

GOD'S PROVISION FOR MAN'S PROSPERITY

While dividing the inheritance to the chosen people of God under divine direction, six cities known as "Cities of Refuge" were set aside (Josh. 20:7, 8). These six cities clearly show how every need of man can abundantly be met only in the Lord Jesus Christ. "Christ Jesus, who of God is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption" (1 Cor. 1:30). "Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3:11). "In him was life; and the life was the light of men... That was the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world" (John 1:4, 9). To the weary, wandering and wasted humanity, the loving Lord Jesus extends His invitation, "Come unto me, ... I will give you rest" (Matt. 11:28). "Look unto me, and be ye saved" (Isaiah. 45:22). "...Obey my voice, ... that it may be well unto you" (Jer. 7:23). In Him alone we can "live, and move, and have our being" (Acts 17:28). For a purposeful life of satisfaction and fulfillment. We want to consider a few unique common characteristics of these six cities, which convey clearly the marvelous provision in the Lord Jesus Christ for all of us.

1. Locality:

First of all, these six cities of refuge were centrally located. All cities were almost equidistant from the city of refuge in that locality. No city was far away from it. The Lord Jesus is not far away from anyone of us (Acts 17:27). All religions with their ordinances and observations show how man is trying hard to reach God. But our loving Lord Jesus took the first step to reach out to the fallen humanity. He left the glory of heaven and came to this earth "to seek and to save" everyone lost in sin (Luke 19:10). Though He is the "high and lofty One" (Isaiah. 57:15), to provide His great salvation for us, He became humble and lowly. No greatness marked the humanity of the Lord Jesus. He was born in a manger (Luke 2:7). He had no home of His own. "And every man went unto his own house. Jesus went unto the mount of Olives" (John 7:53; 8:1). "Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head" (Luke 9:58). He had nothing to call his own. He preached from someone's boat and His body after crucifixion was kept in some one else's sepulcher. In His death, He was counted among criminals though He "knew no sin" (2 Cor. 5:21), "did no sin" (1 Pet. 2:22) and in Him was "no sin" (1 John 3:5). Thus He "made himself of no reputation" (Phil. 2:7). All of us are equally precious to Him, whether we are rich or poor, high or low, educated or illiterate, popular or insignificant, and accepted or rejected by others. That is why He paid the same price of His own: precious blood to redeem us from the bondage of sin, corruption and rebellion. Whatever may be your present pitiable predicament, the Lord Jesus! Comes close to you with great compassion to help you (Luke 10:33). Hence call upon Him now with confidence.

2. Accessibility:

Every city of refuge was easily accessible. No one could miss the way to a city of refuge. There were well-built roads from all directions leading to it. The roads were carefully repaired and maintained in good condition always. The bridges on the way were kept in safe condition. Good road-signs and indicators were clearly provided so that no one might lose the way while fleeing to it speedily. The Lord Jesus does not distance Himself from anyone but accepts everyone who comes to Him with love and grace. "...him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out" (John 6:37). He is only a prayer away. "The Lord is nigh unto all them that call upon him,

to all that call upon him in truth" (Psa. 145:18). We do not need any mediation to come to the Lord Jesus, whether priest, preacher or saint, dead or alive. He understands us fully. No one can feel our pain, loneliness, loss or deepest need as He sure can. He is "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (Heb. 4:15), because "he himself hath suffered" (Heb.2: 18).

You can come to Him with confidence and assurance that He fully understands you and will accept you as you are. He has already gone through whatever you are passing through spiritually, physically, mentally and emotionally except committing sin. He knows what it is to be ignored, insulted, rejected, falsely accused, deserted and deceived. He knows what it is to have excruciating pain from head to foot. He knows what it is to be mocked, slapped, spat upon and beaten. He felt the pain of splinters piercing through His body. Come with all your pain and heartaches. He will readily receive you. You need not 'put on airs' to come to Him. Come just as you are. The "Friend of sinners" will warmly welcome. Even the foulest sinner .coming to Him with repentance. The Lord Jesus came "to seek and to save that which was lost" (Luke 19:10). Come just as you are and He will accept you and transform you.

An artist wanted to draw a picture of a beggar. He found a 'model' after searching for a while in the streets. He told the beggar to come to his studio the next morning, and paid him some money as advance. The beggar was excited. He had a haircut and clean shave. He hired nice clothes for a day and went to the studio in his best appearance. The artist had difficulty in recognizing him and turned him out saying, "I wanted you to come as you were. Now you are of no use to me. You can go away:' God does not want any religious make- up or moral mask when you come to Him. Any sinner of any degree can come to the Lord Jesus for forgiveness and cleansing. Hence come to Him with confidence and faith, and receive His free gift of salvation right now.

