LIVING BY THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, PROSPERING THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

Understanding the Difference Between Receiving Life from Christ and Applying His Wisdom to Experience Fruitfulness, Fulfilment and Kingdom Prosperity

A Christ-Centred Sermon on Salvation, Discipleship, Obedience, Stewardship and Kingdom Fruitfulness

Prepared for: LATTER DAY GLORY EVANGELICAL MINISTRY
Minister: Pastor Israel Oluwafemi Abiodun
Scripture Version: King James Version (KJV)
Estimated Preaching Duration: 60–75 minutes, depending on delivery and congregational response.

PRIMARY SCRIPTURE READINGS

John 14:6

"Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

John 15:5

"I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

Luke 6:46

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Matthew 7:24–25

"Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:

> And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock."

Matthew 6:33

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

3 John 2

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURES

John 1:12–13; John 3:16; John 5:39–40; John 14:15; John 15:1–8; Luke 5:1–11; Luke 16:10–13; Matthew 25:14–30; Matthew 7:21–27; Mark 8:34–37; Mark 10:17–27; Luke 19:1–10; Romans 5:1–2; Ephesians 2:8–10; Titus 2:11–14; Philippians 3:7–11; Philippians 4:10–13; 1 Timothy 6:6–10; James 1:22–25; Genesis 39–41; Proverbs 22:29.

CENTRAL THEME

The person of Jesus Christ gives us eternal life through His saving grace, while His teachings instruct us in the wisdom, obedience, character and responsibility through which our lives become fruitful and pleasing to God.

Christianity is neither a religion of mere spiritual profession nor a system of worldly success principles.

It is a living relationship with Jesus Christ that produces a transformed life.

We are saved by grace through faith, not by our works. Yet the grace that saves us also teaches us how to live.

CENTRAL DECLARATION

You cannot substitute the principles of Jesus Christ for the person of Jesus Christ, and you cannot genuinely submit to the person of Jesus Christ while deliberately rejecting His principles.

His person is the foundation of our salvation.

His Word governs our discipleship.

His Spirit empowers our transformation.

His glory is the ultimate purpose of our fruitfulness.

INTRODUCTION

THE TRAGEDY OF HAVING THE KEY BUT REFUSING TO OPEN THE DOOR

Beloved brothers and sisters in Christ, there is something I want us to consider very carefully today.

It is possible to possess something extremely valuable and yet fail to benefit from it because we do not understand its purpose.

A man may possess an excellent agricultural seed, but if he refuses to plant it, cultivate the ground, remove the weeds and provide the necessary care, he should not expect a harvest merely because the seed is good.

The quality of the seed does not eliminate the responsibility of cultivation.

Similarly, a man may possess the architectural drawing of a magnificent building. He may admire the drawing, frame it, display it in his sitting room and tell everybody about the beauty of the proposed structure.

But if he never lays the foundation, never engages the builders and never follows the specifications, the building will remain a beautiful imagination.

Admiring an architectural drawing is not the same as constructing the building.

Now, consider this.

There are people who admire Jesus Christ but do not obey Him.

There are people who celebrate His miracles but neglect His instructions.

There are people who proclaim His promises but disregard His commandments.

There are people who pray passionately for divine intervention while continually refusing to practise the wisdom God has already revealed.

And there are others who practise honesty, diligence, discipline, generosity and effective planning, yet have never surrendered their lives to Jesus Christ.

The first group may possess religious language without practical discipleship.

The second group may experience temporal advantages without possessing eternal life.

Both conditions deserve serious examination.

Because there is a difference between knowing what Jesus taught and knowing Jesus Himself.

And there is also a difference between claiming to know Jesus and actually living according to His teachings.

Today, I want to bring before us a message that has the potential to challenge our understanding of Christianity, our attitudes towards prosperity, our approach to prayer, and our responsibility for the lives God has entrusted to us.

The message is entitled:

LIVING BY THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, PROSPERING THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST.

Before we proceed, let me establish something very important.

When I speak about prospering through the principles of Jesus Christ, I am not suggesting that obedience automatically makes everybody financially wealthy.

No!

There were faithful servants of God who experienced imprisonment, deprivation, persecution and hardship.

Our Lord Jesus Christ Himself had no permanent earthly home during His public ministry.

The Apostle Paul experienced both abundance and need.

Therefore, biblical prosperity must never be reduced to the amount of money in a person's bank account.

A person may have substantial financial resources and still be spiritually bankrupt.

Another person may possess little materially and yet be rich in faith, integrity, peace, generosity and eternal hope.

However, we must also acknowledge that the teachings of Jesus Christ contain profound wisdom for the management of life.

They instruct us concerning responsibility, faithfulness, integrity, relationships, stewardship, priorities and the use of resources.

The Christian life is not an invitation to irresponsibility.

Grace is not a licence for laziness.

Prayer is not a substitute for obedience.

And spirituality is not an excuse for incompetence.

God does not call us to choose between spiritual devotion and responsible living. He calls us to honour Him through both.

Let me ask you a question.

What is the benefit of spending several hours in prayer, only to spend the remaining hours of the day deliberately violating the principles contained in the Word of God?

What is the benefit of praying for a successful marriage while refusing to forgive your spouse?

What is the benefit of praying for financial stability while consistently refusing to exercise financial discipline?

What is the benefit of praying for ministerial growth while neglecting discipleship, accountability, preparation and pastoral responsibility?

What is the benefit of praying for professional advancement while refusing to develop the competence required for greater responsibility?

Please understand me.

I am not saying that everybody experiencing difficulties is responsible for those difficulties.

Life is more complicated than that.

Faithful people experience adversity.

Responsible people sometimes lose their employment.

Honest businesspeople sometimes experience losses.

Godly families sometimes endure painful circumstances.

But we must never use the reality of suffering as an excuse to neglect the responsibilities God has clearly given us.

Faith does not abolish responsibility; genuine faith teaches us to exercise responsibility in dependence upon God.

And that brings us to our first major consideration.

MOVEMENT ONE

THE TRAGEDY OF KNOWING ABOUT JESUS CHRIST WITHOUT KNOWING HIM PERSONALLY

1. CHRISTIANITY BEGINS WITH A PERSON, NOT A RELIGIOUS SYSTEM

Our Lord Jesus Christ made an extraordinary declaration in John 14:6:

"I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me."

Notice what Jesus did not say.

He did not say, "I know a way."

He did not say, "I have discovered a truth."

He did not say, "I possess certain principles that can improve your life."

He said:

"I AM THE WAY, THE TRUTH, AND THE LIFE."

This declaration separates Christianity from every attempt to reduce it to a collection of moral instructions.

Jesus Christ is not merely a moral philosopher.

He is not simply an inspirational teacher.

He is not merely an example of successful living.

He is the incarnate Son of God, the Saviour of sinners and the One through whom we are reconciled to the Father.

The immediate context of John 14 is important.

Jesus was preparing His disciples for His departure.

Their hearts were troubled.

They were concerned about the future.

They did not fully understand where He was going.

Thomas said:

"Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" — John 14:5.

Jesus answered by directing their attention away from merely knowing a route and towards knowing Him.

The way to the Father was not a geographical pathway.

It was not a religious achievement.

It was not a humanly constructed ladder of morality.

It was Jesus Christ Himself.

Beloved, this means that the greatest need of humanity is not first financial improvement.

It is reconciliation with God.

The greatest human problem is not simply inadequate resources.

It is sin and alienation from the God who created us.

The greatest blessing is not merely the acquisition of possessions.

It is the gift of eternal life through Jesus Christ.

John 3:16 declares:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life."

God did not merely send us a manual.

He gave us His Son.

And His Son did not merely deliver lectures.

He gave Himself for our redemption.

Through His death and resurrection, Jesus Christ accomplished what human wisdom, morality, discipline and achievement could never accomplish.

He made reconciliation with God possible.

A PROFOUND DISTINCTION

The principles of Jesus Christ may teach you how to manage what you possess, but only the saving work of Jesus Christ can reconcile you to the God who created you.

His teachings can expose dishonesty.

His grace can bring forgiveness to the dishonest sinner who repents and believes.

His teachings can expose pride.

His Spirit transforms those who belong to Him into people who increasingly reflect His humility.

His teachings can instruct us concerning earthly responsibilities.

His redemptive work secures our eternal hope.

We must never confuse these realities.

---

2. RELIGIOUS FAMILIARITY IS NOT THE SAME AS SPIRITUAL FELLOWSHIP

Consider the words of Jesus in John 5:39–40:

"Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life."

What a sobering statement!

Jesus was addressing people who possessed the Scriptures.

They were familiar with religious traditions.

They were knowledgeable about sacred writings.

Yet they refused to come to the very One to whom those Scriptures pointed.

Their problem was not the absence of religious information.

Their problem was their refusal to respond rightly to Jesus Christ.

It is possible to study the Bible academically and remain spiritually unconverted.

It is possible to know the language of salvation without personally trusting the Saviour.

It is possible to teach about prayer while neglecting genuine communion with God.

It is possible to preach about holiness while secretly tolerating sin.

It is possible to occupy a prominent position in the church without possessing a transformed heart.

And it is possible to become so occupied with the activities of Christianity that we neglect the Christ at the centre of Christianity.

Consider a husband who provides everything his wife requires materially but never gives her attention, affection, communication or companionship.

He pays the bills.

He provides accommodation.

He supplies food.

He meets several practical needs.

But he has no meaningful relationship with his wife.

Something essential is missing.

In a much greater sense, Christian activity cannot replace fellowship with Christ.

We may organise programmes.

We may conduct conferences.

We may lead departments.

We may establish ministries.

We may publish books.

We may preach sermons.

But none of these activities can substitute for knowing Jesus Christ.

Listen to Paul's testimony in Philippians 3:10:

"That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death."

This was not the prayer of a new convert.

It was the longing of an apostle who had already encountered Christ.

Paul understood that knowing Christ was not a certificate obtained once and then forgotten.

It was a continuing relationship of faith, fellowship, obedience and transformation.

The greatest achievement of a Christian is not that people know his name, but that he truly knows Christ and belongs to Him.

