

We are looking at *verses 1 and 2*. God tells us,

Romans 12:2

² And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove

To prove means to test. In the Psalms it talks about Joseph, a man whom God sent in chains, until the Word of God proved him, until it tested him.

you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

So many of us struggle because we want to know what the will of God is. But this is not just about His will but about His perfect will. There is the permissive will of God, and sadly, most Christians usually walk in the permissive will of God. He permits it but He has called us to walk in His perfect will. We cannot understand His perfect will unless we go through the process of surrendering our bodies and letting our minds be redeemed. The transformation of our minds, the surrender of our bodies, these two are essential. Then we will know,

you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.

We need to go through the process on a day to day basis or we will not understand the perfect will of God. We will walk instead in the permissive will of God, thinking it is what He wants. When we miss out on the perfect will of God, we also miss out being the overcomers He wants us to be. God wants everyone not just a few, to be overcomers and to be that, we need to understand His perfect will. We do not get to know it in one day. It is a process which starts with surrendering our flesh and our bodies. It is a pattern in the Old Testament. The priests used to offer a drink offering. Paul says, *I'm offered on the altar to the Lord as a drink offering*. If I do not surrender my 'self' to God, He will not reveal His will to me. When the self is not surrendered, the mind will not be renewed. If God were to tell me anything, I would pick and choose from it. Most people say, *Lord reveal your will to me*, and when He does, deep within they say, *I'm not going to do it if I don't like it*.

God wants to reveal His will to us. He revealed His will to Jonah and he went in exactly the opposite direction. We need to realize that the storms we face in life enable us to abide in the perfect will of God. He allows those storms and we blame the enemy for them. Yet the enemy is just an instrument God uses to bring the storms. The storms teach us to lean onto God, to cry out to Him, to walk in His will. Jonah knew the will of God and the reason for the storm. They cast lots and traced the cause to him and asked him, *What kind of a man are you? Who are you?* He replied, *I'm a Hebrew, a servant of the Living God. I'm running away from Him and that's the reason for the storm*. They asked him, *What should we do?* He said, *There is no simple solution. If you want the storm to cease just throw me out!* They were not willing to do that!

The disciples were trying to row with all their strength, but deliverance comes only when we obey God. I cannot deliver myself. I can try my best but I'll get nowhere. I need to do what God tells me to do. Deliverance is connected with freedom, and freedom is connected with serving God. In God's perfect will you *always* experience freedom. You will always see that you are above your circumstances. Your circumstances may not change. Look at Paul, his circumstances never changed. They went from bad to worse to worst when, finally, he was killed. It began right from the day he got saved till the end of his life; his situation never seemed to change. But this man, over a period of time, learnt how to live above his circumstances. He walked in perfect freedom. That's what God is calling us to.

Moses is one such pattern in the Old Testament. He was walking with a huge crowd of people, all facing the same problem. He faced the same thirst the people faced. Perhaps the longing for the food of Egypt may have been much stronger in Moses than in the people because they ate only at the flesh pots at the end of their work while he would have dined at the king's table. When they complained about cucumbers and garlic they had no idea what Moses had eaten. Even in his forty years in the desert he ate at the table of the Midian priest! His father-in-law was the priest of Midian. He married into a very reputable family, even in the desert. In the eighty years of his life he had always eaten the best of foods. Yet, when he

Romans Chapter 12 Verse 2 & 3

was in the desert, he didn't give in to his situation or his circumstances. That is what God says. You could be caught in a desert, but you can live above it if you learn to satisfy your thirst and hunger with the Word of God. That's when you walk in His perfect will. That's what God is calling us to.

We see from *Romans 12:4* onwards, he talks about a ministry to which everyone is called. There is nobody in the body of Christ to whom a ministry is not given because everyone has been given grace. But to do this ministry, this service, *Romans 12:1-2*, we need to surrender. God does not say you should be perfect before you can serve, but we do need to surrender before we start serving. Only such people can serve God and His people. Verses 1-11 speak of different categories of people, how we come to God, how we learn to walk in the deliverance and freedom He offers. But verse 12 onwards prepares us for ministry and says it is not only for a small set of people. In the Old Covenant it was meant for everyone but was entrusted only to a few. In the New Covenant too, it is meant for everyone but ultimately gets restricted to just a few because of those roadblocks in *Romans 12:1-2*. The first roadblock is the body. So many Christians are slaves to the body, those who overcome it remain slave to the mind. The metaphor used here is a mould into which you pour molten metal. When it hardens it takes the shape of the mould. Metal, clay are set in moulds. God says we were made in the mould of the world and He is breaking us out of it.

When we are born again, we should not return to the mould of the world or God will never be able to use us in His Kingdom. We will always remain like little babies. As parents we always worried about our babies, that they would catch infections. The smaller they were, the more concerned we were. They can't even tell us what is wrong with them, whether it's a stomach ache or a toothache. They have no idea. All they do is wail, while we run to the experts. The experts too, are careful, because they cannot treat the baby with medicine for adults. As the baby grows older we get less stressed. If it is just a fever we give them paracetamol. But when they are little babies it is so difficult, we don't know what is wrong with them, they don't know how to tell us, and we can't prescribe adult medicine. That is the problem God faces with His children. We do not want to leave the baby stage, so we cry to God for every problem. Howling out to Him! God says, *I've have a solution for you but I can't give it to you because you will not be able to handle it*. He keeps on giving us what the doctors call 'broad spectrum antibiotics'. He keeps giving us the same medicine over and over again and some people get immune to it. If you give a baby the same medicine over and over again his body gets resistant to the medicine. It doesn't work on him anymore.

