

The pathway of sonship

Jesus described the Christian pilgrimage as a narrow way which leads to *zoe* life. Indeed, the Christians of the New Testament church were known as those who belonged to *the way*. This way is the pathway of sonship. If we continue on this pathway, doing the good works that God the Father has prepared for us to walk in, the Scriptures teach that He will be our God and we will be His sons. We will be called 'the sons of the Most High'. When we enter the pathway of sonship for the first time, we receive the initial illumination that comes from the word of the cross. And following our baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we begin to participate in His sufferings.

While a clear understanding of the pathway of sonship is essential for new believers, it is also vitally important for those who are *already* followers of Christ. Having entered by the narrow gate, we must *continue diligently* on the pathway of sonship to the end. We remember the words of Jesus, who said, 'The one who endures *to the end*, he will be saved'. Our goal, today, must be the same as the apostle Paul, who wrote, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but *I press on*, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me'.

A person has access to the pathway of sonship when a messenger of Christ is sent to them. Such messengers come preaching Christ and Him crucified. True messengers of Christ are *sent*. They are *commended* to their work as members of Christ's administration, and they are full of faith and the Holy Spirit.

References:

Mat 7:14 Act 9:2
 Eph 2:10 Rev 21:7
 Luk 6:35 Mat 24:13
 Rom 10:15 1Co 2:2
 Act 14:26 Act 4:8

Further Study

Php 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30

The word of the cross

Paul described the gospel of Christ and *Him* crucified as ‘the word of the cross’. We note two points of emphasis – Jesus Christ; and Him crucified. The apostles were adamant. There is no other name by which a person can be saved.

The apostles of the New Testament declared that salvation is only possible in Jesus Christ. Moreover, the earnest endeavour of the apostles was to publicly portray Jesus Christ as *crucified*. In this, we remember Christ’s own words when He said, ‘And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself’.

It is important for us to understand that the word of the cross is much more than merely an explanation of the events of Jesus’ death at Calvary, or even His vicarious work for us. The word of the cross declares the end of all that is old and passing away – the world, the carnal man and the natural man. It enables the hearer to be *separated* from their old way of life. Furthermore, the word of the cross declares the finished work of the cross of Christ. This work opened a new and living way for believers to become part of Jesus Christ, the New Creation. Summarising the thought, the apostle Paul wrote, ‘Therefore if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come’.

References:

1Co 1:18 Gal 6:15
Gal 3:1 Joh 12:32
Eph 4:22 Heb 10:20
2Co 5:17

Further Study

Act 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 1

Water and blood

The apostle John declared that Jesus came by water and blood, with the Spirit bearing witness because the Spirit is truth. John, who was present at Jesus' crucifixion, was clearly speaking of the water and blood that flowed from His pierced side after He had died. This incident – the finished work of Christ – was actually the high point of the work of the cross, which enables the word of the cross to be declared with power today.

The word of the cross, typified in water and blood, is powerful because it carries the substance of the finished work of Christ. The water that flowed from Jesus' side is the water of the word, which is the will of God the Father for each one of His sons. The blood that flowed from His side redeems and gives life to every believer. We could say that the word of the cross is water and blood, with power. We note, however, that the word of the cross can be emptied of its power. Paul wrote that he did not proclaim the word of the cross with excellence of speech, lest it be emptied of its power. This has important implications for us today.

All believers have been called to speak and proclaim the word of the cross as Christ's witnesses. We are to be part of a corporate messenger, an 'angel', as it is described in the book of Revelation. Thus, we are to speak and proclaim the word of the cross, relying on words taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual. We must take care not to rely on words taught by human wisdom, lest we empty the word of the cross of its power.

References:

1Jn 5:6-8
Eph 5:26
1Co 1:17-18
Rev 1:20

Joh 19:26, 34
1Pe 1:18-19
Act 1:8
1Co 2:13

Further Study

Heb 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 2

Part of Christ's administration

As we consider those messengers who are sent to preach Christ and Him crucified, it is useful to reflect on Paul's work and stewardship as a messenger of Christ. Throughout his epistles, Paul described himself as a *slave* of God, and of Jesus Christ. The apostle was steadfastly committed to the administration of Christ, the administration suitable to the fullness of times. He frequently identified those who were fellow workers and fellow slaves with him in the work of the administration. At all points, Paul submitted himself to Christ's administration, and was thereby commended to the good works that God had prepared beforehand for him to walk in. The word of the cross can only be preached by messengers who are connected to, and commended by, Christ's administration.

