

THE STEPS OF
*S*alvation

Living in first love

PART 3

VICTOR HALL

with Peter Hay & David Baker

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Preface

King Solomon described the path of a son of God as being ‘like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day’.¹ As a community of believers, we can give thanks to the Lord for the illumination that we have received concerning the gospel of sonship. In the series of books entitled *The Steps of Salvation*, we have endeavoured to document the points of illumination that the Holy Spirit has brought to us in this season of our journey on the pathway of salvation.

In Part 1 – *An overview of the gospel of sonship*, we outlined the key waypoints on the pathway of salvation. Our purpose was to understand how a son of man is born again as a son of God, and made a member of the body of Christ.

Understanding the grace of God and the administration of Christ, through which the gospel of sonship is ministered to every person, was the focus of Part 2 – *The four dimensions of the grace of God that are ministered from the face of Jesus Christ*. In this book, we considered the nature of God’s grace that is ministered to a person through the preaching of the gospel. We identified and described the four faces of Christ’s administration that are active in the body of Christ. The purpose of these administrations is to equip every Christian with grace for the work of their ministry as a son of God and as a member of Christ’s corporate body.

1 Pro 4:18

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In this third book, we are considering what it means to live in *first love* as sons of God who have been raised and seated together with Christ in heavenly places.² The term 'first love' was coined by Jesus Christ in His letter to the Ephesian church, and recorded in the book of Revelation.³ Significantly, Christ was calling the leaders of the church in Ephesus, and indeed His whole church, to *return* to first love.

First love describes the way that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live together. Their initiative to create mankind in Their image and likeness revealed Their intention for the sons of men to be born of God and to be joined to Their fellowship.⁴ As the source of mankind's origin, God predestined every person to be a son of God. Even before He created the heavens and the earth, God planned the name and works of sonship for each person. He recorded these details in the book of life.

Adam and Eve fell from this image and likeness of God when they sought to become the source of their own image and destiny, and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.⁵ The consequence of Adam's disobedience was that this fruit became another law within mankind, making them prisoners of the law of sin.⁶ This other law now motivates every person to pursue an image of their own making, and to attempt to define their own destiny. Living by this principle is the reason that mankind remains separated from God, and in bondage to the fear of death.⁷

When a person is born from above and baptised into Christ, they are restored to God's plan for them. As we noted earlier, they are raised into heavenly places.⁸ This is the context of first love. It defines the nature of their fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with their brethren in Christ. A Christian falls from first love when they choose to live by the principle of the other law, rather than by the word of God that proceeds from His mouth, through His administration. Importantly, every Christian will default to this way of living if they are not engaged in a process through which the other law can be removed from them.

The Lord Himself is calling every Christian to repent, and to return to first love as the context and basis for their life. The evidence that we are returning to first love is our capacity for worship. This involves presenting ourselves, by faith, and according to our name as a son of God, for fellowship and offering in the body of Christ. Worship requires us to know God, to know who He named us to be, and to know one another in the body of Christ. This capacity does not reside within

2	Eph 2:6	6	Rom 7:23
3	Rev 2:4	7	Heb 2:15
4	Gen 1:26. Rev 21:3,7	8	Eph 2:6
5	Gen 3:4,6		

us, because we have been corrupted by the other law. We must, therefore, be delivered from our carnal way of living, and enabled to walk in the Spirit.

Meeting the Lord in worship

The apostle Paul testified that to *know Christ* was the primary goal of his life. He said, 'I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord.'⁹ Importantly, Paul explained that this was an ongoing initiative for him. It involved him being delivered from his own righteousness so that he could receive a righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith.¹⁰ He further explained that knowing Christ *depended* on his participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and his being conformed to the death of Christ.

These conditions cause offence to many Christians. This is because they want to know Christ on their own terms. However, the Lord does not meet us on our terms or according to our self-centred expectations of Him. Such attitudes are fallen. In order to truly know the Lord, we must receive Him in the way that *He comes to meet us*. He first comes and confronts us regarding our sin, and then invites us to join the fellowship of His offering. Let's consider this further.

Christ makes Himself known to us through the ministry of His word. As He speaks to us through His messengers, a spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon us.¹¹ Under the influence of grace, we are able to turn to the Lord and see beyond our imaginations of who we think Christ is, or who we would like Him to be to us. These imaginations and expectations are part of a veil that obstructs our spiritual sight and affects our capacity to recognise Christ and to receive what He is saying to us.¹² Unless, by grace, this veil is removed from the eyes of our heart, we will not recognise Christ or hear His word. This is because there is nothing about Christ or His message that appeals to our flesh. As the prophet Isaiah noted, 'He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him'.¹³

When the veil of our fleshly perspective is drawn back, we are able to look into the face of Jesus. More specifically, we are caused to see His eyes and hear His voice. Practically, we look into the eyes of the Lord, and hear His voice, by receiving His messengers. Christ's messengers are our brethren, who are part of His administration of grace. This administration, which is depicted in the book of Revelation as four living creatures, is part of the body of Christ. Significantly,

9 Php 3:10

13 Isa 53:2

10 Php 3:9

11 Zec 12:10

12 2Co 4:3-4

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the apostle John observed that the four living creatures were *full of eyes* in front, behind, around and within.¹⁴

As we look into the eyes of Christ, and hear His voice, our deeds and the innermost thoughts of our heart are laid bare before Him.¹⁵ This has a notable impact upon a person. We recall, for example, the experience of the prophet Isaiah. When he saw the Lord and heard the voice of His messengers, Isaiah said, ‘Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for *my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts*’.¹⁶ The apostle Peter was similarly undone when He looked into the eyes of Christ. As Peter denied Christ for the third time, the Lord turned and looked at him.¹⁷ Peter was caused to remember the word of the Lord that addressed his fleshly and self-righteous attitude.¹⁸ As a consequence of looking into the eyes of Jesus, Peter withdrew in shame and wept bitterly.¹⁹

When we look into the face of Christ, we first see Him whom we have pierced.²⁰ We see the marring of His face, and that He was despised, humiliated, rejected and acquainted with grief *for our sake*.²¹ We acknowledge that He was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities.²² As we perceive the ugliness of His humiliation on our behalf, we realise, through illumination by the Holy Spirit, that we are seeing the condition of *our own wretchedness*. We are, in fact, looking into a *mirror*.²³

Christ’s face was marred and His body was disfigured as He took our sin upon Himself.²⁴ By revealing Himself to us in this way, He confronts us and exposes the sin that is in our heart as He transfers it to Himself. We see our sin in His disfigurement. It is important to recognise that Christ does not reveal Himself to us in this way in order to accuse or condemn us. Rather, Christ comes to meet us and to receive us to Himself. He confronts us with our sin so that we can find repentance, and be recovered to our predestination as a son of God. He wants to heal our identity, which has been marred as a result of sin and our separation from God.

At the same time as we are looking on Him whom we have pierced, grace and supplication that comes to us as a gift from God through the word of Christ’s messengers, enables us to ‘behold the Lamb of God’.²⁵ We begin to see Christ and know His nature as God’s Lamb. As our offering, He is also the image of who we are to become as a son of God. In other words, by revealing Himself to us as the

14 Rev 4:6-8

15 Heb 4:13. 1Co 2:11

16 Isa 6:5

17 Luk 22:60-61

18 Luk 22:31-34

19 Luk 22:62

20 Zec 12:10

21 Isa 52:14. Isa 53:3

22 Isa 53:5

23 2Co 3:18

24 Isa 53:6

25 Joh 1:29,36

Preface

Lamb of God, the One who has come to take away our sin, Christ confronts us with the need to *join Him* in the fellowship of His offering and suffering.

While we cannot divide the vicarious dimension of Christ's offering from the call to join Him in the fellowship of His offering, it is His vicarious work to which we must *first* respond. This is because it draws our attention to the operation of the other law within us. This law is the basis for the image and projections that we create for ourselves, and brings us into bondage to sin.²⁶ It is the reason for our separation from God. To join Christ in the fellowship of His offering, we need to repent of this way of living and accept that the other law can only be removed from our life as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

This understanding reveals that offering transfer *begins* with the confrontation of our sin. Christ takes our sin upon Himself and invites us to join the fellowship of His sufferings, so that His righteousness can be given to us. As we continue to meet Him eye to eye, as both our vicarious offering and the Lamb of God, we increasingly see His face shining as the sun in its clarity, and His garments as white as light.²⁷ As we noted earlier, Christ is a mirror to us. Seeing Him this way reveals that *we are being changed from glory to glory into the image of His sonship*.²⁸

The light of the glory that shines from Christ's face is being given to us as we receive His word and walk in His way. The apostle John said that, if we continue to walk on this pathway of sonship that Christ has pioneered for us, when the Son of Man is revealed in His glory, *we will be like Him*, for we will *see Him as He is*. John further noted that everyone who has this hope purifies themselves, just as Christ is pure.²⁹ They willingly join the fellowship of Christ's suffering in the knowledge that he who suffers in the flesh has ceased from sin.³⁰ Furthermore, they are assured that, as they suffer with Christ, they are being glorified with Him, and are obtaining the eternal inheritance of sonship that God predestined for them.³¹

Christ confronts us with His marred face, and as the Lamb of God. He establishes the ground for worship between these two elements of His offering. The spirit of grace and supplication that is given to us enables us to worship in Spirit and in truth. Truth is the reality of who He is, and who we were created to be. The Scriptures call this our *sanctification*. We are not the source of this truth and must, therefore, receive it from the Lord. As we are delivered from the lie of our own image and projections, we are able to meet others, and worship in Spirit and in

26 Rom 7:23

30 1Pe 4:1

27 Mat 17:2.
Rev 1:13-16

31 Rom 8:17

28 2Co 3:18

29 1Jn 3:2-3

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truth. Through our service of worship, which is offering, the blessing of God's life becomes our possession, and we are able to bless others.

This principle was demonstrated by Abraham and Isaac on Mount Moriah. Abraham's testimony regarding the *offering* that God had called him to make was, 'I and the lad will go over there; and *we will worship and return to you.*'³² The outcome of Abraham and Isaac's participation in this offering was that God said, 'Now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.'³³ Furthermore, God confirmed the blessing of sonship to Abraham and to Isaac.³⁴

Keeping our eyes on Jesus

When we are caused to look into the face of Christ, our initial inclination is to retreat from this confronting interaction. This desire to withdraw because of our shame, reveals that the other law is within us. From the basis of this law, we will either attempt to justify ourselves and our actions or we will endeavour to cover our shame with the projections of our self-defined image. Adam and Eve made this same response after they had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because another law had become part of them. The result of this was disconnection. Having become disconnected from God, and from their predestination, they were naked and afraid. They hid from the Lord and attempted to conceal their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves.³⁵

It is possible for a person to resist the grace of God when Christ comes to meet them. A person resists God's grace by turning away from the word of God, and from those who are bringing the word to them. Instead of receiving the word with humility, and acknowledging their nakedness, they maintain their image and projection of themselves. As they choose to live by the other law, sin takes further advantage of them, and they begin to gnash their teeth in reaction against the word, and against Christ's messengers.

This bitter and murderous response was exemplified by the Jews who heard the preaching of Stephen. As Stephen directed their attention to the Son of Man seated on the throne, they placed their hands over their ears, and sought to further silence the word by putting him to death.³⁶ It is noteworthy that when Stephen began to speak to them, they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.³⁷

32 Gen 22:5

36 Act 7:54-60

33 Gen 22:12

37 Act 6:15

34 Gen 22:16-18

35 Gen 3:7

Preface

When we are confronted with our sin by the Lord, we must not hide our face from Him.³⁸ Instead, we need to continue to lift our eyes to Jesus. We do this by walking in the light of the word and finding fellowship with our brethren in the body of Christ.³⁹ In a *spirit of faith*, we can set our gaze in the same way as the psalmist who wrote, ‘*Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us.*’⁴⁰

It is the spirit of supplication that enables us to respond to the Lord in this way. As we do, we begin to mourn for our sin, its impact on others, and for the loss of our sonship. We cry to the Father for forgiveness. This was the experience of Job, who testified, saying, ‘I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees You*. Therefore I abhor myself [or, my own way], and repent in dust and ashes.’⁴¹

In the process of repentance and mourning for our sin, we must continue to receive the word of the Lord. As we have just considered, this is fundamental to walking in the light and having fellowship with our brethren in Christ. We can be encouraged by the words of Jesus, who said, ‘You are already *clean because of the word* which I have spoken to you.’⁴² The cleansing effect of the word equips us for service in the body of Christ. It was for this reason that Paul exhorted every believer not to refuse Him who speaks, so that we receive grace ‘by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear’.⁴³

The mercies of God have opened the door of recovery for mankind to return to the predestination of sonship that He has planned for them. God, in mercy, has made a new covenant with us, through Christ, by which we can be recovered to our sonship. This covenant involves us in a daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Jeremiah declared that the mercies of the Lord are renewed for us every morning.⁴⁴ For this reason, we rejoice, and can sing of the mercies of the Lord *forever*. Like the psalmist, we declare, ‘With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens”.’⁴⁵ A person who knows the mercies of the Lord in this way cannot help but offer the sacrifice of praise.⁴⁶

It is with this understanding of true worship that we gather together for communion each week. Christ’s body and blood are the fruit of the tree of life to

38 Isa 53:3

42 Joh 15:3

46 Heb 13:15

39 IJn 1:6-7

43 Heb 12:25,28

40 Psa 123:1-2

44 Lam 3:22-23

41 Job 42:5-6

45 Psa 89:1-2

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those who receive, believe and obey the Lord when He comes to meet us. As we eat the bread and drink the wine *in this faith*, all that His body and blood represent becomes substantial within us. This includes our continued fellowship with the Lord and with each other throughout the week; receiving faith for participation in the sufferings of Christ; receiving, living and ministering the life of Christ as a member in particular of the body of Christ; and maturing as a son of God. Those who commune in this way are living in first love. Heavenly places, which is the paradise of God, is their abiding place.⁴⁷

The will of God is our sanctification

The body and blood of Jesus Christ are the elements of the New Covenant.⁴⁸ We eat and drink these elements by receiving and obeying the word of the Lord. His word instructs us and gives us His life, making us sufficient for our participation in the body of Christ. The body of Christ is the context in which the will of God is done. As members of the body of Christ, we are able to minister the New Covenant to others. As the apostle Paul reminded us, ‘Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the New Covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.’⁴⁹

Sanctification is foundational to our participation in the fulfilment of the will of God. Our sanctification is who God named us to be, along with the works that He prepared for us to do in Christ, before He created the heavens and the earth. Mankind fell from sanctification when Adam and Eve desired to be the source of their own destiny. However, a process has been established to enable us to put off the flesh, which operates by the principle of the other law, and to return to first love. This is what the Spirit is calling every person in the church to understand and apprehend.⁵⁰

Returning to first love requires us to recover our sanctification. Let us summarise this process. We will discuss these elements in further detail in the chapters that follow.

1. The will of God is our sanctification.⁵¹ To do God’s will is to be the son that He predestined us to be, and to do the works that belong to our name as a son of God.

47 Rev 2:7

51 1Th 4:3

48 Mar 14:22-24

49 2Co 3:5-6

50 Rev 2:7

Preface

2. Our sanctification is an eternal inheritance.⁵²
3. We obtain our sanctification by *first* becoming slaves of Christ. We become His captives when we accept Him as the Lord of our life. Christ, our Master, then delivers us to the teaching concerning His death, burial and resurrection.⁵³ This is the doctrine of baptism.⁵⁴ We live according to this doctrine by participating in the offering and sufferings of Christ. This makes us a slave of His righteousness.⁵⁵ If we become a slave of righteousness, we receive our 'benefit', which is our sanctification. Living in sanctification results in eternal life.⁵⁶
4. The New Covenant is Christ's will, or testament. Paul explained that 'where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it'.⁵⁷ In one sense, it is God's last will, or testament, because it is an Everlasting Covenant. This covenant, or will, was activated when Christ died.⁵⁸
5. The inheritance that Christ promised to give to us was recorded in the Scriptures. He wrote the Scriptures as His will, or testament.⁵⁹ In the Scriptures, He promised to give us *His* life, to become *our* life. His life is the motivating power that is given to a Christian so that they can live in the New Covenant. Christ's life is in His blood. He made His life available to us when it was poured out and fell upon His body through His sufferings, as He journeyed from the garden of Gethsemane until He declared from the cross, 'It is finished!'⁶⁰ Christ's blood is the blood of the covenant that is given to us to be our life.⁶¹
6. Christ came into the world and was given a body as a Son of Man. In this body, He accomplished the will of God.⁶² As well as His life, membership of Christ's corporate body was also given to us for an inheritance, as part of Christ's covenant. We cannot have His life without being a member of His body.
7. (a) As we noted earlier, the will of God is our sanctification. Christ accomplished this will when He declared from the cross, 'It is finished!'⁶³ That is, through His passion, He pioneered a pathway upon which we journey with Him to obtain the sanctification which God had predestined for us, in Christ. We are now being sanctified by His will through offering transfer. This happens as we receive Christ's life through our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We come into the body of Christ

52 Rom 6:22.
Heb 9:15

53 Rom 6:17

54 Rom 6:1-3

55 Rom 6:18

56 Rom 6:22

57 Heb 9:16

58 Heb 9:17

59 Heb 10:7-10

60 Luk 22:44.
Joh 19:28-30

61 Heb 9:11-14.
Lev 17:11

62 Heb 10:5-9

63 Joh 19:30

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through baptism, and continue to participate in God's will as we eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood at the communion service.

(b) Christ's sufferings were the means by which His blood was made available to us. As we suffer with Him, we are sprinkled with His blood. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the other law is being removed from us, and our conscience is being sprinkled clean by the blood of Christ. The sprinkling of blood ordains us, and makes us adequate, to serve as priests of the New Covenant.⁶⁴ By offering transfer, we are also made part of the body of Christ. This is the context for our priestly service.

8. The offering of Christ has perfected, forever, those who are participating in the process of being sanctified.⁶⁵ This is done by the work of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit's covenant is to write His laws in our heart and mind.⁶⁶
9. As participants in sanctification, we receive the forgiveness of sins.⁶⁷ As a result of forgiveness, we have boldness to enter the most holy place by the blood of Jesus, to serve as priests as we continue on the pathway of sanctification.

64 Heb 9:14

65 Heb 10:14

66 Heb 10:15-16

67 Heb 10:17-18

CHAPTER 1

The cry of ‘Abba! Father!’

Introduction

‘Abba! Father!’ is the distinctive cry of a son of God.¹ It expresses their ongoing commitment to receive and live by the word of God and to attain to the high calling of sonship in Christ Jesus.² Equally, the cry ‘Abba! Father!’ communicates the deep joy that a son of God experiences as Christ is progressively formed in them as they mature in sonship. The apostle Paul described this response as exulting in the hope of the glory of God.³

What does the term ‘Abba! Father!’ literally mean? The Greek word that is translated as ‘Father’ is *pater*. This word denotes a father’s position as the head of his household. Addressing a person as *pater* was an acknowledgement of their position as the head of a household. *Abba* is an Aramaic word that was used *only* by a son or daughter to address the father of a household. The child’s use of this term signified their identification of the head of the house as *their father* and marked their

1 Rom 8:15. Gal 4:6

2 Php 3:12-14

3 Rom 5:2

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unreasoning trust in him. The cry of ‘Abba! Father!’ by a son of God communicates this same sentiment. It is the simple and sincere expression of a son of God who, in trusting confidence, acknowledges that God is their Father.

Paul explained the two distinct reasons for the cry of ‘Abba! Father!’ The first expression of ‘Abba! Father!’ is motivated by *a spirit of adoption*.⁴ This is the expression of a son of man who has received the faith of God and is presenting themselves, by this faith, to do the works of sonship that God has prepared for them to do in Christ. As we will consider further, Paul also identified this motivation, or attitude, as ‘*a spirit of faith*’.⁵

The second expression of ‘Abba! Father!’ is by the Spirit of the Son.⁶ We recall that when a person has been born from above by receiving the incorruptible seed of God, the Father sends forth the Spirit of the Son to dwell within their heart.⁷ The Spirit of the Son continues to cry out ‘Abba! Father!’ within the born-again son of God. This is because He is worshipping the Father within the son of God and testifying that God is the Father of their spirit.⁸

We learn from Paul that *both* these expressions of ‘Abba! Father!’ should be the *ongoing* confession of a Christian believer.⁹ That is, adoption is not simply an interim step in the process of new birth. While adoption is necessary for receiving the Spirit of Christ as a new-born son of God, it is *also* a fundamental and ongoing feature of the expression and conduct of a son of God in this age and in the age to come.¹⁰

We note, in this regard, that the fulfilment of the Everlasting Covenant encompasses both our adoption as sons of men, and our birth from above as sons of God. This is communicated in the final statements of the book of Revelation where we read that John heard a loud voice from heaven proclaiming, ‘Behold, the tabernacle of God is *with men*, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people ... he who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall *be My son*.’¹¹

The cry ‘Abba! Father!’ is the evidence that a person is obtaining the blessing of sonship that was promised to Abraham. This is the promise of the adoption in order that, by faith, a person may be born of the Spirit of God.¹² To understand this promise, and the implications of crying ‘Abba! Father!’, it is helpful to consider the promise that Abraham received from God, to be a blessing.

4	Rom 8:15	8	Heb 12:9	12	Gal 3:14
5	2Co 4:13	9	Rom 8:11-17		
6	Gal 4:6	10	Gal 3:14. Rom 8:23		
7	1Pe 1:23. Gal 4:6	11	Rev 21:3,7		

Abraham received the adoption

When Melchizedek gave bread and wine to Abram, He blessed Abram and declared to him that he would become a *possessor of heaven and earth* as a co-heir with the Son.¹³ Abram was promised the same inheritance that the Son of God Himself received! However, from Abram's natural perspective, becoming a possessor of heaven and earth was beyond his comprehension and capacity. From Abram's point of view, having already endeavoured and failed to bring forth a son with Sarah, God's promise appeared unfathomable. Because he had no children, Abram began to despair of this promised blessing. In this regard, King Solomon noted that, when hope is deferred or seemingly lost, the heart becomes sick or depressed.¹⁴ This was Abram's experience.

The word of Yahweh came to Abram in a vision, saying to him, 'Do not fear, Abram, I am a shield [of faith] to you; [I am] your very great reward.'¹⁵ Yahweh, the Word, had come to give Abram the faith of God so that Abram could see and believe for the blessing of sonship, both for himself and for his children. To receive this faith, Abram *first* needed to be delivered from the fear that was fostered by the limitations of his earthly perspective. That is, he needed to receive spiritual capacity to hear, see and understand what the Lord was promising to him. This is because the capacities of the natural man are unable to receive or comprehend the things of the Spirit.¹⁶ Consequently, the things of the Spirit seem implausible to the natural mind.

Paul taught that the word of God gives a person the *capacity to hear* so that they can *receive the faith of the Son that comes by hearing*.¹⁷ As we considered in Part 2 of *The Steps of Salvation*, the word is one of four dimensions of God's grace that are ministered through the four faces of Christ's administration. The specific administration through which the word of grace is ministered is represented by the face of the 'man'. This is the ministry of *teaching*, through which a person is *discipled*. Regarding discipleship, the Son of God Himself testified, saying, 'The Lord God has given Me the tongue of disciples, that I may know how to *sustain the weary [or depressed] one with a word*. He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to listen as a disciple. *The Lord God has opened My ear*.'¹⁸

By receiving the command, 'Do not fear', Abram was delivered from the fear that was causing his depressed condition, and he was *made a disciple*. This meant that he had received the ear of a disciple. He could now hear the word and receive the

13 Gen 14:18-22 17 Rom 10:17

14 Pro 13:12 18 Isa 50:4-5

15 Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16

16 1Co 2:9-10

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faith of God that comes by hearing.¹⁹ In this *spirit of faith*, Abram was enabled to believe and confess, with the mouth of a disciple, that he and his descendants would be born from above with God's own life.²⁰

Because Abram believed in Yahweh, and believed His word, God reckoned him as righteous.²¹ This means that God considered Abram to be a son in His house, even though Abram had not been born of God. Abram was an adopted son of God, and was now an heir of the divine nature.

This demonstrates that *Abraham received the adoption*. At this point, although it was the *promise* of the adoption, the faith which Abram received from God granted to him the *substance* of that which he was promised.²² His hope of becoming a joint heir with Christ as a son of God was no longer deferred or seemingly lost. Instead, he knew that God considered him to be a son, and that the inheritance of the divine nature would surely be given to him and his descendants. His hope had become *certain*.²³

Now that Abram was a disciple, the Lord commanded him to meet Him in offering.²⁴ By faith, Abram presented himself for participation in this offering. He did not draw back, even when horror and great darkness fell upon him.²⁵ This was because he no longer feared death. In the fear of the Lord, he remained committed to the process that God had called Him to join. Through his participation in this offering, the covenant was confirmed to Abraham and his descendants.²⁶ For this reason, Paul stated that the blessing of the adoption *belonged* to Abraham and his children.²⁷

Having received the promise of the adoption, Abraham grew *strong in faith* and continued in the way of discipleship. As Paul noted, 'He did not waver at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God, and being fully convinced that what He had promised He was also able to perform. And therefore "it was accounted to him for righteousness".'²⁸

As a disciple, Abraham continued to receive and obey the word of the Lord, and was able to participate in the attainment of God's Everlasting Covenant purpose. Moreover, he was able to instruct, or disciple, others. We know this because Yahweh said of Abraham, '*I have known him*, in order that *he may command his children and his household after him*, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.'²⁹

19 Rom 10:17

20 2Co 4:13

21 Gen 15:6

22 Heb 11:1

23 Heb 6:19

24 Gen 15:9

25 Gen 15:12

26 Gen 15:18-21

27 Rom 9:4

28 Rom 4:20-22

29 Gen 18:19

To receive the tongue and ear of a disciple meant that Abraham had received the culture of God's house. He was, therefore, able to train his children in this culture.

The adoption is now in Christ

Paul explained that Christ *redeemed* us from the curse of the law through His offering on the cross so that, in Christ, *the blessing of Abraham* would come to the Gentiles. Thus, they could receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.³⁰ Paul then further clarified the reality that Christ came in the flesh *to redeem* those who were under the law so that they *might receive the adoption as sons*.³¹

From Paul's writings, we understand that *the blessing of Abraham is the adoption*. Now that Christ has come, when a person receives the blessing of Abraham, which is the adoption, they are able to receive the Spirit of Christ and be born of God. To understand how a person receives the adoption and the promise of the Spirit through faith, it is helpful to remind ourselves of the key waypoints in the process of being born of God.

Overview of the new birth

When the gospel of sonship is first proclaimed to an unsaved person by a disciple-messenger, the grace and supplication that comes with the word grants them the capacity to hear and respond to the message. Those who do not resist the grace of God come to the point of accepting that they are bankrupt in spirit, and they begin to mourn for their sin.³² Their mourning involves a cry for forgiveness, and also a cry for help to believe for the sonship that the gospel is offering to them.

In response to their travail, the Father forgives them, and gives them the faith of God so that they can believe what God Himself believes about them; that is, that they can be a son of God. This is the faith that comes by hearing the word. With this faith, they believe for sonship and cry out to the Father to make them His son or daughter. This is the cry of 'Abba! Father!' that is motivated by a spirit of adoption.³³ Paul also referred to the spirit of adoption as a 'spirit of faith'.³⁴

The faith that the hearer receives is the same faith that Abraham received when the Word of Yahweh came to him and said, 'I am your shield.'³⁵ Because they have received Abraham's faith, they have become Abraham's children.³⁶ This is important, because the promised inheritance of sonship was made to only

30 Gal 3:13-14

34 2Co 4:13

31 Gal 4:5

35 Gen 15:1

32 Mat 5:3-4

36 Rom 4:16. Gal 3:7

33 Rom 8:15

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Abraham and his descendants. Thus, in order to receive the promise of sonship, a person must become a child of Abraham and follow in the culture of Abraham's family.

Having already forgiven their sin, the Father reckons righteousness to the hearer because they have believed His word and received His invitation to become His child. This means that the Father considers them to be a son in His house, even though they are not yet born with the life of God. This is the adoption. Those who receive the adoption on account of believing God are blessed with Abraham the believer. As Paul wrote, 'Those who are of faith [and are able to believe] are blessed with believing Abraham'.³⁷

An adopted son or daughter in the Father's house is entitled to the wealth that belongs to the Father. This is the inheritance of the divine nature. The adopted son receives the Holy Spirit, whom the Father sends to dwell within them.³⁸ They begin to experience the washing of regeneration and renewing of their natural identity by the Holy Spirit.³⁹ The Holy Spirit also further energises the spirit of faith that they have received from the word of Christ so that their spirit rejoices in the hope of sonship. This is part of the ongoing cry of 'Abba! Father!' by a spirit of adoption.

