

God's Measureless Measures

by A.B. Simpson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of living according to God's measure, which is higher than human measuring, and encourages believers to walk in faith and obedience to God's will.

Scripture: 2 Corinthians 10:12

Topics: "Faith and Trust", "Divine Standards"

Description

A.B. Simpson emphasizes the contrast between human and divine measures in his sermon 'God's Measureless Measures.' He warns against the folly of measuring ourselves by our own standards or by comparing ourselves to others, urging believers to strive for God's higher calling and to align their lives with His will, word, grace, glory, and the example of Christ. Simpson encourages the congregation to recognize that true fulfillment and strength come from God's abundant resources and to live according to the power that works within them. He concludes by reminding them that their faith should be expansive, allowing them to receive God's immeasurable blessings.

Transcript

"But they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves are not wise. But we will not boast of things without our measure, but according to the measure of the rule which God hath distributed to us, a measure to reach even unto you." 2 Cor. x:12, 13.

"With what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you; and unto you that hear shall more be given." Mark iv 24.

We have here two sorts of measures contrasted, the human and the divine. There is a great deal in a measure. Half an inch off the draper's yard stick makes a good many yards difference when the goods are delivered. The division of a hair line in a carpenter's rule might destroy all the calculations of the architect in the construction of a building. A little boy told his mother that he was six feet high, and when she doubted the statement he assured her that he had just measured himself by his own little rule. His calculations would have been all right if his rule had been right, but when examined, it was found to be a little less than six inches long. This is the sort of rule that a great many Christians measure by.

There are two sorts of human measures; the one is when we are "measuring ourselves by ourselves;" the other, when we are "comparing ourselves among ourselves;" that is, measuring by others. Both are equally "unwise," for both come equally short of the divine rule. Many persons are always trying to measure up to their ideal and their aspirations and to the out-reaching of their poor souls, and the lofty ideals of humanity, as they are pleased to call them. They will tell us that they have lived up to their light and to their conscience and are satisfied with their opinions and content with their lives, and that it is nobody's business but their own. They are measuring themselves by themselves. Some who have come upon a higher plane are measuring themselves by a past experience, by some memory of blessing, some little Mizar or some lofty mount to which they have risen in the distant past, and this, to them, is the type and ideal of all their life. And so, we find thousands trying to hold on to their experience or to get it back again, instead of remembering that God is "able to do exceeding abundantly above all we ask or think."

Others again are ever comparing themselves with others, congratulating themselves that they are as good as some of their standard, or aiming to resemble some human ideal. The result of this is to be seen in the human traditions and the stereotyped patterns of Christian living, according to which so many are moulding their dwarfed and wretched lives. All this is but human measuring; all this is most unwise. From all this Paul turned to reach up to God's measure, and, "forgetting the things that were behind he pressed forward to the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus;" striving that he might "apprehend that for which he was apprehended of Christ Jesus." It is a great thing to have a worthy ideal or pattern. It is better to aim high and miss it than it is to aim low and reach it. The famous artist was wise when he wept with bitter tears because he had reached his ideal. He could dream of nothing higher than he had achieved with his brush and to him the charm and inspiration of life had gone.

We find a number of God's standards and measures referred to in the Holy Scriptures, rising like the rounds of Jacob's ladder from earth to heaven. There is a simple phrase oft repeated in the New Testament and often overlooked, which expresses these measures and steppings. It is the phrase "ACCORDING TO," two words which rise like the uprights of Jacob's ladder to the heavens, and across which many of the precious promises may be seen in the vision of faith firmly fastened as heavenly steps leading higher and higher up to all the good and perfect will of God. Let us glance at some of these heavenly measures.

