

THE STEPS OF
Salvation

The offering of Christ
and the sprinkling of His blood

PART 4

VICTOR HALL

with Peter Hay & David Baker

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Phone: 1300 885 048

Email: info@rfipublishing.org

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Preface

Receiving illumination

The Scripture captures our attention by focusing our understanding on a statement or event that is recorded in its text. It has always been written there for us to see, but we may never have noticed it before. When we receive illumination, we are confronted by what is written in the Scriptures. This is because we realise that what is written, and its implications for us, are a self-evident truth that we have not previously seen. We realise that, up until this point, our understanding and perspective have been darkened.

Although the things of God are proclaimed in nature, God is not found in nature. God can be found and known only through *illumination*, by His Spirit. Paul was making this point when He wrote, 'No-one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.'¹

1 1Co 2:11-14

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A person who is receiving a true knowledge of God is motivated to worship Him. In contrast, there are many people who have a form of godliness, but deny its power.² Referring to people like this, Paul noted that ‘although they knew God, they did not glorify Him as God, nor were thankful, but became futile in their thoughts, and their foolish hearts were darkened. Professing to be wise, they became fools, and changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man – and birds and four-footed animals and creeping things. Therefore God also gave them up to uncleanness, in the lusts of their hearts, to dishonour their bodies among themselves, who exchanged the truth of God for the lie, and worshipped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever.’³

These people lose or forsake their connection to God. Because they cease to glorify God and to give thanks to Him in every circumstance of life, the light of life within them progressively grows dim, and they become blind to what should be self-evident.

Illumination by the Spirit connects a person to worship. How does this happen? With illumination, we see or hear, from the Scripture, that which is self-evident truth. Our heart then burns within us in worship. This was the testimony of Cleopas and his friend as they talked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus. When they arrived at their destination, they said to the Lord, ‘*Abide with us.*’ This revealed their desire for fellowship, which is the context for worship ‘in spirit’. In this fellowship, as they broke the bread of sincerity and truth with the Lord, ‘their eyes were opened and they knew Him’.⁴ Through illumination, they were able to worship the Lord in spirit and in truth.⁵

The eyes of the Lord in every place behold the evil and the good. His eyes communicate His awareness of all things. Nothing is hidden from His sight. The Scriptures teach us that the eyes of the Lord are a flame of fire.⁶ This light illuminates our understanding as we look into His face and meet Him eye to eye. Fellowship with Christ, eye to eye, leads to fellowship with Him, heart to heart.

Christ’s eyes can either reprove us or they can console us with approval. His fiery eyes are the expression of His love. As King Solomon noted, this love is a vehement flame of fire that water cannot quench.⁷ This reveals that the Lord’s eyes communicate the judgement of love.

2 2Ti 3:5

6 Dan 10:6. Rev 1:14

3 Rom 1:21-25

7 Son 8:6-7

4 Luk 24:29-31

5 1Co 5:8

Worship in spirit and in truth is the culture of first love

W E Vine, in his *Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, noted that worship is a difficult word to define in Scripture. The different verbs that describe worship show that it is not just confined to praise. It is more than religious honour, religious service and homage. Christian piety (i.e. pious behaviour, expressed through devotional living) is part of worship, but is not the sum of worship.

The apostle Paul said that authentic Christians worship in the Spirit of God, and rejoice in Christ Jesus as members of His body. Then, as functioning members of Christ's body, they take pride only in Christ Jesus, while they serve as priests by the Spirit of God.⁸

In the Gospel of John, it is recorded that Jesus spoke to a woman of Samaria about worship. He said that true worshippers worship in spirit and truth. He strengthened this further by saying that God the Father is a spirit. Those who worship Him can only do so if they meet Him on His ground and on His terms. That is, for worship to be worship, it must be in spirit and in truth.⁹

Jesus had earlier said to Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews, that a person has to be born again of water and the Spirit to become spiritual. Jesus was most emphatic about this point. A person has to be born again by the Spirit of God to be able to see and enter the kingdom of God.¹⁰

Jesus also spoke to the woman of Samaria about this same process. He said to her, when He first met her at Jacob's well, that He could give to her the water of eternal life. This water would become within her a well of life-giving water that, springing up within her, would give her eternal life.¹¹ The life that He would give to her came from the Father, and this life was the water of which she would be born. As she received the life of God, she would also receive the Spirit of God, causing her to be born of the Spirit of God. She would then be spiritual.

To make this point clearer, Jesus spoke on this subject in the temple. This was on the last day of the Feast of Booths, which is the final celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles, in the seventh month of the Jewish religious year.¹² Jesus spoke to a multitude of Jews who believed that He was God's anointed Messenger. They believed that He was the Christ who had come from God, for they said, 'When the Christ comes, He will not perform more signs than those which this man has, will He?'¹³ To this multitude, Jesus said, 'If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and

8 Php 3:3

12 Joh 7:14,37

9 Joh 4:23-24

13 Joh 7:31

10 Joh 3:5-8

11 Joh 4:10-14

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drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, 'From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.'" But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.¹⁴

The prophet Isaiah, when speaking of this event, said that when people received the Spirit of God as a blessing poured upon them, as rain is poured upon a thirsty land, the effect would be that they would come to life like a land that is regenerating after a drought. People would then confess and say, 'I am the Lord's.' Others would write with their hands, 'Belonging to the Lord'. By this means, the name of Israel, as God's nation and kingdom, would be honoured.¹⁵

Only those who receive the Spirit of God are able to know fellowship, and to worship God. We worship God as His children. We worship when we confess that we belong to Him.

More than this, worship is the essence of first love. It is an expression of fellowship. It is an articulation of our love for God and for one another. It is a response of appreciation to God because He first loved us and gave Himself up for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God.¹⁶ Those who are true worshippers of God have committed themselves to walk in love, in the same way that Christ has loved us. Those who worship Him have joined themselves to the fellowship of Christ's offering through baptism.

The apostle John described first love as an action of *propitiation*. He said, 'By this the love of God was manifested in us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world so that we might live through Him. In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.'¹⁷ John then said that if we love one another, God's love is perfected in us.¹⁸

By definition, 'propitiation' is a merciful action of offering, made by God, by which He is able to destroy sin, remove man's guilt, and then break down the barrier of shame that sin has interposed between God and man. Propitiation, then, reconnects mankind to God by giving Christ's own sinless life to those who believe in His love for them.

The first recorded use of the word 'worship' in the Scriptures is found in the book of Genesis, where Abraham, while giving instruction to his servants, spoke of the

14 Joh 7:37-39

18 1Jn 4:12

15 Isa 44:1-5

16 1Jn 4:19. Eph 5:2

17 1Jn 4:9-11

burnt offering that he was about to make to God.¹⁹ He called it ‘an offering of worship’. However, he did not tell his servants that he was going to offer Isaac up to God as a burnt offering and then receive him from the dead again by a miracle of resurrection.²⁰

Abraham, through offering, joined Isaac to the fellowship of Christ’s offering. The Scriptures record that ‘Abraham took the wood of the burnt offering and *laid it on Isaac his son*; and he took the fire in his hand, and a knife, and the two of them *went together*’.²¹ Because Abraham and Isaac worshipped God together, in the fellowship of offering, God was able to give the blessing of the Everlasting Covenant of sonship to Abraham and to Isaac, with their descendants.²²

The effect of grace and supplication

We begin to worship when a spirit of adoption is poured out upon us. We are able to look upon Christ, high and lifted up upon a cross. We can mourn in repentance as He blesses us by anointing us with the spirit of grace and supplication. We turn to God, declaring that God is our Father, and confessing that we belong to Him.²³ We then worship the Son in the fellowship of His offering. We express our appreciation of His worthiness as the Lamb of God. We prostrate ourselves before Him. We come and kneel before Him, bowing our head in prayer. We kiss the hand of the Son, which is stretched out to save and embrace us. We worship the Lord with reverence and fear. We rejoice with trembling, giving homage to the Son.²⁴

The power of God is released as we bow down and worship the Lord.²⁵ The worship and word of the cross is proclaiming deliverance. It is bringing the wisdom and power of God to our life. We are in the secret place of the Most High when we go to our prayer closet and kneel in worship before God our Maker. Further to this, we are also in the secret place when we gather ourselves together to worship the Son in the fellowship of His communion table.

As our offering begins, the song of the Lord begins, and wells up within us in praise and worship.²⁶ We are a kingdom of priests, worshipping our God as we behold, in worship, the offering of the Lamb, and we follow Him wherever He goes.²⁷

19 Gen 22:5

20 Heb 11:17-19

21 Gen 22:6

22 Gen 22:16-18

23 Zec 12:10.

Isa 44:3-5

24 Psa 2:11-12

25 Rev 4:10-11

26 2Ch 29:27

27 Rev 1:6

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The spirit of grace and supplication has been given to us as an anointing that is poured upon us.²⁸ This blessing enables us to look upon Christ whom we have pierced, and to mourn and weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter, heart-felt weeping that one would experience if they lost a firstborn child. We weep over the loss of our sonship, believing that it can be recovered as we are joined to Christ's death and resurrection.

This grace enables us to look into the bruised and swollen face of Christ, which was marred by the abusive effects of our sin when it was laid upon Him. It joins us to Him in the fellowship of His offering, which is able to redeem and restore us.

Meeting the Lord eye to eye

When the Lord comes to us, He calls us, through the preaching of His word, to come to Him. He asks us to turn to Him and to meet Him face to face. To our surprise, the first element of fellowship that we encounter, as we meet Him eye to eye, is that His eyes expose before us, the nature of our sin and shame. At this point, we can either recoil in self-justification or condemnation, and hide our faces from Him, or we can turn to the Lord. As we meet Him face to face, we can respond in repentance and mourn for our sin.²⁹

Paul declared to us, in his letter to the Hebrews, that 'there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are open and laid bare to the eyes of Him with whom we have to do'.³⁰ Paul then explained that Christ has come to meet us as our Great High Priest. He noted that Christ has come to sympathise with our weakness, because He understands us. This is because He has been tempted in all things as we are, yet without sin. Paul urged us to hold fast to our confession of faith, to draw near to meet Christ with confidence, and to receive from Him mercy and grace that will help us in our need.³¹

Christ, even though confronting us with our failures and sin, is speaking peaceably to us. As He speaks to us, His word convicts us, and we begin to mourn in repentance. We are able to believe that there is hope for us, because a spirit of grace and supplication comes to us from the throne of grace. The throne of grace is the mercy seat, and is also the symbol of His high-priestly authority by which He gives to us, through His grace, the ability to worship Him, and to fellowship with Him in prayer. That is, it enables us to supplicate, and then move forward into a process that brings change to our life. This process involves travail because,

28 Zec 12:10

29 Isa 53:1-5.
Zec 12:10

30 Heb 4:13

31 Heb 4:14-16

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as He talks to us, we are being joined, through offering transfer, to the fellowship of His sufferings.

We believe in the love that God has for us. Even though we are under conviction because of our sin and failures, we come above the shame and condemnation that we feel. This shame and condemnation is the fruit of our own pride and 'other law'.³² Our faith is working because the love of God is being poured into our heart.³³ As we accept the love of God, deliverance comes to us. We know that we have been forgiven. There is no more self-condemnation in us. We are justified by faith. Our faith attitude makes us feel well. More than this, we are now drawn into a process by which we are being made whole.

Illumination and conviction come to us from the eyes of Christ, our Lord, by the power of the Holy Spirit. In the first case, grace and supplication enable us to look upon Christ as our substitute and saviour, and to know that, through His vicarious work, we belong to God. This grace, as it is given to us, is the water of life that becomes a well within us, which then springs up and ministers everlasting life to us.

Grace and supplication also come to us from the throne of grace, and is part of Christ's personal ministry to us as our High Priest. As our High Priest, He sprinkles our conscience, and purges our hearts from sin with His own blood. This capacity that He gives us to meet Him in the fellowship of prayer is an integral part of the process by which He gives us His life as He confronts us. He does not want us to respond to Him in condemnation when under conviction, but to respond in faith and to enter the fellowship of His offering. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, offering transfer moves our sin to Him, and His sinless life to us, enabling us to be transformed and perfected.

To understand how we participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering, it is necessary to consider the pathway of salvation that He authored as He journeyed from the last supper to Calvary. This journey was a work that He had been given according to the will of God. Paul explained that 'by this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all'.³⁴

32 Rom 7:23

33 Rom 5:1-5

34 Heb 10:10

CHAPTER 1

The hope of righteousness

The righteousness of faith

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul communicated his earnest desire for the nation of Israel to be saved. As he outlined his concern for them, he described the reason for their fallen state. He acknowledged that they had a *zeal for God*, but not in accordance with knowledge.¹ What was it that they did not know? Paul said that they did not know about *God's righteousness*, which he called 'the righteousness of faith'.² This was evident because they sought to establish *their own righteousness* through the keeping of the law, rather than by subjecting themselves to the righteousness of God.³

What is the righteousness of God? In summary, the righteousness of God is the inexhaustible fellowship and works of God. It describes the achievement of His will. We can identify from the Scriptures three dimensions of God's righteousness. The gift of righteousness is, first, the *expression of the love and fellowship of Yahweh* that

1 Rom 10:2

2 Rom 10:6

3 Rom 10:3

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we are to participate in, by offering, for eternity. This is what it means to 'reign in life'.⁴ The second dimension of the righteousness of God is that it *endures forever*.⁵ The third aspect of the righteousness of God is that it is the *works of God*.⁶

The wonderful message of the gospel is that God predestined us to *become the righteousness of God*, in Christ.⁷ This means that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit intended us to be born of God, to live in fellowship with Them, and to participate in the works of God. Before the beginning of the heavens and the earth, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together to create, and to bring to glory, a multitude of sons of God. Paul called this discussion of God, 'the counsel of His will'.⁸ The sonship of every identity that would ever be created was named in this discussion. These names were written in the book of life, and encompassed the works that each son of God would do. To know and do these works, and thus participate in the fulfilment of God's will, a person would need to fellowship with Yahweh.⁹ In this fellowship, they would know and be known by Yahweh and their brethren in Christ.

Paul was explaining the plight of the Israelites to highlight the reality that every believer faces the same dilemma that the nation of Israel did. There are many Christians who have a zeal for God, yet their preoccupation is with their *own righteousness* rather than with the righteousness that comes by faith. They believe that their zealous, self-defined works are the righteousness of God and are not dependent on their relationship with other sons of God. Their unwillingness and, indeed, their inability, to worship in one Spirit as part of the fellowship of the body of Christ, according to their name as a son of God, demonstrates that they do not know what the will of God is.¹⁰ Their works, therefore, are not revealing the righteousness of God and have no enduring merit. This way of living leads only to condemnation.

Do not say who will ascend or who will descend

Paul instructed believers regarding the righteousness of faith, using the words of Moses that were recorded in the book of Deuteronomy.¹¹ In this book, written at the conclusion of his ministry, Moses drew the attention of the children of Israel to the failure of the Old Covenant. He implored them to live by faith and in hope for the coming of a different covenant.¹² Through this new covenant, they would be able to fulfil God's commands to love the Lord their God and to love one another.¹³

4 Rom 5:17

5 Psa 112:9. 2Co 9:9

6 Psa 145:4-7.
Dan 9:14

7 2Co 5:21

8 Eph 1:11

9 2Co 5:21.

Eph 1:5-6

10 Eph 5:17

11 Rom 10:6-7

12 Deu 30:14.

Heb 11:1,13-16

13 Deu 30:5-6.

Lev 19:18

To this end, Moses strongly exhorted the people, saying, 'For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven, that you should say, "Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?" Nor is it beyond the sea, that you should say, "Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe it?" But the word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it.'¹⁴

Moses himself had been a leading figure who had gone into heaven on behalf of the children of Israel, to bring the word of the law down to them. However, this covenant had proven to be an abject failure. Why so? It was because of the weakness of man's flesh, and the inadequacy of a vicarious ministry to effect change in the hearts of the sons and daughters of men.¹⁵ For this reason, Moses demanded that the book of Deuteronomy be placed beside the ark of the covenant as a witness against the nation's ability to fulfil the righteousness of the law.¹⁶ He said to them, 'I know your rebellion and your stiff neck [which revealed the other law at work in their hearts]. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the Lord, then how much more after my death?'¹⁷

The book of Deuteronomy was not only a witness against the children of Israel's ability to obtain the righteousness of God under the conditions of the Old Covenant; it was also a prophetic statement of the New Covenant, through which God's Everlasting Covenant would be fulfilled. Moses commanded the children of Israel to read the book of Deuteronomy every seven years, at the time of the remission of debts during the feast of booths.¹⁸ This was to include the singing of the song of Moses. The remission of debts at the end of the sabbath year required every creditor to release his neighbour from their debts.¹⁹ Also, during the sabbatical year, the children of Israel were not to cultivate, work or reap the land that God had given them.

Because the children of Israel failed to keep the sabbath years, the land of their inheritance spewed them out.²⁰ The Lord sent prophets to Israel and Judah to warn them, through the song of Moses, that if they did not turn from their idols, return to the Lord, and obey the words of the Lord, they would be cursed and cast into another land.²¹ The Jewish nation was conquered and exiled by the king of Babylon 'to fulfil the word of the Lord by the mouth of Jeremiah, until the land had enjoyed her seven Sabbaths. As long as she lay desolate she kept Sabbath, to fulfil seventy years'.²²

14 Deu 30:11-14

15 Rom 8:3.
Heb 9:6-10.
Heb 10:1-3

16 Deu 31:26.
Rom 10:5

17 Deu 31:27
18 Deu 31:10-13
19 Deu 15:1-2

20 Lev 18:28

21 Deu 29:27-28.
2Ch 36:15-16

22 2Ch 36:21

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By drawing from the words of Moses in the book of Deuteronomy, Paul highlighted to the Roman Christians the reality that a believer could have the same Old Covenant mindset as the Israelites, even though the New Covenant had already been inaugurated by Christ. When Moses said to Israel, ‘Don’t say, “Who will ascend into heaven?”’, Paul explained that this meant, ‘Don’t say, “Who, on our behalf, will bring Christ down to us?”’²³ We should not expect a person to tell us how to live as Christians or to make us live as Christians. We must not expect even Christ to do this for us!

There are church leaders who presume to ‘bring Christ down’ to others through their ministry. Likewise, there are Christians who desire strong, charismatic, vicar-styled leaders to minister to them in this manner. A leader who functions purposefully, or even inadvertently, as a vicarious mediator of the word of God does so as a means of validating their own identity. Their presentation and practices, including presuming to absolve people of their sin, are part of the religious projections that leaders may tailor for themselves to cover the nakedness and shame of their self-defined ministry. Their sense of self-worth, purpose and efficacy is tied to their influence over others. In this regard, they encourage and exhort their congregants to turn from the deeds of evil and to attain to the standards of righteous living that they have interpreted from the Scriptures for their followers.

We can see how missionary work can also follow this Old Covenant pattern. Moses exhorted the people that they were not to look for leaders who would *cross the sea for them to make them hear the word and observe it*.²⁴ This means that the gospel should not be shared with people in other countries with the intent of *making* them hear the word and observe it. Missionaries can endeavour to make their hearers observe the word by imposing church doctrines and institutional structures upon new Christians. Jesus condemned this approach, declaring, ‘Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.’²⁵

In contrast to this traditional and enduring missionary approach, the preaching of Christ should cause faith to arise in the hearts of those who hear it, leading to their birth as a son of God. A son of God is then able to present themselves for fellowship and service according to their sanctification as a member of the body of Christ. In this way, true administration should grow up organically in each place as ascension-graced messengers who are in the hand of Christ minister the word

23 Rom 10:6

24 Deu 30:13

25 Mat 23:15

of present truth to them. This is in stark contrast to the imposition of church organisational structures upon local believers who are then variously empowered over others by key missionary figures.

Christians who desire their leaders to bring Christ down to them for the purpose of empowering their righteous aspirations have no capacity to demonstrate the righteousness of faith. This is because they are not living by faith. Instead, they pursue holiness through their own strength. They often view approval from senior leaders as confirmation of their acceptable condition. Instead of faith and sanctification being demonstrated through the good works of their sonship, their Christian life, including their service in the church, is based on empowerment through association with the people they perceive as possessing spiritual power and influence. This is not the way to eternal life. It is part of the broad way that leads to destruction.²⁶

Paul also said that the righteousness of faith does not say, ‘‘Who will descend into the abyss?’’ (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).²⁷ By this, Paul meant that a son of God should not expect Christ, or other people on behalf of Christ, to deliver them from their suffering through the exercise of spiritual gifts. This is because the gifts of the Spirit are for the purpose of ministering grace and life to the sons of God so that they are fully equipped for their participation in the offering of Christ. In the fellowship of Christ’s offering, they are able to fulfil the will of God and to become the righteousness of God in Him. Christ’s offering involved a circumcision through suffering. This is why a son of God who has joined the offering of Christ should not view their trials and tribulations as strange or surprising, nor view themselves as the victims of suffering.²⁸

In practice, many of our evangelical and Pentecostal traditions have promoted ‘bringing Christ down from heaven’ to empower our own righteousness or ‘bringing Christ up from the dead’ to deliver us from suffering. However, this is a false gospel. It encourages believers to live by the failed principles of the Old Covenant. Speaking specifically regarding the New Covenant through the prophet Jeremiah, Yahweh said, ‘I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. They will not teach again, each man his neighbour and each man his brother, saying, ‘‘Know the Lord,’’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, declares the Lord, for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.’²⁹

26 Mat 7:13

27 Rom 10:6-7

28 1Pe 4:12

29 Jer 31:33-34

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To receive the New Covenant, we must be illuminated concerning our Old Covenant ways, and must find repentance. In view of this objective, Yahweh said, ‘Set up for yourself roadmarks, place for yourself guideposts; direct [or set] your mind to the highway [of sanctification that Christ has authored through His offering and circumcision].’³⁰ Indeed, turning from the church doctrines and practices that are based in the principles of an Old Covenant is a roadmark that every church, and every believer, must establish in order to receive the blessings of the New Covenant.

Does knowing the Lord and having His laws written into our heart by the Holy Spirit mean that we do not need to hear from messengers in the church? Of course not! Paul said that the righteousness of faith says, ‘The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart [that you may do it]’ – that is, *the word of faith which we are preaching*.³¹ In fact, we are unable to join the fellowship of Christ’s offering and circumcision without receiving the word of God’s will through the messengers He sends to us.³²

The word of truth is the word of a person’s sanctification. It grants to them the faith to believe for, and to fulfil, the works of their sonship in the fellowship of the body of Christ. That is, the word of God establishes the ground of fellowship. In this fellowship, we receive the works that belong to our name, and are equipped to participate in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and circumcision. This is what Moses was calling the children of Israel to see and to desire.

The key point for the children of Israel, and for each of us, is that we must receive the word of faith. Faith enables us to join the fellowship of Yahweh’s offering, through which the righteousness of God is revealed. The children of Israel were to make offering with the same faith that Abraham demonstrated. In this faith, Abraham participated in offering because he saw Christ’s day and was glad.³³ In the New Covenant, we participate in the fellowship of Christ’s offering, now, by the same faith that Abraham received.

The gospel of salvation

The word of the Lord to Israel, through the mouth of Moses, was not recounted by Paul to simply illustrate a point. Paul was revealing that the gospel he preached was the *same message* that Moses had declared to Israel, who were ‘the church in the wilderness’.³⁴ Writing to the Hebrews, Paul said, ‘Therefore, since a promise

30 Jer 31:21

34 Act 7:38

31 Rom 10:8

32 1Jn 1:3

33 Joh 8:56

remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. *For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them*; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it.³⁵

Jesus Himself proclaimed the New Covenant message from the writings of Moses. He said to Cleopas and his companion, ‘Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?’ And *beginning at Moses and all the Prophets*, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.³⁶ Jesus was revealing that His death, or circumcision, was the means by which the Lord would circumcise the hearts of His covenant people so that they could love the Lord, love their brethren, and reveal the righteousness of God. This is what the Lord God had promised through Moses.³⁷

The word that Moses received regarding God’s Everlasting Covenant was the gospel that Paul proclaimed. The illumination that Paul had received concerning God’s purpose and plan was in contrast to the darkened perspective of the Jews, who continued to assert that righteousness could be achieved through a person’s adherence to the law. Paul was not ashamed of his gospel, saying, ‘It is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes, for the Jew first and also for the Greek. *For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith*; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith”.’³⁸

Paul was emphasising that his message enabled a person to participate in the revealing of the righteousness of God, forever. He noted that there were ‘other gospels’ being preached that did not call a hearer to be born as a son of God or to be joined to the fellowship of Christ’s offering and circumcision as a member of the body of Christ.³⁹ He marvelled that whole churches had turned away from the truth that is in Christ, in order to pursue righteousness through their own fleshly efforts.⁴⁰ In this respect, the plight of the Christians in these churches was no different from that of Israel, even though Christ had already offered Himself for them. Paul was ashamed of their gospel. We too should be ashamed of these gospels and their pervasive influence in our churches.

Our task, therefore, is to understand how the gospel enables a person to receive and demonstrate the righteousness of God. This will involve considering how Christians can live in the same condemned manner as the children of Israel, even though they have been born of God.

35 Heb 4:1-2 39 Gal 1:6-8

36 Luk 24:26-27 40 Gal 3:1-4

37 Deu 30:6.
Lev 19:18

38 Rom 1:16-17

The law covenant

For a period of 1500 years, the Israelites lived under the law covenant. God gave the ten commandments to them as their rule for life. He said to them, ‘You are to perform My judgements and keep My statutes, to live in accord with them; I am the Lord your God. So you shall keep My statutes and My judgements, by which a man may live [forever] if he does them; I am the Lord [Yahweh].’⁴¹ The Lord stated that if the children of Israel were able to keep the law, it would give them eternal life.⁴² Paul noted this point in his letter to the Romans, writing, ‘This commandment, which was to result in life [zoe], proved to result in death for me’.⁴³

From the book of Deuteronomy, we also learn that *keeping the law was righteousness*. Specifically, Moses said to the children of Israel, ‘It will be *righteousness for us if we are careful to observe all this commandment* before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us.’⁴⁴ As we noted above, the Lord said to Israel that if they kept the word of the covenant, it would give them life.⁴⁵ Yet the song of Moses reveals that the children of Israel *did not have a heart to keep the law*.⁴⁶

To understand why the children of Israel were unable to obtain the righteousness of God and the blessing of eternal life, we must first recognise that the law was not intended as a set of decrees to which God expected the children of Israel to measure themselves. Rather, *the law was relational*. Quoting the book of Deuteronomy, Jesus said, ‘The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”. There is no other commandment greater than these.’⁴⁷ The whole ‘Law and the Prophets’ hang on these two commandments.⁴⁸

With these points in mind, we note that when God sought to make covenant with Israel, He was desiring that righteousness would be revealed because of their love for Him and their love for one another. This righteousness would be revealed only as they joined the fellowship of Yahweh through offering.

Circumcise your heart

Yahweh invited the people into this covenant fellowship. He said that He would love the children of Israel, but would not tolerate their idolatry. To this end,

41 Lev 18:4-5

45 Lev 18:4-5

42 Luk 10:25-28

46 Deu 32

43 Rom 7:10

47 Mar 12:29-31

44 Deu 6:25

48 Mat 22:40

in order to love the Lord their God and to keep His covenant, *they would need to circumcise their hearts*. Moses specifically said to the people, ‘The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. *Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart*, and be stiff-necked no longer.’⁴⁹

By ‘circumcision’, Moses meant that there is something in the heart of people, as a consequence of the fall of mankind, which needs to be cut out of them. This is because it is detrimental to them. It prevents them from living according to the way that God has planned for them. Moses was effectively asking the children of Israel to perform ‘heart surgery’ on themselves! However, the people would not acknowledge or accept their inability to circumcise their own heart.

A person with a circumcised heart does not merely try to fulfil the ten commandments. This is because a person with a circumcised heart is one who loves the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength, and loves their neighbour as themselves.⁵⁰ The desire and capacity for fellowship and offering is the fruit of a circumcised heart. Unless the children of Israel circumcised their hearts to love the Lord, they would not fulfil the righteousness of the law. Instead, they would treat the law as a religious science from which they expected to receive prosperity as a blessing. This is, in fact, what they did. Jesus said to the Jews, ‘You search [scientifically study] the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me [for fellowship] that you may have life.’⁵¹ They even made the ethics of the law a code for life which expressed the nature of the idols that they created in their own image to serve. This principle is evident in many of the religions of the world today.

Recognising their hardness of heart, the Lord foresaw that when the children of Israel entered the promised land and became prosperous, they would forget the Lord their God and would serve idols that they created in their own image. They would say in their heart, ‘My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth.’⁵² Because of their disobedience and idolatry, the Lord would drive them off the land. However, in His mercy, God said that if Israel would call to mind His word and repent, He would bring them back from their captivity.

Most importantly, the Lord God promised, through Moses, that *He* would circumcise their hearts and the hearts of their descendants to love the Lord

49 Deu 10:15-16

50 Deu 30:6.
Mat 22:36-39

51 Joh 5:39-40

52 Deu 8:17

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their God with all their heart and with all their soul. This would be their eternal life.⁵³ The Father would be the ‘surgeon’ who would circumcise the hearts of His covenant people with the circumcision of Christ.

Moses was prophesying concerning a new covenant that the Lord would make with His people. This is the same promise prophesied by Ezekiel, who declared on behalf of Yahweh, ‘I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them.’⁵⁴ As we will consider, Ezekiel was prophesying regarding the circumcision of our hearts by the circumcision of Christ.

