

A SUPPLY FOR EVERY NEED

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"But my God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus." Philippians 4:19

With what confidence the Apostle speaks here! There is not in his mind the shadow of a doubt: but he declares it as a positive certainty, that his God would supply all their need. Whence arose this confidence? Not from the flesh, we may be well certain. But it arose from two causes: **first**, from the deep conviction, lodged by the Holy Ghost in the heart of the Apostle, that God would supply all the wants of his church and people; and **secondly**, because he had himself experienced, in his own particular case, this gracious and perpetual supply.

But why should **both these** be necessary? Would not **one** be sufficient? I think not. Say that the ground of his confidence was his own personal experience, and disjoin that experience of his from the truth which I have said was lodged in his heart that God would supply all the wants of his church; take, I say, that great truth away, and his experience would afford him no solid ground for confidence that God would supply all **their** wants. Or look at the other side of the question: suppose the doctrinal truth only was lodged in his heart that God would supply all the needs of his church, but that he himself had not a personal experience of that supply, there would still be wanting a sufficient ground of confidence. His confidence would stand upon one foot only if it stood on either of these truths alone, and would thus be liable to be blown down by every gust of temptation. But when his confidence stood in the firm conviction of a general truth on

the one hand, and a blessed experience of that truth in his own case on the other, it then stood firmly upon two feet: and no storm or gust that might arise could drive him down from his standing.

And this must be the ground of **our** confidence too. No Arminian could consistently believe that God would for a certainty supply the wants of the Philippian Church, because, according to his creed, they might be God's children today, and the devil's children tomorrow. Nor, again, if we had not had some experience of God's mercy and faithfulness in our own souls, supplying us from time to time, could we rest upon the mere doctrinal truth, that God will supply the wants of his church? But when the truth of the doctrine and the truth of the experience meet together in the same heart, then there is a solid foundation on which spiritual confidence can rest.

If we look at the words of the text, I think we shall find three things in them. **Want** is the first: "my God shall supply **all your need.**" **Supply** is the **second**: "my God shall supply." And **the Channel**, through which this supply comes, is the **third**, "**according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.**"

I. A man has no spiritual wants until he is made a spiritual man; this is, to God-taught souls, a self-evident truth. Therefore, until the Lord is pleased to quicken the soul into spiritual life, it has no one spiritual panting after God, no one spiritual desire, for it has no one spiritual necessity. But no sooner does life commence in the soul, than wants and necessities commence with it. As the life of the new-born babe is manifested by its desiring the mother's breast, so is the life of the new-born soul manifested by its desiring, as

the Apostle says, "the sincere milk of the word, that it may grow thereby."

He, then, that has no wants is dead in sin, or dead in a profession. But, just in proportion to the depth of God's work upon the soul, will be the depth of the wants; and just in proportion to the continued carrying on of that work with power, will there be the continual springing up of these wants in the soul.

With God's blessing, we will look at a few of these spiritual wants, which God will supply; he himself having caused them to be felt in the soul.

Until the Lord gives us eyes to see, and a heart to feel our real state and case, our true character and condition before him, we can feel no want to be saved from this state—to be delivered from this condition. The very word, **salvation—deliverance**—implies a being saved, a being delivered out of something: and **that**, a state of ruin, wretchedness, and misery. Whatever, then, a man may know **doctrinally** of the truths of the gospel, until he is brought by the special teaching of the Spirit to need something which God alone can give him, he cannot be said to have any spiritual life or feeling in his soul.

1. But what is the first want that the living soul most pressingly and most urgently feels? **Mercy**. Was not that the first cry which was raised up in the heart of the publican: "God be **merciful** to me, a sinner." Mercy was a word that never before had been in his lips: the craving after mercy was an experience utterly unknown in his soul. But no sooner did sin and guilt fall upon his conscience, no sooner was he spiritually convinced of his state as a sinner before God, than a need of mercy was sensibly opened up in his heart; and no

sooner was the want raised up in his heart, than the groaning cry burst forth from his lips, "God be merciful to me, a sinner."

