

The excellence and extensiveness of God's prerogative. (Quality: Very good)

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[0 : 00] Psalm 104 verses 28 and 29 That thou givest them they gather.

Thou openest thine hand, thou art filled with good. Thou hidest thy face, thou art troubled. Thou takest away their breath, they die.

And return to their dust. That thou givest them they gather. Thou openest thine hand, thou art filled with good.

Thou hidest thy face, thou art troubled. Thou takest away their breath, they die. And return to their dust.

Thou hidest thy face, thou art troubled. Thou hidest thy face, thou art troubled. Thou hidest thy face, thou art troubled. Thou art troubled. Thou find in the group of psalms, around about this part of the word of God, are filled with exhortations to praise the Lord, to bless the Lord, to give thanks unto his name.

[1 : 19] There are many points of truth, which are brought to our attention, which will induce in our souls a desire, as well as having the reason for worshipping the Lord, and engaging in this offering of thanksgiving and praise.

Amongst other things, we find the words of our text describing that which evidently gives to us the excellence, as well as the extensiveness, of God's prerogative.

that thou givest them, they gather. Nothing is gathered except what God gives.

It is worth noticing and remembering that in the Old Testament times, and to an extent it would apply today, that when the harvest was gathered in, there were certain that was to be left for the poor to gather up.

We find this particularly so in the book of Ruth, where she gathered after the reapers. But we also find this, that there were handfuls of purpose.

[3 : 25] In our gathering, has it appeared to us sometimes that it has been a handful of purpose, because the Lord has placed it in our way.

Maybe we have felt the substance of his whisper in our ears, this is yours. This is for you. How good that is.

No question then in our mind that we have stolen anything because God has told us that this is for you. Now that will certainly come under the category of these words, that thou givest them, they gather.

Whatever God gives must be for our good. There can be no question about that.

There is no evil design in the mind of a holy and righteous God in respect to his church.

[4 : 43] So then, whatever God may give, it can only be for your enlargement, for your spiritual profit, for your uplifting, and if sometimes it should appear to be for your downcasting, it is only to emphasize subsequently the remarkable power that God has to uplift the downcast.

That thou givest them, they gather. We should never approach these kinds of scriptures or any scripture for that matter without looking, first of all, at the great giver of all.

That is, in the text, that thou givest. We have many benefits. Do we ever consider the giver?

Do we ever think upon the greatness of the giver? The merciful kindness of the giver? The goodness, indeed, of the giver.

Do we look at that which we receive and are so taken with what we have received that we have no eyes to look up to our giver?

[6 : 24] It would be in the proper order of things to put us between ourselves if we received a gift that we should look at the person in the eye to say thank you for that gift.

Shall we be so absorbed with the gifts that God has given to us that we shall forget to give thanks unto the Lord and lifting up our eyes unto God?

God. We should not take it that Christian experience is always contained in the attitude of the publican when he could not submit much as lift up his eyes unto heaven but smote upon his breast and said God be merciful to me a sinner.

Surely when our hearts are touched and there is a feeling of thanksgiving and praise we may sometimes feel that we can look up and behold the giver and rejoice in Christ Jesus through whom come many gifts.

James tells us every good gift and every perfect gift cometh from above from the father of lights with whom is no variableness nor shadow of turning.

[8 : 12] Now if there is a giving then we must also look at the gifts that are given. first of all we will consider what the scripture says and that is the gifts of God are without repentance.

There are no regrets on God's part that he has bestowed such and such a gift that he has given such and such a favor.

The Lord is far above ourselves. If we are ungrateful God does not repent of the gift that he has given.

If we despise what we are privileged to gather God does not repent of the gift that he has given because the scriptures say the gifts of God are without repentance.

In our turn of course we may sometimes look at the gifts that might have been given to others to our estimation we may have felt that not a right value has been set upon them and in our hearts if we have not said so we might have regretted giving such a gift.

[9 : 58] Now why are the gifts of God without repentance? Because he knows the kind of people that he gives his gifts unto. we have no stones to throw at the children of Israel.

