



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL
HE LEADS ME IN PATHS
PSA 23:3

JUNE 2018

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A five day devotional guide

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The obedience of Christ

The death of Christ was a righteous work that belonged to His name, and was an expression of His sanctification. His work was not, in any self-centred way, a demonstration of *His own righteousness*. He revealed the righteousness of God. How do we know this? It is because His work was demonstrated through offering, according to a will that was not His own.

Christ sanctified Himself to obedience, yet, even His obedience was by the power of the Holy Spirit. The love of God was His motivation, and this love was poured into His heart by the Holy Spirit to strengthen Him. This happened when Christ was strengthened with Eternal Spirit to offer Himself on the cross.

In the first case, Christ presented Himself to the Father, in the garden of Gethsemane, as a whole burnt offering. In this fellowship of offering, the Father made Christ an offering for sin. Paul explained that the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. Christ was made sin through obedience to the Father. Christ, having been *made* sin, had that sin cut from Him by the Father, through judgement and chastening. As Christ willingly and obediently submitted to this process, the Father ended sin and its power, in Christ.

Through His suffering, Christ learned what our obedience is, as sons of God. He did this by fully demonstrating the obedience of a son of God by the power of the Holy Spirit. The love of God and the love *for* God were poured into His heart by the Holy Spirit, giving Him the power to go all the way to the obedience of death. Through this obedience, which was to the death, He destroyed the devil and the power of death. Furthermore, He delivered all who died with Him from both the fear and the power of death. He brought life and immortality to light through this offering and gospel.

References:

Heb 9:13-14 Isa 53:10
Luk 22:43 2Ti 1:8-10
Rom 5:5 Heb 5:8

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 4

For our sake

The suffering of Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross was for our sake so that *in Him* our sinful and self-centred hearts could be circumcised. Paul highlighted the truth that Christ's offering on the cross was His circumcision. His death was a circumcision that displayed no dependencies on the energy of His flesh to demonstrate the righteous work of suffering and dying for our redemption. His death, as a circumcision, was the seal of faith for righteousness. Abraham demonstrated this same faith when he received circumcision as the seal of the covenant of faith, through which he would receive God's capacity for righteousness. In Abraham's case, it was first the faith to be adopted and then, eventually, faith to be born as a son of God.

The essence of Christ's suffering was that He endured the resistance to, and the attempted frustration of, His ministry by wicked men. He maintained His ministry work, which the Father had appointed for Him, without drawing back under the pressure of rejection and opposition. The rejection finally became very personal, involving Him in physical suffering as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross. The more intense the opposition and abuse became, the more His life overcame and was transferred to others through His suffering. That is, through suffering, His life, which was in His blood, was poured out and given to others. This culminated in a flood, or river, of life, flowing from His side after He was pierced. This was the seventh sprinkling of Christ's blood.

The circumcision of Christ revealed faith-obedience and love, through giving. It also was a vicarious work, involving chastening, that satisfied the law and established a process for change. However, Christ's offering did not circumcise the heart of every person. It was His own circumcision. In order to receive the gift of righteousness and to reign in life as a person who fulfils the law of love, each person needs to have their heart circumcised in Him.

References:

Deu 30:6
Gen 17:10-11
Rom 6:3-4

Further Study: Colossians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 5

Our participation

In the church today, there are many Christians who do not understand the circumcision of Christ. Their attempts to make sense of their sufferings demonstrate this reality. They may reason, for example, that their sufferings are because they have done something wrong and God is angry with them; or, because they have fallen out of faith and, therefore, out of favour with God; or, because the devil has gained a foothold in their life and is causing them pain. Of course, people may actually suffer for these reasons. However, these are not the reasons for the sufferings that a son of God experiences. The Scriptures teach that the sufferings of everyone who is in Christ are their participation in the circumcision of Christ.

We must have a heart for love and fellowship. This is the meaning of a 'circumcised heart'. A person with a circumcised heart loves the Lord with all their heart, soul, mind and strength, and also loves their neighbour as themselves. This means that they are able to serve and relate in fellowship with others according to their sanctification.

