

## GRACE ABOUNDING

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Every human soul is constructed with an intake and an outlet. This is as true of the spiritual man as it is of the material. We receive and measure light through the eye. Sound is taken through the ear, fragrance through the sense of smell, etc. God has certainly favored us with spiritual senses, and has allowed us the control of them. Just as He provided light for the eye, sound for the ear, and food for the palate, He has as really made provision for our inner man. This text announces the prodigality of God—His extravagance in providing for His own. It announces that His unmeasured love has spared nothing in providing for the needs of His family. No wonder He said that he that provideth not for his own household is worse than an infidel. While He has left the control of the head gates and outlets of our souls with us, He expects that we will take and give out according to His provision.

I no more than touch this text than it falls into three sections or divisions. First, the inflow, then the soul's sufficiency, and next the overflow or outlet. "God is able to make all grace abound toward you"—that is the inflow. "That ye, always having all sufficiency in all things"—that is the supply for our own personal needs. "May abound unto every good work"—that is the outlet, or overflow. When we order the head gates lifted, God never fails to provide us with all grace and expects us to catch, possess, and retain an all-sufficiency for our every need. The remainder is the overflow to satisfy the need of others.

As I turn to the first division of the text, I notice that it also falls into three parts. First, the power of God—"He is able." Second, the provision of God—enough, "all sufficiency." Third, the prodigality of God, superabundance, overflow.

"God is able." This thought is prominent from Genesis to Revelation. The words occur at least twelve times in the New Testament. The sin of Israel was in questioning God's ability. "Can God furnish a table in the wilderness?" "Can he give bread?" He was able to set a table and to send quails quite enough. "God is able!" Take those words and write them over all your difficulties and they must vanish. Write them over your sorrow, over your financial reverses. Write them over your workbench, your counter, cookstove, washtub. Write them across the darkest cloud that ever threatens your sky. They are like a rainbow of promise.

Then, think of His provision. Grace is made to order. Ready-made clothes do not always fit. Grace made for someone else might not fit your need, but He who made you knows your size. He has your measure, and can make grace to fit you like a glove. Then, if grace should ever run short, He who made the first batch is able to make more, so the provisions are ever ample.

Then, think of His prodigality. The word, abound, is a key word in this epistle and is found twenty-four times. God does not flow toward us in a niggardly fashion. He is not sparing with His riches, but is most generous, lavish, and ever apparently extravagant. He never talks about rivulets, but rivers. The Spirit of God is never given by measure, but by a mighty sluice, a Noah's flood. He has no use for a meter at the water gate. In this world, water is often metered to you in proportion to the stock you own in the company

and the condition of the supply. If rain has fallen in abundance, when I receive my monthly bill, I find written across it, "No limit," but if the reservoir is low, I am warned to practice economy. Across every card which I have ever received from heaven the words are plainly written, "No limit." In fact, the more we tap God's resources the more He is pleased. God's reservoir of grace is always bursting. God says, "Thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left." Hebrew scholars tell us that the word "break" has the force of burst. Thou shalt burst forth.

We readily see God's prodigality in nature. How lavish He is in the fields and the gardens; how extravagant He is in the forests, on the hills and mountains, and in the garnished eternal blue. The first time I ever crossed the summit of the Rocky Mountains I found millions of beautiful flowers where no human eye had ever looked upon them. Millions of them stuck their heads up through perpetual snow. They greeted me with a smile. Whenever God makes anything, He always makes an abundance. The mountains are very great and very high; the seas are very wide and very deep. When sailing over the Indian Ocean, I was told that there was five miles of water under me, and I said, "Is that all?" They answered. "We do not know" that is as far as we have sounded." When God made the stars, He made a great many. It is said that the natural eye counts six thousand, but the larger telescopes reveal billions, and almost every time a new discovery is made, we are told that there are other worlds, but so far away that the light has only now reached us. If God is so great in the garnished heavens, why do we make so little of Him in the realm of grace?

