

The image and likeness of God

We read in the book of Genesis that God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image according to Our likeness'. This statement reveals the purpose of the Everlasting Covenant. The Everlasting Covenant was made between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, before the foundation of the world. It is evident by the words 'let Us' that all three Persons in the Godhead were involved in making this covenant, and all Three will be involved in fulfilling it.

We have been predestined to be made in the image and likeness of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We know this because They said 'in *Our* image' and 'according to *Our* likeness'. When we are born of God, we become sons of the Father. We do not become sons of the Son, or sons of the Holy Spirit. However, as sons of God, we do become partakers of the life that belongs to all three Members of the Godhead and we are included in the fellowship of Yahweh. As sons of men who have been born as sons of God, we are 'of God' and partakers of the divine nature, but we never become God. We have been included in the fellowship of Yahweh, but we will never become part of the Godhead.

The image of God is not a set of attributes that are used philosophically, or theologically, to describe God. We know that God has many attributes, but these do not reveal who God is, how we can know Him, and how we are born of His life. In fact, the study of God's attributes alone, will only reinforce the difference between God as the Creator and mankind as the creation. We can be assured that God did not intend to be remote or separate from us. He wants us to be born of His life and joined to Him in one Spirit.

References:

Gen 1:26 Gal 4:6
Gen 17:17 1Jn 1:1-3
Rom 8:29 Joh 1:18

Further Study:

John 17

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

Finding grace

When Adam and Eve disobeyed the word of God, sin and death entered into the world and spread to every person. Every person born after the fall has 'another law' within them. The apostle Paul described this 'other law' as a principle of evil that is in our flesh. It is a person's innate and subconscious desire to preserve their own life and to determine what their life should be like. It is fundamentally self-centred.

Having been separated from the fellowship and life of God, and now living according to the motivations of their own law, mankind *degenerated* to a state of great wickedness. The Scriptures record that 'every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually'. Because of the wickedness of mankind, God repented that He made them. However, one man, named Noah, found grace, through faith, for himself and his family. He escaped the flood of judgement that destroyed the whole human race.

We are all here today because we are descendants of Noah and survived the destruction of every living thing because of his faith. Even though mankind has had a reprieve on account of Noah, we are still under judgement and condemnation for our own sin and wickedness. In our natural condition, we are dead to God and alienated from His life because of our 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.

Through the offering of Christ on the cross, we, who were otherwise dead in sin, were made alive, and were reconciled to God. We are reconciled to God and able to be born from above when we believe and receive the word of hope, which is the gospel that is preached to us.

References:

Rom 5:8-10, 12
Rom 7:21
Eph 2:5
Rom 10:14-15

Further Study: Genesis 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 28

Becoming fruitful sons of God

Whether we have been saved out of the world, or born of God from the womb because of the faith of our Christian parents, the parable of the sower and the seed teaches us that the planting of the seed of the divine nature in a person's heart is only the beginning point of sonship. The Lord wants us to continue to grow and to express the fruit of sonship; some thirtyfold, some sixtyfold and some one-hundredfold. From Jesus' teaching, we understand that there are specific crises of faith that every believer must negotiate, in order to mature as the son of God whom He created them to be, bearing good fruit unto eternal life.

These crises of faith have to do with the condition of our heart, and are initiated by God Himself. At these times in our lives, He asks us to choose whether or not we will walk in the way of sonship that He has prepared for us. In His mercy, the Lord frees us from any influence that may otherwise affect our capacity to make these decisions. These influences may include, for example, previous life experiences, the impact of others upon us, and even our own 'other law'. At the point of choosing, all things are open and laid bare before the Lord. We are completely free to make our choices, and are, therefore, fully accountable for them.

In the midst of these crises, we can ask God for help, and He will give us grace to respond in obedience to His word, and to continue to walk in the way He planned for us. This is the same grace that Noah found so that he was able to be delivered from the destruction of the flood and become an heir of righteousness.

References:

Mar 4:20 1Ki 18:21
Heb 4:13, 16 Gen 6:8
Heb 11:7

Further Study: Joshua 24**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 29

Living by law

Although we have been born from above of the life of God, we know that we all still sin. In his first letter, the apostle John wrote, 'If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves and the truth is not in us'. When we continue to engage in the wicked works of sin, we are rather bad sons of God! What should we do about this situation?

