

The Supplied Life

The Christian life is a supplied life

The new birth is God's set up for supply

The Christian life revealed in the New Testament requires that we live a life of being daily supplied. We begin the Christian life by *an act* of receiving, and we go on by *continuously* receiving (John 1:12, 16; Col. 2:6). The Christian life is a supplied life. That is, it is a life that has already been lived out and preserved for us in the Spirit (Rom. 8:9). Now, that "lived out life" is received and supplied to us.

The Christian life is not dependent on our own resources or any potential in ourselves. It has everything to do with the rich resources of Another life (Rom. 7:4). Indeed, the supplied life is Christ Himself. He has been prepared by God *for* us and is now being supplied and furnished *to* us.

The way God has designed to supply us with Himself is by organically joining us as branches to Christ, the true Vine (John 15:1, 4-5). Thus, the supplied life comes by abiding as a branch in the Vine. Our one unique need as a believer is to learn the secret of cultivating a life of abiding in the Lord so as to receive the supply of the riches of Christ's Person and work.

The apostle Paul's statement to the Corinthians sums up this spiritual principle of being supplied: "What do you have that you did not receive?" (1 Cor. 4:7). This simple word shows us that everything in the Christian life is supplied to us. Everything we have comes from what we receive! For this reason we need to keep ourselves always in a *receiving* position. Christ supplies Himself to those who keep on receiving.

Has it ever occurred to you that your new birth was God's way of setting you up to be supplied? This is the meaning of regeneration or the new birth. It is the birth of our spirit by the divine Spirit (John 3:6). God now has a direct link to the deepest part of our being so that He can supply Himself to us (1 Cor. 6:17). The birth of our human spirit means a new source is opened up in our being for God to supply us.

Before our new birth, the soul life with its mind, emotion, and will was our source. Although God created man's soul in the beginning — even before sin — He never intended that the soul would be man's supply (Gen. 2:7). God Himself was to be man's supply. This is seen by God putting man in the garden to receive and partake of the tree of life (Gen. 2:9). But man sinned and became flesh with a deadened spirit (Eph. 2:1-3). Thus, fallen man had no source of supply.

But in regeneration God made our spirit alive together with Christ (Eph. 2:4-6), and in so doing, he set us up to be supplied. Therefore, regeneration is not simply a good feeling or one time experience. It is not merely limited to a knowing that I am going to heaven. The full significance of our regeneration is a deep change within the deepest part of our being so that we can receive a direct and continuous supply of grace into our spirit (Gal. 6:18).

The new birth is an inner rearrangement in which we no longer relate to ourselves in the same way anymore. The only way we could relate to ourself

IN THIS ISSUE:

- The Supplied Life
— Pages 1-4
- New Book — Insert
- Web Site — www.thechristian.org

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before regeneration was by our own independent thought life, how we felt in our emotions, being left to consulting with ourselves, doing what we desired and what we chose — we were the source. We lived our whole life independent from God with no supply. But when we received Christ, we received a regenerated spirit that is joined to the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ (Phil. 1:19). Every born again person has been set up to be supplied by God Himself.

Spending time with the Lord to be supplied

We have seen that the Christian life has everything to do with our opening up to Another life to be supplied by that life from beginning to end. It is for this reason that we need to spend time with the Lord — to receive this supply. Sometimes when we hear the truth from the Scriptures or from others, we may take it as a personal demand upon us and feel threatened with thoughts like, “I’m not like that. I could never do that.” Or, “I can’t imagine that I could ever feel that way. I just can’t live up to that.” When we have these kinds of thoughts and feelings, if we do not realize that the Christian life is a supplied life, we may conclude that this life is not for us and give up.

But listen to this — Every word that God has spoken in the Bible, whatever it is, whatever apparent demand it brings, God wants to supply that very thing into our being. It is not that we are expected to “measure up,” or come up with the ability to perform in ourselves. No, God intends to continually supply Himself to us. We must understand the Christian life in this way — it is a supplied life. From beginning to end, it is supplied to us. And this supply comes to us and is dispensed into us in a very special and enjoyable way — *by spending time with the Lord*.

The penetrating words in Hebrews 4:12-13 tell us that the word of God divides soul and spirit, discerns the thoughts and intents of our heart, and lays us naked and bare before His eyes. These words are enough to sink one into despair. Yet these very words are specifically intended to bring us to Christ, our sympathizing High Priest, to receive our constant supply at the throne of grace (vv. 14-16). Being exposed in God’s light is always a signal to us to once again draw our supply from Him. The Christian life is a life that has already been lived for us. Christ lived the life that God intended man to live. And now this life that has already been lived is *continuously* being supplied to us.

