

1Thessalonians 5:20-22 "Gift Of Prophecy Part 2"

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 ²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances.
²¹ But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

Considering our study of last week we looked at how the Scriptures distinguish between O.T. prophecy and the N.T. gift of prophecy. We've seen how the apostles and the O.T. prophets were used by God to record the very words of God, complete in every way; inspired by the Holy Spirit, infallible and inerrant. And so, today we have in our possession this very word of God which is fully reliable as the Lord has miraculously preserved the Scriptures, which is the Bible.

As Isaiah the prophet put it under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, "The grass withers, the flower fades, but the Word of our God shall stand forever." (Isa.40:8)

The O.T. prophets and the N.T. apostles were chosen by God to give us His very word with all authority. The Scriptures are complete. We are neither to add to, or subtract from God's written word.

This necessarily means that the N.T. gift of prophecy does not carry with it the same authority as the written word of God which we have in our possession.

In contrast the N.T. gift of prophecy fully assumes that men will make mistakes in their attempts to give revelations from God. However, being less than perfect in those attempts, they are never instructed to be put to death, but instead, we are told this.

1 Thessalonians 5:20-22 ²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances.
²¹ But examine everything *carefully*; hold fast to that which is good; ²² abstain from every form of evil.

In other words, those prophecies are to be tested. "Hold on to the good", and exclude those things which do not align with the written word of God, which can be the only true test of any prophetic utterance.

But maybe we're getting a little ahead of ourselves. After all, we're making an assumption that the gift of prophecy is still in effect

today in the church. Some would suggest that this gift died out with the apostolic age in the first century, which would make this discussion a moot point.

These folks would quote 1Co 13:8 -10 "Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, *they will cease*; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, *it will pass away* 9 For we know in part and we prophesy in part 10 but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears."

"When that which is perfect comes" or as the NIV puts it "when perfection comes", is what they point to and conclude that it refers to the completion of the Bible, the perfect word of God.

Without getting into a lengthy discussion it must be pointed out that if the perfect that is referred to in 1Cor.13:10 is the Bible then we must conclude that those things which will pass away as a result of its completion cannot be limited to prophecies and tongues as noted in 1Cor.13:8, because in that same verse is knowledge, and all knowledge has not passed away.

Even if that knowledge is in reference to the knowledge God revealed in giving us His word, it still has not, nor will ever, pass away, since the word of God is eternal.

Others suggest that the perfect that is referred to is Jesus Christ. And though it would certainly include Him it seems that the word perfect, which can also be translated completion, is more likely to refer to the consummation of all things where Jesus has completed His perfect plan once and for all and all things have come to pass according to His plan.

1Co 13:9 "For we know in part and we prophesy in part....." In other words, we know imperfectly because we are imperfect and we live in an imperfect world. We prophesy in part..... In other words, we prophesy imperfectly for the same reasons.

But when all is completed we will no longer need these imperfect means to walk with God. Why? Well, Paul tells us in 1Co 13:12 "Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. *Now* I know in part; *then* I shall know fully, even as I am fully known."

This is the context of the previous verses stating that certain things will cease. You'll note that there is a "now" and "then" element to this context. The "now" part suggests that prophecy, tongues and knowledge, in relationship to our walk with Christ, is still in effect,

even now. But, Paul identifies the “then” part with knowing fully even as we are fully known.

When will we know fully? When the Christ returns and we will see Him as He is and all veils will be taken out of the way.

1 John 3:2-3 ² Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. ³ And everyone who has this hope *fixed* on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

Today we see things in the reflection of a sin-filled and sin-affected world and so we see, in a spiritual sense, poorly. But there will be a time when we will see face to face. In other words, there will be no more dimness of reflection because we will be completed in glory, God's glory.

Therefore, all that God gave to the church for its edification and its ability to know Him and love and serve Him are very much in need today and are still in effect for precisely the same reasons that they were needed in the first century, though they are imperfect in the sense that they are used in and with imperfect vessels.

And for this reason we must consider the words Paul wrote to the church in Rome.

Rom 12:6 "We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a man's gift is prophesying, let him use it in proportion to his faith."

Not to do so then falls into the category that Paul speaks of in our text.