Our heart needs to be circumcised, but we *cannot* circumcise or change our own heart. King David recognised this reality, and prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and *renew* a steadfast spirit within me'. A clean heart is formed in us after we are born again and proceed to become a new creation. The heart is regenerated and recreated by being joined to the circumcision of Christ – that is, His death, burial and resurrection.

It is important to recognise that new birth, in and of itself, is not eternal life. The parable of the sower and the seed teaches us that eternal life is the *fruit* that comes from the seed that is received into a person's heart when they are born from above. This fruit can only be brought forth when we join the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision.

References:

Mar 12:29-31

Deu 10:12

Deu 30:6

Psa 51:10

Col 2:11

Mat 13:19-23

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 11

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

Baptised into His death

We learn from Jesus' parable that after a person has been born from above by the prevenient grace of God, they will experience tribulation and persecution because of the word. This is the word of their sanctification. The sufferings that they experience reveal the stones of the other law within their heart. At this point, the Lord Himself is giving a son of God an opportunity to join the fellowship of His circumcision so that sin and the other law can be removed from them. Through this process, they can put down deep roots, draw from the wells of salvation, and bring forth the good fruit of their sanctification. The outcome of this process is eternal life.

If a person does not join the circumcision of Christ, through baptism, the covenant of sonship is lost. Their Christian experience will be little more than religious observance in the pursuit of their own righteousness. This describes a heart that is like wayside ground. Baptism is both our commitment and our action of fellowship, by which we join ourselves to Christ's offering and circumcision. It is by resurrection that sons of God, having been born again while dead in trespasses and sins, are brought back from the death of sin. We are made alive as the blood that flowed from Christ's wounds continues to wash and heal us from our self-centredness and sin.

Christ's blood is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. It was this blood that brought Christ, the great Shepherd, back from the dead. This blood brings the great Shepherd's flock back from the death of sin, with Him, as they follow the leading of the Spirit and reject walking in their former, self-centred manner. Paul described this former way of walking as being 'after the flesh', and explained that it leads only to death. As the sheep of God's flock follow Christ, and avail themselves of His blood, they are made complete in every good work to do the will of the Father.

References:

Mar 4:16-17 Psa 95:7-8
Heb 13:20-21 Gal 6:8
Rom 8:13-14

Further Study:

Romans 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

A good conscience

Under the Old Covenant, the children of Israel endeavoured to obtain life through their own ability to keep the law. This led only to condemnation. Now everyone who joins Christ's suffering, dying and death is being freed from the power and deceitfulness of sin. It is being removed from them, and they are receiving the Spirit of life to fulfil the will of God, in Christ. Sin has no place in them. It can find no traction in them, and it cannot exercise power over them as they walk after the Spirit.

Christ's circumcision was an action of *obedience*. It revealed the faith of the Son of God. We join the fellowship of Christ's suffering through baptism. In Him, our sinful disobedience becomes His. As it is judged and removed through chastening, sin is being overcome by His obedience. His obedience is being transferred to us. His obedience is to love the Father and to love the brethren. Making this point, Paul wrote, 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'.

Importantly, once we have joined the circumcision of Christ, and our heart is being circumcised, this process becomes the fundamental basis of our evangelism and ministry to others. Our participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings has less to do with our sin, and more to do with our capacity to minister the life of God to others. This is why Paul said, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, for the sake of His body, which is the church.' Similarly, he testified, 'For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.' In this way, the good that we have received in the fellowship of Christ's afflictions is triumphing and overcoming the evil in others.

References:

Lev 18:4-5

Rom 12:21

Gal 2:20

Col 1:24

2Co 4:11-12

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 8

Sin and the other law

The circumcision of Christ is the process through which sin and the other law is removed from our heart. To fully comprehend this operation, it is important to understand the nature of sin and the other law.

The other law is a strange, aberrant kind of motivation that happens within the deepest part of a person's being when God's law exerts its influence upon them. The effect of the other law within a person is that it stops them from fulfilling the law of God. For the Israelites under the Old Covenant, and many people who call themselves Christians, when God's law calls for obedience to fulfil some standard of righteousness, sin wakes up within them and proposes alternatives to their obedience and love for God. They find that, because of the power of sin that is within them, they are constantly contrary to the word of God when it is proclaimed to them. With their mind, they agree with the common sense of the law of God, but in their heart, they are not subject to the law of God.