A common response is to say, 'I think I will remedy my situation. Here is the law of God. The law is the standard of righteousness that God wants me to live up to. If I commit myself to live by God's law, God will be pleased with me and I won't be a bad son of God.' If we proceed down this track, our reborn relationship with God is going to run into a problem. This is because our efforts are self-centred. They are motivated by the 'other law' that is in our flesh. We will find, as Paul explained, that we are unable to keep the law of God. In fact, our efforts will only result in other sinful responses, such as jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, bad attitudes.

Not only are we unable to keep the law, but we also come under its judgement and penalty. The penalty for failing to keep God's law is death. A Christian who keeps trying to be acceptable to God through their self-sourced efforts will become frustrated, weary in their Christian faith, depressed, and some will even die before their time. These are indications of being under God's judgement. However, these sufferings are part of the crisis of faith that God is bringing to us. They are an invitation to suffer with Christ so that we can be delivered from the 'other law' as the basis for our lives and, instead, walk as a son of God in a new way.

References:

IJn 1:8
Rom 7:23
Rom 8:3-8

Gal 5:19-21
Rom 6:23
1Co 11:30

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30

The cares of the world

Every Christian will have to choose whether they will 'sell all' and follow Christ as one of His disciples. Jesus said that the kingdom of heaven 'is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid again; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that field'. The treasure buried in the field is Christ's life. When we are born from above, we already have Christ's life as a seed hidden in the ground of our heart. However, the deceitfulness of the riches of the world, and the desire to have other things, can enter into our heart and choke the precious life of this seed, so that we are unable to demonstrate that we have the life. This is why we must sell *all*.

This crisis is particularly pertinent to young people who have grown up in Christian homes. There will come a point in their mid to late teenage years when they must choose what they treasure most – either the blessing of Christ's life that they received at birth, or the passing pleasures that the world has to offer.

In this regard, we remember the account of the rich young ruler who asked Jesus what he must do to have eternal life as a son of God. He had been born into the covenant. Now he was needing to know what it meant to have life apart from the faith of his parents. Jesus said to the young man, 'If you wish to be complete [perfect, mature, fruitful], go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me [as a disciple]'. To 'sell all' means that the Lord has first place in every aspect of our lives.

References:

Mar 4:19
Luk 12:33
Mar 10:21

Rom 1:4
Php 3:8

Further Study: Matthew 13:24-58

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 1

Selling all

When we 'sell all' to follow Christ, we let go of our own dreams and self-sourced aspirations so that we can be joined to Christ and our brethren. Importantly, for some people, 'selling all' is not just letting go of the pursuit of worldly wealth. It can also mean letting go of past hurts and unfulfilled expectations of life that prevent us from being yoked to Christ and joined to others in the body of Christ.

All of us will experience situations that require us to choose what we treasure most. We will be caused to consider how much we love the blessing of God's life, and must answer the questions, 'What is it worth to me? What other treasures, aspirations, expectations, hurts, disappointments, do I need to let go of, or sell, to have eternal life?' This crisis does not need to be a difficult one, but we still have to count the cost of following Christ. We can be encouraged that the grace of God is available to us in each season of decision.

Christ is the way, the truth and the life, in relation to each crisis that we will experience as a son of God. Specifically, He has invited us to a fellowship with Him, which is a baptismal service, a Passover meal, and a prayer meeting. These aspects of our fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, in Christ, will have specific and daily implications for the way that we live and walk each day as a son of God. Baptism, communion, and praying in the Holy Spirit, join us to a process through which we are delivered from our 'other law', die to living for ourselves, and follow Christ on the narrow and difficult way that leads to eternal life. By this means, we are able to become all that God predestined us to be when He desired to make us in His image and after His likeness.

References:

Psa 101:2

Joh 6:68

Psa 119:106, 111-112

Act 11:22-23

Joh 14:6

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Philippians 3

Proverbs 4

Sons of disobedience

The nature of our life, or how we live as a Christian, is most important. Many have gone before us, and we can learn from their godly examples, as well as from their failings. When God created Adam and Eve, they lived happily in the garden of Eden, where they enjoyed connection and fellowship with God. The Scripture records that, in the cool of the day in the garden, God would walk and speak with them.

When Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, their fellowship and connection with God ceased, and life was no longer available to them in that way. It was as God had said: 'In the day that you eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall surely die'. Adam was now dead to God. He was still alive as a person, but he was living a life that was totally cut off from the life of God that had sustained him. Adam may have stated it like this: 'I have been disobedient to God and chosen my own way, and I am now dead. The life I now live in the flesh, I live according to my own desires, reasoning and resources, and I seek to find fulfilment, satisfaction and joy in the best way I can.'

