

Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

DECEMBER 2017

Contributing Authors:

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

Restoring My Soul – No. 122 – December 2017

ISSN: 2201-7542

Published by RFI Publishing

© RFI Publishing Inc. 2017

10 Old Goombungee Road

Toowoomba QLD 4350

Phone: +61 1300 885 048

Email: info@rfipublishing.org

For a full catalogue of our Christian music & publications,
please visit www.christianresources.co

Restoration
PUBLISHING

Contents

WEEK 1

Monday	Adam's mandate
Tuesday	Adam's capacity
Wednesday	Cursed for your sake
Thursday	Thorns and thistles
Friday	Rest through baptism

WEEK 2

Monday	An appeal for a good conscience
Tuesday	Christ abolished sin and death
Wednesday	Submitting to our Master
Thursday	The truth will set you free
Friday	Slavehood and sonship

WEEK 3

Monday	Partaking of the tree of life
Tuesday	Death and the tree of life
Wednesday	Hearing and doing the word
Thursday	The communion word
Friday	Thorns and scorpions

WEEK 4

Monday	The preaching of Christ
Tuesday	Christ lifted up
Wednesday	Messengers of Christ
Thursday	The testimony of our Lord
Friday	Do not be ashamed

Adam's mandate

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

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

References:

Gen 1:28

Gen 2:15, 19

Eze 31:8-9

Zec 11:2

Further Study:

Daniel 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 4

Adam's capacity

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

Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an attempt to become the origin of a new image of themselves, and the source of their own destiny and works. In particular, Adam wanted to exercise his considerable mandate, and extraordinary natural abilities, in his own way. In this regard, he wanted to define his own works without the need for reference to, or direction from, God. While he walked in the light of fellowship with Yahweh, Adam's good works were to the glory of God. However, by endeavouring to act from the basis of his own initiative, Adam sought to reveal his own glory. The effect of eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was that the desire to be the source of their own image and destiny became another law that was now part of Adam and Eve's identities. Living by this law brought them into bondage to the law of sin, and was the cause of their fall from first love with Yahweh, and with each other, in the paradise of God.

References:

Mat 5:16

Rom 7:23

Joh 7:18

2Ti 3:16-17

Rom 5:12

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 5

Cursed for your sake

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

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

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

References:

Gen 5:29 Rom 8:28
 Gen 50:20 Rom 5:8
 Psa 119:71

Further Study:

Genesis 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

Thorns and thistles

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

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

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

References:

I Jn 2:16

Luk 3:38

Mar 4:18-19

Luk 10:40-42

Php 4:6

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

Rest through baptism

In the days of Enosh, who was the son of Seth, men began to walk with God, calling themselves by the name of the Lord. Significantly, the name 'Enosh' means 'man', and is derived from the Hebrew word '*anash*', which means 'desperately wicked, incurable, sick, woeful'. As men recognised and accepted the fact that pursuing their own way was the reason for their suffering, they were able to recover relationship with God and, by faith, do the works that belonged to their predestination. In fact, Enoch walked with God for three hundred years, and then, without dying, was taken directly into heaven by God.

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

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

References:

Gen 4:25-26

Gen 5:23-24, 29

Mat 11:28-29

Rom 6:3-4

Further Study:

1 Peter 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

An appeal for a good conscience

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

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

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

References:

1Pe 3:21

Heb 10:22

Lev 17:11

Gal 2:20

Eph 2:10

Col 2:12-13

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 6

Proverbs 11

Christ abolished sin and death

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

When Christ was made sin for us, He joined us in our death and in the shame of our separation from God. At the same time, He became a sin offering in the hand of the Father and Holy Spirit. Because He was Yahweh's Eternal Priest, after the order of Melchizedek, He was able to offer Himself without spot to God by the power of Eternal Spirit. For the impending joy of God's covenant purpose being fulfilled, Christ endured the cross, *despising the shame* of being separated *with us*, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. By this means, He pioneered a pathway upon which every fallen person can be recovered from their nakedness, fear and shame, to their predestined sonship in the image and likeness of God. In order to remain seated in heavenly places with Christ, we must continue to journey with Him on the pathway that He pioneered.

Through His offering on the cross, Jesus, as Yahweh's conquering King and Slave, disarmed principalities and powers, led captivity captive, and gave gifts to men. When a person receives the gospel of sonship and embarks on the steps of salvation, they are delivered from their slavery to fear by becoming a slave of Christ. Fear was their portion under the curse, but now, they are progressively obtaining the blessing of sonship life and their citizenship in the kingdom of heaven.

