

and SELF-SUFFICIENT
AN ALL-SUFFICIENT GOD
2 Corinthians 9:8

Intro: A new year's verse. A good verse to memorize (if you do not already know it).

The context (which we should all know by now): giving. This is a promised reward, a present reward, for sincere, generous giving.

Illus: The pastor who held three silver dollars in his hand and spoke about the lady who had received \$30 and had given \$3, what financial returns it would bring to her.

But the rewards do not always come in dollars and cents. However, they do come in spiritual blessing. Sometimes people give out of their own need; that is when this verse is realized to the full.

This verse corresponds with Phil. 4:19, and the context does, too.

Let us look at the details of the promise which the Lord gave here to the Corinthians through the Apostle Paul.

First, we have . . .

I. SOVEREIGNTY--the sovereignty of God: "And God is able . . ."

How we need to dwell on God, on His attributes, on all of them! But here Paul singled out one: the power of God, the sovereign power of God, what God is able to do.

There are many such verses in the Bible:

- 1) Rom. 4:21.
- 2) Rom. 11:23.
- 3) Rom. 14:4.
- 4) Our text: 2 Cor. 9:8.
- 5) Eph. 3:20, 21.
- 6) Phil. 3:21.
- 7) 2 Tim. 1:12.
- 8) Heb. 2:18.
- 9) Heb. 7:25.
- 10) Heb. 11:19.
- 11) Jude 24.

Whenever you are in special need, or are "down" for any reason, these are good verses to turn to: the sovereign power of God. They are what you would expect from God.

II. SUPERABUNDANCE--the superabundance of God.

Paul had been writing about one grace--the grace of giving.

God exercises this grace toward us, and He also works this grace in us, to move us to give.

But He is not just the God of this grace, this gift, but of "all grace." And so Paul was, in effect, starting with this one gift to show how it leads to all gifts, the supply of all of our needs. Cf. 1 Pet. 5:10, 11.

No one can measure the superabundance of God, nor can we possibly anticipate what our experience will be when God's superabundance is poured out in our lives.

But this leads to my next point:

III. SUFFICIENCY.

At this point in the verse there is a switch from what Paul had been saying about God, to the results that will be seen in our lives: SUFFICIENCY!

Notice how it is expressed: "that ye always have all sufficiency in all things." How could Paul have been more inclusive? This does not exclude any time or any place or any circumstance.

Illus: Whenever we buy certain products we usually are given some kind of a warranty. If you carry health insurance, your contract tells you what is covered, and what is not covered. But so often you find that the very help you need in covering some defect or in meeting your particular need is not covered. Not so with God's warranty! It is good anywhere, any time, regardless of the circumstances. And it is interesting to see that a matter like giving is often what God uses to show us the sufficiency of God, which becomes our sufficiency.

What does sufficiency mean?

Bishop Moule says that the Greek word that is used here, autarkes, speaks of such a supply of whatever we need as to make us independent of externals. This word is translated "contentment" in 1 Tim. 6:6. This is what Paul had in mind in Phil. 4:6, 7.

God is self-sufficient, and within greater limits than it can be stated of Him, He desires to make us like He is in this respect. This is being self-sufficient in a good sense.

Cf. 2 Cor. 12:9.

Illus: Mr. and Mrs. Lindsay in Vancouver, B.C., in their

old age, down in their basement, unable to get up, sitting on the floor for 3 or 4 hours, praying, singing hymns, and rejoicing in the Lord--waiting for help to come (since they lived alone). That is self-sufficiency--and the Lord did not fail them. Help eventually came.

But this all leads to what Paul mentioned at the end of the verse:

IV. SERVICE: "may abound unto every good work."

Abounding in good work means:

- 1) Serving the Lord more than ever before.
- 2) Seeing more fruit than ever before.

We have our own ideas about what it means to serve the Lord, and how we are prepared to serve the Lord. But our ideas and God's ways are often very, very different!

God teaches us to act upon what we know we should do (as, e.g., the giving of the Corinthians), and what He is really working in our hearts. He brings us to an end of ourselves, shows us our great need (and often our great sinfulness, our unworthiness to serve Him). And then the blessings start to come as we learn more and more that when we have the Lord, we have all that we need.

