

Sermon Notes of Rev.Dr.I.J.W.Oakley (14-2-1993 Cleland Baptist Church)

Philippians 4:19

Additional Bible reading: 2 Kings 4:1-7; Matthew 6:25-34

### Introduction

The Philippians had been very kind to Paul. They had sent him more than one gift, and they were the only church that did so. This was not only appreciated by him but it delighted the heart of God. **They are a fragrant offering, an acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God** (Philippians 4:18).

So Paul, though he did not need the gift because he was content in every situation, writes to thank them, and assures them they will not be the losers by their generosity. God will make sure of that. They met Paul's one need, and God would meet their many needs. **My God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus** (Philippians 4:19). This is one of the greatest texts about God's providence, quoted in many a letter and conversation.

Before we study it in detail, we need to look at the context. It is not a text that everyone can claim. It is a promise for certain people. It is only for those in Christ, in the family of God. Then it is especially for some of them – those who are good stewards, generous in helping the Lord's servants. So this is a special promise not just for God's children but for those who are obedient, those who are generous, and show practical care to God's servants. Who were those to whom God promised to **open the floodgates of heaven, and pour out so much blessing, that you will not have room enough for it** (Malachi 3:10)? He promised this to those who faithfully tithed. Who were those who were promised gifts, **a good measure, pressed down, shaken together and running over and poured into you lap** (Luke 6:38)? This was promised to those who gave in the first place.

When we are obedient and generous and make gifts – not just to the church or to missionaries – but really giving to God Himself, He will make sure we are not the losers. God is no man's debtor. We need to think of ourselves as empty vessels which God will fill up according to His riches in Christ Jesus.

### Empty vessels

What needy people we are. Our needs are many and varied. And God promises to meet them. N.B. to meet our needs, not our luxuries, greeds, wants or the things we fancy we need. He will supply the things that He sees as our needs.

We have temporal needs because we are ordinary human beings who live in bodies like everyone else. We need food, clothing, home, health and strength, holidays, transport. Then we have spiritual needs – pardon and forgiveness. Even as God's children, we need these continually because we sin continually. We need strength to live the Christian life. How often we have to ask, "Lord, lighten my load, or strengthen my back". We need guidance about God's will, help in temptation, support

in persecution, presence in loneliness, wisdom to say the right thing at the right time. These are our present needs.

Then there are our future needs. We will have needs in the good days and the bad days ahead, needs for living and for eternity, needs in sickness and in health, needs for living and for dying. Our needs vary according to who we are and what our roles are – husbands, wives, brothers, sisters, sons, daughters, neighbours, citizens, employers, employees, pastors, Sunday School teachers, church members. Our needs increase with years, as our responsibilities grow, and our sphere of witness is increased. Daily the crowd is upon us.

God met our needs yesterday, but we are still as needy today. The blessings of yesterday become stale, and we need new grace and strength for today. We could fill volumes listing our needs. Some of our needs are urgent and pressing, others are for some time in the future. Even when we come into God's house we cannot get our needs out of our minds. Come to Him as empty vessels. Acknowledge how needy you are.

#### Who will fill these empty vessels?

Paul tells us who – **My God**. Not just "God", but "My God". A word of testimony is coming through. The God who belongs to me and who I belong to. The God who had mercy on me when I was a persecutor and revealed His Son to me. The God who saved me, changed me from a bitter persecutor to a flaming ambassador and apostle. The God who has constantly assured me that he is with me, even when I have been scared and persecuted. The God who has given me grace to bear my thorn in the flesh. The God who has stood by me in every kind of trial. My God whom I love and adore. My God on whom I have staked my whole life and to whom I have given my whole self. My God, who has never let me down.

Paul's God had met all his needs. Paul knew what he was talking about. This was not merely a theoretical statement. Paul knew from his own experience that his God would supply all their needs.

There is also the proof of the experience of other Bible men, and men throughout church history. Think of Abraham's God - there was nothing too hard for him. Jacob's God was with him and kept him in all the places he went. The Psalmist's God, **those who seek the Lord lack no good thing** (Psalm 34:10).

Above all, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. **He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all. How will he not also, along with him, graciously give all things?** (Romans 8:32). The final proof is on the Cross. If that is how much God cares for and loves us – that He was willing to give His Son up to death in order to save rebels who deserved damnation – He will certainly give us all good things. The greater includes the less. The Cross is the final and unanswerable proof that He will meet all our needs.

