

# Law and suffering

Pain and suffering are aspects of life that we all experience, whether we are Christian or not. And, although suffering is common to all, the reasons for our suffering and its effects upon us are not well understood. Like worldly philosophy, Christian theology has provided little clarity on the cause and effects of suffering. Many Christians view their faith as a commodity that they can use to avoid suffering. They consider that the sufferings of Christ on the cross as a living sacrifice, were entirely on our behalf. That is, they view His sufferings as *substitutionary*. From this perspective, they believe that Christ, as our sin offering, experienced all the pain of punishment for our sin so that we could receive the blessing of life that overcomes suffering.

For Christians who hold to this understanding, suffering is clearly problematic. They either become offended when they do suffer, thinking that the offering of Christ has not delivered what was promised, or they believe that in some way, they must have failed in their faith. This thinking promotes the belief that their pain is a punishment for their failure of faith. This is not what the Scriptures teach us about suffering.

When discussing this subject, many people focus on how to avoid, limit, or recover from suffering. Parents, for example, do their best to protect their children from harm by teaching them about the dangers they should avoid and behaviours that will preserve them from unnecessary pain and distress. These are certainly important lessons for children to learn. Yet, even with the best teaching and the most effective avoidance strategies in place, we know that our children will still experience suffering in the course of their lives. Why is this so? Why is suffering unavoidable? Are there any benefits to our suffering? What does God think about suffering? These are just a few of the many questions we could consider in relation to this subject.

## References:

Mat 5:10-12

Act 5:41

2Co 12:10

Rom 8:17-18

Further Study: James 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 28

# Creation at peace

To properly understand suffering and its implications for our lives as Christians, it is helpful to begin by considering life on the earth before there was any pain. This was a time when all living things were in complete harmony with each other and with the laws that governed the creation itself. We are speaking, of course, about the conditions of life on earth before mankind fell through their disobedience to God.

The Scriptures teach us that the Lord created the heavens and the earth, and every living thing within it, *by His word*. Inherent in His word was the wisdom by which the earth was founded, and the understanding by which the heavens were established. The limits or boundaries of every dimension of creation were fixed by the word of God. For example, 'He set for the sea its *boundary* so that the water would not transgress *His command*'. These boundaries or laws that were established by the word of God, govern the physical universe, including the times and seasons on the earth.

Every living thing within this creation was made unique by God. He defined the distinctive principles by which each species lives, moves and exists. These principles are the laws by which their life is lived. The law, or word, of God is *perfect*, and every principle of life that the word of God established in creation was in *perfect harmony* with the other. This means that there was no conflict between these laws. There was no death, nor any competition between species for survival. The creation was in harmony and at peace. This is because every aspect and dimension of life within the world was *sanctified*. God Himself acknowledged that the creation, and all that was in it, 'was very good'.

## References:

Joh 1:3

Pro 3:19

Pro 8:29

Psa 74:17

Act 17:28

Gen 1:25

## Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Psalm 33

Proverbs 29

# A mandate laid down to Adam

God planted a garden in the region of Eden and placed Adam in the garden. The garden of Eden was the source of life for the whole of the earth. For example, the river that watered the garden of Eden was a type of the 'river of life' coming from the throne of God. From Eden, it split into four rivers that watered the four corners of the known earth.

Adam and Eve had fellowship with the Lord God in the garden of Eden as He walked there each day in the cool of the evening. The word 'cool' in Hebrew is *ruach*, and can be translated 'wind, breeze, breath, spirit'. Jesus used the same imagery to describe a person who is *born of the Spirit*. Evidently, Adam and Eve's fellowship with Yahweh was 'in the Spirit'. In this fellowship, their *mortality* was sustained by the life of Yahweh. As they walked and talked with Him each day, His word gave them life.

God *laid down a mandate to Adam*. He blessed Adam and said to him, 'Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth, and subdue it; and rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over every living thing that moves on the earth'. It is worth taking a moment to consider the magnitude and implications of the mandate that was laid down to Adam. He was to subdue *every* living thing and to rule over it. This means that all of the laws governing the life of every living thing were subject to Adam. He was to maintain and cultivate this life according to the word and purpose of God. As Adam and Eve were obedient to this command and remained in fellowship with Yahweh, the sanctification, peace and harmony of the creation that had been established by the word of God was maintained.

## References:

Gen 3:8

Gen 1:28

Joh 3:7-8

Isa 45:18

Psa 119:50

## Further Study:

Genesis 2

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30

# The command of life

In the beginning, the life of every creature was sustained by the word that Adam had received from the Lord because every creature had been made subject to him. In this word, Adam received wisdom and understanding regarding the names of the animals. When the Lord brought the animals to Adam, he was not just identifying them; he was defining the laws of their life according to the word of God. All living creatures, including man, received a command from God to be fruitful and multiply. This law of life became a fundamental motivation of every living creature.