Scripture says, *You have become hard of hearing*. Your problems haven't changed but you expect a new solution. God says, *There is no new solution, you have become hard of hearing*. You have heard the solution a thousand times but you're stuck where you are, you're not moving to the next stage. You are not moving at all. Infection sets in and many children move out of the outer courts into the wilderness, out of the gate.

I do not believe in 'once saved, forever saved'. People leave their salvation and go back, as so many have. The Bible has people like Judas and Esau. What did Esau detest? His birthright! What is that? The birthright is your salvation. I was born to be a child of God. What does God tell the prophet? *Even before you were formed in your mother's womb I knew you. You were mine from the beginning*.

The Bible talks about four levels of salvation or four ways in which God saves us:

- Salvation is by grace alone. In Ephesians it says it's the gift of God. You didn't do anything for that.
- You are saved by faith.
- You are saved by hope.
- You are saved by fire, as it says in Corinthians. When you will not be saved by faith and hope, God allows His fire to fall on us so that we are not destroyed.

But everyone is saved by grace, it is the common denominator. We step into God's Kingdom through grace.

Ephesians 2:8

⁸ For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God,

The initial salvation that makes me a child of God is the gift of God. It is by grace. There's nothing anybody can do. I cannot change my sins, forgive my sins or remove my sins. There is nothing I can do about my sin. I need an act of grace from God. All I can do is repent. I can repent, acknowledge, be convicted by the Holy Spirit. But after that comes the works of a saved person. Scripture says, *Faith without works is dead*. There is a living faith and a dead faith. When I'm saved, the faith I have

is a living faith. Only living faith saves, dead faith doesn't save anyone. The sign of a living faith is works. There is a salvation that comes by works, not the salvation of the spirit, but of the mind and soul. The soul has to be saved, that is the renewing of the mind. How do you know your mind is renewed? You don't do the old works anymore! Where the mind goes, the body follows.

The reason we are sitting here is because we obeyed our mind which told us we need to come here today. Six months or a year ago, you were not here on a Tuesday morning, you were somewhere else. But your mind has changed. Your mind knows there is a Bible study on Tuesday morning and you plan to attend it. You plan to give up all other things you did on a Tuesday morning because you decide it is beneficial for you. You chose to change your thinking. But that is not enough. You could always sit at home and think about Tuesday as a good day, that Pastor James is teaching somewhere. Thinking such thoughts will not change anything for you. You have to make a choice to give up what you do on a Tuesday, sacrifice all those things and be found here. Your thinking has to move you to action. That is faith translated into works.

The book of James speaks of faith translated to works, using the example of seeing a poor man and knowing he is hungry. We know from Scripture that to feed someone who is hungry is a good act. Jesus said that even for giving a cup of water to someone you will be rewarded. But what if you think it is good to give something yet do nothing about it, will you be rewarded? Your thought was good but it did not translate into works, therefore your faith is dead. We must realize that all our works should originate from faith, and that happens only when our minds are renewed. Faith comes from hearing, hearing by the Word of God. The more we hear, the more we study the Word of God; our minds get changed, our way of thinking changes. But that is not enough. We can think and still do nothing about it, like people who are alive neck upwards, their minds are renewed but their bodies do not obey. They don't put it into action. That's what Paul means when he says; *Work out your salvation with fear and trembling*. What do you have to do? Work it out!

Ephesians 2:8

⁸For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: ⁹Not of works,

Our salvation is just a gift, the salvation of our spirit. There is a salvation by faith that translates into work, but with fear and trembling. We need to be very careful about that. Don't do your own good works, it will be a stumbling block in the Kingdom of God. Good works should always arise from faith, which comes from hearing, hearing by the Word of God. We are not called to do good works. Though they may look good on the outside, to the world, they may not be good works in the Kingdom. There is nothing wrong in good works but it may not be what God has called us to. When I hear the testimonies from LTD ministries, I get excited and say I want to be doing that kind of work, but God has not called me to it. Is there anything wrong with doing that work? I could decide to go for hospital ministry on Monday and Tuesday, visit the Juvenile Homes on Wednesday and Thursday and the prisons on Friday and Saturday. But what happens to the work God has called me to? Is there anything wrong with the work I did from Monday to Saturday? No!

But why did I do it? I did not work it out with fear and trembling. When you approach God with fear and trembling, you say, *Lord, I want to do this, but what would you have me do?* David brought the Ark into the city the first time without fear and trembling. The second time he enquired of the Lord and found out how it had to be done. What does God want me to do? That's a question for beginners. By and by you get to know more, but not everything in one day. First you offer yourself, your body as a living sacrifice. You cannot live in sin, in opposition to God's revelation for the body and expect to hear from Him. There are many things which God has told you not to do, in your body. Even a new believer or an unbeliever knows it. They know that certain things are wrong and certain things are right because deep within, God has put in us that knowledge in the physical of what is wrong and what is right. Most people know it.

