

Greetings. Welcome to session 9 of this series on “Abounding in the Good Works of God.” Session 7 contained a powerful message about the commitment Jesus Christ demonstrated when he allowed himself to get arrested, beaten and ultimately nailed to a cross. Then we learned in session 8 what we received as an inheritance due to his selfless act of love. God honored his commitment by raising him from the dead and seating him at his own right hand. Through Jesus Christ, our God has promised us amazing and wonderful things.

2 Peter 1:3-4

3 *By his divine power he has granted to us all things that pertain to life and godliness through the knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and excellence,*

4 *through which he has given to us precious and exceedingly great promises, so that by them you become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of lust.*

‘exceedingly great’ in this verse is a translation from the Greek word *megistos*. This is the only place in the Bible where this word is used. The root word of this, *megas*, means very great. *Megistos* adds more to this. It means the greatest of the great.

The word ‘precious’ comes from the Greek word *timios*. It means to be highly valued, honored or esteemed. God has given us promises that are very high in value. They are the greatest of the great. Would you like to tap into these promises? My goal in the next two sessions is to help guide you into claiming and receiving these ‘greater than great’ promises.

Ephesians 3:20

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work in us,

The word ‘power’ is a translation from the Greek word *dunamis*. It is potential power. We have the potential within us to do far and above what we can even ask or think of doing. How awesome is that? This power is packaged within the gift of holy spirit that God gave us when we got saved. Let’s look back again at that verse in 2 Peter.

2 Peter 1:4

through which he has given to us precious and exceedingly great promises, so that by them you become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of lust.

Notice the words “having escaped from the corruption that is in the world because of lust.” When we got saved, God cleansed us internally by way of the holy spirit that he gave us. However, our mind did not get changed. Once we get saved, it is our responsibility to line up our mind and heart to follow where God’s spirit would lead us rather than to continue to commit ourselves to the things of this world.

Matthew 6:19-21

*19 Do not store up for yourselves treasures on the earth, where moth and rust consume, and where thieves break through and steal,
20 but store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust consumes, and where thieves do not break through nor steal,
21 for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

The mindset of the natural man is to store up treasures on Earth. His motivation for living is to do things that will help him improve his current living conditions. God is now asking us to seek treasures that are spiritual in nature.

2 Corinthians 5:17

So then, if anyone is in union with Christ, he is a new creation, the old things have passed away, Look!, things have become new.

We are no longer the same person that we were before we got saved. We are a new creation. God is now exhorting us to live according to this new nature.

Colossians 3:1-3

*1 Since, then, you were raised with Christ, keep on seeking the things that are above, where Christ is seated at the right hand of God.
2 Keep thinking about the things that are above, not the things that are on the earth,
3 for you died, and your life has been hidden with Christ in God.*

God changed us internally at the time we got saved, which is what I like to call “the new birth.” Now God wants us to change externally. It starts with

our thoughts and then gets manifested by our actions. We are to focus our thoughts on spiritual things rather than physical things. Notice verse 1 says to “keep on seeking” and verse 2 says to, “Keep thinking.” God is asking us to seek and think to live this way on a consistent basis, not just one time.

Ephesians 4:22

you are to put off the old self that belongs to your former way of life and that is being corrupted because of deceitful desires,

Do not ask God to change your mind for you. It is your responsibility! You must put off those negative and deceitful aspirations from the world.

Ephesians 4:23-24

*23 and be renewed in the spirit of your mind,
24 and put on the new self, which has been created in the likeness of God in true righteousness and holiness.*

You and I must make a deliberate decision to renew our mind. It needs to happen on a daily and even a moment to moment basis. We are to think Godly thoughts rather than thoughts associated with the world. In verse 24 we see that God wants us to think of ourselves as being holy and righteous. If we focus on our flesh, we will see our shortcomings and our sin nature. If we focus on who God has created us in Christ Jesus, we will see our true self, which is holy and righteous.

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to the pattern of this age, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you can test and approve what the will of God is—the thing that is good and pleasing and perfect.

The people of this world who are not saved are going to try and get you to conform to their way of thinking and believing about life. We are not to follow after the people of the world. Rather, we are to be transformed. This word ‘transformed’ is a translation from the Greek word *metamorfoo*. We get our English word metamorphosis from it. It means a complete change in form, structure and substance. A caterpillar that once crawled on a leaf later gets transformed into a beautiful butterfly that can fly across the sky! That is what God wants to happen in our life. It all begins in the mind. We

must change our thoughts to think of ourselves as being who God says we are. And we are a new creation in Christ Jesus.