Having received the Holy Spirit, the new believer is able to confess Christ as Lord.⁴⁰ This is essential, because Christ will not direct us to the Father to be born again of His life until we have accepted Him as the Lord of our lives. It is Christ who gives a person the right to become a son of God.⁴¹

Those who receive the word of Christ are directed to go to the Father to be born a second time.⁴² The Father then births them from above by the incorruptible word of God.⁴³ Their regenerated natural identity (or human spirit) is *reborn* and *made spiritual*. Through this birthing process, God the Father has now become the Father of their spirit.⁴⁴

The Father sends forth the Spirit of the Son to dwell within their heart. The Spirit of the Son confesses within them that God is the Father of their spirit. As the apostle Paul explained, 'Because you are sons [by adoption], God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into your hearts, crying out, "Abba, Father!"'⁴⁵ When this happens, they are born of the Spirit.⁴⁶ Paul explained that unless a person has the Spirit of Christ, they are not sons of God.⁴⁷ The Son Himself confesses this within

37 Gal 3:9

41 Joh 1:12, Joh 14:6

45 Gal 4:6

38 Joh 14:16

42 Joh 3:3-8

46 Joh 3:5

39 Tit 3:5

43 1Pe 1:23

47 Rom 8:9

40 1Co 12:3

44 Heb 12:9

them. The Holy Spirit also enables a son of God to confess that God is their Father by continuing to bear witness with their spirit that they are a son of God.⁴⁸

In summary, a person is first given the gift of faith which makes them one of Abraham's children. They are then blessed with Abraham by receiving the adoption as a son of God. The adopted son of God is then born of the seed of the Father. This involves receiving the word of their name as a son of God, and receiving the Spirit of the Son into their heart. At this point, they are born of the Spirit. Evidently, a person first becomes one of Abraham's children through faith, and is then born again as one of God the Father's children.

Once a person has been born of God, they come into Christ through baptism. They now belong to Christ. Baptism joins a person to the offering of Christ, which includes the fellowship of His sufferings. They eat and drink the communion elements each week in faith for an ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His body.

Continuing in the adoption

Notably, Paul explained that if a person belongs to Christ, having been born of God and baptised into Christ, *then* they are Abraham's children and heirs according to the promise that God made to Abraham.⁴⁹ We recall that the inheritance is the promise of receiving the Spirit through the process of being born again. Paul was highlighting the reality that, even though a person has received the promise of the Spirit, *they need to continue in the adoption*. He made this same point in his letter to the Christians in Rome, writing, 'Not only that, but we also who *have the firstfruits of the Spirit*, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, *eagerly waiting for the adoption*, the redemption of our body'.⁵⁰

If a spirit of adoption is the expression of a person who has faith to *receive* the promise of the Spirit, why will they *continue* to express 'Abba! Father!' by a spirit of adoption *after* they have been born of the Spirit and have come into Christ through baptism? To answer this question, we must recognise the distinction between Christ the Person *dwelling* within us, and Christ being *formed* within us.

When a believer is first born of the Spirit, Christ the Person has come into their heart. However, the divine nature has not yet *become their nature*. This happens

48 Rom 8:16

49 Gal 3:26-29

50 Rom 8:23

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when Christ is formed in them through a process of travail.⁵¹ This travail is an *ongoing* share in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

In this fellowship, 'offering transfer' is operative. Offering transfer happens when a person is joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Their sin and iniquity is transferred to Christ so that it can be removed from them in the fellowship of His sufferings. In this same fellowship, His life is transferred to them so that it can be *formed in them*.

A person who has been born of God will continue to express 'Abba! Father!' by a spirit of adoption because they desire to attain to the full measure of their inheritance as a son of God, and to participate in the accomplishing of God's will. They will continue to receive the word of God as it is ministered to them by Christ through His messengers. With the word, they *continue* to receive the faith of God to believe and obey His word. In this faith, they are able to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering, through which they partake of His fullness and participate in the will of God being done, as a member of His body.⁵² The apostle John described the fullness of Christ's life as 'grace and truth'.⁵³

As a son of God grows *from faith to faith* through the hearing of the word, they have increasing access to the grace of God in which they stand.⁵⁴ This is the grace of life that Jesus revealed as being the nature of His sonship.⁵⁵ To stand in the grace of God and to exult in the hope of the calling of sonship means that they are obtaining their eternal inheritance as a son of God. A son of God rejoices in suffering because they understand that they receive their inheritance through offering transfer as they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, they are being changed from one degree of glory to another, into the image of Christ's sonship.⁵⁶

Reiterating the point, faith for sonship, combined with the witness of the Holy Spirit with our spirit that we are children of God, enables us to claim our sonship with joyful assurance. Because we are God's children by adoption, we press into the Father's house to become heirs of everything that belongs to us as a result of being born again of His seed. This desire is a spirit of adoption. It is expressed through a believer's ongoing cry of 'Abba! Father!' Because we are fellow heirs with Christ, we join the fellowship of His sufferings so that we may be glorified together with Him as we become possessors of the divine nature. The Spirit of

51 Gal 4:19

52 Heb 10:5-7

53 Joh 1:14,16

54 Rom 1:17.

Rom 10:17.

Rom 5:1

55 Joh 1:14. 1Pe 3:7

56 2Co 3:18

the Son continues to cry out 'Abba! Father!' within us, confirming that we are progressively obtaining the inheritance of our sonship.

The cry of 'Abba! Father!' will continue to be the expression and conduct of the sons of God in the new heavens and earth, even though they have obtained their eternal sonship. Why is this so? It is because, in the new heavens and earth, the sons of God will continue to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. In the faith that comes with this word, they will present themselves for ongoing participation in the works of righteousness that God has prepared for them. The doing of these works will be an expression of their sonship life, and will reveal the cry of 'Abba! Father!' within them by the Spirit of the Son, who is the expression of all sonship.

Discipleship

A person who continues to express 'Abba! Father!' by a spirit of adoption is a disciple. They have received the ear and the mouth of a disciple. They are no longer a slave of sin who is invested in defining and expressing their own life. Such an investment is motivated by the fear of death that describes the condition of a person who does not live by the proceeding word of God. Their heart is bound by unbelief. A Christian who lives this way soon becomes weary in the way of the Lord because they fail to enter the rest that faith brings.

However, a believer becomes settled and secure when they have been sealed as a son by receiving the Holy Spirit.⁵⁷ The security that this rest brings is essential to progressively obtaining their inheritance as a son of God.⁵⁸ This is why Paul said, 'For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!"'⁵⁹

Christ's disciples are able to hear and receive the word that is ministered to them from Christ's messengers. It is through this word that they *continue* to receive the faith of God 'from faith to faith'.⁶⁰ Having this spirit of faith, they are then able to believe and obey God's word, and to follow in the steps of the faith of their father, Abraham the believer.⁶¹ They, as Abraham's children, obey the commands of God. This 'obedience of faith' is the culture of Abraham's house.⁶²

57 Eph 1:13

61 Rom 4:12. Gal 3:9

58 Heb 4:1-3

62 Rom 16:26

59 Rom 8:15

60 Rom 1:17

Coming to faith in the midst of suffering

Paul explained that a person who has received the spirit of faith and therefore believes God's word, *speaks* in a particular way.⁶³ To make this point, Paul specifically quoted a passage from Psalm 116. Although the authorship of this psalm is not identified in the Scriptures, we would agree with most commentators who attribute its authorship to King David. This psalm is the testimony of David, who was restored to a spirit of faith through repentance, having earlier fallen out of faith at a time in his life when he was greatly distressed because of suffering. The account of his experience provides helpful instruction regarding the nature of faith and how it leads to the fellowship of offering in the midst of God's people.

David's psalm opens with his expression of love for Yahweh, who heard his prayers. David then summarised the fruit of his experience as a commitment to continue to call on the name of the Lord as long as he lived.⁶⁴ Knowing the name of the Lord means knowing Yahweh as three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who live in a fellowship of one life and one spirit. To call on the name of the Lord is to join the fellowship of Their covenant discussion concerning Their purpose for our life. Calling on the name of Lord is the initiative of a person who recognises that their life is found only in the name of the Lord. A person who calls on the name of the Lord desires to be known in the fellowship of that name and to express the love of God, by offering, within this fellowship.

David then explained how he felt in the midst of his difficult situation. He wrote, 'The cords of death encompassed me and the terrors of Sheol came upon me; I found distress and sorrow'.⁶⁵ Importantly, this statement of the psalmist was prophetic of Christ's sufferings on the cross. It is also mentioned in Psalm 18, which is a Messianic psalm that prophetically described the event of Christ's death. Why is this important? It is because it highlights the truth that a believer's suffering, no matter how traumatic or unjust, or whether it is caused within or outside the church, is an opportunity to receive their suffering as fellowship in the sufferings of Christ.

Paul himself drew from these very passages as he testified of his own participation in the sufferings of Christ. He wrote, 'For we do not want you to be unaware, brethren, of our *affliction* which came to us in Asia, that we were *burdened excessively, beyond our strength*, so that we *despaired even of life*; indeed, we had the *sentence of death within ourselves* so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises

63 2Co 4:13.
Rom 10:6,8-9

64 Psa 116:1-2

65 Psa 116:3

The cry of 'Abba! Father!'

the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope.⁶⁶ Paul's response in the midst of his sufferings demonstrated that he had received the faith of the Son of God to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.⁶⁷

This, however, was not the initial response of the psalmist. In the midst of his suffering, David was in great distress and sorrow. He was depressed because his hope seemed like a lost cause. In this regard, David was in a similar state to Abraham before the Word of Yahweh came to him, saying, 'Do not fear.'⁶⁸ David could not see, nor believe, that his afflictions were an opportunity to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.⁶⁹ Instead, he declared that his afflictions were his, alone. Furthermore, he said, in *fearful haste*, 'All men are liars.'⁷⁰ David's fear and torment was the evidence that he had turned from faith which works by love.⁷¹ Consequently, David was unable to trust, believe, or love his brethren. To him, they were all liars.

This is a key point. When a person lets go of faith and trust, they are unable to have fellowship with God's people.

If the psalmist had been unable to recover from this state of disconnection, his belief that all men are liars would have become like a spirit of antichrist within him. His love would most certainly have grown cold.⁷² A person who is motivated by the spirit of antichrist, rather than by a spirit of faith, is in bondage to the fear of death and rejects the reality that Christ, the Word, is coming in the flesh of their brethren.⁷³ Eventually, because of offence, they depart from the congregation and persecute those who are of the fellowship of faith.⁷⁴

Thankfully, David did come to faith. What was the beginning point for his recovery? He *turned* again to the Lord in *repentance* and called upon His name.⁷⁵ As David turned his face to the Lord, the veil of his own fallen perspective, which had informed his claim that all men are liars, was removed. He was able to acknowledge that he was bankrupt in spirit, confessing, 'I was brought low, and He saved me.'⁷⁶ Furthermore, he was able to receive the *benefits* of God that were coming toward him by the word that proceeded from the face of the Lord.⁷⁷ These benefits included the grace of God, the gift of His righteousness, and the mercy of God.⁷⁸

66 2Co 1:8-10

70 Psa 116:3,10-11

74 1Jn 2:19

78 Psa 116:5

67 Gal 2:20

71 Gal 5:6. 1Jn 4:18

75 Psa 116:4

68 Gen 15:1

72 Mat 24:12

76 Psa 116:6

69 Heb 11:25

73 2Jn 7

77 Psa 116:12

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David testified that, having been brought low, or to the end of himself, he was able to receive again the salvation of the Lord and declare, ‘Return to your rest, O my soul, for the Lord has dealt bountifully with you. For You have rescued my soul from death, my eyes from tears, my feet from stumbling. I shall walk before the Lord in the land of the living.’⁷⁹

Evidently, David had received the gift of God’s faith so that he was able to walk by faith, and not by his natural sight or fallen perspective regarding the circumstances of his life.⁸⁰ By faith, he was able to believe the word of God and return, through the process of mourning, to enter the Lord’s rest.⁸¹ This motivation to return was the evidence that he possessed a spirit of adoption, or faith. David described the context of rest as ‘the land of the living’.⁸² In His letter to the church in Ephesus, Jesus described this context for life as ‘first love’.

Paul explained that, in the New Covenant, when a person enters the Lord’s rest, they become a *partaker* of Christ.⁸³ This is the same rest that Jesus spoke of when He said to His disciples, ‘Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’⁸⁴

Of course, not every Christian who experiences distress in the midst of their suffering enters the Lord’s rest. Consider, for example, the children of Israel. In the day of their trial and fear, they would not receive the word of Moses, nor the testimony of Caleb and Joshua, the Lord’s messengers. Instead of becoming poor in spirit and mixing the word with faith, they wanted to return to Egypt. They even called the context of their former slavery ‘a land flowing with milk and honey’.⁸⁵ Therefore, the Lord swore in His wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’⁸⁶

What did it mean for David to enter the Lord’s rest? David himself asked, ‘What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me?’ A benefit is something that is bestowed upon a person. When David was noting the Lord’s benefits, he was referring specifically to the righteousness of faith that he had received as a gift from the Lord.⁸⁷ This faith granted him access to a context of grace in which he could stand and exult in hope.⁸⁸ In this faith, David was able to present himself to the Lord.

79 Psa 116:7-9

80 Eph 2:8, 2Co 5:7

81 Heb 3:18-19

82 Psa 116:9

83 Heb 3:14

84 Mat 11:28-30

85 Num 16:13

86 Heb 3:11

87 Eph 2:8.

Rom 4:1-8

88 Rom 5:1-2,17

The cry of 'Abba! Father!'

As we have noted, a believer comes to the rest that is associated with obtaining their inheritance as a son of God, by being yoked with Christ. We observe this faith in the testimony of David, who declared that he would partake of the cup of salvation and call on the name of the Lord.⁸⁹ This means that he joined, by faith, the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This fellowship is represented by the cup of salvation. As Paul taught, 'Is not the cup of blessing which we bless a sharing in the blood of Christ?'⁹⁰ To call on the name of the Lord, having entered His rest, is to partake of the bread of the communion. It is the acceptance that the body of Christ is the context for our life. As Paul also explained, 'Is not the bread which we break a sharing in the body of Christ? Since there is *one bread*, we who are many are *one body*; for we all partake of the one bread.'⁹¹

Instead of believing that his sufferings were his own, David was able to speak in a spirit of faith, and say, 'Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of His godly ones.'⁹² He had accepted that his sufferings were a participation, or ongoing fellowship, in the sufferings of the Lord. He chose these sufferings for himself.⁹³

David was committed to making offering in fellowship with God's people, saying, 'To You I shall offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving, and call upon the name of the Lord. I shall pay my vows to the Lord, oh may it be in the presence of all His people, in the courts of the Lord's house, in the midst of you, O Jerusalem. Praise the Lord!'⁹⁴ David's return to faith was marked by his earnest desire to make offering. This was the fulfilment of his vow as one who was a slave of the Lord.⁹⁵ Furthermore, David was motivated to be found in the midst of the congregation of God's people. That is, he had received faith by hearing the word, and was joining, again, the fellowship of the Lord.

As David professed to be a bondsman of Yahweh, he noted that he was a son of the Lord's handmaid.⁹⁶ In other words, David acknowledged that he was a child of God's covenant from the womb. Because of the faith of his parents, David was a son of Abraham. Nevertheless, his faith was tested through suffering. Whether we have been saved out of the world or born of God in the womb of our mother, *every son of God will experience a trial of faith*. Regarding the trial of faith, the apostle James said, 'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith *produces* endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.'⁹⁷

89 Psa 116:13

93 Heb 11:25

97 Jas 1:2-4

90 1Co 10:16

94 Psa 116:17-19

91 1Co 10:16-17

95 Num 15:2-5

92 Psa 116:15

96 Psa 116:16

The motivation to mourn

As we have noted through the testimony of King David, repentance and mourning are necessary for a person to transition from their state of alienation to fellowship in the body of Christ. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul outlined seven stages of mourning that are essential to making this transition. He wrote, 'For observe this very thing, that you sorrowed [or mourned] in a godly manner: What *diligence* it produced in you, what *clearing of yourselves*, what *indignation*, what *fear*, what *vehement desire*, what *zeal*, what *vindication!* In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.'⁹⁸ A person who has proven themselves 'clear', or 'pure', is being cleansed by the blood of Christ as they walk in the light of the word and have fellowship with their brethren.⁹⁹

In chapter six, we will discuss repentance and mourning in further detail. The point to note, here, is that a spirit of adoption, or faith, is the motivation to engage in the seven stages of mourning. This is because the stages of mourning are the means by which a person is released from their *bondage* to fear, and their associated alienation, so that they can live in the glorious *liberty* of their sonship as part of the fellowship that is in Christ.¹⁰⁰ In this regard, we note again the contrast that Paul made between being in bondage to fear and having a spirit of adoption by which we cry, 'Abba! Father!'

Speaking as a disciple

A person who *calls* on the name of the Lord and *commits* to make offering in the fellowship of His people is able to *speak* this way because they have received the mouth of a disciple. In the book of Romans, Paul noted that a person who has received the righteousness of faith *confesses* Christ as their Lord.¹⁰¹ They are able to do this because they have received the Holy Spirit from the Father.¹⁰² There are two related implications of this confession.

First, a disciple of Christ will obey, from the heart, the word to which their Lord and Master has committed them.¹⁰³ Paul called this 'the obedience of faith'.¹⁰⁴ What is the word to which they are being committed? It is the doctrine of baptism, which calls them to participate in the offering of Christ. As they obey God's word as a slave of righteousness, the result of obedience is sanctification to their name as a son of God.¹⁰⁵ Regarding this sanctification, Paul explained that 'having been freed

98 2Co 7:11

102 1Co 12:3

99 1Jn 1:7

103 Rom 6:17

100 Rom 8:21

104 Rom 1:5

101 Rom 10:9

105 Rom 6:19

The cry of 'Abba! Father!'

from sin and enslaved to God you [have] your [fruit] resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life'.¹⁰⁶

This eternal life is described by the apostle John as 'grace and truth'. It is the fullness of the life of the Son of God that a person receives from Christ, their Head, as they submit to the order of headship in the body of Christ. As they receive this life, in Christ, they grow as a son of God.¹⁰⁷

It is important to recognise that the obedience of faith is much more than a person's compliance with a scripted direction or a standard of conduct. This is because *the obedience of faith works by love*.¹⁰⁸ Jesus said that if a person loved Him, they would keep His commandments.¹⁰⁹ Jesus commanded His disciples to love one another in the same manner that He loved them – by laying down their lives to reveal one another.¹¹⁰ To help in this regard, Jesus said that He would ask the Father to give the Holy Spirit to His disciples.¹¹¹ The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into a believer's heart so that they are able to lay down their life for their friends.

Unless the love of God is poured into a person's heart by the Holy Spirit, they are unable to obey according to their name as a son of God.¹¹² Love enables the sanctified and trusting obedience of a son of God. Their activities are no longer for the sake of revealing themselves. Instead, they offer themselves to reveal the word that they receive from their friends in Christ. This is why Jesus said, 'Greater love has no-one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends. You are My friends if you do whatever I command you.'¹¹³

Offering by the love of God is the second implication of confessing the lordship of Christ as His disciple. Such a person takes up their cross and follows Christ. They personally join themselves to the fellowship of His offering and suffering. In his Gospel, Matthew wrote, 'Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life [soul] will lose it; but whoever loses his life [soul] for My sake will find it".'¹¹⁴

As we have already noted, a person joins the offering and sufferings of Christ through baptism. However, from these passages of Scripture, we note that a person is to *present themselves* in this fellowship as a slave and disciple of Christ. This is an action of faith that works by the love of God.¹¹⁵ Presenting themselves

106 Rom 6:22

110 Joh 15:12

114 Mat 16:24-25

107 Eph 4:14-16

111 Joh 14:16-17

115 Gal 5:6

108 Gal 5:6

112 Rom 5:5

109 Joh 14:15

113 Joh 15:13-14

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in this way is the initiative of a son of man who, in a spirit of adoption, desires to partake of the divine nature that is their inheritance as a son of God.

With this understanding, we note Paul's exhortation to Christian believers to present themselves as a living sacrifice. 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that *you present your bodies* a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service [of worship]. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind [by the Holy Spirit], that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.'¹¹⁶

Having joined the fellowship of Christ's offering by baptism, and then continuing to participate in His offering by eating and drinking of Christ's body and blood, a son of God is able to speak and minister in Christ according to who God predestined them to be. That is, they are able to minister according to their sanctified name. In this regard, they speak and minister by the Holy Spirit, with the life and divine nature of Christ.

In summary, those who walk and live by the spirit of faith have the adoption and are heirs of the divine nature, provided that they, by baptism, maintain a fellowship with Christ in His offering and sufferings. They proceed from faith to faith, crying out 'Abba! Father!' by a spirit of adoption. And, the Son cries out 'Abba! Father!' within them as He is formed within them from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord.¹¹⁷ As members of the body of Christ, they mature in sonship as they grow up into Christ's capacity for headship.

Meeting the Father in the secret place

Sons of God are to meet the Father in the secret place with an unveiled face. If a person knows that God is their Father, then they have a special and unique relationship with Him. The Father reveals the secret of their name to them. Jesus said to His disciples, 'But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.'¹¹⁸

When a son of God prays in the secret place, they are joining, by faith, the fellowship and offering of Yahweh. We have previously used the phrase 'the prayer meeting of four' to describe this fellowship of prayer. It is an ongoing discussion that includes the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and the believer. In this fellowship,

116 Rom 12:1-2

117 2Co 3:18

118 Mat 6:6

The cry of 'Abba! Father!'

the believer's sonship is revealed to them. They are learning from the Father what their name is. The Spirit of the Son and the Word of the Father within them are the seed of their sonship, which is giving form and definition to who and what they are becoming as a son of God.

When Jesus said that the Father would *reward* a son of God openly, He was referring to the *gift* of the Holy Spirit that the Father gives to them.¹¹⁹ When the Father first sends the Holy Spirit to dwell in a believer's heart, the Holy Spirit begins to regenerate and renew their natural identity.¹²⁰ The Holy Spirit also bears witness with their spirit that they are a son of God.¹²¹

When a son of God is baptised into Christ and made a member of His body, their own name and sonship is hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father. They are given a share in the life of the Son, which Jesus, in His parables, likened to talents and minas which were given to slaves in His house.¹²² Talents and minas are given by the Son to slaves of righteousness in His house to trade with on behalf of their Lord and Master.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is given to slaves, who are also sons, as a gift. He is the firstfruits of their inheritance as a son of God. In this regard, the Holy Spirit is the expression of their sonship. As they remain hidden with Christ in God, their name is being revealed through the expression of the gift; that is, the gift is their sonship by the Holy Spirit. By the Spirit, they are able to multiply the talents of the life of Yahweh that have been entrusted to them. Their eternal inheritance, or glory, as a son of God depends on the extent to which they multiply this life through offering.

Jesus taught that 'when they deliver you up, do not worry about how or what you should speak. For it will be given to you in that hour what you should speak; for it is not you who speak, *but the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you*'.¹²³ When a son of God is being who the Father named them to be, they are revealing the Father. Their works are not their own, but are the Father's. In this regard, it is the Father, who is in them, who does the works and who is speaking. A person who is full of the Holy Spirit will be known by name when, by the capacity of the Holy Spirit, they do the Father's works.

The Holy Spirit is also the Comforter. He comforts us by helping us in the expression of our sonship and life. He helps us to keep His unity and integration

119 Joh 14:16-17.
Act 2:38

122 Mat 25:15.
Luk 19:13

120 Tit 3:5

123 Mat 10:19-20

121 Rom 8:16

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in fellowship, in the bond of peace. He does this by helping us to put off all offence and the need for control, and to relinquish our pursuit of dominance or pre-eminence. This is because His own essence is His unity.

The Son of God worships the Father and the Spirit in the midst of His body. He testifies, saying, 'I will declare Your name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly I will sing praise to You.'¹²⁴ He also says, 'Here am I and the children [sons] whom God has given Me.'¹²⁵ We hear the voice of the Son in the anointed worship of the members of His body.

124 Heb 2:12.
Psa 22:22

125 Heb 2:13. Isa 8:18

CHAPTER 2

Understanding first love

Introduction

'First love' is a term that Jesus coined in His letter to the leaders of the church in Ephesus. He said to them, 'I have this against you, that you have left your *first love*.'¹ Although Jesus was initially addressing the Ephesian presbytery, He concluded His letter by declaring, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'² Evidently, the call to live in first love applies to everyone in Christ's church.

What is first love? When Jesus admonished the Ephesian leaders for leaving their first love, He was not saying that they had simply lost the feeling of love that they experienced when they first believed. We know this because He called them to 'remember therefore *from where* you [collectively] have fallen; repent and *do the first works*'.³ We observe that first love is a *place, or context*, that involves *relationship* with others. Within this context there are specific works to do.

1 Rev 2:4

2 Rev 2:7

3 Rev 2:5

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Some thirty years prior to John's record of the Revelation of Jesus Christ, the apostle Paul explained first love to the Ephesian Christians by drawing their attention to the great love of God which was revealed when Christ died on the cross for all men.⁴ This offering was the expression of the love of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. By joining this offering through baptism, a born-again son of God could be brought back from the death of sin *with* Christ, and raised up and seated together *with Him in heavenly places*.⁵ Paul explained that, as sons of God *abide* together in Christ, they are able to do the good works of sonship that God named for them.⁶

Paul's letter to the Ephesians reveals that the context of first love is *heavenly places*, and that the first works are the *works of sonship* that we are to do in Christ. Where, then, is heavenly places? The answer is simple. Heavenly places is where we have *fellowship* with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with other sons of God.

Living in this fellowship is only possible for a person who has been born of the Spirit and has joined the offering of Christ through baptism. Offering is the way of life in heavenly places. It is the expression of love that is 'of God'.⁷ Living this way is 'heavenly'. It cannot be understood or achieved through fallen human, or fleshly, endeavours. This means that, to live in first love, a person must be joined to a process through which their fallen propensities, which Paul identified as the operation of 'another law' within them, are removed from their life.⁸

Living in first love has implications for how a son God lives and relates personally, within a Christian household, and as a member in particular of the corporate body of Christ. It equally and necessarily involves prayer in the secret place, godly living within families, and communing together at the table of the Lord.

The tree of life

Christ said to the Ephesian church that those who returned to first love, by overcoming what had caused them to fall from fellowship in Him, would be able to 'eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God'.⁹ Christ's reference to the tree of life in the paradise of God highlights the understanding that first love was the culture of life in the garden of Eden before the Fall. This point helps us to understand the practicalities of first love in heavenly places, and how Christians can fall from this fellowship. Consider, for example, the reference that Paul made to Eve's transgression in the garden of Eden, as he raised concerns

4 Eph 2:4

8 Rom 7:23

5 Eph 2:5-6

9 Rev 2:7

6 Eph 2:10.
Psa 139:16

7 1Jn 4:7-8

regarding the fellowship in Corinth. He wrote, 'I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ'.¹⁰

As we consider what life was like in the garden of Eden, we note that Adam and Eve met and conversed with Yahweh Father, Son and Holy Spirit each day, in the cool of the evening.¹¹ This would have been about the time of day that the couple were preparing their evening meal, using the fruit of the trees that were growing in the garden. Of all the fruiting trees that were in the garden, the most important was *the tree of life*. This fruit was the central feature of Adam and Eve's fellowship meal with Yahweh each day. The fruit of this tree gave life to Adam and Eve as they received the word of God. As they ate, His word sustained their mortal bodies and provided them with wisdom and direction for the works that they were to do each day in the garden.

The communion gathering

The tree of life was central to Adam and Eve's fellowship with God in the garden of Eden. Likewise, eating and drinking the communion elements is essential to first love in Christ Jesus. This is because Jesus *is* the tree of life. He said, 'Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood *has eternal life*, and I will *raise him up* at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him*.'¹² In chapter five, we will discuss in more detail the implications of Jesus being the tree of life.

In the same way that the fruit of the tree of life sustained and equipped Adam and Eve as they received the word of God, everything that the communion elements represent for us becomes increasingly substantial in our lives as we receive and obey God's word. It is because of this word that we are able to participate in the fellowship of first love in heavenly places.¹³

Clearly, first love is more than just coming together for a communion service each week. It would appear that the Ephesian Christians were regularly meeting for communion.¹⁴ Yet there was something about the *way* that they were meeting and functioning together as a presbytery and as a church that meant they had fallen from first love.¹⁵ It is sobering to consider that they were *unaware* that this had happened. Their ignorance demonstrated that their capacity to perceive that their spiritual condition had been hindered.