I have to first surrender my body. There is a simple salvation song which says, *Things I used to do, I do them no more*. If this doesn't happen, God will not speak any serious thing to me. He will still talk to me but if I ask Him, *Lord what do You want me to do?* He would say, *I want you to do the same thing I told you yesterday. You haven't yet done it*. One week later if I were to ask Him the same thing, His answer would be the same. What does He want me to do? Stop indulging my flesh! I say to Him, *Lord I am asking for grace to know spiritual secrets*. But He begins with the flesh. If He were to give us what we ask, it would destroy us because we have no control over our flesh. He wants us to handle those things first. That's how *Romans 12* begins.

Why is there so much chaos in the ministry when it is supposed to be God working through man? Ministry is one thing which should work mightily on earth because it is from God, instead it is chaotic. Why? Most of the people in ministry haven't surrendered their flesh, so instead of becoming a blessing it becomes a snare. God does not expect perfection; He just wants us to surrender our flesh on a daily basis. We need to be aware of this, to protect those within the body of Christ. In some countries they take disputes in ministry to the court, using their disputes to see that nobody gets into the body of Christ. I am opposed to the way they deal with these matters. There is a principle which God expects us to uphold.

Let's say Pastor John has a church, I am a believer in his congregation and I face abuse at his hands. Scripture says that I should not take the matter to the gentile court but deal with it within the house. There is such a mess today because they take these things to the court and are also making money out of it. I don't approve of it because they mar the name of Christ. They are filing cases against the Catholic churches; they have gone bankrupt in the US, paying out millions of dollars. But the ones who are fighting are not believers. If they were, they would still fight it out within the Church. You could take it to the priest and if he didn't listen then you could take it to the Bishop and then to the Cardinal, then to the Vatican and demand a hearing from the council. You could tell them what happened and seek a remedy because you don't want anyone else to suffer. But we should not go to court and mar the name of Christ.

That's what is happening everywhere, others get to read about it and laugh and mock the name of Christ. When we confront the doctrine of the Church it should be within the confines of the Church. We do not talk about it in the public realm. It has nothing to do with them. I may not agree with all the doctrines of the Catholic church but we still hold the name of Christ and I express my disagreement within the confines of the Church. I don't write about it in the newspapers. There could be Catholics and Protestants in Heaven, all who believed in Christ Jesus. Therefore we do not attack our brothers in the court of the gentiles. That's how we have marred our testimonies. We see it happening all the time. You could write about it in a Christian magazine but not in India Today or the Frontline or the Week or any such magazine. We are the Body of Christ. That's where our spiritual maturity shows. Those who are spiritually immature go to the public realm and fight.

Churches have marred their testimonies going to court over church properties. God says, *Let go, let them take it and go, don't worry I will take care of you*. It is a shame that in places like Kerala, many of the old churches have split. The oldest church in India, the Jacobite church has split. The Jacobite church now has two services in Kerala. When the first service ends, the key to the church building is handed over by the priest to the receiver appointed by the court, who takes it and hands it over to the next group. They went to court and fought it out; both sides were from the same denomination. They didn't agree on certain matters and appeared before a gentile judge in court who adjudicated the case and it's was splashed all over the newspapers. He appointed another gentile who stands there and hands over the key between them. How could they have handled it? The ones who didn't agree could have told the ones with the key to permit them to worship after the other group. If they didn't accept their request they could have just walked away, gathered and worshipped in their homes. That would have been a testimony. The same thing is happening in the Anglican Church in the US. It has split over the issue of Gene Robinson, the gay bishop. They are now fighting over the property which remains with the group that accepts the bishop. We need to have the courage to say, *I need to worship God*.

God is raising up a set of people who will worship Him in Spirit and in truth, as Jesus said. You don't need material things to worship God. If you don't have a place, you could sit in a park and worship Him, or in a room. You don't even need a musical instrument to worship Him. Have you heard of any musical instrument in the New Testament? I don't mean the book of Revelation when trumpets are blown at His coming. From Matthew till Jude no musical instruments are mentioned unlike in the Old Testament, which also speaks of people building a place where they could worship God, the Tabernacle and Solomon's temple. In the New Covenant you do not hear of them building anything. God says your worship should not depend on these things. It is not that you should not have them but you must not depend on any of them. You can worship Him without instruments or buildings. That's the kind of believers He is raising up, who worship Him in Spirit and in truth.

If there is a fight over a building or an instrument, give it up and walk away. Only those who are free will be able to walk away while those who are not, will hold onto things. When you walk away you will see you don't walk alone, the Spirit of God walks with you. That is actual priesthood, when we call Him Lord. In the Promised Land, every Hebrew was given land, according to their tribes, down to their families. Every family had a plot of land. That is why Israel was called the Promised Land; they were literally Promised Land, except for one tribe. The Levites had no land, for God Himself was to be their

inheritance. It looks like the Levites lost out, but you never lose with God. He asked the rest of Israel to give a tenth of their best to the Levite, so they ended up having the best of the land. The best in Israel went to the Levites because they took a stand for God. In the spirit, God says we are the Levites, He is our inheritance. We should never hold onto things. If there is a dispute over it, let it go.

