Realizing we can't make it on our own & by relying solely on our own resources

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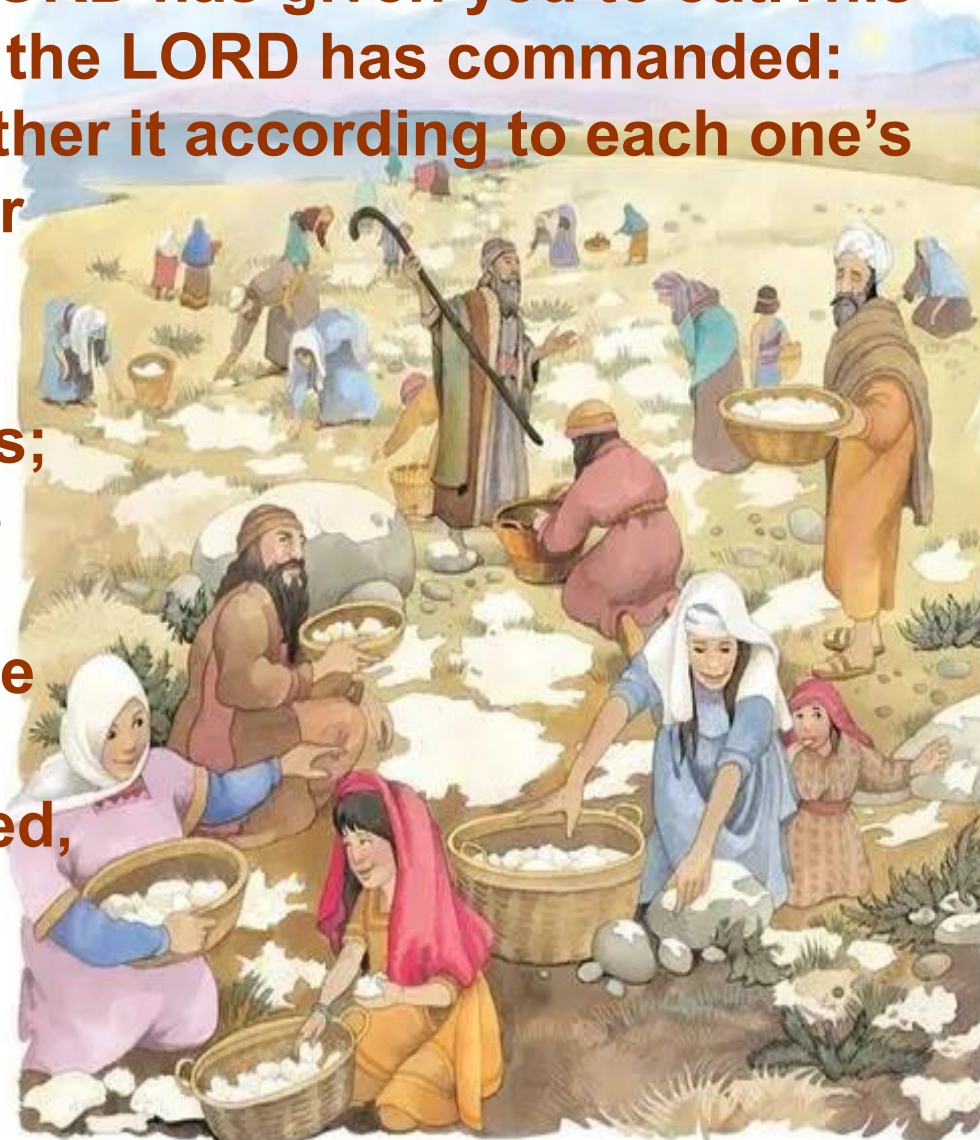
So when the children of Israel saw it, they said to one another, ‘What is it?’ for they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, ‘This is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.This is the thing which the LORD has commanded: ‘Let every man gather it according to each one’s need, one omer for each person, according to the number of persons; let every man take for those who are in his tent.’ And the children of Israel did so and gathered, some more, some less.

Exodus 16:15-17



It is an illusion we all live with, moreso when we are young, confident and think ourselves bullet proof, that we can manage life and all that it asks of us, throws up at us and challenges us with, on our own., We can't. But we think we can. We are sure we can. We have all been there, as teenagers and young adults.