10 2Co 11:3

14 Rev 2:2-3

11 Gen 3:8-9

15 Rev 2:5

12 Joh 6:54-56

13 1Jn 1:3

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Similarly, when Paul observed the conduct of the Christians in Corinth, he noted that they did not commune together for the better, but for the worse.¹⁶ This is because, among other factors, they were divided and loyal to various factions; they were inconsiderate of one another; and they showed themselves to be wise in their own eyes.¹⁷ Instead of resulting in blessing, the way in which they were communing together was bringing them under judgement.¹⁸

The key to understanding first love is to consider *how* we come together for fellowship. This firstly relates to how we participate together as a congregation of believers at the communion table, and then how we present ourselves for fellowship in our families and minister the life of God as members of the body of Christ. The elements of first love are essential foundations for Christian living. When these capacities are active in a spiritual person, they are able to judge all things, yet they are judged by no-one.¹⁹ Let us now consider the elements that are fundamental to first love.

Sanctification

A person's identity is their spirit, and includes their natural abilities. The identity of a son of God is being regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit.²⁰ Their spirit is reborn by the word of the Father. Through this process, they receive their *name* as a son of God, and the Spirit of the Son as their *life*. Then, through baptism, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. The implications of new birth and baptism reveal the *two key elements of sanctification*. Through His parables, Jesus described these two elements of sanctification as minas and talents.

Before we consider these two elements of sanctification in detail, it is helpful to understand that a son of God's name, mina and talent are given to them by God according to their *calling*. The calling of God is His purpose for each person. It is what God has sovereignly chosen, or elected, them to be and to do as His son. The calling of God is not dependent upon the natural capacities that are associated with a person's identity. Concerning this point, Paul wrote, 'For you *see your calling*, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, *are called*. But *God has chosen* the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty.'²¹ God did this so that no flesh would glory in His presence.²²

16 1Co 11:17

20 Tit 3:5

17 1Co 11:18-21.
1Co 3:18-21

21 1Co 1:26-27

22 1Co 1:29

18 1Co 11:27-32

19 1Co 2:15

Understanding first love

If a person's calling is who God has chosen them to be, they make their election sure by doing the works that He has prepared for them to do as a son of God. This is what the Scriptures call 'sanctification'. We could say that a person's sanctification is the *expression* of their calling. It involves a person presenting themselves in the authority of their name, by faith, for fellowship in the body of Christ, and multiplying the life of God through offering.

Mina

In the first instance, sanctification is revealed through the expression of a person's name as a son of God. Of course, we are not referring to the name that they received from their parents when they were a baby. The name of every person in history was discussed by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and recorded in the book of life, before the creation of the heavens and the earth.²³ This name defined who God planned them to be and the works that they were to do as a son of God. King David described God's thoughts regarding a person's name as 'more in number than the sand'.²⁴

A person receives their name by the grace of the Father when they are born from above of incorruptible seed through the living and enduring word of God.²⁵ 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 to do the works of their named sonship. In this regard, we recall the words of Jesus, who said to His disciples, 'Behold, *I give you the authority* to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because *your names are written in heaven*.'²⁶

The authority of a person's name is typified in one of Jesus' parables as a *mina*. He taught that 'a certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, "Do business till I come".'²⁷ The reward for multiplying the mina, which each slave received in equal measure, was authority over cities.²⁸

In this parable, the nobleman refers to Jesus. If the mina represents the authority of a person's name that is received from the Father, from whom every name in heaven and on earth is derived, why did Jesus teach that the mina was given by Him?²⁹ The answer is that the interaction between the nobleman and his servants

23 Psa 139:16

27 Luk 19:12-13

24 Psa 139:18

28 Luk 19:17,19

25 1Pe 1:23

29 Eph 3:14-15

26 Luk 10:19-20

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describes the point at which an *adopted* son of God begins to *confess Christ as their Lord*, by the Holy Spirit.³⁰ Christ then directs them to the Father to be born again of His word.³¹ Regarding this birthing process, Jesus said, ‘Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but *the Father abiding in Me does His works*.’³²

Through the process of being born from above, every believer receives a *mina* from the Father by the word of Christ. Each believer has the same quotient of authority to be the son whom the Father has named them to be. In this regard, the Father loves and honours each son of God, equally.

To summarise, a new believer is firstly adopted as a son of God. Then, because they are a son by adoption, the Father births them from above with the seed of His life, making Him the Father of their spirit.³³ At the same time, the Father gives to them the Spirit of the Son of God, through whom they are able to express and demonstrate their sonship as a member of the Father’s household.³⁴ Inherent in the name of a son of God is the ownership of their identity and the authority to express their sonship. The *mina* represents the authority that has been given to them as a mandate to do the works that belong to their sonship.

A measure of faith

A son of God can only multiply their *mina* *by faith*. This is because *faith* is the capacity to exercise the authority of one’s name. As Paul explained, ‘*Without faith it is impossible to please Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is *a rewarder of those who seek Him*.’³⁵ A person pleases God by being the person that He named them to be. As we have already noted, the reward associated with pleasing the Father, by multiplying the *mina*, is authority over cities in the new heavens and earth.

Paul specifically described the capacity to exercise the authority of one’s name as ‘a measure of faith’ that is allotted to each person by God the Father once a person has received their name through the process of new birth.³⁶ This *faith* *continues* to come to them ‘from faith to faith’ by hearing the word of God.³⁷ It is evident that a person has received *faith* from God when they present themselves to do the works that are associated with their name. As the apostle James testified, ‘I will show you my *faith* by my works.’³⁸ These works are called ‘the obedience of *faith*’.³⁹

30 1Co 12:3

34 Gal 4:6

38 Jas 2:18

31 Joh 14:6

35 Heb 11:6

39 Rom 1:5.

32 Joh 14:10

36 Rom 12:3

Rom 16:26

33 Heb 12:9

37 Rom 1:17.
Rom 10:17

Doing the works of sonship in the obedience of faith reveals ‘the righteousness of faith’. The *first* work of the righteousness of faith is to *speak*.⁴⁰ A person who stands in faith to speak in the authority of their name is not seeking empowerment for a ministry work from others.⁴¹ Neither are they seeking to function by carnal ministry modes.⁴²

Rather, a person speaks in the righteousness of faith because the word that has been preached to them is now in them; it is in their mouth and in their heart.⁴³ With this faith, a son of God presents themselves, in the authority of their name, for fellowship with their brethren.

A person’s viability as a son of God is not proven through self-defined initiatives. This is *not* what it means to stand in faith. A person receives faith by hearing the word of God. Faith is given to them so that they can stand in the authority of their name to *meet and speak* in fellowship with their brethren in Christ. This is the *context* in which they *speak in a spirit of faith*.⁴⁴

A spirit of adoption

When a person speaks in a spirit of faith, they are demonstrating, with joyful assurance, that they are a son of God. The Holy Spirit, who continues to regenerate and renew their identity, is also bearing witness to their spirit that they are a son of God.⁴⁵ For this reason, they press in, by faith, to obtain the inheritance that they are entitled to as a son of the Father. As we will consider in the next section, this inheritance is the divine nature. They become partakers of the divine nature through participation in Christ’s offering.⁴⁶ The motivation to participate in this offering is a spirit of adoption, and is expressed through a believer’s ongoing and assured cry of ‘Abba! Father!’⁴⁷

Importantly, Paul explained that a person who confesses ‘Abba! Father!’ by a spirit of adoption, is *no longer in bondage to fear*.⁴⁸ Paul was referring to the same fear from which Abraham was delivered when the word of Yahweh came to him, saying, ‘*Do not be afraid*, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.’⁴⁹ A person experiences fear when their imagination of what the blessing of God means for their life is not being realised. Their problem is that their understanding of God’s blessing is informed by their fleshly desires rather than by the Spirit.⁵⁰ When their imagined hope is not being realised, their heart becomes sick or depressed.⁵¹ This state of depression will be evidenced by the frustration, agitation, cynicism,

40 Rom 10:6

41 Rom 10:6

42 Rom 10:7

43 Rom 10:8

44 2Co 4:13.

Psa 116:13-19

45 Tit 3:5. Rom 8:16

46 2Pe 1:4

47 Rom 8:15

48 Rom 8:15

49 Gen 15:1

50 1Co 2:9-16

51 Pro 13:12

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fatigue and partiality that they demonstrate as they live their life and interact with others in the church.

Motivated by fear, a person will either seek personal validity and empowerment through association with a key figure or group that they perceive to be spiritually pre-eminent, or they will endeavour to find themselves through their own fleshly, religious efforts. Both of these responses represent a person's fearful unwillingness to present themselves, by faith, for fellowship in the authority of their name. From their natural perspective, they think that they will *lose themselves* if their sonship is dependent upon maintaining fellowship with their brethren in Christ. This is the very fear that motivated the slave with one mina to hide his mina by wrapping it in a handkerchief.⁵²

The truth is, a person *will* lose their image of themselves when they die with Christ and are joined to His fellowship. However, in this fellowship, they will find their sonship. Jesus said, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must *deny himself* [his own image], and take up his cross daily and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it.'⁵³

The spiritual condition of a person is not dependent upon their comprehension of theological concepts or their many well-intentioned endeavours, but on their ability to meet and be met by their brethren *in one Spirit*.⁵⁴ A person who has difficulty meeting or is difficult to meet is not walking according to the Spirit. The way that they relate with others will be instinctively *strategic* as they seek affirmation from others for the image that they have of themselves. This complex mode of living and relating is fleshly and deceived. It is an alternative to living and relating to others in sincere faith.⁵⁵

A person who has received the faith of God ceases to live in a spirit of fear. Because they trust their Father, they are able to trust and openly converse with their brothers and sisters in Christ. This is the childlike simplicity that Jesus said is necessary for receiving and entering the kingdom of heaven. Specifically, He said, 'Truly I say to you, unless you are converted [turn from living in bondage to fear] and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.'⁵⁶ As we considered in chapter one, to become like a little child is to cry 'Abba! Father!' in a spirit of adoption.

52 Luk 19:20

56 Mat 18:3

53 Luk 9:23-24

54 1Co 12:13

55 1Ti 1:5-6

Paul was testifying to this simplicity when he wrote, 'For our boasting is this: the testimony of our conscience that we conducted ourselves [lit: we had our conversation] in the world in *simplicity and godly sincerity*, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God [talents], and more abundantly toward you'.⁵⁷ Their faith was evident because they presented themselves for fellowship according to their sanctification. From this fellowship of offering, they were able to minister the grace of God to others. This brings our attention to the second element of sanctification.

Talent

The second element of sanctification pertains to 'talents'. Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven 'is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey'.⁵⁸

Talents are from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and are given by Christ. They refer to the four dimensions of God's grace (word, life, Spirit and love) that come from Christ's hand. Sons of God receive grace through the ministry of messengers who are in Christ's hand as He walks among His lampstand churches.⁵⁹

Talents are given to a person according to their abilities. As we noted earlier, these abilities are a feature of a person's identity, which continues to be regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. We know that the abilities of children emerge as they grow and mature. However, they also need to be nurtured through training and diligent application. That said, *abilities are not talents*. While talent is given according to ability, not everyone who has abilities receives multiple talents. Talents belong to a person's calling; and calling and name meet in *offering*. Failure to recognise the difference between abilities and talents has been a source of confusion in the church. This confusion has given rise to presumption and corruption within presbyteries and Christian congregations.

A person receives the gift of talents from Christ *after* they have been born of God and come into the house of the Son through baptism. That is, talents are given to slaves of righteousness. Their slavehood to Christ results in their sanctification as a son of God.⁶⁰ As a believer participates in the offering of Christ as a member of His body, they are also multiplying the grace of life as a son of God. Their reward

57 2Co 1:12

58 Mat 25:14-15

59 Rev 1:12-18.
Eph 4:7-12

60 Rom 6:19

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in the new heavens and earth depends upon the extent to which the talents they received in this age are multiplied.

A person exercises their talent as a son of God according to the authority of the mina. In this regard, we note the teaching of Paul, who explained that faith grants a person access into the grace of God in which a believer stands and exults in the hope of the glory of God.⁶¹ This is the hope of receiving their full inheritance as a son of God.

We learn from Paul that the gifts and the calling of God are given without repentance.⁶² However, this does not mean that, once a person has received a gift from Christ, their salvation or sonship is assured. Jesus was making this point when He said to His disciples, ‘Many will say to Me in that day, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!”’⁶³

Evidently, the gift of Christ can be used to advance the ministry projection or imagination that a person has of themselves. This is in conflict with their calling, and means that their ministry endeavours are not an expression of their sanctified sonship. Christ did not know these ones, because the exercise of their talent was not according to the sanctification of their name, by faith. Through sanctification, a person and their gift should be the same thing. *They* should be the gift.

Sober judgement

Sober judgement, motivated by the realities of faith, integrate abilities with the talents or grace that Christ gives. What is sober judgement? Paul wrote, ‘I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound [or sober] judgement, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith.’⁶⁴

A person who has received a measure of faith demonstrates that they are living by faith when they present themselves for fellowship, according to their sanctification. This is a person who views themselves and others with sober judgement. They do not think more or less highly of themselves than they ought. Rather, by the Spirit, they have cast down the imaginations and high thoughts that they have of themselves.

61 Rom 5:1-2

62 Rom 11:29

63 Mat 7:22-23

64 Rom 12:3

Instead of pursuing an alternative image of themselves or their ministry, they bring every thought regarding who they are and how they function into captivity to the obedience of Christ.⁶⁵ Captivity to the obedience of Christ describes our slavehood in the house of the Son. This slavehood results in our sanctification as sons of God.

We can consider sober judgement as 'rightly discerning the body of Christ' and our participation within His body.⁶⁶ When we do not discern the body of Christ from the basis of sanctification, we become weak and sick, and may even die before our time.⁶⁷

Worship

With sober judgement, a person is able to properly worth themselves and worth others. This is fundamental to worshipping in spirit and in truth. Jesus taught that 'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must *worship in spirit and truth*'.⁶⁸ When we are born of God, we have the ability to worship the Lord because the Spirit of God is in us. This is evident because the Holy Spirit gives to us the capacity to love and appreciate others. This capacity replaces the self-centredness which, otherwise, gives rise to comparisons and competition, as well as to jealousy and conflict. These fallen attitudes and behaviours cause the wounding of others and our own alienation from fellowship within families, the church, and the presbytery.

Worshipping in spirit and truth means relating to others *with integrity*. A son of God who has integrity is not attempting to project an image of themselves that is self-defined or created. They are not presenting themselves one way in a particular fellowship context such as the church, and then engaging in another context, such as their home, in a different manner.

As we are increasingly becoming real about who we are, and recognising the name and grace of our brethren, we are being restored to first love at the communion table and in the presbytery. By this means, *the ground of deceit is undermined*. This means that the truth regarding the names of each person is being made known, and the liberty of the sons of God is being promoted.⁶⁹

65 2Co 10:4-5

69 Joh 8:31-32

66 Rom 12:4-8

67 1Co 11:27-32

68 Joh 4:24

Relationship

Worship enables relationship, which is the capacity to be joined together in truth. Relationship is demonstrated by the action of laying down one's life for the brethren in the midst of the fellowship of the body of Christ, and then under Christ's hand in the presbytery.

Relationship involves the *communication of faith*. This communication joins the sanctification of a person's name with the authority of the name, by which an individual stands up and confesses faith in their calling as a son of God. Then, as a firstfruits Christian, they are able to encourage others *to follow their faith*. The apostle Paul exhorted believers, saying, 'Remember those who rule over you [who lead], who have spoken the word of God to you, *whose faith follow*, considering the outcome of their conduct [*conversation*].'⁷⁰

Every son of God must live by faith.⁷¹ If this is so, how do we 'follow' another's faith? The life and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit reveals the answer to this question. Each Person in the Godhead says, 'Follow My faith', by presenting Themselves in fellowship to make offering. The nature of each Person's offering, which manifests the works of Their faith, is to *reveal the other*. That is, They follow one another's faith by standing in faith and giving Themselves to reveal another.

We follow another's faith by joining the fellowship of offering in the same spirit of faith that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit demonstrate. We are able to follow another's faith because we are standing in the authority of our name, and are perceiving and receiving the authority of another's name as it is being exercised by their faith. The first step in offering is to receive what others lay down or minister to us through their offering. As we receive and live what has been ministered to us in sanctification, the one who ministered it to us, by offering, is revealed. At the same time, our own name, or sanctification, is revealed as we express what was given to us.

Fellowship

In worship and relationship, a person is able to have fellowship with their brethren in Christ. The apostle John explained that this fellowship is with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.⁷² The context for fellowship is called 'the name of the Lord'. This

70 Heb 13:7

71 Heb 10:38

72 1Jn 1:3

is why Jesus said, 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them.'⁷³

It is only possible for a person to have fellowship with others in Christ when the love of God has been poured into their heart. The love of God is the basis for true fellowship. This will be tangibly evident as brethren encourage one another to sanctification, meet in one Spirit, and show affection and compassion for one another.⁷⁴

Fellowship is where the communication of faith becomes effective in the communion service. This is because the communion service is the place where every member of the body of Christ who presents themselves in faith is equipped with grace from Christ for the works of their sonship. The fellowship of the communion extends to fellowship in families and in the presbytery, as sons of God stand and exercise the grace that they have received. Writing to his friend Philemon, Paul said, 'I pray that the fellowship [or *communication*] of your faith may *become effective* through the knowledge of every good thing which is in you for Christ's sake.'⁷⁵ The fellowship of faith becomes effective when it leads to the works of righteousness. How does this happen?

The grace of God is depicted in Christ's parable as talents.⁷⁶ Paul described the grace of God as 'Christ's gift'.⁷⁷ This gift is ministered by an individual from the fellowship of the four administrations within the body of Christ, which enable offering.⁷⁸ In other words, the gifts of grace are ministered from the offering of Christ through the word of graced messengers who have been restored to the hand of Christ as part of a *presbytery*.⁷⁹

The presbytery is the holy ground of the *hand of Christ*.⁸⁰ It is a fellowship of overseers, deacons and firstfruits brethren whose relationship with each other is marked by effective communication and dialogue. Although the command that calls for obedience and sanctification is initiated from grace that is given to individual presbyters, it does not come from them as an autocratic demand that takes dominion over the faith of others. In other words, the fellowship and the dialogue of presbytery is never bypassed by those with ascension gift grace or by those who are receiving grace for their work of ministry as a son of God.

The ministry of grace is from a dialogue of fellowship that is facilitated by craftsmen. Craftsmen are men who have been given apostolic, prophetic, teaching

73 Mat 18:20

77 Eph 4:7

74 Php 2:1

78 Eph 4:11-12

75 Php 6

79 Rev 1:20

76 Mat 25:14-15

80 Rev 1:20

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and evangelistic grace from Christ. They are able to focus the operation of the gifts according to the four administrations of grace.

A person who has presented themselves to participate in this fellowship is able to receive grace as it is ministered from the hand of Christ by ascension-gifted men who are also part of the presbytery. By this means, they are equipped to minister, through offering, from the basis of the four administrations as well. This is what Paul meant when he said that the saints are equipped for the work of ministry by apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers, and that this ministry results in the building up of the body of Christ.⁸¹

King David testified to this very principle when he prayed, 'Now therefore, our God we thank You and praise Your glorious name [the context of fellowship]. But who am I, and who are my people, that we should be able to offer so willingly as this? For all things come from You, and of Your own we have given You. [Lit: out of your own hand we have given You].'⁸² David was acknowledging that he was only able to offer what he had received from the hand of God.

Offering

Those who are standing in sanctification, and presenting themselves by faith in fellowship, are able to receive what is being given to them in offering. In faith, when they receive what is ministered to them, *it becomes theirs*. Then, according to sanctification, with the capacities of the talents that belong to their name and abilities, they are able to multiply what was given to them.

They make offering by laying down their life to reveal another, as well as to reveal what has been given to them. They multiply what has been given to them *by trading with their talent*. In reality, this means that they are doing the works that the Father planned for them before the creation of the heavens and the earth. By this means, the will of God is achieved.

In the fellowship of offering, the one who has received what is ministered to them will maintain integrity with those who ministered to them. In other words, they keep faith with their brethren in Christ and with those who deacon offerings in the house of the Lord. By this means, they reveal, by offering, the grace of God that has been committed to them, multiplying it through *diligent application*.

81 Eph 4:12

82 1Ch 29:13

A son of God who presents themselves, by faith, to participate in offering is presenting themselves for service *as a living sacrifice*.⁸³ Offering is how they live. Their obedience is evident as they do the work that is given to them to do, in love, and according to their name. It is in relation to a work that has been given to them that a person can show fruitful initiative. Through this mode of offering, the will of God, or one's sanctification, is proven. What is true concerning one's sonship can be affirmed, and what is imagined or projected can be put off.

Jesus described the attitude that a slave in His house is to have toward their work, saying, 'When you have done all those things which you are commanded, say, "We are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do".'⁸⁴ To testify that we are unprofitable slaves means that we accept that we are not yet fully competent. Our competence develops through our ongoing participation in offering. The confession that we are unprofitable slaves also reveals the attitude of a person who is not seeking for identity verification or status through what they are doing.

The example of Jeremiah

The commission of Jeremiah provides a helpful illustration of the elements of sanctification, fellowship and offering. In order to effectively minister the word of the Lord, Yahweh required Jeremiah to stand up in faith, according to his name. The mandate that Yahweh was giving to Jeremiah was consistent with his name. This was confirmed to Jeremiah by the word of the Lord, when He said, 'Before I formed you in the womb I knew you; before you were born I sanctified you; I ordained you a prophet to the nations.'⁸⁵

Yahweh could not meet Jeremiah, nor engage him in his works, until Jeremiah received faith and then presented himself, by faith, to receive what Yahweh wanted to give to him. Jeremiah needed to let go of his fleshly perceptions of himself and his inadequacies. He said to Yahweh, 'Alas, Lord God! Behold, I do not know how to speak, because I am a youth.'⁸⁶ These excuses demonstrated an absence of faith. Like Abraham, Jeremiah needed to be delivered from his fears and to receive the faith of God for the work to which he was being called. He was then able to consider himself and his work with sober judgement.

83 Rom 12:1

84 Luk 17:10

85 Jer 1:5

86 Jer 1:6

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To deliver Jeremiah of fear, and grant faith to him, Yahweh said to Jeremiah, ‘*Do not say, “I am a youth,” because everywhere I send you, you shall go, and all that I command you, you shall speak. Do not be afraid of them, for I am with you to deliver you, declares the Lord.*’⁸⁷ By this means, Jeremiah was receiving the ear and the mouth of a disciple so that, in a spirit of faith, he would be able to participate in the prophetic work to which God was calling him.

Jeremiah then recorded that ‘the Lord *stretched out His hand and touched my mouth, and the Lord said to me, “Behold, I have put My words in your mouth.”*’⁸⁸ We note in this passage that the grace of God was coming from the hand of Yahweh to equip and send Jeremiah as a prophetic messenger. Importantly, the word now belonged to Jeremiah. Through the word of Jeremiah, nations and kingdoms would be plucked up and broken down, destroyed and overthrown, built and planted.⁸⁹ However, Jeremiah would also personally suffer for the word that he was speaking. In this regard, Jeremiah was taking up *his own cross*.

Living in first love

The Spirit is calling every Christian to live in first love. First love is not simply an ambition that we are to have, which will be realised once we have been made perfect. We are called to live in first love, now!

The capacity to live by love is given to us when we are born of God, are baptised into Christ, and continue to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. The apostle Peter reminds us that ‘His 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.*’⁹⁰

We are all in the process of being restored to first love, which will be the context and nature of our life forever in the new heavens and earth.⁹¹ We all need restoration because we have all been affected by the Fall. To fall from first love is to live by principles that are not heavenly. They are earthly, or worldly, principles. Paul summarised these principles as ‘another law’ that is within us because of the Fall. It is a law that is other than the law of love that defines the way in which God lives.

A person who accepts their need to change and to be delivered from living by their own law, and also accepts that the Lord is causing them to grow in the capacity to

87 Jer 1:7-8

91 Rev 22:2,14

88 Jer 1:9

89 Jer 1:10

90 2Pe 1:3

Understanding first love

live in first love, is *already in heavenly places*. This is what Jesus meant when He said, 'To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God.'⁹² They understand that the process for overcoming sin and the other law is an inherent feature of life in first love.

In the next chapter, we will consider Adam and Eve's fall from the context of first love in the garden of Eden. This will help us to understand the issues that cause us to fall from heavenly places, and the process to which Christ joins us so that we can overcome the other law, and the fear and shame associated with living by this principle.

92 Rev 2:7

CHAPTER 3

The fall of mankind

The origin of mankind

God's Everlasting Covenant purpose and plan for mankind is summarised by the statement, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.'¹ This statement communicated the shared initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to create and bring to glory a great multitude of sons. His sons would be born from above with the life of God, and joined to Their fellowship.²

Corresponding with this plan, the Scriptures record that 'God *created man in His own image*; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them'.³ It is notable that this passage of Scripture does not mention man's creation in the likeness of God. Some Bible commentators have suggested that this verse demonstrates that the terms 'image' and 'likeness' are simply synonyms that equally reveal God as the reference point for the creation of man. However, to truly comprehend the implications of being created in the image and likeness of

1 Gen 1:26

2 Heb 2:10.
Rev 21:3,7

3 Gen 1:27

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God, it is necessary to understand who God is and what His Everlasting Covenant entails.

As we considered in Part 2 of *The Steps of Salvation*, God (Hebrew: *Elohim*) is three coequal Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who are, and who possess together, the substance of one Spirit and one life. They live by offering, where each Person in the Godhead lays down His life to reveal the other two. As They each give themselves to reveal the other two, the three are seen as one God, whose name is Yahweh.⁴ Through offering, Their life is multiplied and Their purpose, or will, is achieved.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have no origin, nor end.⁵ In contrast, man has an origin. *God is the source of man's origin.* Man's origin was initiated before the creation of the heavens and the earth, when the Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together to create mankind in Their image and likeness.⁶ We note the wonderful reality that *man's origin is the gift of who he is.* Apart from God's kind intention to create us in His image and likeness, we would not exist.

The apostle Paul described God's Everlasting Covenant discussion as 'the counsel of His will'.⁷ In this discussion, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit determined the names of every person who would ever be born. They wrote these names in the book of life.⁸ In chapter two, we noted that each name detailed who God intended a person to be, and the good works they were to do as a son of God in the fellowship of Yahweh. A person's name, therefore, defines the will of God for them. Importantly, God predestined every person to be a son of God, and wrote down the details of their name before the beginning of creation. This means that a person's name is sourced in their origin, who is God. Paul summarised this reality, writing, 'We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them'.⁹

When God created Adam and Eve, He gave them possession of their own identity. This was a fundamental aspect of mankind's creation in the image of God. It meant that Adam and Eve, and all their children, were given the capacity, dignity and freedom to possess and express their own lives. Importantly, this faculty and freedom of choice meant that Adam and Eve could present themselves for fellowship with Yahweh and do the works that He had predestined for them as a son of God. To present themselves in this way was to be in the image of God. As

4 Deu 6:4 8 Psa 139:16

5 Exo 3:14. Heb 7:3 9 Eph 2:10

6 Gen 1:26

7 Eph 1:11

they remained connected to the source of their name, they could fulfil the works that God had planned for them.

In the image of God, Adam and Eve were able to know God and know each other. While they remained in God's image, man *drew his life and likeness* entirely from God. In other words, *the likeness of God was found in the fellowship of the image*. As Adam and Eve remained connected to the source of their origin, by continuing in fellowship with Yahweh, their mortality was sustained, and they were able to know and do the works that were predestined for them. By doing these works, Adam and Eve were participating in the fulfilment of God's will, and revealing the righteousness of God. This is what it means to be in the likeness of God.

God's will is achieved through offering, and reveals the oneness of Yahweh as being like a great fire, enfolding itself.¹⁰ This is the context of fellowship to which we have been called. *God is light*, and we have been called to *walk in the light*.¹¹ To be in the likeness of God, and to participate in the works of righteousness through obedience to the word of their name, is how a person walks in the light. This involves them priesting themselves as a living sacrifice in the context of Yahweh's fellowship.¹² The garden of Eden was initially the context for this fellowship. The sons of God have now been raised to dwell in heavenly places, in Christ Jesus, as their new context.¹³

Describing the nature of a person who was in the likeness of God, Solomon wrote, 'But the path [lit: way or manner] of the just [righteous] is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day'.¹⁴ Quoting the prophet Daniel, Jesus said that, on that perfect day, 'The righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father'.¹⁵ We could say that, in the likeness of God, a person is clothed for their priestly service with the very light in which they are walking.¹⁶ It is the light of God Himself.¹⁷

Calling and election

Man's creation in the image and likeness of God reveals the principles of *calling* and *election*. The calling of God refers to His purpose for each person. This is the call to be the particular son that God predestined them to be. Following the fall of mankind, the principle of calling was re-established in Isaac. God said to Abraham, 'In Isaac your seed [descendants] shall be called'.¹⁸ What did this mean?