The six cities of refuge mentioned in Josh. 20:7-8, represent the Lord Jesus Christ and vividly illustrate how our needs can be abundantly met in Him. The five common characteristics of these cities convey clearly the five aspects of salvation by grace, available freely in the Lord Jesus Christ. We have seen firstly about LOCALITY. Every city of refuge was equidistant from all other cities. The Lord Jesus is not far away from anyone of us (Acts 17:27), in-spite of our background, upbringing or religious and social status. Secondly, the ACCESSIBILITY of these cities shows that the Lord Jesus Christ can be confidently approached by anyone for salvation. We will try now by God's grace, to dwell upon the other three aspects.

3. Certainty:

The city of refuge could never refuse admission to the one who came running to it. He would find a warm welcome and free admission at the entrance of the city. He was sure that he would never be 'cast out.' We may feel foul and loathsome about our own selves and in the opinion of others. But the Lord Jesus receives us with open arms when we come to Him. A young man traveling in a train was anxiously peeping through the window every now and then. A co- passenger asked him why he was so anxiously looking out. The young man said, he had committed a crime a few years ago and was imprisoned. He had brought shame upon his family and had almost broken his loving mother's heart. Before his release from the prison, he had written to his mother asking her, if she could forgive him and receive him. To show her willingness to receive him, he wanted her to put a white flag on the big

tree near the house on the day of his return. If not, he was willing to go away without getting down at the nearby station. When the train approached his house, he saw that the whole tree was covered with white flags. In her concern that her son should not miss to see one flag, the loving mother had put so many of them on the tree as a proof of her forgiving love. One look at the cross would suffice to convince fully anyone of the forgiving love of the Lord Jesus Christ. Perhaps you have grieved the heavenly Father's loving heart and wandered far away from Him. "Take with you words, and turn to the LORD: say unto him, Take away all iniquity, and receive us graciously" (Hosea.14:2). Like the father of the prodigal son who waited anxiously for the son's return and saw him "a great way off" (Luke 15:20), your Heavenly Father has been awaiting the moment of your return. Come now, and come just as you are.

4. Sufficiency:

Every city of refuge was supplied with sufficient fuel, water and food all through the year. There was no lack in the city of refuge. The Lord Jesus Christ supplies all our needs -spiritual, emotional, material and physical. "For ye know the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, that, though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, that ye through his poverty might be rich" (2 Cor. 8:9). When the Savior comes into a person, he is blessed with "so great salvation" (Heb. 2:3), which transforms his whole personality –the spirit, soul and body (1 Thess. 5:23). His dead spirit is quickened (Eph. 2:1) and he is spiritually made alive. His darkened soul (2 Cor. 4:4) is enlightened and he is guided correctly in his emotions and decisions. His defiled body (Jude 23) is cleansed and brought under the control of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 8:10). There is a total transformation in his deeds, words, as well as thoughts. His interests, motives and attitudes are all changed. This salvation pertains to the past, present and the future. We are delivered from the punishment of our past sins, are being delivered from the power of sin in the present, and will be delivered from the very presence of sin in the future. In Christ Jesus we are blessed with all heavenly and earthly blessings. In everything and in all situations we can prove His sufficiency by His grace (2 Cor. 9:8). It is foolishness to reject the invitation to come to the Lord Jesus. There is nothing to lose but so much to gain.

5. Security: Inside the city of refuge, everyone enjoyed perfect safety and security. No power- human or inhuman-can affect or afflict a child of God. He is always under the divine protection. "...greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (1 John 4:4) "... they that be with us are more than they that be with them" (2 Kings 6:16). "... with us is the Lord our God to help us, and to fight our battles" (2Chron. 32:8). He is "able to keep you from falling" (Jude 24). "... neither shall any man pluck them (my sheep) out of my hand" (John 10:28).The ever-abiding presence of the Lord Jesus Christ gives us victory always in all things and we are more than conquerors through Him that loved us (Rom. 8:37). No one has ever regretted for coming to Christ and committing his life to Him. Oh, do not delay! Come to Him now and accept Him as your Lord and Savior. The fivefold benefits are yours in Christ Jesus, your Eternal Refuge. (Concluded) T.R.