Adam disobeyed the word of God when he listened to the voice of his wife. Eve had seen that the fruit was good for food, a delight to the eyes and desirable to make one wise. This was her own fleshly perspective, and it was inconsistent with the command that God had given to her husband, Adam. She had been deceived by the serpent who said that eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil would make them *like God*.

We know that God had *made* man in His image and had *planned* for mankind to be according to His likeness. However, the serpent lied to Eve and tempted her with an alternative means of becoming like God. By listening to this alternative word, both Adam and Eve were enticed by the desires of their own flesh. These desires gave birth to sin as they took and ate the fruit, resulting in their death. Adam and Eve had attempted to take hold of what they believed was good for them, forgetting that every good thing came to them from the Father, through the Son.

## References:

Gen 2:19

Gen 1:28

Gen 22:17-18

Jas 1:14-15, 17

Lev 26:9

## Further Study:

Genesis 3

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 1

# A choice

When God made man from the dust of the earth, He distinguished man from all the animals by giving him *possession* of his own identity. Animals must live by the principle of life that God has established for them. A dog, for example, has no capacity to decide whether or not it will behave like a dog. All animals live by their instincts and make characteristic responses to the environments in which they exist. In contrast to all the other living creatures, God created man a living soul, in *His own image*. Adam and Eve were given the capacity, dignity and freedom to possess and express their own lives. This means that they were able to be aware of themselves and others, and could make decisions about how to live their lives. They were, therefore, *accountable* for their decisions and their consequences. Importantly, the faculty and freedom of choice meant that, unlike animals, Adam and Eve could *make offering*. This was the basis of God's own fellowship, and mankind had been created to have fellowship with Yahweh.

The implication of possessing their own identities was that Adam and Eve had a *choice* regarding how to *present* themselves in response to the mandate God had laid down to them. They were not destined to be disobedient. They should have presented themselves to Yahweh as slaves of His righteousness. They had the capacity, opportunity and freedom to do this. They even had an example to follow! God the Son was their example. We know that God the Son *emptied* Himself in response to the Father's desire for many sons. He willingly made Himself to be the Father's Slave and created the heavens and the earth according to the word and mandate that had been given to Him by the Father. Adam and Eve had the opportunity to learn and continue in this way as they walked and talked with Yahweh each day.

## References:

Gen 1:27  
Gen 2:7  
Rom 6:16-19

Php 2:5-8  
1Ki 18:21  
Rth 1:15-16

## Further Study:

Joshua 24

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

# The mind set on the flesh

If Adam had presented himself as a slave of righteousness, his preoccupation would have been to reveal Yahweh through his own obedience to the mandate given to him. A slave, by definition, only does what his master commands him to do. Adam was supposed to have offered himself and his work back to Yahweh. King David, a man after God's own heart, understood this principle when he confessed, 'All things come from You, and from Your hand we have given [back to] You'.

The fellowship of Yahweh needed to be Adam's reference point for everything that he was doing and all that was happening in the garden of Eden. Their fellowship was 'in the Spirit', and Adam should have *set his mind on the things of the Spirit*. The outcome would have been ongoing life and peace in the creation. If slavehood had been the fundamental mode of his fellowship with Yahweh, Adam would not have listened to the alternative perspective offered by his wife. He would have brought the matter into a discussion with Yahweh to ensure that only the will of God was being done.

Adam and Eve *set their minds on the things of the flesh* instead of the things of the Spirit. They *presumed* to take hold of something that was not being given to them by God. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was not within the scope of the mandate that they had received from the Lord. And as they considered the merits of partaking of the fruit, they were setting themselves as the reference point for what was good for their lives. Instead of revealing the glory of God through obedience to His command, they sought to reveal themselves and their own glory. If they had patiently endured, in due time, God Himself would have glorified them as sons of God. Instead, the outcome of their actions was death.

## References:

1Ch 29:14

Rom 6:18-20

Php 2:5-7

Rom 13:14

Php 4:8

1Th 5:21-22

**Further Study:** Romans 8:1-14**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 5

# Disharmony through disobedience

The apostle Paul explained that ‘through one man [Adam] sin entered into the world, and death through sin, and so death spread to all men, because all sinned’. Death and, we could say, the suffering that leads to death, entered the world through the sin of Adam. Paul also explained that because of this sin the whole of creation was also made a slave of corruption. The creation itself groans and suffers the pains of childbirth until now. Because of Adam’s sin, every living thing now experiences suffering and death.

