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Substance of Sermon preached by our Pastor
on Thursday Evening, September 19, 1974.

Lesson. Luke 11. vv. 1-28.

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, Unto him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus throughout all ages, world without end. Amen. Ephesians 3. vv. 20-21.

You are conversant with the amazing and beautiful and sublime language of the Text. It constitutes really a doxology; a song sung by all the redeemed, ransomed Church of God to their blessed Lord for this unmeasurable response to their petitions. Their salvation is not pendant on their prayers: it rests on the eternal Rock and the sacred dimensions of the love of God as declared in the context. But it is the purpose of God and the first function of the implantation of eternal life in the soul that they should begin to pray, and enter the spiritual exercise of seeking God: that they should become aware of Him, of themselves, and of their tremendous need, and the breath divine which the Holy Spirit breathes into their souls causes them to breathe out confessions, supplications and praises to the most high God. A tremendous lustre that is inexpressible is given to the sacred ordinance of prayer by the divine fact that our Saviour Himself, all through His life here as our Surety as He wrought the work of redemption, lived a prayer life. It is wonderful to think of Jesus Christ praying to His divine Father, and I will name this; He came to the place where He said; "I pray for them." It is the longing desire of our souls to know His prayer embraced us. He does not pray now. In heaven as our great High Priest in His New Covenant office He intercedes and mediates, as I have taught you, as a Demandant because it is based on His vicarious work of Redemption and He has possessed the blessings He merited by His work of redemption.

So the Text is the end result of all the response of a loving, gracious faithful, merciful God to all the tremendous volume of prayer that goes to His heavenly Throne through the merits of Christ's mediation and His

sacred method and principle of responding to every petition of His children in all ages is most beautifully expounded in the Text. What is it? The divine response to the breath of prayer is that it exceeds all we can ask or think. So I want to suggest to your minds that this is, and is for this congregation a tremendous, unparalleled, and most powerful incentive and encouragement to you to pray, and to pray on, because the Lord has only one method in responding, and He will never respond in a way less than we can ask or think. His response completely exceeds, excels eclipses all you ask and all you can possibly conceive. So there could be no greater incentive or encouragement to the people of God to pray than this blessed word through the apostle by the Spirit to our souls. I hope the Lord will give me grace to unfold the word to you so it may lodge sweetly, unctuously, powerfully in your souls.

Let us view for a moment why it is His response to living prayer exceeds all we ask or have capacity to conceive. Why is it? I should really give you time to ponder well in your soul because some of you have already experienced it. What is the basic reason for the exceeding of all we ask or can possibly conceive in our mind? It is this. The blessings of God are spiritual and eternal and glorious, and they flow from His eternity and infinity, His wisdom. Unfathomable love; boundless, rich grace flows from a divine source we shall never fathom. If I could put it to you in this way; take the fulness that resides in Christ of grace, love, truth, mercy, justice, faithfulness and power. The vast reservoir of divine love, unction, grace and power is to supply the whole election of grace. If you think of the vastness of the fulness and in these terms, - it has supplied every chosen vessel from Adam and Eve, right down through the generations and ages to the present time, and it will go on supplying all the needs of the ~~many~~ people of God to the last chosen vessel, yet it is not in the slightest diminished. So think of the boundless reservoir of grace, mercy, love, power in Christ for His Church. You think of self, and of yourself as a vessel, and a vessel, as you hope, to honour. Your vessel has a limited capacity. For instance, not to refer to myself, but a few times in life I have ^{known} for the heavens to be opened. I have seen the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, and the refulgent beams of glory have irradiated my soul, and quickly my vessel

has filled and run over, and a few times I have felt, Lord, if the divine irradiation communicated from Thy fulness continues it will be impossible for me to remain in the body or in the world. It will not take much to fill your vessel. So that is the reason why the blessing of God completely eclipses and exceeds all we ask or can conceive, because of His glorious faithfulness and character, and our vessels are of small capacity.