Demonstrating the righteousness of faith

Having considered the failure of the nation of Israel to subject themselves to the righteousness of God, we can ask the question, ‘How did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and the other men and women of faith, succeed in obtaining the righteousness of God?’ Paul similarly considered this subject when he wrote, ‘What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?’⁵⁵ In short, Abraham found the righteousness of faith.

By receiving the word of Yahweh, faith came to Abraham.⁵⁶ He was strengthened, and was able to fear God and to believe His word. Because Abraham believed God, by faith, God accounted righteousness to him.⁵⁷ Abraham was able to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. This capacity for love was evident through Abraham’s obedience in joining Yahweh in the fellowship of offering.⁵⁸

Abraham received circumcision as a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith that he had received while still uncircumcised.⁵⁹ He continued in the righteousness of faith all the way to the point of offering up his son, Isaac. Importantly, when Abraham offered up Isaac, he was offering up what God had promised to him. God had accounted righteousness to Abraham because he had believed the word of God that promised him a multitude of sons through Isaac. If God had not raised Isaac from the dead after Abraham had offered him up on Mt Moriah, then the promised blessing would not have been fulfilled. However, in obedience, Abraham

53 Deu 30:1-6

54 Eze 36:24-27

55 Rom 4:1

56 Gen 15:1

57 Gen 15:6

58 Gen 15:9-17

59 Gen 17:11.

Rom 4:10-11

did not presume that this righteousness was his own. He believed for life out of death. He believed for a *resurrection*.

Isaac walked in faith-obedience with his father, Abraham. At the command of Yahweh, they journeyed together up the mountain of Moriah, where Isaac became a living sacrifice. Isaac was bound by Abraham and laid upon the altar. When Abraham raised the knife to slay his son, the heart of Isaac was circumcised to love the Lord with all of his heart. Isaac was figuratively raised from the dead as he came off the altar. He had come into possession of his name and sanctification. From this point onward, the nation of Israel was 'called' in him.⁶⁰ The word that called men and women to be sons of God through the cross now proceeded from Isaac.

God circumcised from Abraham's heart the desire to control Isaac and to pursue any of his own religious ambitions through his son. Abraham did not seek to control or influence Isaac's destiny to ensure that the prophecy concerning the nation which would arise through Isaac would be fulfilled. This fallen and self-centred mode of fatherhood had been removed from him. His unwavering obedience to God's word, which called him to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah, demonstrated this reality.

Isaac, through faith-obedience to the word of the Lord that was ministered to him by Abraham, found grace to submit himself to his father. He was separated to his name and sanctification through the circumcising action that was part of the offering to which he and Abraham were called. In this fellowship of offering, they were delivered from the familial ways of their forefathers, and from the demonic oppressions that accompany familiar cultures.

In contrast to Abraham, Rebekah sought to ensure that the prophetic word of God concerning Jacob would come to pass through her self-sourced interventions. Fearful that her favoured son would fail to receive the blessing of Abraham, Rebekah said to Jacob, 'Now therefore, my son, *obey my voice according to what I command you*.'⁶¹ Her parenting approach stoked the sibling rivalry between Jacob and Esau, and promoted a fleshly understanding of the blessing of God. Consequently, Jacob needed to leave his father's house. Only by *faith* was he able to receive the blessing of a new name and nature through the circumcision of his heart.

Jacob received a word from God that called him to believe and to receive the Everlasting Covenant that had been committed to his father, Isaac, and to his grandfather, Abraham.⁶² Jacob believed and received this word. His response of

60 Gen 21:12.
Heb 11:18

61 Gen 27:8

62 Gen 28:13-15

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faith was to pay tithes of all that he possessed.⁶³ When he wrestled with the Lord, Jacob's heart was circumcised to love the Lord and to love his brother Esau. He was chastened and made weak in his body and, through this process, his heart was being circumcised.⁶⁴ He received a new name that accorded with his new nature. He was now Israel, which means 'Prince *with* God'.⁶⁵ As one who was with God, he was a participant in the fellowship of Yahweh. This reality was demonstrated when he gave a gift to Esau.⁶⁶

The crisis for every believer

The New Covenant provokes a crisis that confronts every Christian. This is the lesson that Paul taught in the book of Romans from the content of Deuteronomy. Many Christians desire the promises associated with keeping the law covenant. These promises include prosperity, healing, a promised land, being exalted above the nations, being higher than all the kings of the earth, and much more. In pursuit of their own righteousness, they attempt to circumcise their own heart in order to obtain these promises.

It was not only the promise of blessing in this world that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob desired. They, with the other heroes of faith, were waiting for a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God.⁶⁷ Their desire was to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem, which would be their eternal home. Here they would live and have everlasting fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Through Christ's offering, which revealed the New Covenant, we have now come to this city.⁶⁸ Christ's offering revealed a circumcision through which our hearts can be circumcised to love the Lord and our neighbour in the fellowship of Yahweh. In this fellowship, the righteousness of God is revealed.

Under the New Covenant, a person receives Christ's righteousness, which is the righteousness of God, as a gift. This is called 'the righteousness of faith', and is available only *in Christ*. Through baptism, a son of God is joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ. They eat and drink the elements of the communion in faith for their daily participation in the fellowship of this offering.

In this fellowship, Christ's sufferings are the discipline of the Father in the life of a son of God. The chastening of the Lord is from His disciplining, circumcising hand.⁶⁹ It works the peaceable fruit of righteousness in us.⁷⁰ Our heart is circumcised so that we love the Lord with all of our heart, and we love our friends in the body

63 Gen 28:16-22

67 Heb 11:10

64 Gen 32:24-25

68 Heb 12:22-24

65 Gen 32:28

69 Heb 12:5-7

66 Gen 33:3,10-11

70 Heb 12:11

The hope of righteousness

of Christ as ourselves. We are given a heart to serve and to relate according to our sanctification, as the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit.⁷¹ Fellowship and offering, motivated by love, demonstrate that the heart has been circumcised and changed to the heart of a son of God. In chapters 6 and 7 we will discuss in more detail how the circumcision of Christ is practically applied in the life of a son of God.

71 Rom 5:5

CHAPTER 2

Christ, the pioneer of our salvation

A trailblazer, or pioneer, is a person who makes the first journey through an uncharted territory. Their journey establishes a pathway to a destination that was otherwise unreachable. For the whole of their journey, a trailblazer is not just marking out a course for others to follow. They are also learning *how* to make the journey. The knowledge they acquire, along with the course that they chart, enables others, who know them and follow after them, to arrive at the same destination.

The apostle Paul described Christ as the trailblazer of our salvation.¹ The goal of Christ's journey was the demonstration of the righteousness of God by a son of man. Prior to this, the sons of men had failed, catastrophically, in their self-sourced endeavours to obtain a righteousness that would endure forever. Even God's chosen people, the Israelites, failed in this regard. They asserted that they

1 Heb 2:10. Heb 12:2

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could be righteous through the keeping of God's law. However, not a single person under the conditions of this 'first covenant' was able to keep the law.² They were not able to deliver themselves from the condition of sin and death, and to obtain eternal life, through their own religious efforts.

The only way that a person can arrive at the goal of revealing the righteousness of God as one of His sons is to walk the pathway of sonship that Christ authored as He journeyed from the last supper to Calvary. In Gethsemane, Christ joined us in the condition of our sin and separation from God, when the Father made Him to be sin for us. He journeyed back from the death of sin and learnt, through the things which He suffered, the obedience that we are to demonstrate as sons of God.³ When we come into Christ, we are able to journey with Him and to learn the knowledge that He obtained. By this means, we are able to become the righteousness of God in Him.⁴ In these next two chapters, we will consider the course of Christ's journey and the knowledge that He learnt through His experience.

Christ's journey

Just prior to His death, Jesus said to His disciples, 'I came forth *from* the Father and have come into the world. Again, I leave the world and go *to* the Father.'⁵ Jesus was explaining to them that He was on a journey. This journey was the means by which the Everlasting Covenant will of God was being fulfilled. The first stage of His journey *from* the Father was when God the Son emptied Himself and was brought forth by the word of the Father as the Son of God.

The Son of God then came into the world as the Son of Man. He was born and grew up in the house of Mary, and then commenced His earthly ministry at the age of thirty.⁶ When John the Baptist baptised Jesus, he identified Him as 'the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!'⁷ For three and a half years, the Lamb of God proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom, and ministered grace and healing to the multitudes. As the sick were healed and demons were cast out, the sin of the whole world was being progressively *laid upon Him*. Isaiah prophesied, 'The Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all.'⁸ This was different from His soul being *made an offering for sin*, which occurred when He drank the cup that the Father gave to Him in Gethsemane.⁹

2 Heb 8:7

6 Luk 3:23

9 Isa 53:10.

3 Heb 5:8

7 Joh 1:29

Luk 22:42.
Joh 18:11

4 2Co 5:21

8 Isa 53:6

5 Joh 16:28

The apostle John recorded that Christ's journey *from* the Father reached its conclusion at the last supper. He wrote, 'When Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them *to the end* [or to the uttermost]'.¹⁰ Christ had taken the gospel out to the furthest reaches of the human condition, even to the condition of a betrayer, and was now beginning His return to the Father.

Significantly, John noted that 'Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that *He had come from God and was going to God*, rose from supper and laid aside His garments, took a towel and girded Himself'.¹¹ John was indicating that the Son of Man was revealed at the last supper as the great High Priest. This is the same way in which John saw Him in the book of Revelation, when he identified the Son of Man as '*Him who is and who was and who is to come*'.¹²

Most commentators agree that the apostle John wrote his Gospel after he had written the book of Revelation. It was in the light of the revelation of Jesus Christ that John recalled the events of the last supper. He recognised that the elements and mode of Christ's ministry from the last supper were the same as those he described in the first chapter of the book of Revelation.

This is an important observation, because it helps us to understand how Christ's priesthood operated. For example, John described Christ's eyes as being 'like a flame of fire'.¹³ As we will consider in Chapter 4, Peter received the light of illumination concerning his sin when he looked into the eyes of Jesus.¹⁴ Similarly, John described the Son of Man's *voice* as 'the sound of *many waters*'.¹⁵ This reveals the true application of foot washing, which Jesus demonstrated at the last supper.¹⁶

In the book of Revelation, John declared that Jesus 'is coming with clouds'.¹⁷ Likewise, as Christ journeyed from 'the uttermost' back to the Father, He brought with Him a great cloud of witnesses. Daniel prophesied concerning this journey, declaring, 'I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that *all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him*. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.'¹⁸

10 Joh 13:1

14 Rev 1:14

18 Dan 7:13-14

11 Joh 13:3-4

15 Rev 1:15

12 Rev 1:4,17-18

16 Joh 13:12

13 Luk 22:61

17 Rev 1:7

The last supper – the importance of foot washing

When Jesus broke bread and gave it to His disciples to eat, and then gave them the cup of wine to drink, He was establishing and fulfilling the grain and drink offerings. These elements granted to His disciples an ongoing participation in His offering as the Lamb of God.¹⁹

Equally necessary for this priestly activity was the washing of the disciples' feet. When Jesus washed their feet, He was establishing and fulfilling the principle of the laver. Prior to service in the tabernacle of Moses, the priests were to wash their hands and feet with clean water from the laver. In particular, Moses stipulated that priests were to wash with the water from the laver prior to entering the tent of meeting or when they approached the altar to offer up burnt sacrifices to the Lord. If they did not wash, they would die.²⁰

Jesus said to His disciples that unless their feet were washed, they had no part in Him.²¹ He was telling them that they would have no participation in Him as members of His body; nor would they be part of the fellowship of His ministry of priesthood. Although they were unable to fully participate in His offering at this point, Jesus washed their feet so that they could participate in the fellowship of His priesthood as far as the garden of Gethsemane. They could not journey with Christ beyond Gethsemane because Jesus had said, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.'²²

The washings associated with the laver refer to receiving the washing of the water by the word.²³ We know this because Jesus said, 'You are already clean *because of the word* which I have spoken to you.'²⁴ The word proceeds from the mouth of Christ as the sound of many waters. It sounds like many waters because it is the ministry of the word in the mouth of the many sons of God who are part of Christ's body. The word flows from each person, according to their sanctification, as a ministry of the Spirit. This point was noted by the apostle John as he recounted the words of Jesus. ' "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water." But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.'²⁵ The word is ministered to one another as the sound of many waters through body ministry at the communion gathering.

19 Num 28:3-8.
1Co 10:16

20 Exo 30:20-21

21 Joh 13:8

22 Joh 13:36

23 Eph 5:26

24 Joh 15:3

25 Joh 7:38-39

Notably, as Jesus and His disciples approached the last supper, Peter's attitude was influenced by Satan. Jesus had been explaining to the disciples that He would suffer many things in Jerusalem, be put to death, and then be raised up on the third day. Peter rebuked Jesus for this teaching, saying, 'God forbid it, Lord! This shall never happen to You.'²⁶ However, Jesus responded to Peter by saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to Me; for you are not setting your mind on God's interests, but man's.'²⁷

Peter's situation was not dissimilar to that of Judas. It appears that Judas was likewise offended by the prospect of Jesus' death and suffering. It was following the anointing of Christ's head with the costly perfume, which Jesus said was in preparation for His burial, that Satan gained access to the heart of Judas, and aroused within him the intention to betray Jesus.²⁸ Judas went to the chief priests to see what they would give to him in return for delivering Jesus to them. From that moment, he began to look for an opportunity to betray Jesus.²⁹

Washing of regeneration

Peter's reaction when Jesus came to wash his feet was nearly a betrayal. He was indignant that Jesus would wash his feet. However, Jesus rebuked Peter, saying that, unless he allowed his feet to be washed, he would have no part in Him. In response, Peter confessed that he wanted to have a part with Christ. He responded to Jesus, saying, 'Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!'³⁰ Peter did not really understand why he needed his feet washed, but desired, nonetheless, to have a part with Christ. He received the washing of his feet because Jesus said that he needed it. This demonstrated something of the faith that Jesus said He was praying would not fail when Satan sifted Peter.³¹

Importantly, Jesus said that Peter had already been washed by the word and only needed his feet washed to be completely clean.³² What did Jesus mean by this? When had Peter been washed? Certainly, Peter was not perfect, yet the word of the Lord had begun to have a cleansing and regenerative effect in his life. This was in contrast to Judas. Jesus washed the feet of Judas; however, Judas had *already* determined to betray the Lord.³³ In this sense, Judas had rejected the need to have his feet washed, because he wanted no part in Christ.

The distinction between Peter and Judas with respect to the impact of Christ's word in their lives is revealed in Chapter 6 of John's Gospel. In this chapter, John

26 Mat 16:22

27 Mat 16:23

28 Mat 26:6-13.
Mar 14:1-9.

Luk 22:3. Joh 13:2

29 Mat 26:14-16.

Mar 14:10-11.
Luk 22:3-6

30 Joh 13:9

31 Luk 22:31-32

32 Joh 13:10

33 Joh 13:2-5

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recounted Jesus' teaching regarding the necessity to eat His flesh and drink His blood in order to have eternal life.³⁴ John recorded that many of Christ's disciples were offended at His teaching and turned away from Him. Jesus said to the twelve, 'Do you also want to go away?'³⁵ However, Peter answered the Lord, saying, 'Lord, to whom shall we go? *You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.*'³⁶

Although the word had caused Peter offence, he still recognised and received what Jesus was saying as being the words of eternal life. It was living water to him that was washing and regenerating him.³⁷ However, not all of the disciples received the word in the same way that Peter did. Immediately after Peter's confession, 'Jesus answered them, "Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?" He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the twelve.'³⁸ Jesus recognised that Judas remained offended at His words. Judas had rejected the truth that eternal life could only be received by eating the flesh and drinking the blood of Christ. Having hardened his heart, and turned away from the words of eternal life, Judas became increasingly disconnected from Christ and His disciples. When Jesus came to wash his feet, it had no cleansing impact upon him because he was *completely unclean*.³⁹

A double denial

From this point, Peter's need for a trespass offering became evident. His first denial of the Lord was to repeatedly refute Jesus' word concerning the nature of Christ's impending journey, and Peter's insufficiency to journey with Christ. At the last supper, Peter specifically denied that the words of Jesus – 'Where I go, you cannot follow Me now; but you will follow later' – were true.⁴⁰ With the same attitude, he also denied Jesus' prophetic word of knowledge regarding Peter's second episode of denials when, three times before the rooster crowed, he would deny knowing the Lord.

Peter continued to deny the word of the Lord after Jesus and His disciples had departed from the upper room and arrived at the Mount of Olives. This time, Peter denied the truth of Jesus' statement, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered." But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.'⁴¹ Here, on the Mount of Olives, Jesus reiterated His word of knowledge concerning Peter's second set of denials, which Peter continued to refute.⁴²

34 Joh 6:53-58

35 Joh 6:67

36 Joh 6:68-69

37 Tit 3:5

38 Joh 6:70-71

39 Joh 13:10-11

40 Joh 13:36

41 Mat 26:31-32.
Mar 14:27-28

42 Mat 26:34-35.

Mar 14:30-31

At heart, Peter was not a true, obedient disciple. His mode of discipleship was a false position. The denying of Jesus before men, which marked Peter's second episode of denials, was his true position. The first and second denials sprang from the same root. They were the product of the other law, which manifested itself in idealism and in self-preservation.

Peter was, in his own view, sincere and credible. He believed himself to be a patriot and a zealot. He saw himself as a person of integrity. His double denial (first before Jesus, and then before men) showed that he was not a true and sincere zealot. He was therefore not credible, based on his own criteria and affirmation. His integrity was seriously called into question three times before the rooster crowed on the day that Christ died. Peter needed an illumination that would minister *spiritual sight* to him. As we will consider in Chapter 4, Peter received this sight through the second sprinkling of Christ's blood in the court of the high priest.

Who is the greatest?

In his Gospel, Luke recorded that, as the disciples ate the last supper, a dispute arose among them as to which one of them should be considered the greatest.⁴³ They were unlikely to have made overt statements regarding their superiority or authority. Rather, their discussions appear to have been a superficial honouring of others and a self-deprecating expression of humility as they *compared themselves among themselves*.⁴⁴ This way of relating with each other, particularly in the context of a presbytery, is called 'collegiality'.

In response, Jesus said that they were not to exercise authority in the same way that worldly leaders exercise authority. Rather, He said, 'He who is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he who governs as he who serves.'⁴⁵ Jesus was cutting through this compliant, collegial mode, showing that the way of obedience leaves no room for comparisons.

Each person is a son of God with a unique calling and name. Sanctification comes from calling, not from the self-projected use of one's abilities. Talent comes from Christ. We join our abilities to His calling and enabling. However, we note that collegial affirmation from others can spark self-projected initiatives that, again, become prey to deprecation and shame.

43 Luk 22:24

44 2Co 10:12

45 Luk 22:25-26

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Joining the fellowship of the sufferings that Christ endured as a chastening for our peace is the means by which the Lord delivers us from this propensity. We are able to put off our projections and to cease our collegial comparisons and, instead, to live in sanctification. This is what it means to receive the peace of God.

Christ's prayer on the Mount of Olives

At the conclusion of the last supper, Jesus said to His disciples, 'Arise, let us go from here.'⁴⁶ After singing a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives.⁴⁷ It is helpful to note that all four Gospels identify the Mount of Olives and the garden of Gethsemane as two distinct places that Jesus and His disciples visited following the last supper.⁴⁸ However, only John's Gospel recorded the words that Christ spoke on the Mount of Olives, prior to His entering the garden of Gethsemane.⁴⁹ These instructive words, including Christ's prayer to the Father, often referred to as the high-priestly prayer, are recorded in Chapters 15, 16 and 17 of John's Gospel.

During His prayer on the Mount of Olives, Jesus summed up His ministry on earth and gave the most succinct statement of what eternal life is. Through the testimony and prayer of Jesus, our hearts and minds are illuminated to understand the nature of the relationship of the Father and the Son. We are also illuminated regarding our relationships within Their fellowship. This defines the nature of our eternal life. The fellowship and offering of Yahweh is made known to us as we are included in Christ's offering from Gethsemane to Calvary. His offering is the context in which we receive eternal life.

Eternal life is knowing the Father and Jesus Christ whom the Father sent into the world.⁵⁰ What does it mean to know Them? Jesus explained that it means, 'The glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: *I in them, and You in Me*; that they may be made perfect in one'.⁵¹ This glory is made available in the name that is given to us by the Son.⁵²

As He prayed, Jesus spoke about a crowd of people in the world who belonged to the Father, but did not know the Father.⁵³ This group of people was not of the world. The Father had sent the Son to bring a message to them from the Father, and to reveal to them the name of the Father.⁵⁴ In the primary sense, this meant that Christ was to reveal to them that God was their Father, and that He wanted to give them His divine nature.

46 Joh 14:31

47 Mat 26:30.
Mar 14:26.
Luk 22:39

48 Mat 26:30,36.
Mar 14:26,32.

Luk 22:39-40

49 Joh 14:31. Joh 18:1

50 Joh 17:3

51 Joh 17:22-23

52 Joh 17:6,11,21

53 Joh 17:2-3

54 Joh 17:6

Jesus Himself, even though He was the messenger of God the Father, was also a son of God. He was Yahweh the Son, who had been born of the Father as the Son of God, and then been born as a son of man. By this means, He had been made a man like those to whom He had been sent.⁵⁵ Jesus was also the Father's Firstborn, so that in all things He would be the pre-eminent Son, having ownership of all that belongs to the Father.⁵⁶

The Father gave to the Son all the men and women who belong to Him in this world. Together, the Father and Son share ownership of them.⁵⁷ The Son said that He had cared for them on behalf of the Father. All of us, together with Christ, are therefore members of the Father's family. As He prayed, Jesus was telling the Father that He had finished this aspect of His earthly mission.⁵⁸

The Son was not praying for the world. Rather, He was particularly petitioning the Father on behalf of all the men and women who, not being of the world, would be left on their own in the world after He had returned to the Father.⁵⁹ He asked the Father to keep them in the Father's name.⁶⁰

Jesus said that He was no longer in the world, but was departing from it.⁶¹ His departure, then, was from mortality to immortality. His departure from mortality to immortality began on the Mount of Olives with this prayer, and continued as He later prayed in the garden of Gethsemane.

Christ would be glorified in, and among, those who were living at that time, and in all who would receive His message in future generations.⁶² This is because those who received His message, received Him.⁶³ Jesus was asking the Father to keep them together as a family in the Father's name.⁶⁴ They were to be sons and daughters of the Father while they lived in the world. They were to live together in harmony as a community in this world.

Jesus said that He fulfilled this ministry while He was in the world. He kept the disciples in the Father's name, guarding them so that no-one was lost, except Judas. Judas was the son of perdition, whose betrayal was expressly predicted by the Scriptures.⁶⁵

Continuing to pray to the Father, Jesus specifically asked that His disciples would be granted to have His joy made full in themselves.⁶⁶ This joy would be their strength.⁶⁷ Because they had received the word of the Father, and had returned to Him in repentance to be His sons and daughters, they were not of this world.

55 Heb 2:17

59 Joh 17:9-10

63 Joh 13:20

67 Neh 8:10

56 Col 1:18

60 Joh 17:11

64 Joh 17:11

57 Joh 17:10

61 Joh 17:11

65 Joh 17:12

58 Joh 17:7-8

62 Joh 17:10

66 Joh 17:13

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They were spiritual. For this reason, the world was antagonistic to them and hated them.⁶⁸

Christ was not asking that His disciples would be removed from the world, but that they would be kept out of the power of the evil one while they remained in the world.⁶⁹ While in the world, Christ's disciples would suffer persecution and tribulation.

The joy of the Lord had sustained Christ and would continue to sustain Him as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Paul noted that it was '*for the joy that was set before Him [that He] endured the cross, despising the shame*'.⁷⁰ In the same way, Christ's joy would be made complete in His disciples and would sustain them as they suffered for His name's sake.⁷¹

Jesus then said that the community of the sons of God who lived in the world would not live and conduct themselves in the self-centred way in which the world lived. That is what He meant when He said, 'They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.'⁷²

The Son asked the Father to continue to unfold the word of sonship to each of His disciples so that they could be sanctified in the truth.⁷³ This meant that they would know their name and the works that they were to do in the world. As the Father accomplished His work of sanctification in the lives of His sons, then Christ would be able to send them as His disciples into the world to do the works that the Father had commissioned them to do.⁷⁴

The effect of the ministry of Christ's disciples in the world, from generation to generation, would be that a great company of men and women would be gathered out of the world and into the Father's family as a unified community. Jesus was also praying for these future believers.⁷⁵ This community would be joined together in one Spirit in the same way in which the Father lives in the Son, and the Son lives in the Father.⁷⁶ The Father, Son and Holy Spirit would live in the heart of each person, making them a member of the fellowship of Yahweh.⁷⁷ This would be the nature of their eternal life.⁷⁸

Jesus then added that He had given the glory of the Father's name to His disciples.⁷⁹ This glory from the Father is what named and sanctified them as sons of God, and gave them the capacity, by the Holy Spirit, to fulfil their work of ministry in the world. This glory, then, would shine from the face of Christ into their hearts.⁸⁰

68 Joh 17:14

72 Joh 17:16

76 Joh 17:21

80 2Co 4:6-7

69 Joh 17:15

73 Joh 17:17

77 Joh 17:23

70 Heb 12:2

74 Joh 17:18

78 Joh 17:3

71 Joh 15:11

75 Joh 17:20

79 Joh 17:22

The community of God's sons, though diverse in ministry calling, would live and work in harmony and fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with one another. That is what Jesus meant when He prayed that His disciples would be made perfect in unity.⁸¹ The Greek word translated 'in unity' literally means 'into a unit'. Jesus was saying that they were to become part of *one body*, in Him. The effect of this upon the world would be that their hearers would understand that the Father had sent the Son into the world as His messenger, and that the Father loved those who received His word through the Son. They would know that the Father loved them as much as He loved His only begotten Son. This is the central message of the gospel.

Jesus asked the Father to grant that all the sons of God would be given to Him, to be with Him as members of His body.⁸² He wanted them to behold His glory. This was the glory that the Father had given to Him, and this glory was in the name that the Father had given to the Son. The name that the Son had received was the privilege of being the full expression of deity in a human body.⁸³ He was given the capacity as the Son of God to reveal, as a son of man, the fellowship of Yahweh as three Persons, and the identities of God as Father, Son and Holy Spirit, to the children of men.

Jesus came with the name that the Father had given to Him. He has revealed Yahweh God and made His name known to us. In the name is the love of God, which His sons are to personally receive. By giving to us the name that the Father has given to Christ, the same love that the Father had for the Son before creation is given to each son of God.⁸⁴ This is the crowning purpose for which He has made known the name of Yahweh Elohim to us, and will make it further known to each of us. This is the love of God, which His sons are to personally receive. Furthermore, Christ made the name of Yahweh Elohim known to us so that Christ may dwell in us individually and corporately, making us the visible expression of the corporate person of Christ on earth. This community is the body of Christ, the church. The fullness of deity, bodily, was made to dwell in Christ, and we are filled with the fullness of God as we are made complete in Him.⁸⁵

We are to receive the love of God, and to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh as a member of the body of Christ. This will be our expression of eternal life - forever. This is the full explanation of what it means to know God and Jesus Christ, God's Messenger. The Father sent Him to bring us the word of the Father, telling us that He had predestined, before creation, that we should be His sons. Jesus prayed,

81 Joh 17:23

85 Eph 3:19.

82 Joh 17:24

Col 2:9-10

83 Col 2:9

84 Joh 17:26

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'This is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.'⁸⁶

To conceive of eternal life as something other than this is a great error. Sadly, there are many Christians who do not understand eternal life, nor the fellowship of love that God desires for them to join. However, as the Lord illuminates our hearts, and we are being built into the body of Christ, we are being equipped to share this good news with those who are seeking the truth.

Salvation in the name of the Lord

To receive salvation is to receive eternal life in the name of Christ. The apostle Peter proclaimed to the rulers of the people, and to the elders of Israel, that salvation was found only in Christ. 'For there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.'⁸⁷

The name defines the life, context and content of the spiritual. Earlier in His ministry, Christ described a person who is born of the Spirit, by saying, 'The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes.'⁸⁸ The explanation of what this meant was given by Jesus as He prayed to the Father on the Mount of Olives. In short, those who are born of the Spirit live by offering transfer. This is because they have joined the fellowship of His offering.

The prayer of Jesus reveals the distinction between His offering and circumcision. Christ was ministering the word of the Father so that the sons of men could become sons of the Father, in Him. Christ in us, the Father in Christ, and the sons of God in one body was the goal of His offering.⁸⁹ However, to love in this fellowship, we would need to have our self-centredness removed from us. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit made provision for this process through the offering of Christ. As we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering, our self-centredness is circumcised from us, and we receive the love of God as eternal life.

We see, then, that in order to love the Lord, we need to receive the name which connects us to the offering of Yahweh. In the fellowship of this offering, our heart is circumcised with the circumcision of Christ.⁹⁰ By this means, we are able to love the Lord with all our heart, soul, strength and mind; to love our neighbours in the body of Christ as ourselves; and to have eternal life.⁹¹

86 Joh 17:3

90 Col 2:11-12

87 Act 4:12

91 Deu 10:16.

88 Joh 3:8

Deu 30:6.

89 Joh 17:23

Mar 12:29-31

The love of God

God is love. How do we know love? The apostle John said that we know love because the Son laid His life down, in offering, into a fellowship.⁹² This expression of love is *Yahweh*.