I. THE WILL OF GOD.

This is at once the limitation and the inspiration of our faith and prayer. "If we ask anything ACCORDING TO His will He heareth us." "The Spirit maketh intercession for the saints ACCORDING TO the will of God." Beyond this our desires and our aspirations cannot go, but beyond it they need not desire to go, for within it lie all the probabilities of blessing which a human and immortal life can receive; and God's chief desire is to get us to see how much it means of blessing for us. As we have often said, there is no vaster prayer within the reach of faith than the simple sentence, "Thy will be done." This will must mean for each of us our highest possible good. We know it includes our salvation, if we will accept salvation, for "God will have all men to be saved." We know it includes our sanctification, for "this is the will of God, even your sanctification." We know it includes our deliverance from physical evil if we will receive it in His Name in faith and obedience, for He has said, "I will. Be thou clean." We know it includes every needed blessing that the obedient can require, for He has said "He will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly." The apostle's prayer for his beloved friends was that they might have fulfilled in them "all the good pleasure of His goodness;" and that they might "prove that good and acceptable and perfect will of God."

Beloved, are you measuring up to this divine rule? Are you meeting all your Father's will? Are you walking "worthy of Him to all pleasing," and having fulfilled the benediction and prayer that "He may make you perfect in all things to do His will, working in you, that which is pleasing in His sight through Jesus Christ to whom be glory forever and ever? Amen."

II. HIS WORD.

"Behold the handmaid of the Lord!" is the sublime response of Mary to the angel's astonishing message, "be it unto me ACCORDING TO thy word." Never was faith put to a harder test. Never was woman asked to stand in so delicate a place of peril and possibility, of humbling shame and glorious everlasting honor. Realizing, perhaps, with every instinct of her maiden heart all that this might cost her, she meekly, unhesitatingly, without one question, one faltering breath, accepted the stupendous promise and responsibility and rose to meet the divine measure, "ACCORDING TO Thy word," and like an echo came back the heavenly benediction, "Blessed is she that believed, for there shall be a performance of those things that were told her from the Lord."

Beloved, are you living up to this great measure? Is faith resting and claiming, not according to signs and seemings, frames and feelings, but according to His word? Is obedience walking, not according to the course of this world, or the moods of our capricious hearts, or the standards of men, or the example of others, or the traditions even of the church, but according to His word? Are we Bible Christians and determined to believe and obey every word within these inspired and heavenly pages? Then we shall be found in "the way everlasting," for "the grass withereth and the flower fadeth, but the word of our God shall stand forever," and "he that doeth the will of God abideth forever."

III. THE RICHES OF HIS GRACE.

"In whom we have redemption through His blood, even the forgiveness of sins ACCORDING TO the riches of His grace, wherein He hath abounded towards us in all wisdom and prudence." Peter has used a parallel expression. "ACCORDING TO His abundant mercy He hath begotten us again unto a lively hope." This is God's standard and measure of salvation. He works and saves according to the riches of His grace. He abounds towards us in all wisdom and prudence, that is, He adapts His mercy to every variety of guilt, and He anticipates, in His prudence and foresight, every future emergency. He sees Peter from the beginning to the end of his career and accepts him "for better or for worse;" and when the hour of his shameful fall is near, He can say, "I have prayed for thee." So He takes every one of us and adjusts His infinite grace to all the minutiae of our sin and its worst aggravations, our corrupt and ruined nature and all its wreck, our weak and helpless will and all its inability to stand, our circumstances, our temptations and all that besets us. Knowing and anticipating all, He just encompasses us in His everlasting arms and saves and keeps us, "ACCORDING to the riches of His grace."

Beloved, have you entered into the fullness of this measure, and have you understood it in all its all sufficiency for a lost world and the most wretched and ruined lives over whom you pray and love? Oh, let our faith look up from lost humanity, to the mighty love of God and "the exceeding riches of His grace." And if there be a discouraged and guilty soul within reach of this message, may God help you, beloved one, to put your sins with all their aggravations side by side with God's immeasurable grace, until you shall realize something of the Psalmist's sublime figure when he sang, "As far as the east is from the west, so far has God removed our transgressions from us. As high as the heaven is above the earth so great is His mercy toward them that fear Him." Our sins may have reached to the clouds until they have become like

thick cloud" but, thank God, "His mercy is in the heavens," and far above the clouds.

