

## More Than Expected

In Acts 3:1-11 we read of a man who had been physically handicapped from birth. His daily routine was to be laid by friends at one of the gates of the temple and ask for money. On this particular day, he made his request for aid from two men named Peter and John, apostles in the church that Jesus Christ had purchased with His blood and which had just had its beginning. Expecting nothing more than alms when the two apostles answered his call, the lame man received something much greater, something he most likely never imagined. "Then Peter said, Silver and gold have I none; but such as I have I give thee: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise up and walk. And he took him by the right hand, and lifted him up: and immediately his feet and ankle bones received strength." (Acts 3:6-7). The verses that follow describe the formerly crippled man's joyous reaction to his new condition. Leaping up, he walked and leaped some more, praising God on his way into the temple to worship the One who gave such power to men to heal.

This event serves as a vivid illustration of the point that not only does God provide what we need, He provides it in abundance. In fact, He provides much more than we expect. Isn't that the truth? In one sense perhaps it could be said that this is a sad reflection on our faith. Is it too often the case that we don't expect much from our loving Father? James rebuked his readers when he wrote, "Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts." (James 4:2-3). Do we seek God, only expecting to get the scraps from His bountiful table? Maybe we rarely, if ever, seek Him at all because we don't expect Him to give us what we need. Another good example of this attitude is seen in II Kings 13 where we read of King Joash of Israel. Visiting the stricken prophet, Elisha, Joash was told to shoot the arrows he was carrying with him. Joash shot three and then quit. Elisha informed him that, had he kept shooting as he had been told, he would have had dominance over the Syrian enemy. For whatever reason, Joash stopped short. Did he not expect God to be able to give him complete and utter victory? We would do well to carefully consider how our lack of faith keeps us from approaching God in search of what we need.

The thrust of this article, though, is that God "is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that worketh in us." (Ephesians 3:20). Of course, He gives in accordance with His will and in harmony with His written Word, but what He gives He gives in abundance, "exceeding" abundance. Again we read the words of James who said in James 1:5, "If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be given him." The Lord has never withheld any good thing from those who love Him (Matthew 7:7-11). As he said to the Jews under the law of Moses, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt; open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." (Psalm 81:10). Through Ezekiel, God spoke of "showers of blessing." (Ezekiel 34:26). Psalm 84:11 declares, "For the Lord God is a sun and shield: the Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly."

God gives and gives and then gives some more. What He gives may not always be what we want, but it will always be what we need. As the unknown author wrote:

I asked God for strength that I might achieve.  
I was made weak that I might learn humbly to obey.  
I asked for health that I might do greater things.  
I was given infirmity that I might do better things.  
I asked for riches that I might be happy.  
I was given poverty that I might be wise.  
I asked for power that I might have the praise of men.  
I was given weakness that I might feel the need of God.  
I asked for all things that I might enjoy life.  
I was given life that I might enjoy all things.  
I got nothing that I asked for, but everything I hoped for.

Almost despite myself, my unspoken prayers were answered.  
I am, among all men, most richly blessed.

Let us continually seek the Lord and frequently pause to reflect on our lives. In so doing, we will be able to look back over our history and see how time after time, God provided abundantly, and often so much more than we expected.

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