

Bringing down strongholds

After the angel came to Mary, she made a number of statements concerning the coming Messiah. To her cousin Elizabeth she said, 'For the Mighty One has done great things for me; and holy is His name. And His mercy is upon generation after generation toward those who fear Him. He has done mighty deeds with His arm; He has scattered those who were proud in the thoughts of their heart. He has brought down rulers from their thrones, and has exalted those who were humble.'

We know that the Lord brings down the thrones of the proud to show us that we are not adequate in ourselves. It is only in humility that we receive His adequacy. The oil of His word and Spirit is available to us because apostles and prophets have humbled themselves and are willing to be crushed like the olive. Concerning the two olives on either side of the lampstand in his vision, the prophet Zechariah proclaimed, "Not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit", says the Lord of Hosts'. This is how mountains will be removed!

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul wrote, 'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds'. Strongholds are broken down when apostles and prophets are humbled and become as the least. Through affliction, they are crushed to produce the oil which they pour out for us.

As we are found in humility, under His hand, then the works of Satan will be cast down. He will not be cast down when we are exalted. Jesus came as the Olive, and He was crushed as the Olive of the Covenant in the garden of Gethsemane. He modelled humility for us because God has regard for the humble.

References:

Jas 4:6
2Co 10:4
1Pe 5:5
Isa 53:10

Zec 4:6
Psa 138:6
2Co 3:5-6
2Co 4:8

Further Study

Luk 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 29

Humbled under His hands

The apostles, James and Peter, instructed their readers to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God. Peter wrote, 'Therefore humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time'. We might ask: where do we find His hand today? Peter is not making a mystical reference to the Lord's authority. When we submit to apostles and prophets, we are actually humbling ourselves under the Lord's mighty hand. The psalmist declared, 'Your right hand upholds me and Your humility makes me great'. Affliction produces humility in the apostle and prophet, and their gentle hands make us great. When those hands are laid upon us to impart gifts and to ordain elders, we are exalted because we are raised to our unique place in the body of Christ.

The psalmist said, 'For though the Lord is exalted, yet He regards the humble, but the haughty He knows from afar'. He gives heed to His slave. The Lord is able to trust those who have gone down to a lowly place where they can receive what is laid down to them. Jesus said, 'Man shall not live on bread alone but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God'. Affliction softens our stiff-necks and hard hearts so we can receive His proceeding word. Peter declared that the Lord will raise us up after we have 'suffered a little while'. The God of all grace will 'perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you'.

References:

Jas 4:10
Psa 18:35
Tit 1:5
Mat 4:4

1Pe 5:6, 10
Rom 1:11
Psa 138:6

Further Study

2Co 12

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30

Humility and slavehood

Paul introduced most of his letters with the words, 'I, Paul, a slave of Jesus Christ, an apostle by the will of God'. Because he knew he was a slave, he was evidently comfortable with his apostleship. Paul exercised his authority in the humility of Christ as a slave. Likewise, we cannot walk in humility unless we firstly know who we are as a slave of Christ.

Paul had poured himself out to the point of being completely empty. He was no longer concerned with his own needs. The apostle wrote to the Corinthians urging them with 'the humility and gentleness of Christ'. Although Paul communicated with boldness in his letters, he was meek (or humble) when he spoke to them face to face. As a slave of Christ, he constantly humbled himself. Paul imitated Jesus who, being reviled, did not revile in return and, 'while suffering, He uttered no threats, but kept entrusting Himself to Him who judges righteously'. Slaves of Christ must suffer unjustly rather than defend their ground. Jesus explained that a slave never expects to be served and waited on. After working all day in the field, he gladly looks after his master at night. When his duties are complete, he still says, 'I am an unworthy slave'. This is how every slave of Christ should conduct themselves.

We know that the Father has created a unique diversity of sonship expression among all His children. Yet He has determined that each identity will be revealed through humility. Every son must firstly be His slave. And more than this, Jesus taught that we should not concern ourselves with the slavehood of others. When asked about the fate of a certain disciple, He replied, 'What is it to you if he should remain till I come?' We are all slaves but we are not all equal. Some slaves have been given greater authority. Paul wrote that God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets and third teachers. Those with ministry grace authority will need to call others to submit to Christ even as they themselves have submitted under His mighty hand.