The Scripture calls this existence 'being dead in trespass and sin'. The natural man, without Christ, lives in this state. The apostle Paul also referred to natural men as 'the sons of disobedience'. As man continues to live in this state, his identity, which he received from God the Father, is damaged, spoilt, and lost. There is no natural way back from this death. However, God, who is rich in mercy, has made a way for us through the offering of Jesus Christ. This is the only way.

References:

Gen 2:17 2Co 5:14
Tit 3:5 1Ti 5:6
Gen 3:8 Rom 5:8

Further Study:

Ephesians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

How will we live?

Once we have been made alive with Christ, how will we continue to live? Shall we continue in the way of Adam, in disobedience, trespass and sin, so that we keep receiving His forgiveness and cleansing? This is the question that the apostle Paul asked the Romans in his letter to them. It is obvious that we should not continue as thieves, murderers or those who are immoral, for the judgement of God is upon those who practise such things. As the apostle Paul said to the Corinthians, 'Some of you were like this, but you have been washed, you have been sanctified, and you have been justified in the name of the Lord Jesus'. They had been redeemed and set free from their former way of life.

Shall we, then, continue in sin? 'Sin' means 'to miss the mark of the glory or identity' that God has planned for us. 'Certainly not!' the apostle Paul answered. We miss the mark when we think that we can achieve the purposes of God by our own efforts. This is what the Israelites of old said to Moses: 'Tell us all that the Lord our God says and we will do it'. They missed the mark because they thought that they could do God's will by their own efforts.

Shall we, then, live by the law - that is, the law God gave, the laws imposed on us by others, or even laws of our own making - so that we might conform to God's righteous requirement? The answer again is, 'Of course not'. Are we so foolish to think that we can complete what was begun by the Spirit of God by our own efforts? There is nothing that we can do by our own intelligence or strength, to establish God's life in us.

References:

Rom 6:1 Jer 42:20
1Co 6:11 Gal 2:16
Rom 3:23 Gal 5:13

Further Study:

1 Peter 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

The life of Paul

The apostle Paul, before he was converted, was a very religious man. He had an excellent family heritage. He thought that he was doing the will of God. This was according to the various teachings he had received in his youth, and what he thought was right. He was very zealous; he considered that he was blameless according to the law. In fact, he was an enemy of Jesus Christ as he persecuted the church of God. He was a son of disobedience.

His life was transformed when he met the Lord Jesus. Then the apostle Paul's testimony was that he had been crucified with Christ and that he no longer lived. The way he was living before meeting Christ, ceased; but being crucified with Christ was a daily reality. He was no longer a son of disobedience, like Adam, living according to his own desires and reasoning. This part of his life had been crucified with Christ. It was now dead, and had been joined to a process of life, by which his propensity to sin was removed. The life he now lived, he lived by the faith of the Son of God, who loved him and gave Himself for him.

That is the faith of Jesus. Jesus, being equal with God, didn't use any of His privileges to save His own life, and was obedient to the point of death, in order to bring us back to God. He was the Son of obedience. He revealed the life of God by laying down His life. He came to be obedient, not to do His own will. As a disciple of Christ, Paul lived this way. He didn't come as a mighty apostle. He came in what he called 'weakness and plain speech'. His life was hidden with Christ in God. He did not seek to express his own life; His labour was to reveal Christ.

References:

Gal 2:20 Heb 10:7
Col 3:3 Joh 6:38
Php 3:8 1Co 2:1

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 11**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 7

Fruit in every season

We are currently in a time when the Lord is restoring the gospel of sonship to His people. The apostle Paul described this message as a mystery which had been hidden from past generations. It is a glorious treasure that God wants us all to know and receive. One of the great jewels that has been restored to us is the understanding that a child born to a Christian parent receives the seed of God's life when they are conceived. They are a son of God from their mother's womb. However, receiving this seed is just a beginning point. God wants each child to grow up as a son of God and bear the fruit of His life in every phase of their earthly life.

The course of our life is marked by specific and predictable seasons that, in broad terms, include our birth, early childhood, pre-teen years, teenage years, young adulthood, adulthood and senior years. In each of these seasons, God expects us to bear fruit that is appropriate to our age and stage of life; fruit that is specific to our name as a son of God. For example, we note that the expression of a seven year-old son of God will be different from that of a teenager.

