

Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

NOVEMBER 2017

Contributing Authors:

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

Restoring My Soul – No. 121 – November 2017

ISSN: 2201-7542

Published by RFI Publishing

© RFI Publishing Inc. 2017

10 Old Goombungee Road

Toowoomba QLD 4350

Phone: +61 1300 885 048

Email: info@rfipublishing.org

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

Restoration
PUBLISHING

Contents

WEEK 1

Monday	Clothed with light
Tuesday	A robe of righteousness
Wednesday	Naked and afraid
Thursday	An eternal house
Friday	The shame of fear

WEEK 2

Monday	Projections motivated by shame
Tuesday	Living by the flesh
Wednesday	Our own righteousness
Thursday	Shameless behaviour
Friday	Fear and anxiety

WEEK 3

Monday	Depression
Tuesday	A clergy mindset
Wednesday	The confidential confessional
Thursday	Leaders and shame
Friday	Not seeking absolution

WEEK 4

Monday	Turning to the Lord
Tuesday	The word from the beginning
Wednesday	Capacity for worship
Thursday	Meeting the Lord in worship
Friday	Looking into His eyes

WEEK 5

Monday	The marred face of Christ
Tuesday	Christ confronts us
Wednesday	Keeping our eyes on Jesus
Thursday	Not hiding our face
Friday	The mercy of God

Clothed with light

In the garden of Eden, Adam and Eve had fellowship with Yahweh each day at the tree of life. As they remained connected to Yahweh, who was the source of their origin and the author of their predestination, they were able to know Him, know themselves, and know each other. They could meet and appreciate God and one another in worship. In this fellowship, the couple drew their life and likeness from God. This meant that they were equipped for, and engaged in, the works that God had planned for them before He had created the heavens and the earth. Their work in the garden of Eden was a priestly, sanctified service.

The word of Yahweh was a light that gave Adam and Eve wisdom and direction. It also *clothed* them for their priestly work. This principle was demonstrated by Christ, as a Son of Man. When He came in the flesh, He was the full representation of what God had intended the sons of God to be. The Gospel of Luke accounts that Jesus went up on a mountain with Peter, James and John, to pray. While He was praying, 'the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became *white and glistening*. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who *appeared in glory* and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem'. In fellowship with Moses and Elijah, Jesus discussed His imminent offering on the cross. This work had been prepared for Him by the Father, and was written beforehand in the book of life. His appearance, in light, revealed His readiness to do the priestly work He had come down from heaven to accomplish.

References:

2Ti 3:16-17

Rom 12:1

Psa 139:16

Heb 10:5-7

Gen 2:15

Heb 7:20-21

Further Study:

Luke 9:18-62

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30

A robe of righteousness

Through the words of the prophet Isaiah, Christ, the Son of Man, described His clothing as a *robe of righteousness* that He had received from God to do the work for which He had been anointed. He testified, saying, 'I will greatly rejoice in the Lord, My soul shall be joyful in my God; for He has clothed me with the garments of salvation, He has covered me with the robe of righteousness'. God is the source of this righteousness. It is revealed by those who do the good works that God prepared for them. Significantly, the Scriptures teach that this righteousness *endures forever*. As Adam and Eve walked in the light of God's word and did the works He had named for them, they were participating in the fulfilment of God's will, and revealing His enduring righteousness.

God's sons require robes of righteousness to do the works their Father has prepared for them. However, they are also the evidence that God's righteous works, which endure forever, are being fulfilled. To be covered, or clothed, with light, involves being equipped to do the will of the Father, and is *also* the outcome of doing the works associated with one's name. Jesus admonished those who heard His teaching to walk in the light, so they also might become sons of light. The works that a person does in this age reveal their sanctification as a son of God. These works result in eternal life. More specifically, they become the building materials of their heavenly body, which become the glory of their spiritual body on the day of resurrection. This body is their dwelling place in the new heavens and earth. Paul described receiving this body as being clothed with, or putting on, immortality.

References:

Isa 61:10

Joh 12:36

2Co 9:9

Php 3:9

Psa 112:9

Further Study:

Philippians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 31

Naked and afraid

Satan endeavoured to destroy mankind with a lie. He proposed that, by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve could become the source of their own works of righteousness. He implied that, if they became 'like God' in this regard, they would not die. Instead, their eyes were opened, and they only found *they were naked*.

Their 'nakedness' was not just the realisation that they were not wearing any clothes. It meant that they immediately recognised there was no life, and no mandate for them, outside of fellowship with God. They perceived the disunity that now existed between them and God, between each other in their marriage, and in their own hearts. Having become disconnected from their origin, and living by their own law, they were now dying, and were unable to accomplish any works of enduring value. This was their nakedness.

