

02/01/09

Luke 6:35      **KINDNESS: THE 2ND MARK OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY!**

If you want to spiritually mature, you're going to have to excel in kindness towards others. Jesus talked about it here in Luke, encouraging His listeners to be like God, who was kind to those who were "unthankful and evil". Once again, like forgiveness, the key is to imitate God. We're to forgive "even as" God in Christ forgave us (Ephesians 4:32), and here Jesus tells us to be kind to others like God. Ask yourself: when others think of you, would they think of you as a kind person? I know in my own life the answer has not always been "yes"! But to rise to greater levels of maturity in Christ, we're all going to have to extend more kindness – especially to those unkind to us.

God is love (1 John 4:8). That's why He's also kind, because kindness is a by-product of love. 1 Corinthians 13:4 proves this. When listing the characteristics of agape love, kindness is #2 on the list, right after patience. To walk in love demands we show kindness to others; whether they've been kind to us or not. Ephesians 4:32 says it so well. Even as God forgives, we forgive. Even as God is kind, we're kind too. Think of all the ways God shows kindness to you, and then do your best to imitate Him towards others. By performing random acts of kindness, you will not only please God, but raise the bar of spiritual maturity in your own life at the same time.

02/02/09

Ephesians 2:7      **GOD LOVES TO BE KIND. DO YOU?**

The second way to develop spiritual maturity is to be kind like God. Paul says here that God looks forward to an eternity of lavishing kindness upon His children. What more could be said about a God who is called love (1 John 4:8)! Do you look for opportunities to be kind to others? Most don't, but if we're to grow up and mature in Christ, we must. Galatians 6:10 says we should be doing good as we have opportunity. That means we're out there alert, always searching for ways to show God's kindness to others. There are many ways to be kind to others, if only we dedicate ourselves to the task!

Colossians 3:12 tells us to "put on" kindness. That means we're to wear kindness like we wear clothing. If you're spiritually mature, kindness is what people are supposed to see when they look at you, in the same way that when you're out in public, people only see the clothes you're wearing, not what's underneath! Most believers are too busy to be kind, and that's a tragedy. It takes effort to be kind, more so when you're endeavoring to be kind to those unkind to you. But once you get into the habit and discipline of it, you'll never want to go back. Being kind draws you closer to God, and helps you navigate through very difficult relationships, circumstances and situations. God loves to be kind. Do you?

02/03/09

Galatians 5:22      **IS KINDNESS A FRUIT YOU'RE BRINGING FORTH?**

Paul gives us a list of fruits in Galatians 5. They're not the fruits of the Holy Spirit, as many translations would lead you to believe. When Galatians 5:22, don't be fooled by the capital "S" in the word "spirit". That was added by translators who weren't sure if the word should be capitalized or not. In the Greek, the word isn't capitalized – because it's talking about the fruit of the born-again believer – not the fruit of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit doesn't need to bear fruit – we do! We're the ones growing and maturing, and kindness is one of the fruits that should be harvested and manifested in our lives more and more. Is your fruit tree bearing the fruit of kindness?

In John 15:4,5, Jesus tells us that He's the vine, we're the branches. The fruit on a fruit tree doesn't grow on the tree trunk, but on the branches. That's us in Christ! We're supposed to bear fruit for His glory, and that's what the Holy Spirit wants to do in each believer. Kindness is one of the fruits we're to display, and one of the six expressions of spiritual maturity. In 2 Peter 1:7, we see that there's a

progression of growth that God wants for us after salvation. Notice that kindness is one of items listed. 2 Peter 1:8 says that if those things be in you and abound, you will be fruitful in life for God. You will not fall away over time, but instead, as time goes by, you'll become stronger, more fruitful and more mature in Jesus. Praise God! So take a look at the end of your branches, and see if people can see the fruit of kindness. The sustenance for the fruit is already within you, just like the life source for any fruit tree is in it's trunk. The Holy Spirit is ready, willing and able to work with you to develop this fruit, so get busy and let it happen in Jesus' Name!

02/04/09

Luke 10:37 GO AND DO LIKEWISE

When we show kindness to others who are unkind to us, we're expression our spiritual maturity. No Bible story tells this truth better than the Good Samaritan. A lawyer came to Jesus to find out what the greatest commandment in the law was. The answer was in 3 parts. 1). Love God. 2). Love yourself. 3). Love your neighbor as yourself. The lawyer wanted to know who his "neighbor" was. Read the story and see for yourself. The Jew left for dead on the road was an enemy of the Samaritan who stopped to help. The Samaritan knew this of course, yet it didn't stop him from altering his travel schedule to help a man in need – even though that man hated him. Jesus said to "go and do likewise". Are you doing likewise?

3 men had a chance to help the stricken Jew beaten and left for dead. The first 2 were fellow Jews – one a Levite, the other a priest. Of all people who should've stopped, it should've been one of these 2 guys! Levites and Priests - they were the ones who taught the Law to the common man, the ones who were supposed to know more about how to live the Law. But they were just religious, not kind. The Samaritan was the third man to encounter the wounded man – not the first. But he understood that kindness extended to your enemies is the way to love God, fulfill His commandments, and demonstrate true spiritual maturity. Today, we need to find more good Samaritans. There's so many opportunities to be kind to those in need, if only we'll commit to availability. Will you?

