

“It is not me.”

Everything we have belongs to God. Whatever increase we have is from God and we will prosper. A man can certainly increase without God, but it will be a failure and can be removed by other men, because we rely on them for our wealth and work. But, when we rely only on God, as did Joseph, we gain the world because God gives it to us.

It is wondrous how many Christians think they achieve wealth and increase by their own means. How many of us attribute good to God, and our status or wealth to God? Very few. It is very easy to forget Who gives us what we have! A Christian can go all through life thinking he has done this or that by his own efforts or skills. But, when his working life is finished, he has time to reflect, and he will become most miserable, probably without knowing why. It is because God did not receive the glory, throughout the person's time on earth.

I can only repeat what I have said for many years – do not rely on your neighbours, or on unsaved friends; don't follow their lifestyles and do what they do; don't pin all your efforts on work or on 'secular' activities with secular people; do not think worldly gain is of any consequence. Many retire from their fairly well paid work, without sparing a thought for others or for what God wants. They enjoy their retirement, but must quell God's voice to that point and after it. They do not pray to God to give them His mind and ways. Walk His path... and life will indeed be different. You might not become a Joseph, but you will know the fullness of being in the hand of God! What is the point of having a trouble-free life with financial comforts if God is not the cause? Or, if you do not acknowledge it all belongs to Him? Or, if you waft through your comfort without a thought for the comfort or needs of others?

When we live this for God, life is no longer just a stretch of time between birth and death, when we fill in the hours with human activity... it is God's plan working out on this earth, going wherever God wishes to take us. It is never dull and always exciting, even if sometimes a bit fearful. Christians who do not see excitement in their lives are Christians who are entrenched in their own sinful ways and human desires.

In ordinary terms they appear to be successful or happy, but, be assured, this is superficial – their lives are false, for God has no real place in their hearts, prayer is limited (and often misperceived), Bible reading is little, companionship with fellow Believers is probably non-existent and they probably spend more time with unbelievers than with the saints. Sadly, this is because the superficial Christian has eyes only for the baubles offered by this world, and

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so never enters into fullness of spiritual truth.

How is YOUR life (I ask the same question of myself)? All Christians can make suitable public statements and smile the evangelical smile. But, how much of it is genuine? Do you really believe and put your whole life into God's hands? If so, can you prove it?

Verses 1-7

1.

"And it came to pass at the end of two full years, that Pharaoh dreamed: and, behold, he stood by the river.

2.

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven well favoured kine and fatfleshed; and they fed in a meadow.

3.

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them out of the river, ill favoured and leanfleshed; and stood by the other kine upon the brink of the river.

4.

And the ill favoured and leanfleshed kine did eat up the seven well favoured and fat kine. So Pharaoh awoke.

5.

And he slept and dreamed the second time: and, behold, seven ears of corn came up upon one stalk, rank and good.

6.

And, behold, seven thin ears and blasted with the east wind sprung up after them.

7.

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And the seven thin ears devoured the seven rank and full ears. And Pharaoh awoke, and, behold, it was a dream.”

Two years passed since the butler and baker were in prison briefly with Joseph. The butler forgot to speak to Pharaoh about Joseph, so he remained there. Then, Pharaoh had two dreams (seemingly both in the same night)...the contents, as in the other dreams, can only be described, for no man could guess at the interpretation. Joseph rightly said – the interpretation of dreams is God’s province, not mans. Thus, Pharaoh had two dreams but he did not know what they meant. Look at them again? Would YOU understand them?

I would suggest that the dreams must have been vivid and unusual for Pharaoh to be upset by them. He knew they were different from any he might normally have had. This is one hallmark of a true dream or vision – it is obviously different and it makes an indelible impression on the soul, causing the one receiving it to seek wisdom.

Verses 8-13

1.

“And it came to pass in the morning that his spirit was troubled; and he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt, and all the wise men thereof: and Pharaoh told them his dream; but there was none that could interpret them unto Pharaoh.

2.

