

GOD'S RICH SUPPLY FOR OUR DEEP NEEDS (Hebrews 4:12-16)

Let me tell you the story of Ira and Ann Yates. They were married in 1883. Mr. Yates worked a number of jobs during his lifetime, but he worked mostly as a cowhand until he was able to buy some land for himself. In 1913 he traded 216 cattle for a failing dry goods store in Rankin, Texas even though friends warned him against such a foolish venture. Yates, however, turned the store around, and by 1915 it was doing \$5000 worth of business a month, a pretty good sum in that day.

The store caught the eye of a Pecos County rancher. He offered to trade his 16,000 plus acre ranch to Ira Yates for his store. As part of the trade, Yates would have to pay an additional \$16,559 for the existing mortgage on the land and to cover charges for the state's Permanent School Fund. Once again, friends told him not to do it, but Ira Yates was a man who listened to his own counsel, and he made the trade anyway. His granddaughter later explained that her grandfather "didn't know beans about groceries," but he did know ranching, and he was anxious to own such a big spread. Soon after making the trade, Yates bought another parcel of land that intersected his thus making his ranch cover more than 20,000 acres. He was land rich, but he was cash poor, so much so that he and his wife had to live off government assistance to make ends meet.

Yates held on for better than ten years, but he realized that if things didn't change quickly, he wouldn't be able to pay his mortgage, and he would lose his ranch. In 1926, he was able to convince an oil company to drill for oil on his land even though conventional wisdom said there was no oil to be found west of the Pecos River. The first three wells that were drilled were dry holes, but the fourth, at a depth of just over 1100 feet, was a gusher.

Now, other oil companies wanted in on the deal. Soon after, the Yates' donated land for a new town. It was named Iraan after Ira and Ann Yates. It is still there today.

The oil underneath Yate's land has been called Yate's Pool. It was one of the most productive and lucrative fields of oil ever found. It is still producing today. Over the last 85 plus years since it was discovered, Yate's Pool has yielded over 2 billion barrels of oil.

One day, Ira and Ann Yates were dirt poor, living on government assistance, and the next day they were multi-millionaires.

I think many believers in Jesus are spiritually like Ira and Ann Yates. They are living as paupers not knowing that God has supplied them with His unsearchable riches.

Long ago, I was taught that the best commentary on the Bible is the Bible. If you are looking at the meaning of a particular word in one verse, you will want to examine how that same word is used in other passages. If you are struggling with a certain portion of Scripture, you will discover that another part of the Bible throws light on that part of God's word with which you are wrestling.

That being the case, I want to read to you Philippians 4:19 because I believe that one verse summarizes well today's sermon text—Hebrews 4:12-16. Listen to what Paul tells us toward the end of his letter to the Church at Philippi: "And my God will supply every need of yours according to His riches in glory in Christ Jesus."

One person rightly noted that God does not meet our needs out of His glorious riches;

He meets our needs according to His great riches. Let's suppose I were to send a letter to Jeff Bezos, Elon Musk, Bill Gates, and Warren Buffet telling them each that I had some financial needs, and I politely asked for some financial assistance. Let's also suppose that they each responded and sent me \$20, \$50, \$100. Were they to do that, they would be meeting my needs out of their riches. But, if they were to send my \$20 million, \$50 million, \$100 million, they would be meeting my needs according to their riches.

God meets our needs according to His riches, and Hebrews 4:12-16 shows us how He does that. God supplies our deep needs from at least three resources. I challenge you to look for those resources as I read our text.

Did you find them? God meets our deep needs by His word, through His Son, and from His throne. In this message, we are going to examine how God meets our need and just what those needs are.

By His Word, God Supplies Us with Health

The greatest need of a church is not growth; its greatest need is health. It is quite possible for a church to grow without being healthy; that happens often. But it is impossible for a church to be healthy and not grow. Unhealthy churches usually don't grow, but they might. Maybe an unhealthy church has learned how to draw a crowd. Maybe they have a dynamic youth program. Maybe they are situated in a growing part of town.

If a church, however, is healthy, it cannot not grow. A healthy church will grow warmer through fellowship, deeper through discipleship, stronger through worship, broader through ministry, and larger through evangelism. We should make church health not church growth our goal because healthy churches grow.

The same is true of healthy Christians. Healthy Christians grow. I am convinced that God has given us His word, this Book, for our health—our spiritual health.

The author of Hebrews tells us three important truths concerning God's word. **First, it is alive.** It is living and active. When we study God's word, we think that we are examining the Bible. In truth, the Bible is examining us. It is able to diagnose our problems, and prescribe the remedy, and administer the treatment. This Book has healing properties because it is alive. It speaks. It guides. It inspires. It corrects. It teaches, and so much more. It is alive.