---

3. THE DANGER OF SEEKING WHAT JESUS CAN GIVE WITHOUT DESIRING WHO JESUS IS

There is a troubling tendency in contemporary Christianity.

Many people are attracted to the benefits associated with Jesus Christ but are uncomfortable with the demands of His lordship.

They desire His protection but resist His correction.

They desire His provision but reject His priorities.

They desire His miracles but neglect His commandments.

They desire His blessings but resist His authority.

They want Jesus as a helper but not as Lord.

However, Jesus Christ cannot be reduced to a religious instrument for accomplishing personal ambitions.

He is Lord.

And His lordship extends over every dimension of our existence.

Our relationships.

Our finances.

Our ambitions.

Our businesses.

Our families.

Our ministries.

Our private conduct.

Our public responsibilities.

Our use of time.

Our treatment of other people.

Everything.

Luke 6:46 presents a question that should disturb every complacent Christian:

"And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say?"

Notice that Jesus did not question their ability to pronounce the word Lord.

He questioned the contradiction between their confession and their conduct.

They acknowledged His authority verbally but resisted it practically.

Beloved, the greatest evidence of surrender is not merely the volume of our confession.

It is the direction of our obedience.

This does not mean Christians become sinlessly perfect.

We still struggle.

We still require correction.

We still depend upon grace.

But a heart genuinely surrendered to Christ cannot comfortably establish a permanent agreement with deliberate disobedience.

A QUESTION FOR EVERY BELIEVER

If Jesus Christ were to examine your life beyond your church attendance, what would He discover?

Would He find honesty in your business?

Would He find compassion in your relationships?

Would He find faithfulness in your marriage?

Would He find integrity in your financial dealings?

Would He find humility in your leadership?

Would He find love in your home?

Would He find obedience in your private decisions?

Because Christianity must extend beyond what we say about Christ.

It must become visible in how we live before Him.

A relationship with Christ that never influences our conduct is a relationship whose genuineness we must seriously examine.

And this leads us to the second movement.

MOVEMENT TWO

THE DANGER OF CLAIMING CHRIST WHILE IGNORING HIS PRINCIPLES

1. HEARING IS NOT THE SAME AS DOING

Let us examine Matthew 7:24–27.

Jesus had just concluded the Sermon on the Mount.

He had taught about anger, reconciliation, purity, truthfulness, love, prayer, generosity, anxiety, judgement and obedience.

Then He presented two builders.

One was wise.

The other was foolish.

Both were building houses.

Both encountered storms.

Both heard the words of Jesus.

But only one acted upon what he heard.

The wise man built upon a rock.

The foolish man built upon sand.

When the rain descended, the floods came and the winds blew, the difference became evident.

The house founded upon the rock stood.

The house founded upon the sand fell.

And Jesus said:

"And great was the fall of it." — Matthew 7:27.

Beloved, there is something significant here.

The difference between the two builders was not the appearance of their buildings.

Jesus did not tell us that the wise man's house was more beautiful.

He did not tell us that it was more expensive.

He did not tell us that it was larger.

The decisive difference was the foundation.

And in the parable, Jesus explicitly identifies the wise builder as the person who hears His sayings and does them.

The foolish builder hears but refuses to obey.

The strength of a Christian life is not measured merely by how much truth has been heard, but by whether that truth is believed and obeyed.

---

2. THE FOUNDATION IS OFTEN INVISIBLE UNTIL THE STORM ARRIVES

Consider two buildings standing beside each other.

One is beautifully painted.

Its windows are attractive.

Its doors are expensive.

Its interior decoration is impressive.

The second building may appear less attractive.

But beneath it lies a carefully constructed foundation.

Then comes a severe storm.

The rain falls.

The wind blows.

The ground becomes unstable.

Suddenly, what was hidden beneath the buildings becomes more important than what was visible above them.

Beloved, that is life.

There are seasons when appearance seems sufficient.

There are seasons when popularity appears to be strength.

There are seasons when money appears to guarantee security.

There are seasons when a person's title seems to command respect.

But storms reveal foundations.

A financial crisis can reveal whether a person has cultivated contentment, honesty and responsible stewardship.

A disagreement can reveal whether a marriage has developed forgiveness, patience and communication.

A leadership crisis can reveal whether a minister has cultivated humility and accountability.

A season of disappointment can reveal whether our confidence rests upon Christ or merely upon favourable circumstances.

The storm does not necessarily create every weakness it exposes.

Sometimes it reveals weaknesses that were already present.

This is not to suggest that every hardship results from disobedience. The righteous also suffer.

Rather, Jesus teaches that obedience to His Word provides a foundation of genuine security before God, even when life becomes difficult.

A MEMORABLE TRUTH

What you build into your life during peaceful seasons will influence how you respond when difficult seasons arrive.

Do not wait until your marriage is collapsing before you begin learning forgiveness.

Do not wait until your finances are completely disorganised before you begin practising stewardship.

Do not wait until your integrity is publicly questioned before you begin cultivating honesty.

Do not wait until your ministry is in crisis before you establish accountability.

Do not wait until temptation becomes overwhelming before you begin taking holiness seriously.

The time to strengthen the foundation is before the storm.

---

3. PRAYER DOES NOT EXEMPT US FROM OBEDIENCE

One of the most dangerous misunderstandings among believers is the assumption that prayer eliminates the need for responsible action.

Please listen carefully.

Prayer is essential.

We are commanded to pray.

We must depend upon God.

We must seek divine wisdom.

We must acknowledge that without Christ we can do nothing of lasting spiritual value.

But the same God who commands us to pray also commands us to obey.

Prayer and obedience are not enemies.

They belong together.

A student may pray for academic excellence.

That prayer should not become an excuse to neglect studying.

A businessperson may pray for business growth.

That prayer should not become an excuse for dishonesty, poor record-keeping or mistreating customers.

A minister may pray for church growth.

That prayer should not become an excuse for neglecting sound teaching, pastoral care, discipleship and responsible administration.

A husband may pray for peace in his marriage.

That prayer should not become an excuse for refusing to listen to his wife.

A wife may pray for family harmony.

That prayer should not become an excuse for contempt, bitterness or destructive communication.

A young person may pray for employment.

That prayer should encourage preparation, appropriate applications, skill development and perseverance, even when opportunities remain limited.

Prayer should deepen our dependence upon God and strengthen our willingness to do what is right.

We must not pray for God to bless what we are unwilling to manage faithfully.

Yet we must remember that even faithful management cannot guarantee every desired result.

God remains sovereign.

Circumstances vary.

Opportunities differ.

And sometimes the most obedient believer must endure a difficult season.

Nevertheless, obedience remains our responsibility.

---

4. PETER: THE MAN WHO ENCOUNTERED CHRIST AND OBEYED HIS WORD

Turn with me to Luke 5:1–11.

Here we encounter Simon Peter.

Peter was a fisherman.

Fishing was not merely his hobby.

It was his occupation.

It was connected to his livelihood.

He understood the waters.

He understood the nets.

He understood the demands of his profession.

But something had happened.

Peter and his companions had laboured throughout the night without catching anything.

When Jesus entered the scene, they were washing their nets.

Their night had been unsuccessful.

Their labour had produced no catch.

Their experience had not delivered the desired result.

Then Jesus instructed Simon:

"Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught." — Luke 5:4.

Peter responded:

"Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net." — Luke 5:5.

Notice three important truths.

FIRST: PETER DID NOT DENY HIS EXPERIENCE

He acknowledged that they had laboured throughout the night.

He did not pretend that everything had gone well.

He did not deny his disappointment.

He did not conceal the reality of failure.

Beloved, faith does not require us to deny reality.

You can acknowledge that your business is struggling and still trust God.

You can acknowledge that you are unemployed and still believe that God cares for you.

You can acknowledge that your marriage is facing difficulties and still seek God's wisdom.

You can acknowledge that your ministry is experiencing challenges and still remain faithful.

Faith is not the refusal to recognise difficulties.

It is confidence in God amid those difficulties.

SECOND: PETER SUBMITTED HIS EXPERIENCE TO CHRIST'S AUTHORITY

He said:

"Nevertheless at thy word..."

What a statement!

Peter had professional experience.

But he recognised the authority of Jesus.

His obedience was not a rejection of responsible fishing knowledge.

It was a response to a specific instruction from the Lord standing before him.

There are times when our experience must be corrected by God's Word.

There are times when our habits must be challenged by divine truth.

There are times when our professional methods must be examined in the light of righteousness.

But we must distinguish Peter's specific instruction from a universal promise.

Jesus did not promise that every fishing expedition undertaken by every believer would produce a miraculous catch.

This passage is not a formula guaranteeing financial success whenever someone repeats Peter's words.

The miracle revealed Christ's authority and contributed to Peter's calling.

THIRD: THE GREATEST OUTCOME WAS NOT THE FISH

This is where many interpretations of Luke 5 become incomplete.

We often concentrate on the abundance of fish.

We celebrate the overflowing nets.

We emphasise the boats.

We speak about supernatural increase.

But the narrative does not end with Peter establishing a larger fishing enterprise.

It ends with something far greater.

Luke 5:11 declares:

"And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him."

Think about that.

Peter encountered the Lord.

Peter obeyed His instruction.

Peter witnessed an extraordinary catch.

But ultimately, Peter left the catch to follow Christ.

The miracle was not the final destination.

It was part of the revelation that drew Peter into discipleship.

Peter's greatest blessing that day was not the fish he caught; it was the Christ he followed.

Let that truth enter your heart.

Do not become so fascinated with what Jesus can place in your hands that you forget what He wants to accomplish in your life.

The fish was temporary.

The calling was enduring.

The catch addressed an immediate situation.

Following Christ redirected Peter's entire existence.

And beloved, if your understanding of prosperity ends with the fish, you have not yet understood the full significance of Peter's encounter.

MOVEMENT THREE

SALVATION IS RECEIVED BY GRACE, BUT DISCIPLESHIP PRODUCES A TRANSFORMED LIFE

1. WE ARE NOT SAVED BY PRACTISING GOOD PRINCIPLES

Ephesians 2:8–9 declares:

"For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God:

> Not of works, lest any man should boast."

