



DECEMBER 2015

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THE FRUIT OF GRACE part two

Greetings O ye nation of kings and priests!

Our sincere prayer is that you all experience a joy-filled Christmas and have a happy New Year!

Last month, I began giving my testimony from my recent trip to India by talking about my first location Hyderabad, and this month I would like to continue by giving you the details of my second stop, Bangalore.

INDIA RECAP- BANGALORE

I made mention last month how the Holy Spirit spoke to me during this trip that "I came to teach but I came to learn" and, oh, how this came to be such a true statement... This trip, from beginning to end, became such a good learning experience that left me bringing back to the States so many invaluable ministry lessons, and Bangalore was certainly no different.

My friend Trinity and I arrived in Bangalore late on Monday evening, October 19th, and were met at the airport by my good friend and ministry partner, Jayraj Nathan. Jayraj has always been one of the most considerate hosts I have had. The Lord absolutely led him to meet various needs I had.

And this is one lesson that I learned- how God certainly works all things together for our good when we love Him and are called according to His purpose. During my entire trip, every desire was given to me. Every need was met in abundance. I learned this truth last time as well because when I returned two years ago, I had a man who had somehow found out that my car needed a paint job, offer to do it for free. And as I was thanking the Lord for it, He showed me that He did it to thank me for what I did over that trip. Isn't that awesome!?! Amen!

Well, here, the Lord gave me every desire and took care of me all along the way. I even had a couple of times where I felt like I was getting sick- either with a bad reaction to the food or a cold/flu- and they just suddenly went away. Perhaps you were praying for me at that moment or the Lord was simply intervening for me, I cannot tell. All I know is that Matthew 6:33 is certainly true- that when we seek first His kingdom, all these things will be added to us! Amen!

Well, Tuesday was my first full day in Bangalore... We started our Pastor's Conference and while we expected a little over a 100 pastors, we had over 150 to register and attend! Thank you Jesus!

That morning, I taught these pastors for 2 plus hours, and then after my time was up there, we went to a local village outside of Bangalore. This was a first for me- to visit one of the villages outside of the city- and it was a very eye opening experience to see how much more poverty stricken it was outside of the big cities.

The little church we visited that evening in the village was packed with many of the locals and there were no lights. Jayraj and I had to light the place up with our cell phones in order to see. (I'll tell you, there are so many things we take for granted here in the States, and electricity is one of them) Jayraj asked me to share in this church meeting and I began to share on the Hope of Heaven to this impoverished people. As Jesus said, "Blessed are the poor, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven!" This is the gospel to those who do not have much in this life.

Then on Wednesday, we returned to the venue where the pastors were gathered together...

Regarding the Pastor's Conference, I had planned to speak on 2 Chronicles chapter 20 because it was a series that followed the theme of the meetings, but every time I tried to go there, He kept leading me

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back to talking about His grace and love. So I went with the way the Holy Spirit was leading me and taught for over 6 hours over the 2 days of this conference and, saints, let me tell you, those pastor's began opening up like flowers to the truth of God's goodness! Glory! I really felt as though He was teaching those pastors His gospel of grace because I would venture to say that none present had ever heard the true gospel before. And, beloved, I believe many of them got it! The light bulbs were turning on and the flower bulbs were blooming! Glory to God! And, you know, this is the greatest miracle to me- when His children receive eternal truth that will liberate them and change their lives. To me, this is just as great as physically raising someone from the dead!

Then on Thursday & Friday, we held our 2 day School of Evangelism which consists of a small band of local missionaries who come in from their respective mission fields (in the villages) to be built up and edified before going back out to minister. I was not sure going into this trip what I was supposed to share with them, and did not know even as I sat there during praise & worship. But then, as I was introduced and approached the pulpit, I sensed that the Holy Spirit wanted to be the topic. So I ended up teaching them 7 times over the course of Thursday & Friday on the Person of the Holy Spirit and How to be Led by the Holy Spirit and it was *AWESOME!*

Saints, these messages on the Holy Spirit were so incredible! I had a moment of pure speechlessness in the middle of one of my messages as I was deepening my own personal revelation of these truths! I even broke out into song at the end of one of the messages and at the beginning of another one of them! There was such a sweet presence of His Holy Spirit in these meetings!