02/05/09

Romans 12:14 BE A BLESSING WITH YOUR KINDNESS

Paul admonished the Roman Christians to bless those who were persecuting them. Jesus said the same thing in Matthew 5:44, and Luke 6:28. Romans 12:21 tells us to overcome evil with good, and one of the best ways to do that is with kindness. Kindness is disarming. It creates a situation that's very hard for the devil to work in. It gives God an opening, and a means to show His love to the ones you're being kind to. This is evangelism at work. This is spiritual maturity in manifestation.

When you're not sure how to respond to criticism, personal attack or spiritual persecution, look for ways to show God's kindness. It might seem like your acts of kindness are unappreciated at that moment, but never forget the power of your gesture! When you sow kindness to someone whose been unkind with you, you're sowing spiritual seeds that God can take and multiply. He'll not only begin His work in their hearts, but He'll also bless you with much more in return. This is the law of sowing and reaping. So next time you're under attack, instead of reacting in anger, react instead with kindness. Sooner or later, those seeds of kindness will bring a mighty harvest for God's glory.

02/06/09

2 Corinthians 6:6 ARE YOU A MINISTER OF KINDNESS?

When Paul wrote to the Corinthians, he gave them a list of traits which all true ministers of the gospel should demonstrate. Kindness is on the list. Remember ALL of us in the body of Christ are ministers, given the ministry of reconciliation (2 Corinthians 5:18). Jesus said it was the responsibility of

all Christians to go into all the world to preach the Gospel (Mark 16:15). To do this effectively, we must learn to be kind whenever we can be, knowing that our kindness is not only a mark of maturity, but also, a demonstration of our calling as ministers of Christ. Unkind Christians are hypocrites, because they purport to represent Jesus, yet fail to walk in the kindness that Jesus demonstrated in His earthly ministry. Don't live in spiritual hypocrisy! Be kind – whenever, wherever, to whomsoever!

In 1 John 3:18, we're told to love, not in word or tongue, but in deed and truth. Love can express itself in different ways, but one of the most obvious is kindness. Not just to those kind to us, but especially to those unkind to us. That's the challenging part, but that's why there are rewards offered in heaven! The rewards in heaven won't be given to those who did what was easy. They'll be given to those who "overcome" something (see Revelations chapters 2 and 3). Overcome the fleshly tendencies to be unkind to those unkind to you. Instead, rise above your flesh, and operate and live at a level of spiritual maturity that manifests the love and kindness of God day in and day out. That's the life style that gets the rewards in heaven, because the rewards are reserved for those who dedicate themselves to the acquisition of spiritual maturity, and do not accept anything less in life. I pray that be you today, and everyday for the rest of your life in Jesus!

02/07/09

Matthew 5:44

#### PRAYER: THE 3RD EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

Volumes can be written on the importance of prayer, yet so few of us in the body of Christ ever become strong in prayer. But if we're to become spiritually mature, we have to develop a vibrant prayer life. There is no substitute for this. In Genesis 1:26-28, we clearly see that God's creative intent for man was to give him dominion and authority on earth. God does not have dominion on earth today, we do. That's why prayer is so important, because it is the most powerful way to exercise our authority and dominion while here on earth. That's why Jesus was such a prayer warrior, and why He taught His disciples to become prayer warriors too. If you want to walk in spiritual maturity, you must become strong in prayer.

But again, as we see in Matthew 5:44, prayer is to be made for the unlovely as much, if not more, than for the lovely. Spiritually mature believers understand their responsibility here, and embrace it with all their hearts. Do you earnestly pray for those persecuting you? Most believers do not. Do you follow our Lord's example – praying on the cross for those who put Him up there? Most of us would be screaming venom and threats from the cross – promising to come back in 3 days to smoke those religious hypocrites with the judgment of God! In Luke 9:54, the disciples wanted to send fire down on those persecuting Jesus, but they were rebuked because they didn't understand the proper response. They weren't mature in spirit yet. Vengeance belongs to God concerning those who seek to harm you (Romans 12:19). That means we're to pray for those who abuse us, and with all our hearts, believe for God to bless them and help them. That's hard, isn't it? But it's necessary, expected and required by God. Think of something right now who's been a thorn in your side. Be mature – pray for them!

02/08/09

1 Samuel 12:23

#### THE SIN MOST BELIEVERS COMMIT FREQUENTLY

One of the ways we express our spiritual maturity is by praying, and specifically, praying for our enemies. Jesus taught this, and lived it while on earth. Many others in the Bible did this too. They prayed for their persecutors, tormentors and jailers. Paul prayed for those who forsook him in his hour of need (2 Timothy 9-16). Stephen prayed for those putting him to death (Acts 7:60). They demonstrated true spiritual maturity. Do you? Will you? Samuel told the Jews that if he ceased praying for them, it would be SIN to him! Let that statement sink in. And remember, the people Samuel was talking about

were not a bunch of loving, spiritual, kind-hearted people. They were a bunch of backslidden mumblers, grumblers and complainers. Nevertheless, he was responsible to pray for them. If he didn't, he would be charged with sin before God. Have you been committing this sin in your own life?

Sad fact is this: most Christians pray for themselves, and for those they love, like, respect and admire. They hardly ever pray for anyone else, but that is the true expression of spiritual maturity. Praying for others when they attack you, take advantage of you, hurt you, lie about you, cheat you, steal from you – and whatever else that's contrary to godly living. Yes, continue to pray for those you love, and for your needs in life to be met. But don't forget to pray just as much, and with just as much enthusiasm, for those who hate you, use you, despise you and malign you. Rise above mediocrity, and become a true prayer warrior for God!