Now, I believe, in my conscience, that there are hundreds, if not thousands of persons, in a profession of religion, who never once, from their hearts, lifted up that earnest cry to God; the words may have passed through their lips, but the groaning cry before a heart-searching God to visit their souls with mercy, never really burst forth from a broken heart. And if a man has not taken that first step in the divine life, there is no use his talking about how established he is in the doctrines of grace. If he has not come in by "the door," he has clambered over the wall, and is but a thief and a robber. The sweetness of mercy, its suitability to our ruined condition, can only be felt by one who has groaned under the pressure of guilt: and when guilt is really laid upon a man's conscience, nothing but manifested mercy can ever heal his wound, or suit his case. Nor will this need of, and cry for mercy, be confined just to one or two periods in a man's life: but he will often be, as Hart says

"Begging mercy every hour."

Daily sinners want daily mercies; hourly iniquities cry out for hourly pardon; whatever, therefore, a man may have experienced in his soul in times past of granted mercy, yet, as he is perpetually a sinner against God, and is continually doing things, which his conscience bears its solemn testimony against as evil, there will be from time to time a cry in his soul, that God would look down upon him in mercy, and heal his perpetual backslidings from him.

2. **Pardon—forgiveness**—and an inward testimony that the blood of Jesus Christ has been shed for his sins, is a want, a

spiritual need, that God brings every one of his children to experience. It is this need which effectually teaches a man to believe in particular redemption. A man who holds universal redemption can never want to have pardon sealed upon his conscience: he cannot value the blood of Christ, until he knows that that blood was **specially** shed; nor can he behold the efficacy of atoning blood, until he sees that that blood was shed for particular objects. As long, therefore, as a man is buried in free-will errors, until he is effectually purged by "the spirit of judgment, and the spirit of burning" out of freewill and self-righteousness, and has had all his Arminian sentiments dashed to a thousand shivers in his conscience, he can never know what it is to groan out from the depths of his soul for manifested pardon and forgiveness. But, when he is taught of God to view the depth, the awful depth of his iniquities with one eye, and to behold the virtue and efficacy of the atoning blood of Christ with the other, and yet feels his conscience filthy, guilty, burdened, and in bondage, he, and he alone, will then effectually plead for the manifestation and application of that atoning blood to his soul.

3. **Righteousness**—that he may stand righteous before God, "accepted in the Beloved," his own "filthy rags" cast to the dunghill, and Christ's glorious robe of righteousness imputed unto and put upon him—is "a need" felt by every quickened vessel of mercy, before the Lord assures him that he stands complete in Christ. His own "righteousness" being opened up to him as "filthy rags," he views himself, as the Lord showed the prophet Zechariah (Zech 3:3) as Joshua, the high priest, clothed with filthy garments, before the angel of the Lord. Nothing can satisfy him, therefore, but that which satisfies God; nothing is acceptable in his eyes, but that which is acceptable in the eyes of infinite Purity—a robe "without spot or blemish, or any such thing." And it is the sigh, the cry, and the groaning desire of his soul, to have that blessed robe

brought out of the heavenly wardrobe, where it is stored up for those who believe in Jesus, and experimentally put upon him by the Spirit of the living God.

4. **Wisdom**—that he may understand the mind and will of God—that he may have a spiritual and feeling perception of, and acquaintance with "the truth as it is in Jesus"—is a "need." a spiritual want, felt in every living soul. What poor, blind fools are we by nature! How insufficient is all our earthly wisdom and all our natural knowledge, to guide us into the truth! When the soul really is under divine teaching, how ignorant it feels as to every, single thing it desires to know! What clouds of darkness perpetually hang over the mind! What a veil of ignorance seems continually spread over the heart! The simplest truths of God's word seem hid in the deepest obscurity, and the soul can neither see the truth, nor see or feel its personal interest in it.

Now, when a man is here, he does not go to the Lord with lying lips and a mocking tongue, and ask him to give him wisdom, merely because he has heard that other persons have asked it of God, or because he reads in the Bible that Christ is made of God "wisdom" to his people; but he goes as a poor blind fool, as one completely ignorant, as one totally unable to understand a single spiritual truth of himself, as one thoroughly helpless to get into the marrow of vital godliness, into the mysteries of true religion, or into the very heart of Christ. For it is not a few doctrines received into the head, nor a sound creed, that can satisfy a soul convinced of its ignorance. No; nothing can satisfy him, but to have that divine illumination, whereby he "sees light in God's light:" that spiritual wisdom communicated, whereby he feels himself "made wise unto salvation;" that unctuous light shed abroad in the heart, which is the only key to gospel truth,

and is its own blessed evidence, that he knows the truth by a divine application of it to his soul.

