

God's Reserve of Goodness

by J.R. Miller

J.R. Miller's sermon emphasizes that God's goodness is always reserved for us, revealed at the right moments in our lives, particularly during times of need and trial.

Scripture: Isaiah 43:1

Topics: "God's Provision", "Trust in God's Timing"

Description

J.R. Miller emphasizes that God's goodness is never exhausted and is always reserved for us until we truly need it. He illustrates how God's blessings are laid up in advance, much like a father saving resources for his children, and how both nature and spiritual provisions are revealed to us at the right moments in our lives. Miller explains that the treasures of God's goodness, whether in creation or in the promises of Scripture, become apparent during times of need, allowing us to experience their richness only when we face challenges. He reassures that even in sorrow and death, God's goodness is present, revealing greater blessings beyond our current understanding. Ultimately, Miller encourages believers to trust in God's perfect timing and provision, knowing that the best is yet to come.

Transcript

God never gives all he has to give. The time never comes when he has nothing more to bestow. We never reach the best in divine blessings; there is always something better yet to come. Every door that opens into a treasury of love, shows another door into another treasury beyond! The yet unrevealed is ever better than the already revealed. We need not fear that we shall ever come to the end of God's goodness, or to any experience for which he will have no blessing ready.

Yet God's goodness is not emptied out in heaps at our feet when we first start in faith's pathway; rather it is kept in reserve for us until we need it--and is then disbursed. The Scriptures speak of God's great goodness, as laid up for those who fear him. This is the divine method, both in providence and in grace. We think of one gathering food in bright summer days, when the harvests are golden, when the fruits hang on bending boughs, when the hillsides are purple with their vintage--and laying up for winter's use, when the fields shall be bleak, and the trees and vines bare. Or we think of a father gathering riches, and securing them in safe deposits or investments for his children when they shall grow up. So God has laid up goodness for his people.

God laid up goodness in the creation and preparation of the earth. Ages before man was made, God was fitting up this globe to be his home, storing in mountain, hill, and plain, in water, air, and soil, and in all

nature's treasures-- supplies for every human need. We think, for example, of the vast beds of coal laid up among earth's strata, ages and ages since, in order that our homes might be warmed and brightened in these later centuries of the iron, silver, gold, and other metals secreted in the veins of the rocks. We think of the medicinal and healing virtues stored in leaf, root, fruit, bark, and mineral; and of all the latent forces and properties lodged in nature, to be called out from time to time to minister to human needs. No sane and sensible man will say that all this was accidental; it was divine forethought that laid up all this goodness, for the welfare of God's children.

The same is true of spiritual provision. In the covenant of his love, in the infinite ages of the past--God laid up goodness for his people. Redemption was no afterthought: it was planned before the foundation of the world. Then Christ, in his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death--laid up goodness for his people. We sometimes forget, while we pillow our heads on the promises of God, and rest secure in the atonement, and enjoy all the blessings of redemption and the hopes of glory--what these things cost our Redeemer. In those long years of poverty, in those sharp days of temptation, in those keen hours of agony, he was laying up treasures of blessing and glory for us. There is not a hope or a joy of our Christian faith, that does not come to us out of the treasures stored away by our Redeemer during the years of his humiliation and the hours of his agony.

But all this goodness was laid up. The treasures were not all opened at the beginning. This is true, both in nature and in grace. So far as we know, there has been nothing new created since the beginning--but there has been a continual succession of developments of hidden treasures and powers to meet the new needs of the multiplying and advancing race. Thus, when fuel began to grow scarce--then the vast coal-beds were discovered. They were not created then for the emergency: ages before, they had been "laid up," but the storehouse was only then opened to meet the world's need. So, when material for light was in danger of exhaustion, the reservoirs of oil, long hidden in reserve, were opened. And in these recent days, men are discovering the powers of electricity--not a new creation--but an energy which has flowed silent and unperceived through all space from the beginning, only to become available in these later days. Human need is the key that unlocks the storehouses of God's provision for the children of men.

In spiritual things, the method is the same. Take the Bible for illustration. It is a great treasury of reserved blessing. There has not been a chapter, a line, a word, added to it since the pen of inspiration wrote the final 'Amen'. Yet every new generation finds new things in the Holy Book. This is true in all individual experience. As children we study the Bible, and on its words; but many of the precious sentences have no meaning for us. The light, the comfort, or the help is there--but we do not see it. Indeed, we cannot see it until we have larger experience, and a fuller sense of need.

For a time the rich truths of the Bible seem to hide away, refusing to disclose to us their meaning. We read them in sunny youth--but do not discover the blessing or help that is in them. Then we move on into the midst of the struggles, trials, and conflicts of real life--and new senses begin to reveal themselves in the familiar sentences. Promises that seemed pale before, as if written with invisible ink--now begin to glow with rich meaning. Experience reveals their preciousness.