1 Thessalonians 5:20 ²⁰ do not despise prophetic utterances.

The phrase, “prophetic utterances” in the NASB is actually one word in the Greek; *prophetei*, and it is the word for prophecy. And this is why other translations simply use the word prophecy.

^{NIV} **1 Thessalonians 5:20** do not treat prophecies with contempt.

^{ESV} **1 Thessalonians 5:20** Do not despise prophecies,

^{NKJ} **1 Thessalonians 5:20** Do not despise prophecies.

Well, if the Thessalonians were told not to despise, or treat prophecies with contempt, what exactly does that mean and does it include the church 2,000 years down the road?

This is one of the questions I raised last week at the end of the message that introduced this topic of the N.T. gift of prophecy. Some of the other questions that I raised last week will also be answered today.

Is teaching in the church the same as prophecy? Why are women allowed to prophesy but not to have authority over the church? Can a prophet prophesy at will? How do we know if someone has the gift of prophecy? Where and when in the church should this gift be used? Does the N.T. prophet ever make mistakes in his or her prophecy and what is the penalty if they do so? Why is prophecy important to the church?

The gift of prophecy is with us today because the Spirit of God, who gives good gifts, is with us today. The question is what is the gift of prophecy and how is it to be properly used?

Paul says to seek after the gift of prophecy in 1Co.14:1
"eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy."

The gift of prophecy is a wonderful way of how God personally enters into our lives with a word of encouragement and edification from His throne, but it is conveyed through His people by merely human words revealing a spiritual prompting, which is why they must be tested.

The gift of prophesy is one of those gifts that lets us personally experience the reality of how Jesus is truly in our midst. Our Lord may give a word to lift us up, to inform us of His working in our lives and to direct us as we seek Him. But when we look at the gift of prophecy we must recognize its main function in the Body of Christ which also answers how it is to be used.

Paul makes it abundantly clear in 1CO 14:3 "But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort." Or as the NAS puts it: "But one who prophesies speaks to men for edification and exhortation and consolation."

If the gift of prophecy is being used in a way that is contrary to these distinctives then we must question and test to see what we can recognize as coming from God and whether or not this is actually a prophetic word.

For example someone may say they have heard a word from God and that in a short amount of time someone in your family will meet a tragic end and it will disrupt the whole church.

Question: Does this alleged prophecy edify the church? Does it exhort and console the Body? No! Therefore the test would have to question the validity of such a word as being prophecy.

This brings up another important point. If anyone prophecies, they will have to submit to the scrutiny of such testing. Such testing will take into account as to whether this prophecy is edifying, exhorting or consoling. It must also take into account if what is said contradicts the written word of God.

Our text makes it clear that the gift of prophecy is not to be automatically accepted simply because someone is claiming to be speaking a prophetic word.

1 Thessalonians 5:21 ²¹ But examine everything *carefully*;

The Greek word for examine is *dokimazo*, which means to test and by implication, to approve.

If something is to be approved it must be acknowledged as being legitimate and the only way to do that is to have a standard by which the prophecy can be approved, and that does not mean a subjective rule or standard but one that is solid and final.

That final standard must be the written word of God as it is employed by those in the congregation who scrutinize this prophetic utterance. And Paul has written on this issue to the Corinthians.

^{NAU} **1 Corinthians 14:29** Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others pass judgment.

Now, the context of 1Corinthians would certainly suggest that other prophets could pass judgment on the one prophet who is speaking, but it would not exclude others in the body of Christ from doing the same, such as the Pastor, elders or any other person who understands the Scriptures, or one who has the gift of discernment.

The apostle John also warns the entire body of testing those spirits which are of God and those that are not.

^{NAU} **1 John 4:1** Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world.

Here, in 1John, the word prophet is used in a way where someone is claiming to be speaking prophetic utterances on behalf of God, but who is not a true believer as the word false is used in the context of comparing true believers with those who are called anti-christ's.

And so, John is speaking of a different scenario when it comes to using prophecy as a means of acknowledging that God is in the midst of the congregation to strengthen, encourage and comfort the church. John is speaking of those who falsely identify themselves as prophets when in fact they are anti-christ's.