5. And **strength**, too, to walk in God's ways, to believe God's promises, to lay hold of the Mediator's righteousness, to tread in the strait and narrow path that Jesus walked in before him, "leaving us an example that we should follow his steps." Every quickened child of God is deeply convinced of his utter helplessness and weakness in divine things; and he feels, to his very heart's core, in the inward recesses of his soul, that he is as weak as water against all temptations, and utterly unable to do a single thing that God can approve of, unless he is pleased to work it in him with his own powerful and blessed hand.

Until a man gets experimentally acquainted with temptation, he can never know anything of the weakness of the flesh: he may seem to have stood for years in the truth, and made a most flourishing profession, and yet be completely ignorant of his own heart, and of the mountains that lie on the road to glory. But, sooner or later, temptation will come upon him: and temptation, sooner or later, will prove him what he is. If he is nothing but a heady, high-minded professor, a powerful and suitable temptation will probably sweep him at once out of the path in which he has professed to walk: and even if he is a child of God, the first effect of it may be for a time to beat him down. The wind sometimes sweeps over the branches as though it would bow the noblest and strongest oak in the dust: and yet, when the blast has passed away, the tree springs again to its place. So a living soul, when the blast of temptation comes down violently upon it, may seem at first almost laid prostrate; and yet there is a secret strength in a living man, whereby, when the temptation has passed over, he is again restored to his place. The dead tree has no vitality in it, so as to recover itself when the storm

has passed over, and therefore it falls, and great is the fall of it; but where there is vitality in stem and root, there is a springing back of every branch and twig to its place, when the first gust of the storm has blown over. So it is with the living soul; "the root of the matter" is in it; the grace and teaching of God are in the heart; "underneath are the everlasting arms;" and the Lord his God upholds him with his powerful hand. So that though the first effect of temptation may seem to be almost overwhelming, so as to beat him utterly down, yet there is, by the grace and mercy of God, a returning to his standing, so as not to be utterly prostrated by the very roots.

And so with respect to **sin**. No man knows what sin really is, until its nature and power are experimentally made known to him. Many go on for years in a sort of dreamy profession of religion, knowing nothing experimentally of the amazing power of sin in their carnal minds. Many a professor walks consistently for years, sin all the while lying dead and torpid in him, until some mine, which Satan perhaps has been secretly digging for weeks, months, or years, suddenly explodes, and sets all the sin of his heart a fire; and he, not being possessed of grace, and God, therefore, not upholding him by his powerful hand, is at once driven into secret or open licentiousness: and hardly knows what sin is before he is plunged headlong into it.

A child of God never knows what he really is, and what a poor weak creature he is against temptation, until the power of sin is opened up in his carnal mind. But when sin is opened up, when temptation and his fallen nature come together, when Satan is permitted to blow a blast from hell into his carnal mind, and to suit the temptation to the lust, and the lust to the temptation, then a child of God begins experimentally to know the overwhelming power of sin, and

to feel as utterly unable to stand against sin and Satan as to perform an immediate miracle before your eyes. But, by this painful experience, he learns his need of divine strength and the necessity of being kept by the power of God from falling a prey to his own corruptions. This unexpected discovery of his own weakness effectually convinces him that God himself must work in him deliverance from the power of evil, and "strengthen him with might by his Spirit in the inner man," against the swelling tide of his own corruptions, or sooner or later he must be utterly carried away by them.

I believe, in many cases, we go on for some time receiving doctrines as revealed in the Scriptures, and giving, as we think, our full adherence to them, being quite convinced they are true; but not being as yet experimentally grounded in them, after a time we begin to find that we have only half learned them. For instance, we may, perhaps, for years have assented to this doctrine, that Christ's strength is made perfect in our weakness. We have heard ministers preach from it, we have approved of all they said upon it; we have been well convinced it is a gospel truth; but what did we know of it all the time experimentally? Why, perhaps, nothing, positively nothing, absolutely nothing. And so we continued ignorant of our own ignorance until some powerful temptation came upon us, or some lust or corruption was opened up in our heart, when we felt all our fancied strength give way, and found we had no more power to stand against **this** temptation, or to overcome **that** evil, than we had power to raise up the dead from their graves. Thus we learn our need of divine strength; and we now no longer believe it merely upon the testimony of the written word, no longer receive it as a truth because good and gracious men preach it, but we receive it into our conscience as an experimental reality, the weight and power of which we have known for ourselves.