Then spake the chief butler unto Pharaoh, saying, I do remember my faults this day:

3.

Pharaoh was wroth with his servants, and put me in ward in the captain of the guard's house, both me and the chief baker:

4.

And we dreamed a dream in one night, I and he; we dreamed each man according to the interpretation of his dream.

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5.

And there was there with us a young man, an Hebrew, servant to the captain of the guard; and we told him, and he interpreted to us our dreams; to each man according to his dream he did interpret.

6.

And it came to pass, as he interpreted to us, so it was; me he restored unto mine office, and him he hanged.”

When he awoke, Pharaoh's 'spirit' was troubled. The word for 'spirit' is common enough, *ruwach*, but its meaning must be carefully shown. There are about 27 possible interpretations, and in this verse it *cannot* be 'spirit' as used to refer to the Christian spirit or the spirit of an Old Testament man of God. This is because the spirit of an unregenerated man is 'dead' and unable to respond to God.

In this text, the meaning must refer to Pharaoh's mental agitation of his soul (in this verse=mind), causing him to be troubled, rather than to his spirit – as the text tells us... *pa'am*, to be disturbed. Thus, the proceeding word qualifies the first, 'spirit'.

Being troubled he called on the courtiers who an Egyptian would have relied on – magicians, or *chartom*. These were the king's diviners or astrologers, brought in to give occult advice. He also brought in 'wise men', the *chakam*, who could be equated with our philosophers, or even gurus. Pharaoh told them all his dreams, but none could interpret. When you think about it, they would have been stupid to give an interpretation if they had no idea, because a wrong interpretation could end in their execution.

After this, the chief butler spoke to Pharaoh. He told him that he remembered when he had been found guilty by Pharaoh and was placed in the prison. When there he and the baker both

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had dreams. A young man, a Hebrew prisoner who served the prison keeper, interpreted the dreams accurately – the butler lived and the baker was hanged.

In this way Joseph was not just remembered, but he was put in the spotlight! If there was one time he had to be correct in every detail and true to God's gifts, it was now! He did not ask for the task, but it was given him by the butler, by way of recommendation. Today, many charismatics fraudulently claim to have dreams, visions and prophecies, though they have many frankly wrong interpretations. Here, Joseph's character, and possibly his life, was put on the line by someone else! Did Joseph truly have a gift from God, or not? This was to be his test.

Verses 14-16

1.

"Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon: and he shaved himself, and changed his raiment, and came in unto Pharaoh.

2.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I have dreamed a dream, and there is none that can interpret it: and I have heard say of thee, that thou canst understand a dream to interpret it.

3.

And Joseph answered Pharaoh, saying, It is not in me: God shall give Pharaoh an answer of peace."

Delighted to hear the news, Pharaoh sent for Joseph, who was quickly delivered to the palace, after shaving and putting on clean clothing. The shaving in this text is not the shaving of the face, but *galach*, the shaving of the head or 'polling' to make his head bald. This ought not surprise us, for we see many depictions of bald heads in Egyptian murals. It is an interesting historical note, then, that Joseph was habitually bald by shaving, following the common style of the Egyptians.

When brought before Pharaoh, he was told the dreams. Pharaoh added that no-one else could interpret, but that he had heard Joseph could do so. Immediately, Joseph denied having any

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personal power to interpret, saying that only God could do so. With swift assurance, Joseph even said that God would give Pharaoh the true interpretation, which was an 'answer of peace', meaning a special answer promising prosperity and goodness, through a relationship with God (through Joseph, as it turns out).

This was an amazing thing to say to someone who could have him put to death if he was wrong! But, Joseph was confident because God had already filled him with faith in what he was saying. I remember one particular occasion, when a lady came to my house to talk with my wife. It transpired that her brother had gone to live with her, but with him came evil spirits. She happened to tell me what was happening and I was able to tell her what was causing all the signs and symptoms she was experiencing. Then, she asked me how I was so sure, and what could be done.