As Christians, when we sin, particularly while agreeing with God's word with our minds, it is not we who are motivating ourselves to sin, but it is sin that dwells within us that motivates us toward selfish activity. In Paul's words, 'I would not have known sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet." *But sin, taking opportunity by the commandment, produced in me all manner of evil desire.* For apart from the law sin was dead.' Often, this behaviour is quite illogical. We are ashamed of it.

The Father puts sin to death in us by destroying sin's point of traction in our life. This point of traction is the self-centredness of our other law within us. Through circumcision, the Father is putting sin to death in our flesh, as the other law is being cut out of our heart.

References:

Rom 7:7-8
Rom 4:14-15
Rom 8:5

Rom 5:5
Heb 7:19

Further Study:

Romans 7

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

Weak through the flesh

The law, if fulfilled, gives us access to God's life and blessing. As the Lord said through Moses, 'You shall therefore keep My statutes and My judgements, which if a man does, he shall *live* by them: I am the Lord.' The law was meant to give life but, if a person breaks the law, they come under its wrath and judgement. Addressing this point, Paul wrote, 'For all who have sinned without the law will also perish without the law, and all who have sinned under the law will be judged by the law; for it is not the hearers of the law who are just before God, but the doers of the law will be justified'. That is, they eat the fruit of their attitudes and behaviours.

If the word of the law could give life, why did we need Christ to come into the world? The problem is not with the law. It is holy and good. The problem is that it was weak through our flesh. We are unable to keep the law, even though we agree with it. This is because of the strange combination of our self-centredness and motivations of sin. These fallen influences lead us away from the love of God and love for our neighbour. Instead of love being the motivator of our life, covetousness is provoked within us. Christ came to pay the penalty for our sin and to pioneer a pathway upon which a son of God could journey, in Him, and be delivered from these fallen influences.

We observe that the motivation of sin provokes *covetousness* within us. That is, it provokes in us evil desires of every kind. The motive is not *us*; it is *sin in us*. We know this because, with our mind, we desire to serve God. However, the other law is at war with the law of our mind, and makes us a prisoner of sin. The outcome is that we feel condemned.

References:

Lev 18:5
Rom 2:12-13
Rom 8:3-4

Gal 3:21
Rom 3:20

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 2

Proverbs 12

Covetousness

The command 'do not covet' was the final statement of the Ten Commandments. It is the motivation that a person exhibits if they do not love the Lord their God, or their neighbour as themselves. Covetousness results from the judgements that we make about ourselves and others. It is the desire to have something that is not ours. Because we covet, we steal from others, commit adultery, murder, etc. Jesus was highlighting this point, when He said, 'Whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has *already* committed adultery with her in his heart.' In other words, coveting a relationship with another woman is the motivation within a man's heart to commit adultery. With this in mind, we remember that 'out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.'

Paul, also, noted that the word of God declares, 'You shall not covet.' Yet, sin, taking opportunity through our fleshly efforts to fulfil the word of God, produces in us 'all manner of evil desire', such as stealing, adultery and murder. Covetousness is the fundamental motivation to act in these ways, which brings a person under the judgement of the law.

Why do we still struggle with the motivations of our flesh if we have been born with the divine nature, been baptised into Christ, and have touched the complete righteousness that was revealed through Christ's offering? It is because the process that we joined through baptism needs to be outworked in us for the *whole of our life*. That is, we need to avail ourselves of the blood of Christ that flowed from the wounds associated with His circumcision. This is how we are 'saved by His life'.

References:

Exo 20:17
Mat 5:27-28
Mat 15:18-20

Rom 7:7-8
1Jn 2:15-16

Further Study:

Luke 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

Christ dealt with the law

The *first* thing that Christ did to save us was that *He took the law out of the way*. He did this so we no longer needed to relate to the law in the manner demanded under the Old Covenant. The law was a hindrance to us because of the self-centredness of our heart. It brought us under judgement because we were unable to keep the law. Christ removed the law and nailed it to the cross.