What was it about Adam’s disobedience that resulted in sin, suffering and death being spread to us all? How did Adam’s sin result in the suffering of the whole of creation? From the moment that Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were separated from the covenant life of God. They were no longer aligned with God’s word. Moreover, they were separated from the fellowship of the Spirit in which their mortality had been sustained by His life, and their nakedness covered by His light. They were now condemned to live by the principle of their own law, in a vain attempt to sustain their mortal lives.

A life that is lived outside of the parameters established by the word of God is unable to be and do what God has planned for it. It inevitably misses the mark that the word itself has established. ‘*Missing the mark*’ is, in fact, the definition of sin. As the exercise of their own law caused Adam and Eve to miss the mark in relation to their name and work, it unavoidably impacted upon the actions of other laws. ‘*Missing the mark*’ caused the misalignment and disharmony of the laws of creation.

## References:

Rom 5:12, 19    2Pe 3:13  
Eph 2:12        Jer 17:13  
2Co 6:15

**Further Study:** Romans 8:18-30

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 6

# Death spread to all

The discord that resulted from Adam's disobedience to God's word was *imposed upon the entire creation*. This is because the laws or principles of life for every living thing on earth had been subject to Adam, and he was ruling over it. The disconnection from the life of God, and misdirection of their actions, caused all other laws to be misaligned.

The disharmony of the laws of every living creature that resulted from Adam's sin, explains why death has spread to everyone, even though everyone did not sin in the likeness of Adam. This is particularly pertinent to babies born into this fallen world. Although they are born innocent of Adam's sin, children are born with another law in their members. To live by the principle of this law is to sin. It is missing the mark of sonship that God predestined for them. Those who are born into the world, and outside of God's Covenant, are slaves to this way of living. They are disconnected from the word of their name, and are unable to fulfil the righteousness of sonship. In this regard, we note that innocence is not the same as righteousness.

In contrast to this, a child born into a Christian family is connected to their name and receives God's divine nature in the womb of their mother. They are 'of God' and receive righteousness as a gift. Although the child is also born with another law in their members, they are not slaves to sin. Through obedience to their parents, they can grow in the sonship that was named for them. They will still experience suffering, however, the nature and outcome of their suffering will be different from those who are born of the spirit of the world. The suffering of a son of God is the discipline of God the Father in their lives, teaching them the obedience of sonship.

**References:**

Rom 5:14      1Co 15:21  
Ecc 9:11      Psa 22:9-10  
Eze 18:4

**Further Study:** Galatians 6**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 7

# The pain of suffering

God subjected the whole of the creation to *futility* when He sent Adam and Eve from the garden and cursed the ground for their sakes. King Solomon lamented the futility of life on the earth. He noted that life lived under this condition, whether it was the life of the sons of men or of other living things, only resulted in death. He asked, 'What does a man get in all his labour and in his striving with which he labours under the sun? Because all his days his task is *painful* and *grievous*; even at night his *mind does not rest*.'

We can understand suffering as a *protest* against the reduction of our quality of life and its expression. For example, when a person takes a hammer and inadvertently strikes their finger instead of the intended nail, the painful reaction is a protest against this assault. The person's finger is suffering because the hammer missed its mark. And because of the incursion of the hammer, the viability of the finger as an active member of the body is compromised. If this does not cease, the finger's capacity to do its work will be severely reduced and it will ultimately die. We can see that suffering is part of dying.

The next observation we can make is that suffering is a *manifestation of judgement*. What do we mean by this? The pain of suffering is articulating that a law that governs life has been *violated*, and that death could be the result. We have understood that the whole world operates by laws that come into conflict with each other. When they conflict, each law is being violated and the result for one or the other is pain. Because of Adam's disobedience, the world has been left to the process of judgement that comes from violating the laws that govern its existence and environment. Eventually, everything dies because of the judgement of law.

## References:

Gen 3:17            Act 14:22  
Psa 90:7-10        Php 4:6  
Psa 6:6-7            1Pe 5:7

**Further Study:** Ecclesiastes 2

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 8

# Sin and wickedness

The most elementary definition of sin is simply ‘missing the mark’. However, following the fall, we see that men and women departed from the region of Eden and became *increasingly evil*. In this regard, their evil was more than just missing the mark. The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was *only evil continually*. The earth was now full of violence and corruption, ‘for all flesh had corrupted their way upon the earth’. The Lord was sorry that He had made man, and He was grieved in His heart on account of their wickedness and corruption. He determined to destroy every living thing from the face of the earth. God said, ‘The end of all flesh has come before Me; for *the earth is filled with violence because of them*; and behold, I am about to destroy them with the earth’.