The work of the cross, from which the word of the cross is derived, was the work of an obedient Slave and Son who did nothing of His own initiative. We recall the words of Jesus, who said, 'When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me'. Only obedient slaves within the administration of Christ can proclaim the word of the cross because, like Christ, they do nothing of their own initiative. They are completely constrained to the obedience of Christ within His administration, determined to know nothing except Christ and Him crucified. Like Paul, they can confidently proclaim, 'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might *no longer live for themselves*, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf.

References:

Tit 1:1 Rom 16:3
Act 14:23 Joh 8:28
2Co 5:14 Act 14:26

Further Study

Act 13

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 3

The word gives light

In contrast to faithful messengers, the Scriptures describe those who are not submitted to the administration of Christ as ‘clouds without water’ and ‘wandering stars’. They are unable to proclaim the word of the cross, since they themselves are not constrained to Christ’s obedience as those who delight to do the will of God the Father. Jesus spoke of such messengers when He said, ‘Not everyone who says to Me, “Lord, Lord,” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but *he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter*. Many will say to Me on that day, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?” And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness”.’

When the word of the cross is proclaimed with power, its entrance gives light. We are immediately reminded of Paul’s experience on the road to Damascus, when a light from heaven flashed around him and he heard the voice of Jesus saying to him, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?’ The entrance of the word of the cross immediately brought illumination and understanding to Paul, enabling him to understand that his actions were actually piercing Jesus Christ, the Firstborn Son, the many-membered body of Christ.

Although the word of the cross is not always accompanied by a physical light, its entrance always brings illumination and understanding to those who receive it. When the word of the cross is proclaimed, the word that God spoke before the foundation of the world is shining – declaring that God the Father has predestined us to become His sons through Jesus Christ. The word of the cross calls us to our sonship.

References:

Jud 1:12-13
Psa 119:130
Joh 19:37

Mat 7:21-23
1Co 12:12
Eph 1:3-6

Further Study

Act 9

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 4

Piercing the hearts

The word of the cross is the light of the lampstand church. Remembering Paul's experience on the road to Damascus, the word of the cross is the light that is shining on the face of Jesus Christ to reveal who He is. By this light, we can understand that Jesus Christ is the Seed in whom our names are found. He is also the seed of who we will become as sons of God. In the book of Acts, we read that the word of the cross *pierces* the hearts of those who receive it. This was certainly the experience of those who received the word of the cross as it was proclaimed by the apostle Peter in Jerusalem on the first Pentecost following Jesus' death. 'Now when they heard this [i.e. the word of the cross], they were *pierced to the heart*, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, "Brethren, what shall we do?"'

Of course, many do not receive the word of the cross when it is proclaimed. Indeed, Jesus noted that there are *few* who find the pathway of sonship. If a hearer resists the Holy Spirit and rejects the conviction that comes from the word of the cross, the Scriptures teach that the word does not pierce the heart; rather, it *divides* the heart. The hearer then begins to gnash their teeth in rebellion and anger against God and His messengers. This was the effect of the word of the cross when Stephen addressed the Sanhedrin immediately prior to his death. 'Now when they heard this [i.e. the word of the cross], they were cut to the quick [lit. 'their hearts were sawn asunder'], and they began gnashing their teeth at him.'

References:

2Co 4:6 Gal 3:16
Mat 7:14 Psa 112:10
Act 7:51, 54

Further Study

Act 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 7

What shall we do?

Those hearers who do not resist the Holy Spirit but, rather, accept the piercing and conviction that the word of the cross brings, are caused to mourn because they realise that *their* sin crucified Christ, the Firstborn Son, and that they are lost and without hope in the world. The Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon them, compelling them to pray and to join Christ's travail in the garden of Gethsemane. By the Spirit of grace and supplication, they mourn with Christ to will and to do the will of God the Father.