I want to demonstrate as to how the Lord has been pleased to respond in this manner to His people. Where there is a living prayer, that prayer will usually be specific: that is to say, in some sacred detail you will express to the Lord the felt desires of your soul. Take the case of Solomon. The paramount need he felt was that the Lord should communicate to him a commensurate measure of wisdom according to his exalted office. He did not pray for riches, long life, or the life of his enemies. This then was being specific. "and God said, Ask what I shall give thee." He asked for wisdom and discernment, and his speech pleased the Lord. O how it ascended to heaven! perfumed by the holy incense of Christ's merit, and the Lord gave in a measure beyond all men, and as a special mark of divine approbation God gave him two other blessings he had not asked for, riches and honour. This demonstrates it.

O my friends, the Throne of Grace is open. Christ reigns there. There is every encouragement for a poor penitent sinner to come, and this is the Lord's method and plan in responding to your petitions. So spread the case of Solomon before the Lord, and the Lord favour you in the same way. I want to comment on this because I feel what some of you feel. I shall try to express to you the diagnosis of your symptoms. I shall speak to you, child of God, in sore trial, in adversity and distress, as godly, saintly Job. He was stripped of everything, and the language of the hymn was most suited to him;

"My earthly joys are from me torn,
And oft an absent God I mourn." (289)

He was in that place where every single earthly joy was torn from him, and he remained for a while in this great enigma; the unsolved problem and mystery of God's dealings with him. He did not understand why the Almighty was thus dealing with him. Now I can almost hear you say; "I

have been trying to pray for a long time concerning a certain matter. Things are getting worse; not better. My prayer has not been beating the air: it has not been vague. It has been based on the promises of God, yet it^{is} as though "He shutteth out my prayer." Now you are bringing to us this subject and sounding on the gospel trumpet, that God will answer in a way that exceeds all we can ask or think." My friends, it is more precious to be a humble, praying soul than to possess the earth. I will tell you why. The power of prayer is unparalleled, or rather, the power the Lord liberates and exercises in response to the breathings of His saints. Prayer can turn a powerful nation with all its armaments. Undoubtedly our salvation was the Lord's response to prayer, and He turned the powerful German dictator to the East; to Russia. You know the boasts they made. He put on his uniform and took an oath, together with his generals and the head of the Air Force, and they said they would never take their uniform off until England was defeated,- this tiny island in weakness and with little defence. What defeated Hitler? Prayer. Presently he turns his attention to the vast wastes of the plains of the Soviet Union, and the elements of God defeated him,- the Winter.

What about it?

"Wrestling prayer can wonders do;
Bring relief in deepest straits!
Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates," (397)

I shall never forget the blessedness of that verse to me in my teens, when my arm went through a window and I nearly bled to death. It looked as if I should never have much use in my right hand,- as if it would be useless for the rest of my life, even if my life was saved. Mercifully I saw the response to prayer. A young surgeon in North Street and his wife were on the spot, and they showed tremendous efficiency and affection. Then it was not certain as to the issue. After the anaesthetic and the post-operative period, I remember the force of this blessed verse, When I was on my feet in my dressing gown, I saw a man sawing a log, and I said to myself, What a favour to be able to use a saw! and I may never use my right hand again, and God brought that to my heart; "Wrestling prayer." To you who are in trial, that is the only thing for you. Prayer

is an instrument.

"Prayer can force a passage through
Iron bars and brazen gates."

See what prayer does! the Lord liberating love, mercy, healing, the divine touch to soul and body in response to prayer. I do not wish to obtrude myself on you, but I speak to the glory of God, so I can say; "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," that is, faith; potent faith. When the Lord gave the word, He gave me faith to believe my hand would be normal. Do you see what I mean?

