

A GRACIOUS GUARANTEE

"And my God shall supply all your needs according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19.

Few passages can be more assuring and comforting to a believer in Christ than this precious verse which is now before us for consideration. As the beauty of a picture may be enhanced by the light in which it is hung, so the setting of this text reveals a new glory in the message.

Paul had been in deep need. Imprisoned in a Roman dungeon, deprived of the opportunity of earning anything to meet his necessities, at a distance from friends who knew him most intimately and loved him most devotedly, and without earthly resources to draw upon, Paul had been forced to suffer need. Through the thoughtfulness and generosity of the Philippian Christians, who were poor themselves, Paul's need had been supplied. We are not told what the gift was, which they sent to him, but it was sufficient to meet his need. Whatever it was, it awakened both gratitude and joy in his soul, and he sent them this letter, acknowledging their kindness in sending the gift, and assuring them of his genuine happiness even within prison walls.

The way in which his needs were supplied led Paul to think of the means God has at His disposal for supplying all kinds of need and repaying all acts of kindness. You cannot find in the whole epistle a single note of repining, or even a suggestion of discontent. After all, there is no room for repining in a life that is filled with the consciousness of the presence of God. Any life that is filled with the conscious presence of God can take the broken strings of adversity, and the shattered bow of disappointment, and fill the soul with the sweetest melody. With deepest gratitude to his friends in Philippi for their continued ministration to his needs. Paul sends them the strong encouragement of a florid promise based on his own experience. Here it is: "And my God shall supply all your needs according to his riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

I. The Need.

In looking at men in the mass the leading fact to make an impression on the mind is that of need. Man is a creature of much need. No one is exempt. The infant has his needs. Through the period of childhood and youth, as well as in the period of highest activity and power, it is a story of need. Likewise, the patriarch of years has his needs. We have our common needs -- needs in which we all share alike, and we have our individual needs -- needs which are peculiar to each person. The needs of humanity are countless, for it is need here and need there and need everywhere. As Paul was in need of one thing, and the Philippian Christians in need of another, all of us are in need of something. However much we have today, and regardless of how well satisfied we may be when we lie down at night, we shall awake in the morning with a new need.

In the brief time at my disposal for this message, I cannot even name all the things that we need in our pilgrimage from earth to heaven. Each of us is a bundle of needs, and many of them are clamant and ever-recurring.

1. We have Physical Needs.

Our physical needs are numerous. From time to time we are confronted with the problem of food, raiment, shelter, and the materials essential to the comforts of life, both for ourselves and for those who are dependent upon us.

2. We have mental needs.

The human mind needs teachers, books, and culture.

3. We have social needs.

Our social needs are great. From the dawn of life we need the friendly hand

of social sympathy. Our souls crave social love. Our affections need objects about which to twine if we would develop strength and beauty. The words father, mother, brother, sister, husband, wife, son, daughter, and friend represent our social needs.

4. We have spiritual needs.

Our spiritual needs are just as evident as are our physical needs. The hunger of the soul is no less real than that of the body. Man is a sinner and needs God's great salvation, but this salvation does not end his spiritual needs. Even the needs of a redeemed soul are numerous and constantly recurring. The Christian needs forgiveness, cleansing, and a constant renewal of spiritual strength. He is a traveler journeying across the desert of this world with enemies on every hand. He is a voyager trying to cross the rough and boisterous ocean of life. He has to encounter waves of distress, billows of trouble, storms of adversity, shoals of danger, quicksands of error, and rocks of destruction. He needs the breezes of divine influence to waft him, the anchor of hope to steady him, the divine compass to direct him, the voice of the Captain to cheer him, and the hand of the Pilot to guide him safely to the haven of everlasting peace and rest.

Our needs are many. We need faith and its increase, love and its enlargement, hope and its brighter kindling, and grace in all its fulness and variety. We need a closer walk with God. We will need comfort in the hour of affliction. Sorrow and death are still abroad in the land, and they will find their way into our experiences sooner or later, but when they do come God will be there with His consolations also. Whenever the time comes that God wants us to carry this load, He will give us the strength that we shall need for this burden. To each of us He says, "As thy day so shall thy strength be." The trouble with most of us is that we want the strength without the burden, but God never trusts us with two days' strength for one day's burden. Then, we are all going to need special grace when we come to the valley of the shadow of death. From that day most of us shrink. We may talk somewhat bravely about it now, but it will be different when our strength is failing, and we find our feet slipping over the brink that carries us to the silent, sullen stream. But when that day comes we shall find that God has a supply of grace ready for us.

II. The Supply.

1. The Source.

Paul needed relief from his physical distress. He needed expressions of love and sympathy. He needed divine grace to enable him to adjust himself uncomplainingly to his difficult situation. He needed the constant presence and fellowship of Jesus Christ. All these things he had. They came to him from God. "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above."

This source is rich and uncreated. In this uncreated source of blessing Paul had a personal interest. He said, "My God." Was he warranted in using this peculiar language? Clearly he was. On precisely the same grounds we have the same privilege. He is our God. He has unlimited resources and unbounded love. His righteousness is ours. His magnificent possessions are ours. His infinite storehouses are open to us, and with the key of child-like faith we can unlock His great treasury and take all that we need.