Further to this, we died with Christ under the law because of its sentence upon Him on our account. Christ bore the full judgement and penalty of the law on our account. Its judgement was death. Christ took our guilt upon Himself as a sin offering. He was able to bear its full penalty and to satisfy its demands. Then, by dying, He ended our relationship with the law. We no longer have to live by relating to the law in our own strength. Death ended this relationship. We are no longer bound by the law covenant as the means by which we should live. In the New Covenant, we now relate to the law in Christ.

A person who cries, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' has realised that they are unable to circumcise their own heart. They recognise that they cannot fulfil God's law, which is His word. They are crying out to the Lord for deliverance from their sin and self-centredness. The Father answers the cry of the wretched Christian by saying that, in Christ, the judgement that was apportioned under the Old Covenant has ended. This is because He has reconnected us to the law in a different way. Furthermore, the Father circumcises our heart, in Christ. All that a son of God needs to do is to remain connected to the circumcision of Christ. This is what it means to 'walk in the Spirit'.

References:

Col 2:13-14
Rom 7:4,24
Rom 10:4
Gal 3:12-13

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

Walking by the Spirit

A person who has joined the circumcision of Christ lives by the faith that they receive from the word of God. When God calls them to do something, they are able to do it because He grants them faith to believe and to obey His word. By faith, they accept that God has chosen their works for the day, and they recognise that these works are a participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Participation in this fellowship will involve suffering. This is the circumcising element of Christ's offering. Offering is the means by which the life of God is multiplied to us and in us. Circumcision is the means by which our coveting self-centredness is removed from us. It is this self-centredness that causes us to become wretched and condemned.

A person who is walking by the Spirit has come into Christ and has joined the fellowship of His offering and circumcision. This is what Paul meant, when he wrote, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are *in Christ Jesus*, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit'. The sons of God who are in Christ no longer experience condemnation, because they are no longer in the wretched state of attempting to circumcise their own heart. This is because the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made them free from the law of sin and death.

As our self-centredness is circumcised from us, the propensity to be connected to sin is removed. Sin has no purchase or power in our life, and remains dead. As we walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, setting our mind this way, all things are working together for our good. The body of sin is being put to death, and we are changing from glory to glory into the image of Christ's sonship.

References:

Rom 10:17
Rom 8:1-2,28
Gal 6:8
2Co 3:18

Further Study: Galatians 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 15

Taking up our cross

Paul explained that the whole of creation is groaning, waiting for the revealing of the sons of God. In other words, because of sin, the whole world has been subject to pain and suffering. The suffering of people in the world is the consequence of time and chance. In contrast, the sons of God do not suffer because of time and chance. Their sufferings are *appointed* to them by God. Peter declared that those ‘who suffer according to the will of God shall *entrust their souls* to a faithful Creator’. They entrust themselves to God in prayer.

People who have been born of God and filled with the Spirit are able to join the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the prayer meeting that was revealed in the garden of Gethsemane. In this prayer meeting, we are equipped for each day that the Father has prepared for us. Every day, our life involves doing the works of sonship that the Father predestined for us. With these works come the sufferings that He has appointed for our good. Each day of our life, we are able to know that everything that we engage in, and that befalls us, is working together for our sanctification, which Paul called ‘our good’.

In Christ, the righteousness of God is revealed as we do the works that the Father has prepared for us. A person who believes and lives this truth no longer pursues their own righteousness. Their work, which is unto the Lord, *is no longer a grind for them*. This is because their works are an expression of God’s life, rather than a means of finding and expressing themselves. God’s righteousness endures forever, and the expression of His righteousness in the new heavens and earth will be limitless.

References:

Rom 8:20-21,28

Mat 6:33-34

Ecc 9:11

1Pe 4:19

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 9

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 18

A good day

We demonstrate faith when we accept that it is the wisdom of God for His will to be achieved through our participation in Christ's offering and circumcision. In other words, it is the wisdom of God that He has appointed particular circumstances and sufferings for us each day. This is what it means to 'suffer according to the will of God'. These sufferings include the small issues of life that cause us frustration and agitation. This principle of the cross is foolishness to those who are walking according to the flesh and who endeavour to avoid suffering. Sadly, the inevitable sufferings of these people are causing them to perish.

