

*God Has
Finished Giving*

IT WAS ON A SUNDAY MORNING that I sat in my office before the worship service began. I was thinking about the hour that was to come, hoping that we would all sense the Lord at work among us. A few weeks earlier I had done something that I thought made good sense and that seemed to create an atmosphere of expectancy among the congregation. I had asked the people to join together in prayer that God would “pour out His blessings upon us” during our time in church. This time of prayer seemed to be effective, so I decided to do the same thing again the next week, and the next. As I sat in my office four Sundays later, I thought about how I would do the same thing again in this service. It seemed that asking God to give His blessings to the church was a good way to begin any service.

As I dwelled upon encouraging the people to ask for God’s blessings, a sudden thought interrupted my imaginary scene. The thought was plain: *Stop telling the church to do that.* The words disturbed me. After all, I was encouraging the people to do something good. I was tempted to dismiss this peculiar thought, when I heard it again in my mind: *Stop telling the church to do that.* “This is strange,” I thought. “Lord,” I asked, “is this thought from

You?” It made no sense. Why would God speak to me in my thoughts, instructing me not to tell the people to pray for His blessings?

Making no sense out of the strange thought that had entered my mind, I began to read from the Bible, Ephesians chapter 1. Soon the thought that had come to my mind made perfect sense as I read the words of the third verse: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who *has blessed us* with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ” (emphasis added). Suddenly I saw it! We didn’t need to ask the Lord to give us His blessings. He was showing me in His Word that He had *already* given us every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus!

As I went into the worship service that morning, I shared with the congregation what the Lord had just shown me. I read Ephesians 1:3 and explained that we don’t need to ask for something that God has already given us. Instead I encouraged them to unite in *thanking* and *praising* the Lord for the blessings that are already ours in Christ. That day the atmosphere in our worship service was absolutely electrifying. We were consumed with the realization that in Jesus Christ we already have everything we need for time and eternity. Some time later I smiled as I read the words of Watchman Nee, who said, “If we had more revelation, we should have fewer prayers and more praises.”¹ Divine revelation had certainly ruined my sensible plan and set our church free.

God Has Given Us Everything

After the bitter defeat in battle with the people of Ai, Joshua felt absolute dismay. There is no sensation quite like the sour after-effect of a defeat caused by having made carnal choices. Achan’s foolish choice had brought misery into the life of Israel, but there was no time to sit in contemplation of the past. As always, God was

ready to put the past failure behind them and move His people forward into victory. As soon as Achan was put to death, God spoke to Joshua: "Do not fear or be dismayed. Take all the people of war with you and arise, go up to Ai; see, I have given into your hand the king of Ai, his people, his city, and his land" (Joshua 8:1).

God's words to Joshua were the only impetus he needed to launch forward again. "I have given into your hand the king of Ai," God had said. Armed with the truth that the victory was already theirs, Joshua immediately "rose with all the people of war to go up to Ai" (8:3). This wasn't the first time that it had been necessary for God to remind Joshua that He had already given them the land (see Joshua 1:3; 6:2) and it wouldn't be the last (see Joshua 10:8).

Christians today tend to slip backward into the idea that there are blessings God wants to give us if only we will do the right things. We fail to realize that His blessings have been provided as a gift, and gifts aren't given on the basis of merit. God didn't decide to bless us because of how wonderful we are, but because of how wonderful He is. Don't become immobilized by thinking that you don't deserve God's blessings. Of course you don't, but this isn't about you; it's about *Him*! We don't earn the blessings of God; we simply enjoy them by faith.

Every spiritual blessing is ours. What a thought! That means we are forever free from the struggle of trying to stay on God's good side so that things go well for us. The verdict is in on whether or not we are to enjoy divine blessings. God has given His final answer: We *have* been blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ Jesus. It's done and nothing can reverse what God does—nothing. "The one who joins himself to the Lord is one spirit with Him" (1 Corinthians 6:17). We are in Christ and He is in us, therefore all the blessings contained in Him already reside in us. They have been "given into our hand." F. J. Huegel wrote:

Canaan represents the highest union with Christ, the Throne-life to which every believer is called. Joshua represents the Holy Spirit who quickens and imparts faith and leads the believer into this union with Christ. The Canaanites, sons of Anak, Giants, etc., represent the mighty forces of evil, Satanic and otherwise, which oppose the believer in his attempt to “take” the land of promise—i.e., his place with Christ in the Heavens. As to Joshua the Lord said: “Every place the sole of your foot shall tread upon, *that I have given you*.” So to the believer the Spirit says: “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ who *hath blessed* us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ.” It is held in trust. It is already the believer’s *judicially*, and will become his *actually* upon the exercise of faith.²

God’s blessings are already ours. All we need to do is believe God in order to realize them.

