

Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

MARCH 2018

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The righteousness of faith

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul communicated his earnest desire for the nation of Israel to be saved. As he outlined his concern for them, he described the reason for their fallen state. He acknowledged that they had a *zeal for God*, but not in accordance with knowledge. What was it that they did not know? Paul said that they did not know about *God's righteousness*, which he called, 'the righteousness of faith'. This was evident because they sought to establish their own righteousness through the keeping of the law, rather than by subjecting themselves to the righteousness of God.

Paul was explaining the plight of the Israelites to highlight that this is a dilemma that every believer must negotiate. There are many Christians who have a zeal for God, yet their preoccupation is their *own righteousness*, rather than the righteousness that comes by faith. This way of living leads only to condemnation.

Paul quoted the words of Moses to instruct us concerning the righteousness of faith. He said that the righteousness of faith speaks as follows: 'Do not say in your heart, "Who will ascend into heaven?" (that is to bring Christ down), or "Who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead).' Rather, the righteousness of faith says, 'The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart – that is, the word of faith which we are preaching'. These were the same words that Moses spoke to the children of Israel as they prepared to enter the land of promise. The key point for the children of Israel, and for each one of us, is to receive the word of faith. Faith enables us to join the fellowship of offering, through which the righteousness of God is revealed.

References:

Rom 1:16-17

2Co 5:21

Php 3:8-9

Deu 30:11-14

Isa 51:6-8

Further Study:

Romans 10

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

Beginning with Moses

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul did not quote the words of Moses simply for illustration, or to reinforce a point. Paul was revealing that the gospel he preached was the same message that Moses had declared to Israel. We recall that Israel was called the ‘church in the wilderness’. Writing to the Hebrews, Paul said, ‘For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it’.

Jesus Himself proclaimed the New Covenant message from the writings of Moses. He said to Cleopas and his companion, “Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?” *And beginning at Moses* and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself.’ Moses had prophesied that the Lord would circumcise the hearts of His people. Jesus was revealing that His death, or circumcision, was the means by which the Lord would circumcise the hearts of those who had been born again as sons of God.

The major lesson we learn from the nation of Israel, who lived under the Old Covenant, is that it is not possible to circumcise our own hearts to fulfil the Law of God. We recall that the children of Israel said, ‘All that the Lord has spoken we will do!’ The Lord said to them that in order to keep the law, which was summed up in the command to love the Lord their God with all their heart and soul, and love their neighbour as themselves, they would need to circumcise their heart. They did not recognise, nor accept, their inability to circumcise their own heart. As Moses prophesied, we need the Lord to circumcise our hearts.

References:

Joh 8:56
Act 7:37-38
Heb 4:1-2

Deu 30:6
Jer 9:25-26

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Luke 24

Proverbs 6

The law was relational

The Lord stated that if the children of Israel were able to keep the law, it would give them eternal life. Paul noted this point in his letter to the Romans, writing, ‘The commandment, which was to result in life [zoē], proved to result in death for me’. In the book of Deuteronomy, we also learn that keeping the law was *righteousness*. Specifically, Moses said to the children of Israel, ‘It will be *righteousness for us* if we are careful to observe all this commandment before the Lord our God, just as He commanded us’. The Lord said to Israel that if they kept the word of the covenant, it would give them life. Yet, the song of Moses reveals that the children of Israel *did not have a heart to keep the law*.

To understand why the children of Israel were unable to obtain the righteousness of God and the blessing of eternal life, we must first recognise that the law was not intended as a set of decrees to which God expected the children of Israel to measure themselves. *The law was relational*. Quoting the book of Deuteronomy, Jesus said, ‘The first of all the commandments is: “Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.” This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”.’

Recognising that the law was relational, we note that when God sought to make covenant with Israel, He was desiring that righteousness would be revealed because of their love for Him and their love for one another. This righteousness would be revealed only as they joined the fellowship of Yahweh, through offering.