But then things happen and we come to realize that it is not, perhaps, as we thought. Problems aren't as easily solved as we first imagined. The answers are not as readily available as we imagined. Things happen for which we feel unprepared. We come up against setbacks and disappointments, perhaps, and we are not after all so sure that we can, after all.

This persuasion that we can manage and do it all ourselves, arises from an appearance – or the appearance - into which, necessarily, we are born, that we are on our own in this world and that it is all up to us. This is not the reality. But it is the way it seems. It is of the Lord's order that it so seem. It is the way it has to seem.

We wouldn't and couldn't function as independent and responsible individuals otherwise. We need this sense of separateness, or "alone-ness", to consider, reflect and to make freely chosen decisions.

When under the leadership of Moses the ancient people of Israel made their escape from slavery in Egypt, focused on the Promised Land as they very much were, they had episodes of

When they got tired of Moses' leadership on one occasion they thought they could replace him. When, early on, Moses was - in their opinion - too long on Mt Sinai, they turned to Aaron to make them a golden calf which, they believed, would lead them to where they were set on going. When they realized that they would be some 40 years in the wilderness they ignored Moses and tried an abortive surge forward up the coast of the Mediterranean, only to be pushed decisively back by the original inhabitants there.

Rash and impatient, over confident as at times they

If in a sentence you were asked to summarize what the Lord's Teaching in His Word is all about, what would you say? I found myself thinking about this preparing for today and this sermon. What would I say? Well, I would say something along these lines – '**What we have here is the Lord's call to us to be other than that we so often incline to be**.'

The Lord urges us to re-think and re-shuffle our priorities; to subordinate what is self-satisfying and self-gratifying to being of use and service to others.

The Lord calls on us to make hard decisions about **re-ordering what comes first in our lives**; where our focus is to be; what is going to be

But here, too, we fall into the trap of thinking we can do it ourselves, on our own; that we can reach the Promised Land in our own strength; that we can navigate the way drawing on our own so-called intelligence; and that whatever battles come our way we – yes ‘we’ –can and will win them, on our own.

But we can't and don't and won't! This is for sure. What comes to mind is what we read in the Writings that if we believe that we have the strength to win through in our inner struggles and temptations we will fail. There will be no victory. Only the Lord can win such battles and overcome our demons. The battles are His. We read, "The Lord alone endures the conflicts brought by temptations" and we by our own supposed strength "achieve absolutely nothing." (Arcana Caelestia 8175).

The supposed satisfaction of what evil spirits urge us to think, and say and do is too strong. And the self-generated resources we imagined we could rely on, from within ourselves, turn out to be a mirage.

"Jehovah will fight for you and you are to be silent." (Exodus 14:14)

It doesn't seem this way a lot of the time. We even despair it can possibly be so. But the truth and reality is that the Lord is always with us; and that He is aware of every least thought, unceasingly monitoring all that is going on in the deepest recesses of our being. Even the very hairs of your head, He assured us on one

Quite some years ago I preached a sermon on Psalm 10; a Psalm which was written by someone who knew the anguish of times when God had seemed unconcerned and indifferent to what was going on in (presumably) his life. This Psalm begins, "Why do you stand afar off, O LORD? Why do you hide yourself in times of trouble." And there are our very own times when we can identify with this. But then there is also the likes of the magnificent Psalm 139, which is a majestic statement, or series of statements, and reassurances, about the Lord who knows even the words that form in our minds and pass through our lips. "If I ascend up to heaven" says the Psalmist, "you are there. If I make my bed in hell, behold, you are there." (Verse 8).

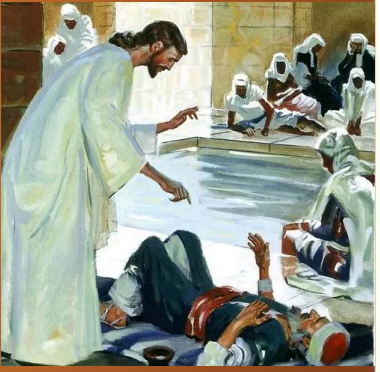
What is more, as different situations, challenges and circumstances unfold for us, the Lord is there offering support, guidance, and the necessary

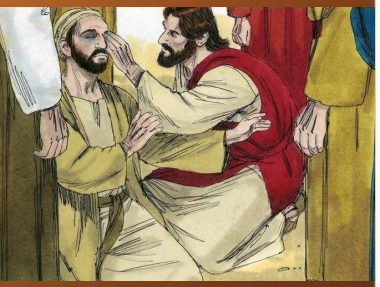
As we read in the Writings, “The Lord provides people’s requirements every day.” (Arcana Caelestia 8478)

But He does not force these gifts on us. The Lord, of necessity, holds back until we come to our realization of our need of these qualities.

