

RIGHTEOUSNESS SERIES

THE GIFT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS

In the last message, we spoke about the organ of righteousness and how Abraham was sensitive to doing the right thing at the right time. We saw how God prospered him and brought him into the revelation that God had in store for him.

Reading from Gen. 15:1 *After these things the word of the Lord came to Abram in a vision, saying, "Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward." And Abram said, "Lord God, what will You give me seeing I go childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" Then Abram said, "Look, You have given me no offspring, indeed one born in my house is my heir!" And behold, the word of the Lord came to him, saying, "This one shall not be your heir, but one who will come from your own body shall be your heir." Then He brought him outside and said, "Look now towards heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them." And He said to him, "So shall your descendants be." And he believed in the Lord and He accounted it to him for righteousness. Then He said to him. "I am the Lord who brought you out of Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to inherit it."*

Up to that point, we have covered some of the verses in the last message. In this message, we want to go on to the other verses and some other things that have to do with this work of righteousness in Abraham's life.

The next question that Abraham asked was very important. Verse 8 *Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?* God had showed him what He would do. God took him out of his tent and he looked up to the heavens above. Usually in a desert area, the skies are very clear with very few clouds. And he saw an innumerable multitude of stars. As he looked up God said, "Your descendants will be as

numerous like the stars.” That was an astounding promise that God gave him. There is no way in the natural he could obtain what God showed him that will happen. Many times God has spoken to some of you and given you visions, dreams, promises and words about what He wants to do in your life. All of us have a destiny. And all the time what God showed you is what you are never able to achieve on your own. Like Abraham, you look at the vision and the dream. You know it’s physically impossible and maybe scientifically, economically, logistically and spiritually beyond you. Yet God says, “This will come to pass.” You have no idea of any possibility but God said it, you believed it and that settles it. It says that Abraham believed God and it was settled. God accounted it to him righteousness.

But here comes Abraham’s second question, which you and I need to answer. He is not asking this question because he didn’t believe. I know that you can prove to me in chapter 17 how he doubted, how Sarah introduced Hagar to “help” God fulfill His promise of an heir and they brought forth Ishmael. These were acts and signs when they were faltering and struggling in their faith but right at that time when God told him that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, Abraham believed. His mind may have doubted here and there but his heart believed in what God said. He just didn’t know how it was going to take place.

Now in that state of faith, in that position of belief in God he asked the next question. Verse 8 *Lord God, how shall I know that I will inherit it?*” What is the seal of the promise that You have for my life that it will come to pass? How does God assure him that it will definitely come to pass and there is no doubt about it? God taught him the blood covenant. Verse 9 *So He said to him, “Bring Me a three-year old heifer, a three-year old female goat, a three-year old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” Then he brought all these to Him and cut them in two, down the middle, and placed each piece opposite the other, but he did not cut the birds in two. And when the cultures came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away. Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram, and behold, horror and great darkness fell upon him. Remember all this happened in order to answer that question, “How will I know that I shall inherit this?”*

Verse 13 *Then He said to Abram: “Know certainly that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, and will serve them, and they will afflict them four hundred*

years. And also the nation whom they serve I will judge, afterward they shall come out with great possessions. Now as for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried at a good old age. But in the fourth generation they shall return here, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.” And it came to pass, when the sun went down and it was dark that behold, there appeared a smoking oven and a burning torch that passed between those pieces.

Now when you say there was a smoking oven, don't imagine some electronic gadgets floating around. In those days, an oven was just a place where there was a fire. The smoking oven was a pillar of fire that went right in between the carcasses.

Verse 18 *On the same day the Lord made a covenant with Abram.* Abraham has walked with God for some years. Remember he left the land of Ur in Gen. 12 when he was about seventy-five years old. By Gen. 16, he was about ninety years old. By the time he came to Gen. 17, he was about ninety-nine years old. That means that in Gen. 15 he could possibly be around eighty-five years old. About five to ten years had taken place since God first called him out of the land of Ur. And this is the first time that God made a covenant with Abraham. Because he asked God the question, “Lord, how will I know that I will inherit it? How can I be assured? What is my assurance? Where is the guarantee that this promise would take place?” God answered his question by the blood covenant. A blood covenant is basically an exchange of your life for God's life given to you. In a covenant, there is an exchange that takes place where we give our all to receive God's all. If there were no exchange, there wouldn't be any necessity for a covenant. And God was in a sense saying that it will be based on His ability that He puts into you. A covenant is a gift from God you can receive. A covenant is something made and not based on works. It's something that looks forward to Jesus Christ the ultimate covenant the Lamb of God. Blood is necessary because blood is a symbol of life. And in a covenant, there is an exchange of life - God's life for our life. And what God was saying in a sense, “Abraham it will be my gift to you. Abraham it is my present for you. Abraham it is something that depends more on Me than on you. All you have to do is to trust My Word and My covenant. Abraham you don't have to earn it. Abraham you don't have to work for it. Abraham it is my gift to you.”