IV. THE RICHES OF HIS GLORY.

Can we form any conception of the riches of His glory? Moses asked to see that glory but was told it was too bright for human gaze, and only in the distance and from behind could he dare to look upon it. A little glimpse of it the disciples beheld on the Mount of Transfiguration, but they were afraid of its brightness and their eyes were overcome with slumber under its spell. "The heavens declare His glory, and the firmament showeth His handiwork," and some conception of the riches of His power and majesty may be gathered from these glorious constellations and worlds of light which science is more fully exploring in these wondrous days. Sometimes we have sat down and allowed our minds to dwell on the multitude of these discoveries and calculations. We have tried to take in the magnitude of yonder planet many hundred times larger than our world, and yonder sun outweighing the world many thousandfold, and stars beyond stars,

"where system into systems runs

And other planets circle other suns,"

until our brain whirls and threatens to collapse under the pressure of the sublimity; and "lo! these are part of His ways, but the full thunder of His power who can comprehend?" His hand holds all these orbs; His will commands all these forces; His wisdom poises all these spheres and directs them in their course without a jar or catastrophe; His sceptre sways this mighty empire; His creating word called every portion of it into being; His providence upholds it every moment; His taste and goodness have adorned it with beauty and loveliness and enriched it with happiness and blessing. There is not a creature among its inhabitants from the highest archangel to the lowest insect but owes its being to His power and goodness. And all this is but "the hiding of His power," for His omnipotence could call millions of such universes into being in a moment. Nay, all this is but a scaffolding for the glory which He is preparing for the abode of His redeemed. The riches of His glory will not be complete until the new heavens and earth shall have emerged from the flames of a dissolving world and the New Jerusalem descended from heaven in the glory of God with streets of gold and gates of pearl and foundations of precious gems, and all the thrones are reared, and crowns are set, and the mansions are completed, and the glorified are shining "as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father," and we ourselves are crowned with all "the riches of His glory."

Oh beloved! we shall then understand something of the meaning of such verses as these, "I pray that God would grant you ACCORDING TO the riches of His glory, to be strengthened by His spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts by faith." Or again, "Strengthened with all might ACCORDING TO His glorious power unto all patience and long-suffering with joyfulness." Or again, "My God shall supply all your need ACCORDING TO the riches of His glory by Christ Jesus." It is according to the riches of His glory that He is working out the new creation in our hearts and preparing the more glorious temple of the soul for His own eternal abode. It is according to the riches of His glory that He is willing to strengthen the heart for all patience and long-suffering. And it is according to the riches of His glory that He is able and ready to supply all our need. There is nothing too hard for such a God, too rich and glorious for His wisdom, grace and love. He looks at the littleness of our faith and cries, "Hast thou not known, hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not neither is weary? There is no searching of His understanding. He giveth power to the faint and to them that have no might he increaseth strength."

Beloved, let us lift up our eyes and behold the glory of our God and begin to walk as sons and heirs, and claim, even in our minority, something of the riches of His glory.

V. THE RESURRECTION AND ASCENSION OF JESUS CHRIST.

"That ye may know what is the hope of His calling and what the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power to us-ward that believe, ACCORDING TO the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; and hath put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be the Head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all."

The resurrection and ascension of Jesus Christ have become for us the pledge and pattern of all our faith and hope can claim. The power that God hath wrought in Christ in raising Him from the dead and setting Him upon His own right hand is the very same power which we may expect Him to exercise to us-ward who believe. "The riches of the glory of this inheritance in the saints" is the standard of what we may share in our spiritual experience now. God has performed for us the most stupendous miracle of grace and power, and nothing can ever be too hard or too high for us to expect from "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ." The picture is a very definite as well as a very glorious one. Step by step we can ascend its transcendent and celestial heights with our ascending Lord, as we see Him rise, first above the mighty power of earth, and then above and far above all principality and power and might and dominion and every name that is named, not only in this world but in that which is to come, until all things are beneath His feet. And then as we gaze upon His lofty preeminence we are permitted to sit down by His side and claim all the fullness of His glory as our own. For all His ascension power and majesty are not for His own personal exaltation, but that He might become the Head over all things for His body the church, and He takes His high preeminence as our Representative and recognizes us as already seated with Him in the heavenly place. His resurrection, therefore, involves ours, His triumphs ours, His ascension ours, His rights are shared with us.