As with the ancient people of Israel, whom He allowed to surge ahead, to make mistakes, to trip up and feel the pain even, He allows us, in our day, to surge ahead in our over confidence and rash assumptions that we can manage on our own.

And, when we trip up, He is there. And at that point He unhesitatingly makes available all that we have now come to realize we so urgently and pressingly need.

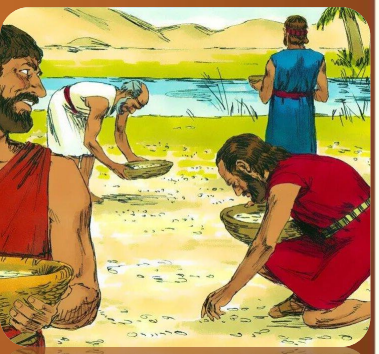




Yes, indeed, all that flows from the Lord, pressed upon us, flows from Him unconditionally: **but reception depends on us**. If indeed we are to be blessed, strengthened, guided, fed and helped by the Lord, there are **initiatives we must take and effort we must make; rules, even, we must follow**.

There are real indicators of this in the Gospels; times when the Lord healed people.

- "**Take up** your bed and **walk**" He told the man at the pool of Bethesda.
- "**Go** and **wash** in the pool of Siloam" He said to the man who had been born blind.
- And to the servant at the wedding at



In this regard, we very usefully notice **three things, highlighted here**.

When you stop and think about it, the people when they went out of the camp to collect the Manna, or Bread that came with the morning dew, had to **stoop down**. And this is the **first thing**.

Spiritually, or in the spiritual sense, **stooping down is all about humility**.

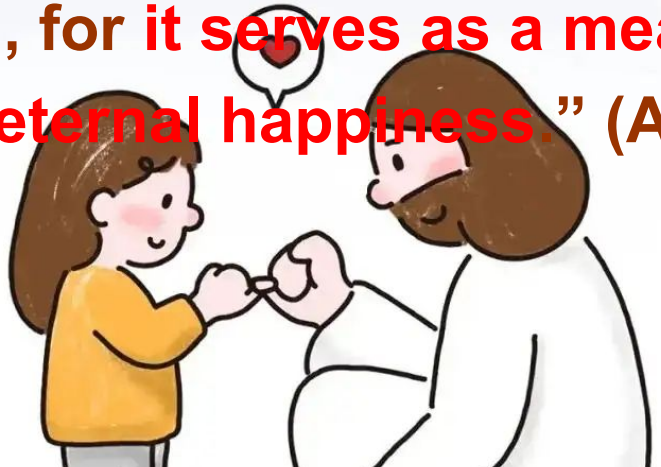
And so the question that arises here is, 'Do we have the humility to accept what the Lord sees to be what we most need in a particular situation?'

Quite some years ago I visited a man in Hospital one evening. He was to have major delicate and life threatening surgery the next morning. At the end of that visit I asked him would he like me to pray with him. 'Yes' he said, 'I would'. But then he went on, 'Can I ask, however, that you don't pray for a given

It is something I have never forgotten!

This man wasn't for telling the Lord what he wanted or hoped for. He wasn't about going to the Lord in prayer with some sort of shopping list as to what he wanted. I loved him for his humility. 'Not my will, but yours be done, Lord.'

We read in the Writings:"Those who trust in the Lord are constantly receiving good from Him; for whatever happens to them, whether it seems to be advantageous or not advantageous , is nevertheless good, for it serves as a means contributing to their eternal happiness." (Arcana Caelestia 8470)



The second thing highlighted and from which we can learn so much is the fact that the manna was to be found **on the ground**.

This is so challenging!

Spiritually, this speaks of grounded things, or of grounding things. It is all about **effort going forth into action**.