Paul, on the other hand, is not suggesting that simply because a believer, who is utilizing the gift of prophecy, and who may have been given an utterance from God, where that utterance doesn't pass the test of lining up with the word of God, is somehow an anti-christ or a false prophet.

Rather, Paul is giving the biblical test for any prophet of God because Paul knows how the gift works and how it is not on the same par with the Old Testament prophetic words given by God. Paul knows that the N.T. gift of prophecy is used by human beings who are prompted by the Spirit of God to encourage the body of Christ, but who are prone to "prophecy in part."

In other words, they are prone to get it wrong at times and therefore they must be tested to assure that whatever they convey is not out of accord with the written word of God, at which point we hold fast to that which is good; and abstain from every form of evil. (**1 Thessalonians 5:21-22**)

The word evil in the Greek is *poneros*, and it means toilsome or bad. And so, essentially Paul is saying to hold on to the good, that which is biblical and encouraging to the body, and dispose or reject that which is not, that which would be considered bad.

This is why everyone in the church needs to be spiritually aware and alert and discerning. This gives everyone a real motivation for growing in Christ and being in God's word so that nothing will slip through for prophecy when in fact it may be something which is not.

By the way, we should point out here that when a prophet, who claims to give an utterance from God, which turns out not to be an utterance from God, and is corrected by those in the congregation, they are not stoned to death because of their false prophecy. This is another indication that we are not dealing with the same type of revelation in this case as it was with the O.T. prophets.

But let's go back to some of the questions we raised earlier, one being, how does someone know if they have received a prophecy from God?

Good question. And this brings up two points I mentioned in question form last week. Can a prophet prophesy at will? How do we know if someone has the gift of prophecy?

Can a prophet prophesy at will? The gift of prophecy is somewhat unique along with a couple of other gifts in that it is one of those gifts you cannot practice unless God gives you a revelation or an illumination.

Unlike the gift of teaching or the gift of mercy or the gift of hospitality, which we can practice any time the occasion calls for, the gift of prophecy is entirely up to the will of God to share something with someone before it can be used.

So how do we know if someone has this gift? Only if God reveals it as such. It is different from simply pondering a bible verse or having insight into spiritual truths which our own minds can do with training.

The gift of prophecy is supernatural and you will know if God places an illumination on your heart and mind because it will be something you didn't consider. In a sense, it would be as though someone had whispered something in your ear that you weren't looking for.

It will be clearly a voice outside of yourself in the sense that your inner man will recognize it as the touch of God. It probably won't be a literal voice from God. But your spirit will recognize it as something unique.

So what do you do if you get such a prompting? You share it. Does that mean you get up in the middle of a worship service or in the middle of the Pastors sermon and blurt out this message from God?

Here we need to be careful. First we must realize that God may give a prophecy to someone wherever they are. It doesn't have to be in the context of a worship service. It may be in a bible study. It may be when you're in prayer. It may be while you're driving down the road.

Paul's exhortation to the Corinthian church was in the context of how they were using the gift of prophecy, unbiblically, in a worship setting. And therefore the instruction was directed towards the worship setting.

However, we must never forget that all that God does is according to order not chaos. And so Paul instructs the Corinthians.

1Co 14:29-33 "Two or three prophets should speak, and the others should weigh carefully what is said. 30 And if a revelation comes to someone who is sitting down, the first speaker should stop. 31 For you can all prophesy in turn so that everyone may be instructed and encouraged. 32 The spirits of prophets are subject to the control of prophets. [In other words the prophet is in control of this gift] 33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace."

And so, I would say that the gift of prophecy may be used within the context of a worship service, but it should never be used to replace or interrupt the teaching of the infallible, living word of God. In other words, to interrupt the Pastor who is feeding the Sheep, which Christ Himself has instructed His shepherds to do, would be disorderly and bring chaos to a time of order.

I believe there are appropriate times to share a prophecy in a worship setting. It may be before or after the message of God's word being delivered in a sermon. It may be in a worship setting like on a Thursday night or during a worship time as the men or ladies come together for their times of worship and study.

