

# Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

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# The administration in the body of Christ

In this season, the Holy Spirit has been restoring the gospel of sonship to us. Central to this restoration has been a call to turn, receive and join an administration through which the light of the gospel of the glory of God is shone into the heart of a believer. It is through this administration that the gospel is proclaimed and made effective in the life of every believer, in every covenant household, and in every local congregation that is part of the body of Christ.

We know that Jesus Christ has been raised, seated, and glorified at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places. However, this does not mean that He is no longer speaking from heaven or actively engaged in the work of building His church. The book of Revelation clearly reveals that Christ is still speaking from heaven. In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul declared that we must not refuse Him who is still speaking. Comparing the nation of Israel in the wilderness with the church in the heavenly places, he said, 'If those did not escape [from judgement] when they refused him who spoke on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who speaks from heaven'.

Jesus Christ continues to speak from heaven, and to minister on earth through those to whom He has given specific ministry grace. The Scriptures tell us that when Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to men. He gave *specific gifts of grace* to certain slaves within His administration. Paul declared, 'When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men ... He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers.' These gifts are the ministry graces of Christ. In a similar way, Paul explained to the Corinthians that God has appointed in the church 'first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles'.

## References:

2Co 4:4  
Col 3:1  
Heb 8:1  
Heb 12:25  
1Co 12:28

## Further Study:

Ephesians 4

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 28

# The revelation to the apostle John

Jesus Christ revealed to the apostle John that the administration of lampstand churches established by Paul, was the pattern of administration for the church age and the time of the end. John recorded that he was in the Spirit on the Lord's day, when he heard the voice of a great trumpet behind him. As he turned to see the voice, he beheld Jesus Christ standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands with seven stars in His right hand. John declared that the face of Christ was 'like the sun shining in its strength'. As we have considered many times, this was the light of the knowledge of the glory of God shining in the face of Christ.

John beheld the radiance of Christ's glory shining from His face, but he also beheld the rays of this same glory shining from His right hand. This was the fulfilment of the prophecy of Habakkuk, who declared, 'His radiance is like the sunlight; He has rays flashing from His hand, and there is the hiding of His power'. Christ called the seven stars in His right hand, 'the angels of the churches'. The word 'angels', in this instance, simply means 'messengers'. They are the messengers, or living ones, in the administration of God.

This is a significant point. The light in the face of Christ is now shining from the ascension gift messengers whom He holds in His right hand. Christ has ordained these messengers to be 'light-bearers'. They are likened to 'stars' and their work is to reveal the light of the knowledge of the glory of Christ and give illumination to all those who receive their ministry. Christ continues His ministry on earth through them, for it is Christ who is speaking in them to reveal His own glory. When this light is received, reflected and focused by lampstand churches, it is 'the light of the world'.

**References:**

Eph 4:11-12      2Co 4:6  
1Co 3:10        Hab 3:4  
Eph 3:8-9

**Further Study:**

Revelation 1

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 29

## The vision in Revelation chapter four

In chapter four of the book of Revelation, John recorded that he was caught up in the Spirit to behold the administration of the throne of the Son in the heavenly places. It is important to recognise that this is the same administration that John described in the first chapter of the book of Revelation. The only new element of the vision in chapter four is the addition of the twenty-four thrones which have been set up for judgement. These thrones will be set up immediately before the beginning of the time of the end when the Lamb stands to open the seven-sealed book.

The beginning of the time of the end is a major waypoint in the culmination of God's purpose in heaven and on the earth. The administration that God will use to fulfil His purpose in the end of the age, will be the same administration that was established when Jesus Christ ascended on high and gave gifts to men. The primary initiative of Christ from His throne, will continue to be through the ministry of the living ones who are in and around the throne. We note that the command of the living ones will initiate and activate the events to be fulfilled in heaven and on earth when the first four seals are opened by Christ, who is the Lamb of God.

The vision of John reveals that the four living ones belong to Christ, the Lamb of God, who is in the midst of the throne. In contrast to the angelic administration that was under the throne, the living ones are in the midst of the throne and around the throne. The apostle Paul declared that every member of the body of Christ has been raised to sit with Christ in the heavenly places. This is far above the principalities and powers of the angelic realm. Evidently, the living ones are part of the administration that has been established by God in the body of Christ.

### References:

Psa 122:5

Rev 5:1-2, 6

Dan 7:9

Eph 1:20-21

Dan 12:4

**Further Study:** Revelation 4

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 30

# The four living ones

John said that each living creature had six wings and was full of eyes 'around and within'. We recall that the number 'six' is the number of 'man'. The grace of each living one is fully revealed in the administration of Christ in the flesh of man. We know that when Christ ascended on high, He gave gifts to men. The imagery of 'eyes' that are around them and within them, conveys the point that these are people who are full of illumination by the Spirit of God. The prophet Daniel described the messengers of Christ as those who have 'insight among the people' so that they can give 'understanding to the many'.