Let me explain to you how the renewed mind works. For a moment, think about your favorite food. Picture yourself eating it. Now, if I were to ask you to stop thinking about that food, what would you do? If you focus your mind on **not** eating that food, you're still going to be thinking about it, right? The correct approach is to replace that thought in your mind with something totally different. Once you do that, the original thought you had will automatically disappear. For instance, think about how much God loves you. As you dwell on that thought, you are no longer thinking about your favorite food. You have replaced it with new thoughts about God's love. That is how the renewed mind works. You replace the thoughts of your old natural self by dwelling on the positive truths God says about you.

Acts 8:9-11

9 But there was a certain man, Simon by name, who before that time used sorcery in the city, and amazed the people of Samaria, saying that he himself was someone great,

10 to whom they all paid attention, from the least to the greatest, saying, "This man is that power of God that is called Great."

11 And they paid attention to him because for a long time he had amazed them with his sorceries.

Simon was operating power from evil spirits. His sorcery amazed the people and they thought Simon was a great man. One way you can distinguish a true man of God from a fake one is to observe who is actually receiving the glory. Is the true God receiving the recognition for the person's actions? Or is the man himself being glorified? In this case, the true God was not being honored and recognized at all. All of the glory was going to Simon. Simon fed off of the crowds. He loved drawing attention to himself. Notice in verse 11 that this has been going on for a long time.

Acts 8:12-13

12 But when they believed Philip, who was proclaiming the good news about the Kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.

13 And Simon also himself believed, and being baptized, he continued with Philip. And seeing signs and great miracles being done, he was amazed.

Wow! Simon the evil sorcerer has now received salvation. He is a new creation in Christ. But getting saved does not change your heart. That is something you must decide to do of your own free will. Simon was still struggling with his sinful old man nature. He still wanted people to think that he was the great one.

Acts 8:18-19

*18 Now when Simon saw that through the laying on of the apostles' hands the spirit was given, he offered them money,
19 saying, "Give me also this power, so that everyone on whom I lay my hands, receives holy spirit into manifestation."*

Although Simon was cleansed internally by the blood of Jesus Christ, his mind was still corrupt. Peter had the right motivation for operating the power of God. He was using it to minister to God's people. Simon had a much different agenda. He saw this power and thought to himself, "Wow. I can learn how to use this power and turn it into a profitable career for myself." Simon looked at Christianity as being a business rather than a means to reach people for our Lord Jesus Christ.

I have witnessed many people like Simon in the USA and also in other countries such as Kenya and Uganda. Men and women who are using the things of God in order to make themselves rich here on Earth. Here is God's answer to that type of behavior.

Acts 8:20-23

*20 But Peter said to him, "May your silver perish with you, because you assumed the gift of God could be purchased with money.
21 You have no part or share in this matter, for your heart is not right before God.
22 Therefore, repent of this wickedness of yours, and pray to the Lord that the intent of your heart is forgiven you.
23 For I see that you are in the gall of bitterness and in the bond of unrighteousness."*

One day we will all stand before God in judgement for our actions. Simon was fortunate that Peter had the love and courage to confront him. There was still time for Simon to change his heart to serve God rather than himself. Simon was saved but he had not renewed his mind to the things from above. His priority was still to gather worldly riches and bring

recognition to himself. Jesus Christ made it very clear that we cannot serve two masters.

Luke 16:13

“No servant is able to serve two lords, for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be devoted to the one and think little of the other. You are not able to serve God and Wealth.”

We have to make a decision which master we are going to serve. The riches of the world? Or our Lord Jesus Christ. It isn't just a onetime decision either. It is a decision we must make over and over again as temptations continually come our way. I have seen pastors who were originally committed to the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ who later in life were deceived by Satan and then fell into a trap of seeking Earthly glory instead of Heavenly glory. We need to be cautious that this doesn't happen to us.

1 Timothy 6:6-9

*6 But godliness with contentment is great gain,
7 for we brought nothing into the world, neither are we able to carry anything out,
8 but if we have food and covering, we will be content with that.
9 But those who are determined to be rich fall into temptation and a snare and many senseless and hurtful desires that plunge people into ruin and destruction.*

There are popular Christian leaders in the USA who are making millions upon millions of dollars from their Christian followers. Some are using this money to buy private jets, expensive cars, multi-million-dollar homes and who knows what else. Like Simon, when you have a specific purpose or plan in mind to be rich, you fall into temptation and a snare. This verse is as true today as it was when it was written over 2,000 years ago.

