

The mystery of Christ

In his letter to the Ephesians, the apostle Paul declared that we have been predestined to become sons of God. We read, 'He [the Father] chose us in Him [the Son] before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him [the Father]. In love He [the Father] predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved [Christ].' This is the hope of the gospel. The gospel of sonship is the primary message of the Scriptures.

Paul often referred to the gospel of sonship as 'the mystery of Christ'. He was referring to the mystery of how sons of men can be born as sons of God, with the glory of an eternal inheritance for the new heavens and new earth. Paul said that this mystery had been hidden from previous generations. Even though the Old Testament saints had the promise of becoming sons of God by adoption, they did not yet possess the divine nature as the fulfilment of this promise. The mystery of Christ dwelling in the heart of man had not yet been revealed to them.

Paul rejoiced that God now wants this mystery to be fully proclaimed and known among all Gentile nations. He declared that the mystery is 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. We have been predestined to become sons of God who will forever reveal the glory of the Father as 'the praise of His glory'. Paul preached the gospel of sonship in every place so that all believers would be greatly encouraged, knit together in love, and possess the wealth that comes from having a true knowledge of the mystery of Christ. He wanted every believer to have a 'full assurance of understanding' about their salvation as a son of God.

References:

Col 1:27 Col 2:2
Rom 16:25 Rev 10:7
Eph 3:9 Rom 8:29

Further Study: Ephesians 1**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 29

Every spiritual blessing

Paul began his letter to the Ephesians, by saying, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Christ'. 'Every spiritual blessing' refers to all the promises that belong to the Everlasting Covenant, which have been given to us in the New Covenant by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. When Paul spoke of 'every spiritual blessing', we are reminded of the words of Jesus that are often referred to as 'the beatitudes'. Jesus described those who are part of the kingdom of heaven as 'blessed'.

The Greek word used for 'blessed' in these passages of Scripture, could also be translated 'happy', 'fortunate', or 'prosperous'. These descriptions do not adequately communicate the true nature of blessing. For example, the life of a son of God is not characterised by luck or good fortune. A believer has been delivered from the realm of time and chance and their life is in God's hands. Clearly, anyone can experience the emotion of happiness when their circumstances are favourable; yet, they can only be blessed by receiving the life of God.

We could summarise 'blessedness' as receiving all the promises of God. If we have been born as a son of God, received the Holy Spirit as the pledge, or down-payment, of our eternal inheritance, and joined the fellowship of the body of Christ so that we are bearing the fruit of eternal life, then we are most certainly blessed! This is the fulfilment of the blessing of Abraham. Jesus explained to us in 'the beatitudes' that we begin to receive real and genuine blessing as soon as we become poor in spirit. He declared, '*Blessed* are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven'.

References:

Eph 1:3

Luk 11:28

Mat 5:3

Gal 3:8-9

2Pe 1:3-4

Further Study: Matthew 5:1-24

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 30

The blessing of illumination

Jesus said to the disciples, 'Blessed are your eyes because they see'. He then proceeded to explain the parable of the sower. The word of God is preached to us as a seed to bring both life and illumination. Jesus likened those who receive the word as information, but do not receive any illumination, to wayside ground. They receive the word into their heart, but they do not understand it. They do not receive any illumination about the gospel of sonship. The word is immediately snatched away by the birds of the air, before the life is able to germinate in their heart.

It is very important for every Christian to understand the difference between 'information' and 'illumination'. Jesus said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born from above, he cannot see the kingdom of God'. When we are born to see, we do not yet have a lot of information about salvation or our predestination as a son of God. However, we can see it by illumination! We know that it is true. We know that we have been born as a son of God and have begun to walk the pathway of salvation that leads to eternal life.

Paul's language concerning the gospel of sonship is beyond poetry. It is the dialogue of illumination. His illustrations are snapshots, or encapsulations, that express his wonder and enthusiasm about the high calling to sonship that we have in Christ. He earnestly prayed that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened to know the hope of the Father's calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward those who believe. His greatest desire was that every person would be genuinely illuminated about the high calling of the gospel of sonship.