Second, God's word is penetrating. It is sharp. It is said to be a double-edged sword. That means it cuts forehanded and slices backhanded. With a double-edged sword, you don't have to reposition the blade. The word that is translated *sword* is not the word for the broad sword used in battle. It is the word for *dagger* which is used up close.

The word of God is a scalpel that is used by the Divine Surgeon. He seeks out where the problem lies. He cuts us in order to heal us. He removes the dead tissue and the diseased tissue within us in order to bring us to a healthy state.

One of my favorite authors and theologians was the late R.C. Sproul. He told the story of his conversion:

I had actually gone to a church-related college, but I went on a football scholarship, not because of any interest in the church. At the end my first week,

which was spent in freshman orientation, my roommate and I decided to hit some of the bars . . . We got to the parking lot, and I realized that I was out of cigarettes.

So, I went back in the dorm and went to the cigarette machine. I got my Lucky's and turned around and saw the captain of the football team sitting at a table. He spoke to me and my roommate and invited us to come over and chat, and we did. This was the first person I ever met in my life that talked about Christ as a reality.

I'd never heard anything like it. I was just absorbed, sat there for two or three hours. He didn't give a traditional evangelism talk to me; he just kept talking to me about the wisdom of the word of God. He quoted Ecclesiastes 11:3: "Whether a tree falls to the south or to the north, in the place where it falls, there will it lie." I just feel certain I'm the only person in church history that was converted by that verse. God just took that verse and struck my soul with it. I saw myself as a log that was rotting in the woods. And I was going nowhere.

When I left that guy's table, I went up to my room. And in my room by myself, in the dark, I got on my knees and cried out to God to forgive me.

The Spirit of God used the word of God to pierce the hard exterior and get to the interior of R.C. Sproul's life, and in the process, he was brought to faith in Jesus Christ.

First, God's word is alive. Next, it is penetrating. **Third, it is discerning.** It discerns the thought and intentions of the heart. We can fool others. We can even fool ourselves. We can pretend that our motivations are noble when they are actually self-serving. Eventually, we even believe the lies we tell to others and ourselves. God's word, however, cuts through all the pretense and lets us know what is really what.

God's word acts as an interior mirror. It shows us what we really look like on the inside, the side that nobody else sees. God's word doesn't just convict us so that we will become a Christian; it also convicts us after we become followers of Christ. If you have never been cut to the heart and convicted by the word of God after becoming a Christian, either you have rarely read the word of God or you aren't a Christian.

Because these three things are true about God's word—it is alive; it is penetrating; it is discerning—we know that v. 13 is true. Look at v. 13 God sees and knows everything about you. You can't hide from Him. You can run, but you can't hide. The good news is that if we will allow the word of God to work in our life and on our souls, we won't want to hide from God. We will seek to draw as close to Him as possible.

As we move forward in our text, we discover a second resource God uses to supply us with what we need.

Through His Son, God Supplies Us with Life

We can't have health until we first have life. It is through Jesus that we have life: new life, abundant life, eternal life.

The author of Hebrews likens Jesus to a Great High Priest, our Great High Priest. A High Priest had two important functions: mediation and intercession. The Old Testament temple building had two sections—the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Any priest could enter the Holy Place, but only one Priest could enter the Holy of Holies—the High

Priest, and he could only enter that sacred room on one day of the year—the Day of Atonement. On the most sacred day, before the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies, he would first sacrifice a young bull. Then, taking with him blood from that young bull, he would sprinkle it on top of the Ark of the Covenant that was in the Holy of Holies. The top of the ark was known as the mercy seat. It was viewed as God’s throne on earth. This blood was meant to atone for the sin of the High Priest and all the other priests.

Next, the High Priest would sacrifice a male goat. Then, he would take blood from that sacrifice, return to the Holy of Holies and sprinkle the mercy seat again with the blood of this second sacrifice to atone for the sin of the people.

Finally, he would leave the Holy of Holies, get a second male goat, place his hands on the head of that goat and ceremonially confer the sin of the people onto that goat. This was known as the scape goat. That goat would be taken into the wilderness and released. Thus, he would carry the sin of the people away from them.

In this way, the High Priest was a mediator. He was a go-between. He stood between God and the people and brought them together. The High Priest had to do this every year.

Jesus is our Great High Priest. First, He was the sacrifice. He died on the cross. Then, He took His blood into the real throne of God. He had to do that just one time. We read in Hebrews 10:12, “But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of God.” Then, in v. 14 we are told, “For by a single offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.”

The second job of the High Priest was to pray for the people. Scripture assures us that Jesus makes intercession for us. Consider these two NT verses:

- Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us (Romans 8:34).
- Consequently, He is able to save to the uttermost those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them (Hebrews 7:25).