02/09/09

Ephesians 2:8,9      **HUMILITY: THE 4TH EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY**

For decades and generations, religion has misunderstood humility. Humility is not the blind acceptance of less than what Jesus died to make available. No, true humility is quite the opposite. When humble, according to the Word of God, you're blessed beyond all you could ask or think, and you freely, openly and enthusiastically give God all the credit for it. That's humility, and that's one of the ways we express spiritual maturity before God and men. Whatever you have, whatever you have accomplished, whatever good has come to you in life – its all because of God. Give Him all the credit, because only He deserves it. You and I are nothing without Jesus, so don't allow a spirit of pride to ever have a place in your heart. Spend time daily thanking God for all He's done for you. Stay mature – stay humble!

We are God's workmanship, not our own. He made us and saved us. We are what we are today by the grace of God, and nothing else (1 Corinthians 15:10). Its true we have a role to play, and that God has chosen to limit Himself on earth to partnership with man, but nonetheless, if it weren't for God's grace manifested in our lives, we'd be dead in sins and on our way to hell. James 1:17 says EVERY good gift, and EVERY perfect gift comes from God. It didn't come from you, or from any other source besides God. The moment you start to think you're responsible for the blessings coming your way, you're in trouble! Don't open the door to the devil by thinking you're somebody special outside of Christ! Remember who you were before you found Jesus. Pride goes before a fall (Proverbs 16:18)!

02/10/09

Proverbs 29:23      **THE WAY TO GOD'S HONOR IN YOUR LIFE**

Proverbs talks a lot about the evils of pride, and the rewards for humility. Mature Christians understand that before we can enjoy honor from God, we must demonstrate humility before God (Proverbs 15:33). God wants to honor you, but He waits for your humility first. He wants you to always remember that without Him, you could do nothing (John 15:5). Immature believers think they're a somebody when they're really a nobody (Romans 12:3). That's a grave mistake, one which opens the door to the enemy, and gives him place to steal, kill and destroy. Don't give him that kind of opening in your life! Stay protected! Stay humble! Enjoy the blessings of the Lord, but when you do, make sure you remember where they came from, and who gave them to you.

In Deuteronomy 8:11-18, God warned the Jews about this. He told them not to forget Him once the blessings came their way. He told them that it was He who gave them the power to get wealth, not themselves. We need to stay vigilant on this today as well. The moment you start thinking you're so important God can't do without you, that's the moment He chooses to use someone else, and you're left to fend for yourself!

02/11/09

1 Peter 5:5

### ARE YOU WEARING THE RIGHT CLOTHES TODAY?

God tells us to be clothed with humility, but most believers are not. Most Christians are clothed with pride, and seem to enjoy wearing those clothes over and over again! But if we're to walk in spiritual maturity, we must put on humility every day. We must live our lives in the light of the fact that apart from Jesus, we can do nothing. He is the vine, not us (John 15:1-7). We are the branches, and the life source for the branches is not in the branches, but the vine. This would seem to be a no-brainer for intelligent Christians, but to the contrary, most believers have this haughty view of themselves that makes them feel good, and feel important. Unfortunately, they fail to realize that when they take that posture with themselves, they open the door to the devil, and allow him access into their lives.

I love the story in Luke, about the two men who went to the temple to pray (Luke 18:9-14). One was a Pharisee, who was trusting in His works to earn favor from God. The second man was a publican, who knew he was a sinner, and had disappointed God many times. The Pharisee took great pride in comparing himself to the Publican, reminding God about how righteous he was, and how repulsive the publican was. On the other hand, the Publican wouldn't even look up to Heaven, but just knelt and kept beating his chest in repentant sorrow, asking for God's mercy instead of His judgment. Jesus said he was the one who got His prayers answered, not the Pharisee. Why? Because he came to God clothed with humility, and God loves that. He already knows we've committed sin when we come to Him. But what He looks for is the attitude displayed by the publican. Humility! Are you clothed with humility today? Are you like the Pharisee, or the Publican?

02/12/09

Galatians 1:10

### BEING UNAPPRECIATED – AND LOVING IT!

Paul said he was serving God, not men. In Galatians 2:20, he said that he no longer had a life, but Christ was now living His life through him. This kind of mentality reveals the fifth way to express spiritual maturity. Being unappreciated, and loving every minute of it! In 2 Corinthians 12:15, Paul told the Corinthians that the more he loved them, the less they appreciated his love. But earlier in the same letter, he also said the love of God "compelled" him towards these ungrateful people (2 Corinthians 5:14). That simply means he would keep on loving them, whether they appreciated it or not. Most believers today don't practice that kind of mindset. They don't mind helping others, as long as those they help express an appropriate measure of gratitude in return. However, if no gratitude is expressed, most Christians move on and with indignation, declare those ingrates to be "unworthy" of time and attention.

But spiritually mature people act differently to those who don't express appreciation or gratitude. Why? Because they do what they do for the Lord's approval, not for man's approval. It's difficult to love people who take advantage of you, but the spiritually mature can do it if God asks them to. Yes, the Bible says we're not to throw our pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6), but many believers use that verse as an excuse to withdraw their love from ungrateful people – never bothering to ask God about it first. If God tells you to cease in your attempts to reach out to someone who doesn't care, then by all means obey God. But you'll find in many cases, God is much more willing for the effort to continue rather than for it to cease. And if you're doing what you're doing for Jesus and not for men, this won't be a problem for you. Once you settle it in your head that you're reaching out because you're serving Jesus and no other, the response won't matter anymore. If they appreciate you, fine, but if they don't, that's fine too! For the mature believer, it's enough to know God sees it all, and will one day give rewards to those who did their work as unto the Lord, and not as unto the response of men.

