

Message no: AR177
Series: Appearance and Reality
Section: The Cross... its significance
Sub-section: The New Covenant (2)
Date preached: 2 Jun 96
Date edited: 22 Jun 02

THE NEW COVENANT – IN CHRIST

In this message, we will continue with the subject: the significance of what was accomplished at the Cross, its implications for mankind and the fulfilment of God's purposes. We will continue with our reflection on the New Covenant, and specifically with the theme "In Christ".

We have seen how, as a result of the death of Christ on the Cross, it is possible for us to be reconciled to God, to have our sins forgiven, and how it is now feasible for sinful, fallen men to draw near to the holy God through the blood of the Lord Jesus. We also considered how, when a person responds in repentance and faith in the Lord Jesus and in His death on the Cross, he enters into the New Covenant with God.

Christ, the Covenant

It is interesting to note that the Scriptures, through the prophetic ministry of Isaiah, refers to the coming Messiah as the covenant.

In general usage, a covenant is an agreement, a contract. In the biblical context, God sets the conditions for the biblical covenant. We cannot bargain with Him. We cannot modify it. He declares His purposes, His will, and we need to respond accordingly. But we do not normally refer to a person as a covenant. Yet, we see Isaiah referring to the coming Messiah as "the covenant" in two prophetic passages generally agreed as messianic and commonly known as the Servant Songs.

The first passage is Isaiah 42:1-9. The first few verses of this passage, which the New Testament quotes, make it clear that the messianic prophesy was fulfilled in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Isaiah 42:1-3

1 "Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold;
My chosen one in whom My soul delights.
I have put My Spirit upon Him;
He will bring forth justice to the nations.
2 "He will not cry out or raise His voice,
Nor make His voice heard in the street.
3 "A bruised reed He will not break
And a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish;
He will faithfully bring forth justice.

In verse 6, Isaiah goes on to prophesy that God will appoint the Messiah “as a covenant to the people” and that He will be “as a light to the nations”.

Isaiah 42:6

"I am the Lord, I have called you in righteousness,
I will also hold you by the hand and watch over you,
And I will appoint you as a covenant to the people,
As a light to the nations,

The second passage is found in Isaiah 49:1-13, which also refers to the coming Messiah, the Lord Jesus Christ, as “the covenant” in verse 8.

Isaiah 49:8

Thus says the Lord,
“In a favorable time I have answered You,
And in a day of salvation I have helped You;
And I will keep You and give You for a covenant of the people,
To restore the land, to make them inherit the desolate heritages;

Why is Christ referred to as the covenant? As I see it, it is because He is at the very heart of the New Covenant. He is the substance and content of the New Covenant. What God promises us, what God intends for us, what we have and what we can find in Him, and how we are to live out our lives, all centre on Christ.

The New Covenant has two related aspects: God’s part and our part. On God’s part, what He intends and what He has provided for us centre on the Lord Jesus Christ. On our part, our response to God in the covenant must also centre on the Lord Jesus Christ. How we are to live out our lives and attain to all that God intends for us in the New Covenant is attained in Christ as we learn to abide in Him and He in us.

In Christ

In the light of the centrality of Christ in the New Covenant, I want to consider with you a very important aspect of the New Covenant. The Scriptures reveals to us that not only is Christ in us, but that all true believers are also in Christ Jesus. We see this in 1 Corinthians 1.

1 Corinthians 1:30

But by His doing you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God,
and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption,

This verse tells us that we are in Christ Jesus “by His doing”, that is, by God’s doing. This is not something that we need to attain to, or something that we need to strive for in order for it to be accomplished. When a person repents and trusts in the Lord, he is born of the Spirit and God places him in Christ. This is a spiritual reality that is

true of all believers - we are all in Christ. But what is the meaning of being "in Christ"? Many are familiar with the expression without being aware of its meaning; nor do they give it much thought or realise that it is a major aspect of what God intends for us in the New Covenant.

"In Christ"—A Figurative Expression or a Spiritual Reality?