Earlier in his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote that tribulation produces patience in the sons of God who, by faith, have received their introduction into the fellowship of offering. The tribulation is not a blessing, but the patience of God that is produced in a son of God as they suffer with Christ, is the blessing. For this reason, when a Christian is having 'a bad day' in faith, it is a good day!

What does this look like, practically? Our response in the midst of our daily sufferings determines whether or not the momentary and light afflictions that we experience during the day are working an eternal weight of glory for us. If we become angry, or view ourselves as being a victim, our suffering causes us to fatigue and, eventually, to die. However, if, by faith, we accept that our sufferings are from the hand of the Father, as a participation in the circumcision of Christ, we are able to overcome the world within us. When we set our mind this way, we recognise that we are unable to circumcise our own heart. In prayer, we commit to walking after the Spirit.

References:

1Pe 4:19

1Co 1:18

2Co 4:17

Rom 8:1-4

Jas 1:2

Further Study:

Romans 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

Coming to the throne of grace

When we join the prayer meeting of Gethsemane, by the Spirit, we are joined to the fellowship of Yahweh's offering. One drop of blood, from one pore of His body, represents the difficulties that we will experience during the day as we are led by the Spirit in the way that the Father has prepared for us. As we pray in the same way that Christ did, we receive grace for our works, as well as grace to endure the difficulties of the day that the Lord has prepared for us.

Jesus invited His disciples to watch and pray with Him so that they would not enter into the temptation of viewing their experiences, and particularly their suffering, to be outside of the will of God. Having received God's word, a son of God is able, by faith, to participate in the fellowship of this prayer meeting. Through prayer each day, they receive grace to take up their cross and to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This is what it means to 'come boldly to the throne of grace' to obtain mercy and grace 'to help in time of need'.

The Greek word translated as 'help', means 'a rope or chain for frapping, or binding together, a vessel'. We are to obtain grace for a life of offering that *binds* the fellowship of Christ's body together. This is fundamental to walking worthy of our calling as sons of God, and demonstrates that the love of God is being poured into our heart. As Paul exhorted his readers, 'I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, endeavouring to *keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace*.'

References:

Rom 8:26-27 Eph 4:1-3
Rom 5:1-3 Heb 13:6
Heb 4:16

Further Study: Philippians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 20

The gifts of the Spirit in body ministry

Understanding what it means for each son of God to participate in the offering and circumcision of Christ highlights the significance of the *gifts of the Spirit*. Paul said that ‘the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each [member of the body of Christ] *for the profit of all*’. At each communion service, God, by the Holy Spirit, ministers the grace of life to each member of the body through gifts of revelation, discernment and power. As they receive this ministry, each son of God is enabled to express the living and dying of the Lord Jesus Christ in the week to come. For some people, the gifts are equipping them to endure in their suffering and to understand what the Lord is addressing in the midst of their suffering. For others, the gifts are ministering the grace of life to sustain them for their works of offering.

Paul identified various gifts that may be given in body ministry. These include words of prophecy, words of wisdom, and words of knowledge. They also include gifts of faith, gifts of healing, and the working of miracles. A person who has gathered to the communion table may receive, for example, a word of knowledge regarding the resolution of a particular matter that they have been negotiating and enduring in the will of the Lord.

Others may receive a word of faith so they are able to present themselves for obedience in a particular work or family situation. There may be a word of healing to someone else who has come to the end of a season of health difficulties that have been for their good. In summary, the ministry of the body at the communion table, through the gifts of the Spirit, is equipping each member for their particular participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ.

References:

2Co 4:7-10

1Pe 4:10

Rom 12:4-5

Eph 4:15-16

1Co 14:26

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

The blessing of Abraham in every house

The apostle John explained that *'everyone who loves is born of God and knows God'*. We know that our hearts need to be circumcised so we can love the Lord and love our brethren in Christ. John's statement highlights the importance of receiving the circumcision of Christ to our living and growing as a son of God. To obtain our sonship in this way is to receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Paul called this promise *'the blessing of Abraham'*.