Do we require in our behalf the exercise of an authority that transcends all other authority? We have but to remember that He, our exalted Head, is sitting far above all principalities. Do we require a force to be exercised for us over-matching the mightiest forces of nature or of evil? He is sitting far above all power and might. Do we ask something which even natural law would seem to hinder? God already has done something in His resurrection which is superior to all law, for that is what "dominion" means. Are we confronted with imposing names and despised by human pride? We are sitting side by side with one who is exalted above every name that is named both in this world and that which is to come. Indeed, the whole economy of human life, the whole system of providence is a framework for the accomplishment of God's purposes for His redeemed people. Nations rise and fall, human society exists, great cities swarm with their inhabitants and move with the mighty currents of commerce and social life. All the events of the great world as they pass are but movements of Christ's mighty hand, primarily designed for those who immediately take part in them, but ultimately for the good of His church and the building up of His kingdom; and men and nations are but puppets in the hands of our anointed King, whom He uses for His wise purposes even when they are fulfilling their own pleasure, and then drops them when He pleases. After the resurrection of Christ, and in view of His enthronement there is nothing we need fear to claim according to this mighty measure, as part of the riches of our inheritance.

VI. CHRIST HIMSELF.

We read in Romans xv: "ACCORDING TO Christ Jesus." This is the highest of all standards, higher even than His resurrection, ascension and glory. As He is, so shall we be when He appears but, "As He is so are we," even here. "Ye are not of the world even as I am not of the world." "Love one another as I have loved you." "As I live by the Father so he that eateth me even he shall live by me." "As Thou hast sent me into the world even so send I them into the world." "When He shall appear we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is." Such are some of the touches of heavenly light which reveal our identity with Jesus and unfold the mystery of His life in us. Not only is He our example, but He is our life. Miniatures of Christ, God expects us to be, receiving and reflecting Him in all His fullness, our life His life, our love His love, His riches ours. We represent Him, we dwell among men not as citizens of earth, but dead to our old citizenship and walking like Him as if we had been sent specially from heaven on a mission from another world.

Beloved, is Christ our Pattern, our Type, our living Head, our Divine Standard and Measure? Are we determined to have nothing less and to be nothing less than even as He? Shall we cease to copy men, and follow only Him?

And even though we oft are conscious of very imperfect resemblance to the Great Original, are we still holding our standard as high as Christ? I have often noticed the artists in the great gallery copying the paintings of the masters. I have sometimes come back weeks afterwards and found them still working on the copy of some great painting. Their work was not complete, but their copy was, and while it hung upon the wall with its perfect form and tints their copy was constantly reaching closer approximation to the great object lesson. But if they had begun to copy the works of the artists around them or to complete the picture from their own recollection or conception of it, it would have soon become a cheap and worthless daub.

So let us always keep our eye upon the heavenly standard and be satisfied with nothing less than "ACCORDING TO Christ Jesus." Sometimes in Kindergarten schools a picture is held before the children for a little and then it is removed and they are required to tell from memory some of its features. Then it is held again and they are again required to tell or draw some of the features that they have noticed and marked until, at length, the whole object lesson is imprinted like a copy upon their minds. So God holds Jesus before us and bids us, not only follow our conception of Him, or the copies we see in others, but again and again contemplate the Original and hold Him constantly in view that even our conception of Christ shall be ever corrected, enlarged, vivified, until it shall be transformed to our inmost being, not only as the Pattern but as the very life of our life.

"Christ men," as one has said, "are the men God wants today." It would not hurt if this word became coined into Christian phraseology, and its meaning stamped upon all our life. A poor heathen Kroo boy came on board a ship, hundreds of miles from the Congo, and finding a party of missionaries going up the river, eagerly sought an interview with them and sent a message by them to one of the missionaries in the far interior. "Tell him," he said in his rude speech, "that when I left him two years ago I promised to be Christ's man. Tell him that I am Christ's man still." Rude and simple as the heathen conception was it was the truest and the highest that mortal thought can reach. It is God's own divine measure of Christian life, to be a "Christ man," living, loving, trusting, serving, suffering, overcoming, "ACCORDING TO Christ Jesus."