Every Christian who has lived many years, and passed through trials and struggles, knows how texts with which he has been familiar from childhood--but in which he has never before found any special help, all at once, in some new experience of need or trial--flash out, like newly lighted lamps, and pour bright beams upon his path. The light was not new; it had shone there all the while--but he could not see it until now, because other lights were shining about him, obscuring this one.

Most personal knowledge of the Bible has to be learned in this way. The words lie in our memory, and the years come and go, with their experiences. The light of human joy wanes; health gives way; disappointment comes; sorrow breaks in upon us; some human trust fails; the sunlight that flowed about us yesterday has gone out, and our path lies in darkness. Then the words of God that have lain so long in memory, without apparent brightness, flash out like heavenly lamps, and pour their welcome radiance all about us. Did those words have no light in them before? Yes! the lamps were shining all the while--but our eyes did not discern the brightness until this world's lamps went out, and it grew dark about us. The goodness was laid up, reserved until we needed it.

God's storehouses of spiritual truth never are opened to us until we really need their blessing. They are placed, so to speak, along our life-path, the right supply at the right point. By the plan of God, in every desert--there are oases; at the foot of each sharp, steep hill--there are stairs for climbing; in every dark gorge--there are lighted lamps; at every stream--there is a bridge. But we find none of these--until we come to the place where we need them. And why should we? Will it not be soon enough to see the bridge when we stand by the stream? Will it not be soon enough, when it grows dark, for the lamps to shine out? Will it not be soon enough, when the cupboard is empty, for God to send bread?

The storehouse in which God's goodness is laid up, is found always at the point of need. Take a promise or two for illustration; "In the time of trouble--he shall hide me in his pavilion." It is very clear that we cannot get this promise when we are in joy and safety--but only when we are in peril. "Do not be afraid, for I have ransomed you. I have called you by name; you are mine. When you go through deep waters and great trouble--I will be with you. When you go through rivers of difficulty--you will not drown! When you walk through the fire of oppression--you will not be burned up; the flames will not consume you. For I am the Lord, your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior." Isaiah 43:1-3. This goodness is laid up in the midst of the wild waves, and cannot be found in any sunny field.

"I will preserve the orphans. Your widows, too, will be able to depend on Me for help." Jeremiah 49:11. This promise can never come to the tender wife when she leans on the strong arm of her husband, nor to the happy children when they cluster about the living, loving father's knee. It can be found only by the dark coffin, or by the grave of love--it lies hidden amid the desolation of sorrow. Thus, the divine treasures are placed in the midst of the very needs themselves, and we cannot get the help or the comfort--until we stand within the circle of the need.

Many a mother, when she reads how some other Christian mother bore herself with sweet resignation when her child died, says, "I could not give up my child in that way--I have not grace enough to do it." But why should she have such grace now? It will be time enough when she needs it. That supply can be gotten at only when she is in the midst of the experience itself. While the child lives, the mother's duty is not sorrow, not submission--but rather, with loving fidelity, to train her child for this life, and for the life beyond; and for this duty, the mother will receive all needful grace, if she seeks it in faith. Then, if death comes to her child, grace will be given, enabling her to meet the bereavement, and sweetly to submit to God's disclosed will.

Many people dread death, and fear that they can never meet it with triumph; but God does not give grace for victorious dying--when one's duty is to live. He gives then grace for living, grace for honesty, grace for fidelity, grace for heroism in life's battle; then, when death comes, when life's work is finished, and the hour comes for the departure, he will give dying grace. The storehouse in which that supply is laid up, is found only in the valley of shadows; and we cannot get the prepared and reserved goodness, until we

come to the experience to which it is pre-eminently suited.

The best of God's goodness is laid up in heaven; hence, to a Christian, death is always a glorious gain. A poet represents our first parent as trembling when he thought of the sun setting the first day of his life, and of night's coming. It seemed to him, that only calamity could result to this fair world. But, to his amazement, when the sun went down softly and silently, thousands of brilliant stars flashed out, and lo! creation infinitely widened in his view. The night revealed far more than it hid. Instead of fly, flower, and leaf, which the sun's beams showed--the darkness unveiled all the glorious orbs of the sky. So, similarly, we shun and dread death. It seems to be only darkness, and seems to hide the lovely things on which our eyes have looked; but, in reality, it will reveal far more than it hides. If it shuts our eyes to the little, perishing things of earth--it will unveil to us the splendors of eternity. The best things are laid up in heaven, and can only be gotten when we pass through death's gate into the Father's house.

Thus, this principle of reserved goodness runs through all God's economy. Blessings are laid up, and are given to us--as we need them. Every experience brings to us its own store of needed grace. Sorrow comes; but, veiled in the sorrow, the angel of comfort comes too. It grows dark--but then the lamps of promise shine out. Losses are met--but there is a divine secret that changes loss into gain. A bitter cup is given--but it proves to be medicine for our soul. Death comes, and seems the end of all. But, lo! it is only the beginning of life; for it leads us away from empty shadows--to eternal realities.

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