The apostle Paul explained that, when we receive the love of Christ that was manifest through His offering, we determine that if He died for all, then we must die with Him.⁹³ As we noted above, Christ, the fullness of *Yahweh*, demonstrated the love of God by laying His life down for us in a fellowship. Having received this love, we join His offering, which involves a death, burial and resurrection. Participation in this offering demonstrates that we have received the love of God.

Christ died so that we, who live by the eternal life that He has given, would no longer live for ourselves.⁹⁴ In the fellowship of His death, the propensity to live for ourselves is being removed from us, and we are receiving eternal life. That is, we are able to love the Lord and love our brethren in Christ. New creation life is being expressed.⁹⁵ This is the same message that the apostle John was communicating when he wrote, 'By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren'.⁹⁶

To 'abide in love' means that we abide in Christ's offering, which is in *Yahweh*. *Yahweh* is a fellowship of three Persons who live by offering. We see, then, that the one who abides in love abides in God and God in Him. This is what we come to know and believe through offering transfer.

Offering is the expression of 'giving love', which is the manifestation of the fellowship of *Yahweh*, for God is love. As we considered in Part 2 of *The Steps of Salvation*, *Yahweh* is depicted in the Scriptures as a 'raging fire enfolding itself'.⁹⁷ As we participate in this dynamic fellowship, life is multiplied in us, sin is forgiven and purged, our hearts are circumcised, and our participation in the community of the body of Christ is fully realised. This is eternal life.

This is *Yahweh's* name revealed. His name reveals what love is. Love is the unique fellowship and giving of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the fellowship of *Yahweh*, in which each son of God is being built up. The name of Jesus Christ has been given so that the love of *Yahweh* may be revealed in the world. By this means, those who are far from God can know that the Father sent the Son and loves them, just as He loves the Son.

92 1Jn 3:16

96 1Jn 3:16

93 2Co 5:14

97 Eze 1:4

94 2Co 5:15

95 2Co 5:17

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The fellowship of the name gives us access to the fellowship of 'offering love'. The Spirit of the Son is able to express the fullness of the love of God through offering. This capacity of love is given to us as we receive the Spirit of the Son, by the Holy Spirit, as a spirit of adoption. We are able then to cry, 'Abba! Father!', in love. We are able to love and to be joined to the Father in the fellowship of 'offering love'; He in us, and we in Him.

The Spirit of the Son is confessing submission, repentance and fellowship. The Holy Spirit is pouring into our hearts this capacity for 'offering love'. This is what it means to be joined to the Lord and to become one Spirit with Him.⁹⁸

The spirit of antichrist does not acknowledge that Yahweh has come in the flesh of the members of Christ's corporate body.⁹⁹ We must not deny this reality of belonging to one another. Those who revert to denying the truth that Yahweh is coming in their flesh, and in the flesh of their brethren, are carnal, and do not walk after the Spirit.

98 1Co 6:17

99 2Jn 7

CHAPTER 3

The offering and circumcision of Christ

Christ set forth as a propitiation

From the Mount of Olives, Jesus and His disciples went to the garden of Gethsemane, where the next phase of His journey back to the Father commenced. Here, Christ was set forth as a propitiation, or mercy seat, when He *offered Himself* as the Lamb of God, without spot or blemish. ¹

By definition, ‘propitiation’ is a merciful action of offering, made by God, by which He is able to destroy sin, remove man’s guilt, and then break down the barrier of shame that sin has interposed, or set, between God and man. This barrier of shame includes the projections that people tailor for themselves to cover the nakedness of their identity, which results from their endeavours to create an image for

1 1Pe 1:19. Rom 3:25

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themselves. This is the consequence of living by the other law. It is also the reason why the sons and daughters of men are unable to fulfil the command to love the Lord their God and to love their neighbour as themselves. As the other law is cut from a person's heart through the circumcision of Christ, the barrier of shame is removed. Propitiation then reconnects mankind to God by giving Christ's own sinless life to those who believe in His love for them.

In the Old Covenant, propitiation was achieved, in type, through the sprinkling of the blood of bulls and goats. On behalf of the people, a priest sprinkled the blood seven times on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. The necessity to make yearly atonement for their sins, through the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats, however, highlighted the inadequacy of this Old Covenant priestly work. The shedding of the blood of bulls and goats certainly atoned for the sins of the people. In fact, Paul said that it 'sanctified for the purifying of the flesh'.² It could not, however, *change* the fleshly, self-centred motivations of a person's heart.³ For this reason, they remained in bondage to sin.⁴

The New Covenant is *not* like the Old Covenant. Christ did not offer Himself on behalf of mankind so that they would have a more enduring legal acceptance before God. His blood was not merely 'better' than the blood of bulls and goats. He established a new covenant that operates *on a completely different basis* from that of the Old Covenant. The apostle Paul highlighted this point by quoting the prophet Jeremiah, 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah – *not according to the covenant* that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt.'⁵

As Christ 'priested' Himself as a living sacrifice, His precious blood was shed as He was wounded. It was sprinkled upon Him for the atonement of our sins. This means that His body is both the mercy seat and the altar of the true tabernacle. In the New Covenant, the *efficacy* of atonement is achieved only by the sprinkling of blood *upon the conscience*.⁶ Paul was making this point when he wrote, 'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and having a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience* and our bodies washed with pure water.'⁷

2 Heb 9:13

5 Heb 8:8-9.

3 Heb 9:9,13.
Heb 10:11

Jer 31:31-32

6 Heb 9:13-14

4 Rom 7:23

7 Heb 10:19-22

The offering and circumcision of Christ

Of course, the whole world was *reconciled* to God through the death of Christ on their behalf. However, this does not mean that every person has been *saved*. A person is *saved* only by receiving Christ's life, which is in His blood.⁸ This blood is given to be their life, through the process of sprinkling. As we just read, it must be sprinkled on a person's heart if they are to be recovered to their predestination as a son of God, to serve the living God.⁹ This is the only way in which the redemption that is in Christ can be appropriated.

It was for this purpose that Christ was set forth, before the eyes of all, as a propitiation, or mercy seat. If Christ is the Mercy Seat, and atonement requires the sprinkling of our heart for the cleansing of our conscience, then we must be joined heart to heart with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, as the blood is sprinkled on Christ, the Mercy Seat, it is sprinkled on our hearts. By this means, His life is given to us to be our life.¹⁰

The word and power of the New Covenant is applied to our lives by the blood of Christ. The Holy Spirit then writes the New Covenant into our hearts and minds to replace the other law. He does this by pouring the love of God into our hearts. Because of this, the way in which we live fulfils the ten commandments.¹¹ This is the new way in which Christ is leading us, *by His hand*. We are being led out from under the law covenant, and into our service as a kingdom of priests in the true temple.

There was only one offering in history. This was the offering of Christ as the Lamb of God. Paul said that by this one offering, 'He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified'.¹² The life that is multiplied through this offering will be ministered by Christ, to each and every son of God, *for eternity*. Christ was appointed a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek for this purpose. His priesthood operates according to the power of an endless life.¹³ In the new heavens and earth, there will no longer be the need for a fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. However, our eternal life will still be found in the fellowship of Christ's one offering.

Christ the conquering Slave

Christ was the conquering Slave. He took the form of a slave and became obedient to the point of death on the cross.¹⁴ As Christ journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary, He was overcoming sin, death, the world, and principalities and powers.

8 Rom 5:10.
Lev 17:11

9 Heb 9:14

10 Gal 2:20

11 Heb 10:15-16

12 Heb 10:14

13 Heb 7:16-17

14 Php 2:5-8

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Moreover, He had come to judge and overcome all authorities on earth and in heaven, and to re-establish them in Yahweh. He did this through *slavery*.

Paul taught that all authority on earth has been given by God the Father. He wrote, 'Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God.'¹⁵ Likewise, Jesus said to Pilate, 'You would have no authority over Me, unless it had been given you from above; for this reason he who delivered Me to you has the greater sin.'¹⁶ This does not mean that all authority is inherently righteous. In fact, the authorities on earth had all been corrupted.

Only a slave can pass judgement. This is because his judgement is not his own. He has no investment in the outcome of the judgement. In this regard, we remember the words of Jesus, 'I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgement is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me.'¹⁷ The slavery of the Son was the outcome of emptying to an endpoint, by offering. At this point, He was completely revealing the Father, and fulfilling the Father's will. For this reason, judgement was being passed on those who failed to acknowledge the authority that He was revealing.

As the Slave of God interfaced with each authority in the world, they were judged, condemned and disempowered as they rejected and abused Christ who was revealing the source of their authority. For this reason, their authority was removed from them and gathered up by Christ. In this way, as He progressively endured the abuse of the authorities in the world, and they were being *disqualified*, He was being progressively *enthroned*!

With each stroke that Jesus received along His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, those who were abusing Him were being disempowered. His offering revealed the wisdom of God, and demonstrated that the weakness of God is stronger than men.¹⁸ Then, on the cross, 'having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it'.¹⁹

Paul identified this process as 'the way of the cross', and explained that the way of the cross is the way in which a son of God is called to live. Specifically, he wrote, 'For consider [or, be illuminated concerning] your calling [as a son of God], brethren, that there are not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the

15 Rom 13:1

19 Col 2:15

16 Joh 19:11

17 Joh 5:30

18 1Co 1:25

wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised God has chosen, the things that are not, so that He may nullify [or disempower] the things that are, so that no man may boast before God. But by His doing [the Father's circumcising work] you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us [through offering transfer] wisdom from God, and righteousness and sanctification, and redemption.²⁰

The way of the cross was also Paul's pastoral mode. He told the Corinthians that when he came among them, and spoke the word to them, there would be 'strife, jealousy, angry tempers, disputes, slanders, gossip, arrogance, disturbances'.²¹ Nevertheless, Paul said that this would be for their up-building.²² How could this be? As Paul was speaking to the Corinthians, in Christ, the abuse he received caused those who were angry, those who were arrogant, and so on, to be disempowered. This provided them with an opportunity to repent and to be delivered from their bondage to sin. In other words, the weakness of Christ, demonstrated by Paul, was overcoming the flesh in those who were persecuting him, so that they had the opportunity to be recovered to Christ. This principle is the focus of Chapter 8 in Part 2 of *The Steps of Salvation*.

The blood of sprinkling

Christ was *cut off* from God when the Father made His soul an offering for sin in the garden of Gethsemane.²³ To be 'cut off' means that He became dead to God. This occurred in six circumcising, suffering events, which transpired as Christ presented Himself to God in Gethsemane, and then journeyed to Calvary. This work of redeeming mankind was completed when Jesus declared from the cross, 'It is finished!'²⁴ At that point, Christ had fully come back from the death of sin by the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and by the shedding of His own blood.

As Christ suffered at each stage of His journey, He endured the full brunt of rejection as a sinner by God; the judgement and wrath of the law that punished Him for our sake; the rejection and abuse of mankind; and the horrible abuse and torment that is the portion of the demonic powers of darkness.

The Son of Man journeyed in full faith, strengthened by the Holy Spirit to accomplish our redemption and to endure the circumcision that we needed. This circumcision was necessary in order that self-centredness could be cut from our

20 1Co 1:26-30

24 Joh 19:30. 1Jn 2:2

21 2Co 12:20

22 2Co 12:19

23 Isa 53:8,10

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lives. Because of the fall of mankind, sin and self-centredness have become another law within us that controls our life.

As Christ suffered, and His blood flowed from His body at each circumcising event, His blood, which contained His life, brought Him back, or redeemed Him, from death.²⁵ Through His wounds, His blood atoned for our sin, then ministered His life to us. The seventh and final wound, which He received after He had committed His Spirit to the Father and had physically died, opened the way for us to join the fellowship of His offering. This new and living way is our fellowship with Yahweh, which Paul identified as being in the Most Holy Place. We enter the Most Holy Place through His pierced side. In Christ, we are able to become the righteousness of God.²⁶

Now, instead of pursuing our own righteousness, we come to Jesus, the Son of Man, and to His sprinkled blood *that speaks*.²⁷ In the fellowship of the offering through which His blood was shed, our sin is being removed and we are receiving His life. This is the new and living way.²⁸ We must, therefore, consider what it means to *come to Jesus*. We must also understand how the sprinkled blood speaks to us, and what it is saying to us.

Let us summarise what Christ achieved as He endured the six wounding events of His offering and circumcision, and how the sprinkling of His blood is effective in our lives to remove the body of sin. In the next chapter, we will consider the efficacy of each of these wounds in more detail, including the disempowerment of the hostile, worldly authorities at each stage of His journey.

First wound – Gethsemane

- In Gethsemane, the sin of our wilful self-centredness was dealt with through the offering of prayer. Jesus prayed, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’²⁹ An angel appeared to Christ and strengthened Him with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit.³⁰ Luke recorded that ‘being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.’³¹
- Jesus told His disciples to join Him in this phase of His offering and circumcision so that they could be delivered from falling into the temptation of living by self-determination. He said that their spirit was willing to live in obedience to God’s will, but that their flesh was weak.³²

25 Heb 13:20

29 Luk 22:42

32 Mat 26:41.

26 Heb 10:20.
2Co 5:21

30 Heb 9:14.
Luke 22:43

Mar 14:38

27 Heb 12:18-24

31 Luk 22:44

28 Heb 10:20

The offering and circumcision of Christ

- As we join Christ in the fellowship of prayer, His obedience is transferred to us, and our wilfulness is cut from our life.

Second wound – bruised for our iniquities

- In the house of Caiaphas the high priest, Christ was punched, slapped and buffeted. He was also beaten with rods. The prophet Isaiah declared that the resulting bruising was for our iniquities.³³
- As Jesus endured this circumcising pain, He looked at Peter, who was cursing, swearing and denying that he was one of Christ's disciples.³⁴ This was revealing iniquity in Peter. Peter's heart began to be circumcised as Christ looked at him. In this moment, Peter understood that self-motivated love, mateship and the ideals of a Christian zealot are not expressions of the love of God. For this reason, they are not capable of activating faith.³⁵
- After Christ rose from the dead, He met His disciples on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and prepared a breakfast meal for them. Jesus, the risen Lord, asked Peter whether he loved Him. Peter, in contrite humility, could only answer that he was a friend to Jesus. At this point, Christ was able to call and name Peter, and give to him His faith-righteousness that works by love.³⁶

Third wound – chastised for our peace

- Jesus was beaten with rods in the presence of the high priest, Caiaphas. Isaiah described these blows with rods as the chastisement for our peace.³⁷ When chastened with rods, the Father's hand was disciplining Christ for our sake. He did this so that we could become partakers of Christ's holiness and begin to demonstrate the peaceable fruits of righteousness that belong to firstfruits Christians.³⁸ We receive our wellbeing, or peace, in the fellowship of Christ's chastening.

Fourth wound – for our healing

- Speaking of Christ, the prophet Isaiah declared that 'by His stripes we are healed'.³⁹ Under the direction of Pilate, Jesus was scourged with the cat o' nine tails. This caused Christ's blood to flow from multiple wounds that peeled the skin from His back.

33 Isa 53:5

36 Joh 21:12-18

34 Mat 26:74.

37 Isa 53:5

Mar 14:71.

38 Heb 12:11

Luk 22:61

39 Isa 53:5

35 Gal 5:6

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- The blood that flowed from these wounds brings deliverance and healing to the many and varied personality flaws that we may have. The personality flaws of a person are the consequence of the *lust of the eyes*.⁴⁰ The lust of the eyes became a fundamental desire within mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Scripture recorded that when Eve listened to Satan's lie that she could become like God by eating the fruit, it appeared to be 'pleasant to the eyes'.⁴¹ The lust of the eyes refers to the fantasies, projections and dreams that people pursue for themselves. Although they lust for the resources to service their projections or fantasies, their reality is only nakedness, bondage to fear, and shame.
- The personality flaws that result from our pursuit of what is pleasing to our eyes lead us away from our sanctification, and into deviant ways of living. It is for this reason that we are exhorted by Paul to not despise the chastening of the Lord nor to be discouraged when we are rebuked by Him. 'For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and *scourges* every son whom He receives.'⁴²

Fifth wound – the crown of thorns

- The crown of thorns, with its mocking and associated buffeting of Christ's head and face, as well as the plucking out of portions of His beard, was the *humiliation* that Christ endured during His fifth wounding. Through this suffering event, Christ dealt with our pride and projections.
- Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because it 'was desirable to make one wise'.⁴³ The apostle John described the pursuit and exercise of this wisdom as 'the pride of life'.⁴⁴ It refers to the misappropriation of abilities and authority, and to the empowerment mechanisms by which a person is lifted up in pride.
- Paul said that Christ had joined him to this fifth aspect of Christ's circumcision by giving to him a thorn in the flesh. He described this thorn as 'a messenger from Satan' to buffet him, so that he would not be lifted up in *pride*.⁴⁵ Christ also encouraged Paul that he would be sustained by Christ's strength.⁴⁶ This strength came from the life that was in Christ's blood.

40 1Jn 2:16

44 1Jn 2:16

41 Gen 3:6

45 2Co 12:7

42 Heb 12:6

46 2Co 12:9

43 Gen 3:6

Sixth wound – pierced for our transgressions

- Christ was pierced through for our transgressions by the nails that fastened His hands and feet to the cross.⁴⁷ In this event, the law was nailed with Him to the cross.⁴⁸
- Eve perceived the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to be ‘good for food’.⁴⁹ John identified the desire for this food as being ‘the lust of the flesh’.⁵⁰ It is the desire for and misappropriation of resources, for the purpose of sustaining our self-righteous endeavours. These resources include, for example, religious doctrines, scientific knowledge, and even God’s word.
- ‘Transgressions’ are the self-sourced activities that we believe best define who we are and who we want to be. Our transgressions are not just the wicked things that we do. They include all of the good works that spring from our self-righteousness. They are based in our own will. Jesus said that His ‘food’ was to do the will of the Father, and to finish His work.⁵¹ In contrast, our ‘food’, according to our own supply, is to do our *own will*. We draw this food from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because we believe that it will make us like God.⁵² In particular, we desire to be wise like God.⁵³ However, James said that this flesh-based wisdom, from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, is from beneath. He taught that it is ‘earthly, sensual, demonic’.⁵⁴

Seventh wound – Him whom we pierced

- After Christ breathed His last, a spear was thrust into His heart.⁵⁵ The blood that was shed from this seventh wound was the sum of the previous six sprinklings. As we noted earlier, it became a river, or fountain, of life flowing from His side.⁵⁶ This piercing opened the way for the sons of men to join the fellowship of Christ’s offering, through which the blood of the previous six encounters could be sprinkled on their hearts.

The circumcision of Christ

The Son of Man needed no personal circumcision to enable Him to fellowship and love. He was without sin, and was not born with another law in His heart. Christ’s circumcision was for our sake so that in Him our sinful and self-centred hearts could be circumcised. Paul highlighted the truth that Christ’s offering on the

47 Isa 53:5

51 Joh 4:34

55 Joh 19:34

48 Col 2:14

52 Gen 3:5

56 Zec 13:1

49 Gen 3:6

53 Gen 3:6

50 IJn 2:16

54 Jas 3:15

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cross was His circumcision.⁵⁷ It manifested, or revealed, the love and fellowship of Yahweh.⁵⁸

The death of Christ was a righteous work that belonged to His name, and was an expression of His sanctification. His work was not, in any self-centred way, a demonstration of *His own righteousness*. He revealed the righteousness of God. How do we know this? It is because His work was demonstrated through offering, according to a will that was not His own.

The works of redemption that the Son was to accomplish were *given* to Him by the Father. The Holy Spirit made these works part of the Son's name as the Holy Spirit became the power and expression of the Son's works.

Christ sanctified Himself to obedience, yet even His obedience was by the power of the Holy Spirit. The love of God was His motivation, and this love was poured into His heart by the Holy Spirit to strengthen Him. This happened when Christ was strengthened with Eternal Spirit to offer Himself on the cross.⁵⁹

Christ presented Himself as a whole burnt offering. In this fellowship of offering, the Father made Christ an offering for sin.⁶⁰ Paul explained that the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him.⁶¹ Christ was made sin through obedience to the Father. Christ, having been *made* sin, had that sin cut from Him by the Father, through judgement and chastening. As Christ willingly and obediently submitted to this process, the Father ended sin and its power, in Christ.

Through His suffering, Christ learned what our obedience is, as sons of God.⁶² He did this by fully demonstrating obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit, who enabled Him to obey God's will. The love *of* God and the love *for* God were poured into His heart by the Holy Spirit, giving Him the power to go all the way to the obedience of death. Through this obedience, which was to the death, He destroyed the devil and the power of death. Further, He delivered all who died with Him from both the fear and the power of death. He brought life and immortality to light through this offering and gospel.⁶³

Christ's death was a circumcision that displayed no dependencies on the energy of His flesh to demonstrate the righteous work of suffering and dying for our redemption. His death, as a circumcision, was the seal of faith for righteousness. Abraham demonstrated this same faith when he received circumcision as the

57 Col 2:11-12.
Rom 6:1-6

58 Joh 15:13, Joh 8:28

59 Heb 9:14.
Luk 22:43.
Rom 5:5

60 Isa 53:10

61 2Co 5:21

62 Heb 5:8

63 2Ti 1:10

seal of the covenant of faith, through which he would receive God's capacity for righteousness.⁶⁴ In Abraham's case, it was first the faith to be adopted and then, eventually, faith to be born as a son of God.

The essence of Christ's suffering was that He endured the resistance to, and the attempted frustration of, His ministry by wicked men. He maintained His ministry work, which the Father had appointed for Him, without drawing back under the pressure of rejection and opposition. The rejection finally became very personal, involving Him in physical suffering as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross. The more intense the opposition and abuse became, the more His life overcame and was transferred to others through His suffering. That is, through suffering, His life, which was in His blood, was poured out and given to others. This culminated in a flood, or river, of life, flowing from His side after He was pierced. This was the seventh sprinkling of Christ's blood.

The circumcision of Christ revealed faith-obedience and love, through giving. It also was a vicarious work, involving chastening, that satisfied the law and established a process for change. However, Christ's offering did not circumcise the heart of every person. It was His own circumcision. In order to receive the gift of righteousness and to reign in life as a person who fulfils the law of love, each person needs to have their heart circumcised in Him.

The Firstborn from the dead

As a Son of God, Christ was God's *Firstborn from the death of sin*.⁶⁵ Jesus, the great Shepherd, said, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they *follow Me*.'⁶⁶ The sheep of God's flock follow the Shepherd by joining His circumcision. By this means, the sheep are brought to birth with Him as the church of the firstborn.⁶⁷ This was prophesied by Ezekiel who wrote, 'Thus says the Lord God: "I will also let the house of Israel inquire of Me to do this for them: I will increase their men like a flock. Like a flock offered as holy sacrifices, like the flock at Jerusalem on its feast days, so shall the ruined cities be filled with flocks of men. Then they shall know that I am the Lord".'⁶⁸ Christ did this by the agency of His own blood.

The faith of Christ, as He proceeded to fulfil the suffering work of redeeming us, was that God, through the Holy Spirit, would give Him the capacity and power to accomplish His work. This defined His circumcision. The Son endured the sufferings of the cross without drawing back or sinning through reaction. By this

64 Gen 17:11

68 Eze 36:37-38

65 Col 1:18

66 Joh 10:27

67 Col 1:18. Heb 12:23

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means, He demonstrated that His faith was credible and real. His sufferings, which Paul described as ‘the circumcision of Christ’, accomplished our redemption. For this reason, Christ’s circumcision revealed that His work of faith was valid. It was a success! His sufferings, by which His blood was poured out, ministered His life to us. The fact that it has been given to us by offering transfer proves this point.

The order of Christ’s life, then, is that a person is born again, through forgiveness, while dead in trespasses and sins. Then, by baptism, a reborn, new creation son of God is joined to the circumcising process that Christ endured during His Passion. This is for the purpose of renewing and circumcising their heart from self-centredness so that they are able to love and to fellowship in the body of Christ.

One offering for every individual

It is important that we understand the significance of Christ’s offering and circumcision for us, personally. Christ’s one death was not for the collective human race. His circumcision authored a *unique pathway* for the perfection of *every individual*. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, ‘But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that *He by the grace of God should taste death for every man*.’⁶⁹ The implication of Paul’s statement is that every suffering that a person experiences, in Christ, has been tailored for the perfection of their sonship.

For this reason, a son of God, who has been baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, has no grounds for viewing themselves as a victim in the midst of their suffering. Rather, we are to accept that our sufferings have been given to us as our unique participation in Christ’s circumcision. Furthermore, we do not need to feel sorry for our brethren who are suffering with Christ, because their sufferings have been appointed for their perfection in Christ. Of course, we can pray for one another, and bear one another’s burdens, but we must not view ourselves or our brethren as victims of their suffering, in Christ.

The righteousness of God is revealed in Christ

Through Christ’s offering, the gift of righteousness was made available to those who would receive it. Paul wrote, ‘For if by the one man’s offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of*

69 Heb 2:9

The offering and circumcision of Christ

righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ'.⁷⁰ The gift of righteousness, which enables us to reign in life, is in contrast to a righteousness of our own, which is from the law.⁷¹ Christ made this gift available through His circumcision, which was His death, burial and resurrection. The gift of righteousness becomes the possession of every person whose heart is circumcised in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. They join this fellowship through baptism.

The Scriptures teach us that it was not on the basis of deeds which we did in righteousness that God saves us from death. We were dead in trespasses and sins when we were first born from above. Paul noted that it was according to God's mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom the Father poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that we were *justified*. We were justified, or declared righteous, by God's grace, so that we might be made heirs of eternal life, according to hope.⁷² The apostle John declared that this is the hope of sonship.⁷³ This is a foundational statement that we can trust and build our lives on.

70 Rom 5:17

71 Php 3:9

72 Tit 3:4-7

73 1Jn 3:1-3

CHAPTER 4

The seven wounds of Christ's offering and circumcision

After praying to the Father on the Mount of Olives, Jesus and His disciples descended the mount, crossed over the Brook Kidron, and entered a walled garden called the garden of Gethsemane.¹ Christ's offering and circumcision for our sake commenced in Gethsemane. This phase of His journey back to the Father involved six wounding events that He endured as a living sacrifice, and a seventh wound that He received after His redemptive work was complete and He had physically died. In this chapter we have detailed the key elements of each wound that Christ received during His offering and circumcision.

¹ Joh 18:1

Christ in Gethsemane – the first sprinkling of blood

The first sprinkling of Christ’s blood, resulting from His offering and circumcision, occurred in the garden of Gethsemane. ‘And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.’² This is where Christ prayed three times to the Father, saying, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.’³

The faith of the Son

An offering that pleases God is one that demonstrates or expresses faith. We are reminded in the book of Hebrews that ‘without faith it is impossible to please Him’.⁴ In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ did not firstly offer Himself to God as a *sin offering*. Christ, in faith, first offered Himself to God *as a whole burnt offering*. He offered Himself to God as a Lamb without spot or blemish.⁵ It was as a whole burnt offering that His blood was first shed. The suffering that He endured, which caused His blood to sweat from every pore in His body as it was racked with fever, was the result of deep anguish.

Christ, as our suffering High Priest, offered Himself to God in Gethsemane with strong crying and tears. God was able to save Him from death. Christ offered up both prayers and supplications as a sweet incense to God. He was heard because of His piety, or godly fear.⁶

The Son’s prayer was the expression of *faith-obedience*.⁷ The full expression of His faith was seen in *sorrow* when, before He began to pray, He said, ‘My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.’⁸ This same trial fell upon Abraham when he joined the fellowship of Christ’s offering to receive the rewards of faith. The Scriptures record that after Abraham received the word of Yahweh that delivered him from fear, and granted faith to him to believe for the promise of sonship, God commanded him to make offering.⁹ As he participated in the burnt offering that Yahweh had called for, ‘a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, *terror and great darkness fell upon him*’.¹⁰

Likewise, for Christ, the obedience of faith took Him down into darkness and death. In this sense, He was in ‘free fall’. Faith-obedience meant that He could use no mechanism, whether natural or spiritual, to save Himself. His obedience was unto death.¹¹

2	Luk 22:44	6	Heb 5:7	10	Gen 15:12
3	Luk 22:42. Mat 26:44	7	Mar 14:36	11	Php 2:8
		8	Mat 26:38		
4	Heb 11:6	9	Gen 15:9-10		
5	1Pe 1:19				

The seven wounds of Christ's offering and circumcision

Christ's sufferings as a whole burnt offering were the sufferings that accompany submission in faith-obedience. Christ, having offered Himself as a whole burnt offering, was made by the Father to be a sin offering as the sum and total of all expiatory offerings. His hands and feet were to be pierced through with nails. He was to be fastened to a cross to die the death of a common criminal because of our transgressions. His death would be a substitutionary death. His soul – the very essence of His being as a son of man and Son of God – was to be *made* an offering for sin. Christ was not simply carrying sin on His back. His soul was *made* sin. His journey would lead Him to become the serpent on the pole, which was then judged and destroyed.¹² This was the Father's work.¹³

In order to become a sin offering, Christ had to be identified with sinners.¹⁴ To this end, He was cut off from, or dead to, the Father. This was agony indeed. However, the substance of His faith was that He now trusted that God would deliver and restore Him to His warm embrace, once His work as Priest and Offering was accomplished. His faith worked because He loved and trusted the Father and the Holy Spirit.

The fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane

Christ was made adequate for His offering through prayer. His prayer was incense that revealed the grace of God, through which Jesus tasted death for everyone.¹⁵ It also established a fellowship of prayer with the Father and the Holy Spirit, which He invited His disciples and, in particular, Peter, James and John, to join.

We recall that in Moses' tabernacle the incense was made up of four spices in equal measure, to which salt was added.¹⁶ These four spices typified the fourfold grace of God, through which Christ became obedient to the point of death on the cross.¹⁷ Two handfuls of incense were placed on the golden altar before the ark of the covenant, creating a cloud of incense that covered the mercy seat.¹⁸ This was where the high priest met the Lord.¹⁹

Jesus' prayer in the garden of Gethsemane revealed the Most Holy Place of the true tabernacle. Through the fellowship of prayer with the Father and Holy Spirit, Christ received the strength and power of God that comes from Their Eternal Spirit.²⁰ Through Eternal Spirit, He was able to demonstrate the obedience of faith, and to offer Himself to God as a whole burnt offering. The whole burnt offering continued throughout the night.²¹ As Jesus presented Himself as a burnt offering,

12 Joh 3:14

16 Exo 30:34-35

20 Luk 22:43.

13 Isa 53:10

17 Php 2:8. Heb 2:9

Heb 9:14. Heb 12:2

14 Isa 53:12

18 Lev 16:12-13

21 Lev 6:9

15 Heb 2:9

19 Exo 30:36

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He was provided with life and grace to endure the complete process of the cross. When we join the fellowship of Yahweh's prayer, we receive the same strength that Christ did. We, too, are sustained as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. We are able to join Christ in the fellowship of every aspect of His one offering.

In the context of Yahweh's fellowship through prayer, the whole burnt offering is the means by which the New Covenant is activated. As the blood of Christ fell upon His body as a mercy seat in Gethsemane, the life of Christ, which is His divine nature, was multiplied and given to those who join Him in the fellowship of prayer. His life, when joined to our life through offering transfer, gives us strength to walk as disciples with Christ on the pathway of faith-obedience that sanctification requires.

Not My will, but Yours, be done

Many people have misunderstood Jesus' prayer to the Father, when He said, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.' The common view has been that the will of Jesus was different from the Father's will, and that Jesus laid aside His own will to fulfil the will of the Father. However, this is not the case. Jesus' will and the Father's will *were the same*. Paul noted this point when he wrote, "Sacrifice and offering, burnt offerings, and offerings for sin You did not desire, nor had pleasure in them" (which are offered according to the law), then He said, "*Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God*".²²

If there was no difference between the will of the Son and the will of the Father, why did Jesus say, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done'? It is because, when He drank the cup that the Father had given Him, and He became sin, He received the disobedient wills of all humanity. He was saying, *on our behalf*, 'Not the disobedient "my wills" of fallen mankind, but the Father's will be done'. It is as though all our wills were seeking to overpower Christ so that another way might be found. However, as Christ was strengthened with Eternal Spirit, and prayed even more earnestly in relation to putting off the will of the flesh, He began to sweat great drops of blood all over His body.²³

This sprinkling of Christ's blood marked the removal of the 'own wills' of fallen humanity, and the giving of His life to those who are in Him for their obedience to the Father. In this regard, the faith of the Son that we receive in the word of God

22 Heb 10:8-9

23 Luk 22:42-44

is for the purpose of joining the fellowship of this sprinkling event. In Him, our will is able to be put off, and we are enabled to fulfil the will of the Father as we continue to participate in all the other dimensions of the operation of God.

Your hour and the power of darkness

While Jesus was praying in the garden, Judas, and a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people to betray and arrest Him.²⁴ This multitude included a cohort of Roman soldiers (normally 600 men).²⁵ Jesus was not overpowered by this significant company. In fact, when He revealed to them that He was Yahweh, they *all* drew back and fell down to the ground!²⁶

Jesus did not demonstrate this power to avoid suffering but, rather, to ensure that the disciples were not taken by the cohort. Jesus knew what was coming upon Him and, in faith, took initiative to deliver the disciples from the hand of the cohort. By this means, the word of the Lord was fulfilled: 'Of those whom You have given Me I lost not one'.²⁷

Jesus gave Himself to be bound by the multitude who had come to arrest Him. This multitude represented humanity who were themselves in captivity to Satan, the ruler of this world.²⁸ Jesus said to them that this was their hour, and the power of darkness.²⁹ It was the period of time that was reserved for the abuse of Christ by humanity and the principalities and powers of this age. This was for the express purpose that Christ would overcome them through the weakness of the cross. As they bound the Son of Man, they were themselves bound and disempowered through this action.³⁰ It was at this point that Christ began to lead captivity captive to Himself.³¹

In the court of the high priest – the second and third sprinklings of blood

From Gethsemane, Jesus was taken to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas, the high priest, and then to Caiaphas. Two specific sprinklings were occasioned at this site, revealing the *trespass offering* and the *peace offering*. It was in this context that Peter denied Christ three times. Let us now consider the reason for Peter's denial, and the efficacy of Christ's blood for his recovery, and for the recovery of us all.

24 Mat 26:47

28 Joh 12:31. 2Co 4:4

25 Joh 18:3

29 Luk 22:53

26 Joh 18:6

30 Joh 18:12

27 Joh 18:9. Joh 17:12

31 Eph 4:8

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When Jesus, at the last supper, explained to His disciples that He was about to commence a journey that they would initially be unable to join, Peter was indignant. He said to Jesus, ‘*Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.*’³² Peter was denying that what Jesus had just said was true. He believed in the integrity of his heart and in his own capacity for *agape* love. However, Jesus said to Peter, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.’³³

We note that Peter was *not alone* in this first denial of the words of Jesus, who had said to His disciples, ‘You will all fall away because of Me this night, for it is written, “I will strike down the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered”.’³⁴ In his Gospel, Matthew recorded that Peter reaffirmed his commitment, saying, ‘“Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!” *And so said all the disciples.*’³⁵ The fundamental issues pertaining to Peter’s denial were common to all the disciples. They are, in fact, common to us all. In this respect, Peter was an example for us all of how the Lord breaches our other law, and establishes us in the way of sanctification.

When the cohort came to Gethsemane to arrest Jesus, Peter demonstrated his zeal and patriotic commitment to journey with Christ by taking up his sword against those who sought to bind Jesus. In his fervour, he cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest.³⁶ Peter was demonstrating that he was ready to die with Jesus. He mistakenly believed that his actions were those of a disciple.

Peter followed Christ to the court of the high priest. As he witnessed Christ being beaten with fists and with rods, spat at, and mocked, he denied Christ three times. When the rooster crowed, Jesus, whose face was swollen from the severe abuse that He had received, looked at Peter and met him *eye to eye*. Through this interaction, the blood that was being sprinkled by Jesus on Peter’s behalf was speaking to him and exposing what was in his heart. Luke recorded that, in this moment, Peter *remembered the words that Jesus had spoken to him.*³⁷

Peter went out and wept bitterly. Because of the grace and supplication that was being ministered to Peter as the blood of sprinkling was speaking to him, his response was one of conviction, rather than condemnation. His sorrow was the mourning of one who had become *poor in spirit*. His integrity had failed, and he had deserted Christ. His own fleshly good had been exposed as inadequate. This was

32 Joh 13:37

36 Joh 18:10

33 Joh 13:38

37 Luk 22:61

34 Mat 26:31

35 Mat 26:35

the beginning point of Peter's restoration. This process of recovery culminated on the shore of Galilee when the Lord restored Peter to his sanctification.

The light of life that brings illumination – second sprinkling

The second sprinkling of blood, which involved Jesus being bruised for our iniquities, as prophesied by Isaiah, ministered the *light of life* to Peter.³⁸ Through the ministry of this blood, Peter received illumination from Christ regarding the operation of the other law within him. 'Iniquity' means 'living by the other law'. How did the blood speak in order to bring illumination to Peter regarding his iniquity?

Concerning Jesus, the apostle John wrote, 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'.³⁹ This life was in Christ's blood. Through His offering, Christ's blood/life was given, or was made available, to be the light of men.⁴⁰

John then said that 'the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend [or apprehend] it'.⁴¹ John was referring to the darkness of a person's heart. A darkened heart has no capacity for illumination.

King Solomon explained that the spirit, or identity, of a person is the lamp of the Lord. Jesus further specified that the lamp, or light, of a person's body, is *the eye*. He then said that if their eye was single, which means 'sanctified to their name', their whole body would be full of light. They would no longer be in darkness.⁴² However, if a person's eye is bad, or fallen, their whole body is full of darkness, and they are unable to comprehend the light.⁴³

When Adam and Eve fell, they were disconnected from their fellowship with Yahweh, and with the predestination that He had prepared for them. They had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an attempt to become the origin of their own image, and the source of their own destiny. Consequently, the knowledge of good and evil became another law within them. Their own law was now the basis of their perspective of themselves, and what they believed to be true. They believed that their own perspective was light, when in fact it was darkness.

Solomon explained that it is possible to walk according to the sight of our own eyes. He said, 'Walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgement.'⁴⁴ Peter was walking in

38 Isa 53:5. Joh 1:4 42 Mat 6:22

39 Joh 1:4 43 Mat 6:23

40 Lev 17:11. Joh 1:4 44 Ecc 11:9

41 Joh 1:5

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the sight of his own eyes when he claimed that he was willing to lay his life down for Jesus. His eye was not single or clear. The darkness of his own perspective meant that he could not receive what Jesus was saying to him. It also resulted in his unhelpful intrusion upon the work of Christ in Gethsemane when he cut the ear off the servant of the high priest.

This highlights the practical implications of a defective eye. A person's darkened *perspective* has an unavoidable impact on their *actions*. Everything that they do springs from the perspective, or eyes, of their darkened heart. Jesus made this point when He said, 'Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies.'⁴⁵ This is why, if a person's eye is bad, their whole *body* is full of darkness.⁴⁶

We have already noted that Christ's blood, or life, is the light of men. This light is ministered by His eyes, which are like 'a flame of fire'.⁴⁷ This is the light that shines from the marred face of Christ. He meets a person eye to eye.

When the eyes of Christ, which are a flame of fire, look at us, our hearts begin to be sprinkled by His blood. Through the light of life that is in His blood, we begin to receive sight. By this means, our eye is becoming clear, and the darkness of our own law is passing away. As the apostle John summarised, 'A new commandment I write to you, which thing is true in Him and in you, because the darkness is passing away, and the true light is already shining'.⁴⁸

Christ's eyes, as a flame of fire, search our heart and try our spirit, and reveal the wickedness of our own way, or law.⁴⁹ By this means, the eyes of the Lord make a breach on our other law. We acknowledge that we have been deceived, having believed that the darkness of our own perspective is the light. As Peter did, we perceive the bankruptcy of our spirit, and can begin to mourn.⁵⁰ From this point, we are able to journey on a pathway of mourning, lamentation and woe to become a firstfruits Christian.⁵¹

As the light of the gospel shines from the eyes of Christ and begins to sprinkle our hearts, we must not draw back. If we draw back, the soul of the Lord has no pleasure in us.⁵² In other words, His blood is not effective in our lives.

45 Mat 15:19

46 Mat 6:23

47 Rev 1:14, Rev 2:18

48 1Jn 2:8

49 Psa 139:23

50 Mat 5:3-4

51 Eze 2:10

52 Heb 10:38

The nature of compliance

Peter mistook his own compliance for obedience. What was Peter compliant with? It was not with the words of the Lord but, rather, with his own *assessment* of himself, of Jesus, and of the words of Jesus. These assessments revealed that his eye was evil. His whole perspective, which motivated his religious zeal, was in darkness. His emotions, driving his sense of spiritual fervour, indicated a deceived spirituality, motivated by good intention. This was the emotion of sin, taking hold of God's law by his own law.⁵³

Peter's zeal revealed itself in a manner that was unique to his temperament. The darkened zeal of others may be variously expressed through poetry, writing songs, composing sermons, conducting Bible studies, serving a Christian cause, joining a service team. When motivated by the sight of our own eyes, none of these initiatives will be part of our calling and, therefore, not of our sanctification. Why is this so? It is because the initiative is *ours*, and we are not being obedient slaves. Instead, we are zealots and fellow travellers with Christ, who claim that our goals are the same as Christ's. This is what 'compliance' means.

A person who is compliant can even call Christ 'Lord'. Peter said to Jesus, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.'⁵⁴ Jesus acknowledged that Peter had received this as a revelation from the Father Himself!⁵⁵ However, in His very next interaction with Peter, Jesus said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan!'⁵⁶

Although Peter confessed the lordship of Christ, it was obvious that there was something that he loved more than He loved the Lord. Jesus was making this point when He asked Peter, on the shore of Galilee, 'Do you love [*agape*] Me *more than these*?'⁵⁷ What was it that Peter had loved more than his Lord? Fundamentally, it was his own sight, or perspective.

We come to know the truth through obedience. Faith is the prerequisite to obedience. We must let go of our compliance, with all of its associated confirmations, speculations and revelations. Compliance does not need faith. It constantly claims its own 'signs and wonders', which support its own initiatives.

A creative, compliant zealot will be very active. However, their activities will not be obedience. Rather, they take all that they hear being preached or written and reprocess it so that it belongs to their own initiative. Often, what they have taken is represented by them as a better suggestion or idea that *they* have had. In

53 Rom 7:5,23

57 Joh 21:15

54 Mat 16:17

55 Mat 16:16

56 Mat 16:23

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this regard, they are unwilling to take Christ's yoke as a learner.⁵⁸ This is because true discipleship joins them to a process of suffering, through which their own perspective, which they love, can be removed.⁵⁹ Consequently, they never are able to find rest for their soul. Instead, they are beset by agitation, anxiety, upsets, anger, depression.

The fruit of shame constantly dogs their steps. They are as complex and defensive as Peter was. They swing between the euphoria of self-realisation, springing from the affirmations of their own spirituality, to the depression that comes because nothing results from the optimism that they project. Their eyes are constantly reopened to realise their nakedness, with its accompanying shame. However, they are unable to change or obtain the glory of sonship.

The work of chastening – third sprinkling

It is the *chastening of the Father* that brings change in relation to this mode of relationship. This particular application of Christ's blood was revealed through the third sprinkling in the court of Caiaphas. *This was the effect of the blows with rods that Jesus received for our peace.*⁶⁰ 'Peace' simply means 'sanctification to one's name'. A person has peace when they cease from pursuing a perspective and a way of life that is in conflict with the word of their name. They are able to cease from this darkened way of living if they allow the Lord to remove the other law from their heart. This occurs through the process of chastening, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Jesus began to apply this principle to the life of Peter as, on the shore of Galilee, He called him again to discipleship. Peter confessed that He was unable to love (*agape*) the Lord, demonstrating that he had become poor in spirit.⁶¹ The Holy Spirit was now able to begin pouring the love of God into Peter's heart so that he could fulfil the works that the Lord had prepared for him to do.⁶²

Through this ministry of Jesus, Peter was receiving the word of His calling and sanctification. With this word, Peter was receiving the faith of the Son to present himself for obedience to the name and works of his sanctification.⁶³ This faith was able to work by the love of God that was being poured into his heart.⁶⁴ Peter could, therefore, proceed with confidence to fulfil the works of his sonship, rather than to engage in dead works that were motivated by his other law.

58 Mat 11:29-30

62 Rom 5:5

59 Isa 50:4-6

63 Rom 10:17

60 Mat 26:67.
Isa 53:5

64 Gal 5:6

61 Joh 21:17

The seven wounds of Christ's offering and circumcision

Christ was calling Peter to shepherd the sheep of His flock. This discussion regarding Peter's name and works was a call to a way of discipleship that was different from Peter's previous mode. As John recorded, 'Jesus said to him, "Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me".'⁶⁵

Even at this point, Peter was still comparing himself with others. Having heard Christ's word regarding his work and his particular participation in Christ's suffering, as a disciple who was yoked with Christ, Peter looked at John and said, 'But Lord, what about this man?'⁶⁶ Jesus had to rebuke Peter and call him to his particular participation in chastening, through which he could be completely delivered from this mode of comparison.⁶⁷

The sacrifice of thanksgiving

The evidence that, in Christ, we are receiving chastening for our peace is that we are able to offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving as we participate in the sufferings of Christ. King David, when he had been delivered from captivity to his own way and perspective, and had been recovered to faith, declared, 'I will offer to You the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the Lord. I will pay my vows to the Lord now in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem.'⁶⁸

The apostle Paul exhorted us to go outside the camp to Christ, and to bear His reproach. In other words, we are called to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, which are the chastening hand of the Father upon Him and upon us. With this in view, Paul exhorted believers to have the same response as King David, saying, 'Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.'⁶⁹ The sacrifice of praise to God is a *peace offering*.⁷⁰

In summary, we are participating in Christ's peace offering when we are being chastened by the Father, in Christ. The evidence of our participation in this offering is that we are able to give thanks to God in the midst of our sufferings.

65 Joh 21:17-19

69 Heb 13:15-16

66 Joh 21:20-21

70 Lev 7:11-12

67 Joh 21:22

68 Psa 116:17-19

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The Old Covenant priesthood disqualified

Jesus was questioned by Caiaphas, the High Priest, who asked Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed One?'⁷¹ Caiaphas was asking Jesus if He was 'the Branch', of whom Zechariah had prophesied.⁷² Under the direction of Zechariah, a double crown – representing kingship and priesthood – had been crafted. It was to be kept in the temple in the custody of the high priest, who was to crown the Messiah when He came to the temple.⁷³

In response to the high priest's query, Jesus declared, 'I am [Yahweh]. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.'⁷⁴ Instead of making haste to collect the double crown and then place it on Melchizedek, who had come to His temple, the high priest 'tore his clothes and said, "What further need do we have of witnesses?"'⁷⁵ Condemning Jesus to death, they began to spit on Him, blindfold Him, and beat Him with rods.⁷⁶

Through their actions, *the priesthood of the law covenant was disqualified*. It was stripped from them as the high priest tore his priestly garment and they struck the One who had been appointed by the Father as a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.⁷⁷ Consequently, the Old Covenant priesthood was shut down, and the priesthood of a new covenant was revealed.

Before Pilate and Herod – the fourth and fifth sprinklings of blood

Early in the morning, after Christ had been beaten and humiliated in the court of the high priest, all the chief priests and the elders of the people counselled together to put Jesus to death. They bound Him, led Him away, and delivered Him up to Pilate, the governor of Judea.⁷⁸

After hearing the charges against Jesus, Pilate was unconvinced of Jesus' guilt. He asked Jesus whether He was a king. Jesus said to Pilate, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.'⁷⁹ Pilate sent Jesus to Herod, who happened to be in Jerusalem at the time. He did this because Herod was tetrarch over Galilee and Perea, and Pilate had heard that Jesus was a Galilean.⁸⁰

71 Mar 14:61

72 Zec 6:12

73 Zec 6:11-15

74 Mar 14:62

75 Mar 14:63

76 Mar 14:65

77 Lev 21:10.

Heb 7:17. Psa 110:4

78 Mat 27:1-2.

Mar 15:1. Luk 23:1.

Joh 18:28

79 Joh 18:37

80 Luk 23:4-7

Herod was very pleased to see Jesus because he had heard much about Him and hoped that Jesus would perform a sign for him. However, Jesus did not respond to any questions or comments that Herod directed toward Him. Therefore, Herod and his soldiers treated Jesus with contempt, dressing Him in a gorgeous robe and mocking His kingship. Herod then sent Jesus back to Pilate. Through this interaction, Herod and Pilate became friends.⁸¹

When Jesus returned to Pilate, the governor sought to have Jesus released. Interestingly, Pilate recognised that the chief priests had delivered Christ up because of envy, or *covetousness*.⁸² The chief priests stirred up the people to ask Pilate to release the thief and murderer, Barabbas, instead of Jesus. Afraid of an uprising, and wishing to satisfy the multitude, Pilate released Barabbas.⁸³ He took Jesus into the Praetorium where He was scourged.⁸⁴ The soldiers stripped Jesus of the gorgeous robe, and put a scarlet robe on Him. They fashioned a crown of thorns, which they placed on Him and then drove into His head with a reed which served as a mock sceptre. During this episode, they spat on Him, mocked Him and abused Him in a vile manner. At the conclusion of this abuse, they removed the scarlet garment from Him and replaced it with the garments that He had been wearing when He had come from Herod's court.⁸⁵

The abuse that Christ received under the direction of Pilate, and of Herod by association, manifested the fourth and fifth wounds of Christ. The fourth wound was the scourging that Christ received for our healing. The fifth wound was the crown of thorns upon His head.

Scourged for our healing – fourth sprinkling

The scourging that Christ received under the direction of Pilate was the fourth wound resulting in the sprinkling of Christ's blood. Identifying the purpose for these wounds, the prophet Isaiah proclaimed that 'by His stripes *we are healed*'.⁸⁶

The whip used to scourge Jesus was a terrible instrument that was designed to cause intense pain. Commonly referred to as 'the cat o' nine tails', it was no ordinary whip. One strand of the nine leather tails that comprised this scourging whip may have had four or five pieces of sharp bone or metal fastened to it. A full beating of thirty-nine stripes would bring an individual to the brink of death, having caused approximately 1600 wounds to their back. It was said that forty stripes would kill a man.

81 Luk 23:8-12

82 Mat 27:18.
Mar 15:11

83 Mar 15:11-15

84 Mat 27:27. Joh 19:1

85 Mat 27:27-31.
Mar 15:16-20.

Joh 19:2-3

86 Isa 53:5

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The cat o' nine tails that was used by Pilate to whip Christ is a symbol of the many difficult, and at times brutal, afflictions that befall us in life because of the fall of mankind. Regarding these afflictions, the prophet Isaiah wrote, 'I shall make mention of the lovingkindnesses of the Lord, the praises of the Lord, according to all that the Lord has granted us, and the great goodness toward the house of Israel, which He has granted them according to His compassion and according to the abundance of His lovingkindnesses. For He said, "Surely, they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely." So He became their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them; in His love and in His mercy He redeemed them.'⁸⁷ What does this passage mean for us?

When He was scourged, Christ joined Himself to us in fellowship in the midst of the sufferings and misfortunes that may overtake us in life. We bring some of these sufferings upon ourselves, while other sufferings that we experience are the result of problems that spring from our associations with family, interactions with people in the broader community, from health issues, career matters, etc. In this regard, we are all affected by time and chance.⁸⁸

Many and varied though our trials may be, Christ has made our circumstances His own. He suffers *with* us and *for* us. Then, because He has made these afflictions His own, He *heals* us as we receive them as a fellowship in His sufferings. This is what the apostle Paul meant when he described our sufferings in this world as being 'the fellowship' of Christ's sufferings.⁸⁹ When we receive the many and varied afflictions as a participation in Christ's sufferings, they are no longer the effect of time and chance upon us. They are being specifically given to us by the Father, in Christ, for our healing and change.

There are many and varied aberrant behaviours that we can identify as being part of the fallen human condition. These aberrant behaviours and personality flaws are the consequence of the lust of the eyes.⁹⁰ As we noted in Chapter 3, the lust of the eyes refers to the fantasies, projections and dreams that we pursue for ourselves. The many wounds that Christ received upon His back as He was scourged at the command of Pilate were for the healing of these many aberrant behaviours.⁹¹

The wound caused by just one of these pieces of bone, as it tore the flesh and skin from Christ's back and caused His blood to flow, brings deliverance and healing to our life, and gives us victory over the aberrant behaviours that are particular to us and that lead us away from our sanctification. These behaviours,

87 Isa 63:7-9

88 Ecc 9:11

89 Php 3:10

90 1Jn 2:16

91 Isa 53:5.

Heb 12:4-13

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based in our projections and fantasies, are the reason why we are unable to have fellowship with the Lord and with each other, and are unable to demonstrate the righteousness of God.

As the soldiers took the whip and applied it to Christ's back, the blood of Christ flowed from His body. The Holy Spirit, as the agent of Christ's offering, joins us, in fellowship, to Christ's atoning work, and transfers Christ's healing life – the life that was in His blood – to our life and circumstances. When we suffer, as a participation in His chastening for our sake, it is dealing with the aberrant behaviours that are peculiar to us. In Christ, our suffering is a small participation in His considerable wounding.

The healing of the nations

The healing that Christ brought through His scourging is available to us as we eat from the tree of life. Jesus spoke of Himself as being the water of life and the bread of life.⁹² He had come down from the throne of God as the Lamb of God who, through offering, would give us His own life. His life was in His blood. This life is described as the water of life that we spiritually drink when we join with Christ in fellowship and worship.⁹³ The bread of life is the fruit of Christ, who is the Tree of life. This 'food' is to do the will of God and to fulfil His righteousness.⁹⁴

In Jerusalem, Pilate was the representative of the Roman Empire. The Roman Empire at that time was the sixth world order that gathered up *all the nations of the world under its rule*. Although Pilate attempted to wash his hands of the incident, Jesus was condemned to death on the cross under his direction.⁹⁵ Pilate himself said to Jesus, 'Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?' This authority had been given to him by the Father.⁹⁶

Christ went from the judgement seat of Pilate to Calvary with the blood of scourging upon His body and the crown of thorns upon His head, as well as with the blood that had been shed as a consequence of His earlier wounds. As Jesus was nailed to the cross and lifted up as crucified, He became the Tree of life.⁹⁷ By this means, He turned the abuse and death that He suffered at the hands of the authorities of this world *into a blessing*. We are reminded that Christ brought death to the tree of life by being cursed, 'for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree".'⁹⁸ Paul explained that this was so that *the blessing of His life might come upon*

92 Joh 4:14. Rev 22:1. Joh 6:48,51

93 Joh 4:10,13,23-24

94 Joh 4:34

95 Mat 27:24

96 Joh 19:10-11

97 Gal 3:13-14

98 Gal 3:13

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the Gentiles and that every believer might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.⁹⁹

Christ's body and blood became the *fruit* of the tree of life for us when He was lifted up on the cross. Christ made the abuse that He had suffered at the hands of the ungodly to be a grain offering and a drink offering on the cross. At the last supper, Jesus said that the bread was His flesh and the wine was His blood. He was connecting these elements to the offering that He was about to make.¹⁰⁰ Paul said that drinking the cup was a *participation* in the blood of Christ, and that eating the bread was a *participation* in the body of Christ.¹⁰¹ In other words, eating and drinking the elements of the communion joins a person to Christ's offering.

Peter was making this very point when he explained that Christ was nailed to the cross so that we might join His death, die to sin, and live to righteousness. Specifically, he wrote, 'He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness; *for by His wounds you were healed*. For you were continually straying like sheep, but now you have returned to the Shepherd and Guardian of your souls.'¹⁰² Evidently, the healing that we receive through our participation in Christ's sufferings should lead to our sanctification as the lusts of our eyes are removed from us.

Through His offering, Christ's life was being multiplied to us. The fruit of Christ's own life is the multiplication of life that is then given to us as our *spiritual food*. This food sustains us, and its *leaves are for medicine*, containing a remedy that He continually supplies for the *healing of the nations*.¹⁰³ This finished work was observed by John and recorded in the book of Revelation. 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, *proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb*. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. *The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations*. And there shall be no more curse, but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His servants shall serve Him.'¹⁰⁴

Christ gave Himself to us as the bread of life and the water of everlasting life. When we eat and drink from the Tree of life, it grants us a participation in His death so that we can receive and live by His life. His death involved all the wounds that He received, including the many and diverse afflictions associated with His scourging. We eat and drink the communion and receive the water of the word in faith that the afflictions which we experience from day to day, whether big or

99 Gal 3:14

100 Luk 22:19-20

101 1Co 10:16

102 1Pe 2:24-25

103 Rev 22:1-2.

Eze 47:1-12

104 Rev 22:1-3

small, are from His hand for our deliverance, provision and healing. As we join ourselves to Christ in the fellowship of His offering, we find joy and consolation in the provision that comes from God.

The crown of thorns – fifth sprinkling

As we described earlier, Jesus, following His scourging, was taken by the soldiers into the Praetorium, where He was stripped and dressed in a scarlet robe. They then twisted thorns into a crown, which was placed on His head. They put a reed in His hand as a mock sceptre. After spitting on Him, humiliating Him, and mocking Him, the soldiers used the reed to strike Jesus on the head. This caused the thorns to be driven into His head.¹⁰⁵

Both Pilate and Herod queried Christ's kingship. The crown of thorns was placed upon the head of Christ to humiliate Him and to mock His identity as King and as the Son of God. As the Scriptures attest, 'In His humiliation His justice was taken away'.¹⁰⁶ The thorns that were used for this purpose represented the dysfunction of the whole of creation. Thorns and thistles were a central feature of the curse upon the whole of mankind because of Adam's disobedience.¹⁰⁷ Thorns and thistles represent the difficult and conflicting situations that frustrate us in life. They undermine the work and success of our hands. It is the pride of life that drives our pursuit of this success.

The desire for success and notability in life is the cause of much suffering in the world. People seek to conquer others to gain an advantage over them in the pursuit of pre-eminence and worldly wealth. The actions that they take can cause significant disadvantage and distress to those who are usurped and used by them. However, those who perpetrate such abuse are unable to escape their own anguish. They are beset with anxiety as they pursue their goals and their riches, and become depressed when they fail to realise their aspirations. In this regard, their minds are being tormented. These sufferings are all part of the wounds that Christ received because of the crown of thorns upon His head.