This was a striking declaration. When Adam and Eve disobeyed God, He said that they would surely die as a consequence. However, God was not determined to destroy all life on account of their sin. In fact, He established offering as a means by which Adam, Eve and their children could be *recovered* to fellowship with God. In contrast, in the days of Noah, God repented of the creation and determined to destroy it. When God determined to destroy every living thing, the sentence of death was passed on the *whole* of the creation. Every person at that time was destroyed, and the destinies of those who would otherwise have been born to them, were also lost. However, ‘Noah found *grace* in the eyes of the Lord’. Because of God’s grace, Noah and his family were delivered from the destruction of the flood. The deliverance of Noah and his family revealed both the condemnation of the world *and* the gift of God’s righteousness.

## References:

Gen 3:3,19      Gal 5:5  
 Gen 4:3-4      Php 3:9  
 Heb 11:7      2Ti 4:8

## Further Study:

Genesis 6

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

# Reconciled to God

Paul was emphatic on the point that *all* have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. We see that Noah was no different from us. He did not become an heir of righteousness on the merits of his own good works. Righteousness is a *gift* from God that we receive *by His grace*. This grace was made available to all men through the Son's suffering and death on the cross for our redemption. When Christ died on the cross for us all, the old creation was condemned. Paul said that 'it passed away'. This was the same judgement that God had declared to Noah. When Noah found grace in the eyes of *Yahweh*, it was the grace that *Yahweh* made available through His offering on the cross.

Noah and his family were *reconciled* to God through His gift to them. Concerning this same reconciliation, Paul wrote, 'While we were enemies we were reconciled to God *through the death of His Son*, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be *saved by His life*'. Paul was drawing our attention to two aspects of Christ's provision. Firstly, Christ reconciled us to God when He suffered in His fleshly body and died *once for all* on the cross. Secondly, a person who receives this message of reconciliation can be saved by the life of the Son. However, we are only saved by His life by being conformed to His death through baptism.

Paul contrasted the *condemnation* on all men because of the fall, with the *justification of life* that was made available to all men through the obedience of Christ. He wrote, 'So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men'. We now have the reconciliation that was made available by the grace of Jesus Christ.

## References:

Rom 3:23-25  
2Co 5:17  
Rom 5:10

Col 1:22  
Rom 6:4

## Further Study:

Ephesians 2

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

# Baptism

Every person who was born after the flood was subject to the condemnation of the old creation. After the flood, it would only be through grace that a person could be delivered from the judgement that God had brought upon the whole world and all who lived upon it. As we understand this, we can begin to see the significance of the apostle Peter's teaching on baptism. Like Paul, Peter identified Christ as the provision for our reconciliation. For our sake, Christ was put to death in the flesh but made alive in the Spirit. His one-offering-for-all connected every believer of every generation with the grace by which Noah and his family were delivered out of the waters of judgement. He wrote, '*Corresponding to that, baptism now saves you*'.

The waters of baptism connect us to the grace and reconciliation that Noah found. As we are baptised in water, we accept that God has passed judgement completely and absolutely on the whole of the old creation, including us. However, this grace does not give us liberty to continue living by the principle of our own law. This will lead us back into captivity to sin. As Paul reminded the Romans, we are not to continue in sin because 'all of us who have been baptised into Christ Jesus have been baptised into His death'. To be baptised into Christ's death is to be *conformed* to His death. By this means, we are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings and can know the power of His resurrection. Having received the reconciliation, we are saved by His life as we suffer with Christ on the pathway of salvation that He authored. John the Baptist said that Jesus Christ would baptise us with the Holy Spirit and fire. These are the fiery trials that are part of the sufferings of Christ.

## References:

1Pe 3:19-21    1Pe 4:12-13, 17  
 Php 3:10      1Co 3:12-15  
 Luk 3:16      Rom 5:10

**Further Study:**      Romans 6

**Daily Proverb:**      Proverbs 13

# Two kinds of suffering

Baptism into Christ highlights the reality that there are two kinds of suffering on the earth. The first is the suffering that the whole world experiences as a consequence of the fall of mankind. This suffering should lead people to join the second kind of suffering; the suffering of Christ. The sufferings that people experience in the world can teach them to 'get real' about their situation and then seek a way that leads to life. In this regard, suffering can help a person if they stop and consider whether or not there is a way that leads to life, instead of their inevitable death. When Adam sinned, God cursed the ground so that every person who is born into this fallen world needs to 'seek God, if perhaps they might grope for Him and find Him'.