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When the Bible says that God has already given Christians every blessing in Christ Jesus, exactly what blessings does it mean? How can we begin to understand the full impact of God’s grace in our lives? It isn’t possible. Peter described it as “the manifold grace of God” (1 Peter 4:10). The word “manifold” means

multifaceted, like the many fine cuts on a beautiful diamond. When one examines a flawless diamond under a bright light, its beauty may appear to be awesome. Then when the diamond is turned slightly so that the light is focused on a different facet, it may appear to be a totally different diamond, whose beauty looks to be equal to or even surpass what was previously seen. So it is with the grace of God. Christians will spend eternity marveling at this amazing grace as we continually examine it under the resplendent light and glory of the Son!

We Don't Need to Keep Asking for Blessings

Imagine the Jews going across Canaan, begging God all the way: "Lord, will you give us this city? Now will you give us that city? What about the next one?" That approach would have demonstrated the kind of bankruptcy of faith that kept them out of Canaan for 40 years. They didn't have to ask God to give them city after city. The cities were already theirs because He had told them, "I have given you this land." So has God given to the Christian everything in Jesus Christ. If you possess the life of Jesus Christ, God has finished giving because there is nothing left to give. In Jesus Christ dwells the *fullness* of deity and we have been made complete in Him (see Colossians 2:9-10).

While it isn't possible to list an inventory of the infinite blessings that are ours in Christ, there are some remarkable blessings that have been given to the church, which many Christians fail to realize are already theirs. Many continually ask God to give them specific things that He has already given to every believer. While their approach may seem right, it is actually an act of *faithlessness*. God has finished giving to the Christian. Our responsibility is to believe that He has already given us everything in Christ.

Mark 11:24 says, "All things whatsoever ye pray and ask for, believe that ye have received them, and ye shall have them." The statement there is that, if you believe that you already have received your requests (that is, of course, in Christ), then "you shall have them." To believe that you *may* get something, or that you *can* get it, or even that you *will* get it, is not faith in the sense meant here. This is faith—to believe that you have already got it. Only that which relates to the past is faith in this sense. Those who say "God can" or "God may" or "God must" or "God will" do not necessarily believe at all. Faith always says, "God has done it."³

We Have Already Been Given Holiness

Perhaps the greatest blessing given to the Christian at salvation is the one that most don't realize they already have: holiness. Ask the average person in the average church whether or not he is holy, and his response is likely to be, "I'm trying to be holy." For the Christian to suggest that he is trying to become holy is analogous to an unsaved man saying, "I'm trying to become a Christian."

Suppose Ted meets Ben at work one day and asks him, "Are you a Christian?"

"I'm trying to be," Ben responds.

Without hesitation Ted answers, "You can never become a Christian by *trying*. The only way to become a Christian is by trusting Jesus Christ to forgive your sins and give you His life. It isn't by trying, but trusting, that one is born again."

Imagine that Ben does trust Christ and is born again. The next Sunday Ted sees him at church and asks, "Are you holy?"

"I'm trying to be," Ben responds. What is the appropriate response from Ted in that situation? Many Christians would assure Ben that they are praying for him and encourage him not

to give up his efforts. Such a response, however, would be a tragic error.

When a person becomes a Christian, he is *instantly* made holy because the Holy One takes up residence in his spirit, thus transforming his very nature. His soul, which consists of the mind, will, and emotions, begins to be transformed as the outworking of Christ's life brings renewal to his personality (soul). This holiness will become increasingly evident in his thoughts and deeds as he grows in grace, but his spirit becomes completely holy at the moment he receives Christ. At the core of his or her identity, every Christian is as holy as Jesus Christ because He is our very life. You are righteous because at the moment of salvation, Jesus Christ *became* your righteousness (see 1 Corinthians 1:30).

God's New House

I heard about two college students whose football team was about to get a goat as their new school mascot. There was much discussion between the two about where the goat would stay. One student said to the other, "Why don't we let the goat stay in our dorm room?"

"What about the smell?" the other asked.

"The goat will get used to the smell," the first responded.

Goats may get used to living in filth, but God won't live in any place that is unclean. Where does God live today? We find the answer in 1 Corinthians 3:16-17:

Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are.

