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2 Corinthians 9:8-15; Philippians 4:19 “Commitment by Faith in God’s Provision”

Intro. Do you ever feel inadequate to handle the demands of life? Do you feel that your strength is gone? Do you feel that you are just barely getting by financially, and that you have so little to give to our building program? If so, I have good news from this text of Scripture. V.8 of my text is a beautiful verse, and one of the most important verses in the Bible. You should commit it to memory. Let’s look at it again: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” Notice the imagery that we have here. God’s grace toward us is like a fountain of living water. Such a fountain has a never ending source of water. Someone who has a fountain has an all-sufficient supply of water. Our church has a never ending water supply. Our well is tapped to a deep spring. Even during the driest summers, we have never run out of water. Then from that fountain of living water we can do much good. We quench thirst. We can fill an 800 gallon baptistry.

Even so, God’s grace is like that. You can never exhaust God’s grace. And out of the all-sufficiency of His grace, we have all the resources we need to do every good work. Eph. 2:10 says that we are “created in Christ Jesus for good works....” Tit 2:14 says that Christ redeemed us that we might be “zealous for good works.” God does not just demand that we produce good works; He enables us to do good works out of the resources of His grace. One type of good work that we will talk about today is the grace of giving. Paul wanted the Corinthians to learn this truth of the Christian life. If you will grasp the truths that I will share with you this morning, it will not only revolutionize your giving, but also your Christian living. That’s because I will share with you the wonderful truth of God’s enabling grace.

Now the first thing I want to encourage you to do is this:

I. CLAIM THE PROMISE OF GOD’S PROVISION

God promises that He will provide all that you need to live a life that is a blessing to others. And when you bless others, blessings flow right back to you. Consider with me the specifics of this promise of God’s provision. First:

A. God’s Grace is the Source of His Provision – Again, Paul says in v.8, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you....” The fountain that supplies all that we need is God’s grace. What is grace? Using an acrostic, it is God’s Riches At Christ’s Expense. It is the sum total of all the unmerited blessings and favors which come to us from God through Jesus Christ. God’s grace is the source of all of His blessings.

Notice that Paul says that “all grace” will abound toward us. Or it can be translated “every grace.” God’s grace is comprehensive in its multiplicity; it omits not a single gift of grace that we may need. God’s grace is not just saving grace. God’s grace is not just to get you to heaven. God’s grace is the source of victorious Christian living. If we need strength & ability to do good works, God is able to give that strength. If you are facing temptation, God’s grace will provide a way to escape it, or give you strength to resist it. If you have a great or difficult task, God is able to fully give us all that we need to meet the challenge. Whatever God requires you to do He will enable you

to do. James 1:5 says, “If any man lacks wisdom, let him ask of God who gives to all men liberally....” If we need strength to bear our cross, or to bear sorrow, God is ready & willing to enable you to bear that suffering with strength & patience. God told Paul in 2 Cor. 12:9, “My grace is sufficient for thee.” There Paul was probably dealing with suffering, but God told Him that His grace of sufficient to enable Him to bear with it well. And as you face death, God will give you dying grace. He will enable you to face death with courage and peace. Indeed, “God is able to make all grace abound toward you....”

B. God’s Grace Is More than Sufficient - God promises in v.8 that God’s grace will abound to us so that we will have “all sufficiency in all things.” This means that we have all that we need, lacking nothing. We all know how the 23rd Psalm begins, “The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want.” It is so liberating to find out that we do not live the Christian life in our own strength, relying upon our own limited resources. And certainly in this context this sufficiency includes having a sufficient income. God knows what we have need of, and He promises to meet that need sufficiently. Through Jesus Christ, we can have the adequacy to meet the demands of life.

This principle applies to the grace of giving. In many cases God has already supplied the resources you need to give. Some have more than enough to live on. Others of you feel like you are just barely getting by. Well remember this promise: “And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” He will replenish your supply as you give. So don’t give just based on your own meager resources. If God leads you to give a sacrificial amount, He will resupply you in due time to meet your own needs, and to enable you to give yet again.

Then in v.10 Paul moves from what God is able to do to what God *will* do. He supplies seed to the farmer and bread for food. In other words, He will provide for our needs, and enable us to meet other needs as well. Turn over to Phil. 4:19. There we have one of the clearest statements of God’s promise to provide our needs, “And my God shall supply all your need according to His riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” Our God never promises to fulfill every greed but He will supply every need.