References:

2Co 10:1 Joh 21:22
Eph 1:1 2Ti 4:6
1Co 11:1 1Co 12:28

Further Study

1Pe 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 31

Learning humility through suffering

The Lord, the Creator of heaven and earth, looks to those who are humble, contrite of spirit and who tremble at His word. He gives grace to the humble. And we learn humility through suffering. Paul told Timothy that all of Asia had turned against him. When he addressed the Ephesian elders in Miletus, the apostle described how he had conducted himself from the first day he set foot in Asia, as a slave of the Lord 'with all humility'. In his many tears and trials, Paul understood the way of the cross, the way of affliction and the way of suffering. He knew that the Lord was training him for battle so that he would not war in the flesh. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul wrote, 'Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in the heavenly places'.

If we learn humility through suffering, we will participate in bringing down the power of Satan. For Satan does not believe we will lay down our lives. God told Adam that the ground was cursed for his sake. We must also accept that the ground is cursed for our sakes. Our initial efforts will come to nothing. But our failure will produce humility and godliness if we make a genuine slavehood response. In the Scripture, we see the principle of the 'second time'. In the 'first time', the Lord teaches us to humble ourselves. By bringing circumstances into our lives that are not achievable or attainable, He teaches us not to trust in ourselves.

References:

Isa 66:2 2Ti 1:15
Act 20:19 Eph 6:12
Gen 3:17 1Pe 2:23

Further Study

Deu 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 1

Mourn and weep

The apostle James wrote, 'Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord and He will exalt you. Do not speak against one another, brethren. He, who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law.' The psalmist prayed, 'Set a guard, O Lord, over my mouth; keep watch over the door of my lips'. In the last days, the whole Jewish race will mourn. Zechariah prophesied, 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn'. We pierce Him every time we refuse to receive the word of our sonship. But we also wound Him every time we judge another.

Faith is found when we look on Christ's sufferings with an attitude of repentance for the suffering that we have caused others; those who are wounded and bleeding because of our assessments according to law. Humility through affliction is the means by which we become spiritual men and women. This work of God in us is producing the fruit of the Spirit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, gentleness, meekness, temperance, self-control, against which there is no law. We speak against one another when we believe that we have been humbled while others have been exalted. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that they had 'become arrogant and had not mourned'. When we rise up in self-justification, we cannot truly mourn. Jesus said, 'Blessed are those who mourn'.

References:

Jas 4:9-11
Zec 12:10
1Co 5:2

Psa 141:3
Gal 5:22
Mat 5:4

Further Study

Amo 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 2

The operation of God

We read in the book of Revelation that 'he who takes part in the first resurrection shall not be overcome by the second death'. The 'second death' is the penalty for those who do not take hold of their sonship and preordained portion in this life. We can only possess for eternity what death cannot take from us. Therefore, the Lord delivers us over to death in this life so that we can possess, in the face of death, all that is ordained for us. The apostle Paul understood that this is how God operates. He explained that we are buried with Christ in baptism and are then raised with Him 'through the faith of the operation of God'. Paul knew that His mode of operation was the way of the cross. Therefore, the apostle was constantly being delivered over to death so that the oil of grace and life could be produced.

Paul knew that if he was willing to be abased and brought to nothing, he would be raised up again. Death could not hold him. Paul said of his ministry in Asia, 'We were burdened excessively, beyond our strength, so that we despaired even of life; indeed, we had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead'. When Paul was cast down to death, he trusted in the One who raises the dead. The mode of his apostleship was the faith of *exanastasis*, meaning 'out resurrection'. Paul demonstrated resurrection life in his flesh.

The apostle and prophet are in a constant cycle of being abased and exalted. They are delivered over to death and they are raised from the dead. When the sentence of death touches us, we can also be raised by the power of God. Through our right connection with the apostles, we will receive the word of life and grace.

References:

Rev 2:11 Col 2:12
Rom 6:4 2Co 1:8-9
Php 3:11 1Pe 1:21
Php 4:12-13

Further Study

2Co 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 5

Apostolic humility – abolishing death

The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that he had been delivered from 'so great a peril of death' by God who raises the dead. Because Paul experienced resurrection life in his flesh, death could not hold him. Jesus Christ takes away the power of death from those who humble themselves under His mighty hand. He brings about justice speedily for His elect. After he sinned, Adam was told by God that 'the ground is cursed for your sake'. As each apostle is abased and exalted, the curse is being broken by resurrection power; life out of death. When Paul humbled himself under the hand of Christ, the power of death was being destroyed. Paul said of Christ, 'For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death.'