The God who took care of Paul can and will take care of us. One cannot afford to ignore Him unless he wants to be a failure. There is no hope for man apart from God. God has not changed during the long centuries, nor have the spiritual needs of men changed. If we are His, then the treasury of His love and grace is at our disposal. He will supply all our needs. "He openeth His hand and supplieth the needs of every living thing." Nobody else can. God has never forgotten me, and He will not forget you.

2. The Extent.

"All your needs." "Every need of yours." What a vast field this expression covers! But, we must not make the mistake of identifying our needs with our wants, or with what we often foolishly fancy it would be good for us to have, because they may be entirely different. In our childishness and waywardness we ask for many things which we do not need, and which would be injurious to us. We often want things it is a thousand times better for us not to have. And we need many things we do not want. I do not know all the things that you need, nor all the things that I need, but God knows, and His gifts will be measured in the vessels of our needs. He frequently declines to supply our wants because they are unnecessary, fanciful, or injurious, but He never fails to supply what He sees we need.

Rich argosies of blessing hourly arrive from heaven to meet your needs and mine. There is strength for daily toil, wisdom to train our children for God, grace to vanquish temptation, mercy to cover all our sins, faith to grasp all the promises of God, patience under trial, courage to face the foe, the fellowship of the Spirit, a strong hope that shall survive death, and the full assurance of glory. There never has been any lack, and there never will be. He is rich in wisdom, in love, and in power, and His supply will never even diminish, let alone disappear.

Most of us believe that God will supply our great needs, such as food and raiment, and grace for the dying hour, but I wonder how many of us believe that all we need is what God sends us. The only reason God sends a black cloud is that there may be a refreshing shower. Perhaps you have noticed that the robins always sing before a storm. That is because they know that the drenching rain will bring to the earth's surface the worms with which they can feed their young. What God sends to you and me is always the supply of a need, and what He withholds is always for our good. There will be a time when God cannot give you just what you actually need. He has already made provision for every need that you will ever have.

3. The Means. (Measure)

The needs will be met as they arise one by one, and that according to a large pattern, or "according to His riches in glory." God is a glorious giver. Whatever He does is done in a way or on a scale that is worthy of His wealth. Sometimes His blessing seems too much for us to receive, but He reassures us by saying that they are not too much for Him to give. His supplies are abundant, satisfying, unexhausted, and inexhaustible.

Just as a true father will have different treatment for the son who is designed to be a great leader from that accorded the boy who is to be a follower, so God has His purpose for each of our lives, and His gifts will be for the achievement of that purpose. Two brothers, who were sons of a rich man, were discussing what they wanted to be when they became men. The younger said, "I want to be a great athlete, and I want to go to the college that has the best football team, and the best baseball players, and the fastest sprinters."

The older said, "I want to be what ever dad wants me to be, and I will go to whatever college he selects for me." That is the true spirit of the followers of Jesus -- to be willing to fill the lowliest position if that be His will. Jesus left it to His Father to assign Him both His place and His task, and we are most like Him when we desire supremely to do His will. He does not give us all the same things, but He does give to each of us what which is best for us. He gives to the antelope his speed, and to the elephant his strength, and to the bird of paradise his glorious plumage, and to the lark his matchless song. At times I have wished for the eloquence of Spurgeon and the brilliance of Maclaren, but God knew that such gifts would have spoiled me, and I would have spoiled the gifts, so He withheld them, and made me what I am because in this capacity I can serve Him best. "The riches of His grace" are the treasures to which Christians have free access at all times. While we might hesitate to make too large a draft upon an earthly friend, there is no need to draw light upon God,

"For His grace and power are such
That none can ever ask too much."

It is from His glory that God gives to us, and it is to His glory that He gives to us. We cannot afford to ignore His blessed promise. Dr. Richard Newton told a story about an aged and ragged Indian, who many years ago wandered into one of our western settlements begging for food to keep him from starving. A bright colored ribbon was seen about his neck from which there hung a small, dirty pouch. On being asked what it was he said it was a charm given him in his younger days. He opened it, and took out a worn and crumpled paper, which he handed the person speaking to him for inspection. It proved, on careful inspection, to be a regular discharge from the Federal army entitling him to a pension for life and signed by General Washington himself. Here was a man, with a promise duly signed, which if presented in the right place would have secured for him ample provision for all his days, and yet, here he was wandering about hungry, helpless, and forlorn, and begging for bread to keep him from starving. And what a picture it gives too of many Christians, who, with all the promises of God in their hands, the charter of an eternal inheritance in full possession, are yet gloomy, and sad, and starving in the wilderness.

4. The Medium.

"In Christ Jesus." Our supply comes through Him. Our union with Him is the guarantee of a full supply of all our needs. It is everything through Christ, and nothing apart from Him. This fact ought to enhance the value of our common blessings, and to inspire our hearts with a new joy. All the divine supply comes to us through Him. "No man cometh unto the Father but by me." "If ye shall ask anything in My name, I will do it." Everything that God has is given to those who are in Christ, so those who are in Him are well provided for,

"Thou, my everlasting portion,
More than friends or life to me;
All along my pilgrim journey,
Saviour, let me walk with Thee.

Lead me through the vale of shadows,
Bear me o'er life's fitful sea;
Then the gate of life eternal,
May I enter, Lord, with Thee."

Jesus Christ is all you need. He is the one in and through whom God will fill up every need of yours. Unsaved friend trust and accept Him as your Saviour, and go to your home in peace and gladness.