As the hearers mourn with Christ, they cry out, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' We note that this cry is the first evidence of a *breach* upon their will. This, however, is not enough. The hearer must actually receive a 'new will' – the will of God the Father – if they are to continue on the pathway of sonship.

A person who is illuminated, convicted and pierced by the word of the cross is one whom Jesus described as *seeing* the kingdom of God. Illumination is the first dimension of strengthening that happens to the spirit of the natural man. This brings the natural into the spiritual, where a person can begin to receive the things that belong to the Spirit of God.

We must emphasise, however, that seeing the kingdom is not yet salvation. The apostle Paul was clear that we are not justified by illumination; we are justified by faith in Christ Jesus. A hearer is born from the first when they see the kingdom of God *and* respond to the word of God in faith-obedience. They must then proceed to be born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God and become His sons.

References:

Rev 1:7
 Php 2:13
 Joh 3:3
 1Co 2:14-16
 Rom 5:1

Eph 2:12
 Act 2:37
 Eph 1:16
 Joh 9:35-41
 Gal 2:16

Further Study

Zec 12

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 8

Born from the first

Speaking to those whose hearts had been pierced by the word of the cross, Peter declared, 'Repent, and each of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins; and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit'. This was the word of God that they were to obey in faith. The same is true today. Those who have accepted the conviction of the word of the cross are called to repent, come away from the world, and be baptised with Jesus Christ into His death, burial and resurrection, for the forgiveness of their sins. When a person agrees to obey this word, they are beginning to find salvation. They are born from the first, they are saved, and must now continue in the way of salvation.

In obedience to the word of God, the new believer is baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are three elements to this baptism which all occur simultaneously as we are baptised. Firstly, we are separated from the world by being joined to Christ in the threefold action of dying *with* Him, being buried *with* Him and being raised *with* Him. Emphasising this point, Paul declared, 'May it never be that I would boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world'.

In the second element of baptism, we are joined to Christ and become part of God's people as the *community* of Christ. This occurs through our fellowship with Him in His vicarious work for us in His death, burial and resurrection. In this phase of being baptised with Christ, we accept Him as our Lord and Saviour and are severed from the world and the power of Satan.

References:

Act 2:38
1Co 1:18
Act 8:12
Act 19:5
Col 2:12
2Co 2:15
Act 10:48
Gal 6:14

Further Study

Rom 6

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 9

Baptism into the name

Deliverance comes to our lives when we are baptised into Christ. For many, demons are cast out, sicknesses and diseases are healed, and curses and bondages are broken. Christ leads us from captivity as slaves of sin, into freedom. We can now become slaves of righteousness and sons of God as we come into the body of Christ.

Great deliverance comes to us because Christ has dispensed with everything of the old creation. We are now able to be delivered from the futility of the curse of the fall, the deception of Satan, the bondage of familiar spirits, and the lusts of this world. Jesus Christ is our conquering Saviour and King who has taken 'captivity captive' and given gifts to men. Paul rejoiced in this vicarious work of Christ, saying, 'The free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one, the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one Man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many'. He continued, 'Those who receive the abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness will reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ'.

While we were dead in our transgressions and our flesh was uncircumcised, we have been made alive together with Christ through baptism. We have been raised up with Him to walk in newness of life.

As we have noted, there is tremendous healing and restoration that comes to a believer as they come up out of the waters of baptism through faith in the working of God who raised Christ from the dead. However, there is more to the pathway of sonship than these specific miracles, signs and wonders.

References:

2Co 5:17 Eph 4:8
Col 2:12-13
Rom 6:8, 18-19
Rom 5:15, 17

Further Study

1Jn 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 10

Possessing our sonship

Our baptism into Christ separates us from the world and joins us to Christ as part of His community. The third element of baptism brings us into His body where we receive the Spirit of Christ and join the fellowship of Christ's circumcision to deal with sin. When we are baptised by the Spirit of God, *into* the body of Christ, we are born to enter the kingdom of God, which is *in* Christ.