References:

Lev 18:4-5

Rom 7:10

Deu 6:24-25

Luk 10:25-28

Luk 11:42

Further Study: Deuteronomy 32**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 7

The circumcision of the heart

Yahweh invited the people into fellowship with Him. He said that He would love the children of Israel, but He would not tolerate their idolatry. In order to love the Lord their God and to keep His Covenant, the Israelites would need to circumcise their hearts. Moses specifically said to the people, ‘The Lord delighted only in your fathers, to love them; and He chose their descendants after them, you above all peoples, as it is this day. Therefore, *circumcise the foreskin of your heart*, and be stiff-necked no longer.’ By ‘circumcision’, he meant that there is something in the heart of people, as a consequence of the fall of mankind, which needs to be cut out of them. This is because it is detrimental to them. It prevents them from living according to the way God has planned for them.

A person with a circumcised heart is not merely trying to fulfil the ten commandments. If they have a circumcised heart, they will love the Lord with all of their heart, mind, soul and strength, and they will love their neighbour as themselves. The desire and capacity for fellowship and offering is the fruit of a circumcised heart. Unless the children of Israel circumcised their hearts to love the Lord, they would not fulfil the righteousness of the law. Instead, they would treat the law as a religious science, from which they expected to receive prosperity as a blessing. This is what they did. Jesus said to the Jews, ‘You search [scientifically study] 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 [for fellowship] that you may have life.’ They had made *the ethics of the law* a code for life that supported their own religious aspirations and idolatry. We see this principle in many of the religions of the world today.

References:

Deu 10:15-16

Joh 5:38-40

Psa 16:11

Mat 23:37

Hos 11:7

Further Study: Deuteronomy 30

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

The prophecy of Moses

Before the Israelites entered the promised land, Moses said that they would experience great abundance. He exhorted them not to forget the Lord their God when they had eaten and were full, had built beautiful houses, and their flocks had multiplied in the land. He warned them to not say in their heart, 'My power and the might of my hand have gained me this wealth'. Moses prophesied that the outcome of forgetting the Lord through the pursuit of self-righteousness, would be idolatry, and that the people would perish.

Moses foretold that the Israelites would be driven from the promised land as the consequence of their idolatry. However, he also said that if they would return in repentance to the Lord their God, and obey His voice with all their heart and soul, the Lord would bring them back from their captivity. Significantly, Moses prophesied that '*the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, that you may live*'.

Moses was referring to a *new covenant* that the Lord would make with His people. In the same way, the prophet Ezekiel declared on behalf of Yahweh, 'I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.' Like Moses, Ezekiel was prophesying regarding the circumcision of our hearts by the circumcision of Christ.

References:

Deu 30:1-3, 6
Eze 36:24-27
Deu 6:3
Eze 11:19-20

Further Study: Deuteronomy 8

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 9

What did Abraham find?

We know the nation of Israel did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. They were unwilling and unable to circumcise their own hearts. So how did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob succeed in obtaining the righteousness of God? Paul also considered this subject, when he wrote, ‘What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?’ In short, Abraham found the righteousness of faith.

By receiving the word of Yahweh, faith came to Abraham. He was strengthened and was able to fear God and believe His word. Because Abraham believed God, it was reckoned to him as righteousness. He was able to love the Lord with all his heart, soul, mind and strength. This capacity for love was evident through Abraham’s obedience to join Yahweh in the fellowship of offering.

Abraham received circumcision as a sign and seal of the righteousness of faith, that he had received while still uncircumcised. He continued in the righteousness of faith, all the way to the point of offering up his son, Isaac. Importantly, when Abraham offered up Isaac, he was offering up what God had promised to him. God had accounted righteousness to Abraham because he had believed the word of God that promised him a multitude of sons through Isaac. If God had not raised Isaac from the dead, the promised blessing would not have been fulfilled. However, Abraham believed for life out of death. He believed for a *resurrection*.