This is fundamental to the Christian gospel.

Salvation is not a reward for human achievement.

It is not payment for religious activity.

It is not the result of financial generosity.

It is not earned through discipline, honesty, hard work or moral improvement.

It is God's gracious gift received through faith in Jesus Christ.

Why?

Because humanity's problem is deeper than a lack of discipline.

We are sinners in need of redemption.

We cannot erase our guilt before God merely by becoming more responsible.

A dishonest person should stop being dishonest.

A violent person should abandon violence.

A greedy person should repent of greed.

But moral reform alone cannot accomplish reconciliation with God.

We need the saving grace of Jesus Christ.

Romans 5:1 declares:

"Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."

Peace with God is not purchased with money.

It is not earned through professional achievement.

It is not secured by social status.

It comes through our Lord Jesus Christ.

---

2. THE GRACE THAT SAVES ALSO TEACHES

Now consider the next verse after Ephesians 2:8–9.

Ephesians 2:10:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them."

Do you see the balance?

Verses 8 and 9 establish that we are not saved by works.

Verse 10 establishes that we are saved for good works.

Good works are not the foundation of our salvation.

They are part of the intended fruit of our new life in Christ.

We do not obey Jesus in order to purchase His acceptance.

We obey because we belong to Him.

We do not practise righteousness to make God indebted to us.

We practise righteousness because His grace is transforming us.

Titus 2:11–12 declares:

"For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men,

> Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world."

Notice that grace teaches.

Grace does not merely pardon.

Grace instructs.

Grace trains.

Grace redirects our desires.

Grace calls us away from ungodliness.

Grace teaches sobriety.

Grace teaches righteousness.

Grace teaches godliness.

Therefore, when a person claims to have received grace but continually uses that claim to justify deliberate sin, that person has misunderstood the purpose of grace.

Grace is not divine permission to remain unchanged; it is God's gracious provision for a new life.

---

3. THE PERSON AND THE PRINCIPLES ARE NOT COMPETITORS

Sometimes Christians create an unnecessary opposition between spiritual dependence and practical responsibility.

One person says:

"I depend entirely upon God."

Another says:

"I believe in discipline and hard work."

But biblical Christianity does not require us to choose between these two realities.

We depend upon God.

And because we depend upon God, we take His instructions seriously.

Consider Philippians 2:12–13.

Paul instructs believers to work out their salvation with fear and trembling.

Then he explains:

"For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure."

God works within His people.

And His people respond through obedient action.

Divine grace does not make human responsibility unnecessary.

It makes faithful obedience possible.

Consider a tree.

Its roots draw nourishment from the soil.

Its branches bear fruit.

The fruit does not create the roots.

The roots sustain the life that produces the fruit.

In a similar way, our good works do not create our salvation.

Our new life in Christ produces the fruit of obedience.

A tree cannot become alive merely by tying artificial fruit to its branches.

Likewise, a spiritually unregenerate person cannot obtain eternal life merely by attaching respectable behaviour to an unchanged heart.

We need life from Christ.

And when that life is present, it should increasingly become visible.

This brings us directly to John 15.

---

4. THE VINE AND THE BRANCHES: THE SECRET OF TRUE FRUITFULNESS

Jesus declares:

"I am the true vine, and my Father is the husbandman." — John 15:1.

Then He says:

"I am the vine, ye are the branches..." — John 15:5.

The relationship between the vine and the branches is one of dependence.

A branch does not generate life independently of the vine.

Its fruitfulness depends upon its continuing connection to the source.

Jesus commands His disciples to abide in Him.

In the immediate context, abiding involves remaining in His love, receiving His words and keeping His commandments.

John 15:10 declares:

"If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love."

This does not mean that obedience earns Christ's love.

Rather, obedience belongs to the life of fellowship with Him.

Now consider the implications.

You cannot replace communion with Christ by religious activity.

You cannot replace spiritual dependence with professional competence.

You cannot replace obedience with impressive public performance.

And you cannot replace the fruit of the Spirit with material possessions.

A person may be financially successful and spiritually fruitless.

A person may be professionally accomplished and morally compromised.

A person may be influential and yet lack humility, love and integrity.

In John 15, fruitfulness is ultimately concerned with the life of disciples who remain in Christ and glorify the Father.

It includes obedience, love, Christlike character and faithful service.

We should not reduce the fruit of abiding to financial increase.

THE GREAT LESSON

The branch does not bear fruit to prove that it can live without the vine. It bears fruit because it receives life from the vine.

Beloved, never become so successful in ministry that you begin to think you no longer need prayer.

Never become so knowledgeable that you no longer need correction.

Never become so influential that you no longer need accountability.

Never become so financially comfortable that you no longer depend upon God.

Never become so experienced that you no longer listen to His Word.

The greatest danger of success is not always the possession of resources.

Sometimes it is the gradual development of self-sufficiency.

And Jesus says:

"For without me ye can do nothing."

This statement must be understood in its context.

Jesus is speaking about the impossibility of producing the spiritual fruit of true discipleship independently of Him.

People outside Christ can accomplish remarkable things in ordinary life.

They can build institutions.

They can develop technology.

They can establish businesses.

They can perform acts of social good.

But none of these achievements can replace the saving and sanctifying life that comes from Christ.

Beloved, abide in Him.

Let your activities flow from communion.

Let your service flow from love.

Let your obedience flow from faith.

And let every achievement return glory to God.

MOVEMENT FOUR

THE PRINCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE PURSUIT OF KINGDOM PROSPERITY

1. WHAT DOES IT REALLY MEAN TO PROSPER?

Before discussing prosperity, we must define it carefully.

Many people hear the word prosperity and immediately think about money.

Houses.

Cars.

Businesses.

Contracts.

Land.

Bank accounts.

Investments.

Financial independence.

There is nothing inherently sinful about possessing legitimate resources.

Money can meet genuine needs.

It can support families.

It can provide employment.

It can relieve suffering.

It can finance responsible ministry.

It can assist the vulnerable.

But money is not the complete measure of a prosperous life.

A person may be financially wealthy and relationally impoverished.

A person may possess substantial resources and lack peace of conscience.

A person may own several properties and have no meaningful relationship with his children.

A person may command public admiration and secretly live under the bondage of greed.

Therefore, we must distinguish material prosperity from the broader biblical vision of a fruitful life.

For the purpose of this sermon, we may describe kingdom prosperity as:

A life increasingly ordered by God's will, sustained by His grace, characterised by faithfulness and godly fruit, and committed to using whatever resources and opportunities God entrusts to us for His glory and the good of others.

Such a life may include financial abundance.

It may also include seasons of material limitation.

Its defining characteristic is not the amount possessed but faithfulness to God.

---

2. UNDERSTANDING 3 JOHN 2

The Apostle John wrote to Gaius:

"Beloved, I wish above all things that thou mayest prosper and be in health, even as thy soul prospereth."

This verse is frequently quoted in discussions of Christian prosperity.

But we must interpret it responsibly.

John was expressing his desire for the well-being and health of Gaius.

He also recognised the spiritual well-being of the recipient.

The passage reflects a legitimate concern for the whole person.

Christians may appropriately pray for good health, sufficient resources and favourable circumstances.

However, this greeting should not be transformed into an unconditional guarantee that every faithful Christian will become wealthy or enjoy perfect health.

Scripture itself records faithful believers who experienced sickness, hardship, imprisonment and deprivation.

Paul spoke of Timothy's recurring infirmities.

He described his own experiences of hunger and need.

Therefore, we must not turn John's pastoral wish into a formula that condemns suffering believers.

A Christian who is sick is not necessarily spiritually deficient.

A Christian who is poor is not necessarily disobedient.

A Christian who experiences business failure is not necessarily under divine judgement.

The biblical question is not simply:

"How much do I possess?"

It is:

"Am I faithful to God with what has been entrusted to me?"

---

3. THE PRINCIPLE OF FAITHFULNESS IN LITTLE THINGS

Luke 16:10 declares:

"He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful also in much: and he that is unjust in the least is unjust also in much."

This principle challenges our tendency to underestimate small responsibilities.

Many people desire greater opportunities while neglecting their present assignments.

A young employee wants promotion but regularly arrives late and refuses correction.

A business owner desires expansion but does not maintain reliable financial records.

A church worker desires leadership but is careless with responsibilities already assigned.

A student desires academic distinction but refuses consistent preparation.

A person desires financial increase but makes no effort to understand existing financial commitments.

Jesus teaches that faithfulness matters even in small things.

However, we must not misrepresent this teaching.

Faithfulness in little things does not guarantee that everybody will eventually receive a large business, a prominent position or substantial wealth.

Its central concern is trustworthiness before God.

A faithful person may never become famous.

A trustworthy employee may never become a chief executive.

A diligent minister may never lead a large congregation.

But their faithfulness is not wasted.

God values obedience beyond the measurements of worldly success.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

If you are responsible for church offerings, handle them transparently.

If you are entrusted with another person's property, protect it.

If you are an employee, fulfil your legitimate responsibilities faithfully.

If you are a businessperson, avoid fraudulent measurements and dishonest pricing.

If you are a minister, do not manipulate people for personal financial gain.

If you are a parent, recognise that your children require more than financial provision.

They require guidance, affection, correction and godly example.

The person who cannot be trusted with little has no moral justification for demanding greater responsibility.

---

4. THE PRINCIPLE OF PLANNING AND COUNTING THE COST

Jesus says in Luke 14:28:

"For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it?"

The immediate context concerns the cost of discipleship.

Jesus was teaching that following Him requires serious commitment.

He used the illustration of a builder who considers the cost before beginning construction.

We should not remove the illustration from that context.

Nevertheless, it also demonstrates that thoughtful planning was an intelligible example of ordinary wisdom.

The Christian life does not require us to despise planning.

Planning becomes sinful when it expresses prideful independence from God.

But responsible planning undertaken in humility can be an expression of stewardship.

Consider a man who intends to build a house.

He purchases cement.

He purchases blocks.

He hires workers.

He begins construction.

But he has made no realistic assessment of the cost.

