According to His Riches

"My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus."
—Philippians 4:19

THE SCRIPTURES ABOUND with God's wonderful promises to love and care for his people. In our featured scripture, the Apostle Paul speaks of some of these provisions of grace that are made available to those who have been specially called during the present Gospel Age. These riches of God's grace are freely available to us because of our faith in Christ Jesus' blood, and are for the development and ultimate deliverance of the body of Christ who are being called during this age.

PROVISIONS OF GRACE

Some of these riches are identified in the Apostle Paul's letter to the brethren at Rome, where we read, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: By whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God." (Rom. 5:1,2) The apostle further addresses this

provision by saying, "God commendeth his love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. Much more then, being now justified by his blood, we shall be saved from wrath through him." (vss. 8,9) Paul then explains, "If, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom we have now received the atonement [reconciliation, *Marginal Translation*]."—vss. 10,11

These are indeed wonderful provisions from God's abounding grace on behalf of members of the fallen human family. "Not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance of grace and of the gift of righteousness shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ." (vss. 15-17) Provision for our justification has been made available to us through Jesus' blood as Paul has explained.

BLESSED PROMISES

God's great salvation has thus been made known through Christ Jesus, not only in connection with the salvation which we now enjoy, but to the grander and higher prospect which is yet future. "Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed."

(Rom. 13:11) We read also of all the exceeding great and precious promises, "All the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us." (II Cor. 1:20) This may result in trials and testings as we continue to walk in newness of life with our Lord. Our trials also come from the loving Divine care of our Heavenly Father, and we know that he will supply all our needs to be victorious. He declares over and over again in his Word that his provision is enough to meet our every need, whatever those needs may be. If we fail to appreciate this favor we are discrediting his promises.

THE WORK OF FAITH

Our trust in God's wonderful provisions for our growth and development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus should be strong enough to carry us throughout our consecrated walk. Although our weaknesses, shortcomings, and fleshly imperfections may often be painfully visible to us, God's promised grace and strength are always available for every time of need. His abundant supply is hidden in the secret of his presence and can only be realized through faith. "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us."—Heb. 12:1

We are to realize things that are unseen, and if our vision is limited to the things that are seen, it will be more difficult to endure and faithfully walk in the pathway that has been marked out for us as God's people. We are reminded of the Apostle Paul's words, "Our light affliction, which is but for

a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory; While we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen: for the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal."—II Cor. 4:17,18

When we look at self and the things that are seen we sometimes tremble, but when we look to God and those things that are not seen we become strong. We can trust that God's provision for all our needs is indeed sufficient. "Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; (for he is faithful that promised)."—Heb. 10:22,23

OUR GREAT ENEMY

Satan, the great Adversary, has always sought to thwart and falsify God's ultimate plan and purpose and to hinder God's faithful children. When man was created in the Garden of Eden the wily serpent questioned the power of God's command, as we read, "The serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?" (Gen. 3:1) This questions the reliability of God's word. Again, when our Lord Jesus was about to enter his earthly ministry, Satan questioned his relationship to the Heavenly Father, saying, "If thou be the Son of God." (Matt. 4:3-6) Satan's use of the word 'if' identifies his attempt to cast doubt on Jesus' relationship with his Father.

The Adversary has also targeted those who would serve our Heavenly Father with poisonous arrows of doubt, discouragement, and defeat. When writing to the ecclesia at Rome, Paul looked back in time to some of the experiences of these brethren. He told them, "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the scriptures might have hope." (Rom. 15:4) There are numerous accounts relating to the faithful endurance that some of these people experienced. Their trying experiences are recorded for our encouragement, and the apostle has enumerated many of them in the eleventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews.

COMFORT IN TRIBULATION

When considering the apostle's words that were written to the brethren at Corinth, we read, "Blessed be God, even the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort; Who comforteth us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort them which are in any trouble, by the comfort wherewith we ourselves are comforted of God."—II Cor. 1:3,4

The question may be asked whether there have ever been experiences in our own consecrated life when the great Adversary of God has endeavored to precipitate his poisonous arrows of doubt, discouragement, or defeat? It is doubtful that anyone who is fully consecrated to God and is presently walking in the narrow way of sacrifice has not, at some time or other, experienced tribulation of some kind. However, in full assurance of faith—a faith

that is sure and simple—we will take our Heavenly Father at his Word.

Trusting in his providence we shall endure until the end of our consecrated course. All things, evil as well as good, will be overruled for good to us. We know that God's provision is more than sufficient to equal the most serious emergency that can ever befall us.

IF GOD BE FOR US

God's promises to his consecrated children are again brought to our attention by the apostle in his epistle to the Romans. He says, "What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us? He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—Rom. 8:31,32

Thus realizing that God freely gave to us his greatest gift, our precious Lord Jesus, while we were yet sinners should surely be sufficient guarantee that we have been reconciled to him, and that he will also freely give us all other necessities to keep us from falling and to make our calling and election sure. None of us can doubt that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. There can be no question as to whether God will, or will not, keep his promise, and no one can rightfully say in their heart, am I his or am I not.

LIFE IS IN THE BLOOD

Another scripture which speaks of the abundant provision of God in Christ Jesus is found in Hebrews. We read, "If the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: How much

more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?" (Heb. 9:13,14) God so arranged matters in connection with the typical Tabernacle and with his typical people Israel that the 'blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean' did serve to sanctify and purify the flesh.

Paul was here making a comparison with the typical people and typical Tabernacle arrangements, with the true tabernacle and with God's true people. He made clear the fact that the blood of Christ would 'purge your conscience from dead works,' and to further provide the way to serve the living God.