When the last trumpet sounds, the dead in Christ will rise, and death will finally be done away with for all eternity. The wonder of the Day of Atonement is ever before us. In the last days, there will be a body of people who will overcome the death of sin while they are still mortal. They will be the evidence that death has been overcome. This living generation will touch the perfections of Christ while still in the flesh. This is the meaning of Paul's statement concerning the heroes of faith, 'Without us they will not be made perfect'. Until that day, every slave/son of God must continue in the same faith as the apostle Paul whose faith we follow. By becoming overcomers in their generation, they will partake of the first resurrection. And they shall not be hurt by the second death. But the resurrection power of Christ will become the judgement upon those who are destroyers and workers of death.

References:

2Co 1:10
Gen 3:17
Heb 11:4

Luk 18:7-8
1Co 15:25-26
Rev 2:11

Further Study

2Co 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 6

Jealous over His possession

When the Israelites were about to enter the Promised Land, Moses addressed them, saying, 'So watch yourselves, that you do not forget the covenant of the Lord your God which He made with you, and make for yourselves a graven image in the form of anything against which the Lord your God has commanded you. For the Lord your God is a consuming fire, a jealous God.' The jealousy of God has nothing to do with human jealousy. Clearly, He does not envy what another has or does. In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul referred to 'the riches of the glory of *His inheritance* in the saints'. The Lord receives an inheritance in the Everlasting Covenant. He is going to obtain an inheritance and He is clearly jealous over it.

Moses told the Israelites that the Lord had delivered them from Egypt, the iron furnace, 'to be a people for His own possession'. The prophetic and symbolic fulfilment of this Scripture is seen in the book of Malachi where the prophet declared, 'They shall be Mine on the day when I make up My jewels'. Paul picks up this theme all through the New Testament. He told the Thessalonians that they were his 'crown'. And he wrote to the Corinthians saying that they were 'the seal' or evidence of his apostleship.

Moses said that the Lord is a consuming fire and a jealous God. The fire and the jealousy of the Lord are one and the same. The pillar of fire that led the children of Israel out of Egypt and protected them on their journey through the wilderness are the same flames that burn in the Gehenna, the lake of fire described in the book of Revelation.

References:

Eph 1:18 Mal 3:17
1Th 2:20 1Co 9:2
Exo 13:21
Deu 4:20, 23-24
Rev 20:14-15

Further Study

Jas 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 7

The fire of His jealousy

In his address to the children of Israel before they entered Canaan, Moses described the actions of a jealous God who had delivered them from Egypt and preserved them in the wilderness. He asked, 'Has any people heard the voice of God speaking from the midst of fire, as you have heard it, and survived? Or has a god tried to take a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and wonders and by war and by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm and by great terrors, as the Lord your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? To you it was shown that you might know that the Lord, He is God. Out of the heavens, He let you hear His voice and on earth He let you see His great fire, and you heard His words from the midst of the fire. Because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them. And He personally brought you from Egypt by His great power, driving out from before you nations greater and mightier than you, to bring you in and to give you their land for an inheritance, as it is today.'

The apostle James said that the Spirit yearns jealously over those who are His. After Israel had endured insult from the surrounding nations, Ezekiel prophesied, 'Surely in the fire of My jealousy I have spoken against the rest of the nations and against all Edom, who appropriated My land for themselves as a possession'. And when Judah was about to go into captivity in Babylon for failing to keep the covenant, Jeremiah proclaimed, 'And you will, even yourself, let go of your inheritance that I gave you. I will make you serve your enemies in the land that you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in My anger which will burn forever.'

References:

Deu 4: 34-38 Jas 4:5
Eze 36:5 Jer 17:4
Nah 1:5-6 Isa 66:24

Further Study

Deu 32

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 8

Trusting in the Lord

A pillar of fire led the nation of Israel out of Egypt and protected them in the wilderness. The fire represented God's jealousy toward them. But when they failed to keep His Covenant, the fire which preserved the Israelites also threatened to consume them. Through our disobedience, we can also kindle His jealous fire so that it no longer burns ahead of us but comes upon us. The prophet Jeremiah described the consequences for those who do not trust in the Lord.

He declared, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord. For he will be like a bush in the desert and will not see when prosperity comes, but will live in stony wastes in the wilderness, a land of salt without inhabitant. Blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord and whose trust is the Lord. For he will be like a tree planted by the water, that extends its roots by a stream and he will not fear. Its leaves will be green, and it will not be anxious in a year of drought nor cease to yield fruit.' When we trust the Lord, His covenant word takes root in our hearts. We can then flourish in accordance with the unique name that He has given us.