It is of vital importance that the outlet shall be kept open. Otherwise stagnation will ensue. An English preacher from a cotton mill district, after preaching a year and a half, requested the prayers of the saints, and said he had run off his bobbin. Any preacher will run off his bobbin if he doesn't keep the connections open. In the economy of grace, God allows nothing to go to waste. All we receive from above we must pass on to others.

It is a great satisfaction to me that the text says, "In all things." A superabundance in a few things might not be sufficient. But this text says, "All sufficiency in all things."

I had a friend who had been frugally brought up. The first time he was ever in a dining car he was the guest of a rich man. When he was asked what he would order, he was embarrassed and confused, and he finally said, "Give me the whole bill of fare." The dinner cost his host about five dollars, which was not only amusing but very pleasing to his friend. Nothing pleases the Lord more than for you to order the whole bill of fare. He is never impoverished, and He loves to supply in the most princely manner.

I used to run a threshing machine. We often fed the grain from both sides, and it was a man's job to get enough wheat in the cylinder to keep the power down. Nothing is more gratifying to our Heavenly Father than to see us feeding from both sides. In many a hospitable Southern home I have been seated at a table fairly groaning with the bounties of this world, and when the time came, the hostess would say, "Now, just reach to, and help yourself." Why should we live on short rations when our great Host has said, "Reach to, and help yourself to an all-sufficiency in all things?"—Heart and Life.

## A GREAT PREACHER ON PREACHING

We must throw all our strength of judgment, memory, imagination, and eloquence into the delivery of the gospel, and not give to the preaching of the Cross our random thoughts while wayside topics engross our deeper meditations. Depend upon it, if we brought the intellect of a Locke or a Newton and the eloquence of a Cicero to bear upon the simple doctrine of "believe and live," we should find no surplus strength.

Brethren, first and above all things keep to plain, evangelical doctrines; whatever else you do or do not preach, be sure incessantly to bring forth soul-saving truth of Christ and Him crucified.

I know a minister whose shoelatchet I am not worthy to unloose, whose preaching is often little better than sacred miniature painting—I might also say holy trifling. He is great upon the ten toes of the beast, the four faces of the cherubim, the mystical meaning of badgers' skins, and the typical bearings of the staves of the ark, and the windows of Solomon's Temple; but the sins of business men, the temptations of the times, and the needs of the age he scarcely ever touches upon.

Such preaching reminds me of a lion engaged in mouse-hunting, or a man of war cruising after a water beetle. Topics scarcely in importance equal to what Peter calls "old wives' fables" are made great matters by those microscopic divines to whom the nicety of a point is more attractive than the saving of souls. There is such a thing as meanness of mental occupation unbecoming the rank of an ambassador of heaven.

The world needs still to be told of its Saviour and the way to reach Him. If with the zeal of Methodists we can preach the doctrines of Puritans, a great future is before us. The fire of Wesley and the fuel of Whitefield will cause a burning which shall set the forests of error on fire and warm the very soul of this cold earth.

Man's fall, his need of a new birth, forgiveness through an atonement, and salvation as the result of faith, these are our battle-ax and weapons of war. Blessed is that ministry of which Christ is all.—C. H. Spurgeon.

## THE IMPORTANCE OF THE MID-WEEK SERVICE

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see how God uses humble ones to be our inspiration to those who carry the burden, and the prayer and testimony meeting afford a wonderful opportunity for mutual helpfulness.

How God's children sometimes cut off from this means of grace, long for it! True, they meet by faith with those they know are assembled for prayer; but when released from the restraints that hold them, how they go with abounding joy and expectation to the place where prayer is wont to be made.

Beloved, if you have lost your relish for this means of grace, if you are not willing to make some sacrifice to get there, the fire must be burning low. "Stir up the gift of God that is within you." Do your part to make the church to which you belong a real church, and thus become, not a brakeman but a fireman for God.

A Holy Ghost Christian always has the golden winged canary of joy caged up in his soul, ever sounding forth the sweet notes of praise.