Some view this phrase "in Christ" as merely a figurative expression. Perhaps it is because they find it difficult to understand how we can be in Christ literally. There are many believers in different parts of the world. How can we all be in Christ? Or perhaps, they may also wonder how we can be in Christ when we are on earth and He in heaven, at God's right hand.

No, this phrase is not a figurative expression. It is a reality that we are in Christ, but it is a *spiritual* reality that has profound, positive spiritual implications. It opens up to God's children unfathomable riches and possibilities of what we have and can find in Christ.

The phrase "in Christ" or "in Him" may be used in different contexts with two different meanings intended though they are related. The first meaning refers to our being "in Christ" or "in Him" in the sense that we are spiritually united with Him, having been placed in Him. The second meaning refers to what can be found "in Christ" or "in Him" in the sense of what is present in the Lord Jesus in His being and what He has accomplished. The first meaning of being spiritually united with Christ makes available to us all that can be found in Him, in His being and in His accomplishments (the second meaning), so that we can receive and benefit from Him and all that He has done for us.

Paul has much insight into this important area of truth, which is prominently reflected in his epistles. We shall look at a few passages in Ephesians and Colossians.

Ephesians 1:3

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,

In the above passage, Paul is writing to believers. He says that God has "blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ". Paul did not say that God will bless us, or that He may bless us sometime in the future. No, he says that it is something that has taken place. All true believers are in Christ and they have entered into this spiritual reality.

In Ephesians 2, Paul tells us that God has not only made us alive together with Christ, but He has also raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (v. 6). Again, this verse is difficult to understand and there are those who treat it as merely a figurative expression because they wonder

how it is possible that we who are on earth can be seated with the Lord in the heavenly places in Christ. But it is a spiritual reality, not something yet to be. Spiritually, we are united with Christ, and because we are spiritually united with Him, we are already seated with Him in the heavenly places in Christ. It is a position of glory and victory, and we can experience this glory and this victory to the degree we are identified with Christ and one with Him.

Ephesians 3:8

To me, the very least of all saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unfathomable riches of Christ,

The above verse tells us that when we are in Christ, we have access to the unfathomable riches of Christ. However, believers generally experience only a little of what is possible and available to us in Christ.

Colossians 2:3

in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.

Like the earlier verses, this verse in Colossians is a very important and rich verse with significant implications. But we may often not pay much heed to it because its implications are difficult to understand in practical terms. This verse shows us that in the being of Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge and all this is accessible to us because we are now in Christ, being united with Him. Let us also realise that, in the person of Christ, we can find true security, abiding peace, joy, ultimate well-being, protection and fullness of life because we are now in Christ, being spiritually united with Him. He is our refuge, our strength, our rock, our fortress, our shield and our defender. There is much that we can find in Him.

Paul puts it in a rather comprehensive way in this declaration in Colossians:

Colossians 2:10

and in Him you have been made complete...

Again, this verse is not a reference to something in the future or something that may or may not happen. Because we are in Christ, we have been made complete (literally "having been filled", that is, not lacking in anything). We are complete in Him, lacking in nothing.

As we ponder over the scriptural teaching on what Christ has accomplished at the Cross for all mankind and its implications for believers under the New Covenant, especially in relation to what we have and can find in Him - how God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ and how we have been made complete in Him - we may wonder what do these verses really mean. How do we reconcile these spiritual realities with the spiritual poverty and weakness that we see in Christians generally?

Various Approaches to Understanding Spiritual Truths

I want to ponder together with you this question: How are we to understand the meaning of verses like these? It is not easy. Believers have responded to verses like these and the issues involved in different ways. I shall refer to some of the approaches that have been taken.

What we are considering may be a bit abstract. Nevertheless, it is important enough for us to dwell upon. It is helpful to have some awareness of some of the approaches taken by believers, which are reflected in their writings. It is important that we are discerning and evaluate the soundness of what we read and hear and not simply absorb whatever others express. If their views are unsound and yet we absorb them, they would distort our understanding and reception of the truth, which would in turn hinder our spiritual growth and walk with God.