It may be in the context of a church fellowship which we have once a month. That doesn't mean you can only receive such a revelation at church or in the fellowship of other believers. We can't put God in a box. As I said God may touch you anywhere. But the sharing of such revelations must be in the context of the Body or at least a portion of the body so that it may be tested.

Notice too, that the word revelation, in 1Cor.14:30, that we just read, is associated with this gift of prophecy. What this means is that the one receiving the prophecy is having something outside of himself, or herself, that he or she did not decide on their own

volition, to share with the body of Christ, but instead it was revealed by God to that particular person at that particular time.

But if you receive a revelation from the Lord in the form of a prophetic word, it is meant to be shared with the body, but only those things that God has given should be shared. It's very easy for any of us to embellish something God has shared with us. It's also tempting to try and fill in some of the blanks. What I mean by that is often times prophecy is like a jigsaw puzzle. The Lord may give us a glimpse into something and not give us every detail.

If your revelation is general in nature then share it in a general way. If you're tempted to try and interpret such a prompting you could be adding your own wisdom and giving information that God didn't share with you. Again, this is why we test such prophecies.

Do we have examples of revelations in N.T. Scriptures that we can look at and get an idea of how God has prompted others? Sure. Agabus is an example of how one can be on the receiving end of a revelation of God.

Act 21:10-13 "After we had been there a number of days, a prophet named Agabus came down from Judea. 11 Coming over to us, he took Paul's belt, tied his own hands and feet with it and said, "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'" 12 When we heard this, we and the people there pleaded with Paul not to go up to Jerusalem. 13 Then Paul answered, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus."

In this instance the prophet Agabus reveals a couple things that would bring his prophecy into question.

It begs the test of whether or not this prophecy meets those three requirements mentioned in 1CO 14:3 "But everyone who prophesies speaks to men for their strengthening, encouragement and comfort."

Was Paul being strengthened, encouraged and comforted by this word? It doesn't appear to be so. In fact in Acts 21:13 he says, "Why are you weeping and breaking my heart?"

Agabus may certainly have received something from the Lord, but it may have been a word of knowledge rather than a prophecy. I'm not suggesting that Agabus delivered this as a prophecy, it doesn't

say it was, but it's interesting to note that Agabus is conspicuously called a prophet.

The second thing to note is that even if this was a prophecy we can see how the wisdom of the prophet can get in the way of the details which were not given by the Spirit and which Agabus seems to fill in himself.

Look closely at the prophecy. "The Holy Spirit says, 'In this way the Jews of Jerusalem will bind the owner of this belt and will hand him over to the Gentiles.'"

Now if the Holy Spirit had in fact given these very details then we would expect them to be 100% correct. Are they? Well, the fulfillment of this word that Agabus received is found in the same chapter of Acts.

Act 21:27-33 "When the seven days were nearly over, some Jews from the province of Asia saw Paul at the temple. They stirred up the whole crowd and seized him, 28 shouting, "Men of Israel, help us! This is the man who teaches all men everywhere against our people and our law and this place. And besides, he has brought Greeks into the temple area and defiled this holy place." 29 (They had previously seen Trophimus the Ephesian in the city with Paul and assumed that Paul had brought him into the temple area.) 30 The whole city was aroused, and the people came running from all directions. Seizing Paul, they dragged him from the temple, and immediately the gates were shut. 31 While they were trying to kill him, news reached the commander of the Roman troops that the whole city of Jerusalem was in an uproar. 32 He at once took some officers and soldiers and ran down to the crowd. When the rioters saw the commander and his soldiers, they stopped beating Paul. 33 The commander came up and arrested him and ordered him to be bound with two chains. Then he asked who he was and what he had done."

Paul had in fact gone to Jerusalem which was part of Agabus' utterance from God. So far so good. But instead of the Jews binding Paul and then delivering him over to the Gentiles, the Jews are trying to kill Paul. Instead, it was the Gentiles who bound Paul saving his life from the Jews in the process.

Is this not nit-picking? Of course. But it illustrates that even if we get a word from the Lord we need to be careful not to add our own interpretation in the process which again takes us back to why all prophecies, or words of knowledge, must be tested.