Soon, his resources are exhausted.

The building remains unfinished.

Now, the lesson is not that every unfinished building results from irresponsibility.

Unexpected inflation, illness, loss of income and other circumstances may interrupt even careful plans.

The lesson is that responsible people should consider foreseeable obligations before making commitments.

APPLICATION TO FAMILY LIFE

Before undertaking major financial obligations, consider your capacity.

Before borrowing money, understand the repayment terms.

Before beginning a business, study the market and associated risks.

Before accepting a leadership responsibility, consider the duties involved.

Before establishing a ministry project, evaluate the resources, people and systems required.

Before making promises, consider whether you can fulfil them.

Beloved, planning does not replace prayer.

Planning should be submitted to God.

James 4:15 teaches us to say:

"If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that."

The biblical balance is humble planning under divine sovereignty.

Faith is not carelessness dressed in religious language.

---

5. JOSEPH: SPIRITUAL DISCERNMENT AND ADMINISTRATIVE COMPETENCE

Consider Joseph in Genesis 39–41.

Joseph's life demonstrates that spiritual conviction and practical wisdom can operate together.

He was a man who feared God.

When Potiphar's wife attempted to seduce him, Joseph refused.

He asked:

"How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" — Genesis 39:9.

Joseph's integrity was rooted in his consciousness of God.

He recognised that sin was not merely a violation of human expectations.

It was an offence against God.

Yet his righteousness did not immediately deliver him from suffering.

He was falsely accused.

He was imprisoned.

He endured injustice.

This is important.

Joseph's integrity did not prevent hardship.

Therefore, we must never preach that obedience automatically removes suffering.

But God remained with Joseph.

And in due course, Joseph was brought before Pharaoh.

Through God's enabling, Joseph interpreted Pharaoh's dreams.

Seven years of abundance would be followed by seven years of famine.

Now observe what happened.

Joseph did not stop at interpreting the dreams.

He also proposed an administrative response.

He advised Pharaoh to appoint responsible oversight, gather resources during the years of abundance and preserve supplies for the coming famine.

Genesis 41:34–36 records the substance of his proposal.

The revelation identified the coming crisis.

The administrative plan addressed how the nation should prepare.

Both dimensions mattered.

Joseph's wisdom was not merely theoretical.

It became practical.

He understood that the years of abundance required responsible management.

A LESSON FOR THE CHURCH

There are times when God provides opportunities that must be stewarded carefully.

There are times when increased resources require improved accountability.

There are times when ministry growth requires better organisation.

There are times when a family must prepare for foreseeable responsibilities.

There are times when an institution must preserve resources rather than consume everything immediately.

Consider Joseph's example.

He did not interpret the years of abundance as permission for reckless consumption.

He understood that present abundance could be used to prepare for future scarcity.

Beloved, a season of increase should not automatically become a season of increased extravagance.

Sometimes increase is an opportunity to strengthen reserves, fulfil obligations, assist others and prepare responsibly.

Not everything that enters your hand must immediately leave your hand through consumption.

But remember the distinction.

Joseph's rise was part of God's particular providential purpose.

We cannot promise that every faithful administrator will become a national leader.

What we can learn is that integrity, wisdom and competent administration are consistent with faithful service to God.

---

6. THE PRINCIPLE OF STEWARDSHIP

Matthew 25:14–30 presents the parable of the talents.

A master entrusted resources to his servants before travelling.

Upon his return, he required an account.

The central lesson concerns faithful responsibility in anticipation of the master's return.

The talents in the parable were monetary units, and Jesus used them to teach accountability and readiness.

We should not reduce the parable to a guarantee of investment profits.

Nor should we assume that every financial loss proves unfaithfulness.

Nevertheless, the passage teaches that what is entrusted to us carries responsibility.

Beloved, stewardship begins with the recognition that we are accountable to God.

Your time is a stewardship.

Your abilities are a stewardship.

Your opportunities are a stewardship.

Your influence is a stewardship.

Your family responsibilities are a stewardship.

Your ministry assignment is a stewardship.

Your financial resources are a stewardship.

Your knowledge is a stewardship.

Even your position of leadership is a stewardship.

The question is not merely:

"What do I possess?"

The question is:

"What am I doing with what has been entrusted to me?"

A pastor who has received the responsibility of teaching God's people must study faithfully.

A parent who has received the responsibility of raising children must provide godly guidance.

A professional who has received specialised knowledge should use it responsibly.

A leader entrusted with public resources must resist corruption.

A Christian businessperson must recognise that profit does not justify exploitation.

Stewardship means recognising that ownership, opportunity and responsibility are not the same thing.

We may possess resources temporarily.

But we remain accountable to God for how we use them.

---

7. THE PRINCIPLE OF KINGDOM PRIORITY

Matthew 6:33 declares:

"But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."

This verse is frequently quoted as though Jesus were promising unlimited material possessions to everyone who puts God first.

But we must examine the context.

Jesus was addressing anxiety concerning food, drink and clothing.

He directed His disciples towards the heavenly Father's knowledge of their needs.

He contrasted the anxious pursuit of material necessities with the priority of God's kingdom.

The instruction is not:

"Seek the kingdom so that you can become obsessed with possessions."

It is:

"Seek God's kingdom and righteousness rather than allowing material anxiety to govern your life."

The Father's care does not eliminate the reality of hardship.

Nor does it justify irresponsibility.

Rather, it calls us to trust Him while ordering our priorities according to His will.

WHAT DOES IT MEAN TO SEEK THE KINGDOM FIRST?

It means that God's righteousness governs your business decisions.

It means that your desire for promotion does not justify dishonesty.

It means that your pursuit of wealth does not justify exploitation.

It means that your ambition for influence does not excuse pride.

It means that your professional commitments do not erase your obligations to your family.

It means that your ministry success does not become more important than your obedience to Christ.

It means that you refuse to gain the world at the expense of your soul.

Kingdom priority is not merely giving God the first portion of your day; it is allowing His authority to govern the whole of your life.

MOVEMENT FIVE

WHY SOME PEOPLE PROSPER THROUGH SOUND PRINCIPLES WITHOUT PROFESSING FAITH IN CHRIST

Beloved, we now come to a subject that requires careful thinking.

Have you ever observed that some people who do not profess Christianity demonstrate remarkable discipline, integrity, diligence and administrative competence?

They plan carefully.

They develop useful skills.

They maintain reliable records.

They honour agreements.

They respect time.

They invest in education.

They treat customers responsibly.

They build effective organisations.

And sometimes they experience considerable material success.

Meanwhile, some professing Christians neglect these responsibilities while expecting prayer alone to produce favourable outcomes.

How should we understand this?

---

1. GOD HAS CREATED AN ORDERED WORLD

Matthew 5:45 declares that God:

"...maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust."

Jesus spoke these words while teaching His disciples to love their enemies.

His point was that God's kindness extends beyond those who love Him.

Christian theology commonly uses the expression common grace to describe aspects of God's goodness experienced throughout humanity.

People who do not profess Christian faith may possess remarkable intelligence, creativity, discipline and skill.

They may discover useful scientific principles.

They may develop effective systems.

They may make sound financial decisions.

They may establish institutions that benefit society.

They may demonstrate admirable qualities of kindness, courage and responsibility.

We should acknowledge these realities rather than deny them.

Proverbs 22:29 asks:

"Seest thou a man diligent in his business? he shall stand before kings; he shall not stand before mean men."

This proverb commends diligence and describes its potential to bring recognition.

It is wisdom literature, not an unconditional guarantee of promotion.

Nevertheless, diligence often contributes to competence and usefulness.

A person who consistently develops professional skills may become more effective.

A business that maintains accurate records may make better decisions.

An organisation that establishes accountability may reduce certain forms of waste and misconduct.

A family that practises responsible communication may become better equipped to resolve disagreements.

These are ordinary patterns of wisdom within God's created order.

They are not restricted to people who profess Christianity.

---

2. TEMPORAL SUCCESS IS NOT THE SAME AS ETERNAL SALVATION

Now we must make a crucial distinction.

A person may apply sound principles and experience material success without being reconciled to God.

A person may be disciplined and remain spiritually unregenerate.

A person may be generous and still need salvation.

A person may be respected and yet have no saving relationship with Jesus Christ.

This is why we must never equate material achievement with divine approval.

Mark 8:36 asks:

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

What a question!

A man may possess extensive properties.

He may have substantial investments.

He may command enormous influence.

He may receive public recognition.

He may have access to powerful people.

But what happens when his earthly life ends?

Can his investments purchase eternal life?

Can his professional achievements remove his sins?

Can his properties reconcile him to God?

Can his social influence defeat death?

No.

The advantages of sound principles, however valuable, cannot replace salvation.

You may learn principles that help you succeed in the world, but you still need the Saviour who reconciles sinners to God.

---

3. THE RICH YOUNG RULER: WHEN POSSESSIONS BECOME A RIVAL TO CHRIST

Turn to Mark 10:17–27.

A man approached Jesus and asked:

"Good Master, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?" — Mark 10:17.

The man possessed substantial wealth.

He also claimed to have observed the commandments Jesus mentioned.

But Jesus exposed the issue that stood between the man and wholehearted discipleship.

Mark 10:21 records Jesus' instruction to sell what he possessed, give to the poor and follow Him.

Then verse 22 declares:

"And he was sad at that saying, and went away grieved: for he had great possessions."

Notice the tragedy.

The man came to Jesus seeking eternal life.

But when confronted with the cost of following Him, he turned away.

His possessions had become a rival to the lordship of Christ.

Jesus' specific instruction exposed this man's attachment to wealth.

We should not turn the passage into a universal command that every Christian must sell every possession.

But we must recognise its universal challenge:

Nothing must take precedence over Christ.

For some people, the obstacle may be money.

For others, it may be pride.

For others, it may be ambition.

For others, it may be an immoral relationship.

For others, it may be public recognition.

For others, it may be an unwillingness to surrender control.

The issue is not merely what you possess.

The issue is what possesses your heart.

A QUESTION

If following Jesus required you to surrender something you presently consider indispensable, would you still follow Him?