Approach 1: Position vs Experiential Reality

Some try to resolve this apparent discrepancy between what the Scriptures states and observations of realities by making a distinction between our position and experiential reality. They say that our position is one of spiritual riches and victory whereas experiential reality can be different and can vary from spiritual poverty and weakness in some believers to one of relative riches in others.

However, it is not clear what this approach means. What exactly is meant when the advocates of this approach say that positionally we are spiritually rich and victorious while experientially we may not be so? Are God's children in reality spiritually rich and victorious? How does this distinction help us understand these verses in practical terms, in the outworking of our lives? For some, this approach goes together with the next.

Approach 2: Believe by Faith

Another approach to understanding such verses is along this line: If our experience is different from what the Scriptures has revealed, then we must exercise faith to believe what the Scriptures has stated and it will be so. Our experience will then agree with what the Scriptures states.

Along this line of reasoning, the approach to such verses would be: though Christians may appear to be spiritually poor and weak, but because the Scriptures reveals that believers are spiritually rich and victorious, we must therefore believe that we are spiritually rich and victorious. We must exercise faith that it is so and we will then experience the riches and the victory.

Illustration - Romans 6:6 Old man crucified

There are some adherents of this approach who use it to understand Romans 6:6. According to this view, Romans 6:6 teaches that for Christians, our old man or the flesh was crucified with Christ and thereby rendered powerless, dead and inoperative.

Romans 6:6

knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin;

Yet believers still notice that the flesh is rather alive and active. Thus they say, "If in our experience, the flesh seems to be active and still causing us difficulties, the way to victory is to believe in what the Scriptures has revealed, that the flesh was crucified and rendered powerless, dead and inoperative." Just reckon it so, believe it is so, even if it does not seem to be so, and we will experience that indeed it is so. It will no longer trouble us, we will have victory over sin, our flesh will no longer disturb us.

This approach is unsatisfactory. The position adopted does not reflect the realities of life, and the problem lies in the unwholesome interpretation of the Scripture. The Scriptures will always be consistent with reality. If our interpretation of the Scriptures is not consistent with reality, it means we have misinterpreted the Scriptures or misunderstood reality. The Scriptures, properly interpreted, cannot conflict with reality. What is taught in the Scriptures is intended by the God of truth, who is always accurate and will not reveal to us what is inconsistent with reality.

In reality, many Christians are spiritually poor, weak, and living defeated lives. The Scriptures makes this clear to us, for example, Paul referred to the Corinthians as carnal believers. Believing that they are in reality spiritually rich, strong and victorious is not in line with the truth. The Scriptures does not teach that all believers are spiritually rich, strong and victorious.

For believers, the flesh is still present. While we are in this body, the flesh will remain a lively issue. And trying to believe that it has been rendered powerless, dead and no longer operative in our lives is not in line with the truth. The Lord Jesus Himself tells us that "the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matt. 26:41).

This kind of approach can result in believers living in an illusion, and leading to confusion and disillusionment. I say "living in illusion" because believers may pretend that the flesh is dead, believing that they are overcoming and victorious when they are not. This can result in much confusion as believers try hard to believe that the flesh is dead, yet knowing it is very much alive and affecting them. If they keep on trying to believe that it is inoperative, they may become confused. And after a while, they can become disillusioned, because they find that this approach doesn't work.

This important but difficult area of truth, understanding Romans 6:6 and how the Cross provides the foundational basis for us to overcome the weakness of the flesh, is covered in several subsequent messages AR194-201.

Yes, it is important for believers to exercise faith. But we must understand the meaning of true faith and how to exercise biblical faith. True faith must be grounded in the truth. This is an important principle we need to pay attention to. Faith that is not grounded in the truth is not pleasing to God and will not result in positive outcome. Instead, it may lead to negative consequences and complications. A very helpful verse on this is 2 Thessalonians 2:13:

2 Thessalonians 2:13

But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.