1 Timothy 6:10-11

*10 For the love of money is a root of all kinds of evil, which some, reaching out for it, have been led astray from the faith and have pierced themselves through with many sorrows.
11 But you, O man of God, flee these things, and diligently pursue righteousness, godliness, trust, love, endurance, and meekness.*

Do you see from verse 11 that it is up to you to decide if you're going to renew your mind to pursue the things of God? You cannot serve both God and money. If you start to see yourself getting tempted in the wrong direction, God says, "Flee these things." Run away from it. And the way to run away from it is to pursue righteousness, godliness, trust, love, endurance and meekness.

1 Timothy 6:12

Fight the good fight for the faith, lay hold on the life in the age to come, to which you were called, and confessed the good confession in the sight of many witnesses.

Instead of getting entangled in the things of this world, we need to fight the good fight for the faith and to set our sights on the age to come. Don't spend your life here on earth trying to gather worldly riches. That's not what we signed up for. That's not where our commitment is supposed to lie. Instead, choose to pursue God's plan for your life and the eternal rewards that you will receive after this life is over with.

Many years ago, my mother picked up a newspaper and read about a man who was in prison. Our Lord Jesus Christ tugged on her heart to visit with him and share the Gospel. This was in a small town in Missouri during the 1970's. Women were not supposed to do prison ministry work. Only men did that. But my mom knew what she had been called to do. There were those who mocked her. Others simply discouraged her. She was told that she wouldn't be allowed inside of the prison because she was a female. She didn't listen to any of them. She only listened to Jesus Christ.

On the day she set out for her visit, she got sick. But she didn't let that stop her. She drove to the prison anyway. When she got halfway there, her car broke down. She refused to give up. She called her husband on the phone. He came out, figured out what was wrong with her car, and got it working again. She then drove the rest of the way to the prison.

When she arrived, do you think the guards turned her away? No. God had called her to be there. And when God calls you to do something, you will always be successful. Although she was a woman, the guards let her inside. She went and ministered to that man. Later on, after that man finished his time in prison, he became a minister for the Gospel. My mom continued to return to the prison week after week, for several years. She ministered to a

man at the jail who had been heavily involved in drug dealing. Shortly after that, this man's wife came to my mom and said, "Can you minister to our son as well? He's also in the prison." My mom then went and ministered to their son. He had also been convicted for dealing drugs. Later, after the father and son were released from prison, they both dedicated themselves to Christian ministry.

Many people were led to salvation by my mom's visits to that prison. Why did her ministry produce so much spiritual fruit? Because she obeyed the direction of Jesus Christ rather than the direction of people who told her not to do it or that she couldn't do it. One day she was offered a position as pastor of a church associated with that prison. She turned it down. Why? Because she knew that it was not what God had called her to do. Her gift ministry was to minister to people one-on-one, not to feed a congregation.

Instead, she and her husband purchased and ran an antique store. Over the next fifteen years, lots and lots of people walked into that store and were ministered to by my mom. That was the ministry God called her to do by way of our Lord Jesus Christ. He knew she had a talent to minister at an individual level. God knows your talents and abilities too. If you will look to him, and seek him, he will guide you and direct you to the ministry that is best for you.

Now I'd like to ask a question. What was the motivation for my mom to own and operate an antique store? Was it just a job so my mom could earn a living? Or, was it part of God's plan, giving her the ability to love and serve him by reaching out to people who would walk into her store?

I hope you understand that I am not saying that God doesn't desire for his people to have material possessions to enjoy. For sure, living here in the USA, I have been blessed with many earthly things. In the Old Testament, Abraham was a faithful servant of God and he was also a very rich man. By operating the wisdom of God, Joseph, from the book of Genesis, was able to bring huge riches to the country of Egypt. It is never about money. God looks at the heart. It is only when people choose to love money more than they love God that it becomes a problem.

Where is your heart? Is it to serve man so you can gather riches for yourself? Or, is it to utilize whatever material possessions God has blessed you with for the service of his Kingdom? My mom loved antiques. And she

used her passion in that field to give glory and honor to God. That is what we all must do. To utilize our talents, abilities and our passions for the purpose of serving our Lord Jesus Christ.

When we choose to do that, God promises us riches that are of very high value. We learned in 2 Peter 1:4 that these riches are the greatest of the great. They are not material riches but spiritual, in the form of eternal rewards which God will be passing out to those who dedicate their life to serve his purposes rather than their own.

In the next session we will address the very important topic of what it means to serve the true God. Until then, remember that God loves you, and so do I.

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