10 Eze 1:4

14 Pro 4:18

18 Gen 21:12

11 IJn 1:5

15 Mat 13:43.
Dan 12:3

12 Rom 12:1

16 Rev 3:18

13 Eph 2:6

17 IJn 1:5

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Isaac was born according to the word of promise that God had spoken to Abraham. Furthermore, on Mount Moriah, Isaac joined the offering of the Lamb of God, foreshadowing the implications of baptism. Paul explained that those who were ‘called in Isaac’, are the children of promise.¹⁹ Isaac’s birth and participation in offering foreshadowed new birth in the New Covenant. In the New Covenant, the sons of men are born of the Spirit by the word of God, and come into the fellowship of Christ through baptism.²⁰ Receiving this calling recovers a person to the image of God, where they can walk in the light of the word of life, have fellowship with their brethren in Christ, and fulfil their predestination in His likeness.

God’s predestination for each person reveals the principle of *election*. This describes the name and works that God *sovereignly chose* as a possession for every person, before the foundation of the world. The elect of God are those who have embraced their predestination, and are fulfilling the works that God has chosen for them. They make their calling and election sure by choosing what God has chosen for them. The apostle Peter said that if a person did this, they would never stumble.²¹ A believer stumbles in their Christian walk when they desire to make a name for themselves or when they covet the name and expression of another.

The principle of the election was revealed in Jacob.²² We recall that while Jacob and Esau were still in their mother’s womb, God declared the word of their predestination. He said to Rebekah, ‘Two nations are in your womb, two peoples shall be separated from your body; one people shall be stronger than the other, and the older shall serve the younger.’²³

The experiences and responses of Esau and Jacob reveal that God’s predestination for a person is unchangeable. It is not based on any extraneous factor such as heritage, ability or training but, rather, is declared by the word of God. Esau was unwilling to accept God’s election. He believed that the blessing belonged to him by birthright. Furthermore, he was furious that Jacob had taken advantage of him and secured the blessing by deceit. Instead of honouring God’s word in the matter, Esau was unable to forgive his brother and to appreciate who God had named Jacob to be. For this reason, Esau himself was unable to find forgiveness from God.²⁴ His resulting bitterness grew to become an ancient hatred between the two nations.²⁵

However, Jacob also had to learn that the blessing of election could not be obtained through his fleshly schemes and fallen propensities. For this purpose, Jacob

19 Rom 9:8

20 Gal 4:28-29

21 2Pe 1:10

22 Isa 45:4

23 Gen 25:23

24 Mar 11:25-26.

Heb 12:17

25 Eze 35:1-5

endured a prolonged season of trial and testing.²⁶ At the conclusion of this season, Jacob wrestled with the Lord and received a new name that was commensurate with his election. He was no longer Jacob, the ‘deceiver’. He had been blessed with the name Israel, meaning ‘prince with God’. Notably, Jacob walked with a limp from that day forward.²⁷ Suffering became an ongoing reality for him as he participated, by name, in the unfolding covenant plan of God. This work was to raise twelve sons in the land of promise, who would become the firstfruits of God’s chosen people. We will discuss this further in chapter six.

The nature of fellowship in the garden

When God created man in His image, He placed him in the garden of Eden. This was the paradise of God, where Adam and Eve had fellowship with the Lord and drew their life and likeness from Him. The Bible records that ‘in the day that God created man [in His image], He made him in the likeness of God’.²⁸ Practically speaking, what did this look like?

Each day, in the cool of the evening, Adam and Eve met and conversed with Yahweh Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²⁹ The word ‘cool’ in Hebrew is *ruach* and can be translated as ‘wind, breeze, breath, spirit’. Jesus used this same imagery to describe a person who is *born of the Spirit*.³⁰ Evidently, Adam and Eve’s fellowship with Yahweh was ‘in the Spirit’.

The cool of the evening would have been about the time of day when the couple were preparing their evening meal, using the fruit of the trees that were growing in the garden of Eden. Of all the fruiting trees that were in the garden, the most important was the tree of life.³¹ Its fruit was the main course of Adam and Eve’s fellowship meal with Yahweh. As they ate the fruit of the tree of life in fellowship with Yahweh, the light of God’s word mandated, or clothed, them for the works of righteousness that He had prepared for them.³² It provided them with the wisdom and understanding necessary for their participation in the will of God, and sustained their mortal bodies. In this sense, they were thoroughly equipped by the word of the Lord, for the good works that God had prepared for them to do.³³

The account of life in the garden of Eden prior to the fall of mankind reveals that communing with the Lord is an essential feature of being in the image and likeness of God. King David noted this reality, writing, ‘Trust in the Lord, and do good;

26 Gen 31:38-42

30 Joh 3:7-8

27 Gen 32:22-31

31 Gen 2:9

28 Gen 5:1

32 Isa 61:10

29 Gen 3:8-9

33 2Ti 3:16-17

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*dwell in the land, and feed on His faithfulness. Delight yourself also in the Lord, and He shall give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord, trust also in Him, and He shall bring it to pass. He shall bring forth your righteousness as the light, and your justice as the noonday.*³⁴

The deception and transgression of Eve

Let us now consider the fall of man from the image and likeness of God. Prior to this event, Satan and his demonic angels had fallen from the heavenly stations to which God had appointed them. They fell because they were unwilling to function as a servant order in relation to God's Everlasting Covenant purpose for mankind. Instead of *servicing*, unrighteousness was found in Satan because of his *trading*. Having become filled with violence, Satan sought an opportunity to destroy mankind through deceit.³⁵ He did this by positioning himself at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.³⁶

While Eve was separated from Adam and the Lord, she entertained a conversation with Satan at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan's first objective was to determine Eve's understanding of God's command regarding eating the fruit of this tree. Prior to Eve's formation from the rib of Adam, God had said to Adam that 'from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will *surely* die'.³⁷ However, Eve's response to Satan revealed a slight vagueness regarding this command. She said, 'God has said, "You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, *lest* you die"'.³⁸

Satan seized on Eve's lack of clarity on the point and said, 'You surely will not die! For God knows that in the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil'.³⁹ With these words, Satan was calling God's honesty into question and attacking His motives. He implied that God was not trustworthy or being truthful, and that God was keeping from Adam and Eve something that was within their reach to obtain.

Satan proposed to Eve that she could have life apart from eating the fruit of the tree of life in fellowship with Yahweh. By eating the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil, she could become the origin of her own image and, like God, become the source of her own life and works. By this means, Adam and Eve could rise above their present state. According to the lie of Satan, God was limiting the potential of Adam and Eve, while Satan was offering them the opportunity to advance.

34 Psa 37:3-6

38 Gen 3:2

35 Eze 28:16

39 Gen. 3:4-5

36 Gen 3:1

37 Gen 2:17

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As Eve heeded Satan's proposition, her *perception* of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was *distorted*. To her, the fruit of the tree *now* appeared to be good for food, pleasant to the eyes and desirable to make one wise.⁴⁰ During the thousands of years that Eve had supped with Adam and the Lord in the garden of Eden, the fruit had never before appealed to her in this way. What had happened?

The desire to be the source of her own definition had been aroused within Eve as she gave her ear to Satan's lie. Consequently, she rejected God as the origin of her creation and the source of her predestination, and wilfully transgressed God's word by eating the fruit. Eve ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil because she desired an image of herself that was different from the image in which God had created her. That is, instead of continuing in her sanctification as the wife and helper to Adam that God had created her to be, Eve sought to become the origin of a new image for herself.⁴¹

The apostle Paul warned that we can be deceived and fall into transgression in the same way that Eve did. Writing to the Corinthians, he said, 'But I am afraid that, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds will be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.'⁴² With Paul's words in mind, transgression can be understood as straying from simple and devoted obedience to Jesus. We stray when we give our ear to a spirit or word that is different from the word of God which is preached by Christ's messengers.⁴³

These alternative words are put forward by people in the church who do not have the same spirit of faith as do Christ's messengers. Their teaching is contrary to the gospel of sonship that Paul preached. Jesus described these people as being part of the synagogue of Satan.⁴⁴ They believe and teach that God values a person's self-defined initiatives to serve Him. They propose that this is faith, and deny that eternal life can only be obtained through ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a sanctified member of His body. Through smooth and flattering speech, these ministers of Satan deceive those who are unsuspecting and vulnerable.⁴⁵

Like Eve, we become vulnerable to these other spirits and other words when we are disconnected from the Lord and from His people. However, we can be protected from the devices of Satan by remaining in fellowship with the Lord and with our brethren in the body of Christ. This is what it means to be *in the name of the Lord*. King Solomon declared that 'the name of the Lord is a strong tower; the

40 Gen 3:6

44 Rev 2:9. Rev 3:9

41 Gen 2:18,21-24

45 Rom 16:17-18

42 2Co 11:3

43 2Co 11:4

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righteous run to it and are safe [set on high]'.⁴⁶ Running into the name of the Lord is the action of a person who has a spirit of adoption.⁴⁷ They have received faith that comes by hearing the word of God.⁴⁸ In a spirit of faith, they believe God's word, and present themselves for fellowship with their brethren.⁴⁹ This is how the shield of faith is a protection against the fiery darts of the enemy.⁵⁰

The sin of Adam

Acting from the basis of her self-made image, Eve endeavoured to convince Adam that her new-found perspective was a good one. Eve wanted Adam to accept the image that she had created for herself, and to join her in the romantic pursuit of all future possibilities that she believed this had opened for them. However, Eve's actions and opinions were simply a further expression of her transgression and disconnection from the image in which she had been created. She was not living or speaking the truth. This is because God is the source of all truth.⁵¹ Having sought to establish the origin of a new image outside of fellowship with God, she was living and expressing a lie.

By giving consideration to Eve's suggestion, Adam chose to exercise his mandate outside of the parameters of the word and direction that was coming from Yahweh. That is, he wanted to exercise his mandate in his own way. He wanted to pursue his own initiatives and ideas without the need for fellowship and dialogue with Yahweh at the tree of life.

It is notable that, having eaten the fruit, Eve was not initially aware that her transgression was a problem. Eve needed a word from outside herself in order to recognise her transgression and the disastrous effect that it was actually having on her and on others. If he had not sinned, Adam could have helped Eve to recover from her transgression. Together, they could have sought the Lord at the tree of life for wisdom concerning Eve's restoration. With this in mind, we note the instruction of Paul, who wrote, 'Brethren, if a man is overtaken in any trespass [wilful transgression], you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself lest you also be tempted'.⁵²

Clearly, Adam did not 'consider himself' when Eve approached him in her transgression. Instead, he succumbed to the temptation of becoming the origin of a new image, and the source of his own destiny. In contrast to Eve, Adam was not deceived at this point.⁵³ He knew what God had said. However, he chose the

46 Pro 18:10

50 Eph 6:16

47 Rom 8:15

51 Deu 32:4, Psa 31:5

48 Rom 10:17

52 Gal 6:1

49 2Co 4:13

53 1Ti 2:14

romantic option that Eve offered to him, rather than his own sanctified relationship with the Lord. Adam was disobedient to the word of God. This was sin. Through his disobedience, the eyes of both Adam and Eve were opened. Moreover, 'Sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned'.⁵⁴

God cursed the ground, or context, of Adam's mandate because of his disobedience. He said to Adam, 'Cursed is the ground *because of you*; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both *thorns and thistles* it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field.'⁵⁵ The context of his work would produce thorns and thistles that would wound him as he worked.

Importantly, this passage of Scripture can be equally translated as, 'Cursed is the ground *for your sake*'. In this regard, the ground had equally been cursed for Adam's sake so that he would cease from pursuing the expression of his mandate through the operation of another law (i.e. his own law), and return to the rest that comes through first love relationship with God. We will discuss this principle of cursing in further detail in chapter five.

The other law

Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because they desired to be the origin of their own image. That is, they wanted to create an image for themselves that was not dependent on God, who was the source of their origin. Pursuing this alternative image meant that they would no longer draw their life and likeness from God. In other words, as the origin of their new image, they were endeavouring to be the source of their own life and works. For this reason, after they had eaten of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, God said, 'Behold, the man has become *like* one of Us.'⁵⁶ This likeness was a stolen likeness. God was acknowledging that because man had become the origin of a new image, he was now the source of his own destiny and works.

Adam and Eve had chosen the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil as *their resource for life*. This was instead of the life and capacity that they were able to receive from God's word as they ate from the tree of life in fellowship with Yahweh. As Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, the desire to be the source of what was good or evil for them became a law within them. What they ate became part of their identity, affecting their capacity for reason, and their

54 Rom 5:12

55 Gen 3:17-18

56 Gen 3:22

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perceptions of themselves and others. This new law within them was different from the law of love that is established by the word of God.⁵⁷ It is for this reason that Paul called it ‘another law’.⁵⁸

Because Adam and Eve now lived by their own knowledge of good and evil, they were unable to know and understand themselves in relation to the predestination that God had planned for them. God had predestined Adam, Eve, and all their children to become sons of God in His image and likeness. Mankind had become disconnected from their predestination. Fallen men and women were now able to view their possibilities in life only from the basis of what they judged to be good or evil for themselves.

Fallen man’s knowledge of himself in relation to good and evil is *against* the knowledge of God. This desire to know himself as something that is apart from and outside of God, only reveals that fallen man does not know God at all. He only knows separation from God and from others. He is separated from his origin and from his predestination.

Using himself as an example, Paul explained that the other law *waged war* against the law of his mind, making him a prisoner of the law of sin.⁵⁹ By this, Paul meant that the other law affected the way in which he considered himself and other people, and the way in which he interpreted the situations that he found himself in. These distorted perceptions caused him to think and behave in a manner that was contrary to God’s law, and even contrary to sound reason. His sinful behaviours and passions were the evidence of his bondage to the law of sin, and brought him under the judgement of God’s law.

The apostle James also identified this *war* within a person as the effect of the other law. He described the other law as a person’s *lusts, or desires*. He explained that the operation of the other law within people is the source of *all conflict*, including conflict between Christians.⁶⁰ He noted that people who lust after a ministry profile, or any other self-defined image, invariably compare themselves with others. These comparisons give rise to covetousness, and even result in murder.⁶¹ While the other law is the basis for the literal killing of others, murder can also refer to unsalvageable breaches of relationship in the body of Christ.

Importantly, James explained that people who live by the other law are unable to obtain the righteousness that they desire, because they do not ask God for it.

57 1Jn 2:5

61 Jas 4:2

58 Rom 7:23

59 Rom 7:23

60 Jas 4:1

The fall of mankind

Even when they do ask, they are unable to receive it, because they are asking with the wrong motives.⁶² They are seeking, for example, spiritual gifts from God for the purpose of advancing their own ministry image. However, they are unwilling to present themselves, by faith, for fellowship so that they can find reflection and adjustment among their brethren in Christ in relation to their works. As Paul explained, and as we considered in chapter two, when a person presents themselves for offering, as a slave of righteousness, they obtain their sanctification as a son of God. The result is eternal life, and the evidence of this is that they will seek to live peaceably with all men.⁶³

John directly connected the lusts that operate within a person to the distorted perspective that Eve had of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We remember that Eve ‘saw that the tree was good for food [lust of the flesh], that it was pleasant to the eyes [lust of the eyes], and a tree desirable to make one wise [the pride of life]’.⁶⁴ John explained that these lusts are in *opposition to the life* that comes from the Father. A person who lives by these principles is unable to do the will of God.⁶⁵

Commenting specifically on the pride of life, Paul identified *imagination*s as projections of pride that exalt themselves against the knowledge of the predestination of sonship that belongs to, and establishes a person in, freedom, as a Christian.⁶⁶ A person receives the knowledge of sonship from the word of God that is spoken to them. The word of God reveals their name and sanctification to them. When they receive this word, their mind has the knowledge of God, and is no longer deceived. However, as we have already noted, a person’s imaginations and lusts, sourced in the other law, wage war against the law of their mind and make them a prisoner to the law of sin that is in the members of their body.⁶⁷

The law of sin

In addition to the other law, the outcome of the Fall was that sin became a governing power, or principle, within mankind.⁶⁸ The source of sin was the devil.⁶⁹ Jesus described him as ‘the father of lies’ and ‘a murderer from the beginning’.⁷⁰ Just as Satan sought the destruction of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden, sin seeks our destruction.⁷¹ As this happens, its heinous character is exposed, and we know that its source is from Satan.

62 Jas 4:3

66 2Co 10:5

70 Joh 8:44

63 Rom 6:22.
Heb 12:14

67 Rom 7:23

71 Rom 7:11

68 Rom 7:21

64 Gen 3:6. 1Jn 2:16

69 1Jn 3:8

65 1Jn 2:16

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In his letter to the Romans, Paul described sin as an organised power within a person that acts through the members of their body.⁷² This does not mean that sin usurps a person's will. If this were so, fallen men and women could not be accountable for their actions. Rather, *a person's will is the seat of sin*. What do we mean by this?

A person's will is a feature of their identity. It is their God-given right and ability to choose how and why they will act in a given situation. As a consequence of Adam and Eve's sin, the identity of every person has been tainted by the other law. When a person lives by the other law, the motives of their will are inherently and unavoidably self-centred. Because of this, sin is empowered within them as they act in accordance with their self-centred will. This is what James was explaining when he wrote, 'Each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [other law]. Then when lust has conceived, *it gives birth to sin*; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.'⁷³

The law of sin works within a person by *deception*. It is a law that motivates them to action, producing behaviours that result in outcomes that are detrimental to the individual and to others. The collusion of a person's own motivations, driven by imagination, covetousness and lust (i.e. our other law), with the law of sin, is an evil that is present within them and is destroying them.⁷⁴

When the word of God that is sent to us to give us direction for our lives is ministered to our minds, sin is aroused within us because of the operation of God's word. As God speaks to us, sin arouses itself, and seeks to impose itself upon us as our master.⁷⁵ Sin excites our imagination, causing us to covet and lust for a life and a destiny that has its own accompanying position, work, wealth, power and pleasures that we assume belong to our calling.⁷⁶ We claim it as our ministry mandate. However, these motivations are really the sinful passions that are aroused within us by sin and our other law when the word of God came to us.⁷⁷

We see that sin seeks to take opportunity through God's word, which comes to give a person direction and life.⁷⁸ It deceives them by motivating them to misappropriate God's word to their own self-centred motivations. When a person acts on this provocation, they disobey God and come under the judgement of God's word. This results in condemnation and death.⁷⁹

72 Rom 7:20,23

73 Jas 1:14-15

74 Rom 7:21

75 Rom 7:9

76 Rom 7:7-8

77 Rom 7:5

78 Rom 7:10

79 Rom 7:9-10

The conscience

The conscience of man is a fundamental faculty of his creation and life in the image and likeness of God. Prior to the Fall, man had fellowship ‘in the Spirit’ with Yahweh each day.⁸⁰ He knew himself in relation to God, the source of His origin. What man knew about himself, and how he was to live, was *true*. Man’s conscience enabled him to proceed from this fellowship to do the works that were consistent with this truth. That is, man’s conscience was able to bear witness with him that what he was doing, and the initiatives he was taking, were in accordance with the truth that he knew in fellowship with Yahweh.

As we have already considered, man endeavoured to become the origin of a new image, and the source of his own destiny, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Man’s resultant fall from the image and likeness of God had a consequential effect upon the operation of his conscience. Man’s conscience was no longer concerned with the truth that was sourced in fellowship with God and with his brethren. Instead, the concern of his conscience became man’s relation to himself. What do we mean by this?

As a consequence of the Fall, man’s conscience replaced the voice of God to him. His conscience now speaks from the basis of good and evil. Fallen man has become the origin of his own good and evil. He does not deny his evil. However, through his conscience, man summons himself, who has become evil, back to his *self-defined* good. Paul described this as an ‘evil conscience’.⁸¹ He noted that the thoughts of a person having a conscience that operates in this way are ‘alternatively accusing or else defending them’.⁸²

Having become like God in his knowledge of good and evil, man presumes to define his own good and its associated works. As far as man is concerned, his good is the truth. He demonstrates that he believes this to be so by imposing this standard of good on others, including God. That is, as man bears within himself the knowledge of good and evil, he presumes to be the judge of God and of others, just as he is the judge of himself.

Disconnected from his origin, and presuming to be the source of his own image, man’s life is now based on how he understands himself. Man’s self-knowledge is now the measure and goal of his life. Self-knowledge is man’s interminable striving to overcome his disunion with himself – the discrepancy between his good and his

80 Gen 3:8

81 Heb 10:22

82 Rom 2:15

evil – by thought. By unceasingly distinguishing his evil from the good of himself, he endeavours to achieve unity with himself. However, this is futility, because man can only truly know himself, and attain to what is good, in God, who is the source of all truth.

The wickedness of Cain

Following the Fall, and their departure from the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve conceived and brought forth two sons – Cain and Abel. These two sons were born in sin and with another law within their hearts. Besides their inevitable death, it was unclear what these two implications of the Fall would mean for them. However, this quickly became apparent once the two sons approached the age of personal accountability to make offering at the gate of the garden of Eden.

The Scriptures record that Abel became a keeper of sheep, while Cain became a tiller of the ground. This is not what God had intended Cain to become. It was Adam who had been called by God to order and tend the creation.⁸³ As the first born, Cain's work should have been priesthood.⁸⁴ However, through self-definition, Cain sought to make offering in the likeness of Adam's name and work. In Cain's mind, his identification as a ruler over the creation was confirmed by his successful cultivation of a harvest from the ground which had been cursed.⁸⁵

Because Cain did not offer according to his name, God rejected him and his offering. This rejection caused Cain to become angry. God tried to encourage Cain by explaining to him that there was a way for Cain to be acceptable. God was giving Cain an opportunity to understand his sanctification. Cain could then have made offering in a manner that was consistent with his name. However, Cain wanted to offer according to his own way. This desire revealed the operation of the other law within him.

God said to Cain, 'Sin is crouching [ready to leap] at the door [of your heart, which has another law within it]; and its desire is for you, but you must master it.'⁸⁶ The 'other law' was operating within Cain as he sought to define his own name and offering. The operation of the other law within him was the doorway for sin to gain an advantage in his life. To overcome sin, Cain would need to let go of the image that he had created for himself. The desire to maintain this image was motivated by the other law. Overcoming sin was possible if Cain humbled himself and found fellowship with one who was spiritual.⁸⁷

83 Gen 1:28-30.
Gen 2:15

84 Num 3:12

85 Gen 4:3

86 Gen 4:7

87 Gal 6:1

The fall of mankind

After God had spoken to Cain regarding his sanctification, Cain spoke to Abel and recounted what the Lord had said to him. This conversation was separate from their interaction that ended in the murder of Abel. The Scriptures specifically record that, after God finished speaking to him, '*Cain told Abel his brother. And it came about [later] when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him.*'⁸⁸

Why would Cain's initial response have been to speak to his brother? It is because the inadequacy of his offering was associated with *how he related* to his brother as much as it was affected by *what he had offered*. Cain's anger was provoked when he saw that Abel's offering was accepted, but his was not.⁸⁹ Evidently, Cain was competing with, and comparing himself to, Abel. This marked a division between them.⁹⁰

In their initial discussion, it appears that Cain was unwilling to receive instruction or admonition from Abel. Such a word was necessary for fellowship, through which Cain could have been restored to sanctification.⁹¹ Abel was in the light because he had joined, by faith, the acceptable offering of the Lamb of God.⁹² From this basis, Abel had the ability and resources to minister life to Cain so that he could be restored to his sanctification, and could offer in an acceptable manner.

However, instead of receiving the word of Abel, Cain trampled his brother's offering. Cain was more concerned about the acceptability of his offering than he was about the relational impasse between his brother and himself. Addressing relational disharmony among brethren, Jesus said, 'If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First, be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.'⁹³

Instead of leaving his offering at the altar and seeking to be restored to Abel, Cain engaged with his brother for the purpose of achieving his desire for acceptability. That is, he viewed his interaction with Abel as a means of resourcing himself to make an acceptable offering. Cain's unyielding desire to have what he wanted hindered his ability to comprehend the nature and importance of fellowship. Unwilling to let go of his desires, Cain was overtaken by murderous anger, and killed his brother. This is the very principle that James identified as the outcome of living by the other law.⁹⁴

88 Gen 4:8

89 Gen 4:4-5

90 Jas 4:1

91 1Jn 1:7

92 Joh 1:29,36.

Rev 21:23

93 Mat 5:23-24

94 Jas 4:1-3

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When God asked Cain, ‘Where is Abel, your brother?’, Cain’s response was, ‘Am I my brother’s keeper?’ The Lord said to him, ‘What have you *done*?’ Significantly, Cain’s rejection of first love as his brother’s keeper implied that he had done something to Abel. By rejecting relationship and pursuing the desires associated with the image that he had of himself, Cain had already trampled Abel’s offering. Cain viewed his interaction with Abel as a means of obtaining the resources necessary for making an acceptable, or effective, offering. He failed to recognise that the restoration of his relationship with Abel was necessary for acceptable offering. As Paul reminded us, ‘If I have the gift of prophecy, and know all mysteries and all knowledge; and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing.’⁹⁵

The Lord said to Cain that the prophetic voice of Abel’s blood was crying out to Him from the ground. This is an amazing point. Abel’s prophetic grace continued to be effective, even though he had been trampled by Cain. In fact, his blood still speaks!⁹⁶ The voice that could have brought blessing to Cain was now proclaiming judgement upon him. This is the principle of the fallen star that we will consider in chapter six. Cain was clinging to Abel with deceit, resulting in the fall of Abel ‘by sword’.⁹⁷

When God cursed the ground because of Adam’s sin, and for his sake, He said to him that ‘in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.’⁹⁸ However, in response to Cain’s sin, God said, ‘Now you are cursed from the ground ... when you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you.’⁹⁹ Instead of remaining in the context where he could make offering, and be recovered to fellowship with God and with his family, Cain departed from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod.¹⁰⁰ In the land of Nod, Cain ceased farming because of the curse that lay heavily upon him. His alternative was to build cities.¹⁰¹

As we noted earlier, sin is ‘missing the mark’ of God’s word concerning our lives, and who He made us to be. It is the outcome of wanting to do the will of God in our own way. The penalty for sin is death. However, God is able to recover us from the state of sin and death. Paul explained that ‘where sin increased, grace abounded all the more, so that, as sin reigned in death, even so grace would reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’.¹⁰² Although Adam and Eve sinned, they were recovered to fellowship with the Lord through offering.

95 1Co 13:2

99 Gen 4:11-12

96 Heb 11:4

100 Gen 4:16

97 Dan 11:33-35

101 Gen 4:17

98 Gen 3:17-18

102 Rom 5:20-21

The fall of mankind

In contrast, wickedness, or iniquity, describes the condition of a person who has set themselves against the way of the Lord. Their mind is set on the flesh, and they have become *lawless*. Consequently, they are hostile to God and His people.¹⁰³ By the time Noah was born, the Lord repented of having made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart on account of their wickedness.¹⁰⁴ He proclaimed judgement on all wickedness, bringing to an end the old creation. There is no way of escape for those who choose wickedness.

103 Rom 8:7

104 Gen 6:6.

CHAPTER 4

Fear and shame

Introduction

Let us begin our consideration of the subject of fear and shame by revisiting some key points regarding the creation and fall of mankind. In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had fellowship with Yahweh each day at the tree of life. As they remained connected to Yahweh, who was the source of their origin and the author of their predestination, they were able to know Him, know themselves, and know each other. They could meet and appreciate God and one another in worship. In this fellowship, the couple drew their life and likeness from God. This means that they were equipped for, and engaged in, the works that God had planned for them before He had created the heavens and the earth.¹ Their work in the garden of Eden was a priestly, sanctified service.²

The word of Yahweh was a light that gave Adam and Eve wisdom and direction. It also *clothed* them for their priestly work. This principle was demonstrated by

1 2Ti 3:17. Psa 139:16

2 Gen 2:15. Rom 12:1

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Christ, as a Son of Man. When He came in the flesh, He was the full representation of what God had intended the sons of God to be. The Gospel of Luke accounts that Jesus went up on a mountain with Peter, James and John, to pray. While He was praying, ‘the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became *white and glistening*. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who *appeared in glory* and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem.’³ In fellowship with Moses and Elijah, Jesus discussed His imminent offering on the cross. This work had been prepared for Him by the Father, and was written beforehand in the book of life.⁴ His appearance, in light, revealed His readiness to do the priestly work that He had come down from heaven to accomplish.⁵

Through the words of the prophet Isaiah, Christ, the Son of Man, described His clothing as a *robe of righteousness* that He had received from God to do the work for which He had been anointed. He testified, saying, ‘I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness.’⁶ God is the source of this righteousness. It is revealed by those who do the good works that God prepared for them. Significantly, the Scriptures teach that this righteousness *endures forever*.⁷

God’s sons require robes of righteousness to do the works that their Father has prepared for them. However, they are also the evidence that God’s righteous works, which endure forever, are being fulfilled. We note, therefore, that to be covered, or clothed, with light involves being equipped to do the will of the Father, and is *also* the outcome of doing the works associated with one’s name. Jesus admonished those who heard His teaching to walk in the light so that they also might become sons of light.⁸ The works that a person does in this age reveal their sanctification as a son of God. These works result in eternal life.⁹ More specifically, they become the building materials of their heavenly body, which becomes the glory of their spiritual body on the day of resurrection. This body is their dwelling place in the new heavens and earth. Paul described receiving this body as being clothed with, or putting on, immortality.¹⁰

As Adam and Eve walked in the light of God’s word and did the works that He had named for them, they were participating in the fulfilment of God’s will, and revealing His enduring righteousness. Of course, at this stage, they had not been

3	Luk 9:29-32	7	2Co 9:8-9. Psa 112:9
4	Heb 10:5-7	8	Joh 12:36
5	Heb 7:20-21	9	Rom 6:22
6	Isa 61:10. Luk 4:17-21	10	2Co 5:4

born again of the Spirit of God. However, as long as they remained in fellowship with the Lord, and walked in the light of His word, they were connected, by faith, to their predestination as sons of God. In fellowship, they were equipped to do God's will and to fulfil the mandate of kingship that God had given them over creation.