And we want to talk about the gift of righteousness. The force of righteousness is powerful. If you look up the concordance and check up the word *righteousness* you will find many, many blessings that are associated with righteousness. For example, the Lord will not let the righteous be forsaken. But when we talk about righteousness, we know that the other law of sowing and reaping also operates. There is a cause and effect in everything in life. When you do the right things, you reap the right results. When you do the wrong things, you reap the wrong results. But the law of sowing and reaping is a different department from the gift of righteousness because many times when we look at righteousness or try to be righteous, many of us tend to miss the whole point. We tend to work up righteousness by our own efforts instead of yielding to the gift of righteousness by God's grace. We want to become righteous by the law of sowing and reaping instead of yielding to the gift of righteousness by the law of grace.

This is why I need a special illustration to convey this to you. Righteousness affects different aspects of life. It's a powerful force. The force of righteousness is what makes kings rule. The scepter of his kingdom is the scepter of righteousness. Righteousness helps kings to rule. Righteousness sets a person high before God. Righteousness brings a person to a powerful position and place. Positions are obtained through righteousness. Righteousness is a powerful force since it rules the nations of the world. Righteousness is a force so powerful that the whole earth is controlled by that force and anyone who flows with that force will reap the benefits of that force.

Righteousness is like a coat. Let's assume that God has given you this blue coat and it represents the gift of righteousness. Righteousness is a gift from God. It attracts goodness, mercy and all kinds of wonderful blessings that will happen when there is righteousness. Based on the law of sowing and reaping, when you are constantly sowing seeds of righteousness, you would reap different harvests of blessings. But what God is giving is not just a blessing based on righteousness. He is actually giving us the gift of righteousness. This gift from God would attract the different blessings of goodness, mercy, prosperity and healing. Goodness, mercy, prosperity and healing will always follow the gift righteousness.

Let's assume that this black coat represents our human righteousness, works and

efforts. No matter how hard we try, we will not get these blessings of goodness, mercy, prosperity and healing to follow our human righteousness because this black coat represents works and efforts. It represents our attempt to earn goodness; to earn mercy; to earn prosperity; to earn healing. Now if you want to get these blessings to follow you, you will have to take off the black coat of human righteousness and put on the blue coat of God's gift of righteousness. Once you get hold of the blue coat, these blessings can follow you. They are just attracted to the gift of righteousness.

Let us look into the book of Romans. We want to focus on the word *righteousness* and understand the full import and power of Romans. We may need to look at Rom. 1 God is not talking about our righteousness. He is talking about a special gift that has a price paid on it that will produce results. Now to get that level of righteousness and make it a gift takes effort. Jesus had to come, live a righteous life, obey all the laws for us etc.

In Rom, 1 it shows us what God's purpose was all the time. Rom. 1:16 *For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, for it is the power of God to salvation (the word salvation includes prosperity, healing, redemption and deliverance from the path of darkness and eternal life etc.) for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God.* It's not human righteousness because later on he tells us that there are none righteous. But he tells us that there is a righteousness that is not human righteousness but it is God's righteousness that comes from the throne of God. That righteousness is revealed in the gospel.

That was his basic subject in Romans and he brings us to Rom. 3:21 *But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of God through faith in Jesus Christ to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.* Notice it is not just righteousness. Don't eliminate the other two words - *of God*. It's the righteousness of God. It is God's righteousness that He wants to give us through the blood covenant.

Rom. 4:3 *For what does the Scripture say? Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to*

him for righteousness. Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness. Verse 9 Does this blessedness then come upon the circumcised only or upon the uncircumcised also? For we say that faith was accounted to Abraham for righteousness. Verse 13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith. That is a righteousness that is received by faith not by works. It's a righteousness that is obtained through faith. It is not the righteousness of our own but it is the righteousness of God given to us.