Jesus explained how the New Covenant works. A Roman soldier had the right under Roman law, to ask anyone who was not a Roman to carry his load for him up to a mile. If I were a Roman soldier carrying my pack and I met Vishal on the road, I could stop and ask him to carry it. If he refused he would be punished. So Vishal would carefully complete the mile, set the load down right there and walk away. The soldier can't do anything about it because the law says that the man needs to carry the load only for a mile. That's the Roman law. But Jesus said, *if anyone makes you carry his load for a mile, carry it for two miles. Do you know why? Because you are free!* You are free to carry it for two miles. The soldier will be amazed at your freedom. If someone takes your coat give him your shirt too because you are a free man. He needs a shirt and a coat because he is a slave. But you are free because God is covering you.

God is calling us to that kind of a freedom, where we don't hold onto things. Just let go and God will give you what you need. You don't have to worry about it. Just believe that God will take care of it. He is a loving God. Repent, change your ways, God will use you if you are willing to change. He says, *You don't need to worry about your possessions if you know and believe that I AM your possession.* For us to reach that level of thinking we need our minds to be renewed. Most of our worries are about possessions, *How will I manage next week? How will I pay my son's fees? How will I buy clothes for my daughter?* We worry over these possessions when God says, *Don't you know that I AM your possession?*

Let's say, when Joba got married she had only a thousand rupees, but Manoj had a million rupees in his bank. If Joba got married on 1st January, how much money did she have on 31st December? Just her thousand rupees, yet on 1st Jan, how much did she have? A million! Do you know why? His money had become her money, it's no longer about his or hers, it's their money. God is calling us to a marriage where He is our inheritance. But to believe that God is my inheritance, the first thing I need to do is to separate from all others, make my vow, *I will honor you with my body*, that is the covenant a woman and man enter into. We never need to worry about God honoring us with His body, He will honor us with His flesh but He never honors the world.

Now do you understand why Jesus refused to minister to the Gentiles when He came? We find it difficult to understand when He said, *I have not come for the gentiles.* When He came down to earth, Israel was God's bride and He came for them, not the others. He did a few things for some gentiles because of their faith but He refused to have anything to do with the rest of them. He came as the Bridegroom to the Jews. After His resurrection He said, *Now everyone can be part of the Bride.* As long as the Old Covenant remained, He was spouse only to Israel. Remember the Canaanite woman with the sick child who came to Jesus and said, *Son of David, have mercy upon me?* The most compassionate man that ever walked the earth refused to even listen to her. He told the disciples, *I have come for the lost sheep of Israel.* Then the woman cried out, *Lord, have mercy.* When she called Him Son of David, He didn't answer her. That was a form of address used only by a Hebrew, under the Old Covenant. The moment she changed His title and called Him 'Lord', as in God to all, He addressed her, *I am your God too, but only to them I am their David. When you call Me Son of David I will not answer you.* Now He is not Son of David, He is God of all flesh, seated on the right hand of the Father. Now He is God again to everyone. We become His bride when we accept His salvation, then He becomes our inheritance.

We say, *I know He is my inheritance* but God says, *Do you really know it? Shall I write out your thoughts and show how you worry day and night? If I am your inheritance why do you worry? Why are you anxious all the time?* In the Kingdom of God everything operates by faith which is always seen by your works. Like Sis Ailsa prayed, if we walk by faith we will always run to the Throne first, not to the phone. That's our basic problem. God does not say you shouldn't ask another person in the family to pray for you. If a wife has a problem, whom does she talk to first? Her husband! When a wife talks to somebody other than her husband about her problem, you realize there is a problem in the marriage. In this case, for us as the bride, the problem is not with the husband, with God, the problem is with the wife, with us. If there is no problem in her relationship with her husband, the wife will always confide first in her husband. When the husband wants something done, whom does he ask first? He asks his wife. If He who is our husband is not able to ask us, His wife, what He wants done, then it is like a child marriage. He wants to tell us but He only tells us simple things.

In the olden days in India, we used to have child marriages. The husband wouldn't ask anything of the child bride. The mother in law trained her for years. My grandmother was married at the age of twelve, it was a Christian wedding. She told me she sat on her father's lap through the wedding ceremony. Her father was a bishop. She lived to the age of 100 years. When she got married she was twelve years old and her husband was 21 years old, by God's grace he was only nine years older. What does a twelve year old girl know? Her mother in law didn't allow her to sleep with her husband for many years, because she was a child bride. The Heavenly husband wants to share many intimate things with His wife but He can't because she is still a child. That's where the Church is at. The Husband longs to share His heart with His wife but she doesn't understand Him. He can't talk to us except to tell us simple things. He longs to talk to His wife. Thank God that we have a very faithful Husband. Extramarital affairs happen when the wife or the husband does not listen to what the other wants. I am not trying to justify extramarital affairs. If the wife is in the spirit but the husband is carnal, when he can't get his carnal ways, he will find a fleshly concubine outside, because there is no satisfaction to his flesh in his marriage.