Anna Warner, author of the hymn “Jesus Loves Me,” constantly faced financial pressure. Her father had been a wealthy powerbroker in New York City, but the stock market crash of 1837 wiped out his finances. As a result, Anna faced overwhelming debt all her life. But she learned to trust God with her needs. A friend wrote this about her: “One day when sitting with Miss Anna in the old living room she took from one of the (book)cases a (sea)shell so delicate that it looked like lace work and holding it in her hand, with eyes dimmed with tears, she said, ‘There was a time when I was very perplexed, bills were unpaid, necessities must be had, and someone sent me this exquisite thing. As I held it, I realized that if God could make this beautiful home for a little creature, He would take care of me.’”¹

So God will supply all our needs so that we will have sufficient resources for our physical needs, and all that we need to live for Him. But as we move on, we learn that it gets better!
Notice:

C. God’s Provision Can Be Abundant - There are a number of indications from Paul that God wants to do more than give us the bare necessities of life. In v.8 he speaks of grace “abounding” to us that you “may have an abundance for every good work.” If we are going to abound in good works, then we must have an abundant supply. And that is what we have through

¹ Turning Point Daily Devotional, 8-27-04 [Illus.#C-1249].

the enabling grace of God. Then in v.11 Paul says that we will be “enriched in everything for all liberality.” This abundance is also expressed in the number of times the word “all” is found in v.8. God’s provision is by no means partial.

The abundance of God’s provision is also found in Phil. 4:19. Notice that God promises to supply all our need “according to His riches in glory.” Notice that He will not meet our need “out of His riches”, as a millionaire might do when he donates a trifling sum to a good cause. But God gives “according to his riches”, so that the gift is actually in proportion to God’s infinite resources! Furthermore, it can be translated that “God will gloriously supply all our need.”²

So in this context where Paul is encouraging the Corinthians to give, he is assuring them that when they give, God will resupply the fountain from which they have drawn. Remember, these are promises of God. You can count on God to keep His promises.

II. FULFILL THE PURPOSES OF GOD’S PROVISION

Why does God supply us with all that we need, and even more than we need? God expects us to meet the needs of our own families. Paul said in 1 Tim. 5:8, “But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.” But God has given you more than the bare necessities of life, especially if you live in America. Have you considered why God has blessed you financially? There is nothing wrong with enjoying the fruits of your labor, especially if you give thanks to God for His blessings. But there are higher purposes than your own enjoyment. First:

A. To Enable Us to Do Good Works – This is stated in the last of v.8, “...that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.” Note that abounding grace is to bring about good works. God’s grace enables us to abound in all kinds of good works. This certainly includes giving. Paul was asking the Corinthians to give to help the poor. That was a good work indeed. But good works includes far more than just giving. People need to be loved, so God gives us love that we might share the love of God with others. If someone needs compassion, God will enable us to be compassionate. There are all kinds of ministry in a church. God will enable you to do ministry with a spiritual gift. Paul calls these spiritual gifts “grace gifts” 5 times in 1 Cor. 12 (vv.4, 9, 28, 30-31).

Are you relying upon God to enable you to do good works?

B. To Enable Us to Increase Our Good Works – In v.10 Paul says the Christian life is like a great landowner supplying seed to the farmer. Why does he do that? Should the farmer get the idea that the seed has been given to him simply that he might have plenty to eat? No! It is so that he might work hard to plant & cultivate the seed, that he might multiply the seed.

Even so, why has God given you talents and abilities? Why has He given you financial resources? Why has He given you His Holy Spirit? Why has He given you His precious Word? It is not that you may consume these blessings only for your own benefit. The real reason is found in the last of v.10. There we see that God will “supply and multiply the seed you have sown and increase the fruits of your righteousness.” I believe he is saying that God wants to increase our good works, that flow from righteousness. Generally speaking, God wants you to be able to give more, and do more to bring the blessing of God to others.

² If “in glory” modifies the verb “supply.”

