support Christian causes. One day the businessman told the preacher, “Preacher, when my business prospers I will donate such-and-such amount of money to God’s work.” The preacher replied, “Sir, do you have a dime?” The businessman answered, “Sure, why?” The preacher said, “Will you please give that dime to me,” and, receiving the dime from the businessman, he added, “At least, I can be sure you gave a dime today; as for the such-and-such amount of money you promise to give in the future, I don’t expect to see any of that very soon.”

It is very easy to claim that we have now adopted the motive of serving God, not money. And we deceive ourselves into believing we have made that change in our motive. But God gave us a sure-fire, effective way to test whether our claim is true or we are just deceiving ourselves.

What’s the test? Are you ready to start laying up treasures in heaven, not on earth.

How do we do that?

- FIRST, we align ourselves with GOD’S LAW OF BLESSING:

You are blessed to be a blessing. All of God's creation follows this law. Every living thing takes something and gives back something.

For example, trees take carbon dioxide from the atmosphere, and give out oxygen in return. Human beings and animals take oxygen from the same atmosphere and give out carbon dioxide.

Our new "shoes" – our new lifestyle – must include this change: As we are blessed, let us be a blessing by sharing what we have with others who have less than we have.

- SECOND, and more specifically, God commands us to give back to Him the TITHE of our income.

Tithe – what's that? The tithe is 10 percent of anything – harvest, income, possession.

Some people try to find a way around it. They want to debate about its applicability today. God stated the law of the tithe in Malachi 3:8-12 (which we quote in full below):

8 "Will a man rob God? Yet you have robbed Me! But you say, 'In what way have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings. 9 You are cursed with a curse, for you have robbed Me, even this whole nation. 10 Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and prove Me now in this," says the Lord of hosts, "If I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it. 11 And I will rebuke the devourer for your sakes, so that he will not destroy the fruit of your ground, nor shall the vine fail to bear fruit for you in the field," says the Lord of hosts; "and all nations will call you blessed, for you will be a delightful land," says the Lord of hosts.

God's people did not even admit they were stealing from God. They were keeping that part of their harvest which did not belong to them – the tithe. God set aside the tithe for Himself, and we see at least FOUR reasons why He did this:

(1) OWNERSHIP.

God gave the law of the tithe to remind people that God was the Owner and Source and Sustainer of all things. Let's use a simple illustration... you plant an apple tree. The harvest season arrives; you harvest 10 delicious apples. And God tells you: You keep NINE for yourself; give me back ONE. And you debate with God and say: But why should I give back ONE; I need all TEN apples for myself.

Now, we need to ask ourselves some simple questions:

Question: Who made the apple tree, and who made the seed of the apple tree?

Answer: God.

Question: Who owns the soil in which you plant the apple seed?

Answer: God.

Question: Who gives the sunshine and the rain and the air and all the nutrients that will cause the apply seed to grow?

Answer: God.

Question: What part did you have in the whole process that brought the harvest?

Answer: You planted the seed, and did a little bit of caring for the growing plant.

Afterwards, it practically took care of itself.

Question: Who contributed more to the process – God or you? Answer: God.

Question: Based on plain arithmetic and using simple ratio and proportion, who should get NINE – the person who contributed more or the person who contributed less?

My answer: ME – and I don't want only NINE, I want all TEN!

God's answer: I deserve ALL TEN, but I only ask for ONE and give you NINE.

(2) OBEDIENCE.

The tithe is a test of people's obedience toward God. God commanded the tithe to test me whether I would OBEY His command or not.

(3) FAITH.

The tithe is a test of people's faith: When the amount of the harvest or income seems to be short of what I need; if I give away 10 percent of what is already short, that will even make my shortage worse. The tithe tests my faith. Do I believe God's promise that He will supply all my needs; that, in fact, He promised to give me multiplied blessings in return for the tithe?

(4) METHOD OF CONVERSION.

The tithe is God's medium of exchange that converts earthly treasure into heavenly treasure. Giving the tithe to support God's work will result in an eternal harvest of good deeds that will be recorded to our credit. Someday, when we get to heaven God will reward us with heavenly treasures for all the good deeds we have stored up.

NO, these good deeds do not buy our way to heaven.

YES, though we don't exactly understand it now, God will have rewards waiting for us someday in heaven for all the good deeds we have done in this life, in Christ's name. Remember from a previous lesson, we learned that God will reward us even for just a cup of cold water that we give for the sake of Christ. Someone said, "You can't take your money with you when you die; but you can send it on ahead by giving your tithe."

Some people look at the tithe as LOSING something. The Bible wants us to look at it in terms of SOWING AND HARVESTING. When we give the tithe, we are sowing in God's field; and God promises us that from His field we will reap a bountiful harvest.

2 Corinthians 9:6-8: "But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work."

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

But how and where and to whom do we give?

We may give directly to people in need. We may give to our favorite charity. We may give to a mission work that we know about. But the divine plan is to give to and through our church.