But, from what we see in this revelation that the Holy Spirit gave to Agabus, it more closely resembles, not a prophecy at all, but a word of knowledge from God, which by the way, is another one of the gifts of the Spirit. Can a man who is designated a prophet have more than one gift? Certainly, and Agabus may have utilized another gift not associated with a direct prophecy.

I brought up two other questions last week which I'll quickly address. Is teaching in the church the same as prophecy? Why are women allowed to prophesy but not to have authority over the church?

Let's deal with the first question as we consider two things about the N.T. gift of prophecy.

1) a prophecy must be based on a revelation from the Holy Spirit of God; if there is no revelation there is no prophecy.

2) It must include a public proclamation. As Dr. Grudem says, the mere reception of a revelation does not constitute a prophecy until it is publicly proclaimed.", which is what we see taking place in 1Cor.14:29-31.

And so N.T. prophecy is spontaneous in nature as God gives the revelation for that moment to be shared with the Body of Christ for its edification and exhortation. (1Cor.14:26,31)

Teaching on the other hand is not necessarily a spontaneous revelation from the Holy Spirit like the gift of prophecy. Teaching is, more often, simply an explanation or application of the written word of God. The gift of teaching is no less a gift from God but its application is different from prophecy.

Dr. Grudem in his book, "The Gift of Prophecy in the N.T. and today, says, "This is evident in Acts 15:35 where Paul and Barnabas and many others are in Antioch TEACHING and preaching the word of the Lord.

And at Corinth, Paul stayed a year and a half TEACHING the word of God among them (Acts 18:11). Paul tells the Romans that the words of the O.T. scriptures were written for our instruction (or TEACHING, Greek (*didaskalia*) (Rom.15:4), and he writes to Timothy that all scripture is profitable for TEACHING (2Tim.3:16)."

Grudem goes on to say, "*The difference with prophecy is quite clear here: Timothy wasn't to prophesy Paul's instructions; he was*

to teach them. Paul didn't prophesy his ways in the church; he taught them. The Thessalonians were not told to hold firm to the traditions which were prophesied to them but to the traditions which they were taught."

..... Thus it was not prophecy but teaching which in a primary sense (from the apostles) first provided the doctrinal and ethical norms by which the church was regulated. And as those who learned from the apostles also taught, their teaching guided and directed the local churches.

..... Among the elders, therefore, were those who labor in the word and teaching (1Tim.5:17), and an elder was to be an apt teacher (1Tim.3:2; Tit.1:9) -- but nothing is said about any elders whose work was prophesying, nor is it ever said that an elder has to be an apt prophet or that elders should be holding firm to sound prophecies.

..... In his leadership function Timothy was to take heed to himself and to his teaching (1Tim.4:16), but he is never told to take heed to his prophesying. James warned that those who teach, not those who prophesy, will be judged with greater strictness"(Jam.3:1).

And so the gift of teaching is a separate gift from the gift of prophecy. And so there is a distinction. If a message is the result of conscious reflection on the text of Scripture, containing interpretation and application to regarding the text, then it is (in the N.T. sense) a teaching. But if a message is the report of something God suddenly brings to mind, then it is a prophecy.

Now, sometimes God may interrupt a prepared message like this one where the teacher may receive a prophecy which He brings to mind to share with the congregation. And so you have a teaching with prophecy mixed in.

This distinction is important because many Charismatic or Pentecostal churches may encourage the Pastor to get up in to the pulpit and deliver a message as the Spirit "guides" him without any preparation.

When Jesus told Peter to feed the sheep He inferred that Peter would teach and encourage the Sheep with the word of God which Peter must study and then use to instruct the sheep.

Not to be prepared as you enter the pulpit or teach in any capacity, by opting to simply wait for some anointing from God as He gives you a word, is not to be more spiritual it is to be foolish and lazy to

neglect that gift of teaching or to confuse it with the gift of prophecy which is spontaneous.

But, the gift of prophecy is never to take precedence over the written word for our instruction and learning of our God and His salvation.

As we've seen in this study, the gift of prophecy is to be encouraged in the body as God chooses to use it to edify the body at a particular time for a particular reason, which in turn directs our eyes to Christ and His written word.