And what does God say about them? I knew that there were to stiff-necked people, unthankful people, complaining people, but nevertheless when they cried unto the Lord he supplied gifts.

When they came into the wilderness and there was no water, God was able to bring forth this wonderful gift. And so did they their thirst at that time?

So then, if God's gifts are without repentance, God's gifts must necessarily be good and pure.

And they are given, if I may be allowed this expression, always in a right spirit. And that right spirit is in the spirit of love.

[11 : 26] Can we reflect upon the gifts that God has given to us? We may look at the natural gifts that God has given. Has he given us sight?

Is it not a gift of God's love? Has he given us hearing, ability to walk, and above all ability to think?

gifts gifts which many may consider to be common to all. But may the children of God not consider the wonder of these things because they are gifts of love.

However others may receive these gifts, gifts, yet may we regard them as the children of God in this light. We should gather the gifts differently then, can't we?

Perhaps they'll give us them they gather. We may then say that whatever God gives will always be sufficient.

[12 : 44] we find a well known case of Paul in his epistle to the Corinthians where God says, my grace is sufficient for thee.

And doubtless Paul proved that as many of the children of God have proved it down the ages. So God's gifts are sufficient. Now here we may observe the wonder of God's gifts, that they are given to us to satisfy need.

In these days of comparative affluence, gifts are given, but it can scarcely be said that they satisfy need.

But God's gifts, will always satisfy need. And there will be therefore a readiness to gather, a readiness to collect with thankfulness what God has given.

We have mentioned natural faculties. May we not mention their spiritual counterpart, bearing in mind that God will give us efficiency in his gifts.

[14 : 20] Says the psalmist, may we not say he is asking. Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

God's gifts may sometimes be given without asking, but sometimes they will be given through asking.

They become gifts because it is not possible for us to pay for them. Anything that is free is a gift. And therefore, we may have to ask God, as the psalmist did, open thou my eyes.

He needed the gift of sight, and that thou givest them, they gather, gather up sight, gather up sight in reading the word of God.

What shall we say? If we have received this gift from God, and we have gathered it, is it not sufficient?

[15 : 35] Sufficient for the time being, as his grace is sufficient for the time being. But then we may go on, we might feel that we need more sight.

And we bear in mind what the scripture says concerning grace, he giveth more grace. there are no limitations to God's giving.

They are always sufficient and miraculous as it is, yet it is true. Though he continually gives out, yet there is no diminishing in him.

And then, that thou givest them, they gather. Well, we may multiply the many things that God gives, and not least of them he giveth life.

life. This, in view of the end of the second verse, we perhaps should mention. He giveth life. Not only natural life, but he gives spiritual life.

[17 : 01] There could be no gathering if we were dead. There could be no gathering if we had no power to gather. The living, the living, he shall praise thee as I do this day.

So then, that thou givest them, they gather. There is some consolation here, because as God is certain to give, so the person is certain to gather.

Cannot we read this in connection with these words? That they'll give us them they gather. There is no indication that we might say well they might gather.

Another might come and steal what has been provided for them. These words will ensure against that kind of thing. God sets down his gifts for certain people at certain times.

And therefore this precious gift of life is given at God's right time. we may be very anxious sometimes about our dear ones and so on.

[18 : 35] Friends that we know as to whether God will bless them with life. You know we cannot give our children spiritual life.

we can give them a lot but we cannot give them spiritual life. May we be encouraged by this that if God gives spiritual life it will not be lost it will surely be gathered.