God makes the expression of our sonship 'beautiful in its time'. It is perfect for each season of our lives. This is what Paul was referring to when he wrote that 'as many as are perfect [mature]' have the attitude of 'forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead'. He was not saying that we are sinless; but, rather, that we should be continuing to grow as sons of God and bearing fruit 'in its season'. This authentic expression of sonship is what it means to be a firstfruits Christian.

References:

Col 1:25-27 Php 3:13-15
1Co 7:14 Psa 1:3
Ecc 3:11 Psa 92:14

Further Study:

John 15

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

The circumcision of Christ

A firstfruits believer is the 'good ground' that Jesus spoke of, which bears fruit - thirty, sixty and a hundredfold. We are able to hear, believe and obey the word of God because we are being delivered from our other way of thinking and behaving, which the apostle Paul described as 'another law' within us. This 'other law' is the sinful propensity in our flesh, which motivates us to go our own way. If we live by what we *think* is best for us, then we cannot be the son whom *God wants* us to be. So, how are we delivered of this 'other law'? Paul explained that it is by the *circumcision of Christ*.

In the season of early childhood, the circumcision of Christ is wholly administered to the life of a son of God by their Christian parents, who train them in 'the discipline and instruction of the Lord'. This training and discipline is a circumcision that teaches their children to be obedient, and cuts from their lives foolish and hurtful behaviours. Paul said that the obedience of children is pleasing to God and distinguishes them as His sons. We could say that simple obedience is the fruit that children bear in their early years.

As they continue to grow and learn, it is common for Christian children, somewhere around the age of six to eight, to desire baptism in water and in the Holy Spirit. At this age, their spiritual awareness is beginning to develop, and their conscience is being established so that they are able to distinguish between what is right and what is wrong. They are becoming mindful of the fact that God is in heaven and knows their deeds. Although their parents continue to train them in the way of obedience, they are becoming more invested in the need for repentance, forgiveness and change. Through baptism, they are personally joining the circumcision of Christ.

References:

Mar 4:20

Pro 22:15

Rom 7:23

Col 3:20

Eph 6:4

Eph 6:1-3

Further Study:

Colossians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

The example of Jesus

What sort of fruit would we expect a teenager to bear at this stage of their Christian pilgrimage? The best example, of course, is Jesus. The account of His trip to Jerusalem as a twelve year-old, to celebrate Passover, provides some helpful indicators of what a firstfruits teenager will be like. We recall that, following the feast, Jesus spent three days in the temple, sitting in the midst of the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. Luke recorded that ‘all who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers’. The fruit that Jesus was demonstrating was illumination.

A person’s natural capacity to comprehend, understand, and think about things, will be developing quite markedly as they enter their teenage years. As a son of God, their capacity to understand the things of the Spirit should also be developing. During this time, if a teenager will receive the word of God, read their Bible, and prayerfully devote themselves to what the Spirit is saying to His people, they will become illuminated concerning the way of truth. It will be like a fire that begins to burn within them, motivating them to find out more by asking questions and sharing their own understandings with others.

We can see that a person who is being illuminated by the word of God, will desire to have fellowship with others. This is what it means to ‘walk in the light’. To walk in the light is to live in a transparent way. We are open with one another about our lives, and 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. Paul described those who are being illuminated as ‘children of light’ who are ‘trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord’.

References:

Luk 2:47 Psa 119:105
1Jn 1:7 1Jn 1:4-5
Eph 5: 8, 10 2Pe 1:19

Further Study:

Daniel 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

Sonship works

When Mary asked Jesus what He was doing, staying in the temple when His parents had left for Nazareth, He said to His mother, 'Did you not know that *I must be about My Father's business?*' A teenager in a Christian family should have an emerging desire to do the works of sonship that have been prepared for them by the Father. Illumination causes a person to burn with zeal for the house of the Lord. This does not mean that a firstfruits teenager should be a religious fanatic. Instead, it means that they will be increasingly aware of the fact that they are a part of God's house and have works to do as a member of the body of Christ. As their natural abilities become increasingly apparent, they will also begin to recognise the talents and minas that the Son of God has given them from the Father, so that they can participate in doing God's will on earth.

After the events of Passover, Jesus went with His parents to Nazareth, and was subject to them. Luke wrote that Jesus 'increased in wisdom and stature, and in favour with God and men'. Like Jesus, a Christian teenager who wants to grow to firstfruits, will be subject to their parents. This means that they will continue to obey their parents and show them due honour. In fact, the honouring of our parents should continue for all of our lives.