That's why God warns us not to be yoked with unbelievers. That applies to believing Christians too. I make it a point to counsel young people not to marry when they are at different spiritual levels, they will find it difficult. One will always try to push the other into doing things he or she doesn't want to do. As it says in Corinthians, once you are married you will want to please your spouse. If a believer marries one who is not baptized in the Holy Ghost, there will be a disconnect. One will be able to hear in the spirit while the spouse doesn't. One will listen to God's direction while the other is not in the least interested. Unless two agree they cannot walk together. So it is not enough that they should be believers, they should also be of the Father's household, knowing the Father the same way, being part of that same family. That's what Abraham told Eleazer, *Get a girl from my father's household*. There are many good girls around but pick someone from the Father's household, who will be able to walk with you.

All of us are married, so this is not about a second marriage or changing spouses, this is to the young people. Don't be in a hurry, shut your mind off, wait on the Lord and say, *It is good that I wait and hear from You. I will not decide on the basis of my eyes and ears*. The decision about a spouse is made in the Spirit. For many of those who made this decision with their ears and eyes it was, *Marry in haste and repent in leisure*. So we repent at leisure, with all the time we have, because marriage vows are also binding. Make your choices in the spirit, God will tell you who the person is. Eleazer said, *Lord, it is evening time and the women will come out. How do I make a choice? I will not make a choice by sight*. If it was to be a choice by sight, Eleazer would have said, *Lord I will pick the most beautiful from out of ten girls who come here. I will look at her eyes, nose, complexion and then decide. Or I will pick the best dressed girl, she may not be good looking but she will have good taste. Or I will see how clean she is, that means she's careful about hygiene*. But he tried none of these things. He said, *Lord, help me to make a test in the spirit and choose according to the Spirit*. God helped him to make a test. *Who will give me water? Who will water my camels?* That is the test of the Spirit. He sought out a giving person, one who would go out of her way to give. That would be the mark of God on her spirit. That's the test Rebecca passed.

I am talking about the renewing of your mind. The mould of the world will make us pick according to the flesh. This includes the decisions we make as parents for our children. Are these choices according to the flesh or according to the spirit? If we train our children to make decisions according to the spirit when they are small, they will learn it right from the beginning. Their minds get tuned to the things in the spirit. They do not question it. We think it would be difficult with children but it is easy if you train them early. Yesterday evening we were there at Gokul and Jaya's place. I used to take a Bible Study there every Friday when Gokul wasn't a believer. He used to give them a real tough time in that house. Jaya was desperately looking for a job as an escape. She applied everywhere and was rejected though she had five years experience. I felt led to tell her that the Lord was asking her to have a baby. The very next day she went to her doctor and called me to say she had conceived. I told her to train the baby right in the womb, to start listening to God's music, God's Word. That child just turned two on Sunday. She sang at least six worship songs perfectly including using words like sanctuary. She can sing even at a high pitch. She began by singing 'Our God is an awesome God' and went on to sing some tough songs including 'Take me past the outer courts'!

We think we can't train the children! We can do tremendous things with them. Train them up, their minds are fresh, like soft clay, they can be moulded. As you practice and train them, you will see their minds getting fixed in the ways of God. They will not doubt, the way we do. We think repetitive is boring, but not in the Kingdom of God. Discipline is just doing the same thing over and over again. Don't change rules until they are able to handle it. Make a rule in the house that they will not watch more than an hour or two of TV a week. Get them to read instead, because they have to eventually learn to read

the Word of God. Those who don't have habit of reading when they are small, find it difficult to read the Word of God when they are older. Then they pray for a miracle, *Lord help me to concentrate*. When we form the habit of reading, studying the Word of God is not a difficult thing. But when we train our mind to watch TV, we continue to do so when we are saved. We watch a man or woman of God on TV and they minister to us. But we are not seeking the Spirit of God directly, we are looking at someone ministering to us. It is something removed two times from God. I don't mean that God doesn't use people, He does. There is an anointing through which he teaches. But what if you are not trained to receive directly from God? On the other hand, if you have trained yourself, when you sit with the Word of God and seek His Spirit, God starts speaking to you directly. This is what the training is for. Nobody is too old to be trained, you can still discipline your mind. If the mind is not disciplined we will still fail. We can have a surrendered body with an unrenewed mind or we can have a surrendered body and a renewed mind.

Romans 12:3

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

The Word of God follows an order in its lessons. After we surrender our bodies and commit ourselves with a renewed mind, the next thing God says is, *Be Humble*. You can speak of humility only to one who has a renewed mind. A mind that is not renewed is always proud, always focused on its achievements. Paul begins on a humble note saying, *I wrote those eleven chapters but whatever I have written to you, the deep things of God, is nothing of me, it's not my wisdom. It's not about whether I am smarter or better than the other apostles, but it's written through the grace given to me*. You and I serve Him only because of grace given to us. If you keep your eyes fixed on that, you will never get caught in that great and terrible trap, which even senior and mature believers fall into, the trap of pride in our achievements. In the Kingdom of God, you and I never achieve anything, it is only the grace of God that achieves it.