It is God's desire for us to experience salvation, and salvation in its fullest sense goes far beyond just conversion. But how does this come about? It is through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. The Spirit of God helps us, but we must also exercise faith, specifically faith in the truth, in what God has revealed to us. We must not ignore the realities of life nor pretend that they do not exist.

Importance of correct interpretation of the Scriptures

It is vital that we interpret and understand the Scriptures accurately so that we will arrive at the truth and we can then exercise true faith, according to the truth that the Scriptures teaches. Before we rush to exercise faith, we need first to make sure that we understand the Scriptures accurately. If we are unclear as to what the Scriptures teaches, then we need to study further. Some verses are not easy to understand. If we are too quick to exercise faith in areas that are not clear, and which in fact we have understood wrongly, we may land ourselves in very serious trouble. So trying to interpret, understand and apply the Scriptures properly and accurately is very important. We cannot over-emphasise this point.

Approach 3: Figurative Expression

Another approach to such difficult verses is to regard them, including this very important concept of "in Christ", as figurative expressions. But using such an approach can result in us missing out on very important and rich truths that God has revealed in the Scriptures. The truth is that we are actually in Christ. We are in Him. It is an important spiritual reality.

Approach 4: Indifference

Finally, there is a fourth approach, if we can call it an approach. There is a category of people who, when they come across such verses, read and treat them as if they are not there. They just read and carry on with an attitude of indifference. They do

not pause to ponder or try to understand their meaning and implications. Such verses, including important truths like “in Christ”, have no impact or relevance to them. They just carry on in this manner year after year.

This is sad and undesirable if it is due to lack of diligence and care in trying to understand the Scriptures. But if we have tried and are unable to understand such verses, it is all right for us to leave them for the time being. But there must be the longing within our hearts to want to understand them, especially if there are indications that these are important verses. We should continue to prayerfully look to the Lord to help us understand them in due course. This is the proper approach.

Scope of Christ’s Death

In this regard, some may also wonder, if Christ has died for the sins of the whole world, if He has borne our sins and the punishment due to all mankind, how can it be that there are still those who die without their sins being forgiven, and who are still under the wrath of God?

This is an issue that has been raised in theological circles and in books on theology. To resolve this difficulty, two erroneous views with various modifications have been put forward, and they have attracted a number of adherents.

Erroneous View 1: All Benefit From Christ’s Death

The first erroneous view is that since Christ has died for the sins of the whole world and has borne the punishment due to all mankind, God will not punish anyone again for sins committed. None will have to face the wrath of God and the sentence of death. Since Christ has already borne the punishment due to us, how can God punish again? Otherwise God would be punishing for sins a second time.

Erroneous View 2: Christ Died Only for the Elect

Another erroneous view is that Christ did not die for the sins of the entire world, because if He had, then none can be punished again. But because God will punish the unbelieving, Christ did not die for the sins of the entire world nor bear the punishment due to all mankind, but only for those who will be saved, that is, the elect. For those not amongst the elect, He didn’t bear their punishment or die for them.

This may sound strange, but there are people who subscribe to this position. This is known as limited atonement - limited because according to this view, Christ’s atonement is not for the whole world, but only for some, the elect.

Wholesome Understanding of the Biblical Position

What then is the wholesome understanding of the biblical position on this subject? We have seen in the earlier message (AR174) that the Scriptures teaches that Christ died for the sins of the whole world and bore the punishment due to all mankind. But this does not mean that all are automatically forgiven, saved and enter into all that God intends for us on the basis of what has been accomplished at the Cross. This is important to note.

Christ's death on the Cross has opened up the way of salvation and fullness of life for all mankind. But we need to respond in repentance and faith before we can benefit from it. Whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life. This principle of the need for a positive response is true before as well as after conversion. There is a need for the proper response of true faith, which includes repentance and the commitment of our lives to the Lord. In other words, the proper response on man's part is crucial - for conversion and at every stage of our spiritual and moral development.