References:

Mat 13:16 Eph 1:18-19
Joh 3:3 Psa 119:18
Php 3:14 Luk 24:45

Further Study: Luke 11:29-54

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 31

Other gospels

Even before the apostle Paul had died, the high calling of the gospel of sonship had begun to be rejected by many believers. Perhaps the notion of sons of men becoming sons of God seemed too lofty a pursuit. The gospel of sonship began to be replaced by other man-made gospels. Paul was evidently concerned by these alternatives when he said to the Galatians, 'I am amazed that you are so quickly deserting Him who called you by the grace of Christ, for a different gospel'. He testified to the Corinthians that he was afraid that they would be led astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ, in the same way that the serpent deceived Eve with an alternate word.

Sadly, church history bears witness to how quickly the gospel of sonship was rejected and replaced by various alternatives, including Gnosticism. In many cases, a fellowship in the word of present truth was replaced by the pursuit of mystical knowledge on the one hand, or the pursuit of theological information on the other. Instead of continuing to receive illumination by the Spirit, it is apparent that many believers became distracted with philosophical and theological arguments. This must have been true even in the days of Paul. He warned Timothy to ignore ignorant and foolish speculations that only produce strife and quarrels.

It is important to recognise that the apostle Paul, along with all the apostles, preached one cohesive message. They unashamedly preached and proclaimed the gospel of sonship. It is incumbent upon every Christian to embrace this gospel and then become the ministers of this gospel as the ambassadors of Christ to the world. It is sobering to consider the warning of Paul, 'How will we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?'

References:

1Jn 5:13

1Ti 2:14

2Ti 2:23

Heb 2:3

Gal 1:6-7

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 11

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 1

The importance of understanding

It should be our testimony that we have 'a full assurance of understanding' regarding our own salvation. The apostle John wrote to those who believe in the name of the Son of God so that we all may know that we have eternal life. Further to this, we know that God has given us the ministry of reconciliation as ambassadors of Christ. We need to understand the way of salvation so that we can effectively communicate the gospel of sonship to others and bring them all the way to a full assurance of understanding regarding their salvation.

The work of Christians is to proclaim the gospel of sonship to those who are afar off from God because of sin. Those who share the gospel are giving their hearers the opportunity to accept God's invitation to be recovered to their predestination as a son of God. If the unsaved person is willing to hear and receive this invitation, the firstfruits Christian should be able to help them lay hold of the call to be son of God.

In several of his letters, Paul reminded his readers of the stewardship of God's grace that had been given to him for their sake. We know that Paul had the grace and authority of apostleship to proclaim the word of present truth in his generation. However, more than this, Paul spoke of the grace that he had received as 'the least of all the saints', to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ. He will have done this publicly, but also in all of his personal interactions with people. This is the grace that has been given to all Christians. Jesus said that the work and ministry of the least in the kingdom of God is greater than the ministry of John the Baptist. This is because a firstfruits Christian is not only bearing witness to Christ; they are also actively involved in bringing sons of God to birth.

References:

I Jn 5:13

Heb 6:11

Eph 3:8

Php 2:3

Rom 15:15-16

Further Study:

Colossians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

The work of evangelism

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul declared, 'We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. For this purpose, also I labour, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.' In this statement, Paul was explaining that he had received capacity from the Lord to labour for the sake of establishing a person in Christ. His reference to admonishing and teaching 'every man', indicates a *personal* connection with the ones who were being admonished and taught.

In the next verse, Paul further described the nature of this work as 'a great struggle on your behalf'. From Paul's testimony, we understand that there is a concerted labour, or work, involved in establishing a new believer in the gospel of sonship. Paul explained that this labour involves much prayer. He testified that he continually bowed his knees before the heavenly Father from whom every family derives its name. He prayed that, as he ministered to individuals who wanted to be a son of God, they would be strengthened in the inner man so that Christ would dwell in their heart by faith.

The work of evangelism is much more than sharing the gospel. It is an evangelistic labour which includes a regenerating work and a begetting work. Paul testified to the Galatians that he was in 'labour' for them so that Christ would be formed in them. In his letter to Philemon, he spoke of his child Onesimus whom he had 'begotten' while in prison. This is the work of firstfruits Christians and households. Evangelism will only be effective when Christian households have been equipped and mobilised toward this kind of ministry. It is for this reason that we must have a full assurance of understanding concerning the way of salvation.

References:

Col 1:28-29

Gal 4:19

Col 2:1

Phm 1:10

1Th 2:2

Further Study:

Ephesians 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 5

Not ashamed of the gospel

The apostle Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel because it was the power of God for the salvation of everyone who received and believed his message. On the pathway of salvation, the righteousness of God is *revealed* in the life of a son of God. Paul was not referring here to the righteousness that is *accounted* to a person because they believe God. Rather, he was contrasting the implications of the 'New Covenant', with the outcome of life under the 'Old Covenant'. We recall that, through Moses, the righteousness of God was *defined* by the law and given to the flesh of mankind as a covenant. However, this only served to show that men and women, born of the flesh, were *unable* to demonstrate the righteousness of God.

