

“The Lord Will Provide”

by Walton Weaver

After Abraham had taken the wood of the burnt offering and laid it on Isaac to offer him up in sacrifice as God had commanded, the book of Genesis says,

“Isaac spoke to Abraham, ‘My father!’ And he said, ‘Here I am my son.’
The he said, ‘Look, the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a
burnt offering?’ And Abraham said, ‘My son God will provide for
Himself the lamb for a burnt offering’ . . .” (Gen. 22:6-7).

The question of Isaac must have cut right through Abraham’s heart. In this particular circumstance, it undoubtedly was the toughest question any father could have been asked of his son. But this was a question that could not be avoided. The issue was one Abraham had to face. “Where is the lamb for the burnt offering?”

What could he do? He could have turned and walked away. Under the pressure of such a tantalizing question, he could have taken his son Isaac and gone home. But his decision had been made. The difficulty of the question would not deter him. He had already demonstrated his remarkable faith in God in coming this far. His decision had been no quick, spur of the moment decision. The nature of the test was not merely that he might prove to be obedience. No, this was a test for Abraham to show that he would be obedient to God *in every detail*.

For Abraham to be successful would require the utmost consideration and considerable effort. He already had passed that part of the test by getting everything prepared for the journey (v. 3), and then sweating it out for at least a three days journey to the place where the sacrifice was to be made. So why would anyone be surprised at Abraham’s answer to his son’s question: “The Lord will provide.” After the Lord had provided the lamb to be offered—the ram in the thicket (v. 13)—and Abraham had offered it up as a burnt offering instead of his son, Abraham named the place where this event took place, “The-Lord-Will-Provide” (v. 14).

God’s people need this same confidence today. If God provided Abraham what he needed, will he not also provide for us? What has God promised to provide?

Every Good And Perfect Gift

We should begin with the general statement that “every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom there is no variation or shadow of turning” (James 1:17). The God we serve is totally good, and he is the author of all good. It is his nature to give only what is good. The evil that is in the world has another source.

The context for the statement that God gives every good and perfect gift is James' discussion of temptation which he has developed in the preceding verses. Instead of sending temptation, which is an attempt to cause man to sin, God sends good things to bless and benefit men. James illustrates his point by going on to show in the next verse how our redemption is due to God's good *will* toward us. It was by his own *will* that we became the children of God. There was no external power that controlled God in bringing us redemption; he acted for our good simply because he wanted to do good for us—to save us from our sins. God has the same benevolent concern for us in all the other areas of our lives as well.

The Will To Do His Will

When Paul commanded the Philippians to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12), he added, “for it is God who works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure” (Phil. 2:13). Not only does God himself will that we be saved, but he also works to provide in us the *will* to want to succeed, as well as to lead us the to *do* “his good pleasure.” “His good pleasure” is that which pleases him, which is the *doing* of his will. Such a wonderful promise instills in God's children the confidence they need to succeed in living the Christian life. It assures them that they are not alone. God is with them every step of the way, and in and through the means through which he works, he is supplying the incentives and motivation needed to both *desire* and to *do* his will. Our “God will provide.”

The Strength Needed To Succeed

The Christian is engaged in a great conflict. He is at war with the devil and his forces, and with all that is of this world (1 Pet. 5:8; Eph. 6:10-20; 1 Jn. 2:15-17). God makes available to him all the pieces of the armor that the Christian needs as a good soldier to succeed in this conflict. These include: truth, the breastplate of righteousness, the preparation of the gospel of peace, the shield of faith, the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God. But even more than this, God provides the *strength* to enable us to succeed. Paul begins his description of the Christian's armor by saying, “Finally, brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of His might” (Eph. 6:10). The terms “be strong” appear also in 1 Corinthians 16:13. In 2 Timothy 2:1 Paul urges Timothy to “be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus,” and in Ephesians he prays for his brethren at Ephesus that God would grant them “to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith . . .” (Eph. 3:16b-17a). In Ephesians 3: 20, Paul says, “now to him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us.” Clearly, the Christian's strength is not in himself, it is “in the Lord.”

In his comments on Ephesians 6:10 Colly Caldwell says:

“The strengthening is not self-strengthening. We must exert ourselves to the fullest, but the strength is the Lord's. It is ‘in the Lord’ (*en*

kuriō), in connection with him, in union with him, and in his cause. It is strength or power (*kratei*) of the great captain of our souls. The Lord is able both to empower us and to defend us (Heb. 2:10). Our spiritual strength is in him.