02/13/09

Colossians 3:16,17

### WHO ARE YOU SERVING TODAY?

The 5th expression of spiritual maturity is the ability to work for the Lord, and never mind how men receive you, or appreciate you when you attempt to minister to them in the Name of the Lord. I call it being unappreciated – and loving it! Meaning to say; when you reach out and try to help people as a Christian, you're doing it for the Lord and no other. Therefore, whether people love you or hate you, it doesn't matter because you know the Lord will judge fairly one day, and your deeds of love and obedience will not go unnoticed or unrewarded by the Lord (Hebrews 6:10). Knowing that should elevate you to a level of operation that insulates you from the responses of the people.

Don't worry about how people "receive" you or not. Don't worry about their "response" to your efforts to love them in Jesus' Name. Remember, you're working for the Lord, so if He's satisfied with you, it doesn't matter if anyone else is or not. In Colossians 3:23,24, Paul reminded the believers about this. We do what we do for the Lord and not for men, KNOWING that from the Lord we'll receive the promised rewards. That's what most believers don't know, and that's why they have problems continuing to offer help to those they think don't appreciate their efforts. It's the same principle Jesus mentioned in Luke 6:32-35. It's not hard to love those who love you. It's much harder to love those who don't appreciate the love! But that's exactly what the mature are asked to do as we live to serve Jesus. Do you measure your kindness based upon the response of those you're reaching out to? Be like Jesus, and live to find His pleasure in your obedience to Him, and nothing else!

02/14/09

2 Corinthians 7:2

### MOVING ON: THE 6TH EXPRESSION OF SPIRITUAL MATURITY

When Paul wrote this letter, he exhorted the believers to receive him as one who had done no wrong to anyone. How can he say that, when he was the one in Acts who was guilty of persecuting the church so vehemently? Because he's grown up spiritually, and learned the 6th expression of maturity, which is to move on from failure, and live in the light of God's forgiveness and grace. Many believers need to learn to do the same thing today. They're still living in the shadow of their past sins, mistakes and failures. This is an expression of spiritual immaturity, and must be overcome before God can manifest Himself the way He wants to, and promises to in the Bible. Have you confessed your sins? If so, let go of them and receive your forgiveness by faith, not by feelings. You're not forgiven because you feel like it, but because God promised it in 1 John 1:9.

Many Christians labor and live under the devil's condemnation because they allow him to convince them that God is through with them because of their sins or mistakes. That's such a lie! Nothing could be further from the truth. Look at Paul as the classic example of this. In Philippians 3:13-15, he told us about his former conduct, and former sinful life. But he had enough sense to accept his forgiveness, and move on from those past failures in confident assurance that God not only forgives, but forgets! If God forgets your sins when you confess them to Him, why should you keep remembering them? Move on and get on with your life. You don't have to wait to feel forgiven before you get forgiven. Forgiveness comes by faith, and faith is not a feeling. You aren't forgiven when you feel it, you're forgiven when you ask for it. From that point, the mature believer exercises the discipline needed to move on, and never let the devil bring condemnation over sins already confessed and forgiven. No matter what you've done in the past, receive your forgiveness and move on! You'll never become spiritually mature until you learn to do this.

02/15/09

Psalms 126:5

### THE IMPORTANCE OF TEARFUL SOWING

If you study the Bible on the subject of prosperity, you will come to learn about the master law of sowing and reaping. There are many verses which address this spiritual law, but whichever one you chose to meditate on, the law itself remains the same. If you want to get more money from God, you have to give more money to God. That's the way it works – for money, as well as anything else promised in God's kingdom. Jesus said the whole kingdom of God (which would include your finances) is like men planting seeds in the ground (Mark 4:26). Any farmer will tell you – if you want a harvest, you have to plant seeds first. The planting always precedes the harvesting, and many times in life, the planting will have to be done in tears – when things aren't as wonderful as we'd like them to be financially. Do you manage your finances with that truth in mind?

If you understand the truth about sowing and reaping, you're going to have to learn the discipline of tearful sowing. What is that? Its sowing when it hurts. Or, giving when everything within you says you shouldn't. Being generous when everybody says you're stupid to do so. Tearful giving is a part of the lifestyle of generosity, and that's the ONLY lifestyle God promises to bless in His word. God never promises to bless the cheapskate – the person who looks for ways to avoid giving at all costs. No, God says He will bless the generous soul, and make him "fat" (Proverbs 11:25/22:9). "Fat" means the generous soul is the one who walks in the blessings of God on a continual basis. And to get to that point, you're going to have to learn to give when it doesn't look like the wise thing to do in the natural. That's tearful giving, but as the Psalmist says, those who do it in faith, trusting God, will no doubt enjoy the rewards of their decision. The verse after verse 5 says it this way: He who continually goes forth weeping, bearing seed for sowing, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. (Psalms 126:6)! "Doubtless" means absolutely – without a shadow of a doubt! If you want that kind of promised security from God, learn to give with joy – with tears if necessary, by faith, knowing God is good for His word in your life!

