

"Satisfied with favour"

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"And of Naphtali he said, O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the LORD; possess thou the west and the south" (Deuteronomy 33: 23).

In these verses, part of the blessing of Moses the man of God, four truths suggest themselves which lead us, as to the New Testament equivalent, to the Ephesian Epistle.

1. "Satisfied with *favour*". This indicates something which Naphtali, whilst he enjoyed it, did not find in himself; he found it in another. For this favour he looked from self to God. Indeed this word "favour" is translated in verse 16, "the *good will* of Him that dwelt in the bush." Ephesians 1: 5, 6 (N. Tr) reads, ". . . according to the *good pleasure* of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, wherein He has taken us into *favour* in the Beloved," the measure of which favour can only be rightly appreciated as we learn the place which our Lord Jesus Christ (His work on earth well done) has now on high with the Father, blest Object of all the Father's love, in that scene of bliss and joy supernal. In Him the Father rests, finding in Him everything which accords with His own love and holiness; and as learning His place of acceptance with the father we learn our own too as in Him — a satisfying portion for our souls, lifting us above the sphere of time and sense. Well might we sing with overflowing hearts:-

"We bless Thee, God and Father,
We joy before thy face;
Beyond dark death for ever,
We share Thy Son's blest place.
He lives a Man before Thee,
In cloudless light above,
In Thine unbounded favour —
Thine everlasting love."

Standing in this favour, nothing of God's eternal purpose is hidden from us; so the apostle prays that we might be enlightened in the eyes of our heart in order to know the hope of God's calling (sonship, verse 5); the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints (vv. 8-10); and the working of His mighty power by which all shall be implemented as a result of the resurrection of our Lord (v. 20).

Here the eternal purpose of God is objectively presented to us, it is for us *to know*. It is a very blessed thing to have the prophetic word opening up the future and revealing the things to come, but in Ephesians 1 we are taken back (as verse 4 tells us) before the world's foundation, into the counsel chamber of eternity to be initiated into the deep things of God. How blessed our portion, to be given such a place of nearness so that the things which lie nearest the Father's heart for His own glory and that of His beloved Son (and our part in it all, through grace and salvation as sealed by the Holy Spirit on the ground of accomplished redemption) should be full revealed to us.

Satisfied with *this* favour, may we be preserved from seeking favour at the hands of a world which has rejected and crucified God's beloved Son — HE in whom we have been taken into favour.

2. Every objective blessing and privilege calls for response and a practical subjective answer on

the part of the recipients of blessing. If Ephesians 1 brings before us the favour in which we now stand; if the apostle prayed that we might apprehend the greatness and grandeur of the purpose of God, chapter 3 brings before us what should be our answer to it.

Ephesians 1 is objective — what we should know;

Ephesians 3 is subjective — what we should be filled with.

Chapter 1 shows what has been made available *to* us in association with the glorified Christ on the ground of His redemptive work; chapter 3 what is wrought *in* us by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Thus we may apply the second part of the blessing of Naphtali to chapter 3: —

"Full with the *blessing* of the LORD."

Paul, in his prayer (Ephesians 3: 14), commences at the very fountain head - "the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom every family in the heavens and on earth is named." We belong to one of the heavenly families, to that family which is related to the Father in blest association with His dear Son, in regard to which He said, "Go to *My brethren* and say to them, I ascend to My Father, and *your* Father . . ." (John 20: 17).

As belonging to this innermost family it is our privilege to be blessed "with every spiritual blessing in the heavenlies in Christ." The choicest things of God — the things of the Father and of the Son — are made known to us; hence the apostle, in his prayer, seeks a corresponding response.

The resources at the Father's disposal for our blessing are spoken of in superlative language — "the riches of His glory." Everything, too, is administered in that same free giving of God which brought us faith in Christ as Saviour, as the apostle prays, "that He would *grant* you," according to the riches of all that He is and has, "to be strengthened with might by His Spirit in the inner man."

In chapter 1, the greatness of His power is *towards* us; in chapter 3, it is "the power that worketh *in* us;" and in chapter 6, we are to be strong "*in* the power of His might" in order to stand against the onslaughts of spiritual wickedness.

We certainly need this power by which alone we are able to apprehend all that is spread before us in Ephesians 3: 17-19, and there is that within us (fruit of God's operation by the Spirit) here designated "the inner man," which is the subject of His gracious ministry with the intent "that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith."

The Lord Jesus, who has proved *His* heart's love to us in the depths to which He went, seeks *our* hearts; not that He might have occasional response from us, but that He might have a continual dwelling place in our hearts; He would win our hearts that He might have undivided sway there. There are lawful claims upon us — natural, domestic, secular — yet if we yield to that amazing love of His, the moment we are free we shall turn to Him in holy, happy communion; His claim of love transcends all others.

For the moment we see Him not, but until we do may faith be in exercise to gladly accord Him this place. Then, like the tree, our roots will strike deep until they are founded in the depths of divine love. We shall be formed in the divine nature — that which is presented in the ministry of John as the marks of that nature will have a prominent place with us, and thus the whole circle of divine interests here — "all saints" — will find a near and dear place in those affections which embrace Christ and are rooted and founded in the love of God. Then, "with all saints", we shall take in the vast expanse — "breadth, and length, and depth and height" — of the counsel of God. The whole vista of that which the

Father has planned, and is working for His own glory and for that of His Son, will be affectionately apprehended by us. Mere mental intelligence will not do; how great a place love has in the intelligent acquisition of truth! If we loved more we would learn more.