When faced with the blazing furnace, Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego refused to worship the golden image that Nebuchadnezzar had set up. Although they believed God could save them, these young men declared they would not bow down even if He did not deliver them. They would not trust in mankind or make flesh their strength. As sons of God, we are constantly being delivered over to death. But we receive His power and adequacy when we are exalted.

References:

Num 14:14 Jer 17:5-8
2Co 4:10-12 2Ch 32:8
Heb 3:12 Isa 36:6

Further Study

Dan 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 9

Possessing our inheritance

God gave the land of Canaan to Abraham and his descendants as an everlasting possession but the nation of Judah let go of their inheritance. Jeremiah referred to their captivity in Babylon, saying, 'And you will, even of yourself, let go of your inheritance that I gave you; and I will make you serve your enemies in the land which you do not know; for you have kindled a fire in My anger which will burn forever'.

How do we let go of our inheritance? And how do we kindle the fire of God's jealousy so that it no longer burns ahead of us, but upon us? Jeremiah answered these questions when he said, 'Cursed is the man who trusts in mankind and makes flesh his strength, and whose heart turns away from the Lord'. In the second book of Chronicles, we read the story of King Asa of Judah. Rather than look to the Lord for deliverance, Asa asked a neighbouring king for assistance in battle. And when Asa was severely diseased in his feet, 'he did not seek the Lord but the physicians'.

We read in the book of Proverbs that 'every word of God is tested; He is a shield to all who take refuge in Him'. After Abraham had received God's covenant word, the Lord spoke to him in a vision, saying, 'Do not fear. I am your shield and your exceedingly great reward.' As we step forward to possess the land of our sonship, He becomes our shield of fire, jealously guarding the Spirit that dwells within us.

References:

Jer 17:4-5

Pro 30:5

Jas 4:5

Num 34:2

Gen 15:1

Further Study

2Ch 16

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 12

House of Jacob – a fire

In Ezekiel's prophesy, we read that God's jealousy burned against all Edom because of 'His land'. The descendants of Esau had joyfully and scornfully appropriated the land of Canaan for themselves as their own possession, causing it to become a prey. The prophet Obadiah declared that 'the house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau will be as stubble. And they will set them on fire and consume them, so that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau.' Isaiah also spoke about the fire in the house of Jacob. He prophesied, 'Sinners in Zion are terrified; trembling has seized the godless. Who among us can live with the consuming fire? Who among us can live with continual burning?' And referring to Assyria, the prophet declared, 'His rock will pass away because of the panic and his princes will be terrified at the standard whose fire is in Zion and whose furnace is in Jerusalem'.

Jesus told His disciples to wait in Jerusalem until the promise of the Father came to them. When one hundred and twenty believers were baptised with the Holy Spirit on the Day of Pentecost, tongues of fire rested on their heads. As they went out proclaiming the gospel, the word of God cut those who heard it, right to the heart. People either raged back at the preachers or reached out to possess their inheritance as sons of God. Pierced to the heart, the converts asked, 'Brethren what shall we do?'

Ezekiel said that the house of Joseph was a flame. Through his son Ephraim, Joseph represents 'the fullness of the Gentiles' who will be grafted into the lampstand church in the last days. The house of Joseph is a flame that burns as a light to the Gentiles.

References:

Eze 36:5 Oba 1:18
Isa 33:14 Isa 31:9
Luk 24:49 Rom 11:25

Further Study

Act 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 13

His covenant word – a shield

We read in the book of Genesis that the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision. He said, 'Do not fear. I am your shield; your exceeding great reward.' Paul directed us to participate in God's word to Abraham when he wrote, 'Take for yourself the shield of faith with which you will be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked one'. The Everlasting Covenant is our shield! When we receive the word of our sonship, we take up the shield of faith. The promise of the covenant is sonship. His covenant word to us concerns our individual name and work. When we hear the word of our sonship, we believe and obey His Covenant with us. We know from the book of Proverbs that 'every word of God is tested'. Therefore, every covenant promise is tested. But His Covenant is still our shield in the midst of the trial.

When the word of the Lord came to Abraham, he received the promises of the covenant. He was told what would happen and how it would happen. Since he was childless, Abraham asked how he would possess the promises. As he looked up and tried to count the stars of heaven, God confirmed His promise saying, 'So shall your descendants be'. Abraham did not need to fear because the covenant was His shield. When God speaks to us about our inheritance as a son of God, every word is tested and tried so it can become our possession. When Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him as righteousness. And by his faith, he became the heir of the whole world. If we let go of God's covenant word, we let go of our inheritance! But if we hold firm to His word, it will be our shield as we step forward to possess the land of our sonship.