02/16/09

Ecclesiastes 11:4

**LOOK AWAY FROM NEGATIVE ECONOMIC INDICATORS!**

As we said in yesterday's verse-a-day, sowing must ALWAYS precede reaping in the kingdom of God. And even though many Christians have heard the sermons which present that truth, very few of them actually put the laws into practice on a daily basis. They don't tithe, and they don't give offerings above their tithe. Why? Because they're guilty of doing what this verse today talks about – observing the wind and storm clouds of life, and allowing what they see in the natural to influence their decision to give or not give to God. Listen, if you're not willing to sow in the times of financial famine (Genesis 26:1-12), you're not going to enjoy the rewards that God has promised to those who give generously as a way of life. If you give generously, especially in times of famine, when things look bad all around you, you're telling God, the devil and your circumstances that you have faith in God's word. Do you have that kind of faith? Prove it! The next time you're facing the wall financially, what will you do with the resources at hand?

The longer you look at the wind and storm clouds on our financial horizon, the less likely you'll be to sow the needed seeds which put the laws of sowing and reaping in operation for you. Instead of meditating on all the problems (real or perceived), spend time renewing your mind to God's promises on the subject of prosperity. Be like Isaac, who sowed in a time of famine, and in the same year, reaped a 100 fold return on the seeds he sowed. The Bible says that AFTER he sowed seed in the time of famine, God BEGAN to bless him. What was God waiting for? For Isaac to plant his seed, in spite of the fact there was a severe famine in all the land! You see friend, your financial well-being is not up to God – it's up to you! Your life – like everyone else's – has ups and downs – good times and bad times in the natural. Develop the habit of sowing generously, no matter how threatening the storm clouds look like, or how

strong the wind is against your face! When you do, you position yourself to reap a mighty harvest of God's blessings! If Isaac can prove it in an Old Testament time of famine, you can prove it today in your life, no matter how negative your "economic indicators" may be!

02/17/09

Amos 9:13

#### ITS TIME FOR ACCELERATED RETURNS IN YOUR LIFE!

We're living in a time when time as we know it is running out. Because of this, God is more than ready to step up the timetable when it comes to the financial laws of sowing and reaping. That's what this verse in Amos is referring to. It's a prophetic reference to our day now, exhorting us to continue to give generously, EXPECTING a shorter and shorter time between the time we sow, and the time we reap. Why? Because time is running out, and much work still needs to be done evangelistically worldwide. Always remember that prosperity's purpose is soul winning – nothing else! It takes money to win souls, and the more you have the more you can give – and the more we can get done to reach souls before Jesus returns. So as time in this age comes to a close, understand the time is coming, and I believe is upon us now, when the reaper will actually overtake the sower! Isn't that a wonderful way to live!

How do you get into this kind of financial flow? Give as you have never given before! Never mind the gloomy economic forecasts, or the lies the enemy will whisper in your ear about what will happen to your finances if you give generously to God's work. God's system of finance is not controlled by, or dependent upon, anything in this world that is organized and controlled by men. Now of course He will USE those systems to bless us, but He's not dependent upon them! All He requires is our commitment to a generous lifestyle, and once that has been established, the laws of sowing and reaping WILL work, no matter what things look like to the contrary. And as we give and sow our seeds, we have every right to expect God to speed up the whole process so that it will seem to us as if the reaper has indeed overtaken the sower! Imagine sowing your seeds to God, and getting returns so fast you can't hardly believe it! That's what has been prophesied for our time, and for your life – if – you believe it, act on it in simple faith, and sow your seeds into the kingdom of God. Its time!

02/18/09

2 Corinthians 9:8

#### DO YOU KNOW WHY GOD PROMISES TO PROSPER YOU?

Over the past 30 years or so, much has been taught about Divine prosperity. Some of what has been said is scriptural, most of it unscriptural. Because of that, many Christians have an erroneous understanding of prosperity, and don't have the first clue as to WHY God promises prosperity in the Bible. Never forget this: PROSPERITY'S PURPOSE IS SOULWINNING; NOTHING ELSE! If you remember that, you'll be able to avoid the deception that is rampant within Christian circles about the subject of prosperity. What did Paul say here to the Corinthians? That God wanted to bless them abundantly SO THAT they could abound in every good work of the ministry. This is not what many are preaching prosperity for. They just want you to line their pockets with your money, and they don't mind mis-representing the scriptures to do it. Beware! Pray before you just give to anyone who is tugging on your emotional purse strings! There are many good churches and ministries doing their best to reach souls, but there are also many, many churches and ministries that are BAD GROUND to sow into.

It takes massive amounts of money to fulfill the Great Commission (Mark 16:15-20). That's no problem for God – there's plenty of money on earth to complete the task. But when Christians start hoarding money unto themselves, the whole process begins to break down and the only one left dancing is the devil! Much of what is preached as prosperity today isn't prosperity at all. Its greed disguised as prosperity. You need to really take a hard look at how some preachers are living, and ask yourself if this is appropriate – given the fact that millions are lost, dying in their sins, and have no avenue in which to

hear the life-saving gospel. Of course, God wants you to be blessed, and there's nothing wrong with that – to a point! But how much is enough? How big a house does someone need to live in? How expensive a car does it need to be? When does it stop? As a missionary, I've devoted more than 25 years to labor amongst third-world people whose idea of prosperity is quite different than that in our country. In the Philippines, prosperity is many times just having enough to buy a bicycle! Someone will say: "Well, God can afford to be lavish with me! After all, He can afford it!" I've heard that for so long it nauseates me! Yes, God WANTS to lavishly bless us, but not so we can just lavishly heap possessions unto ourselves. We're to be lavishly blessed so we can give lavishly to finance the work of ministry! That's what prosperity is all about – not about how much I'm able to acquire, accumulate and possess in this life, but how much I'm able to channel into the work of reaching and changing lives – one life at a time!