References:

Heb 10:20

Heb 12:2

2Ti 1:10

Isa 53:10

Heb 9:14

Eph 4:7-8

Further Study:

Hebrews 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

Submitting to our Master

A slave of Christ receives the word of their Master as a command. In his address to the Jewish council, Stephen declared that it was ‘the *God of glory*’ who appeared to Abraham and *commanded* him to depart from his country, and his relatives, in order to enter the land of promise. Abraham’s obedience to this command enabled him to receive the promise of sonship. Similarly, King David declared, ‘The Lord [Yahweh] said to my Lord [*Adon*, or Master], “Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool”’. David was referring to the Son of God as *Adon*, or *his* Master. These men acknowledged the lordship of Christ toward them, and received His word as a command. Consequently, they were described as ‘the friends of God’.

Jesus explained that we, also, could be His friends. He said, ‘You are My friends if you *do whatever I command you*’. His commandment to us is to love one another in the same manner in which He loved us. Christ loved us by laying down His life, or offering Himself for us, according to the command of the Father. Doing what we are commanded by Christ makes a person a disciple. Jesus said, ‘If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed’.

The word that Christ, a believer’s Friend, delivers them to, is the teaching concerning His death, burial and resurrection. This is the doctrine of baptism. It calls a believer to fellowship with Christ, for an obedience of faith, to learn offering. The doctrine of baptism becomes their master. The implication of the doctrine of baptism becoming a person’s master is that they join Christ in the fellowship of the offering that He made as the Slave of Yahweh. This is what it means to learn as a disciple from Christ, the Master.

References:

Act 7:2-3

Exo 33:11

Psa 110:1

Act 13:22

Jas 2:23

Isa 50:4

Further Study:

Philippians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

The truth will set you free

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

How can a slave make offering when his work is only to reveal his master? It is the heart of the slave, in relation to their service, that makes the difference between offering and coercion. Paul's instruction to slaves was to serve their masters with the same attitude with which they served Christ. This is because they were Christ's freemen, yet, they had *made themselves* love-slaves to Him. The work of offering is an expression of love. Its purpose is always to give life to another, enabling them to live and to be revealed. We note, then, that fatherhood, brotherhood, and the ministry of the Spirit, are all of the same purpose; they are of love.

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

References:

Joh 8:32
Rom 6:22
Col 3:22-24

Eph 6:5-6
1Co 7:22
2Co 3:17-18

Further Study:

Galatians 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

Slavehood and sonship

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

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

Through baptism and an ongoing participation in the communion, a son of God is joined to the fellowship of Christ's slavehood. As a particular member of the body of Christ, they are doing the works that belong to His sonship, according to the sanctification of their name, by the Holy Spirit. By this means, the will of God is fulfilled. In this fellowship of offering, which includes suffering with Christ, each member of the body of Christ receives Christ's life by offering transfer. Christ's life enables them to be a slave, but also enables their sonship. This is what it means to take up the cross of Christ and follow Him as His disciple.

References:

Rom 8:20-21 2Ti 2:21
Mar 8:34 Eph 2:10
Rom 6:10-11, 22

Further Study:

Ephesians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Partaking of the tree of life

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

It is important to recognise that Christ introduced a 'death' to the tree of life. He did this by becoming a curse for us. Paul made this point when he explained that Christ became a curse for us on the cross, 'For it is written, "Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree".' This was for the purpose that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles, and that every believer might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. When Christ became a curse for us, the cross was manifest in history as the tree of life. Jesus proclaimed that the fruit of the tree of life is His flesh and blood.

While baptism joins a son of God to the fellowship of Christ's offering, eating and drinking the elements of the communion is the basis for, and the highpoint of, our ongoing participation in the fellowship of first love. Jesus explained to the Ephesian church that those who overcame the issues that caused them to fall from first love, would be granted access to eat from the tree of life that is in heavenly places. Importantly, eating the fruit of the tree of life maintains a person's connection to the process, through which they are able to overcome sin and the other law. It also equips them to minister the life of God to others as members of Christ's body.

References:

Gal 3:13-14 Rev 2:7
Deu 21:22-23 2Th 1:3
Joh 6:54-56

Further Study: 1 Thessalonians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 18

Death and the tree of life

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

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

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

References:

Luk 22:19-20
1Co 10:16
Lev 17:11

Gal 2:20
Heb 9:22

Further Study:

Hebrews 10

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

Hearing and doing the word

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

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

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

References:

1Jn 1:3

Pرو 3:13, 18

Rom 16:25-26

Joh 6:61-64

Act 2:46

Rom 10:17

Further Study:

1 Corinthians 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

The communion word

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

When people presume to misappropriate the word of God in order to advance their own image of themselves, they eat and drink in an unworthy manner. Paul said that they eat and drink judgement to themselves, not discerning their sanctified participation in the body of Christ. To live this way is to live according to a wisdom that is from beneath. It is the outcome of misappropriating the word through the exercise of their own law. When they do this, it is an attempt to use the word to substantiate the image they create for themselves and their ministry. The communion word becomes for them, the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. For these people, the contrary conditions the curse produces in their lives, do not deliver them from their other law. Instead, their sufferings under the curse *provoke* their other law, causing them weariness, frustration and agitation. In truth, this should serve as an indication of the effect of the law of God upon them, and cause them to turn again to the Lord in repentance and faith.

