

MESSAGE 4 - CHRIST – GOD’S PRIMARY PROVISION FOR US

Christ – God's primary provision for us

- Christ is God’s primary provision for us:
 - o for reconciliation to God
 - o for our relationship with God
 - o for our spiritual growth
 - o for responding well to God's calling
 - o for fruitful ministry

The person and work of Christ and being ‘in Christ’

John 3:16

“For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.

John 17:3

“This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

- God's intention for us is not only forgiveness of sins and reconciliation so that we will not perish, but also that we may have eternal life
- John 17:3 tells us that a primary aspect of the meaning of having eternal life is that:
 - o we may know God and Christ
 - o we may continue to grow in our knowledge of and relationship with God and Christ - now and in eternity

Christ – the way to deep relationship with God

- How can finite, weak and sinful men have deep relationship with the transcendental, almighty, holy, perfect God?
- Answer: Only in Christ and on the basis of what has been accomplished at the Cross
- Christ is the only way and basis on which:
 - o we can be reconciled to God and begin our relationship with Him
 - o we can make good progress in deepening our relationship with God
- The Lord Jesus Himself tells us:

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

- Christ is the way to begin our relationship with God because all have sinned and Christ's death for our sins opens the way for forgiveness of sins and reconciliation with the holy God through our repentance and faith in Christ.

- Repentance and faith in Christ results in our:
 - o Entry into the New Covenant: Heb 9:13-15
 - o Being in Christ: 1 Cor 1:30
 - o Being joined to the risen Christ: Rom 6:3-5
 - o Becoming members of His body, the church: Eph 1:22-23
 - o Becoming children of God: John 1:12
 - o Receiving the gift of eternal life - the life of God: 1 John 5:11-13
 - o Receiving the gift of the Holy Spirit and our body the temple of the Holy Spirit: 1 Cor 6:19
 - o Entry into God's kingdom: John 3:3-5
 - o Becoming citizens of heaven (even while we live in this fallen world): Phil 3:20
- Christ is also the way to an overcoming life
 - o Overcoming the weakness of the flesh, bondage to sin and bondage to the evil one
 - o Having true freedom in the Lord and empowered to live a life pleasing to God – walking in truth
- Christ is the way to purification and transformation into the image of Christ – blossoming of the positive - leading to fruitfulness and effective participation in the fulfilment of God's purposes

2 Corinthians 2:14

But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.

God's plan for us in Christ

- In Christ, God makes provisions for us so that it is feasible for every man to rise up to God's high calling:
 - o to attain to the highest level of moral and spiritual stature and quality of life
 - o to experience a life of spiritual richness and abundance and fruitfulness
 - o to fulfil our individual part in the outworking of God's purposes
- All this is in the context of deep fellowship with God and submission to Him
- All this is God's intentions for us *in Christ* - God sees our frailties, weaknesses and deficiencies, but He also sees what we can become *in Christ*

In God's heart before the foundation of the world

Ephesians 1:3–10

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
 who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ,
 4 just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.
 In love
 5 He predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will,
 6 to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved.
 7 In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace
 8 which He lavished on us. In all wisdom and insight

9 He made known to us the mystery of His will,
according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him
10 with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the
summing up of all things in Christ,
things in the heavens and things on the earth. In Him

Ephesians 1:18–19

18 I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the
hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints,
19 and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe. These are in
accordance with the working of the strength of His might

- It is important that the eyes of our heart be enlightened, so that we may know:
 - o what is the hope of His calling
 - o what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints
 - o what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe

Paul's contribution to the fulfilment of God's purposes

- Paul rejoiced in his sufferings as he sought to contribute his part in the fulfilment of God's purposes, according to God's calling and the stewardship entrusted to him:

Colossians 1:24-2:3

24 Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of
His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.
25 Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed
on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God,
26 that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has
now been manifested to His saints,
27 to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery
among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.
28 We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so
that we may present every man complete (*or mature*) in Christ.
29 For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works
within me.
2: 1 For I want you to know how great a struggle I have on your behalf and for those who
are at Laodicea, and for all those who have not personally seen my face,
2 that their hearts may be encouraged, having been knit together in love, and attaining to
all the wealth that comes from the full assurance of understanding, resulting in a true
knowledge of God's mystery, that is, Christ Himself,
3 in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Continuing our relationship with God through Christ

- We not only begin our positive relationship with God through Christ - we must also continue to make progress in our relationship with God through Him and in Him

Colossians 2:6-7

6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,
7 having been firmly rooted and now being built up in Him and established in your faith,
just as you were instructed, and overflowing with gratitude.

- Let us ponder further how the words of the Lord Jesus in John 14:6 can help us understand the way to an increasingly deeper relationship with God, in truth

John 14:6

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.

- o The Lord Jesus is the way – not only shows us the way to the Father, the way we should walk in – but *He is the way*
- o Our relationship with God is through Him and in Him and we are to walk in Him
- We also see here the relationship between the Lord Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life:
 - o *He is the way*. He is the truth. In Him is life
 - o Through Him and in Him is *the way of truth*
 - o The way of truth is *the way of life*
- When we walk in Him, we walk in truth
- In Him and through Him is the way to reception of the life of God in increasing measures and the life of richness and abundance and the life of truth → men of truth
- Abiding in Christ and He in us

John 15:1–11

1 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.

2 "Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit, He takes away; and every branch that bears fruit, He prunes it so that it may bear more fruit.