We note the distinction between the first two elements of baptism and the third. We are not just baptised *with* Christ; we are baptised by one Spirit *into* Christ. As we are baptised into Christ and become members in particular of His body, the process by which we possess our sonship becomes *active* in our lives. The believer now becomes a part of the fellowship of a local church where they become a disciple of Jesus Christ. They now face the issues of stony ground, which is tribulation and persecution because of the word; and thorny ground which is the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches. They overcome these issues by the Spirit of God as they continue in fellowship in the body of Christ.

In the parable of the sower, Jesus described two specific groups of believers – those who received the word of the kingdom on *stony places*, and those who received the word *among thorns*. In both cases, there was both an illumination to see, and a faith to enter the kingdom. We could even say that a son of God was *born*. However, for both groups of believers, the life that sprang up because of the word did not produce the fruit of their sonship. Jesus said that those who received the word of the kingdom on stony places immediately fell away because of the tribulation and persecution that arose because of the word.

References:

Rev 1:9 1Co 12:13
Rom 8:14 Rom 6:3
Eph 4:15
Mat 13:20-22

Further Study

Mar 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 11

Tribulation and persecution

Those who have entered the kingdom of God must now live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, just as Jesus did. And like Him, they will encounter the tribulation and persecution that arises because of the word. Jesus said, 'If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also'. Paul also noted that all who desire to live godly lives in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. To overcome, new believers must fix their eyes on Jesus. He is 'the Author and Perfecter of our faith who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God'.

Jesus offered Himself through Eternal Spirit. All believers have access to the power of Eternal Spirit – the fullness of the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son and the Holy Spirit – by which they can endure the tribulation and persecution that arises because of the word. If we do not avail ourselves of this power but, rather, attempt to endure tribulation and persecution by our own fleshly strength, our flesh will fail us and we will die spiritually. 'For if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live.' Jesus said that those who receive the word of the kingdom among thorns are those believers whose minds are set on the things of God, as well as the things of the flesh, the things of this world. Like those who received the word of the kingdom on stony places, they are born of God, but are now attempting to serve two masters.

References:

Mat 4:4
2Ti 3:12
Heb 9:14
Luk 16:13

Further Study

Psa 37

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 14

Thorny ground

When the word of God falls on thorny ground, the things of the flesh – the cares of the world and the deceitfulness of riches – choke the word so that it becomes unfruitful. Paul highlighted this point in the book of Romans when he wrote, ‘The mind set on the flesh is death’. Jesus urged all believers to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all other things would be added to us. This is the answer to the thorny ground issue. Through the power of Eternal Spirit, we are able to set our minds on things of the Spirit, rather than the things of the flesh. As we do so, we find that the mind set on the Spirit is life and peace, and we can rest in the knowledge that our heavenly Father will provide all that we need.

In the book of Colossians, we read that all the treasures of God’s wisdom and knowledge have been *hidden* in Christ. The psalmist wrote, ‘He who dwells in the secret place of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty’. The body of Christ is the secret place of the Most High. Our name, works and *zoe* life as sons of God have been hidden in Him.

We find our ‘new self’ as a new creation once we come into Christ. This is actually the central message of the gospel – there is a new creation! Jesus Christ has established a process so that we can lay aside ‘the old self with its evil practices, and put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him’.

References:

Mat 13:22 Rom 8:5-6
Mat 6:32-33 Col 2:2-3
Psa 91:1 Eph 4:24
2Co 5:17

Further Study

Col 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 15

The truth of our name

When Paul uses the phrase, 'new self', he is not implying that we receive a new identity or that we become a different person. Our identity is recovered to the truth of our name that was written in the Lamb's book of life before the foundation of the world. We find the secret of our name in Christ and we receive 'new life' as a son of God. This is the life of new creation.

Once we have been baptised by the Spirit of God into the body of Christ, God the Father sends forth the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, enabling us to be born individually as a son of God. We become partakers of the divine nature, and cry out, 'Abba, Father!' This is the expression of a newborn child calling out to God their Father.

There are three elements to the cry, 'Abba, Father!' Firstly, we have been born of God by receiving the Spirit of Christ into our hearts. Secondly, we have been *received* by the Father and will now be chastened and disciplined by Him as a legitimate son. And thirdly, we have now fully joined Christ in Gethsemane, where He prayed, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.' We have received the will of the Father as a gift, in the bread of life, so that we can genuinely pray, 'Our Father, Your will be done'. We have previously noted the cry, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' It is the first evidence that a *breach* has been made upon a person's will. When a person receives the Spirit of Christ and cries out, 'Abba, Father!' their own will is now *cut off* or *circumcised*.