A righteousness revealed through faith is such an amazing outcome of the gospel of Christ. A person does not need to hopelessly strive to fulfil the righteousness of God through their best efforts. Now, it is fulfilled in those who are born of the Spirit and walk according to the Spirit. This is the salvation that Paul was referring to. He was adamant that any message other than the gospel that he preached was devoid of power for this salvation. This is why he said, 'Even if we, or an angel from heaven, should preach to you a gospel contrary to what we have preached to you, he is to be accursed!'

This is obviously a message with vast implications. We must give careful attention to rightly understanding the gospel, so that it is *effective* in our lives and we can effectively share it with others. Helpfully, Paul's letter to the Christians in Rome provides a deliberate and comprehensive summary of the gospel proposition. It identifies all of the major waypoints on the pathway of salvation.

References:

Rom 1:16-17 Rom 8:4
Rom 4:3-5 Gal 1:8
Joh 3:5-6

Further Study:

Psalm 71

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

The creation

Early in his letter to the Romans, Paul explained that God's invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly evident since the creation of the world. They are able to be understood through what has been made, so that no one has an excuse for failing to believe that God has a purpose for their life. Indeed, God created the heavens and the earth for the very purpose of bringing forth sons of God in Their image and after Their likeness. This shared initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is called Their 'Everlasting Covenant'.

The 'Everlasting Covenant' was established in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit before the foundation of the world. Then, the Scripture records that on the sixth day of creation, Yahweh Elohim (the Lord God) formed man's flesh from the dust of the earth and breathed into his nostrils the breath of lives. Consequently, Adam became a *living soul*. In addition to a body and soul, the *spirit* of man was formed within him when Yahweh breathed into his nostrils. This is what made Adam unique and different from any of the animals. He had the freedom to choose whether he would submit to the Father's predestination for his life, and was fully accountable for his choice.

When Adam was created, he had spiritual identity from the Father. However, he was not yet in possession of his name as a son of God. Neither did he have the Holy Spirit abiding in him. Once Adam and Eve had been created, procreation was the process through which the identities named by the Father were to be brought into existence. Every child receives identity from God the Father in their mother's womb. The psalmist rejoiced in this truth, when he declared, 'You formed my *inward parts*, You wove me in my mother's womb'.

References:

Rom 1:20 Zec 12:1
 Gen 1:26-27 Psa 139:13
 Gen 2:7

Further Study:

Psalm 33

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

Life in the garden of Eden

The garden of Eden was the context in which Adam and Eve had fellowship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They met with the Lord God 'in the cool of the day'. It is helpful to note that 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', even though they had not yet been born of the Spirit. In this fellowship, their mortality was sustained by the life and Spirit of Yahweh. As they walked and talked with Him each day, His word gave them life. They knew all things in God and God in all things.

It was in the context of the garden that the serpent presented Eve with an alternative to the word of God as the source and definition of her life. Earlier, God had said to Adam, 'From the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die'. Satan said to Eve that she would not die if she ate of the fruit, but rather, her eyes would be opened and *she would be like God*, knowing good and evil. Of course, this was a lie.

Except for the knowledge of *their own capacity for good and evil*, there was no new knowledge to be gained by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam and Eve's choice to eat this fruit was their pursuit of 'God-likeness'. It was the desire to have the life of God apart from receiving it in fellowship with Yahweh through the anointing of the Holy Spirit upon them.

References:

Gen 2:16-17
Joh 3:7-8
Psa 119:50

Pro 15:3
Heb 4:13

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Genesis 3

Proverbs 8

The fall

The apostle James declared that ‘each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.’ Even before Adam and Eve ate the fruit and gained the knowledge of good and evil, their decision to *consider* Satan’s alternative proposition, revealed both their *liberty* and their potential for *carnality*. As Eve listened to Satan’s word, *she saw* that the fruit was good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise. By giving ear to Satan’s lie, Adam and Eve were introduced to an alternative principle for life. This principle was to make decisions according to what they saw as good or evil, rather than according to what God had said.