God never slumbers nor sleeps. He is always on hand to help. He comes at the most unexpected times, and is always there to meet the surprising need. He is omni-present and omnipotent.

In what way will He fill these empty vessels?

**According to His glorious riches.** There are several ways of doing most things. There is more than one way of giving to a beggar. We can give him the smallest coin in our purse, pitch it to him as you would a bone to a dog, or hand it over in a huff and with a “be off with you”, or give courteously and generously, or take him and buy him a cup of tea to ensure our gift is used wisely.

When God gives, he gives generously, according to His riches. A millionaire might give 10p *out of* his riches, but that would not be giving *according to* his riches. If the millionaire gave *according to* his riches, one might expect a bit more. God’s gifts are according to His riches, in proportion to His infinite resources. There is always abundance and overflowing with God. We can see His abundance in nature – the trees, flowers, air, sky etc. **The earth is the Lord’s and everything in it** (Psalm 24:1). **Every animal of the forest is mine, and the cattle on a thousand hills** (Psalm 50:10).

And His grace is illimitable. **I have come that they might have life, and have it to the full** (John 10:10). When the prodigal son returned, he was given the best robe of all (Luke 15:22). **God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things at all times, you will abound in every good work** (2 Corinthians 9:8). **God who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ** (Ephesians 1:3). **Him who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine** (Ephesians 3:20).

Spurgeon, speaking of his conversion and baptism, recalled his mother’s words, “Charles, I often prayed that the Lord would make you a Christian, but never that you might become a Baptist.” “Ah, mother, the Lord has answered you prayers with His usual bounty and given you exceedingly abundantly above what you asked or thought!”

As Christians we are part of God’s family, heirs of God, and co-heirs with Christ. **If you, then, though you are evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father in heaven give good gifts to those who ask him!** (Matthew 7:11). God has a fatherly concern for each of us. He anticipates our needs, He knows what we need before we ask.

Edwin Orr, an Irish preacher, arrived in Liverpool with a bicycle and a few shillings – and faith in God. He had come to spread the message of prayer for Revival all over England, Scotland and Wales. He never lacked a single meal or a place to sleep. He met a commercial traveller in Scotland who asked him, “Are you representing some firm?” “I am travelling for my father” “Is there much money in it?” “I am not worried, my father is a multi-millionaire. He sends me all I need.” “Lucky blighter” “I am the happiest man on earth.” “I wish I could join your firm.” “There is no reason why you shouldn’t.” “Who is the managing director?” “The Holy Spirit”. Orr had the joy of leading that man to the Father, and the principal of the firm, the Lord Jesus Christ.

By what means does He supply all our needs?

**In Christ Jesus, or By Christ Jesus (AV).** This is an unlimited offer, yet there is a limit. It is for those who are in Christ, and who are, through Him, in a relationship with God. All God's blessings come through that one channel. We deserve nothing because of our sin. But God will bless us for Christ's sake. He never refuses His Son anything. If we come to God through the mediator who died for us, we will receive blessing.

We can use Christ's name at the Bank of Heaven. When we have Christ, we have all. **All things are yours... and you are of Christ** (1 Corinthians 3:21,23). God will not hear a man's prayer unless he prays in Christ's name. But if we use that name, the gates of heaven will fly open at once.

So our text is not for everybody, but only for those in Christ Jesus, only for those who have seen their desperate plight and lost estate. Those who have run to Christ, and given themselves to Him, received forgiveness through Him, been accepted into God's presence, incorporated into Christ, members of His body, and complete in Christ.

#### Conclusion

**My God will meet all your needs.** What blessed certainty and assurance are in these words. Whatever your need, it will be met. Bring your needs today. Do not leave one behind. Come as you are in emptiness. Your emptiness is your greatest qualification. You are just the sort of person God loves to bless. Our extremity is God's opportunity. Come with your sins and your failures. Mention Christ's name and you will not be refused. Lose your smugness and self-sufficiency and feel your sense of need. Bring your empty vessel to be filled to overflowing.

Let the Psalmist have the last word. **I was young and now I am old, yet I have never seen the righteous forsaken, or their children begging bread** (Psalm 37:25).