Rom. 5:15-17 *But the free gift* (the free gift that comes to us through the blood covenant that Jesus made for us) *is not like the offense. For if by the one man's offense many died, much more the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abounded to many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who sinned. For the judgment which came from one offense resulted in condemnation, but the free gift which came from many offenses resulted in justification. For if by one man's offense death reigned through the one, much more those who receive (not those who earn, not those who try but those who receive) abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.*

Paul's whole purpose in Romans was to tell us about the righteousness of God that is now free. Paul's purpose in the book of Romans is not trying to tell us how to be holy. I know the gift of righteousness will lead us to holiness but his purpose was not trying to tell us that. His purpose was to bring to us a revelation of the gift of righteousness that is now ours – this righteousness is so high and so powerful, that millions of human endeavor could never produce the same kind of righteousness. But through one act of His death and resurrection, the Son of God gave the gift of righteousness to us. It is not just righteousness but it is God's righteousness.

II Cor. 5:21 *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* Notice again the phrase - *the righteousness of God.* Do you realize that Jesus wants to make you the righteousness of God? He doesn't even just want to make you righteous. I know its good to be cleansed, good to be free from sin, good to be touched by the blood of Jesus. I know it is wonderful to have the forgiveness of God, its wonderful to have condemnation removed from our life by

one drop of the blood of Jesus Christ. But Jesus didn't just come to clean you up. He came to make you and I the righteousness of God. If it is that simple, why can't we see it?

Let me illustrate it with the negative first before the positive. Lets look at II Cor. 5:21 and look at the other part. *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God.* From that verse we can go to Isa. 53 and I Pt. 2:24 etc. where it talks about Jesus taking all our sins and our sicknesses and everything upon Himself.

Lets look at the negative part on how we get forgiveness for sin. If anyone of you right now has done anything wrong, the moment you pray you are forgiven. In twenty years of ministry, if I can recall, there were two times that an individual has told me, "Pastor, I think I have committed the unpardonable sin. I cannot be forgiven. I have blasphemed the Holy Spirit." I looked at that person. He doesn't look like the devil at all. I asked, "Why do you think so?" He said, "This is what I have done and this is how I lived my life." I said, "If you have committed that sin you won't be here holding my hand and talking to me about it. If you really have committed that sin, you would be right now somewhere out of the kingdom of God rejoicing and having nothing to do with Jesus. But if you could come down to the fact to think that you could have committed that sin you haven't."

Now, how long does it take for God to forgive our sin? Very fast. It is as fast as your prayer. You want to pray slow motion, you can also do that for more dramatic effects. It depends on how fast you pray, how slow you pray. Sometimes you don't have much time to pray. Peter was walking on the water and halfway he was sinking. He had only time to scream. He couldn't say, "O gracious heavenly Father, Lord and Master of the universe, the Uncreated Creator, Thou whose throne is surrounded by the multitude of heavenly hosts etc." By the time he finished, he would have been under the water. He had only time to cry, "Jesus help." And immediately Jesus was at his side holding him. How long does it takes for God to forgive us? Just the moment we pray with all our heart if we really mean it. When you really blew it and you really missed it you pray with all your heart, "Jesus forgive me for my sins," you are immediately forgiven. I know some of you have

made promises like, "I won't do that again." And then you go out and do it again and then you pray for forgiveness all over again.

There is revelation that you miss that I am sharing with you today. The moment you pray, you are forgiven from heaven. The fact is many of us don't feel forgiven. The greater the sin the less forgiven you feel. The longer you have been in sin the longer you feel less forgiven. And something in you is not convinced that you are forgiven. The guilt in you sometimes haunts you and the memories still sometimes are there. And Satan dangles it in front of your eyes. Every time you close your eyes, he dangles the picture in front of you. But did God forgive you? He did. Why didn't we feel forgiven and why are we remembering those things? Do you know where the problem actually lies? We couldn't see that the sin is on Him yet. We cannot see that He has taken our sin and transgressions. We keep seeing that the sin is still inside of us hiding in one corner. It says that He made Him sin for us. That's the other side of the picture. He took your sins; He took your sicknesses. He took your iniquity. He took your trespasses. Did He take all the sins of the world? Yes. And the moment you pray, your sin is laid there on the cross. But why don't we feel forgiven when God has forgiven? The problem is we cannot see ourselves there at the cross. We cannot see our old man on the cross. We cannot feel our old man at the cross. We cannot feel all the worse part of our being on the cross. That's our problem. No matter how great your failures, how long your failures have been the moment you pray God forgives. But the revelation that your sins and trespasses were on the cross was not complete. You know that the sin is there but you don't feel it. Every time you close your eyes, you can't see your sin laid there on the cross but you could see your sin with you. You are still carrying it instead of allowing Jesus to take it. And that revelation takes time. Some times it takes fasting and prayer to bring ourselves to feel good about ourselves again. I am trying to help you to receive the revelation that your sin is taken to the cross and your forgiveness is done. You must receive the revelation that your sins and trespasses have been placed there.

