

THE WAY OF
*S*alvation

VICTOR HALL

THE WAY OF SALVATION

Victor Hall

with Peter Hay

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Phone: 1300 885 048

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Preface

Simeon was a righteous and devout man who was waiting intently for the coming of the Messiah. The Holy Spirit had revealed to him that he would not die until he had seen the Lord's Christ.¹ When, by the Spirit, Simeon recognised Jesus, he blessed God and said, 'My eyes have seen *Your salvation*, which You have prepared in the presence of all peoples, a *light of revelation* to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel.'² The Son of God had come in the flesh of humanity to bring salvation to Jew and Gentile alike.

Paul called this salvation 'a mystery that had been kept secret in ages past' but was now being made known to all.³ He explained that the mystery was that 'the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body [of Christ], and fellow partakers of the promise [of eternal life] in Christ Jesus through the gospel'.⁴ As we shall see, Paul's statement is a helpful summary of the waypoints of salvation. Elsewhere, Paul referred to the mystery as 'the mystery of His will'.⁵ Considering these passages together, it is evident that 'the way of salvation' is the means by which the God's will is fulfilled.

The will of God could be summarised as being an eternal inheritance. Many Christians will be familiar with the wonderful truth that God has prepared such

1 Luk 2:25-26 5 Eph 1:9

2 Luk 2:30-32

3 Rom 16:25-26

4 Eph 3:6

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an inheritance for the sons of God.⁶ The way of salvation is the means by which we are able to obtain this inheritance.

However, *more so*, the mystery of God's will concerns an inheritance *that belongs to God*. In this regard, Paul wrote, 'I pray that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened, so that you will know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe'.⁷ *We are to be God's inheritance!* The great treasure that He desires is the multiplication of His life through an innumerable host of sons and daughters who are part of a corporate body of Christ, and servants of the Lord, forever.

The Lord wants everyone to know the riches of the glory of this mystery.⁸ As we continue in the way of salvation, and also take initiatives to share the good news of Jesus Christ with others, it is important that we do not reduce the gospel to a protocol such as the four spiritual laws or some other creed of the church.

The way of salvation is not a set of procedures; it is a *fellowship*. It is, in fact, the expression of God's love for us.⁹ When we are established in the way of salvation, His love is being perfected in us. The love of God within us is evidenced by our capacity for fellowship with God and with our brethren in the body of Christ.¹⁰

Paul encouraged believers to be rooted and grounded in love so that we are able to 'comprehend with all the saints what is the breadth and length and height and depth, and to know the love of Christ which surpasses knowledge, that you may be filled up to all the fullness of God'.¹¹ The way of salvation is rich in its implications for our lives as individuals, families and communities. It has many dimensions to it that we are to increasingly comprehend and fill out in our Christian pilgrimage.

We do this as we grow in our relationship with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, and with each other. Growing in this knowledge is the mark of Christian maturity. As we mature in the way of the Lord, we will increasingly experience and express the breadth, length, height and depth of God's love.

The purpose of this book is to identify and explain the waypoints of our salvation. This will help us to press on to maturity as disciples of Christ, and to avoid stumbling in our faith. By this means, we can be assured of obtaining our entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ.¹² An understanding of the elements of salvation will also help us to 'disciple' new believers in the way

6 Col 1:12

7 Eph 1:18-19

8 Col 1:27

9 Joh 3:16

10 1Jn 4:15-21

11 Eph 3:18-19

12 2Pe 1:10-11

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of the Lord. We must all continue to grow in our knowledge and understanding of God's plan and purpose in order to adequately support and encourage these ones as they encounter the various crises of faith on the pathway of sonship.

SECTION 1

Introduction

By way of introduction to this fundamental message of the Scriptures, it will be helpful to draw attention to some important clarifications and distinctions regarding the waypoints of salvation. These clarifications will help us to more rightly and clearly divide the word of truth concerning the mystery of God and its implications for our lives as Christians. We will say more about these implications in the sections of the book that follow this introduction.

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul explained that while we were dead in our transgressions, God made us alive together with Christ, and raised us up with Him and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.¹ The point to note is that when Jesus declared from the cross, ‘It is finished!’, and then committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, the full work of our salvation had been completed. This was while we were dead in sins and enemies of God.² The offering of Yahweh had been made once, for all.³

1 Eph 2:5-6

2 Rom 5:10

3 Heb 10:10

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The gospel message invites every hearer to receive their salvation by accessing this finished work as an event of history. Through baptism, communion, and by the Holy Spirit, we are joined to the fellowship of this offering. Although Christ travelled the way of salvation alone and once for all, through fellowship, we are able to join the pathway of salvation that He pioneered. Our participation in the offering of Christ is fundamental to our salvation. Unless we journey with Christ, we will by no means receive the promise of eternal life.

Fundamental to our understanding of salvation is the truth that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in the fulfilment of our salvation. It was not just an action of Christ on behalf of the Father or the Holy Spirit. Neither is our experience of joining the finished work of our salvation an action of the Father towards us, that is followed by an action of the Son, followed by an action of the Holy Spirit. They are all working together for the fulfilment of Their covenant purpose in relation to each waypoint of salvation. It is this integrated understanding that reveals the breadth and length and height and depth of the love of God for us.

The unique contributions of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

The Everlasting Covenant purpose of God is for the sons of men to become the sons of God. This means that we are to be partakers of God's own nature. God is three Persons – Father, Son and Holy Spirit – who live in a fellowship of one life and one Spirit. To be 'of God' is to be joined to this fellowship. For this to happen, we must receive the life of God as it is specifically communicated, or expressed, by each Person of the Godhead. This is because They each have a specific contribution to make to the process of bringing us to glory as sons of God.

The Father

Yahweh Father is the source of all giving. He possesses the capacity to set apart from Yahweh other identities, to whom He is able to give gifts. In this regard, His unique capacity is to be the source of all life. James explained that, 'Every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights [or identities], with whom there is no variation or shifting shadow.'⁴

The first action of the Father towards us is to regenerate and renew our heart and spirit. He does this by the water of His word and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

4 Jas 1:17

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Through the process of regeneration, a person's fallen identity, which is inevitably marked by dystrophy because of sin and death in their life, is able to be recovered.

The Father then gives us His life through the process of *birthing*. We are born of the incorruptible seed of the divine nature through the living and enduring word of God.⁵ The life that we are born of is eternal life. It is the life of our unique sonship that the Father predestined for us before the heavens and the earth were created. The seed of this life is, therefore, *specific* to the name and identity of each son of God. Highlighting the uniqueness of each son of God, the apostle James explained that the Father brought us forth as His sons by the word of truth so that each one of us might be a *certain kind* of firstfruits of His creation.⁶

The Son

Yahweh Son gives us His life by *sharing*. His blood was poured out through offering. *His life is in His blood*; it is the life and identity of *His* sonship. Having been baptised into Christ and joined to the fellowship of His offering, our personal sonship that we received from the Father through the process of birthing, is to be hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father. The life that we now live and express is to be the life of the Son. It is His sonship that we are to reveal as members of His body.

Jesus said that unless we partake of the flesh of the *Son of Man* and drink His blood, we have no life in ourselves.⁷ By referring to Himself as the Son of Man, Jesus was highlighting the sufferings He would experience in His *mortality*. It was through these sufferings that Christ's blood was shed so that the life in His blood could be given to us. This is the principle of atonement. 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls.'⁸ Eating and drinking the elements of the New Covenant gives us access to this fellowship so that, as we suffer with Him, we receive the life that is in His blood. Jesus continued by saying, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *has eternal life*, and I will *raise him up on the last day*. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him*.'⁹

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the fellowship of Yahweh. His life gives us the capacity for worship and for fellowship. We do not receive this from the Father or from the Son.¹⁰ It is the Holy Spirit who joins us in one Spirit to the fellowship of Yahweh. Paul said that 'the one who joins himself to the Lord is

5 1Pe 1:23

9 Joh 6:54-56

6 Jas 1:18

10 2Co 13:14

7 Joh 6:53

8 Lev 17:11

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one Spirit with Him'.¹¹ Paul also explained that 'by *one Spirit* we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of *one Spirit*'.¹² It is because we have received the Person of the Holy Spirit that we are able to be joined in one Spirit with each other.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification.¹³ This is because He sanctifies each person to their name, and enables us to know and appreciate the names of our fellow brethren. By being who we are, and respecting who God has made others to be, we maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.¹⁴ He is 'the Spirit of truth' through Whom we are able to worship in Spirit and truth.¹⁵

Paul summarised the outcome of receiving the life of the Holy Spirit when he wrote, 'Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose'.¹⁶ Our capacity to give and receive encouragement in Christ, consolation of love, fellowship, affection and compassion are the evidence that we have received the life of the Holy Spirit. Because we have received His life, we are able to be united in love, spirit and purpose.

The Holy Spirit gives us power to be active members of the body of Christ. Jesus said to His disciples, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth'.¹⁷ The Holy Spirit enables us to minister the life of Christ as members of His body in the places where we live.

The power that we receive from the Holy Spirit is referred to in the Scriptures as 'the seven Spirits of God', 'the Spirit of the Lord', and 'Eternal Spirit'.¹⁸ Paul explained that Jesus was strengthened with Eternal Spirit to offer Himself without spot to God.¹⁹ This was Christ's priestly work. He has made us to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father.²⁰ Like Christ, we are strengthened with Eternal Spirit for the work of priesting ourselves as a living sacrifice.

Obtaining an eternal reward

A new-born son of God has been regenerated by the Spirit of the Father and has received the incorruptible seed of the divine nature.²¹ This seed is the Spirit of the Son that the Father sends forth into our regenerated heart.²² The outcome of this

11 1Co 6:17

12 1Co 12:13

13 2Th 2:13

14 Eph 4:3

15 Joh 16:13. Joh 4:24

16 Php 2:1-3

17 Act 1:8

18 Rev 4:5. Isa 11:2.
Heb 9:14

19 Heb 9:14

20 Rev 1:5-6

21 Tit 3:5. 1Pe 1:23

22 Gal 4:6

process is that we are a *new creature*. We have received our name and life as a son of God and have a place in heaven. However, we must come into Christ so that our new creation life is made substantial. Then we will be able to testify with confidence that ‘the old things passed away; behold new things have come’.²³

To receive Christ in our hearts as the seed of the divine nature is ‘the hope of glory’.²⁴ It is a hope because, although we have already been conceived as a son and have received a new creation body, our sonship needs to be filled out and come to maturity.²⁵ A new-born son of God has an incorruptible *seed*; it is not the full expression of their eternal sonship. John explained that our sonship will not be fully revealed until the day of resurrection.²⁶ We must, therefore, give consideration to how we come to glory as a son of God, so that on the day of resurrection our hope will be realised and we can rejoice with exultation.²⁷

The Father’s house

Jesus said, ‘He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.’²⁸ In this passage of Scripture, Jesus was talking about a person who had been born again of the life of God. They had *found* new creation life, having previously been *dead* in trespasses and sins. However, Jesus was explaining that the new believer would lose this life if they were not baptised into Christ. Through baptism we are joined to the pathway of salvation that He pioneered from Gethsemane to Calvary. To take up our cross is to be joined to the fellowship of His offering and to follow Him on this pathway.

Paul explained this very principle in his letter to the Christians in Colossae, saying, ‘You have died [with Christ in baptism] and your [new creation] life is *hidden with Christ in God*. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.’²⁹ Although Paul’s statement is simple, it is rich in its implications for our Christian experience. To understand these implications, we must consider where Christ is *hidden*.

We recall that after Jesus had declared from the cross that the work of our salvation had been ‘finished’, He committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father.³⁰ The Father received the Son, by embrace, into His bosom. This is where Jesus remained hidden while His body was preserved in the tomb by the Spirit of

23 2Co 5:17

27 1Pe 4:13

24 Col 1:27

28 Mat 10:38-39

25 2Co 5:1. Heb 6:1

29 Col 3:3-4

26 1Jn 3:2

30 Joh 19:30.
Luk 23:46

the Father for three days and three nights. The bosom of the Father is also called 'the Father's house'.

A heavenly place, prepared

Before His passion commenced in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus explained what He would do for His disciples when He went to the bosom of the Father. He said to them, 'In My *Father's house* are many dwelling places [mansions]; if it were not so, I would have told you; *for I go to prepare a place for you*. If I go and prepare a place for you, *I will come again and receive you to Myself*, that where I am, there you may be also.'³¹ Jesus was explaining to His disciples that He would prepare a dwelling place in the house of the Father for every son of God.

When Jesus went to the bosom of the Father, He took all our names as sons of God with Him. He was preparing a place for each of these sons in the heavenly house of the Father. In this regard, He was the Seed that had gone into the ground and was coming up as a great multitude of new creation sons.³² When He rose from the dead, His body had been changed to an immortal body. As He promised, Jesus had come again to receive His disciples to Himself.³³ He was making them members of His corporate body that He had created on the cross from the flesh of humanity, so that *where He was*, they would be also.³⁴

Jesus explained to His disciples where *He would be*, saying, 'I ascend to My Father and your Father, and My God and your God.'³⁵ Accordingly, when Jesus went into heaven after appearing to His disciples, He went back to the bosom of the Father.³⁶ Paul explained that Jesus is now seated in heavenly places at the right hand of the Father. The Father put all things in subjection to Him and *gave Him* as the immortal Head over the church and His corporate body.³⁷

Receiving an immortal body

When we are baptised into Christ, the life of our new creation sonship is hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father. It is no longer ours. Our sonship rests in the bosom of the Father in the hope of its full revelation in the age to come. The life which we now live in the flesh is Christ's life.³⁸ Paul summarised this by saying, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God'.³⁹ This is important to understand because, unless we live by Christ's life as a member of

31 Joh 14:2-3

35 Joh 20:17

39 Gal 2:20

32 Joh 12:24

36 Joh 1:18

33 Joh 14:3

37 Eph 1:20-23

34 Joh 14:3

38 Col 3:4

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His body, we will not receive the full glory of our sonship in the new heavens and earth. In the positive, Paul said, ‘When Christ, *who is our life*, is revealed, then you *also will be revealed* with Him in glory.’⁴⁰

Paul described our earthly bodies as a tent, and explained that when we were born again, we received a heavenly body.⁴¹ How we live and what we do in our mortal bodies will affect the glory of our spiritual body that we receive on the day of resurrection. We can be encouraged, however, that God has given us the Holy Spirit to help us to journey in a manner that is worthy of the reward of eternal life. Our bodies, therefore, are also a temple of the Holy Spirit.⁴² The Holy Spirit enables us to be joined in one Spirit with the Lord and each other, and urges us to keep the unity of the Spirit as members of Christ’s body on earth.