In the New Testament the Greek word *epichoregia* (ἐπιχορηγία) depicts the Christian life as a supplied life. For example, Philippians 1:19 says, “For I know that this shall turn to my salvation through your prayer, and *the bountiful supply (epichoregia)* of the Spirit of Jesus Christ.” In the ancient Greek world the root word *choregia* was used to describe the person who was responsible for a chorus of singers. In brief, this person was responsible for supplying all the needs of all the members of the chorus. He was “the supplier.” The Greek word meant that he was both a leader and a provider of all the needs of the chorus. Whether it was clothing, food, or money, he supplied everything; and he supplied it lavishly and abundantly without rationing or restriction.

Today this New Testament word for “supply” can be likened to being on a full scholarship as a university student. You are very relaxed. You are free from anxiety over your needs. You do not have to work your way through school; you just *receive* all the benefits of your scholarship. All your practical needs are cared for. Your tuition is cared for. Your research needs are cared for. Everything is fully supplied.

This is the thought behind the word for supply (*epichoregia*). When the apostle Paul applied this word to the Christian life, he was conveying that everything in the Christian life is provided for. The normal Christian life is like being on a full spiritual scholarship with everything supplied to us. Paul surely had this in mind when he declared in Ephesians 1:3, “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with *every spiritual blessing* in the heavenlies in Christ.”

When you see your shortages and realize that you do not have a fervent love for the Lord — your heart is not inclined toward Him and His Word that much — God’s desire at that point is to supply Himself to you. *He* wants to be your love for Him and that necessary desire for His Word. So never be troubled, never be fearful.

Every new juncture in our Christian life, no matter what it is, is simply another occasion for fresh supplies from the throne of grace. For example, if you are reacting toward your husband, what you need supplied to you is Christ lived out toward your husband. Or if you feel anxious about your financial situation, what you need supplied to you is a life of trusting the Lord, taking one day at a time, and seeking first the kingdom of God. For every kind of lack there is a supply of life

waiting to meet it. You may be exposed to a sinful and worldly environment, and you need the power to resist temptation. The life that overcomes sin and the world will also be supplied to you.

We must continually realize that we are vessels receiving the bountiful supply of the Spirit of Jesus Christ. Our whole understanding of the Christian life must be renewed in this way. *The Christian life is a supplied life.* Thus, spending time with the Lord is prime time in our daily life to get connected with the supply.

In our time with the Lord, a number of things may take place as we are being supplied. To begin, we may need to cast all our preoccupations and anxieties upon Him (1 Pet. 5:7). Then we may spend time just feeding upon the Word by praying over a verse or part of a verse. We can take the very words of Scripture themselves and make them our prayer, as the apostle Paul tells us: “*Take . . . the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, by means of all prayer and petition, praying at every time in spirit.*” Following this we may sense the need to wait upon the Lord quietly, allowing the love-life of the Father and the Son to be cultivated within our hearts (Gal. 4:6; Rom. 5:5). We may find ourselves making melody in our heart to the Lord by singing a hymn or chorus. Paul and Silas blended their praying with singing: “Now, about midnight Paul and Silas while they were praying were also singing praises to God, mingling petition with songs of praise . . .” (Acts 16:25). Our time with the Lord may include a blend of several ways of contacting Him. However we spend our time with the Lord and whatever we do during that time should usher us into God Himself. It is a time to have direct contact with Him in spirit, where nothing is mere routine. It is this contact that nourishes, supplies, and furnishes Christ to us as *the supplied life.*

How God prepares us for supply

At the same time we are having a revelation of the supplied life, God is working in and over our lives to prepare us for supply. We see this by observing God’s ways of dealing with man in making him ready to receive His supply. This is a basic principle in the Old and New Testament. For example, in Galatians 3:22-24, we read,²² “But the Scripture has confined all under sin in order that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.”²³ But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the law, confined

unto the faith which would afterward be revealed.²⁴ Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith.” The word tutor can also be translated child conductor, custodian, guardian or escort. God uses the law as an escort to deal with man and lead him to Christ. In other words, the law was God’s way of preparing man to be supplied with Christ.

The frustrating experience of attempting to keep the law in our own strength was designed by God as an escort to lead us to Christ. This is exactly what Paul experienced in Romans 7:24-25. The frustration of being “a wretched man” actually prepared him to be supplied with the riches of Christ!

In which way did God escort man to Himself? He escorted man by giving him the law. Under the law man is prepared to receive supply by virtue of his utter feeling of failure and desperation. Man discovers he cannot keep the law in his flesh, so He must find something outside of himself to deliver him — this is how God prepares us to be supplied with Himself.