Let me complete the word to you in adversity. It is a deep path; it is a blessed path. You will know the beauty and blessedness of your Redeemer. You will know how firm is your foundation. You will be close to Him. This is one of the most amazing statements of sheer faith in the Book of God, and it is a principle we need to be well taught, and which I would inculcate in my ministry. "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him.- If He kills me I shall still trust Him." I feel to go aside to dilate on this. If the Lord has blessed you as a poor guilty condemned sinner with a revelation of His glorious Person, and has caused divine love to flow into your soul,- pardon and peace,-and has sealed you an heir of glory, the Lord give you the sweet confidence of faith, and cast not away therefore your confidence, Try to avoid living so much on frames and feelings. That is how we inculcate this particular doctrine: rest on the Rock; cast yourself on Christ and feel as good Bunyan said; "I feel I shall blindfolded leap into eternity on Christ." That is how I feel. There are times when you are not blessed with an ecstasy of joy; you have no wonderful spiritual emotion, but you cast yourself, lean on your precious Redeemer even in the dark. It is the same with a promise. If the Lord has given you a promise, plead it before Him. Tell Him His Name and honour is at stake, and you will cling to this and to the promise. Moses told the Lord if He cast away Israel; "blot me, I pray thee, out of thy book. Lord, if the nation goes down I go with it. If Thou forsake Israel I go with them." This is sheer faith, and there is nothing more honouring to the Lord than this. Faith is as a grain of mustard seed: mustard is potent. Plead on, pray on.

What was the issue with Job? the end result? He must have felt he had lost everything; family, health, substance, all, really. His friends misjudged and misunderstood him and accused him. But the day came when the Lord turned his captivity. Have you known what it is to be in captivity? or are coming into to it now? in captivity to your distresses, to the temptations of Satan; to sorrows and trials, and sometimes to your own spirit, and the Lord turns your captivity. I am certain as I stand here that there are precious souls who are silent under my humble ministry. The Lord will turn your captivity. You are in captivity: the Lord will turn it. There will be heavenly music and melody. They "were beyond measure astonished" for the poor man with the impediment in his speech, and they said; "He hath done all things well." This is it.

Let us take a look at the things with Job. He had lost his health; he was covered with sore boils from the sole of his foot unto his crown,- the whole area of the dermis. In the original the word 'boil' is a grievous ulcer. From his crown to his feet he was covered with awful ulcers. O what a man of prayer he was! I tell you, you will get ^{where} your prayers no one will be able to identify, only God. "Like a crane or a swallow, so did I chatter: I did mourn as a dove: mine eyes fail with looking upward: O Lord, I am oppressed; undertake for me." said Judah's king Hezekiah. This is it: the loud, clamorous note of a crane, the twittering of a swallow; groans, sighs, tears. What a man or woman of prayer! If only you can shed your tears at the feet of Christ, and Christ take your tears and put them into His bottle! and one day you will come again with rejoicing, bringing your sheaves with you.

Take the beauty of the Book of Job. It is almost a biography of Job,- and you see the end of the Lord. James tells you; "Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and have seen the end of the Lord." It is the purpose of God unfolding in the issue. What is the end? gloom? darkness? misery? adversity? No! it is bright sunshine. "The Lord turned the captivity of Job, when he prayed for his friends;" He received earthly goods; he had the Spirit of Christ. "also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before." Surely this exceeded all he could ask or think,- family, health, prosperity. It was spiritual prosperity. "Also the Lord gave Job twice as much as he had before...So the Lord blessed the latter end of Job more

than his beginning." This is one thing I desire, that in the latter days of my life and ministry I may know the greatest blessings of all; to live near Him and to be ready when He calls. That is the principle thing.

"Now unto him that is able to do," That is to say, the Lord does things. He is able to quicken sinners: able to do it. A prodigal returning: He is able to do. Able to reveal Himself to a perishing sinner: able to do. Able to do it to a dying malefactor. Able to deliver you out of all your afflictions: able to do it. I hope this theme will just permeate your spirits so ^{you} may ponder it. He is able to do things: able to deliver Daniel out of the lions' den: able to deliver the three Hebrews out of the fire. Able to deliver Jonah out of the whale's belly, - "Out of the belly of hell cried I." Able to do it.

I feel I have a number of matters I want Him to do of His mercy and love. He is able to do it. Surely the greatest wonder is to save me, a vile wretch. "Able to do exceeding abundantly" When will you know the full glory of the Text? Presently you will come to the tranquil waters of the harbour; to your desired haven. When you come you will draw your little bark that has been ~~th~~ough the storms of life and outridden them all, and as you come Christ is there in all His glory to welcome and receive you. "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." Don't you think you will be astonished beyond measure to find yourself there? Amen.