This was the main lesson God was teaching the children of Israel in the desert for 40 years!

Concl: What more needs to be said? Where does this verse find you tonight--facing what needs, confronted with what difficult circumstances? It is not by mistake that you and I are where we are. God has placed us there. And He has placed us where we are to show us that if we have Him, we have all that we will ever need.

May this coming year cause all of us, under the providence of God, to understand more of God's sufficiency, that we may become more self-sufficient because of what we have found Him to be to us. A man's life does not consist in the abundance of things which he may possess, but in the reality and depth of his relationship with the Lord.

SPIRITUAL PROSPERITY

Psalm 1

Intro: For quite a number of years, at the beginning of the year, I have spoken on Psalm 1.

Most of us can quote it. It is a favorite of the Lord's people. And yet we can so easily overlook its truth.

It speaks of happiness; it speaks of prosperity. Both of these words need to be defined.

And basically it speaks of two ways of life: the life of the person who chooses to live without God, and the life of the person who has God as the very center of his life.

We would say today that it speaks of the person who is not a Christian, and of the person who is a Christian.

But even among Christians there is a difference.

Not all of the people of God are living the kind of a life which the Psalmist described here. And so there is a solemn message in this Psalm for those who do not know the Lord, but there is also a solemn message for those who do know the Lord.

The Psalm is very simple, very clear. No one needs to miss the important message which it conveys, a message which is repeated and emphasized throughout the rest of the 150 Psalms.

The theme is happiness, but happiness which leads to the attainment of the reason for one's existence upon the earth. This is what the Psalmist meant by prospering. It suggests the possibility that one can spend his whole life on earth, and yet not have a feeling of accomplishment when life here is over.

Let us look, first of all, because that is where the Psalmist looked first, at . . .

I. THE HAPPY MAN, THE SPIRITUALLY PROSPEROUS MAN (Psa. 1:1-3).

A. The happy man is a godly man.

This is stated negatively, but the implication could not be clearer.

The person who does not know the Lord, and who is not interested in pleasing the Lord, is presented in three ways:

- 1) For emphasis.
- 2) To show the progressive degeneration of such a life.

The "ungodly" are mentioned 4 times in the Psalm,

"sinners" are mentioned 2 times; "the scornful," once.

"The ungodly" are the unrighteous, those who do not care what God wants, nor what His standards are. They set their own standards, or conform to what most of the world approves.

"Sinners" are those who have missed the mark--like the corresponding word in the Greek.

"Scornful" are those who not only reject the things of God, but who ridicule them, who look down on them, who despise them as being worth nothing.

Now there are three words associated with these three terms.

The "ungodly" give advice. The "sinners" advocate a certain way to live, a life which excludes God. And the "scornful" have become so set in their ways that they are hardened in their sin.

So you see a man moving through all of these phases, or stages of life, until he is, as the word suggests, in a habitation and no one can get him to move out!

THE PSALMIST SAID, IN EFFECT, THAT IF YOU ARE LOOKING FOR HAPPINESS, DO NOT FOLLOW THE KIND OF PEOPLE THAT ARE DESCRIBED IN VERSE ONE! They are headed in the wrong direction.

True happiness is only found in a holy life, a life that seeks to please God, a life where God is pre-eminent.

But there is a second point. How do we know what a godly life is?

B. A happy life is centered in the Word of God.

Two things need to be said here, and all of us who know the Lord should observe carefully what the Psalmist said.

1. His delight is in the law of the Lord.

The law of the Lord is the Word of God--all of it. To delight in it means that you will be inclined toward it, You recognize it as the Word of God, and you approach it with a desire to know what it is that the Lord wants you to do, and what He wants you to be.

The more Bible-centered a person's life is, the happier he is going to be providing his interest is in being conformed to that Word of God.

The first step, of course, is in coming to the knowledge of Christ as Saviour. It is in the Bible that we learn about sin, about God's hatred of it, and of His judgment upon it. The Word of God gives us the Gospel, the good news about salvation. And this is the only place we will find it.