After the end of the School of Evangelism, I was so incredibly touched by the words of thanksgiving that were spoken over me from everyone- particular from Pastor Kumar's wife, Sarah. While I was ministering, I could tell that she was really receiving and getting what I was teaching them. So at the end of the meetings, she got up and said that it was like eating KFC (yes, they do have Kentucky Fried Chicken restaurants in India). She said she had paid several thousands of dollars to go to seminary in India and had never learned any of the things that she learned the week I was there. I sat there with tears in my eyes as she spoke and thought if I would have just come for her, it would have all been worth it. Amen!

This was yet another lesson I learned through this trip: It is not about numbers; it is about souls. Although we ministered to a lot of people throughout this trip, I saw the heart of the Master- that He will spend a great amount of resources and go through much effort to seek out that one sheep. Praise Jesus!

I had another lady at a house meeting who confirmed this by saying that as I began to share some truths from the story of Lazarus being raised from the dead, that she had just read that passage a day or two before that and had several questions that I answered all of them one by one. She said to me, "It is amazing to me that God would send a man across the world to answer these questions for me." That amazes me too! This is why I do what I do!

You know, I am reminded right now of a story I once heard of a man who God led into a park of a large city and then the Lord asked Him what he saw. This man responded, "I see buildings, airplanes, buses etc." Then the Lord asked him- "Do you want to know what I see?" He continued by saying, "I see people in those buildings. I see people in those airplanes. I see people in those buses."

You know, people are what are important, not things. We have a tendency to place more value on things like our careers, our possessions, etc. but God places value on the only thing in this world that is eternal- people! So, saints, we need to value that one person that God sends across our path more than anything else! Amen! Then on Friday, after the sessions of the seminar were completed, they had arranged for me to go and

share to this local prayer meeting where a large group of people from surrounding villages were gathered together to pray for 8 straight hours! Did you hear that? An 8 hour prayer meeting!

I ended up sharing on God's heart for us and the reason why He gives us commandments, ordinances and statutes- It is because this is what He does! Amen! One new revelation I got while teaching this was "Why does God tell us to love Him with all our heart, soul, mind and strength?" It is because He first loved us with all His heart, soul, mind and strength! Glory to God! This was such an intimate gathering because, as I shared my heart (or, more accurately, God's heart), I even got down on the floor with them during my message and shared while sitting in "Indian style."

Bangalore was a huge blessing! I absolutely love being able to share with other pastors, evangelists and missionaries because I see this as making the biggest impact. Why? Because as they become better equipped with God's truth themselves, then they are able to go and minister those same truths to others. And as I said, towards the end of both groups (the pastors and the missionaries), I could see these ministers of the gospel really "getting" the gospel for the first time! Many of these ministers were still talking about what I shared with them 2 years ago. I would venture to say they will be doing the same after these meetings as well. Amen.

Well, last month, we began talking about what I call "the fruit of grace" and learned that not only are we saved by grace, but we live the rest of our lives by grace too. We saw how the joy of our initial salvation is oftentimes lost because we generally stop focusing on the grace and love of God like we did at the beginning of our walks. It is so subtle, but it seems like the vast majority of Christians fall from the awareness of God's grace like this.

THE WORK OF SALVATION VERSUS WORKING FOR SALVATION

You see, if we are not able to joyfully serve the Lord, then we are not serving the Lord the way He intended for us to. When we are living the Christian life correctly, we will live a life that is full of peace and joy. It is only when we try to live the Christian life in the arm of the flesh that we are miserable and unfulfilled.

Saints, it is not the Lord's will for any part of our Christian life to feel like "work." Jesus said that His yoke was easy and His burden was light (see Matthew 11:30). The reason it is light and easy is because we are yoked up with Him! In those days, oxen were yoked up together in order to share the load they were carrying. So if we have been yoked up together with Christ, then we can be certain that He will bear any and all burdens. This will result in our walk being light and easy and not be hard and difficult. The only time that it becomes this way is when we, of our own accord, unyoke ourselves from Him and try and pull the weights of this life ourselves. This is when the Christian life becomes burdensome and overbearing and we, as a result, lose our joy.