According to Malachi 3:10, we bring the tithes into "God's storehouse" – in the Old Testament that storehouse was the temple; in the New Testament the storehouse is the church. That's why it is important for you to be a member of a local church. If you are not already a member of a church, look for a Christian church in your neighborhood. The bottomline characteristics of a Christian church should include the following:

- (a) They accept and obey the Bible as the Word of God and as the sole basis for faith and life;
- (b) They believe in the Apostles' Creed;

(Note: In the creed the "catholic church" means the UNIVERSAL CHURCH or the Body of Christ made up of those whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life [Revelation 21:27], and who are saved according to point (d) below.)

- (c) They believe in the Trinity;
- (d) They teach that faith in Christ is the only way of salvation, not through human effort, not even through church membership;
- (e) They have a ministry of intentional discipleship growth for every member;
- (f) They are actively involved in helping fulfill the Great Commission.

I encourage you to look for a Christian church where you can grow in your faith and where, with other Christians, you can serve the Lord through your giving and involvement. In this way, you will be laying up treasures in heaven... while, at the same time, placing yourself in a position where God can and will continue to bless you in this life.

Day 8: WHAT'S YOUR PURPOSE IN LIFE?

We continue to meditate on STEP 2: NEW SHOES – NEW LIFESTYLE, which involves the following:

- First, new motive: Serve GOD, not Mammon.
- Second, new values: Treasures in HEAVEN, not on earth.
- Third, new purpose: Seek God’s kingdom and righteousness first.

In today’s study we look at the third aspect of our new lifestyle: NEW PURPOSE.

SEEK FIRST THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The Lord Jesus made this purpose clear in Matthew 6:33: “But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.”

What do people think of when they talk about prosperity? Things – STUFF, LOTS OF IT, LIFE’S TOYS.

Someone said, “He who dies with the most toys wins.”

Another replied, “He who dies with the most toys still dies.”

This story of a Texas oil millionaire has been told and retold. As per instruction in his will, when he died he was buried in his luxury Cadillac. Someone at the funeral commented glowingly, “That’s living!” But someone else said, “No, that’s dying.”

In Matthew 6:33 Jesus summarizes for us the key to prosperity: Don’t aim for prosperity directly; seek God’s kingdom and righteousness first, and all these things (whatever you need) will be added unto you.

What does Jesus mean by “added”? They’re the extras of the life, the fringe benefits, that God will throw in. They’re not the important things, but God will bless you with them anyway – WHEN you have obtained and attained what really matters in life.

The kingdom of God means His reign over all His creation, and His purpose for every person. God has a purpose for your life that extends beyond this world.

TRANSFORMED INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

God’s purpose is to transform you into a certain kind of person, with a certain kind of character that will be worthy to be called His child and who will be worthy to inherit all His eternal

treasures in the eternal kingdom. God wants to impart to you the character of His own Son Jesus Christ.

To seek God's kingdom and His righteousness means to pursue and fulfill that purpose and to cooperate with God in the process of transformation. And while you are going through the process yourself, God wants to use you to invite others to join in that process, too.

As I write this, one of the annual fires that devastate California continues to rage in many places. The fires have already destroyed so many homes. Among these are two historic structures in the affluent Malibu area. One newspaper reported:

“Two of Malibu's most prominent and beloved landmarks – one a palace of secular dreams and the other a center of religious devotion – were destroyed Sunday”

Doesn't God protect His church? Doesn't God protect His children?

Yes, God protects His children – but He does not promise to protect their STUFF.

Matthew 6:33 is a part of the Sermon on the Mount which starts at Matthew 5:1 and ends at Matthew 7:29. At the conclusion of His Sermon on the Mount Jesus clearly said that both godly people and ungodly people will go through the same trials of life on the earth. Listen to what He said:

“Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man, who built his house on the rock: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. Now everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” (Matthew 7:24-27)

Both men, the wise and the foolish, suffered the same calamities. However, their destinies were different. The wise man's house lasted; the foolish man's house collapsed. The wise man is the person who seeks God's kingdom and righteousness first; the foolish man is the person who seeks only earthly stuff.

The Malibu church lost its building; but what they built in the lives of people will go on forever.

And the Malibu Castle Kashan? I found out these reassuring words from the Castle Kashan website:

“Castle Kashan is the only Castle in Malibu and is the home of Lilly Lawrence, world renowned beauty and Malibu philanthropist. Lilly was dubbed ‘The People's princess’ by New York Newsday and the ‘Roze of Shiraz’ by the New York Times. With a heart bigger than her Castle, she carries on her family's tradition of helping the underprivileged. Her charity work extends towards the Arts and Children.”

Lilly Lawrence lost her earthly castle. But, thank God, she built more than an earthly castle. Through her philanthropy she built into lives of people, especially children, and what she built will remain. The LA Times report quoted her as saying, “My possessions don’t possess me. My house does not possess me.”

The same report also quoted the Malibu church pastor: “We will rebuild. We will gather together. We will plan and be stronger.” And a church elder said: “We’re not going to go away, in terms of our ministry. I just feel very much that God will turn this into a positive, into a better future for us.”