It is evident that the living ones are fully engaged in revealing the fullness of Yahweh in Jesus Christ, who is the One who sits on the throne. Day and night, they do not cease to proclaim, 'Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty, who was and who is and who is to come'. The ministry of apostles, prophets, teachers, and evangelists, reveals and ministers the fullness of grace that belongs to Jesus Christ. The first work of those with this kind of ministry grace is to proclaim what Christ is saying to His church, by the Holy Spirit, as the word of present truth in every generation. The second work is to supply the grace of God to every member of the body of Christ. The third work of those with ministry grace is to adjust each member of the body of Christ so that they can fulfil their particular ministry in the body according to the sanctification of their own name. The outcome of this ministry will be that the body of Christ will be able to build itself up in love and the grace of God will abound to the fullest measure.

**References:**

Eph 4:8

Dan 11:33

Rev 4:8

1Th 2:4

Act 4:33

Gal 6:1

**Further Study:**

Ephesians 3

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 31

# In and around the throne

Perhaps the most amazing aspect of John's vision is that he saw the living ones 'in and around' the throne. This signifies the *dynamic nature* of the administration of Christ. It cannot be understood from a static perspective. In the first case, the four living ones belong to Jesus Christ, who is the Lamb of God in the midst of the throne. The living ones are in the midst of the throne because they are in the right hand of Christ. Christ Himself speaks in and through apostles, prophets, evangelists and teachers. The glory of the face of Christ is fully revealed through these four ministry graces in His right hand.

When Christ speaks in and through the four ministry graces, the light of His glory shines forth from His right hand. John beheld the four living ones in the midst of the throne, but also saw them proceeding from the throne like flashes of lightning. The four living ones proceed from the throne like flashing lightning 'in and through' the lampstand administration that is before the throne. This ministry of light from the throne is the outcome of a dynamic fellowship of offering, not of a static hierarchy or pattern of church governance. The Scripture uses the term 'in and around' to convey the dynamic nature of this fellowship.

We recall from Revelation chapter one that John beheld Jesus Christ standing *in the midst* of seven golden lampstands. Another way of describing this picture would be to say that the seven golden lampstands were *around* Jesus Christ. We note that the stars were in the right hand of Christ and, hence, *in the midst* of the lampstands. However, they were also *around* Jesus Christ because one star belonged to each lampstand. Further to this, the stars could move from lampstand to lampstand as Christ walked among all seven lampstands with all seven stars in His right hand. This is most certainly a dynamic picture.

## References:

Rev 5:6

Rev 4:4-6

Deu 33:2

Rev 1:12-13, 16

Rev 3:1

## Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Ezekiel 1

Proverbs 1



# All things in heaven and on earth

The vision of John that is recorded in Revelation chapter four is an active and dynamic picture. The worldwide administration of lampstand churches is represented by seven lamps of fire burning before the throne. The phrase 'before the throne' is better translated as 'in the face of the throne'. This better conveys the truth that lampstand churches reveal the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that is in the face of Jesus Christ. By reflecting and focusing the light of the living ones in the right hand of Christ, lampstand churches manifest the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit of God. In this way, the four living ones are seen in the midst of the throne, and then proceed from the throne to be around the throne, in and through the lampstand administration which manifests the fullness of the sevenfold Spirit of God to the world.

It is important to recognise that the lampstand is more than *one* piece of furniture in the heavenly tabernacle. We know that Jesus Christ is the embodiment of every piece of furniture. For example, John saw His face 'shining like the sun in its strength' as the full expression of the ark of the covenant, and 'His feet like burnished brass' as the full expression of the altar of sacrifice. Every personal attribute and administration that belongs to Christ is ministered to lampstand churches through the seven stars that He holds in His right hand. It is the ministry of lampstand churches to reveal all the personal attributes and administrations of Christ, to the world. This is the administration of Christ that gathers all things in heaven and on earth into one cohesive administration that is suitable for the fullness of times.

**References:**

Rev 4:5-6

2Co 4:6

Rev 5:6

Rev 1:15-16

Col 1:20

**Further Study:****Daily Proverb:**

Ephesians 1

Proverbs 4

# The four faces

When the apostle John saw the four living ones ‘in and around’ the throne, he observed that each living one had a particular face. The first living creature was like a lion, the second was like a calf, the third like a man, and the fourth like a flying eagle. These four faces reveal the four dimensions of grace that are ministered from the face of Jesus Christ by the Holy Spirit. The four living creatures represent the four ministry graces that Jesus Christ gave to the body of Christ when He ascended on high. We will refer to the operation of these four ministry graces as an ‘apostolic administration’. When we use the term ‘apostolic administration’, we are not referring to a group of apostles. For an apostolic administration to be fully functional, it requires apostles, prophets, teachers and evangelists. The apostle John beheld the full and complete picture when he saw all four living creatures in and around the throne.