Now let us look at the positive side. How is righteousness imparted into our life? The same problem exists. We cannot see that the righteousness of God is already in us. It is not a future tense; it's a past tense. Because it takes time for the revelation that we are the righteousness of God and that revelation hasn't sunk in our consciousness, we keep trying to be righteous by our own efforts. It is just like on

the other side where you keep trying to earn the forgiveness of sin. You keep trying to make up for it. As long as you don't get the revelation of God's righteousness, you will be trying to obtain righteousness by your own efforts and works. Righteousness is a gift that God has given to us. Jesus is the fullness of the righteousness of God for the church. Even though you may understand that the gift of righteousness is yours to possess, you may not feel the righteousness yet. In that case, you won't be able to see the fullness of righteousness in your own life yet. But you must believe that it is there. Just like on the other side the key is you must believe that you have been forgiven. You hold fast to the fact that when you have confessed your sins He is faithful and just to forgive all your sins. You believe, and then your feelings of being forgiven come later but you must start with believing. On this side, you must believe in the gift of righteousness. As you continue to believe in that gift of righteousness, it will be like that coat that will become more a part of you. In the end, it is continuously learning how to see the gift of righteousness and yielding to the gift. If you don't believe that the gift of righteousness is freely given to you and imputed to you, you won't be able to yield to that gift.

Lets read II Cor. 5:21 again *For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.* And that's what God is waiting for all this time. He is waiting for us to accept, to receive that righteousness and not try to earn it. It is not earned through good works or merits. We are talking about righteousness and it is not earned through Christian activities. It is a gift from God that we accept into our lives but the revelation of it needs to grow in our lives until we see it thoroughly. It is like the blue coat. If you want all those blessings associated with righteousness to come to you, you must wear the blue coat of the gift of righteousness, embrace that gift of righteousness, receive it with your whole heart, keep thanking and praising God for it, walk in that gift of righteousness until it becomes a part of your mind and heart and consciousness. The prayers of a righteous man are effective. I mean it has tremendous power in the spiritual world. If you want it, the key is how to draw upon this righteousness, not trying to earn it but to receive and accept it and trying to yield to it.

Lets look back at Romans and I need to put three words in its perspective. Rom.3:22 *Even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference.* This righteousness of God is given to you not

through your works but through your faith.

There is righteousness, there is faith and then there is grace. Look at Romans 4:4 *Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt. Verse 16 Therefore it is of faith that it might be according to grace so that the promise might be sure to all the seed, not only to those who are of the law, but also to those who are of the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all.*

So we have faith and then faith draws and believes in that righteousness. And when you enter into that revelation of that righteousness the grace starts operating.

So lets illustrate it as three steps. Step one faith, you need faith in order to believe it, accept it and receive it. So you step into faith. That faith is to believe in that second area righteousness which is a gift of righteousness from God. It is the position that you have as heirs and joint heirs with Christ. It is the position that Christ has brought you to be in. And all those positions are yours. You have access to them through faith. You develop your faith and your faith helps you gain access into that second area of righteousness. You begin to gain access into that position of righteousness and authority as you accept and receive the gift of righteousness. The reception is done through faith. So between faith and righteousness is reception - you got to receive it. You acquire it through faith and not by works. You don't do something for it; you receive it. You don't earn it but you accept it.

In the natural, we know the difference between a gift and wages. If your employer gave you a check and says that it is for your salary, you would know it was not a gift. That check was your wages. It was what you have earned throughout the month. It is your right. Supposing that another check was added on the top of it and your employer said, "This extra check is a gift for you." You know the difference. You know that you did not deserve the extra check. You know that you did not do any extra work to earn that extra money. I am not talking about working overtime. You still earn wages for working overtime. You know that your qualification did not merit you that. And some times, you are given gifts that are outside your ability to earn. When you get the gift, you didn't look at yourself and

say, "I am receiving this gift because of all my qualities." You do not look at your qualities.

When you receive a gift, you thank God for the giver. A gift depends on the giver and wages depend on the laborer. Your capacity to earn depends on your capacity to work. Wages depend a hundred percent on the laborer. Gift depends a hundred percent on the giver. If the giver is a doughnut seller, he may say, "In the spirit of Christmas I am giving away free doughnuts to all orphanages and old folks homes." It depends on his capacity to give. When we talk about helping the needy, we help according to our ability. We don't mean that you have to help until you yourself become needy. It would be like digging a hole to fill up another hole and you got another one to take care now. Nobody wants you to be inconvenienced when you are helping somebody else. But you help as you are able to as God enables you, so that by helping one another we eliminate the needy and poverty in our midst and not create a new one. So the ability to give and the gift depends on the giver. We never in the natural for a moment think about our ability to earn when we receive a gift.