But, no, Christianity is not to be "work." Certainly, there is discipline over the flesh and the resistance of temptation involved in the life of a Christian, but in regards to our growth and increase in every area of Christianity, it is God who does the work. The gospel of our salvation is that the work *of* salvation is accomplished completely by God. Therefore, we never have to work *for* salvation. Glory to Jesus!

In his epistle to the Philippians, Paul made a statement that has led many to believe otherwise...

In Philippians 2:12, he said, "Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." This verse has been grossly misunderstood, but to the casual observer, it seems to reflect those interpretations.

Many have quoted this verse as to say that we are to “work” for our salvation. On top of that, it also has been interpreted as saying that we are to work for our salvation motivated by fear and terror of what God might do to us if we don’t. Those kinds of interpretations are way off base...

A good rule of thumb is that when you interpret a verse you must understand the context and intention of the author. Here, notice what Paul said at the beginning of verse 12... He said, “Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only...” Here, Paul was commending them for their obedience to the Word of God that he recalled they had when he was present with them. But then he says, “...but now much more in my absence...” So then he turns their attention to how important it is for them to maintain the same discipline, the same perseverance, and the same effort now that he is absent from them. This is what Paul prefaced this statement with- “work out you own salvation with fear and trembling.”

So, again, Paul’s point was to get them to see the importance of maintaining the same kind of diligence in their walk now that he is not there as they did when he was present with them.

Notice the word “own” that was included in front of the word “salvation.” By adding this little, seemingly obscure word, Paul was making an important point. It was as if he were saying to them- “as opposed to doing it with my constant leadership, correction, and instruction.” In other words, the great apostle was telling them that they needed to apply the same level of diligence to work out their salvation on their own as they did when He was there watching them.

Finally, the phrase “with fear and trembling” is not, in this context, a reference to their attitude towards God (although we should have this reverential fear and carefulness in His presence). Rather, this phrase is a reference to their attitude and mentality in Paul’s presence!

PERFORMING FOR THE PREACHER

You see, what they were doing when Paul was present was the same thing we have a tendency to do when we are around the “man or woman of God.” They were putting on their best show for their father in the faith: being on their best behavior and saying all the right things.

Do you see how many believers do this same thing today? When they get around “the preacher”- the man or woman of God- they tend to walk a little more circumspectly. They become a little more careful with what they say and with what they do. They use all the right spiritual terminology and dance for the preacher when he or she is around. But oh, when the preacher is away, how the Christians will play! These same believers will let all that carnality just hang out when they are in the confines of their own home, won’t they? But on Sunday, they portray themselves as so holy in their self-righteousness. Now I know that you and I don’t ever do that. I am talking about “the other guy.” This is just human nature though. Our flesh seeks to impress, especially those who we consider our spiritual authorities. The carnal side of man tends to look for a man or woman to rule over them instead of looking to God. This is what Israel did in the Book of First Samuel when God Himself desired to be their King. But they wanted to have a man be their king instead, like the other nations. And God’s people still do this today... We like to look to our spiritual authorities and depend on them for our spiritual growth instead of looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith.

This is just one of the many ways in which people fail to depend on God. We need to understand that teachers, prophets, and other kinds of spiritual leaders cannot bring growth in your life. As we will learn shortly, it is God who gives the increase! So while it is good to benefit from the ministries God has put

in our lives, we must not totally depend on them for our spiritual progress. All they can do is present the truth to us and then we must apply those truths by the power of the Holy Spirit. Then, and only then, will we see growth and increase in our lives.

GOD'S WORK FROM WITHIN

Now we have not digressed from our subject either... Many believers also depend on other people and things to give them joy and happiness instead of depending solely on God. They will look to different kinds of relationships to find that fulfillment that only comes through Christ. They will only be happy and content when they are experiencing favorable or comfortable circumstances. But this is not where true joy is found! Joy is not found in having the perfect life with a perfect family and perfect circumstances. It is not obtained through any person, preacher, or circumstance. None of these things can work the joy of your salvation in your life. As Paul said, you must work out the joy of your own salvation. Why? It is because joy comes from your own personal relationship with God!

Paul goes on to explain this in his next statement in Philippians chapter 2- "For it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His own good pleasure." (vs.13)

The word "For" here at the beginning of verse 13 is oh so significant. This word "for" denotes the same thing as the word "because." So what Paul was doing in verse 13 was further explaining what he just said in verse 12 about us working out our own salvation.