References:

Gen 15:1, 5
Pro 30:5
Deu 33:29

Eph 6:16
Rom 4:13

Further Study

2Sa 22

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 14

The shield of Saul was not anointed

In the second book of Samuel, we read the words of David as he lamented over the deaths of King Saul and his son Jonathon. He said, 'O mountains of Gilboa, let not dew and rain be upon you, nor fields for offering; for there the shield of the mighty was defiled, the shield of Saul, was not anointed with oil.' How did the king of Israel let go of his inheritance? How did he let go of the word of his kingship? Why did he become jealous of David? Why did he not know then that the kingship belonged to David? Saul would have had an inheritance through his daughter, Michal, David's wife. But he let go of his shield. He let go of God's covenant word to him. Therefore, his name has been erased from the Lamb's book of life and he is no more!

The Lord 'is a shield to those who take refuge in Him'. But He is only our shield when we take refuge in Him, when we believe God's word and it is reckoned to us as righteousness. We possess His covenant word when we lift up the shield of faith, believing the word that He has spoken to us.

In the book of Zechariah, we note a preliminary statement before the word of the lampstand. Concerning Jerusalem, the Lord says, 'I will be a wall of fire around her, and I will be the glory in her midst'. No one will be able to pass through this wall of fire without understanding and appropriating the jealousy of God toward them. We do this by receiving and obeying His covenant word of sonship. King David declared, 'My God, my rock, in whom I take refuge, my shield and the horn of my salvation, my stronghold and my refuge; my Saviour. You save me from violence.' No one can touch us if we are abiding in His Covenant and walking in His will.

References:

2Sa 22:3, 31
Gen 15:6
1Sa 18:8-9, 27

Further Study

2Sa 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 15

‘I am your reward’

We note in the Scripture, that God’s promises were made firstly to Abraham. Through the Everlasting Covenant, we are given the capacity to possess the promised land of our own sonship. We learn about the inheritance that is set before us when we read the account of the Israelites going up to possess the land promised to their father, Abraham. The Lord is saying to us as He did to Abraham, ‘I am your reward’. We would all agree that the children of Israel received the first stage of their reward when they crossed the Jordan River and entered the land of Canaan. Nevertheless, they did not ever truly possess their inheritance.

Like the Israelites, we have to enter the land that has been promised *before* we can possess the reward. The Lord said to the nation of Israel, ‘You are to possess their land, and I Myself will give it to you to possess it, a land flowing with milk and honey’. In the book of Deuteronomy, the Lord instructed His people to go in and possess the land. We read, ‘I am the Lord your God, who has separated you from the peoples. I have placed the land before you; go in and possess the land which the Lord swore to give to your fathers.’ And later He said, ‘I have begun to deliver Sihon and his land over to you. Begin to occupy, that you may possess his land.’ We find, however, that the Israelites were not adequate for this task and they consequently failed to possess the promise. When we come to the Jordan and are about to go into the land of our inheritance, we must firstly apply faith to find the adequacy that allows us to possess the promise that God has given. Like the apostles and prophets, we will have the sentence of death in ourselves so that we do not trust in ourselves.

References:

Psa 58:11

Lev 20:24

Deu 1:8

Deu 2:31

2Co 1:9

Further Study

Psa 16

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 16

Finding adequacy through humility

The Scripture tells us that ‘the man Moses was very humble’. This does not mean that Moses had a soft and gentle personality. He was made adequate to do the will of God through his response to the Lord’s chastening. In the book of Deuteronomy, Moses addressed the nation of Israel, saying, ‘And you shall remember that the Lord your God led you all the way these forty years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you, to know what was in your heart, whether you would keep His commandments or not. So He humbled you, allowed you to hunger, and fed you with manna which you did not know nor did your fathers know, that He might make you know that man shall not live by bread alone; but man lives by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord.’ God humbles us through affliction to make us adequate to inherit and possess what is ours. He lets us know what is in our heart so we can have genuine self-knowledge. We can know who we are and the motivations that drive us. As we enter the ground of our inheritance, we will then know how to cast out the inhabitants of our ‘land’.

