

Words of Encouragement: All that We Need

When we think about the vastness of our God (e.g., the fact that he is limitless in every measure and every respect) our little brains often fail us. These are things that we simply cannot fathom. We scratch the surface and do the best we can, but even with the Holy Spirit's help our understanding is like child's play compared to the reality of God's greatness.

As true as this is regarding the nature of God, it's just as true with respect to the favor God has shown his people. Consider this verse in Second Peter:

His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (2 Pet 1:3)

What a dramatic statement this is: *everything*—that is, limitless resource for life and godliness. Have you ever daydreamed about having a limitless (and valid!) bank account? As regards spiritual necessities, that's what Peter is saying. God has made full provision for everything we need as regards our life in Christ and the pursuit of godliness. Just as God is limitless in his person, as we grow in Christ we come to realize that he is also limitless in his resources—resources that he makes available to us. In other words, we can never place a draft on God's account that he is unable to fill. Now, this truth is so exciting that we could quite easily start celebrating over it before we learn how to apply it!

The wisdom of James might serve to restrain our enthusiasm—before go and do anything rash. There are a couple of things that James tells us about making good on God's "account." First, he says, we have to go to the bank:

You want something but don't get it. You kill and covet, but you cannot have what you want. You quarrel and fight. You do not have, because you do not ask God. (James 4:2)

Well this is not a pretty picture at all. Greed, envy, strife—all because of a fundamental failure to go to God for resources and to trust him for the supply. Our first stop when we encounter a legitimate need must be to *ask* God. Then we need to *trust* God. But there may be another problem, as James says in the next verse:

When you ask, you do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, that you may spend what you get on your pleasures.

Hmmm. Evidently God has placed some spending limits on his account. These are not material limits, measured in dollars or goods. The supply, after all, is limitless. However, there are spiritual limits, measured against the purposes of God and the fullness of Christ. Anywhere within the extent of God's will and purposes there is no end to the resources made available to us. We have everything we need. Outside of God's will, on the other hand, there's no provision at all. Of course, we may see some measure of goodness there because God is good and he sends his rain on the just and the unjust alike. (Matt 5:45) But surely we must grow to discern the difference between reliance upon the compassion of God (as those who beg bread) versus access to the storehouses of heaven (as sons and daughters of the King). Isn't this one of the lessons we learn from the parable of the prodigal son? The son who remained was told, "all that is mine is yours." (Luke 15:31) If there might be any doubt remaining about these things, recall that Jesus told his disciples directly, "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be given you." (John 15:7)

Do we recognize the pattern here? God has granted free access to the resources of heaven to the sons and daughters of the kingdom, to those who abide in Christ, whose hearts and intentions are set upon the things of God. God has initiated a plan that transforms this world from a barren and hopeless place to one filled with the knowledge of the glory of the Lord (Hab 2:14), and in his wisdom God has determined that this is to be accomplished through his people. Ephesians 1:22 tells us that this is why God *gave* Christ "as head over all things *to the church*." And what is the goal? That "all things in heaven and earth will be summed up in Christ." (Eph 1:10) The task may seem daunting, but there is no end to the resources that God has made available for the work.

Imagine: What could we accomplish in the Kingdom if we just had the resource? Are we asking? And are we asking as sons and daughters who know the King's intentions for his estate? Perhaps these questions, and not budgets, highlight the true difference between abundance and lack.