But the words of the text are very extensive. It does not say, "My God shall supply **some** of your need." but, "My God shall supply **all** your need." If, then, we are the people of God, we cannot come into any one state of mind, into any one exercise of soul, into any one perplexing circumstance, into any one spiritual or temporal trouble, to which this promise does not apply. If the word "**all**" could be struck out, what a blank it would leave! How it would foster the doubts, and fears, and suspicions, that arise in the mind! It would at once be suggested by unbelief, "God has not said '**all**;' therefore **your** need is excluded." The tempted soul would say, "My temptation is not there;" the poor creature, perplexed in providence, would say, "My providential trial is not there;" the tender conscience, groaning under the power of sin, would say, "My exercise is not there;" and thus all might be so continually bringing forward each his own exercises to his own peculiar exclusion, that, by the omission of that little word **all**, Satan might rob every child, of his manifested interest in this promise. And, therefore, to block him out, to keep the Church of God in its right place, as a needy dependant upon the divine bounty, and yet to open up a sweet source of consolation to the living family, that word "**all**" has been introduced by the blessed Spirit, that a child of God may never be in any circumstances, to which the promise should not apply.

But, my friends, we feel (**those of us I mean whom God has taught anything of the truth**) that the Lord must not only give us wants, in the first instance, but that he must from time to time keep alive a sense of those wants in our souls. There are many times with us, when we seem not to have a single spiritual want; when we are, in our feelings, as cold and carnal, careless and stupid, dead and unfeeling, as if a single groaning cry had never gone up out of our heart, as

if there had never been any breathing after the presence of God, as if the power of truth had never once been felt, and as if we had no more to do with truth, and truth had no more to do with us, than if there were no God to know or fear, no Jesus to believe in or love, no Spirit to teach or lead us, no hell to dread, nor heaven to enjoy. Through this wretched carnality and recklessness we learn that an experience of our urgent wants must, by a divine power, be again and again brought into our hearts.

But what painful ways does the Lord employ to keep a feeling sense of these wants in exercise! It is not to stretch ourselves in an evening in our arm chair, and say—"I have this want, and I have that need; I will therefore go to the Lord with this want, and ask him, to supply that need!" No, that is not the way whereby the Lord usually raises up a sense of want in our souls; but he permits, in his providence, some powerful temptation to assault us that we would not have for the world; or he lays some heavy affliction upon us, that brings us down into the dust; or he brings some trouble which we would escape from if we could, and the very sight of which fills us with dread. He thus raises up wants, by putting us into situations, which the flesh naturally shrinks from, and at which, if left to ourselves, we can only murmur and rebel. When he puts us, then, into these spots, where we should never have put ourselves, which we hate when we are put into them, and where we kick sometimes "as a wild bull in a net;" and when he keeps us down in these spots by his own powerful hand—then is the time, and that is the way, that he raises up wants in our souls. But wherever the Lord raises up, by the power of his blessed Spirit, these wants within, he, at the same time, mercifully enables us to pour them out at his footstool, and to ask him to supply them, because it is written upon our consciences that he alone can grant our desires, and mercifully appear on our behalf.

II. And this leads us to consider the **second** thing that we mentioned as contained in the text; which is **Supply**. "My God shall **supply** all your need."

Oh! what should we do without a supply? Want could not satisfy us. Many seem to rest upon wants; they have, they say, a sense of their lost and ruined state, are troubled with doubts and fears, have exercises of mind, and are often assailed by temptations. So far, so good. But their error is, that they rest upon these exercises as satisfactory evidences of a work of grace. Wants are very good when they lead the soul to seek after and prize their supply. But can mere want satisfy us? Suppose we had this year a deficient harvest: suppose the Lord, in anger for our sins as a nation, were to smite down the very wheat from the soil, and not give us our daily bread, would want and famine satisfy us? Suppose the noble river Thames, which flows by this metropolis, were dried up, so that no ships freighted with merchandise could come up to the city of London, should we think, in that case, that want would serve for supply: and that a dry channel would be as good as the present liquid highway? The want indeed makes the supply precious; but who could rest upon the want? No, it is the supply; it is the Lord causing, year after year, the ground to bring forth its abundant harvests, that supplies our table with bread. It is the same munificent God sending rain, and causing the sea to ebb and flow, that bids the noble river go down into the sea, and bring up the ships. So it is spiritually. It is not having wants (**though spiritual wants are evidences of the divine life, and are so far good**) but it is the supply of the wants, which is the real marrow of vital godliness: and in the receiving of this supply does all the enjoyment and comfort of spiritual religion consist.