When we are finding humility, we are not hiding our face from our flesh. We are not thinking of ourselves any higher or lower than we ought. To be humble is to be lowly. It is not to be lower than we should be. Moses learnt slavehood for forty years in a wilderness environment. By the time he was called again, he had learnt humility. He realised that he was not adequate to do the work and will of God. Moses was humbled so that he would not trust in himself. His adequacy would be from God.

References:

Num 12:3 Deu 8:2-3
2Ch 33:12 1Pe 1:7
Jer 17:9 Act 7:30

Further Study

Exo 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 19

The adequacy of God

Moses is a symbol and a type of those who learn the humility of God. Hence, the Lord refers to him as 'Moses My slave'. In the book of Revelation, the overcomers sing the song of the Lamb and the song of Moses. As far as our inheritance is concerned, our adequacy is not made complete by His ransoming blood or by His eagle wing power. Our adequacy in God is made complete when we enter and possess the land. When we find faith to enter into the substance of our name, when we go into the land of promise and possess, we will immediately find that we are not adequate.

Only two out of twelve men who were sent to survey and spy out the land of Canaan testified, 'We should by all means go up and take possession of it, for we will surely overcome it'. Joshua and Caleb reported that they had passed through an exceedingly good land. They declared, 'If the Lord delights in us, then He will bring us into this land and give it to us, a land which flows with milk and honey'. These two men were effectively saying that God was their adequacy and He would give them everything that He said He would.

The Lord humbles us so we can find His adequacy. Otherwise, we are in danger of becoming like the Israelites who did not honour the Lord when they lived in cities that they did not build and enjoyed houses that they did not fill, cisterns that they did not dig, vineyards and olive trees that they did not plant. The Lord had given them a land and provision for all of their needs, but they began to say in their hearts, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth'.

References:

Rev 15:3-4 2Co 2:15-16
 Num 13:32 Num 14:8
 Deu 6:11 Deu 7:16-19
 Mat 20:25-28

Further Study

Deu 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 20

The ground of humility

The Lord is very serious about you possessing your holy ground. Why wouldn't we possess the wonderful bounty and provision that He has ordained and named for us? For many, fear will be the most obvious reason and hindrance. But others have not negotiated Egypt, the world. When we keep going back to the world for counsel, we know we haven't left Egypt. Isaiah prophesied, "Woe to the rebellious children", says the Lord, "Who take counsel, but not of Me, and who devise plans, but not of My Spirit, that they may add sin to sin; who walk to go down to Egypt, and have not asked My advice, to strengthen themselves in the strength of Pharaoh, and to trust in the shadow of Egypt!" We remember that King Asa of Judah was rebuked by God when he consulted physicians before seeking the Lord. When he was struck down with illness, God said, 'Why did you not come to Me?' We do not need to seek the counsel of Egypt, for there is help among our brethren.

When we apply the blood of the Lamb to the doorposts and the lintel, we are rescued from Egypt and delivered to the Father's house. The angel of death cannot touch us, as long as we abide in His house and do not forsake the assembling of ourselves together. There is power in His ransoming blood to deliver us from Egypt. He bore the nation of Israel on eagle's wings! But we can also appropriate the activity and adequacy of the cross to take us into the Promised Land, to the ground of our sonship.

References:

Isa 30:1-2 2Ch 16:12
Exo 12:22-23 Heb 10:25
Exo 19:4 Isa 40:31

Further Study

Mar 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 21

The plots of the Jews

Paul encouraged us to imitate him as an apostle just as he imitated Christ. As we follow this apostolic model, we will discover our individual pathway of sonship but we will also find that we are delivered over to death. Two things will happen on a daily basis. We will know what it means to abound and to be abased; to be exalted up to the place of our sonship and then to be humbled down again. Like apostles, we will have ‘the sentence of death within ourselves so we do not trust in ourselves but in God who raises the dead’.

In the book of Acts, we read about Paul’s meeting in Miletus with the Ephesian elders. He referred to his conduct among them; how he served the Lord ‘with all humility and with tears and with trials which came upon me through the plots of the Jews’. We find that Paul’s account is almost identical to Jeremiah’s experience in the Old Testament. Both the apostle and the prophet were persecuted by the Jews. Paul was persecuted when he ministered in Asia. And Jeremiah was persecuted when he prophesied about Judah’s impending captivity in Babylon. Jeremiah lamented, ‘But I was like a gentle lamb led to the slaughter; and I did not know that they had devised plots against me, saying, “Let us destroy the tree with its fruit, and let us cut him off from the land of the living”.’ Paul also referred to the plots or conspiracies of the Jews.