This verse must be understood in light of v.6, “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” Of course Paul is not saying that we should all go out and become farmers. He is laying down a principle, an illustration. Imagine 2 farmers. Both receive 500 pounds of grain. That is not only enough to plant, but also enough to feed their families while they are waiting on the harvest. One farmer decides to take only 10 pounds and plant a small crop, thinking that he should keep the other 490 pounds for his food. After all, you never know what might happen. The harvest may be poor this year. In such a case, he will sow sparingly and reap a small harvest. But the other farmer decides to plant 250 pounds of that seed. The other 250 pounds will be plenty to live on for the next several months. So he works hard, and trusts the Lord to bless his work with rain. Now he who sowed bountifully would reap 25 times more! Knowing this, the farmer should plant as much seed as possible.

Now which does God want? Does He want you to produce a little for Him or a lot? Does He want you to do only a few good works, or bless the lives of many people with many good works? I believe the answer is obvious. That means, if you want to reap a bountiful harvest, you must take what God has given you, and sow bountifully with it. Don't give a meager amount to help others & support the work of God, for if you give little, you will reap little. But give much, and you will reap much. Like the farmer, if you sow seed, you shall receive even more seed in return. Jesus said, “Give and it shall be given unto you...” (Luke 6:38). One of the greatest Old Testament promises is found in Mal. 3:10, “Bring all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be food in My house, and test Me now in this... if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you such blessing that there will not be room enough to receive it.” You can't outgive God. When you give your time, talent, & treasure unto the Lord, He has His ways of giving even more back to you. J. Vernon McGee said, “I have never known anyone who has gone broke giving to the Lord's work” and I would have to agree with him. What He gives back to us is not always money or material goods, but it is always worth far more than we gave.

One application we need to make related to giving. If God wants you to abound in good works, then He wants you to give liberally. In v.11 Paul says that “you are enriched in everything for all liberality....” God is willing to enable you to be liberal in your giving. He is able to provide us with such abundance that none of us ever needs to hesitate about dispensing it with full hands in all manner of good works. It is inconsistent with the abounding grace that we receive from God that we should give meagerly. Are you liberal in your giving, or do you give only a little? Do you give many hours of your time each week to serve God, and to bless the lives of others? Or do you spend the vast majority of your time only for yourself? If you are taking what God has given you, and keeping it for yourself, you need to rethink what you are doing.

Many are asking how much should I give to TWB. We have suggested that it should reflect an equal sacrifice. But some of you are going to want to do more than that because you want a more bountiful harvest to the glory of God. Think of the souls that are going to be saved and baptized through our ministry using this new building. Think of the new people that we will be able to teach the Word of God to with our expanded S.S. space. Don't you want to invest in something that has lasting significance? When you make your commitment, think about the resources God has blessed you with, and the resources He promises to bless you with. And then think about how much blessing you want to flow to yourself and others. If you want much blessing, give much.

Now it may seem to you that you are throwing money away when you give. But as the illustration goes, you are just sowing seed for a bountiful harvest. The more seed you sow, the greater your harvest. If you demonstrate to God that you will be faithful to give and to sow

blessings in people's lives, God will see to it that you will have more "seed" to sow next year. God does not promise to financially bless the giver so that they may consume the blessings for themselves, but that they might have seed to continue sowing, and for sowing even more. Why is it so hard for us to catch this vision?

Another reason God graciously supplies us what we need is this:

C. To Enable Us to Meet Needs to the Glory of God – Look at vv.12-15, "For the administration of this service not only supplies the needs of the saints, but also is abounding through many thanksgivings to God, while, through the proof of this ministry, they glorify God for the obedience of your confession to the gospel of Christ, and for your liberal sharing with them and all men, and by their prayer for you, who long for you because of the exceeding grace of God in you. Thanks be to God for His indescribable gift!" God does not give us money just to supply our own needs and desires. And even when we give to help meet the needs of others, there is a greater purpose we should remember. The highest aim for all of us should be to multiply thanksgivings to God. Paul was saying that as the Corinthians gave to the poor saints in Jerusalem, they would respond with thanksgiving and praise to God, who enabled the Corinthians to supply their need. Is anyone anywhere thanking God for your generosity? Grace giving isn't supposed to bring glory to us; it brings glory to God. We are but channels through whom God works to meet the needs of others.

It is my prayer that our *Together We Build* gifts will bring praise to God. I'm getting excited about what God is going to do. We have 2 big announcements coming up. The first will be made April 1 at our Special Event. We will announce the total committed from advance commitments. The second will be on April 22, when we announce the total committed. I believe we will be praising God for what He has done to supply the funds we need for this new building.

