

#160 “God Will Provide”

by Brent Barnett

www.relevantbibleteaching.com

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?

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 enough clothing to stay warm. *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. 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 (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.

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 (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 (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.

Paul goes out of his way in verse 19 to refer to God in a personal, experiential sense by saying “my God.” He is saying with full confidence that he has seen firsthand that God does keep His promises, that He does supply our needs, and that He does give us strength to do everything that He has called us to do. If the man who suffered the pangs of hunger and the torment of multiple imprisonments and beatings can say that God never let him down, then so should the Philippians and so should we. Rather than getting bitter at God about an unmet need, we should eagerly look forward to how God will cause a particular difficulty to work for good (Romans 8:28). *Rather than asking in a faithless manner “Why is God allowing this?” we should think “I can’t wait to see how God is going to work this out for good!”*

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.

The more we see God continue to meet our needs and come through for us in perfect wisdom, even sometimes despite our doubt (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.