When we are conspired against, there will be some quota of truth in what is said. It will draw from us as believers, the desire to put our side of the case forward, to balance the argument and to give a defence. But we must remember the way of our Lord Jesus, the Lamb of God. ‘Being reviled, He opened not His mouth.’

References:

1Co 11:1 2Co 1:9
Act 20:18-19 Jer 11:19
Act 8:32 Act 9:23

Further Study

Act 20

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 22

A thorn in the flesh

As we are delivered over to the sentence of death, we should expect some kind of injustice and conspiracy against us. There will always be ones who are looking to disqualify the slaves of Christ. And like Paul, our enemies will be both secular and spiritual. Paul said, 'Alexander the coppersmith did me great harm'. When he came against Paul, he brought a false accusation. Because this man was suffering loss on account of the word that Paul preached, he became the apostle's enemy. Clearly, he had a different agenda to the one he was stating and putting forward. A problem arose when Paul challenged the veracity of the Temple of Dianna. Through his preaching, the apostle turned away many worshippers, threatening the livelihood of the craftsmen involved. Demetrius, a silversmith, gathered them together and incited revolt against Paul and his companions.

Paul also suffered at the hands of the Judaizers who were defending their religious position. Originally converted by James and the brethren in Jerusalem, they soon became Paul's enemies. They followed the apostle everywhere, becoming the thorn in his flesh. Paul walked in humility because of the tears and trials that came upon him through their plots. He called his thorn 'a messenger from Satan'. It prevented him from exalting himself on account of his great revelation. When the apostle asked the Lord to remove the thorn, He said, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'. Paul found adequacy through affliction. If we are to walk in humility before God, we must also expect a thorn in our flesh to protect us from our propensity to pride.

References:

2Ti 4:14 Act 19:26
2Co 12:7-9 Act 14:2
2Th 2:14-16 Act 18:4-6

Further Study

Act 17

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 23

His adequacy in us

It is wrong to think that we are no longer humble when the Lord exalts us after He has brought us low. Humility is the condition of those who have true knowledge of themselves. God humbled the nation of Israel in the wilderness to test them, to find out what was in their hearts. Obviously, He already knows the condition of our hearts. But through our response in affliction, He shows *us* so we can live in humility. We can live as authentic sons when we have this self-knowledge.

Until we make humility our possession, we are not adequate to go in and possess what He has put before us. In order to inherit, we must be equipped with the adequacy of God. The Lord commands us to believe the word of our sonship. It will be our shield of faith, enabling us to proceed forward to possess the land. We do not have to fear because His word is our shield and exceedingly great reward.

The apostle Paul testified, 'Such confidence we have through Christ toward God. Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as coming from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate as servants of a New Covenant.' Paul came to terms with an amazing principle. Through trial and affliction, he learned that adequacy was produced when humility was found. We know every word of God will be tested. But as we step forward, the trial of His word will produce in us the adequacy of Christ.

References:

Deu 8:2 Psa 119:75
Eph 6:16 Gen 15:1
Psa 119:114 Pro 30:5

Further Study

2Co 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 26

The mark of lowliness

The apostle Paul carried the mark of lowliness in himself. He confessed that he was a persecutor of the church. In the book of Acts we read, 'I persecuted this Way to the death, binding and putting both men and women into prisons'. We can speculate about the life of Paul and consider where he was when Jesus was walking and teaching among them. By the time of the crucifixion and resurrection, we know that Paul was empowered as an opposer of the word of the cross. Everything that is religious is empowered *by* the word of God *over against* the will of God.

There is no doubt that Paul had a 'thorn' in his flesh because he had not properly possessed what God had preordained for him. He had not fully exercised his authority as an ascension-gift apostle; he had not sat on his throne. Paul's enemies, both secular and spiritual, tormented him constantly. But after Paul received the thorn in his side, the power of God rested on him. Jacob also had a thorn in his side because he would not fully possess what God had for him. After wrestling with the Lord all night, the angel touched his hip and dislocated it. Jacob walked with a limp for the rest of his life but his name had been changed to 'Prince with God'. Like the apostle Paul, Jacob's enforced condition of weakness caused him to trust in God rather than himself. The thorns in our flesh will be more severe if we move to perpetuated disobedience. The Lord says that 'they will be thorns in your side and they will be thorns in your eyes'. 'A thorn in the eye' means that our spiritual vision is impaired and we will not be able to see properly.