“We are to **be** empowered or strengthened. The verb tense clearly evidences that we are “acted upon.” Too many are trying to be strong in their own worldly strength without the help of God. They wonder then why they falter and fail. We must all realize that only the Lord can furnish this strength to overcome. We can find our source of power only in him” (*Ephesians* 306).

Indeed, “God will provide.”

Wisdom In Trials

When our faith is put to the test and we are severely tried as was Abraham, we are prone to wonder, why me, Lord? Then we remember, as Peter points out to his readers, that we are not alone: “Resist him [your adversary the devil, v. 8], steadfast in the faith, knowing the same sufferings are experienced by your brotherhood in the world” (1 Pet. 5:9). This is a reminder that when our faith is being tested we just need to remember that the same is true of brethren everywhere. The trial of our faith, or the “various trials” we all “fall into” now and then (James 1:2), is the common experience of all Christians. What we need to know is how to successfully endure them.

It is for this reason that James gives some reasons to encourage us in such times. He shows that these kinds of trials help develop our character (James 1:3) and contribute to our growth into maturity as Christians (v. 4). But we need wisdom to be able see these kinds of benefits when we are experiencing severe trials. Thus he adds, “if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God . . .” — the one who “will provide”!

A Way Of Escape From Temptation

Temptation is another “common” experience of Christians—“such as is common to man” (1 Cor. 10:13a). We all are tempted, but Paul goes on to assure us that “God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it” (1 Cor. 10:13b).

Christians should not blame God for temptations that they face. Temptation is a solicitation to do evil. God would never attempt to cause us to stumble, or to fall into sin. His nature would not allow him to make such an attempt. Paul is saying that the very opposite is true. When we are tempted God provides us a way of escape. So, as James says, “Let no one say when he is tempted, ‘I am tempted of God’; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he himself tempt anyone” (James 1:13). We can blame only ourselves when we are tempted (v. 14). God is the great provider. He provides a way of escape out of temptation.

Abounding Grace And Seed For the Sower

Giving liberally to urgent needs, as well as the seed sown in such giving, is viewed by Paul as being of God. Both are a sign of his grace given (2 Cor. 9:8-9). It is God who provides both the seed for sowing and the bread for eating. Such acts of righteousness will abide forever (v. 9). Even though the gift itself may be small, God will increase the fruits of such righteousness by giving a manifold harvest of blessing to one's generosity (v. 10).

As a matter of fact, those who practice generosity in giving for the needs of others seem to always have a sufficient supply from which they can continue these kinds of good works. The reason? God continues to provide abounding grace that enable his people to succeed: "And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, have an abundance for every good work" (v. 8). Philip E. Hughes summarizes the thought of this verse in this way: "God's giving of His grace is the complete opposite of grudging and forced. In responding to it by generous and cheerful giving [see vv. 6-7, ww] the Christian finds not only that, contrary to human probability, he yet has a sufficiency for his own needs, but, far more, that he is so enriched by divine grace as to be able constantly to abound in every kind of good work. The inexhaustible resources of the grace of God made available in Christ mean that this exuberant life in which the Christian 'always abounds in every good work of the Lord' (1 Cor. 15:58) is a practical and joyful reality for the man of faith" (*The Second Epistle To The Corinthians* 332).

Physical Necessities

In the model prayer for his disciples, Jesus told them to pray, "give us this day our daily bread" (Matt. 6:11). "Daily bread" includes all our physical needs, such as "food and covering" named by Paul in 1 Timothy 6:7. A few verses later in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 6:25ff) Jesus teaches his disciples not to be "anxious," or not to worry, about such matters since their heavenly Father would take care of them. He knows our need for such things even before we ask for them (v. 32). What should they do? Here is Jesus' answer: "But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (v. 33).

Conclusion

Isn't it wonderful to know that amid all the uncertainties of life, let come what may, "our God whom we serve is able to deliver us" (Dan. 3:17). He has promised, and no matter what the circumstance, with Abraham, we can with confidence say, "God will provide." Whatever he may chose to provide we will humbly accept, for we know it will be his will, because our prayer is, and always shall be, "Your kingdom come, Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Amen.