Then why is it that when we talk about the gift of righteousness we oftentimes think about our ability or hard work or efforts to merit that gift of righteousness? In the world when you are given a gift, you don't think that it was anything special you did to receive that gift. You don't think about this. You just thank God for the gift. Yet, when it comes to the gift of righteousness, do you know what most Christians are thinking? They think they have spent much time in prayer. They think they have done much bible reading. I do not say those things are not important. But we have to leave that for some time towards the ending and just focus on this now. We start think about our Christian requirement, Christian ability and all that. Why do we do all that for? A gift is a gift. All you have to do is to appreciate the gift and say, "Lord, thank you for your gift of righteousness."

Right now, if you receive the gift of righteousness, you are as righteous and able to pray the prayer of the righteous as much as someone who has spent forty days fasting and praying. If you understand this area, you will always walk at that level. I don't undermine spending time with God in Bible reading, meditation, prayer, worship, intercession and fellowship. There is an area there that I will talk about

afterwards. But if you understand this gift the moment you wake up you can cast out one hundred demons. The moment you wake up in the morning you know that the world belongs to you. Praise God the blessing of God belongs to me. But some of us the moment we wake up, we go out and do our work, and if the blessings of God didn't come on our work or if the project we are working on didn't go through, some will say, "I know why God is punishing me. I didn't do my morning devotion before leaving the house."

Remember earlier I said that goodness, mercy, prosperity and healing follow the gift of righteousness. Let me remind you once again. I believe in prayers. I spend hours in praying waiting on God. I eat one meal a day. I believe in all those things but do you know what? There is nothing I can ever do to earn a tiny little ounce of power to heal a flu. Nothing we ever do can ever earn the authority or power to do God's work. If we had succeeded that way, we would have already succeeded. If it were that way, the Jews would have already succeeded. That was the revelation the Paul gives, healing, prosperity and all other blessings you can add follow the gift of righteousness. I can show you that even in the Old Testament where Judaism involved more works than grace the same is true. Ask yourself, if God wanted to give blessings to us through our works, then why did the bible conclude that nobody could earn the gift of righteousness? Those who got this gift of righteousness obtain it through the blood covenant. Do you think Abraham deserve those blessings? He got them through the blood covenant. I am trying to show you an important truth that runs this universe. Everything we receive from God is a gift. Now there is a place for the role of works in our Christian lives. I need to touch on that to be balanced. But we must remember we cannot earn the gift of righteousness. It is something that cannot be earned; it's a gift of God.

I believe David prospered because of the blood covenant and not because of his works. God liked his works but he prospered because it was God's gift. You remember when David did something wrong with Bathsheba God said, "You were a nobody. You were a little shepherd boy." We are nobody and we don't need God to remind us that. We need to remind ourselves that. No amount of works can earn the results of the gift of righteousness. That is why when you accept the gift of righteousness and the fullness of the working of faith is in you, it will bring you into the righteousness of God. You will see God's righteousness working in you

When the revelation of the gift of righteousness is not fully revealed in us, we won't have the full comprehension and fullness of the working of righteousness. Then No. 3 grace cannot operate. The abundance of grace cannot flow in our lives. On one side is the principle of sowing and reaping. On the other side is the principle that if it is of works, then it is not of grace. If it is of grace, it should not be of works. And both principles must harmonize. When you bring two things together, you must see their relationship.

We are harmonizing these two theological schools that for a long time theologians have been trying to harmonize. It has been the same way when we harmonized the five-fold ministry with the nine gifts of the Spirit by putting the five-fold ministry above the nine gifts. The nine gifts empower you to stand in one of the five-fold offices. To harmonize you need to see the relationship between the two streams.

How do we harmonize the law of sowing and reaping with the other law that says if it is grace, then it is not works and if it is works, then it is not grace. The two laws need to harmonize. Here is where the harmony is. On my right hand is the law of grace versus works – that is, if it is of grace, then it is not of works. If it is of works it is not of grace. On my left hand is the law of sowing and reaping. You reap what you sow. If you honor God, God honors you. All these sub-laws are under the main law of sowing and reaping. Now we bring the two together. Surprisingly the law of sowing and reaping is under the law of grace versus works. Let me prove it. If you don't receive the grace of God first before doing your works, you will be like Cain. You can till the ground. The sweat is coming from your brow. You harvest your crop and you carry them to bring an offering to God. I know his heart was not perfectly right but there was some effort and at least he should reap something. If he were really that bad, he wouldn't bring the offering in the first place. If he were really that bad, he wouldn't have done anything. And all his works were like filthy rags because he didn't use the blood. The other reason is that Cain didn't offer his firstfruits to God. But let me emphasize the blood is important.