III. FULFILL THE PREREQUISITES OF GOD'S ABUNDANT PROVISION

We have seen that God promises to graciously supply all you need, so that you can abound in good works. But this promise is conditional. If we produce few good works, if we fail to live the Christian life successfully, or if we are stingy in our giving, the problem is not with God. His supply is abundant. He is more than able to help you do all that He expects of you. Rather, look in the mirror and you will see the problem. You see, there are several things we must do if we are to fully experience the abundance grace of God. And if you are to experience a complete and overflowing sufficiency in the financial realm, notice the conditions that must be met:

A. You Must Be "In Christ" – To whom are these promise given? Is this an unconditional promise to all people? No, it is made to believers only. 2 Corinthians is written to believers. Notice in Phil. 4:19 that our needs are met "in Christ Jesus" (not by). This promise is to those who are in vital union with Christ by faith.

So if you have not placed your faith in Jesus Christ as Savior & Lord, that is the starting place. Why neglect the Source of a never-ending supply. Turn to Christ. Trust in Him today. Receive Him into your heart.

B. You Should Work – God does not promise to supply your need apart from work. God does His part, but you must also do your part. Even the Israelites in the wilderness had to work to gather the manna that God supplied each day. Notice the connection in 2 Cor. 9:10 between "seed

for him who sows” and “bread for eating.” God does not drop bread from heaven. He provides seed, but in this agricultural illustration we see that we must work to sow the seed first, and then we can expect to eat bread made from the harvest. Prov. 28:19 says, “He that tills his land shall have plenty of bread.” Prov. 14:23 says, “In all labor there is profit, but mere talk leads only to poverty.” Other Scriptures indicate that we must work if we are to receive financial blessing. If we are able, we must work (2 Th. 3:10), not only to provide for our own needs, but also to help others who have need (Eph. 4:28; Acts 20:35; 1 Tim. 5:4, 8). God’s promise to meet our needs is no excuse for laziness.

Some of you have worked many years, and you have been able to retire. If your income is insufficient to be a channel of blessing to others, God may lead you to go back to work part-time. But either way, if God has given you life, strength, and abilities, you need to work for Him, and give of your time to be a blessing to others.

C. You Must Give - Notice that Phil. 4:19 follows v.18, where Paul refers to their gift to him given through Epaphroditus, “an acceptable sacrifice, well-pleasing to God.” The Philippian church loved Paul and they gave so that his needs would be met, and so that the missionary work could make better progress. It is to such givers that Paul gave this wonderful promise. Also notice in 2 Cor. 9:10 that God “will supply and multiply your seed for sowing.” That should be interpreted in light of v.6, “But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully.” God promises abundance to those who give abundantly.

So if you want to see God work in some marvelous ways become a generous giver. You never lose when you give. God has His ways of resupplying you, and even causing you to abound even more. One way you can start is with a *TWB* commitment. The need for additional funds to build this building is clear. God can use you as one channel of blessing to meet that need.

D. Trust God to Provide – Are you giving only by sight? Are you going to give only what you can see that is left over in your bank account each month? Or are you going to give by faith, trusting God to supply your commitment? Sacrificial giving takes faith to believe that God will supply your needs when you give. You can trust God to keep the wonderful promises that I have shared with you.

Now, the question is will you act upon your faith and give, believing that God will resupply you? Don’t let a lack of faith keep you from giving freely and generously.

Conclusion: God can be for you like an ever-flowing fountain, constantly resupplying you with strength, courage, wisdom, and financial resources. By His grace He will enable you to succeed in the Christian life, and do many good works for His glory. But you must meet the conditions. First, you need to make sure that Jesus is in your heart. Then you need to be diligent to work, both in employment and in service. Then take a generous portion of the time, talent, and treasure that God has given you, and invest it in the lives of others and in kingdom work. And just trust God to multiply the seed you have sown into a great harvest. If you have not been living out of the riches of God’s grace, I hope you will begin today!

Sources: Ronald A. Beers, ed., *Life Application Study Bible* (Tyndale House & Zondervan, 1991); William Hendriksen, *New Testament Commentary: Philippians* (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1962); H.A. Ironside, *Second Epistle to the Corinthians*, (Neptune, NJ: Loizeaux Brothers, 1939); R. C. H. Lenski, *The Interpretation of St. Paul’s First and Second Epistles to the Corinthians* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1937); John MacArthur, Jr., *God’s Plan*

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