Naked and afraid

Satan endeavoured to destroy mankind with a lie. He proposed that, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve could become the source of their own works of righteousness. He implied that, if they became 'like God' in this regard, they would not die.¹¹ Instead, their eyes were opened and they only found that *they were naked*.¹²

Their 'nakedness' was not just the realisation that they were not wearing any clothes. It means that they immediately recognised that there was no life, and no mandate for them, outside of fellowship with God. They perceived the disunity that now existed between them and God, between each other in their marriage, and in their own hearts. Having become disconnected from their origin, and living by their own law, they were now dying, and were unable to accomplish any works of enduring value. This was their nakedness.

When Yahweh came to meet with Adam and Eve in the cool of that evening, He called to them, asking, 'Where are you?' Yahweh's question revealed that mankind had disconnected themselves from Him. In response to Yahweh's query, Adam said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was *afraid because I was naked*; and *I hid myself*.'¹³ Adam confessed that he was afraid *because* of his nakedness. His nakedness implied that he was now vulnerable. He had cut himself loose to time and chance.¹⁴ He had no covering or defence other than his own capacity to survive through the use of the knowledge of good and evil. Death was the inevitable consequence of his nakedness. This is why Adam was afraid.

Adam's dilemma was not just that he was mortal and dying because he was disconnected from the life of God. His nakedness was his *disconnection from the word of his predestination*. God had predestined him to be a son of God, forever. However, because he was disconnected from his origin and the source of his righteous works as a son of God, when his mortal body perished, he would have no eternal covering,

11 Gen 3:4-5

12 Gen 3:7

13 Gen 3:10

14 Ecc 9:11

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or dwelling place. While his soul and spirit would exist forever, he would have no spiritual body, nor capacity for expression in the presence of God. This is what it means to be condemned to eternal destruction.¹⁵ The resurrection of damnation is a mortal resurrection in which the damned remain fully conscious in a corrupting body. However, they are unable to express the pain of their torment as the fire of the Lord's presence burns forever against them in judgement.¹⁶

Paul drew attention to this reality when he wrote, 'For in this [house] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall *not be found naked*. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but *further clothed*, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.'¹⁷ With this in mind, Paul reminded his readers that 'we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the [mortal] body, according to what he has done, whether good [sanctified] or bad [fleshly]'.¹⁸

Now that mankind has fallen from the image and likeness of God, every person who does not know Him lives by the principle of their own law. Because of this, they are motivated to pursue and maintain an image of themselves that is sourced in their perception of what is good or evil for them. However, *this very pursuit keeps them naked* in relation to God's predestination. Because they are naked, they are afraid of death, and thus apply themselves all the more to the attainment of their self-defined good, even at the expense of others. This is the nature of man's bondage to fear, and the reason why the whole world lies under the sway of the wicked one.¹⁹ They have become slaves of Satan. The only avenue for deliverance from this bondage to fear is to turn to the Lord and become *His captive*.²⁰ We will consider this remedy further in chapter five.

The shame of fear

Returning to Adam's confession, we note that it was *because* of his fear that Adam *hid himself* from the Lord. This demonstrated that Adam was also *ashamed of his fear*.²¹ Adam's confession revealed that fear is something that every fallen person is ashamed of and endeavours to keep hidden. It is a private foreboding that a person tries to allay.

15 2Th 1:8-9

16 Isa 66:24

17 2Co 5:2-5

18 2Co 5:10

19 Heb 2:15. 1Jn 5:19

20 Eph 4:8

21 Gen 3:10

We see that shame is not simply the emotions of embarrassment or regret that are associated with errant behaviour. Shame is the consequence of a person's *disconnection from the life of God and their predestined name*, which are only found in fellowship with Yahweh. It is the evidence that mankind has quantifiably lost something. As such, shame is an indelible trait of fallen human nature. People are ashamed because of their loss of unity with God and with others. Because they are ashamed, fallen men and women engage in all manner of activities to conceal their fear. However, fear should be a true motivation for repentance, causing them to turn to the Lord so that they can receive His word and be reconnected with Him. In this fellowship, their nakedness can be properly addressed. As the psalmist wrote, 'May my heart be blameless [complete; or having integrity] in Your statutes, so that I will not be ashamed'.²²

In the same way that Adam and Eve's fear motivated them to hide from the Lord, a person's shame affects how they relate with others. Some people try to conceal their shame by withdrawing from others, while some seek to compensate for their shame by seeking acceptance and reassurance in social relationships. People either avoid the gaze of others because their gaze reminds them of their shame and inadequacy, or they seek the gaze, attention, and acceptance of others as a means of obtaining some form of personal verification. Obsessive attention-seeking, in particular, represents a person's concerted effort to recover their lost unity with other people by pursuing a connection that neutralises the pain of shame and aloneness.

When a person lives this way, it is evident that they have been cut off from the unifying life of God, and have been delivered over to death. Their life is now in *disunion* with Him, with others, and with themselves. Alienation is now their portion in life.²³ Instead of knowing God and themselves in fellowship, they can only seek to define themselves by inward-looking reflection or by comparing themselves with others. This means that they can never truly relate to other people or participate in worship that is in spirit and in the truth.²⁴

Projections motivated by shame

Adam and Eve's response to their shame was to make *alternative* coverings for themselves by sewing fig leaves together.²⁵ This was an attempt to cover their nakedness. Shame provokes this response within *all* people who live according

22 Psa 119:80

23 Eph 4:18. Col 1:21

24 Joh 4:24

25 Gen 3:7

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to the fallen principles of the flesh (i.e. their 'other law'). Motivated by the shame of fear that is caused by their nakedness, people who live by the flesh attempt to 'tailor' a name for themselves. This is an endeavour to replace the covering of their lost predestination with a destiny, or name, of their own making. Their 'clothing' is a projection of their self-defined image, which is sourced in what they view as being good or evil for themselves.

This response of shame impacts upon even the most basic actions of a fallen person. For example, the way that they dress and present themselves is part of the projection of their self-sourced image. In this regard, it is part of their investment in how they would like to be known and received by others. Of course, there are people in society who, for a myriad of reasons, are unable to attain the image that they would like for themselves. These reasons may include, for example, income status, physical appearance, natural abilities. This does not mean that they are not invested in being the source of their own image nor in defining their own destiny. For these people, the pursuit of a particular image, and its associated projections, are their hopes and dreams for a better 'good'. However, as King Solomon taught, 'In many dreams and in many words there is emptiness [or vanity]'.²⁶

Under these conditions caused by the Fall, a person's self-confidence depends on how satisfied they are with the image they have of themselves, and the extent to which their projections are accepted and valued by others. In reality, they are never truly satisfied with their image or their projections. This is because their eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is their ear filled with hearing.²⁷ They are constantly looking at, and listening to, others. Through their assessments and comparisons, a person's perceptions of what is good or evil for them are constantly being adjusted. They either attempt to change their image and projection of themselves or they covet what they cannot obtain.

These principles of shame equally describe the reality of life for a Christian who chooses to live by the principles of the flesh.²⁸ This simply means that they preference the right to be the origin of their own image, above the invitation from Christ to present themselves, in a spirit of faith, as a slave of obedience to the doctrine of baptism. As we have discussed in chapter five, a son of God is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through their obedience to the doctrine of baptism. In this fellowship, the other law is being removed from them, and they are then able to find God's will for their life. God's will is their sanctification as a son of God.²⁹ The outcome of this process is eternal life.³⁰

26 Ecc 5:7

30 Rom 6:22

27 Ecc 1:8

28 Rom 8:5

29 1Th 4:3

When a Christian lives by the flesh, they view the word of God as a helpful, and even important, resource that they can draw from to help define their own image. Motivated from this basis, which is the operation of their own law, they engage in works that they have defined for themselves. These works are projections of the good, religious image that they are creating for themselves. Paul called these works ‘dead works’, and explained that they are motivated by an evil conscience.³¹ Many people who aspire to ministry positions do so from the basis of the flesh. This is evidenced by their discontent when other people do not accept or submit to their projection of themselves. These responses of discontent are the passions of sin, and they reveal that these people, who are aspiring to positions of influence, are enslaved to the law of sin. They are prisoners to the law of sin because they are living by the principles of the flesh.³²

All projections, whether they are religious or not, are the garments of a person’s self-righteousness. As the prophet Isaiah declared, ‘For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and *all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment*; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away.’³³

Even the most noble and admired works of fallen men and women are temporary in their glory. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Peter noted that ‘all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.’³⁴

Clearly, the ‘clothing’ that these projections represent has no enduring merit. As we have already considered, this reality becomes permanently entrenched when an unsaved person dies. They have no heavenly body, because the works that they did on earth were not motivated by the Holy Spirit. Their works were not according to their predestination.³⁵ Only a person who has received, and been established in, the sanctification of their name as a son of God, will be clothed with eternal garments for life in the new heavens and earth.³⁶

Shameless behaviour

A person who lives by the other law aspires to live according to an image of good that they define for themselves. Their pursuit of this good equally involves avoiding behaviours that they consider to be evil. Where a person’s perceptions of good and evil have been influenced in some way by God’s law, their moral

31 Heb 9:14

35 2Co 5:5

32 Rom 7:5,23

36 2Co 5:4-5.

33 Isa 64:6

1Co 15:51-54

34 1Pe 1:24-25

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standards will reflect this influence. Of course, their thoughts and behaviours may not necessarily measure to the image to which they aspire. This is because living by the other law brings a person into captivity to the law of sin, resulting in their engagement in the evil that they are attempting to avoid.³⁷ The condemnation that they subsequently feel only serves to heighten their sense of shame.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul described a different type of person who *deliberately suppresses* the influence of God's word on their perceptions of good and evil.³⁸ Isaiah said that these people call evil 'good', and good 'evil'; substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; and are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.³⁹ The outcome of this suppression of the truth is wickedness. These people *shamelessly* engage in behaviours that are immoral, and yet consider their actions to be acceptable. As they parade their nakedness, and encourage others to follow their example, these behaviours and attitudes are normalised in society through social engineering.

The various excesses and risk-taking behaviours of these wicked people are portrayed as harmless pleasure. By this means, the wicked attempt to demonstrate that they are not afraid of death nor ashamed of their nakedness. In reality, however, their cynical, godless bravado is simply an attempt to *disguise* their fear through pride or debauchery. This behaviour is a fallen person's deliberate and deluded rejection of the truth of God, in favour of the lie that their nakedness is not shameful.⁴⁰ Their proud, shameless behaviour is because God has given them over to a depraved mind.⁴¹

This was the condition of mankind in the days of Noah. Except for Noah and his family, the whole of mankind had degenerated from the sinful condition of the Fall, to a state of wickedness. The intentions of their heart were evil, continually.⁴² Consequently, the Lord was sorry that He had made man and proclaimed the end of all flesh.⁴³ Jesus taught that, as the time of the end draws near, the moral standards of society will deteriorate to the same level as in the days of Noah.⁴⁴ We are already witnessing this decline in moral standards as, for example, sexual promiscuity and experimentation are being normalised in popular media and even promoted through various school programs. This serves as an indicator that the time of Christ's return is fast approaching.

37 Rom 7:19-20,23

38 Rom 1:18

39 Isa 5:20-21

40 Rom 1:25

41 Rom 1:28

42 Gen 6:5

43 Gen 6:13

44 Luk 17:26

Fear and anxiety

The disguising of fear through deceit, along with the prohibitions of an apostate conscience, are the ground of anxiety, from which many emotional and mental health problems spring. King Solomon signalled this principle when he wrote, 'This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is *one fate* for all men [death]. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are *full of evil* and *insanity is in their hearts* throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.'⁴⁵

The manifold curses that came upon Israel when they broke their covenant with God, and refused to walk in sanctification, involved the magnification of their fear. This legacy of fear produced anxiety, depression and madness, and this became their portion in life. In this regard, Moses had prophesied, saying:

- 'The Lord will send on you cursing, *confusion*, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me.'⁴⁶
- 'The Lord will cause you to be defeated before your enemies; you shall go out one way against them and *flee seven ways before them*; and you shall become troublesome to all the kingdoms of the earth.'⁴⁷
- 'The Lord will strike you with *madness and blindness and confusion of heart*.'⁴⁸
- 'So you shall be *driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see*.'⁴⁹

The fall of man from the image and likeness of God exposed the frailty of the flesh in all its dimensions, including the mind and emotions. A person's natural death and their eternal death cannot be prevented by creating an image for themselves and attempting to cover their nakedness through self-righteous works. Likewise, these fleshly endeavours are unable to fortify the mental and emotional frailties that are associated with being in bondage to fear. The only remedy is to be connected to the Lord through new birth and baptism. As Paul reminded Timothy, 'God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of *a sound mind*'.⁵⁰

For this reason, persistent and widespread depression and anxiety within church congregations is a cause for concern. This is because it is the evidence that many of these people remain in bondage to fear and, to that degree, are disconnected

45 Ecc 9:3

49 Deu 28:34

46 Deu 28:20

50 2Ti 1:7

47 Deu 28:25

48 Deu 28:28

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from their sanctification in the image and likeness of God. There are two possible reasons for this situation. The first possibility is that the ministry that they are receiving in the church is *not a ministry of the Spirit*. Rather, their leaders are ministering condemnation from the basis of good and evil. Paul described this as a ‘ministry of sin’.⁵¹ These leaders have fallen from first love, and are unable to minister the word of God by the Spirit. In contrast, the ministry of the Spirit is able to equip their hearers with faith so that they can stand in grace, participate in offering, and obtain their sanctification as sons of God.⁵² In other words, they are enabled to walk in the Spirit.⁵³

The second possible reason for the ongoing emotional distress of a Christian is their unwillingness to receive the word of the Lord that He is ministering to them, by the Spirit, through the messengers who are in His hand. If they receive the word, their minds will be transformed by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit.⁵⁴ When a Christian relies on their own perspective (the sight of their own eyes), and maintains the right to determine their own sonship, they have set their mind on the flesh rather than on the Spirit.⁵⁵ If they persist with this attitude, they will remain disconnected from their predestination as a son of God. We note, in this regard, that ‘to be carnally minded is death, but to be *spiritually minded is life and peace*’.⁵⁶

A person’s sanctification can only be found as they willingly present themselves as a slave of obedience to the doctrine to which Christ, their Lord, has committed them.⁵⁷ However, when they actively reject God’s covenant, they are subject to the same curses that Moses declared would befall the children of Israel. As we noted above, this includes fear, anxiety, depression, and even madness.

The manipulation of shame

Let us now turn our attention more directly to the operation of shame within the church. Viewing and pursuing ministry within the church as a vocation is a mindset that is motivated by shame. This is because such an attitude to the ministry is not based in sanctification, which is essential to first love. Rather, it is based in the operation of another law. As we have already stated, seeking to minister from this basis most often involves a projection that covers the nakedness of a person’s disconnection from their origin and predestination as a son of God. When they

51 2Co 3:7-9

52 Rom 10:17.
Rom 5:2.
Rom 6:22

53 Gal 6:16

54 Rom 12:2. Tit 3:5

55 Rom 8:5

56 Rom 8:6

57 Rom 6:17

minister in this way, they are not being the son of God that He predestined them to be; they are not doing the works that He prepared for them to do.

Instead of the gift of grace making room for the ministry of a son of God in the body of Christ, the appointment of people to positions of authority within a clergy structure has often been based on theological qualification, self-motivation and idealism. These factors have been essential contributors to the formation and validation of a clergy aspirant's projection.

Of course, for some people, their fulltime service in the church has been consistent with their sanctification as a son of God. However, even where this is the case, in order for a person to return to first love as part of an effective presbytery in the hand of Christ, repentance from the dead works of a clergy, vocational approach to the care of the church is needed. Jesus said that repentance from these fallen approaches to ministry in the church is the first step in being recovered to effective ministry as a part of a presbytery in His hand.⁵⁸

There are many church practices that have been established as part of the institutionalisation of the ministry. These practices have become defining features of the clergy vocation, and serve to validate the projections of would-be ministers. Arguably, the most damaging of these practices has been the tradition of the confidential confession. Often, these interactions between ministers and the people who have sought their counsel have only served to augment the wretchedness that is associated with shame and fear. This is because the practice itself is based in the operation of another law and is, by definition, hidden.

For the purpose of explaining this point, let us represent the confidential confessional interaction as a conversation occurring at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this regard, picture the trunk of the tree dividing into two main branches. One branch represents 'good' Christian behaviour, while the other branch represents evil behaviour. Through its application, the cross is set by the minister between the two branches of good and evil. The confessional booth or vicarage in which the minister receives the confessions of sinners is situated at the base of the trunk.

Having received the confession of a sinner, the minister makes a judgement as to whether the sinner is sufficiently penitent in order for him to grant them absolution. When absolved in this way, the sinner leaves the interview feeling

58 Rev 2:5

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much better about themselves, and possessing a stronger resolve to avoid the evil behaviour in the future. At times, the minister may deem it necessary to apply the cross to the sinner through strong castigation. He presumes to do this so that the sinner ceases from his evil activities and returns to the standard of righteousness to which he is being exhorted.

This mode of operation has been a problem for *both* clergy-styled leaders and those seeking absolution for their sin. Let us consider the dilemma for the leader. Obviously, this mode of counsel is based on the knowledge of good and evil. This means that it is not a ministry of the Spirit from the basis of first love. Operating from this fallen position means that the leader's actions cannot be anything more than a projection associated with their own image of themselves.

When a person ministers in this way, they remain in bondage to the law of sin. This is the wretched condition that the minister or leader finds himself in if he continues to live by the other law.⁵⁹ The more he pursues what he believes to be good, the more he practises the evil that he does not want to do.⁶⁰ His sin becomes exceedingly sinful.⁶¹ His secret, sinful condition may even be worse than that of those who are making confession to him. This heightens his sense of shame, causing him to further alienate himself from true fellowship. Motivated by shame, he works harder to achieve the good image that he desires for himself. Moreover, he attempts to advance his projection of himself through religious activities and the ministry of legalistic holiness to others.

We all must recognise that it is not the role of the counsellor to give absolution, nor to make a person feel better about themselves following a misdemeanour. It is to help a brother or a sister to find perspective on how to properly recover relationship with the people who have been affected by their sinful actions. Although confidentiality is a legal expectation for religious counsellors, their purpose for maintaining confidentiality should not be for keeping the matter concealed or for maintaining their position of power over the people. Instead, they are to remain circumspect in relation to these matters, because they accept that the matters of sin and relational breaches that they are discussing with their brother or sister are not their business. They are the business of the one who has sinned, and the people against whom he has sinned. The counsellor also maintains confidentiality because they are not given to gossip.

59 Rom 7:23-24

60 Rom 7:19

61 Rom 7:13

What about the sinner who seeks absolution through a confidential confession? They are also desiring to be made righteous through a fleshly activity. Their insistence on confidentiality is the desire for their shame to remain hidden. They are simply seeking to feel better about their condition, and to find some assurance of acceptability before God, despite their shameful actions. This will be evident because of their unwillingness to seek reconciliation and relational recovery with the particular people against whom they have sinned. If they continue to live their life in this way, they will also remain in the wretched condition that Paul identified in his letter to the Romans.⁶²

Shame is the reason why people conceal their sin through projections, and through withdrawal from open and truthful relationship with others. This relationship between shame and fear, and a person's unwillingness to relate about their sin beyond the context of a confidential confession to a minister, was identified by Job. He asked, 'Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, and kept silent and did not go out of doors?'⁶³

Godly fear, indicating a person's sanctification and commitment to reconciliation, can only be truly demonstrated or expressed when a believer makes confession regarding the hidden things of shame. A person's unwillingness to bring their shameful deeds into the light is a shameless and wicked condition. If they do not deal with their shame, they demonstrate that they fear death and the loss of control over their life more than they fear God. They ignore the reality that God has the power to destroy, with death, both soul and body in hell.⁶⁴

The word of God addresses a person's fearful apprehensions by bringing a faith that supersedes the faith that is based on their own knowledge and experience of good and evil. Unless they receive God's faith by hearing and receiving the word of God, and then present themselves in a spirit of faith for fellowship and offering, their earthly faith will remain the foundation for their self-preservation. They will continue to live in bondage to fear and to express themselves through the projections associated with their shame.

62 Rom 7:23-24

63 Job 31:33-34

64 Mat 10:28-29

Turning to the Lord

The beginning point for every believer is to find true repentance from these dead works. Repentance involves renouncing the hidden things of shame, including the religious activities that a person engages in for the purpose of advancing their projections and concealing the shame of their nakedness. It is important to note that repentance does not involve the shameless trumpeting of a person's wickedness. Rather, it involves true confession, and recovery of relationship with the people against whom they have sinned.

The projections of a person who is living according to the flesh are not only temporary and crude coverings for their nakedness. These projections also become a veil over their eyes so that they are unable to perceive their true condition or to receive the light of the word as it shines from the face of Jesus through the word of His messengers.⁶⁵ In this regard, we recall the words of Christ to the church in Laodicea. 'Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked – I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.'⁶⁶

When a person turns to the Lord in repentance, the veil that conceals their shame and limits their capacity to perceive the truth is removed.⁶⁷ They are able to stand in the faith that they receive from the word, and to present themselves in the sanctification of their name for fellowship with others.⁶⁸ In this fellowship, the blood of Christ cleanses their conscience so that they are able to participate in offering in a sanctified and open-faced manner within the body of Christ.⁶⁹ This is what it means to 'walk in the light', as those who are clothed with light, and to have fellowship with the Lord and one another in Christ.⁷⁰ This is what it means to live in first love.⁷¹

Born of the word from the beginning

As we discussed in chapter three, man's origin is the gift of who he is. A person receives this gift and is reconnected with their origin when they are born again by the incorruptible word of God, which is *from the beginning*. The apostle John explained that this word is declared by the messengers of Christ so that those who

65 2Co 4:3-5

69 1Jn 1:7

66 Rev 3:17-19

70 1Jn 1:5

67 2Co 3:16

71 Rev 2:4,7. Rev 7:9

68 2Co 4:13. 1Jn 1:7

receive it can be joined in fellowship with them and with the Father and the Son.⁷² In this fellowship, they are joined to a process through which their projections and imaginations can be removed from them, and they can know the truth of who God named them to be. Moreover, they fulfil the works that God prepared for them according to the kind intention of His will.

Jesus taught that the antidote for fear and anxiety is to be reconnected to God the Father by being born again as a son of God. He explained that the Father watches over every eventuality that befalls us in life, causing all things to work together for our good.⁷³ It is notable that Jesus specifically taught His disciples that they were not to worry about what they should *eat or drink* or what they should *wear*. Instead, as His disciples seek first the kingdom of God and *His* righteousness, all these things are added to them.⁷⁴ While this certainly applies to the literal needs of food and clothing, it also pertains to the reality that a son of God does not need to seek for food other than what is provided from the tree of life, which, in the church age, is the communion meal. Similarly, they are to forsake the clothing of fleshly projections, and be clothed with priestly garments that are necessary for presenting themselves for fellowship as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God.⁷⁵

It is important to recognise that a son of God is able to turn away from the word and the fellowship of Yahweh in the same manner as Adam and Eve did. This is what Paul warned the Corinthians against when he wrote, 'But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ'.⁷⁶ They do this when they seek to make themselves the origin of their own religious image and the source of their own works.

72 1Jn 1:1-3

76 2Co 11:3

73 Rom 8:28

74 Mat 6:31-33

75 Rom 12:1-3

CHAPTER 5

Granted to eat from the tree of life

Introduction

After God had created Adam in His image and likeness, He blessed Adam and gave to him an extraordinary mandate. God called Adam to subdue the earth and to rule over every living thing.¹ As part of this work, Adam named all the animals.² This mandate involved much more than simply assigning a title to identify each creature. In the same way that Adam's own name encompassed the details of who God had made him to be, the work of naming the animals required him to define the way in which they lived. He received the authority and capacity to do this through the word of God that called him to bring the creation into submission. While Adam remained in the image and likeness of God, all of the laws governing the life of every living thing were subject to him.

1 Gen 1:28

2 Gen 2:19

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God also required Adam to cultivate and maintain the garden of Eden.³ Again, this work was much more substantial than simply pruning plants. We learn from the prophetic Scriptures that the trees that God had caused to grow in the paradise of God were symbolic of the destinies of nations and of individuals. For example, the Lord described the nation of Assyria as ‘a mighty cedar tree’. He said, ‘*No tree in God’s garden could compare with it in its beauty. I made it beautiful with the multitude of its branches, and all the trees of Eden, which were in the garden of God, were jealous of it.*’⁴ By referring to the nations as trees that He had planted in the garden of Eden, Yahweh signalled that He was the origin and source of their destinies. Adam’s service required him to perceive, understand and cultivate these destinies by attending to the plants in the garden.

Adam’s natural abilities were completely appropriate for the mandate that he had received from God. Consider the intelligence and physical capabilities that Adam would have needed in order to rule over creation and to cultivate the garden of Eden. As impressive as they were, his abilities were not his adequacy for this work. Adam was equipped with the necessary wisdom and understanding to fulfil the will of God *as he communed each day with Yahweh at the tree of life*. It was from this basis that he exercised his notable abilities, and performed the works that God had prepared for him. When Adam fell from the image and likeness of God, he became vulnerable to creation, even though he had not lost any of his natural abilities.

The curse

Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an attempt to become the origin of a new image of themselves, and the source of their own destiny and works. In particular, Adam wanted to exercise his considerable mandate, and extraordinary natural abilities, in his own way. In this regard, he wanted to define his own works without the need for reference to, or direction from, God. While he walked in the light of fellowship with Yahweh, Adam’s good works were to the glory of God.⁵ However, by endeavouring to act from the basis of his own initiative, Adam sought to reveal his own glory.⁶

The effect of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that the desire to be the source of their own image and destiny became another law that was now part of Adam and Eve’s identities. Living by this law brought them into bondage to the law of sin, and was the cause of their fall from first love with

3 Gen 2:15

4 Eze 31:8-9

5 Mat 5:16

6 Joh 7:18

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Yahweh and with each other in the paradise of God.⁷ God barred the way to the tree of life and cursed the ground because of Adam's disobedience.⁸ Specifically, He said, 'Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, "You shall not eat from it"; cursed is the ground *because of you*; in toil you will eat of it all the days of your life. Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; and you will eat the plants of the field; by the sweat of your face you will eat bread, till you return to the ground.'⁹

This passage of Scripture can equally be translated, 'Cursed is the ground *for your sake*.'¹⁰ How could cursing the ground improve Adam and Eve's situation? They were already naked and dying, afraid and ashamed. The answer is that God intended to use the effects of the curse on mankind to deal with the cause of their disconnection from Him, and the loss of their predestination as sons of God.

Living by the other law was the reason that Adam and Eve were disconnected from the image and likeness of God. By cursing the ground, which was the context for Adam's work, God was directly frustrating Adam's attempts to rule over creation from the basis of his own image and projection of himself. In other words, the effects of the curse, including the weariness associated with the unfruitfulness of his toil, and the thorns and thistles that the ground would bring forth, would cause Adam to turn from pursuing his own good and to seek restoration with the Lord.

The 'ground' of a son of God refers to their specific context for life and works. When a son of God endeavours to live by the principle of the other law, rather than in obedience to God's word as a member of the body of Christ, they will experience the effects of the curse. This is God's judgement upon them because of the other law that is at work within them. The other law brings them into conflict with God's law when it is energised by the law of sin. Instead of ministering life, God's law judges them with weakness and death.