Now the Lord has promised that he will "supply all our need;" that we shall not pine away in want, shall not die of hunger, shall not perish with thirst, shall not be utterly carried away by temptation, shall not be borne down the current of sin into hell; but that he will graciously supply those wants which he himself has kindled in the soul. And does he not, from time to time, graciously supply them? Do you not know it so, from time to time, in soul experience, that there is a supply opened up in proportion to the reality and depth of your wants? Have you not sometimes been under heavy **afflictions**, and deeply, sensibly wanted the hand of God to appear, either to remove the affliction or else to give you patience and resignation under it? And has not the Lord, in his own time and way, done both for you? Has he not sometimes removed the affliction? and has he not at other times given you patience and resignation to submit to it, and to look up unto him that it may work in you "the peaceable fruit of righteousness?" So with respect to **temptations**: did we ever go to the Lord with a temptation, which was not more or less taken away? I have known what it is to labour under a temptation so strong and powerful, that I thought it would utterly overthrow me: and I have known what it is to go with groans, and sighs, and tears to the Lord to take the temptation away: and I have had it taken away, so as not to come with the same power again. It is the removing of temptation, in answer to prayer, in this marked and sensible way, that raises up in our souls gratitude to God for his delivering hand.

But temptations, at least, many of them, are such as people naturally love, and so far from their being a pain, they are a pleasure to them, to gratify which is their chief delight. A change, therefore, must take place in us before we can desire to be delivered from them. Few will sincerely and spiritually go to the Lord, and cry from their hearts to deliver

them from the power of a temptation, until it presses so weightily upon their conscience, and lies so heavy a burden upon their soul, that none but God can remove it. But when we really feel the burden of a temptation; when, though our flesh may love it, our spirit hates it; when, though there may be in our carnal mind a cleaving to it, our conscience bleeds under it, and we are brought spiritually to loathe it and to loathe ourselves for it; when we are enabled to go to the Lord in real sincerity of soul and honesty of heart, beseeching him to deliver us from it, I believe, that the Lord will sooner or later, either remove that temptation entirely in his providence or by his grace, or so weaken its power that it shall cease to be what it was before, drawing our feet into paths of darkness and evil.

As long, however, as we are in that state of which the prophet speaks, "Their heart is divided; now shall they be found faulty"; **Ho 10:2** as long as we are in that carnal, wavering mind, which James describes—"A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways;" as long as we are hankering after the temptation, casting longing, lingering side glances after it, rolling it as a sweet morsel under our tongue, and, though conscience may testify against it, yet not willing to have it taken away; there is no hearty cry, nor sigh, nor spiritual breathing of our soul, that God would remove it from us. But when we are brought, as in the presence of a heart-searching God, to hate the evil to which we are tempted, and cry to him that he would, for his honour and for our soul's good, take the temptation away, or dull and deaden its power; sooner or later (I can speak from soul experience on more than one occasion, and, if I thought it right to mention them, could bring forward several instances), the Lord will hear the cry of those who groan to be delivered from those temptations, which are so powerfully pressing them down to the dust.

So with respect to the Lord's **strength**. When is it we find divine strength? It is only when we are experimentally sensible of our own weakness, and feel utterly unable to think, to speak, or to do anything acceptable in God's sight; when weakness is not a doctrine, but an experience; when man's thorough helplessness is believed by us, not merely because we read it in the Scripture, but because we really know it in our own hearts. Then it is, and then alone, that we find the strength of the Lord made perfect in weakness. If we go forward in our own strength, we are sure to get baffled; none of our anticipations are realized; disappointment and mortification are the only crop we reap. But when we feel all weakness and emptiness, we find at times secret and unexpected strength communicated.

So with respect to **righteousness**. When we go to the Lord, hating ourselves, abhorring and loathing ourselves in dust and ashes, and see no more reason why God should have mercy upon us than upon the vilest sinner who is daringly fighting against his Majesty, this is the time when he often gives to the soul a sweet testimony of its interest in Christ's righteousness. When we go puffed up with some conceit of our own righteousness, and thinking, "surely we are not so bad as others, surely there are those who are or have been more inconsistent than we," and thus, as Berridge says, "squint and peep another way, some creature-help to spy," there is a denial, on the Lord's part, to indulge us with a spiritual view of Christ's glorious righteousness. But when the soul stands naked and bare, clothed with humility, and filled with contrition, then the Lord, from time to time, opens up a sight of Christ's glorious righteousness as unto all and upon all them that believe.