That question reveals the difference between admiring Christ and submitting to Him.

MOVEMENT SIX

UNITING SPIRITUAL DEVOTION WITH PRACTICAL WISDOM

1. SPIRITUALITY MUST BECOME VISIBLE IN DAILY RESPONSIBILITIES

Beloved, Christianity is not designed to operate only inside the church auditorium.

It must influence the home.

It must influence the workplace.

It must influence the marketplace.

It must influence our relationships.

It must influence leadership.

It must influence our use of money.

It must influence our treatment of people.

It must influence our decisions when nobody is watching.

A person who prays fervently on Sunday but cheats customers on Monday has not understood the practical demands of discipleship.

A minister who preaches holiness but exploits vulnerable members has contradicted the message he proclaims.

A parent who teaches children to respect God but continually demonstrates cruelty at home is communicating two conflicting messages.

A leader who publicly speaks about righteousness but privately misappropriates resources is undermining his own profession of faith.

Christianity must be lived.

Not merely discussed.

Not merely celebrated.

Not merely defended.

It must be lived.

James 1:22 declares:

"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Notice the danger James identifies.

Self-deception.

A person can mistake exposure to truth for obedience to truth.

He can mistake agreement with a sermon for transformation by that sermon.

He can mistake religious emotion for lasting repentance.

But the Word of God calls us beyond admiration into action.

---

2. IN MARRIAGE: LOVE MUST BECOME RESPONSIBILITY

A Christian marriage requires more than the public profession of faith.

It requires patience.

Faithfulness.

Communication.

Forgiveness.

Sacrifice.

Mutual honour.

Truthfulness.

Responsible provision according to ability.

And a willingness to resolve disagreements without cruelty.

A husband cannot consistently humiliate his wife and then assume that public prayer automatically makes him a godly husband.

A wife cannot continually treat her husband with contempt and assume that religious activity excuses destructive conduct.

Both must submit their attitudes and actions to Christ.

Ephesians 5:21 teaches:

"Submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of God."

The wider passage gives specific instructions concerning marriage, including the husband's duty to love his wife sacrificially.

A home is not transformed merely because the occupants identify as Christians.

It is transformed as they increasingly practise the love, truthfulness, patience and humility commanded by Christ.

PRACTICAL COUNSEL

If you have offended your spouse, acknowledge the offence.

If you have made a promise, endeavour to fulfil it.

If communication has broken down, seek an appropriate opportunity for constructive conversation.

If serious harm or abuse is occurring, prioritise safety and seek qualified help; forgiveness does not require remaining in danger.

If your children are growing up without meaningful parental attention, reconsider your priorities.

A family does not become healthy merely because its members pray together; prayer should lead them towards the love and responsibility that sustain healthy relationships.

---

3. IN BUSINESS: INTEGRITY MUST GOVERN PROFIT

Let me address Christian entrepreneurs and businesspeople.

There is nothing inherently wrong with earning a legitimate profit.

Profit can sustain a business.

It can support employees.

It can enable expansion.

It can provide for families.

It can create opportunities for generosity.

But profit must never become an excuse for unrighteousness.

A Christian should not deliberately sell defective products while concealing their defects.

A Christian should not falsify measurements.

A Christian should not knowingly exploit customers.

A Christian should not refuse legitimate obligations while displaying extravagant personal wealth.

A Christian should not manipulate vulnerable people through religious language to obtain money.

Luke 16:11 asks:

"If therefore ye have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will commit to your trust the true riches?"

Jesus places financial conduct within the larger question of faithfulness.

How we handle money reveals something about our priorities and character.

Beloved, your business is not outside the authority of Jesus Christ.

Your contracts are not outside His authority.

Your invoices are not outside His authority.

Your employment practices are not outside His authority.

Your tax obligations are not outside His authority.

Your treatment of customers is not outside His authority.

If Christ is Lord of your life, He must also be Lord of your business decisions.

---

4. IN MINISTRY: ANOINTING MUST NOT BECOME AN EXCUSE FOR NEGLIGENCE

Let me speak particularly to ministers and church workers.

Spiritual gifts are important.

Prayer is important.

The ministry of the Holy Spirit is indispensable.

But spiritual ministry also requires faithfulness, preparation, integrity and accountability.

A pastor must study the Scriptures responsibly.

A teacher must handle biblical passages carefully.

A church administrator must maintain accurate records.

A ministry leader must treat workers fairly.

Those responsible for financial resources must provide appropriate accountability.

Those entrusted with vulnerable people must establish safeguards against abuse.

A church must not confuse spiritual authority with freedom from scrutiny.

Consider Acts 6:1–7.

The early church encountered a problem involving the daily distribution to widows.

The apostles did not dismiss the complaint as evidence of spiritual immaturity.

They recognised that the matter required responsible attention.

They arranged for suitable men to oversee the practical responsibility.

The result was not a rejection of prayer and the ministry of the Word.

It was a more appropriate distribution of responsibilities.

The church needed both spiritual ministry and responsible administration.

Beloved, a congregation can pray fervently and still require proper record-keeping.

A ministry can experience spiritual growth and still require safeguarding policies.

A pastor can be sincerely called by God and still need further education, correction and accountability.

Spiritual calling does not eliminate the need for practical competence.

---

5. IN EMPLOYMENT AND EDUCATION: DILIGENCE HONOURS GOD

Consider the Christian employee.

Your employer should not have to choose between your religious commitment and your professional reliability.

You should strive to be trustworthy.

You should respect legitimate workplace expectations.

You should develop relevant skills.

You should avoid dishonesty.

You should accept correction where it is justified.

You should resist corruption.

And where workplace demands conflict with God's commands, you must obey God rather than participate in wrongdoing.

Colossians 3:23 declares:

"And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

The immediate context addresses responsibilities within the household structures of Paul's time, including bondservants.

We should not use that passage to justify exploitation or abusive employment arrangements.

Nevertheless, it expresses a broader Christian principle: our conduct should be shaped by accountability to the Lord.

A Christian student should take learning seriously.

A Christian professional should pursue competence.

A Christian leader should value truthful information.

A Christian teacher should prepare responsibly.

A Christian healthcare worker should treat patients with dignity and professional care.

A Christian public servant should not regard public resources as personal property.

Excellence does not earn salvation, but faithful service can honour the Saviour.

---

6. ZACCHAEUS: WHEN ENCOUNTERING CHRIST CHANGES YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH MONEY

Let us examine Luke 19:1–10.

Zacchaeus was a chief publican.

He was wealthy.

But his encounter with Jesus produced a remarkable response.

Luke 19:8 declares:

"And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore him fourfold."

Consider what happened.

Jesus entered his life.

And Zacchaeus's attitude towards wealth changed.

His concern was no longer merely accumulation.

He began addressing generosity and restitution.

He recognised that wrongdoing required a practical response.

This is an important lesson.

Repentance is not merely feeling sorry.

Where possible and appropriate, repentance seeks to correct the harm caused by wrongdoing.

If you have stolen something, repentance should move you towards restitution.

If you have damaged someone's reputation through false accusations, repentance should move you towards correction.

If you have withheld money that rightfully belongs to someone else, repentance should move you towards making matters right.

If you have exploited people, repentance should move you towards justice.

Of course, restitution must be handled responsibly and within applicable legal and ethical requirements.

But the principle remains.

An encounter with Jesus that transforms the heart should also influence the hands.

Zacchaeus did not merely become more emotional.

He became accountable.

He did not merely make a religious declaration.

He demonstrated a changed relationship with wealth and other people.

And Jesus declared:

"This day is salvation come to this house..." — Luke 19:9.

Zacchaeus's generosity did not purchase salvation.

Rather, his response provided visible evidence of the transformation taking place through his encounter with Christ.

MOVEMENT SEVEN

THE GREATEST PROSPERITY IS TO GAIN CHRIST WITHOUT LOSING YOUR SOUL

Beloved, we have discussed diligence.

We have discussed stewardship.

We have discussed planning.

We have discussed integrity.

We have discussed responsibility.

We have discussed wise financial management.

All these matters are important.

But now we must return to the greatest question.

What is the value of everything you possess if you do not possess eternal life in Christ?

Mark 8:36 declares:

"For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Jesus presents a question that overturns the ordinary calculations of human success.

The world asks:

How much have you acquired?

Jesus asks:

What is the condition of your soul?

The world asks:

How influential have you become?

Jesus asks:

Are you following Me?

The world asks:

How many people recognise you?

Jesus asks:

Do you belong to Me?

The world asks:

What have you accumulated?

Jesus asks:

What have you surrendered for My sake?

Beloved, there is a prosperity that cannot be measured by money.

There is a peace that cannot be purchased.

There is a righteousness that cannot be manufactured through human effort.

There is a hope that death cannot destroy.

There is an inheritance that cannot decay.

And all these blessings find their ultimate foundation in Jesus Christ.

---

1. PAUL: A MAN WHO LEARNT CONTENTMENT IN ABUNDANCE AND NEED

Consider Philippians 4:11–13.

Paul declares:

"Not that I speak in respect of want: for I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content."

Then he says:

"I know both how to be abased, and I know how to abound..."

And finally:

"I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me."

This final verse is often quoted as a promise that Christians can accomplish any ambition they desire.

But Paul's immediate subject is contentment and endurance amid changing material circumstances.

He had experienced need.

He had experienced abundance.

He had known hardship.

He had received support.

And he had learnt to remain dependent upon Christ.

His strength was not the guarantee that every circumstance would become comfortable.

It was the grace to remain faithful through changing circumstances.

This is spiritual maturity.

When resources increase, remain humble.

When resources decrease, remain faithful.

When opportunities open, give thanks.

When opportunities close, continue trusting God.

When people celebrate you, resist pride.

When people overlook you, resist bitterness.

When life becomes comfortable, do not abandon devotion.

When life becomes difficult, do not abandon Christ.

The believer's security must rest more deeply in Christ than in the circumstances surrounding him.

---

2. THE DANGER OF MAKING WEALTH YOUR MASTER

Jesus declares in Matthew 6:24:

"Ye cannot serve God and mammon."

Money is a useful servant.