1 Corinthians 3:6-7

⁶ I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase. ⁷ So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.

It is God who gave the increase! We have to be very careful as a person, as a group, as a church, as the body of Christ, that we never boast about ourselves. No denomination should boast about itself because it is nothing in itself, it's only the grace of God that was given to them. Denominations are not from God. Churches should only boast about Christ. We boast about Christ by being quiet about ourselves, the more quiet we are about ourselves, the more we will talk about Christ. We can't do both.

I listen to the testimonies in the church, that's a barometer God has given me to measure my congregation. When I listen carefully, I know who is boasting about Christ and who is boasting about himself or herself. This knowledge helps me to assign tasks appropriately so that they don't get destroyed. Someone may be better at doing certain things but I may ask someone else to do it because the other might get destroyed because of pride. God too assigns things to us that don't destroy us. Pride is one thing that can destroy us. We have to be careful in listening and speaking. Do we lift Jesus up or ourselves? It's the grace of God that does the work through us. I don't do anything. Nobody can do anything in the Kingdom of God, in the Spiritual realm, other than through the grace of God.

Paul is consistent in his testimony. Even in the book of Acts when he reported to the church, he testified the same way, *We did all these through the grace that God gave us*. At the church in Antioch, Barnabas and Paul were set apart by the Spirit of God, prayed over and sent out on a mission. They were on a journey and in the process of this journey they were maturing. They were not yet big apostles. When they finished the journey, they returned to the church to give an account of what they had done, by the grace of God.

On Sunday I talked about the two birds Noah sent out on the upper deck of the Ark. He represents Jesus there, who sent His servants out. The raven never came back to Noah, but the dove did. That doesn't mean that the dove lived with Noah forever after that. This is about accountability, to return and report, *Pastor, this is what I did*. Do you know why? It means that you acknowledge whatever you did was through the grace of God. The raven never came back because it did not want to acknowledge anything to Noah, therefore the raven's ministry will not be recognized in Heaven. The dove's ministry will

be recognized because it had a leaf in its mouth, symbolizing life. God says, *This is the trap in which people get caught. The trap is pride.* The raven thinks, *You sent me out because of all the birds I am the smartest, that's why I was picked. Now I am smarter than you, I don't have to come back to you.* The dove too was released by Noah one day saying, *Go, start out on your own.* That is the way ministries begin. That is what Paul tells us. After a season, Paul doesn't report anymore, others were reporting to him. Paul was writing to everyone and others are writing back to him and telling him where Timothy is, Titus, Silas. He was ordaining deacons and overseers. Did he start that way? No, he didn't. He started at one level and reached a different level but the difference between this man and the others is that he continued in the way he started, in humility. At the end he said, *By the grace of God. It's not me. It's not I who live but Christ who lives in me.*

Romans 12:3

³ For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Paul was writing to a church in Rome. He speaks to us too as a church, telling us not to think too highly of ourselves. If you think highly of yourself, if your pastor were to ask you to do something you might consider it an insult to be asked such a thing. You begin to think that maybe you should have been called to preach. When we think too highly of ourselves we cannot serve in any position other than what we like. Everything else would be beneath us. In his epistle, Peter tells us, *Christ Jesus has shown us a way.* What was that way? He served in His father's house for thirty years before He was given a ministry. He humbled Himself and started at the lowest level, waiting till God approved His service. On the day He was baptized, the Father said, *Here is My Son in whom I am well pleased.* He did a good job at home taking care of His brothers and sisters, His mother, making good furniture, not complaining and doing everything He was told. God could entrust the next level of ministry into His hands. That is why God asks us not think too highly of ourselves, but to be sober in our own esteem.

Sober is the opposite of drunk. When you think a little too highly of yourself you are drunk. Drunkenness is when something takes control of you. When you think highly of yourself, somebody else is in control, you are not in control, God is not in control. We do not trust a drunk, we avoid him. So what is God trying to tell us? He avoids drunks! But there is a safety valve there. Read that line carefully. He also says we are not to think too low of ourselves either. When I minister to women, especially those who go through a tough time in their marriage, they have very low self-esteem and it keeps them from being used by God. They carry with them the image of what others said to them. What is the second commandment? Love your neighbor as you love yourself. If you don't love yourself, you will have very low self-esteem and you will love others the same way. You'll not be able to see true worth in anyone because you don't see any worth in yourself. Your ministry becomes a ministry of condemnation and running others down. You pull down because you have always been pulled down. Don't think too highly or too lowly of yourself, think about yourself the way God thinks of you. How does God think about you? He says there is nothing good in us, yet there is this treasure within. Through Him all things are possible, if we lean on Him daily, we will have a healthy love of ourselves and will be able to minister to others. When you see others in your situation, you will be able to help them, acknowledging the truth about it yet showing that through God all things are possible, because you yourself were in that rut but you have been lifted out. It is no longer a ministry of condemnation but of conviction for you.

God has dealt to each one a measure of faith.