And so with respect to every kind of **deliverance**; for instance, deliverances in providence. Until we get into providential difficulties, we know nothing of providential deliverances; until we get into straits, where our own wisdom is utterly at fault, we do not find the Lord stretching forth his hand to guide and deliver us. But when we are brought to this point, that our way is completely blocked up, that we do not know what step to take, and unless the Lord appear: we must certainly go wrong: when, under these exercises, we are brought honestly and sincerely to cry to the Lord mercifully to appear on our behalf, sooner or later, a secret light will be cast upon the path, and there will be a fulfilment of that gracious promise, "Thine ears shall hear a word behind thee, saying, this is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand, and when ye turn to the left." **Isa 30:21**

It was so with the children of Israel. Until they had come out of Egypt, and "the wilderness had shut them in," till they were encamped by the Red Sea, with the rolling waves before, and their furious enemies behind, there was no deliverance from the power and rage of Pharaoh. But the Lord did not tell them there should be deliverance in that way. He left the deliverance to come when the danger came; yet no sooner did the danger come than the deliverance came with it. Have we not ever found it thus? and thus we shall continue to find it. It is when the danger comes, when the perplexity arises, and we have no strength, wisdom, or power, to deliver ourselves, that then, and not till then, the deliverance comes.

We should not know what a God the Lord was, unless things were thus managed. We profess to believe in an Almighty, All-present, All-seeing God; and we should be highly offended if a person said to us, "you do not believe that God

sees everything, that he is everywhere present, that he is an Almighty Jehovah;" we should almost think that he was taking us for an atheist. And yet practical atheists, we daily prove ourselves to be. For instance, we profess to believe that God sees everything, and yet we are plotting and planning as though he saw nothing; we profess to know that God can do everything, and yet we are always cutting out schemes, and carving out contrivances, as though he were like the gods of the heathen, looking on and taking no notice: we profess to believe that God is everywhere present to relieve every difficulty and bring his people out of every trial, and yet when we get into the difficulty and into the trial, we speak, think, and act, as though there were no such omnipresent God, who knows the circumstances of the case, and can stretch forth his hand to bring us out of it.

Thus the Lord is obliged **(to speak with all reverence)** to thrust us into trials and afflictions, because we are such blind fools, that we cannot learn what a God we have to deal with, until we come experimentally into those spots of difficulty and trial, out of which none but such a God can deliver us. This, then, is one reason why the Lord often plunges his people so deeply into a sense of sin; it is to show them what a wonderful salvation from the guilt, filth, and power of sin, there is in the Person, blood, and righteousness of the Lord Jesus Christ. For the same reason, too, they walk in such scenes of temptation; it is in order to shew them what a wonder working God he is in bringing them out. This too is the reason why many of them are so harassed and plagued; it is that they may not live and act as though there were no God to go to, no Almighty friend to consult, no kind Jesus to rest their weary heads upon; it is in order to teach them experimentally and inwardly those lessons of grace and truth which they never would know till the Lord, as it were, thus compels them to learn, and actually forces them to believe

what they profess to believe. Such pains is he obliged to take with us; such poor scholars, such dull creatures we are. No child at a school ever gave his master a thousandth part of the trouble that we have **(so to speak)** given the Lord to teach us.

If your child were as stupid, as dull, as intractable, in learning his A B C, as we are learning the A B C of religion, I know not how many times a day he would be put into the corner; I know not how many cuffs our natural impetuosity might not be provoked to give him. But we are such stupid wretches, that God has actually to put us into places where he would not otherwise put us, in order that we may learn the up-stroke of the great A of true religion; in order just to teach us, as the prophet says, "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little, and there a little." But when we have got a little way into our alphabet, such dull scholars are we that we almost immediately forget it all, and have to go back, and begin with great A again. So we go on learning and forgetting, learning and forgetting; and, with all the pains taken with us, when we most wish to put our lesson into practice, feeling as if we had not yet learnt a single truth aright. In order, then, to teach us what a God he is, what a merciful and compassionate High Priest—in order to open up the heights, and depths, and lengths, and breadths of his love, he is compelled to treat, at times, his people very roughly, and handle them very sharply; he is obliged to make very great use of his rod, because he sees that "foolishness is so bound up in the hearts" of his children that nothing but the repeated "rod of correction will ever drive it far from them."