When Yahweh came to meet with Adam and Eve in the cool of that evening, He called to them, asking, 'Where are you?' Yahweh's question revealed that mankind had disconnected themselves from Him. In response to Yahweh's query, Adam said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was *afraid because I was naked*; and *I hid myself*'. Adam confessed that he was afraid *because* of his nakedness. His nakedness implied that he was now vulnerable. He had cut himself loose to time and chance. He had no covering, or defence, other than his own capacity to survive through the use of the knowledge of good and evil. Death was the inevitable consequence of his nakedness. This is why Adam was afraid.

References:

Gen 2:25 2Co 5:3
Rev 3:17-18 Ecc 9:11
Rev 16:15

Further Study: Genesis 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 30

An eternal house

Adam's dilemma was not just that he was mortal and dying because he was disconnected from the life of God. His nakedness was his *disconnection from the word of his predestination*. God had predestined him to be a son of God, forever. However, because he was disconnected from his origin and the source of his righteous works as a son of God, when his mortal body perished, he would have no eternal covering, or dwelling place. While his soul and spirit would exist forever, he would have no spiritual body, or capacity for expression in the presence of God. This is what it means to be condemned to eternal destruction. The resurrection of damnation is a mortal resurrection in which the damned remain fully conscious in a corrupting body. However, they are unable to express the pain of their torment as the fire of the Lord's presence burns forever against them in judgement.

Paul drew attention to this reality, when he wrote, 'For in this [house] we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed with our habitation which is from heaven, if indeed, having been clothed, we shall *not be found naked*. For we who are in this tent groan, being burdened, not because we want to be unclothed, but *further clothed*, that mortality may be swallowed up by life. Now He who has prepared us for this very thing is God, who also has given us the Spirit as a guarantee.' With this in mind, Paul reminded his readers that 'we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the [mortal] body, according to what he has done, whether good [sanctified] or bad [fleshly]'.

References:

2Th 1:8-9

Isa 66:24

Dan 12:2

Rev 14:11

Joh 14:2-3

1Co 3:9

Further Study:

 2 Corinthians 5

Daily Proverb:

 Proverbs 31

The shame of fear

Adam *hid himself* from the Lord because he was afraid. This demonstrated that Adam was also *ashamed of his fear*. Adam's confession revealed that fear is something every fallen person is ashamed of, and endeavours to keep hidden. It is a private foreboding that a person tries to allay.

We see that shame is not simply the emotions of embarrassment or regret that are associated with errant behaviour. Shame is the consequence of a person's *disconnection from the life of God and their predestined name*, which are only found in fellowship with Yahweh. It is the evidence that mankind has quantifiably lost something. As such, shame is an indelible trait of fallen human nature. People are ashamed because of their loss of unity with God and with others. Because they are ashamed, fallen men and women engage in all manner of activities to conceal their fear. However, fear should be a true motivation for repentance, causing them to turn to the Lord so that they can receive His word and be reconnected with Him. In this fellowship, their nakedness can be properly addressed. As the psalmist wrote, 'May my heart be blameless [complete; or having integrity] in Your statutes, so that I will not be ashamed'.

In the same way that Adam and Eve's fear motivated them to hide from the Lord, a person's shame affects how they relate with others. Some people try to conceal their shame by withdrawing from others, while some seek to compensate for their shame by seeking acceptance and reassurance in social relationships. People either avoid the gaze of others because their gaze reminds them of their shame and inadequacy, or they seek the gaze, attention, and acceptance of others as a means of obtaining some form of personal verification. Attention-seeking behaviour represents a person's concerted effort to recover their lost unity with other people, by pursuing a connection that neutralises the pain of shame and aloneness.

References:

Gen 3:10

Joe 2:27

Psa 119:80

Isa 33:14

IJn 2:28

Further Study:

Psalm 25

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 3

Projections motivated by shame

Adam and Eve's response to their shame was to make *alternative* coverings for themselves by sewing fig leaves together. This was an attempt to cover their nakedness. Shame provokes this response within *all* people who live according to the fallen principles of the flesh (i.e. their 'other law'). Motivated by the shame of fear that is caused by their nakedness, people who live by the flesh attempt to 'tailor' a name for themselves. This is an endeavour to replace the covering of their lost predestination with a destiny, or name, of their own making. Their 'clothing' is a projection of their self-defined image, which is sourced in what they view as being good or evil for themselves.

This response of shame impacts upon even the most basic actions of a fallen person. For example, the way they dress and present themselves is part of the projection of their self-sourced image. In this regard, it is part of their investment in how they would like to be known and received by others. Under these conditions caused by the fall, a person's self-confidence depends on how satisfied they are with the image they have of themselves, and the extent to which their projections are accepted and valued by others. In reality, they are never truly satisfied with their image or their projections. This is because their eye is not satisfied with seeing, nor is their ear filled with hearing. They are constantly looking at, and listening to, others. Through their assessments and comparisons, a person's perceptions of what is good or evil for them are constantly being adjusted. They either attempt to change their image and projection of themselves, or they covet what they cannot obtain. However, as King Solomon taught, 'In many dreams and in many words there is emptiness [or vanity]'.