As a result of acting on Satan’s temptation, this other principle was established as an irrevocable law within their flesh. They were aware that if they did not strive to attain what they deemed to be ‘good’ for them, then the outcome would be ‘evil’. They were now slaves to this knowledge of good and evil, and prisoners to the law of sin. It was no longer an *alternative* principle for them, but the *only* law by which they could now live. All the sons and daughters of men have inherited this other law in their flesh from Adam and Eve.

From the moment that they ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam and Eve died. They were no longer walking ‘in the light and life’ of fellowship with Yahweh. This was evident because they knew they were naked and they hid themselves from Him. They were now walking in darkness, rather than the light.

References:

Gen 3:6, 8 Psa 119:36-37
Rom 7:23 1Pe 2:18
Jas 1:14-15

Further Study:

1 John 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

Separated from God

The darkness experienced by Adam and Eve was not just the outcome of their shame. In the book of Proverbs, Solomon described the spirit of a person as 'the lamp of the Lord'. It is 'of the Lord' because we received it from Him and it is the faculty through which we know God. Jesus also used the imagery of 'a lamp' to describe 'the eye' of our body. He was saying that a person's spirit is their capacity to see and receive the light of life. He explained that if a person's eye was evil (meaning, 'degenerate'), then their whole body would be full of darkness. On account of sin, Adam and Eve, and their children, were unable to know and relate with God and others 'in spirit' because their eyes were now degenerate. They were spiritually dead to Him.

Separated from God and living from the basis of another law, men and women were unable to know the name and works that God had prepared for them from before the creation of the world. All their works were now motivated by the desire to sustain their own life by pursuing what they perceived to be good for them, and avoiding what was evil. They inevitably 'missed the mark' of God's will for their lives. This was their sin.

Concerning the outcome of the fall, Paul explained that 'death reigned from Adam until Moses, even over those who had not sinned in the likeness of the offence of Adam'. Through Moses, God gave His royal law to the nation of Israel as a covenant with their flesh. However, the law did not deliver people from their sin. Rather, it revealed the nature of sin in the flesh. The Lord gave the law to the nation of Israel so that every mouth would be closed and the whole world would become accountable to God.

References:

Luk 11:34, 36
Pro 20:27
Rom 5:14

Rom 3:19
Act 26:18

Further Study:**Daily Proverb:**

Romans 3

Proverbs 12

Reconciled while enemies

In the first three chapters of the book of Romans, Paul summarised the predicament of both Jews and Gentiles. He explained that there is no partiality with God and all men are under His judgement. To reinforce his point, Paul quoted the Scripture, 'There is none righteous, not even one ... destruction and misery are in their ways, and the way of peace they have not known. There is no fear of God before their eyes.' In this fallen condition, the whole human race has become *hostile* to God. This is our beginning point – as *enemies* of God.

While we were all enemies, God reconciled the whole world to Himself through the death of His Son, Jesus Christ. This was completely for our sake. Christ's blood was shed through His sufferings. It was by this means that we were brought near and reconciled to God. The blood of Christ was the treasure that redeemed, or ransomed, us from the power of sin and death. It was the coinage that gave life to men and women who were otherwise dead because of sin. On account of this vicarious work, we received the forgiveness of sins, reconciliation, and the right to be born again and to receive the divine nature.

Through this 'one act of righteousness, there resulted justification of life to *all men*'. This was the expression of God's love for us. However, Paul was clear that there was much more to the gospel of our salvation than justification through the blood of Christ. Through His offering, He authored a pathway that *leads* to eternal life. The preaching of the gospel introduces a person to this pathway. Paul declared, 'For if 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'.

References:

Rom 3:10, 16-18 Eph 2:13
Rom 5:9-10 1Pe 1:18
2Co 5:18 Heb 12:2

Further Study:

Ephesians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

The gospel proclaimed

In his letter to the Romans, Paul asked some obvious questions. 'How will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how will they hear without a preacher?' Receiving and believing the word of God is the beginning point of sonship for every person. Christ and His messengers (those who are disciples of Christ) proclaim the gospel, calling their hearers to be reconciled to God as His sons. This message of reconciliation defines what they are to believe for. They are being invited to see and enter the kingdom of heaven as sons of God.

