

A.B. Simpson:

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

There are some souls that always seem to be kept on scant measure. Their spiritual garments are threadbare, their faces pinched, and their whole bearing that of people who are poverty stricken, and kept on short allowance. They are always "hard up," and on "the ragged edge" of want and bankruptcy. To use the vivid figure of Job they come through by "the skin of their teeth," or as Paul expresses it in a stronger figure, they are "saved as by fire." They are represented in Bunyan's glorious dream, not by sturdy Christian, buoyant Hopeful, and heroic Faithful, but by poor old "Ready to Halt," with his crutches, Mr. "Much Afraid," with his downcast look, and Miss Despondency, with her long and miserable face. They sing sometimes, but it is generally this:

"'Tis a point I long to know,
Oft it causes anxious thought,
Do I love the Lord or no,
Am I His or am I not?"

And when they go to the prayer meeting their usual cry is, "Pray for me." They are always begging, always hungry, always waiting for somebody to help them, and seldom looking for a chance to help. Like Pharaoh's lean kine they eat everything in sight, but still they are always half starved.

Loved? Yes, they are loved and cared for by the dear Lord, loved as the crippled child, as the invalid member of the family. Saved? Yes, they are saved through the exceeding grace of Jesus Christ, "who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way." But they never can be samples of the King's household, representatives of His grace, or attractions to draw men to His fold. They are poor, half-starved sheep, that cast reflection on the goodness and care of the Shepherd, and not happy, well fed lambs that "lie down in green pastures," for very satiety, and make others feel like saying, "The Lord is my Shepherd, I shall not want." On the contrary many who look at them will say, "If that is Christianity, save me from it."

In contrast with such as these, there is another type of Christian character that we might call the "life more abundantly." It is a life which overflows in thankful joy and unselfish blessing to others. Its faith is full assurance. Its love "heareth all things, believeth all things, hopeth all things, endureth all things," and "never faileth." Its patience has "all longsuffering with joyfulness." Its peace "passeth all understanding." Its joy is "joy unspeakable and full of glory." Its service is so free and glad that duty is delight and work a luxury of love. Its giving is not only cheerful but "hilarious." Its sacrifice is so willing that even pain is joy, if borne for others and for God. It has enough and to spare, and its love and joy find their outlet in giving the overflow to others and finding that "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

In a word it has got out into the infinite as well as the eternal, and sails on the shoreless and fathomless sea of God and His infinite grace.

What a difference! It is the difference between the barren desert and the luxuriant oasis with waving palms and glorious verdure. It is the difference between the gaunt and hungry flock and the herds that lie down in green pastures and beside the still waters. It is the difference between the poor burdened horse that is trying to drag you up the hill, and the flying locomotive that carries you without an effort. It is the difference between the old pump by the roadside, out of which you could force a few pailfuls of water after you had poured one in, and the deep artesian well that pours its gushing torrent forth in floods. It is the difference between the viewless plain and the mountain landscape looking far out to the regions beyond, and the "land of far distances." It is the difference between the shallow stream, where your boat every moment touches sand or strikes some hidden rock, and the deep unfathomable sea where your keel never strikes bottom and you ride in safety amid ocean's wildest swells.

Oh, the difference of these two lives.

Once 'twas painful trying,
Now 'tis perfect trust;
Once a half salvation,
Now the uttermost.
Once I hoped in Jesus,
Now I know He's mine;

Once my lamps were dying,
Now they brightly shine.

Let us look at Paul's testimony of this overflowing life.

I. IN HIS OWN EXPERIENCE, IT WAS HIS LIFE

"I am full," he cries, "and abound." Was there ever such a paradox?

A prisoner chained between two soldiers in a cheerless Roman barracks! A man who says, "I have suffered the loss of all things!" A hated, persecuted outcast, even now awaiting a trial in which his very life hung by a thread on the capricious will of the Roman tyrant! A man who bore in his body the scars of beating, scourgings, shipwrecks, and privations of every kind, and who, only a few days before had received some scanty offerings of clothing, food, and perhaps a little money, from his congregation in Philippi. It is this man who cries, "I have all and abound."

Was it a dream of a diseased imagination? Or was it true in some higher sense than the world could understand?

Yes, he had a life whose sources were not in circumstances or things. And that life was full and satisfying. He had a salvation proportioned to the depth of his sin and need and he could say of it, "The grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." He had a hope of which he could boast, "I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord." He had a love that could say, "I will very gladly spend and be spent for you; although the more abundantly I love you, the less I be loved." He had a victory of which he could boast, "Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us." His sacrifices were so gladly made that he could say, "Yea, and if I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all." His sufferings so little disturbed him that he could say, "The Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God."

There was not one little thing about him. His whole character was built on the most colossal mold. He was a great, magnanimous soul, with a spiritual life as large as the heart of God. He could say to the Corinthians, "Ye are not straitened in us . . . be ye also enlarged." Into this little, sorrow-beaten frame God compressed the grandest character that ever followed Jesus, and standing on the battlements of his sublime exaltation he tells us we may have all he had, and cries, "My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

II. FOR OTHERS

Paul's life was an overflow life, and that always means a life that reaches out to bless others. It has enough and to spare for a suffering world and "grows rich in giving." Paul lived in the hearts of others. "I long to see you," he wrote in anticipation of his visit to Rome. Not that he might see the splendid capital of the Caesars, nor even that he might enjoy the fellowship of his cherished friends, but "that I may impart to you some spiritual gift." "We were willing," he writes to the Thessalonians, "to have imparted unto you not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls."