References:

Gen 3:7

Pro 27:20

Ecc 1:8

Ecc 2:11

Isa 50:10-11

Further Study:

Ecclesiastes 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

Living by the flesh

The covering of shame describes the reality of life for a Christian who chooses to live by the principles of the flesh. This simply means that they preference the right to be the origin of their own image, above the invitation from Christ to present themselves, in a spirit of faith, as a slave of obedience to the doctrine of baptism. A son of God is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through their obedience to the doctrine of baptism. In this fellowship, the other law is being removed from them, and they are then able to find God's will for their life. God's will is their sanctification as a son of God. The outcome of this process is eternal life.

When a Christian lives by the flesh, they view the word of God as a helpful, and even important, resource they can draw from, to help define their own image. Motivated from this basis, which is the operation of their own law, they engage in works they have defined for themselves. These works are projections of the good, religious image that they are creating for themselves. Paul called these works 'dead works', and explained that they are motivated by an evil conscience. Many people who aspire to ministry positions do so from the basis of the flesh. This is evidenced by their discontent when other people do not accept, or submit to, their projection of themselves. These responses of discontent are the passions of sin, and they reveal that these people, who are aspiring to positions of influence, are enslaved to the law of sin. They are prisoners to the law of sin because they are living by the principles of the flesh.

References:

1Th 4:3

Rom 6:13,22

Heb 9:14

Col 3:1-3

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

Our own righteousness

A person who lives by the other law aspires to live according to an image of 'good' that they define for themselves. Their pursuit of this 'good', equally involves avoiding behaviours they consider to be evil. Where a person's perceptions of good and evil have been influenced in some way by God's law, their moral standards will reflect this influence. Of course, their thoughts and behaviours may not necessarily measure to the image to which they aspire. This is because living by the other law brings a person into captivity to the law of sin, resulting in their engagement in the evil they are attempting to avoid. The condemnation they subsequently feel, only serves to heighten their sense of shame.

All projections, whether they are religious or not, are the garments of a person's self-righteousness. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and *all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment*; and all of us wither like a leaf, and our iniquities, like the wind, take us away'. Even the most noble and admired works of fallen men and women are temporary in their glory. Quoting the prophet Isaiah, the apostle Peter noted that 'all flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of the grass. The grass withers, and its flower falls away, but the word of the Lord endures forever.'

Clearly, the 'clothing' that these projections represent has no enduring merit. This reality becomes permanently entrenched when an unsaved person dies. They have no heavenly body, because the works they did on earth were not motivated by the Holy Spirit. Their works were not according to their predestination. Only a person who has received, and been established in, the sanctification of their name as a son of God, will be clothed with eternal garments for life in the new heavens and earth.

References:

Isa 64:6 2Co 5:4-5
 Php 3:9 1Co 15:53
 1Pe 1:24-25

Further Study:

Galatians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

Shameless behaviour

In his letter to the Romans, Paul described the type of person who *deliberately suppresses* the influence of God's word on their perceptions of good and evil. Isaiah said that these people call evil 'good', and good 'evil'; substitute darkness for light and light for darkness; and are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight. The outcome of this suppression of the truth is wickedness. These people *shamelessly* engage in behaviours that are immoral, and yet, consider their actions to be acceptable. As they parade their nakedness, and encourage others to follow their example, these behaviours and attitudes are normalised in society through social engineering.

The various excesses and risk-taking behaviours of these wicked people are portrayed as harmless pleasure. By this means, the wicked attempt to demonstrate that they are not afraid of death, or ashamed of their nakedness. In reality, however, their cynical, godless bravado is simply an attempt to *disguise* their fear through pride or debauchery. This behaviour is a fallen person's deliberate and deluded rejection of the truth of God, in favour of the lie that their nakedness is not shameful. Their proud, shameless behaviour is because God has given them over to a depraved mind.

This was the condition of mankind in the days of Noah. Except for Noah and his family, the whole of mankind had degenerated from the sinful condition of the fall, to a state of wickedness. The intentions of their heart were evil, continually. Consequently, the Lord was sorry that He had made man, and proclaimed the end of all flesh. Jesus taught that, as the time of the end draws near, the moral standards of society will deteriorate to the same level as in the days of Noah.