References:

Rev 13:8 Heb 10:20
Gal 4:6 Heb 12:5-6
Mar 14:36 Mat 6:9-10
Act 2:37

Further Study

2Pe 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 16

The will of God

After we have received the will of the Father as a gift, we must abide with Christ in the fellowship of His prayer in Gethsemane. This is how we are delivered from the temptation of turning back to serve our own will, rather than continuing to receive the word of the cross, the bread of life. However, it is important that we understand that the word of the cross – the bread of God – is not simply the content of the will of God which we receive and then try to obey according to our flesh. Implicit within the bread of God is the capacity to obey. The bread of God is the bread of Christ's miraculous obedience. Even more than this, it is the 'will of God' itself which makes us 'willing' to do His will. The bread of God gives us the capacity 'to will' and 'to do'. Paul declared, 'It is God who works in you to will and to do for His good pleasure'.

When a believer is baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, they come into Christ, and Christ comes into them. They are born of the Spirit, born of the seed of Christ. The Spirit of Christ is now dwelling in them. They are *with* Christ as God's people, they are *in* Christ, and they are *joined* to the fellowship of Yahweh. Christ is the context in which they grow up in their sonship and overcome sin. He is also giving to them their personal inheritance as sons of God. At this point, the work that Christ accomplished on the cross is not just vicarious; it is both vicarious, and a *participation*.

References:

Mar 14:38 Php 2:13
Joh 3:5 1Jn 3:9
Gal 4:6 1Co 10:16-17

Further Study

Heb 10

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 17

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings

Once we have been baptised into Christ, we are called to participate in the fellowship of His sufferings. Christ has made *all* suffering to be His. He has also commuted eternal judgement, the just outcome of our sins, to chastening. Our participation in Christ's sufferings is now the expression of the Father's chastening hand upon us. By this means, He is joining us to the pain of Christ's circumcision.

The blood of Christ's circumcision yielded the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. This is the blood of the cross that brought Him back from the dead as the great Shepherd of the sheep. When we join His circumcision, this very same blood is bringing us back from the death of sin and the power of His resurrection is coming to us. It is redeeming blood that is healing us from our sin. For this reason, Peter declared, 'Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin'.

Perhaps the simplest definition of the circumcision of Christ is His suffering for us – from His travail in the garden of Gethsemane right through to His death on the cross at Calvary. This was His circumcision, where He cut off everything that was old. Our participation in Christ's sufferings now, which is causing us to cease from sin, is our participation in His circumcision. We are being circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, and we are being saved.

Paul highlighted this point in the book of Romans when he wrote, 'The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, *if indeed we suffer with Him* so that we may also be glorified with Him'.

References:

Php 3:10 Heb 2:9
 2Co 5:14 1Co 11:32
 Heb 12:5-6 Col 2:11
 Heb 13:20 1Pe 2:24
 Rom 8:16-17

Further Study

1Pe 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 18

The Spirit of life

The sufferings of Christ are also the circumcising process by which our own fleshly will loses its power over us, and the will of the Father for us as a son of God is implanted in us. Those who suffer in the flesh are able to *cease from sin*. The circumcision of Christ actually *established* the means by which sin could be condemned in the flesh and a person could walk according to the law of the Spirit of life. Let us consider this matter further.

Once a believer is born again as a son of God, the Spirit of God energises the *zoe* life of their sonship. Paul described this energy of God as the 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. Going further, Paul wrote that the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus now *sets us free* from the law of sin and death. Sin can now be condemned in our flesh as we walk according to the law of the Spirit of life, as we set our minds on the Spirit. We are able to destroy speculations, imaginations, and every lofty thing that is raised up against the knowledge of God, which is Christ, and we are able to take every thought captive to the obedience of Christ.

The essence of the New Covenant is this. Through Christ, we are receiving the will of the Father, and the capacity to do that will. As we have noted earlier, we receive the will of the Father as we are born of the seed of *zoe* life in Christ as sons of God. Having received the will of the Father as a gift, we are to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice.