The reed that was given to Jesus as a mock sceptre, and which was used to drive the thorns into His head, represented the added force of satanic oppression upon Him. Paul described it as being the work of principalities, powers, rulers of the darkness of this age, and the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places.¹⁰⁸

105 Mat 27:27-30

106 Act 8:33

107 Gen 3:17-18

108 Eph 6:12-13

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They endeavour to drive into us the thorns that are associated with the curse, and to bruise us mentally and emotionally.

This dual oppression of thorns and demonic oppression was exemplified in the experience of Paul, who testified, saying, ‘And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a *thorn in the flesh* was given to me, a *messenger of Satan* to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.’¹⁰⁹

Finally, we note that it was the headship of Christ that was being assaulted and undermined through the suffering caused by the crown of thorns. That is, He was suffering the abuse associated with the corruption of the order of headship. We remember that God cursed the ground so that it brought forth thorns and thistles because Adam listened to his wife rather than obeying the word of the Lord.¹¹⁰ However, through the abuse of Christ’s headship, caused by the cursed crown, He was making provision for the recovery of each person to the order that God has established. Through this order of headship, the grace of life can be ministered to every person in Christ.¹¹¹

Overcoming the world

In previous publications, we have considered the principle of Babylon. Babylon describes an administration of the nations that has been established as an alternative to the administration of the firstborn. It has usurped the mandate of the firstborn over the nations and the kings of the earth. In the book of Revelation, Babylon is depicted as a harlot sitting on a scarlet beast that is full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns.¹¹²

The seven heads of the beast are the administration of Babylon over the nations. The ten horns are the kings who will emerge from the ten groups of nations in the seventh world kingdom. The prophetic Scriptures reveal that there will be seven times throughout history when a certain kingdom emerges to become the head of the nations of the world. These seven kingdoms are Egypt, Assyria, Medo-Persia, Greece, Rome, and a seventh world kingdom that is presently being established in the world.

The epitome of this ruling principle was the kingdom of Babylon. Its most prominent king was Nebuchadnezzar. From the book of Daniel, we learn that ‘seven periods of time’ passed over Nebuchadnezzar to teach him that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men and gives it to whomever He chooses.¹¹³ The

109 2Co 12:7

113 Dan 4:25

110 Gen 3:17-19

111 1Co 11:3

112 Rev 17:3,5

'seven times' signify that God has ordained seven world kingdoms throughout history to achieve His purpose and to teach the nations and kings of the earth this lesson.

Pilate was the representative of the kingdom of Rome. This was the sixth kingdom – representing all the kingdoms of men – including the seventh kingdom that was yet to come. Jesus came before Pilate as the Firstborn over all creation and as the King of Kings.¹¹⁴ Instead of recognising and accepting Christ's kingship and the legitimacy of the firstborn administration in the earth, Pilate, as the representative head of the kingdoms of men, abused and mocked Christ. As Christ submitted Himself to this abuse, He fulfilled 'the seven times prophecy of Daniel'. Through this action, the authority of the kingdoms of the world was stripped from them and given to Him.

This means that, in Christ, a person who suffers under the persecution of the kingdoms of the world can learn the truth that the Most High rules in the kingdoms of men. Furthermore, they can be joined to Christ their Head as part of the administration that is suitable for the fullness of times.¹¹⁵

Through the abuse of Christ at the hands of Pilate and Herod, the two men became friends. Their friendship signalled the alliance of the world with the descendants of Ishmael and Esau over and against God's firstborn people, to whom belonged the blessing of God. How is this so?

Herod was an Idumean. This meant that he was a descendant of Esau. He was also a descendant of Ishmael through Ishmael's daughter, Mahalath, who married Esau.¹¹⁶ Ishmael and Esau personified the principle of the flesh that is in conflict with the Spirit. Ishmael defaulted in relation to *calling* when he mocked Isaac. Esau defaulted in relation to the *election* when he sold his birthright to Jacob for a pot of stew. However, we know that Jacob obtained the blessing by deceit. His nature needed to change in order that he might possess the blessing of Abraham. Following his encounter with the Angel of the Lord, where his name was changed from Jacob to Israel, Jacob bowed seven times before the face of Esau.

This prophetic bowing of the firstborn to Esau, in order to obtain the promise of God, was fulfilled when Jesus submitted Himself to the abuse, mocking and humiliation directed towards Him by Herod. In this way, the right of the Arabs and Edom to the blessing of Abraham was removed from them and established in

114 Col 1:15. 1Ti 6:15

115 Eph 1:10

116 Gen 28:9

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the true Israel of God. Moreover, the principles of calling and election were now realised in Christ.

Mount Calvary – the sixth and seventh sprinklings of blood

After Jesus was scourged, and the crown of thorns had been set on His head, He was led away to Calvary to be crucified. This was the fourth site of His woundings, and the sixth and seventh sprinklings of His blood for the sake of the world were manifested here.

Pierced through on Calvary – sixth sprinkling

The prophet Isaiah declared that Jesus was *pierced through for our transgressions* when His hands and feet were nailed to the cross.¹¹⁷ This was the full manifestation of the sin offering. Through this action, Christ became a curse for us so that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, and that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.¹¹⁸ Having been nailed to the cross, Jesus was lifted up from the earth as a great light, and began to draw all men to Himself.¹¹⁹

On the cross, Christ removed the law, which was hostile toward us. It was hostile because our transgression of the law resulted in our condemnation and death. However, Paul explained that Jesus has ‘cancelled out the certificate of debt consisting of decrees against us, which was hostile to us; and He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross’.¹²⁰

In Christ, we are reconnected with the law in a different way. We come into Christ by joining His death, burial and resurrection through baptism. In Christ, we are dead to the law.¹²¹ It no longer has dominion over us.¹²² Instead, in the fellowship of the offering and sufferings of Christ, the other law is being removed from us so that our sins and lawless deeds are remembered no longer. Moreover, the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart.¹²³ The love of God is the capacity to fulfil the command to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul, mind and strength, and to love our neighbour as ourselves. When we live according to this way, we fulfil all the law in Christ. It becomes life to us, rather than death. We see, then, that to have the love of God poured into our heart is to have the law put upon our heart and written on our minds.¹²⁴ This is how the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death.¹²⁵

117 Isa 53:5

121 Rom 7:4

125 Rom 8:2

118 Gal 3:13-14

122 Rom 7:1

119 Joh 12:32

123 Rom 5:5

120 Col 2:14

124 Heb 10:16

The seven wounds of Christ's offering and circumcision

When Christ nailed the law to the cross in Himself, He also removed the impediment to unity between Jew and Gentile. As Paul summarised in his letter to the Ephesians, 'For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.'¹²⁶

Making a spectacle of principalities and powers

Between the sixth hour (12 pm) and the ninth hour (3 pm), there was darkness over all the earth. It was during this time that Christ disempowered and reorganised the angelic principalities and powers. In relation to this stage of Christ's journey, Paul explained that 'when He had disarmed the rulers and authorities, He made a public display of them, having triumphed over them through Him'.¹²⁷

Christ achieved this victory when He was crucified at the hands of men who were under the sway of Satan and who were therefore motivated to put Christ to death.¹²⁸ How did this achieve a victory over Satan and his angels?

Early in His ministry, Jesus said, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.'¹²⁹ The symbol of a serpent on a pole portrays a suffering snake. Satan is characterised in the Scriptures as a snake.¹³⁰ Moreover, he was the source of all sin.¹³¹

When a serpent bites its victim, they are stung with venom, leading to death. Paul said that 'the sting of death is sin'.¹³² When Adam and Eve heeded the word of Satan and disobeyed God, they were stung with sin, leading to their death. Paul explained that the strength of sin (which is the venom of the serpent) is the law.¹³³

In the garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus drank the cup that His Father had given Him, He was made sin on our behalf.¹³⁴ Christ aligned Himself with us in our state of sin and came under the judgement of law with all of its conflict, dystrophy and death. Only Christ had the power to harmonise all things. He did this through His perfect obedience to the Father, as the Son of Man. Paul said that, by coming in the likeness of our sinful flesh and offering Himself for our sin, the Son 'condemned sin in the flesh'.¹³⁵

126 Eph 2:14-16

130 Rev 12:9

134 Mar 14:36.

127 Col 2:15

131 Eze 28:15.

2Co 5:21

128 Act 2:23. 1Jn 5:19

Joh 8:44

135 Rom 8:3

129 Joh 3:14-15

132 1Co 15:56

133 1Co 15:56

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Christ condemned sin in the flesh when He was nailed to the cross. At this point, He was the serpent on the pole, bringing an end to sin in the flesh, and an end to Satan's misappropriation of the law. Because Satan had attempted to apply the law to Christ, he destroyed his own legitimacy to use the law. Furthermore, Christ had taken the law out of the hands of Satan and brought it into Himself.¹³⁶ Satan was now powerless and defeated. Christ had made a public display of him and had triumphed over him, having destroyed him who had the power of death.¹³⁷ Regarding this point, the apostle John recalled the words of Jesus, writing, "Now judgement is upon this world; now the *ruler of this world will be cast out*. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself." But He was saying this to indicate the *kind of death by which He was to die*.¹³⁸

If Satan had understood what Christ was doing when He offered Himself in obedience to death, even death on a cross, he would never have provoked men to put Christ to death in this manner. But God's purpose was hidden from him. Paul noted this very point, writing, "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory."¹³⁹

The redemptive work is finished

At this point, Jesus had fulfilled His mandate as Offering, Priest and Slave. Knowing that His work was finished, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"¹⁴⁰ Having completed His work, Jesus was asking to be received back into fellowship with the Father and the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus declared, "It is finished!", He was saying that His redemptive work was complete. In the Scriptures, the number six represents man. The six wounds that Christ endured as a living sacrifice was the full provision for the redemption of mankind. At this point, He had fully come back from the death of our sin and separation from God. Having finished His work, He cried out, "Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit."¹⁴¹

After this, Jesus breathed His last breath. However, He was not immediately received back to the Father. This was because the full work of atonement required a seventh sprinkling of blood. For this reason, Jesus rested in hope on the cross, waiting for the final sprinkling of blood.

136 Col 2:14

137 Col 2:15. Heb 2:14

138 Joh 12:31-33

139 1Co 2:7-8

140 Mat 27:46.

Mar 15:34

141 Joh 19:30.

Luk 23:46

Blood and water from His side – seventh sprinkling

The seventh, and final, sprinkling of blood was caused by the spear that was thrust into Jesus' side by the Roman soldier.¹⁴² As His flesh was pierced, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, signifying the end of the Old Covenant and its temple.¹⁴³ Furthermore, blood and water began to flow from His body.¹⁴⁴ The apostle John bore witness to this piercing, explaining that this was the fountain for sin and uncleanness, prophesied by Zechariah.¹⁴⁵ Importantly, Paul explained that this had opened a new and living way that the sons of God could now journey upon for salvation.¹⁴⁶

This water, for sin and uncleanness, was symbolised in the Old Covenant as the ashes of a heifer. A red heifer was burned outside the camp of the Israelites. Its hide, its flesh, its blood and its offal were burnt with cedar wood, hyssop and scarlet. The ashes were mixed with clean water. This mixture was called 'the water of purification', and its purpose was for cleansing.¹⁴⁷

Jesus had endured the fire of offering, which was the jealous love of God.¹⁴⁸ This fire had burned on Him as He offered Himself 'through the night' as a living sacrifice. When He gave up His Spirit to the Father, His body was like the ashes that remained after the red heifer was burnt. In this way, the water that flowed from the side of His dead body was the water for uncleanness.

This water is applied to our lives through the washing of water by the word that is ministered to us at the communion gathering.¹⁴⁹ This word cleanses us and grants to us the faith to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we are granted access to the life that is in Christ's blood and flows from His side. In other words, we have a participation in the six wounds through which Christ's blood was sprinkled and made available to us as our life.

We note that the bride of Christ is to be brought forth from the pierced side of Christ in the same way that Adam's wife, Eve, came from his rib.¹⁵⁰ Paul introduced this theme to us when he described Adam as 'a type of Him who was to come'.¹⁵¹ Having brought His bride forth, Christ then sanctifies and cleanses her with the washing of water by the word so that He might present her to Himself as a glorious church.¹⁵² Paul referred to this as 'a great mystery'.¹⁵³ The fulfilment of this mystery is detailed in the book of Revelation. The apostle John described the bride as 'the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband'.¹⁵⁴

142 Joh 19:34

146 Heb 10:20

150 Gen 2:21-23

154 Rev 21:2

143 Mat 27:5

147 Num 19:1-10

151 Rom 5:14

144 Joh 19:34

148 Son 8:6

152 Eph 5:26-27

145 Zec 13:1

149 Eph 5:26

153 Eph 5:32

CHAPTER 5

Witnesses of His resurrection

Introduction

Shortly before His ascension from the Mount of Olives, Jesus said to His disciples, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be *witnesses* to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.'¹

Jesus commissioned His disciples to become His witnesses in every place. Specifically, the disciples were called to become *witnesses of His resurrection*.

The disciples understood the mandate that they had received from Christ. When they returned to Jerusalem, they gathered in the upper room and began to pray in one accord. During this prayer meeting, Peter stood up and declared that they should choose a man to replace Judas. The requirement for such a man was that he had been with the disciples from the baptism of Jesus all the way through to His

1 Act 1:8

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ascension. However, the reason for choosing a replacement was so that he could join the rest of the apostles as *a witness of the resurrection* of Jesus Christ.²

The apostle John said that there were many events that surrounded the physical resurrection of Christ.³ Jesus performed many signs in the presence of the disciples during the forty days between His resurrection and His ascension. These signs verified that He had been raised from the dead as the Son of God with power.⁴ However, John did not record all of these signs in his Gospel narrative, because his primary focus was not to verify the authenticity of Christ's physical resurrection. Understanding his primary mandate as a witness of Christ's resurrection, John focused on the waypoints that are relevant for a person to believe in Jesus Christ, to be born as a son of God, and then to join the fellowship of His offering and circumcision so that they receive resurrection life in His name.⁵

What is a witness of the resurrection? We often consider a witness to be someone who has seen an event or relational interaction, and is then able to testify about what they have seen and believe to be true. However, Jesus was asking His disciples to do more than testify that He was alive because they had seen Him after His physical resurrection. He was asking them *to join the fellowship of His offering and circumcision*. By joining Him, they could receive and manifest His life in their mortal bodies as living witnesses of His resurrection from the death of sin.

A witness of the resurrection of Christ is doing more than simply bearing witness *to* the life. Indeed, they are a witness *of* the life, because they have joined the fellowship of Christ's sufferings so that His life is being manifested in their mortal bodies. The apostle Paul declared, 'For we who live are constantly being delivered over to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.'⁶ And, further to this, because a witness has joined the fellowship of Christ's offering, they are able to minister that life to others. Speaking of his ministry toward the Corinthians, Paul continued, 'So death works in us, but life in you'.⁷

Two phases of Christ's resurrection

It is important to understand that there were *two distinct phases* to the resurrection of Jesus Christ. The word 'resurrection' simply means to 'stand up again'. In this case, it means to 'stand up again' from *death*.

2 Act 1:22 6 2Co 4:11
3 Joh 20:30 7 2Co 4:12
4 Rom 1:4
5 Joh 20:31

In the first phase of His resurrection, Jesus was standing up again from *the death of our sin* as He journeyed from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. He was fully back from the death of sin when He cried from the cross, 'It is finished!' This triumphant cry signified that the first phase of His resurrection was complete. This was complete before He committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father and breathed His last.

In the second phase of His resurrection, He stood up again from *the death of mortality* when the Father, by the Holy Spirit, raised His physical body from the grave. He was raised in a spiritual body which was immortal and incorruptible.

In his letter to Timothy, Paul drew attention to these two distinct phases of Christ's resurrection. He declared that Jesus Christ 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'.⁸

In the *first phase* of His resurrection, Christ abolished the death of *sin* and brought *eternal life to light*. He did this from the cross as the Light of the world.⁹ He demonstrated that His life is available to us, by offering transfer, as we join the fellowship of His sufferings.

In the *second phase* of His resurrection, He brought *immortality to light* when He was physically raised from the dead in an immortal body as the Firstfruits of all those who die in Him.¹⁰

As sons of God, we know that we possess the hope of receiving an immortal and incorruptible body in the resurrection at the last day.¹¹ However, we are not waiting until after our physical death to experience and know resurrection life. Paul declared that his goal in this lifetime was to know the power of Christ's resurrection so that he could join the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death. Thus, he could progressively attain to a resurrection out of the death of sin.¹² He recognised that Christ had laid hold of him for this very purpose. Paul declared that this is 'the high calling of God in Christ Jesus', and commended this goal to every believer.¹³

The death of our sin

Let us consider these two phases of resurrection in more detail. We will begin by asking a question that is foundational to the Christian faith. When did Jesus

8 2Ti 1:10

9 Joh 8:12,28

10 1Co 15:20,23

11 1Th 4:13-18

12 Php 3:11

13 Php 3:14-15

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Christ die for our sin? Most Christians would answer this question by saying that He died for our sin when He breathed His last and physically died on the cross. However, we will consider that when Christ physically died, He was no longer under judgement and separated from God the Father. He had committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. This was the culmination of His journey back to the Father's house. His physical death was the expression of a pure and undefiled offering to the Father.

In considering this question, it is important to remember that there is a significant distinction between the death of sin and physical death. In this fallen world, we know that the corruption of the physical body and mortality is a symptom of the death of sin. However, the predicament of fallen man is not limited to the problems of mortality. A fallen man who is dead in trespasses and sin is *dead to God*; He is alienated from the life of God. When the Lord warned Adam concerning the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, saying, 'In the day that you eat from it you will surely die', He was referring to *this death* - the death of our *sin*.¹⁴

Jesus died the death of our sin in the garden of Gethsemane. This is when the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us.¹⁵ It is important to recognise that Christ did not simply *carry the weight* of the sin of the whole world. He *became sin* for our sake. He bore the full extent of every individual's sin and iniquity *in His physical body*.¹⁶ Having become our sin-Bearer, He drank the cup of God's wrath and judgement upon our sin. This included the full extent of our eternal judgement and separation from God. He was dead to God. The prophet Isaiah proclaimed that we esteemed Him as One who had been smitten and afflicted by God.¹⁷

We recall that Jesus warned His disciples on the Mount of Olives, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me *this night*, for it is written: "I will strike the Shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered".'¹⁸ We draw two important conclusions from these words of Jesus. First, it was the sovereign initiative of the Father to strike Him as our great Shepherd and sin-Bearer. This was not the prerogative of men. It was only because Christ had been smitten by God, according to His predetermined plan, that He was then delivered to suffer at the hands of godless men. Second, Jesus was smitten by God, and His disciples were scattered *on the same night* that He issued the warning. He was evidently referring to the events that unfolded in Gethsemane, not to the events that occurred later when He was interrogated, beaten, scourged and crucified.

14 Gen 2:17

18 Mat 26:31.

15 2Co 5:21

Mar 14:27

16 1Pe 2:24

17 Isa 53:4

We know that Christ died the death of our sin in Gethsemane, but when and how did this occur? It has often been suggested that Christ became our sin offering when the servants of the high priest laid their hands upon Him.¹⁹ This was the fulfilment of the way in which the priests under the Old Covenant would lay their hands upon the head of the sin offering. It was necessary for this laying on of hands to occur as Christ became the fulfilment of the sin offering under the Old Covenant. However, the Father had already made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us. This occurred while He was praying to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane.

In the garden, Jesus said to Peter, James and John, 'My soul is deeply grieved, *to the point of death*; remain here and keep watch with Me.'²⁰ Paul referred to this event when He said that Jesus humbled Himself *to the point of death*.²¹ This was not yet His physical death; it was the death of our sin. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'The Lord was pleased [as the manifestation of His will] to crush Him, putting Him to grief, if He would render Himself to be sin.'²² This translation emphasises the Son's *initiative* to render Himself to the Father to become sin for our sake. This verse can equally be translated as, 'When You [the Father] make His soul to be sin'.²³ This highlights the fact that it was the *sovereign work of the Father* to make Christ to be sin on our behalf. Both of these points are true. The transaction occurred in a fellowship between the Father and the Son.

In this fellowship, Jesus prayed, 'Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours, be done'.²⁴ This prayer demonstrated that He had begun to drink the cup of man's sin and iniquity, and yet He reaffirmed His unyielding commitment to be the Father's Slave and to fulfil the redemptive work that the Father had given Him to do. An angel of the Lord appeared from heaven and strengthened Him to continue presenting Himself, in prayer, as a burnt offering to the Father. He was strengthened with the capacity of Eternal Spirit, which is the fullness of the capacity of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We read in the book of Hebrews that it was *through Eternal Spirit* that He offered Himself to God.²⁵

As we have already stated in Chapter 4, having been strengthened by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, Christ continued to offer Himself to God as a burnt offering *to become our sin offering* through the shedding of His precious blood. The clots of blood that were shed from every pore of His body during His travail in the garden of

19 Lev 16:21

23 Isa 53:10

20 Mat 26:38,
Mar 14:34

24 Luk 22:42

25 Heb 9:14

21 Php 2:8

22 Isa 53:10

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Gethsemane were the first sprinkling of blood on His physical body as the Mercy Seat of the true tabernacle. As Christ's blood was shed, we observe the beginning of Christ's propitiatory work and the first manifestation of the principle of *offering transfer*. The sin and iniquity of every person had been transferred to Him. His life, which was resident in His blood, was now made available to us in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Coming back from the death of our sin

It is important to establish this beginning point in the garden of Gethsemane. It means that, as Christ journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross, He was not making *His way to* the death of our sin. He was making *His way back* from the death of our sin. With every wound that was inflicted upon Christ that caused His blood to be shed, He was progressively 'standing up again' out of the death of our sin and redeeming us from our death with Him. He was doing this as both our great High Priest and our great Shepherd. As the Father's Slave and our Shepherd, Jesus testified concerning His own life, 'I have authority to lay it down [by offering] and I have authority to take it up again [by resurrection]. This commandment I received from My Father.'²⁶

The apostle Paul concluded his letter to the Hebrews by saying, 'Now the God of peace who brought up from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the Eternal Covenant, even Jesus our Lord, equip you in every good thing to do His will.'²⁷ In this verse, Paul was evidently referring to the resurrection of Jesus from the death of our sin by the shedding of His own blood, while He was still alive in His mortal body. This must be the case, because Jesus was not physically raised from the dead by blood. We recall that all the blood was emptied from the body of Christ when the soldier thrust the spear into His heart.²⁸ When He was physically raised from the dead in His immortal body, there was no longer any blood in His veins.²⁹

The Scriptures record that, at the end of His travail and offering, Jesus cried out with a loud voice, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'³⁰ This was not a cry of desperation, despair or defiance. This was the cry of the triumphant Slave of God who had completed the work that He had been given to do by God the Father. He had nailed the law to the cross and abolished the Old Covenant. He had destroyed the body of sin in the flesh. He had disarmed principalities and

26 Joh 10:18

30 Mat 427:46

27 Heb 13:20-21

28 Joh 19:34

29 Luk 24:39

powers. He had released, reconciled and redeemed a great multitude of captives so that they could become sons of God.

When Christ prayed to the Father in this way from the cross, He was signifying that He had made His journey from the uttermost extremity of eternal judgement all the way back to the door of the Father's house. In effect, Christ was knocking on the door of heaven and asking the Father to welcome Him back into the loving fellowship of Yahweh. Once the Father had verified that His work was complete, the Son was able to triumphantly proclaim, 'It is finished!'³¹ Christ was proclaiming to all men that He was back from the death of our sin while He was still alive in His mortal body. His redemptive work was complete. All of this work was done before His physical death.

The apostle Peter declared that Christ suffered as a living sacrifice for our sin so that He could bring us to God. He was able to do this because, as He was physically dying, He was coming back from the death of our sin and bringing us back with Him as the great Shepherd of the sheep. Peter highlighted this point by saying that, as He was being put to death in the flesh, He was being made alive to God in the Spirit.³² Paul referred to this as one of the major waypoints in the mystery of godliness. He declared that God was manifested in the flesh and then 'justified in the Spirit'.³³ Jesus was being 'justified in the Spirit' during His journey from the garden of Gethsemane all the way to the cry, 'It is finished!' from the cross.

When we consider the resurrection of Christ in this way, it completely changes our view of the cross. It means that Christ's offering was much more than a substitutional sacrifice. Under the Old Covenant, the substitutional sacrifices required by the law yielded only a legal or positional outcome for the one who was offering. By dying the death of our sin as *a living sacrifice*, and coming back from the death of our sin while still in His mortal body, Christ established a new and life-giving way for us to walk. He established a new circumcision that is able to cut the other law from our hearts, and to destroy the power of sin in our lives. This means that we are being changed from glory to glory as sons of God, here and now; and we can genuinely bear witness to this change. In the primary sense, this is what it means to be a witness of the resurrection of Christ!

31 Joh 19:30

32 1Pe 3:18

33 1Ti 3:16

Christ's physical death

Luke recorded that after Jesus had cried out with a loud voice to declare that His work was finished, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.'³⁴ Having said this, He breathed His last. There are a number of important points to make regarding the physical death of Christ.

1. Jesus did not die from loss of blood. Even though He had suffered many horrendous wounds on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, He was sustained by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, and the volume of His blood loss was controlled and measured. When Jesus declared, 'It is finished!' on the cross, He had shed enough blood to redeem all of mankind from the death of sin and the curse of the law. The loss of His blood had not resulted in His death. This highlights the finite nature of man's sin and wickedness in comparison to the infinite nature of Yahweh's life that resided in the blood of Christ. It also demonstrates that no-one took the life of Christ from Him. This confirmed the words of Jesus, 'No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself'.³⁵
2. The physical death of Christ was a pure and undefiled offering to the Father. We read in the book of Hebrews that, through Eternal Spirit, Christ 'offered Himself without spot to God'.³⁶ The apostle Peter also declared that we have been redeemed by the precious blood of Christ who was 'as of a lamb without blemish and without spot'.³⁷ We have considered that Christ died *our death* in the garden of Gethsemane. When He breathed His last, it was the final manifestation of *His death* as an offering to the Father. As a pure expression of offering, His physical death was a great and powerful witness from the cross. When the centurion who was guarding the cross saw the way in which He breathed His last, he declared, 'Truly, this man was the Son of God'.³⁸
3. When Christ committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, this included His whole inner Person – both soul and Spirit. In a parallel passage, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'He poured out *His soul* to death.'³⁹ When Christ breathed His last, He poured out both His Spirit and soul as an offering to the heavenly Father. There was no separation between His soul and Spirit at the point of death. Confusion on this point has helped to perpetuate the false doctrine that the Spirit of Christ went to heaven, while His soul descended into hell to be tormented for a further three days and nights. This was certainly not the

34 Luk 23:46

38 Mar 15:39

35 Joh 10:18

39 Isa 53:12

36 Heb 9:14

37 1Pe 1:19

case. During the three days and three nights that His physical body lay in the tomb, the whole inner Person of Christ was resting in the loving embrace of the heavenly Father and the Holy Spirit.

4. When Jesus was embraced by the Father following His physical death, He had not yet ascended to *the Father's throne*, but this was the conclusion of His journey from the death of our sin to *the Father's house*. Jesus had explained to the disciples that He was going to the Father's house to prepare a place for them and for every believer. This included a heavenly house for every Old Testament believer who had died in faith. Prior to the physical death of Christ, all of the Old Testament saints had rested in hope, in Sheol, in a place of faith called 'the bosom of Abraham'.⁴⁰ When Christ completed His journey to the Father's house, He took Abraham and all the believers of old with Him to 'the bosom of the Father'.

Resting in hope

When Jesus committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, His Spirit and soul were not immediately received by the Father. The work of atonement by blood was not complete until there was a seventh and final sprinkling of blood on the Mercy Seat of His physical body. Jesus rested in hope for this seventh and final wound. When the soldier thrust the spear into His heart through His side, His inner Person immediately departed to the loving embrace of the Father and Holy Spirit.⁴¹ His physical body continued to rest in hope as it hung on the cross. In fact, the body of Jesus could have hung on the cross and never undergone decay.

This fulfilled the prophecy of the psalmist, 'You will not allow your Holy One to undergo decay'.⁴² There are two major reasons why Christ's physical body did not begin to decay at the point of His physical death.

1. Christ had condemned sin in His flesh. We know that decay and death did not enter the world until sin entered the world. When Christ destroyed the body of sin in His flesh, He removed the cause of corruption in the flesh of mankind. In His mortality, He destroyed the power of death. It was impossible for Him to be held in its power.⁴³
2. The power of Eternal Spirit that enabled Him to offer Himself to the Father for our sake remained as an anointing on His physical body following His death.

40 Luk 16:22-24

41 Joh 19:34

42 Act 2:27

43 Act 2:24

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Once His heart had been pierced by the spear, this anointing that rested upon His body enabled all those who looked upon Him to receive a spirit of grace and supplication and to begin to mourn.

It was only the apostle John who recorded that Christ's heart was pierced by a spear. We know that, unlike the rest of the disciples, John was present at the crucifixion. Shortly before He breathed His last, Jesus committed His mother, Mary, into John's care. From that hour, John took Mary into his household, although it is evident that he did not leave the cross immediately.⁴⁴ John remained there to witness the blood and water flowing from the heart of Christ when the spear pierced His side. This was the seventh and final sprinkling of blood.