Now to learn religion in this way, is not like getting hold of a few doctrines in the judgment, and then setting up to be a very bright professor; like a tradesman who borrows all his

capital, and then, by puffing and advertising drives for a time a flourishing trade, till the bubble bursts. God's people cannot thus borrow from books and ministers a number of doctrines and texts, and then set up with these as a stock in trade. No; they have to be emptied and stripped of all such borrowed stock and brought into darkness and confusion, that they may learn all they really know from the lips of the Lord himself. They have to pass through many painful exercises and troubles, and all for one purpose—that they may be scholars in the school of tribulation, and thus walk in the footsteps of a suffering Jesus.

III. And this leads us to **the Channel**, through which God supplies all the varied wants of his people. "My God," says Paul, "shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus."

Oh! If there was no Christ Jesus, there could be no "supply." Howling in hell would our miserable souls be, unless there was a Mediator at the right hand of the Father—a blessed Jesus, full of love, pity, and power, co-equal and co-eternal in his Divine nature with the Father and the Holy Ghost, and yet the God-Man in whom "it hath pleased the Father that all fulness should dwell." If there was not such a blessed Mediator at the right hand of God, then not one drop of spiritual comfort, not one particle of hope, not one grace or fruit of the Spirit to distinguish us from the damned in hell, would ever be our lot or portion. Oh! we should never forget the channel through which these mercies come; we should never, for one moment, think that they could come through any other person or in any other way, than through God's only begotten Son, now in our nature, at his right hand, as our Advocate, Mediator, and Intercessor with the Father.

And this supply is "according to the riches of his glory;" which, I believe, is a Hebrew idiom, signifying **his glorious riches**—riches so great, so unlimited, so unfathomable, raising up the soul to such a height of glory, that they may well be called "glorious." And these "in Christ Jesus:" stored up in him, locked up in him, and supplied freely out of him, just according to the wants and exercises of God's people.

Oh! my friends, when the channel through which these mercies come into the soul, is in a measure opened up to the eye of faith: when we see that we have not to deal with pure Deity, with offended purity, with a justly incensed Jehovah, with a holy God, who, with one glance of his righteous eye, could frown our souls into a never-ending hell, but have to plead with "the God and Father of the Lord Jesus Christ," with a merciful God, who has sent his dear Son into the world that those who believe in his name should not die, but live for ever; when we see, too, by the eye of faith what this blessed God-Man has done and suffered: when we mark him coming down from heaven to earth, when we view him in the manger, when we trace all his sorrowing and suffering path through life, and see him at the end suspended betwixt two malefactors, groaning out that agonizing cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?"—when we accompany his dead body to the tomb, and see him raised up thence with power and glory, to sit at the right hand of the Father: oh! I say, when faith receives this blessed truth of Christ's mediation in the love of it, in the sweetness of it, and in the power of it, how it opens up a way for the poor and needy to plead at Jehovah's footstool? How it encourages them to go to the throne of grace, with all their wants, troubles, and exercises! And how it draws forth their soul into admiring views, hopes, and love towards the Lord Jesus, for having done and suffered such things on their behalf!

The channel, then, through which every gospel blessing and mercy comes into the soul, is through the Mediator at God's right hand: and in him God can be "just and the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus." This is our plea. Not that we have done anything, not that we can do anything; not that we have lived good and holy lives; not that we have said, or done this or that—all such carnal pleas and vain hopes must be swept away. Our only warrant to draw near to the throne is this—the blessed teachings of the Spirit in the soul, whereby he gives the eye of faith to see Jesus, and to approach the Father through his atoning sacrifice and his meritorious obedience, as the Scripture speaks, "for through him we both have access by one Spirit, unto the Father."

Eph 2:18 And as through this channel alone do our prayers flow upward, so through this channel, and through this channel only, does every mercy, and every blessing, and every grace flow downward into the hearts of those that fear God. If it were not so, long ago must we have died in despair: if it were not so, long ago must God have banished us from his presence for ever. But now that there is One in our nature, who has suffered, bled, and died, and made an atonement for sin, God can be holy and merciful at the same moment; he can forgive sin, and yet not have his justice for a moment sullied.

