

Ephesians 3:8 (R) 67891

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Eph. 3:8

"Enough is as good as a feast," says the world, and as to that which perishes with the using it is true in its way. Yet even here the world convicts itself; for it acknowledges that by enough every man means something more than he has; so that practically he never reaches his "enough," and how much less the feast? This only makes good the conclusion of the preacher, "the eyes of man are never satisfied." (Prov. 28:20.) And again, Eccl. 12:8, "vanity of vanities, all is vanity." The human heart is too large for any terrestrial thing to fill it!

But on entering the new creation, that blessed expanse where "all things are become new." I begin with God's feast; I find "all things are ready," and I prove that "all things are of God," as He says, "my dinner, my oxen, my feelings" all is of Him; I have come to a marriage feast; it is the initial thing in "the creation of God!" We read in Luke 15 that, as soon as they entered the house, "they began to be merry;" and since that joy met no reverse, we may conclude it is without a break and without a bound; assuredly then that newborn joy ought to go on characterizing all who know that they are within that festive scene, and as truly now as by-and-by in the glory, though then, of course, circumstantially and manifestly:

Is it not a reasonable inquiry, whether as vessels—emptied of care and every ill, and filled as He who has formed us for Himself, loves to fill us—we do in any adequate way experience and express the blessedness which we are not only aware of being ours, but are familiar with as such? I may know even to familiarity what God has given me, but I have never known it in power and consequently have never truly made it mine, much less can I be the expression of it, if I do not practically and positively enjoy it, and, as it were, jubilantly, it being the habitual delight of my soul.

In the Lord's ways with Israel, gracious and merciful as He was to them, the blessing was a measured one: according to their obedience did He mete out blessing from His hand. But if we seek analogy to the principle and character of our blessing, we must revert to that of Noah and his sons; there we find God declaring on the ground of the sweet savor of the superb sacrifice He had just accepted from the first altar ever erected—"Even as the green herb have I given you all things:" this surely suggests the church's unmeasured portion in the new creation as "blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ," which blessing being based upon the value before God of Christ's sacrifice of Himself, is as immeasurable as it is illimitable. As immeasurable as the excellency of Christ; as illimitable as the Father's delight in Him. It may be interesting to trace this profuseness of blessing in each of its varied and wonderful characters as it met us at first, waits upon us at present and stretches us on into glory, indicated by such words as "riches," "fullness," "abound," "abundantly," and the like, as found in the writings of John, Paul, and Peter, premising as one loves to do, that it finds its center and its extent in Christ; root and stem, branch and twig, tendril and cluster, "from me is thy fruit found!" Hos. 14:8. "Joseph is a fruitful bough, even a fruitful bough by a well, whose branches run over the wall." Gen. 49:22.

John says "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us, full of grace and truth, and of His fullness have all we received, and grace upon grace." John 1:14-16. So in Rom. 5:15: "The grace of God and the free gift in grace has abounded unto many;" in verse 17, it is termed the "abundance of grace," and in verse 21 we find that if the offense abounded and how wide spread soever sin has abounded, the grace has over-abounded, grace is regnant: so also in Eph. 2:7, "the exceeding riches of his grace;" again, 2 Cor. 4:15, "grace abounding through the ninny may cause thanksgiving to abound." It is the abounding grace of God multiplying itself in its objects! In like manner, mercy. Peter says, "According to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again," 1 Peter i. 3, and Paul says that He who has quickened us together with Christ found a motive in the riches of His own mercy, Eph. 2:4, 5, and in the same scripture as to love, we read, "For his great love wherewith He loved us" (the word "great" being rendered "plenteous" in Matt. 9:37, and "abundant" in 1 Peter 1:3); in John 13 "having loved his own which were in the world, He loved them," not "to the end" in point of time, but to the uttermost, "going through with everything." Oh! love unmeasured and untold, filling our lives with its unwearied ministrations in priesthood and in advocacy, how truly is it love abundantly! So from the Lord Himself we get not only "I am come that they might have life," which an Old Testament saint had, but "and might have it abundantly." John 10:10.

This deeper, fuller, brighter reality was doubtless fulfilled in the communication of His risen life after His resurrection. John 20:22. As the risen man He is constituted head or "beginning of the creation of God," and as such His first work, a work in which His heart went out, was to impart to His beloved disciples, His "brethren" now, His life in resurrection, the "life abundantly!" And when that same blessed One, who down here received the Spirit without measure, is exalted on high, the glorified Man, He makes it His first service from the new platform of glory gained to bring them into positive, eternal union with Himself by baptizing them with the Holy Ghost, the promise of the Father, and accordingly we read "which he shed on us abundantly, through Jesus Christ our Savior." Titus 3:6. Before His departure He had tutored the hearts of His disciples in His own joy for their joy, in respect to obedience, John 15:11; in respect to dependence, 16:24, and as to the Father's unwearied care, 17: 13, their joy must be full and His joy must be filled up in them!

In Ephesians—wondrous, blessed ground for faith—we read (chap. 1: 8-10), "He hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence, having made known unto us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself;" this we may therefore term the abundant revelation of His counsels! Again (19) "the exceeding greatness of His power to usward who believe according to the working of his mighty power which he wrought in Christ when he raised him from the dead," &c. Here is power working transcendentally in an objective way, its correlative being chapter 3: 16 and 20, "that he would grant you according to the riches of his glory to be strengthened with might

by his Spirit in the inner man—according to the power that worketh in us;” clearly this is the highest energy of power working subjectively.