When Christ's heart was pierced by the spear, it fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah, 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his only son, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a firstborn.'⁴⁵ John bore witness to the impact of this event upon himself. He also testified of his faith to proclaim the word of the cross so that all men can look upon Christ whom they have pierced and begin to mourn, and to believe for the recovery of their sonship. John declared, 'He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe.'⁴⁶

It is likely that Mary, the mother of Jesus, remained with John to witness this event before he took her to his home. We recall that the word of the incarnation was given to Mary, who was engaged to Joseph, enabling her to be the mother of Jesus. The Word was made flesh in her womb. Simeon had prophesied to her, '(A sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed'.⁴⁷ Mary experienced the pain of this travail as Jesus, who is the Word, proceeded from her womb to fulfil His earthly ministry. However, as the spear wielded by the centurion pierced Christ's heart, and Mary saw that the travail of His soul had concluded, the sword that pierced her heart ceased its painful work. Her travail was fulfilled as grace and supplication fell upon her and the rest of the multitude. She was then able to go with John to his house.

When the spear pierced the heart of Christ, the thoughts of the hearts of many people began to be revealed. This is because a spirit of grace and supplication was poured out upon all those who looked upon Him. This anointing enabled all

44 Joh 19:27

45 Zec 12:10.
Joh 19:37

46 Joh 19:35

47 Luk 2:35

those who witnessed this event to behold Christ as the Son of God and to mourn over Him. Luke recorded that there was a great crowd that gathered together to witness this spectacle. When they looked upon Christ whom they had pierced, they began to mourn and to beat their breasts as they returned to their homes.⁴⁸ This was the outcome of the spirit of grace and supplication coming upon them. There is little doubt that many of these people would have been among the great multitude who were cut to the heart when Peter preached the Pentecost sermon.⁴⁹

Significantly, when Christ's side was pierced, there was a great earthquake, and the veil in the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom.⁵⁰ This signified that a new and living, or life-giving, way was now open for all men to join the fellowship of Christ's offering. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul declared that we have 'confidence to enter the holy place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He inaugurated for us through the veil, that is, His flesh'.⁵¹ The blood and water that flowed from His side as a fountain of life are the cleansing and life-giving elements that are applied to our lives, by the Spirit, as we join the fellowship of His offering.

Three days and three nights in the grave

The Jews wanted the body of Jesus taken down from the cross before the commencement of the high day sabbath that was an integral part of the Feast of Passover. The body was released by Pilate to Joseph of Arimathea, who was a prominent member of the Jewish council, but also a secret disciple of Jesus. Joseph and Nicodemus, who had been among the first to receive the gospel of sonship from Jesus, wrapped His body in linen wrappings and placed Him in a nearby tomb in a garden.⁵²

We will make a brief comment on the timing of His burial. During His earthly ministry, Jesus explained to His disciples that His body would spend three days in the grave. He said, 'The Son of Man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him; and when He has been killed, He will rise three days later.'⁵³ Even more specifically, He explained that His body would be in the grave for three days and three nights.⁵⁴

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus rose from the dead early in the morning on the first day of the week – which is Sunday.⁵⁵ This means that the traditional view that

48 Luk 23:48

49 Act 2:37

50 Mat 27:51.
Mar 15:38.
Luk 23:45

51 Heb 10:19-20

52 Joh 19:38-42

53 Mar 9:31.
Mar 10:34

54 Mat 12:40

55 Luk 24:1. Joh 20:1.
Mar 16:2,9

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Jesus died on a Friday cannot be accurate. If this were the case, it would mean that His body was only in the grave for two nights and one day. This problem is easily resolved by a proper understanding of the sabbaths in the Jewish calendar.

We know that the Feast of Passover was celebrated on the fourteenth day of the first month of the Jewish year. This was always followed by a *high day* sabbath on the fifteenth day of the month.⁵⁶ This holy day marked the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted for seven days. The Jews wanted to remove the body of Jesus from the cross before this *high day* sabbath.⁵⁷ This is not to be confused with the *weekly* sabbath which occurred every Saturday. Jesus rose from the dead early in the morning on the day following the *weekly* sabbath.⁵⁸

With this in view, the timetable of Christ's death, burial and resurrection is straightforward. Jesus would have celebrated the last supper with His disciples at some time after 6 pm on Tuesday evening. He was crucified about 9 am (the third hour) on Wednesday morning. He breathed His last just after 3 pm (the ninth hour), and His body was removed from the cross and laid in the tomb before 6 pm. This means that His body was in the tomb for a full three nights and three days before He rose from the dead before the sun came up on Sunday morning.

This timetable is consistent with the words of Jesus. When the scribes and Pharisees persisted in asking Him to show them a sign, He said, 'An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but *the sign of Jonah* the prophet; for just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.'⁵⁹ When Jesus rose from the dead after three days and three nights, it was a sign of judgement to the Jews, who did not accept Him. This was despite the fact that He had been declared to be the Son of God with power, by resurrection.⁶⁰

The three days and three nights were more than a sign of judgement to those who did not accept that Christ is the Son of God. When we are planted in the likeness of Christ's death by baptism, we are also joined to His burial.⁶¹ This means that we have been raised with Christ to sit with Him in heavenly places. Like the apostle Paul, we know that our citizenship is in heaven, even while we are still at home in our mortal, physical body on the earth. The life and glory of our sonship has been hidden with Christ in God.⁶² Our physical bodies have become members of Christ's

56 Lev 23:6

60 Rom 1:4

57 Joh 19:31

61 Col 2:12. Rom 6:4

58 Mat 28:1

62 Col 3:3

59 Mat 12:39-40

corporate body, and our preoccupation is to reveal His life and righteousness in the world.

The day of His resurrection

We read in the Gospel of John that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb before the sun had risen on Sunday morning. When she saw that the stone that protected the mouth of the tomb had been removed from its place, she ran and told Peter and John that the Lord's body had been removed from the tomb, and that she didn't know where it was. On hearing this report, Peter and John ran to the tomb. Peter went into the tomb and John followed. They found that the face cloth had been removed, folded up and put in a place by itself. The linen wrappings, which resembled a cocoon, lay empty - for the body of Jesus was no longer there. John recorded that, when he saw these things, he *believed*, even though he did not yet understand the Scripture that Christ must rise from the dead.⁶³

After Peter and John returned to their homes, Mary remained at the tomb. She looked inside the tomb and saw two angels. One was sitting where the head of Jesus had been and one was sitting where the feet of Jesus had been. They asked her why she was weeping and she replied, 'Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.'⁶⁴ At this moment, she turned around and saw a man whom she presumed to be the gardener. She did not recognise Him. However, as soon as Jesus called her name, she knew that it was Him.⁶⁵

Mary was the first person to meet Jesus after His resurrection. When Mary recognised Jesus, she fell at His feet and clung to Him. Jesus said to Mary, 'Stop clinging to Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God".'⁶⁶ This statement contains the primary message of the gospel. It is significant that Jesus did not simply ask Mary to tell the disciples that He was alive. Having met Jesus, she was more than a witness of His physical resurrection. She was now a messenger of the gospel of sonship.

Jesus said, 'My Father', because He was the only begotten Son of God the Father. However, following His resurrection, He was able to say 'to My Father and *your Father*' because He had been begotten from the dead as the Firstborn among *many brethren*.⁶⁷ A great multitude of sons had been begotten to a living hope through His

63 Joh 20:1-10

67 Rom 8:29

64 Joh 20:11-13

65 Joh 20:14-16

66 Joh 20:17

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resurrection. Jesus was announcing to Mary that the work of bringing many sons to glory was complete.

Jesus said, 'My God', because He had emptied Himself to become the love-slave of God the Father. He had humbled Himself by becoming fully obedient to the Father's will, even to the point of death on the cross.⁶⁸ He said, 'My God and *your God*' because, as sons of men, the Father will forever be 'our God'. We have been begotten as sons of God so that we can genuinely refer to Him as 'our Father'.⁶⁹ However, we will never become part of God; and we will never cease to be sons of men.

When Christ ascended to the Father, in His immortal body, after speaking with Mary Magdalene at the tomb, the Father accepted Him as the Firstfruits of all those who sleep. This was the culmination of the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits that began to be fulfilled when Christ committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father from the cross. We recall that the waving of the sheaf of firstfruits was an integral part of the celebration of the Feast of Passover for the nation of Israel.⁷⁰ In fulfilment of this, when Jesus ascended to the Father as the Firstfruits on the day of His resurrection, it signified the completion of the redemptive work of the Passover. Further to this, the Father verified that Christ's immortal and incorruptible body is the substance of the body that every son of God will receive on the day of resurrection.

Between the time when Jesus first met Mary Magdalene outside the tomb, and when He later met her and the other women who were with her, it is evident that He had ascended to the Father and returned to speak with them. The Gospel of Matthew recorded that the women were able to worship at His feet and to cling to Him.⁷¹ He then sent them as His messengers to proclaim the glad tidings of the gospel. He committed the gospel of sonship to them as the word that brings faith and illumination. Following His resurrection, Jesus immediately equipped individuals, according to their own name and calling, to become messengers of the gospel of sonship. The word of the gospel, proclaimed from the tomb, was then proclaimed by the word of messengers sent by Christ.

Why did Jesus appear to Mary and these other women before He appeared to Peter and the rest of the disciples? He was not establishing a hierarchy or an order of priority. Rather, Jesus first committed the gospel of sonship to women as the antidote to the deception of Eve by the lying serpent in the beginning. The apostle

68 Php 2:7

69 Mat 6:9. Rom 8:15

70 Lev 23:10-11

71 Mat 28:9-10

Paul declared that ‘the woman being deceived, fell into transgression. But she will be [saved] through the bearing of children’.⁷² The travail of bringing forth the Son of God, all the way to the completion of His ministry when blood and water flowed from His side, was a saving work for the mother of Jesus. This happened when grace and supplication was poured out upon the multitude, including Mary, who looked upon Christ’s pierced body. And, more than this, the travail of bringing forth spiritual seed, by which the mother of Jesus was saved, is a saving work for all women, who have been given the mandate of bringing forth sons of God and proclaiming the gospel of sonship.

After Jesus appeared to Mary Magdalene and the other women, it is apparent that He also appeared to Peter. This is verified by the testimony of the two disciples who walked with Jesus on the road to Emmaus, and by the account of the apostle Paul.⁷³ Peter had been singled out from among the twelve apostles to be a unique messenger of the gospel. Nevertheless, he had to accept that he could not fulfil his predestination by the efforts and strength of his own will. It was also necessary for Peter to receive the love of God into his heart. He received the love of God as his motivation when he met Christ by the Sea of Galilee.⁷⁴ He was then able to preach the Pentecost sermon.

On the day of His resurrection, Jesus appeared to the women, then to Peter, then to the two disciples on the road to Emmaus.⁷⁵ He then appeared to all the disciples, apart from Thomas, in the upper room. He ministered the peace of God to them as the culmination of His work of reconciliation on the cross, and commissioned them to be messengers of the gospel of sonship in the world. He said, ‘Peace to you! As the Father has sent Me, I also send you.’⁷⁶ He then breathed on them and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit.’⁷⁷ In this personal interaction with Christ, the disciples were born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son, and the Spirit of the Father all came to take up residence in their hearts. This fulfilled the promise of Jesus to His disciples, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him’.⁷⁸

In this same interaction, Luke recorded that the disciples were initially terrified and frightened because they thought that they had seen a ghost.⁷⁹ Jesus responded by showing them His hands and His feet, and telling them that ‘a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see that I have’.⁸⁰ The immortal and incorruptible body

72 1Ti 2:14-15

76 Joh 20:21

80 Luk 24:39

73 Luk 24:32-35.
1Co 15:5

77 Joh 20:22

78 Joh 14:23

74 Joh 21:15-19

79 Luk 24:37

75 Luk 24:13-35

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of Jesus is both physical and spiritual. He no longer has any blood in His veins, because His body is no longer mortal. He lives by the power of an endless life. His body is spiritual and not bound by any of the material constraints of this created universe. He could vanish from before the eyes of the disciples whom He met on the road to Emmaus and could walk through the wall to appear in the midst of the disciples in the upper room.⁸¹ Nevertheless, His body was still physical. He demonstrated this by sitting down for a meal with His disciples and inviting them to touch Him.⁸² Jesus invited the disciples to behold and touch His physical body, because it was the substance of the resurrection body that they would receive in the resurrection at the last day.⁸³

The great commission

It is clear from the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark that Jesus did not give the great commission to His apostles in the upper room. He did this later in Galilee on the mountain which He designated.⁸⁴

The apostle Paul said that Christ appeared to over five hundred witnesses all at once.⁸⁵ This may have occurred on the mountain in Galilee. Matthew recorded that they worshipped Him, but that some doubted.⁸⁶ This does not mean that some of the eleven were still doubting; rather, it refers to some of this larger group of witnesses. The five hundred witnesses would have been representative of the great network of worthy houses that Christ had established during His earthly ministry in preparation for the Day of Pentecost.

His ascension

Finally, after spending forty days and forty nights with them after His resurrection, Jesus went with His disciples to the Mount of Olives. He instructed them to wait for the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and then He physically ascended before their eyes until a cloud received Him out of their sight.⁸⁷ The book of Daniel recorded what happened when Jesus ascended into heaven. Daniel testified, 'I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting

81 Luk 24:31,36

82 Luk 24:41-43

83 Luk 24:39.

Php 3:21.

1Co 15:40-54

84 Mat 28:16

85 1Co 15:6

86 Mat 28:17

87 Act 1:9

dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.⁸⁸

As the resurrected Son of Man, Christ ascended to the Father and was given dominion, glory and a kingdom. He received *dominion* because the Father gave Him headship over the church and the nations of the world. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul declared that Christ has been raised ‘far above all rule and authority and power and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in the [age] to come’.⁸⁹ The Father has put all things in subjection under His feet, even though we do not yet see all things in subjection to Him.⁹⁰

In terms of *glory*, we know that God the Son laid aside His right to exercise His own glory when He emptied Himself to become the Son of God. And He humbled Himself further to be born in the flesh of mankind as the Son of Man. Jesus Christ will always be the Son of God and the Son of Man. However, having been presented before the Ancient of Days at the conclusion of His earthly ministry, He has also received the glory that He had with the Father before the foundation of the world as Yahweh the Son.⁹¹ He is now the *glorified* Son of Man.

With respect to a *kingdom*, the glorified Son of Man has taken His seat in the Father’s throne and received a kingdom that includes a great multitude of sons of God.⁹² This great multitude of sons has been given to Christ to serve as slaves in His household. The work, which has been committed to them to do as His slaves, is a priestly work. For this reason, the kingdom of the Son is a kingdom of priesthood. In the first chapter of the book of Revelation, we read that Christ has made us to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father.⁹³

An essential work that has been given to every believer who is part of this great kingdom of priests is to be a messenger of the gospel of sonship and a *faithful witness* to the resurrection of Christ. This is possible only if we have joined the fellowship of His offering and circumcision as a kingdom of priests, so that His life is being manifested in our flesh.⁹⁴ As he concluded his Gospel, John testified that he recorded the major waypoints of Christ’s resurrection so that we may believe that Jesus is the Son of God and, more than this, that we may receive life in His name by joining the fellowship of His offering.⁹⁵

88 Dan 7:13-14

92 Luk 19:12

89 Eph 1:21

93 Rev 1:6

90 Heb 2:8

94 Rev 1:6

91 Joh 17:5

95 Joh 20:31

CHAPTER 6

Joining the offering and circumcision of Christ

In the church today, there are many Christians who do not understand the circumcision of Christ. Their attempts to make sense of their sufferings demonstrate this reality. They may reason, for example, that their sufferings are because they have done something wrong and God is angry with them; or because they have fallen out of faith and therefore out of favour with God; or because the devil has gained a foothold in their life and is causing them pain. Of course, people may actually suffer for these reasons. However, these are not the reasons for the sufferings that a son of God experiences. The Scriptures teach that the sufferings of everyone who is in Christ are their participation in the circumcision of Christ. In these next two chapters we will consider the implications of joining the offering and circumcision of Christ.

A circumcised heart

We must have a heart for love and fellowship. This is the meaning of a 'circumcised heart'. As we have previously considered, a person with a circumcised heart loves the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and also loves their neighbour

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as themselves.¹ This means that they are able to serve and relate in fellowship with others according to their sanctification.

We are not able to circumcise or change our own heart. King David recognised this reality and prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me'.² A clean heart is formed in us after we are born again and proceed to become a new creation. The heart is regenerated and recreated by being joined to the circumcision of Christ – that is, His death, burial and resurrection.³

It is important to recognise that new birth, in and of itself, is not eternal life. The parable of the sower and the seed teaches us that eternal life is the *fruit* that comes from the seed that is received into a person's heart when they are born from above. This fruit can only be brought forth when a son of God has negotiated the issues associated with wayside ground, stony ground and thorny ground.⁴

We learn from Jesus' parable that after a person has been born from above by the prevenient grace of God, they will experience tribulation and persecution because of the word.⁵ This is the word of their sanctification. The sufferings that they experience reveal the stones of the other law within their heart. At this point, the Lord Himself is giving a son of God an opportunity to join the fellowship of His circumcision so that sin and the other law can be removed from them. Through this process, they can put down deep roots, draw from the wells of salvation, and bring forth the good fruit of their sanctification. The outcome of this process is eternal life.⁶ If a person does not join the circumcision of Christ, through baptism, the covenant of sonship is lost. Their Christian experience will be little more than religious observance in the pursuit of their own righteousness. This describes a heart that is like wayside ground.

Baptism is both our commitment and our action of fellowship, by which we join ourselves to Christ's offering and circumcision. Christ's circumcision was a complete death in all of its stages and was, therefore, demonstrated by burial. Then it was a resurrection by the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit, along with the blood of Christ. It is by resurrection that sons of God, having been born again while dead in trespasses and sins, are brought back from the death of sin. We are made alive as the blood that flowed from Christ's wounds continues to wash and heal us from our self-centredness and sin.

1 Mar 12:29-31.
Deu 6:4-5.
Deu 10:12-13.
Deu 30:6

2 Psa 51:10

3 Col 2:11-12

4 Mat 13:18-23

5 Mat 13:20-21

6 Rom 6:22

Christ's blood is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. It was this blood that brought Christ, the great Shepherd, back from the dead.⁷ This blood brings the great Shepherd's flock back from the death of sin, with Him, as they follow the leading of the Spirit and reject walking in their former, self-centred manner. Paul described this former way of walking as being 'after the flesh', and explained that it leads only to death.⁸ As the sheep of God's flock follow Christ, and avail themselves of His blood, they are made complete in every good work to do the will of the Father.⁹

Overcoming evil with good

A sinner is dead in the uncircumcision of their unloving self-centredness. However, even when we were dead in trespasses, the Father made us alive in Christ.¹⁰ Our sinful ways now belong to Christ, because we are part of Him. The Father made our self-centredness and disobedience (i.e. our uncircumcised flesh) the lot of Christ. The body of sin was removed from Him by being judged by the Father and overcome by Christ's obedience. The Son's obedience was transferred to us as His righteous capacity, given to us as a gift. His righteous capacity is part of who He is, and belongs to His life and attitude. This is the life by which we now live.¹¹ We take hold of His life and live in partnership with Him, able to be the son whom we were named to be by the Father.

We see that Christ offers us life, not through our own capacity to draw life out of the word of God as a law, but by offering transfer. This is the major distinction between the Old Covenant and the New Covenant. Under the Old Covenant, the children of Israel endeavoured to obtain life through their own ability to keep the law.¹² This led only to condemnation. Now everyone who joins Christ's suffering, dying and death is being freed from the power and deceitfulness of sin. It is being removed from them, and they are receiving the Spirit of life to fulfil the will of God, in Christ. Sin has no place in them. It can find no traction in them, and it cannot exercise power over them as they walk after the Spirit.

Summarising the point, Christ's circumcision was an action of *obedience*. It revealed the faith of the Son of God.¹³ We join the fellowship of Christ's suffering through baptism. In Him, our sinful disobedience becomes His. As it is judged and removed through chastening, sin is being overcome by His obedience. His obedience is being transferred to us. His obedience is to love the Father and to

7 Heb 13:20

11 Gal 2:20

8 Rom 8:13

12 Lev 18:4-5

9 Heb 13:21

13 Gal 2:20

10 Eph 2:5. Col 2:13

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love the brethren. Making this point, Paul wrote, ‘Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good’.¹⁴

Importantly, once we have joined the circumcision of Christ, and our heart is being circumcised, this process becomes the fundamental basis of our evangelism and ministry to others. Our participation in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings has less to do with our sin, and more to do with our capacity to minister the life of God to others. This is why Paul said, ‘I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.’¹⁵ Similarly, he testified, ‘For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.’¹⁶ In this way, the good that we have received in the fellowship of Christ’s afflictions is triumphing and overcoming the evil in others.¹⁷

Sin and the other law

We have established that the circumcision of Christ is the process through which sin and the other law is removed from our heart. To fully comprehend this operation, it is important to understand, even further, the nature of sin and the other law.

The other law is a strange, aberrant kind of motivation that happens within the deepest part of a person’s being when God’s law exerts its influence upon them. The effect of the other law within a person is that it stops them from fulfilling the law of God. For the Israelites under the Old Covenant, and many people who call themselves Christians, when God’s law calls for obedience to fulfil some standard of righteousness, sin wakes up within them and proposes alternatives to their obedience and love for God. They find that, because of the power of sin that is within them, they are constantly contrary to the word of God when it is proclaimed to them. With their mind, they agree with the common sense of the law of God, but in their heart they are not subject to the law of God.

The law, if fulfilled, gives us access to God’s life and blessing. As the Lord said through Moses, ‘You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgments, which if a man does, he shall *live* by them: I am the Lord.’¹⁸ The law was meant to give life but, if a person breaks the law, they come under its wrath and judgement.

14 Rom 12:21

18 Lev 18:5

15 Col 1:24

16 2Co 4:11-12

17 Rom 12:21

Addressing this point, Paul wrote, 'For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law, and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for it is not the hearers of the Law who are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified'.¹⁹ That is, they eat the fruit of their ways and doings.

The heart that is in the process of circumcision is having the self-centred motivations that sin monopolises removed from it. Consequently, sin has no traction, or purchase, in their life. The love of God is being poured into the heart, motivating a Christian to fellowship and giving, so that the hope of sonship, which is the hope of a righteousness being revealed, is not disappointed.²⁰

As Christians, when we sin, particularly while agreeing with God's word with our minds, it is not we who are motivating ourselves to sin, but it is sin that dwells within us that motivates us toward selfish activity. In Paul's words, 'I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." *But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.* For apart from the law sin was dead.'²¹ Often, this behaviour is quite illogical. We are ashamed of it. Paul called this kind of behaviour 'living according to the flesh'.²²

If the word of the law could give life, why did we need Christ to come into the world? The problem is not with the law. It is holy and good.²³ The problem is that it was weak through our flesh.²⁴ We are unable to keep the law, even though we agree with it. This is because of the strange combination of our self-centredness and motivations of sin. These fallen influences lead us away from the love of God and love for our neighbour. Instead of love being the motivator of our life, covetousness is provoked within us.²⁵ Christ came to pay the penalty for our sin and to pioneer a pathway upon which a son of God could journey, in Him, and be delivered from these fallen influences.

Sin provokes covetousness. That is, it provokes in us evil desires of every kind. The motive is not us; it is *sin in us*. We know this because, with our mind, we desire to serve God.²⁶ However, the other law is at war with the law of our mind, and makes us a prisoner of sin. The outcome is that we feel condemned. Our mind condemns us as wretched, and we blame ourselves for the sin that is in us.

19 Rom 2:12-13

20 Rom 5:5

21 Rom 7:7-8

22 Rom 8:5

23 Rom 7:12

24 Rom 8:3

25 Rom 7:7

26 Rom 7:25

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Why does this happen if we have been born with the divine nature, been baptised into Christ, and have touched the complete righteousness that was revealed through Christ's offering? It is because the process that we joined through baptism needs to be outworked in us for the *whole of our life*. That is, we need to avail ourselves of the blood of Christ that flowed from the wounds associated with His circumcision. This is how we are 'saved by His life'.²⁷

Covetousness

The command 'do not covet' was the final statement of the ten commandments.²⁸ It is the motivation that a person exhibits if they do not love the Lord their God, nor their neighbour as themselves. Covetousness results from the judgements that we make about ourselves and others. It is the desire to have something that is not ours. Because we covet, we steal from others, commit adultery, murder, etc. Jesus was highlighting this point when He said, 'Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has *already* committed adultery with her in his heart.'²⁹ In other words, coveting a relationship with another woman is the motivation within a man's heart to commit adultery. With this in mind, we remember that 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.'³⁰

Paul, also, noted that the word of God declares, 'You shall not covet.' Yet, sin, taking opportunity through our fleshly efforts to fulfil the word of God, produces in us 'all manner of evil desire' such as stealing, adultery and murder.³¹ Covetousness is the fundamental motivation to act in these ways, which brings a person under the judgement of the law.

Christ dealt with the law

The Old Covenant demanded that an Israelite fulfil the law by their own capacity, energy and strength. As we have noted already, to do this, the children of Israel needed to circumcise their own hearts.³² However, they were unwilling, and unable, to do this.

As a result, the *first* thing that Christ did to save us was that *He took the law out of the way*. He did this so that we no longer needed to relate to the law in the manner demanded under the Old Covenant. The law was a hindrance to us because of the

27 Rom 5:10

31 Rom 7:7-8

28 Exo 20:17

32 Deu 10:16

29 Mat 5:28

30 Mat 15:19-20

self-centredness of our heart. It brought us under judgement because we were unable to keep the law. Christ removed the law and nailed it to the cross.³³ In the New Covenant, we now relate to the law in Christ.

Second, in Christ, under the law, we died with Christ because of its sentence upon Him on our account. Christ bore the full judgement and penalty of the law on our account. Its judgement was death. Christ took our guilt upon Himself as a sin offering. He was able to bear its full penalty and to satisfy its demands. Then, by dying, He ended our relationship with the law. We no longer have to live by relating to the law in our own strength. Death ended this relationship. We are no longer bound by the law covenant as the means by which we should live.

Confessing our wretchedness

A person who cries, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’ has realised that they are unable to circumcise their own heart.³⁴ They recognise that they cannot fulfil God’s law, which is His word. They are crying out to the Lord for deliverance from their sin and self-centredness.

The Father answers the cry of the wretched Christian by saying that, in Christ, the judgement that was apportioned under the Old Covenant has ended. This is because, as we considered above, He has reconnected us to the law in a different way. Furthermore, the Father circumcises our heart, in Christ. All that a son of God needs to do is to remain connected to the circumcision of Christ. This is what it means to ‘walk in the Spirit’, and is the reason why Paul wrote, ‘If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live’.³⁵

The Father puts sin to death in us by destroying sin’s point of traction in our life. This point of traction is the self-centredness of our other law within us. Through circumcision, the Father is putting sin to death in our flesh, as the other law is being cut out of our heart. As our self-centredness is circumcised from us, the propensity to be connected to sin is removed. Sin has no purchase or power in our life, and remains dead.³⁶ As we walk in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and circumcision, setting our mind this way, all things are working together for our good.³⁷ The body of sin is being put to death, and we are changing from glory to glory into the image of Christ’s sonship.³⁸ Let us consider this more closely.

33 Col 2:14

37 Rom 8:28

34 Rom 7:24

38 2Co 3:18

35 Rom 8:13

36 Rom 7:8

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A person who has joined the circumcision of Christ lives by the faith that they receive from the word of God.³⁹ When God calls them to do something, they are able to do it because He grants them faith to believe and to obey His word. By faith, they accept that God has chosen their works for the day, and they recognise that these works are a participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Participation in this fellowship will involve suffering. This is the circumcising element of Christ's offering. Offering is the means by which the life of God is multiplied to us and in us. Circumcision is the means by which our coveting self-centredness is removed from us. It is this self-centredness that causes us to become wretched and condemned.

A person who is walking by the Spirit has come into Christ and has joined the fellowship of His offering and circumcision. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are *in Christ Jesus*, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit'.⁴⁰ The sons of God who are in Christ no longer experience condemnation, because they are no longer in the wretched state of attempting to circumcise their own heart. This is because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death.⁴¹

Taking up our cross each day

Paul explained that the whole of creation is groaning, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. In other words, because of sin, the whole world has been subject to pain and suffering.⁴² The suffering of people in the world is the consequence of time and chance. In contrast, the sons of God do not suffer because of time and chance. Their sufferings are *appointed* to them by God.

People who have been born of God and filled with the Spirit are able to join the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the prayer meeting that was revealed in the garden of Gethsemane. In this prayer meeting, we are equipped for each day that the Father has prepared for us. Every day, our life involves doing the works of sonship that the Father predestined for us. With these works come the sufferings that He has appointed for our good.⁴³ Each day of our life, we are able to know that everything that we engage in, and that befalls us, is working together for our sanctification, which Paul called 'our good'.⁴⁴ In the next chapter we will discuss our participation in this prayer meeting in more detail.

39 Rom 10:17

43 Mat 6:34

40 Rom 8:1

44 Rom 8:28

41 Rom 8:2

42 Rom 8:21

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In Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed as we do the works that the Father has prepared for us. A person who believes and lives this truth no longer pursues their own righteousness. Their work, which is unto the Lord, *is no longer a grind for them*. This is because their works are an expression of God's life rather than a means of finding and expressing themselves. God's righteousness endures forever, and the expression of His righteousness in the new heavens and earth will be limitless.