In the Old Testament, God lived in the Holy Place. It was such a sacred place that no one was allowed inside except the high priest, who went in only one time each year on the Day of Atonement. Before he entered the Holy Place, the priest was commanded to conform to meticulously detailed instructions about *how* he was to approach the residence of a holy God (see Leviticus 16). He was required to submit to a purification process and put on sacred garments before entering the place where God lived. If an unauthorized or unclean person entered God's residence, immediate death was the result.

The New Testament reveals that God has moved from where He used to live. He doesn't live in the old neighborhood anymore. He has built a new house, where He now lives. That house is the Christian (see 1 Peter 2:5). He has taken up permanent residence inside the believer. In 1 Corinthians 3:16-17, Paul states indisputably that the Christian is holy by boldly asserting three basic facts: 1) You are the temple of God; 2) the temple of God is holy; 3) you are holy. To deny the truth of the believer's holiness in Christ is to totally reject this passage of Scripture.

Do you believe the Bible? The Bible makes clear that it isn't necessary to pray for God to give the Christian holiness. The person you were in Adam was unholy, but we learned in chapter 4 that that man is dead. As believers we have already been given a new life, and with it came the blessing of holiness. "If by the transgression of the one [Adam], death reigned through the one, much more those who receive the abundance of grace and of *the gift of righteousness* will reign in life through the one, Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17, emphasis added). Righteousness is a gift possessed by every believer. God has already given holiness to you. You can know you are holy right now because the Bible says so (see Romans 5:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21; Ephesians 4:24).

We Have Already Been Given Victory

"Pray for me that God will give me victory over my temper," Nick told me one day. "If I don't get better control of myself, I'm going to end up losing most of my employees. I try to keep my temper under control, but the demands of our work cause the office to be like a simmering pot all the time. Sometimes I just boil over." Nick went on to say that he had bought books that outlined several different methods for trying to control one's temper, but all of them had failed.

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Victory in any area of life, however, doesn't come to the believer by finding the right method. Rather, victory has already been given to us in the person of Jesus Christ (see Romans 8:37; 1 Corinthians 15:57; 2 Corinthians 2:14). We experience victory in life as we understand that when Christ gave us His life, we gained victory as a gift that is found in Him. We experience that victory as we appropriate by faith that Christ is our life and we trust Him to animate our actions (see 1 John 5:4).

I used to think that if I just *did* enough of the things that God expected, I would experience victory in every area of my life. I did everything I knew to do in order to experience victory. I read my Bible; I prayed; I memorized Scripture; I fasted; I attended church (and even preached the sermon when I got there); I gave financially; I was zealous in evangelism; I regularly attended

Bible conferences; I read three books each week written by Christian authors. I did it *all*, yet none of it ever brought consistent victory in every area of my life. I always felt like I had farther to go before I would reach the place where I believed I needed to be.

What a liberating day when I discovered that it isn't necessary to struggle to get to the place of victory. Watchman Nee advised, "Think of the bewilderment of trying to get into a room in which you already are! Think of the absurdity of asking to be put in! If we recognize the fact that we *are* in, we make no effort to enter."⁴ The good news is that because believers are in Christ, we are continually in the place of victory. The only thing Nick needed was to understand his identity in Christ—to know that the old Nick, whose life would have been marked by impatience, is dead; to know that now Christ is his life and that Jesus is a *very* patient Person; to understand how to abide in Christ, allowing Him to express His divine life and patience *through* Nick on the job each day so that he wouldn't be defeated by old flesh patterns. His source of victory over his anger is Jesus Christ. He is the Victory in every area of our lives. Alan Redpath observed:

When a Christian begins to count upon His presence, to reckon upon His victory, and to draw upon His power, it is like stepping into a totally different world! The child of God finds that his faith which has been firmly rooted at the Cross now starts to bear fruit because he is living in touch with the throne of God. Isn't it a new stage in Christian experience when we look not only back to Calvary but also up to a living Christ on the throne? We begin to draw infinite, heavenly power every moment of every day from Him, and we discover that the Christ who died for us is indeed Christ who is our life.⁵

As Christians we aren't fighting *for* victory, but *from* victory. The empty tomb is an eternal witness to the victory that belongs to those who are in Christ, the Victor of all the ages. God has already given victory to the Christian. You received the total victory for life when you received Christ by faith.

We Already Have Been Given Power

The year was 1975 and I was a young pastor, barely in my twenties. I had determined that I could be more effective in ministry if I only had more spiritual power. A friend and I agreed that we would begin to pray together continuously until we received the power from God that was necessary to serve Him with the kind of results that we desired. So we went into my office one evening to pray. We determined that we would not eat, sleep, or leave that room until we had *experienced* a divine infusion of power that would cause us to be forever changed.