This by the way, is the reason that the gift of teaching, in most cases, is associated with leadership and why Paul instructs women not to teach in a capacity which would place them in that leadership role over the church, and yet they are encouraged to prophesy which leads to the other question I posed, why are women allowed to prophesy but not to have authority over the church?

If N.T. prophecy and the gift of teaching were equal in authority Paul would never have encouraged women to seek the gift of prophecy as he does in 1CO 11:5 "And every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head--it is just as though her head were shaved."

Philip the evangelist, one of the Seven had four unmarried daughters who prophesied as we see in ACT 21:9.

And so, because the gift of prophecy does not carry with it the intrinsic authority to rule, it is a gift which anyone in the body may utilize as God gives such a revelation as was promised by God through the prophet Joel.

Acts 2:17-18 ¹⁷ 'AND IT SHALL BE IN THE LAST DAYS,' God says, 'THAT I WILL POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ON ALL MANKIND; AND YOUR SONS AND YOUR **DAUGHTERS SHALL PROPHECY**, AND YOUR YOUNG MEN SHALL SEE VISIONS, AND YOUR OLD MEN SHALL DREAM DREAMS; ¹⁸ EVEN ON MY BONDSLAVES, BOTH MEN AND WOMEN, I WILL IN THOSE DAYS POUR FORTH OF MY SPIRIT ***And they shall prophesy.***

Now, one of the other questions which I brought up last week is: can someone who has the gift of prophecy, prophesy at will, whenever they want to? The answer is found in what the Scriptures tell us what the N.T. gift of prophecy is, which is

basically a spontaneous revelation which God prompts upon the heart of a believer.

This means that this gift is different from the others in that when, and only when, God chooses to give a revelation can it be utilized. The other gifts like teaching or mercy or faith or any of the others can be utilized as we seek to practice them by faith.

The gift of prophecy is a wonderful way in which God blesses us and encourages, exhorts and comforts us. If you think you have the gift of prophecy let me know and I'll share with you how you might use it here.

But, we should be praying that any gift be used in love and not for our own glory or status as Paul describes in 1Cor.13. Along with seeking this gift there should be the attitude that we would be content with any gift God gives us and that we should be growing and maturing in our walk with God if we are to utilize any of His gifts effectively in His power.

Are you studying His written word and growing in His knowledge and grace to be used for the building up of the body today, or are you waiting for a bolt from heaven to strike you and show you with letters engraved in the clouds before you begin to serve and glorify Christ in your daily life?

If you're not sure what gifts you have from God ask others what they see in your life which might indicate how God is using you. This by the way is one reason it's so important to be plugged into a local body. The rest of the Body is able to utilize their gifts to often times encourage you in yours.

If you seem to receive very pronounced promptings from God which you didn't dream up on your own, it may be God prompting you to share something He desires this body to hear, and you may in fact have the gift of prophecy, which will be put to the test from God's written word.

But that same kind of attitude should be applied to any gift which is used to build up the Body of Christ. We should always apply discernment that checks teachings or any other gifts which may be used, against God's word.

Our entire lives should be tested according to the word of God and should come into conformity with His word and with the life of Jesus Christ who is the One we should be imitating in all things.

Paul told Timothy, "don't neglect the spiritual gift within you (1Tim.4:14) and God tells us today not to neglect the spiritual gift within us, the greatest gift being the gift of eternal life which we should be sharing with the world through our words and deeds.

But, we are called to be one body with one Spirit, one Father, and one Savior, Jesus Christ whom we serve as we serve one another.

GAL 5:13 "You, my brothers, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to indulge the sinful nature; rather, serve one another in love."

And as we serve one another in love we will fulfill the greatest commandment which is to love God with all our heart, souls and minds as we reach out to each other and apply biblical principles and guidelines for all of life.

I'll end with the words the Lord gave James in his epistle. It's encouraging and practical.

JAM 1:17-18 "Every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights, who does not change like shifting shadows. 18 He chose to give us birth through the word of truth, that we might be a kind of firstfruits of all he created.

Be a blessing and be blessed in the process. Give glory to God and bless His name in your life all of your days, as you rely on His power and His Spirit to be the servant He wants you to be.