References:

Isa 5:20-21
Gen 6:5,13
Heb 11:7
Luk 17:26

Further Study: Romans 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 9

Fear and anxiety

The disguising of fear through deceit, along with the prohibitions of an apostate conscience, are the ground of anxiety, from which many emotional and mental health problems spring. King Solomon signalled this principle, when he wrote, 'This is an evil in all that is done under the sun, that there is *one fate* for all men [death]. Furthermore, the hearts of the sons of men are *full of evil* and *insanity* is in their hearts throughout their lives. Afterwards they go to the dead.'

The manifold curses that came upon Israel when they broke their covenant with God, and refused to walk in sanctification, involved the magnification of their fear. This legacy of fear produced anxiety, depression and madness, and this became their portion in life. In this regard, Moses had prophesied, saying, 'The Lord will send on you cursing, *confusion*, and rebuke in all that you set your hand to do, until you are destroyed and until you perish quickly, because of the wickedness of your doings in which you have forsaken Me'. Likewise, he said, 'The Lord will strike you with madness and blindness and confusion of heart ... So, you shall be *driven mad because of the sight which your eyes see*.'

The fall of man from the image and likeness of God exposed the frailty of the flesh in all its dimensions, including the mind and emotions. A person's natural death, and their eternal death, cannot be prevented by creating an image for themselves and attempting to cover their nakedness through self-righteous works. Likewise, these fleshly endeavours are unable to fortify the mental and emotional frailties that are associated with being in bondage to fear. The only remedy is to be connected to the Lord through new birth and baptism. As Paul reminded Timothy, 'God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of *a sound mind*'.

References:

Ecc 9:3
2Pe 2:5
2Ti 1:7

Rom 8:15
1Jn 4:18

Further Study: Deuteronomy 28:1-48

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

Depression

Persistent and widespread depression and anxiety within church congregations is a cause for concern. This is because it is the evidence that many of these people remain in bondage to fear and, to that degree, are disconnected from their sanctification in the image and likeness of God. There are two possible reasons for this situation. The first possibility is that the ministry they are receiving in the church is *not a ministry of the Spirit*. Rather, their leaders are ministering condemnation from the basis of good and evil. Paul described this as a 'ministry of sin'. These leaders have fallen from first love, and are unable to minister the word of God by the Spirit. In contrast, the ministry of the Spirit is able to equip their hearers with faith, so they can stand in grace, participate in offering, and obtain their sanctification as sons of God. In other words, they are enabled to walk in the Spirit.

The second possible reason for the ongoing emotional distress of a Christian is their unwillingness to receive the word of the Lord that He is ministering to them, by the Spirit, through the messengers who are in His hand. If they receive the word, their minds will be transformed by the renewing work of the Holy Spirit. When a Christian relies on their own perspective (the sight of their own eyes), and maintains the right to determine their own sonship, they have set their mind on the flesh, rather than on the Spirit. If they persist with this attitude, they will remain disconnected from their predestination as a son of God. In this regard, we note that 'to be carnally minded is death, but to be *spiritually minded is life and peace*'. A person's sanctification can only be found as they willingly present themselves as a slave of obedience to the doctrine to which Christ, their Lord, has committed them.

References:

Rom 10:17 Tit 3:4-5
Rom 5:1-2 Rom 8:5-6
Rom 6:21-22 Pro 12:25
Gal 6:15-16

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 13

A clergy mindset

Viewing and pursuing ministry within the church as a vocation is a mindset motivated by shame. This is because such an attitude to the ministry is not based in sanctification, which is essential to first love. Rather, it is based in the operation of another law. Seeking to minister from this basis, most often involves a projection that covers the nakedness of a person's disconnection from their origin and predestination as a son of God. When they minister in this way, they are not being the son of God that He predestined them to be; they are not doing the works that He prepared for them to do.

Instead of the gift of grace making room for the ministry of a son of God in the body of Christ, the appointment of people to positions of authority within a clergy structure has often been based on theological qualification, self-motivation and idealism. These factors have been essential contributors to the formation and validation of a clergy aspirant's projection.

Of course, for some people, their fulltime service in the church has been consistent with their sanctification as a son of God. However, even where this is the case, in order for a person to return to first love as part of an effective presbytery in the hand of Christ, repentance from the dead works of a clergy, vocational approach to the care of the church, is needed. Jesus said that repentance from these fallen approaches to ministry in the church is the first step in being recovered to effective ministry as a part of a presbytery in His hand.

There are many church practices that have been established as part of the institutionalisation of the ministry. These practices have become defining features of the clergy vocation, and serve to validate the projections of would-be ministers.

References:

Pro 3:35

Eze 44:12-13

Rev 2:5

Jer 17:9

1Pe 2:7-8

Rom 10:2-3

Further Study:

Ezekiel 14

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

The confidential confessional

One of the most damaging outcomes of a clergy mindset has been the tradition of the confidential confession. Often, these interactions between ministers and the people who have sought their counsel, have only served to augment the wretchedness that is associated with shame and fear. This is because the practice itself is based in the operation of another law and is, by definition, hidden.