For this reason, Paul said, ‘Consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry.’⁴³ Paul implored us to, instead, ‘Put on love, which is the perfect bond of unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, to which indeed you were called in one body; and be thankful.’⁴⁴ Paul was describing the mindset of a person who is committed to living as a member of Christ’s body.

We are to be the physical body of Christ on earth by expressing the life of His sonship through the deeds that we do in our mortal bodies. In fact, Paul called our physical bodies the ‘members of Christ’.⁴⁵ As we do the works of His sonship on earth, we receive the wages, or fruit, of eternal life. By this means, our own heavenly dwelling is *being* made more glorious.

On the other hand, if we insist on expressing our own sonship through our unwillingness to be joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, the glory of our eternal reward will be greatly diminished. As was the case for the Pharisees, we will receive our reward in this age.⁴⁶ Furthermore, our Christian experience will be plagued by agitation, judgements and discontent, demonstrating that our own sonship is not resting in hope with Christ in the bosom of the Father.

Paul reminded us that ‘we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may be *recompensed* for his deeds in the [mortal] body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad’.⁴⁷ This is when we receive the wages that we accrued in heaven for the deeds that we did in our mortal bodies on earth. Significantly, the ‘goodness’ of our deeds has nothing to do with the expression of our own sonship. Good works can only be done in the body of Christ by those

40 Col 3:4

44 Col 3:14-15

41 2Co 5:1-5

45 1Co 6:15

42 1Co 6:19

46 Mat 6:2,5,16

43 Col 3:5

47 2Co 5:10

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who are living by His life.⁴⁸ The glory of our spiritual body will reflect the wages that we earned while in our mortality.

In this regard, we can expect that people will have differing glories in the age to come. This will be dependent on how they lived and served in the body of Christ on earth. Some will bring forth the fruit of eternal life that is the equivalent of a hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.⁴⁹ In this regard, Paul warned us not to be deceived, saying, 'God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life.'⁵⁰ We can be assured that, as we do the will of God as members of the body of Christ, we are already reaping wages, and gathering fruit for eternal life.⁵¹

Talents and minas

The parables of Jesus concerning the kingdom of sonship help us to understand how we receive the reward of our immortal body as a son of God in the new heavens and earth. We recall that Jesus likened His life to talents and minas that were given to the slaves in His house.⁵² Jesus, the Master of the house, expected to receive an increase from the labours of His slaves as they traded with His possession in the broader kingdom.

When a person comes into Christ through baptism, they are made slaves in His house and receive talents and a mina. Talents are given in varying volumes according to each person's ability.⁵³ We can liken talents to the varying capacities of individual members of Christ to express His sonship. In contrast, one mina was given to each slave.⁵⁴ The mina represents the authority of each person's name.

As slaves trade with their talents and minas by doing the works that Christ gives them as members of His body, the life of Christ's own sonship is being multiplied. While everyone who comes into Christ receives a talent and mina, we recognise that not everyone will exercise themselves to multiply Christ's sonship. These ones choose to work or live by a different principle. This is the principle of 'another law' in their flesh. From the basis of this law, some people will busy themselves with many activities that reveal their own sonship, while others may withdraw from participation in the life of the body of Christ. This would be like saying, 'Because I am not a hand, I am not a part of the body'.⁵⁵

48 Eph 2:10

49 Mat 13:23

50 Gal 6:7-8

51 Joh 4:36

52 Mat 25:14-29.

Luk 19:12-26

53 Mat 25:15

54 Luk 19:13

55 1Co 12:15

In both parables, the master of the house came and settled accounts with His slaves. This event was referring to the day when we all must appear before the judgement seat of Christ. Our eternal reward will be commensurate with the multiplication of Christ's sonship in this age. Some people will even receive more glory. However, those who fail to multiply the life of the Son, for whatever reason, are condemned. Jesus declared, 'For to everyone who has, more shall be given, and he will have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. Throw out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'⁵⁶

The essence of the Old and New Covenants

Central to the gospel message is the transition that every person must make from living under the conditions of an Old Covenant and coming into the New Covenant that Christ established through His offering and priesthood on the cross. It is therefore important that we understand the difference between these two covenants. This would seem to be an obvious and easy distinction to make. However, a person can be born of God and still endeavour to live by the principles of the Old Covenant. How can this be so? To answer this question, we need to recognise that fulfilling and revealing the righteousness of God is foundational to both of these covenants. We can summarise righteousness as 'living according to the will of God'.

The law of God defines the way that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live. For this reason, 'The law is holy, and the commandment is holy and righteous and good'.⁵⁷ *The law was the essence of the Old Covenant.* God said that if a person obeyed His word and was careful to do all of His commandments, they would receive the blessing of His life.⁵⁸ In other words, if a person kept the law, they would become a viable son of God. However, there was not one person under the Old Covenant who was justified by the works of the law.⁵⁹ On account of the inadequacy of the flesh to keep the law and fulfil the righteousness of God, every person is condemned by the law and under the penalty of death.

When Christ took the Old Covenant, consisting of its decrees against us, out of the way through His death on the cross, He also removed the priesthood of the Law Covenant.⁶⁰ In its place, He became the Mediator of a new covenant. Christ gave us *the Holy Spirit as the essence of this covenant*, enabling us to walk after the Spirit as sons of God. When a person dies to the law with Christ, they are able to be

56 Mat 25:29-30

59 Rom 3:20.

57 Rom 7:12

Gal 2:16

58 Deu 28:1-2.
Rom 7:10

60 Col 2:14-15

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motivated in a new way. The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus sets them free from the law of sin and of death.⁶¹ Instead of the use of the law in the hands of the carnal person being the source of their motivations and actions, leading to sin and death, they are able to serve God *‘in the newness of the Spirit’*.⁶²

After a person has been baptised into Christ, they can still bring themselves back under the law, even though there is no longer any present covenant that God will honour with the flesh if a person keeps the law. We recall the exasperation of Paul with regard to the Christians in Galatia, who had chosen to pursue life by the keeping of the law. He called them ‘foolish’ and asked them, ‘Having begun by [with] the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things [in the fellowship of Christ’s suffering] in vain – if indeed it was in vain?’⁶³

It is important to recognise that setting our minds on the flesh is not the same condition as that of the wretched Christian who, with their mind, wants to serve God, but is unable to do so because the other law within them has not been removed.⁶⁴ A person who has set their mind on the flesh is rejecting the Spirit and choosing another way. This results in hostility toward God. Summarising the point, Paul declared, ‘For the mind set on the flesh is death, but the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the law of God, for it is not even able to do so, and those who are in the flesh cannot please God’.⁶⁵ To be hostile toward God is to be of the spirit of antichrist.

This does not need to be our attitude. Instead, we can humble ourselves and return to the fellowship of Christ’s mortal body and His immortal body. This simply means that, in relation to Christ’s physical body, we accept that it is necessary for us to suffer with Him. We receive the chastening and discipline of the Lord in our lives by the capacity of the Spirit, and set our minds on revealing the sonship of Christ as a member in particular of His immortal body. Our repentance will be that we will return to living by the capacity of the Spirit in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Consequently, we will reign in life by His grace, and we will ‘become the righteousness of God in Him’.⁶⁶

Two marriages

To explain the difference between the Old and New Covenants, Paul described them as two marriages.⁶⁷ The first, or old, marriage was the covenant that Christ

61 Rom 8:2

65 Rom 8:6-8

62 Rom 7:6

66 2Co 5:21

63 Gal 3:3-4

67 Rom 7:2-3

64 Rom 7:14-21

made with the flesh when the law was given to Israel through Moses. By this means, the nation of Israel became, as Stephen described them, 'the church in the wilderness'.⁶⁸ As the church, they were married to Christ. Isaiah highlighted this point, stating, '*Your husband is your Maker, whose name is the Lord of hosts*'.⁶⁹ This was Jesus Christ.⁷⁰

The second marriage is a *new* covenant between Christ and the church. Christ firstly brings her forth from His pierced side, just like Adam's wife, Eve, came from his rib.⁷¹ Paul introduced this theme to us when he described Adam as 'a type of Him who was to come'.⁷² Having brought His bride forth, Christ then sanctifies and cleanses her with the washing of the water by the word so that He might present her to Himself as a glorious church.⁷³ Paul referred to this as 'a great mystery'.⁷⁴ The fulfilment of this mystery is detailed in the book of Revelation. The apostle John described the bride as 'the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband'.⁷⁵

An 'old' marriage

Israel, the church, was supposed to have been a light to the whole earth so that every person would receive God's word and become an extension of the church.⁷⁶ When the law was given to Israel as a covenant, the whole of humanity was brought under the jurisdiction of the law. The law became the condition, or basis, of the marriage of Christ to the flesh. In this regard, we were all bound *by* the law covenant in the same way that a woman is bound *by* marriage to a husband. This is what Paul was communicating when he wrote, 'Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband'.⁷⁷

When a person first hears and responds to the word of the covenant, their relationship with Christ is full of romantic optimism and fervour. Like the children of Israel, they say, 'All the words which the Lord has spoken we will do!'⁷⁸ This is common to all, because we all have another law within us by which we are motivated to pursue life through the exercise of our flesh. We soon become aware of our complete inadequacy to fulfil God's law by this means. All our motivations to obey and serve God are hindered by the sinful passions of lust within us that

68 Act 7:38

72 Rom 5:14

76 Isa 49:3,6

69 Isa 54:5

73 Eph 5:26-27

77 Rom 7:1-2

70 Col 1:16

74 Eph 5:32

78 Exo 24:3

71 Gen 2:21-23

75 Rev 21:2

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rebel against the directions that the law gives to us. Consequently, our rebellious behaviour only produces sadness, sickness and death in our bodily members.

To deliver us from the sickness and death that is caused by our inability to fulfil the conditions of the Old Testament marriage covenant, Christ decided to make a *new covenant* with the members of His bride, the church. The New Covenant would enable us to serve Him in the *newness* of the fellowship of the Holy Spirit. By this means we would no longer be bound by the flesh to serve in the energy of our own religious and romantic ideas. Instead, we would be enabled to walk and serve in the ‘newness of the Spirit’.⁷⁹

A marriage is annulled through death

The annulment of our old marriage covenant required a death. ‘For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning the husband.’⁸⁰ Christ was born under the law for this very purpose.⁸¹ However, Paul was very clear that we needed to die to the law through Christ so that we could be married again on a new basis. Explaining this point, Paul wrote, ‘Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the Law through the body of Christ, so that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit for God’.⁸²

Our old marriage to Christ was ended when He died under the judgement of the law. We, also, were crucified and died with Him through baptism. This is what Paul was explaining when he said, ‘Through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God’.⁸³ After the Son was raised from the dead, we were betrothed to Him again as His bride so that we could bring forth the fruit of everlasting life instead of the fruit of death.

The body and the bride

Adam and Eve were the very first married couple. We recall that Eve was taken from the flesh of the ‘first Adam’. The book of Genesis accounts that ‘the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man.’⁸⁴ This established the principle of marriage; that ‘a man shall leave his father and mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh’.⁸⁵

79 Rom 7:6

83 Gal 2:19

80 Rom 7:2

84 Gen 2:21-22

81 Gal 4:4-5

85 Gen 2:24

82 Rom 7:4

Paul quoted this very passage of Scripture in his explanation of Christ's new marriage covenant. He wrote, 'This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church'.⁸⁶ Paul was drawing our attention to the fact that the bride of Christ was to come from the flesh of His body. To be a part of the bride of Christ, we first need to become a part of the flesh and bones of His corporate body. Christ was creating this corporate new man on the cross, from the 'soil' of the flesh of humanity. Paul called this corporate new man, 'the last Adam'.⁸⁷ When we are baptised into Christ, we are joined to the new man. Just as the rib of Adam was formed into a bride, when Christ's side was pierced with a spear, a new and living way was established through which we could be sanctified, or made, His church. His church is His bride.

The headship of Christ

We can see that there are two aspects of our corporate life: we are members of His body, and members of His church. These are not separate entities in the sense that we can be a part of one fellowship but not the other. Rather, they express particular aspects or expressions of our participation in God's covenant will.

Paul explained that in the body of Christ 'there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus'.⁸⁸ The headship of Christ is expressed in the body through the fivefold ministry gifts. This is for the purpose of equipping *every member* of Christ's body for their specific service. By this means we are able to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the Head.⁸⁹ This is the expression of the headship of Christ *in His body*.

Those with ministry grace from Christ are also jealous over *the church* in order that it might be presented to Christ as a chaste virgin.⁹⁰ The apostle Paul's jealousy particularly concerned the content of the preached word. On this point he explained, 'I have betrothed you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. 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'.⁹¹

There are some important and practical implications of the distinction between the body and the church. When a man and a woman in the body of Christ marry, they establish a new home as members of Christ's *church*. This is because their marriage has been established in the *order of headship*. In this regard, Paul wrote,

86 Eph 5:32

90 2Co 11:2

87 1Co 15:45

91 2Co 11:2-3

88 Gal 3:28

89 Eph 4:10-16

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'For the husband is the head of the wife, as Christ also is the head of the church, He Himself being the Saviour of the body'.⁹² We note, then, that the 'order of headship' belongs to the church, the bride. This order is not an aspect of the life of the body of Christ, because, as we noted earlier, there is no distinction between male nor female in the body of Christ.⁹³

A most significant implication of marriages that are established within the order of headship in the church is that the children who are conceived as sons of God can be clothed in flesh as sons of men. How does this happen?

Children born sons of God

At conception, a child receives their identity, or soul, *from the man*. In this regard, we recall that 'the first man, Adam, became a living soul'.⁹⁴ From him, every other living soul came into being through the process of procreation. James explained that 'every good thing given and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights [or identities]'.⁹⁵ James was highlighting an order through which the identity of each person is manifest. In relation to this order, Paul taught that the man is the *image and glory of the Father*.⁹⁶ This is why a child receives their identity, or soul, from the man.

Paul further expanded this point when he explained that 'man does not originate from woman, but woman from man ... for as the woman originates from the man, so also the man has his birth through the woman; and all things originate from God'.⁹⁷ Paul was highlighting the reality that the identity of every person came from the first man, Adam. However, as we will discuss further, the flesh of every person comes through the woman.