A SPECIAL RELATIONSHIP

Serving the living God was never made possible with the typical arrangement in connection with Israel's Tabernacle. The Apostle Peter spoke of the true value of Jesus' blood, when he wrote, "Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."—I Pet. 1:18,19

The Scriptures teach that there is a special relationship that exists between members of the body of Christ and their Lord during this present Gospel Age. In one illustration, Jesus is pictured as the true vine, and the various members of his church are represented by the branches. In another scriptural

picture the closeness of this relationship is shown as a temple, with our Lord as the chief cornerstone and the church represented as living stones. There is also the illustration of the human body, with Jesus being the head and the church represented as various members of the body.

As body members of Jesus, we have a responsibility, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost [Holy Spirit] hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood." (Acts 20:28) There is also the beautiful illustration of the closeness between husbands and wives, where we read, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish."—Eph. 5:25-27

The Apostle Paul testified to the very special blessing of being a coworker with our dear Lord Jesus. He said, "I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me." (Gal. 2:20) Here the apostle speaks of his personal and individual relationship with Jesus.

ILLUSTRATION OF PROVIDENCE

When speaking of God's providential love and care over his people, Jesus used an illustration from our everyday natural surroundings. He said,

"Consider the lilies how they grow: they toil not, they spin not; and yet I say unto you, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. If then God so clothe the grass, which is to day in the field, and to morrow is cast into the oven; how much more will he clothe you, O ye of little faith?" (Luke 12:27,28) Jesus chose the lily as an apt illustration because of the special care and attention they must receive from those who grow them, and also by using all of the essential nutrients that are provided for them by our loving Creator.

The glory of Solomon was only an outward display, but the lily of the field has an inherent glory as part of its very nature. There is perfection in the texture of the flower that has been created and cared for by an infinite and unseen hand. If God can so clothe the lily, how much more able is he to clothe you and to provide for all of your needs. Let us, as 'lilies' of his planting, take every advantage of his wonderful care and attention for our every need that we may blossom forth for his ultimate glory.

With another beautiful illustration, Jesus said, "Consider the ravens: for they neither sow nor reap; which neither have storehouse nor barn; and God feedeth them: how much more are ye better than the fowls?" (Luke 12:24) Plant and animal life in our natural surroundings are the quiet recipients of our Creator's loving providence. As we meditate upon these illustrations, we realize more and more that our loving Heavenly Father is abundantly able to provide for all of our needs as his special people. Luke also recorded other lessons in which Jesus used examples from nature. "Are not five sparrows sold for two farthings, and not one of

them is forgotten before God? But even the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: ye are of more value than many sparrows." (Luke 12:6,7) Our Lord has truly emphasized the grand and glorious reality of our Father's loving care over us.

TO THEM THAT ASK

Jesus emphasized the glorious truth concerning the Father's provision for his own people from another aspect, when he said, "If a son shall ask bread of any of you that is a father, will he give him a stone? or if he ask a fish, will he for a fish give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?" (Luke 11:11,12) No parent would ever think of giving something that was bad to a child who had asked for a good gift. On the contrary, any parent would take delight in giving good gifts to their children except when circumstances over which there was no control might prevent it. Our Lord provided the comparative and worthy explanation, when he answered, "If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him?"—vs. 13

In Matthew's gospel, he records a parallel account of Jesus' lesson, but there are some interesting variations. In the full account, Jesus said, "Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you: For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give

him a serpent? If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?"—Matt. 7:7-11

In either Luke's or Matthew's accounts, Jesus was addressing the underlying principles that govern our loving Heavenly Father's willingness to provide all things that are necessary for our development as New Creatures in Christ Jesus. He pointed out that these provisions will be granted to God's children, but only 'to them that ask him.' Apart from the gift of his own dear Son, God's greatest gift to the church during this age of acceptable sacrifice is the Holy Spirit. We must understand our need for it, and our desire to be filled with it. Luke has emphasized the gift of the Holy Spirit in his account of what Jesus was teaching, whereas Matthew's included certain other details that Jesus used to portray the wonderful gifts that come from our loving Father.

In connection with the Master's lesson, the Apostle Paul reminds us, "Ye are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if so be that the Spirit of God dwell in you. Now if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his." (Rom. 8:9) We must realize our deficiencies and our need for the wonderful blessings that come to us from on high. In God's storehouse are promised abundant mercies, and if we ask him for more of them we shall surely receive them.

OUR SUFFICIENCY IS OF GOD

Whatsoever is good for us as New Creatures in Christ Jesus will be given to us if we have the proper condition of heart. Paul had a deep appreciation

of the marvelous grace of God and, in his letter to the Corinthian church, he wrote, "Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think any thing as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God." (II Cor. 3:5) Later, in the same letter, we are given an insight into his consecrated heart. "Lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me. And he said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness. Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."—II Cor. 12:7-10

ABOVE ALL WE ASK OR THINK

The great apostle, notwithstanding his many and grievous trials, was able to testify to the marvelous love of God. "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."—Rom. 8:38,39

Our loving Father is abundantly able to do much more for us as New Creatures than we could ever possibly ask or think. In our consecrated walk in newness of life, we have come to appreciate him more and more, "To know the love of Christ, which

passeth knowledge, that ye might be filled with all the fulness of God. Now unto 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 church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end." (Eph. 3:19-21) Whatever our needs may be, in God's provision there is an abundant supply that exceeds all that we could ever ask.

FEAR NOT LITTLE FLOCK

One of the most important lessons we must learn as followers of our dear Lord is that the Father is dealing with us with the positive conviction that his provisions are sufficient for all of our needs, whatever those needs may be. This has been the experience of all God's faithful ones down through the stream of time. We are strengthened by the wonderful words of Jesus, which remind us, "Fear not, little flock; for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."—Luke 12:32 ■