For the purpose of explaining this point, let us represent the confidential confessional interaction as a conversation occurring at the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In this regard, picture the trunk of the tree dividing into two main branches. One branch represents 'good' Christian behaviour, while the other branch represents 'evil' behaviour. Through its application, the cross is set by the minister between the two branches of good and evil. The confessional booth, or vicarage, in which the minister receives the confessions of sinners is situated at the base of the trunk.

Having received the confession of a sinner, the minister makes a judgement as to whether the sinner is sufficiently penitent in order for him to grant them absolution. When absolved in this way, the sinner leaves the interview feeling much better about themselves, and possessing a stronger resolve to avoid the evil behaviour in the future. At times, the minister may deem it necessary to apply the cross to the sinner through strong castigation. He presumes to do this so that the sinner ceases from his evil activities and returns to the standard of righteousness to which he is being exhorted.

This mode of operation has been a problem for *both* clergy-styled leaders and those seeking absolution for their sin. Obviously, this mode of counsel is based on the knowledge of good and evil. This means that it is not a ministry of the Spirit from the basis of first love.

References:

Joh 6:63

Jas 5:6

1Co 11:27-29

2Co 7:10-11

Mat 5:23-24

Further Study:

1 John 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Leaders and shame

When a leader functions from a fallen position, they remain in bondage to the law of sin. Their actions cannot be anything more than a projection associated with their own image of themselves. This is the wretched condition that the minister or leader finds himself in, if he continues to live by the other law. The more he pursues what he believes to be good, the more he practises the evil that he does not want to do. His sin becomes exceedingly sinful. His secret, sinful condition may even be worse than that of those who are making confession to him. This heightens his sense of shame, causing him to further alienate himself from true fellowship. Motivated by shame, he works harder to achieve the good image that he desires for himself. Moreover, he attempts to advance his projection of himself through religious activities and the ministry of legalistic holiness to others.

We must all recognise that it is not the role of the counsellor to give absolution, or to make a person feel better about themselves following a misdemeanour. It is to help a brother or a sister to find perspective on how to properly recover relationship with the people who have been affected by their sinful actions. Although confidentiality is a legal expectation for religious counsellors, their purpose for maintaining confidentiality should not be for keeping the matter concealed, or for maintaining their position of power over the people. Instead, they are to remain circumspect in relation to these matters, because they accept that the matters of sin and relational breaches they are discussing with their brother or sister, are not their business. They are the business of the one who has sinned, and the people against whom they have sinned. The counsellor also maintains confidentiality because they are not given to gossip.

References:

Ezr 9:7

Eze 44:13

Dan 9:7

Rom 7:19,23

Further Study: Matthew 23**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 16

Not seeking absolution

A person who seeks absolution through a confidential confession, desires to be made righteous through a fleshly activity. Their insistence on confidentiality is the desire for their shame to remain hidden. They are simply seeking to feel better about their condition, and to find some assurance of acceptability before God, despite their shameful actions. This will be evident because of their unwillingness to seek reconciliation and relational recovery with the particular people against whom they have sinned. If they continue to live their life in this way, they will also remain in the wretched condition that Paul identified in his letter to the Romans.

Shame is the reason why people conceal their sin through projections, and withdrawal from open and truthful relationship with others. This relationship between shame and fear, and a person's unwillingness to relate about their sin beyond the context of a confidential confession to a minister, was identified by Job. He asked, 'Have I covered my transgressions like Adam, by hiding my iniquity in my bosom, because I feared the great multitude, and the contempt of families terrified me, and kept silent and did not go out of doors?'

Godly fear, indicating a person's sanctification and commitment to reconciliation, can only be truly demonstrated, or expressed, when a believer makes confession regarding the hidden things of shame. A person's unwillingness to bring their shameful deeds into the light is a shameless and wicked condition. If they do not deal with their shame, they demonstrate that they fear death and the loss of control over their life, more than they fear God. They ignore the reality that God has the power to destroy, with death, both soul and body in hell. The word of God addresses a person's fearful apprehensions by bringing a faith that supersedes the faith that is based on their own knowledge and experience of good and evil.

References:

Rom 7:23-24 Luk 19:8
Job 31:33-34 Psa 32:2-3
Mat 10:28 Pro 20:9
Lev 6:2-4

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 7**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 17

Turning to the Lord

The beginning point for every believer is to find true repentance from all dead works. Repentance involves renouncing the hidden things of shame, including the religious activities that a person engages in for the purpose of advancing their projections and concealing the shame of their nakedness. It is important to note that repentance does not involve the shameless trumpeting of a person's wickedness. Rather, it involves true confession, and recovery of relationship with the people against whom they have sinned.