To look out on these four dimensions we must needs be at the centre of divine purpose, and this is the Assembly's place — by the side of her glorious Head. Should this contemplation of the vast range of glory and of blessing tend to stagger and overwhelm us, we find a calm resting place in the love of Christ. Never, in time or eternity, shall we reach the end of the love of Christ, for it passeth knowledge.

All this precious wealth, prayed for on our behalf by the apostle Paul, has in view our being filled into all the fulness of God. Incomprehensible! but good by the Spirit's power for faith. Of our Lord Jesus Christ alone could it be said, while He moved in grace through the world, ". . . in Him *all* the fulness . . . was pleased to dwell," and now that He has ascended, "in Him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily." True of Him here in meekness; true of Him now in glory. May we then write over these precious words of Holy Scripture, "Full with the blessing of the Lord," and join in this ascription, "To Him that is able to do far exceedingly above all which we ask or think, according to the power which works in us, to Him be glory in the Assembly in Christ Jesus unto all generations of the ages of ages. Amen."

3. Now such a one who is "Satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord," is invited to "possess the west and the south." We would take these further words as again suggestive of other precious things in the Ephesian epistle.

The Lord Jesus in speaking to the people in Luke 12: 54, 55 said, "When ye see a cloud rise out of the west, straightway ye say, there cometh a shower; and so it is. And when ye see the south wind blow, ye say, There will be heat; and it cometh to pass."

Let us consider a few thoughts suggested by *the shower* and *the heat*. Those who are taken into favour in the Beloved, and to whom the privilege is afforded of being full with the substance of Ephesians 3: 14-19, are described as forming "one body" (Ephesians 2: 16 and Ephesians 4: 4). The Assembly is composed of those who have believed the gospel of their salvation (Ephesians 1: 13), who are redeemed with the precious blood of Christ (v. 7), and are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise (v. 13).

The company thus composed is called in Ephesians 1: 22, 23, "the Assembly, which is His body, the fulness of Him who fills all in all."

The day is hastening when the body will be with Him in manifested glory, to display Him in His all-varied features throughout the bounds of the world-to-come. In the meantime it is here in the world to set forth his moral graces. The Assembly as Christ's body is the vessel for the expression of His life in that very world which crucified Him — that world where He has been in meekness, long suffering, gentleness, peace, righteousness, holiness, goodness, kindness, love. The triumph of God is being witnessed today in that He is, by the power of His Spirit, producing the features of Christ's life in the members of His body.

Though refused here He ascended up on high (the *earth rejected* is the *heaven accepted*) and from thence, as the glorified Head, He sends down the showers of heavenly refreshment and nourishment to sustain "the whole body." He has given gifts "for the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ."

Everything that is necessary for the body flows down from him, and all is in view of that time when "we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect

man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ."

The gifts given by the ascended Christ are the apostles and prophets (these abide today in their authoritative writings — the New Testament), the evangelists, the pastors and the teachers. The evangelists go out with the glad tidings of the grace of God in the light of the revelation of the mystery which was made known to the apostles and prophets (Ephesians 3: 3-6), and the Head uses them in the gathering of souls for the Assembly, thus contributing to the growth of the body. The pastors exercise a gracious shepherd care to bind the saints together; and as thus bound together they are brought under the ministry of the teachers whom the Head uses for the instruction of His own as to His love to them in giving them such a place of unsurpassed blessing in union with Himself. How blessed are those who, in the simplicity of faith and in the sweetness of first love, hold the Head, eschewing the poverty stricken organisations of men. The body is a living organism, and can be sustained only by the impulse of life from its glorious Head.

These heavenly showers, where received, will establish our souls, preserving us from the inpouring floods of Satanically inspired false doctrines. How active he is in opposition to every truth of the Holy Word of God in this our day. How deadening the effect of the "wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive."

May we all have an ear for Christ's Word. Only that which we receive from Him will benefit our brethren. To receive from Him we must abide in Him. Communion carries edifying communications which are to the good of all the saints of God, for they are replete with the sweet pervading of the love of Christ.

4. As we are brought under the influence of the warmth of the south wind there will be a speaking of the truth in love. What is there so sweet and tender, so heart-warming as love? And this love of Christ is a sacrificing love, for it has been fully demonstrated in the giving of Himself — "Christ also loved the church, and gave Himself for it."

This love is a giving love. The intrusion of the mind of man and the principles of the world amongst the people of God is destructive of fellowship and true growth. On the contrary as we live in communion with our Head in heaven we receive the gain of that holy love which diffuses amongst the members of His body. This love draws us under the power of that energetic ministry of the heavenly showers which flow from Himself in the glory. Thus, and only thus, will the body — every member functioning harmoniously in its place — make increase to the edifying of itself in love (Ephesians 4: 16).

The Lord grant that, being satisfied with favour and full with the blessing of the Lord, we might receive largely from the showers of the west, thus promoting more the warm influences of the south wind.