As Christians, we are receiving 'every spiritual blessing'. Our settled, faithful, and good conduct, will be appreciated by others as they bear witness to the divine nature within us. God wants each and every one of us to be firmly established in the pathway of sonship. The apostle Peter said that God has given to us 'all things that pertain to life and godliness'. We can have great confidence in the Lord, who enables us to bear much fruit in every season of life.

References:

Exo 20:12 2Pe 1:3
Eph 1:3 Psa 69:9
Luk 2:29, 51-52

Further Study:

Romans 14

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

The road to Emmaus

On the same day that Jesus Christ had risen from the dead, two disciples were walking from Jerusalem to Emmaus, along the Emmaus road. This was approximately an eleven-kilometre journey. As they walked, they talked together about all of the things that had happened to Jesus, and they were sad. Even though, earlier that day, they had been with other disciples and had heard that Jesus was alive, they had not believed the report.

So they went on their way, discouraged and saddened. The account in the Gospel of Luke also tells us that they were reasoning together as they walked and talked. They were obviously trying to make sense of the events of the last three days. They were hoping that Jesus was going to redeem Israel, but that seemed impossible since He had been condemned to death and crucified by the chief priests and rulers. These two disciples could not see the way ahead and had lost hope.

At some point along their journey, a third man drew near and walked with them. This man was Jesus, but they did not recognise Him. He asked them what they were talking about and why they were sad. The two disciples answered, telling Him of the things that had recently happened and how they had heard that Jesus was alive, but no-one had seen Him.

At the end of the day, they invited their travelling companion, Jesus, to stay with them and they sat down to eat together. Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them. Then their eyes were opened and they knew Him; and He vanished from their sight. They understood God's covenant purpose and the pathway of life. The Scriptures had come alive – literally! They had received illumination from Jesus through the fellowship of communion – the fellowship of the body of Christ. This is a very important point.

References:

Joh 21:4 1Co 15:3-4
Isa 59:20 Luk 22:19
Act 17:3 Jer 23:29

Further Study:

Luke 24

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

The way that leads to life

The two disciples on the road to Emmaus received illumination when Jesus broke the bread of the communion with them. Immediately, even though it was almost evening, they ran all the way back to Jerusalem to tell the others. Note that, once they received illumination, the first thing they did was to return to fellowship without delay. Once they had returned, Jesus appeared again to them and to the other disciples in Jerusalem. He spoke to them, and He opened their understanding that they might comprehend the Scriptures. Although they knew the Scriptures, they had to receive illumination and understanding from Christ Himself.

We can learn a lot from the disciples' journey on the Emmaus road. We are also on a journey. Our whole life as a Christian is a journey; it is a pilgrimage. Christ has gone before us in all things and made the way for us to follow. He is the Pioneer of the journey. However, He does more than just show us the way. He equips us for the journey, and He also trains us. He has also given us the Holy Spirit to teach and guide us.

The disciples on the Emmaus road had their eyes opened to see the way that leads to life. As the Scriptures were illuminated to them, they understood the testimony of Jesus Christ. He is the way, the truth, and the life. The disciples understood the various waypoints of the journey. Waypoints are not the final destination. They are reference points along the way that help you to know that you are on the right path, and where you are on your journey. We often think of a milestone in life as a significant measure of achievement. For the Christian pilgrim, these are not just static, one-off events. Instead, they are points of illumination and understanding, as well as points of growth, faith and hope, that we continue to walk in. They are waypoints of salvation.

References:

Luk 24:44-45 Joh 20:22
Heb 2:10 Psa 119:18
Joh 14:6, 26 Act 26:18

Further Study:

Luke 13

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Waypoints of salvation

In his letter to the Roman church, the apostle Paul listed some key waypoints for the nation of Israel: the adoption, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the service of God (worship), and the promises. These were all waypoints that should have led the nation of Israel to Christ, but they 'did not seek righteousness by faith, but by the works of the law'. They had a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge. Just like the disciples on the Emmaus road, the nation of Israel did not recognise Christ, the One of whom all the Scriptures testified. Jesus explained this condition well when He said to the Pharisees, 'You do not have the Father's word abiding in you, because whom He sent, Him you do not believe. You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.'

The waypoints that Paul mentioned are still relevant to every believer. We will also be familiar with other waypoints, such as baptism into Christ, communion, the love of the brethren, the baptism of the Holy Spirit, and praying in the Spirit. Already, we should be able to identify these points growing and developing in our life: faith, virtue, knowledge, self-control, perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love. The apostle Peter wrote, 'If these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For he who lacks these things is short-sighted, even to blindness.' Blindness is the condition of the person who has no illumination. Peter also wrote that 'if you do these things, you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'.