Now in Rom. 4 it says that the seal of the gift of righteousness in Abraham's life in the Old Testament was circumcision that came later when he was ninety-nine years

old. That's found in Rom.4 and Gen. 17. God called Moses in Exodus 3 when God appeared to him in a burning bush. He gave Moses signs, powers, and miracles to carry out His work to deliver the Jews from Pharaoh. But in the very next chapter, we find that God sought to kill Moses because his children were uncircumcised. What does that tell you? Before you can think about doing any work for God, you better enter into grace first. The law of sowing and reaping doesn't work until you understand and enter into the realm of grace. I know there is a lot of sowing and reaping done by even among those who don't know God. But let tell you it is subject to the law of grace. No matter how hard you try, if it's not God's will, do you think you can benefit from the law of sowing and reaping? If it were so, the law of sowing and reaping may bring you to be what God doesn't want you to be. And sometimes people overdo it instead of yielding to it. Like Jacob he didn't have to tell lies in order to get all those blessings. I don't believe that's the proper way. He could have been honest and inherited all those blessings.

I read the story of Pontius Pilate. He was a crooked, sly man. He gave bribes to obtain positions. He was a skillful politician. And by his scheming, by his crooked ways, and by his pulling strings he maneuvered himself into position and power. That's what history records. When Jesus was standing in front of him on trial, he said these words to Jesus, "Don't you know that I have power to crucify You or to set You free?" Do you know what Jesus said? He said, "You can have no power over Me except what is given to you from above." Jesus could have continued and said, "You can have no power even if you bribed, schemed, pulled strings, if God never had a plan for you in that area in the first place." "You don't have to scheme and bribe your way to the top. If you have God with you, you would have attained that position anyway. If God didn't predestine you to have that position, you would never have gotten to it even if you did all the dirty tricks." Sometimes your great efforts to reach God is like building the Tower of Babel. Mentally we seem to be doing that. God will not permit it and sooner or later, He will bring your Tower of Babel down.

So I bring before you the two theological truths again. The law of sowing and reaping is subject to the grace of God. You know what that makes us - it makes us feel so small. You may want to build the largest church, the most prosperous Christian enterprise and the most ambitious missionary project. To accomplish that, you can fast for eighty days, read the bible for eighty years in order to try to do it

but if God never wanted you to do it, He still wouldn't give you the grace to do that. I have established the fact that the grace of God is above the law of sowing and reaping. Now the grace of God does not remove the law of sowing and reaping. That's the other extreme. Don't think it has been removed. It is subject in this manner. The law of sowing and reaping is still operating but it's subject to the law of grace. What does it tell you when something is subject to another thing? Make sure you observe the first things first before you go to the second. If some things are greater than another, you treat the greater first before the lesser. The law of grace is more important than the law of sowing and reaping if you understand the realm of grace. And that is the realm that very few Christians understand and many Christians have put the order in the reverse way. They wrongly place the law of sowing and reaping above the law of grace. You can never become what God never wanted you to become. You can only be what God wants you to be. The law of sowing and reaping is still operating because if it's not there, then grace would be automatic and that wouldn't be fair because some efforts to labor through the grace of God are still involved.

Now we close by talking about how that effort is brought forth. The key word for the word *effort* is the word *yield*. It is allowing the grace that God has for your life to help you to make those efforts. Yieldedness is the key. That means it is not the problem of righteousness. Righteousness is a gift and you must dwell in it until it becomes part of your consciousness. Although you can have the knowledge of it, it has not become part of your consciousness yet. It is just like you can pray for Jesus to forgive your sin - straight away you are forgiven but you don't feel forgiven. It may be good to spend some time meditating on all that Jesus had done for you until the revelation and feeling of forgiveness is found by your soul as much as by your spirit. It's more the delay of revelation coming into your consciousness and not so much as God's part in delaying His forgiving you. In the same manner, there is the gift of righteousness. You understand that is yours. You accept it as yours. You are willing to believe that is yours. But you need to take time to look at it, to behold it, to explore it, embrace it, until it becomes your consciousness. It is yours. It is just like the secret of Christian life in the meditating on the grace of God that He has for you. It works in every area. Let's say in your own private life. All you have to do is to sit down and meditate that Jesus is in you, the Holy Spirit is in your spirit. Even those simple words are so powerful when you meditate. And you sense Him in you. It has an effect on your spirit, soul and body. When you look at righteousness, it is yours. You study scriptures on the fact that it is yours. You meditate on it, you

confess it, you believe it, you receive it, you embrace it it's yours. It is not even your righteousness. It is the same coat that Jesus wore the righteousness of God. The same coat is now yours. That is why Jesus says that the works that I do you will do also and greater works shall you do because I am going to My Father and there is an increase of the supply of the Holy Spirit. The same works because the same coat of righteousness has been given to you.