Man in the flesh and under the law was tested for 4000 years of history and failed over and over again. He made promises, made deals, signed covenants, did all kinds of things to keep the law, but failed repeatedly. Although God knew man would fail, man needed to know that he was a failure. So the law faced man with his failure, and by so doing was an escort to Christ.

Failure and desperation can ultimately be a blessing in disguise. If you have been raised under the law in a legalistic system, your sense of failure under that system is intended to escort you to Christ to be supplied by Him. The system said, “You had to do this and you had to do that,” and you found out that you couldn’t do it, so you were on the verge of throwing in the towel. Do you realize that such an experience was your escort to Christ?

This is the way God works. He works with your frustration. You get so fed up with yourself that there has got to be something else on the horizon. The law drives you up a wall. It causes you to cry out as Paul did, “Oh wretched man that I am!” Passing through the bondage of legalism can lead you straight into the arms of Jesus. Yes, you need outside help! “I can’t do it on my own! Who is going to deliver me?” With that confession comes, “I thank God *through* Jesus Christ!” Your wretchedness just escorted you to Christ, and that is exactly what God intended by this whole cycle of law / bondage / wretchedness / crying out = preparation to be escorted to Christ for His full supply.

*Prepared for supply by the
one thing you can't overcome*

Some of us are too independent, we are too self-sufficient, we are too proud. We think we can do it. So that is why in most of our lives there is always one thing we can't overcome. There is something, there is a hang-up somewhere. A secret or a private sin. There is something in your life you cannot lick. You just cannot win the battle.

The Lord discovered this one area in the life of the rich young ruler. The young man really thought that he did it all, that he kept the commandments. He couldn't consciously think of one thing in his life that was wrong. He said, "What do I lack?" The Lord took the tenth commandment, and applied to the young man's life. He didn't say to him, "Thou shalt not lust." This is a commandment on your reactions, not on your actions. It is not saying "Do not commit adultery." That is an action. It is saying, "Do not *feel* lust." That is an inner reaction. Don't feel that way? How can I not feel that way, when I feel that way? The Lord said to the rich young man, "Go sell all that you have, and give to the poor, and come and follow." The young man went away, sad. The Lord put him to the test. It was the one thing in his life, he couldn't overcome.

Maybe in your life you have given over ninety five percent to the Lord, but there is five percent that you know you are a failure again and again. Now let that five percent work. It is an escort. The area you can't overcome is intended to drive you out of yourself as your source into Christ as your life. Don't despise it. Tell Him, "Lord, thank You that there is something in my life that has proved to me that I am not sufficient of myself. I need You as my supply."

Prepared for supply by being thirsty

Have you not read your symptoms of thirst? The woman at the well in John 4 was seeking many husbands to satisfy her thirst. All her husband-seeking was just her symptoms of thirst. The woman seeking husband after husband was a symptom of her thirst. Eventually it prepared her to receive the supply of living water. In the same way, the activity of the grace of God in us is like the movement of the ocean. It ebbs in the form of a feeling of emptiness and void. There is a backwash. You feel disgusted with yourself. You find yourself going to the refrigerator, or going shopping,

watching TV, going off impulsively on a weekend binge. You find yourself trying to fill that void, because you can sense there is a deep void within you.

Do you realize that God uses this feeling of void to prepare you to be supplied with Christ? You wouldn't move on your own. You are not pursuing Him. So God in His mercy does not leave you to yourself. He allows a sense of void and emptiness. It is like the ocean is ebbing — "I am loosing ground, everything is getting bad. I am going from bad to worse. I used to love the Lord. I used to love my Bible. But look at me now. Look at the feelings I am having. I am even feeling indifferent." You start to get afraid of yourself a little bit. That is the ocean ebbing out. But all the time it is ebbing, it is gaining momentum to come back in. And this whole cycle is all the grace of God preparing you to be supplied.

If you do not understand the Christian life in this way, then you may wander in the wilderness for forty years (Heb. 3:9-10). You are going to question why God did this or that to me? Why did I get a bad break? Why didn't things turn out differently? If you are in that mode of thinking, you will miss the purpose of all your trials. Whatever God has allowed over our lives, it is to reduce us to be a person that can be supplied by Him.

The Christian life is a supplied life because God intended from the beginning that man would live a dependent life upon Him. This dependency means God is our source in all things. Thus, in whatever inward and outward environment we may find ourselves, it is simply another occasion for the branch to draw its supply from Christ, the true Vine. The first and last lesson of the Christian life is to *abide* in Him.

— Bill Freeman

the Christian

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