There is a sense in which the job of mediation was completed on the cross. Jesus said, “It is finished.” The job of intercession, however, is ongoing. Jesus continues to pray for you and me.

Pastor, author, and Methodist Bishop William Willimon told of an encounter he once had with a dying woman:

She was in the last stages of lung cancer, gasping day after day for breath. It was obvious she was in great pain and exhausted from fighting. She clutched a crucifix daily, given to her by her grandmother when she was a girl, carved by a monk in Europe. It was a symbol of all that her Catholic faith meant to her.

When I entered the room that afternoon, I could see she was very near the end.

“Would you like me to pray for you?” I asked. “Would you like me to summon a priest?”

With her last ounce of energy, she held out the crucifix toward me, which depicted the body of Christ nailed to the cross. She said, “Thank you—but I have a Priest.”

Do you have a Priest? You do if you have received Jesus as your Lord and Savior. He is your Great High Priest. It is through Him and in Him that you and I have life. We read in Romans 5:21, “As sin reigned in death, grace also might reign through righteousness leading to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord.” Then, we find in the latter half of Romans 6:23, “the free gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

God supplies us with health by the word of God. He supplies us with life through the Son of God.

From His Throne, God Supplies Us with Grace

Look with me at Hebrews 4:16. In Isaiah 6, the prophet tells of a vision he had. We read in v. 1 of that chapter, “In the year that King Uzziah died, I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne, high and lifted up.”

In his commentary on that passage, Matthew Henry wrote:

See the sovereignty of the Eternal Monarch: He sits upon a throne – a throne of glory, before which we must worship, – a throne of government, under which we must be subject, – and a throne of grace, to which we may come boldly. This throne is high, and lifted up above all competition and contradiction.

God sits upon a throne of glory, a throne of government, and, dear friend, a throne of grace. What an encouragement we are given! We are told that we can come boldly before God’s throne of grace whenever we are in need. We are assured that when we do so, we will receive the grace of God to help us whatever that need is.

I wonder:

- Are you in need today?
- Do you need guidance?
- Do you need encouragement?
- Do you need boldness?
- Do you need comfort?
- Do you need instruction?
- Do you need help?

I like what the Chinese evangelist Watchman Nee wrote. He taught, “Our prayers lay the track down on which God’s power can come. Like a mighty locomotive, His power is irresistible, but it cannot reach us without rails.”

Whenever you need help, and that is every day, come boldly before God’s throne and ask for it. He will supply it.

Another one of my favorite preachers was a man named E.V. Hill. He was a black preacher who pastored Mt. Zion Missionary Baptist Church in Los Angeles for 42 years, from 1961 until his death in 2003.

Dr. Hill was born during the Great Depression. His real mother had five children. She couldn’t feed and take care of them all; so, she sent 4-year-old Ed (E.V.) to live with

another woman in the little town of Sweet Home, Alabama. It was that woman who raised Ed, and it was that woman whom Ed called “Mama.”

Despite the odds against him, Mama helped Ed graduate from high school. He was the only one that year to graduate from his country school. Mama insisted that Ed go to college. Mama took Ed to the bus station. She handed him a ticket, and gave him \$5. Mama said to him, “Now, go off to Prairie View College, and Mama is going to be praying for you.”

Dr. Hill recalled later that he didn’t know much about prayer, but he knew Mama did. When he arrived at the college, he had \$1.89 left in his pocket. Ed was told that he needed \$80 in cash in order to register. Listen to how Dr. Hill described what happened next:

I got in line . . . and the devil said to get out of line . . . but I heard my Mama saying in my ear, “I’ll be praying for you.” I stood in line on Mama’s prayer. Soon there was [another new student ahead of me], and I began to get nervous, but I stayed in line . . . Just about the time [the other student] got all of her stuff and turned away, Dr. Drew touched me on the shoulder, and he said, “Are you Ed Hill?”

I said, “Yes.”

“Are you Ed Hill from Sweet Home?”

“Yes.”

“Have you paid yet?”

“Not quite.”

“We’ve been looking for you all this morning.”

I said, “Well, what do [you] want with me?”

“We have a four-year scholarship that will pay your room and board, your tuition, and give you thirty dollars a month to spend.”

And I heard Mama say, “I will be praying for you!”

I want you to know, somebody has been praying for you. It may have been your Mama. It may be your spouse, your friend, your neighbor, another church member. Additionally, from this text, I know Jesus had been praying for you. Stand on those prayers and your prayers. Stand knowing that God will provide exactly what you need.

Do you need health? Do you need life? Do you need grace? God will provide. He will provide for you by His word, through His Son, and from His throne.