Participation in the sufferings of Christ is the way that leads to life. It is through this suffering that we are brought to glory as the sons of God. In his letter to the Romans, Paul wrote, 'The Spirit Himself bears witness 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 in order that we may also be glorified with Him'. Paul was explaining that our experiences of suffering with Christ are the means by which we will be glorified, or revealed, as the sons of God in the likeness of Christ's sonship. Clearly, we cannot have one without the other. If we do not suffer with Christ, we will not be glorified with Him. Paul encouraged believers with the thought that the sufferings we are experiencing now are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed to us.

**References:**

Psa 119:67, 71, 75  
Act 17:27  
Rom 8:16-19

Php 3:10  
Heb 2:10

**Further Study:**

Philippians 1

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 14

# A pathway of suffering

The cross of Christ is a study of suffering. Through His experience of the cross, Jesus pioneered a pathway through the suffering and death that had spread to the whole of creation on account of Adam's sin. The pathway that He pioneered leads to life. However, it is a narrow and difficult way, and few find it. Interestingly, the New Testament church first called itself 'the Way'. They were followers of Christ on the pathway that He had established. As His followers, they were not escaping from suffering, but rather, were joined to a process through which they were receiving the eternal life that Christ had made available.

Jesus said, 'I came that they may have life, and have it abundantly'. Having made known the reason for coming into the world, Jesus then began to reveal that, through offering, He was *authoring* a pathway to life. He firstly did this by identifying Himself as the good Shepherd who was going to lay down His life for the sheep in obedience to the command of the Father. We recall from the Psalm of David, that the Lord is our Shepherd who *leads* us on this pathway of righteousness. It is a pathway that passes through the valley of the shadow of death. The Lord is able to lead us on this pathway because it was established by Him when He laid down His life for the sheep.

Jesus came to give us God's life in the midst of our suffering. The moment that we receive the life of Jesus, *our sufferings change*. They are no longer the manifestation of judgement because some natural law that governs life has been broken and caused the quality of our life to be diminished. They are now joining us to His life and teaching us *obedience and discipline*.

## References:

Heb 2:10  
Mat 7:14  
Act 19:23  
Psa 23:1-4  
Heb 5:8

## Further Study:

John 10

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

# Condemned sin in the flesh

Jesus Christ was sent by the Father to suffer and die for our sake so that we can receive the promise of eternal life. This was the expression of God's love toward us. In the garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus drank the cup His Father had given Him, He was made sin on our behalf. Christ aligned Himself with us in our state of sin and came under the judgement of law with all of its conflict, dystrophy and death. Only Christ had the power to harmonise all things. He did this through His perfect obedience to the Father, as the Son of Man. By coming in the likeness of our sinful flesh and offering Himself for our sin, Paul said that the Son 'condemned sin in the flesh'. He redeemed us, bringing us out from under the condemnation that we had fallen under, and from the conflict of law in our own flesh, bringing us peace.

We need to look upon Jesus and recognise that our suffering and death is the consequence of our sin. The sufferings of Christ were part of His redeeming work. In obedience to the Father, Jesus Christ gave Himself to suffering and death for us. This was to 'redeem us from every lawless deed, and to purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds'. These good deeds are the works of our sonship, prepared for us from before the foundation of the world. If we are joined to His death and suffering, and learn the obedience that He perfected in His flesh, the requirements of the Law are fulfilled in us. This means that we are able to walk according to the Spirit and do the will of God as His sons.

## References:

Joh 3:16      Rom 8:3-4  
Mar 14:36    Tit 2:14  
2Co 5:21

**Further Study:**      Hebrews 2

**Daily Proverb:**      Proverbs 16

# The two thieves

The distinction between the two kinds of suffering in the world was most clearly portrayed on the day that Christ died. We recall that on that day there were three crosses erected on Mt Calvary. Christ died on one cross, and two thieves died on the other crosses; one on His left and the other on His right. All three men were experiencing the *same* physical pain. However, the reasons for their suffering were different.

Both criminals were suffering because they had exercised their own law to steal from others, and it had violated another law by which they were judged and condemned. And even though they were suffering *justly*, one of the criminals hurled abuse at Jesus, demanding that He deliver him from his pain. However, the other criminal recognised that the *reason* for Jesus' suffering was not the same as theirs. He rebuked his colleague, saying, 'We indeed are suffering justly, for we are receiving what we deserve for our deeds; but this man has done nothing wrong'. In contrast to the criminals, Christ's suffering and death were *because of His obedience*.