This is God's merciful initiative toward them to cause them to turn again to Him and to cease living by this fallen principle. Paul summarised this reality by explaining, 'He who eats and drinks [the communion] in an unworthy manner [i.e. contrary to first love] 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. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.'¹¹

7 Rom 5:12. 11 1Co 11:29-32
Rom 7:23

8 Gen 3:22-24

9 Gen 3:17-19

10 Gen 3:17

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The thorns and thistles that grew upon the ground, frustrating Adam's labours, were a notable feature of the curse. What does this look like in a Christian's life today, as a son of God? We recall that the plants in the garden of Eden represented people. In the same way, thorns and thistles in the context of a son of God's work refer to the prickly and antagonistic reactions of people against them. For example, the thorn in the flesh of the apostle Paul was a demonic spirit from Satan that incited people to persecute him. Paul understood that this thorn had been given to him by God to keep him from being lifted up in pride. The pride of life is an element of the other law.¹² We see that the thorn in Paul's flesh directly addressed this 'other law' propensity within him.

The ill-tempered reactions of a son of God to the thorny provocations that they inevitably experience in the course of their daily life, reveal the operation of the other law *within their own heart*. When this happens, it presents the Christian with an opportunity to turn again to the Lord, and to receive their sufferings at the hands of these people as a participation in the sufferings of Christ. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, sin remains dead within the son of God, and the other law is being removed from them. We will expand on this principle later in this chapter.

Recovery from the curse

For 930 years, Adam continued to cultivate the ground that was cursed both because of him, and for his sake. This was a demanding and, at times, painful, toil for him. However, Adam remained in the region of Eden and was processed, through his suffering, so that he was numbered in the genealogy of the sons of God.¹³

Paul drew attention to a number of other men who, by faith, also recovered relationship with God in the generations following the Fall.¹⁴ For example, he wrote that '*by faith* Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he *obtained the testimony that he was righteous*'.¹⁵ Faith, not sacrifice, is the ruling concept in this passage of Scripture. God bore witness to the righteousness of Abel by accepting his offering. This is because Abel's offering involved the works of faith that belonged to his name and sanctification as a son of God.

We note also that, in the days of Enosh, who was the son of Seth, men began to walk with God, calling themselves by the name of the Lord.¹⁶ Significantly, the name

12 1Jn 2:16

16 Gen 4:25-26

13 Luk 3:38

14 Heb 11:4-7

15 Heb 11:4

Enosh means ‘man’, and is derived from the Hebrew word ‘*anash*’, which means ‘desperately wicked, incurable, sick, woeful’. As men recognised and accepted the fact that pursuing their own way was the reason for their suffering, they were able to recover relationship with God and, by faith, do the works that belonged to their predestination. In fact, Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, and then, without dying, was taken directly into heaven by God.¹⁷

Noah’s faith brought rest

All of Adam’s descendants suffered under the conditions of the curse. Adam died when Lamech, Noah’s father, was 56 years old. Lamech named his son Noah, saying, ‘This one will give us rest from our work and from the toil of our hands arising from the ground which the Lord has cursed.’¹⁸ In this regard, Noah was a type of Christ, who said of Himself, ‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.’¹⁹

Noah brought rest to the sons of God by building an ark that delivered them, whereby they passed through the waters of judgement into a new earth that was not subject to the same cursed conditions that Adam had precipitated through his disobedience. This was a place of rest in which Noah’s children would again be able to find access to the tree of life. Hence, the apostle Peter referred to Noah in his discussion on baptism. In this regard, Peter explained that baptism is ‘not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, who is at the right hand of God’.²⁰ Peter was showing that access to the tree of life in the heavenly places is obtained through baptism.

Peter’s point was that baptism into Christ is not merely a means of washing away the shameful *consequences* of fleshly attitudes and behaviours. Such a preoccupation is indicative of an evil conscience. A person with an evil conscience either condemns or defends their works on the basis of their own self-defined good.²¹ This reveals that the other law is the basic principle of their life. As we have already noted, living according to this way only leads to more sin, and brings a person under the curse associated with God’s judgement.

17 Gen 5:23-24

21 Heb 10:22

18 Gen 5:29

19 Mat 11:28-29

20 1Pe 3:21-22

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A Christian is joined to Christ through baptism. This makes them a member of His body. Baptism also joins them to a process by which they are *delivered* from living by the other law that is resident within them. Baptism is their point of entry into the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as a member of His body. In this fellowship, sin remains dead within them, and the other law is progressively removed from their life. Furthermore, the life of Christ, which was in His blood and was shed as He suffered on the cross, is given to them as their life.²² This enables a son of God to live by Christ's life rather than by their own fleshly motivations.²³

The blood of Christ also sprinkles clean the conscience of a Christian so that it no longer operates from the basis of good or evil.²⁴ This means that a Christian no longer defines their own life and works. Instead, they walk in obedience to the word of God and serve Him by doing the works that the Father predestined for them in Christ. This is their sanctification, and the means by which they participate in the fulfilment of God's will.

The desire to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering is the appeal for a good conscience.²⁵ Although this fellowship involves suffering, a son of God rejoices in these sufferings because they know that they are ceasing from sin and are obtaining their eternal inheritance as a son of God.²⁶ In other words, they are finding rest for their soul.²⁷

Christ abolished sin and death

Paul described life in the fellowship of Christ's offering as 'a new and living way' that Christ pioneered for us through His death on the cross.²⁸ Through this offering, Jesus Christ 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel'.²⁹ It is only as a person joins this offering that they can be delivered from the fear of death that keeps them in bondage to Satan. It is also the means by which they obtain their sanctification as a son in the image and likeness of God.³⁰

When Christ was made sin for us, He joined us in our death and in the shame of our separation from God. At the same time, He became a sin offering in the hand of the Father and Holy Spirit.³¹ Because He was Yahweh's eternal Priest after the order of Melchizedek, He was able to offer Himself without spot to God by the power of Eternal Spirit.³² For the impending joy of God's covenant purpose being fulfilled, Christ endured the cross, *despising the shame* of being separated *with us*, and

22 Lev 17:11

23 Gal 2:20

24 Heb 10:22

25 1Pe 3:21

26 1Pe 4:1. Rom 5:3-5.
Rom 8:17

27 Mat 11:29

28 Heb 10:20.
Heb 12:2

29 2Ti 1:10

30 Heb 2:15

31 Isa 53:10

32 Heb 9:14

sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. By this means, He pioneered a pathway upon which every fallen person can be recovered from their nakedness, fear and shame, to their predestined sonship in the image and likeness of God.³³ In order to remain seated in heavenly places with Christ, we must continue to journey with Him on the pathway that He pioneered.

Through His offering on the cross, Jesus, as Yahweh's conquering King and Slave, disarmed principalities and powers, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men.³⁴ When a person receives the gospel of sonship and embarks on the steps of salvation, they are delivered from their slavery to fear by becoming a slave of Christ. Fear was their portion under the curse, but now they are progressively obtaining the blessing of God. This blessing is sonship life and their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.³⁵ The progression from fear to blessing is summarised in the word of the Lord to Abraham. God said, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield, your exceedingly great reward.'³⁶

Submitting to our Master

A slave of Christ receives the word of their Master as a command. Consider the examples of Abraham, Moses and David. In his address to the Jewish council, Stephen declared that it was 'the *God of glory*' who appeared to Abraham and *commanded* him to depart from his country and his relatives in order to enter the land of promise.³⁷ Abraham's obedience to this command enabled him to receive the promise of sonship.

Similarly, when Moses interceded for the children of Israel following the incident of the golden calf, he said to the Lord, 'Please, show me *Your glory*'.³⁸ On Mount Sinai, Yahweh, the God of glory, revealed Himself to Moses. After having seen the glory of the Lord pass by him from the safety of Christ's hand, Moses bowed his head toward the ground and worshipped the Lord, addressing Him as *Adonay*.³⁹ The word *Adonay* means '(my) Lord' and is an emphatic form of the word *adon*, which means '(my) master'. If Moses knew the name of Lord, why did he address Him as *Adonay*? It was because Moses was personally confessing that Christ was the Lord and Master of his life. God responded to Moses by saying, 'Behold I make a covenant ... observe what I *command* you this day.'⁴⁰

33 Heb 12:2

37 Act 7:2-3

34 Eph 4:7-8

38 Exo 33:18

35 Mat 5:3-11

39 Exo 34:8-9

36 Gen 15:1

40 Exo 34:10-11

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King David declared, ‘The Lord [Yahweh] said to my Lord [*Adon*, or Master], ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’.⁴¹ David was referring to the Son of God as *Adon*, or *his* Master. Notably, in this psalm, David identified his Master as a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.⁴² This was the priesthood through which Jesus, the Son of Man, offered Himself as a living sacrifice.⁴³

Each of these men acknowledged the lordship of Christ toward them, and received His word as a command. Consequently, they were described as ‘*the friends of God*’.⁴⁴ Jesus explained that we, also, could be His friends. He said, ‘You are My friends if you *do whatever I command you*.’⁴⁵ His commandment to us is to love one another in the same manner in which He loved us.⁴⁶ Christ loved us by laying down His life, or offering Himself, for us according to the command of the Father.⁴⁷

Doing what we are commanded by Christ makes a person a disciple. Jesus said, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.’⁴⁸ The word that Christ, a believer’s friend, delivers them to, is the teaching concerning His death, burial and resurrection. This is the doctrine of baptism. It calls a believer to fellowship with Christ, for an obedience of faith, to learn offering. The doctrine of baptism becomes their master. The implication of the doctrine of baptism becoming a person’s master is that they join Christ in the fellowship of the offering that He made as the Slave of Yahweh.⁴⁹ This is what it means to learn as a disciple from Christ, the Master.⁵⁰

If a person abides as a slave of the doctrine of baptism, Jesus said that they would know the truth, and the truth would make them free.⁵¹ What will a son of God be free from if they continue to abide in Christ’s word? It is freedom from sin, the other law, and from the deception that sin is forcing upon them. Because of this freedom, they can know and live in the truth. Truth is their sanctification as a son of God. As slaves of righteousness, then, they increasingly obtain their sanctification as a son of God, resulting in eternal life.⁵²

How can a slave make offering when his work is only to reveal his master? It is the heart of the slave, in relation to their service, that makes the difference between offering and coercion. Paul’s instruction to slaves was to serve their masters with the same attitude with which they served Christ. This is because they were Christ’s freemen, yet they had *made themselves* love slaves to Him.⁵³ The work of offering is an expression of love. Its purpose is always to give life to another, enabling them

41 Psa 110:1	45 Joh 15:14	49 Php 2:5-8	53 Col 3:22-23.
42 Psa 110:4	46 Joh 15:12	50 Mat 11:28-29.	Eph 6:5-6.
43 Heb 7:27	47 Joh 15:13. Joh 10:18	Isa 50:4	1Co 7:22
44 Jas 2:23. Exo 33:11.	48 Joh 8:31	51 Joh 8:32	
Act 13:22		52 Rom 6:22	

to live and to be revealed. We note, then, that fatherhood, brotherhood and the ministry of the Spirit are all of the same purpose; they are of *love*.

Reiterating the *key point* that we must understand: to have eternal life, a person must find sanctification. To find sanctification, they must find freedom from sin, deception and the other law. To find freedom, they must be brought under the doctrine to which their Friend, Christ, delivers them. This is the doctrine concerning His death, burial and resurrection. As a son of God presents themselves in sanctification, and by faith, to abide in this word, they learn worship, relationship, fellowship and offering. By this means, Christ's life is revealed in and from them as a blessing.

Two dimensions of life

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the works that a son of God is doing as a slave are the works that belong to their sonship. This is their sanctification. In other words, their slavehood results in the freedom, or the liberty, of a son of God.⁵⁴ The authority of their name, and the grace that they have received from Christ, become increasingly evident as they continue to present themselves as slaves of righteousness and, by this means, reveal Christ's sonship in the world.

It is important to note that Christ does not require His slaves to engage in works that are different from the works that belong to their sonship. This is because He is committed to revealing them as sons of the Father. In this action, the Son does not reveal Himself by demanding that believers submit to Him as His slaves. Further to this, the Father and the Holy Spirit are committed to revealing each individual son through their works as members in particular of the body of Christ. Through these works, Christ is being revealed in the world.

The distinction between slavehood and sonship reveals *two dimensions of the life of God*. The first dimension is the life of Christ that a person receives through offering transfer in the fellowship of His offering and suffering. What does this mean?

Through baptism and an ongoing participation in the communion, a son of God is joined to the fellowship of Christ's slavehood. As a particular member of the body of Christ, they are doing the works that belong to His sonship, according to the sanctification of their name, by the Holy Spirit. By this means, the will of God is fulfilled. In this fellowship of offering, which includes suffering with Christ, each

54 Rom 8:21

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member of the body of Christ receives Christ's life by offering transfer. Christ's life enables them to be a slave, but also enables their sonship.⁵⁵ This is what it means to take up *His cross*.⁵⁶

The second dimension of life is the life of Yahweh. The life of Yahweh is given to a slave as talents, or gifts of grace, through the ministry of Christ's messengers who are in His hand. Their message is the 'word of grace' which gives grace to every member of the body of Christ for their specific work of ministry.⁵⁷ This grace of life becomes their possession, and is multiplied by their offering. This is what it means for a person to take up *their cross* and follow Christ.⁵⁸ Importantly, a son of God cannot have one dimension of the life without the other.

Partaking of the tree of life at communion

While baptism joins a son of God to the fellowship of Christ's offering, eating and drinking the elements of the communion is the basis for, and the highpoint of, our ongoing participation in the fellowship of first love.

Jesus explained to the Ephesian church that those who overcame the issues that caused them to fall from first love would be granted access to eat from the tree of life that is in the midst of the paradise of God.⁵⁹ As we discussed in chapter two, this is heavenly places. Importantly, eating the fruit of the tree of life maintains a person's connection to the process through which they are able to overcome sin and the other law. It also equips them to minister the life of God to others as members of Christ's body.

In chapter two, we demonstrated that Christ Himself was the tree of life. We recall that Jesus said, 'Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life' and 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him'.⁶⁰

The question is, how is Christ revealed as the tree of life? What are the implications of eating the fruit of the tree of life?

Christ brought death to the tree of life by being cursed. Paul made this point when he explained that Christ became a curse for us on the cross, 'for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree".'⁶¹ This was for the purpose that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, and that every believer might

55 Rom 6:5-11

59 Rev 2:7

56 Mar 8:34

60 Joh 6:54,56

57 Act 20:32.
Eph 4:12

61 Gal 3:13

58 Mat 16:24

Granted to eat from the tree of life

receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.⁶² When Christ became a curse for us, the cross was manifest in history as the tree of life

When Adam and Eve fell, the way to the tree of life was barred for them because of their sin. If they had eaten of the tree of life, they would have been condemned to live forever in their sin, and would have remained separated from fellowship with God. However, when the tree of life was manifest at Calvary, mankind was again granted access to eat of the tree of life, even though they were still in sin. How is this possible?

Christ's body and blood became the fruit of the tree of life for us when He was lifted up on the cross. At the last supper, Jesus said that the bread is His flesh and the wine is His blood. He connected these elements to the offering that He was about to make.⁶³ Paul said that drinking the cup is a *participation* in the blood of Christ, and eating the bread is a *participation* in the body of Christ.⁶⁴ In other words, eating and drinking the elements of the communion joins a person to Christ's offering.

As we have already noted, Christ brought death to the tree of life by becoming a curse. As a person eats the fruit of the tree while in sin, they are given a participation in this death. In fellowship with Christ, the curse, represented by thorns, thistles and scorpions, is for the purpose of putting sin to death within them. Further, it is circumcising the other law from them. Sin lies dead, but the other law, which is the motivations of the flesh, is being cut from them. This deliverance is through fellowship in Christ's sufferings, in which a believer continues to participate by eating His flesh and drinking His blood. They do this by receiving the word, as a slave to the doctrine of baptism.

The second feature of Christ's suffering is that it was the means by which His blood was shed for mankind. Through the sufferings associated with Christ's death, His blood was shed from, and fell upon, His body. His body was the altar of sacrifice. His life was in His blood, and was given to us on the altar to become our life.⁶⁵ A person receives Christ's life when they are joined to His suffering body. The blood cleanses their conscience from dead works and is also given to them so that they can live by His life.⁶⁶

62 Gal 3:14

63 Luk 22:19-20

64 1Co 10:16

65 Lev 17:11

66 Gal 2:20.

Heb 10:22

Hearing and doing the word

Practically, how does a person eat the fruit of the tree of life? It is by receiving and obeying the word of God that is ministered to them at a communion service. The message of the cross, which joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering, is the power of God and the wisdom of God.⁶⁷ This special wisdom is the wisdom of Calvary. It is the wisdom of His death, burial and resurrection. This wisdom becomes the tree of life to those who receive the word and live by the word in the obedience of faith.⁶⁸

Jesus Himself made this very point when He responded to His disciples' complaints regarding the necessity to eat His flesh and drink His blood. He said to them, 'Does this offend you? What then if you should see the Son of Man ascend where He was before [i.e. heavenly places]? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit [enabling them to be one loaf, or body], and they are life [the life they receive from His blood]. But there are some of you who do not *believe*.'⁶⁹ They could not believe, because they were not willing to receive the word of Christ.

Those who do not believe the word that is ministered by Christ through His messengers are unwilling to let go of the right to be the source of their own life and destiny. Because they do not receive the word with gladness and simplicity of heart, they have no faith.⁷⁰ They are, therefore, unable to present themselves in a spirit of faith for fellowship in the body of Christ, which is the context for their good works as a son of God. This means that the blessings of the tree of life are not theirs, and they remain fallen from first love.

We remember that the fruit of the tree of life sustained and equipped Adam and Eve as they received the word of God. In the same way, everything that the communion elements represent becomes increasingly substantial in the life of a son of God as they receive and obey God's word. In this way, they eat the bread, accepting that faith is coming in the word to equip them for their specific, sanctified ministry as a member of the body of Christ. This will include putting off all division, and seeking restoration of relationships - individually, in families, and in the body of Christ. They drink the cup in faith, willing to obey the word that gives them life and capacity to suffer with Christ, and to minister the life of Christ as a member of His body.

67 1Co 1:18,24. 1Jn 1:3 70 Act 2:46.

68 Pro 3:13,18.
Rom 16:25-26

69 Joh 6:61-64

Eating and drinking in an unworthy manner

When people presume to misappropriate the word of God in order to advance their own image of themselves, they eat and drink in an unworthy manner. Paul said that they eat and drink judgement to themselves, not discerning their sanctified participation in the body of Christ.⁷¹ To live this way is to live according to a wisdom that is from beneath. It is the outcome of misappropriating the word through the exercise of their own law. When they do this, it is an attempt to use the word to substantiate the image that they create for themselves and their ministry. The communion word becomes for them the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

Regarding this wisdom, the apostle James wrote, 'But if you have bitter jealousy and selfish ambition in your heart, do not be arrogant and so lie against the truth. This wisdom is not that which comes down from above, but is earthly, natural, demonic. For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder and every evil thing.'⁷² As we considered in chapter three, jealousy and selfish ambition are the evidence of another law at work within us. Living by this principle brings us into bondage to the law of sin, and under the judgement of God.⁷³

For these people, the contrary conditions that the curse produces do not deliver them from their other law. Instead, their sufferings under the curse *provoke* their other law, causing them weariness, frustration and agitation. In truth, this should serve as an indication of the effect of the law of God upon them, and cause them to turn again to the Lord in repentance and faith.

Thorns and scorpions

When Jesus commissioned the seventy-two disciples, He said to them, 'Behold, I give you the authority to *trample on serpents and scorpions*, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your *names are written in heaven*.'⁷⁴ Jesus was saying that the thing to value is not the exercise of power within a ministry context but, rather, *obedience to Christ*, which reveals the sanctification of a person's name. By this means, they will fulfil the will of God and obtain an eternal reward.

71 1Co 11:27-29

72 Jas 3:14-16

73 Rom 7:11,23

74 Luk 10:19-20

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The words of Jesus parallel the mandate that the prophet Ezekiel received from the Lord when he was commissioned to speak to the children of Israel. The Lord said to Ezekiel, ‘And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, *though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions*; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house.’⁷⁵

Ezekiel was joined to the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings by *eating*. He was *commanded* to open his mouth and eat what the Lord was giving to him.⁷⁶ Regarding this encounter, Ezekiel said, ‘Now when I looked, there was a hand stretched out to me; and behold, a scroll of a book was in it. Then He spread it before me; and there was writing on the inside and on the outside, and written on it were *lamentations and mourning and woe*.’⁷⁷ The hand stretched out to Ezekiel was the same hand that the apostle John described as holding seven stars.⁷⁸ It is the hand of Christ, from which His word is proclaimed by His messengers. The word itself is the scroll that Ezekiel was commanded to eat. It detailed the works associated with his predestination.

Although Ezekiel’s ministry would be under the same cursed conditions that Adam experienced (thorns and thistles), he would be fruitful, or effective, in this context. This is because, in type, he was eating the fruit of the tree of life. This joined him to the conditions of the curse, which were, for him, a fellowship in Christ’s sufferings. However, as he was weak as a slave of righteousness, the Lord’s strength was manifest through him as Ezekiel’s words came to pass. As we have already noted, this was also characteristic of Paul’s ministry.⁷⁹

Ezekiel’s account of eating the scroll helps us to understand the impact upon us of eating the fruit of the tree of life. It is first sweet in our mouths, but then becomes bitter in our bellies, or in our heart, as it joins us to a process through which the other law is being cut from our lives. Once this process is a reality in our lives, we are given the mandate and grace to proclaim the word of life to others.

The preaching of Christ

Paul reminded the Galatian Christians of the process through which they had been born of God. The beginning point was Paul’s ministry. Through his preaching, Jesus Christ was publically portrayed, before their eyes, as crucified.⁸⁰ Paul explained that Christ redeemed all men from the curse of the law by becoming

75 Eze 2:6

79 2Co 12:9-10

76 Eze 2:8

80 Gal 3:1-2

77 Eze 2:9-10

78 Rev 1:20

a curse when He was lifted up on the cross. This was for the purpose that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.⁸¹

Paul's ministry in the region of Galatia was recorded by Luke in the book of Acts. Luke particularly noted Paul's declaration: 'The Lord has commanded us, "I have placed you as a *light for the Gentiles*, that you may bring salvation to the end of the earth".'⁸² To explain the ministry that he had been set apart for, by the Holy Spirit, Paul specifically quoted Isaiah's prophecy concerning Christ, who declared, 'It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; *I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth.*'⁸³ Paul connected his ministry to the Gentiles with Christ's ministry to the nations.

Similarly, as a spirit of supplication was poured upon the Jews on the day that Christ was crucified, this same spirit of grace and supplication was available to the Gentiles through the public portrayal of Christ as Paul preached to the Galatians.⁸⁴ Paul's hearers were also able to look on Christ whom they had pierced, to mourn in repentance, and to find reconciliation with Him.

Regarding the ministry of Christ to the whole world, Isaiah declared, 'Remove the stones, *lift up a standard* over the peoples. *Behold, the Lord has proclaimed to the end of the earth, say to the daughter of Zion, "Lo, your salvation comes; behold His reward is with Him, and His recompense before Him."* And they will call them, "The holy people, the *redeemed* of the Lord"; and you will be called, "Sought out, a city not forsaken".'⁸⁵

Elsewhere, Isaiah prophesied, saying, 'Then in that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, *who will stand as a signal [standard] for the peoples*; and His resting place will be glorious [lit: glory].'⁸⁶ The resting place of glory is the illuminated position of faith. This is the rest that is found in Christ when a person is born from above and comes into Christ through baptism.⁸⁷ Isaiah added, 'Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up [on the cross] and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations, kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.'⁸⁸

81 Gal 3:13-14

85 Isa 62:10-12

82 Act 13:47

86 Isa 11:10

83 Isa 49:6

87 Mat 11:29

84 Zec 12:10-11.
Joh 19:37

88 Isa 52:13-15

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In the light of these prophetic statements, we note the words of Jesus Himself, who said, ‘And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all men to Myself.’⁸⁹ Being lifted up on the cross was a notable theme in Christ’s teaching. For example, He said that if He was lifted up on the cross, everyone would know that He was Yahweh.⁹⁰ He also declared that ‘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’.⁹¹ In this way, Christ gathered up all the prophetic statements regarding the ministry of the light of life to the world, and applied them to His offering on the cross.

Importantly, in the very next verse of Isaiah’s prophecy, the prophet asked, ‘Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm [power] of the Lord been revealed?’⁹² Isaiah revealed that the ministry of Christ, through His offering on the cross, would be achieved through the preaching of a message. This message is the gospel that Paul preached and described as the wisdom and power of God.⁹³ Through the preaching of this message, Christ was portrayed to the Galatians as crucified. It is through the preaching of Christ crucified outside the camp that the Spirit of God, through Christ, comes to the Gentiles.⁹⁴

Messengers of Christ

A messenger is a member of the body of Christ. Christ speaks through messengers, by the Holy Spirit. Paul reminded the Galatian Christians of the fact that God speaks through His messengers when he wrote, ‘You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus’.⁹⁵ Importantly, Paul noted that the outcome of receiving his message as the words of Christ was that the Galatians received a *blessing*.⁹⁶

Christ continues His ministry on earth through His body. Each member of Christ’s body has a ministry that is consistent with where the Father has placed them within His body. Through their ministry, by the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of God is being ministered to others. Paul made this point when he asked the Galatians, ‘So then, does He who provides you with the Spirit and works miracles among you, do it by the works of the Law, or by hearing with faith?’⁹⁷ The supply of the Spirit of God is the means by which the body of Christ is mobilised. Gifts and ministries that come from the Spirit of God are given so that works of power (i.e. miracles) are ministered by the members of the body of Christ.

89 Joh 12:32

93 1Co 1:24

97 Gal 3:5

90 Joh 8:28

94 Heb 13:13

91 Joh 3:14-15

95 Gal 4:14

92 Isa 53:1

96 Gal 4:15

The preaching of the cross, so that those who hear the message are able to see and receive Christ as crucified for their sake, *is a miraculous activity*. It is a work of power. Those who proclaim Christ crucified can do so only if they have committed themselves to join the fellowship of Christ's offering as members of His body. By this means, they are able to show forth His death in each generation of the church, until Christ comes again.

Stir up the gift that is in you

Writing from prison, the apostle Paul asked Timothy not to be ashamed of 'the testimony of our Lord'.⁹⁸ 'The testimony of our Lord' was the atoning death of Christ as He was lifted up and crucified on the cross. This included the humiliation and sufferings that He endured from Gethsemane to Calvary. As a prisoner of Christ, Paul also suffered and, therefore, asked Timothy not to be ashamed of his sufferings.⁹⁹

Paul had joined Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings as a messenger of the gospel. As Paul suffered for the gospel, by the power of God, people were illuminated to see Christ crucified.¹⁰⁰ Paul testified to this when he said to the Galatians that 'it was because of a bodily illness that I preached the gospel to you the first time; and that which was a trial to you in my bodily condition you did not despise or loathe, but you received me as an angel of God, as Christ Jesus Himself'.¹⁰¹

Paul's ill health was the outcome of all the persecution he had experienced during his ministry in the other cities and regions that he visited. As Paul was joined to the sufferings of Christ, he received power to minister the Spirit of Christ to his hearers. By this means, he was a gift of the Spirit to them.

Paul had this principle in mind when he said to Timothy, 'Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands. For God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.'¹⁰² Paul exhorted Timothy to proclaim Christ crucified. It is through the public portrayal of Christ crucified that the Spirit is ministered to those who hear the word. The word and Spirit work the miracle of illumination within them. A hearer who receives this message is then equipped to join the offering of Christ so that they are also able to be a gift, by the Spirit, to the body and to those who are yet unsaved.

98 2Ti 1:8

102 2Ti 1:6-7

99 2Ti 1:8

100 2Ti 1:8

101 Gal 4:13-14

Do not be ashamed

Christ calls every believer to join the fellowship of His sufferings. Just as Paul exhorted Timothy not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord, or of Paul himself as the prisoner of the Lord, they are being called not to be ashamed of the testimony of the Lord or of those who are suffering for His name's sake.

The Lord does not ask us to like our sufferings or to enjoy them. As both Paul and Peter observed, no suffering is pleasant.¹⁰³ Rather, *the Lord is asking us to commit ourselves to suffer with Him and with our brethren in Christ*. It is by this means that the divine nature is being formed within us and we are able to minister this life to others.¹⁰⁴ Christ Himself did not consider suffering to be a pleasant or desirable experience. In fact, He asked the Father, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me.' However, Christ committed Himself to receive and fulfil the Father's will.¹⁰⁵ Then, it was for the joy that would result from His offering that He endured the cross and despised the shame.¹⁰⁶

As we embrace our participation in Christ's sufferings, we are delivered from our fear of death and of suffering. He secures us and grants peace to us so that we are able to proceed in the way that He has set before us. Most importantly, we are able to endure by the power of God. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we have access to the same power through which Christ endured the cross. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you'.¹⁰⁷ This is indeed a miracle!