God will not forgive those who are unrepentant. Those who reject what He has provided and insist on living according to their own thinking and own desires will move in the direction of death rather than life. It is neither right nor meaningful for God to forgive those who refuse to repent. It is contrary to His character. Although God invites us to turn to Him and benefit from what He has provided, it is on the condition of repentance and faith.

We have seen in the previous message that God has done and provided much for us under the New Covenant in Christ's blood and our appropriate response is repentance and faith. That is how we enter into the New Covenant. And that is how we ought to continue in it.

We should be mindful of a very important principle running right through the Scriptures concerning the way God deals with us, and that is, both God's part and man's part are important.

Some think that it is honouring God and glorifying to Him to emphasise that salvation is all of God, that He has provided and done everything. There is nothing on man's part. But this is not so.

It is true that we cannot on our own attain salvation or grow in the Lord. This comes about through the grace of God. God has to take the initiative not only in creating us but also providing us the way of salvation through the death of Christ. Yet there is also man's part. This is a fundamental principle in the spiritual realm.

Yes, it is true that even the positive response on our part is in the context of the grace of God and the Spirit of God at work in our hearts and minds, drawing us and encouraging us and enabling us. But there is a need for us to respond positively to

the Spirit of God at work in our lives. We can harden our hearts and resist God's gracious working in our lives and, sad to say, man often does that.

God requires a positive response from us if we are to make progress in life and participate meaningfully in God's purposes. There will be no positive moral and spiritual progress without positive response. This principle of God's part and man's part is reflected throughout the Scriptures. On the one hand, God provides for us, on the other, He exhorts us to respond to His love, to His call, and warns us of dire consequences if we continue to harden our hearts, go our own way and continue in sin. We see this principle specifically addressed in Galatians 6:7-9.

Reaping What We Sow

Galatians 6:7-9

7 Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap.

8 For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.

9 Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary.

"Do not be deceived, for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." These are words that we need to pay heed to. Paul cautions us not to think that we can violate this fundamental principle. We should not think that we can make spiritual progress while we keep feeding the flesh. God will not allow it to be so; we will reap what we sow.

But some may think, "Oh, but this doesn't seem to be! Look around us, aren't there many who do not reap what they sow? Many are wicked, yet they are rich and living it up. On the other hand, many who try to live godly lives suffer terribly." How can we reconcile this observation with the scriptural teaching?

In Galatians 6, Paul is not talking about reaping and sowing in the temporal, superficial sense, but in the ultimate sense. Verse 8 makes this clear to us when it contrasts the outcomes of sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit. In the temporal world, this principle may not seem to be in operation. But in the ultimate sense, it always operates. If we do what is negative, there will be negative implications for us; if we do what is positive, there will be positive results. If you sow to the flesh, you will from the flesh reap corruption; if you sow to the Spirit, you shall from the Spirit reap eternal life. And so Paul goes on to encourage us in verse 9 not to grow weary in doing good for in due time we will reap.

Paul is referring to the moral and spiritual dimension when he writes about sowing to the flesh and sowing to the Spirit. This is a fundamental principle that always works in the moral and spiritual dimension and cannot be violated. It applies at conversion -

we need to respond positively, in repentance and faith, in order to be converted. It also applies after conversion - to the degree we are ignorant, complacent and half-hearted, to that degree we will fail to experience the spiritual riches of the life that God intends for us in Christ. Moral and spiritual growth is not automatic. Our positive response is critical if we want to grow in spiritual stature and maturity. It is not that the moment we become Christians, we are complete in Christ in the sense of being spiritually mature. No, we need time to grow in spiritual stature and maturity. But at what pace we grow will depend on the depth and quality of our response to God.

When Paul tells us in Colossians 2:10 that in Christ, we "have been made complete", he is not referring to spiritual maturity. Here, Paul uses a different word from the one he uses in Colossians 1:28, where he states his goal is to present every man "complete" in Christ. In verse 28, the word "complete" has the meaning of being "mature" in Christ and is translated as such in Ephesians 4:13: a "mature" man. The word translated "have been made complete" in Colossians 2:10 has the meaning of "having been filled", that is, in Christ we have been filled, complete, not lacking in anything.