Praise God, these people had more than earthly, combustible stuff. They knew something of seeking God’s kingdom and righteousness.

How about you? Put yourself to this test:

God forbid, but if for some mysterious reason everything that you now possess suddenly caught fire and vanished into smoke, would you have something of value left that the fire could never touch?

If you are consistently seeking God’s kingdom first, your answer will certainly be a confident, triumphant, unequivocal YES!

Day 9: THE “RING”

Let’s review what we have covered thus far:

- (1) ORIGINAL CREATION: God created Adam and Eve prosperous in every way, body, soul, and spirit. They were supposed to pass on this prosperity to us, their children.
- (2) FALLEN CREATION: But through their sin, Adam and Eve lost everything, and they passed on to their children, not prosperity but poverty in body, soul and spirit. Still, God loved people so much He sent His only Son, Jesus Christ, to die and rise again to redeem them from sin and to restore all that Adam and Eve lost. Now, when a person believes in and receives Christ as Lord and Savior, God brings that person through the 3-STEP PROCESS OF RESTORATION. This process may be symbolically pictured by the THREE TOKENS OF RESTORATION that the Prodigal Son received from his father: ROBE, SHOES, AND RING.
 - The ROBE represents the restoration of relationship; that relationship assures the restored son/daughter of three treasures.
 - The SHOES represent a new lifestyle characterized by partnership and stewardship as expressed in three ways.

- The RING represents the authority that I share because of my relationship to Christ in His three-fold office as Prophet, Priest and King. (In this study we start looking at what it means to wear the RING of authority in the name of Christ.)

THE RING

To understand the power of the RING, let's look at a dramatic illustration of the RING in Genesis 41:41-44:

⁴¹ And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt."

⁴² Then Pharaoh took his signet ring off his hand and put it on Joseph's hand; and he clothed him in garments of fine linen and put a gold chain around his neck. ⁴³ And he had him ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried out before him, "Bow the knee!" So he set him over all the land of Egypt. ⁴⁴ Pharaoh also said to Joseph, "I *am* Pharaoh, and without your consent no man may lift his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt."

THE CHRISTIAN'S RING

In a similar way that Pharaoh put the ring of his authority on Joseph's finger, God puts the RING of His Son Jesus Christ on the Christian's finger. This is because Christ is the HEAD, and Christians are His BODY. The HEAD does not wear the ring; the FINGER does!

We have this RING OF RULERSHIP because of our relationship with Christ: He is the Head and we are His Body the Church. When we became Christians through faith in Christ, we were placed into Christ's Body.

1 Corinthians 12:13: "For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have all been made to drink into one Spirit."

By the way, there are two baptisms:

(1) SPIRIT BAPTISM (John 3:3,5), when we are born again, the Holy Spirit comes to live in our heart, and we are placed into (made a part of) the Body of Christ.

(2) WATER BAPTISM (Matt. 28:19; Acts 2:41), as a public testimony of your faith in Christ. Let's remind ourselves that water baptism is not a requirement for salvation; but Christ commanded it as a PUBLIC TESTIMONY of genuine faith (Matt. 10:32-33). Remember our very first lesson in this book?

HEAD AND BODY ENTHRONED TOGETHER

The union between Christ the Head and the Church as His Body is described in Ephesians 2:4-7:

⁴But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, ⁵even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), ⁶and raised *us* up together, and made *us* sit together in the heavenly *places* in Christ Jesus, ⁷that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in *His* kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

PLEASE NOTE:

Ephesians 2:4-6 does not say: we SHALL SIT (future) ... but “made us sit together”, meaning, the sitting is an accomplished action and we NOW SIT with Christ on His throne – as a present position and reality!

Let’s go back to the story of the Prodigal Son. When he came home, his father gave him on the same day his ROBE, SHOES, and RING!

Similarly, on the day we were born again, God gave us our...

- ROBE of relationship;
- SHOES of partnership;
- RING of rulership.

But we must note:

- (1) We receive all THREE GIFTS simultaneously.
- (2) But we learn to enjoy the THREE GIFTS progressively... through the 3 STEP PROCESS.

Day 10: SPEAKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT GOD

In our previous study we saw from Ephesians 2:4-7 that Christ our Head and we the Church, His Body, are enthroned together in the heavenly places.

To sit with Christ on His throne means that He gives us the RING OF AUTHORITY to exercise in His name the powers of His three offices as Prophet, Priest, and King. The powers contained in each office have varied aspects, but for our purposes we may summarize the core essence of each office as follows:

- PROPHET: Represents God to people

- PRIEST: Represents people to God
- KING: Exercises power over enemies

PROPHET

In this study we focus on the Power of the Prophet: He speaks for God! He delivers the word – the message – of God!

The unbelievable statement of Christ in John 20:23 will help underline the tremendous power of the prophet. In this verse Christ tells His disciples:

“If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.”