Then in the next part we read this thou openest thine hand. God is a spirit in that sense he has no parts and yet it hath pleased the Holy Spirit in order that we may understand things as we daily come in contact with them to set before us as God having parts thou openest thine hand they are filled with good this is God's hand and therefore when that hand is open they are filled with God in the 80th psalm we have these words open thy mouth wide and

I will fill it that is a needful thing for us the ministers of the gospel need God's open opening hand in order that that might be put in that they might be able to speak out now open is thine hand and then again the open hand is that from which creatures will feed is fear taken away can we with boldness draw near to God whose open hand fills us with good we find in the new testament these words the good man out of the good treasures of his heart bringeth forth good things but where from where did the treasure come well it came from an open hand and so we may be in trials and afflictions we may have to meet people and as

God has said open thy mouth wide and I will fill it so he will open his hand that you may be filled with good with whom you may have to speak we do not always realize God's continuing goodness anxieties may come to us sometimes as various people have to have met sometimes in the course of business sometimes in other fields and we're anxious we're anxious what shall we say behold these words they're open is thy hand and and fillest them with and they are filled with good good words wise words words that cannot be spoken against hence the open hand will fill the open mouth and then the hand of

[23 : 08] God is a merciful hand a gracious hand we might say a condescending hand their openness have we felt sometimes that God's hand is closed there is much to be taught in these few words about God's sovereignty we cannot demand anything from God we cannot command anything from God and we see this word sovereignty written over these words that thou givest them they gather so everything is controlled and if we should say but this cuts across what I want to do because sometimes

I want to gather something and God's sovereignty stops me from gathering it what a mercy that is some of us have lived long enough to bless God that he has intercepted so that we haven't been able to gather that which looked attractive why we can see it now because God's sovereignty prevented it how easily we may sing the hymn and how joyfully we may sing it and feelingly too sovereign ruler of the skies ever gracious ever wise all my time shall ever be ordered by thy wise degree and this will include the times of gathering but if you should see a restriction on the one hand you will also have the consolation of having no lack on the other we find concerning the children of

Israel that when the manor came down they that gathered little had no lack and they that gathered much had none over we're not wise to compare ourselves with others the great thing is have we sufficient and if we should see others having more then looking at it from God's sovereign point of view there we must come to this conclusion that that person needs more I remember years quite a number of years ago now of a new gracious woman and she used to come to the house of prayer and every lord's day she gathered something and she had her critics she always gets something well I knew the background and if I was in her place up to her neck in trouble I should want something every lord's day therefore that they'll give us them they gather

God knows what our needs are God knows how up to our necks in trouble we are and therefore his sovereign purposes will decree that we shall always have a sufficiency now others may not be so pressed and their food therefore may be reduced according to their requirements but then again we must look at another point that they'll give us them they gather they'll open us thine hand and they are filled with good we remind ourselves of the scripture which says a little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked and how true this is the proverbs tell us that a dinner of herbs where love is is better than a stalled ox and hatred therewith how many of the people of

God have proved that in their lives at the same time proving the veracity of these words that thou givest them they gather thou openest thine hand now God's people know sometimes at least when God opens his hand we do not need quantity if God opens his hand I've sometimes looked at those cases in the scriptures where the Lord fed the four thousand and the five thousand and there were just a few loaves and a few small fishes it says a few small fishes and yet they were sufficient or amply sufficient to satisfy the needs of that multitude and there were baskets full of fragments that remained now

[29 : 42] I see a value in what the hymn describes as a crumb of mercy the crumb of mercy Lord I crave unworthy to be fed with dainties such as angels have or with the children's bread well you may say that's not much a crumb that they'll give us then they gather and remember that God is able to multiply a crumb and hasn't God done so sometimes just a few words from the scriptures one word from the scriptures God can multiply in your meditation that it becomes a complete meal well more than satisfying to your hungry soul so with respect to

God's provision we may rejoice in the quality of it sometimes oh the quality of it the quality of mercy have we thought upon mercy this is what God is giving every day through our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ but have we thought of the quality of mercy it is stamped with the Godhead it is stamped with the love of the Father the love of the Son and the love of the Holy Ghost Christ and therefore we may regard these words though openest thine hand they are filled with good now isn't this something which fills us with good the mercies of the

Lord I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever so evidently the psalmist was satisfied because he saw that God had given them and he continues but with my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations for I have said mercy shall be built up forever thy faithfulness shall thou establish in the very heavens it is a mercy to be filled with mercy a sense of it but there is a wonderful gift which God gives to principally first of all we will consider the gift of the