An Analogy: A Rich Man's Will

Perhaps I can use an analogy to illustrate the significance of what Christ has accomplished at the Cross and the implications for our lives. It can help us understand what the Cross has opened up for us and what God intends for us in Christ, and what it means to be blessed with every spiritual blessing in Christ.

But bear in mind that though analogies can be helpful, they always have their limitations. We should take note of the point of reference and similarities in the analogy and the reality and not stretch the analogy too far.

There is a caring and very rich man whose children have been separated from him since young. By and by, his children become involved with secret societies. This man has made a will bequeathing his bountiful possessions and extensive resources to all his children for their benefit and development. There is however one proviso: To benefit from his will, his children must renounce their association and involvement with any secret society.

His children do not know that their father has made a will; nor are they aware of the great inheritance that awaits them. And they have to wait till the father dies before the will can come into effect.

The father dies, and the will now comes into effect.

Spiritual Parallel: The Will of God

There is a parallel in the spiritual realm. Just as the man has drawn up a will bequeathing his bountiful possessions to his children, likewise it is the will of God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit that His children benefit from the bountiful riches that are intended for us in Christ.

The man's will takes effect only after he has died. So too, Christ has to die on the Cross before God makes available all that He intends for us.

Just as Christ has died for us, so too the man has died. His children need to be informed of the existence of the will, which they as yet do not know. They also need to be informed of the proviso. Similarly, the gospel needs to be communicated to sinful men, including their need to repent and believe in the gospel.

The man's children who refuse to renounce their involvement with secret societies cannot benefit from the will, even though the father has bequeathed all to them. Likewise, though Christ has died for us and there is much that awaits us, those who refuse to repent and believe in the gospel will not benefit from what Christ has accomplished at the Cross.

Those children who have renounced their involvement with secret societies are now beneficiaries of the father's bountiful provision and vast resources. In the same way, those who have responded positively to the gospel have become children of God; they are in Christ. So these children can now benefit from their heavenly Father's bountiful provision and vast resources, which are intended for their enjoyment and development.

Bountiful Inheritance

Now, those of the man's children who have come clean have the father's bountiful provisions and vast resources at their disposal, but it does not mean that they will immediately benefit from all of them. They have first to get to know what the inheritance consists of, as it is very extensive and spread out into many regions and countries. Not only that, to enjoy the benefits, much time and effort are required for them to explore, to discover. Let's see some of the inheritance that the father has bequeathed to his children:

The father has provided for them big, well-equipped libraries of very helpful books. But they could not possibly benefit from them all at once. They need time to read and explore; and there is so much in store for them. These are very helpful for their learning and development.

The father has also provided for them fitness parks with the best equipment of every kind. The children need to learn how to use them and to subsequently make use of them. Otherwise, there will not be tangible benefit.

He has, in addition, provided for them all kinds of good musical instruments. But if they want to benefit from them, they need to first learn how to play them.

Gold and diamond mines are also part of what the father has bequeathed to them; and these await them to mine - diamonds, gold, precious stones and gems of all kinds. They are all there; they are all bequeathed to them. But they remain to be mined.

The father has also engaged experts in every field to train them and excellent teachers to teach them. They would need the discipline and determination to learn from these masters.

There is no lack in what has been provided. It all belongs to them. But they have yet to experience and benefit from all that is available. In fact, it is possible to be a beneficiary and yet hardly benefit at all from the bountiful and generous provisions. The books in the library are waiting to be read, the fitness equipment to be used, the musical instruments to be played, the precious stones to be mined, and the trainers and teachers to learn from. All these are there, but if the children are lazy, they will not benefit.

And even those who do benefit may not do so to the same degree. Those who are more earnest and diligent will benefit more, while those who are apathetic and unwilling to exert themselves will benefit little.