Isaac walked in the obedience of faith with his father, Abraham. At the command of Yahweh, they journeyed together up the mountain of Moriah, where Isaac became a living sacrifice. Isaac was bound by Abraham and laid upon the altar. When Abraham raised the knife to slay his son, the heart of Isaac was circumcised to love the Lord with all of his heart. Isaac was, figuratively, raised from the dead as he came off the altar.

References:

Rom 4:1-3
Gen 17:10-11
Rom 4:9-11

Heb 11:17-19
Gen 22:10-12

Further Study:

Genesis 15

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

The circumcision of Jacob's heart

God circumcised from Abraham's heart the desire to control Isaac and to pursue any of his own religious ambitions through his son. Abraham did not seek to control, or influence, Isaac's destiny to ensure that the prophecy concerning his son would be fulfilled. This fallen and self-centred mode of fatherhood had been removed from him. His unwavering obedience to God's word, which called him to offer Isaac on Mount Moriah, demonstrated this reality.

In contrast to Abraham, Rebekah sought to ensure that the prophetic word of God concerning Jacob would come to pass through her self-sourced interventions. Fearful that her favoured son would fail to receive the blessing of Abraham, Rachel said to Jacob, 'Now therefore, my son, *obey my voice according to what I command you*'. Her parenting approach stoked the sibling rivalry of Jacob and Esau, and promoted a fleshly understanding of the blessing of God. Consequently, Jacob needed to leave his father's house. He was only able to receive the blessing of a new name and nature through the circumcision of his heart, by faith.

Jacob received a word from God that called him to believe and receive the Everlasting Covenant, which had been committed to his father, Isaac, and his grandfather, Abraham. Jacob believed and received this word. His response of faith was to pay tithes of all that he possessed. When he wrestled with the Lord, Jacob's heart was circumcised to love the Lord and to love his brother, Esau. He was chastened and made weak in his body, and through this process his heart was being circumcised. He received a new name that was consistent with his new nature. He was now called 'Israel', which means 'Prince with God'. As one who was with God, he was a participant in the fellowship of Yahweh.

References:

Gen 25:23
Gen 32:24-25, 28
Gen 33:3, 10-11

Further Study:

Genesis 32

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

The righteousness of God is revealed

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob were not looking for physical blessings in this lifetime. Along with the other heroes of faith, they were looking for a heavenly city whose builder and maker is God. Their desire was to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem. This would be their eternal home. Here, they would live and have everlasting fellowship with the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We can rejoice that we have now come to the heavenly Jerusalem as participants in Christ's offering. The offering of Christ has revealed a circumcision, through which our hearts can be circumcised to love the Lord and our neighbour in the fellowship of Yahweh. In this fellowship, the righteousness of God is revealed.

Under the New Covenant, a person receives Christ's righteousness, which is the righteousness of God, as a gift. This is called 'the righteousness of faith'. Next, they receive God's capacity to do the works that belong to their sonship. They are forgiven, justified and born with the divine nature as a son of God. Moreover, they are joined, through baptism, to a fellowship in the afflictions of Christ. These sufferings of Christ are defined as His circumcision.

In this fellowship, Christ's sufferings are the discipline of the Father in the life of a son of God. The chastening of the Lord is from His disciplining, circumcising hand. It brings forth the peaceable fruit of righteousness. Our heart is circumcised so we love the Lord with all of our heart, and we love our friends in the body of Christ as ourselves. We are given a heart to serve and to relate according to our sanctification, as the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Fellowship and offering, motivated by love, demonstrate that our heart has been circumcised and changed to the heart of a son of God.

References:

Heb 11:9-10

Col 2:11-12

Rom 5:5

Rom 1:16-17

Rom 6:4-5

Further Study:

Romans 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

The wonder of Christ's death

Christ's death was a righteous work, but it was *not of His own making*. His offering was according to the will of the Father. The Son declared, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, *not My will, but Yours be done*'. Christ was revealing the hope of righteousness, which was the Father's desire to bring forth many sons of God.