I did not have an answer but went upstairs for a few minutes to my bedroom and prayed that God would prove the case. I was prompted to go back down and I began to speak. I did not know what I was about to say, and the words were as new to me as they were to the lady. God told her, through me, that the proof would come as soon as she returned home; the signs would increase dramatically because the demons were aware I had spoken with her. I then told her what to do to be rid of the activities. And so it all came to pass. It was not me, and I did not interpret – God spoke through me. And that is what happened with Joseph, as he correctly stated. Sadly, today's 'prophets' and 'interpreters' claim power within themselves, and even take pride in what they claim for their own. This is proof not of God, but of satanic deception.

Verses 17-24

1.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, In my dream, behold, I stood upon the bank of the river:

2.

And, behold, there came up out of the river seven kine, fattleshed and well favoured; and they fed in a meadow:

3.

And, behold, seven other kine came up after them, poor and very ill favoured and leanfleshed, such as I never saw in all the land of Egypt for badness:

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4.

And the lean and the ill favoured kine did eat up the first seven fat kine:

5.

And when they had eaten them up, it could not be known that they had eaten them; but they were still ill favoured, as at the beginning. So I awoke.

6.

And I saw in my dream, and, behold, seven ears came up in one stalk, full and good:

7.

And, behold, seven ears, withered, thin, and blasted with the east wind, sprung up after them:

8.

And the thin ears devoured the seven good ears: and I told this unto the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.”

Pharaoh repeats his dreams to Joseph; the words are self-evident. The important note in this section is: “I told this to the magicians; but there was none that could declare it to me.”

We must read this in its specific context. That is, God gave Pharaoh prophetic dreams. But, when Pharaoh called upon his magicians and philosophers they were unable to decipher them. This is because the dreams were from God and they were unbelievers.

We must be very careful what we attribute to God, just as we must be careful not to deny an act of God. Today, charismatics (of any denomination or none) claim to have these dreams, visions and prophecies. They believe that because answers are received from interpreters, this proves the words are from God. The reality may be very different... they have been duped.

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Automatically, charismatics think any spiritual messages they receive must be from God, just as they believed the whole Toronto Blessing (and subsequent 'waves') was from God. But, let us be clear about this – *Satan can give these very same 'gifts', too*. It works like this... a demon gives a dream, vision or prophecy to a man. Another person gives an 'interpretation' which 'proves' the thing to be from God. But, it does not. It only proves that an interpretation was given!

It is nothing for a demon to persuade a gullible person (even a Christian). The easiest part is to receive a dream, vision, or prophecy. The demon then 'talks' to another person who will 'interpret'. Very often these interpretations are about no more than everyday events. Demons then go about manipulating people, events and times so that the 'prophecy' comes true.

Thus, demons create a situation and then work towards it to convince people the messages are from God and are genuine. Why do this? To detract from the truth and from God. In this way Satan constructs a whole new sub-system of beliefs which, as charismatics have openly stated, are 'extra-biblical'. By doing this demons can place thoughts into minds and bring them about, causing them to build a theology not of God, and a spiritual life of darkness, with a thin gloss of 'light' on the surface. Inevitably, despite a veneer of humility (or none, more often than not), people think they personally have 'power' and 'gifts' they can use whenever they wish. Beware of the sad and demonic claims of so many today!

Verses 25-32

1.

"And Joseph said unto Pharaoh, The dream of Pharaoh is one: God hath shewed Pharaoh what he is about to do.

2.

The seven good kine are seven years; and the seven good ears are seven years: the dream is one.

3.

And the seven thin and ill favoured kine that came up after them are seven years; and the seven empty ears blasted with the east wind shall be seven years of famine.

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4.

This is the thing which I have spoken unto Pharaoh: What God is about to do he sheweth unto Pharaoh.

5.

Behold, there come seven years of great plenty throughout all the land of Egypt:

6.

And there shall arise after them seven years of famine; and all the plenty shall be forgotten in the land of Egypt; and the famine shall consume the land;

7.

And the plenty shall not be known in the land by reason of that famine following; for it shall be very grievous.

8.