This unbelievable statement has been debated by Catholic and Protestant theologians about exactly what it means. Did Christ give His disciples and to their successors (popes, bishops, priests) the power actually to forgive, remit, erase sin? Did Christ give them the power to say to a person, “I forgive you”, and that person’s sin with its guilt and penalty will actually go away?

Let’s leave to the theologians the intricacies of the debate.

For us ordinary Christians, there is, in that unbelievable statement of Christ, a sense that applies to all Christians, clergy and laity alike. And that sense is found in Luke 24:46,47, in which Christ told His disciples, and by extension, He is also telling all Christians today: “Thus it is written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

In this statement Christ is giving all Christians the power and privilege of sharing the Gospel – GOOD NEWS – that forgiveness of sins is possible and available for every person who believes in Christ as Lord and Savior.

To illustrate, let’s use this story, which is set in the olden days before radio or phone or television, at a time when messages were carried by messengers on horseback. In this story, a criminal had been condemned to die in a certain remote town. The day of the hanging arrived, and the hour of execution was set for twelve o’clock noon. On the morning of that day, at the state capital the governor signed the pardon papers for the condemned criminal. The problem was that the pardon papers will not do any good until it was delivered to the criminal who is awaiting the hour of execution at a town miles away from the capital. So, a swift horse and an expert rider were found to deliver the pardon papers. In a very real sense, the salvation of the criminal lay completely in the hands of that rider. If he succeeded in delivering the pardon papers on time, the condemned man would be saved. If he delayed or if, for whatever reason, he decided not to deliver the papers, the condemned man would not receive the pardon that the governor already gave him.

In the same way, we Christians hold in our hands the PARDON PAPERS for sinners. The pardon, the forgiveness, is contained in the good news we call the Gospel, which says that Christ has already paid for the sins of the whole world by His death on the cross.

So, think of the power that you have as a Christian!

Whenever you meet a non-Christian person on the street or in the market or in your office or even in your home, say to yourself: “I hold in my hands God’s pardon papers that will forgive this man all his sins. Will I deliver the message to him or will I withhold it from him?”

THAT is the meaning of the power to forgive sins. In putting the pardon papers in our hands, God gave us the power to forgive or not to forgive the sins of a person – by the simple decision and act of delivering or not delivering the message.

The apostle Paul expressed this powerful truth in 2 Corinthians 5:20: “Therefore we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were pleading through us: we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.”

We are ambassadors for Christ. We are prophets speaking for God, representing God to people. We have the message of forgiveness that God wants all people to hear.

Shall we tell them of God’s great news of forgiveness?

Think of your own situation. You are now a believer in Christ. You know your sins have been forgiven, and that you are assured of eternal life in heaven someday. All this because, in the past, SOMEONE loved you enough to deliver to you the message of forgiveness from God.

In my own case, as some of you may have already read or heard me say before, God sent a single missionary lady all the way from Canada to come to our town in the southern part of what was then called the province of Cotabato before it was subdivided. This missionary lady, Miss Blanche Palmer, on her 4-wheel drive Willys jeep, went to the public elementary schools in the different towns of southern Cotabato, including our town Marbel, which served as her base of operations. Arriving during recess time at the elementary school, she set up her flannel illustration board, played her accordion, taught us gospel songs and then told us about Jesus, about how He died and rose again to save us from our sins. Then at the end of each lesson she invited us to pray the sinner’s prayer: “Lord Jesus, I admit that I am a sinner. Please forgive me of all my sins. Thank You for dying on the cross and rising again to save me. Dear Jesus, I open my heart and receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. Please come in and save me. Amen.”

Whenever I remember Miss Palmer – God bless her memory, she is now in heaven with Jesus – I tell myself, “God surely loved me so much that He sent someone from such a far away place as Canada just so a young elementary school pupil like me – and many others like me – might hear God’s message of forgiveness.”

How about you? Do you remember the person who delivered to you the message of forgiveness? Ask yourself: What if THAT SOMEONE did not bother to tell you about Christ? What if he/she did not deliver the pardon papers that God intended for you?

This is our awesome power and responsibility as prophets and proclaimers of God's message. If we fail to deliver the message, people will never receive God's forgiveness for their sins. But, oh the joy and reward, for even just one sinner who repents if we are faithful in delivering the message!

Day 11: SPEAKING TO PEOPLE ABOUT GOD

In our study under the POWER OF THE PROPHET we were confronted by this unbelievable statement by the Lord Jesus.

John 20:23: "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained."

We saw that this power to forgive lay, not in ourselves, but in the proclamation of the Gospel of forgiveness. As we proclaim the Gospel to people, we make forgiveness of sins possible for them. To the extent that we withhold the Gospel, to that extent we withhold forgiveness for their sins. What tremendous power – and responsibility – rest upon us!

Today, we shall look at the ...

POWER OF THE PRIEST: THE POWER OF PRAYER.

We shall look at another unbelievable statement by the Lord Jesus:

John 14:12: "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to the Father."

Do the same works Jesus did? Do greater works than He did? Unbelievable!

How?

The Lord Jesus tells us how... through prayer.

John 14:13-14: "And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it."