Through the faith of the husband and wife, or either, this newly conceived identity receives the seed and name of the divine nature. By this means, they are born from above and receive a heavenly house that is part of their new creation identity.⁹⁸ The Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son and the Holy Spirit are all involved in this birth from above. Paul was communicating this wonderful point when he wrote, 'For the unbelieving husband is sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified through her believing husband; for otherwise your children are unclean, but now *they are holy*'.⁹⁹

It is through the woman that this newly conceived son of God is clothed with flesh as a son or daughter of man. Because of this, they are able to be brought forth

92 Eph 5:23

96 1Co 11:7

93 Gal 3:28

97 1Co 11:8,12

94 1Co 15:45

98 2Co 5:1-2

95 Jas 1:17

99 1Co 7:14

and joined to the physical body of Christ. As they continue in the fellowship of His mortality and immortality, they are able to obtain their eternal inheritance in the age to come. This is a most significant and glorious contribution to the fulfilment of God's covenant plan.

The Son of God Himself received His physical body from Mary when He was conceived in her womb by the Holy Spirit.¹⁰⁰ He was brought forth as the Son of Man, and this became His priority name. We note that He referred to Himself as the Son of Man, even in relation to His finished work on the cross. For example, Jesus testified, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me'.¹⁰¹ It is amazing to consider that Christ's physical appearance has the semblance of Mary. Without her, He would not have been revealed as the Son of Man, and the will of God would not have been fulfilled. He established a process through which Christ's body could be brought to immortality. Unless we are born as a son or daughter of man, and are then joined to Christ's corporate body, we will not inherit immortality in the age to come.

Bringing forth fruit

Earlier, we noted that we were made to die to the law through the body of Christ so that we might bear fruit for God.¹⁰² What is the fruit that we are to bear? Drawing from the rich themes associated with the way of salvation, we can identify three types of fruit.

Fruit of Christ's sonship

First, the fruit we are to bear is the fruit of Christ's sonship. Paul described this as 'the fruit of righteousness which comes through Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God'.¹⁰³ This righteousness is the will of God being fulfilled through the expression of Christ's life by the members of His body. As we are faithful to express and multiply His life as slaves of His righteousness, we are receiving wages and gathering fruit for life eternal.¹⁰⁴ We receive these wages as the glory of an immortal body on the day of resurrection. The parable of the vine and branches helps us to understand this principle.¹⁰⁵

Jesus taught that He is the Vine and that the branches of the vine are the individual members of His corporate body. He made the obvious point that a branch cannot bear fruit unless it is connected to the vine, saying, 'He who abides in Me and I in

100 Mat 1:20. Gal 4:4 104 Joh 4:36

101 Joh 8:28 105 Joh 15:1-6

102 Rom 7:4

103 Php 1:11

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him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.¹⁰⁶ The fruit we are to bear is the manifestation of Christ's own life. He warned that if we do not abide in Him and bear the fruit of His sonship, we will be cut off from the Vine by the Father, and cast into the fire and burned.¹⁰⁷

Fruit for God

The fruit for God is also the bringing forth of sons of God. This is speaking about our participation in the ministry of the gospel to those who are afar off from God. As disciples of Christ, we have all been commissioned with the task of bearing witness to Jesus Christ and Him crucified, in all the places that He has set us. However, even more specifically, the fruit of sons of God is speaking about the children who are born into covenant households. This is the outcome that God desires from the restoration of every household to the culture of faith. The Lord declared through the prophet Malachi, 'But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks godly offspring [seed]. Therefore take heed to your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.'¹⁰⁸

The Manchild

The final fruit that is to be revealed is the fruit of the union of Christ and His bride. This is the birth of the 'Manchild'. The apostle John recorded the revelation of the time of the end, and wrote, 'A great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labour and in pain to give birth'.¹⁰⁹ In this vision, John was bearing witness to the perfected bride of Christ. She was carrying the child that was coming forth from the union of Christ and His bride. He then observed that 'she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne'.¹¹⁰

The principle of sin

Central to the restoration of each person to God's plan is our deliverance from sin. The Scriptures teach that sin is within us because of the Fall and our connection to Satan's fatherhood.¹¹¹ He is the source of sin. However, as Christians, sin is *dead* within us. It only becomes active when we, from our own carnality, take hold of

106 Joh 15:5

110 Rev 12:5

107 Joh 15:2,6

111 Joh 8:44

108 Mal 2:15

109 Rev 12:1-2

God's law and endeavour to live by our own self-centred motivations. As Paul testified, 'When the commandment came, sin revived and I died'.¹¹²

The apostle John explained that 'the one who practises sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning'.¹¹³ We recall that Cain's countenance fell because his offering was rejected by God. Cain's mode of offering demonstrated the principle of 'another law' within him.¹¹⁴ He wanted to be acceptable to God, but on his own terms. The rejection of his offering provoked in him the sinful passion of anger. He was not willing, nor able, to master sin that was crouching at the door of his heart. As a consequence, he killed his brother.¹¹⁵ Through this action, Cain was doing the works of his father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning.¹¹⁶

It was the carnality of the other law within Cain that led him to sin. The apostle James explained this principle when he wrote, 'But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [carnal desires, motivated by the other law]. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.'¹¹⁷ A new-born Christian has this other law, or propensity to sin, within them. The Holy Spirit urges this new-born Christian to come into Christ so that they can be delivered of this principle that is resident within their flesh.

Dying to the law

At no time in His mortal life did Christ take hold of the law to fulfil it through the exercise of *His own fleshly initiative*. Instead, Christ only did what the Father gave Him to do.¹¹⁸ Unlike the Pharisees, He did not seek to reveal His own righteousness according to the law, through the works of His flesh. His perfect obedience to the Father was the means by which He fulfilled the law.¹¹⁹

Christ was born under the law, and His parents circumcised Him on the eighth day in accordance with the law.¹²⁰ In this regard, they brought Him under the covenant of the law. As Jesus grew up in their house, He was subject to His parents and increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men.¹²¹ Then, when He was made sin on our behalf, the Father laid the iniquity of us all on Him. That is when Christ died to the law.

When we died with Christ through baptism, we were under the law with Him. Those who live by law are under its condemnation. However, Paul said that

112 Rom 7:9

116 Joh 8:44

120 Gal 4:4. Luk 2:21

113 Ijn 3:8

117 Jas 1:14-15

121 Luk 2:51-52

114 Rom 7:23

118 Joh 8:28-29

115 Gen 4:6-8

119 Mat 5:17

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‘through the law I died to the law, so that I might live to God’.¹²² Christ’s death was the means by which all law was removed by Him. It was taken out of the way when it was nailed to the cross with Him.¹²³ It was also the means by which the carnal motivations, called ‘the flesh’, were circumcised from our new creation identity.

Members of His body

When we died with Christ through baptism, our new creature was hidden with Christ in God and, therefore, needs no further circumcision. In this regard, our heavenly bodies are resting in hope. Our physical bodies, on the other hand, were made part of Christ’s corporate body on earth. As members of His body, we have an ongoing participation in Christ’s circumcision and suffering so that the carnality and sin that still resides in our *fleshly members* can be removed from our lives. Paul was emphatic on this point, saying, ‘Do you not know that your bodies are members of Christ? Shall I then take the members of Christ and make them members of a harlot? Certainly not!’¹²⁴

This is the reason that we must not forsake our participation in the communion. By eating and drinking the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, we have an ongoing participation in His circumcision.¹²⁵ As we are being delivered from our ‘other law’ and ending our relationship with the law through the circumcision of Christ, we are able to be more effective ministers of Christ’s life as members of His body. That is, we are able to more effectively ‘priest’ ourselves as living sacrifices that are holy and acceptable to God.¹²⁶

Christ’s mortality and immortality

The final clarification that we will highlight in this introduction, and then discuss further in other sections of this book, is the difference between Christ’s *mortal* body and His *immortal* body. At the outset, let us be clear: we are talking about the same body. However, when the Son of God was on earth, His body was *mortal*; it bled and could obviously be damaged, or injured.

Then, when He rose from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb, His body was *immortal*. With this body, the risen Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father and was made the immortal Head of His physical, corporate body.

122 Gal 2:19

126 Rom 12:1

123 Col 2:14

124 1Co 6:15

125 1Co 10:16

Introduction

Christ had brought His mortal body to immortality through His priesthood, which Paul described as ‘after the order of Melchizedek’.¹²⁷ Paul explained that Christ did not come according to the law of a *fleshly* commandment, but according to the *power of an endless life*.¹²⁸ As Christ offered Himself by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, and shed the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, His body was sustained by the Spirit of the Father. It was the Spirit of the Father that raised Christ from the dead, and preserved His body while it lay in the tomb. It was this same Spirit by which Christ’s body was transformed from mortality to immortality.

Christ was appointed as a Priest after the order of Melchizedek by the Father, for the very purpose of abolishing death, and bringing life and immortality to light.¹²⁹ The reason for this whole process was that, according to God’s Everlasting Covenant, we were also to be brought to life and immortality *with Him* and *in Him*. To receive this inheritance of an immortal body that is suitable for the new heavens and earth, we must join the fellowship of Christ’s mortality and His immortality.

Through baptism, we are joined to the death and suffering that Christ experienced in His mortal body from Gethsemane to Calvary. This is what it means to know the fellowship of His sufferings and be conformed to His death. Equally, through baptism, we are raised and seated with Christ in heavenly places, *in Him*. Our life is in heaven, but our body is on earth as a member in particular of His corporate body. The marvellous promise of the Scriptures to those who belong to Christ is that the same Spirit that raised Christ from the dead and gave Him immortality, will give life to our mortal bodies.¹³⁰

In summary

Receiving and believing the preaching of the gospel of Jesus Christ is the beginning point of a person’s salvation. By this means, they are reconciled to God and are born of the imperishable seed of the divine nature. Baptism, eating and drinking the bread and wine of the communion, and the Holy Spirit join a person to the body of Christ’s mortality and immortality. In this fellowship they are delivered from their carnal propensity to sin and enabled to walk after the Spirit as a member of the body of Christ.

These are the key waypoints of salvation that Paul identified as the mystery of Christ.¹³¹ In the sections of this book that follow, we will consider these waypoints in more detail.

127 Heb 7:17

131 Eph 3:3-6

128 Heb 7:16

129 Heb 5:6,10.
2Ti 1:10

130 Rom 8:11

SECTION 2

Born of God

Dead in sin and under judgement

First and foremost, the gospel message is that God predestined us to be His sons. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit planned together to create a multitude of sons who were born of Their life, and who would live forever in relationship with Them. This is His *Everlasting Covenant* purpose for us. The Son created the present heavens and earth as the place in which every person, named in Himself, would come into being through the ‘first man’, Adam.¹ God’s plan was that the sons and daughters of men would be born of God’s own life and joined to the corporate body of Christ.² Finally, we would receive an immortal body consisting of the substance of Christ’s own body in the resurrection.

However, from the moment that Adam and Eve disobeyed the word of God, the whole of mankind was separated from the fellowship and life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.³ They condemned themselves to live by the principle of their own

1 Joh 1:3.
Gen 1:27-28

2 Gal 3:26-29

3 Gen 3:22-24

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self-centred law in a vain attempt to sustain their mortal lives.⁴ The exercise of this law in the flesh of a person made them slaves of sin.⁵ ‘Therefore, just as through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned.’⁶ In their natural condition, mankind is dead in trespasses and sins.⁷

Following the Fall, God established offering as the means of recovering Adam and Eve and their offspring to relationship with Himself.⁸ However, as we follow the early generations that arose from Adam, we note that very few people maintained their walk with the Lord. And so, mankind *degenerated* to a state of great wickedness. The Scriptures record that ‘every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually’.⁹

It is helpful here to mark the distinction between sin and wickedness. 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. In this regard, we recall the words of Paul, who 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’.¹⁰

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.¹¹ Ultimately, this describes the spirit of antichrist. Jesus warned that in the last days of the church age the love of many would grow cold because of lawlessness, or iniquity.¹² It will be like it was in the days of Noah.¹³

In Noah’s generation, the Lord repented of having made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart on account of their wickedness.¹⁴ He declared, ‘I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.’¹⁵ God determined to destroy every living creature on earth, saying, ‘I am bringing the flood of water upon the earth, to destroy all flesh in which is the breath of life, from under heaven; everything that is on the earth shall perish.’¹⁶

Through faith, Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord.¹⁷ Paul explained that by faith Noah condemned the world by preparing an ark in obedience to the word of the Lord. Noah and his family were saved from the universal judgement of

4	Rom 5:18-19	8	Gen 3:21. Gen 4:3-4	12	Mat 24:12	16	Gen 6:17
5	Rom 7:14	9	Gen 6:5	13	Luk 17:26	17	Gen 6:8
6	Rom 5:12	10	Rom 5:20-21	14	Gen 6:6		
7	Eph 2:1-3	11	Rom 8:7	15	Gen 6:7		

God, and Noah became an heir of righteousness.¹⁸ We note that the apostle Peter described the ark of deliverance as a picture, or type, of baptism. Specifically, he explained that ‘baptism now saves you – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience – through the resurrection of Jesus Christ’.¹⁹ Peter was saying that deliverance from the condemnation of this world through baptism is not just for cleansing and forgiveness; it will also result in a fundamental change in the way a person lives.

We are all descendants of Noah, and survived the destruction of every living thing because of his faith. However, it is important to understand that God’s judgement in the days of Noah was on the whole of the creation, including those who were born after the flood. God had proclaimed *the end of all flesh*.²⁰ Even though mankind has had a reprieve because of the faith of Noah, they are still under judgement and condemnation because of sin.²¹ They are dead to God and alienated from His life because of their wicked works. Since the flood, only those who live by faith and are introduced to the grace that Noah found, can be saved from the destruction of this present creation.²² In the New Covenant, grace for life is only available within the fellowship of the body of Christ as we live by the faith of the Son of God.²³

Mercy to those who are afar off

Although mankind is the enemy of God and under His judgement, Paul taught that, while we were enemies, Christ died for us so that we could be reconciled to God. Through Christ’s offering ‘once for all’ and the shedding of His blood on our behalf, we were justified, or made righteous, in the sight of God.²⁴ This was the work that Christ accomplished in His *mortality* as the Son of Man. Through this ‘one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to *all men*’.²⁵

It is obvious that there are many people who do not know God, nor live in a manner that would reflect the justification of life that resulted from Christ’s offering. This is because a person must receive this justification by faith. How do they do this? To those who are afar off from Him, the Father sends people to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ and Him crucified.²⁶ These ‘messengers’ are simply bearing witness to Jesus and His offering for us on the cross. Jesus said that His disciples would receive power from the Holy Spirit to be His witnesses to the whole world.²⁷ *Every disciple of Christ* is able to bear witness to the life and love of Christ that was manifest when He offered Himself on the cross for the sake of the mankind.