The apostle John identified the four living creatures in a specific order, because there is an order of initiative when it comes to how these ministry graces operate and proceed from the throne of the Son. This order of authority and initiative is particularly relevant when it comes to how the word of Christ is ministered in the midst of a presbytery and proclaimed to the church. An apostle has the grace to reveal, from the Scriptures, what Christ is saying to the church as the word of present truth. A prophet has grace to illuminate all the implications of the word of present truth for a kingdom of priests. A teacher has grace to articulate the word of present truth so that every household can ‘continue in the word’ as disciples of Christ. An evangelist has grace to proclaim the word and exhort as a father, so that the life of Christ is formed in a multitude of sons of God.

## References:

Rev 4:7

Eph 4:8, 11-12

2Pe 1:12

Col 2:7

Heb 13:9

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 11

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 5

## The face of the lion - apostles

The living creature that is like a *lion* represents the ministry of ascension gift apostles. Ascension gift apostles will reveal and proclaim the word of present truth from the Scriptures, in every generation of the church. They will preach and teach this word in the fellowship of a presbytery and directly to the head of every household. Apostles carry the authority of Christ's kingship to lead, shepherd, and oversee the whole flock of God. Christ has given them authority to lead His church in and out to find pasture, to lead in times of warfare, and to initiate and oversee all administrations in the broader community of the church within a region or country. This authority has been committed to them by Christ, who is the Shepherd and Overseer of the church.

The apostle Paul is the most obvious example of an ascension gift apostle in the Scriptures. However, we need to remember that his apostolic mandate was unique and different from all other ascension gift apostles. Another example of an ascension gift apostle is Barnabas. We know that Barnabas did not have the same mandate as Paul, but he also was sanctified by the Holy Spirit for an apostolic work. Timothy and Titus were men whom Paul trained and mentored as part of an apostolic administration. The pattern for all those who have received apostolic grace throughout the church age is found in Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus.

Apostles will initiate many administrations in the church. They will establish the priesting administration with the prophets, the teaching administration with the teachers, and the fathering administration with the evangelists. Once these administrations have been established, apostles will commit the primary oversight of these administrations to the other three ministry graces. However, apostles will personally retain the oversight of the administration of the word of present truth, the administration of church finance and government, and the general oversight of the fellowship of the presbytery.

### References:

1Pe 2:25      1Co 4:17  
Rom 1:1      2Co 8:23  
Act 13:2      Rom 16:25

### Further Study:

Acts 13

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 6

# The face of the ox - prophets

The living one that is like a *calf* represents the ministry of ascension gift prophets. We know that this face has often been associated with priesthood. It is true that ascension gift prophets have a particular priestly mandate. The prophet calls all men who have been born again as sons of God, to become king-priests to God. They will compel every believer to present their body as a living sacrifice so that they can prove the will of God by offering. The fruit of the ministry of ascension gift prophets is the mobilisation of an entire kingdom of priests.

The ministry of those with prophetic grace will motivate and equip all believers in the work of their priesthood, so that they can effectively pray, worship, function with spiritual gifts, and make offering to the Lord. Ascension gift prophets will also equip and train an administration of deacons. This will include the deacons who are responsible for ordering the spiritual worship of each congregation, and those who are responsible for hosting and ordering the function of every member of the body of Christ with the gifts of the Spirit.

There are a number of examples of ascension gift prophets in the New Testament. It is evident that Agabus was such a prophet. In Antioch, he stood up and showed, by the Spirit, that there was going to be a great famine throughout the world. In response to his word, the disciples at Antioch determined to make offering, according to their ability, for the care of the saints who were dwelling in Judea. It was also Agabus who prophesied regarding the specific sufferings that Paul would encounter during the latter part of his ministry as a priest of the gospel among the Gentile nations. Another example of an ascension gift prophet is Silas, who travelled with Paul as part of an apostolic company on his second missionary journey.

## References:

Rev 1:6  
Rom 12:1-3  
1Co 14:32

Act 21:10-11  
Act 15:32

## Further Study:

Acts 11

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 7

# The face of the man - teachers

The living one that is like a *man* represents ascension gift teachers. The face of the man has, historically, been associated with the ministry of the prophet. However, the ministry of the prophet is better aligned to the face of the ox or calf. Teachers will articulate the word of present truth and instruct disciples in the culture of sound doctrine. They will call all believers to submit to the lordship of Christ and to become His disciples. We recall the words of Jesus, 'If you continue in My word, you are truly disciples of Mine'. The ministry of ascension gift teachers will produce those who have the ear of a disciple, who then become teachers with the tongue of a disciple. That is, those with teaching grace will train and equip disciples in the word of Christ so that they will be able to teach and disciple others. The evidence of an effective teaching administration will be seen in the public program of the church and in a vibrant fellowship of the word, from house to house.