IN MY NAME... that's the key.

That's the power of the RING:

We share in Christ's power as priest, the power to ask in prayer, in His name – because of our relationship with Him as the Head and we are His Body, acting on His behalf, to promote His purposes, for the glory of God the Father.

This was such a new thing to His disciples, He had to repeat this unbelievable truth to them one more time in John 16:23-24:

John 16:23-24: “Most assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in My name He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Most of us – if not all of us, including myself – will admit that our prayer life has not been what it should be.

It doesn't matter how much we failed in our prayer life in the past.

Let us put ourselves back to where the disciples were... when they had not yet learned to pray the right way, in a powerful, effective way.

Let me illustrate this by referring to another problem that Christians encounter, sooner or later – the problem of not having assurance of salvation. Whenever this pastor from a previous century was approached by a Christian with a doubt saying, “Pastor, I am having doubts whether I have truly been born again, whether I am truly saved,” this pastor would simply say: “Well, you know what God's Word says, Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved. But as many as received Him, He gave the power to become children of God, even to those who believe in His name.” Why don't you make sure right now that you do believe and receive Him in your heart; then you can have the assurance from God's Word that you are a child of God.

The same thing with prayer. If we admit that in the past we have not truly prayed, or that our prayers did not seem to have power, we can go back to the beginning and say, “Lord, I want to learn to pray in the right way, in a powerful way, effectively beginning today.”

And the Lord will tell us what He told His disciples in John 16:24: “Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.”

Prayer is as simple as...

ASKING...
JUST ASK!
TELL THE FATHER WHAT YOU NEED...

Like a little child...

Enjoy calling out to God, “Abba, Father!” This is the first prayer taught by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:15,16; Galatians 4:6). In the original language that Jesus spoke while on earth, ABBA was the word that a little child, who was learning to talk used in calling his/her father and today in our language it means DADDY! PAPA! (in Filipino, Tatay, Tatang).

Prayer is not the sound of your voice... Prayer is not the words you use... Prayer is simply your heart crying out, Abba! Daddy! Papa!

Let’s remember: When we pray, God is not looking at us alone. God is looking at us with Christ, holding our hands, and interpreting our stumbling prayers into powerful words that the heavenly Father understands.

When we pray in the name of Jesus... we pray with full confidence in our relationship with Him.

This is the Power of the Priest: To represent people to God.

We present our needs to God... We present the needs of others to God... In the name of Jesus... and God guarantees He will work, He will move, He will bless!

Yes, we are still human beings with our weaknesses. But prayer is not about US... Prayer is about CHRIST! Prayer is about the NAME OF JESUS – WHO HE IS!

The Bible reminds us of ELIJAH. Most of the time we idolize prophets and Bible heroes so much, and we think that they were of a higher class than we are. But the Bible reminds us that Elijah (like all the other prophets and Bible heroes) was a man subject to like passions as we are. Elijah was an ordinary human like us! What made him different? HE PRAYED... And God answered with miracles (James 4:17).

Our response should be: Well, then, I too can pray!

Maybe, it’s better if we just forget the word PRAYER!

Maybe it’s better if we think of prayer as simply TALKING with God while holding on to the hands of Jesus!

Let’s learn to ASK our heavenly Father as little children.

Even the Son of God, Jesus Christ, was told to ASK.

In Psalm 2:7, 8, the Christ in Old Testament prophecy says:” I will declare the decree: the Lord has said to Me, You are my Son, today I have begotten You. ASK of Me, and I will give you...”

The Son of God was told to ASK...

And now, Jesus Christ, as our Head, tells us: ASK in My name... ASK on my behalf... And the Father will give you what you ask.

JAMES 4:3 tells us: “You do not have because you do not ask”

You may have heard the following two stories before.

Story 1: A man died and went to heaven and St. Peter brought him to the mansion Jesus prepared for him. As St. Peter was giving him a tour of his new home, they came to a room full of gifts of all sizes all wrapped and ready to be delivered. When the man inspected the gifts, he was surprised and asked St. Peter, “All these gifts have my name on them. How come I never got them?” St. Peter replied, “Well, because you never asked for them.” Prayer is asking God to send us the gifts that He has already prepared for us.

Story 2: One day a man approached Emperor Napoleon Bonaparte and asked for a very big favor. His officers were surprised when the great Napoleon gave the man what he asked for. After the man left, his officers asked him: “Why did you give him such a big favor?” The emperor replied: “He honored me with the bigness of his request!”

Are we honoring the Almighty God our Father with the bigness of our requests?

Someone said about prayer:

You are coming to the King,
Great petitions with you bring.

LET’S USE THE POWER OF THE RING!

Let’s use our priestly power of prayer. Let’s learn to ask – and to ask big – on behalf of ourselves, and on behalf of others!

God has opened His vast treasure chest of blessings. And He tells us: “Everything inside that chest is yours. Everything that you need, everything that your family needs, everything that your friends need – everything’s in there. Just ask, and they’re yours!”

Let’s ASK, ASK, ASK!

