

**THE
BON AIR
PULPIT**

October 1, 2000

Scripture: 11 Corinthians 9:8-14

Sermon : *God Blesses Our Obedience*

Every Sunday when I stand, I read a portion of God's Word and if I were to ask you, "Do you believe the Bible is the Word of God?" almost everybody in this room would say yes. Well, let me ask you the difference. Suppose I came to you today with a certified letter addressed just to you and when you ask who it was from, it said God. Do you understand that what I am reading for you is a certified letter just to you and that what I am reading to you is the communication of God's word to you, and I hope that when you hear me reading it that you will sense that it is a direct message from God and it is meant specifically for you.? So let me read for you today from the book of 11 Corinthians Chapter 9, Verse 8. What you are going to see in Verse 8 is the little word *all* is just going to appear time and time again and finally a synonym for *all*, it talks about God's provision for our life. Listen, God is able to make all grace abound to you, so that in all things, at all times, having all you need, you may abound in synonym every good work, as it is written he that scattereth abroad his gifts to the poor, his righteousness endures forever. Now he who supplies seed to the sower and bread for food will also supply and increase your store of seed and will enlarge the harvest of your righteousness. You will be made rich in every way so that you can be generous on every occasion and through your generosity will result in thanksgiving to God. When you read the Bible you see that God is constantly challenging people to do far beyond what they are presently doing. When you first meet Abraham he is a very wealthy herdsman in the country of Iran and God comes to him and says, *I want you to leave your home country, I want you to move all your business operation*, but the catch is he doesn't tell him where he is to go and he says to him, *I want you to go where I lead you*. When you meet Moses, Moses is a son of a king of Egypt, but he comes one day and identifies himself with the slaves of his daddy and he says to them, "You know I need to leave this area because my father has one policy and I have another and when you meet him he is very safe in the Sinai Peninsula." And then God comes to him and says, *Moses I want you to leave the desert, I want you to go back to the king and I want you to tell him that I command that you let all of those slaves go*. When you meet Jonah he is a prophet that is hunkered down in his country because his neighboring country is destroying them and God comes to him and says, *this is what I want you to do. I want you to go to the capitol city of your greatest enemy and I want you to tell them about the forgiveness of God*. And when you turn to the New Testament there is Paul the orthodox Jew, but God says *I want you to lay aside all of your Jewishness and all of your rituals and I want to call you to be an apostle to Gentiles, I want you to go where you have never dreamed before*. Now when you begin to read in the Bible what you sense is that God's consistent pattern is to call people to do more than they ever thought they could do. And what God does is that God comes and he says, *I want you to move beyond the comfortable, I want you to think beyond the obvious, and I want you to act beyond the ordinary*.

There is a story of a man in history that some of you have read about that probably serves as a good parable for us. His name is William Carey. William Carey lived in the 1700's in England. He was a maker and mender of shoes, but it was at a time when a lot of explorers were finding new lands all around the world and there was a real cauldron of intellectual curiosity and William Carey went down to the butcher shop and bought some butcher paper and he put a cross in front of him where he was making the shoes and when he would learn something he would put it up, he would start drawing the maps and he would include this country and he would learn, and when he learned more he began then to go down and buy more butcher paper until finally it covered his room.

This is the parable for your life. God wants you always to be buying more butcher paper. God wants you always to be learning more. God wants you always to be seeing new visions. God is always in the business of challenging you and because I know how God works I don't have any doubt when I come on a service like this to be aware that there are people here and God is challenging you to do something that you never thought you could do. He is always asking you to be more than you are and he is always pointing to you and saying, "This is what I would like for you to do."

Now our problem is that our spirits are not very expandable. We get a little high up in the spirit and we get kind of dizzy. I love what Peter Marshall, the famed Presbyterian minister said about us. He said, "God has dressed us up with deep sea diving uniforms and we go busily about pulling stoppers out of

bathtubs.” Simply, we like the comfortable, the safe, the secure. We don’t like to stretch out too far. We don’t like to extend ourselves too far and interestingly enough that everyone of these stories that I started the sermon with, everyone of them said this, “God I can’t do that.” God you have got the wrong person and what I also know about us is that everyone of us react the same way. When God comes with a challenge our first thing is God I can’t do it, I don’t have the ability, I don’t have resources, the timing is not right, God you must have made a mistake.

Now that is the reason that I wanted to read for you this passage of scripture for today. I want you to see the cycle of it and this is what it says. Here is need. Then what God does is he comes and puts a believer to meet that need. What God does is that he blesses the believer so that they have adequate resources to do everything God wants them to do. And when the believer meets the need then people give glory to God and where you are in the process is that you live in the world of overwhelming need and what God wants to do is put you next to the need, God wants to then bless you so that you can meet the need and then there will be a sense of praise to God. Now in most peoples’ offices, they keep little mementos. This is one that I keep. Sometime people come in and ask me what little things mean in my office. Let me tell you what this means. I learned years ago that this shell was only about this big at the very top. In it is a living organism, as that little thing grows the house gets crowded, so it has to make it a little bigger and the bigger it gets the bigger the shell is. Now the reason I keep this is a reminder, if you want to, you can live in this little part, but if you want to get bigger then you need to expand and expand. I keep this to remind me that as long as I live, God wants me to continue to build and get bigger and get broader and this is the lesson of the parable that I always keep before me.

Now God wants to do the same with you and yet I know that what you are saying is, “Well God, what I have I can’t meet those needs, so here are the principles I want you to learn. Principle number one is, God will provide if you will obey, so that whatever your calling is and whatever that need is, if you will obey him, God will make every resource that He has available to you to get it done. Now let me remind you it doesn’t reverse the other way. Most of us come to God and say, God if you provide then I will do. No, it doesn’t work that way. God says you do and I will provide. And the reason God does that is that God wants you to learn to trust His resources. God wants you to learn to trust Him. Now if you can do it by yourself you don’t need Him. If you have all that you need why do you need to depend upon Him. So he is going to deliberately put you in areas that are beyond your resource and the reason is so that you can learn and trust in Him. And if you are willing to do what he wants you to do then he will provide for your need.