The ministry of Apollos provides a particularly helpful example of the work of an ascension gift teacher. He was described by Luke as an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. Importantly, Apollos was easily entreated. He received instruction from Aquila and Priscilla, who explained to him the way of God more accurately. Subsequently, he became a great help to the disciples who had believed through grace. It is significant that Paul likened the ministry of Apollos to the watering of a seed that had already been planted. He wrote, 'I planted, *Apollos* watered, but God gave the increase'. The ministry of teaching is likened in the Scriptures, to the rain and the dew of heaven that bring rest and refreshing.

## References:

Joh 8:31

1Co 3:6

Isa 50:4

Deu 32:2

2Ti 2:2

Isa 28:12

## Further Study:

Acts 18

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

# The face of the eagle - evangelists

The living one with the face like a flying *eagle* represents the ministry of ascension gift evangelists. Evangelists have a ministry of fatherhood that is able to establish every believer and every household in the gospel of sonship. The work of fatherhood involves a travail so that Christ is formed in the heart of every son of God who has been born of the Spirit. Testifying to this dimension of Christ's ministry, Paul said to the Corinthian church, 'For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel'.

By way of example, one of the seven deacons appointed by the twelve apostles, was called 'Philip the evangelist'. Philip preached the gospel to large crowds and his ministry was accompanied by miracles and gifts of healing. He also evangelised 'house to house'. We recall that he personally shared the gospel with the Ethiopian eunuch. Evangelists may proclaim the gospel in large public gatherings. However, their primary work in the midst of a presbytery is to nurture and oversee an administration of elders who are able to fully establish every household in the gospel of sonship.

Along with apostles and evangelists, elders have been given the ministry of fatherhood that is able to nurture and tend the divine nature in every house. This kind of eldership will promote house-to-house fellowship. Evangelists and elders will equip, train and mobilise evangelistic households that are able to labour and travail to see sons of men become sons of God. We know that the gospel of sonship must be proclaimed to all those who dwell on the earth - to every nation, tribe, tongue and people. Households that receive grace from the face of the eagle will be equipped to preach the gospel, and to minister healing and help to friends, families, neighbours and work colleagues, from their houses.

## References:

1Co 4:15

Act 21:8

Rev 14:6

Gal 4:19

Php 1:8

Act 2:42

## Further Study:

Acts 8

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

## Four ministry graces

In the past, we have often referred to five ascension gift ministry graces. This teaching was based on Paul's statement that Christ has given 'some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers'. The notion of five ministry graces was sometimes reinforced by likening the ministry graces to the five fingers on the hand of Christ. Using this illustration, the ministry of the apostle was often likened to the thumb, to illustrate that the apostolic grace touches each of the other ministry graces. These kinds of illustrations have had some merit but, in more recent times, we have become aware of some significant points of clarification.

The first point of clarification is that the ascension gift ministry graces are not the right hand of Christ; they are in the right hand of Christ. This means that the ministry graces are not holding the seven stars; they are an integral part of the seven stars. This point of clarification is significant because it means that those with ministry grace need to function in and through the presbytery of a lampstand church. A person with a gift of ministry grace from Christ is not free to function independently, with their own itinerant ministry. For their grace to be effective in equipping the saints for the work of ministry in the body of Christ, they need to be submitted to the fellowship of offering that is found in a presbytery.

The second point of clarification is that there are not five ministry graces. There are only four ministry graces. This is consistent with the rest of the Scriptures that reveal the four dimensions of grace that belong to Jesus Christ. This conclusion is supported by the language that Paul used to nominate the ministry graces in his letter to the Ephesians, when he combined 'pastors and teachers'. We surmise that Paul did not intend for these to be read as separate ministry graces. He was referring to a pastoring teacher or a teaching pastor.

### References:

Eph 4:11-12, 29  
Rev 1:16-17  
Act 13:1  
Jud 1:12-13

### Further Study:

Romans 12

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

# The work of shepherding

When we consider the work of the four ministry graces, it raises an important point regarding the work of shepherding. The work of pastoring, or shepherding, is not a ministry grace in its own right. There is a unique dimension of pastoring that belongs to each of the four ministry graces. That is, there is a feeding and tending work that is associated with each ministry grace. In this regard, an apostle is a shepherd with authority from Christ to lead the whole congregation in and out; a prophet is a priesting pastor; a teacher is a discipling pastor; and an evangelist is a nurturing pastor. The work of a nurturing pastor is to establish identity and headship, so that the divine nature can be established and revealed from every house by fatherhood and motherhood.

This is an important clarification, because many have confused the work of firstfruits brethren, who are ‘addicted to the care of saints’, with the work of shepherding, or pastoring. Paul named Stephanas, Fortunatus, and Achaicus as ministers among the Corinthians, and urged the church to submit to such men. However, throughout church history, this role has been taken beyond its mandate so that men have called themselves, or been called, ‘shepherds’, or ‘pastors’.