Lets look at I Cor. 15:10 *But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace towards me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.* You know what the labor is. The labor was the labor to yield. Yielding is something that we learn. It takes labor to learn to yield to the righteousness on your inside. It is already there in you but you are learning to yield to it on your inside. To allow your consciousness to tap on it and understand that it's already on your inside. Paul says in Gal. 2:20, *It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.* The key to this and similar verses is yieldedness. And in the end, it's all tied to the word *exchange*. We learn the secret of yielding to Him by focusing on Him. We learn the secret of letting go; letting go is an effort. Try teaching someone who doesn't know how to swim. To let go takes a lot of effort on their part. Part of learning to swim is to learn to let go. Learn to relax, to be at peace. The moment you feel the struggle in swimming, it won't work and the learning becomes difficult.

There was an article about some scientists who analyzed the amount of effort that human beings use in order to carry heavy objects. They analyzed the amount of energy that human beings expend when they carry a haversack on their backs. Then they also analyze the villagers who carry heavy loads on their heads. Which do you think is more energy-efficient - to carry on your head or to carry on your back? That is the question that these scientists wanted to find out. Have you seen some of these tribal people and the way they carry things on their heads? When they cross the road, they look right and left and then they cross the road with the heavy loads still on their heads. Some of those things on their heads are huge and big. But they walk with such grace. It came out in a travel magazine called "Discover" some time ago. One curious scientist wanted to find out which takes more effort. He found out that it takes far less energy to carry a load of say, 50 pounds, on the head as compared to carrying that same load of 50 pounds on the back, which takes up far more

energy. And yet, you would find most shoestring travelers preferring to carry their haversacks on their backs. Curiously enough, they are called *backpackers*. They would see more of the world with more energy if they carried their haversacks on their heads, like the natives.

Having answered that question the next question is important. Why does it take less effort? The reason is called the parable of the cockroach. Cockroaches have six legs. Can you imagine how you would run if you have six legs. The same scientists wanted to find out how the cockroaches run with six legs. They took a video camera and videotaped a cockroach running to see how cockroaches run. Surprisingly they found out that when cockroaches are walking, they walk on all six legs. But when they are running, they run on two legs.

Now I am going to tell you why carrying with the head is easier and better than carrying on the back. It is because when we carry loads on our heads, we have to constantly play the balancing act. Some times when the head is tilted forward a bit and as the object is falling forward, one of our legs goes forward to balance the load up. As the load is falling forward all the time, the body has to maintain a constant sense of balance. In a sense, the body is flowing with the law of gravity. As the gravity pulls the object downwards and forwards, the legs have to keep going forward and so the body will feel a little bit of the weight of the load. But when you carry the load on your back, one hundred percent of its weight is on you. And the gravitational force is pulling the weight of the load through your body. That is the reason why it takes just a small energy to carry a load on your head as compared to carrying it on your back.

Let us illustrate it on the spiritual side. Sometimes when you don't know how to labor correctly in the spiritual realm, and you do not know that the law of sowing and reaping comes under the law of grace, you would be wasting a lot of your labor. You may be expending ninety percent of your prayer trying to get something that is already given to you through the grace of Jesus Christ. Instead, we should be just spending ninety percent of our time with God learning how to yield and this is a different thing. We should be teaching people that the secret of obtaining spiritual things is to let go and learn how to flow with the force of righteousness that is already your birthright. The law of gravity is already there. In life, we have to

expend much effort. But we need to know the force of righteousness is already on our inside. It is like a force that is already propelling you. If you spend ninety percent of your devotional time praising and thanking and worshipping God for what He has given, you would find that His blessings are easily flowing into your life. But you would find it very strenuous and weary interceding and groaning for God to release His blessings to you. Besides that, it may even take a longer time for His blessings to flow to your life. You don't intercede and groan for His blessings but you do intercede and groan for sinners and for the nation. You praise and thank God for His blessings but praising and thanking God for sinners are not appropriate. See the difference? Many Christians apply different rules of prayer to different needs and petitions in a wrong way.