Through Christ's offering, the gift of righteousness was made available to those who would receive it. As Paul wrote, 'For if by the one man's offence death reigned through the one, much more those who receive abundance of grace and of the *gift of righteousness will reign in life* through the One, Jesus Christ'. The gift of righteousness, which enables us to reign in life, is in contrast to a righteousness of our own, which is from the law. Christ made this gift available through His circumcision, which was His death, burial and resurrection. The gift of righteousness becomes the possession of every person whose heart is circumcised in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. They join this fellowship through baptism.

The Scriptures teach us that it is not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness that God saves us from death. We were dead in trespasses and sins when we were first born from above. Paul noted that it was according to God's mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom the Father poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, that we were *justified*. We were justified, or declared righteous, by God's grace, so that we might be made heirs of eternal life, according to hope. As the apostle John proclaimed, this is the hope of sonship. This is a foundational statement that we can trust and build our lives on.

References:

Luk 22:42

Rom 5:17

Php 3:8-9

1Jn 3:1-3

Gal 2:16

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Titus 3

Proverbs 15

The righteousness of God

What is the righteousness of God? It is the inexhaustible fellowship and works of God. The gift of righteousness is, first, the *expression of the love and fellowship* of Yahweh that we are to participate in, by offering, for eternity. This is what it means to 'reign in life'. The second dimension of the righteousness of God is that it *endures forever*. The third aspect of the righteousness of God is that it is the *works of God*. This was demonstrated by Christ, from the garden of Gethsemane until He proclaimed, from the cross, 'It is finished!' These works of righteousness are the fruit of a *circumcised heart*.

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 then loves their neighbour as themselves. King David's prayer was, '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.

Baptism is both our commitment and our action of fellowship, by which we join ourselves to Christ's sufferings and death. Christ's circumcision was a complete death in all of its stages, and was, therefore, demonstrated by burial. Then it was a resurrection by the power of the Father and the Holy Spirit, along with the blood of Christ. 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.

References:

Rom 5:17

Psa 112:9

Mar 12:29-31

Deu 10:12-13

Deu 30:6

Further Study:

Colossians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 16

Christ's redemptive work

Christ's blood is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. It was this blood that brought Christ, the great Shepherd of the sheep, back from the dead. This blood also brings all of His sheep back from the death of sin, with Him, as they follow the leading of the Spirit, and reject walking in their former manner. Paul described this former way of walking as being 'after the flesh'. He 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.

The death of Christ was a righteous work that belonged to His name and was an expression of His sanctification. However, 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'.

The works of redemption that the Son accomplished were given to Him by the Father. The Holy Spirit made these works part of the Son's name as the Holy Spirit became the power and expression of the Son's works. 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.

A son of God with a circumcised heart is able to serve God and relate in fellowship with others according to their sanctification. Each of us needs our heart to be circumcised. This is the process through which self-centredness is cut from our heart, so we can walk by the Spirit and live by love. This means that we will be able to do the works of our sonship by offering, and reveal others in the same way that Christ did.

References:

Heb 13:20-21

Col 2:11-12

Heb 9:13-14

Luk 22:43

Rom 5:5

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

The circumcision of Christ

Christ, the Son of Man, needed no personal circumcision for the purpose of enabling Him to love. His circumcision was completely *for our sake*. The circumcision of Christ manifested, or revealed, the perfect love of Christ for us.

In love, Christ presented Himself to the Father as a whole burnt offering. In this fellowship of offering, the Father made Him to be 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. Having been made sin, the Father cut it from Him by 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 obedience by the power of the Holy Spirit who enabled Him to obey God's will. The love of God was 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. He brought life and immortality to light through His offering.

Christ's death was a circumcision that demonstrated no dependency on the energy of His flesh to accomplish 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 received God's capacity for righteousness. In Abraham's case, it was first the faith to be adopted and then, eventually, to be born as a son of God.