Vishal, what has He given you? You can't say you don't have faith. No true believer, having repented and accepted Him as Lord and Savior can say he has no faith, because God says he has given us a measure of faith. But what we do with it is up to us. If we use it, it will increase, if we don't, nothing will change in our lives. To everyone He has given a measure of faith which does not decrease as it is consumed. Faith is not like that. It increases with use, the more I love people, the more love increases in me. When I walk in faith, my faith increases. The Kingdom of God is directly opposed to the kingdom of this world that is why we should not *conform to the patterns of this world.* If your mind is in the world, you will try to hide your faith and not use it. *This is all I have, ayyo if I use it, it will finish!* The more you give away, the more you receive. That's the most difficult law for people to follow. We can apply it to love and faith, but what about money? God says, *operate your money with love and faith, it will never decrease.* That's the true prosperity Gospel. Your income will never decrease, but to do it, you have to operate by faith. That is the only way your incomes increases in the Kingdom of God. Everything in the Kingdom of God operates on the principle *give it shall be given unto you, use and I will give you more to use.*

The key principle in the Kingdom of God is that everything is given to be used, nothing should be hoarded. For example, if God increased our supply in February and the papers keep reporting about recession and depression, we begin to think we need to start saving a little right away. After that, the next month's supply seems like it has decreased. I tell you, this is what happens. We received by faith but we acted according to pattern of this world, getting our information from the papers. God's economy is not concerned with recession or depression. But He tells us to be good stewards of His money, which is an entirely different thing. He says everyone has been given a measure of faith. You are not able to walk by faith only because you do not use the faith He has given. You do not apply it to the different areas of your life. Don't start applying it to great things when you haven't learnt to apply it to the little things. We have more ladies over here, sisters, start asking God for intervention in your cooking. Don't tell anyone else about it. God says, *I will bless the work of your hands*. He will bless the bread basket. In the Bible there are so many references about cooking, where God Himself is involved in it. Start cooking by faith, walk in those blessings, trust the Lord to release His blessings according to His Word, over the work of your hand. Remember you will be tested too, when you start walking by faith. When you prayed and blessed your cooking, maybe that day you put in too much salt. Do not get discouraged.

Joel Osteen's father, John Osteen was a real man of God. When he got baptized in the Holy Ghost, the Lord told him to pray over the sick. The first person he prayed over, died as did the second and the third person, but the fourth one got healed. He said the key was that he didn't give up the first three times. He still believed that God's Word did not go void. What does void mean? Empty. You know what that verse actually means? We apply it in different ways but it is talking about Jesus. The Word of God sent in the flesh will not go void, He achieves the purpose for which He is sent. He does not return to the Father and say He failed. He fulfills the purpose for which He was sent. When we are in Him, we are included in it.

Ephesians 2:22

²² ***In whom ye also are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit.***

We are all in Him. God sends us out and if we go according to His Word, our work will never go void, it will always achieve the purpose for which it was sent, in Him. God has given us this measure of faith. I strongly believe we are living in the last generation. Suddenly, everybody is talking about it like never before. Last night on God TV, they had a program on the apocalypse, that's the Book of Revelation. Everywhere you go, God is speaking in different places that this is the generation who will see His coming. If that is so, we are only going to survive by faith. In Thessalonians God warns us that even the elect will be shaken in the last days. If we are going to be shaken so badly, how are we going to survive and come out victorious, except by faith? If we are going to make our decisions based on the information we get from the world, we will be in trouble, big trouble. Scripture says this is what we will face, even with faith. That is a very scary line,

2 Thessalonians 2:3

² ***Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition,***

It says this will happen before He comes. What does it mean to fall away? Can you fall if you aren't standing? This is about many who believe in Jesus. They will fall away, they will leave the church. We are already seeing people in their tens of thousands who were Christians leaving the Church, walking away, no longer interested. The unsaved are getting saved but those who were saved are no longer interested in the Church. We hear strange reports coming out of these churches. The Council of Churches in India is planning to agree with the government that the Full Gospel and Pentecostals are creating the trouble in India, that salvation is not only through the name of Jesus, that their preaching is causing friction in the country. They have already agreed on the agenda and plan to make it official soon. The Council includes almost every major denomination in India today, including the Catholic, Methodist, Presbyterians and the CSI. They agree among themselves that these churches are creating friction in society by preaching that Jesus is the only Way. I have seen even Bishops letters saying this, that salvation is possible in other ways too.

We are coming to a point where there will be agreement between the powers of this world and the rulers of the Church. There will be a massive falling away when they don't believe that Jesus is the only Way. God Himself says that there is pleasure in the world. What stops us from joining that fun? The reason is that we believe He is the only way, that there is no other name under Heaven by which we can be saved. Scripture teaches us to work out our salvation with fear and

trembling. We are facing this great falling away. What will happen after that? The man of lawlessness will be revealed. Are we seeing the man of lawlessness? We see lawless men and women everywhere, it's so scary to walk on the road or drive. If your vehicle so much as touches another vehicle, even by accident, there is so much violence. You see people beating each other up just for a mark or a scratch on the car. This is lawlessness being manifested, everybody taking the law into their own hands. When we take the law into our own hands, we become lawless. We see lawlessness everywhere and the government keeps increasing its security forces. Can you see what we read in Thessalonians? There is rebellion and a falling away. The man of lawlessness is doomed to destruction. He will exalt himself over everything and set himself up in God's temple.