The projections of a person who is living according to the flesh, are not only temporary and crude coverings for their nakedness. These projections also become a veil over their eyes, so that they are unable to perceive their true condition, or to receive the light of the word as it shines from the face of Jesus through the word of His messengers. In this regard, we recall the words of Christ to the church in Laodicea. 'Because you say, "I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing" – and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked'.

When a person turns to the Lord in repentance, the veil that conceals their shame and limits their capacity to perceive the truth, is removed. They are able to stand in the faith that they receive from the word, and to present themselves in the sanctification of their name for fellowship with others. In this fellowship, the blood of Christ cleanses their conscience, so they are able to participate in offering in a sanctified and open-faced manner within the body of Christ. This is what it means to 'walk in the light', as those who are clothed with light, and to have fellowship with the Lord and one another in Christ. This is what it means to live in first love.

References:

2Co 4:3-5

Rev 3:17-19

2Co 3:16

Rev 2:4,7

Deu 30:9-10

Further Study: Lamentations 3:1-40**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 20

The word from the beginning

The apostle John explained that the word from the beginning is declared by the messengers of Christ, so that those who receive it can be joined in fellowship with them and with the Father and the Son. A son of God is able to turn away from the word and the fellowship of Yahweh, in the same manner as Adam and Eve did. They do this when they seek to make themselves the origin of their own religious image and the source of their own works. However, when a son of God continues to receive the word, they are joined to the process through which their projections and imaginations can be removed from them, and they can know the truth of who God named them to be. Moreover, they fulfil the works that God prepared for them according to the kind intention of His will.

Jesus taught that the antidote for fear and anxiety is to be reconnected to God the Father by being born again as a son of God. He explained that the Father watches over every eventuality that befalls us in life, causing all things to work together for our good. It is notable that Jesus specifically taught His disciples that they were not to worry about what they should *eat or drink* or what they should *wear*. Instead, as His disciples seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, all these things are added to them. While this certainly applies to the literal needs of food and clothing, it also pertains to the reality that a son of God does not need to seek for food other than what is provided from the tree of life, which, in the church age, is the communion meal. Similarly, they are to forsake the clothing of fleshly projections, and be clothed with priestly garments that are necessary for presenting themselves for fellowship as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God.

References:

Rom 8:28 1Jn 2:7
Mat 6:31-33 1Jn 3:11
Rom 12:1-3

Further Study:

James 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Capacity for worship

Adam and Eve fell from the image and likeness of God when they sought to become the source of their own image and destiny, and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The consequence of Adam's disobedience was that this fruit became another law within mankind, making them prisoners of the law of sin. This other law now motivates every person to pursue an image of their own making, and to attempt to define their own destiny. Living by this principle is the reason that mankind remains separated from God, and in bondage to the fear of death.

When a person is born from above and baptised into Christ, they are restored to God's plan for them. They are raised into heavenly places. This is the context of first love. It defines the nature of their fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with their brethren in Christ. A Christian falls from first love when they choose to live by the principle of the other law, rather than by the word of God that proceeds from His mouth, through His administration. Importantly, every Christian will default to this way of living if they are not engaged in a process through which the other law can be removed from them.

The Lord Himself is calling every Christian to repent, and to return to first love as the context and basis for their life. The evidence that we are returning to first love is our capacity for worship. This involves presenting ourselves by faith, and according to our name as a son of God, for fellowship and offering in the body of Christ. Worship requires us to know God, to know who He named us to be, and to know one another in the body of Christ. This capacity does not reside within us, so we must be delivered from our carnal way of living, and enabled to walk in the Spirit.

References:

Gen 3:4,6
Rom 7:23
Heb 2:14-15

Eph 2:4-6
Psa 19:14

Further Study:

Ephesians 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

Meeting the Lord in worship

The apostle Paul testified that to *know Christ* was the primary goal of his life. He said, 'I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord'. Importantly, Paul explained that this was an ongoing initiative for him. It involved him being delivered from his own righteousness, so that he could receive a righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. He further explained that knowing Christ *depended* on his participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and his being conformed to the death of Christ.

These conditions cause offence to many Christians. This is because they want to know Christ on their own terms. However, the Lord does not meet us on our terms, or according to our self-centred expectations of Him. Such attitudes are fallen. In order to truly know the Lord, we must receive Him in the way that *He comes to meet us*. He first comes and confronts us regarding our sin, and then invites us to join the fellowship of His offering.