And for that the dream was doubled unto Pharaoh twice; it is because the thing is established by God, and God will shortly bring it to pass.”

Joseph now begins to interpret. He did not have to think about it, but launches into it immediately, because God had already opened his mouth. I have no doubt whatever that the words issued from Joseph's mouth instantly, without his thought. That is, Joseph did not know what he was saying until he actually said it (as described earlier).

Joseph said that the two dreams were linked and definite ('one'). Again, he advised that the dreams were about what *God* was going to do. In his interpretation were no vague allusions that could be taken in many sorts of ways. Today, fake 'prophets' give 'interpretations' that, when shown not to have occurred, are given new meanings!

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The interpretation was that there would be seven years of plenty followed by seven years of famine. Again, Joseph attributed the message to God, not to himself. 'This is what God is about to do to you and your land. The famine would be devastating, and,' said Joseph, 'this was why God repeated the dreams twice.' There was no doubt as to the meaning, for it was 'established', *kuwn*, or already set up and a fixed action. Not only that, but the prophesied actions were imminent: "God will shortly bring it to pass". 'Shortly' means to come about quickly, *mahar*. Therefore, this was no fake delusion uttered by Joseph, or a satanic ploy. Over the next 14 years Joseph would be proved to be either a liar and liable to death, or a truth-teller whose spirit is of God.

Verses 33-37

1.

"Now therefore let Pharaoh look out a man discreet and wise, and set him over the land of Egypt.

2.

Let Pharaoh do this, and let him appoint officers over the land, and take up the fifth part of the land of Egypt in the seven plenteous years.

3.

And let them gather all the food of those good years that come, and lay up corn under the hand of Pharaoh, and let them keep food in the cities.

4.

And that food shall be for store to the land against the seven years of famine, which shall be in the land of Egypt; that the land perish not through the famine.

5.

And the thing was good in the eyes of Pharaoh, and in the eyes of all his servants."

It did not end there. Now Joseph advised Pharaoh to create a new office, that a man might oversee what was to be done to allay the problems of a coming disastrous famine. The man

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had to be “discreet and wise”; ‘discreet’ means to be discerning and perceptive, with an intelligent grasp of what was to be done. ‘Wise’ was to be shrewd and prudent. Such a man must be given the task; he must be ‘set... over the land of Egypt’. It had to be a whole-land policy because the famine would involve the whole land.

God gave Joseph the plan needed: Pharaoh must also appoint officers (*paqiya* – deputies) subservient to the higher officer, who would look after the regions of Egypt. A fifth of the land would be used to provide grain and goods during the coming seven good years. Whatever was produced in that fifth part would be put into storage by command of Pharaoh, and a normal food chain could still be kept going for the people.

The stored grain would later be used to feed the people during the famine. In this way, said Joseph, the people of Egypt would not starve. Pharaoh was delighted with Joseph’s plan, as were his courtiers and servants. As has been said before, the presence of a godly man amongst heathen not only brings the godly man benefits from God, but also the heathen, for the sake of the godly man.

Verses 38-43

1.

“And Pharaoh said unto his servants, Can we find such a one as this is, a man in whom the Spirit of God is?”

2.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, Forasmuch as God hath shewed thee all this, there is none so discreet and wise as thou art:

3.

Thou shalt be over my house, and according unto thy word shall all my people be ruled: only in the throne will I be greater than thou.

4.

And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, See, I have set thee over all the land of Egypt.

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5.

And Pharaoh took off his ring from his hand, and put it upon Joseph's hand, and arrayed him in vestures of fine linen, and put a gold chain about his neck;

6.

And he made him to ride in the second chariot which he had; and they cried before him, Bow the knee: and he made him ruler over all the land of Egypt.”