We demonstrate faith when we accept that it is the wisdom of God for His will to be achieved through our participation in Christ's offering and circumcision. In other words, it is the wisdom of God that He has appointed particular circumstances and sufferings for us each day. This is what it means to 'suffer according to the will of God'.⁴⁵ These sufferings include the small issues of life that cause us frustration and agitation. This principle of the cross is foolishness to those who are walking according to the flesh and who endeavour to avoid suffering. Sadly, the inevitable sufferings of these people are causing them to perish.⁴⁶

Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote that tribulation produces patience in the sons of God who, by faith, have received their introduction into the fellowship of offering.⁴⁷ The tribulation is not a blessing, but the patience of God that is produced in a son of God, as they suffer with Christ, is the blessing. For this reason, when a Christian is having 'a bad day' in faith, it is a good day!

What does this look like, practically? Our response in the midst of our daily sufferings determines whether or not the momentary and light afflictions that we experience during the day are working an eternal weight of glory for us.⁴⁸ If we become angry or view ourselves as being a victim, our suffering causes us to fatigue and, eventually, to die.⁴⁹ However, if, by faith, we accept that our sufferings are from the hand of the Father, as a participation in the circumcision of Christ, we are able to overcome the world within us. When we set our mind this way, we recognise that we are unable to circumcise our own heart. In prayer, we commit to walking after the Spirit.⁵⁰

Coming to the throne of grace

When, by the Spirit, we join the prayer meeting of Gethsemane, we are joined to the fellowship of Yahweh's offering.⁵¹ One drop of blood, from one pore of His body, represents the difficulties that we will experience during the day as we are

45 1Pe 4:19

49 1Co 11:30

46 1Co 1:18

50 Rom 8:1,4

47 Rom 5:1-3

51 Rom 8:26-27

48 2Co 4:17

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led by the Spirit in the way that the Father has prepared for us. As we pray in the same way that Christ did, we receive grace for our works, as well as grace to endure the difficulties of the day that the Lord has prepared for us.

Jesus invited His disciples to watch and pray with Him so that they would not enter into the temptation of viewing their experiences, and particularly their suffering, to be outside of the will of God. Having received God's word, a son of God is able, by faith, to participate in the fellowship of this prayer meeting. Through prayer each day, they receive grace to take up their cross and to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.⁵² This is what it means to 'come boldly to the throne of grace' to obtain mercy and grace 'to help in time of need'.⁵³

The Greek word translated as 'help' means 'a rope or chain for frapping, or binding together, a vessel'. We are to obtain grace for a life of offering that *binds* the fellowship of Christ's body together. This is fundamental to walking worthy of our calling as sons of God, and demonstrates that the love of God is being poured into our heart. As Paul exhorted his readers, 'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*'.⁵⁴

Faith allows a person to accept weakness. Paul learnt this lesson. Three times he asked the Lord to remove the circumcising action of the Father from him. The Son's response was 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness'.⁵⁵ Paul's access into this grace was through faith that comes by the word of God.⁵⁶ Paul was able to testify that when he was weak in Christ, he knew that he was strong. For this reason, Paul was joyful in the midst of his sufferings.

The gifts of the Spirit in body ministry

Understanding what it means for each son of God to participate in the offering and circumcision of Christ draws attention to the significance of the *gifts of the Spirit*. Paul said that 'the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each [member of the body of Christ] *for the profit of all*'.⁵⁷ The 'profit' that Paul was referring to is the multiplication of the mina, which we will discuss in Chapter 8.

At each communion service, God, by the Holy Spirit, ministers the grace of life to each member of the body through gifts of revelation, discernment and power.

52 Rom 5:1-3.
Php 3:8-11

53 Heb 4:16

54 Eph 4:1-3

55 2Co 12:9

56 Rom 5:1.
Rom 10:17

57 1Co 12:7

Joining the offering and circumcision of Christ

As they receive this ministry, each son of God is enabled to express the living and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ in the week to come.⁵⁸ For some people, the gifts are equipping them to endure in their suffering and to understand what the Lord is addressing in the midst of their suffering. For others, the gifts are ministering the grace of life to sustain them for their works of offering.

Paul identified various gifts that may be given in body ministry. ‘For to one is given the *word of wisdom* through the Spirit, to another the *word of knowledge* through the same Spirit, to another *faith* by the same Spirit, to another *gifts of healings* by the same Spirit, to another the *working of miracles*, to another *prophecy*, to another *discerning of spirits*, to another *different kinds of tongues*, to another the *interpretation of tongues*.’⁵⁹

In body ministry, a person may receive, for example, a word of knowledge regarding the resolution of a particular matter that they have been negotiating and enduring in the will of the Lord. Others may receive a word of faith so that they are able to present themselves for obedience in a particular work or family situation. There may be a word of healing to someone else who has come to the end of a season of health difficulties that have been for their good. In summary, the ministry of the body at the communion table, through the gifts of the Spirit, is equipping each member for their particular participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ.

Circumcision and the blessing of Abraham in every house

The apostle John explained that ‘*everyone who loves is born of God and knows God*’.⁶⁰ In this book, we have been considering the necessity for our hearts to be circumcised in order to love the Lord and to love our brethren in Christ. John’s statement highlights the importance of our receiving the circumcision of Christ to our living and growing as a son of God. To obtain our sonship in this way is to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Paul called this promise ‘the blessing of Abraham’.⁶¹

We recall that Yahweh called Abraham to leave his country, his relatives, and his father’s house in order to receive a blessing from God.⁶² This was the promised blessing of becoming a son of God, which was the *goal* of God’s Everlasting Covenant. The Lord said that He would make Abraham a blessing, and that *all the families of the earth would be blessed in him*.⁶³

58 2Co 4:10

62 Gen 12:1-2

59 1Co 12:8-10

63 Gen 12:2-3

60 1Jn 4:7

61 Gal 3:14

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We see that families are central to the fulfilment of God's Everlasting Covenant plan. As it was for Abraham, in order to obtain the blessing of sonship, there are worldly and family cultures that we must leave, and there is a godly culture that must be established within our families. The Lord made it clear, through His word to Abraham, that this culture could only become ours if we became a part of Abraham's family.

A person becomes a part of the household of Abraham when they receive and live by the faith of God that comes by hearing the word that is preached to them.⁶⁴ In this faith, they must join the *circumcision* that Abraham received, in type, as the *seal* of the Everlasting Covenant. God said to Abraham that He would establish His Everlasting Covenant with Abraham and his children (those who are of faith). He then declared, 'This is My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be *circumcised*.'⁶⁵

Two types of discipline

The cut of circumcision enables a person to be delivered from fallen, family traditions. It is also the process through which the blessing of sonship is cultivated within a family. The circumcision of Christ was the chastening hand of the Father upon Christ, who had been made sin for us. Through these sufferings, our sin was cut from Christ, as He learned the obedience of our sonship.⁶⁶ We see that the circumcision of Christ involves chastening *and* instruction.

The apostle Paul exhorted Christian fathers, saying, 'Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.'⁶⁷ Paul was drawing their attention to two modes of parenting. One approach leads to wrath, and the other is 'of the Lord'. The fathering that is 'of the Lord' connects a child to the circumcision of Christ.

Paul further highlighted the distinction between a fallen, or earthly, mode of parenting, and the circumcision of Christ in families, when he wrote, 'We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time *as seemed best to them*, but He disciplines us *for our good*, so that we may share His holiness.'⁶⁸

64 Gal 2:20.
Rom 10:17.
Gal 3:7,9.
Rom 4:16

66 Heb 5:8

67 Eph 6:4

68 Heb 12:9-10

65 Gen 17:10

Joining the offering and circumcision of Christ

Paul was explaining that parents can chasten their children from the basis of their own fleshly perspective. The English translations of this passage of Scripture advance the proposition that earthly discipline causes children to respect their parents. However, the Greek word that is translated 'respect' can equally be translated as 'shame'. In fact, if the grammatical conventions of the Greek text are followed, this passage can read, 'We had earthly fathers to discipline us, *who made us ashamed*'.

Evidently, discipline that is based on earthly principles does not cultivate the divine nature in children, and does not, therefore, result in the good of their eternal reward. This approach to discipline and instruction may yield a child's compliance with the standards of behaviour that seem best to their parents, but it does not promote the child's sonship. A child's compliance is simply a projection that clothes the shame of their pursuit of good and their avoidance of evil. It is the outcome of having been trained to live by the other law. The parents, who themselves are living by the principles of the flesh, view their children's compliance as the evidence of their good family culture. Parents who live this way are often concerned about how they and their children are being perceived by others.

Why does earthly discipline result in shame? It is because it is based in the application of the knowledge of good and evil. We recall that Adam and Eve's desire to be the source of what was good or evil for themselves resulted in mankind's nakedness and shame. Parents who live by this same principle will perceive a standard of 'good' to which their children should attain. The children are rewarded when their behaviours and attitudes reflect this good, but are punished when their deeds are perceived as evil. The children are taught to pursue what is good and to avoid what is evil. Living by this principle of the flesh will bring the children into bondage to the law of sin.⁶⁹ We see, then, that training children to live according to the flesh is how parents provoke their children to wrath.⁷⁰

In contrast, the discipline of God the Father conforms a child to their name and to the works of faith that belong to their righteousness as a son of God. The Father's discipline in a child's life is the circumcision of Christ. As we noted earlier, Christ's circumcision is the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Christian parents are called to raise their children in this manner. How is this different from earthly discipline, which leads to shame, and provokes a child to wrath?

69 Eph 6:4

70 Rom 7:23

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The fundamental foundation for raising children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord is for the parents themselves to be receiving the discipline and instruction of the Lord in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. In this fellowship, parents are being delivered from their fleshly propensities, including their earthly approaches to the discipline of their children. They are also being filled with the love of God and the life of Christ. Because they are joined to Christ's offering and circumcision, they are able to join their children to this offering and fellowship.

Christian parents who live this way are walking in the Spirit. Their engagement with their children is based in the love of God, which is being poured into their heart by the Holy Spirit. As they continue to walk in the Spirit each day, Christian parents can receive insight and wisdom from God for the nurture and admonition of their children. They seek this spiritual wisdom through prayer and fellowship, for the sake of their children's sanctification. This is because they honour the fact that God is the Father of their children's spirits.⁷¹ This is in contrast to the fleshly approach to raising children where the parents are more concerned about what the children's behaviour says about *themselves*.

Of course, Christian parents will teach their children to be obedient, because obedience is fundamental to sonship. However, obedience is different from compliance, because obedience is a capacity that is given to a person, *in Christ*. This is why Paul wrote, 'Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth".'⁷² Children are in the Lord on account of the faith of their parents, the reality of which is demonstrated by the parents' participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ.

There are children who are raised in fleshly homes who know the Lord for themselves and choose to walk according to the Spirit. Similarly, some children from godly homes will choose their own way, rather than their sanctification as a son of God. This simply highlights the reality that God gives every individual the opportunity and accountability to choose what He has chosen for them. Nevertheless, our approach to parenting can either cultivate the divine nature in our children or it can impede their sonship. As the Scripture teaches, 'Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it'.⁷³

71 Heb 12:9

72 Eph 6:1-3

73 Pro 22:6

Discipleship in the church

Importantly, this same principle applies in the church. Elders and leaders who expect the members of their congregation to conform to the standards of righteousness that they teach are attempting to disciple Christians *as they see fit*. Paul called such teaching 'the ministry of condemnation'.⁷⁴ These leaders measure the success of their ministry by the extent to which their congregants conform to the cultural standards that the leader proclaims. Attention and affirmation are the reward for people's conformity with the doctrine proclaimed. Those who do not comply are confronted, counselled, and may even be discounted.

Ministry from this basis does not achieve the righteousness of God. True discipleship should join a believer to the circumcision of Christ. In the fellowship of Christ's circumcision, a believer is enabled to walk by the Spirit rather than according to the principles of the flesh. They receive faith at the same time as they receive the word of God and, in faith, participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship, they receive the life of God and are able to minister His life to others.

Fleshly parenting

Fathers and mothers, whose ambitions in life have, for one reason or another, been frustrated, can attempt to realise their ambitions through their children. This culture within a family is destructive, particularly when a parent attempts to live out their religious, ministry aspirations through their children. They consider the involvement of their children in the activities of the church to be a demonstration and expression of the family's righteousness and cultural maturity.

This self-sourced approach to church life does not teach the children to be about their heavenly Father's business.⁷⁵ The children do not learn that the righteousness of God is revealed by faith that they, as a family, receive by hearing and obeying the word of God. Instead of learning to trust God's messengers, and to give themselves, with their parents, to fellowship and offering in the body of Christ, the children are taught by their parents to measure the word against the understandings and cultural standards of their family. Parents who maintain this fallen mindset expect their children to remain loyal to their definition of righteousness. Furthermore, the children are taught to prioritise the perspectives, values and activities of the

74 2Co 3:9

75 Luk 2:49

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family over discipleship in the body of Christ. Blood-guiltiness is the outcome of this family way.

Blood-guiltiness was reckoned under the Old Covenant to any person who made an offering to God in any place other than in fellowship with the administration that God had established for His people.⁷⁶ Independent offering that makes the church an extension of a person's own house aligns that person's actions with the sin of Cain. This is because it is 'blood-guilty'. Why is this so? It is because such an action tramples Christ's offering. All offering must be joined to His one offering, and His offering is only accessed in one place; that is, where the altar of God is. It is in the doorway of Christ's temple, the church.⁷⁷

Maintaining and asserting the righteousness of their own way has a destructive effect on families. It gives rise to a murderous spirit of control and identity suppression, as was exemplified by Cain. The actions of a parent, provoked by such a spirit, can result in the dystrophy of a child's identity. Furthermore, it can promote disharmony between siblings in the family, and between peers in the church. Demonic oppression and emotional and mental instability can result.

Such disharmony, oppression and dystrophy is not the blessing that God promised to all the families in the household of Abraham. Thankfully, the Lord is restoring the gospel to His church so that, as it is received, each family can find recovery from the effects of the curse, and begin to multiply the blessing of the divine nature. Indeed, we are in a time when the Lord is turning the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers.⁷⁸

76 Lev 17:2-4

77 Joh 10:9. Col 1:18

78 Mal 4:6

CHAPTER 7

Walking and living in the Spirit

The pattern of the cross

The apostle Paul nominated knowing the Lord, and expressing the righteousness of God as a member of the body of Christ, as being the goal of his Christian pilgrimage.¹ He testified that, although he had not yet been perfected in relation to this purpose, he was pressing on to lay hold of his calling as a son of God in Christ Jesus. To this end, Paul was forgetting what lay behind him and reaching forward, by faith, to what the Father had in store for him each day. This included the works that he was to do, and the sufferings that he would experience, as he participated day by day in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.²

Significantly, Paul exhorted all believers, saying, 'Let us keep living by the standard [or sanctification] *to which we have attained*.'³ Paul was indicating that the righteousness of God would become increasingly substantial and obvious in the

1 Php 3:8-9

2 Php 3:12-14

3 Php 3:16

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life of a Christian who is in Christ and lives by faith. Elsewhere, he described this attainment as changing 'from glory to glory' into the image of Christ's sonship.⁴

Paul then specified the way in which a Christian was to live and walk each day so that this would be their reality. He said, 'Brethren, *join in following my example*, and note those who so walk, as you have us for *a pattern*.'⁵ The pattern that Paul spoke of was the way of the cross. The cross of Christ is our fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ. We know this because Paul said that everyone who teaches Christians to live in a way that is different from the pattern that he taught and demonstrated is an enemy 'of the cross of Christ, whose end is destruction, whose god is their appetite, and whose glory is in their shame, who set their minds on earthly things'.⁶

The Christian pilgrimage

The prayer of Jesus on the Mount of Olives reveals that eternal life is *Christ in us, God in Christ, and being made perfect in unity*.⁷ This is the reality of the New Covenant which Christ established through His offering and circumcision. Clarifying the theology of the cross is important. However, receiving illumination concerning the daily implications of the New Covenant for a Christian is even more critical. We need to understand how to practically participate in the offering and circumcision of Christ, and to recognise what is achieved in our life as a result of this operation.

Paul said to the Christians in Galatia, 'Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfil the lust of the flesh.'⁸ The only way that we will not fulfil the lusts of the flesh is if they are removed from us through the circumcision of Christ.⁹ We see, then, that walking in the Spirit *means* joining the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision.

In Christ, the cut of circumcision is removing sin and the other law *from* us. At the same time, we are being cut *into* the covenant fellowship of Yahweh. Through this process, we are able to appropriate everything that God has made available to us so that we can express the love of God by doing the good works of our sonship. This we do, in Christ, as we journey with Him on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for us. Let us consider some of the practical and daily implications of this way of walking.

4 2Co 3:18

8 Gal 5:16

5 Php 3:17

9 Col 2:11

6 Php 3:18-19

7 Joh 17:22-23

The communion gathering

Communion is the highpoint of our ongoing participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ. At the communion gathering, Christ begins to do a work in our life through the washing of the water by the word. Christ, through the members of His body, by the Holy Spirit, speaks the Father's word to us. The word of God addresses our motivations, and washes us so that we can present ourselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering. As we learnt in Chapter 2, Christ symbolised this activity by washing the disciples' feet at the last supper.¹⁰

Jesus said that unless we receive this washing by the water of the word at the communion gathering, we have no part with Him.¹¹ A person is not washed by the water of the word simply by their attendance at the communion meeting. They must *receive* the word and *believe* for participation in the fellowship that the word is calling them to join.¹² We know, for example, that Judas had his feet washed at the last supper, yet he had *already rejected* the gospel that Jesus was declaring. He chose, instead, to align himself with the Jewish leaders who condemned the Son of Man because Jesus would not validate their Old Covenant gospel.

We eat and drink the bread and wine of the communion in faith for our participation in the New Covenant. A person who eats and drinks the elements of the communion in a worthy manner rightly discerns, or understands, that the body and blood of Jesus is their point of ongoing participation in His offering and circumcision.¹³ In contrast, Paul said that a person who eats these elements in an unworthy manner is guilty of the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴ In other words, God views them and their way of life *as the reason* for Christ's suffering and death. Notably, these people believe this as well, because they view Christ's offering as being merely a substitution for their death. As Caiaphas did, they believe that it was expedient for Christ to die on their behalf.¹⁵ They are unable to recognise or to appropriate true substitution, which we have described in this book as 'offering transfer'. Paul said that because of this fleshly perspective, these people are under the judgement of God.¹⁶

The command to watch and pray

The word that we receive at the communion table grants to us the faith to join the fellowship of Christ's prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.¹⁷ In Gethsemane, Christ called His disciples to watch and pray with Him.¹⁸ We, too, are called to

10 Joh 13:1-17

11 Joh 13:8

12 1Jn 1:1-3

13 1Co 11:29

14 1Co 11:27

15 Joh 11:49-50

16 1Co 11:29-31

17 Rom 10:17

18 Mar 14:38

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pray with Christ. This is what it means to 'pray in the Spirit'. Praying in the Spirit is possible because we have been baptised with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit joins us to the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and He prays in us with groanings that are too deep for words.¹⁹

As we begin to pray, we are strengthened with Eternal Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, *to pray more earnestly*. This was the experience of Jesus. After Jesus prayed to the Father, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done', an angel appeared and strengthened Him with Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Being strengthened with Eternal Spirit can also be described as the love of God being poured into Christ's heart by the Holy Spirit.²¹ Then, 'being in agony, *He prayed more earnestly*'.²² Christ was praying concerning His participation in the Father's will. It was then that Christ's blood began to flow.²³ When we begin to pray more earnestly, it demonstrates that we are being strengthened with Eternal Spirit to participate in the offering of Christ. In the fellowship of this offering, Christ's circumcision begins to be applied to our heart. What does this mean for us?

In our flesh, we are not inclined, nor even able, to say, 'Not my will, but Yours, be done.' However, as we, by faith, present ourselves in prayer, and are enabled by the Holy Spirit to join the travail of Christ's prayer, the desire to pursue our own will begins to be cut from us. The self-centredness that hinders us from receiving a will that is not our own begins to be removed from us. At the same time, Christ's blood, or life, sprinkles our heart. His life and faith, as well as the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit, replace our own self-centred motivations. In prayer, we are being brought back from the death of pursuing our own way, and are receiving the life and faith of the Son of God.²⁴ Furthermore, the love of God is being poured into our heart, motivating and enabling us to love. We demonstrate love by laying down our life for others, and by doing the works of sonship that the Father has prepared for us. These are the works that are according to our sanctification, and they bear the fruit of eternal life.²⁵

Paul was highlighting this principle for life when he testified, 'I have been [co-] crucified with Christ; 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 the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.'²⁶ Having received Christ's life and faith, Paul was then able, in Christ, to give himself for others. He was even able to be poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of other people's faith. Paul said that this way of living was a joy for him, exhorting all believers to live in the same manner.²⁷

19 Rom 8:26

20 Luk 22:42-43.
Heb 9:14

21 Rom 5:5

22 Luk 22:44

23 Luk 22:44

24 Gal 2:20

25 Rom 6:22

26 Gal 2:20

27 Php 2:17-18

As we pray in the Spirit, we are building ourselves up in our most holy faith, and we are keeping ourselves in the love of God.²⁸ The love of God is expressed in the *burnt offering*. Therefore, keeping ourselves in the love of God means remaining in the fellowship of the burnt offering. Throughout the day, in the fellowship of the burnt offering, we find that we are able to co-operate with the Holy Spirit as He leads us into the truth of our sanctification.²⁹ By faith, which has been built up by praying in the Spirit, we are able to believe and accept that our circumstances are the will of God for us.³⁰ As, by faith, we suffer with Christ, we receive and demonstrate His virtue in the midst of our suffering. We have considered this principle in more detail in Chapter 8.

Praying in the Spirit is the means by which we receive our introduction, by faith, into the grace in which we stand day by day, so that we are able to fulfil the works of our sonship, and are able to glory in tribulation.³¹ This should be a daily reality for us, and highlights the importance of taking time every day to meet the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in prayer.

Although, through prayer, we are joined each day to the offering and circumcision of Christ, we will still fall short of our sonship.³² As the apostle John noted, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'³³ This is because we have not yet matured to the full stature of Christ's sonship.³⁴ We begin as babes in Christ who need to mature, or grow up, into Christ. So, what should our attitude be when we fall short of the glory of God?

John taught that when we confess our sin, the Father is 'faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness'.³⁵ Confessing our sin is acknowledging the wretchedness of pursuing our own righteousness. By the grace of God, we repent by turning to the Lord, recovering relationships, and continuing to present ourselves for fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ. We know that it is in this fellowship that the blood of Christ is available to sprinkle our heart clean from the wickedness of our own way.

We are able to proceed in life with the same attitude of faith that Paul demonstrated when he said, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God

28	Jud 20:21	32	Rom 3:23
29	Joh 16:13	33	1Jn 1:8
30	Rom 8:28	34	Eph 4:13
31	Rom 5:1-3	35	1Jn 1:9

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in Christ Jesus.³⁶ In other words, we accept that we begin as babes in Christ. We have immaturities to put off, and sonship glory that is yet to be attained. We understand that this maturing process involves the discipline of the Lord in our life.

Journeying with Christ

Joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, we proceed throughout the day and learn from Him what is our obedience as a son of God. Moreover, having been joined to the fellowship of the burnt offering in prayer, we are able to journey with Christ and to participate in the work of the other offerings that He fulfilled as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. This includes, for example, the sin offering, the peace offering and the trespass offering. Through fellowship in this process, which involved six wounds, or circumcising cuts, we are progressively being delivered from our sin and other law, and are being cut into the Everlasting Covenant.

We have summarised the operation of the circumcision of Christ in Chapter 4 of this book. To remind ourselves of this work, let us again consider some of the key outcomes of Christ's circumcision in our life.

The second wound that Jesus received was in the house of Caiaphas. Here, Christ was bruised *for our iniquities* as a trespass offering.³⁷ As we receive our participation in this aspect of Christ's circumcision, the Father deals with our zealous, self-righteous claims to be able to love and serve God. As we repent, and this propensity is removed from us, the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart. We are able to do the works that the Father has prepared for us in Christ, by the Holy Spirit.

The third wound that Jesus received was also in the house of Caiaphas when He was beaten with rods. This was the chastisement *for our peace*.³⁸ The outcome of fellowship in this element of Christ's sufferings is that the discipline of the Lord brings us to peace.³⁹ This has several implications. First, we come to peace with ourselves. We cease to judge ourselves from the basis of our own law. We know that we are loved by the Lord, and we love who He has made us to be. We also come to peace with others, ceasing to strive with, and compete against, our brethren in Christ. This is because we accept our sonship and are able to appreciate the sanctification of others.

36 Php 3:12-14

37 Isa 53:5

38 Isa 53:5

39 Heb 12:7-11

The peace of God also frees us from anxiety. An anxious person leans on their own resources. They do not trust God for their life. Through chastening, we are able to be delivered from this fallen and self-sourced way of living, and we are able to obey the words of Jesus, who said, 'Therefore do not worry, saying, "What shall we eat?" or "What shall we drink?" or "What shall we wear?" For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.'⁴⁰

The fourth wound of Christ was caused by the scourging that He received under the direction of Pilate. Isaiah declared that by these stripes 'we are *healed*'.⁴¹ In the fellowship of these many and varied wounds, we are able to *find deliverance from our personality flaws*. These include laziness, outbursts of wrath, sexual deviancy. These fallen propensities can be summarised as the lusts of the eyes. They are the fantasies, projections and dreams that people pursue for themselves.

The fifth wound that Jesus received was the crown of thorns that was driven into His head as the soldiers beat Him with a mock sceptre. Through this suffering, Christ was dealing with our pride and projections. As we fellowship with Him in this particular wound, *the pride of life is being removed* from us. We are being delivered from our desire to take dominion over others, and are able to demonstrate love through obedience.

The sixth wound that Christ endured as a living sacrifice involved the nailing of His hands and feet to the cross. Here, Christ was pierced through *for our transgressions*.⁴² The evidence of our fellowship in this element of Christ's circumcision is that we cease making a name for ourselves and desiring to be the source of our works. In effect, we are nailed with Christ as His 'prisoner'. This is how Paul described himself.⁴³ Having been taken captive to the obedience of Christ, we are no longer transgressing the word of God by pursuing our own name and works.

Equipped for every good work

Christ received *the seventh wound* after His redemptive work was complete and He had committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father.⁴⁴ When the spear was thrust into His heart, blood and water flowed from Him.⁴⁵ Drawing on the prophecy of Zechariah, John highlighted that this was a fountain of water *for purification*.⁴⁶ Paul

40 Mat 6:31-34

41 Isa 53:5

42 Isa 53:5

43 Eph 3:1. Phm 1

44 Joh 19:30.

Luk 23:46

45 Joh 19:34

46 Joh 19:37.

Zec 12:10. Zec 13:1

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said that Christ gave Himself for us ‘that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and *purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works*’.⁴⁷

The blood and water that flowed from Christ’s side is for our purification.⁴⁸ It is effective in our lives through the washing of water by the word. This word joins us to the new and living way, which describes our daily participation in Christ’s offering and circumcision. We receive this word at the communion table. We are cleansed by the word and equipped to join the offering and circumcision of Christ. This equipping includes power, anointing and priestly garments to present ourselves as living sacrifices who are holy and acceptable to God. To show diligence in relation to this word and its implications for the way in which we live each day describes what it means to be ‘zealous for good works’.⁴⁹

A living sacrifice

Joining the circumcision of Christ involves some pain. However, this pain is a by-product of something detrimental being removed from us. In the midst of these sufferings, we can believe the word of sonship, and confess that we are sons of God. We can testify that these sufferings are part of the circumcising work of the Father in our life.

Our sufferings are because we are being wounded. However, in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, His blood, or life, is flowing into the wound. There is pain, yet this pain is not leading to our eternal death. Rather, we are being strengthened by His life. He is giving His life to our mortal bodies.⁵⁰ This is what it means to be a *living sacrifice*.⁵¹ Pain is the mark of death for everyone who is not in Christ. However, for a person who is presenting themselves, in Christ, as a living sacrifice, their pain is the evidence that something they do not need is being cut from them.⁵²

How is faith demonstrated in the midst of suffering? When, in Christ, we are wounded and suffering, our blood is being shed. This is our life and our ability to make a good response. Our life, which is being lost, is replaced with Christ’s life and His ability to make a virtuous response in the midst of suffering. If we are not joined by faith to Christ’s sufferings, and choose instead to reveal our own righteousness, we will die as our blood, or life, is shed. As we noted above, this describes the failure of Peter.

47 Tit 2:14

51 Rom 12:1

48 Zec 13:1

52 Rom 12:1-2

49 Tit 2:14

50 Rom 8:11

If we respond to suffering by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, we will be sustained. As the apostle Peter said, 'But may the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after you have suffered a while, perfect, establish, strengthen, and settle you.'⁵³

Those who are joined by faith to the circumcision of Christ will not die a moment earlier than the time that God has fixed for their death. In contrast, it is possible for people who resist the circumcising hand of the Father in their life to die before their time. Paul was noting this point when he said that Christians who do not discern their participation in the offering of Christ as a member of His body 'are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [or die before their time]'.⁵⁴

The fast that God has chosen

The fast that God has chosen is an *acceptable day of the Lord*.⁵⁵ Israel was unable to keep the fast that God had chosen.⁵⁶ In order to fast in a way that is acceptable to God, a believer needs a circumcised heart. This is possible only in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision.

