

January 2009

Provision

I must admit that when I arrive at that part of the Lord's Prayer which says: "...and give us each day our daily bread...", I often gloss over it or struggle a bit knowing how to apply it to my life. But, not so much these days! The great economic engine of our country is gasping for air, and so are many people. For many of us, each day is getting longer, more complex, and less certain.



Under these conditions, especially, I find myself driven deeper into the promises of God. There are indeed many passages in the Bible which offer assurance that the Lord will provide for those who turn in trust to Him and ask for help. The one passage which stands out for me above all others is from Matthew, chapter 6, verses 31 through 34, which reads: *"Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What will we eat?' or 'What will we drink?' or 'What will we wear?' For it is the Gentiles who strive for all these things; and indeed your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well. So, do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring worries of its own. Today's trouble is enough for today."*

In this same vein of thought, I can hear in the back of my head, Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones singing, *"You can't always get what you want... but you get what you need."*

Fear is the biggest foe to God's promises and divine offers of assurance. I will never forget one time during one of my overseas trips, I found myself in the mountain areas of Brazil in a small cleared-out area having been led there by a Presbyterian Brazilian pastor. There in a circle huddled and sitting on the ground looking up at me with fragile smiles on their faces were 30 or 40 men barely dressed or clean. The pastor explained to me that these men were using prayer in Christ and the Twelve Steps as they understood them to overcome and recover from their common addiction to alcohol and drugs. They had nothing else besides themselves, this little area in the mountains, and their faith in God that He would provide what they needed. Many if not all the men had lost their jobs, and many had lost their families. At this small



"camp," there were no professional counselors, no medicines, barely enough food, and only one dedicated Presbyterian pastor trying to help these men as best he could. These men gave me an even greater compassion for the particular needs of an unreached people group; but they also gave me a new, needed perspective to face my own personal challenges, fears, and lack of faith in God's promises for my own life.

The reality in the world today is that nearly one-fourth of the world's 6.5 billion people live on less than one dollar a day of income. In my work with Presbyterian Frontier Fellowship, I am in constant contact with people from many different cultures whose commitment and dedication to their faith while they live in the most meager way, literally blows my mind. Many of them have dug deeper into God's Scripture than I will ever hope to do. I have seen God provide for these people in the most miraculous ways. As the 6th chapter of Matthew asks, they live each day in the most radical fashion. They need no great intellectual proof of God's existence. God is moving through every fiber in their bodies as they scramble to survive each day; especially the parents who struggle to feed their children. When these

faithful people begin to feel the presence of God in their lives and experience unexpected provisions appearing from here and there, their faith and wisdom increases incredibly; they often become acutely aware of one of life's most important distinctions: knowing what we humans need versus what we want.

Without God at the center of our lives, we create within ourselves huge emotional and spiritual holes, which we often feed in the unhealthiest ways.

Sadly, among the many things we frequently do under these circumstances is buy, purchase, and consume far more than we need.



Is God really out there? Can we count on him? Does the Lord really provide what we need to eat, drink, wear and enjoy - or do the weak, dumb, lazy, unlucky, and bad rightfully slide into ill health, deserved embarrassment, and even death when the money, ingenuity and hard work finally run out?

For many people in America today we are starting all over again, loading up the wagons, walking down the dusty trails, at times along side our spouse and children. And, we may or may not even have a horse to pull the wagon.

But, if we choose, we can embrace the promise of God that He will provide for us, have faith in His profound love for us, giving us courage to face the next day. *"Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find; knock and the door will be opened to you."* Matthew 7:7.