Holy Spirit that thou givest them they gather the Lord Jesus Christ himself was blessed with the Spirit without measure how necessary it was to him when you bear this point in mind that his way was much rougher and darker than mine did Christ my Lord suffer and shall I repine then shall we not see how essential it was that the Lord should have the Spirit without measure so it could truly be said that thou givest them they gather now openest thine hand they are filled with good but coming to ourselves in the book of Nehemiah we read these words he gave them his good spirit his good spirit and that good spirit led them on through the wilderness journey gave forty years thou didst sustain them in the wilderness so that they lacked nothing their clothes wax not old and their feet swelled not reading through this ninth chapter of

Nehemiah we have so many references of what God gave moreover thou ledest them in the day by a cloudy pillar what a provision and in the night by a pillar of fire to give them light in the way wherein they should go then thou gavest them bread from heaven for their hunger and brought forth water for them out of the rock for their thirst and promised them that they should go in to possess the land which thou hath sworn to give them and so we come to this as I've already mentioned thou gavest them thy good spirit to instruct them and withheld is not thy manner from their mouth and gavest them water for their thirst the provision that

[35 : 51] God made this in spite of all the baseness the evil manners of these people in the wilderness but to the godly he gave his good spirit thou openest thine hand and thou filled with good now sometimes according to our feelings we seem to be filled with evil if God gives us his good spirit we shall know that God has given something he's opened his hand and we are filled with good because when the spirit of truth is come he will lead us into all truth he will take you the things of Jesus and will reveal them unto us what a blessing that is thou gavest them thy good spirit and accordingly as their need arises so they were able to gather they will gather they must gather now openest thine hand they are filled with good but this brings us to consider the second of these great gifts and that is

Jesus Christ a saviour mighty to save is Christ the Lord now the spirit the holy spirit being given what a gift he is shows to us this great gift from the Father of lights with whom is no variableness neither shadow of turning Jesus Christ and the spirit of God opens to us the various attract various attractiveness of our Lord Jesus Christ what a blessing to realize that the Lord Jesus Christ is a friend oh what a friend we have in Jesus sometimes you may feel friend less sometimes you may be in the place where you may say no man cares for my soul and that brings on a deep depression and then you will perhaps take up what the psalmist says in the seventy third psalm where he speaks about his own personal experience he says for all the day long have

I been plagued and chastened every morning if I say I will speak thus behold I should offend against the generation of thy children when I thought to know this it was too painful for me until I went into the sanctuary of God then understood I their end are we afraid because of the plague of our own heart of offending against thy children the generation of thy children how often the lepers will have to put their hand upon their lip crying out unclean unclean and we need grace to do that and we need grace to bear up under it but then

God gives more grace sending his Holy Spirit to take of the things of Jesus and one of the things is this that we have a friend who will lay down his life we have this testimony of the Lord himself a man will lay greater love have no man than this that a man will lay down his life for his friend the point is have we a friend have we such a friend that will lay down his life will be ready to pay the uttermost as it were to save us and to deliver us a gift from

God is a friend that we have in Jesus who openest thine hand they are filled with good and we shall be filled with good when Jesus Christ is revealed and here again the gift may be given as the result of our petitioning Jesus reveal thyself to me as thy free gift for the salvation of the people now in the next verse we have a contrast they who hidest thy face and they are troubled now though this may be a negative view of experience yet nevertheless it brings out with all forcefulness the positive side would you be troubled at the hiding of God's face how many are not troubled at all they carry on in their religion whether

[42 : 20] God is smiling or not they're oblivious of his smiles and also unaware of his frowns this is not so with the people that the psalmist is referring to here thou hidest thy face thou troubled are we troubled at the hidings of God's face because if we are then surely we shall know something of the previous verse thou openest thine hand thou filled with God and God when he opens his hand will be looking down remember the words in one of the other psalms which tells us that the Lord looked down to behold the things yea yea the