It is true that firstfruits brethren have an important role in caring for a congregation, but the work of shepherding the church of God is the province of the ascension gift ministries, who carry the authority of Christ as part of their mandate. If firstfruits brethren presume upon this kind of mandate, they will end up trying to control and ‘lord it over’ the flock. Those who are novices are at risk of being trapped in this presumption and falling into the condemnation of the devil. A scriptural example of this is Diotrefes, who claimed to have a priority in the local congregation and resisted the authority of the apostle John and the presbytery.

## References:

1Co 16:15-17

Joh 21:16

1Ti 3:6

3Jn 1:9

Act 20:28

1Pe 2:25

## Further Study:

## Daily Proverb:

1 Peter 5

Proverbs 13



# The need for deacons

When the apostle Peter stood on the Day of Pentecost and proclaimed that God had made Jesus both Lord and Christ, three thousand people found repentance, were born again as sons of God, and were baptised into Christ. Following this day, the church continued to grow rapidly. We read that the people were devoted to the word that was proclaimed and taught by the twelve apostles. They continually met together with one mind in the temple and broke bread from house to house. They ate their meals together with gladness and sincerity of heart.

Further to this, it is clear that the early church was committed, practically, to a fellowship of offering. Offerings were continually brought to the feet of the apostles. These offerings were administered by the apostles and distributed to those who had need among the congregation. It is evident that the apostles were able to manage this task effectively for a while, because 'there was not a needy person among them'. However, as the church continued to grow, the task of receiving and distributing the offerings became increasingly difficult for the apostles.

The Hellenistic Jews began to complain that their widows were being overlooked when the offerings were being distributed. The apostles were accused of giving undue preference to their native brethren. There was great upset in the early church over this issue. The apostles recognised that the work of managing all the offerings had caused them to become distracted from their primary mandate of prayer and the ministry of the word. They also recognised that they needed to appoint deacons and establish administrations so that the church could continue to grow. The apostles instructed the congregation to recommend seven men from among them, whom they knew to be of good reputation and full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom.

**References:**

Act 2:41-42, 46-47  
Act 4:34-35  
1Ti 3:10, 13  
Php 1:1

**Further Study:**

Acts 6

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 14

# The revelation of grace

As the seven deacons gave themselves to the work that had been committed to them in the early church, it quickly became apparent that some of these men had been given specific ministry grace by Christ. Following their appointment, the word of God kept spreading and the church in Jerusalem continued to grow rapidly. We observe the clear principle here that, whenever there is division or difficulty in the church, administrations need to be established. When men and women serve in administrations, the grace that each person has received from Christ will become evident to all.

One of the seven deacons was a man named Stephen. Before he was appointed, he was known to be a man who was 'full of faith and the Holy Spirit'. However, as he began to serve as a deacon, it became evident that he was also a man who was 'full of grace and power'. We will suggest that Stephen is the first example of an ascension gift apostle in the Scriptures. He performed great wonders and signs among the people. When he was brought before the Jewish council, they saw that his face was like the face of an angel. That is, it shone with the glory of God as a messenger of Jesus Christ.

Philip was also one of the seven deacons. In contrast to Stephen, who had apostolic grace, it is evident that Philip had evangelistic grace. When he proclaimed the gospel of the kingdom of God in the city of Samaria, it was accompanied by miracles, gifts of healing, and deliverance from demonic oppression. Large crowds of people received his word and were baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus. It was also Philip who personally preached the gospel to the Ethiopian on the road to Gaza. The Scripture does not record the nature of the grace that became evident in the other five deacons, but we certainly see the beginnings of an apostolic administration in Stephen and Philip.

## References:

Act 6:5, 7-8, 15

Act 21:8

Act 8:12, 35

1Th 2:2

## Further Study:

John 1

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

## Offering transfer from Stephen to Paul

The ministry of Stephen only lasted for a short time. However, his martyrdom had a greater impact upon the early church than any other event. His death initiated a great persecution against the church in Jerusalem so that everyone, except the twelve apostles, was scattered into the regions of Judea and Samaria. This meant that the word of God began to be preached in the regions beyond Jerusalem. However, the greatest impact of Stephen's death was upon a young man named Saul (later changed to Paul).

When the angry crowd dragged Stephen outside the city to stone him to death, they laid their robes at the feet of Paul. Paul was not a direct participant in the stoning of Stephen, but he was in 'hearty agreement with putting him to death'. Two things happened to Paul in this situation. In the first case, as he stood by and approved the killing of Stephen, the demonic spirit that had driven this crowd into such a murderous frenzy, began to grip his heart also. From that day, Paul began to breathe threats and murders against the disciples of the Lord. He became a fierce persecutor of the church.