We recall that Yahweh called Abraham to leave his country, his relatives and his father's house, in order to receive a blessing from God. This was the promised blessing of becoming a son of God, which was the *goal* of God's Everlasting Covenant. The Lord said that He would make Abraham a blessing, and that *all the families of the earth would be blessed in him*.

We see that families are central to the fulfilment of God's Everlasting Covenant plan. As it was for Abraham, in order to obtain the blessing of sonship, there are worldly and family cultures that we must leave, and there is a godly culture that must be established within our families. The Lord made it clear, through His word to Abraham, that this culture could only become ours if we became a part of Abraham's family.

A person becomes a part of the household of Abraham when they receive and live by the faith of God that comes by hearing the word that is preached to them. In this faith, they must join the *circumcision* that Abraham received, in type, as the *seal* of the Everlasting Covenant. God said to Abraham that He would establish His Everlasting Covenant with him and his children; that is, those who have received the same faith.

References:

1Jn 4:7

Gen 12:1-3

Gal 2:20

Rom 10:17

Rom 4:16

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

Two types of discipline

The apostle Paul exhorted Christian fathers, saying, ‘Do not provoke your children to wrath, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord.’ Paul was drawing their attention to two modes of parenting. One approach leads to wrath, and the other is ‘of the Lord’. The fathering that is ‘of the Lord’ connects a child to the circumcision of Christ.

Paul further highlighted the distinction between a fallen, or earthly, mode of parenting, and the circumcision of Christ in families, when he wrote, ‘We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time *as seemed best to them*, but He disciplines us *for our good*, so that we may share His holiness.’ Paul was explaining that parents can chasten their children from the basis of their own fleshly perspective. The English translations of this passage of Scripture advance the proposition that earthly discipline causes children to respect their parents. However, the Greek word that is translated ‘respect’ can equally be translated as ‘shame’.

Evidently, discipline that is based on earthly principles does not cultivate the divine nature in children, and does not, therefore, result in the good of their eternal reward. This approach to discipline and instruction may yield a child’s compliance with the standards of behaviour that seem best to their parents, but it does not promote the child’s sonship. A child’s compliance is simply a projection that clothes the shame of their pursuit of good and their avoidance of evil. It is the outcome of having been trained to live by the other law. The parents, who themselves are living by the principles of the flesh, view their children’s compliance as the evidence of their good family culture. Parents who live this way are often concerned about how they, and their children, are being perceived by others.

References:

Eph 6:4
Heb 12:7,9-10
Deu 6:6-7
Gen 18:19

Further Study: Deuteronomy 11

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

The foundation for parents

Why does earthly discipline result in shame? It is because it is based in the application of the knowledge of good and evil. We recall that Adam and Eve's desire to be the source of what was good or evil for themselves, resulted in mankind's nakedness and shame. Parents who live by this same principle will perceive a standard of 'good' to which their children should attain. The children are rewarded when their behaviours and attitudes reflect this good, but are punished when their deeds are perceived as evil. The children are taught to pursue what is good and to avoid what is evil. Living by this principle of the flesh will bring the children into bondage to the law of sin. We see, then, that training children to live according to the flesh is how parents provoke their children to wrath.

In contrast, the discipline of God the Father conforms a child to their name and to the works of faith that belong to their righteousness as a son of God. The Father's discipline in a child's life is the circumcision of Christ. Christ's circumcision is the discipline and instruction of the Lord. Christian parents are called to raise their children in this manner. How is this different from earthly discipline, which leads to shame, and provokes a child to wrath?

The fundamental foundation for raising children in the discipline and instruction of the Lord, is for the parents themselves to be receiving the discipline and instruction of the Lord in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. In this fellowship, parents are being delivered from their fleshly propensities, including their earthly approaches to the discipline of their children. They are also being filled with the love of God and the life of Christ. Because they are joined to Christ's offering and circumcision, they are able to join their children to this offering and fellowship.

References:

Eph 6:4
Rom 7:22-23
Pro 4:1-4
2Ti 1:5

Further Study: Colossians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 26

True discipline

Christian parents who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, are walking in the Spirit. Their engagement with their children is based in the love of God, which is being poured into their heart by the Holy Spirit. As they continue to walk in the Spirit each day, Christian parents can receive insight and wisdom from God for the nurture and admonition of their children. They seek this spiritual wisdom through prayer and fellowship, for the sake of their children's sanctification. This is because they honour the fact that God is the Father of their children's spirits. This is in contrast to the fleshly approach to raising children where the parents are more concerned about what the children's behaviour says about *themselves*.