The gospel message contains the power of God for salvation when it is preached by those who are sent by Christ. Jesus said, 'He who receives whomever I send receives Me; and he who receives Me receives Him who sent Me [the Father]'. Further to this, the apostle Peter declared that the gospel is preached *with the Holy Spirit* who has been sent down from heaven. It is important to acknowledge the role of the Holy Spirit in the process of bringing many sons of God to glory. In relation to Their Everlasting Covenant purpose, the Holy Spirit gave Himself to be the 'Helper' of the Father and the Son. Accordingly, He is involved at *each* waypoint on the pathway of salvation.

A person who has been sent to preach the message of reconciliation has, themselves, been joined in one Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, to the fellowship of the Father and the Son. This is because they continue to live by the word of present truth as it proceeds from the presbytery of a lampstand church. The outcome is that this word is in their mouth and in their heart, as long as they continue to receive the ministry of the Spirit in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

References:

Joh 13:20
1Pe 1:12
2Co 5:20

Mat 10:7
1Jn 1:1-3

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 10

Proverbs 14

The seed sown in the heart

Jesus called the words which He spoke, 'My commandments'. He was referring here to *sowing seed*. We know this to be so, because the apostle John described the commandment as 'the word [*logos*] which you heard from the beginning'. In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus taught that the 'seed is the word [*logos*] of God'. Jesus is the Sower and His commandments, or word, is the seed that is sown in the heart of a hearer.

Jesus explained to His disciples that He is in the Father and His Father is in Him. He said this to make the point that 'the words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, *but the Father abiding in Me does His works*'. A person must receive the spoken word of God. When they believe this word, the *work of the Father begins to be accomplished in them*. Although it is the word of Christ that is spoken by a messenger who is empowered by the Holy Spirit, it is the Father's work that is being done in the hearer.

In the first instance, prevenient grace comes with the word, by the Holy Spirit. If this grace is not resisted, a person is *made alive* in order to hear and receive the message. When they begin to receive the word, they receive faith. This is the capacity to believe what is being proclaimed. They are justified by faith, in the same way that Abraham was justified by faith when He believed the word proclaimed to him. In Romans chapter four, Paul identified that Abraham believed God and it was reckoned, or accounted, to him for righteousness. He then continued, by saying, 'It was not written for his sake alone that it was imputed to him, *but also for us*. It shall be imputed to us who believe in Him who raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead.'

References:

Eze 36:26 Eph 2:4-6
 1Jn 2:7 Rom 4:23-24
 Luk 8:11

Further Study:

John 14

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Growing strong in faith

When a person receives the word of Christ and believes in God, they are justified by faith and find forgiveness. They have been reconciled to their heavenly Father through the offering of Christ. The outcome of this reconciliation is peace with God. Paul said, 'Having been justified by faith, we have *peace with God* through our Lord Jesus Christ'. They are no longer enemies and under condemnation. Like Abraham was, they are now the friends of God because they have believed the word and God has accounted it to them as righteousness.

Further to this, the new believer receives *their name* as a son of God. This is what the apostle Peter was saying, when he wrote, 'You have been born again not of *seed* which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and enduring word of God'. It is the word of truth through which the Father brings them forth to be a certain kind of firstfruits of His creation. The seed is sown in their heart and they are able to see that God predestined them to be a part of His kingdom as His son.

The work of the Father continues to be done through the word of Christ. The new believer is strengthened with power by the Spirit of the Father. By this means, they *grow strong in faith*. This strengthening involves the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, as the believer continues to receive and believe the word that is ministered to them by Christ through the members of His body. This work is to continue across the course of our Christian lives. Paul encouraged the Colossians to continue in faith, firmly established and steadfast, so they would not move away from the hope of the gospel. The hope of the gospel is to bring forth the fruit of our sonship.

References:

Rom 5:1 Jas 1:18
Jas 2:23 Joh 3:3
1Pe 1:23 Tit 3:5

Further Study:

Romans 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 16

The Holy Spirit of promise

The word of the Father is preached by messengers of Christ *with the help of the Holy Spirit*. It is the work of the Holy Spirit to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement. However, the work of the Holy Spirit does not cease once a person has believed the gospel. We are reminded of the words of Paul, who wrote that after we had heard the word of truth and believed in the Son, we were *sealed* with the Holy Spirit of promise.

Jesus promised His disciples that He would ‘ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not *see* Him or *know* Him, but you know Him because He abides *with* you and will be *in* you’. The Holy Spirit is given to us by the Father, through Christ, as the down-payment of our inheritance as sons of God. In this regard, the Holy Spirit is the expression of our sonship. He has come to enable us to bring forth the fruit of our sonship by joining us to the Lord in one Spirit.