However, more significantly, as Stephen laid down his life as a faithful witness of Christ, the power of God for salvation was directed toward Paul. Before Stephen was dragged out of the city to be stoned, he gazed intently into heaven and saw the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. This glory had been reflected into his heart by the Holy Spirit so that he was able to reveal this same glory of God as a messenger of Jesus Christ. As Stephen joined the sufferings of Christ and died in weakness, the glory of God was revealed, and the power of God's life was directed toward anyone who was willing to turn to the Lord and receive it.

### References:

Act 8:1

Act 7:55-56, 58

Act 22:4, 20

2Co 13:4

### Further Study:

Acts 7

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

# The mantle laid down to Paul

When Stephen joined the sufferings of Christ and died in weakness, the power of God for salvation was directed toward Paul. And more than this, when the coats of those who killed Stephen were laid at the feet of Paul, the apostolic mantle, which had been given to Stephen as a messenger of Christ, was transferred to Paul. This does not mean that Paul became Stephen's replacement. We know that God had set Paul apart for a unique apostleship while he was still in his mother's womb. However, the death of Stephen ensured that Christ would lay hold of Paul for this purpose. We could say that the fruit of Stephen's death was seen in Paul's conversion and in his subsequent ministry to the Gentiles. Even though Paul's apostleship was unique, he ministered in the *same mode* as Stephen. He ministered in weakness, so that the power of God could be directed toward his hearers.

When Jesus Christ appeared to him on the road to Damascus, Paul later testified, 'I saw a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who journeyed with me'. This was the same light of the glory of God in the face of Christ that Stephen saw when he looked into heaven. It was the same light that had been directed toward Paul as he stood by and observed the death of Stephen. He had resisted the illumination of the light on that day, and then continued to flee from it. He evidently loved the darkness of his own self-righteousness more than the light. However, Christ confronted him, and said, 'Why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.' Jesus appeared to Paul to appoint him as a minister and a witness to the Gentile nations.

**References:**

Act 7:58  
Gal 1:15-16  
Act 26:13-14

2Co 13:4  
2Co 12:9-10

**Further Study:**

Acts 26

**Daily Proverb:**

Proverbs 19

## Paul's mandate

Paul was appointed by Christ to be the apostle to the Gentiles. Jesus explained that Paul's mandate was 'to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to God, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me'. The apostle Paul proclaimed the gospel of sonship as 'the mystery of Christ' in every place. However, he also brought to light and established 'the administration of the mystery', which is the administration of lampstand churches that is suitable to bring many sons to glory.

The book of Acts recorded that Paul was sanctified by the Holy Spirit for his unique apostolic work and sent on his first missionary journey from Antioch. He travelled with Barnabas and John Mark. John Mark turned back, but Barnabas continued to travel with Paul. It is apparent that Barnabas was an apostle, but he did not have the same revelatory grace and mandate as the apostle Paul. On this first missionary journey, they preached the gospel of sonship and established churches in a number of cities throughout the Galatian region.

Paul was unique in his ministry as an apostle, preacher and teacher. His writings were part of the Scriptures, and his work was to establish the church in the Gentile world. In his letter to the Corinthians, he testified that he was a wise master builder who laid the foundation of the administration of Jesus Christ in every place. This was a unique mandate. Since that time, the work of all those with ascension gift grace has been to build on the foundation that has already been laid by Paul. The apostolic administration that is being restored in the church in our day, must not presume to take Paul's place. Instead, they must receive his instructions as the Scriptures, and ensure that they are building according to the pattern of administration which Paul established.

### References:

Act 26:18  
Eph 3:8-9  
2Pe 3:16

Rom 11:13-14  
Gal 2:8

**Further Study:** 1 Corinthians 3

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 20

## A thorn in the flesh

When Paul was converted, he had been completely delivered from the murderous spirit that had energised him as a 'persecutor of the church' and 'violent aggressor' toward all those who held the testimony of Christ. Following Paul's conversion, this same spirit turned around and became a thorn in his flesh. It was a messenger of Satan that tormented him by continually stirring up the Jews against him. For example, on his first missionary journey, he was pursued and severely persecuted by a group of religious zealots.

It is important to recognise that this thorn in the flesh of Paul had been sent by the Lord to keep him from exalting himself because of the abundance of his revelations. And, more than this, it had been sent to buffet him so that his ministry would always be in the mode of weakness. This was the apostolic mantle of weakness that he had received from Stephen. This mode of weakness was firmly established in the life of Paul during his first missionary journey. In one place, he was stoned (like Stephen) and dragged outside the city because the people thought he was dead.