103 Heb 12:11. 1Pe 1:6 107 Rom 8:11

104 Heb 12:11.
1Pe 1:6-8

105 Mat 26:39

106 Heb 12:2

CHAPTER 6

First love among brethren

Jesus warned all believers that, as we approach the time of the end, lawlessness will increase, and the love of the majority of Christians will grow cold.¹ Lawlessness is the outcome when a person is motivated by their own law to create an image of themselves, rather than becoming the person that God has predestined them to be. In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul called this desire for independence, control and self-expression that resides in the heart of every person, the ‘other law’.² It is the other law in a believer’s heart that causes them to be self-righteous, to judge others, and to be offended when they feel hurt or marginalised by other Christians in the place where they live and come together to eat and drink the communion meal.

When a believer becomes offended with a brother or sister in Christ, they will often begin to withdraw from fellowship and revert to doing what is right in their own eyes.³ This is the pathway that leads to lawlessness. Their love for the word of Christ that is proclaimed by His messengers, and their love for their brethren,

1 Mat 24:12

2 Rom 7:23

3 Pro 12:15

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

will grow cold. Jesus said that these kinds of relational issues will impact upon the faith and love of the majority of Christians as we approach the time of the end.⁴ It is important for every believer to remain in the fellowship of Christ's offering, which will include a participation in His sufferings, so that the other law is removed from their heart.⁵ Likewise, a person needs to resolve any relational issues with their brethren so that offence does not take root in their life.⁶

When we consider our relationships in the body of Christ, we need to remember that the Father has sovereignly placed us in the relational context that He has chosen.⁷ It is the Father who has joined us to Christian brothers and sisters in a locality, so that our hearts can be knit together in love as we serve together and minister life to one another.⁸ We know that we need our brethren, and that we must continue to walk in first love with them, if we are to be saved. The apostle John declared that 'we know that we have passed out of death and into life because we love the brethren'.⁹ Further to this, he proclaimed that 'if someone says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for the one who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen'.¹⁰

Paul's admonition to the Corinthians

The apostle Paul rejoiced that the grace of God had been given to the Corinthian church. The testimony of Christ had been confirmed in them so that they 'were not lacking in any spiritual gift'.¹¹ Nevertheless, Paul was clear that he could not commend or praise them for the way in which they came together for communion.¹² Many of them were eating and drinking the communion in an unworthy manner. Because of this, they were eating and drinking judgement upon themselves. The judgement of God was among them so that many were weak and sick, and some were even dying prematurely.¹³ Paul summarised this situation by saying that when the church came together for communion, they came together 'not for the better, but for the worse'.¹⁴

We eat and drink the communion in *a worthy manner* when we come together to minister the grace of Christ to one another in a fellowship of first love. The communion table should be the place where we come to minister life and *to be a blessing* to our brethren. When we come with the motivation to give, we also receive blessing from others in a fellowship of giving and receiving. In contrast, Paul explained that we will eat and drink the communion in *an unworthy manner*

4	Mat 24:12	8	Col 2:1-2. Eph 4:16	12	1Co 11:22
5	Rom 2:29. Col 2:11	9	1Jn 3:14	13	1Co 11:30
6	Jud 1:21. Heb 12:15	10	1Jn 4:20	14	1Co 11:17
7	1Co 12:18	11	1Co 1:6-7		

if we do not ‘judge ourselves rightly’ and if we do not discern ‘the body of Christ rightly’.¹⁵

We judge *ourselves rightly* when we come to give according to the name and grace that we have received from God. We judge *the body rightly* when we recognise the name and grace of others in the body of Christ, and honour one another. Consequently, we can receive the ministry of the word of life from one another. Judging ourselves and the body of Christ rightly also involves resolving any relational issues that we may have with our brothers and sisters in Christ.

Paul was greatly concerned about the relational issues that had caused divisions in the Corinthian congregation.¹⁶ The judgement of God was among them because of the breaches in fellowship that existed between brethren. Earlier in his epistle, Paul listed many of the issues that were causing these breaches in fellowship. He identified a number of areas where they had become ‘puffed up’ with pride. He used the terminology of being ‘puffed up’ to signify that these issues had become *a leaven* in the church that was preventing them from eating the communion meal in sincerity and truth.¹⁷ Later in this chapter, we will consider the types of leaven that Paul identified in the Corinthian church.

Godly sorrow that leads to repentance

Many in the Corinthian church had left their first love, and needed to find repentance before the Lord, and reconciliation with their brethren. Each member of the congregation needed to receive Paul’s word, and to allow the Holy Spirit to bring illumination and conviction regarding relationships that needed healing and restoration. This was necessary before they could eat and drink the communion in a worthy manner.¹⁸ Jesus said, ‘If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother and then come and offer your gift.’¹⁹

In His admonition to the Ephesian presbytery, Jesus declared that repentance is the first step on the pathway to recovering first love.²⁰ In a similar way, the apostle Paul identified the truth that repentance needs to become the first enduring foundation in our Christian life.²¹ Repentance before the Lord is *the foundation* that makes possible our genuine reconciliation with our brethren. The pursuit

15 1Co 11:27-32 19 Mat 5:23-24

16 1Co 1:10. 1Co 3:3. 20 Rev 2:5
1Co 11:1 21 Heb 6:1

17 1Co 5:7-8

18 1Co 11:27

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of reconciliation, without repentance, will be the expression of a carnal motive and will only achieve a carnal outcome. The hallmark of true repentance is that it begins with godly sorrow. If repentance is the first step on the pathway to recovering first love, then godly sorrow is the first step on the pathway to finding repentance.

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul contrasted the outcome of shame, which is the sorrow of the world that leads to death, with *godly sorrow* that leads to repentance. He explained that godly sorrow leads to repentance without regret.²² It leads to a new way of living and relating, without regression or relapse. This is the case because godly sorrow produces diligence, clearing of ourselves, indignation, fear, vehement desire, zeal and vindication.²³ We have often referred to these elements of godly sorrow that lead to repentance as ‘the seven steps of mourning’.

The seven steps of mourning are not a pathway of penance. Nor are they some kind of biblical formula that guarantees the recovery of individuals and relationships. The seven steps of mourning are not something to be *attained* by a penitent sinner or *orchestrated* by a religious counsellor. We note that Paul did not need to encourage the Corinthians toward the seven steps of mourning; he simply proclaimed the word of God to them, and relied upon the conviction of the Holy Spirit to cause them to turn to Christ and to begin to mourn.²⁴ He then, retrospectively, bore witness to the fruit that this godly sorrow produced in them.

Paul bore witness that the first thing that godly sorrow produced in them was *diligence*.²⁵ This could be better translated as ‘a speedy, eager and *forward-looking earnestness*’. This is a unique kind of earnestness. It is the evidence of the spirit of adoption in the heart of the believer. We know that it is the spirit of adoption that compels a believer to confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, and to come to the heavenly Father to be born again as a son of God. It is also the spirit of adoption that compels us to join the fellowship of Christ’s offering by baptism. The spirit of adoption in the life of a believer, which is the spirit of faith, always manifests itself in this kind of *forward-looking earnestness*.²⁶ When the word of God comes and highlights a relational issue in the life of a believer, it is *the same spirit of adoption* that compels and motivates them toward personal recovery and relational restoration.

In the midst of godly sorrow, it is the spirit of adoption within the heart of the believer that causes them to eagerly press forward to find recovery and restoration, instead of recoiling in shame and condemnation. The spirit of adoption will

22 2Co 7:10

26 2Co 4:13

23 2Co 7:11

24 2Co 7:8-9

25 2Co 7:11

motivate them toward the *clearing of themselves* in an honest and accountable way.²⁷ They will do this by making appropriate confession and apology to those against whom they have sinned. In contrast, the desire to be absolved from the accountability of their sin by making a confidential confession to a third party or clergy person is the evidence of shame, not the fruit of a spirit of adoption.

The foundation of relational honesty and accountability that leads to a genuine clearing of ourselves is a broken and contrite heart, and the capacity to *empathise* with those against whom we have sinned.²⁸ It is important to recognise that empathy is *not* sympathy. We can sympathise with a person at any time and in any situation, but it is only possible to empathise with a person when we turn to look upon Jesus Christ whom we have pierced, and then join the offering of Christ, who has empathised with all men by joining us in our affliction and suffering.²⁹

True empathy means that we will recognise the real impact that our sin has had upon Christ and others. This illumination enables us to be accountable for our transgressions and any breaches in relationship that we have caused. Instead of being motivated by our own desire to absolve ourselves of relational accountability or to relieve ourselves of the guilt of our sin, the empathy of Christ motivates us toward an honest, open, and accountable clearing of ourselves. This means that we will make confession and apology to those we have sinned against, and seek to make appropriate restitution wherever possible.

It is the capacity to empathise with those who have been impacted by our sin, that produces godly *indignation*.³⁰ Many believers will hate the guilt and condemnation that they feel because of their sin. Like the wretched man whom Paul described in Romans chapter seven, they may even hate the fact that they are in bondage to the law of sin in their flesh, and are unable to fulfil the will of God.

However, indignation that is motivated by a spirit of adoption is much more than this. It is not self-centred indignation. Godly indignation is hatred of the sin itself because of the relational implications of the sin. The believer who is motivated by a spirit of adoption will hate the impact that their sin has had on others, and the relational separation that their sin has caused between themselves and others.

Rather than being motivated by a spirit of fear to withdraw themselves and to preserve their own life, they will be motivated by *godly fear* to walk in the light of the word and the light of fellowship with their brethren, so that the blood of

27 2Co 7:11

28 Psa 51:17

29 Isa 53:3-5.
Zec 12:10

30 2Co 7:11

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Christ can cleanse them from all sin.³¹ The God-fearer will recognise that it is only as they participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering that the other law in their flesh, which keeps them in bondage to the law of sin, is able to be removed from their life. The person who fears God will also recognise that the wisdom of God for every issue, situation and circumstance can only be found in the fellowship of Christ's offering.³²

Further to this, Paul identified the reality that the fruit of godly sorrow and the spirit of adoption in a believer's heart will be *vehement desire, zeal* and *vindication*.³³ When he spoke of vehement desire and zeal, he was referring to much more than the desire for relational recovery and restoration. Paul was describing the motivation of the spirit of adoption within a person toward a completely different mode of living. This new way of living expresses itself in a *vehement desire* to join the offering of Christ, and to become a blessing to others in the fellowship of the body of Christ.³⁴ It is a *zeal* for the Lord's house and for all those who dwell within it.³⁵ In all of this, the believer is fully vindicated because of the real and substantial change that is evident in their life. This is the evidence that they have found repentance without regret.³⁶

The example of Jacob and Esau

In the life of Jacob, we observe the steps of mourning that lead to repentance. In contrast to this, the Scriptures record that Esau was not able to find repentance, even though he sought it diligently with tears.³⁷ His tears were not the fruit of godly sorrow. They were the expression of bitter anguish, and the evidence of his lack of resolution and fulfilment. The tears of Esau were a cry to minimise or remove the consequences of his sin. One of the major lessons that we learn from the life of Esau is that a person cannot find repentance as the first step on the pathway of sanctification if they allow bitterness to take root in their heart when someone has sinned against them.³⁸

Even when he had sold his birthright in exchange for a single meal, Esau believed that he had a right to be blessed, on the basis that he was more righteous than the one who had sinned against him.³⁹ Esau viewed himself as the victim of Jacob's opportunistic and deceitful behaviour. He believed that his brother had unfairly gained an advantage over him. In the light of Jacob's deception, Esau could not understand why Jacob had been rewarded with blessing and advancement. As an

31 2Co 7:11. 1Jn 1:7 35 Joh 2:17. Psa 27:4 39 Gen 25:31-34.
32 Psa 111:10. 36 2Co 7:10 Heb 12:16
Pro 9:10. Pro 15:33 37 Heb 12:17
33 2Co 7:11 38 Heb 12:15
34 1Co 14:1

angry victim, he allowed bitterness to take root in his heart. He grew to hate his brother and plotted to kill him.⁴⁰ Esau would have viewed the murder of Jacob as an execution of justice.

We recall that Jacob was born with a corrupted name, even though he was born in a covenant house. His name meant ‘supplanter’ or ‘cheat’, and this name defined his nature from his mother’s womb. In a similar way, we observe that children who are born in Christian homes, as children of the covenant, will still require regeneration so that their nature can be changed to be commensurate with the new name that they have received from the Father. As they are disciplined by their parents in the nurture and admonition of the Lord, they are taught to cooperate with the regenerative work of the heavenly Father.⁴¹ The chastening of the Father causes their lives to be aligned with their sanctification as sons of God.⁴²

In Jacob’s situation, his name revealed his fallen nature, and it appears that this nature was also *nurtured* by his mother in the household. We know that the Lord told Rebekah that ‘the older would serve the younger’ while the two boys were still in her womb.⁴³ She failed to believe this word, however, when she encouraged Jacob to deceive his father.⁴⁴ She engendered a culture in her household where ‘the end justified the means’. Because Jacob deceived and took advantage of his brother Esau, he was sent away to learn that the ‘means and the end are the same’ in the sight of the Lord. Jacob needed to find godly sorrow and repentance in order to recover his relationship with Esau. The seven steps of mourning needed to be established in Jacob’s life.

During his sojourn in Laban’s house, Jacob had to learn to cope with injustice and to receive it as chastening from the hand of the Lord. We know that Laban deceived Jacob into marrying his eldest daughter, and changed Jacob’s wages ten times.⁴⁵ Why did Jacob need to be deceived and to experience injustice in Laban’s house? Was he reaping what he had sown as the consequence of his own deceptive behaviour? Was it to teach him the error of his ways? Was it to teach Jacob how Esau would have felt when he was deceived by him? Much more than this, the Lord used injustice to join Jacob to the fellowship of His sufferings so that the work of regeneration was active in his life and *his nature could be changed*.

The process of chastening in the life of Jacob, under the hand of the Lord, culminated when he wrestled alone with the angel of the Lord for a whole night, before crossing the river to meet his brother.⁴⁶ The Lord weakened Jacob by putting

40 Gen 27:41-42

44 Gen 27:8-10

41 Eph 6:4. Heb 12:9

45 Gen 29:23-25.
Gen 31:7

42 Heb 12:10

46 Gen 32:24

43 Gen 25:23.
Rom 9:12

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his hip out of joint.⁴⁷ However, Jacob endured the travail through the night until he received a blessing from the Lord. He was blessed by receiving a new name.⁴⁸ Even though he had already been blessed by Isaac, Jacob could not inherit and appropriate the blessing until his name was changed. The Lord changed his name from Jacob to Israel, which means 'ruler with God'. This was the outcome of the process of regeneration and the seven steps of mourning in his life. He inherited the authority of his predestination when he received this new name.

Israel testified that he had seen God face to face, and yet his life had been preserved.⁴⁹ Because he had submitted to the chastening of the Lord until his name was changed, he was able to proceed to openly meet Esau face to face. We know that Esau needed to serve Jacob, who had become a 'ruler with God', but, significantly, Jacob testified that Esau was *the face of God* to him.⁵⁰ Jacob recognised that he could not be restored to God's purpose for his life until he had endeavoured to be reconciled to his brother. This was true, regardless of Esau's response or intentions toward him. As Israel accountably bowed seven times before Esau, the process of his repentance was complete, and he was able to proceed in the pathway of his sanctification as the father of the patriarchs of the nation of Israel.⁵¹

The importance of forgiveness

We cannot eat and drink the communion in a worthy manner if we know that our brother has something against us.⁵² However, equally, we cannot eat and drink the communion in a worthy manner if we have something against our brother. Regardless of the circumstances or the hurt that we have experienced at the hands of others, we cannot allow unforgiveness to reside within our heart. We recall that Peter asked Jesus how many times he should forgive a brother who sinned against him, and then proposed to the Lord that seven times should be enough. Jesus answered him, 'I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.'⁵³ We note that the requirement upon us to forgive our brother is not dependent upon them being aware of the hurt that they have caused us, by their making apology or by them seeking our forgiveness.

When we forgive, it does not mean that we need to overlook or embrace the aberrant behaviour of a brother. It means that we can raise a matter with a brother in an honest and gracious manner, knowing that we are speaking the truth in love for their sake, rather than speaking from any need for personal resolution or

47 Gen 32:25

48 Gen 32:26-28

49 Gen 32:30

50 Gen 33:10

51 Gen 33:3

52 Mat 5:23-24

53 Mat 18:22

vindication. It is this relational mode that makes reconciliation with our brother possible. We must be active toward reconciliation, but this does not mean that we make allowances for evil behaviour.⁵⁴ Jesus said, 'If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.'⁵⁵ Once we have done all that we can to restore relationship, and if a brother is not willing to be restored, we wait, in good conscience, for future opportunities for relational recovery.

The willingness to forgive is an important foundation in the life of a Christian for a number of reasons. First, if we are not willing to forgive a particular person for a real or perceived hurt that they have caused us, then it will affect all of our relationships in the body of Christ. This is a sobering point. If we are not willing to walk in first love with a particular brother or sister, we will not be able to walk in first love with other brethren in the body of Christ. When God the Father has joined us in a fellowship with Christians where we live, we do not have the freedom to be selective in our relationships. To do so would make us guilty of the sin of partiality. We know that the Lord does not tolerate any form of partiality within His body.⁵⁶

Second, if we allow unforgiveness and resentment to reside within our heart, it will become a root of bitterness within us that will impact upon every facet of our life and relationships. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul warned us that if we allow a root of bitterness to spring up in our heart, it will harm us and cause us trouble.⁵⁷ A root of bitterness will have a negative impact upon our emotional health and physical wellbeing. And it can manifest itself in angry outbursts or discriminatory conversations that have the potential to defile those around us.

Third, if we do not forgive, it will give Satan an advantage in our life. Paul highlighted this point to the Corinthian church. He exhorted the church toward the need to forgive a brother so that no advantage would be taken over them by Satan. He said, 'For we are not ignorant of his schemes.'⁵⁸ One of the primary schemes of Satan, who is our adversary at law, is to encourage us to keep living by our own knowledge of good and evil. This will include endorsing our self-righteousness, and fanning the flame of our own sense of hurt and injustice when we feel slighted by others. He knows that our lack of resolution and our judgements of our brethren will cause us to withdraw from fellowship, and bring us into bondage.

54 Rom 12:18

58 2Co 2:11

55 Mat 18:15

56 Jas 2:9

57 Heb 12:15

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Finally, and most significantly, our own forgiveness by the heavenly Father is dependent upon our willingness to forgive those who have sinned against us. Jesus said to His disciples, 'If you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.'⁵⁹ Jesus reinforced this point when He told the parable about the slave who was forgiven a debt of ten thousand talents by the king, but then refused to forgive one of his fellow slaves a debt of one hundred denarii.⁶⁰ In the end, we cannot be saved if we are unwilling to walk in first love with our brethren.

The leaven of unbelief

The basis for all fellowship is the word of God. The apostle John declared, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.'⁶¹ The word of a messenger administration establishes and sanctifies the ground of fellowship in the body of Christ. The fellowship of the body of Christ is the context for all offering. It is the place where we present our body as a living sacrifice to prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God.⁶² The word, fellowship, and offering are the essential elements of first love in the communion meal and in the building up of the body of Christ.

The Scriptures teach us that the bread of the communion represents these three elements of first love.

In the first case, the bread represents the *word* of God. Jesus said to those who were following Him, 'Do not work for the food which perishes, but for *the food* which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.'⁶³ At the end of this interaction on the bread of life from heaven, He said to them, '*The words that I have spoken* to you are spirit and life.'⁶⁴

In the second case, the bread represents the body of Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, 'This is *My body* which is given for you.'⁶⁵ Paul taught that we are all one body because we partake of the one bread.⁶⁶

In the third case, the bread also represents our participation in *the offering* of Christ. The bread *which we break* is a participation in the offering of Christ, enabling His grace to be multiplied and given to all who gather at the communion table and

59 Mat 6:14-15

63 Joh 6:27

60 Mat 18:23-35

64 Joh 6:63

61 1Jn 1:3

65 Luk 22:19

62 Rom 12:1

66 1Co 10:17

eat and drink in a worthy manner.⁶⁷ We are genuinely eating the bread of the communion as we receive the word of God, live in the fellowship of the body of Christ, and participate in the offering of Christ.

This is only possible as we purge out the leaven that wars against our capacity to walk in first love.⁶⁸ The first leaven that Paul identified in his letter to the Corinthians was to not receive the word of Christ that is proclaimed by His messengers. He likened those who are unwilling to receive and submit to Christ's messengers, to a leaven in the midst of the congregation. He said, '*Now some are puffed up, as though I were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.*'⁶⁹

Evidently, there were members of the Corinthian congregation who believed that they no longer needed Paul and his ministry. Some of them thought that they had the necessary grace to sustain their own ministry. Others had begun to follow independent and itinerant preachers in the hope that they would receive some kind of ministry from them. They did not acknowledge their need to receive the word of present truth, and to be properly equipped by ascension gift overseers for the work of their own ministry. Neither did they recognise or appreciate the *mode of ministry* that true overseers would demonstrate among them.⁷⁰

The evidence of this kind of leaven in our heart or in the midst of a congregation will be grumbling and an absence of faith.⁷¹ We know that faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.⁷² Paul reminded the Hebrews that the incessant grumbling and complaining of the children of Israel was a key indicator of their lack of faith. He said, '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.'⁷³ The Israelites could not enter the rest of faith that pertained to their inheritance, because they were continually putting the Lord and His administration to the test.

Repentance begins when we turn from our grumbling to the word and the messengers of Christ. The Lord expects us to humble ourselves and to be submitted to His word as it is ministered by His messengers.⁷⁴ A person who is committed to first love will have an 'ear to hear' what the Spirit is saying to the churches through the messengers of Christ.⁷⁵ Jesus explained that a person who hears and receives the word of God is able to eat the fruit of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of God.⁷⁶

67 1Co 10:1

71 Joh 6:41. 1Co 10:10

75 Rev 2:7

68 1Co 5:7

72 Rom 10:17

76 Rev 2:7

69 1Co 4:18-19

73 Heb 4:2

70 2Co 13:3-4

74 Jas 4:6-10.
1Pe 5:5-7

The leaven of evil behaviour

The second leaven that Paul identified in the Corinthian church was evil behaviour. However, more particularly, the leaven was the religious sophistication that was demonstrated by many in the congregation by their toleration of the evil behaviour. Instead of mourning over a particular issue, they even glorified in their capacity to embrace the behaviour in the name of love and tolerance. Paul said to them, ‘*You are puffed up*, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed *might be taken away* from among you.’⁷⁷ He continued, ‘Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a *little leaven leavens the whole lump*? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened.’⁷⁸

Paul asked the Corinthians, ‘For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?’⁷⁹ The word of God that invites us to join the fellowship of the body of Christ *also* calls us to ‘come out from among them and be separate ... do not touch what is unclean’.⁸⁰ We know that this is not a call to remove ourselves from the world, but is a call to separate ourselves from the *evil behaviour* that is in the world.⁸¹ It is also a call to remove all evil behaviour from our own lives and from the midst of the church.

The evil behaviour itself will become a leaven, but it is the ‘normalisation’ of the evil behaviour, by those who do not understand the love of God and do not walk in the fear of God, that becomes the most pervasive leaven. Referring to the immoral situation, Paul instructed the Corinthians to remove the evil person from the congregation. He did this for the sake of the congregation, and for the sake of the offender, so that he had the opportunity to find godly sorrow and repentance before the Lord.⁸²

In the case of new believers, we know that the personal conviction which they experience when they look upon Jesus Christ, whom they have pierced, and begin to mourn, will lead to repentance and a significant change in their culture.⁸³ Firstfruits Christians will need to walk sensitively and supportively with new believers as they learn the new culture of conduct that belongs to the household of God.⁸⁴

In contrast, a different approach is needed if a person decides to leave the fellowship of the body of Christ and follow their own way. We cannot pursue such a person, but this does not mean that we close the door on the possibility of recovering the

77 1Co 5:2

78 1Co 5:6-7

79 2Co 6:14

80 2Co 6:17

81 1Co 5:9-10

82 1Co 5:5

83 Zec 12:10.
Act 19:18-20

84 1Ti 3:1

relationship. In this regard, we recall the demeanour of the prodigal son's father. Although he did not condone, nor make room for, his son's rebellion, the father remained in his house, *waiting in hope* for the return of his son.⁸⁵

The leaven of judgements and factions

As we noted earlier, the word sets the ground of fellowship. This is the basis for walking in the light. Relationships that are established on any other basis are not in the light. For this reason, Paul declared to the Ephesian church, 'For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them.'⁸⁶ The unfruitful works of darkness are not simply sinful activities. They are also modes of relationship within the church that are an alternative to fellowship that is in the light.

Paul described these relationships as 'factions' in the church.⁸⁷ This was the third kind of leaven that he identified in the Corinthian church as being the evidence that they had fallen from first love. Sometimes, factions can emerge in a church over certain doctrines or ministry initiatives. However, a more common cause of factions is people becoming puffed up on behalf of one against another concerning a particular issue or past hurt.⁸⁸ This can occur when an aggrieved person shares their discontent with a friend or family member who is then, by implication, placed under a loyalty obligation. The consequence of such an obligation is that the friend or family member is unable to relate openly and easily with the one who has supposedly perpetrated the injury.

When offences are discussed in an inappropriate way, the discussion often drops into character assessments or judgements about a person's personality, intelligence or capacity. Once an opinion has been formed about a person, ongoing misunderstandings will strengthen the judgement and only serve to perpetuate the breach in the relationship. This causes alienation, and means that longstanding offences and factional mechanisms are able to exist in the middle of Christian communities. With this in view, it is vital that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn into unhelpful discussions with an offended brother or sister.⁸⁹ We must refrain from gossip, and ensure that we do not hinder the recovery of an offended

85 Luk 15:20

89 Col 4:6.

86 Eph 5:8-11

Rom 15:1-2

87 1Co 11:19

88 1Co 4:6

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party by exacerbating their real or perceived hurt, rather than encouraging them toward personal healing and relational restoration.

Most importantly, we must not be drawn to form a judgement or an opinion of a brother or sister, based upon the offence of another person. Paul was referring to these kinds of relational matters when he said to the Corinthians that they had become ‘puffed up on behalf of one against the other’.⁹⁰ We are reminded of the words of the wise man, ‘The first to plead his case seems right, until another comes and examines him’.⁹¹ However, this does not mean that the answer in these situations is to hear both sides of the story and then arbitrate the situation from the base of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We need to refrain from the presumption of passing judgement and, rather, encourage our brethren to let go of offence and to actively pursue reconciliation wherever possible.⁹²

When Christians become puffed up on behalf of one against another, it is a destructive leaven within any congregation. However, it is a particularly destructive leaven in family situations. It often causes children to become locked up to the grievance of one or both of their parents toward other family members or toward brethren in the church.⁹³ As they overhear their parents’ grievances or judgements, the children are taught that the church, as a community, has no integrity. Once this view of relationships and of other people in the church becomes entrenched, the children seek opportunity to leave the church and to find credible relationships elsewhere.

We know that children will grow up and become accountable before the Lord for their own attitudes, behaviours and decisions. However, Christian parents must walk in the fear of the Lord and ensure that they are not imposing their own grievances upon their children, thus causing them to stumble. Referring to young children in the kingdom of God, Jesus said, ‘Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to stumble, it would be better for him to have a heavy millstone hung around his neck, and to be drowned in the depth of the sea.’⁹⁴ If parents have shared their grievances with their children, it is incumbent upon them to resolve the issue, and then to actively inform their children that the matter has been resolved.

In all situations, where issues have divided brethren in the body of Christ, it is most important that reconciliation is shared as widely as the grievance was shared. If this does not happen, factious alienation will persist in the church. Even when

90 1Co 4:6

94 Mat 18:6

91 Pro 18:17

92 Rom 14:10

93 Jer 31:29

the emotion of the original offence has been forgotten or the perpetrators of the offence have left, the legacy of the alienation can continue as a culture. The work of the Holy Spirit is to bring sight and healing to those who are bruised in this way, and to set them at liberty so that no-one or nothing takes their crown of sonship from them.⁹⁵ While ever a person maintains a grievance against another brother or sister in the body of Christ, the liberty of their own sonship is undermined, and they cannot walk in first love with any of their brethren.

The cross of Christ is the means by which we address these issues in our families and with our brethren. As Paul reminded us, '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.'⁹⁶ When we were baptised into Christ's death, burial and resurrection, we were joined to this reconciling work. We eat and drink the communion in faith for ongoing participation in His offering, and the recovery of first love that is a condition of fellowship with Yahweh. Through our participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we are being delivered from our own law, and are receiving life to minister to our brethren. Of course, this has a broad application that needs to be considered and understood in every Christian home.