References:

Col 2:11-12

Isa 53:10

Joh 8:28

2Co 5:21

Gen 17:11

Further Study:

2 Timothy 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

Joining the circumcision of Christ

The offering of Christ did not circumcise the heart of every person. It was His own circumcision, even though it was completely for our sake. To receive the gift of righteousness and reign in life as a person who fulfils the law of love, each person needs to have their own heart circumcised. How does this happen?

We are circumcised by the circumcision of Christ when, through baptism, we join the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. Through this process, the body of sin is removed from our life. What does this mean?

A sinner is dead in the uncircumcision of their unloving self-centredness. However, even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, the Father made us alive in Christ. Our sinful ways now belong to Christ because we are part of Him. The Father gave our self-centredness and disobedience (i.e. our uncircumcised flesh) to Christ. The body of sin was removed from Him by being judged by the Father, and overcome by His obedience. The Son's obedience was transferred to us as a gift. It is His righteous capacity that is part of who He is, and belongs to His life and attitude. This is the life by which we now live. When we take hold of His life and live in partnership with Him, we can be the son who we were born to be.

We do not receive life as a resource from the word of God. Rather, Jesus Christ gives us His life by offering transfer. This process is the major upgrade on the Old Covenant. All who join Christ's suffering, dying and death, are receiving His life and being freed from the power and deceitfulness of sin. It has no place in them. It can find no traction, and it cannot exercise power over them as they walk after the Spirit.

References:

Col 2:11-13

Gal 2:20

Rom 6:6

Gal 6:14

Further Study:

Ephesians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

The obedience of Christ

We clearly observe that Christ's circumcision was an action of obedience. It revealed His faith as 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 love our brethren.

When the Lord circumcises our heart in Christ, He cleanses it from its selfish, coveting propensity by a washing that regenerates it. He also renews and births it by the Holy Spirit, so we can love the Lord and our brothers and sisters in Christ. This enables us to join the fellowship of offering in the body of Christ. The love of God activates our faith, causing us to trust in God and obey Him when He gives us a command in relation to the work that He wants us to do.

Importantly, once we have joined the circumcision of Christ, and our heart is being circumcised, this process becomes the fundamental principle of our evangelism and ministry to others. In this regard, our participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings has less to do with our own 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.'

References:

Gal 2:20
2Co 4:11-12
Tit 3:4-5

Rom 8:3-4
1Pe 2:24

Further Study:

Colossians 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

The Firstborn from the dead

In his letter to the Colossians, the apostle Paul declared that Christ is God's *Firstborn from the dead*. He came back from the death of sin, by the blood of the Eternal Covenant, as the great Shepherd of the sheep. As the great Shepherd, Jesus said, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they *follow Me*'. The sheep of God's flock follow the Shepherd by joining His circumcision. By this means, His sheep are brought to birth with Him as part of the church of the firstborn.

The faith of Christ, as He proceeded to fulfil the suffering work of redeeming us, was that God, through the Holy Spirit, would give Him the capacity and power to accomplish His work. This defined His circumcision. Christ endured the sufferings of the cross without drawing back, or sinning through reaction. By this means, He demonstrated that His faith was credible and real. His sufferings, which Paul described as 'the circumcision of Christ', accomplished our redemption. For this reason, Christ's circumcision revealed that His work of faith was valid. It was a success! His sufferings, by which His blood was poured out, ministered His life to us. The fact that it has been given to us by offering transfer proves this point.

The process of salvation is that a person is forgiven and born again while dead in trespasses and sins. Then, by baptism, a reborn, new creation son of God is joined to the circumcising process that Christ endured during His passion. This is for the purpose of renewing and circumcising their heart from self-centredness, so they are able to love the Lord and their brethren. This means that they are being saved from their sin by His life, and are able to live in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

References:

Joh 10:26-27
Heb 12:22-24
Rom 8:29

Col 2:11
Col 1:18

Further Study:**Daily Proverb:**

Romans 5

Proverbs 23

Saved by His life

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. The apostle Paul described the outcome of the other law in his letter to the Romans. He said, 'I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members'. This will be the experience of many Christians. The outcome is that we feel condemned. Our mind condemns us as 'wretched', and we blame ourselves for our wretched condition.