You see, if Paul would have ended with verse 12, there would have been another misunderstanding about this passage of Scripture, and that is that we are the ones solely responsible for working out our salvation. Without verse 13, it would have made it sound like we are the ones doing all the work, right? But thank God, Paul did not end with verse 12; we have verse 13 to teach us the part God's grace plays on the working out of our salvation! The Holy Spirit foreseeing the wrong beliefs that could (and even have) come from his previous statement clarified it by inspiring the Apostle Paul to write verse 13.

Verse 13 goes on to say- "For it is God who works in you..." So again, by using the word "for" at the beginning of verse 13, Paul was saying that the truth he was about to reveal in verse 13 was why we can work out our own salvation.

You see, Paul was still on the same subject as he was in verse 12- that it was not Paul's presence which would produce change in them. And what he was saying here was that it was rather going to be God's presence within them that would bring the increase. In other words, our fruitfulness is not going to come from any outside help; it is going to come from the inside-out- namely, by the Holy Spirit who dwells within us. Amen!

Again, this is why Paul used the terminology "work *out* your own salvation." It is because the work of salvation in our life is a work that starts inside and then works its way out. God is going to produce this change by working in us and the fruit of the Spirit will come from within, not from without! Thank you Lord!

And I have even better news because this grace goes much deeper... Paul goes on to say that God is the One who works in us "both to will and to do for His own pleasure."

The words "to will" describe the "desire" for something. So when Paul said that God is working in us "to will...for His own pleasure", what He was saying was that God is working in us the will, the desire, and the "want to" that is in accordance with what pleases Him. In other words, He works in us the "want to"-

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the will and desire- to do what is good and pleasing in His sight. The words “to do” come from the Greek work “energeo” which usually is defined as “work or working.” It is where we get our English word “energy” from. So you could translate these words in this context as so- God is working in us “the energy or ability to produce” His own pleasure.

So combine these two definitions together and you get the following truth: God is working in us both to desire His own pleasure and the energy to do His own pleasure. In other words, God’s work within us includes the desires and the strength we need to have in order to fully please Him.

Let me further explain this by relaying an experience I once had... I remember a particular time in my Christian walk when I was frustrated with my continuous stumbling in certain areas of my flesh. On this particular occasion, I was praying about it and the Lord quickened this verse to me. When He did, He emphasized the seemingly insignificant word “both” that Paul used in this verse.

Now let me ask you a question- Why did Paul have to include the word “both” in verse 13? Wouldn’t the verse have made just as much sense if it would have been left out? Absolutely, it would have! Paul could have just simply said, “For it is God who works in you... to will and to do for His own pleasure” and it would have had the same meaning. But there is a reason that the Holy Spirit inspired Paul to include this word “both”, and that reason is because it was meant to emphasize a point, and that point is this... God is working in us *both* the desire for His own good pleasure and the energy to perform His good pleasure. In other words, God is working in us, *not only* giving us the desire to do what is pleasing to Him, but also giving us the ability to perform those desires! Glory to God! Now that is good news, my friends!

So when I saw this, faith was quickened in my heart! The Lord was letting me know- “Trey, those desires that you have to live a life of fully pleasing me, I have worked those in you. But not only that! I also work in you the ability to do what you have in your heart to do!” Praise the Lord!

You see, so many times we feel like the person Paul described in Romans chapter 7... This servant of God described in this chapter wanted so much to please God and do the right thing, but although he had the desire, he lacked the power to perform those desires. His testimony was “Oh, what a wretched man that I am!” And this is what having a desire to do one thing but lacking the strength and ability to fulfill those desires will do to us! It will frustrate us and make us miserable. But, praise be unto God, we don’t have to live that way! We have Romans chapter 8! And the gist of Romans chapter 8 is the same of that of Philippians 2:13- that we have God living on the inside of us in the person of the Holy Spirit, and He is working in us not only the desire to do what is right, but also the ability to live what is right! This is the power of the Spirit-filled life! He enables us to do what we could never do because of the weakness of our own flesh! Thank you Jesus!

Until next month... Maranatha!

Victoriously,