**Day 12:
SUBJUGATING THE ENEMY**

STEP 3: RULERSHIP – RING	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speaking to people about God • Speaking to God about people • Subjugating the enemy
STEP 2: PARTNERSHIP – SHOES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • New motive • New values • New purpose
STEP 1: RELATIONSHIP – ROBE	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loved unconditionally • Supplied abundantly • Empowered limitlessly

FIG. E

In our study of the RING, we have studied the power of the PROPHET and the PRIEST that Christ shares with us.

Today we look at the THIRD ASPECT OF THE RING – WE SHARE IN CHRIST’S POWER AS KING.

Let me give you a THIRD UNBELIEVABLE STATEMENT OF JESUS:

Luke 10:19: “Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you.”

Power over the enemy!

This authority was later amplified in Mark 16:17 to include all believers.

Mark 16:17-18: “And these signs shall follow them that believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will be no means hurt them; they will lay their hands on the sick, and they will recover.”

Now, we need to remind ourselves that this authority was given specifically to the disciples.

But from Mark 16:17 we see that this authority was given also to all believers. And this is proven by the fact that all believers share in Christ’s ascension and enthronement at the right hand of the Father, far above all rule and authority.

Let's look again at Ephesians 2:4-7: "But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved) and raised us up with Him, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ."

When Christ took His place at the right hand of the Father, He did so as our Head, taking along His Body (the Church – all believers – you and me) with Him.

But let's go back to the UNBELIEVABLE STATEMENT #3:

Luke 10:19: "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you."

When Christ gave this unbelievable statement, He followed it up with a very strong reminder in verse 20:

Luke 10:20: "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

You see, miracles, signs and wonders, do not prove whether you are a true Christian or not.

This was the deception from the time of Jesus, and before the time of Jesus – for example, all the way back to Moses. Miracles do not prove God is with you and you are with God. When Moses did the miracle of casting down his rod before Pharaoh and his rod turned into a snake, Pharaoh's magicians were not impressed. They cast their rods down and their rods turned into snakes as well.

Of course, Moses's snake swallowed up the magicians' snakes.

This continues to be the deception today.

Sometime ago, the news carried the miraculous photograph of a bonfire that had the figure of Pope John Paul. And people said (and neither Pope Benedict and nor any of the priests and bishops or cardinals contradicted) that the late Pope John Paul was trying to send a message.

People have seen the image of Christ in a tortilla, and they put that tortilla on a prayer altar and they started praying it; in Cavite City in the Philippines some people saw the image of the Virgin Mary on a crab shell and people started praying to that shell.

This is why Jesus gave this strong reminder:

Luke 10:20: "Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven."

Jesus gave a similar warning in another place.

Matthew 7:21-23: Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!”

So, like the disciples, we must not rejoice in miracles and signs and wonders.

We must not even put confidence in the fact that we call Jesus Lord. The question is, are you sure your name is written in heaven?

For many Bible-believing evangelicals, there is a danger we must beware of: we are in danger of giving people false assurance. In our witnessing, we are taught to bring a person to a point of decision, when he/she will pray the sinner’s prayer.

This prayer usually runs like this:

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am sinner. I repent of my sins. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and You rose again on the third day. I open my heart and receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank You for coming in my heart. Thank You for saving me. Amen.

There’s nothing wrong with this prayer.

But do you understand what the prayer means? Do you really mean what you said? Or you simply repeated some kind of religious magic formula?

Let’s try to understand each sentence in the sinner’s prayer:

“Lord Jesus, I confess that I am a sinner.”

When you say those words, you are admitting that your heart is like Fig. 1: Christ is outside your heart, and you (represented by the BIG PROUD “I”) are sitting as the king/queen on the throne of your life. That’s what a sinner is – someone who’s the boss of his/her own life and someone who keeps Christ outside because he/she doesn’t Christ to interfere with his/her lifestyle.

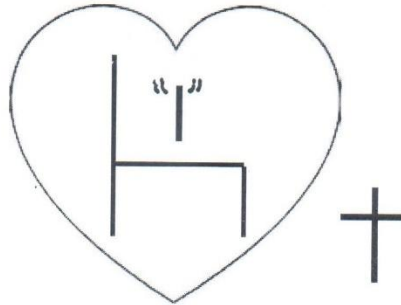


FIG. 1

“I repent of my sins”

When you pray these words, you are saying that you want to change, you want to stop being the boss of your life.

Then, when you pray: *I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and You rose again on the third day.*

You recognize that your sins deserve God’s judgment but Christ saved you from that judgment.

Then when you pray:

“I open my heart and receive You as my personal Lord and Savior.”

You are taking the step of moving from a life in sin to a life in Christ and His kingdom and righteousness. You surrender the throne of your heart to Christ so that He will now be the Savior and Lord of your life. This change is represented by Fig. 2, showing Christ on the throne and you (the former proud “I”) now bow in submission before Christ.