References:

Rom 10:2
Joh 5:36-40
2Pe 1:8-11

1Co 11:24-25
1Jn 1:3
1Jn 3:14

Further Study:

Romans 9

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

Increasing in knowledge and understanding

A young child with Christian parents, should be led by their parents, and equipped and trained in the way they should go as a son of God. They need to be equipped with the armour of God and trained in the way to use it. The armour of God is truth, righteousness, the gospel of peace, faith, salvation, the word of God, prayer, and walking in the Spirit. A maturing Christian teenager should be beginning to accountably exercise themselves in the use of God's armour, which will protect them when they face conflict on their Christian journey. A teenager should be becoming more skilful in the use of their spiritual equipment. They will be increasing in knowledge and understanding of the waypoints of salvation and their importance for the journey to their heavenly home.

For example, we all need to know the importance of praying in the Spirit so that we do this every day. We also accept that the journey will involve suffering, and that it requires discipline and diligence. We set our eyes firmly on the destination, our heavenly home, and willingly follow Christ. We have a testimony of how the Lord has met us, opened our eyes, and led us in the new and living way. We are able to 'run with endurance'. We receive illumination and capacity to participate in the fellowship of the body of Christ. We greatly treasure fellowship with God and with our fellow brethren in Christ.

It is most important to recognise that we are not on our own on our Christian pilgrimage. Our brethren in Christ will be praying for us. Paul testified that we 'do not cease to pray for you, and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; that you may walk worthy of the Lord'. There is always a fellowship on the pathway that leads to life.

References:

Heb 10:20 1Co 14:15
Heb 12:1-2 Php 2:16
Col 1:9-12 2Ti 4:7-8

Further Study: Ephesians 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 19

The need for a guide

History teaches us that a pilgrimage will be much more successful when it is led by someone who knows where they are going, and what will be required to get there; i.e. *a guide*. We remember that the Lord Himself guided the children of Israel as they journeyed from Egypt to Canaan, the land of their pilgrimage. 'And the Lord went before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light, so as to go by day and night.'

It is reassuring to consider that, under the New Covenant, each one of us has been given a Guide to lead us on our Christian pilgrimage – God the Holy Spirit. And the Holy Spirit doesn't just come with us on the journey. Jesus said that the Holy Spirit would abide *with* us and dwell *in* us. Like the Father and Jesus Christ, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of every son of God. In fact, the apostle Paul noted that our bodies are actually a *temple* of the Holy Spirit who is *in* us.

There are many aspects to the Holy Spirit's work as the Guide of our Christian pilgrimage. But even before He begins to lead us, we are *sealed* with the Holy Spirit who has been given to us as the guarantee, or pledge, of our inheritance. What does this mean? 'A pledge' is simply a down-payment that is given, in advance, to guarantee the remainder of the payment at some future time. The Holy Spirit has been given to us as the pledge of our sonship. This is true because He is actually the expression of our sonship. In other words, the capacity to express identity as a son of God, according to our name, is only possible *by the Holy Spirit*.

References:

Exo 13:21

Joh 14:17

1Co 6:19

Eph 1:13-14

Joh 16:13

Further Study:

Isaiah 42

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

The Spirit of truth

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of *truth*. This is a very important point. As we listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit every day, and follow His leading, He will lead us into all truth. Of course, 'all truth' isn't every fact in the universe! 'All truth' is the truth of our name. The Holy Spirit guides us into the truth of our name so that we can walk according to the Spirit. We do this when we exercise the authority of our name according to how the Spirit is leading us. This is a crucial aspect of our Christian pilgrimage. We are reminded of the words of Paul, 'For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God'.

We further note that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification. This is because He sanctifies each person to their name, and enables them to know and appreciate the names of their brothers and sisters in Christ. By being who we are, and respecting who God has made others to be, we can maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

At several points in the New Testament, the Holy Spirit is described as the fellowship of Yahweh. Accordingly, the Holy Spirit gives us the capacity for fellowship and worship, and joins us, in one Spirit, to the fellowship of Yahweh. This is an amazing point. Paul further noted 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 into one Spirit'. This means that the Holy Spirit actually joins us to the body of Christ, and then enables us to stand firm in one Spirit with our brethren.