Christ makes Himself known to us through the ministry of His word. As He speaks to us through His messengers, a spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon us. Under the influence of grace, we are able to turn to the Lord and see beyond our imaginations of who we think Christ is, or who we would like Him to be to us. These imaginations and expectations are part of a veil that obstructs our spiritual sight, and affects our capacity to recognise Christ and to receive what He is saying to us. Unless, by grace, this veil is removed from the eyes of our heart, we will not recognise Christ, or hear His word. This is because there is nothing about Christ, or His message, that appeals to our flesh. As the prophet Isaiah noted, 'He has no form or comeliness; and when we see Him, there is no beauty that we should desire Him'.

References:

Php 3:9-10
2Co 4:3-4
Zec 12:10
Isa 53:2

Further Study:

John 17

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 23

Looking into His eyes

When the veil of our fleshly perspective is drawn back, we are able to look into the face of Jesus. More specifically, we are caused to see His eyes and hear His voice. Practically, we look into the eyes of the Lord, and hear His voice, by receiving His messengers. Christ's messengers are our brethren, who are part of His administration of grace. This administration, which is depicted in the book of Revelation as four living creatures, is part of the body of Christ. Significantly, the apostle John observed that the four living creatures were *full of eyes* in front, behind, around and within.

As we look into the eyes of Christ, and hear His voice, our deeds and the innermost thoughts of our heart are laid bare before Him. This has a notable impact upon a person. We recall, for example, the experience of the prophet Isaiah. When he saw the Lord and heard the voice of His messengers, Isaiah said, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for *my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.*' The apostle Peter was similarly undone when he looked into the eyes of Christ. As Peter denied Christ for the third time, the Lord turned and looked at him. As a consequence of looking into the eyes of Jesus, Peter wept bitterly.

When we look into the face of Christ, we first see Him whom we have pierced. We see the marring of His face, and that He was despised, humiliated, rejected, and acquainted with grief *for our sake*. We acknowledge that He was wounded for our transgressions and crushed for our iniquities. As we perceive the ugliness of His humiliation on our behalf, we realise, through illumination by the Holy Spirit, that we are seeing the condition of *our own wretchedness*. We are, in fact, looking into a *mirror*.

References:

Rev 4:6-8
Heb 4:13
Isa 52:14

Isa 53:3-5
2Co 3:18

Further Study:

Luke 22

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 24

The marred face of Christ

Christ's face was marred and His body was disfigured as He took our sin upon Himself. By revealing Himself to us in this way, He confronts us and exposes the sin that is in our heart as He transfers it to Himself. We see our sin in His disfigurement. It is important to recognise that Christ does not reveal Himself to us in this way in order to accuse or condemn us. Rather, Christ comes to meet us and to receive us to Himself. He confronts us with our sin, so that we can find repentance, and be recovered to our predestination as a son of God. He wants to heal our identity, which has been marred as a result of sin and our separation from God.

At the same time as we are looking on Him whom we have pierced, grace and supplication that comes to us as a gift from God through the word of Christ's messengers, enables us to 'behold the Lamb of God'. We begin to see Christ and know His nature as God's Lamb. As our offering, He is also the image of who we are to become as a son of God. In other words, by revealing Himself to us as the Lamb of God, the One who has come to take away our sin, Christ confronts us with the need to *join Him* in the fellowship of His offering and suffering.

While we cannot divide the vicarious dimension of Christ's offering from the call to join Him in the fellowship of His offering, it is His vicarious work to which we must *first* respond. This is because it draws our attention to the operation of the other law within us. It reveals the reason for our separation from God. To join Christ in the fellowship of His offering, we need to repent of this way of living, and accept that the other law can only be removed from our life as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

References:

Isa 53:6

Joh 1:29,36

Rom 7:23

Zec 12:10

Joh 5:21

Rom 8:2

Further Study:

Isaiah 53

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

Christ confronts us

Christ confronts us with His marred face, and as the Lamb of God. He establishes the ground for worship between these two elements of His offering. The spirit of grace and supplication that is given to us, enables us to worship in Spirit and in truth. Truth is the reality of who He is, and who we were created to be. The Scriptures call this our *sanctification*. We are not the source of this truth and must, therefore, receive it from the Lord. As we are delivered from the lie of our own image and projections, we are able to meet others, and worship in Spirit and in truth.

Christ takes our sin upon Himself and invites us to join the fellowship of His sufferings, so that His righteousness can be given to us. This is the principle of *offering transfer*. As we continue to meet Him eye to eye, as both our vicarious offering and the Lamb of God, we increasingly see His face shining as the sun in its clarity, and His garments as white as light. Seeing Him this way reveals that *we are being changed from glory to glory, into the image of His sonship*.

The light of the glory that shines from Christ's face is being given to us as we receive His word and walk in His way. The apostle John said that, if we continue to walk on this pathway of sonship that Christ has pioneered for us, when the Son of Man is revealed in His glory, *we will be like Him*, for we will *see Him as He is*. John further noted that everyone who has this hope purifies themselves, just as Christ is pure. They willingly join the fellowship of Christ's suffering in the knowledge that he who suffers in the flesh has ceased from sin. Furthermore, they are assured that, as they suffer with Christ, they are being glorified with Him, and are obtaining the eternal inheritance of sonship that God predestined for them.