References:

1Pe 4:1
Rom 12:1
2Co 3:17
2Co 10:2-5
Rom 6:18
Gal 5:1

Further Study

Rom 8

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 21

Present your bodies a living sacrifice

The Scriptures describe the capacity that enables us to do the will of God the Father as a garment, or robe, of righteousness. The psalmist declared, 'Let Your priests be clothed with righteousness'. The garment of righteousness is the mandate to do the will of God the Father concerning our lives – everything that He named before; our name and works. The capacity of the will of God is in the garment of priesthood. He gives us the garments of righteousness (the garments of priesthood) in which we minister our name and works by offering.

The garment of righteousness is for the *work* of priesthood. Once we receive the garment of righteousness, we are able to present, or priest, our bodies as a living sacrifice. When we are clothed with the garment of righteousness, we are clothed with the ability of His will so that we can offer ourselves as a living sacrifice. This is our reasonable, priestly service. Saying it another way: by His will, we present our bodies as sons of God and we are obedient, as slaves, to the will of God by offering. This is the definition of 'righteousness'.

We now have a stewardship, as slave-priests, which is 'against our will'. This simply means that our stewardship is according to another will – the will of the Father. We have fully mourned with Christ, having joined His prayer, 'Not my will, but Yours be done'. The circumcision of Christ replaces our will with the will of God the Father. Christ's prayer becomes our prayer and, as we pray, we can say, 'Our Father who is in heaven ... Your will be done'. The nature of Christ becomes ours as we are born of God.

References:

Isa 61:10 Psa 132:9
Exo 28:4 Eph 2:10
Rom 12:1 1Co 9:17
Luk 22:42 Mat 6:9-10

Further Study

Psa 40

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 22

Priesting our name

Our individual stewardship involves priesting our name, works and *zoe* life. As slave-priests, we have been made 'willing' and 'adequate' to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God. We have, likewise, been made 'willing' and 'adequate' to be ministers of the New Covenant to others. We have a treasure in our earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves.

As members in particular, we now priest, by suffering, the *zoe* life of Yahweh that is resident in the body of Christ. We are joined with Him in the fellowship of His offering. When we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, as individual sons of God, our predestination, life, name and works are revealed.

For this reason, Jesus proclaimed in the Beatitudes, 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted'. We are comforted, in the primary sense, because we are being delivered from the wretchedness of our old man to receive *zoe* life, new creation life. Then we can become willing and able ministers of the New Covenant, according to our name which was written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world.

As Christians, our ministry as sons of God then further exposes us to the sufferings that belong to preaching the gospel. This can be true even for those who are recent converts to Christianity. We remember the suffering that the newly converted apostle Paul endured at the hands of the Jews soon after his conversion. Of course, these sufferings that belong to preaching the gospel are also Christ's sufferings. However, we have now proceeded from a participation in *His* cross, which is for our *perfection*, to the taking up of *our* cross, which is for *others*, and the means by which we have an eternal reward.

References:

2Co 3:5-6 2Co 4:7
1Co 12:27 Mat 5:4
Rev 13:8 Act 9:23-30

Further Study

2Co 4

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 23

Ceasing from sin

Our participation in His cross is primarily for our perfection; it enables us to cease from sin. The apostle Peter outlines one example of this type of suffering – the suffering of injustice. ‘Servants, be submissive to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and gentle, but also to those who are unreasonable. For this finds favour, if for the sake of conscience toward God a person bears up under sorrows when suffering unjustly. For what credit is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer for it you patiently endure it, this finds favour with God.’

Peter is making an obvious point here. Everyone in the world will suffer injustice – both Christians and non-Christians. However, believers with a good conscience toward God, who are part of His new creation, will find favour with Him if they endure such suffering with patience, by the power of the Spirit of God. These sufferings are primarily for our perfection. They are now a participation in the sufferings of Christ.

The suffering of temptation is a further example of this type of suffering. In the book of Hebrews, we read, ‘Therefore, in all things He had to be made like His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has *suffered*, being *tempted*, He is able to aid those who are tempted.’ Again, the point is straightforward. All Christians will suffer temptation, just as Jesus suffered temptation. In fact, Paul noted that no temptation will overtake us as Christians, but such as is common to man.