Though Pharaoh was not a ‘believer’ in the usual sense, like others before him he recognised the God of Joseph to be more powerful than his own, and Joseph to be more spiritually enabled than his own magicians. He asked those around him where such a suitable man could be found for the biggest job in the country, a man who was the instrument of God. He used the word *elohi ym*

This word can simply refer to any ‘god’ or powerful possibly divine being. But, I suggest it means in this case the God of Israel, because it is qualified by the word ‘Spirit’ with a capital ‘S’, which makes Him the Holy Spirit. In some way Pharaoh knew that the Spirit within Joseph was of the God of Israel.

Pharaoh was utterly convinced by Joseph’s interpretation, and that, by his character and spiritual uniqueness, he had Almighty God as his ally. Who else, then, could take on the job proposed by Joseph? Probably, when Joseph gave Pharaoh the message straight from God, he did not know God was to cause Pharaoh to give him the job.

Before, Joseph was overseer for a single household, and then a prison. Now, Pharaoh told him he would oversee his royal household and family. Not only that, but he would rule all of Egypt on his behalf! The people, he said, would have to obey his every word, because he would have the full authority of Pharaoh. In matters of power, said Pharaoh, Joseph would be the most powerful man in Egypt, its ruler, with only Pharaoh above him in power and authority.

See, said Pharaoh, I have made you ruler of Egypt. He was, in effect, the prime minister. As a sign of his new office and his closeness to Pharaoh, Pharaoh gave him the royal ring he wore. Then he ordered his tailors to clothe him in the finest linen, and gave him a magnificent gold chain to wear around his neck, as a second sign of office.

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When he had been arrayed suitably, Pharaoh took him out into the city. Pharaoh went in the first chariot, and Joseph went in the 'second' chariot. That is, the second royal chariot. Both would have had seats and were driven by charioteers. The term 'second' refers to a duplicate royal chariot, but inferring a slightly lower rank. As the two were driven around the city, people cried out on their knees to Pharaoh and Joseph as almost equal in status. In this way Joseph was introduced to Egypt as the supreme ruler "over all the land of Egypt."

Joseph was lifted by God from prisoner to supreme ruler in a few brief hours! This is the excitement Christians can expect and receive in their lives! It is true that not all can be so visibly blessed – but all Christians are given the same Holy Spirit and wonderful opportunities. How many, though, recognise them when they arise? How many want to serve God? How many want the full orb of being active and obedient Believers?

Sadly, most Christians are happy just to have good jobs, or incomes, or good houses or cars. They are happy when they have no problems, and when people like them! They do not understand that these may mean God is far away from them. Their happiness is self-induced by friends and ordinary circumstances. Joseph went through slavery, false charges, and prison. But, then came a glorious reward for his obedience to God! Do not be happy with mere happiness! Seek godly joy instead, even if it means a time of helplessness and even persecution. Such joy might come via oppression and persecution, but it is true joy compared to falsity of hope and faith.

Verses 44-49

1.

"And Pharaoh said unto Joseph, I am Pharaoh, and without thee shall no man lift up his hand or foot in all the land of Egypt.

2.

And Pharaoh called Joseph's name Zaphnath-paaneah; and he gave him to wife Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On. And Joseph went out over all the land of Egypt.

3.

And Joseph was thirty years old when he stood before Pharaoh king of Egypt. And Joseph went out from the presence of Pharaoh, and went throughout all the land of Egypt.

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4.

And in the seven plenteous years the earth brought forth by handfuls.

5.

And he gathered up all the food of the seven years, which were in the land of Egypt, and laid up the food in the cities: the food of the field, which was round about every city, laid he up in the same.

6.

And Joseph gathered corn as the sand of the sea, very much, until he left numbering; for it was without number.”

With royal assent, Pharaoh told Joseph that the people of Egypt would not move or breathe unless Joseph commanded it. This was, he said, the word of Pharaoh. He gave Joseph an Egyptian name, *Zaphnath-paaneah*, meaning ‘treasury of the golden rest’. He also gave him a high-ranking wife, Asenath (‘belonging to the goddess Neith’). She was the daughter of Potiphera (‘he whom the Ra gave’ – Ra being the Egyptian sun god), the priest of On (‘strength or vigour’). On was the city of the sun-god in lower Egypt, near Goshen.