The sufferings of the children of God were his. "Who is offended," he writes to the Corinthians, and "I burn not?" His prayers are all for others. Rarely do we find him asking anything for himself. His life was all given away in ministry for others. And it was Christ he ministered. He had a Christ he could give away and yet retain. He was so filled with the Spirit of the Master that he could just pour out His life into every empty and open heart.

How blessed to find, how blessed to live such lives. How delightful it is to come in contact with hearts that are not preoccupied with their own needs, but are at leisure to lift the burdens of other hearts, and help men to touch His garment.

Beloved, have you this glorious fullness? Have you got beyond your own self-consciousness, your own prayers, your own little circle of friends and family ties, until your heart is in touch with the Savior's and the world's? This is the crowning glory of the sweetest Christian life.

"A heart at leisure from itself
To soothe and sympathize."

III. THE SOURCE OF THIS SUPERABUNDANT LIFE, "MY GOD"

It all came from the revelation and conception he had obtained of God. He was but drinking at a higher fountain, and pouring out the fullness he received. He had found a heavenly spring, and he was but leading others to the same fountain.

The scantiness or the fullness of your life all depends upon how large a God you have! The God of most Christians is not much larger than the dumb idol of wood or stone the heathen worships and then takes down from its pedestal and scolds if it does not answer his prayers or meet his expectations. The God of Paul was a very glorious and mighty Being, and it was the greatness of his God that gave greatness to his character and life. He was but a vessel to receive and reflect the glory of God. "The people that do know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." The souls that have learned to clothe themselves with His Almightyness are the people of enlarged vision and victorious faith. Human heroes are honored for what they have become or achieved. God's heroes are honored for the measure in which they have dropped out of sight and simply magnified Him. It is not Elijah but Elijah's God that we remember. It is not Paul, but Paul's Christ that we want.

What then does Paul mean when he says, "My God"?

1. He means the God of nature. The God who shall fully supply all our need is the God who made the heavens and earth, and upholds the whole system of the universe by the hand that once hung from the nails of Calvary. Look at the glory of the heavens and the elements of nature. Multiply every star you see in yonder heavens by one hundred and you have not begun to count the worlds of space, but He made them all. They are poised by His power and moved by His omnipotence. In perfect order and awful might they sweep along their orbits through immensity. Yonder in the cluster of the Pleiades that little star is twelve thousand times the size of our sun. And there are millions of such suns all along the heavenly fields, each surrounded by systems and satellites. Cannot He who holds them in His hand supply all thy need?

2. He is the God of the Old Testament. He is the El Shaddai of Abraham, the great I Am of Moses, the Captain of Joshua's vision, the Jehovah God of Elijah's miracles, the mighty Providence of Esther and Nehemiah, the God who divided the sea, marched through the wilderness, shattered the walls of Jericho, halted the sun at Joshua's command, raised the dead at Elijah's word, stilled the lions for Daniel's protection, walked through the fire with the Hebrew children, and proved equal to all His people's needs through 4000 years of Old Testament history, history of patriarchs, prophets and saints. Is not the God of Abraham, of Esther, of Daniel, of Elijah, able to supply all your need?

3. He is the God and Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. The life of Jesus is just the expression of His power and love. He stood among men healing the sick, pardoning sinners, comforting the sad, and doing it all in the Father's name and by His authority and will. "My Father worketh hitherto and I work," was His constant testimony. My miracles of power, My words of grace, are just My Father's will, My Father's love. The God who so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, this is the God who "will supply all our need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."

4. He is the God of the risen Christ. He is the God for whom even death has no barrier that can hinder His purpose or defy His will. He who burst asunder the bars of the grave, and without an effort passed through that sealed stone and met His sorrowing disciples with the glad "All Hail"™ of the first Easter morning, He it is who will supply all our need according to "the exceeding greatness of his power ... which he wrought in Christ, when he raised him from the dead."

5. He is the God of the Ascension. Not only did He raise Him from the dead, but He "set him at his own right hand in the heavenly places, Far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, ... and gave him to be head over all things to the church." He is enthroned above all other power. He controls every force in the universe. And He is yours. Can He not supply your need?

6. He is the great Intercessor. He is in yonder heaven as our Advocate, Representative and Friend. His one business is to hear our petitions, present them to His Father, and send us the answers. We have a right to His constant intervention, and efficient aid. With such a Friend what can we ever need, how can we ever fail?

7. He is the God of heaven. What do we know of heaven? How much does that expression mean to us, "His riches in glory"? Something we may gather from the inspired descriptions of that City that hath no need of the sun, whose walls are jewels and its streets are shining gold -- that glorious New Jerusalem, whose countless streets shall stretch for fifteen hundred miles north and south and east and west, and then as high up in mid-heaven, for the length, the breadth and the height of it are equal. And surely He who can build that Golden City is rich enough to supply all your need. Sometimes as the gates have parted to let some loved one in we have caught a glimpse of its surpassing glories, and we have felt, oh, if He has all this for us by and by can He not supply all our present needs, and anticipate a little our coming heritage of glory? O beloved, how ashamed we shall be some day that we did not better understand our heavenly calling and walk more truly like "the children of a King."

Yes, this is some feeble measure of "His riches in glory," and it is according to this that He will supply all our need. Let us trust Him. And let us clothe ourselves with His all-sufficiency and rise to the grandeur of His glorious fullness.

Finally, how shall all this be ours?

First, we must learn to say MY God.

And secondly, we must learn to understand that "our every need" is just the vessel He is ever sending to hold His fullness. Let us pass down the little buckets of need on the endless chain of faith and prayer, and they will come up brimming with His overflowing fullness, each one saying as it flows:

"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."