02/19/09

Romans 1:16            **DON'T BE ASHAMED!**

In this very revealing passage, Paul tells us why we should never be ashamed of the gospel. According to what he says here, how is the gospel to be defined? **IT IS THE POWER OF God UNTO SALVATION TO EVERYONE WHO BELIEVES!** That's why you're never to be ashamed when you share the good news with someone. No matter how they respond or react, always remember the gospel of God **IS** the power of God! It doesn't just contain God's power – it **IS** God's power! Let that truth sink in for a moment.

If you're standing in faith for God's power to manifest in some way in your life today, get busy and start sharing the gospel with people in your areas of influence. That's where the power is to be found, and so that's where the power to help you will be found also. In Romans 10:17, it says faith comes by **HEARING**, and **HEARING** by the Word of God. Why? Because the gospel of God is the power of God unto.... Unto what? Unto anything you need! Salvation, healing, prosperity, answers to prayer, spiritual counsel or guidance, deliverance – whatever! That's why it's called the **GOSPEL!** The word "gospel" means "good news!" As people hear it, faith gets deposited down inside their hearts, and when they release that faith through words and actions, God's power goes to work. In order for you to receive the power of God, you have to know where it's to be found first. God's power for anything you need today is found in the announcement of good news! It's the announcement that releases the power, so don't be ashamed to announce and proclaim the gospel! Share it today. Share it often. Share it without apology!

02/20/09

1 Peter 3:15            **ARE YOU READY TO PREACH?**

Peter told his disciples to be ready to give an answer to anyone who wanted to know about Jesus. Are you ready to do the same today? In Romans 1:15, Paul made a similar statement to the Roman Christians. He said he was **READY** to preach the gospel in Rome. Are you ready to do the same at work, or at school, or wherever you're going today? You should be, because that's your primary assignment in life. Get ready, be ready, stay ready! Ask yourself this question: Am I living my life out of the overflow in my heart? Those who are living life out of the overflow of their hearts are the ones who are always ready to give people answers and share the gospel effectively. Is there that Divine overflow in your life today?

We witness and share our faith in many ways. We preach in many ways. We need to be aware of the fact that people are watching us all the time, and many times it's not so much what we say about Jesus, but the lives we live that convey the message effectively. When you live your life out of God's overflow in your heart, you're constantly ready to share because you're constantly basking in God's presence. You're not trying to "find a message", or "find a verse" to share. They're just coming up out of you, and

you're not even thinking about it. If Christians spent as much time with the Lord in prayer and Bible study, as they do with the carnal pursuits of this life, we'd all be much more able to witness effectively. We'd consistently be ready because we'd constantly be overflowing with God's love, God's mercy, God's patience, forgiveness, forbearance, etc. When Moses came back to the Jews after he had spent time in God's presence, the Bible says his face glowed so brightly the people asked him to put a veil over his face! What was he doing? Preaching out of the overflow! He wasn't trying to glow, it was just the by-product of time spent with God. And that's how you get ready, and stay ready! Take the time to spend time with God! In doing so, you'll be ready at all times to preach the gospel, and give answers to those who have questions!

02/21/09

Luke 6:22,23

#### HOW DO YOU KNOW ITS TIME TO LEAP FOR JOY?

Everybody loves to be happy. Everybody loves to have things going their way. When good things come your way, and good news abounds in your life, its easy to leap for joy. But Jesus said there were other times when leaping for joy was appropriate. He tells us to leap for joy when everybody is against you, lying about you, persecuting you and refusing to even talk to you – because you're obeying God and doing your best to live right and do right in His sight. Is this easy? Of course not. You can't do it unless you keep your eyes on the Lord, and stay VERY focused on Him and Him alone. Why? Because it hurts when people lie about you, and say all manner of evil against you falsely. Its not easy to take, but that is what Jesus teaches us to learn to do. Can you do it? Most believers can't!

I've had to practice what I'm preaching to you – more than once. Its not an easy thing to do, but it is the mature thing to do. In fact, Matthew 5:44 exhorts us to pray for those who use us and despitefully come against us. The natural, immature thing to do is to want to fight back, defend yourself, accuse your accusers, and exact your measure of revenge. That may feel good for your flesh, but its disaster for you in the spirit realm. And when you're tempted to do that, remember what Jesus said to do. Leap for JOY! Joy! Imagine that! Not leaping for sorrow, or anger, or retribution – but for joy! Remember, the joy of the Lord is your strength, and in times like that you need God's strength to pull you through. So let joy have it's way, and leap for joy in the midst of tests, trials and difficulties with people. If you can learn to do this apart from your feelings, you'll be well on your way to insulating yourself from what people say or do against you, and that is certainly something to leap for joy about!

02/22/09

Romans 4:16

#### CALLING THINGS THAT BE NOT....!

Abraham is called the father of our faith. Why? Because he acted in faith like God, and basically, set the example for all of us to follow afterwards. What did he do that made him so "God-like?" He called things that were not as though they were. You and I have to do the same if we're to ever be pleasing to God, because Hebrews 11:6 says without faith its impossible to please God. Faith chooses to look at things through God's word, rather than by how they may appear through our five physical senses. This takes a discipline and a dedication that most believers aren't willing to undertake. Its so much easier to just accept things the way they appear in this world, rather than choosing to change them by faith if they contradict God's word. This is the difference between the Abraham kind of faith, and the Thomas kind of faith (John 20:29).