VII. ACCORDING TO THE POWER THAT WORKETH IN US.

"Now unto Him that is able to do exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or think, ACCORDING TO the power that worketh in us" (Eph. iii: 20).

"Whereinto I also labor, striving ACCORDING TO the power that worketh in me mightily" (Col. i: 29).

"ACCORDING TO the working whereby He is able to subdue all things unto Himself" (Phil iii: 21).

In these passages we have God's present working referred to in two directions; namely, in the believer's heart and in the sphere of providence and government. The one must ever keep pace with the other. God does work mightily in the forces around us, but we must allow Him to work within us or all the might of His providence shall be ineffectual for us. "He is able to do exceeding abundantly," but it must be wrought in us. It is "ACCORDING TO the power that worketh in us." All the forces of that mighty engine in the factory yonder are limited and measured by the attachment of the little pulley of each particular machine. It can drive a hundred printing presses if they are in contact, but its power is ACCORDING TO the measure in which each one will receive it and co-operate. God is waiting to work in each of us, indeed He is already working up to the full measure of our yieldedness, and we may have all which we are willing to have inwrought in our own being. The Holy Spirit is always in advance of us, pressing us on to more than we have yet wholly received and we may be very sure that ACCORDING TO the measure of His inward pressure will always be the external workings of God's Almighty hand. Whenever we find the wheels within in motion we may be very sure that the wheels of providence are moving in accord, even to the utmost bounds of the universe and to the utmost limits of God's Almighty power and supreme authority.

Let us then yield to the power that worketh in us to its full measure. Let our being be responsive to its slightest touch, so responsive that, like the Eolian harp, it will answer to the faintest breath of the Holy Spirit as He moves upon the chords of our inmost being.

VIII. ACCORDING TO OUR FAITH.

"ACCORDING TO THY FAITH be it unto thee" was Christ's great law of healing and blessing in His earthly ministry. This was what He meant when He said "with what measure ye mete it shall be measured to you again." All these mighty measures that we have been holding up are limited by the measures that we bring. God deals out His heavenly treasures to us in these glorious vessels, but each of us must bring our drinking cup and according to its measure we shall be filled. But even the measure of our faith may be a divine one. Thank God, the little cup has become enlarged through the grace of Jesus, until from its bottom there flows a pipe into the great ocean, and if that connection is kept open we shall find that our cup is as large as the ocean and never can be drained to the bottom. For He has said to us "Have the faith of God," and surely this is an illimitable measure.

A few weeks ago a noble band of missionaries landed upon the coast of Sierra Leone, filled with faith and holy enthusiasm. Before many days however three of their number had fallen victims to the dreadful African fever. Shortly afterwards one of these dear brothers was to us a very touching and wonderful message. He said that on his way across the Atlantic he had been led to see the truth of divine healing and had taken the Lord Jesus as his healer. Soon after, the death of these friends came upon him like a bewildering shock and for a few hours his faith seemed to be wholly paralyzed. Then he threw himself at the feet of Jesus and to his surprise there came upon him such a baptism of rest and confidence, with which he seemed to have nothing to do, that he rose not only comforted, but so established in His confidence, so assured that the Lord was his healer and keeper that he had no fear even of the failure of his faith, but was able to say with humble and holy confidence that come what might he would trust the

Lord alone, and was confident that his life and faith would be upheld until his work was done. His old faith had died, and out of its grave had come the faith of God. His little drinking cup had broken, and all the water had leaked out, but lo! a hand divine had opened through that broken cup a connection with that heavenly fountain, and henceforth his cup was not only full but full forevermore with all the fullness of God. He had passed out of himself into Christ, and was now able to meet the immeasurable promises with a trust as measureless and divine.

So let us, beloved, rise unto the fullness of Jesus and sweetly

"Find His fullness round our incompleteness,

Round our restlessness His rest."

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