Before an invention becomes a physical reality, it is first built up at the theoretical level. Most inventions were first theory five or six years before they were built. In the same way the man of lawlessness is already setting up the basis to exalt himself over everything that we believe is from God. What God has declared as an abomination, both the Church and the world have got together to say it is not so. The problem is not about what the world says but when the Church starts agreeing, believers get confused. That is happening now. We get to see things on live broadcast everywhere in the world. If it is of significance to the media, they beam it all around the world. How many millions watched Obama's swearing-in ceremony? It was a statement to the world that what God called abomination is now acceptable in the Church. Most of the pastors and bishops were pro-gay. What did they swear on, including the President? They swore on the Holy Bible! It was held up before the entire universe to see. Their Supreme Court judges too are sworn in on the Bible, those same judges who say homosexuality is okay and what the Bible said is wrong! Yet they were swearing on it! You could bring Lincoln's Bible and swear on it and yet not agree to anything written in it. Millions of non-believers were watching and thought it was okay. They are not going to read the Bible, they only get to see what we do and think it is okay.

In 2006, the Supreme Court made a ruling about sexual perversion, saying the law is not concerned about what happens in the bedroom. Yet the same God over whose Word they swore, asks us to keep the marriage bed honorable. How did they become judges? They were sworn in over the Bible to uphold it and every one of them went against the Word of God. Annie Graham, Billy Graham's daughter's stated it well. She said with all the disasters happening, everyone was crying out to God to help. *Why is it happening to us*, they ask. She said, *God is a perfect gentleman. First you told Him to get out of the schools, He got out. No prayer, no Bible in the schools. Then you told Him get out of our government, separate the government and the Church, He got out. Then you told Him get out of the public space, He got out. Then you told Him get out of the Courts, He got out. Now you are in trouble and you are asking where He is? He says, you told me to get out!* When we take Him out, we do not create a vacuum. The enemy gets in. Jesus said, *When you clean out the demons from a place and leave it empty, he will come back with seven others and your situation is worse off than before!*

God is telling the last day's generation, *You have no excuse! I have given you a measure of faith, don't tell Me you don't have any. If someone has more faith than you, it is only because they used it and you didn't.* If you want to start hearing from God, walk from His permissive will to His perfect will and start using the faith He has given you. Start applying it in the little things. Start at home. Once you succeed at home, God will take you beyond that. When He can trust you with the measure of faith He has given you, He will take you beyond it and use you in mighty ways. You have to be faithful with the faith God gives you. What is the duty of every child, every student? They wonder why they should get high scores. God says, *It is not about marks, that is in the teacher's hands. I only tell you how you need to work. I never told you about you grades, that you need to score 90 or 95 percent.* God gives us the grades but the work is in our own hands. When you tell a child about his grades, you are telling him that he needs to get a higher score. If you are called to be a student, then study as hard as you can, you need to work, discipline yourself. If you have been called to minister, then you have to study Scripture or else you will have nothing to minister from. You cannot excuse yourself by saying you don't know what to preach. You have to be faithful in whatever God has called you to, before He increases it.

David was faithful in the little thing entrusted to him by his father, the little flock of sheep. Even his family acknowledged it before he went to meet Goliath. When he met his brothers with the bread his father sent through him, his elder brother asked him, *Where have you left the sheep?* He knew David took care of the few sheep and he was seeing him for the first time without the sheep. David said, *I left the sheep only because Dad told me to. If hadn't said so, I wouldn't have left them.* Just think about the scenario when Samuel came to Bethlehem. David, as usual, was told to take care of the sheep. That day his father didn't change the instruction for him. He didn't tell him that Samuel had come and he needed David to be at hand. He didn't ask David to hand the sheep over to somebody else and come home. So even though the Prophet was in

town and something big was going to happen, the boy took the sheep with him and went. He didn't leave his post for the sensational event because he was faithful with what the father had told him to do. The sensational event became all about him. He became the sensation, he was called back and anointed because he was found faithful. Many are called but do you know why they are not chosen? Because they were not faithful with that measure of faith! We don't realize that one word 'measure' is so important. Maybe you are given only a little and because you were not faithful with it, you run away saying, *Lord, with all the talents I have, You wouldn't be calling me for such a small job, would you? I think You got it wrong, I think You have called me for a great ministry.* God says, *No, I called you for this, will you stay there?*

Many Christian magazines carry advertisements calling people to attend Bible College with a 10th class certificate as a minimum qualification, even those who fail may apply. What kind of testimony are we putting across to the world? Is this is how we prepare God's servants? I am not saying that you need even a class ten certificate. I don't mean that. What I mean is that we are saying it doesn't matter, anything will do, kuch bhi chalega, just come! Our God is so desperate, He has no faithful servants! God has lowered His standard saying, *I don't need any faithful people, anyone will do, faithful or unfaithful, just come because I need servants.* That is not true! God does not change. Do you think our God changes? No, He is still the same. We have to be faithful and if we are not faithful at the point where He has called us and we jump ship, we will find ourselves in a worse place.