We might ask why God should allow this to happen. How could God condone a marriage between His own servant and a heathen girl? In answer we can say a few things: firstly, Joseph had been living without any kind of guidance from his father for a number of years and, possibly did not know of God’s wish for His people to marry godly partners; secondly, the marriage does not mean God condoned it; thirdly, there are instances in scripture of God going outside what we would expect of Him, and of using people we would have rejected; fourthly, and the most important fact – we are not told anything other than what happened, so we cannot sensibly come to any conclusions. It happened, and that is that. Whether in our modern times we accept it or not is irrelevant.

Now a married man, Joseph travelled all over Egypt, appointing his deputies and issuing necessary orders and laws. At this time, Joseph was only 30 years of age! Over the next seven years God granted Egypt plentiful harvests for the sake of Joseph. Joseph made sure that a fifth

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of all produce was put into vast storage silos near every city, guarded by soldiers and administered by his deputies. At first Joseph weighed and counted what was going into the silos, but he then gave up, because the harvests were so plentiful, beyond counting. When God says He will give abundance, He means full and overflowing! It was so plenteous it was like the 'sand of the sea', uncountable. This bounty is another mark of God's hand – He does not just give in small measure, but over and above what is needed.

Verses 50-52

1.

“And unto Joseph were born two sons before the years of famine came, which Asenath the daughter of Poti-pherah priest of On bare unto him.

2.

And Joseph called the name of the firstborn Manasseh: For God, said he, hath made me forget all my toil, and all my father's house.

3.

And the name of the second called he Ephraim: For God hath caused me to be fruitful in the land of my affliction.”

Joseph, then, became the ruler of Egypt, with immense wealth and power. This was added to by the provision of two sons who were born just before the famine struck. The first-born was Manasseh ('causing to forget', an allusion to his being far away from his family and also to his previous sufferings). The second son was Ephraim ('double ash-heap; I shall be doubly fruitful'). The first son caused him to be thankful for his new life and the second caused him to think of how the new life gave him plenty, though it began in such a miserable way. As believers we never know what God has ready for us around the corner. What begins in misery can end in great benefits. Throughout it all, God is good, for He will not harm His faithful people, but will build them in strength and holiness, if only they will obey and trust.

Verses 53-57

1.

“And the seven years of plenteousness, that was in the land of Egypt, were ended.

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2.

And the seven years of dearth began to come, according as Joseph had said: and the dearth was in all lands; but in all the land of Egypt there was bread.

3.

And when all the land of Egypt was famished, the people cried to Pharaoh for bread: and Pharaoh said unto all the Egyptians, Go unto Joseph; what he saith to you, do.

4.

And the famine was over all the face of the earth: and Joseph opened all the storehouses, and sold unto the Egyptians; and the famine waxed sore in the land of Egypt.

5.

And all countries came into Egypt to Joseph for to buy corn; because that the famine was so sore in all lands.”

The seven years of plenty finished when Joseph was 37 years of age. Then started the seven years of famine. We note that the famine struck 'all lands'. I assume from this is meant all the Middle East and northern Africa. Only Egypt had food. If the Egyptians needed food they cried to Pharaoh, but he pointed them to Joseph, the ruler. They were to obey him.

When required by necessity, Joseph ordered his deputies to sell the grain contained in the city silos, to the Egyptians. Such was the plentiful supply, Joseph was also able to sell to people from other lands. In this incredible way, Joseph was the physical saviour of many nations. In a way this is symbolic of the way the earth has a spiritual Saviour in the Lord Jesus Christ, Who gives succour and salvation amongst sin and its devastation.

Because of God's intervention and the working of the Holy Spirit, Joseph was a man of great attributes, who today would be counted a captain of industry and a superlative world leader. If asked, I know he would humbly pass off any such applause and attribute everything he gained

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to God. As a Christian, do you attribute everything to God's grace, or to your own intelligence, or work, or abilities? If the latter, you are in for a fall. If the former, you will likely know greater increase. Remember – everything belongs to God.

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