References:

Joh 16:13

Rom 8:14

2Co 13:14

Php 2:1

1Co 12:13

Further Study:

1 Corinthians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Our Helper

Perhaps the most significant description of the Holy Spirit in relation to the Christian pilgrimage, is that He is our *Helper*. Jesus warned that our Christian pilgrimage, the way which leads to life, would be difficult. We all know this to be true from our own experience. However, Jesus promised us, 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever ... He abides with you and will be in you'. We can be assured that the Holy Spirit is with us every step of the way, encouraging us and reminding us that we *are* sons of God, and that if we continue in the faith, we *will* make it to the end of our pilgrimage.

As our Helper, the Holy Spirit empowers us to live as sons and daughters of God, by faith. He does this by pouring the love of God into our hearts, so that we can live by the obedience of faith. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit brings to us the seven Spirits of God. This is the full capacity of everything that God is in Spirit, and is the same power through which Jesus was enabled to offer Himself. Likewise, we are enabled by the seven Spirits of God, brought to us by the Holy Spirit, to live by offering as a son of God, and thereby reveal the love of God.

In the book of Romans, Paul highlighted an amazing, yet very simple, promise. 'For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.' If you will listen to the voice of the Holy Spirit and follow His leading every day, you can be assured that you will finish your Christian pilgrimage, and you will be the sanctified son who God has named you to be, for all eternity.

References:

Mat 7:14 Heb 9:14
Joh 14:16-17 Isa 48:16-17
Rom 8:14, 16 Joh 3:34

Further Study:

Galatians 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

The fruit of the Spirit

Love is a capacity that we receive from the Holy Spirit, who pours the love of God into our hearts. It is, therefore, the expression, or fruit, of a person who has been born of the Spirit. Paul listed it as the first fruit of the Spirit, writing, 'But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law'. Paul commended the Christians in Colossae for this expression of the love of God, having been informed by Epaphras of their 'love in the Spirit'.

John said that we know that we are 'of God' because we love one another. To be 'of God' is to have received the divine nature. This is evident in our culture, or the way that we live in fellowship with one another as sons of God. This fellowship is not a state of association based on a common ideal, but is demonstrated as we give to one another according to our unique name and grace. We note from the teachings of Paul, that our sanctification is an essential element of the expression of the love of God.

In this regard, we recall that the Holy Spirit who pours the love of God into our hearts, is also the Spirit of sanctification. The love of God cannot be expressed through a projection of something other than who we were named to be in Christ. This would be a lie. The Holy Spirit, who is the Spirit of truth, guards against this, and is unyielding in His preservation of fellowship in truth. We note, for example, that it was the Holy Spirit who killed Ananias and his wife Sapphira, when they lied about the offering that they were making. This incident reminds us of the jealousy of God which is an inherent dimension of the fire of His love.

References:

Rom 5:5
Gal 5:22-23
Col 1:7-8

1Jn 4:7
Act 5:5, 10
1Pe 1:2

Further Study: 2 Thessalonians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

Our song of pilgrimage

The city of God is described in the book of Psalms as 'beautiful in elevation' and 'the joy of the whole earth'. The city of God is a heavenly city. The prophet Isaiah said that its walls are called 'salvation' and its gates are called 'praise'. The kings of the earth look upon this city and marvel. They are afraid of what they see, because God is in her palaces. This city is safe. God is her refuge, and He will establish her forever.

We know this is the same heavenly city for which the Old Testament heroes of faith searched. Their confession of faith was that they were pilgrims and strangers upon the earth. By faith, they were citizens of this heavenly city, whose 'builder and maker is God'. He has prepared this heavenly city for all those who believe. All those who believe are born into this heavenly city. This city is called the city of Zion. The apostle Paul declared that we have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, which is the heavenly Jerusalem.

The city of Zion is the city of the Lord of hosts. We ask the question: who is the Lord of hosts? The book of Psalms declares that He is the Lord strong and mighty. He is the Lord who is mighty in battle. Moses sang a song of deliverance upon the shores of the Red sea, declaring that 'the Lord is a man of war ... He is my strength and my song, and He has become my salvation'. This 'man of war' is the same Man as the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty, and the Lord mighty in battle. We know this Man in the New Testament as our Lord Jesus Christ.

