

- ***Read Philippians 4:12-20/Prayer*** As Paul concludes this letter to his beloved brethren in Philippi, he leaves them last with this all important message of contentment. Surely if anyone could be a great example of living a content life, then the Apostle Paul is certainly that person. In **v.12**, Paul affirms that regardless of his present earthly circumstances, he would be content. He goes further to say that his contentment was made possible through the power of his God and Savior who gave him the strength to go through all of these things. Even when he didn't have much physically, he would still persevere and move forward strongly. These brethren were also instrumental in helping Paul in his work. They were certainly used by the Lord to fulfill some of Paul's earthy needs, and Paul blesses them for their loving gift that aided them. He leaves them with what are very encouraging words concerning them being fully supplied by the God of heaven to have their every need met.
- Now, is Paul saying that every single one of them will have abundance in this life? I just don't think that makes contextual sense with what Paul just said concerning the need for contentment. Instead, I am convinced that Paul knew that God would bless them fully in every spiritual need that they had. The truth of the matter is that man is in desperate needs of some things from a spiritual stand point. Unfortunately, we are helpless to fulfill these all important spiritual needs, but we can be encouraged knowing that our God will supply all of our needs. The truth is that what man needs...God provides! Let's take some time this morning to bring attention to 4 of man's greatest spiritual needs and how our gracious and loving heavenly Father provides for those needs.

I. Man Needs Direction...God Has Provided The Word!

- A. We, as human beings, do not know which way to go in this life on our own based upon the reality of their being a God. If there was no God...if we were just a result of environment and natural chance...then it would not matter the direction we choose to take in this life for there is no true end game. However, we believe there is a God and there is an end game of reaching heaven, but again on our own we are helpless to reach heaven and be with God on account of our sins and lack of heavily knowledge and wisdom. Jeremiah recognized this in his book. **(Jer. 10:23)**
- B. So we are a people living this world with a broken compass not knowing which way to proceed without God. Thankfully, our God supplies and provides for our every need...including the need to know which direction to proceed in this life, and He has done this through the giving of His Word to us.
- C. His Word can serve as the compass and light that can help guide us through this life. **(Psalm 119:105)** Paul expounds upon this with what he says to Timothy in **II Timothy 3:16,17**. God's Word shows us what is the right direction to go. It shows how to get going in that direction. It shows us how to keep going on that direction.
- D. That last point is so very important to us. Just because we have God's Word doesn't mean that we are set no matter what. Just because we have a compass doesn't mean that we will get where we are wanting to go. We must be sure to use the compass well. We must be sure to be committed to God's Word and that is what quickly follows us that verse we read a minute ago. **(Psalm 119:106)**

II. Man Needs Salvation...God Has Provided Grace!

- A. The oldest and greatest need of mankind is first spoken of in the very front of the Bible when just 3 chapters in we find Adam and Eve separated from God because of their sin. **(Genesis 3)** From that moment on, the plan of man's eternal redemption was put into motion by God.
- B. The first major act was God's promises made to Abraham the land, nation, and seed promises. **(Gen. 12:1-3)** The first two promises were fulfilled within the kingdom of Israel with it becoming a great nation and possessing a great land. The third and most important promise to us is concerning the fact that through the lineage of Abraham "all the families of the earth will be blessed." **(Gen. 12:3)**
- C. From this point on we move into the prophets who continued to prepare the way for this person who would come to take away the sins of mankind. **(Isaiah 53)** This Messiah came in the form of Jesus of Nazareth who was the Son of God who had left heaven for all of us. **(Phil. 2:4-8)**
- D. Through Jesus's suffering and death on the cross, the penalty for sin was paid for those who would put their faith and trust in Him to be their Savior. **(Romans 5:1-9)** The price could not be paid by any mere human for we have nothing to offer God. We were helpless. We were in need of eternal redemption and forgiveness, and God provided that through grace.

III. Man Needs Correction...God Has Provided Discipline!

- A. Going back to our first point...we are not capable of guiding ourselves through this life unscathed to a place to be with God. God provides the direction through the Word. The Word teaches us about God's grace. And the Word also helps to show us the discipline that God has provided to us. Even as Christians, we still make mistakes. We still need correction and discipline from time to time and the Word helps to provide some of that for us.
- B. Consider again, **II Timothy 3:16,17**. The Word of God is useful for correct and training in righteousness. It helps to discipline us and to teach us what the righteous way to live this life is.
- C. It ought to make perfect sense to us that God would want to discipline us to live godly in this life. **(Hebrews 12:5-13)** He wants what is best for us. This is why He provides the direction and forgiveness through grace to those who believe. But He also wants us to continue on in that path. He wants us to recognize when we have made mistakes and to come back to Him and get back on the path.
- D. So how is it that we are disciplined by God when we make mistakes? Naturally, we suffer when we make mistakes based upon how God set this world up to operate. Within the Body of Christ, God has given the church the ability to disciple those members of it that are straying and in need of correction. **(II Thessalonians 3:11-15)** If we have been walking in the way of the Lord through the Word, and have been saved through His giving of salvation through Jesus then our consciences ought to be trained to recognize when we have made mistakes, but again that is because of what God has provided to us. **(Heb. 9:14)** Without God's provisions, we would not have the means of knowing when we have strayed and how to get back to Him and His way.

IV. Man Needs Protection...God Has Provided The Armor!

- A. Man needs direction, salvation, and correction....and thankfully our merciful God provides those things to us! He loves us and wants what is best for us. Certainly, our loving God recognizes that we are daily being pursued by Satan **(II Peter 5:8)** and He knows that we need protection! As our loving Father He provides protection for us.
- B. God recognizes and we must recognize that we are being pursued by Satan and involved in a spiritual war each and every day. Satan is pursuing to kill and destroy our souls, and we are seeking to protect ourselves and save others as best we can. By ourselves, we are, again, powerless and helpless. However, with God we have divine protection that can help us overcome. That divine protection is what we refer to so often as the armor of God. **(Ephesians 6:10-17)**
- C. Notice that Paul points out that this battle is not against flesh and blood, but against spiritual forces. As humans, we have no tools that can help us to fight against the dark spiritual forces of this life. Instead, we must rely upon God for the tools, protection, and armor. Notice that every piece of armor represents something that is only given to us because of God. Only God gives us truth. Only God gives us the Gospel of peace. Only God gives us faith. Only God gives us salvation and His Word. He alone provides for us in our need for protection.

If we get nothing else from this lesson...I really hope that each of us recognize just how much we must rely upon God. I hope we recognize how hopeless and helpless we are without Him. We have many needs in this life. We can fulfill some of those for ourselves, but the most important needs are only provided for by our great God. God is worthy to be praised for His provisions because we would be no where without Him. May we give it all to God, be thankful for His provisions, and may we give full allegiance to Him as faithful servants who provides for our most important needs...our needs that will help us to please Him and help us to be with Him in heaven when this life comes to an end.