3 "You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches;

he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.

6 "If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned.

7 "If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you.

8 "My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be My disciples.

9 "Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love.

10 "If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love.

11 "These things I have spoken to you so that My joy may be in you, and that your joy may be made full.

- Only as we abide in Christ and He in us will we be able to:
 - o V 5 - bear much fruit
 - o V 8 - glorify God the Father
 - o V 10 - keep His commandments and abide in His love
 - o V 11 – have His joy in us and have our joy made full
- In short, it will be a life of obedience and fruitfulness
 - o A life that glorifies God
 - o A life of deep love-relationship with the Lord
 - o A life of deep joy and fulfilment

Practical daily living

- How can what we have been considering be meaningfully worked out in practical daily living?
- A deep, continuing consciousness of the Lord Jesus and looking to Him can help us live well and make good progress in our relationship with God
- As we grow in our appreciation of who Christ is - His character and ways - as revealed in the Scriptures, and as we fellowship with Him daily, we will understand how to follow His perfect example
- We will know how to cooperate with God and allow Him to transform us to become increasingly like Him
- God's will is that we be conformed to the image of Christ and that Christ be the firstborn among many brethren:

Romans 8:29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren;

- As we become increasingly conformed to the image of the Son of God, we will be able to have increasingly deep fellowship with God and be effective members of God's family
- As we continually look to the Lord Jesus to guide, enable and undertake, we can be conformed to the image of Christ
- This is a meaningful way of appreciating 2 Cor 3:18

2 Corinthians 3:18

But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as from the Lord, the Spirit.

- o It is a spiritual experience, an approach to daily living: continuing consciousness of the Lord Jesus, looking to Him, seeking to be like Him and letting Him have the freedom to work in and through our lives
- The writer to the Hebrews exhorts us:

Hebrews 12:1-2

1 Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us,

2 fixing our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.

- o As we run our race, we look to Christ as our perfect example – we reflect on how He lived His life and supremely, how He endured the Cross (v 2)
- o As we seek to live in the same manner and spirit, we ourselves will become increasingly perfected in our faith - as we fix our eyes on Him who is the author and perfecter of faith (v 2)
- The apostle Peter exhorts us in the same manner: the Lord Jesus has set us an example for us to follow:

1 Peter 2:21–23

21 For you have been called for this purpose, since Christ also suffered for you, leaving you an example for you to follow in His steps,

22 who committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth;

23 and while being reviled, He did not revile in return;

while suffering, He uttered no threats,

but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously;

- o As we live our lives in the manner described, we will continually deepen in our fellowship and relationship with the Lord Jesus and with God

For to me to live is Christ

Philippians 1:21

For to me, to live is Christ and to die is gain.

- For Paul, his whole life revolved around the Lord Jesus Christ
- He sought to know Christ in increasing measure, proclaim Christ, exalt Christ, glorify Christ, live in deep fellowship with Christ and live by the power of the risen Christ
- His is a life that manifests the love, power and glory of Christ
- We must learn to live in like manner - to know Christ and to make Him known

Christ lives in me

Galatians 2:20

“I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself up for me.

- Paul did not live according to his own thinking, desires or strength
- His approach was to enable the Lord Jesus to have the freedom to express His life through his own
- The principle of *Christ lives in me* - not that the Lord Jesus completely takes over - we still have to actively choose to live in this way and cooperate with the Lord in what He desires to do in and through our lives
- It is a life of deep oneness and fellowship with the risen Lord

God provides us with a Person

- It is important to understand and live out the truths and principles revealed in the Scriptures – but a wholesome and biblical approach goes beyond this
- Not adequate even if we look to God to help us understand and live out the truths and principles
- God provides us with a Person – the Lord Jesus Christ – the God-man - the very best that God can provide for us
- It is in and through the Lord Jesus Christ that we can enter fully into all the richness of life God intends for us – as we are joined to the risen Christ and as we abide in Christ and He in us
- We must learn to concentrate on the Lord Jesus Christ – on what He has accomplished at the Cross - on the implications of His death and resurrection, and on our relationship with Him

- That is why Paul says:

1 Corinthians 2:2

For I determined to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ, and Him crucified.

- It is not just seeking to understand and live out truths and principles, but seeking the Truth (Christ) – walking with Him, walking in Him, being built up in Him

Knowing truth and knowing Christ - both vital and related

- These two areas are vital and related:
 - o Knowing scriptural truths and principles and living them out
 - o Knowing Christ and abiding in Him
- Trying to understand and live out scriptural truths and principles without appreciating Christ and nurturing our relationship with Him is to miss out on God's primary provision for us - needful for spiritual life, reality and vitality
- Affirming our faith in Christ and seeking to nurture our relationship with Christ without seeking to understand scriptural truths and principles is to miss out on God's revelation to us on how we are to cooperate with the risen Christ and what Christ seeks to bring about in our lives – how to abide in Christ and He in us – so that our affirmation of the lordship of Christ will not be empty profession – but Christ may indeed reign in our hearts and have freedom to work in and through us
- Appreciation of scriptural truths and principles can help us recognise:
 - o whether we are indeed abiding in Christ and He in us or we are living according to our own understanding or being deceived by the evil one
 - o whether we have a genuinely deep relationship and fellowship with Christ or it is primarily a feeling
 - o whether we are indeed walking in truth and fulfilling the will of God or walking according to the flesh