18 Heb 11:7

19 1Pe 3:21

20 Gen 6:13

21 Joh 3:18

22 Eph 2:5

23 Gal 2:20. Act 4:12

24 Rom 6:10.
Rom 5:8-9

25 Rom 5:18

26 Rom 10:15.

1Co 1:23

27 Act 1:8

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When a person receives the testimony, or witness, of a disciple, *Christ introduces Himself to them*.²⁸ He meets them and proclaims the good news of their salvation to them. He does this in a particular way. Referring to His death on the cross, Jesus said that ‘if I am lifted up from the earth, *I will draw all men to Myself*’.²⁹ Every person’s first interaction with Christ is at the cross. He meets them there as their Lord and Saviour who has triumphed over the sin and death to which they are in bondage.

Jesus also said that no-one comes to Him unless the Father draws them.³⁰ So how does the Father draw us to Christ so that we can meet Him at the cross? When a person is willing to hear and receive the word of God through the testimony of a believer, a *spirit of grace and supplication* from God the Father begins to be poured out upon them by the Holy Spirit.³¹ Grace enables a person to believe in the Son of God. This means that they are able to acknowledge their sinful condition, and recognise the offering of Christ on their behalf. They are able to appreciate that a provision has been made for their reconciliation to God.

Under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the new believer begins to mourn and repent for their sin and its consequences. A *spirit of supplication* enables them to cry out to the Father for forgiveness. The Father forgives and receives them on the merits of Christ’s blood that was shed for all of mankind. On account of Christ’s blood, they are reconciled to God and made acceptable in His sight. This is what it means to be ‘justified’ before God. In summary, a person receives reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, and justification, through faith that comes by hearing, receiving and believing the word of God.³²

Regeneration and renewing

As the word of God is being received, a person’s ‘inner man’ is regenerated, or made alive, by the washing of the water of the word and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. ‘But when the kindness of God our Saviour and His love for mankind appeared, He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.’³³

Regeneration gives us a new heart and a new spirit so that we can receive and believe the word.³⁴ It is also cleansing our bodies from the filth of our fallen behaviour. Renewing by the Holy Spirit is addressing the dystrophy of our identity that has been caused by our sin. Through this process we are restored to

28 Joh 1:9-12.
Joh 14:21-23

29 Joh 12:32

30 Joh 6:44

31 Zec 12:10

32 Rom 10:17.
Act 10:43

33 Tit 3:4-5

34 Eze 36:25-26

the human identity that the Father had predestined for us. This is God's initiative towards us for our refreshing and healing. As the psalmist wrote, 'He sent forth His word and healed them; He rescued them from the grave.'³⁵

This is the impact of the Spirit of the Father within us. We are strengthened with the power of the Spirit of the Father so that the seed of God's life that comes to us in the word is able to take root within us.³⁶

Born of imperishable seed

The apostle Peter explained that we were born again of an *incorruptible* seed through the living and enduring word of God.³⁷ Notably, Peter distinguished between that seed and the *corruptible* seed that was planted in the womb of our mother when we were conceived. This corruptible seed contained our identity, or soul. Regeneration by the water of the word recovers this identity.

Jesus explained that the incorruptible seed *is the word of God the Father*.³⁸ This word contains the *name* of our new creation sonship that was known by God before the creation of the heavens and the earth. When we receive the word of our name, we are born of water. The Father then sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our heart, crying, 'Abba! Father!'³⁹

The Son is the sum of all sonship. This means that there is no sonship that can be expressed apart from Him. However, when Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten by the Father as the Son of God, He was no longer expressing His own identity as Yahweh Son. He was now revealing the Father. Likewise, when the Son emptied Himself to be sent into our heart, the sonship that we manifest is according to the unique name that the Father prepared for us. At this point, we behold a new creation! This new creation has a heavenly house that has been prepared for us in the bosom of the Father. When we are baptised into Christ, this new creation life is hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father, to be revealed on the day of resurrection.

Now the Spirit of the Father and the Son are dwelling within us. Jesus said, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our *abode* with him.'⁴⁰ We also receive the Holy Spirit. As Jesus explained, 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot

35 Psa 107:20 39 Gal 4:6-7

36 Eph 3:17. Luk 8:11 40 Joh 14:23

37 1Pe 1:23

38 Luk 8:11

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receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He *abides* with you and will be in you'.⁴¹

A certain firstfruits

The life that we are born of is eternal life. It is the life of our unique sonship that God the Father predestined for each one of us before the heavens and the earth were created. The seed of this life is therefore *specific* to the name and identity of each son of God. When it is received by a person, the life becomes their possession and they are born as a *unique* son of God.

The writings of the apostle James bring to our attention the uniqueness of each person's sonship. James explained that it was the exercise of the Father's will to birth us from above by the word of truth. This is the word that proceeds from His mouth.⁴² The Father wanted each one of us to be a *certain firstfruits* among His creatures.⁴³ James was explaining that each person who is born of God is a new creation son of God, with particular capacities for the expression of His life. One son of God is not the same as any other son of God; each one is to be a certain kind of firstfruit.

The capacities for the expression of God's life that are contained in the seed of our new creation sonship are far beyond our natural abilities, and even beyond our natural comprehension. Paul reminded us that 'eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him'.⁴⁴ It will only be in the new heavens and new earth that the full extent of our sonship capacities will be known and exercised. Affirming the point, Paul wrote, 'Now I know in part, but then I will know fully just as I also have been fully known'.⁴⁵

The carnal Christian

According to Jesus, the initial response of a believer to the word of God gives them the capacity to *see*, by illumination, the kingdom of God and their place in it as His son.⁴⁶ They are born of the seed of God's divine nature, yet they are still *carnal*. This means that they still have another law within their flesh. Paul called this law a *principle of evil that is within us*.⁴⁷ It is an innate and subconscious desire within a person to have and express life 'their own way'. As a consequence of the fall of mankind, every person is born with this propensity within them. It is from

41 Joh 14:16-17

45 1Co 13:12

42 Mat 4:4

46 Joh 3:3

43 Jas 1:18

47 Rom 7:21

44 1Co 2:9

the basis of this law that we seek to satisfy the desires of our flesh and of our eyes, and become lifted up in pride.⁴⁸

In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus likened the various expressions of carnality to 'stony ground' and 'thorny ground'.⁴⁹ We understand from this parable that unless this fleshly propensity is removed from us, we will fail to bring forth fruit to God. At best, we will be a Christian who is weak in faith. At worst, we will lose our salvation.

With the best of intentions, a carnal Christian will set out to live acceptably to God by doing what they think is pleasing to Him. They will attempt to fulfil what they perceive to be the will of God through the enthusiastic exercise of their unique sonship and, by this means, they believe that they will be able to keep the law of God. This is because they recognise that God's law defines the cultural standards of His kingdom, which they have been born to see. They set about living by these standards because they think that this is how they will inherit the kingdom of God.

As they set out to do the will of God, they find that various sinful passions begin to be aroused within them.⁵⁰ For example, they may begin to compare themselves with others and become envious of their capacities or ministry expression. They may become frustrated because their efforts are not being adequately acknowledged. The trials and tribulations which they experience because of the word may cause them to become weary and discontented with the Christian life. The failure of their initiatives may result in outbursts of anger. Paul called these responses 'the deeds of the flesh'.⁵¹

According to the law that the carnal Christian is trying to fulfil, their fleshly deeds are sin. On account of their sin, they come under the judgement of the law and are found wanting. The wages, or penalty, for sin is death.⁵² Instead of finding life through their well-meaning endeavours, they are losing it under the condemnation of the law.⁵³

Paul explained that although these ones have delighted in the law of God in their regenerated and renewed 'inner man', and want to be righteous, they are prisoners to the law of sin in their bodies.⁵⁴ This is because their flesh is self-centred and they can only do the deeds of the flesh. These deeds are inherently contrary to the law of God, which is love from a pure heart.⁵⁵ It is a body of death rather than a body that is receiving the blessing of life.⁵⁶ In this body, they are unable to do

48 1Jn 2:16

52 Rom 6:23

56 Rom 7:22-24

49 Luk 8:13-14

53 Mat 16:25

50 Rom 7:5

54 Rom 7:23

51 Gal 5:19

55 1Ti 1:5

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the good works that God prepared for them to do that are according to His will. Until they are delivered from this principle within them, they are slaves to sin, and remain under the judgement of the law.⁵⁷

Paul noted that there were many who are weak, sick, and who even die, because they live their lives and judge themselves from the basis of their own law, and it brings them under the judgement of God.⁵⁸ However, they have been born of imperishable seed, and if they will continue to believe in the Son and receive His word, they will enter heaven when they die. In the meantime, their lives on this earth will be beset with sickness and weakness. They will become *weary* in their Christian pilgrimage, and may become *depressed* because their sonship aspirations and expectations are not being realised. Whether they acknowledge it or not, their Christian experience will be fruitless and miserable. Explaining this point by using his own life as an example, Paul arrived at the exasperated conclusion, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'⁵⁹

Baptism now saves us

This is not how God intended His sons to live. The Son of God died so that we could be delivered from this way of living. He established a fellowship through which the body of sin could be removed from us, and we could participate in showing forth of His righteousness as a part of His kingdom. Through baptism in water and the Holy Spirit, we are joined to a fellowship with Christ through which our carnal propensities are removed from us, and we are instructed in the way of sonship.

Having been reconciled to God, forgiven of our sin, justified, and born to see the kingdom, *much more, we are saved by Christ's life.*⁶⁰ We also remember that the apostle Peter taught that '*baptism now saves [us]* – not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience'.⁶¹ A person with a good conscience has had their evil heart sprinkled with the blood of Jesus.⁶² Consequently, they are no longer motivated to serve God according to their own way. They are able to serve the living God as priests.⁶³ In summary, Paul was saying that reconciliation, justification and being born to see the kingdom are necessary, but not sufficient, for salvation and participation in the kingdom of God. *We need Christ's life.*

57 Rom 7:10-14

61 1Pe 3:21

58 1Co 11:30

62 Heb 10:22

59 Rom 7:24

63 Heb 9:14

60 Rom 5:10

The life of Christ could be summarised as the elements of His body and His blood. Jesus said, ‘Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, *you have no life in yourselves*. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. For My flesh is true food, and My blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him*.’⁶⁴ The life of the Son is who He is. He is the sum and full expression of all sonship, and this was revealed through His priesthood and offering. Baptism joins us to the fellowship of Christ’s priesthood and offering. We then partake of the communion elements each week in faith for our ongoing participation in these dimensions of His life.

A new believer’s faith for baptism will not come through convincing theological propositions. Neither does baptism into a denomination or doctrinal tradition grant us entry into the kingdom of God. It is the Holy Spirit who enables and convinces a person to come into Christ. Of course, a new believer can be encouraged toward baptism, as the multitude were on the day of Pentecost.⁶⁵ However, the believer’s urgency to be baptised, and their understanding of its implications for their life, is a consequence of the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit.

Sanctification by the Spirit

We read earlier that the Father brought us forth by the word of truth so that we would *become* a certain firstfruits of His creation.⁶⁶ As we have already stated, if we attempt to fulfil what we perceive as God’s will, through the exercise of our unique sonship, we will come under the law and its condemnation. This happens because we are still carnal. As a consequence, our Christian lives will be wretched and unfruitful. This highlights the point that we are not firstfruits simply because we have been born from above or have a unique sonship to express. And we do not arrive at firstfruits as an inevitable consequence of time; the parable of the sower and the seed teaches us this.

The principle of firstfruits highlights the necessity for Christians to bring forth fruit. In the first instance, this is speaking of the fruit of righteousness.⁶⁷ However, Jesus explained that the fruit is also *eternal life*. He said, ‘Already he who reaps is receiving wages and is gathering fruit for life eternal.’⁶⁸ To bear this fruit is to receive the hope of the resurrection to immortality as a son of God. The question is, ‘How do we bear the fruit of righteousness, leading to eternal life?’

64 Joh 6:53-56

68 Joh 4:36

65 Act 2:38

66 Jas 1:18

67 Jas 3:18

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Like James, Paul taught that the Father had chosen us to become firstfruits Christians. However, Paul provided us with some further detail regarding how this happens. He explained that it is through the purifying, or sanctifying, influence of the Holy Spirit.⁶⁹ Having been born from above of the seed of God's life, our spirits then begin to be sanctified by the Holy Spirit. He convinces us to believe in Jesus Christ *as the revelation and manifestation of true sonship*. We believe that we can receive our eternal sonship in Christ and from Christ.

Having been sanctified and empowered to believe in the Son by the Holy Spirit, a person will want to come into Christ through baptism. We recall the enthusiasm of the Ethiopian eunuch who received the word of Philip and immediately desired to be baptised. Philip said to him that if he believed with all his heart, he could be baptised. The point Philip was making was that if the Ethiopian had been 'born from above', he could be baptised. The eunuch answered Philip, saying, 'I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God.'⁷⁰ In other words, He believed that Jesus was the sum of all sonship and he desired, as Paul later did, to be found in Him, not having a righteousness of His own that was derived through the law, but that which comes through faith in Jesus Christ.⁷¹

The privilege of participation in Christ's own life can only be accessed through baptism. The confession of the believer who has received this sanctification and illumination by the Holy Spirit is that they want more than just the seed of their own life. They want to receive the life of Christ. By receiving the life of His sonship and participating in the revelation of His glory, we bear the fruit of righteousness in Him, and will receive the full reward of our own sonship in the new heavens and earth.

Coming to Jesus as disciples

Jesus invited all those who were weary and heavy-laden from their vain attempts to live acceptably to God through the exercise of their own law, to come to Him and find rest.⁷² He said, '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.'⁷³ To take Christ's yoke upon us is to receive the New Covenant that He made available as a participation, or fellowship, in His death, burial and resurrection. By this means we can be delivered from living by the principles of the Old Covenant that only serve to keep us in bondage to sin and death and result in a Christian experience that is beset by weariness and wretchedness.

69 2Th 2:13

73 Mat 11:29-30

70 Act 8:36-37

71 Php 3:9

72 Mat 11:28

When, as disciples, we come to Christ and take His yoke upon us, we begin to *learn* how to reveal the life of sonship by doing the works of His sonship.⁷⁴ Paul said that by this means we ‘gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ’.⁷⁵ Christ’s glory is the expression of His sonship. He is the sum and full expression of all sonship. As we learn sonship from Christ, by doing the works of His sonship as a member of His body, we are being brought to glory as sons of God. When He appears again at the end of the age, we will be like Him.⁷⁶

The fellowship of Christ’s offering

Christ has invited us into a fellowship with Him. This is, in fact, the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to join us to the fellowship of the Trinity. This fellowship is in the body of Christ. ‘For *in Him* dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily.’⁷⁷ Furthermore, ‘By one Spirit we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit’.⁷⁸ We are baptised by one Spirit into the body of Christ so that we can be included in Their fellowship by receiving our sonship from the source of all sonship, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. This is what it means to be ‘complete in Him’.⁷⁹ This is the New Covenant.