Also, by their very nature, more benefits can be derived from these things only when the children have learnt some of the prior skills and knowledge. Some things cannot be benefited from straightaway, even if they want to, for example, the deeper books. They need to begin with the elementary books and build a sound foundation. If they go straight into the deeper books, they will not be able to understand them. Worse, they may land themselves in trouble if they misunderstand or misapply what they read.

Likewise the more advanced equipment. If the children use them before they have trained themselves sufficiently or if they are not sufficiently fit, they may seriously injure themselves instead of benefiting from them. They are not ready to use the more advanced equipment.

The same can be said of the higher skills and the higher levels of learning. The experts and teachers are all there to teach them, but they are unable to immediately learn the higher levels because they need prior skills and learning. All has been provided that is needful for them to attain to the highest level of development, but they still need to progress through the stages.

Spiritual Parallel: Our Bountiful Inheritance in Christ

We can readily see the spiritual parallel to what have been described of the father's inheritance. Believers who have repented and believed in the gospel are now in Christ and can benefit from all that God has done and provided for us in Christ. We are children of God, we are in Christ, we are born of the Spirit.

And in Christ, God has provided for us bountiful spiritual riches and blessings. These are intended for our moral and spiritual development to the highest level and life in all its fullness and abundance. God has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ. In Him we lack nothing. In Him we have been made complete. In Him we have been made full.

But we first need to know what God has done and provided for us and what are the riches and blessings in Christ. This is where our understanding of the Scriptures is important. It is not just an academic issue. We need to understand accurately what the Scriptures reveals about our riches and blessings in Christ. It will take time and effort, but by the grace of God, we can increasingly enter into the treasures of wisdom and knowledge hidden in Christ.

In a sense, we can say that it's all there; it all belongs to us because we are in Christ. It is for us to benefit from, to grow into. God wants us to grow in spiritual strength and stature and live a life of victory. All that is needful has been provided for us in Christ. But we need to be diligent, to be earnest, and have the right response of our hearts.

We need to be mindful that an increasing depth of oneness with Christ is the key that opens up for us a deeper and fuller experience of all that God intends for us in Christ, as we learn increasingly to abide in Christ and He in us.

Those who have a deeper love for the Lord, for the things of God and truth, who are more earnest and diligent, will make better progress. The moral attitudes of the heart are critical, that is, having the right frame of mind, heart and attitude.

There is much that awaits us that requires prior foundational development and knowledge before we can appreciate more and benefit further. There are many blessings in Christ, but it doesn't mean that we can enter into them all immediately. Without the proper foundation, we would not be able to experience some of the deeper things of God. We need to build up our lives, and as we grow and develop, progressively, we will be able to appreciate better and benefit more from what God intends for us. We can then enter into a deeper life with God.

Conclusion

In the previous message and in this message, we have considered what God has done and provided for us, and what He intends for us in the New Covenant. These are in accordance with God's kind intention, plans and purposes for us in Christ Jesus our Lord. He wants us to be aware of them, and to respond to Him and live accordingly.

In Ephesians 1:9, Paul declares that God has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Christ. The mystery, which was hidden in times past, God has now revealed in the Scriptures. The apostle Paul has much insight into the mystery (Eph. 3:4). It is vitally linked to what God has purposed in Christ. God doesn't want us to live in ignorance and in spiritual poverty. He wants us to walk more and more in the light and live as children of light. And all these are in accordance with the eternal purpose He carried out in Christ Jesus (Eph. 3:11), which form an integral part of the fulfilment of God's purposes.

www.godandtruth.com

Copyright

The content of this message is protected by Copyright © 2002 Lim Kou. Permission is given to print and reproduce part (where the meaning intended is retained and the part is not quoted out of context) or all the content, for personal use or for distribution, on condition that there is proper acknowledgement, no changes are made and the content distributed free of charge. Please be prayerful and discreet in distributing or making the content available to others. *This paragraph and that below should be included in any and all content reproduced for distribution.*

Scripture Quotations

Scripture quotations unless otherwise stated, are taken from the NEW AMERICAN STANDARD Bible®, Copyright © 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, 1995 by The Lockman Foundation. Used by permission.