Now so many times I find people who are sitting around saying, “God if you will provide I will do.” So hear the word. You are waiting for God to provide, God is waiting for you to proceed, and He is saying if you will step out, if you will trust in me then I want you to know that you can depend upon my resources I will provide. There is a little story that makes its way around on a regular basis. It is about a daddy that was working down in his basement, electricity went off, his little son was up in the kitchen and he was very frightened, came and hollered down to his daddy. “Daddy, are you down there?” “Yes I am down here,” “Daddy, I can’t see you.” “But son I am down here.” “Daddy, I want to come to you.” “Good, just walk down the steps and I will meet you.” “But daddy I can’t see you.” “Then follow my voice.” God wants you to know that while you cannot see Him, follow His voice and you then can learn to trust in Him. God will meet every need when you obey His will.

Second principle that comes out of it, God promises to provide only when we do His will. What that means is you can know God’s will. God is not some body up in heaven whose delighting in you stumbling along saying I wish I could understand what God wants me to do. God can communicate that. God wants to communicate that to you. It may take a little while to understand it but God can reveal it unto you and when you know His will, then God says I will provide it but here the second point. He won’t do it if you just decide to go out and do what you want to and say oh guess what God now get me out of this bind I got myself in. So the key is, understanding what His will is and when that is done then it can be done.

Third thing I need to tell you, God provides on when we put ourselves at the point of need. If I come and I say well I can do this then you don’t need him. But if you are willing to follow Him and do what He says then God says guess what I will do, I will meet that need. Let me give you an illustration. There is a wonderful passage of scripture in the book of Acts, it says this, You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me. Let me show you how that works. Suppose you say I don’t want to be a witness. You know what you are not going to get. You are not going to get the power. He is not going to give you the blessings if you are not going to do what He wants you to do. Now some people come to me and say, “You know, I wish I could have a fresh walk with God, I wish I could know the power of God in my life.” Well I tell you how you get it. You start obeying. If you say I will do what you want me to do and what He wants you to do is always more than what you can do, so you

have to come to the point where you depend and trust in Him. And only when that is done in your life can that ever happen. Now all of my life I have worked in church and all of my life I have heard this statement. Well Pastor, you know our church has to be run with sound business principles. Now I know what you mean by that and we have a lot of capable people in our church that operate on sound business principles. I know what you mean by that, but let me tell you, there is something they don't teach you at Harvard Business School, that when we do what we can and follow God's will, God will provide to make sure that His will gets done. And when all of us do what we can do then we come and say, God following your will we want to obey you and God then pours out His resources to enable us to do it. We are today celebrating a five year process. Five years ago we appointed our first committee to try to determine the building needs of this church. Five years later we are finally celebrating. I told somebody I didn't know the gestation period for a new building was so long. Five years. Five years ago this congregation said, "This is what God wants. It is far more than what we can ever do but we will do what God wants and God will provide. When you get ready to go in that facility what you will be able to say is, God has kept His promise. He has provided. And what my prayer for this congregation is, is that people will always be able to look and say here is a group of people who believe God's promise that if they do what He says they can know He will provide.

I found this true in my life as a very young Christian. I was a sophomore in college, I was in business, I had plans to go with my uncle into his business and I began to hear this irresistible voice, I began to understand God wanted me to be a preacher. Once I understood that, I said I will do that. That meant because of the way it was structured I had to give up my scholarship and part of the reason that delayed so long is God I am in college, how am I going to stay in school. But I became convinced that is what He wanted so I just said ok. My brother just above me, at that time was in the Air Force, he was in a two man fighter jet, and he was promoted. As brothers we don't write each other letters but that day I went down to the college post office and there was a letter from my brother with a new title of how he had just been promoted. And he said, "You know I have just received this promotion and what I wanted you to know is that all of the money I make in the promotion, I want sent to you and every month you will receive a check from me." And what I realized was that my brother's promotion check was exactly the amount of money I needed to stay in school. And what I learned as a young Christian I wanted to come to you now many years later to say that in all of these years when I have done what He wanted me to do, He has met every need of my life. The scripture says, "He will make all things so you can do everything that I want you to do." And whether it means for you some new ministry that God is calling you to, whether it is God calling you to school, whether it is God calling you to go to seminary, whether God is calling you to assume some responsibility in our church, whether God is calling you to do something in your business that you are convinced is God's will, I want you to understand today if you are following what God wills, God will meet every need you have.

There is a little statement that I wanted you to walk away with today, I don't know where it came from. It is one of those things that is just common Christian property, but this is what it says, "The finger of God will never point where the hand of God does not provide". The finger of God will never point where the hand of God does not provide. And if you know He is pointing, then head out because all of the resources of God are available in His hand to enable you to do what He called you to do. Now I don't know what His calling is for you, I know He is, He is trying to expand you. Don't hold back because you say I can't, in Christ you can move out.

Some of you here today have been thinking about giving your heart and your life to Christ, you need to come to do that today, some of you are Christians who very much need to get involved in this church, you need to come and move your life and membership. I know it is difficult, but everything that God asks you to do is difficult, but you do it in His strength, so you need to come. And some of you perhaps need to come and say, "God is calling me to do something else and I want to surrender to it today, believing God will provide," so we are going to stand together and sing a hymn of invitation and in the name of Christ I invite you to come and make your decision. We do it right now please, as we stand together and sing.