But it is a destructive master.

When money becomes your master, integrity becomes negotiable.

Relationships become instruments of personal advantage.

Generosity becomes difficult.

Contentment becomes impossible.

And the desire for more becomes an endless appetite.

First Timothy 6:6 declares:

"But godliness with contentment is great gain."

Notice the expression:

Great gain.

Paul does not identify great gain merely with financial accumulation.

He connects it with godliness and contentment.

This does not mean Christians must reject legitimate ambition or responsible financial improvement.

It means that our ambitions must remain subordinate to godliness.

We should work responsibly.

We should manage resources wisely.

We should provide for legitimate needs.

We should practise generosity.

But we must refuse to make wealth the foundation of our identity.

Beloved, if your happiness depends entirely upon possessing more, you may never recognise when you have enough.

And if your spiritual confidence depends entirely upon material abundance, what happens when abundance disappears?

SPECIAL SECTION

THE DANGER OF SEEKING THE PRINCIPLES WITHOUT THE PERSON

There are two dangerous spiritual errors I want us to confront.

The first is seeking the principles of Jesus Christ without receiving the person of Jesus Christ.

The second is claiming allegiance to the person of Jesus Christ while rejecting His teachings.

Let us examine them carefully.

ERROR ONE: PRINCIPLES WITHOUT THE PERSON

A person may admire the teachings of Jesus concerning love.

He may appreciate His instruction about forgiveness.

He may practise generosity.

He may value humility.

He may recognise the wisdom of honesty.

He may apply principles of stewardship.

He may become disciplined and responsible.

All these are valuable.

But none of them can substitute for salvation.

Why?

Because Christianity is not merely a programme of behavioural improvement.

It is reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ.

John 1:12 declares:

"But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name."

Notice the emphasis.

"As many as received him..."

Not merely those who admired His wisdom.

Not merely those who adopted selected moral principles.

But those who received Him through faith.

A person may learn how to become a better manager without becoming a Christian.

A person may learn how to communicate more effectively without becoming a Christian.

A person may learn financial discipline without becoming a Christian.

But no person can obtain salvation independently of Jesus Christ.

Ephesians 2:8–9 makes that clear.

THE TRAGIC POSSIBILITY

A person may improve his circumstances while neglecting his soul.

He may become more financially stable but remain spiritually alienated from God.

He may become more respected but remain unconverted.

He may become more influential but remain without eternal hope.

Beloved, do not confuse moral improvement with spiritual regeneration.

You may become a better version of your old life without receiving the new life that comes through Jesus Christ.

That is why the gospel calls us not merely to improve ourselves, but to repent and believe in the Lord Jesus Christ.

ERROR TWO: PROFESSING THE PERSON WHILE REJECTING HIS PRINCIPLES

Now let us consider the opposite problem.

A person says:

"I am born again."

"I love Jesus."

"I believe in miracles."

"I attend church."

"I am a worker."

"I am a minister."

But his conduct continually contradicts the teachings of Christ.

He lies without remorse.

He cheats without repentance.

He exploits others.

He refuses correction.

He treats people cruelly.

He neglects legitimate responsibilities.

He uses spiritual language to justify wrongdoing.

Such a person must examine the genuineness of his profession.

Jesus declares in John 14:15:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments."

This does not mean that every genuine believer obeys perfectly.

The Christian life involves growth, repentance, correction and continued dependence upon grace.

But genuine love for Christ cannot be separated from a sincere willingness to obey Him.

A believer may fall into sin.

But he should not make peace with sin.

A believer may make mistakes.

But he should remain teachable.

A believer may struggle with weakness.

But he should seek grace for transformation.

THE TWO GREAT WARNINGS

Principles without the Person cannot save the soul.

A profession of allegiance to the Person without a life of repentance and obedience contradicts genuine discipleship.

We need Christ.

And because we need Christ, we must take His Word seriously.

CONTEMPORARY CHRISTIAN CHALLENGES

WHEN PRAYER BECOMES AN EXCUSE FOR INACTION

Beloved, there is a form of religious thinking that can gradually weaken personal responsibility.

A person refuses to prepare for an examination but expects exceptional results because he has prayed.

Another person continually mismanages resources but assumes that every financial difficulty requires only another prayer meeting.

A church leader refuses to establish accountability but attributes every administrative problem to spiritual opposition.

A family neglects communication and conflict resolution but expects its problems to disappear without meaningful change.

We must correct this misunderstanding.

Prayer is not the enemy of responsible action.

Prayer should inspire responsible action.

When Nehemiah faced opposition during the rebuilding of Jerusalem's wall, he prayed and also took practical precautions.

Nehemiah 4:9 declares:

"Nevertheless we made our prayer unto our God, and set a watch against them day and night, because of them."

Observe the balance.

They prayed.

And they set a watch.

They depended upon God.

And they exercised responsibility.

They did not treat practical precautions as evidence of unbelief.

Nor did they treat human precautions as substitutes for God.

Prayer and responsible preparation can operate together under the sovereignty of God.

WHEN PROSPERITY BECOMES THE MEASURE OF SPIRITUALITY

Another danger is the assumption that financial wealth is the principal evidence of God's favour.

Under this thinking, a wealthy Christian is automatically considered spiritually mature.

A struggling Christian is automatically considered deficient in faith.

But Scripture does not support such simplistic conclusions.

Consider the Apostle Paul.

He experienced imprisonment.

He endured persecution.

He sometimes lacked material necessities.

Yet he was a faithful servant of Jesus Christ.

Consider the churches of Macedonia.

Paul describes their deep poverty and abundant generosity in 2 Corinthians 8:1–5.

Their poverty did not prevent them from demonstrating remarkable grace.

Consider the church in Smyrna.

In Revelation 2:9, Jesus acknowledges their poverty and declares:

"...but thou art rich..."

Their earthly circumstances did not fully reflect their spiritual condition.

Beloved, do not despise a faithful believer because he has limited resources.

Do not assume that a wealthy person is righteous merely because he is wealthy.

And do not assume that every financial difficulty results from personal irresponsibility.

Some people work diligently and still struggle because of circumstances beyond their control.

Some families face medical expenses that exhaust their resources.

Some honest businesses collapse during severe economic difficulties.

Some faithful workers lose employment because of institutional decisions.

Some people experience hardship because of injustice, conflict or discrimination.

The church must respond with compassion, generosity and practical assistance.

We must teach responsibility without condemning the vulnerable.

We must encourage diligence without worshipping achievement.

We must affirm stewardship without reducing Christianity to financial success.

The gospel must never become a weapon for humiliating people who are already suffering.

PERSONAL EXAMINATION

FIVE QUESTIONS EVERY BELIEVER MUST ANSWER

Beloved, before we conclude, I want us to examine ourselves.

Not our neighbours.

Not our spouses.

Not the person sitting beside us.

Ourselves.

1. THE QUESTION OF SPIRITUAL LIFE

Do I genuinely know Jesus Christ, or am I merely familiar with Christian activities?

Can you identify evidence of a living relationship with Him?

Do you seek His presence?

Do you listen to His Word?

Do you respond to His correction?

Do you desire to become more like Him?

Or has Christianity become merely a routine?

2. THE QUESTION OF CHARACTER

Does my conduct reflect the teachings of the Christ I profess?

Am I truthful?

Am I trustworthy?

Am I compassionate?

Am I willing to forgive?

Am I humble enough to receive correction?

Do I treat people with dignity?

What do my private decisions reveal about my spiritual condition?

3. THE QUESTION OF STEWARDSHIP

Am I faithfully managing what God has entrusted to me?

How do I use my time?

How do I manage my finances?

How do I develop my abilities?

How do I fulfil my responsibilities?

How do I treat the people under my leadership?

Am I accountable?

Am I responsible?

Am I wasting opportunities through avoidable negligence?

4. THE QUESTION OF PURPOSE

Am I seeking God's kingdom, or am I using Christianity primarily to pursue personal ambitions?

Is my relationship with Christ dependent upon receiving material blessings?

Would I still follow Him if my circumstances became difficult?

Would I still honour Him if people stopped celebrating me?

Would I still obey Him if obedience became costly?

5. THE QUESTION OF ETERNITY

Am I preparing for eternity, or am I living as though this world is my permanent home?

What occupies my deepest affection?

What determines my decisions?

What am I becoming?

What will remain of my life when my earthly journey is over?

Beloved, these are not questions designed merely to produce emotion.

They are questions intended to produce honest examination and practical response.

SEVEN PRACTICAL COMMITMENTS FOR RESPONSIBLE DISCIPLESHIP

As we respond to this message, I want every believer to consider seven commitments.

FIRST: CULTIVATE DAILY COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

Set aside meaningful time for prayer, Scripture meditation and personal examination.

Do not allow ministry activity to replace personal devotion.

SECOND: IDENTIFY ONE AREA OF DISOBEDIENCE THAT REQUIRES IMMEDIATE ATTENTION

It may involve dishonesty.

It may involve bitterness.

It may involve negligence.

It may involve financial misconduct.

It may involve pride.

It may involve an unhealthy relationship.

Bring that area before God in repentance and take appropriate corrective action.

THIRD: DEVELOP A RESPONSIBLE STEWARDSHIP PLAN

Review your income, expenses, obligations and financial commitments.

Where possible, establish a realistic budget.

Avoid unnecessary debt.

Seek competent advice when needed.

Practise generosity within your means.

Do not compare your financial circumstances with those of others.

FOURTH: IMPROVE YOUR COMPETENCE

If you are a student, study responsibly.

If you are employed, develop relevant skills.

If you operate a business, improve your knowledge of management and customer service.

If you are a minister, continue studying the Scriptures and developing pastoral competence.

Learning is not evidence of inadequate faith.

It is often part of responsible stewardship.

FIFTH: RESTORE INTEGRITY WHERE IT HAS BEEN COMPROMISED

Correct dishonest records.

Fulfil legitimate obligations.

Seek reconciliation where appropriate.

Make restitution where possible.

Stop using spiritual language to conceal wrongdoing.

SIXTH: ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY

Invite appropriate correction.

Seek wise counsel.