Christ's circumcision from Gethsemane to Calvary was the acceptable day of the Lord. It was the highpoint of His ministry. He had previously summarised His ministry by declaring, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.'⁵⁷

We note that the effect of the fast that God has chosen is that the bonds of wickedness are loosed, heavy burdens are undone, the oppressed are released, and every yoke is broken.⁵⁸ The breaking of every yoke reveals the connection of the fast that God has chosen with the scourging that Christ received to deal with every form of aberrant behaviour. It is through this wounding, which was part of the fast that God had chosen, that the oppressed heart is liberated and healed.⁵⁹

Christ's offering and circumcision was accomplished on the 14th day of the Jewish month of Nisan. This was during the Feast of Passover. His offering and circumcision *was* the acceptable day of the Lord. It was God's chosen fast. This was the day when the door of deliverance was opened to us. It was the day when He

53 1Pe 5:10

57 Luk 4:18-19

54 1Co 11:29-30

58 Isa 58:6

55 Isa 58:5-6

59 Mat 17:21

56 Isa 58:5

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saved us from our sin by condemning sin in our flesh and by cutting our coveting self-centredness from our hearts.

When we are joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ, through baptism, all of the circumstances in our life that cause us frustration and suffering are now working for us. They are effective to cut our sin and self-centredness from us as we walk by the Spirit through our sufferings.

The apostle Paul observed that 'tribulation *produces* perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.'⁶⁰ Likewise, the apostle Peter declared, 'In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, *may be found* to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen you love.'⁶¹

Because God's love is being poured into our heart and is being made known to us by the Holy Spirit, we are able to count it all joy when we experience various trials.⁶² Further to this, the love of God is becoming our motivation. It is replacing our coveting self-centredness, which is being removed from us through the circumcision of Christ. We note, therefore, that when we fall into various temptations, or trials, we have joined the fast of Yahweh, which is the 'acceptable day of the Lord'.⁶³

The mind of Christ is among us as we gather together for communion. His mind is communicated through body ministry, and addresses us in relation to our suffering and healing. That is, there is a word that comes to us each week in our love feasts which joins us to, and equips us for, our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. Paul was making this point when he wrote, 'Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ? Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ?'⁶⁴

Kicking against the goad

A person who sets their mind on the flesh desires to establish their own righteousness. A person who maintains this mindset becomes the victim of suffering. Their suffering does not produce the peaceable fruit of righteousness.

60 Rom 5:3-5

64 1Co 10:16

61 1Pe 1:6-8

62 Rom 5:5, Jas 1:2

63 Isa 58:5

Instead, it produces anger, frustration, contentions, etc. They become enemies of the cross and begin to persecute those who minister to them in weakness. Unless they come to repentance, and cease kicking against the 'goad', which is the word of the cross, they will leave the church and continue to rage against the Lord's people.

This was Paul's experience prior to his conversion. The Father had chosen Paul, from his mother's womb, to preach Christ among the Gentiles.⁶⁵ However, from the basis of his own righteousness, Paul was persecuting the Christians. Following the death of Stephen, Saul (whose name was later changed to Paul) pursued and persecuted the early church Christians. On the road to Damascus, Christ met him and called to him, asking, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'⁶⁶ The Greek word translated 'persecuting' in this passage means 'harassing, troubling, molesting, causing to suffer'.

The people whom Saul was confronting, beating and causing to be put to death were members of Christ. As they suffered at the hands of Saul, they were filling up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ.⁶⁷ This is why Jesus said that Saul was persecuting Him.

Saul answered the Lord with the correct question. He said, 'Who are You, Lord?'⁶⁸ Saul was beginning to pray and to acknowledge the lordship of Christ. Through this interaction with the Lord, Saul was being joined to Christ's first wounding in Gethsemane. This was where Christ prayed, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.'

Jesus replied to Saul, saying, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is dangerous and it will turn out badly for you to keep kicking against the goad.'⁶⁹ The 'goad' is the word of the cross. Jesus was saying that Saul's iniquity was causing him to kick against the word of the cross as it was being spoken and demonstrated by the members of Christ's body.

A goad causes suffering to an animal in order to teach it to walk in the way of obedience to its master. Through this interaction with Christ, the goad, or word of the cross, was beginning to have an impact upon Saul's life. The Scriptures record that, 'trembling and astonished', Saul asked the Lord, 'What do You desire me to do?'⁷⁰

Ishmael was a child who was born in bondage to the way of the flesh.⁷¹ We recall that Ishmael was described as 'a wild donkey of a man'.⁷² In this regard, Saul was

65 Gal 1:15

69 Act 9:5

66 Act 9:4

70 Act 9:6

67 Col 1:24

71 Gal 4:24

68 Act 9:5

72 Gen 16:12

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like Ishmael. The Lord was provoking Saul with the word of the cross, and he was kicking against it with both of his 'hind' legs. Through suffering, the Lord intended to change Saul so that he ceased to walk after the flesh and began to fulfil the works of righteousness for which God had set him apart, from the womb.⁷³ He was being changed from Saul to Paul.

Here is the key point. Through Saul's iniquity, the members of Christ's body, His church, were being persecuted. Christ was able to make what He was suffering a goad to teach Saul the way of obedience. That is, the word of the cross was being ministered to Saul by the members of Christ's body who suffered at his hands. Their unwillingness to conform to Saul's religious expectations, and the peace of God that they demonstrated in the midst of the resulting suffering, provoked Saul. He became increasingly agitated and unstable, breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord.⁷⁴ At the peak of Saul's psychological distress, the Lord, in His mercy, drew his attention to the source of his anguish. Saul was kicking against the word of the cross that could deliver him from his self-righteousness and establish him as a son of God. As a son, he would be able to fulfil the righteousness of God by doing the works that God had prepared for him as a son, before the foundation of the world.

After Paul responded in repentance to the word of the cross, the Lord then joined him to His sufferings and taught him what great things he would suffer for His name's sake.⁷⁵ In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Paul's nature was being changed, and he was able to minister the life of Christ to those who were now persecuting him.

Sleeping through sorrow

Some Christians, when they are suffering, can begin to 'fall asleep through sorrow'. This was the experience of the disciples in Gethsemane when Christ invited them to fellowship with Him in prayer, as He experienced the first wound of His circumcision.⁷⁶ We fall asleep through sorrow when we focus on our sufferings, and maintain the mindset that we are the victims of suffering. We become offended at the tribulation that we are experiencing. When we think this way, the sufferings that we are experiencing are of no benefit to us. They are not working for our good. We are not changing, and neither are we fulfilling the works that the Father prepared for us to do as His sons, in Christ.

73 Gal 1:15

74 Act 9:1-2

75 Act 9:16

76 Luk 22:45

However, in the purposes of God, we see that this tribulation, or suffering, is *because of God's word*. His word is the word of our predestination, which He has chosen for us.⁷⁷

Paul addressed this same point in his first letter to the Corinthians, writing, 'For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and *many sleep*.'⁷⁸ Paul was referring to people who were not being sustained in the midst of their sufferings. This is because they were not receiving their suffering as a participation in the offering of Christ. More specifically, they were not rightly discerning the purpose for their suffering as a member of the body of Christ. Their inability to understand the purpose for their suffering demonstrated that they were *falling asleep*. They were coming under the judgement of God so that, through chastening, they would not be condemned with the world.⁷⁹

Paul said that if a person would judge themselves rightly in relation to their participation in the offering of Christ as a member of His body, their sufferings would not be a judgement upon them.⁸⁰ In fact, in the midst of their sufferings, they would be a blessing to others.⁸¹

We note, in this regard, the example of the Christians who suffered at the hands of Paul before his conversion. They embraced Paul's persecution of them, accepting it as the hand of Christ in their lives in order that they might be changed. Because of this, they were able to bless the one who was persecuting them.⁸² They understood that these sufferings had been chosen by the Father for their good. There was an unction upon them from the Spirit to enable them to endure these sufferings.

Paul taught that God has given 'a measure of faith' to each member of the body of Christ so that they are able to present themselves for participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ.⁸³ As we participate by faith in this offering and circumcision, we are able to overcome everything of the world that is in us. John explained, 'This is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith.'⁸⁴ Through this process, we are made sufficient as ministers of Christ.⁸⁵

When we are living in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, we are not emptying the cross of its power.⁸⁶ A person empties the cross of its power in their life, and in the lives of their hearers, when they deny that the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the means by which the other law is circumcised

77 Mar 4:17

81 1Co 10:16

84 1Jn 5:4

78 1Co 11:29-30

82 Rom 12:14.

85 2Co 3:6

79 1Co 11:32

Mat 5:44.
Luk 6:28

86 1Co 1:17

80 1Co 11:31

83 Rom 12:1-3

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from their heart. Sadly, there are many alternative gospels being proclaimed in the broader church today that deny this truth. People who reject the invitation to join the circumcision of Christ will become beset with sin and condemnation. Those who teach these false gospels are ministers of condemnation and death.⁸⁷ This is why Paul said that they are to be accursed.⁸⁸

The Nicolaitans

In the book of Revelation, Jesus described these false teachers, as well as those who favoured their instructions, as ‘Nicolaitans’.⁸⁹ Why did Jesus use this title to identify this group of people? The answer to this question lies in the meaning of the name Nicholas.

In the Scriptures, the Lord used a person’s name to communicate something of their nature. For example, in the Old Testament, the Lord marked the change in Jacob’s fallen, deceiving nature by changing his name from Jacob, which means ‘supplanter’, to Israel, which means ‘Prince with God’. We read in the New Testament that Jesus changed Peter’s name from Simon to Peter, meaning ‘stone’, saying that upon *this* ‘rock’ He would build His church.⁹⁰ The name Nicholas is a composite of two Greek words – *nike*, meaning ‘victory’ and *laos*, meaning ‘people’. Together, the name means ‘victory of, or over, the people’. Jesus was identifying a faction within the church who lived by a principle that involved ‘*lording*’ over others.

Christ’s first reference to the Nicolaitans was in His letter to the church in Ephesus. In this letter, He commended the presbytery for recognising false apostles, and also for hating the deeds of the Nicolaitans. In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthians, he also addressed the teachings of false apostles and described a larger group who were connected to this teaching. He said that the false apostles were deceitful workers who preached a different gospel from Paul’s gospel.⁹¹ Describing the broader group who were associated with these false apostles, Paul wrote, ‘For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage [to law], if one devours you [for dishonest gain], if one takes from you, if one exalts himself [over you], if one strikes you on the face’.⁹² Paul was identifying people who ‘lorded over’ others, and those who accepted these practices. Evidently, Paul was referring to the faction that Jesus called Nicolaitan.

87 2Co 3:7-9

91 2Co 11:4,13

88 Gal 1:8

92 2Co 11:20

89 Rev 2:6. Rev 2:15

90 Joh 1:42. Mat 16:18

Paul said that he was too weak in comparison to those who lorded over the people. He then revealed the basis of their teaching by saying, 'Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I.'⁹³ We see that these Nicolaitans were Jews. They were persecuting Paul and troubling the churches of Asia by teaching that the Gentiles needed to be circumcised and to observe the law of Moses.⁹⁴

From the writings of Paul and Peter, we can summarise the doctrine and deeds of the Nicolaitans as the pursuit of God's blessing through the keeping of the law. These people teach and believe that the righteousness of God can be attained without a participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ. By implication, they believe that a Christian can circumcise their own heart, and so live in a way that is pleasing to God. People who hold to this doctrine view success, prosperity and health as God's blessing upon them because of their righteousness or acceptability. They view suffering as the evidence of cursing upon a person because they have, in some way, fallen short of the standard of righteousness to which they should be aspiring.

In the early church, the people who taught such a message were variously identified as Judaisers, 'the circumcision', and 'the sect of the Pharisees'.⁹⁵ Concerning these people, Paul said, 'There are many insubordinate, both idle talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole households, teaching things which they ought not, for the sake of dishonest gain.'⁹⁶ Interestingly, Paul noted that these so-called 'leaders' professed to know God, but denied Him through their works. As we noted above, Paul said that his desire was to grow in his knowledge of the Lord through his participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ.⁹⁷ These were Paul's works. In contrast, the Nicolaitans deny the true knowledge of God because they reject the need to have their heart circumcised in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. For this reason, Paul described them as 'abominable, disobedient and disqualified for every good work [of sonship]'.⁹⁸

Titus was directed by Paul to silence this false teaching within the church. He further called Titus to sharply rebuke those who taught and lived by this false gospel. The purpose for rebuking them was so that they would be '*sound in faith*, not giving heed to Jewish fables and commandments of men who turn from the truth'.⁹⁹ A person who is sound in faith has embraced their participation in the circumcision of Christ. Their faith is in 'the operation of God', which Paul

93 2Co 11:22 97 Php 3:8-10

94 Act 15:5. Gal 1:6-9 98 Tit 1:16

95 Gal 2:4. Tit 1:10. 99 Tit 1:13-14
Act 15:5

96 Tit 1:10-11

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explicitly identified as ‘the circumcision of Christ’. He said that this operation was the means by which the body of the sins of the flesh are put off.¹⁰⁰

The importance of being in Christ

It is clear from the Scriptures that only a person who has become a new creation will inherit eternal life. Moreover, the new creation is only revealed ‘in Christ’.¹⁰¹ Certainly, Christ died for the sins of the whole world. And because of His offering once for all, every person can receive the forgiveness of sins. However, unless a forgiven son of man is born again of the Father’s seed, and then matures in some measure through fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ, they will not go to heaven when they die. Flesh and blood will by no means inherit the kingdom of heaven, even if it has been forgiven.¹⁰² Only a person who has been born from above and become a partaker of the divine nature will inherit the kingdom of heaven.

In order to be with Christ in Paradise, we must accept this truth. The two thieves who were crucified with Christ represent two responses to the message of the cross. One of the thieves viewed Christ as the means of their escape from suffering and death. He said to Jesus, ‘If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.’¹⁰³ He expected Christ to save him from death. The other thief accepted that Christ was dying unjustly for him, and joined himself to Christ’s death. Christ said to this man, ‘Today you will be with Me in Paradise.’¹⁰⁴ The glory of his inheritance would no doubt have been limited, because his journey in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings was short. Nevertheless, he received an inheritance! The glory of our inheritance in the age to come will depend upon the maturity that we have attained through fellowship in Christ’s offering and suffering in *this* age.

A person who views Christ’s offering on the cross as being merely a better substitutionary offering than the bulls and goats of the Old Covenant remains ignorant of God’s covenant purpose. If they actively reject God’s call to come into Christ and to join the fellowship of His offering and suffering, they deny their own salvation. We have already noted that on the day of judgement, Christ will say to *many* who have identified themselves as Christians, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!’¹⁰⁵ Lawlessness is their mode of living. This is because it has not been removed from them through the circumcision of Christ.

100 Col 2:11-12

104 Luk 23:43

101 2Co 5:17

105 Mat 7:23

102 1Co 15:50

103 Luk 23:39

CHAPTER 8

Our sanctification

A person's sanctification describes who they are in the Lord, who they are to others, and who others are to them. It is the basis of fellowship and offering. Unless a person knows and appreciates who the Father named them to be, they will not be able to appreciate and know others. A person who knows their sanctification will be at peace with themselves and at peace with others. It is important to distinguish between the different elements that comprise a person's sanctification, because confusion on these points gives rise to corruption.

Through procreation, a son of man is conceived, and possesses a body, soul and spirit. Their spirit is their identity and includes their abilities. When a son of man is born from above, they receive their name as a son of God. This name was determined by God and written in the book of life before the creation of the heavens and the earth. It defines who God planned them to be and the works that they are to do as a son of God.

The authority of a name

Inherent in a person's name is ownership of their identity, and the authority to express their sonship. This authority is not their name, but is the mandate that is given to them by the Father, through the Son, to express and minister their gifts

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and the abilities that belong to their identity. Through this expression, they are fulfilling the works of their sonship, which were prepared beforehand in Christ.

The authority of a person's name is typified in one of Jesus' parables as a 'mina'.¹ In this parable, each slave received one mina, which could be multiplied up to ten times. The reward for multiplying the mina was authority over ten cities. This reward reveals that authority is the substance of the mina.

Every son of God receives one mina. That is, we all receive the same quotient of authority to be the son whom the Father named us to be. We must recognise, however, that one mina only grants us *entry* into authority. Unless our mina is multiplied, we will not have an inheritance in the new heavens and earth.² In fact, Jesus described a person who failed to multiply their mina as 'wicked' or 'worthless'.³

This is an important point to note. A person receives a mina when they believe and receive the word of the gospel. There are many Christians who erroneously suppose that receiving this gift from Christ is sufficient to grant them entry into the everlasting kingdom of God. However, as we have already noted, Jesus was very clear that, if a person is to have eternal life, they must multiply what they received when they first believed.

The authority that we receive from God is the mandate to reign with Christ as a *king-priest*. As the apostle Peter declared, 'You are a chosen race, a *royal priesthood*, a holy nation, a people for God's own possession, so that you may proclaim the excellencies [or virtues] of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvellous light.'⁴ As a king-priest, our work is to reveal the excellencies, or virtues, of Christ. As we will consider later in this chapter, this is what it means to multiply our mina.

Talents

In a different parable, Jesus used the imagery of 'talents' to describe another feature of a person's sanctification.⁵ Talents are from the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and are given by Christ. They refer to the four dimensions of God's grace that come from Christ's hand. This grace is given as a gift, according to a person's abilities. A son of God receives from Christ one talent, two talents or five talents. Christ expects a person to double their talent. In this regard, a person who has received

1 Luk 19:11-27 5 Mat 25:14-30

2 1Co 6:9

3 Luk 19:22

4 1Pe 2:9

one talent will not be able to generate more than two talents. Similarly, a person who has received two talents will not be able to generate more than four talents. A person who has received five talents can multiply to a maximum of ten talents.

If the mina represents the kingly authority of a son of God to exercise priesthood, then the work of ‘priesting’ oneself is the means by which talent is utilised and multiplied. Peter explained that we are living stones who ‘are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ’.⁶ We reveal and multiply the virtues of Christ (or mina) through offering ourselves as living sacrifices who are holy and acceptable to God. This offering is according to the grace that we have received from the hand of Christ (our talent).⁷

Multiplying the mina

In short, ‘doing business’ with our mina involves doing the works of righteousness that the Father has prepared for us to do, in Christ. These works reveal the righteousness of God as we are joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ. Paul testified that he had suffered the loss of all things so that he could gain Christ and be found in Him. In Christ, by faith, he possessed the righteousness of God. This was not his own righteousness; nor was it righteousness *from* God.⁸ It was the righteousness *of* God. Paul then explained what it means to be *in Christ*, and to receive the righteousness of God that comes by faith. Specifically, he wrote, ‘That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead’.⁹

In his second letter, the apostle Peter detailed how we multiply the mina through our participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ. He commenced his explanation by saying that God’s ‘divine power has given to us all things that pertain to life and godliness, through the knowledge of Him who called us by glory and virtue’.¹⁰ To receive the call of God on our life is to be born from above as a son of God. Peter explained that through this transaction we received everything that pertains to life and godliness; that is, we received a mina. As we noted earlier, the mina is not, in and of itself, life and godliness. Rather, it *pertains* to life and godliness. In particular, Peter taught that the mina gives a person the right to become a partaker of the divine nature as a son of God.¹¹

6 1Pe 2:5

10 2Pe 1:3

7 Rom 12:1

11 2Pe 1:3, Joh 1:12

8 Php 3:8-9

9 Php 3:10-11

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Partaking of the divine nature directs our attention to the implications of eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We partake of the communion elements in faith for participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ. In this fellowship, we learn ‘the knowledge of Christ’. This knowledge refers to the obedience that Christ learnt through the suffering which He experienced from Gethsemane to Calvary.¹² Isaiah prophesied that through this knowledge Christ would justify, or make righteous, the many.¹³ Everything pertaining to eternal life and the culture of sanctification has been made available to us through His knowledge.

To become partakers of this divine nature, we must join the fellowship of Christ’s offering. This is the means by which we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust.¹⁴ The corruption that we are to escape is the fruit of the operation of another law within us. The other law describes our lusts, or desires.

The virtues of Christ

Peter identified nine qualities, or virtues, that a son of God is to multiply as a partaker of the divine nature, through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. These nine virtues of Christ, summed up together, are the manifestation of ten minas. This principle of the whole (ten minas) being greater than the sum of the parts (nine virtues) is descriptive of Yahweh Elohim Himself. It is also revealed, for example, in the book of Revelation, where the seventh trumpet is the sum of the six preceding trumpets.¹⁵

In order that we might become partakers of the divine nature, Peter instructed us, writing, ‘Applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge, and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness, and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.’¹⁶ Let us now consider what it means to demonstrate these nine virtues of Christ.

The first virtue of Christ that is expressed as we seek to do business with our mina is *faith*. This is the faith of the Son of God.¹⁷ Faith is the expression of our sanctification, because it comes from hearing and receiving the word of our name.¹⁸ This is the word that is preached to us by Christ’s messengers.¹⁹ In response to

12 Heb 5:8

16 2Pe 1:5-8

13 Isa 53:11

17 Gal 2:20

14 2Pe 1:4

18 Rom 10:17

15 Rev 11:15-19

19 Rom 10:8,14-15

this word, our confession as a son of God will be, 'I believe Your word, help my unbelief!'²⁰ We accept that our own faith is insufficient to enable us to believe for participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. God gives us the faith of the Son so that we are able to join the prayer meeting of Gethsemane. In the fellowship of this prayer meeting, we are able to confess, 'Not my will, but Yours, be done', and to believe to receive our portion of sufferings as a participation in the circumcision of Christ. In the travail of this prayer, we receive the capacity of Eternal Spirit to fulfil the works that the Father has prepared for us, and to endure the sufferings that He has appointed for us.

Peter said that we were to apply all *diligence* in our faith. He was referring to how we proceed, by faith, to walk in the light of the word that we have received. The word is our 'food', and defines the Father's will for our life. The will of the Father can only be accomplished in Christ. The word is proclaimed so that we might join the fellowship of the Father and the Son.²¹ A diligent person will continue to break open and to consume the apostles' doctrine, individually, in their household, and house to house.²² Moreover, they will desire to present themselves for offering in the fellowship that the word calls them to join. We note this sentiment in the words of the wise man, who wrote, 'The lazy man does not roast [or eat] what he took in hunting, but diligence is man's precious possession'.²³

As we apply all diligence to our faith, Christ's *virtue* is supplied to us. The righteousness of God is expressed by a son of God through their participation, by faith, in the sufferings that they may experience in the course of a day. As they make faith responses in the midst of their daily circumstances, they *receive* power to live as the son whom the Father named them to be. Paul called this power 'the law of the Spirit of life'.²⁴ This is the capacity to demonstrate the qualities of Christ's sonship in the midst of suffering. The apostle Peter identified this capacity as *virtue*.²⁵ The Holy Spirit helps us to add virtue to our faith.

Inherent in the capacity of virtue is the joy of the Lord. This is revealed in the midst of suffering, where the righteousness of God is being fulfilled, and the wickedness of the world is being destroyed. Jesus was anointed to suffer for this very purpose. Concerning Christ, the psalmist wrote, 'You have loved righteousness and hated wickedness; *therefore* God, Your God, has anointed You with the oil of joy above Your fellows. All Your garments are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia'.²⁶

20 Mar 9:24

24 Rom 8:2

21 IJn 1:3

25 2Pe 1:5

22 Act 2:42,46

26 Psal 45:7-8

23 Pro 12:27

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We experience joy in the midst of contrary circumstances when we recognise that we are partaking of God's holiness in Christ. We understand and accept that the Father is circumcising our heart. At this point, the Holy Spirit is pouring the love of God into our heart. We are strengthened through offering that multiplies strength. This is the offering of prayer and supplication in the midst of suffering. The joy of the Lord was Christ's strength, and is our strength in the midst of suffering.²⁷ This is why James said, '*Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials.*'²⁸ These tribulations test our faith and produce, or multiply, endurance within us. This is offering transfer at work in our life.

For the joy set before Him, Jesus endured the cross and despised the shame.²⁹ In Christ, we are also able to despise the shame which we experience as we are being humiliated by others. Despising shame is not just 'being bigger' than our shame or somehow diminishing its significance through our thought processes. The joy of the Lord is the means by which we are able to despise our shame. We are joyful because, through offering transfer, we are able to add virtue to our faith. The humiliation does not hurt us. Rather, in the midst of our humiliation, His life is multiplying within us.

One of the purposes for Christ's ministry, through His messengers, is 'to console those who mourn [or travail] in Zion, to give them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they may be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He may be glorified'.³⁰ In other words, as we join the travail of Christ in Gethsemane, we are anointed for our priestly work of presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice in the body of Christ. Significantly, King David described this anointing as being 'like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments'.³¹

The virtue that a son of God receives in Christ is able to supply *knowledge* to them.³² This is the knowledge of obedience that they learn as they follow Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. As we noted earlier, Christ learned the obedience of sonship through the things which He suffered.³³ Obedience is the knowledge of our sonship which we learn from Christ, and add to virtue.

Peter continued, saying that to knowledge we are to add *self-control*, and to self-control, perseverance.³⁴ We note the connection of this verse with Paul's instructions to the Romans. He counselled them that tribulation, or the fellowship

27 Neh 8:10

31 Psa 133:2

28 Jas 1:2

32 2Pe 1:5

29 Heb 12:2

33 Heb 5:8

30 Isa 61:3

34 2Pe 1:6

of Christ's sufferings, *produces perseverance*.³⁵ Evidently, Peter and Paul were referring to the same process, through which the element of the mina is multiplied.

The seventh virtue that Peter identified is *godliness*.³⁶ Godliness is the culture of God's house. A person who is demonstrating godliness has come to firstfruits. The way in which they live reveals the life and culture of God Himself. They are multiplying the life of God to others through offering.

To godliness, a son of God is to add *brotherly kindness*.³⁷ This demonstrates that a person who is maturing in their sanctification is growing in their capacity to *reveal others*. They are less focused on their own name and works, and are demonstrating the ability to foster and promote the sanctification of their brethren. This is what it means to be 'spiritual'.³⁸

Finally, a son of God is to add *love* to brotherly kindness.³⁹ Love summarises the *purpose* of God's Eternal Covenant. A person who is established in love knows the Lord God. They love the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and love their neighbour as themselves. Evidently, they are becoming the righteousness of God, in Christ.⁴⁰

Identity verification

A natural man, who has not received their name through new birth, will endeavour to make a name for themselves through their own actions and aspirations. As we considered in Part 3 of *The Steps of Salvation*, these are projections that a person tailors for themselves to cover their nakedness and shame. They attempt to verify their identity through their projections.

A son of God may reject the name that they received when they were born from above, and may choose, instead, to make a name for themselves through their own works. This is what it means to have a righteousness of their own. Even though they may appear to be more religious, their self-righteous projections are no different from the coverings that unsaved people create for themselves. These Christians are not exercising the authority of their name. They are not doing business with the mina which they received from the Father, through the Son.

This is, in fact, what it means to bury our mina in a handkerchief. We recall that the wicked and worthless slave kept his mina in a handkerchief because he was

35 Rom 5:3

39 2Pe 1:7

36 2Pe 1:6

40 2Co 5:21

37 2Pe 1:7

38 Gal 6:1

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fearful of the master.⁴¹ This handkerchief, or napkin, was a piece of cloth that was used to wrap the head of a dead corpse in preparation for burial. We wrap our mina in such a cloth when we reject the word of faith that proclaims our sanctification, choosing instead to be the source of our own name and works. The napkin becomes a veil over our face so that we are unable to receive illumination regarding our spiritual condition or our name. In this state, we are no different from the children of Israel under the conditions of the Old Covenant, who were in bondage to fear and blind to the gospel.

People who pursue a righteousness of their own in this way may use the gift of God's grace to validate their projection and to verify their identity. This, inevitably, results in corruption, as the person attempts to satisfy the identity vacuum which they feel because of shame.

This is a particularly notable problem for people with high ability who demonstrate low authority. A person with low authority does not know their name and is not willing to present themselves, by faith, to make offering according to their sanctification. Instead, they seek to be empowered through a prescribed position, a scripted work, or through association with ascension-gifted messengers. Their ministry is a projection with which they attempt to cover the nakedness of their shame.

The resolution to this problem is to learn how to multiply a mina. This is not the same as multiplying talents through the exercise of spiritual gifts. As we noted in previous writings, a person may exercise spiritual gifts, but fail to come to sanctification. On the day of judgement, Jesus will say to people like this, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!'⁴²

To highlight the significance of the mina, and the importance of understanding how it is multiplied, we note that Jesus taught this parable because His disciples desired to be empowered by Christ. Luke recorded that 'He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately [and that they would receive their thrones, upon which they would judge the twelve tribes of Israel]'.⁴³

41 Luk 19:20-21

42 Mat 7:23

43 Luk 19:11.
Mat 19:28

Fruitful in the knowledge of Christ

Peter said that if these nine qualities, which together represent ten minas, are ours, and increase, we will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. We will know Him!⁴⁴ However, a person who lacks these virtues is blind, or short-sighted.⁴⁵ This blindness is the consequence of a veil covering their face. The veil is their own fleshly perspective. Instead of receiving the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that shines from the face of Christ, they desire to name themselves and to define their own works. Peter said that they have forgotten that they have been cleansed from their sin. In other words, they have chosen the other law as the basis for their life, and have become enslaved *again* to the law of sin.⁴⁶

In summary, Peter exhorted all believers, writing, ‘Therefore, brethren, be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ’.⁴⁷ The everlasting kingdom is the context in which those who multiplied their mina to ten minas receive the reward of authority over ten cities.⁴⁸

44 Php 3:10

48 Luk 19:17

45 2Pe 1:9

46 Rom 7:23

47 2Pe 1:10-11