If, then, you are a child of God, a poor and needy soul, a tempted and exercised believer in Christ, "God shall supply all your need." It may be very great; it may seem to you, sometimes, as though there were not upon all the face of the earth such a wretch as you, as though there never could be a child of God in your state; so dark, so stupid, so blind and ignorant, so proud and worldly, so presumptuous and hypocritical, so continually back-sliding after idols, so continually doing things that you know are hateful in God's sight. And if you think that you are the worst, I could find

you a companion; I could find you one who could walk side by side with you in every step; who could put his arm into yours, and compare notes, and if you thought yourself one of the basest, vilest, and worst of all who are hanging upon Jesus, could, from the same lips whose breath you now hear, whisper the same things into your ear that you might whisper into his. But whatever our need be, it is not beyond the reach of divine supply; and the deeper our need, the more is Jesus glorified in supplying it. It is not little sinners that will go to heaven; little sinners can know nothing experimentally of the blood of the atonement. It is not those who can make themselves religious, that God will take any pains with: it is not those who can make a ladder and climb up the rounds of their own piety, that will reach the heavenly Canaan: but those wilt run the race and gain the prize who often feel themselves too base and too black, too filthy and too vile to be saved. It is not those who are walking upon the stilts of their own religion, and raising themselves so many feet higher, who are accepted by him who searcheth the heart: but it is those, who have no power to walk at all, and who cannot move a single step except as God is pleased to "work in them that which is well pleasing in his sight," who eventually will come off more than conquerors through him that loved them, and gave himself for them.

Say not then that your case is too bad, that your wants are too many, your perplexities too great, your temptations too powerful. No case can be too bad; no temptations can be too powerful; no sin, except the sin against the Holy Ghost, can be too black; no enigma can be too hard; no state in which the soul can get is beyond the reach of the almighty and compassionate love, that burns in the breast of the Redeemer.

But do you try him? How many there are who seem to have wants, and yet their wants are not pressing enough to force the cry for mercy out of their souls! How many in religion are like some persons, naturally, that are ailing all their lives, and yet are never bad enough to go to a doctor! They have their dyspepsia, and their bilious attacks, and their rheumatic pains, and their nervous complaints, but they go croaking and croaking on, and yet do not apply to any physician, or medical man; they are not bad enough for that. So are there not many of God's people, who go croaking and croaking on with their doubts and fears, questionings and suspicions, convictions and complaints, and their other numerous ailments, but in whom the disease of sin is not so deeply felt as to make them sigh, cry, and groan out their souls, and breathe their very hearts into the ears of Jehovah Rophi, that that blessed Physician would apply the balm of his atoning blood to their bleeding consciences?

Until we know what it is to have a disease deeply fixed in our vitals, we shall never have recourse to the Almighty Physician; until we are brought into the depths of poverty, we shall never know nor value Christ's riches; and until our own case is utterly unmanageable by our own wisdom, we shall never find that Christ is made "wisdom" to his church. But when we come into those desperate circumstances, that all the help of men and angels combined could never bring a moment's peace into our hearts—when we come into those straits and difficulties, wherein God must appear, or we must perish at his feet, the supply then will not be long delayed: the answer to prayer then will not be long in tarrying: the wheels of deliverance will be heard approaching; and the Conqueror who rides in that chariot, the bottom of which is "paved with love," will come into the heart of his Hephzibah, and ravish her with his smile. But as long as we can do without him, he, so to speak, will do without us; as long as

we trifle and play with our ailments, our doubts, and fears, the Lord will stand back: but when nobody can bless us but he, and nobody can do us good but he, he will not be long in tarrying. **"His heart is full of tenderness, His bowels melt with love"** for poor sinners. He is now behind the lattice, hidden only by the wall; he only waits to hear a few more knocks; and when the soul is so pressed down that it cannot do without him, he will shine from behind the lattice, blessedly appear, and make it happy in himself.

It is a truth, then, which will stand for ever, that "God will supply all our need, according to his riches in glory, by Christ Jesus." If any of his people lived and died without their spiritual want being supplied (**I say it with all reverence**), God would forfeit his word. But he will never suffer any one to charge him with that; he will never let any one say that he was not faithful to his promise. He will prove, before men and devils, saints and sinners, that he has never given a promise in the Scripture which he has not fulfilled, or which he will not fulfil to the very letter.