The grace of God is the life that is ministered to us by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, as They Each, individually, come and take up Their residence with us. It is not only the Holy Spirit who dwells with us and in us. Jesus promised, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him’. Our introduction into grace is our introduction into the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, so that we are joined in one Spirit with the Lord.

References:

Joh 14:16-17

Eph 1:13-14

2Co 1:22

Tit 3:5

Joh 14:23

Further Study:

John 16

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 19

Our introduction into grace

Through the word of the Father and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, every believer should come to the realisation that they are unable to fulfil the righteousness of God through their own flesh. The evidence that we have arrived at this conclusion is that we begin to cry out, 'Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?' We are coming to the point of being 'poor in spirit' so that we can be delivered from our slavery to sin that results from living by the flesh, and enter into the glorious liberty of the sons of God who walk according to the Spirit. This is the beginning of receiving the blessing of Abraham, which is the promise of the Spirit.

Under the influence of grace and supplication, we begin to mourn because of our sin and our inability to fulfil the righteousness of God through our flesh. This is the evidence of illumination coming to us by the Holy Spirit. Our mourning begins to shift from a godly sorrow for the consequences of our sin, to the travail of one who desires to be *made adequate* for what God has planned for them.

Having become poor in spirit but strong in faith through regeneration, we obtain our introduction by faith into the grace of God. This grace is not merely the unmerited favour of God. We experienced this when we first believed. Nor is it assistance from God to compensate for the weakness of our flesh. We are to cease walking according to the flesh. Rather, it describes the sum of all grace that God has made available to His sons and daughters as part of His Everlasting Covenant. The grace of God is the gift of His life that we receive through Jesus Christ.

References:

Rom 7:24

Mat 5:3-4

Rom 5:2, 15

1Pe 3:7

Further Study:

Colossians 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

Christ dwells in our heart

Paul explained that the Father strengthens us in the inner man by the process of regeneration, so that Christ can dwell in our hearts through faith. It is God the Father who sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our heart. This causes us to cry out, 'Abba! Father!' Receiving Jesus Christ in our heart is the means by which we are able to attain to the hope of sonship. This is because His Spirit and life within us is the *substance* of our sonship. In this regard, we note the *distinction* between receiving the *seed of the word* by command, and receiving the Person of the Son, who is the Seed of *both Abraham and God the Father*.

When we receive the Spirit of the Son, we also become His disciples. Christ makes Himself known to us as our Lord, and calls us to the *obedience of faith*. This is for the purpose of blessing us with sanctification and making the kingdom of God our possession. Christ does this by turning us, as lost sheep, from our 'own way' (the way of the flesh), and making us part of His flock. We turn from our own way by receiving Christ's *command* to 'follow Him'.

When we confess Jesus Christ as our Lord, He becomes the Lord of our life and also the new dimension of our life. At this point, we are living by the faith and initiative of the Son of God. This is the point of our *conversion* from flesh to Spirit. We have the Holy Spirit dwelling within us as the firstfruits of our inheritance as a son of God. And the Son and Father have come to make Their abode in us. This is what it means to be born of the Spirit so that we can enter the kingdom of God.

References:

Eph 3:16-17 Rom 16:25
Gal 4:6 Joh 14:3
Rom 1:5 Joh 3:3

Further Study:

1 John 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Born of the Spirit

In his interaction with Nicodemus, Jesus said that we must be born from above to see the kingdom of God. We receive this illumination and are born from above when we receive the word of the Father that is proclaimed to us by messengers of Christ. However, this illumination is only the beginning of our salvation. Jesus continued to explain that we must be born of water and *of the Spirit* so that we can enter the kingdom of God.

When we are born of the Spirit, we know the glorious liberty, or freedom, of being a son of God. Now standing in grace, we exalt in the hope of the glory of God. This is the hope of fully becoming the son we were predestined to be in the Everlasting Covenant. The Holy Spirit has poured the love of God into our heart so that this hope is not disappointed or unachievable. The love of God energises our sanctification so that we are able to keep the word of our name by doing the works the Father prepared for us to do, in Christ. By this means, the righteousness of the law is being fulfilled in us as we walk after the Spirit.

The New Testament contains many examples of this conversion from flesh to Spirit. We note, in particular, the conversions of Paul and Peter, whose experiences encapsulate the fundamental aspects of this crisis that every person must experience in order to possess the kingdom of heaven. This was when they moved from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant; from being in the flesh to walking after the Spirit. Our committed confession, from this point onwards, is that we no longer live from our own law and resources. Christ now lives within us, and we live to reveal His life and identity as He directs our lives.