Of course, Christian parents will teach their children to be obedient, because obedience is fundamental to sonship. However, obedience is different from compliance, because obedience is a capacity that is given to a person, *in Christ*. This is why Paul wrote, 'Children, obey your parents *in the Lord*, for this is right. "Honour your father and mother," which is the first commandment with promise: "that it may be well with you and you may live long on the earth".' Children are in the Lord on account of the faith of their parents, the reality of which is demonstrated by the parents' participation in the offering and circumcision of Christ.

There are children who are raised in fleshly homes who know the Lord for themselves and choose to walk according to the Spirit. Similarly, some children from godly homes will choose their own way, rather than their sanctification as a son of God. This simply highlights the reality that God gives every individual the opportunity and accountability to choose what He has chosen for them. Nevertheless, our approach to parenting can either cultivate the divine nature in our children, or it can impede their sonship.

References:

Heb 12:9

Pro 22:6

Psa 78:3-4

Deu 4:9

Psa 34:11

Further Study:

Ephesians 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

Discipleship in the church

The apostle Paul warned the Ephesian leaders that there would be men among them who would speak perverse things and *draw away disciples* after themselves. In this regard, there is evidently a form of discipleship that can exist within a church that wars against true discipleship to Christ. Elders and leaders who expect the members of their congregation to conform to the standards of righteousness that they teach, are attempting to disciple Christians *as they see fit*. These leaders measure the success of their ministry by the extent to which their congregants conform to the cultural standards they proclaim. Attention and affirmation are the reward for people's conformity to the doctrine proclaimed. Those who do not comply are confronted, counselled, and may even be discounted. Paul called such teaching, 'the ministry of condemnation'.

Ministry from this basis does not achieve the righteousness of God. True discipleship should join a believer to a daily participation in the circumcision of Christ. Jesus taught His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and *take up his cross daily* and follow Me'.

In the daily fellowship of Christ's circumcision, a believer is enabled to walk by the Spirit, rather than according to the principles of the flesh. They receive faith at the same time as they receive the word of God and, in faith, participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship, they receive the life of God and are able to minister His life to others. They are enabled, by the Spirit, to love the Lord their God and to love their brethren. Jesus said, 'By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another'.

References:

Act 20:29-30
Luk 9:23
Joh 13:35

Further Study:

Matthew 10

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 28

Fleshly parenting

Christ was *cut off* from God when the Father made His soul an offering for sin in the garden of Gethsemane. To be 'cut off' means that He became dead to God. As Christ suffered at each stage of His journey, He endured the full brunt of rejection as a sinner by God; the judgement and wrath of the law that punished Him for our sake; the rejection and abuse of mankind; and the horrible abuse and torment that is the portion of the demonic powers of darkness.

The Son of Man journeyed in full faith, strengthened by the Holy Spirit to accomplish our redemption and to endure the circumcision that we needed. This circumcision was necessary in order that self-centredness could be cut from our lives. Because of the fall of mankind, sin and self-centredness have become another law within us that controls our life.

As Christ suffered, and His blood flowed from His body at each circumcising event, His blood, which contained His life, brought Him back, or redeemed Him, from death. Through His wounds, His blood atoned for our sin, then ministered His life to us. This work of redeeming mankind was completed when Jesus declared from the cross, 'It is finished!' At that point, Christ had fully come back from the death of sin by the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit, and by the shedding of His own blood.

The seventh and final wound, which He received after He had committed His Spirit to the Father and had physically died, opened the way for us to join the fellowship of His offering. This new and living way is our fellowship with Yahweh, which Paul identified as being in the Most Holy Place. We enter the Most Holy Place through His pierced side. In Christ, we are able to become the righteousness of God.

References:

Luk 2:49
Gen 25:28
Mal 4:6

Luk 1:17
2Pe 1:2-3

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Mark 7

Proverbs 29