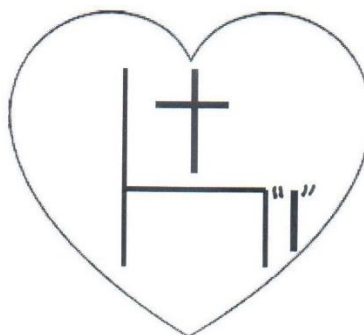


FIG. 2

When you sincerely invite Christ to come in your heart, He promises He will come in. That is why you can say:

“Thank You for coming in my heart. Thank You for saving me now. Amen.”

The moment Christ comes in He will cause you to be born again, and He will write your name in the Book of Life in heaven. From that moment on you can rejoice that your name is written in heaven.

By the way, are you sure your name is written in heaven? Are you sure you have opened your heart and invited Christ to come in and be the Savior and Lord of your life? If you're not sure, are you ready to pray this prayer right now?

Lord Jesus, I confess that I am sinner. I repent of my sins. I believe that You died on the cross for my sins and You rose again on the third day. I open my heart and receive You as my personal Lord and Savior. Thank You for coming in my heart. Thank You for saving me. Amen.

Day 13: LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The proof that you have the ROBE OF RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (Step 1), is that you have put on the SHOES OF PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD (Step 2), a new lifestyle of obedience, characterized by new motivation, new values, and new purpose.

And because your name is written in heaven, you have gained the critical key to victory over Satan and over his most effective weapon against people.

VICTORY OVER SATAN

What is Satan's most effective weapon?

Let's read Hebrews 2:14-15: “Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He (Christ) Himself share in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.”

Let's try and understand these two verses very well:

Verse 14 tells us through Christ's death on the cross He destroyed the devil and his power of death.

As a result... Verse 15...

Christ released, delivered, saved those who believe in Him from fear of death.

It was through that fear that the devil was able to control people.

Fear of death consists of all our other fears... fear of tomorrow, fear of the unknown, fear that we will go hungry, fear that we will get sick, fear of poverty, fear that we have no money, fear of abandonment, When you take all these fears to their logical conclusion they will all end up with the ultimate fear: YOU WILL DIE!

And what is Christ's antidote to that fear? Your name is written in heaven! ETERNAL LIFE!

And included in that ETERNAL LIFE are these assured promises of God in Step 1:

- I'm LOVED unconditionally!
- I'm SUPPLIED abundantly!
- I'm EMPOWERED limitlessly!

This was the antidote that the Risen Christ gave to the apostle John, when he was exiled on the island of Patmos.

Revelation 1:17-18: And when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as dead. But He laid His right hand on me, saying to me, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. "I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death."

And when Christ has shattered the chains of fear that bind you, then you obtain the faith that overcomes all the power of the enemy.

1 John 4:4: You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world.

1 John 5:4: For whatever is born of God overcomes the world. And this is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.

MIRACLES WILL COME!

As we grow in our faith, and as we learn to exercise our faith, miracles will come. We will experience what the disciples experienced.

Mark 16:19-20: "So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

But now, let's ask the Lord to examine our hearts and help us see where we really stand. Are you really sure your name is written in the Book of Life in heaven?

If you are sure, then...

- Are you rejoicing in your RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD (Step 1)?
- Are you walking in PARTNERSHIP WITH GOD (Step 2). If you are growing in your experience of Steps 1 and 2,,,
- Are you continuing to grow in your enjoyment of the power and authority of RULERSHIP WITH CHRIST (Step 3)!

Through this 3-STEP PROCESS OF RESTORATION, you will truly experience the FULLY RESTORED LIFE of the Prodigal Son who has come home!

Now that you are home, you are fulfilling the Heavenly Father’s purpose for your life. That purpose is to bring the Kingdom of God near to everyone around you, within the circle of your relationships and influence. That purpose is called THE GREAT COMMISSION, given in these powerful words of the Crucified and Risen Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ:

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, to the close of the age” (Matthew 28:18-20).

FINAL DIAGRAM

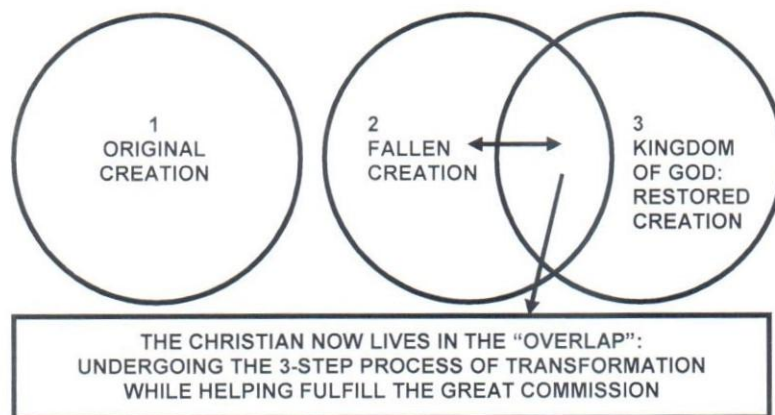


FIG. F

Let’s now study our final diagram (see below). When Christ announced “The Kingdom of God is near” He actually launched the great invasion of the eternal kingdom of God into the present fallen creation. The Kingdom of God is now a present reality, overlapping the present Kingdom of Darkness.