References:

Rom 8:4, 21 Eze 36:27
Rom 5:2 Mat 3:11
Isa 44:3-4 1Pe 1:2

Further Study:

John 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

Baptism

When we are converted by receiving Jesus Christ into our heart, we will want to be baptised. Baptism is the expression of our faith to join the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, and thus fulfil our commitment to take up our cross and follow Him. We know that if we are planted in the likeness of His death, we will also be raised in the likeness of His resurrection. We will be raised to walk in newness of life. When we are baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we begin to exercise the *right* that Christ has given us to share in His life and become members of His body, the church.

Through baptism, we become participators in Christ's offering and His sufferings. This demonstrates our faith to receive the *circumcision of Christ*. In the fellowship of His sufferings, Christ's life is transferred to us as a saving and justifying capacity. This is how we are saved by His life. The fellowship of His sufferings is also the means by which we are delivered from the law of sin and the other law within us. Regarding this process, Paul wrote, 'Our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin'.

For these reasons, we exult in tribulations. This is because tribulation is a fire that refines our lives, producing within us, perseverance. Perseverance demonstrates that we believe in the word of sonship that we have received. It is the proven character of a son of God that is being demonstrated in our lives as we truly believe in the hope of sonship. We know that this hope will not be disappointed as we follow Christ, because He has already fulfilled God's will on our behalf. As we manifest His life through sanctified living, God's will is being done in our lives.

References:

Gal 3:27 Rom 6:4-6
Col 2:11-12 Eph 5:26
Rom 5:3, 10

Further Study:

1 Peter 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 23

Communion

As members of the body of Christ, we are joined by communion to Christ's dying on a daily basis. This is our ongoing participation in Christ's circumcision, which is His sufferings. As we eat and drink the communion elements each week, we have faith for participation in these sufferings. This is what Paul meant when he said, 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until He comes'. We are sanctified by Christ's blood as we join the fellowship of His sufferings. This means that His blood is able to purge and cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we can serve the living God as His priests.

The blood of Christ sanctifies and equips us for priestly service. However, the blood is more than a cleansing and sanctifying agent. It is the very life of the New Covenant. It is the life of the Son that He has shared with us by offering. Jesus said to His disciples at the last supper, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood'. The bread and wine of the communion represent the full provision of the New Covenant that we receive as participants in Christ's body and Christ's suffering.

As we participate in the communion, we proclaim and demonstrate the Lord's death as living sacrifices who minister the life of Christ to one another. By the functioning of every member of the body of Christ, the needs of the whole church are met. The Holy Spirit gives to each member, according to their sanctification, a portion of grace to minister as their offering. Each member of the body of Christ is able to reveal His sonship and minister His life to others. The apostle Paul rejoiced that this ministry 'causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love'.

References:

1Co 10:16 Eph 4:16
1Co 11:26 Joh 6:53
Luk 22:20

Further Study: Mark 14:1-31**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 26

Judging ourselves rightly

It is important for Christians to judge themselves rightly. Paul exhorted us to examine ourselves when we come together to partake of the communion elements. He explained that a person who does not judge himself rightly in relation to the body of Christ, eats and drinks the judgement of God to himself. It is for this reason that there are many who are weak, sick, and who even die before their time. They are obviously not recipients of the 'times of refreshing' from the Lord. However, if we judge ourselves rightly, we will not be judged.

To judge our situation rightly, we need to be rightly related to the royal law of God. In this regard, it is important to recognise that Christ did not come to destroy the law; He came to fulfil it. Likewise, as sons of God who have received the promise of the Spirit through faith, we do not nullify the law. Christ has satisfied the demands of law on our behalf. This means that the law is no longer exercising its judgement upon Him, or upon those who are in Him. He suffered its full penalty and established redemption as a process that gives us His life.

In order to be delivered from trying to fulfil the law through the flesh, we must die with Christ to the law. We do this by being rightly connected to the crucified body of Christ. We are connected to Christ's suffering and dying when we are baptised. We, also, through the death of Christ, have died to the obligation to keep the precepts of the law in our own strength. By joining the offering of Christ through baptism, we have been given the privilege and capacity to *fulfil its commands by the Spirit and power of God*. Having been baptised into the death of Christ, we are now able to put off the law of sin by the power of the Holy Spirit who is in us.