To understand the nature of this covenant and our participation in it, we must first consider the offering of the Son of God, through which the will of God was done and the righteousness of the law was fulfilled. We have been invited to join the fellowship of this offering.

74 Mat 11:28-30

78 1Co 12:13

75 2Th 2:14

79 Col 2:10

76 1Jn 3:2

77 Col 2:9

SECTION 3

The body of our Lord Jesus Christ

A body prepared to do the will of God

The Son of God was born into this fallen and condemned world that had been made even more sinful with the advent of the law covenant.¹ He came for the purpose of saving ‘that which was lost’ to God; namely, us.² The testimony of Jesus to the Father was, ‘Sacrifice and offering You have not desired, *but a body you have prepared for Me*; in whole burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have taken no pleasure. Then I said, “Behold, I have come (in the scroll of the book it is written of Me) *to do Your will, O God*”.’³ What did Christ mean by this?

The most obvious point to note from this passage of Scripture is that the Son of God received a body from the Father through which the will of God could be fulfilled. The fulfilment of God’s will was in contrast to the sacrifices and offerings

1 Rom 7:13

2 Mat 18:11

3 Heb 10:5-7

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of the Old Covenant, which were ineffective in this regard. What this old, law covenant could not achieve in terms of dealing with the flesh so that a person could fulfil God's will, God achieved by sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh.⁴ This happened when Christ was born of a woman, in the form of mankind. 'Incarnation' is the theological term that is used to describe the mortal body of the Son of God. This was the first phase of the body that had been prepared for the Son, through which the will of God would be done.

Paul described Jesus as a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This priesthood did not operate by the same principles as the old Levitical priesthood. Through His priesthood and offering, Christ's mortal body was changed into an immortal body. This was the nature of His body when He rose from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb. Importantly, when Christ ascended to the right hand of the Father with this body, He was made the immortal Head of His corporate body on earth. This was the second phase of the body that was prepared for Christ.

The order of Melchizedek is the priesthood that belongs to the New Covenant. It is the priesthood that functions according to the *power of an endless, or indestructible, life*.⁵ It was by this means that Christ was able to bring His mortal flesh to immortality. This is what Paul meant when he said that our Saviour Christ Jesus 'abolished death and brought life and immortality to light'.⁶ The process through which this was achieved, and the Father's will was fulfilled, was the pathway of salvation. As Paul explained, 'It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings. For both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father'.⁷

Jesus authored, or pioneered, the pathway through which the sons of men could be brought to life and immortality. This is, in fact, the inheritance that God had prepared for the sons of God before the foundation of the world. To obtain this inheritance, we must be joined to the body of Christ. His body was and is the only one in which the will of God could be done on earth and in heaven. Moreover, it was the only body in which the law could be fulfilled.⁸ If we are to fulfil the will of God and bear the fruit of righteousness, we must join the fellowship which He has invited us to join, in the body of His mortality and His immortality.

4 Rom 8:3

8 Mat 5:17

5 Heb 7:16

6 2Ti 1:10

7 Heb 2:10-11

His mortal body

The will of God was being accomplished in Christ's mortal body from the moment of His conception in the womb of Mary. This was where God the Son, who had been begotten by the Father as the Son of God, came into the world as the Son of Man. Concerning this event, an angel of the Lord spoke to Joseph and said, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take Mary as your wife; for the Child who has been conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. She will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." Now all this took place to fulfil what was spoken by the Lord through the prophet: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child and shall bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which translated means, "*God with us*".⁹ When the Son of God came in the flesh, He was establishing a point of fellowship 'with us'. This fellowship would culminate in an invitation to journey 'with Him' on the pathway of sanctification that He would establish through His passion from Gethsemane to Calvary.

Jesus' ministry on earth commenced when He was about thirty years old.¹⁰ Concerning this ministry, He testified, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim release to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, to set free those who are oppressed, to proclaim the favourable year of the Lord.'¹¹ This He did throughout the region of Judea. The blind received sight, the lame were healed, the lepers were cleansed, the deaf received their capacity to hear, and the poor had the gospel preached to them. Jesus said of His ministry that a person was blessed if they did not take offence at Him.¹²

At the last supper, Jesus gave the bread and the wine to His disciples as the elements of the New Covenant. He explained to them that the bread was His flesh and the wine was His blood that they were to partake of in remembrance of Him. Paul explained further that the bread and wine were a sharing, or participation, in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Eating and drinking these elements would grant them access to the New Covenant that He was going to establish through the shedding of His blood on the cross.

The cross of Christ is where He fulfilled the Father's will. Christ poured out Himself to death in the garden of Gethsemane, saying to Peter, James and John, 'My *soul* is deeply grieved, to the *point of death*; remain here and keep watch *with Me*'.¹³ Having poured out Himself, Jesus was numbered *with us*, the transgressors.¹⁴

9 Mat 1:20-23

13 Mat 26:38

10 Luk 3:23

14 Isa 53:12

11 Luk 4:18-19

12 Mat 11:5-6

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He had established a point of fellowship with all of us, who were dead because of sin. Christ gave Himself as an offering for our sins so that He might rescue us from the judgement of God that is already upon the wickedness of this present age. Paul explained that Christ gave Himself this way *according to the will of God*.¹⁵ He received this will when He prayed to the Father, 'If it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will.'¹⁶

When Jesus prayed to the Father, He was asking to be made a sin offering for us. The Father was pleased to receive the Son's request to be our Redeemer. This is why Yahweh was pleased to bruise the Son.¹⁷ God was not demanding an outlet or an alternative target to satisfy His fierce anger that had been provoked by the depravity of humanity. Rather, He was responding to the request of the Son to be an offering for our sin. The apostle Paul explained that Christ became the *embodiment* of our sin. God 'made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him'.¹⁸ To become the righteousness of God means that we are fulfilling the will of God. Of course, the key for us is to be 'in Christ'.

The blood of Jesus

As Christ suffered in the mortality of His flesh, His blood was poured out for us. Yahweh Himself taught that the life, or soul, of a person was in their blood.¹⁹ The life of a person is not the blood; *it is in the blood*. The same was so for the Son of God. His own sonship life was carried in His blood. He gave His life for us, and to us, when it was shed as a direct result of His offering and sufferings from the garden of Gethsemane through to Calvary.

The New Testament writers highlighted three aspects of Christ's blood of which we are to avail ourselves:

1. Christ's blood was shed for us when He offered Himself 'once for all'.²⁰ The blood of Christ was the treasure that redeemed, or ransomed, us from the power of sin and death.²¹ It was the coinage that gave life to men and women who were otherwise dead because of sin.²² On account of this vicarious work, we received the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, and the right to be born again and to receive the divine nature. This was a completely vicarious work, of which a person is a beneficiary when they first receive and believe the message of the cross. At this point, however, the blood has not been *applied* in their lives.

15 Gal 1:4

16 Mat 26:39

17 Isa 53:10

18 2Co 5:21

19 Lev 17:11,14.

Deu 12:23

20 1Pe 3:18

21 1Pe 1:18-19

22 Eph 2:1

2. The blood of Jesus is a washing, cleansing agent that we have access to when we join the fellowship of His sufferings.²³ Christ's blood purges the garments of our priesthood so that we can join the fellowship of Christ's priesthood, and then offer ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God.²⁴ We join the fellowship of Christ's priesthood through baptism, communion and by the Holy Spirit.
3. The blood of Christ was given to us on the altar as Christ suffered in Gethsemane and finally died on the cross. This was His work of atonement for us. Yahweh said that the life in the blood is given to us on the altar to make atonement for our souls.²⁵ The life of the Son is eternal life! His life is transferred to us, giving us power to live as sons of God. Furthermore, as we eat His flesh and drink His blood, Christ joins us to His sonship, making us living participators in the expression of His corporate sonship. Jesus promised that if we would partake of His flesh and blood, He would raise us up on the last day.²⁶ He was saying that we would receive a resurrection body just like His.

The bosom of the Father

Jesus died the death of sin in Gethsemane and was brought back from this death by the Spirit of the Father, the shedding of His own blood, and the power of Eternal Spirit. Then, on the cross, having triumphed over death and sin, Christ declared, 'It is finished!'²⁷ He had fulfilled the will of the Father and completed the full work of redemption. As we noted above, through this one act of righteousness, 'there resulted justification of life to all men'.²⁸

Jesus then cried out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.'²⁹ The Spirit of the Son was then received by the Father into His bosom, where He remained while His buried body rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. The apostle Peter declared that Christ 'was neither abandoned to Hades, nor did His flesh suffer decay'.³⁰ His body was preserved by the Spirit of the Father in the tomb, where it rested in hope of the resurrection.³¹

Speaking of His offering, Jesus said, 'The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit.'³² Isaiah prophesied regarding the multiplication of life as the outcome of Christ's offering, saying, 'It

23 1Jn 1:7

27 Joh 19:30

31 Act 2:26-27

24 Rev 7:14-15.
Rom 12:1

28 Rom 5:18

32 Joh 12:23-24

29 Luk 23:46

25 Lev 17:11

30 Act 2:31

26 Joh 6:54

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pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand.³³

When Jesus went to the bosom of the Father, He brought a great multitude of sons with Him. He reconciled us all to God through His offering. This multitude included all the men and women of faith who had died prior to His death. When the Old Testament saints died, they were kept by faith in what was called ‘the bosom of Abraham’. Those who did not demonstrate the faith of Abraham were kept in Hades. These two realities were identified by Jesus in His account of Lazarus and the rich man.³⁴ When Christ died, all the men and women of faith under the Old Covenant were transferred to the bosom of the Father as sons of God.³⁵ Christ’s blood had ransomed them, as well as us, to God. Their faith had joined them to Abraham, to whom the promise of sonship was made, and their faith was then imputed to them as righteousness.

Before He died, Jesus had said to His disciples, ‘Do not let your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father’s house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself, that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going.’³⁶ Jesus was speaking here of preparing a place for each one of us in the bosom of the Father.

Christ’s personal journey from Gethsemane to Calvary pioneered a pathway that we could journey upon *with Him*, all the way to being hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father.³⁷ When we are baptised into Christ, we are hidden with Christ in God. Our sonship is with Him in heaven, while we, who are the members of His body on earth, are on a journey through ‘the wilderness’ of the world. This is a journey that is both ‘with Him’ in the fellowship of His mortality, and ‘in Him’ as a member of His corporate body. The journey that Jesus has authored for us is a narrow and difficult way that leads to eternal life.³⁸

His immortal body

After three days and three nights, the Spirit of Christ returned to His body which had been kept from corruption by the Father. When He rose from the dead, His body was flesh, but did not live by the principle of blood, for Christ’s blood had been poured out to give us life. He now lived by the power of Eternal Spirit. It

33 Isa 53:10

37 Col 3:3

34 Luk 16:22-24

38 Mat 7:14

35 1Pe 3:18

36 Joh 14:1-4

was now an immortal body.³⁹ However, it was not mystical. It was substantial. Significantly, Jesus said to His disciples, ‘See My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself; touch Me and see, *for a spirit does not have flesh and bones* as you see that I have.’⁴⁰ To Thomas He said, ‘Reach here with your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand and put it into My side; and do not be unbelieving, but believing.’⁴¹ He then said, ‘Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.’⁴² Jesus was making the point that our belief is in the Son who has an immortal body.

When the Son ascended into heaven, the Father seated Him at His right hand in heavenly places and made Him the immortal Head over His corporate body.⁴³ Through His passion from Gethsemane to Calvary, Christ was creating in Himself a *corporate body* from the ‘soil’ of the flesh of Jew and Gentile. When they became members of His physical corporate body, they would be able to participate in the fulfilment of the will of God.⁴⁴ Saying it another way, the Son’s mortal body was the temple of Yahweh, just as our own body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.⁴⁵ Through the cross, the temple of His body was being expanded to include us as living stones.⁴⁶ We are now the flesh and bones, joints and ligaments of the expanded temple of His body, of which He is the *immortal* Head and Capstone.⁴⁷

39 Luk 24:6-7

40 Luk 24:39

41 Joh 20:27

42 Joh 20:29

43 Eph 1:22-23

44 Eph 2:14-16

45 1Co 6:19

46 1Pe 2:4-5

47 Col 1:18. 1Pe 2:7

SECTION 4

The fellowship of the body of Christ

The New Covenant is the promise of receiving the divine nature as a personal and eternal possession. We are recipients of, and participators in, the New Covenant through *regeneration*, *new birth* from an incorruptible seed, *baptism*, by eating and drinking the elements of the *communion*, and by receiving the *Holy Spirit*. These five aspects of covenant life connect us to a fellowship in Christ's mortality and His immortality. Through our fellowship with Christ in relation to these two aspects of His body, we are made adequate to fulfil the will of God, and we are assured of receiving the promise of eternal life.

It is important to understand the implications of our fellowship with Christ in His mortality and His immortality. This is because, together, they communicate the nature and details of *our* Christian pilgrimage on this earth. This journey, which was pioneered by Christ through His offering on the cross, culminates in our possession of an immortal body, just like the one Christ received when He rose

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from the dead after three days and three nights in the tomb.¹ This body belongs to our eternal inheritance as a son of God in the new heavens and earth.² Receiving this inheritance depends upon coming into Christ and journeying ‘with’ Christ in the fellowship of His death and sufferings, which He experienced in His mortal body. It depends, *equally*, upon being found ‘in Him’ as part of the corporate body of Christ, of which He is the immortal Head.