Maintain transparent records.

Submit to legitimate oversight.

Remember that spiritual maturity does not place anyone above accountability.

SEVENTH: KEEP ETERNITY IN VIEW

Do not sacrifice righteousness for temporary gain.

Do not sacrifice your family for unnecessary ambition.

Do not sacrifice your conscience for money.

Do not sacrifice your relationship with Christ for public recognition.

Build a life that remains faithful to God whether earthly circumstances bring abundance or limitation.

THE CHRIST-CENTRED CLIMAX

WHEN THE PERSON BECOMES MORE PRECIOUS THAN THE PROVISION

Beloved, let me bring this message towards its conclusion.

There is something deeply significant about the encounter between Peter and Jesus in Luke 5.

Peter had laboured throughout the night.

He had caught nothing.

Jesus entered his boat.

Jesus instructed him.

Peter obeyed.

A remarkable catch followed.

But the story did not end with the catch.

Peter left everything and followed Jesus.

Now consider another man.

The rich young ruler came to Jesus possessing great wealth.

Jesus called him to follow.

But the man went away sorrowful because he had great possessions.

Think about the contrast.

Peter experienced an extraordinary catch and followed Christ.

The rich young ruler possessed substantial wealth but turned away from Christ.

One encountered the Lord and surrendered his livelihood to follow Him.

The other encountered the Lord but could not surrender his attachment to possessions.

The difference was not simply the amount of money involved.

It was the response of the heart to Jesus Christ.

Peter shows us that Christ is worth following beyond the blessings He gives.

The rich young ruler warns us that possessions can become obstacles when they take precedence over Christ.

Now consider Zacchaeus.

He was wealthy.

But when Jesus entered his life, his relationship with wealth changed.

He began to demonstrate generosity and a willingness to make restitution.

And consider Paul.

He experienced both abundance and need.

Yet he declared that Christ strengthened him in every circumstance.

These accounts confront us with one great truth.

The highest purpose of Christianity is not the accumulation of possessions but reconciliation with God and transformation into the likeness of Jesus Christ.

Let me say it another way.

You can have money and not have Christ.

You can have education and not have Christ.

You can have influence and not have Christ.

You can have professional success and not have Christ.

You can have religious titles and not have Christ.

You can even become familiar with Christian teachings and still fail to surrender to Christ.

But if you have truly received Jesus Christ, you have received the One in whom eternal life is found.

And if you belong to Him, His Word must increasingly govern the way you live.

Beloved, we must not become Christians who know how to pray but refuse to obey.

We must not become Christians who speak about prosperity but neglect integrity.

We must not become Christians who celebrate miracles but despise responsibility.

We must not become Christians who seek influence but neglect humility.

We must not become Christians who preach eternal life but live as though earthly possessions are everything.

We must know Christ.

We must abide in Christ.

We must obey Christ.

We must reflect Christ.

We must serve Christ.

And we must remain faithful to Christ.

THE FINAL CHARGE

DO NOT GAIN THE WORLD AND LOSE THE SAVIOUR

Church of the living God, hear this final charge.

If God gives you wealth, remain humble.

If He entrusts you with influence, remain accountable.

If He opens doors of opportunity, remain faithful.

If He blesses your work, remain generous.

If He allows you to experience seasons of abundance, remember those in need.

If you experience seasons of hardship, do not conclude that Christ has abandoned you.

If you are waiting for an answer to prayer, continue trusting Him.

If you have made mistakes, repent and return to His Word.

If you have neglected your responsibilities, begin taking them seriously.

If you have become spiritually cold, return to communion with Christ.

If you have become proud of your achievements, remember that every good gift ultimately comes from God.

And if you have been pursuing success without surrendering to Jesus Christ, recognise that no earthly achievement can replace eternal life.

Beloved, do not merely ask God to increase what is in your hands.

Ask Him to transform what is in your heart.

Do not merely ask for greater opportunities.

Ask for the wisdom and integrity to handle opportunities faithfully.

Do not merely ask for more possessions.

Ask for freedom from greed.

Do not merely ask for influence.

Ask for the humility to use influence responsibly.

Do not merely ask for a prosperous life.

Ask for a life that glorifies God.

Because one day, our earthly assignments will come to an end.

The applause will cease.

The titles will lose their earthly significance.

The possessions will remain behind.

The offices will be occupied by others.

The businesses will pass into other hands.

And we shall stand before God.

On that day, what will matter most will not be how impressive we appeared before people.

What will matter is our relationship with Jesus Christ and the reality of a life surrendered to Him.

Therefore:

DO NOT BECOME SO FASCINATED WITH THE PRINCIPLES THAT YOU FORGET THE PERSON.

DO NOT CLAIM TO LOVE THE PERSON WHILE CONTINUALLY REJECTING HIS PRINCIPLES.

RECEIVE HIS LIFE.

SUBMIT TO HIS LORDSHIP.

OBEY HIS WORD.

WALK IN HIS WISDOM.

STEWARD HIS GIFTS.

BEAR FRUIT THAT GLORIFIES THE FATHER.

And above all:

LET JESUS CHRIST REMAIN THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING.

For He is the Saviour who redeems.

He is the Lord who commands.

He is the Teacher who instructs.

He is the Shepherd who guides.

He is the Vine who sustains.

He is the Master who commissions.

And He is the King whose kingdom shall never end.

May we never become so successful in the eyes of men that we become unfaithful before God.

May we never become so occupied with working for Christ that we neglect walking with Christ.

And may we never gain the whole world at the expense of our souls.

In Jesus' mighty name.

Amen.

THREEFOLD ALTAR CALL

FIRST APPEAL: COME TO THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST

Perhaps you are listening to this message and you realise that you have been pursuing success without personally surrendering your life to Jesus Christ.

You have worked hard.

You have developed yourself.

You have pursued opportunities.

You have made plans.

You may even have achieved considerable success.

But you have never genuinely repented of your sins and trusted Jesus Christ as your Saviour and Lord.

Today, I want you to understand that Jesus Christ offers something greater than earthly success.

He offers forgiveness.

He offers reconciliation with God.

He offers eternal life.

He died for our sins.

He rose again.

And He calls sinners to repentance and faith.

Romans 10:9 declares:

"That if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved."

If you desire to surrender your life to Jesus Christ, you may express your repentance and faith in a prayer such as this:

PRAYER OF SURRENDER

Heavenly Father,

I acknowledge that I am a sinner in need of Your mercy.

I confess that my achievements, morality and religious activities cannot save me.

I believe that Jesus Christ died for my sins and rose again.

I repent of my sins and turn to You.

Lord Jesus, I place my trust in You as my Saviour and Lord.

Forgive me.

Cleanse me.

Give me a new heart.

Teach me to follow You.

Let my life belong to You from this day forward.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

Remember, salvation does not come through merely repeating a prayer. It comes through genuine repentance and faith in Jesus Christ, whose saving grace the prayer expresses.

If you have sincerely turned to Christ, begin growing in His Word, prayer and fellowship with a faithful Christian congregation.

SECOND APPEAL: RETURN TO OBEDIENT DISCIPLESHIP

Perhaps you are already a Christian.

You genuinely believe in Jesus Christ.

But as you listened to this message, the Holy Spirit brought certain areas of your life to your attention.

Perhaps you have neglected prayer.

Perhaps you have neglected your family.

Perhaps you have compromised your integrity.

Perhaps you have become careless with your responsibilities.

Perhaps you have allowed greed or pride to influence your decisions.

Perhaps you have been asking God to change circumstances while resisting changes He is calling you to make.

Today, the Lord calls you to repentance and renewed obedience.

Do not respond merely with emotion.

Respond with surrender.

Ask God for forgiveness.

Identify the necessary changes.

Seek appropriate help where required.

And begin walking in obedience.

PRAYER OF RENEWED CONSECRATION

Lord Jesus,

I acknowledge that You are not only my Saviour but also my Lord.

Forgive me for the areas in which my conduct has contradicted my confession.

Forgive my negligence, pride, dishonesty and disobedience.

Restore my love for Your Word.

Renew my desire for Your presence.

Teach me to obey You sincerely.

Let my faith become visible through love, integrity, responsibility and faithful service.

Strengthen me by Your Spirit.

In Jesus' name.

Amen.

THIRD APPEAL: SEEK KINGDOM FRUITFULNESS

This final appeal is for believers who desire to become more faithful and fruitful in every legitimate responsibility God has entrusted to them.

Perhaps you are a minister.

Perhaps you are a businessperson.

Perhaps you are a student.

Perhaps you are a parent.

Perhaps you are a professional.

Perhaps you are currently unemployed.

Perhaps you are struggling financially.

Perhaps you are waiting for an opportunity.

Whatever your present circumstances, ask God to help you remain faithful.

Ask Him for wisdom.

Ask Him for diligence.

Ask Him for integrity.

Ask Him for contentment.

Ask Him for discernment.

Ask Him for courage.

Ask Him to deliver you from greed and irresponsibility.

Ask Him to help you use your life for His glory.

And remember that the ultimate goal is not merely to become more prosperous in earthly terms.

It is to become more like Jesus Christ.

TWELVE SCRIPTURE-BASED PRAYER POINTS

PRAYER ONE: GENUINE SALVATION AND PERSONAL KNOWLEDGE OF CHRIST

Scripture: John 17:3

"And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent."

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, deliver me from empty religion and superficial Christianity. Grant me genuine faith in Jesus Christ and a growing personal knowledge of Him. Let my relationship with You be deeper than religious activities, public appearances and spiritual language. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER TWO: RENEWED INTIMACY WITH CHRIST

Scripture: John 15:4

"Abide in me, and I in you..."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, restore the priority of communion with You in my life. Deliver me from spiritual dryness, distraction and self-sufficiency. Teach me to abide in Your Word, remain in Your love and depend upon Your grace. Let my service flow from fellowship with You. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER THREE: GRACE FOR PRACTICAL OBEDIENCE

Scripture: John 14:15

> "If ye love me, keep my commandments."

