

"God's Ultimate Provision Has Already Been Given in the Gospel"

God's ultimate goal is always spiritual. He always has a spiritual reason behind any material blessings He supplies or withholds. We ask God for many things, but the greatest thing we could ever receive from him has already been given.

What God has given us in the gospel is light-years ahead of every other provision and care we could ever seek from Him. When we trust in Christ, we have decisively secured for us every ultimately good thing from Him. It's just a matter of time. James 1:17 reminds us, **"Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of Lights with Whom there is no variation or shadow due to change."** Every truly good thing in our lives comes straight from the Father. The ultimate good He provided us, through Whom much of the other good things come to us, is Jesus. Jesus is the ultimate treasure. In Jesus Christ, God has provided all that we need for life and godliness "As His divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him Who called us by Glory and virtue..." (2 Peter 1:3).

"God Provides Finally in Eternity"



Hebrews 11 gives us two different perspectives on God's provision and care for us. Some, by faith, came through this life victorious, while others lost their lives. Both are commended for their mighty faith. God does not always provide and care for us in ways we might expect in this life. The Bible does not promise this. Peter,

James, John, and Paul gave their very lives for the gospel. They viewed the gospel as a treasure not to be lost at any cost. They suffered gladly because they had something in the gospel that had far more worth. This life is fleeting.

This life is fragile. This life is but a vapor's breath. The next life, the age to come, is where all God's provision and care for us will ultimately make sense and come together as a whole. We may not receive healing in this life, but we will receive perfect healing in eternity. We may not see answers to our greatest prayers in this life, but we will receive fully in eternity. Some days God's provision and care may seem distant, but it will be ever-present in eternity. We long for our world to stop raging and be at peace, but ultimate peace will only come in eternity. Our hearts ache under the pressures of this life, but it is only because we were made for another world. We are sojourners and aliens on this earth. **"But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellences' of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous Light"** (1 Peter 2:9).

The concept of need is a very interesting one. We all have needs, though some feel them more severely and acutely than others. Some live with hunger, some live without a roof over their heads, and some live without a loving parent. Others are blessed with the basic necessities of life and yet are consumed with worry about other also valid needs such as harmony in family relationships, problems at work, health complications, etc. The fact of the matter is that even the wealthiest and most powerful people have needs. So why does God allow us to have needs, and why does it seem that many needs go unmet?

"Being In A State Of Need"



Paul in Prison

Paul says in Philippians 4:19, **"And my God will supply all your needs according to His riches in Glory in Christ Jesus."** Paul rightly understood the concept of need. He says in verse 12 that having needs is a matter of suffering (the exact phrase is **"suffering need"**). Being in a state of need is not fun or easy. It reminds us that there is nothing that we by our own human strength, ingenuity, and power can do to change the situation. If we could, we should because such would amount to faithful stewardship. Needs that arise due to our own laziness are our own fault, and we should try to resolve those issues. But inevitably we will encounter needs that we cannot solve and are not even meant to be able to solve, and for these needs, we need to learn what Paul learned. Paul went from times of having an abundance of provisions to times of having next to nothing, including nothing in his stomach and not

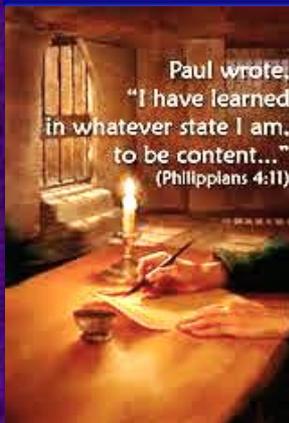


Paul Shipwrecked

enough clothing to stay warm. Paul suffered greatly through times of imprisonment and being shipwrecked without food. Never did he accuse God of not meeting his needs in those situations, which is remarkable. Surely food and shelter are legitimate needs, yet God allowed Paul to be without both at various points in time. Paul, however, did not stumble over this reality and begin to question God's faithfulness. Rather, he spoke of what he learned through these experiences. He says in Philippians 4:12-13 that he learned the secret of how to get along regardless of his circumstances by trusting in Christ who would give him strength to do all things. He would need strength to endure in the suffering, and he would need strength to not grow overconfident when he wasn't suffering. In other words, he learned that he needed divine help at all times and in all circumstances and that Christ would give Him strength to do all the things that God had called him to do.