Evidently, the believing criminal had been illuminated regarding the efficacy of Christ's offering. Firstly, he saw Christ lifted up in the manner of a serpent on a pole, and acknowledged that it was his own sin that was causing him to die. He also recognised that Jesus was Yahweh and was suffering because He was fulfilling the will of the Father. The criminal had been drawn to Jesus by the Father and recognised that there was a kingdom for him to enter. In this faith, he said to Jesus, 'Remember me when You come in Your kingdom!' Having found forgiveness, the believing criminal was joined to the sufferings of Christ.

## References:

Num 21:8-9

Joh 3:14-15

Joh 8:28

Joh 12:32

**Further Study:** Luke 23:26-56

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 19

# Jesus exercised no law

Jesus Christ gave Himself for us and laid His life down against every temptation to exert His own right to survive. As He willingly submitted Himself to the suffering of the cross, He activated no law in self-defence. Of course, He had every right to defend Himself, because He was completely innocent. In response to Peter's indignant reaction to His betrayal, Jesus said, 'Do you think that I cannot appeal to My Father, and He will at once put at My disposal more than twelve legions of angels? How then will the Scriptures be fulfilled, which say that it must happen this way?' Throughout His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, Jesus did not react to those who falsely accused Him and abused Him. Neither did He justify or defend Himself.

If Christ had reacted in self-defence, He would have activated His *own law* and perpetuated the suffering in this world that is the consequence of the conflict of laws. He did not come to do this. He came to show another mode or way of living, thinking and functioning. He had emptied Himself and come as a slave, becoming obedient to the point of death on the cross. Paul said that we must learn from this and have the same mind.

We recall that Adam's disobedience brought disharmony, suffering and death. However, 'through the obedience of the One the many are made righteous'. Christ did this by nailing every dimension of law, including the laws upon which the creation is based, to the cross. He removed the enmity of competing laws, which included the philosophies of the world and the Law of commandments, thus establishing *peace*. Where there had been disharmony on account of competing laws, there was now harmony and peace *in Him*.

## References:

Mat 26:53-54    Rom 5:19  
 IPe 2:22-23    Col 2:14  
 Php 2:6-8      Eph 2:14-16

## Further Study:

1 Peter 2

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

# Life in the fellowship of offering

In response to a query from one of the scribes regarding the greatest commandment, Jesus said, ‘The foremost is, “Hear, O Israel! The Lord our God is one Lord; and you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.” The second is this, “You shall love your neighbour as yourself”.’ ‘On these two commandments *hang* all the Law and the Prophets.’ This *command* revealed the life and fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and the offering of the cross through which we can be reconnected in fellowship with Them. When Jesus said that the Law and Prophets hang from these commandments, He was pointing to His own body that would soon hang on the cross. All the Law and Prophets were hung on the cross in His body.

Through this offering, Jesus was revealed as ‘I Am’, or Yahweh. His offering revealed the name of God and the nature of Their fellowship in one life and one Spirit. The Son’s love of the Father was demonstrated through His complete obedience. Jesus said, ‘So that the world may know that *I love the Father*, I do exactly as the Father *commanded Me*’. Finally, *we* were the ‘neighbours’ who Christ had loved as Himself. Jesus was made like His *brethren* in all things, and testified that He would lay His life down for the sheep. In this regard, He exemplified ‘greater love’ by laying His life down for His *friends*. The fellowship of Yahweh is the fellowship of offering. Offering is how the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *live*. It is the expression of Their *love*, and the means by which Their life is given. The commandment to love is proclaimed from the cross so that we might be joined to this fellowship.

## References:

Mar 12:29-31      Joh 14:23  
 Mat 22:40        Heb 2:17  
 Joh 8:28          Joh 15:13

## Further Study:

John 5

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

# The power and wisdom of the cross

Baptism is our connection to the wisdom and power of the cross. This is because we are baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. We are joined to His offering. Baptism is God's method of dealing with our sin and its consequences. As we are baptised into His death, we are raised to walk in His life. Our sufferings with Christ are the hand of the Father upon us, dealing with the other law in our members and teaching us the obedience of sonship. We are being quickened in our mortal bodies by the Father so that we can endure our suffering. As we are connected to the life of God, not a hair on our head perishes without our heavenly Father knowing. When we are baptised with the Holy Spirit, He gives us the capacity of Eternal Spirit so that we can present ourselves as living sacrifices who are *fulfilling a will that is not our own*.

In fellowship with the Father and the Son and with each other, we are to continue receiving and living by the word of God that gives life to us. From this word, we receive faith. It is the faith of the Son of God. Having been crucified with Christ, we forsake our former ways of living – whether it is the seeking of signs, or the philosophies of the world – and live by the faith of the Son of God who loved us and gave Himself up for us. Faith orientates us rightly to God. It is the capacity for obedience and to make offering. It is evident that we have received faith because we are able to stand and fully express the name and identity that God predestined for us. We do this by laying our lives down for our brethren in a genuine fellowship of first love.