Most Christians are like Thomas. They won't believe in something unless they can contact it, or verify it, or feel it – by their five senses. Abraham, on the other hand, chose to take God at His word, and believe something was true even though his five senses said it wasn't. Remember there are two kinds of truth. There's physical truth, and spiritual truth. Spiritual truth is a higher truth, and always supersedes

physical truth. As an example: your body may tell you you're sick, but God's word tells you you're healed by the stripes of Jesus (1 Peter 2:24). Its true you're sick physically, but that truth can be superseded by God's word if you choose to make it so! How? By agreeing with what God said, and putting His word in your mouth to bring what you desire to pass. That's what God was doing when he changed Abram's name to Abraham. Abraham means "Father of many nations". At the time he was so named, he was father of no one, and his wife was barren! Yet, he chose to believe God, and as a result became the great man of faith that we read about today. Follow in his footsteps today as well. Stop calling things as though they appear in the natural world. Start calling things as though God's word is final authority – because it is!

02/23/09

Romans 5:5                    **YOU CAN LOVE LIKE GOD LOVES!**

When a person accepts Jesus as Lord and Savior, the Holy Spirit comes to not only recreate their spirit, but also to take up a permanent dwelling within their spirit forever. When that happens, the love of God is "shed abroad" in that person's heart, making them capable of loving like God does. Now, it doesn't take a genius to look around and see that in the body of Christ, very few of us love like God loves, but nonetheless, its possible. Not only is it possible, its commanded! In several places in the New Testament, the Bible specifically commands Christians to walk in love. One of the best examples of this is John 13:34,35. Not only did Jesus command us to love in that passage, but He also said it would be the only way Christians were to identify themselves as true believers. Think about that!

Walking in love like God requires exercise, discipline, and a commitment to be pleasing to the Lord. You have to practice walking in love, and the more you do, the better you get at doing it. There are opportunities every day to walk in love, because we're always surrounded by people who aren't walking in love! So each time you're confronted with the decision in how to react to things people say or do around you, make the choice to walk in love! When you do, you're exercising your spirit and bringing it to the place where it becomes so strong, nothing the devil tries can succeed against you. This is the way it was with Jesus. Satan tried everything in the book against Him, but without success. The Bible says Jesus was tempted in all points like we are, yet without sin (Hebrews 4:15). The love of God within Jesus so strengthened Him that no matter what the devil threw at Him, it was repelled forcefully, and authoritatively. And although Jesus will forever be the only Man to walk this earth sin-free, we can come to the place where God's love so dominates our lives, we become mirrored reflections of Jesus Himself! Jesus told His disciples that when they saw Him they were looking at His Father. Well, for us today in Christ, let's dedicate ourselves to love to such a degree, that when people see us, they're really looking at Jesus! Its possible! It can be done! I'm on the journey, and getting better at it everyday. How about you?

02/24/09

Romans 6:13                    **ARE YOU DEAD OR ALIVE?**

When you accepted Jesus as Lord and Savior, you were translated out of the kingdom of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of God Son (Colossians 1:13). When that happened, you died to the flesh, and became alive unto God in spirit. This is what Paul was trying to get the Roman Christians to understand. He was imploring them to cast off the works of the flesh, and put on the new man in Christ. We must be doing the same thing today if we're to be pleasing to God, and "meet" for the Master's use. Remember, your flesh is still dead to sin, and its your eternal enemy. It never wants to obey God, and always wants to rebel against God. You must control it, as Paul said in 1 Corinthians 9:26. For this to

happen, it will start with a mind-set that considers the flesh dead, even as it continues to rise up and usurp authority daily. To live above the flesh, you must consider it dead, and treat it as such.

You can't live in the spirit while your flesh is allowed to run rampant in your life. You have to "kill it", and reckon it dead each day. This is what Paul was talking about when he said that he died "daily" (1 Corinthians 15:31). You'll have to do the same if you want to rise above carnality, and truly become spiritual in Christ. Die daily! That doesn't mean you kill yourself physically – obviously. Rather, it means crucifying the flesh, and considering it dead in your life. You give it no place for expression, and constantly – daily - you keep it subdued under your spiritual feet by meditating and doing the Word of God. It's a day to day battle, but a battle that must be won! And remember, yesterday's victory over the flesh doesn't guarantee victory today! Each day is a new day, and a brand new opportunity for both your flesh, and your spirit! So as you rise each day, ask yourself; Will I be dead or alive today? Which way will I go? Will you let your flesh have its way, or will you treat it as a dead entity, and walk in the newness of life in Christ? Only you can make that choice, but depending on how you choose, you'll either empower the devil, or empower God. You are the deciding witness!

02/25/09

Romans 7:21                    SLEEPING WITH THE ENEMY!

We are created as tri-part beings. We are spirits, we have a souls, and we live in a bodies. Spirit, soul and body. If you read Romans 6,7 and 8, you find an extensive discourse on the battle all of us must wage and win daily. It's the fight between the desires of our flesh, verses the desires of our spirit. Paul had this struggle, and we all have it today. Yet, sad to say, most believers spend most of their time pampering the enemy, coddling the enemy, and sleeping with the enemy! How do they do that? By giving place to their carnal appetites and desires. Are you one of those? I hope not! As an example: look at how much money the world spends on making the flesh look better, younger, stronger – whatever! The cosmetics industry is huge – all driven by people's fleshly desires. Now there's nothing wrong or sinful with doing your best to look nice and presentable because we're all Ambassadors for Christ, but at the same time, you have to understand that as your enemy, your flesh will never be satisfied with what you pamper it with today. It will always want more tomorrow, and this is the deceptiveness of sin.