These two expressions – ‘with Him’ and ‘in Him’ – were specifically used by Paul in relation to baptism into the Lord Jesus Christ. For example, Paul taught that ‘if we have become united *with Him* in the likeness of His death [through baptism], certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection’.³ In his letter to the Colossians, Paul explained that we have ‘been buried *with Him* in baptism, in which you were also raised up *with Him* through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead’.⁴ This being our experience, we are made complete *in Him*. ‘For *in Him* all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and *in Him* you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority; and *in Him* you were also circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, in the removal of the body of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ.’⁵

From these passages, we can see that ‘with Him’ and ‘in Him’ also describe what it means to be baptised into the *death, burial* and *resurrection* of Christ. Having come into Christ through baptism, we are joined to the fellowship of His death and suffering that He experienced in His mortal body from Gethsemane to Calvary. ‘Buried with Christ’ refers to the reality of our personal sonship being hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father. ‘Raised and seated with Him in heavenly places’ in Him is the reality of being a member of His corporate body.⁶

The fellowship of His death, burial and resurrection is to be our *daily reality*. In this regard, they are not independent steps that we simply experience in sequence and then move past. Each aspect of baptism is dependent upon the others. For example, our capacity to effectively minister as a member of the corporate body of Christ will be hindered if our sonship does not remain hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father. This is because our priority for service will be the expression of our own sonship, rather than the expression of Christ’s sonship as a member of His body. The only way that we can be delivered from this propensity is through the chastening of the Lord that we experience in the fellowship of Christ’s death and sufferings.

1 Luk 24:6-7

5 Col 2:9-11

2 Rom 8:23-24.
1Co 15:51-53

6 Eph 2:6. Col 3:1

3 Rom 6:5

4 Col 2:12

The circumcision of Christ

Significantly, baptism into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus joins us to the circumcision of Christ.⁷ The circumcision of Christ is the religious 'rite' of the New Covenant that a person must receive if they are to lay hold of the promise of receiving the divine nature as an eternal possession. What do we mean by a 'rite'? When God made an everlasting covenant with Abraham, He said, 'You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin, and it shall be the sign of the covenant between Me and you.'⁸ God then said, 'An uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant.'⁹ We see that circumcision was the *sign* and *condition* of the Everlasting Covenant that God made with Abraham. Likewise, *the circumcision of Christ is the sign and the condition of the New Covenant.*

We can think of circumcision as an operation that cuts, from our body, something that is causing us harm. This could be, for example, a cancerous tumour that, if not dealt with, will cause our death. This picture from the 'natural' helps us to understand circumcision in relation to our sonship. The circumcision of Christ is the process that the Son, the Father and the Holy Spirit planned so that we could be delivered from the other law within us that brings us into bondage to the law of sin and death.

The circumcision of Christ describes the death and suffering that He experienced in seven stages from Gethsemane to Calvary. To receive His circumcision, we must be joined to Christ's death as *an event that belongs to history*. We are to die *with Him* and journey *with Him* all the way to the bosom of the Father. Fellowship connects us to all the events and outcomes of Christ's passion that He experienced in the body of His mortality. In this regard, there is no spiritual 'time machine' that takes us back to Gethsemane. Neither is our journey 'with Him' a mystical experience. Paul is clear that the New Covenant is a *koinonia*, or fellowship, that we join through baptism, communion and the Holy Spirit.

The circumcision of sons

We can make the obvious point that a child can only be circumcised after it has been born. Under the Old Covenant, a son was circumcised eight days after his birth.¹⁰ When we received the imperishable seed of the divine nature, we were born from above by the Father. We had been made alive from the death of

7 Col 2:11

8 Gen 17:11

9 Gen 17:14

10 Gen 17:12. Lev 12:3

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separation from God and were now new creation sons of God. As we have already noted, the process leading to our new birth did not deliver us from the propensity of carnality. Neither did it join us to the New Covenant. For this reason, we need to receive the circumcision of Christ.

Through the circumcision of Christ, the carnal propensities that bring us into bondage to sin are cut off from us. How does this happen? The sin of the whole world was laid upon Christ when He became sin for us. In this regard, He became the collective body of sin.¹¹ As Christ suffered in the flesh by the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God, this body of sin was being cut off from Him. We eat and drink of His body and blood that is made available to us in the fellowship of the communion meal, in faith for participation in these sufferings so that the body of sin is being cut away from our life.

Christ was being brought back from the death of sin by the Spirit of the Father and by the shedding of His own blood. When we are baptised into Christ, we are baptised into His death and joined to the fellowship of His sufferings. As we receive the portion of sufferings that He gives to us as a participation in His sufferings, the body of our sin which was laid upon Him is removed from us. Moreover, we are recipients of all the elements of His redemptive work in His mortal body. This includes the power of His resurrection, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and the sevenfold Spirit of God by the Holy Spirit.

Washing the garments of priests

When we are baptised into the death of Christ, we are also made adequate to serve as priests in the temple of His corporate body. The most fundamental requirement of service and participation in the house of God is to be clothed appropriately. Regarding priestly garments, Yahweh said to Moses, 'They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, *so that they do not incur guilt and die*. It shall be a statute *forever* to him and to his descendants after him.'¹² Although we are not sons and daughters of Aaron, we have been called to be a kingdom of priests.¹³ This is according to the order of Melchizedek. Like Aaron and his sons, we also must be clothed appropriately for participation in the priestly activities of Christ's house.

Priestly garments symbolise a person's mandate, or authority, for serving God. On this point, Isaiah eloquently stated the dilemma for every believer. 'For all of

11 2Co 5:21

12 Exo 28:43

13 Rev 1:6

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us have become like one who is unclean, and *all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment*.¹⁴ Our own righteous deeds are motivated by the other law within us. And while our aspirations for serving God may be admirable, they do not achieve the righteousness of God. They are filthy garments that need to be removed and replaced.

Through baptism we are able to put off the pursuit of our own righteousness, and put on the garment of Christ's priesthood. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, 'For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'.¹⁵ Being clothed with Christ has two implications for us. First, we are able to priest, or present, ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God.¹⁶ Second, we are brought into His corporate priesthood as a member of His body. We can see that the dimensions of 'with Him' and 'in Him' are fundamental to the work of priesthood.

Once we have been appropriately clothed for priesthood, we also need to be consecrated for service. In the Old Covenant, the Levitical priesthood was ordained for service in the temple by being washed with water, and having their garments sprinkled with blood and anointing oil.¹⁷ In the New Covenant we are joined to Christ's Melchizedek priesthood. Our sanctification for service is initiated through baptism, and maintained as we receive the washing of the water by the word; as we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ through our daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings; and as we are anointed and strengthened for service with the oil of the Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit.

The blood of Christ, in particular, cleanses our conscience from dead works so that we can serve God.¹⁸ Dead works are simply the works that are motivated by our other law. The blood cleanses our conscience so that we are motivated in a different way. We are delivered from the desire to reveal our own righteousness through our activities of service. The outcome of the blood in our lives is that our conscience will bear witness in the Holy Spirit.¹⁹ This means that our initiatives for service are consistent with the way in which the Holy Spirit is leading us. He is the Spirit of truth who leads us in the truth of who God named us to be in the body of Christ. Our initiatives will be consistent with His leading because they are motivated by the faith of the Son of God, rather than by the pursuit of our own righteousness through the expression of our sonship.

14 Isa 64:6

18 Heb 9:14

15 Gal 3:27

19 Rom 9:1

16 Rom 12:1

17 Lev 8:6,30

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No doubt, in the course of our lives, we will return to the flesh as a means of attaining to life. However, when the Holy Spirit brings this to our attention, we can repent and return to the fellowship of Christ in which the water, blood and Spirit can be effective in our lives. In this regard, Jude exhorted us to hate ‘the garment polluted by the flesh’.²⁰ Paul warned that if we actively pursue the flesh as the means of attaining the righteousness of God, our conscience would be seared and we would fall away from the faith.²¹

The responsibility to have our heart sprinkled in this way is *ours*. Paul said, ‘Since we have a great priest over the house of God, *let us draw near* with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.’²² We must draw near to where our great High Priest is ministering. His ministry commenced in the garden of Gethsemane.

The communion

Prior to the travail of Gethsemane, Jesus, our great High Priest, communed with His disciples, giving them the elements of the bread and wine of the New Covenant. The gospel of Luke records that ‘when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.” And in the same way He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood”.’²³ Paul explained that the elements of the communion are a point of participation in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Partaking of the elements of the New Covenant gives us access to the fellowship of Gethsemane.

As members of the body of Christ, we are joined by communion, on a daily basis, to Christ’s dying. This is our ongoing participation in Christ’s circumcision, which is His sufferings.²⁴ As we eat and drink of the communion elements each week, we are to have faith for participation in these sufferings. This is what Paul meant when he said, ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes.’²⁵ The communion elements do not specifically relate to our sonship. They are a fellowship and participation in the body of Christ.²⁶ As a member in particular of the body, a person’s work is to reveal Christ’s sonship.

20 Jud 1:23

24 1Co 10:16

21 1Ti 4:1-2

25 1Co 11:26

22 Heb 10:21-22

26 1Co 10:16-17

23 Luk 22:19-20

The garden of Gethsemane

The circumcision of Christ began in the garden of Gethsemane. It was here that the first blood began to flow from Christ's mortal body. After Jesus had become sin for us, 'An angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.'²⁷ To avail ourselves of this precious blood, we must join His prayer.

When Jesus invited His disciples to join the prayer meeting in Gethsemane, He personally took Peter, James and John, and asked them to pray with Him. In the lead-up to this event, each of these men had demonstrated notable fleshly attitudes. Peter had taken Jesus aside and rebuked Him for showing His disciples that He must suffer many things, be killed and raised on the third day.²⁸ James and John had asked Jesus to grant that they might sit at His right hand and His left hand in His kingdom. Jesus invited these men to join Him in the fellowship of His sufferings so that they could be delivered from their carnal attitudes and behaviours. This was to occur through their participation with Him in the fellowship of His death and sufferings. We are all invited to Christ's prayer meeting for this same purpose.

Jesus said to His disciples, 'Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'²⁹ The exhortation of Jesus applies to us all. Prayer with Christ by the capacity of the Spirit is fundamental to our Christian pilgrimage. This is how we are delivered from the temptation to take hold of the law through the flesh as a means of fulfilling the righteousness of God. We can receive the strength of the Spirit of God by the Holy Spirit to endure with Christ in prayer, and to continue in the pathway of salvation so that this carnal propensity is completely removed from our lives.

The Holy Spirit

We are joined to Christ's intercessory prayer in Gethsemane by the capacity of the Holy Spirit. Paul explained that 'the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered. Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God.'³⁰ The Holy Spirit gives us the *same capacity* to pray, that Jesus received in the garden of Gethsemane when

27 Luk 22:43-44

28 Mat 16:21-23

29 Mat 26:41

30 Rom 8:26-27

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an angel strengthened Him with the sevenfold Spirit of God from the Holy Spirit. The groanings that we experience as we pray in the Spirit are the same groanings that Christ had as He made intercession for us.³¹

If a Christian wants to overcome sin, they should go to prayer and fasting. Joining the intercession of Christ with prayer and fasting shows our preparedness to join the circumcision of Christ. The garden of Gethsemane is where He prayed for us and grieved for our sins. As we endure with Christ in prayer, the Holy Spirit helps us to understand our sanctification. This is the work He has called us to by name. We remember, for example, the account of the church in Antioch. ‘While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.”’³²

In prayer, the Holy Spirit also shows us where we have not remained sanctified to our participation in the life of the body. We begin to grieve because of the impact of our sin on ourselves and others, and the reality that Christ was under judgement for the sin that we committed. Our grief is the evidence of the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We are enabled to endure with Christ in the process which He has invited us to join, through which our sinful propensities are able to be put off.

Availing ourselves of the blood of Jesus

Joined to the fellowship of Christ’s circumcision, we have access to the blood of Christ. As we noted earlier, His blood sprinkles our hearts from an evil conscience so that we can join Christ in His priesthood and offering.³³ However, in this fellowship, the life of Christ that is in His blood is given to us as our life. This is the principle of atonement.

Many people may have previously thought of atonement as the shedding of blood for the forgiveness of sins, on behalf of another person. While this is true, it is only part of the process of atonement. As we noted in the previous section, the principle of atonement is that the life of Christ was *given to us* as our life when it was poured out on the altar of His body from Gethsemane to the cross. As we are joined to the fellowship of the cross, we receive His life as our life. There is now a change in how we live. We no longer live by the power of our own life, which is in our blood. Instead, we live by the life of Jesus that was in His blood, and is given to us as we join the fellowship of His circumcision.

31 Luk 22:44.
Heb 5:7

32 Act 13:2

33 Heb 9:14.
Heb 10:22

Highlighting this point, we recall that Paul made a distinction between the blood that was shed on our behalf for our reconciliation, and blood that saves us. He wrote, 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.'³⁴ It saves us because it is *eternal life*. This is what Jesus said. 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *has eternal life*, and I will *raise him up on the last day*.'³⁵

Hidden with Christ in God

Explaining the implications of dying with Christ, Paul said, 'For you have died and *your life is hidden with Christ in God*. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.'³⁶ Our life that is hidden with Christ in God the Father is the life of *our sonship*. The apostle John explained that 'no-one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God *who is in the bosom of the Father*, He has explained Him'.³⁷ The bosom of the Father is where our life is hidden with Christ.

The secret place

The bosom of the Father is also called 'the secret place'. Jesus taught His disciples to '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'.³⁸ Likewise, concerning fasting, Jesus said, 'When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.'³⁹ Jesus was teaching His disciples what it means to be hidden with Christ in God the Father.

As we consider this theme in the Scriptures, it becomes readily apparent that Jesus was not speaking, primarily, about a quiet room for praying, that no-one else knows about. The secret place is where we *dwell as sons of God*. For example, King David declared, 'He who *dwells in the secret place* of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty.'⁴⁰ The secret place is where our life is hidden. That is why it is secret.

Paul explained that once we have received the gospel of our salvation and come into Christ, we are *sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise*.⁴¹ To be 'sealed' means that we are 'kept secret'. Later in his letter to the Christians in Ephesus, Paul wrote, 'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed [kept] for the day

34 Rom 5:10

38 Mat 6:6

35 Joh 6:54

39 Mat 6:17-18

36 Col 3:3-4

40 Psa 91:1

37 Joh 1:18

41 Eph 1:13

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of redemption'.⁴² This highlights the reality that our sonship is to be kept secret in God until the day of redemption, when we receive our resurrection body.⁴³ The Holy Spirit helps us to remain hidden so that we can obtain our full inheritance in the age to come. We grieve Him by seeking to reveal our own sonship, rather than remaining hidden with Christ in God.

When we pray in the secret place, we are to pray that the will of God is done. That is what Jesus taught us. He said, 'Pray, then, in this way: "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven".'⁴⁴ Jesus received the only body in which the will of God could be done on earth and in heaven. He was teaching us to *pray to be a part of the body of Christ*. This is where the will of God is being done. To pray and fast in the secret place is to ask for our personal sonship to remain hidden in the bosom of the Father so that the works that we do, reveal the sonship of Christ. Through prayer and fasting, our sonship is being laid down.