When a person receives Christ, God really and truly transfers him/her from the Kingdom of Darkness into the Kingdom of Christ.

Colossians 1:13 (NRSV): “He has delivered us from the dominion of darkness and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son.”

Please study the diagram below.

Notice the overlap area between Circle 2 and Circle 3. That OVERLAP represents God’s Kingdom now present and reigning in invisible form on earth today. The Christian now lives in the “overlap”. In that “overlap” he/she is undergoing the 3-step process of restoration, while at the same time he/she is helping to fulfill the Great Commission, symbolized by the two-headed arrow:



The left end of the arrow symbolizes the Christian attacking the territory of the enemy by proclaiming the Gospel (Good News) to the captives of the enemy, telling them that Christ has defeated Satan and that they are now free to escape out of the Kingdom of Darkness and move into the Kingdom of Christ. The right end of the arrow symbolizes the Christian leading the captives out of the Kingdom of Darkness and bringing them into the Kingdom of Christ.

In that “overlap” the powers of the Kingdom of God are now operating in full force, and through the exercise of the RING (Step 3), the Christian experiences more and more the working of those kingdom powers in changing and transforming lives and in overcoming all the attacks and strongholds of the Kingdom of Darkness. And as we seek God’s Kingdom first through the all-out implementation of the Great Commission, God guarantees that all things – ALL THE RESOURCES that we may need – will be abundantly supplied to us.

THAT is the true message of BIBLICAL PROSPERITY. Biblical Prosperity is not a GOAL to be attained. It is a FRINGE BENEFIT – and lots of it – that God pours out upon us as we give our lives to the main thing – God’s Kingdom and righteousness! When you put God and His kingdom first, He guarantees ALL THINGS THAT YOU NEED will be added unto you. ALL THINGS include needs of the spirit, body, mind and money, etc. That is real Biblical Prosperity!

Two powerful promises of prosperity that most Christians know and claim:

- Matthew 6:33: But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.
- Philippians 4:19: And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

To these two promises Christians need to know and claim a third one:

- 2 Corinthians 9:8: And God *is* able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all *things*, may have an abundance for every good work.

Look at this verse very carefully.

First, God is able... able to do what? He is able to make ALL GRACE abound toward you.

Second, because of God's abounding grace (provision, supply), what do you have? You personally will have "all sufficiency in all things". In other words, you will have more than enough for your personal needs.

Third, over and above your personal sufficiency, you will also have "an abundance for every good work". In other words, you are able to share your prosperity with the needy world around you. This is how God works. You are blessed to be a blessing! This is why it is important that as you receive God's blessings, you must always keep on giving.

Think of these three promises above as "checks" issued to you by the Bank of Heaven. You have to learn to "cash" (claim) these "checks" (promises) to meet any and all needs and situations that you may encounter. This is what it means to live in the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God has invaded this world, God is near, God is here! You just have to "plugged" into the unlimited power-source of God's love, power, and wisdom. And because you are abundantly supplied, you can go forth marching from victory unto victory, in the words of this hymn:

Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus going on before;
Christ our royal Master leads against the foe,
Forward into battle, see His banner go!
Onward, Christian soldiers, marching as to war,
With the Cross of Jesus going on before!

Biblical Prosperity, however, doesn't mean we won't have trials and troubles and tribulations anymore in this world. As long as we are in this world, we are at war with the enemy and he will try with all his might to harm if not to defeat us. But with God on our side, we are assured of ultimate victory. Let's meditate and fully absorb the victorious message of Romans 8:31-39:

³¹ What then shall we say to these things? If God *is* for us, who *can* be against us? ³² He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things? ³³ Who shall bring a charge against God's elect? *It is* God who justifies. ³⁴ Who *is* he who condemns? *It is* Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us. ³⁵ Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? *Shall* tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? ³⁶ As it is written:

“For Your sake we are killed all day long;
We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.”

³⁷ Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. ³⁸ For I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, ³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord!

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THE PRODIGAL SON (Luke 15:11-24)

¹¹ Then He (Jesus) said: “A certain man had two sons. ¹² And the younger of them said to *his* father, ‘Father, give me the portion of goods that falls *to me*.’ So he divided to them *his* livelihood. ¹³ And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living. ¹⁴ But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want. ¹⁵ Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine. ¹⁶ And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him *anything*.

¹⁷ “But when he came to himself, he said, ‘How many of my father’s hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger! ¹⁸ I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, “Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you, ¹⁹ and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants.” ’

²⁰ “And he arose and came to his father. But when he was still a great way off, his father saw him and had compassion, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him. ²¹ And the son said to him, ‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight, and am no longer worthy to be called your son.’

²² “But the father said to his servants, ‘Bring out the best robe and put *it* on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on *his* feet. ²³ And bring the fatted calf here and kill *it*, and let us eat and be

merry; ²⁴ for this my son was dead and is alive again; he was lost and is found.' And they began to be merry.