Why does this happen 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, which 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. The circumcision of Christ is removing the other law from our hearts and enabling us to live by His life. This is how we are 'saved by His life'.

Having identified the reason why we can experience condemnation, Paul encouraged all believers with the truth that there is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. As we walk in the Spirit, we are participating in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, through which the hope of sonship is being realised. That is, we are changing from glory to glory into the image of His sonship.

References:

Rom 7:23

Rom 5:10

Rom 8:1

2Co 13:4, 18

1Jn 5:11-12

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 26

Walking after the flesh

Paul explained that the law was intended to bring life and blessing to the nation of Israel. If the word of the law could give life, why did we need Christ to come? The problem was not with the law. It is holy and good. The problem was that it was *weak through our flesh*. We are unable to keep the law, even though we agree with it, because of the strange combination of self-centredness and the motivations of sin. These fallen influences lead us away from the love of God and love for our neighbour. Instead, covetousness is provoked within us.

For the Israelites under the Old Covenant, and many carnal Christians, when God's law calls for obedience to fulfil some standard of righteous attitude and behaviour, sin wakes up within them and proposes alternatives to obedience and love for God. They find that, because of the power of sin within them, they are constantly living in a way that is contrary to the word of God when it is proclaimed to them. 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, we are not motivating ourselves to sin. It is sin that dwells within us that motivates us to selfish activity. Often, this behaviour is quite illogical. We are ashamed of it. Paul called this kind of behaviour, 'walking after the flesh'.

The heart that is in the process of circumcision, is having the self-centred motivations that sin monopolises removed from it. The love of God is being poured into the heart, motivating a Christian to fellowship and giving, so that the hope of sonship, which is the hope of a righteousness being revealed, is not disappointed.

References:

Rom 7:7, 12

Rom 8:3-4, 12-13

Rom 5:5

Further Study:

Galatians 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

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 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 recall that ‘out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are the things which defile a man.’

Paul further explained that the word of God says, ‘You shall not covet’. However, 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. The motivation to act in these ways brings a person under the judgement of the law.

The Old Covenant demanded that we fulfil the law by our own capacity, energy, and strength. We note that Moses said, ‘You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength’. To do this, the children of Israel needed to circumcise their own hearts. However, they were unwilling, and unable, to do this. Because of this, the first thing Christ did to save us was that *He took the law out of the way* and nailed it to the cross. In the New Covenant, we relate to the law, in Christ. As we are joined to Christ’s circumcision through baptism, our heart is circumcised so we are able to love with His life, capacity, and strength.

References:

Exo 20:17

Mat 5:28

Mat 15:19-20

Deu 10:16

Col 2:13-14

Heb 13:5

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Luke 12

Proverbs 28

The blood of sprinkling

Christ was cut off from God when the Father made His soul an offering for sin in the garden of Gethsemane. 'To cut off' means that He became dead to God. This occurred in six circumcising, suffering events, which transpired as Christ presented Himself to God in Gethsemane, and then journeyed to Calvary. This work of redeeming mankind was completed when Jesus declared, from the cross, 'It is finished!' Christ had 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.

As Christ suffered at each stage of His journey, He endured the full brunt of God's rejection as a sinner; 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 endure the circumcision that we needed. This circumcision was necessary to cut our self-centredness from our lives. Because of the fall of mankind, self-centredness, with sin, had become another law within us that controlled 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. His blood atoned for our sin, and then ministered His life to us. The righteousness of God that was manifest through the offering and circumcision of Christ, can be expressed by a son of God who is joined to the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. We join the fellowship of His circumcision when we are baptised into His death, and then participate in the fellowship of His sufferings as members of His body.