## References:

1Co 1:18,24

1Th 1:5

Mat 10:29-31

Gal 6:14

Gal 2:20

## Further Study:

Colossians 2

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

# New creation

Through His obedient offering on the cross, Christ has made way for a new creation and, eventually, a new heaven and a new earth. The apostle Peter wrote that ‘according to His promise we are looking for a new heavens and a new earth, in which righteousness dwells’. In this new creation, no law will ever compete again in relation to the survival of one species against another. Every principle of life will be aligned to the will of God and will be satisfied by His life. The new heavens and earth will be inherited by the righteous who have received an immortal resurrection body. This new creation will be ruled with a rod of iron. Under these conditions, ‘There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore’.

It is amazing to realise that Christ created a whole new kind of humanity in Himself on the cross. By perfecting obedience, Christ Jesus abolished sin and death and *brought life and immortality to light through the cross*. The Father was the source of this life and strengthened Christ’s mortal body to endure the cross. By this same power, Christ received an immortal body when He rose again after His body had rested in the tomb for three days and nights. We can see why it was necessary that, in the midst of His suffering, Christ did not activate any law. He functioned only by the life of God that was coming into Him. This was so that He could do away with everything that was old, and create in Himself one new man.

## References:

2Pe 3:13

Isa 60:21

Rev 12:5

Isa 9:7

2Ti 1:10

Eph 2:15

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 5**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 23

# Not seeking signs or wisdom

As Christians, we must learn to commit our lives to God as to a faithful Creator, and not revert to using the mechanism of law for our survival. This is the wisdom of God that the world cannot know or receive. Paul noted that ‘Jews ask for signs and Greeks search for wisdom; but we preach Christ crucified, to Jews a stumbling block and to Gentiles foolishness’.

Jews do not want to know Christ and Him crucified. They seek a sign. This is because they believe that a sign demonstrates that something or someone comes from God. When Jesus drove the money changers from the temple, for example, they asked Him, ‘What sign do You show us as Your authority for doing these things?’ From this perspective, a sign is the outcome of God crushing every other law to bring a particular outcome, such as a healing, to pass. The righteousness of God is not demonstrated through the application of a bigger law over every other law. Rather, righteousness is demonstrated through offering, by which the will of God is accomplished.

The Greeks epitomised the human endeavour through their investment in philosophy. Philosophy seeks to understand and control the disorder of creation through intellectual engagement. The fields of medicine and science, for example, have their roots in philosophy. The practice of medicine is completely focused on treating and preventing the pain and suffering caused by competing laws. Science seeks to understand the structure and behaviour of the physical and natural world through theorisation, observation and experimentation. It denies the existence of God and, instead, promotes theories such as evolution to explain the interactions of the laws of life. They desire to understand the laws of the physical and natural world so that they can control and manipulate them. This is ultimately in view of extending their lives.

## References:

1Pe 4:19      Heb 11:4  
1Co 1:23      Act 17:18  
Joh 2:18      Col 2:8

**Further Study:** Malachi 3

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 26

# The mystery revealed

Paul explained that the cross of Christ was a completely different way of life from the way of religion and the philosophies of the world. The cross is the wisdom and power of God. Through the fallen perspectives of various religious persuasions and worldly philosophies, a person is not even able to comprehend the cross of Christ. This is because the wisdom and power of God is a mystery that has been hidden from them.

Concluding his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul explained that the revelation of the mystery of God through the preaching of Jesus Christ was now being made known to all the nations. Importantly, he said that this was leading to the *obedience of faith*. The revelation of the mystery of the cross is for the sake of the obedience of all the nations. It was God's covenant desire to bless all the nations of the earth. Yet, because of the reign of sin and death, conflicts between individuals, families, and whole nations have characterised the history of mankind.

Paul asked the Gentile churches to pray for him and for those who were given the task of making the mystery known. Specifically, he asked that they pray that there would be an open door for the word, and that they would have capacity to clearly articulate the mystery. As churches, we can still be praying this way so that deliverance from the chaos of competing laws can be achieved through the wisdom and power of God. Of course, we are *all called* to be a part of this proclamation. However, this requires us to recognise and forsake the understandings we have previously held concerning suffering and salvation, and begin to reason according to the wisdom and power of God.