References:

Act 8:1-4 Act 9:1-2
2Co 12:7 Num 33:55
Psa 52:6-9
Gen 32:25-32

Further Study

Act 22

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 27

He intercedes for us

Although we live with 'the sentence of death', the Lord intercedes for us so we will not faint in the day of adversity, when we are accused, discredited, opposed and resisted. The book of Proverbs says, 'If you are slack in the day of distress, your strength is limited'. If we faint during our trial, we give ground and opportunity to the devil. And the very thing that we give ground to, will become the thorn in our side! Jeremiah declared that he who pursues emptiness will himself become empty. We are emptied out when we seek the cooperation and wisdom of the world.

In his letter to the Romans, Paul asked, 'Who will bring a charge against God's elect? God is the one who justifies; who is the one who condemns? Christ Jesus is He who died, yes, rather who was raised, who is at the right hand of God, who also intercedes for us. Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' What do these things look like and what do they mean? When we are afflicted, we are being pressed down or crushed. 'Famine' means that we are experiencing shortage in provision. 'Nakedness' means our flesh and our essential person is being exposed. 'Peril' infers we have reason to fear. And 'a sword' suggests that the threat of violence is near. How does Paul summarise all these pressures? Firstly he says, 'For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered'. He did not necessarily mean a literal death because the apostle was very much alive when he wrote to the Roman church.

References:

2Co 1:9 Pro 24:10
Eph 4:27 Jer 2:5
Isa 31:1
Rom 8:33-35

Further Study

Isa 30

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 28

Reckoned as sheep to the slaughter

When Paul spoke about tribulation, distress, persecution, famine, nakedness, peril, and sword, he was referring to the book of Daniel. The prophet declared, 'Those of the people who understand shall instruct many; yet for many days they shall fall by sword and flame, by captivity and plundering'. We also read that 'those who have insight among the people' will lead many to righteousness and will shine brightly like the stars.

These ones with insight include the Old Testament prophets, the apostles of the Lamb, as well as the ascension-gift apostles and prophets of the New Testament. Paul said, 'For your sake we are being put to death all day long; we were considered as sheep to be slaughtered'. Like the one hundred and forty four thousand in the book of Revelation, 'they follow the Lamb wherever He goes'. The apostle directed us to imitate him just as he imitated Christ. Because we follow the way of the Lamb, we do not open our mouth when we are reviled.

Do you know why we are delivered over to so great a peril of death? It is so the power of death will have no power over you! This is the work of the cross. In the book of Hebrews we read, 'Through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil'.

Therefore, we should not try to deliver ourselves from death or justify ourselves to our enemies. It is God who justifies. And He will bring about justice speedily for His elect. Paul said, 'I conducted myself in humility with tears and temptations'. Our temptation is always to go back to the flesh and to war in the flesh. Our temptation is to stretch out our own hand to save ourselves. But God is able to deliver us 'from so great a peril of death'.

References:

Dan 11:33 Dan 12:3
Rom 8:33, 36 Rev 14:4
1Pe 2:23 Heb 2:14
2Co 1:10

Further Study

2Co 11

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 29

Overcoming by the blood of the Lamb

In the book of Revelation, we learn about the rewards for overcomers; how Jesus will confess our names before the Father. We read that we will overcome Satan 'by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of our testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death'. In his letter to the Romans, Paul referred to the Father's eagle wing power. He wrote, 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.' He will quicken our mortal bodies. He will bear us up. He will deliver us by His ransoming blood. Through Moses, the Lord said, 'You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself'. When the Lord brings you to Himself, He begins to give you the inheritance of your name.

When Paul spoke about the Spirit that gives life to our mortal bodies, He was referring to *exanastasis*, resurrection life in our flesh. Paul's statement presupposes that a living generation will come to the Day of Atonement. They will possess the fullness and power of the sevenfold Spirit of God. The perfections of Jesus Christ will belong to them while in mortal flesh. And by this means, Satan will be destroyed. And finally, Jesus will destroy the power of death itself. And of course, all the overcomers who partake in the first resurrection will not be hurt by the second death.

It makes complete sense that we have the sentence of death within ourselves because the Lord makes us adequate through *exanastasis*, life out of death. Like Paul, we confess that we want 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'.

References:

Rev 3:5 Rev 12:11
Exo 19:4 Rom 8:11
Php 3:10-11 Rev 1:18
Heb 2:14
Rev 2:7, 11, 17, 26

Further Study

Rev 20

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30