But after we are saved, then we need to be concerned about the life we are to live. This also is carefully set forth in Scripture. Nothing is left for us to add.

But there is another point. The happy man not only loves the Word, but, if he truly loves the Word, he is going to do something else.

2. His meditation will be first and foremost upon the Word.

Now in the course of a day's work and activities, we have many things to think about. That was true of the Psalmist. Most people are busy. But what the Psalmist meant was that the child of God is going to find greater and greater happiness by seeking to penetrate deeper and deeper into the meaning of the Word. And in all of the decisions that face him his primary concern is going to be that he might do the will of God.

But let us remember that happiness does not mean that he will be free from trouble. It does not mean that giddy, care-free life which so many seem to be looking for. It is not a happiness that depends upon what you have or where you are able to go, all of the things that you are able to do. Happiness is dependent upon what you are, and in making sure that what you are is what God wants you to be. Then there will be a deep-seated peace and joy which the events of life will not be able to disturb!

But let me mention two other things about the happy man.

C. The happy man will be a stable man: "Like a tree . . ."

He will not be tossed all around, running here and there in search of happiness. And he will have an unseen source of life which continually strengthens and refreshes him for all of the trials of life.

D. The happy man will be a successful, prosperous man.

Now our idea of a successful, prosperous man, is a man who has a lot of money, who has a fine home (or perhaps, homes), who is able to do what he wants to do, and who has been outstanding in his business, etc., etc., etc.

That is not what the Word of God has in mind.

Sometimes godly men are successful in that sense, but the Psalmist had another idea in mind.

That word "prosper" suggests that God has a purpose for the lives of His people. It is not the same in every instance. I would like to be a Spurgeon, or a Whitefield. But I am not. God's purpose for them as far as their work was concerned was different from His purpose for me and for you. But He has a purpose for me and He has a purpose for you. He has a work to accomplish through us. To "prosper" means that we are seeing that purpose accomplished, whatever it may be. We may not know all about it, but it has to do with the the reason the Lord has left us here on this earth.

I cannot think of anything worse than for a person to come to the end of his life and to have to realize that he has spent his life in vain. If our lives are not being directed by God, by the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Holy Spirit, which means, by the Word of God, they will be wasted!

But to take the first three verses of Psalm 1 is to guarantee happiness now, and thanksgiving to God when our earthly sojourn is over, that our lives have been lived according to God's plan and purpose.

Now let us look for just a moment or two at the other side.

II. THE UNGODLY MAN, THE SINNER, if you please (Psa. 1-4-6).

The Psalmist promised the ungodly man three things, and those three things have never changed.

A. UNHAPPINESS (v. 4).

Instability means unhappiness. Nothing is secure; the ungodly man is not secure.

B. JUDGMENT (v. 5).

There is a day of reckoning coming. The wicked will not stand with the righteous. They spend all of their

time trying to make others, including the godly, stand with them now, but there will be no possibility that they will be able to stand with the righteous when the time comes for us to stand before the Lord.

Cf. Heb. 9;27.

Finally, and most important of all . . .

C. THE LORD.

Why does godliness bring happiness and prosperity (as I have defined it), and why does ungodliness bring unhappiness and eternal loss?

There is one main reason: Because God approves (knows) the way of the righteous, and because He has decreed that ungodly people will perish eternally.

Concl: The choice is clear. We choose God, or we choose our own way, the way of ungodly men. The one leads to happiness, to prosperity, and ultimately to heaven. The other leads to greater and greater sinfulness, and ultimately to an eternal hell.

It is not too late for a change if you are headed in the wrong direction. "Choose you this day whom you will serve." But remember: We cannot choose God without choosing Christ! And choosing Christ means to acknowledge that we are sinners, deserving of divine judgment, but have hope of forgiveness and eternal life through the mercy of God expressed to us in the substitutionary death of His dear Son.

If you are a child of God, but are not living the life of a godly man, then change, by the grace of God. Make God the center of your life. Delight yourself in the Word, and make it your meditation by day and night. Your problems may not depart, but you will be changed, and a joy will be yours which cannot be experienced in any other way.