## References:

1Co 1:24      Col 4:3-4  
1Co 2:7      Col 1:26  
Rom 16:25-26

**Further Study:** 2 Timothy 1

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 27

# The 'no' and 'yes' of the cross

When a person hears the word of the cross and is caused to look upon Christ's offering, they are firstly aware of the 'no' of God. God the Father is drawing their attention to the consequences of their disobedience to His word. They are aware that their sin was the cause of their suffering and death, and that they will remain separated from God if they continue to live this way. As they mourn for their sin and its consequences, and cry out to the Father for forgiveness, He forgives them because Christ's blood was shed for them. The 'yes' of God is the *way to life*. As we receive and continue in the discipline of the Father, we are able to walk as disciples of the Son in the way that He pioneered. We learn His obedience and receive His life on this pathway.

Jesus said that we were not to make oaths by heaven, or by the earth, or by Jerusalem, or by our own heads. In our society, we generally don't make oaths. So what does this mean for us? Jesus was drawing our attention to the same approaches to life that Paul did when he wrote about the Jews who seek a sign and the Gentiles who seek worldly wisdom. To make an oath by heaven, or by Jerusalem, is to seek some form of divine intervention in our circumstances so that *our own will* can be performed. Similarly, making an oath by the earth, or by our own head, is an attempt to manage and mitigate our circumstances through worldly philosophies so that *our own will* can prevail. Jesus said that we were not to live this way. Instead, we are to let our statement be 'Yes, yes', or 'No, no'. This is the wisdom and power of the cross, and is the way of obedience.

## References:

Eph 1:7  
Heb 9:22  
Mat 5:34-35

2Co 1:17-20  
Col 4:6

## Further Study:

### Daily Proverb:

James 5

Proverbs 28

# Offences will come

Every Christian is going to experience offence. Jesus said, ‘Woe to the world because of offences! For offences must come, but woe to that man by whom the offence comes!’ In fact, the Scriptures teach that in these last days, turmoil causing offence and sorrow will increase across the whole earth. The prophet Isaiah declared, ‘The wicked are like the troubled sea, when it cannot rest, whose waters cast up mire and dirt. “There is no peace,” says my God, “for the wicked”.’ The mire and dirt typify the agitation of people in the world and their constant dialogue of offence. They have no peace and their ensuing sorrow only leads to death. This should not be the experience of the sons of God.

There are many experiences in our lives that can cause us to become offended. These may include, for example, reproaches, false accusations, betrayals, and being misunderstood. The offence that we *feel* when we encounter these things is because of the ‘other law’ that is in our members. It is from the basis of this law that we perceive various situations to be unreasonable or unjust, and we feel motivated to exercise the right of defending ourselves. Our reactive responses to our sufferings will bring us back into bondage to the law of sin. They are not the responses of obedience that Christ demonstrated in His sufferings.

As sons of God who have been baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we have access to the grace of God. The reproaches we experience, when balanced by the *grace* that comes from the hand of God, become a *discipline* upon us. As we humble ourselves and suffer *with* Christ, the reproaches which seek to break our spirits become the instrument by which we are delivered from our own fleshly principles of life.

## References:

Mat 18:7      Rom 7:23  
 Mat 24:8      Rom 6:4  
 Isa 57:20-21      Heb 11:26

Further Study:      1 Peter 4

Daily Proverb:      Proverbs 29

# Paul's example

We recall that Paul earnestly prayed to the Lord three times for a thorn in his flesh to be removed. He described this thorn as a messenger of Satan. Many commentators have suggested that this thorn was the agitation and persecution that was stirred up against Paul in the cities in which he preached the gospel of Jesus Christ. The Lord's response to Paul's petition was, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'. Grace was coming from the Father, through Christ, as Paul suffered the hostility of sinners against him. However, this suffering was keeping him from becoming exalted in pride through the exercise of his own law. As he continued to suffer with grace, Christ's strength was being perfected in him. He was able to do the works of his sonship and was being delivered from his propensity to pride. This is how the wisdom and power of God was being demonstrated in his life.

Sometimes, we will be set upon with hostility by those who are sinners, who vilify us in the name of adjusting us. Again, we must see this event as the hand of the heavenly Father upon our lives, chastening us to circumcise from our lives our own self-righteous law. Of course, it is best that we are innocent of the things being brought against us. If we are innocent, the experience is completely confronting our own law. At this point, if we make a self-justifying response, it demonstrates that we are still operating by our own law. We need to repent and turn again to Jesus, our Pioneer, and learn the nature of His obedience. This is how we find peace in the midst of the vilification and turmoil that we are experiencing. We can let go of the question, 'Why am I suffering this?', and instead ask, 'Lord, what are you teaching me through this experience?'

## References:

2Co 12:7-9  
Heb 12:5-6  
1Pe 4:19

1Pe 3:17-18  
Heb 5:8

**Further Study:** Hebrews 12

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 30