In the midst of this suffering, the power of God for salvation was directed toward all those who received the word of Paul. Having established a church in each city, Paul and Barnabas revisited each of these churches on their return journey to strengthen the souls of the disciples. They encouraged them to continue in the faith, by saying, 'We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God'. These churches had already begun to experience persecution. This meant that a number of firstfruits believers, who were devoted to serving the saints and nurturing the life that had been received in each household, quickly became evident. Paul recognised this and appointed such men as the beginning of a presbytery in the region.

### References:

Act 13:50      2Co 13:4  
1Ti 1:13      Col 1:10  
2Co 12:7

### Further Study:

Acts 14

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

## Timothy and an apostolic administration

On his second missionary journey, Paul revisited the churches in the Galatian region to see what further grace had emerged among them. It was on this journey that he found Timothy. Recognising the grace of God that had been given to Timothy, Paul decided to take him along as a travelling companion. He began to train and mentor Timothy as part of an apostolic administration. By the time Paul undertook his third missionary journey, this apostolic administration included many men. Paul not only travelled with these men; he was also able to leave them in certain places, or send them to specific places for a period of time, to establish believers in the Christian faith and to raise up administrations.

We recall that, in the early part of his ministry, Paul personally established the believers, waited for the grace of firstfruits believers to emerge, appointed elders, and raised up administrations. However, by the end of his ministry, he had committed this work to an apostolic administration. Paul wrote to Titus, 'For this reason I left you in Crete, that you set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you'. Paul trained and mentored an apostolic administration that was to replace him and continue its ministry for the whole of the church age.

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, we find Paul's instructions on how this apostolic administration should function for the church age. He explained to them how to establish administrations and the qualities that they were looking for in overseers and deacons. He encouraged them not to 'lay hands on any man too hastily'. The pattern that Paul committed to an apostolic administration was to leave room for firstfruits Christians to demonstrate, through offering, the nature of their ministry grace. He was looking for those who were approved by offering to begin serving with the 'grace talents' they had received from Christ. In this way, elders and deacons could be identified, and administrations established.

### References:

Act 15:36      2Ti 2:1-2  
Act 16:1-3     2Ti 3:14-15  
2Ti 1:13       1Ti 5:22

### Further Study:

Titus 1

### Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

# Paul's gospel

The apostle Paul summarised the gospel that he had received from the Father as, 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. Through Paul's gospel, a person could be born of God and then joined to a process through which Christ would be formed in them. Paul had not received this understanding from men. He had received it through a revelation of Jesus Christ. God the Father had called Paul 'through His grace'. He made it clear to Paul that it was His desire and pleasure to reveal His Son in him. This was so Paul could preach and reveal Christ to the Gentiles.

Paul was startled by this revelation. As a result, he went away to Arabia. After he was resolved and converted in relation to God's call upon his life, he returned once more to Damascus. Then, after three years, he went up to Jerusalem and stayed with the apostle Peter for fifteen days. There, he shared with Peter and with James, the Lord's brother, the content of the gospel that he had received. After this, Paul went preaching *his gospel* in the regions of Syria and Cilicia. The impact of his ministry was that believers were born of God and joined to a process through which Christ would be formed in them. Christ was being revealed in Paul, and Paul was speaking in Christ. Those around him who witnessed his ministry, were glorifying God in him.

The proof that Christ was speaking in a disciple-messenger became an issue in the early church. Some in the Corinthian church began to challenge Paul, demanding that he prove that Christ was speaking to them through him. Paul told the Corinthians that he was not just another instructor. He had been sent to them as a father in Christ Jesus. Although *Christ was speaking in him*, Paul was also able to *speak in Christ* to them. In this particular mode of ministry, he was able to beget them through the gospel.

## References:

Col 1:27  
2Co 13:3  
2Co 10:8-9

2Co 3:1-3  
1Th 1:8

## Further Study:

Galatians 1

## Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25



# Weak in Christ

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul explained that he did not presume to minister outside of the sphere that God had apportioned to him. Paul and his fellow workers had been the first ministers of the gospel to the Corinthians. For this reason, they were not overextending themselves when they came again to minister to the Christians at Corinth.

Paul explained to the Corinthians how a son of God who is in Christ, speaks and ministers as one of His disciple-messengers. In summary, they are to minister in the same manner as Christ did when He was on the earth. The full expression of Christ's ministry has been revealed from the last Passover meal, until He proclaimed His work finished, just before He died on the cross. Jesus instructed His disciples, throughout the church age, to take up their cross, follow His example of ministry, and follow Him in the way of the cross that He had established. They would be effective ministers of His life if they continued in the fellowship of His sufferings.

Paul spoke of his own ministry profile as a messenger of Christ, and how he was personally connected to Christ's weakness and dying. Because of his participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, he was also connected to the power of God that sustained Christ and raised Him from the dead. Paul readily testified to the Corinthians that he was *weak in Christ*. He knew that God would humiliate him among them, and that he would mourn over those who had sinned. He would be despised by some, given over to humiliation and rejection, and even appear to fail as he interfaced with the problems that were besetting the Corinthian church. Yet, through Christ in him, as Paul himself joined Christ's offering, the power of God would be directed toward those in need.