References:

Lev 16:21-22

Joh 19:30

1Jn 2:2

Heb 13:20-21

Heb 12:2-3

Further Study:

Isaiah 53

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29

Suffering with Christ

We know that there is no merit to our own sufferings. They are a curse and the consequence of the fall of mankind. Our sufferings only lead to death. Christ took our sufferings and sin, and He made them His. Through baptism, we join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. In this fellowship, our sufferings are no longer our own. The sufferings that we experience are appointed to us as a share in the sufferings of Christ. Why is this important? It is because Christ's sufferings and death resulted in eternal life.

The blood of Christ was shed as He suffered the cut of each wound. If we had suffered these 'cuts', the resulting blood loss would have led to our death. However, when Christ offered Himself, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit by the Holy Spirit, and was brought back from the death of sin as His blood was shed upon His physical body.

We see that Jesus did not die of blood loss. In each of the six circumcising events, His blood atoned for Him and for us, and kept Him alive. We also note that during all the beatings Jesus endured, not one of His bones was broken. Those who join Christ's sufferings, likewise, receive the power of the Father, and the Holy Spirit, and the life that is in Christ's blood. Practically, this means that we are able to endure the sufferings we receive as a fellowship in Christ's sufferings. These sufferings do not cause our untimely death, nor do they cause the structure of our identity to fracture or fail. Instead, they yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness within us.

A person with a circumcised heart loves the Lord, loves their neighbours, and is in fellowship with the Lord and their neighbours. Fundamentally, a person with a circumcised heart *knows the Father and knows Christ* as a member of the body of Christ. This is eternal life.

References:

Heb 9:13-14

Rom 8:11

Joh 19:36

Heb 12:11

Joh 17:3

Further Study:

Romans 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30

O wretched man

Many Christians desire the promises associated with keeping the law covenant. These promises include prosperity, healing, a promised land, being exalted above the nations, being higher than all the kings of the earth, and much more. The Israelites attempted to circumcise their own hearts, in pursuit of their own righteousness, so they could obtain these promises. They did not recognise their inability to circumcise their own hearts; nor could they accept the wretchedness of pursuing their own righteousness.

A person who is crying, ‘O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?’ realises 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 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 remain connected to the circumcision of Christ. This is what it means to walk in the Spirit, and the reason why Paul wrote, ‘If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live’.

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. As we walk in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and circumcision, 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:

Exo 19:8

Rom 10:1-4

Lev 19:18

Rom 8:13

2Co 3:18

Further Study:

Romans 7

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

Scourged for our healing

Christ has taken the law out of the way. He has nailed all Ten Commandments to His cross. We now relate to the law only in the cross of Christ. We are not able to circumcise our own hearts to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, and our neighbour as ourselves. However, as we walk in the Spirit, God does what the law could not do. He condemns the sin that is in our flesh and cuts it from our life. This is the work of God the Father. His discipline in our life causes us to be partakers of His holiness. As we accept that the sufferings of this present time are the Father's discipline in our life, this discipline is a manifestation of the chastening that Christ experienced on our behalf, and we are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings.

There are many and varied aberrant behaviours that we can identify as part of the fallen human condition. The many wounds that Christ received upon His back, as He was scourged at the command of Pilate, were for the healing of these aberrant behaviours. One strand of the nine leather tails that comprised this scourging whip, may have had four or five pieces of sharp bone fastened to it. This means that a full beating of thirty-nine lashes would have resulted in almost one thousand, six hundred wounds to Christ's back.

The wound caused by just one of these pieces of bone, as it tore the flesh and skin from Christ's back and caused His blood to flow, brings deliverance and healing to our life and gives us victory over the particular aberrant behaviours that lead us into sin. When we suffer, as a participation in His chastening for our sake, it is dealing with the aberrant behaviours that are peculiar to us. In Christ, our suffering is a small participation in His considerable wounding.

References:

Heb 12:9-10

Isa 53:5

Col 2:13-14

Deu 30:6

Heb 12:11

Further Study: Deuteronomy 10**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 3

The fast that God has chosen

The fast that God has chosen is an *acceptable day of the Lord*. Israel was unable to keep the fast that God had chosen. In order to fast in a way that is acceptable to God, a believer needs a circumcised heart. This is only possible in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision.