House to house fellowship

We maintain our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as we gather together and partake of the communion elements each week. This is a fellowship of life that is mobilised at the communion table. This fellowship in the offering of Christ continues throughout the week as each member of Christ's body ministers to others according to their name and grace. This ministry will be expressed from *house to house* and from Christian households into the world. In the early church, as believers continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, they broke the bread of life from house to house and the Lord added to the church those who were being saved.⁹⁷ We read that great grace was upon them all.⁹⁸

House to house fellowship is characterised by sanctified dialogue, friendship and hospitality. As households are restored to this fellowship, the word of grace that is ministered at the communion table is able to be broken open and multiplied. Friendship in a spirit of sanctification is a foundation of house to house fellowship. When people meet in a spirit of sanctification, they have no agenda other than

95 Rev 3:11

96 Eph 2:14-16

97 Act 2:42-47

98 Act 4:33

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love. They are able to maintain an easy and open dialogue with their brethren in Christ. In contrast, house to house fellowship is frustrated when sons of God fail to reconcile with their brethren in the body of Christ. While a person has something against their brother or sister in Christ, their relationships with others will not be from the basis of first love.

We recognise that first love must be recovered and maintained in Christian households so that the evangelistic ministry of the church is able to be effective. In the Scriptures, the evangelistic administration of the church that reveals and ministers the love of God is typified as a standard with the face of an eagle. The first manifestation of the love of God in a Christian house is the establishment of a covenant household through sanctified marriage. Children who are born in these households are 'godly seed'.⁹⁹ The multiplication of sons of God in covenant households is the first and foremost element of the church's evangelism. Christian parents have been given the grace to have children and to nurture the divine nature of God within their children. As heirs together of the grace of life, it is the work of godly fathers and mothers to raise their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord.¹⁰⁰

Further to this, Christian homes that have been established in the love of God, and that maintain the love of the brethren, will be effective contexts for evangelism into the world. Paul rejoiced when he witnessed the growing and overflowing nature of faith and love among the Thessalonians. He said, 'We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brethren, as is only fitting, because your faith is greatly enlarged, and the love of each one of you toward one another grows even greater.'¹⁰¹ With the help of the Holy Spirit, covenant households are able to minister the word as the bread of life with others in the broader community. When members of households have received the grace of life at the communion table, the light of the word is able to be reflected from their households into the world. Motivated by the love of God, it is this evangelistic ministry of Christian households that enables the church to become the light of the world.

99 Mal 2:15

100 1Pe 3:7. Eph 6:4

101 2Th 1:3

CHAPTER 7

The restoration of a star

When Paul addressed the Ephesian elders at Miletus, he warned them that men from within their own presbytery would rise up to speak perverse things in an effort to draw away disciples after themselves. He also warned them that savage wolves would come in among them to use and exploit the church for their own gain.¹ In the years that followed, it is apparent that the Ephesian presbytery heeded the words of Paul and was able to cope with and overcome this kind of corruption. Jesus personally commended them for their ability to deal with those who lived among them demonstrating this kind of hypocrisy.²

However, Jesus identified a much more significant crisis that they needed to overcome. He said, ‘Nevertheless, I have this against you, that *you have left your first love*.’³ The loss of first love was their major problem, and the imperative to return to first love was their greatest priority. Jesus warned the Ephesian presbytery that, if they did not return to first love, He would come and remove their lampstand church from its place in the administration of Christ.⁴ This meant that the church

1 Act 20:29

2 Rev 2:2

3 Rev 2:4

4 Rev 2:5

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would no longer have access to the grace of God that proceeds from the face of Christ through the seven stars in His right hand.⁵

We know that lampstand churches, in every generation and in every place, will face the same issues as did the Ephesian church. There will be individuals with ministry aspirations who will rise up with their own initiatives and doctrines to make people the disciples of their own personal agendas. And there also will be individuals who come in to join the fellowship of the word under false pretences and with ulterior motives. Whenever the word of God is proclaimed and ministered, there will be those who seek to use the word as a resource, and join themselves to those who minister the word, for the sake of their own personal gain. Daniel prophesied that the messengers of Christ would be beset by those who would cleave to them *in hypocrisy* until the time of the end.⁶

The key point is that the church will survive and overcome the corruption of individuals who minister in presumption. However, the one thing that the church cannot survive is the loss of first love! When Jesus admonished the Ephesian presbytery about this ‘one thing’, He knew that their survival as a presbytery and as a lampstand church depended upon their willingness to return to first love.⁷ This point is true for every Christian, every family, and every congregation. In this chapter, we will focus on the need for a presbytery to return to first love, so that it can be effective as a star in the right hand of Christ.

A star in the right hand of Christ

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John testified that he was in the Spirit on the Lord’s day when he heard the voice of a great trumpet behind him.⁸ When he turned to see the voice that was speaking to him, he saw the Lord Jesus Christ standing in the middle of seven golden lampstands.⁹ John bore witness that Christ was clothed in priestly garments, and he also described the personal attributes that Christ possesses as the glorified Son of Man.¹⁰ For example, he declared that the face of Christ shone like the sun in all its strength.

Most notably, we know that John saw seven stars in the right hand of Christ. Jesus personally explained to the apostle John the meaning of the lampstands and the seven stars in His right hand. He said, ‘As for the mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: the seven

5 Rev 1:16

9 Rev 1:12

6 Dan 11:34

10 Rev 1:13-16

7 Rev 2:5

8 Rev 1:10

stars are *the angels* of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands are the seven churches.¹¹ The word that is translated as ‘angel’ in this verse is the Greek word *aggelos*. It simply means ‘messenger’. In this context, it is evident that Jesus was not referring to the angelic host. When He subsequently addressed the angel of each lampstand church, it is clear that He was talking to men. More specifically, it is clear that He was talking to groups of brethren who had been given the mandate, as a presbytery, to be the *corporate messenger* of a lampstand church.¹²

Jesus initiated the administration of stars in His right hand and lampstand churches when He ascended on high from the Mount of Olives and gave gifts to men.¹³ In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul declared that Christ gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists and some to be teachers.¹⁴ These four ministry graces comprise an ‘apostolic administration’ in the midst of a presbytery. When an apostolic administration is fully functional in the midst of a presbytery, the four dimensions of the grace of God will be effectively ministered to a lampstand church. The evidence of this ministry will be that the entire church will be mobilised in the four administrations of the grace of God. These administrations minister the Spirit of God, the life of God, the word of God, and the love of God.¹⁵

The apostle Paul trained and mentored such an apostolic administration, and established lampstand churches among the Gentile nations. He instructed men such as Timothy and Titus to keep the commandment regarding the administration of Christ, without stain or reproach, until the second coming of the Lord.¹⁶ However, the Scriptures reveal that, even before the apostle Paul had died, many other gospels and modes of administration had crept into the church. Paul lamented that many had rejected the gospel of sonship and the administration of Christ, and had become enemies of the cross.¹⁷ In a letter, Paul informed Timothy that all who were in Asia had turned away from him.¹⁸

When Jesus revealed His administration to the apostle John, He confirmed that the lampstand administration that had been established by the apostle Paul among all the Gentile churches was the pattern of administration for the entire church age.¹⁹ It is the only pattern of administration that Christ has personally *initiated* and *endorsed*. Jesus addressed the Ephesian presbytery and called them to return to this pattern.²⁰ In the same way, for many years, He has been calling us to return to first love, so that a lampstand administration can be fully restored among us.

11 Rev 1:20

12 Rev 2-3

13 Eph 4:8

14 Eph 4:11

15 Joh 4:24. 1Jn 1:5.

Joh 1:1. 1Jn 4:16

16 1Ti 6:14

17 Php 3:18

18 2Ti 1:15

19 Rev 1:17-20

20 Rev 2:4-5

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The Scriptures teach us that this is the only administration that is suitable for the fullness of times.²¹

The oracle of Christ

The first observation that we make from John's vision is that every presbytery must be *in the right hand of Christ* in order to be an effective messenger of Christ. Jesus admonished the Ephesian presbytery to 'remember from where they had fallen', because they had fallen from Christ's right hand.²² A presbytery must be recovered to the right hand of Christ before it can shine as a star in the heavenly places. A star that has been recovered to Christ's right hand is able to fully minister the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that shines from the face of Christ.²³

When the prophet Habakkuk prayed that the Lord would revive His work in the midst of the years, he beheld the Lord coming, and testified that His radiance was like the sunlight.²⁴ Further, he declared that the Lord had 'rays flashing from His hand, and there [in His hand] is the hiding of His power'.²⁵ John received this same vision and recorded it for us in the book of Revelation.²⁶ He saw the face of Christ shining like the sun in its strength, and he saw seven stars in His right hand that are shining this same light as messengers to lampstand churches. We know that Christ is still speaking from heaven and directing the affairs of His church.²⁷

The key point here is that He speaks and gives direction to His church through the stars that are in His right hand.

How does this happen? It is the word of Christ, by the Spirit, that establishes love and faith as the ground of fellowship in a presbytery so that it can be a star in His right hand. The four administrations of the grace of God are the necessary elements of an apostolic administration. An apostolic administration is fully functional in the midst of a presbytery when the word of Christ is in the mouth of those with apostolic grace, prophetic grace, teaching grace and evangelistic grace. Apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists need to minister in sanctification within a presbytery, and to speak according to the grace that they have received from Christ.

When all four ministry graces are active as an apostolic administration, and brethren are ministering in a fellowship of first love and faith, the presbytery will be the oracle of Christ.²⁸ A presbytery that functions in first love is able to

21 Eph 1:10

22 Rev 2:5

23 2Co 4:6

24 Hab 3:1-4

25 Hab 3:4

26 Rev 1

27 Heb 12:25

28 1Co 2:16

apprehend and proclaim the mind of Christ, and to give illumination and grace to the church. Through fellowship and dialogue, a presbytery comes to a common mind regarding the will of God for the local church in an area. The presbytery is the oracle where the mind of Christ is found, so that it can be articulated at the communion table of every local congregation that belongs to a lampstand church.

Remember from where you have fallen

When Jesus addressed the Ephesian presbytery about the need to return to first love, He was speaking to them as a fallen presbytery. They had left their first love, and so, had fallen from the right hand of Christ.²⁹ This means that they had also fallen from heavenly places. The first thing that Jesus called the Ephesian presbytery to do was *to remember from where they had fallen*.³⁰ This was only possible as they allowed Christ to confront them concerning their own fallen modes of relating together and ministering to the church. It is this personal confrontation with Christ that enables genuine illumination and repentance.

Each leader in a presbytery must be illuminated, by the Holy Spirit, to see the lampstand administration that Christ revealed to the apostle John.³¹ It is the illumination of the Holy Spirit that enables us to *remember* from where we have fallen. The scriptural meaning of remembrance is much more than recalling a past situation or experience. The work of restoration is not limited to what a group of leaders have previously attained. The Holy Spirit enables us to remember that which we have never previously seen, heard or experienced. We are remembering what God has predestined for our lives from before the foundation of the world, and the administration of first love that has always existed in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

It is vital that we remember from where we have fallen. Otherwise, we will build and maintain our own man-made administrations and fleshly approaches to the work of the ministry. When we manufacture our own mode of administration, it will stand in direct opposition to the administration of Christ. When the Lord revealed the place of His throne and the soles of His feet to the prophet Ezekiel, He identified the fact that men have established alternative administrations *right beside* His administration. The Lord described one mode of administration as being built upon the corpses of kings, and the other as being religious harlotry.³²

29 Rev 2:4

30 Rev 2:5

31 Rev 1:1-3

32 Eze 43:7-9

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In terms of building ‘upon the corpse of a king’, it is not difficult to identify the dangers of building a religious administration upon the theology and practices of a historic leader, and then resisting the illumination of present truth on this basis.

In terms of ‘religious harlotry’, it is not difficult to identify the dangers of crafting a religious administration that tries to be relevant and attractive to an ever-changing and increasingly self-centred world. We recall the words of James, ‘You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God?’³³

However, there is another corruption of the administration of Christ that can be much more subtle; and yet it is equally destructive for a presbytery. We have often referred to this carnal mode as *collegiality*.

It can be difficult to identify collegial attitudes and modes in a presbytery, because they can look very similar to the mode of first love. This highlights why the conviction and illumination of the Holy Spirit is so important. It is only as we remember, by illumination, from where we have fallen, that we are able to genuinely uncover and identify the fallen modes of relating and ministry that exist among us. We need to be illuminated to know what a presbytery is, how it should function, and how we participate in it by offering. Without this illumination, we will have a different view of presbytery and how it should function. Our participation will not be a fellowship in first love.

Before we consider what a presbytery is and how it should function, it will be helpful to state what a presbytery *is not* and how *it does not function*. This will help to distinguish the difference between the mode of collegiality and the mode of first love. It may also help to identify areas where repentance is required and our view of presbytery needs to change. In the light of the word that has been coming to us, the Holy Spirit has been impressing upon us the need to repent from all of our historic approaches to presbytery and from fallen modes of ministry. We need to genuinely come to *a common mindset* in relation to the need for presbytery, the way we come to presbytery, what happens in presbytery, and how we proceed from presbytery to the communion table to receive grace for the work of ministry in our various communion venues.³⁴

We are reminded of Paul’s admonition to the Philippians, ‘Let us, as many as are mature, have this [common] mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God

33 Jas 4:4

34 1Co 1:10. Php 1:27.
Php 3:16

will reveal even this to you'.³⁵ In a similar way, Paul said to the Galatians, 'I have confidence in you, in the Lord, that you will have no other mind.'³⁶

With this goal of a common mind in view, let us clearly state that:

- the presbytery is not a committee of professional clergymen who run the church by consensus
- the presbytery is not a group that has been given the task of moderating the ministry initiatives of individuals so that the church is protected from anything that is deemed to be unorthodox
- the presbytery is not simply a meeting that may, or may not, have any particular relevance to how the church runs, because the real work of running the church happens in other forums in local congregations
- the presbytery is not a forum that functions as a helpful resource for church leaders to discuss the word and learn from others whom they perceive to be successful in the ministry
- the fellowship of the presbytery is not an opportunity for those who are weak in faith and lacking in accountability to receive instruction so that their work is scripted for them
- the presbytery is not a fraternal of professional clergymen who encourage one another, protect one another, and endorse one another, in the midst of the common pressures that are experienced by those in church leadership who face difficult situations in their local congregations
- the presbytery is not a symposium where church leaders are able to enjoy fellowship, discuss theology, exchange information and share opinions, so that every man is empowered and equipped for the work of ministry.

We know that there is a place for many of the elements listed above. For example, there is a place and a need for committees in our legal structure. There is a need for friendship and mutual support among co-workers. There will need to be discussion and consensus on many matters. However, none of these elements define a presbytery, and cannot become a substitute for the fellowship of first love and faith in a presbytery.

35 Php 3:15

36 Gal 5:10

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When men come together in any of the above ‘collegial modes’ and call it a ‘presbytery’, then a great deception has been perpetrated. Likewise, if a man seeks to join a presbytery for any of the above reasons, he is in danger of falling into the sin of a great presumption. The prophet Daniel said that many will endeavour to cleave to a star in the right hand of Christ in *hypocrisy*; that is, men will seek to join the fellowship of the presbytery in a collegial mode and with their own agenda.³⁷

The book of Revelation is clear that it is Christ who personally judges and chastens the star of each lampstand church.³⁸ Christ walks among each lampstand church as the One who searches the minds and hearts of all men, and renders to each man according to his deeds.³⁹ We have certainly known the chastening hand of the Lord among us in recent years. In this season, we need to take heed to ourselves as a presbytery to ensure that we are judging ourselves rightly, and properly discerning our participation in the body of Christ as it is expressed in the presbytery and at the communion table.⁴⁰ We know that the apostle Paul instructed the Ephesian presbytery to take heed to itself.⁴¹ We need to know what it means to live together in first love.

The need to take heed to ourselves has *collective* and *personal* implications. Every man who aspires to be a functional member of a presbytery will need to take heed to himself in terms of his relationship to the fellowship of the word in the presbytery, and in his approach to the work of ministry in the church. Paul exhorted Timothy to take heed to himself and, most particularly, to take heed to himself in relation to the word of present truth that had been committed by Christ to an apostolic administration in the midst of a presbytery.⁴² He needed to do this for the sake of his own salvation and the salvation of those to whom he had been sent to proclaim the word. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul instructed Archippus to take heed to the ministry (i.e. the deaconing work) that he had received in the Lord, so that he could fulfil it.⁴³

A fallen star

The Ephesian presbytery no longer walked with Christ among the lampstand churches. He described them as ‘a fallen star’. They had left Christ’s administration and were preoccupied with their own local ministry agendas.

However, it is important to consider a further dimension of what it means to be a *fallen star*. The prophet Daniel declared that ‘those who have insight among the

37 Dan 11:34

41 Act 20:28

38 Rev 2-3

42 1Ti 4:16

39 Rev 2:23

43 Col 4:17

40 1Co 11:26-32

people will give understanding to [or illuminate] the many; yet they will *fall* by sword and by flame, by captivity and by plunder for *many days*.⁴⁴ When Daniel spoke of 'those who have insight', he was referring to a star in the right hand of Christ. We are reminded that Paul said, 'When you read, you can understand my *insight* into the mystery of Christ.'⁴⁵

It is the work of stars in the right hand of Christ to give understanding and illumination to the many members of the body of Christ. However, Daniel identified the reality that these stars will *fall* by sword, flame, captivity, and plunder for many days. The 'many days' refers to the 2 300 years that the Lord has appointed for His messengers and His people to be trampled by the little horn, which is empowered by the spirit of antichrist.⁴⁶

When Daniel said that the stars will fall for many days, he was not primarily speaking about stars leaving their first love and falling from the right hand of Christ. He was referring to the suffering and persecution that the messengers of Christ will experience as they are trampled by the spirit of antichrist that is in the church, and then goes out of the church to empower the principle of the little horn in the world.

It is important that we understand *the relationship* and *the difference* between these two elements of a fallen star. We know that the loss of first love and the corruption of offering has caused the trampling of the messengers of Christ and the church.⁴⁷ However, when we repent and return to first love, the trampling becomes part of the *perfecting process* that the Lord uses to fully restore the stars in His right hand.

Daniel proclaimed that the stars will fall and be trampled 'in order to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end'.⁴⁸ It is possible for the judgement of trampling to become part of the refining, purifying and perfecting process for us, because Christ has joined us as part of the fallen star. This is a most significant point. Christ was cast down and trampled with His star-messenger administration. The trampling of Christ culminated when He was thrown on His back and nailed to a cross at the hands of wicked men.⁴⁹ We know that Christ was not trampled because He had left His first love. On the contrary, He willingly submitted Himself to be trampled with us because of His great love for us.⁵⁰ In this way, Christ converted the trampling from being the consequence of falling from first love to being part of *the process to recover first love* for those who repent and join the fellowship of His sufferings.

44 Dan 11:33

48 Dan 11:35

45 Eph 3:4

49 Act 2:23

46 Dan 8:12-14

50 Eph 5:2

47 Dan 8:13

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The *nature of the trampling* that we experience will be determined by our response to the word of the Lord that comes to us in the midst of the trampling. If we accept that we have left our first love and have fallen from the right hand of Christ, we are able to repent and to turn from our fallen and fleshly modes of ministry. We know that these fallen approaches to ministry are sourced in the operation of the other law within us.⁵¹ It is the operation of the other law that leads to the manifestation of lawlessness in the church and causes the love of many to grow cold.⁵² When we repent and join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the other law can be removed from our heart, and we can be restored to first love.

However, if we do not accept that we have left our first love, we will reject the need to repent and to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings as part of a fallen star. This means that our mode of ministry will still be sourced in the other law. The other law within us will motivate us to wage a self-righteous war, in the flesh, against the principle of the little horn in the world. Or the other law within us will cause us to be offended by the sufferings of Christ, so that our love for our brethren grows cold and we begin to act wickedly toward Christ and His administration. Daniel prophesied that the philosophy of the spirit of antichrist in the church will turn to godlessness those who act wickedly toward the covenant.⁵³

If we repent as part of a fallen star, the Lord has promised us that we will be helped with 'a little help'.⁵⁴ In the first case, this is the help that we receive because Christ has joined us as part of the fallen star. He has converted the judgement of trampling to a fellowship in His sufferings, so that the other law can be removed from our lives, and His life can be formed in us. Paul declared that Christ does not give help to angels, but that He does give help to the descendants of Abraham, who are as numerous as the stars of heaven.⁵⁵ Further to this, Christ has sent us the Holy Spirit, whom He called 'another Helper'.⁵⁶ It is the Holy Spirit who enables us to be restored to first love. He does this by sanctifying us according to the name that is given to us by the Father, joining us to the fellowship of the body of Christ, and enabling us to make offering as a unique member of the body of Christ.

This means that we are able to return to first love and become effective ministers of the New Covenant as a star in the right hand of Christ.⁵⁷ In the midst of the trampling, Daniel declared that 'those who know their God will display strength and take action'.⁵⁸ He was evidently not referring to the strength of the flesh. Daniel was speaking about the strength of the grace of God that Christ received,

51 Rom 7:23

55 Heb 2:16

52 Mat 24:12

56 Joh 14:16

53 Dan 11:32

57 2Co 3:6

54 Dan 11:34

58 Dan 11:32

through the Holy Spirit, to endure the sufferings of the cross.⁵⁹ Christ spoke of this strength when He said to the apostle Paul, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.’⁶⁰ The right hand of Christ gives a star the capacity to minister the power of His life through the weakness of suffering.⁶¹

The need to join the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings is *a test* for those who are called to be a part of the star. In fact, it is a test for every member of the body of Christ.⁶² Those who eat and drink the communion in faith to participate in the process through which they are recovered to first love, will obtain a blessing. They also minister this blessing to others. In contrast, those who dissociate themselves from the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings and its implications for how they live and relate in the body of Christ, will eat and drink the communion elements in an unworthy manner.⁶³ By this means they demonstrate that they are insincere, and eventually fall away from the living God.⁶⁴

Lamentation, mourning and woe

To understand the nature of the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings that we experience as a presbytery in the right hand of Christ, it is helpful to consider the experience of the prophet Ezekiel. The Lord instructed him to open his mouth and to eat the word that he was being given to proclaim to the nation of Israel. The prophet saw a hand extended toward him, holding a scroll. When the Lord spread the scroll out before him, he saw that it was written on the front and the back with *lamentations, mourning and woe*.⁶⁵ It was only as Ezekiel ate this scroll, which was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly, that he was placed in the hand of Christ to be a messenger to the house of Israel during their exile in Babylon.⁶⁶ This connected him to the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings.

It is important to remember that the prophetic mandate of Ezekiel extended far beyond speaking to the Jewish exiles. He also prophesied that there would be a full restoration of offering in an administration suitable for the fullness of times. Ezekiel spoke of many of the events that will occur in the time of the end. This includes the events of the sixth seal, followed by the establishment of the kingdom of God on the earth during the fulfilment of the Day of Atonement.⁶⁷ When Ezekiel ate the scroll that included lamentation, mourning and woe, he joined the suffering that will be experienced by all messengers of Christ until the end of the age.

59 Heb 9:14

63 1Co 11:27

67 Eze 38-48

60 2Co 12:9

64 Heb 3:12

61 2Ti 1:8-9

65 Eze 2:10

62 2Co 13:5

66 Eze 3:1-4

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

We read in chapter ten of the book of Revelation that, in a similar experience to that of the prophet Ezekiel, the apostle John was also asked to eat a book.⁶⁸ He was told that he must prophesy concerning the eighth world kingdom and the culmination of the purpose of God in heaven and on the earth. John testified that this prophetic word was sweet in his mouth and bitter in his belly.⁶⁹ This is an important point for us, because our recovery to be a star in the right hand of Christ and our ongoing ministry as a star in His right hand will also involve us in lamentation, mourning and woe. This will be so until the end of the age.

Lamentation – godly sorrow

Recognising that lamentation, mourning and woe is a fellowship in Christ's sufferings, we need to begin by asking the question, 'What was the nature of Christ's lamentation?'

We recall that Jesus lamented over Jerusalem when He said, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! See! Your house is left to you desolate.'⁷⁰ Christ lamented over the Jewish nation because of their unwillingness to receive the messengers of God and to find repentance. The consequence of their hardness of heart was the loss of the blessing of Abraham, and the judgement of desolation upon them as a nation. Jesus reinforced the focus of His lamentation when He turned to the women who were following Him on the way to the cross and said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, stop weeping for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children.'⁷¹

In the first case, lamentation is the recognition that something has been lost. More than this, it is the recognition of *the reason for the loss* and *the impact of the loss*. The *fruit* of lamentation, which is a genuine godly sorrow, will be accountability and true empathy. The apostle Paul described this kind of lamentation as 'godly sorrow' that leads to repentance.⁷² We join the lamentation of Christ by recognising that we have fallen from first love, and that this has led to judgement and desolation in the Lord's house. Daniel demonstrated the *accountable response* of a man who has joined the lamentation of Christ, when he prayed, 'Hear the prayer of your servant, and his supplications, and for the Lord's sake cause Your face to shine on Your sanctuary, which is desolate.'⁷³

68 Rev 10:9

72 2Co 7:9

69 Rev 10:10

73 Dan 9:17

70 Mat 23:37-38

71 Luk 23:28

Jesus recognised that the Jews had killed all of the prophets who had been sent to them but, at the same time, He set His face like flint toward His death in Jerusalem.⁷⁴ Christ was fully committed to being obedient to the Father's will, regardless of how He was received by men. The Lord promised to give Ezekiel this same kind of obedience so that he could fulfil his mandate as a messenger. He said, 'Like adamant stone, harder than flint, I have made your forehead.'⁷⁵ We observe that lamentation moves beyond the recognition of why something has been lost, and the impact of the loss. It produces within a believer a resolute commitment to walk in the pathway that is necessary for their recovery and restoration. The godly sorrow that the Corinthians experienced produced a vehement desire and zeal among them to avenge the wrong!⁷⁶ This resolute commitment to restoration was the fruit of their repentance.

Mourning – travail

What was the nature of Christ's *mourning*? The prophet Isaiah said that Christ was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief.⁷⁷ We recall that He wept at the tomb of His good friend, Lazarus.⁷⁸ However, Isaiah continued to say that, more than simply being able to identify with our grief, Christ *bore all of our grief and carried all of our sorrows*. Jesus testified to His disciples in the garden of Gethsemane, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death.'⁷⁹

Christ converted the sorrow of the world to a travail. It is a unique travail. The travail of Christ is not only able to recover what has been *lost*; it is also able to bring forth something completely *new*. In the same passage, Isaiah rejoiced, 'He shall see the fruit of the travail of His soul.'⁸⁰ Paul had evidently joined the travail of Christ when he testified to the Galatians that he was in labour until Christ was formed in them.⁸¹

The mourning of Christ is much more than lamentation. Lamentation and godly sorrow lead to repentance, whereas mourning and travail lead to the multiplication of new life. The travail of Christ describes the mode of ministry that He has established for every messenger. It is through ministering in weakness so that the power of God can be effectively directed toward those who receive the message.⁸²

The woe of betrayal

What was the nature of Christ's *woe*? Jesus said, at the last supper, 'The Son of Man is to go, just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of

74 Luk 13:32-35.
Isa 50:7

75 Eze 3:9

76 2Co 7:11

77 Isa 53:3

78 Joh 11:35

79 Mat 26:38

80 Isa 53:11

81 Gal 4:19

82 2Co 13:4

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had not been born.⁸³ 'Woe' includes the judgement that is incurred upon the one who betrays, but it also includes the pain that is experienced by the one who is betrayed. King David spoke of this when he said that his companion and friend in the house of God had exalted himself against him.⁸⁴ Likewise, the apostle Paul spoke of the pain of betrayal when he said that Alexander the coppersmith 'did him much harm'.⁸⁵

The prophet Daniel explained that there will be many who will join themselves to a presbytery in hypocrisy.⁸⁶ For this reason, the pathway of restoration for a presbytery will involve the pain of betrayal. This is the outcome of the spirit of antichrist that is among us and goes out from us.⁸⁷ We know that this is part of the refining, purifying and perfecting process of the Lord upon us. The Lord uses injustice and betrayal to deal with our other law, and to form the nature of His life within us. As we walk the pathway of lamentation, mourning and woe, as a participation in the sufferings of Christ, we do find our sanctification, and are equipped to be effective ministers of Christ as part of a presbytery that functions in first love.

83 Mat 26:24

87 1Jn 2:18-19

84 Psa 55:12-14

85 2Ti 4:14

86 Dan 11:34