Lord humbled himself to behold the things that were done in heaven and in earth we should remember that the Lord is higher than the heavens the heaven of heavens cannot contain thee much less this house that I have built but thou hidest thy face Job speaks about this he knew about it therefore he could speak about it thou hidest thy face and we are troubled and this is emphasized by the rest part of the verse thou takest away their breath they die and return to their dust solemn word this is for God to hide his face and then there is the fearful thought that

God can take away our breath the children of God must indeed be deeply affected and concerned about the hiding of God's face when they consider how quickly and how easily the Lord may take away their breath and they die this is not always realized when people die a great deal of investigation is sometimes done to discover the cause of death but the basic principle is before us the cause of death is because the Lord taketh away their breath and they die there is none that can thwart God in this but no wonder the people of

God are troubled at the hidings of God's face when this follows so closely on top of it they'll taketh away their breath and they die can we look at the point from this spiritual angle they'll taketh away the breath of prayer how solemn for us to be in such an extremity when God hides his face and takes away the breath of prayer at the same time and how dead we are what a mercy to look back upon God's sovereignty and God's mercy because he assures his children I will come again and receive you unto myself that where I am there ye may be also but this word seems to refer more particularly to that which is natural thou takest away their breath they die and return to their dust we have to go to the last chapter in ecclesiastes to clarify the point in respect to the spirit then shall the dust return to the earth as it was and the spirit shall return unto

God who gave it and when the spirit returns unto God who gave it then it will be a solemn day because it will be a question of depart from me I never hear you or come in enter into the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world maybe we could use these words from Genesis come in thou blessed of the Lord wherefore stand as thou without has God given it then we shall gather it it may be if our faith is small that there will be some timidity about it but we are certain to gather because

[48 : 10] God will give strength to gather has God given us a good hope through grace a hope which will still survive when the Lord hides his face still survive when we are troubled the psalmist speaks of his troubled case when he had a soliloquy with his soul as we read in the 42nd and 43rd Psalms why art thou cast down oh my soul is there any one reason more than another that will cast a person's soul down surely we have the answer in the words of our text thou thou hidest thy face and thou troubled thou will cast our souls down and why art thou disquieted within me hope thou in

God what a mercy to have this faithful companion moving along with us giving us this gracious counsel hope thou in God for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my God but where there is casting down there is lifting up when we come back to the first part of this verse that they'll give us then they gather God will sometimes give us handfuls of purpose promises that he has spoken that will help us on sometimes a revelation of what God is that attracts our faith as we have it here for I shall yet praise him who is the health of my countenance and my

God even though the Lord hid his face yet hope seemed as it were to strengthen itself to rise up and to become extremely strong in the time of this adversity what does hope do judge me oh God and plead my cause against an ungodly nation oh deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man for thou art the God of my strength why dost thou cast me off why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy oh send out thy light and thy truth let them lead me that they may bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles we should notice the spiritual desire expressed by the psalmist in this 43rd psalm people may ask for God to send out light and truth but by the teaching of the spirit

God had given hope and he given grace that in the petition there was a purpose in mind send out thy light and thy truth let them lead me not anywhere let them bring me unto thy holy hill and to thy tabernacles now we think of the words again from the scripture yet will I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion what a desire are we does God hide his face are we troubled then we find this desire this prayer so full of inspiration and direction I oh send out thy light and thy truth not that

I might be able to crow over my fellow travelers as to how much light I've got and how much truth I've got and how much understanding I have but send it out that it may lead me and it may lead me to the holy hill where I shall see Jesus Christ but it may lead me to thy tabernacles wherein I will see the glory of Christ within the tabernacle itself oh send out thy light and thy truth thou highness thy face and thou troubled this intensifies the cry of the children of God and it also brings forth this point as to whether we have life in our souls or not how good it is then to be supported in our dark times with the evident sovereignty of God that they'll give us them they gather and

[53 : 46] God gives us strength to gather and they'll open his hand and they are filled with good and this is the thought here that if God opens his hand then he brings that that we need where we are we read in Peter's epistle the grace that is to be brought unto you with from God's open hand they'll give us though they are filled with good they'll hide is thy face they are troubled they'll take away their breath they return they and they die and return to their death