So keep everything in balance, and don't give place to your flesh. Its dead to sin, and wants to drag you to hell if it can. It wants to do three things: eat, sleep and sin – and not necessarily in that order. The more you cater to it, the more dominant it becomes in your life. Eat one Krispy Kreme donut today, and your body will want a dozen of them tomorrow! And if you're not strong enough to resist, you'll go out and give it what it wants! Paul said we're to subdue our flesh (1 Corinthians 9:26,27). That word "subdue" in the Greek means to "beat the body black and blue". The flesh isn't going to want to pray, or read the Bible, or attend church, or do anything that your born-again spirit wants to do. So you have to MAKE IT OBEY! There's no other way, because it won't cooperate on it's own. It can't – its dead to sin! Recognize this, and make the appropriate choices daily. Instead of sleeping with the enemy, kick that puppy out of bed and never let him in again!

02/26/09

Romans 8:26                    DO YOU PRAY IN TONGUES?

Prayer is one of our greatest expressions of authority on the earth today. When God created man, He gave him dominion over everything that was created (Genesis 1:26). If you want to know why the world is in such a mess: with wars, disasters, catastrophes and human suffering in epic proportions, just remember that God doesn't have the dominion down here, we do. He said so, and set it up that way right from the beginning. That's why prayer is so important, because praying is our exercise of authority and

dominion. Its where we join forces with God, and partner with Him to get things done according to His will and His Word. And one of the best ways to pray is to pray in tongues. Do you? If you don't, its probably because you don't yet know how powerful, and how important it really is.

According to our text today, the Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses in prayer, because we don't always know exactly how to pray for things. Sometimes we do, but many times we don't. And in those times when we don't know exactly how to pray, or what to say in prayer, tongues becomes an invaluable method to connect with God and get things done in the spirit realm. Sometimes we face situations too complex to pray about with our mental understanding only. We need additional information, and that's what tongues will provide. The Holy Spirit knows EXACTLY how to pray the perfect prayers to get things done for God, so He provides us with supernatural, spiritual words to speak forth, words which accurately and perfectly address the situations being prayed over. So when you are faced with "mission impossible" in prayer, don't try to tackle those issues with your own understanding only. Take advantage of the presence and capabilities of the Holy Spirit living within you. Pray in tongues! Paul said he prayed in tongues more than all the Corinthians put together (1 Corinthians 14:18). He knew the importance of praying in tongues. You should too, and do it accordingly – everyday, as often as possible.

02/27/09

Romans 8:27                    WHY PRAY IN TONGUES?

When we pray in tongues, we're yielding ourselves to the desires of the Holy Spirit, who wants to work with us to pray perfect prayers that always agree with God's perfect will. Many times when we rely solely on prayer from our intellect or natural awareness of certain situations, we're praying with an incomplete understanding of what we're praying about. But when we partner with the Holy Spirit and pray in other tongues, we allow the Holy Spirit to provide us with the right words to speak, words with accurately and directly target our prayers, making them powerful expressing of our authority on earth. When the Holy Spirit is allowed to furnish us with the right words to pray, we're ALWAYS praying in line with God's will, and that's when our prayers really become powerful weapons against the forces of darkness.

Instead of trying to pray prayers that rely on what we know, which many times is incomplete, we should be taking advantage of the Spirit's indwelling presence as often as possible when praying. God knows how we should be praying, and the Holy Spirit knows that and goes to work when we yield ourselves to Him. When that happens, great things get accomplished in our times of prayer. You might not see immediate results or changes, but rest assured there is work taking place in the unseen realm of the spirit to bring God's perfect will to pass. Many times in my own life, I've faced situations too complex for me in the natural. In those times, I just shift gears and begin to pray in tongues. It not only helps me to connect with God and pray correct prayers, but at the same time, it refreshes me spiritually, and like a battery charger, charges me up to stay strong and steadfast for the work of the Lord (1 Corinthians 14:4). So pray in tongues today – and every day – as often as you can!

02/28/09

Psalms 25:2                    SEE THE BIGGER PICTURE WHEN YOU PRAY IN TONGUES!

Another reason why praying in tongues is so important is because we can't see the whole picture like God does. We can't know what the devil is planning against us, but the Lord does know, so when we take time to pray in tongues as a normal part of our daily prayer life, many times we're praying against the strategies of the enemy which he hasn't yet launched against us! The things you're praying over in tongues today may be addressing demonic attacks the enemy is planning against you tomorrow, or next month, or even next year! Romans 8:26,27 tells us that when we pray in tongues, we're praying according

to God's perfect will. Well, of course God's perfect will is for us to triumph over our enemies, rather than the other way around. To that end, the Holy Spirit will work with us in prayer, and through tongues, provide us with prayers that cut off the devil, and prevent him from successfully launching attacks against us.

Many times people get tired of praying in tongues because they can't see any tangible results. But people like that need to remember that many times, its what DOESN'T HAPPEN that is the answer to our praying in tongues! Only eternity will tell, when we stand before the Lord in Heaven, will we be able to see all the plans, strategies and attacks the devil had wanted to use against us, but was never able to because of our praying in tongues! That's why you should NEVER be discouraged when praying in tongues. Tongues is always a valuable use of time, and is always the best way to pray, not only about current problems, challenges or situations, but also about future battles we might be involved with against the devil. The things you're praying about in tongues today might be pertaining to things six months, one year or two years ahead of you in life! Not just concerning protection, but also promotion, favor, health prosperity as well. So don't be discouraged about praying in tongues. Be encouraged! There's no better way to pray, that's why the devil fights against this so hard.