References:

1Co 11:27-29 1Co 2:6-7
Rom 7:11, 23 Job 28:28
Pro 2:6

Further Study:

James 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Thorns and scorpions

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

The words of Jesus parallel the mandate the prophet Ezekiel received from the Lord, when he was commissioned to speak to the children of Israel. Although Ezekiel's ministry would be under the same cursed conditions that Adam experienced (thorns and thistles), he would be fruitful, or effective, in this context. This is because, in type, he was eating the fruit of the tree of life. This joined him to the conditions of the curse, which were for him, a fellowship in Christ's sufferings. However, as he was weak as a slave of righteousness, the Lord's strength was manifest through Ezekiel as his words came to pass.

Ezekiel was joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings by *eating*. He was *commanded* to open his mouth and eat what the Lord was giving to him. Ezekiel's account of eating the scroll helps us to understand the impact upon us of eating the fruit of the tree of life. It is first sweet in our mouths, but then becomes bitter in our bellies, or in our heart, as it joins us to a process through which the other law is being cut from our lives. Once this process is a reality in our lives, we are given the mandate and grace to proclaim the word of life to others.

References:

Luk 10:19-20 Eze 3:1-3
2Co 12:7-10 Rev 10:9-10
Heb 13:5-6

Further Study:

Ezekiel 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

The preaching of Christ

Paul reminded the Galatian Christians of the process through which they had been born of God. The beginning point was Paul's ministry. Through his preaching, Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed, before their eyes, as crucified. Paul explained that Christ redeemed all men from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse when He was lifted up on the cross. This was for the purpose that the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so they might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

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

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

References:

Act 13:47

Isa 49:6

Zec 12:10-11

Joh 19:37

Isa 62:10-12

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25

Christ lifted up

Speaking of the offering of Christ on the cross, Isaiah prophesied, 'In that day the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, *who will stand as a signal [standard] for the peoples*; and His resting place will be glorious [lit: glory]'. The resting place of glory is the illuminated position of faith. This is the rest that is found in Christ when a person is born from above and comes into Christ through baptism. Isaiah added, 'Behold, My servant will prosper, He will be high and lifted up [on the cross] and greatly exalted'.

In the light of these prophetic statements, we note the words of Jesus Himself, who said, 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth [on the cross], will draw all men to Myself'. Being lifted up on the cross was a notable theme in Christ's teaching. For example, He said that if He was lifted up on the cross, everyone would know that He was Yahweh. He also declared that 'as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that *whoever* believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life'. In this way, Christ gathered up all the prophetic statements regarding the ministry of the light of life to the world, and applied them to His offering on the cross.

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

References:

Isa 11:10 Joh 3:14-15
Isa 52:13-15 Isa 53:1
Joh 8:28 1Co 1:23-24

Further Study:

John 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

Messengers of Christ

In his letter to the Romans, Paul quoted from the prophecy of Isaiah, and declared, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news of good things!' Christ continues His ministry on earth through His body. A messenger is a member of the body of Christ. Paul reminded the Galatian Christians of the fact that God speaks through His messengers, when he wrote, 'You received me as an angel of God, even as Christ Jesus'. Importantly, Paul noted that the outcome of receiving his message as the words of Christ was that the Galatians received a *blessing*.

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

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

References:

Gal 4:14-15 Luk 7:26-27
Gal 3:5 Rom 10:15
Pro 25:13

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 27

The testimony of our Lord

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

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

Paul's ill health was the outcome of all the persecution he had experienced during his ministry in the other cities and regions he visited. As Paul was joined to the sufferings of Christ, he received power to minister the Spirit of Christ to his hearers. By this means, he was a gift of the Spirit to them. Paul had this principle in mind when he said to Timothy, 'Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands'.

Paul exhorted Timothy to proclaim Christ crucified. It is through the public portrayal of Christ crucified that the Spirit is ministered to those who hear the word. The word and Spirit work the miracle of illumination within them. A hearer who receives this message is then equipped to join the offering of Christ, so they are also able to be a gift, by the Spirit, to the body and to those who are yet unsaved.

References:

Gal 4:13-14 1Jn 5:11-12
Psa 19:7 Rev 19:10
Joh 15:27

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 28

Do not be ashamed

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

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

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

References:

1Pe 1:6-8

Rom 8:11

Luk 22:41-43

2Th 3:16

Heb 2:14-15

Further Study:

Hebrews 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29