Before we quit Ephesians we may see also the provision for our defense while engaged in true Christian conflict. The apostle says, “Wherefore take unto you the whole armor,” or panoply, “of God,” chapter 6: 11-18; and in other epistles we read, “The arms of our Warfare are not fleshly, but divinely powerful to the overthrow of strongholds,” 2 Cor. 10:4; we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.” (Rom. 8:37.) In a similarly triumphant strain does Peter speak (1 Peter 1:11) of the saints' departure to be with the Lord, “For so an entrance shall be ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.”

So in Rom. 15:13, “Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing that ye may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost;” only here does hope find its sphere of exercise and only in us its full fruition. How strikingly again, do we see in the Epistle to the Colossians to what surpassing blessedness our participation in the mystery introduces us for “God would make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the nations,” the apostle agonizing as to the saints “that their hearts may be encouraged, being united together in love and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the full knowledge of the mystery of God in which are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.” (Col. 1:27; 2:8.) Lastly in chapter 2: 9, 10: “In him dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and ye are filled full in him,” which signifies as toward God our present completeness in Christ—may we not say abundantly?

Seeing then from scripture these varied characters of blessing, taken without much regard to order, in respect to grace, mercy, love, life, the Holy Ghost, joy, counsels of God, power, defense, hope, the mystery and completeness in Christ, we may fairly remark that if God speaks of each of them in this uniform way, it must be because He would impress our hearts ever and anon with the exuberance of the blessing which He has poured into our bosom, giving us, indeed, “all that love could give!” But the question arises, what is the practical effect to our souls of the sense of such supreme, such magnificent blessing—surely to draw out the heart to joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ and all the faculties of the soul in worshipping the Father in Spirit and in truth; surely to fit us for closer, deeper, fuller fellowship with the Father and the Son; surely, also, while learning herein what an object we are to the Father's heart, to assimilate us more and more in an ever increasing degree, to Him who has been essentially the object of that heart from eternity!

What a striking illustration of more than regal bounty is furnished in Solomon's munificence to the Queen of Sheba; all she had given to him, the many camels' load of spice and gold and precious stones, he gave her back, shall we not say enhanced a thousand fold? Next she got “all her desire, whatsoever she asked.” (2 Chron. 9:12.) Lastly “Solomon gave her of his royal bounty.” (1 Kings 10:13.) But in the closing chapter of Revelation (20: 1, 2), we have an illustration of divine bounty in the new creation, “He showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river was there the tree of life which bare twelve manner of fruits, and yielded her fruit every month, and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.” Only here is an adequate illustration of our twelve-fold blessing; for surely it is the privilege of faith to be ever drinking of the water of life, and feeding even now upon the fruit of that tree of which it is significantly said it is “on either side of the river.” Though the nations have yet to learn, as one day they will, that the leaves of the tree of life alone can heal them, yet we are already privileged as knowing our place in the new creation, to eat of the fruit which is alone “sweet to our taste” and to drink of the stream which alone refreshes the new nature!

But if instead of illustration we turn to instances we find that when Christianity was inaugurated at Pentecost, the typical idea was a full vessel; the disciples “were all filled with the Holy Ghost” (Acts 2:4); the apostles were full of the Holy Ghost, great power and great grace was upon them all, chapter 6: 3 full of the Holy Ghost, verse 5; full of faith and power, verse 8! Paul the pattern man in living, says that “the grace of our Lord surpassingly over-abounded” to him with faith and love, 1 Tim. 1:14; when his sufferings abounded his consolation also abounded by Christ. (2 Cor. 1:5.) Again he says, “I am filled with encouragement, I overabound in joy.” (2 Cor. 7:4.) When slighted by the Corinthians the abundance of his love is displayed. (2 Cor. 12:15.) When caught up into the third heaven he received abundance of revelations (verse 7); he testifies of the Corinthians that they were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, that they abounded in faith and word and knowledge and in all diligence and in love; also of the Macedonians that they abounded in affliction and joy, poverty and liberality.

When he had received a present from the Philippian, and was unable to requite it from any visible resource, he says, “My God shall supply all your need, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.” (Phil. 4:19.) When he desired that the Corinthians should have the privilege of contributing of their bounty to other saints, in what a wonderful strain he speaks! “God is able to make every gracious gift abound towards you, that, having in every way always all-sufficiency, ye may abound to every good work. Now he that supplieth seed to the sower, and bread for eating, shall supply and make abundant your sowing, and increase the fruits of your righteousness; enriched in every way unto all free-hearted liberality, which worketh through us thanksgiving to God.” (2 Cor. 9:8, 10, 11.) He brings their souls into contact with God, as it were, for their enlargement. Never, surely, can we lose sight of the fact that we are finite vessels; but what is of moment is to observe that the Holy Ghost is a wonderfully expansive power, and He dwells in a singularly expansive vessel. It is no marvel, then, that as He fills the vessel it enlarges by the divine afflatus, as in Eph. 3:16—the Holy Ghost in the inner man, and Christ in the heart, we apprehend the immeasurable height, and length, and depth, and breadth, and we know the love of Christ, which passeth knowledge, that we might be filled even unto all the fullness of God! As though a tiny egg-cup were expanded to the dimensions of a gigantic vase, magnificent in its capacity and proportions; and yet, says the apostle, the confines are not reached, for God delights to bring our finiteness into constant contact with His infinitude, and not only all we ask, but all we think, He is able to do exceedingly, abundantly, above! What vessels of blessedness and of blessing would His heart delight to make us!

“Now into him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us, unto him be glory in the assembly hi Christ Jesus, unto all generations of the age of ages. Amen.” (Eph. 3:20, 21.) R.

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