Christ's circumcision from Gethsemane to Calvary, was the acceptable day of the Lord. It was the high point of His ministry. He had previously summarised His ministry by declaring, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the poor; He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'.

We note that the effect of the fast that God has chosen is that the bonds of wickedness are loosed, heavy burdens are undone, the oppressed are released, and every yoke is broken. The breaking of every yoke reveals the connection of the fast that God has chosen, with the scourging that Christ received to deal with every form of aberrant behaviour. It is through this wounding, which was part of the fast that God had chosen, that the oppressed heart is liberated and healed.

Christ's offering and circumcision was accomplished on the fourteenth day of the Jewish month of Nisan. This was during the Feast of Passover. His offering and circumcision was the acceptable day of the Lord. It was God's chosen fast. This was the day when the door of deliverance was opened to us. It was the day when He saved us from our sin by condemning sin in our flesh and cutting our coveting self-centredness from our hearts.

References:

Isa 58:5-6

Luk 4:18-19

Mat 17:20-21

Act 13:2-3

Mat 6:16

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Isaiah 61

Proverbs 4

In this you greatly rejoice

When we are joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ through baptism, all of the circumstances in our life that cause us frustration and suffering are now working for us. They are effective to cut our sin and self-centredness from us, as we walk by the Spirit through our sufferings.

The apostle Paul observed that 'tribulation *produces* perseverance; and perseverance, character; and character, hope. Now hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who was given to us.' Likewise, the apostle Peter declared, 'In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, *may be found* to praise, honour, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, whom having not seen, you love'.

Because God's love is being poured into our heart, and is being made known to us by the Holy Spirit, we are able to count it all joy when we experience various trials. Further to this, the love of God is becoming our motivation. It is replacing our coveting self-centredness, which is being removed from us through the circumcision of Christ. We note, therefore, that when we fall into various temptations, or trials, we have joined the fast of Yahweh, which is the acceptable day of the Lord.

The mind of Christ is among us as we gather together for communion. His mind is communicated through the ministry of the Spirit, and addresses us in relation to our suffering and healing. That is, there is a word that comes to us each week in our communion gatherings, that joins us to, and equips us for, our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision.

References:

Rom 5:3-5

2Co 12:9

1Pe 1:6-8

1Co 10:16

Jas 1:2

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 5

Not sleeping from sorrow

Some Christians, when they are suffering, can begin to fall asleep through sorrow. This was the experience of the disciples in Gethsemane when Christ invited them to fellowship with Him in prayer, as He experienced the first wound of His circumcision. We fall asleep through sorrow when we focus on our sufferings, and maintain the mindset that we are the victims of suffering. We become offended at the tribulation we are experiencing. This tribulation, or suffering, is *because of God's word*. His word is the word of our predestination, which He has chosen for us. When we think this way, the sufferings we are experiencing are of no benefit to us. They are not working for our good. We are not changing, and neither are we fulfilling the works that the Father prepared for us to do as His sons, in Christ.

Paul addressed this same point in his first letter to the Corinthians, writing, 'For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sick among you, and *many sleep*.' Paul was referring to people who were not being sustained in the midst of their sufferings. This is because they were not receiving their suffering as a participation in the offering of Christ. More specifically, they were not rightly discerning the purpose for their suffering as a member of the body of Christ. Their inability to understand the purpose for their suffering, demonstrated that they were *falling asleep*. They were coming under the judgement of God so that, through chastening, they would not be condemned with the world.

Paul said that if a person judges themselves rightly in relation to their participation in the offering of Christ, as a member of His body, their sufferings would not be a judgement upon them. In fact, in the midst of their sufferings, they would be a blessing to others.

References:

Luk 22:45

Mar 4:16-17

1Co 11:29-32

1Co 10:16

Pro 6:10-11

Further Study:

Romans 13

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6