Let me point to this fact. If God predestined you to do something don't you think all the energy, resources, influences and all the supply to do those things are already a part of God's provision to fulfill that predestination? If I send my children for camping, I would supply them all the necessary things that are required for camping as much as I know how. If I am preparing them to go camping and if I didn't pack any torch lights, sleeping bags, tents, nothing except for a towel and swimming shorts, don't you think I have prepared them wrongly? Spiritually and naturally, whatever God's will is in your life, there is already a force of righteousness and the destiny of God arranging every supply to fulfill that will. All you have to do is co-operate with God and not resist God. By doing nothing but listening to God trying to find His will, you are already positioning yourself to find out what God has already prepared you for. He will not ask you to do something that He has no intention of providing the necessary supply to you. He gives the talents, the personality and all those things that are required part and parcel of His call for your life. It has to do with our talents, our temperance, our behavior, our abilities, our gifting, all these things God will prepare you for it. There is still effort and there is still labor. But there is a difference when you labor under the grace. You learn to flow and yield to what you know is the right thing. There is still an effort to yield. That is why the bible calls it the labor into the rest. You do not carry the load on your back, heaving and panting and utilizing your own strength and energy to fulfill God's will. Instead, you let the Head carry the load and as the Body, you flow along with the gravitational force of righteousness.

So I close with Eph. 2:4 *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 together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus. (All these summarize your position in God.) That in the ages to come, (which means in our time. In the times right up to the glorious church all ready for the rapture.) In the ages to come He might show, (not your greatness, not your righteousness, but,) the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship. It is God working in us.

Every time I read the book of Acts, I don't see it as the acts of the apostles. I see it as the acts of the Holy Spirit through the apostles. Every time when a person shares a testimony of what God has done, it is not what that person has done in God but what God has done through that person. And everything in your Christian life, you should never ever see it as your effort. Always see it as what God has done through you and with you. It is always God working in our life.

It says *For we are His workmanship created in Christ Jesus for good works*. Now if Paul didn't continue that verse with the phrase *for good works*, it would give rise to some theological misunderstanding. Because it looks like we have been saved by grace and there is no more need for good works. You must enter the position of grace first and understand that you are created for those good works and if you stop there, people might say that they are saved by grace but there is no need for good works. We have to have works but in the manner of what Paul says in I Cor. 15: 10 it is the grace of God in me that does it. Paul did make efforts. You read I Cor. 15 again it says he did labor abundantly through the grace God has given but he says, "Yet not I." The key is the word *yet not I but the grace of God which was with me*.

The heavy burden that you have if you understand that is God's will in your life, if its in the right place, right position, it will be effortless for you to carry it. Some people say that being a pastor a very difficult job. I will say, "Yes, realistically and naturally, the job of a pastor is difficult but when God gives you that calling, you would enjoy being a pastor." I may feel tired at times, I may feel that I wish I had more time, but I still enjoy the office of a pastor. I enjoy ministering to people. I

enjoy counseling people because I am called to this office. There is an effort. But it's a joy in that effort.

Now the secret is in verse 10 *which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them*. Do you notice the works are prepared and you just walk in them? You still have to walk but it is already done. You just have to wear them. God never ask you to make the coat. God never ask you to go and buy the cloth. God never ask you to make all the effort. God never ask you to sew it. God says all you have to do is wear it. The works are already done prepared beforehand before you and I were born. Now if its God's will for you to be a swimmer God would have provided the swimming ability. Do you know it still takes effort to exercise that swimming ability? But here it is the good works that God has prepared you just walk in them.

Let me summarize for you the keys again: faith, the gift of righteousness, the abundance of grace. Exercising faith in the gift of righteousness that God has given will release the abundance of grace to reign as a king in life through Christ Jesus. We must receive all these three keys. Those who receive them will see the fullness of what God has for their life. What is God's will for your life? Even when you are doing nothing about God's will every instrument, every person that is required to help you fulfill the will of God, every amount of finances required, everything is already prepared. All you have to do is to discover it and flow in it. That takes effort. But it's a different kind of effort. It's a labor into rest. When you are in it, it will find that it is like a harmonious flow. Paul says I labor more abundantly yet not I but the grace of God was with me. A lot of people can see the first part but they cannot see the last part because they are not yielded to the gift of righteousness and His grace. If you yield to them, the first part and the last part of 1 Cor 15: 10 becomes operative in your life – I labor more abundantly, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.