References:

Mat 5:17

Rom 7:4

Rom 3:31

Rom 10:4

Rom 8:2-4

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 11

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 27

Living in the New Covenant

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul compared and contrasted the Old and New Covenants in great detail. When the Lord made the Law Covenant with the nation of Israel, it was a covenant made *with the flesh*. We know this covenant resulted in death. In stark contrast to this, the New Covenant is *of the Spirit*. Paul declared to the Corinthians that God has made us 'adequate ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter [ordinances of the law] but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life'.

When Jesus Christ presented Himself to the Father as a living sacrifice, from the garden of Gethsemane to the cry, 'It is finished', He fulfilled the law, abolished the Old Covenant, and ratified the New Covenant by His blood. It is no longer possible for a Christian to live under the Old Covenant. However, we can revert to living under *the mode* of the Old Covenant; that is, we can live and walk according to the flesh. We recall the words of Paul to the Galatians, 'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?'

The major crisis for every Christian under the New Covenant is whether we will walk after the Spirit or after the flesh. Having been baptised into Christ and released from the bondage of our own law and the law of sin in our members, we have the freedom to choose whether we will set our mind on the things of the flesh or the things of the Spirit. Paul has warned us that if we live in the flesh, then we cannot please God. More than this, the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God and only leads to death. In contrast to this, the mind set on the Spirit leads to life and peace.

References:

2Co 3:6

Gal 5:4

Gal 3:3

Heb 7:18-19

Rom 8:7-8

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 28

Walking according to the Spirit

We became a temple of the Holy Spirit when we received Him. He dwells within us and yearns jealously for us. According to Paul, the Spirit lusts against the flesh, in the same manner as the flesh lusts against Him. Because of this, we cannot do the things that we desire to do. At these times, we become frustrated because we are unable to fulfil our personal religious agendas. This frustration demonstrates that we are trying to fulfil the righteousness of God through the weakness of our flesh. As we do this, *the Holy Spirit is against us*.

The baptism of the Holy Spirit gives us power for change. Before Jesus ascended into heaven, He said to His disciples, 'You will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth'. To be a witness of Christ, we need to be delivered of the desire to reveal ourselves. We are unable to deliver ourselves of this propensity. It is at this point that the Holy Spirit helps our weakness. Our weakness is the fallen propensities of our flesh.

When we are converted, we will readily recognise that we do not even know how to pray as we ought to pray. Paul explained that 'the Spirit Himself intercedes for us with groanings too deep for words'. The Son comes to the aid of the Spirit. He is the One who searches our heart and knows what the mind of the Spirit is. As He searches our heart, Christ seeks to know from the Holy Spirit, who is within us, what it is that He should be praying to the Father for, in relation to our sonship and pilgrimage.

References:

Jas 4:5
Gal 5:17
Act 1:8

Rom 8:26-27
Rev 2:23

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Galatians 5

Proverbs 29

The Son intercedes for us

When we pray in the Holy Spirit, the Son intercedes for us to the Father, according to the will of God. He petitions the Father to strengthen our spirit with His Spirit. The Father answers the prayer of the Son through His word, which, if received, continues to bring regeneration and renewing to our lives so that we grow in the capacity to live the life of Christ. As we pray in the Spirit, we are enabled to show forth the virtues of Jesus Christ as members of His body. This becomes an ongoing dimension of our life, by which we are able to walk according to the Spirit.

The Father also gives us grace to participate in the sufferings of Christ. We are strengthened by the same power that raised Christ from the dead, to join the fellowship of His sufferings. These sufferings are 'according to the will of God'. This is why Paul said that we should not despise the chastening of the Father. He disciplines us 'for our good, so that we may share His holiness'.

Finally, the Father enables the Holy Spirit to pour the love of God into our hearts, establishing and grounding us in love. The hope of being a son of God is not disappointed as we bring forth the fruit of the Spirit of God. Paul identified these fruits as 'love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control'. This is the fruit of sanctified living, by which the righteousness that is defined by the law is revealed. This quality of living, or life, is the law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus. This life is now our life. The Spirit gives us power to express the life of Christ as a son of God, and also, to show forth the excellencies of the Son of God as a member of His body, the church.

References:

1Pe 4:19
Heb 12:10-11
Gal 5:22-23

Jas 5:16
Jud 1:20-21

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 30