Christ is the sum of all sonship. He is the source and full expression of our sonship. Our works as sons of God were finished in Him before the world began.⁴⁵ When Christ is doing the will of God, which are the works prepared for us before the foundation of the world, we are doing them through fellowship with Him. In other words, the will of God that is being done by a member of the body of Christ is resulting in the fulfilment of that person's predestined sonship. As a functioning member of the body of Christ, then, we are not trying to manifest our own sonship through our actions. Rather, we are revealing the righteousness of God in Christ. It is His righteousness that is being seen.

Rewarded openly

The opportunity and capacity to demonstrate the righteousness of God in Christ as His slaves is the *reward* of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. In this regard, we are revealed as a member of Christ's body, which is the full expression of sonship. Slavehood, or body membership, is the expression of a portion of His sonship. To be 'rewarded openly' is the fruit of dying and being raised with Christ so that we are hidden with Christ in God. Paul made it clear that when Christ, who is our life, appears, then we will appear in glory.⁴⁶

The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, summarised the effect of praying and fasting in secret. This is the fast that the Lord Himself has chosen for us.⁴⁷ Having been

42 Eph 4:30

46 Col 3:4

43 Rom 8:23

47 Isa 58:6

44 Mat 6:9-10

45 Heb 4:3

delivered of our other law, and our fleshly motivation to reveal our own sonship life, we are able to be joined in fellowship with God, and made effective ministers of His life in the places where we live.

For example, the Lord said, ‘Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry, and He will say, “Here I am”. If you remove the yoke [of law] from your midst, the pointing of the finger [based on our assessments of one another] and speaking wickedness, and if you give yourself to the hungry and satisfy the desire of the afflicted, then your light [of life] will rise in darkness and your gloom will become like midday. And the Lord will continually guide you, and satisfy your desire in scorched places, and give strength to your bones; and you will be like a watered garden, and like a spring of water whose waters do not fail. Those from among you will rebuild the ancient ruins; you will raise up the age-old foundations; and you will be called the repairer of the breach, the restorer of the streets in which to dwell.’⁴⁸

In summary, once we have been co-crucified with Christ through baptism, our testimony should be that ‘it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God’.⁴⁹ To be co-crucified with Christ means that we have joined Christ’s offering, and laid down the expression of our individual sonship life, so that our priority is to reveal His life as a member of His body. This makes us slaves of His righteousness.

‘In Him’ as members of His body

When Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He was made Head of the church and received the name above every name.⁵⁰ This is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ, all three Persons of the Godhead are involved in making us members of the body of Christ. By one Spirit we were all baptised into one body of Christ, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit. Having been baptised by one Spirit into Christ, each one of us was placed in the body by God the Father, as He desired. Paul likened this to being made a foot or a hand or an eye, of Christ’s body.⁵¹

It is the Father who sanctifies us to a particular work on earth as a particular member of Christ’s body.⁵² Notably, this work is according to whom the Father named us to be as His son. However, we do not do the works of our name for the purpose of finding our life as a son of God. Our sonship has been entrusted to

48 Isa 58:9-12

52 1Co 12:18

49 Gal 2:20

50 Php 2:9

51 1Co 12:14-18

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the Father. The works that we do as members of Christ's body are the works that the Father gave Him to accomplish. By faith, we now manifest His sonship by the capacity of His life that has been given to us.

We are connected to Christ the Head as the flesh and bones, joints and ligaments, of His body.⁵³ In this sense, it is a corporate, physical body that is composed of sons of God in local church congregations, who are joined by the bonds of God's love. This is important to note. The body of Christ is not a mystical entity that we are a part of merely because we have been born again or baptised into a denominational tradition. Our membership of the body of Christ is evident because of our tangible connection with, and ministry to, other sons of God in a communicable area. It is also evident as we teach and admonish our children, and encourage them to participate with us as sons of God in this reality.

Joined in one Spirit

It is the Person of the Holy Spirit who joins us to the body of Christ and gives us the capacity for fellowship and worship. This is the life that we receive when we are baptised with the Holy Spirit. It is the capacity to be 'one Spirit' with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with one another in the body of Christ. Paul was very clear on this point. He said, 'The one who joins himself to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him.'⁵⁴ He also explained that '*by one Spirit* we were all baptised into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of *one Spirit*'.⁵⁵

To understand the life that the Holy Spirit gives to us, it is helpful to consider the distinction between *worship* and *fellowship*. To worship something means that we give it worth. We recognise its value to us. Clearly this capacity is not unique to Christians. People in the world worship all kinds of things. These objects of worship include, for example, notable people in society, valued possessions, key landmarks, and even the creation itself. A person is able to give worth to these things without knowing them or being known by them.

Notably, a person can worship God in the same way. They can study His attributes and rejoice in the outcome of His wondrous works. However, the more they learn *about* Him and His mighty power, the more aware they become of the gap between the spiritual Creator and the fleshly creature. As a consequence of knowing more

53 Col 2:18-19

54 1Co 6:17

55 1Co 12:13

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about God, He seems further away from us, and relationship with Him seems all the more inconceivable. The fact is that the flesh cannot know God.⁵⁶

However, Paul said, 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God.'⁵⁷ The Holy Spirit makes us spiritual so that we can be joined in one spirit with Yahweh and our brethren in the body of Christ. This capacity does not come from the Father or the Son. It is particular to the Holy Spirit.⁵⁸

Because we have received the Holy Spirit and the capacity for fellowship, we are able to worship God 'in spirit and truth', rather than from afar.⁵⁹ This is because the Holy Spirit is 'the Spirit of truth'.⁶⁰ The 'truth', here, is speaking about the name of every person that was written in the Lamb's book of life before the beginning of time. The Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to know our name and to recognise and appreciate the name of another. This is what true worship is. It is the appreciation and worth that we give and receive in fellowship with the Lord and one another.

The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts.⁶¹ Furthermore, He sanctifies each of us to our name so that we are able to be who God made us to be, in Christ. This is 'the sanctifying work of the Spirit'.⁶² Within these lines of sanctification, our works as a particular member of the body of Christ are the expression of the love of God. This is what the apostle John meant when he wrote, 'Little children, let us not love with word or tongue, *but in deed and truth*.'⁶³ John was saying that the love and life of God is expressed through the unique and sanctified name of each person. These works are the proper working of each individual part of the body of Christ, and cause 'the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love'.⁶⁴ The miracle of this fellowship is that we are able to be completely *one*, even though each person is unique in their expression of God's life.

Once we have been baptised by one Spirit into the body of Christ, it is our responsibility to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.⁶⁵ We do this by keeping our minds set on the things of the Spirit. As Paul explained, 'The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace'.⁶⁶ However, we do violence to the unity of the Spirit when we set our minds on the things of the flesh. This means returning to the flesh as the basis for our Christian lives. The deeds of the flesh are evidently contrary to the unity of the Spirit. In addition to obvious corruptions, they include behaviours such as disputes, dissensions, factions, and envy, that promote division. If we practise these things, we will not inherit the kingdom of God.⁶⁷

56 1Co 2:11

60 Joh 16:13

64 Eph 4:16

57 1Co 2:12

61 Rom 5:5

65 Eph 4:3

58 2Co 13:14

62 1Pe 1:2

66 Rom 8:6

59 Joh 4:24

63 1Jn 3:18

67 Gal 5:19-21

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In contrast, a person who has received the Holy Spirit and is walking according to the Spirit, has a different motivation. These ones endeavour to put off the flesh as a mode of living and receive the capacity of the Spirit to be of one mind and one spirit together. In this regard, their initiative and demeanour is toward being united in spirit, and intent on seeing the purposes of God being fulfilled through the effective ministry of each member of the body. Paul summarised this fellowship of the Spirit, saying, 'Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose.'⁶⁸

The third aspect of the life we receive through the Holy Spirit is the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God. This power enables us to be active members of the body of Christ. Furthermore, we are able to present ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God. We recall that Jesus, our Great High Priest, offered Himself through Eternal Spirit.⁶⁹ Likewise, our priestly service is only possible by the capacity of the Spirit of God that we receive by the Holy Spirit. It enables us to journey with Christ on the pathway of His offering and sufferings.

Our Christian pilgrimage

As members of the body of Christ, our sonship is in heaven with Christ, but our physical bodies are on the earth. Christ has prepared a place for us in heaven with Him.⁷⁰ Having received Christ's life as ours, the life we live as a son of God on earth is fulfilling His purposes, revealing His life, and by this means, expressing His sonship. Consequently, the initiative for our sojourn in this life is no longer ours. Rather, we are being led by the Spirit as sons of God.⁷¹

As sons of God who are members of the body of Christ and slaves of His righteousness, our physical bodies are called a 'tent' in which we live and sojourn in a pilgrimage on earth.⁷² Our 'tent' is a temporary dwelling that represents our mortal existence as we journey in the way of sanctification, and reveal Christ's life on earth. Like Abraham, Isaac and Jacob did, we move our tent from place to place and possess the promises of God, which is our eternal inheritance as His sons. The kingdom of heaven is the 'promised land' of Christ's sonship that we are possessing.

68 Php 2:1-2

72 2Co 5:1

69 Heb 9:14

70 Joh 14:2

71 Rom 8:14

The fellowship of the body of Christ

In the same manner in which the patriarchs walked throughout the land of Canaan to possess it, we progressively possess 'this place and that' as we walk throughout the kingdom.⁷³ This is the kingdom of the Son. For example, Paul wrote, 'He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love'.⁷⁴ We also note that we are to be fellow partakers 'in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus'.⁷⁵ As we journey throughout the kingdom of the Son, we learn the lessons of sanctification that each place brings. These are seasons or experiences of life where the Lord specifically meets us for the purpose of bringing us to a further point of maturity as a son of God. They are invariably points of crisis in our lives through which we are coming to know God in a deeper and more personal way.

This is how we come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and thereby make our calling and election as sons of God, sure.⁷⁶ As we learn the lessons of faith, calling and election, the 'promised land' of our eternal inheritance becomes our possession, by sanctification. We demonstrate that we are possessing the kingdom because we are bearing the fruit of righteousness and attaining to eternal life. We are becoming the certain firstfruit son of God that the Father predestined us to be.⁷⁷

A person who is bringing forth fruit from God's life is evidently a person who has received the Spirit, and who sets their mind on the things of the Spirit.⁷⁸ 'For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan [by the capacity of the Spirit], being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed but to be clothed [with a heavenly dwelling] so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by life. Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us *the Spirit as a pledge*.'⁷⁹

73 Gen 13:17

77 Jas 1:18

74 Col 1:13

78 Rom 8:6

75 Rev 1:9

79 2Co 5:4-5

76 Mat 22:31-32.
2Pe 1:10-11

SECTION 5

The chastening and discipline of the Lord

Many preachers enthusiastically proclaim the wonderful message of God's mercy to those who are afar off from Him because of sin. They invite hearers to receive the good news of salvation and to enter the kingdom of heaven. Hearers are promised a life that is rich in blessing. Indeed, as we have been considering, the gospel is a marvellous invitation with a promise of eternal life.

However, to fully appreciate the mercy of God, and to know the assurance of eternal life, we must properly understand the *judgement of God*. Unless we recognise God's judgement upon the whole world, including ourselves, we will not understand the mercy of God nor embrace the process that God has established to make us complete in Him.

The judgement of God

The psalmist wrote, 'Let the heavens be glad, and let the earth rejoice ... for *He is coming to judge the earth*'.¹ The reason that many Christians do not truly fear God is because they do not understand that *God is their Judge*. Neither do they consider that they are being judged with all the other peoples of the earth. Instead, they believe that because of Jesus' death on the cross, the penalty for their sin has been paid for, and they are no longer under the judgement of God.

Those who think this way forget that Jesus, our great Redeemer, is also our Judge. For example, Jude reminded his readers that 'the Lord [Jesus], after saving a people out of the land of Egypt, subsequently destroyed those who did not believe'.² The deliverance of Israel from their slavery in Egypt is a picture of our reconciliation to God through the shedding of the blood of the Lamb on the cross. Concerning His covenant people, the Lord declared, 'For forty years I loathed that generation, and said they are a people who err in their heart, and they do not know My ways. Therefore I swore in My anger, truly they shall not enter into My rest.'³ The thought that Jesus would give deliverance to His people and then loathe and slaughter them in the wilderness because of their unbelief and disobedience, is confronting. We can take heart, however, that two men of that generation – Joshua and Caleb – did enter the promised land because they believed and obeyed the word of the Lord.⁴

Every Christian must come to the realisation that God executes judgement on those who do not keep His word or fulfil His law. This was even the experience of Moses, Aaron and Samuel. Through their fleshly attitudes and actions, they defaulted in relation to their participation in kingship and priesthood. On account of transgressing the law, they experienced the *vengeance of God*.⁵ Although these three men were forgiven by God, we note that Moses and Aaron failed to enter the promised land, while Samuel's authority to judge Israel was removed from him and his family. This is how God dealt with His friends who failed to keep His word!

The dilemma for us all is that no person is able to fulfil the law of God in their flesh. As Paul reminded us, 'By the works of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight'.⁶ Of course, through the offering of Christ, we have been delivered from our slavery to sin and death. However, as Paul also explained, if we return to living by the law through the efforts of our flesh, we rebuild what we had previously

1 Psa 96:11-13

5 Psa 99:6-8

2 Jud 1:5

6 Rom 3:20

3 Psa 95:10-11

4 Num 14:6-9.

Num 32:11-12

destroyed when, through baptism, we joined the fellowship of Christ's offering.⁷ As a consequence, we prove ourselves to be transgressors, and again come under the judgement and condemnation of the law.

If, as Christians, we attempt to keep the law in order to achieve the righteousness of God, then we become like the Galatian Christians. Paul described them as 'foolish' and 'bewitched'.⁸ He asked them, 'Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?'⁹ The answer, of course, is that 'by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin'.¹⁰

God's judgement relates to what He will not tolerate in His house. These things must be repented of and cut off. The jealousy of God will ensure that His judgement will exclude us if we do not change.¹¹ We can understand why the psalmist wrote, 'The Lord reigns, *let the peoples tremble*'.¹² This is because the Lord looks favourably upon those who are humble and contrite of spirit, and who tremble at His word.¹³

The cup of judgement

The theme of God's judgement in the Scriptures leads us directly to Christ's travail in the garden of Gethsemane. Here, Christ received a cup from the Father, that He was to drink on behalf of us all.¹⁴ This was the *cup of God's wrath and judgement* upon the sin of the whole world.¹⁵ Christ had been numbered with us, the transgressors. He had become sin for us and suffered the full wrath of God's judgement of the sin of the whole world. This is a most important and marvellous truth. And we can understand why, as Christians, we might arrive at the conclusion that we are no longer under God's judgement.