You know, we can sit in an armchair for so long, or be in prayer about something for so long. But in themselves these things don't really open us to the energy and flow we are seeking.

The teaching of the Writings is that "Action comes first, then the desire for it in the person's will follows." (Arcana Caelestia 4353)

Though, at first, we can be reluctant, hesitant, unsure, lacking courage even, to take action, yet when we take that first step we open ourselves to an energy and a blessing flowing into us from the Lord.

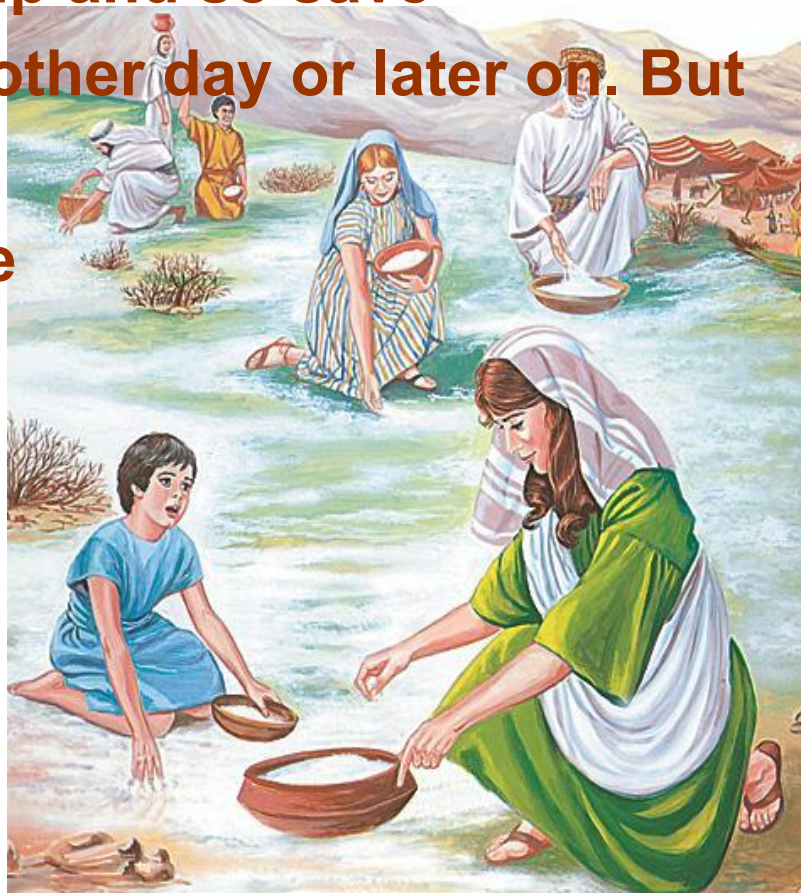
To this day I still am challenged and unsure writing an email to someone who has shared a problem or is facing a challenging time. Yet, once I sit down at my laptop and start typing, words start to flow.

And who of us hasn't kept postponing a difficult task? And yet when at last we take ourselves in hand and start doing that job a spiritual energy flows into us.

Jesus said, "Give, and it will be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, shaken

This brings us then to the third thing highlighted and, again, from which we can learn so much.

Many of the ancient Israelites thought they could take more than was necessary for one day; that they could store it up and so save themselves effort on another day or later on. But when they did the bread bred worms and became putrid. (Verse 20) They had to learn that they would need to come out each morning; do the work; put in the effort; engage with the



And here is the message this holds for us: that when it comes to food for our souls that the Lord alone can make available to us, there can be no ‘blanket’ cover, so to speak, for all situations and developments. In each circumstance and challenge we need to seek the Lord, do the work and engage with the requirement. It is about identifying what our need is as each state comes upon us. The need for strength, the need for courage, the need for gratitude and thankfulness, the need for humility, the need for wisdom, the need for restraint, or whatever it may be. Each issue and circumstance must be explored and our need with regard to it specifically identified. “As your days are, so shall your strength be.” (Deuteronomy 33:25)

The giving of manna in the wilderness never failed. For the whole of the 40 years wanderings

◆ Tough, as the issues and circumstances of our lives can be, the Lord will never fail us either. Every day – that is, in every state – bread from heaven is made available to us.