References:

1Pe 2:18-20 1Pe 4:13
1Co 10:13 Luk 22:46
Heb 12:4 1Pe 1:6-7

Further Study

Heb 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 24

Suffering for the gospel

As Christians, perhaps the most common temptation that we will face is to revert to the ways of the flesh, to our former manner of life. Paul highlighted this dilemma to the Galatian Christians when he wrote, 'Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?' If we live according to the flesh, then we will die; but if by the Spirit we are putting to death the deeds of the body, then we will live. This is why it is so important for us to understand our participation in the circumcision of Christ. It is only through His circumcision that our will is cut, so that we receive a new will, the will of the Father. By this means, the spirit of our mind is completely renewed.

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus urged His disciples, 'Keep watching and praying that you may not come into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'. As we suffer being tempted, we must abide within the fellowship of Yahweh through prayer. As we abide with Christ in His travail, we are strengthened by Eternal Spirit. Moreover, we are delivered from the temptation of turning back to the flesh to serve our own will, rather than continuing to receive the bread of life which is the will of God given to us as a gift. As was the case for the suffering of injustice, this suffering of temptation is an example of our participation in His cross, which is for our perfection and the means by which we cease from sin.

In contrast, the sufferings that belong to the preaching of the gospel are not primarily for our perfection. These sufferings will still enable us to cease from sin, but they are now primarily for *others*. They are the means by which we have an eternal reward.

References:

Eph 4:22-23 Gal 3:3
Rom 8:13 Mar 14:38
2Co 4:12

Further Study

Act 20

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 25

Rejoicing in suffering

As we take up our cross and follow Christ, our consequent sufferings are filling up that which is lacking in His sufferings, for the sake of His body. Paul declared, 'Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions'.

The sufferings that Paul and the other apostles endured mostly belonged to the preaching of the gospel. Having been imprisoned for the sake of the gospel, Paul urged Timothy to join with him in these sufferings. He said, 'Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God, who has saved us and called us with a holy calling. Not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was granted us in Christ Jesus from all eternity.'

In like manner, we are to suffer for the gospel according to the power of God. As we do the works of our sonship, the works of offering, within the fellowship of Christ, we fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ for the sake of His body. In other words, our sufferings are actually enabling others to find their sonship in Christ. Furthermore, as we suffer in this manner, we are attaining to an *eternal* reward. Jesus encouraged His disciples in this matter, saying, 'Blessed are you when men hate you, and ostracise you, and insult you, and scorn your name as evil, for the sake of the Son of Man. Be glad in that day and leap for joy, for behold, *your reward is great in heaven.*' Our sufferings cannot be compared to the glory that will be revealed in us.

References:

Col 1:24
Rom 8:17
Act 14:22

Luk 6:22-23
Mat 16:24
Php 1:29

Further Study

2Ti 1

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 28

Power to be witnesses

The baptism of the Holy Spirit is critical for those who desire to walk the pathway of sonship. It gives us *power* to be *witnesses* of Christ when we have determined, like Paul, to know and proclaim nothing except Christ and Him crucified. This ‘power’ is the fire of the sevenfold Spirit of God which enables us to live as a son of God.

Once we have been born of God in Christ, the baptism of the Holy Spirit enables us to become ministers of the New Covenant with Christ. We are now able to fellowship in His offering, in life and death. This is an important point. Our participation in offering does not conclude when we die. The book of Revelation teaches us that the sons of God will finally live in the new heavens and new earth, serving God as His slaves, in a perpetual priesthood through the ministry of offering.

The pathway of sonship is an important consideration for all Christians, including those who have already committed themselves to follow Christ. Regardless of our age or length of Christian experience, we must continue to walk this pathway with the same diligence and fervour as when we first believed, always remembering our need of endurance, through the Spirit of God. The writer to the Hebrews encourages us in this way, saying, ‘For you have need of *endurance*, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised’.

The key to our continuance on this pathway is the word of the cross. It continues to be spoken, today, through the messengers who are sent as part of Christ’s administration. This is the living and powerful word that comes to pierce and convict our hearts so that we can be illuminated to the hope of our calling.