Three long days later, we came out of our sequestered search for spiritual power. We felt no different, but concluded that maybe we already had the power we needed and just didn't know it. Later I came to discover that we were right. Our need wasn't to have God give us something from outside ourselves, but to understand the reality of the indwelling power we already had. Andrew Murray wrote:

The power is Jesus; Jesus is ours with all His fulness; it is in us His members that the power is to work and be made manifest. And if we want to know how the power is bestowed, the answer is simple: Christ gives His power in us by giving His life in us. He does not, as so many believers imagine, take the feeble life He finds in them, and impart a little strength to aid them in their feeble

efforts. No; it is in giving His own life in us that He gives us His power.⁶

As a Christian, how much of Jesus Christ do you possess at this moment? All of Him, of course. How much power does *He* possess? Infinite power! Therefore, every Christian already has infinite power residing within him. In no way do I intend to denigrate experiences in which a person may become aware of God's power at work in him. I'm not against *experiences*. However, it is necessary that we interpret our experiences in the light of biblical truth. In the years since my private pursuit for power, I have certainly had divine encounters in which I was consciously aware of God's power (Jesus) working, at times in me, and at other times through me. A biblical understanding of those experiences causes me to know that I wasn't receiving something new from God that came from outside myself. I was simply experiencing the outworking of what God deposited in me on the day I was saved. God has already given Christians spiritual power; He has already given us Jesus Christ. It isn't possible that we should possess more power than that.

Bill Bright told the story of Mr. Yates, a man who lived in Texas during the time of the Great Depression. Mr. Yates bought a farm, which he diligently worked in order to make a living for his family. When the economic downturn of the 1930s struck, he fell behind on his mortgage. After several months had elapsed without him making a payment, he was contacted by a representative from the mortgage company. Mr. Yates was told his property would go into foreclosure if he didn't catch up on his payments. Despite his plea for time, he was given a deadline. The days began to wind down and the situation looked completely hopeless.

One day there was a knock at the door of his farmhouse. When he opened the door, he saw a man who introduced himself

as a representative from an oil company. "We would like permission to drill on your property to determine if there is oil here," the man said. Thinking about how he would soon lose his property anyway, Mr. Yates granted permission, and a few days later, the oil company sent their crew. When they sank their drill deep into the earth, they immediately hit a gusher. Eighty-two thousand barrels of oil per day came shooting up out of the ground. Instantly, Yates had millions of dollars at his disposal.

Consider and answer this question: *When* did Mr. Yates become a millionaire? Was it at the time that the oil company struck oil? No, it wasn't. Mr. Yates became a millionaire on the day that he bought the property. Why, then, did he live in poverty for so long? It was because he didn't know what he already possessed.

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Many Christians have long lived in spiritual poverty despite the fact that the Bible teaches that we are rich in Jesus Christ. Have you unwittingly lived beneath your spiritual means? It isn't necessary to keep asking God to give us His blessings. He already has. When we understand this truth, we will be set free from an overshadowing sense of deficit in our lives. The truth that God has already given us everything in Christ will cause the Christian to become bold. It will become the catalyst that causes us to live in reckless abandonment to Him.

"I have given you." Four times God spoke those words to Joshua. They became the words that set him free to move forward in faith with boldness. He clung to the words of God and in fact encouraged the people with those words, telling them eight times, "The LORD has given..." (see Joshua 2:9,24; 6:16; 18:3; 22:4; 23:13,15-16). As Israel moved forward into the land, it was that truth that set them free from fear and doubt. Armed with that knowledge, it was now time to learn about their relationship to the laws of God, without which they would never know how they were to live in Canaan.



Dear Father,

I want to thank You that in Christ You have already given me every spiritual blessing. Renew my mind with this truth so that I will be set free from believing that I lack anything in my life. Thank You for being my holiness, my victory, my power, my everything. Teach me how to appropriate daily all that I possess in Christ Jesus. Thank You, Father.

G.R.A.C.E. Group Questions

1. Read and explain Ephesians 1:3. In what way has God given to us every spiritual blessing?
2. Read Mark 11:24. Name five blessings Christians often ask for that they have already received in Christ.
3. How does a person become holy? On a scale of 1-100, how holy are you (if Jesus Christ ranks a 100)? What would you say to a Christian who says that he is trying to become more holy?
4. If believers have already received victory in Jesus Christ, why don't they experience it in every situation of life?
5. Identify one area in your own life where you are not experiencing victory. What are the reasons you are not knowing victory? What is necessary for you to know victory in this area?