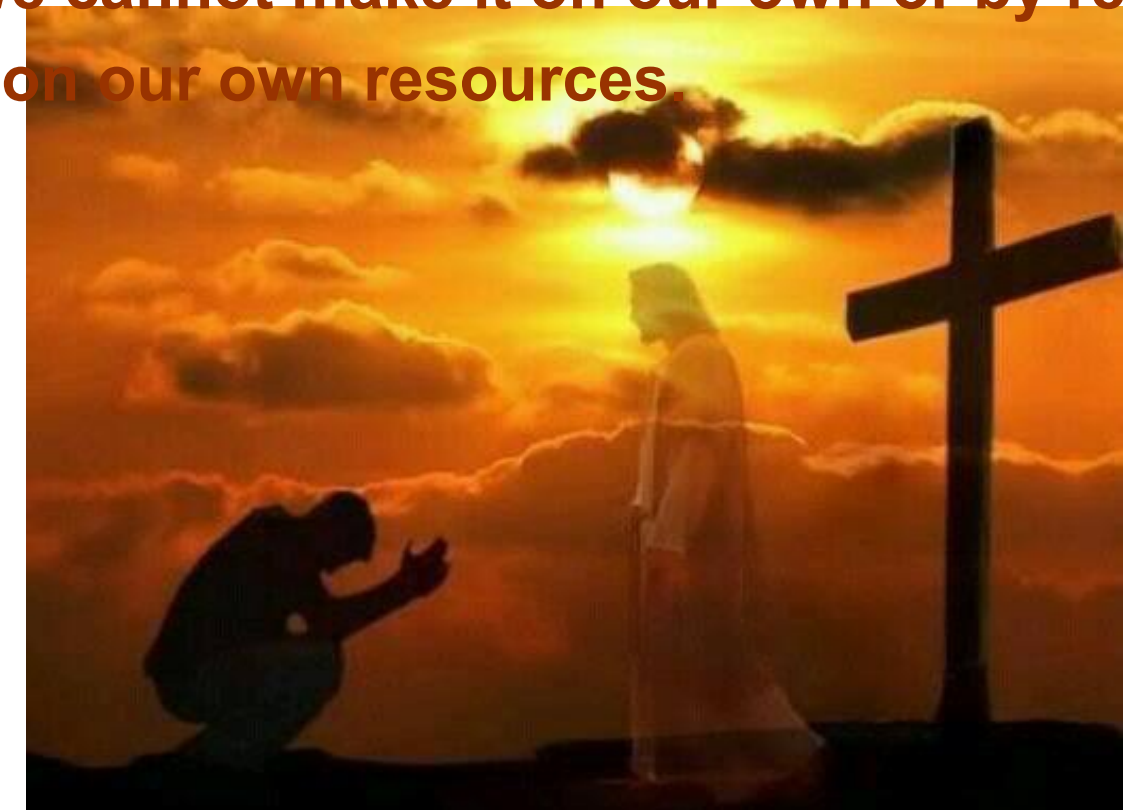
◆ But we need to stoop down, that is, to have the humility to tune into and embrace the Lord's will and way in the situation.

◆ We also need to be emphatically "grounded', thought and intention and perceived need going forth into action. And we need to be prepared to work with the Lord in each and every circumstance and situation, really coming to grips with what our specific need is.

"Lo, I am with you always" said the Lord. (Matthew 28:20).

Here, then, is the Lord, closer to us than our breathing, with us unceasingly, aware of every minute unfolding of thought and feeling, every shift that takes place, offering and pressing – even - on us His gifts…if we will make all necessary effort to receive them.

We cannot make it on our own or by relying solely on our own resources.



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Amen

Readings:

John 15: 1-5
Exodus 16: 10-21
Apocalypse Explained 386
Arcana Caelestia 5915

Apocalypse Explained 386

The spiritual life (or, our spiritual life) has need equally of nourishment and support with the natural (or, our physical) life; wherefore when we are deprived of such nourishment and support, or when they fail, or when they are unknown and yet are desired, that life is said to be in famine.

Arcana Caelestia 5915

In the internal sense ‘sustainment’ is nothing else than the influx of goodness and truth from the Lord by way of heaven. This is how angels are sustained, and it is how a person’s soul, that is, (our inner, spiritual being and life) is sustained

THE END