"God Provides More of Himself"

Never would Paul lack what he needed in order to be able to fulfill God's purpose for him in this life. This position of recognizing his own human weakness was how God could show Himself strong by perfecting His power in, through, and even despite Paul's weakness; **"And He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.'** Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Paul learned to see need as God sees need, trusting Him absolutely that God would always supply his needs according to His perfect wisdom.

"An Unmet Need Might In Actuality Be A Provision"

We get into trouble when we try to tell God how to run the universe, and, in particular, the course and events of our lives. Certainly, He cares about our pain and our needs, and He wants us to cast them upon Him; **"Casting all your care upon Him, for He cares for you"** (1 Peter 5:7). But we must understand what Paul did, choosing to accept that this life will involve pain and suffering as Jesus said it would; **"These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"** (John 16:33). God is not some magic genie who answers to our every

beck and call so that we can be instantly removed from any pain and transported to an earthly life full of endless ease and relaxation. Needs are part of this life and part of the human condition, even as believers. God will not always instantaneously spare us of the pain of being in need. In fact, sometimes what we view as an unmet need might in actuality be a provision in and of itself from God, something that God is using to teach us, mold us, and shape us.

Sometimes, we need to suffer in order to learn, to gain wisdom, and to be able to fully identify and appreciate the good gifts of God when they are given later on. God is good, and He does provide for and deliver His people. But we must be humble enough to trust Him to ultimately be able to measure and identify our needs and to meet them according to His perfect wisdom and timetable. God may allow us to come to a place of utter helplessness, hopelessness, and desperation before acting mightily on our behalf. This reminds us of our weakness and inability and of His strength and absolute power. It is not God holding out on us or keeping something good from us. There is always purpose behind His methods, and there is always goodness filling His heart.

"We Will Begin To Learn, Like Paul"

The more we see God continue to meet our needs and come through for us in perfect wisdom, even sometimes despite our doubt; **"If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself."** (2 Timothy 2:13), we will begin to learn, like Paul, the secret of how to get along no matter the circumstances, being filled with joy, contentment, strength, and peace. Of those things, praise God, there never has to be any lack. May God increase our faith in His eternal supply and may we believe that He will indeed give us strength to do all that He has given us to do.

"Seek First The Kingdom Of God"

"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the Kingdom of God and His Righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow...." (Matthew 6:31-34)

**"God's Most Important Provision Is For The Needs Of Our Soul And Spirit"**

He provides us with **JOY**; **"Nevertheless He did not leave Himself without witness, in that He did good, gave us rain from heaven and fruitful seasons, filling our hearts with food and gladness."** (Acts 14:17), **PEACE**; **"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid."** (John 14:27), **COUNSEL**; **"I will bless the LORD who has given me counsel; My heart also instructs me in the night seasons"** (Psalm 16:7), **COMFORT**; **"Who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God."** (2 Corinthians 1:4), **POWER AND STRENGTH**; **"But let the righteous be glad; Let them rejoice before God; Yes, let them rejoice exceedingly."** (Psalm 68:3), and **LOVE AND SELF-CONTROL**; **"For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind."** (2 Timothy 1:7). Through His **ABUNDANT LOVE AND MERCY**, He **"has blessed us in Christ with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places"** (Ephesians 1:3). He also promises to generously provide **WISDOM** to all who ask; **"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him."** (James 1:5). Along with His promise of wisdom is **THE ASSURANCE OF HIS LOVE AND GUIDANCE** along the way; **"For You are my rock and my fortress; Therefore, for Your name's sake, Lead me and guide me."** (Psalm 31:3)