## References:

Luk 9:23-24    2Co 12:10  
Joh 12:25-26    2Co 13:4  
Eph 5:1-2

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 10

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 26

## Power perfected in weakness

When Paul prayed to the Lord on three occasions concerning the thorn in his flesh, Christ responded by saying to him, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'. Once Paul understood this principle, he accepted that his weakness was a participation in the sufferings of Christ so that the life of Christ could be ministered through him. On the basis of this illumination, Paul gladly boasted and ministered from weakness so that the power of Christ would rest on him. Christ Himself certainly ministered through Paul with signs, wonders and miracles, that confirmed the preaching of the gospel of Christ.

However, because of the ministry of Christ in him, Paul was brought under persecution, physical abuse and much suffering. He was *made* weak through suffering. In weakness, Paul was able to speak in Christ according to his own name, by the Spirit. The secret to the success of his apostolic ministry was not the signs, wonders or miracles; it was that the power of God was being ministered from him to others as he was made weak in Christ. This is the principle of 'offering transfer'. Paul wanted the Corinthian church to understand that, as he ministered to them in this way, the life of Jesus would be transferred to those who were in need. Further, he wanted them to learn from him so that, as they followed his example of ministry, they also could successfully minister Christ's life to others.

Paul summed up his second letter to the Corinthians, by saying, 'All this time you have been thinking that we are defending ourselves to you. Actually, it is in the sight of God that *we have been speaking in Christ*; and all for your upbuilding, beloved.' The emphasis here was not on Christ speaking in Paul but, rather, on Paul doing the speaking in Christ. Paul explained to the Corinthians that, as he spoke to them in Christ, deliverance could come to those who received his word.

### References:

2Co 13:4

1Co 2:3

2Co 4:7

Eph 1:18-19

Rom 1:16

### Further Study:

 2 Corinthians 12

### Daily Proverb:

 Proverbs 27

# Speaking in Christ

It is evident that Paul's ministry was not based merely on Christ speaking through him. If this were so, his ministry would have been no different from the ministry mode of many in Corinth. It was a church that Paul described as lacking in no gift. However, the endemic carnality and widespread sinful activities of those in the congregation, demonstrated the inadequacy of a ministry that was based solely on the exercise of spiritual gifts.

Paul explained to the Corinthians that he was speaking to them *in Christ*. This was in contrast to Christ speaking *through him*. Paul's mode was to come among them in weakness. He expected to be humiliated and mistreated by some of them. By this means, he was joining the offering and suffering of Christ and ministering in weakness as Christ had done. As part of this fellowship in Christ's offering, Paul committed himself to mourn and travail for the many who had sinned. This mourning and travail was the travail 'of the Spirit', to which Paul was joined as he maintained his participation in the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Paul's ministry became effective toward the Corinthians as he was humbled among them, and mistreated by some of them. This mistreatment became part of his suffering travail in the Spirit, for them. Paul's travail was part of his participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, by which he was made weak. As he suffered because of their mistreatment, Paul was dying with Christ for those who were struggling in their sin and rebellion. To those who received Paul's ministry as he spoke to them in the weakness of Christ, the power of God became mighty in them and brought deliverance to them. Paul, also, was personally receiving the life of Christ that was sustaining him as he participated in the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ.

## References:

1Co 1:7  
Rom 8:26  
2Co 13:3-4

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 4

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 28

# Living by the same faith

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul described his ministry as a 'travail' through which Christ was being formed in them. This was also true for the Corinthian church. The effective working of Paul's ministry in the lives of his hearers was the proof that Christ was speaking to the Corinthians through him. It was not merely his capacity to exercise spiritual gifts among them. Paul's mode among them demonstrated that he had been sent to them as a father in Christ Jesus, and that he had begotten them through this travailing process as he preached the word of God to them.

Challenging the Corinthian congregation, Paul said that if they claimed that they were born of God, and that Christ also lived within their hearts, they should live and minister in the same mode that he did. He wrote, 'Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognise this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you – unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realise that we ourselves do not fail the test.'

Paul asked the whole Corinthian congregation to live by the same faith and mode that he had received from Christ. This was so Christ could speak and minister through them and direct the power of God toward others. He wanted them to understand the true secret of ministry: as Christ ministered the power of God to others through them, they also would be sustained in their weakness and be able to minister as sons of God and as members of the body of Christ. This should be true for every Christian. It is only as we live this way that we pass the test that demonstrates that Christ is living in us as sons of God and that we are in Christ, ministering as members of His body.

## References:

Gal 4:19            1Pe 4:1-2  
2Co 13:5-6        1Pe 1:3  
Php 3:10-11

**Further Study:** 2 Corinthians 13

**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 29