References:

Isa 60:18 Heb 12:22
Heb 11:10 Psa 24:8
Psa 87:5 Exo 15:2

Further Study:

Psalm 48

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

Our strength and song

It is interesting to consider that Moses called the Lord, 'his song'. He called Him, 'his strength and his song'. The Lord is our song too. We could call Him, 'our Song of pilgrimage', as we journey to the city of Zion. Our Song of pilgrimage is victorious, and this Song is a Person; a victorious 'Man of war'. Ask yourself this question: do we really comprehend how strong and victorious our Lord is? We could even ask this same question in a different way: do we really understand how mighty and powerful is our Song of pilgrimage? We don't fully comprehend this, unless we are illumined by the Holy Spirit to see the Lord, and the greatness of His power.

The apostle Paul knew that this was the case for the church at Ephesus. They needed illumination. He wrote to them, telling them that he prayed for them unceasingly, that God would enlighten the eyes of their understanding so that they might know the exceeding greatness of the Lord's power toward them.

The Lord wants us to know the exceeding greatness of His power toward us. He wants us to know His illumination. He is the Lord of hosts. He is the Lord strong and mighty in battle. He is our Lord Jesus Christ, and the apostle Paul also called Him, 'the Lord of glory'. When the Lord of glory lights up our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are illumined. All of a sudden, we see and we know. We have a knowledge of 'the hidden wisdom' from God concerning ourselves. We see ourselves. We see who we are and who God called us to be. We see the manner of our work, the way of our walk, and the lines of our sanctification.

References:

Exo 15:2 Psa 110:2
Psa 27:1 1Th 1:5
Dan 10:1 2Co 4:7

Further Study:

Ephesians 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

Illuminated by the Lord of glory

We see who we are predestined to be as sons of God when we are illuminated by the 'Lord of glory'. His face shines upon us, lighting up our hearts and shining His light upon our pathway. As we walk according to this illumination, the Lord of glory restores us to our predestined name as sons of God with each step that we take on our journey. The psalmist wrote, 'O Lord of hosts, restore us; cause Your face to shine upon us, and we will be saved'. Think on this for a moment. It is awesome that this mighty 'Man of war' - *the Lord of hosts, the Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle, the Lord of glory* - is our *Song of pilgrimage*, who makes us victorious as we journey on the path that He has set to the city of Zion!

When we comprehend this awesomeness, our journey is certainly not a pathetic one. Rather, it is an overcoming one! We don't feel sorry for ourselves when our walk becomes difficult, for we know that He has set our path. Nor are we afraid of the enemy and the battles that he wars against us. When the Lord of glory is *our Song of pilgrimage*, we trust in Him and are not afraid because we know Him. We know that He loves us and that He is saving us. He is delivering us and bringing us safely home!

The prophet Isaiah wrote, 'I will trust and not be afraid for the Lord is my strength and song; He has also become my salvation'. God wants to put His Song in our mouths. He wants His 'Song' to become our 'new Song'; to become our new way of living. Christ is *our Song of pilgrimage*. He is our Song of deliverance. He is our Song of victory.

References:

Psa 80:19

Isa 26:4

Isa 12:2

Psa 40:3

1Co 15:57

Further Study:

Exodus 15

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 28

The song of our testimony

When the Song of the Lord becomes our Song, others will also be illumined to see Him. They, too, will see the Lord of glory. They will then fear Him as ‘the Lord strong and mighty in battle’ and, because of this, they will also put their trust in Him. The psalmist wrote, ‘He has put a new song in my mouth - praise to our God; many will see it and fear, and will trust in the Lord’. When we sing the new Song, many will see that we have a different point of reference from those in the world. Like the heroes of faith, we, too, confess that we are strangers and pilgrims on this earth. The world is no longer our dwelling place, in the sense that it is not our point of reference for how we live. It is not our home. Our home is the city of Zion. Its life and culture are our point of reference for how we align our lives.

As Christian pilgrims, we are heading toward that spiritual city, whose Builder and Maker is God. However, we must be very careful to keep to the path that the Lord has set; otherwise, we will never get there. We will be lost along the way. Paul wrote that ‘we must give earnest heed to the word we have heard, lest we drift away’. If we desire to make the journey, God’s word must be our map, and His fellowship must be our compass, as we walk circumspectly with our brethren. We sing *our Song of pilgrimage* each step of the way home. His ‘Song’ in our mouth is our ‘new Song’, and this is a Song of victory. By the mighty power of our Lord Jesus Christ, we will overcome every obstacle which stands in the way of making it all the way home.

References:

Psa 40:3 1Pe 2:11
Heb 2:1-2 1Pe 1:17
Heb 11:13

Further Study:

Psalm 34

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29