However, we must remember that Christ now gives this *same cup* to drink *with Him* as a participation in the fellowship of His sufferings. Jesus specifically connected *our* baptism, and *our* drinking of this cup at communion, to *His* death on the cross. He asked His disciples, James and John, 'Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised?'¹⁶ He then said to them, '*The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptised with the baptism with which I am baptised.*'¹⁷

If the cup that Christ gives us to drink is the cup of God's wrath, why did Paul call it 'the cup of blessing'?¹⁸ In reference to this cup, Paul explained that it was a sharing, or participation, in the blood of Christ.¹⁹ To share in this blood, we must

7 Gal 2:18	11 Nah 1:2-3	15 Isa 51:17. Jer 25:15	19 1Co 10:16
8 Gal 3:1	12 Psa 99:1	16 Mar 10:38	
9 Gal 3:3	13 Isa 66:2	17 Mar 10:39	
10 Rom 3:20	14 Mat 26:39	18 1Co 10:16	

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join Christ where His blood was shed. The bread and the wine of the communion joins us to the fellowship of His sufferings. His blood was shed for us as He suffered under the wrath of God. In fellowship with Him, we are joined to a process through which our carnal propensity to sin is removed, and we are enabled to live in a new way that is pleasing to God. This is why it is a blessing. Through this process, we receive His life and we will be raised up with an immortal body on the last day.²⁰

The fellowship of His sufferings

The pain and suffering that people in the world experience is the consequence of the sin of mankind. Moreover, it is a foretaste of God's final judgement on the world because of sin and wickedness. Even now, 'the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness'.²¹

Although the gospel of Jesus Christ delivers us from the world and its condemnation, Christians will still experience suffering. However, the sufferings of a Christian are not the indication of eternal separation from God. Rather, they are 'producing for us an eternal weight of glory far beyond all comparison'.²² For our sufferings to produce this fruit, it is important to recognise that not all suffering as a disciple of Christ is the same. It is necessary to understand these differences so that we are able to respond appropriately to the Lord in the seasons of our suffering. In this regard, we can identify three kinds of suffering:

1. chastening
2. discipline
3. experience

Chastening

Baptism into Christ joins us to the death and suffering of judgement that Christ experienced on our behalf from Gethsemane to Calvary. *This judgement becomes a chastening upon us* so that we are delivered from the condemnation of eternal fire that the old creation is under because of sin and wickedness. As Paul summarised, 'When we are judged [with Christ], we are *chastened* by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world'.²³ Elsewhere, Paul explained that these sufferings are 'a plain indication of God's righteous judgment so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God'.²⁴

20 Joh 6:53-54

24 2Th 1:5

21 Rom 1:18

22 2Co 4:17

23 1Co 11:32

Through the sufferings of chastisement, God removes something from us that is causing us harm. As we considered earlier, this is through the process of circumcision. The sufferings that we experience in our lives after we join the circumcision of Christ are no longer for the purpose of destroying us as part of an old creation that God loathes. They are a chastening upon us, demonstrating God's love for us. Concerning this chastening, we remember the Scripture that says, 'For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives'.²⁵ God loves those who have been born of His life, but He hates our sin. For this reason, He deals with our sin through chastisement so that we might be brought to glory as a son of God.

It is important to recognise that we come under the judgement and chastening hand of God because of the contrary attitudes and actions that are sourced from the other law within us. Unless we repent and find deliverance from these fallen propensities, *we will remain under God's judgement and chastening*. In these seasons of life, we need to receive illumination from the Holy Spirit regarding our circumstances, so that we are able to judge ourselves rightly in relation to our sin.²⁶ When we receive clarity and find repentance, the chastening of God's judgement upon us becomes His *discipline*.

Watching and praying with Christ

As we considered in the previous section, Christ invites all His disciples to watch and pray with Him in the prayer meeting of Gethsemane. We are to watch and pray so that we can be delivered from the temptation to live according to the principles of the flesh. The Holy Spirit helps us in this regard. He makes intercession for us, because we do not know how to pray as we ought. As we pray in the Spirit, we receive understanding regarding our participation in the expression of Christ's life as a member of His body. We also receive illumination regarding where we have not remained sanctified to our name as servants of Christ. This is sin in our lives that the Lord is wanting to deal with, and for which we may be experiencing His chastening hand. As we accept this truth, we will begin to grieve for the impact of our sin on others. This is the evidence of the conviction of the Holy Spirit. It is godly sorrow that leads to mourning and repentance for our sin.²⁷

It is helpful to understand that every communion service is part of Christ's prayer meeting in Gethsemane. In fact, the elements of the communion are both our access to the prayer meeting *and* our participation in the prayer meeting. Paul

25 Heb 12:6

26 1Co 11:29-32

27 2Co 7:9-11

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specifically instructed us to tarry for one another when we come to eat and drink at the communion table.²⁸ To tarry means ‘to wait for’, ‘expecting to receive’, ‘about to receive from any quarter’. It is also translated ‘confident, steadfast expectancy’. This expectant waiting on the Spirit is the basis of our participation in body ministry. Tarrying joins us to the intercession and travail of Christ, where we pray for ourselves and for others. As we tarry together, the Holy Spirit begins to minister through the members of Christ’s body. The involvement of every member of the body is the sound of many waters, as the river of life flows from every heart. This is the voice of the Spirit in the midst of the body, giving illumination and understanding to every person who will receive it.

Living by the flesh

Through body ministry we can receive a word of knowledge from the Holy Spirit that gives us clarity concerning our sin, so that we are able to rightly judge ourselves.²⁹ Unless we receive illumination from the Spirit, we will judge ourselves according to the flesh. When we do this, we become a law unto ourselves, and accuse or excuse ourselves and others according to our own law.³⁰ Christ died for the very purpose of delivering us from this unworthy manner of living. Paul said that ‘whoever eats the bread or drinks the cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner, shall be guilty of the body and the blood of the Lord. But a man must examine himself, and in so doing he is to eat of the bread and drink of the cup.’³¹

Eating and drinking the elements of the communion brings every person under God’s judgement with Christ. Paul explained that a person who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner, eats and drinks judgement to Himself. The effect of this judgement is that we become weak and sick, and may even die before our time.³² These weaknesses may include anxiety and depression, and we may even begin to grow weary of our fellowship with others in the body of Christ. This suffering and turmoil does not produce the righteousness of God. Nor does it demonstrate the spiritual quality of *virtue*. Nevertheless, if a person in this situation continues to partake of the communion, they will find forgiveness and will not be condemned with the world. In summary, the chastening of judgement will grant them entry into heaven; however, their lives will be miserable. God Himself is causing their trouble.

28 1Co 11:33

32 1Co 11:29-30

29 1Co 11:31

30 Rom 2:14-15

31 1Co 11:27-28

Asleep from sorrow

During His travail in the garden of Gethsemane, Christ came to the disciples and found them *sleeping from sorrow*.³³ This is an apt description of a fleshly Christian who has come under God's judgement, with Christ, by partaking of the communion. We note that Jesus said to the disciples, 'Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak.'³⁴ It was the weakness of their flesh that left them sorrowful and fatigued with Christ. In contrast, a Christian who has pressed in to watch and pray with Christ is being delivered from living according to the principle of another law within their flesh. Their sufferings are producing the peaceable fruits of righteousness.

Those who are weary in the way because they are continuing to live by the principles of another law in their flesh, can take instruction from Paul. He said, 'Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret. But all things become visible when they are exposed by the light, for everything that becomes visible is light. For this reason, it says, "Awake, sleeper, and arise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you".'³⁵

Walking in the light

The good news is that we can be delivered from this weak and wretched condition. We can judge ourselves rightly. This begins as we humble ourselves and come ready to receive what the Spirit is saying to us in the midst of the body of Christ. As we receive this illumination, we are able to walk in the light of this word, and we begin to be purified from our self-centred, fleshly ways. The apostle John wrote, 'If we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin'.³⁶

Walking in the light means living in a transparent way. We are open with one another about our lives, and are committed to preserving the unity of the Spirit within the local church congregations of which we are a part.³⁷ We are able to receive illumination from God's word as it is ministered by the members of the body of Christ, under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The word gives us clarity on how we are to live and minister the life of God in all the contexts of our life. God's word also illuminates us concerning areas of darkness in our life of which we may be ignorant. By this means, the light of the word is dispelling the darkness in our

33 Luk 22:45

37 Eph 4:3

34 Mat 26:41

35 Eph 5:11-14

36 1Jn 1:7

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lives. Having received illumination, we are able to repent, and give ourselves to the process that God joins us to so that His blood is able to cleanse us from sin.

Even after we have received sight concerning our sin, we will experience seasons of chastening under the hand of God. This is because sin and its motivations are still within us. 'If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us.'³⁸ Furthermore, 'If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar and His word is not in us'.³⁹ The other law is present wherever there is sin, and we will need to fellowship in the circumcision of Christ to remove it from our lives.

The discipline of God

The sufferings that we experience as part of the discipline of God are not the same as the suffering of chastisement on account of judgement. The discipline of God is the process through which we are being *formed* into the son of God that He predestined us to be.⁴⁰ A person who has joined the sufferings of Christ in faith to receive the discipline of the Father is a person who is entrusting their soul to a faithful Creator.⁴¹ Our sufferings are now a trial that is producing in us faith that is more precious than gold.⁴² The gold, here, is speaking about the divine nature within us. After we have suffered a while, the Father, who called us to eternal glory in Christ, perfects, confirms, strengthens and establishes us.⁴³

Through these seasons of discipline, we are able to demonstrate the patience of the saints, which is *virtue*. Christian virtue is the demonstration of patience, kindness, and first love *in the midst of suffering*. It is devoid of self-justification, and judgement of others. When our sufferings are the discipline of the Lord, we are able to be properly and peacefully connected to the body of Christ in the local areas in which we live. Our own righteousness, with its other law, is no longer agitating us and motivating us to be the judge of others.

It is evident that a person's sufferings have moved from chastisement to discipline when they rejoice in the knowledge that they have been counted worthy to suffer with Christ. In this regard, they are able to bear witness to the apostle Peter's encouragement, 'To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, keep on rejoicing, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation'.⁴⁴ As fellow members of the body of Christ, we can rejoice with those

38 1Jn 1:8

39 1Jn 1:10

40 Heb 12:7

41 1Pe 4:19

42 1Pe 1:6-7

43 1Pe 5:10

44 1Pe 4:13

who are being disciplined by the Lord, because we are able to bear witness to the precious treasure of their sonship being formed within them.

Experience

The sufferings that are part of our daily experience as Christian pilgrims on the earth are equipping us for priesthood as sons of God. In this sense, they are formative. These were the only sufferings that Christ needed. Although He was already a son, He learned obedience through the things which He suffered.⁴⁵

Formative sufferings that are part of our Christian experience have many expressions. For example, they can be the result of immaturity and ignorance; part of coping with injustice; experiencing the difficulties of living in a fallen world; learning the ‘no’ of life; or dealing with disappointments when our carnal dreams and expectations are not realised.

When we submit to Christ’s discipline, we find peace. We accept the limitations that He places upon us as sons of God, as His *yoke* upon us.⁴⁶ Because we have committed our way to Him, He is directing our path. This is our faith. We have been delivered from the principle of time and chance that the world has been under since the time of the fall.⁴⁷ Instead, we know that everything that happens to us is from God’s hand. ‘God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose.’⁴⁸

The experience and testimony of Paul

Paul encouraged us to join in following his example.⁴⁹ He had suffered the loss of all things so that he might gain Christ, and be found in Him, not having a righteousness of His own that was based on the law, but which was through faith in Christ. We well know Paul’s desire to ‘know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead’.⁵⁰

It appears that Paul had an extended fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. He testified that a messenger of Satan had been given to him as a thorn in the flesh to keep him from exalting himself on account of the greatness of the revelation he had received.⁵¹ Paul was acknowledging that he had a propensity for pride. This was the particular expression of the ‘other law’ in his members. Paul had been

45 Heb 5:8-9

49 Php 3:17

46 Mat 11:29-30

50 Php 3:8-11

47 Ecc 9:11

51 2Co 12:7

48 Rom 8:28

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delivered over to the torment of Satan so that he would not be lifted up in pride, thereby forfeiting the great salvation that he had received. On account of pride, he would have been cast away from the fellowship of Yahweh.

In the first instance, as we noted, this was for his own sake, so that he would not be lifted up in pride on account of the abundant revelation that he had received.

Second, his sufferings were for the sake of the body of Christ and its expansion among the Gentiles. He testified, 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions.'⁵² Those sufferings were for Christ's name's sake.⁵³ For those, he would receive great reward.

In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Paul also learned and received the capacity of grace to priest the offering of his own life.⁵⁴ This was the capacity of grace that was demonstrated through him. The Lord said to him, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness.'⁵⁵ With this understanding, Paul was able to be 'content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake'.⁵⁶ Evidently, Paul's suffering was not causing him to grow weary in his faith. Instead, he was able to demonstrate virtue, and bring forth the fruit of God's righteousness through Jesus Christ.

Covenant houses experience chastening and discipline

Chastening and discipline will be the experience of every covenant household. This is because they have received the New Covenant and the blessing of Abraham.⁵⁷ As we have been learning, the circumcision of Christ is the sign and condition of the New Covenant, and is the means by which the divine nature within our houses can be fostered to fruitfulness.

Children who are born into covenant houses need to experience the circumcision of Christ in order to grow and be established as fruitful sons of God. On account of the faith of their parents, they are already part of Christ's body. The child's first experience of the circumcision of Christ is the chastening hand of their believing parent. However, as they grow and mature, they need to meet and know, for themselves, Him who is true. Drawing from the teaching of Jesus, the apostle John said that this was eternal life.⁵⁸ In other words, the child born into a covenant house needs to move from birth, to knowing God, to having eternal life.

52 Col 1:24

56 2Co 12:10

53 Act 9:16

57 Act 3:25

54 Rom 12:1

58 Joh 17:3. 1Jn 5:20

55 2Co 12:9

The chastening and discipline of the Lord

Eldership within the church can help to foster the divine nature from house to house by encouraging households to understand their sufferings in relation to chastening, discipline and experience. However, it is not the role of elders to micro-manage this culture in houses or to make judgements about the reasons for people's suffering. Rather, they can help Christian households to seek God themselves in relation to their sufferings, so that it is producing for them an eternal weight of glory that is far beyond all comparison.⁵⁹

59 2Co 4:17