Prayer:

Father, give me a heart that delights in obedience. Deliver me from the contradiction of confessing Your lordship while deliberately resisting Your instructions. Strengthen me to practise the truth I hear and to honour You through my daily decisions. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER FOUR: DELIVERANCE FROM HYPOCRISY

Scripture: James 1:22

> "But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves."

Prayer:

Lord, search my heart and expose every area of self-deception. Deliver me from pretending to be what I am not. Let my private conduct agree with my public confession. Produce sincerity, humility and genuine holiness in my life. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER FIVE: WISDOM FOR DAILY DECISIONS

Scripture: James 1:5

> "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God..."

Prayer:

Father, grant me wisdom for the decisions before me. Give me discernment in relationships, finances, ministry, employment, business and family responsibilities. Help me recognise what is right, reject what is harmful and act with understanding. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER SIX: FREEDOM FROM GREED AND MATERIALISM

Scripture: Luke 12:15

> "Take heed, and beware of covetousness..."

Prayer:

Lord, deliver my heart from greed, covetousness and the unhealthy pursuit of possessions. Help me to appreciate legitimate blessings without making them objects of worship. Teach me contentment, gratitude and eternal priorities. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER SEVEN: FAITHFULNESS IN STEWARDSHIP

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 4:2

> "Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful."

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, make me faithful in managing the time, abilities, resources, opportunities and responsibilities entrusted to me. Deliver me from wastefulness, negligence and carelessness. Teach me to use what I have responsibly for Your glory and the good of others. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER EIGHT: INTEGRITY IN BUSINESS AND RELATIONSHIPS

Scripture: Proverbs 11:1

> "A false balance is abomination to the LORD: but a just weight is his delight."

Prayer:

Father, establish truthfulness and integrity in my life. Deliver me from dishonest gain, manipulation, exploitation and corruption. Help me to honour my commitments, treat people fairly and maintain a clear conscience before You. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER NINE: DILIGENCE AND EXCELLENCE

Scripture: Colossians 3:23

> "And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men."

Prayer:

Lord, strengthen me to fulfil my responsibilities diligently. Deliver me from avoidable laziness, procrastination and careless service. Give me the willingness to learn, the humility to receive correction and the perseverance to complete legitimate assignments faithfully. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER TEN: CONTENTMENT AND GENEROSITY

Scripture: 1 Timothy 6:6

> "But godliness with contentment is great gain."

Prayer:

Father, teach me to be content without becoming complacent, ambitious without becoming greedy, and generous without becoming irresponsible. Give me compassion for those in need and wisdom to use my resources faithfully. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER ELEVEN: LASTING SPIRITUAL FRUITFULNESS

Scripture: John 15:8

> "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."

Prayer:

Lord Jesus, make my life fruitful through abiding in You. Produce love, holiness, humility, patience, integrity and faithful service in me. Let my influence encourage others towards righteousness. May my life glorify the Father. In Jesus' name.

PRAYER TWELVE: ETERNAL READINESS AND PERSEVERANCE

Scripture: Mark 8:36

> "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"

Prayer:

Heavenly Father, keep my heart fixed upon eternal realities. Deliver me from sacrificing righteousness for temporary gain. Strengthen me to persevere through trials, remain faithful in abundance and need, and finish my earthly journey in genuine faith and obedience to Jesus Christ. In Jesus' name.

COMPREHENSIVE CLOSING PASTORAL PRAYER

Heavenly Father,

The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,

We come before Your throne of grace with gratitude, humility and reverence.

We thank You for the gift of Your Son, Jesus Christ.

We thank You because You did not leave humanity without hope.

We thank You because, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

We thank You for the forgiveness of sins, the gift of eternal life and the privilege of reconciliation with You.

Father, today we acknowledge that Jesus Christ is not merely a teacher of moral principles.

He is our Saviour.

He is our Redeemer.

He is our Lord.

He is our Shepherd.

He is our righteousness.

He is our life.

And apart from Him, we have no saving hope.

Lord, forgive us wherever we have reduced Christianity to the pursuit of material blessings.

Forgive us wherever we have sought Your gifts more passionately than Your presence.

Forgive us wherever we have celebrated Your promises while neglecting Your commandments.

Forgive us wherever we have substituted religious activities for genuine fellowship with You.

Forgive us wherever we have allowed ministry responsibilities to displace personal devotion.

Restore us, O Lord.

Bring us back to the simplicity and sincerity of devotion to Jesus Christ.

Give us hearts that hunger for Your Word.

Give us spirits that delight in prayer.

Give us minds that submit to truth.

Give us consciences that remain sensitive to Your correction.

Give us lives that increasingly reflect the character of Jesus Christ.

Father, we pray for every person struggling with disobedience.

Grant repentance.

Grant humility.

Grant the courage to make necessary changes.

Where relationships have been damaged through pride, bitterness or dishonesty, grant wisdom for appropriate reconciliation.

Where resources have been mishandled, grant the discipline to begin responsible stewardship.

Where responsibilities have been neglected, grant renewed commitment.

Where integrity has been compromised, grant sincere repentance and the willingness to make matters right.

Lord, we pray for our families.

Let our homes become places of love, truthfulness, patience and godly instruction.

Strengthen marriages.

Guide parents.

Protect children.

Restore healthy communication.

Deliver our homes from cruelty, manipulation, bitterness and destructive conflict.

Teach us to demonstrate the love of Christ through our everyday relationships.

Father, we pray for those in business.

Give them wisdom.

Give them integrity.

Give them sound judgement.

Help them to treat customers and employees fairly.

Deliver them from dishonest gain.

Teach them responsible planning and financial management.

Where they encounter setbacks, grant courage and discernment.

Where opportunities arise, grant humility and responsible stewardship.

Lord, we pray for students and young people.

Give them a love for truth.

Grant them diligence in learning.

Protect them from destructive influences.

Help them to develop their abilities responsibly.

Give them the courage to resist corruption and dishonesty.

Teach them to seek Your kingdom above temporary recognition.

Father, we pray for those who are unemployed.

Those who are struggling financially.

Those whose businesses have suffered losses.

Those who are burdened by debt.

Those who are experiencing disappointment after years of effort.

Lord, let them know that their circumstances do not place them beyond Your compassion.

Provide daily necessities.

Open appropriate opportunities.

Raise up people who can offer legitimate assistance.

Grant wisdom for difficult decisions.

Strengthen their hope.

Protect them from despair.

And help Your church to become a community of genuine compassion, practical generosity and responsible support.

Father, we pray for ministers of the gospel.

Keep us close to Jesus Christ.

Deliver us from the pride of position.

Deliver us from the temptation to manipulate people.

Deliver us from financial dishonesty.

Deliver us from the pursuit of fame at the expense of faithfulness.

Teach us to handle Your Word responsibly.

Teach us to shepherd Your people with compassion.

Teach us to remain accountable.

Teach us to value character above applause.

Teach us to value truth above popularity.

Teach us to value souls above personal ambition.

May we never become so occupied with building ministries that we neglect building our lives upon Christ.

Lord, we pray for the entire congregation of Latter Day Glory Evangelical Ministry.

Make us a people who truly know Jesus Christ.

Make us a people who love His Word.

Make us a people who practise what we believe.

Let our worship be sincere.

Let our relationships be governed by love.

Let our financial conduct reflect integrity.

Let our service demonstrate humility.

Let our leadership reflect accountability.

Let our families become testimonies of Your transforming grace.

Let our young people grow in wisdom.

Let our workers serve faithfully.

Let our ministers remain devoted to Christ.

Let our lives become instruments through which others encounter the truth of the gospel.

Father, grant us the grace to prosper in the things that truly matter.

Let our faith grow.

Let our love increase.

Let our character mature.

Let our wisdom deepen.

Let our stewardship improve.

Let our generosity expand according to the resources You entrust to us.

Let our service become more fruitful.

And where You grant material increase, help us to remain humble, responsible and compassionate.

Where You permit seasons of limitation, strengthen us to remain faithful.

Where You lead us through suffering, sustain us by Your grace.

Where You call us to sacrifice, help us to obey.

Where You correct us, help us to respond.

Where You open doors, help us to walk with integrity.

And where You close doors, help us to trust Your wisdom.

Above all, Lord Jesus, keep our hearts centred upon You.

Do not allow the pursuit of prosperity to replace the pursuit of godliness.

Do not allow the desire for influence to destroy humility.

Do not allow the pursuit of achievement to consume our families.

Do not allow religious activities to replace genuine communion.

And do not allow the temporary attractions of this world to blind us to the realities of eternity.

May we live by the life You give.

May we walk according to the truth You teach.

May we serve through the strength You supply.

May we bear fruit through abiding in You.

And when our earthly journey is complete, may we be found among those who truly belong to You.

We ask these things in the precious and mighty name of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.

Amen and Amen.

FINAL DECLARATION FOR THE CONGREGATION

The congregation may be invited to affirm these words prayerfully and sincerely.

Jesus Christ is my Saviour and my Lord.

His grace is the foundation of my salvation.

His Word is the authority for my conduct.

His Spirit is my helper in holy living.

His wisdom will guide my decisions.

His teachings will shape my character.

His kingdom will govern my priorities.

His glory will remain the purpose of my fruitfulness.

I will not substitute religious activity for fellowship with Christ.

I will not substitute prayer for obedience.

I will not substitute prosperity for godliness.

I will not substitute earthly success for eternal life.

By the grace of God, I will live faithfully, serve responsibly, walk humbly and remain steadfast in Christ.

For me to live is Christ.

And to die is gain.

Philippians 1:21.

JESUS CHRIST IS MY LIFE, HIS WORD IS MY GUIDE, AND HIS GLORY IS MY PURPOSE.

Hallelujah!

SERMON MANUSCRIPT

Title: LIVING BY THE PERSON OF JESUS CHRIST, PROSPERING THROUGH THE PRINCIPLES OF JESUS CHRIST

Minister: Pastor Israel Oluwafemi Abiodun
Ministry: Latter Day Glory Evangelical Ministry
Location: Abuja, FCT, Nigeria
Ministry Website: www.latterdayglory.org

Foundational Scripture: John 15:5

> "I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing."

THE END.