References:

Act 1:8 1Co 1:22
 2Co 3:6 Rev 22:3-5
 Heb 10:36 Heb 4:12
 Eph 1:18

Further Study

Rom 2

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 29

Receive and obey

The book of Hebrews urges us to continue to receive and obey the word of the cross, encouraging one another while it is still called *today*. We read, 'But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called "Today," so that none of you will be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our assurance firm until the end, while it is said, "Today if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts, as when they provoked Me".' As we respond in faith-obedience to the word of the cross, today, we are continuing to be born from the first.

Our response to the word of the cross then leads us to walk in the faith of our baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. As Paul encouraged the Roman Christians, we are to continue to reckon ourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. This is the power that we have obtained because we have been baptised *with* Christ. Having died with Him in baptism, we now continue to lay aside our old self, which grows corrupt according to deceitful lusts. We are renewed in the spirit of our mind, putting on the new man, which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Furthermore, the faith of our baptism continues to highlight that we have been baptised by one Spirit into one body of Christ. We are members of Christ and of one another; thus we pursue those things which make for peace and the building up of one another in faith.

References:

Heb 3:13-15 Rom 6:11
Rom 14:19 Col 3:10
Eph 4:22-23, 25

Further Study

Gal 5

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 30

Spirit of grace and supplication

When we were baptised into Christ, God sent forth the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, enabling us to be born individually as a son of God. We fully joined Christ in Gethsemane, where He prayed, 'Abba! Father! All things are possible for You; remove this cup from Me; yet not what I will, but what You will.' We received the will of the Father as a gift, in the bread of life, so that we could genuinely pray, 'Our Father, Your will be done'. As mature Christians now, we must continue to receive the will of God the Father as it comes to us in the word of the cross. This is a critical point.

When the word of cross is proclaimed and cuts us to the heart, the Spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon us. This is the capacity and compulsion to pray and join the travail of Christ in the garden of Gethsemane. By the Spirit of grace and supplication, we mourn to will and to do the will of God the Father. God then changes our heart and illuminates our understanding by pouring out upon us the spirit of wisdom, so that we can understand His doctrine. His doctrine is the word of present truth coming from Christ to give us direction as His slaves. We become obedient from the heart to that form of teaching, the will of God the Father, to which we have been delivered. As followers of Christ, receiving and obeying the will of God must be our complete preoccupation. As our own will is circumcised through our participation in Christ's circumcision, we are able to present our bodies as a living and holy sacrifice. This is our reasonable priesthood, a stewardship that is according to the will of God the Father, not our own will.

References:

Mar 14:36 Mat 6:9-10
Zec 12:10 Php 2:13
Rom 6:17 Rom 12:1

Further Study

Psa 119:113-136

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 31

Priestly garments

When we are clothed in priestly garments, we are able to priest our name, works, and the *zoe* life of God that has been hidden in Christ, the secret place of the Most High. As we take up our cross, following Him and declaring the word of the cross ourselves, we suffer for the sake of the gospel and fill up that which is lacking in His sufferings. Our sufferings are no longer primarily for ourselves and our perfection, but rather, they are for the sake of the body of Christ. They are the means by which we have an eternal reward. We can rejoice, as the apostles did, that we are counted worthy to suffer shame for His name.

In the book of Proverbs, we read, 'In the way of righteousness is life, and in its pathway there is no death'. The pathway of sonship leads to eternal life. If we will follow this pathway, enduring to the end, we will be called the sons of God. We will be those who serve Him in the new heavens and the new earth as His slaves, in a perpetual priesthood through the ministry of offering. We read in the book of Revelation, 'There will no longer be any curse; and the throne of God and of the Lamb will be in it, and His bondservants will serve Him; they will see His face, and His name will be on their foreheads. And there will no longer be any night; and they will not have need of the light of a lamp nor the light of the sun, because the Lord God will illumine them; and they will reign forever and ever.'

References:

Exo 28:4 Col 3:3
Act 5:41 Pro 12:28
Rev 22:3-5 Rom 10:15
1Co 2:2 Luk 24:49

Further Study

2Co 3

Daily Proverb

Proverbs 1