

God's Provision for the Wilderness

1 Peter 2.

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We find blessedly brought out in this epistle God's provision for the little flock passing through the wilderness. In Ephesians all is found in heaven; but as passers through the wilderness, our feet really treading this earth, there is a goodly portion provided for us — all God's stores from everlasting to everlasting found to be what gives strength as we go on — a rich portion for the heart by the way. It is important in this day to know God's thoughts for His people *in their hours of weakness*.

The end of chapter 1 brings out the thought of "all flesh is grass." So a Jew — Paul, looking at his lineage, privileges, etc., could say, "Flowers of grass." But there is something eternal — the word of the Lord — of eternal moment. Your position is *now* according to this gospel; not what "I think" — but what has the Lord spoken? tidings of good news, beginning with the "seed of the woman." For whom? Not Satan, surely? His head is to be crushed. Well, God wished His glory to be known, His enemies to be put down, and He found out the "seed of the woman" to do it. Don't you talk of yourself, "I am so bad; my faith is so weak." Don't you see another Person on the scene — *God's Christ*? Of course you will be proved weak; and didn't Christ show out *all flesh* was bad save His *own* — the holy, harmless, undefiled One? When a believer in the sense of his *weakness* gets talking about THAT, he is forgetting *the glory of the blessed Lord!* In the light I say, "Let God be true, and every man a liar." I remember Christ, and say, "I'll sanction no evil. I want to be just what I am before Him; for there is the Lamb on the throne for me, and *what* a sinner I must have been to need *that* blood!"

"As new-born babes desire the sincere milk of the Word." But they were *not* as new-born, not as young believers; they had gone through a great deal, were as martyrs; but they and you are to *desire* as babes. I suppose one of the greatest mistakes in many minds is that mercy will do very well for any *outside*; "But for me who have passed out of babyhood, it's not mercy I want." That there are steps I don't deny — babes, young men, etc.; but the young man, IF overcoming, does not forget what he had in the nursery, and the father in Christ never *could* forget mercy; no, never!

"Washed from my sins," you say, "I must overcome the world." Very true. But when you *have* overcome, there is always something that still hinders; and when I get old saints I find them *turning back with such sweetness to the blood*, and they don't know why, making so much more of *Christ in humiliation*. Very natural. In the epistles I get the work of Christ bearing on my difficulties; in the gospels His word, beauties and perfection, the *riches* of His *person*, and the soul *feeds* there. For my part I do not *ever* expect to *taste* mercy as I shall taste it in heaven. Shan't I join the song, "Worthy," etc.? I shall not want mercy there, but I shall never TASTE it as I shall before the throne.

Another remark in connection with the taste of weakness and pilgrimage. Romans 8 is the roll-call of a believer's privileges; but you don't find such a taste of *mercy* as in Romans 5. Three things (vv. 1, 2, etc.) — glory in tribulation, rejoice in hope, love shed abroad, not ashamed. The little band must drink of the brook by the way, mercy from first to last. Because the *love of God* is shed abroad, *that* is where the running of the stream is. The "brook" for the pilgrim is not in the mercies of the way, but in the love, in THE HEART of HIM *who humbled* Himself, and *there* the pilgrim turns back and drinks.

"Oh, but I want that love! I lift my eye, but I don't get the taste of that love." All very right; but *where*, I ask, is the stream the apostle presents? *In Christ*. He recalls to your mind what He did. He died

for us "ungodly," and "without strength," and the soul going through the wilderness has *the very same Christ up there* who *first* met it in the extremity of its helplessness, and shut out for ever from God — getting back there to *that love*; that is, *drinking* of the brook by the way; not saying, "My leanness, my faith," etc. I am here in the wilderness, brought to my wits' end; but *here is Christ*. If Christ's death did something, His life does much more. People are always wanting to find a stream *running along before them*. He says, "No; go up to the source, and then you'll drink of 'the brook by the way.'"

If you talk of your deserts you are not fully matured in grace; you forget *how* He took you up, and that love is the *same love* that you *still have* to do with as you go on through the wilderness. What are you individually occupied with? Is it your leanness? Is it the *providential* dealings of God with you? Say even, is it *disciplinarian* dealings? Well, do they as they should — drive you out of your circumstances? And where? Do they drive you to *despair*, or to GOD? Look out of yourselves, that will give you lower ideas of self than looking at your low attainments. People say, "I find no love in my heart." If you only *went a musing on what you were* when Christ took you up, you'd find *the love flowing in*. Here Peter refers to it practically — "growing there by milk of the word" — "gospel."

What do I live upon, energy of my own? No. Has Christ spoken one word to me, and has He got no *second* word? Nothing more. Has the Lord looked once into my soul, and is it not natural for me to expect it again? How natural for any who *tasted* mercy — that He is gracious — to taste again that he "may grow thereby!" When unconverted I only knew God as a Judge, *not* as gracious; but I have found Him a Giver — "gave His Son" and "the Holy Ghost" I've known Him forty-seven years *as a Giver*. I say, Why does He give? *Because it is like Himself*; the whole place where Christ is answers the question. He is a Giver, and ought not God to bestow? Who is to be an open fountain if not God? In Eden man proved it; but now God has recast heaven, and put a *Man* there to be the Giver.

Verse 4. "As a living stone" you can say to the world — that which *characterises* me before God puts me into direct contrast with you. I know Christ as "chosen of God, and precious." I know who this Person is — the elect corner-stone; and because I have *acted* on that, and owned Him as such, I see the *peculiar* place a soul gets into who does this; before whom? *God*. Christ precious to God, commands all the range of His affections; next precious to those who believe. The poor feeble believer in the presence of God finds he has a thought — the counterpart of God's thought (not as to volume — His is infinite — but as a tiny brook is to a large one) — God saying, "He is precious," and I looking at Christ, and saying, "Oh, He is precious!"

Precious, I say; do you say He is not? Not *all God says He is*? If Christ is not Son of God, yea, God Himself, then not *only I am lost*, but my life is lost also. Why for forty-seven years I have tried to string everything I have done on to Christ, as beads are strung on a string, and you would tell me He is *only man*. Then where is my acceptance and my life? Where should I be, passing through the wilderness, in all the deep needs, the little perplexities, even without knowing that preciousness as something one wants to stay oneself upon? Looking at the cross I say, "He bore that for me," though the Father only knows the Son — knows the full worthiness of the Son *there*. Still we say He is precious, and what a place that puts us in! Is any poor thing groaning here as to themselves or circumstances? What do you think of that, that you have got God's thoughts about Christ? What strength that gives the heart to say, "Come what may, God and I have the same thoughts about Christ; it puts me at once into the place of blessing — "Ye are a *chosen* generation, a peculiar people."

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