References:

Joh 1:29 1Jn 3:2-3
Joh 4:24 1Pe 4:1
2Co 3:18 Rom 8:17

Further Study: Romans 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 28

Keeping our eyes on Jesus

When we are caused to look into the face of Christ, our initial inclination is to retreat from this confronting interaction. This desire to withdraw because of our shame, reveals that the other law is within us. From the basis of this law, we will either attempt to justify ourselves and our actions, or we will endeavour to cover our shame with the projections of our self-defined image. Adam and Eve made this same response after they had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, because another law had become part of them. The result of this was disconnection. Having become disconnected from God, and from their predestination, they were naked and afraid. They hid from the Lord and attempted to conceal their nakedness by sewing fig leaves together to cover themselves.

It is possible for a person to resist the grace of God when Christ comes to meet them. A person resists God's grace by turning away from the word of God, and from those who are bringing the word to them. Instead of receiving the word with humility, and acknowledging their nakedness, they maintain their image and projection of themselves. As they choose to live by the other law, sin takes further advantage of them, and they begin to gnash their teeth in reaction against the word, and against Christ's messengers.

This bitter and murderous response was exemplified by the Jews who heard the preaching of Stephen. As Stephen directed their attention to the Son of Man seated on the throne, they placed their hands over their ears, and sought to further silence the word by putting him to death. It is noteworthy that when Stephen began to speak to them, they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.

References:

Gen 3:7

Gal 3:1

2Co 6:1

Gal 2:21

Act 6:15

Further Study:**Daily Proverb:**

Acts 7

Proverbs 29

Not hiding our face

When we are confronted with our sin by the Lord, we must not hide our face from Him. Instead, we need to continue to lift our eyes to Jesus. We do this by walking in the light of the word and finding fellowship with our brethren in the body of Christ. In a *spirit of faith*, we can set our gaze in the same way as the psalmist, who wrote, ‘*Unto You I lift up my eyes, O You who dwell in the heavens. Behold, as the eyes of servants look to the hand of their masters, as the eyes of a maid to the hand of her mistress, so our eyes look to the Lord our God, until He has mercy on us.*’

It is the spirit of supplication that enables us to respond to the Lord in this way. As we do, we begin to mourn for our sin, its impact on others, and for the loss of our sonship. We cry to the Father for forgiveness. This was the experience of Job, who testified, saying, ‘I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees You*. Therefore I abhor myself [or, my own way], and repent in dust and ashes.’

In the process of repentance and mourning for our sin, we must continue to receive the word of the Lord. This is fundamental to walking in the light and having fellowship with our brethren in Christ. We can be encouraged by the words of Jesus, who said, ‘You are already *clean because of the word* which I have spoken to you’. The cleansing effect of the word equips us for service in the body of Christ. It was for this reason that Paul exhorted every believer not to refuse Him who speaks, so that we receive grace ‘by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear’.

References:

Isa 53:3

1Jn 1:6-7

Psa 123:1-2

Job 42:5-6

Joh 15:3

Heb 12:25,28

Further Study:

John 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30

The mercy of God

The mercies of God have opened the door of recovery for mankind to return to the predestination of sonship that He has planned for them. God, in mercy, has made a new covenant with us, through Christ, by which we can be recovered to our sonship. This covenant involves us in a daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Jeremiah declared that the mercies of the Lord are renewed for us every morning. For this reason, we rejoice, and can sing of the mercies of the Lord *forever*. Like the psalmist, we declare, ‘With my mouth will I make known Your faithfulness to all generations. For I have said, “Mercy shall be built up forever; Your faithfulness You shall establish in the very heavens”.’ A person who knows the mercies of the Lord in this way, cannot help but offer the sacrifice of praise.

It is with this understanding of true worship that we gather together for communion each week. Christ’s body and blood are the fruit of the tree of life to those who receive, believe and obey the Lord when He comes to meet us. As we eat the bread and drink the wine *in this faith*, all that His body and blood represents, becomes substantial within us. This includes our continued fellowship with the Lord and with each other throughout the week; receiving faith for participation in the sufferings of Christ; receiving, living and ministering the life of Christ as a member in particular of the body of Christ; and maturing as a son of God. Those who commune in this way are living in first love. Heavenly places, which is the paradise of God, is their abiding place.

References:

Lam 3:22-23

Psa 89:1-2

Heb 13:15

Rev 2:7

Mar 14:22-24

Tit 3:5

Further Study:

Psalm 33

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 1