



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

APRIL 2020

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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April 2020

Contributing Authors

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

Compiled by

David Baker

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Blessed are those who mourn

When the side of Christ was pierced on the cross, the people who looked upon Him and became poor in spirit, began to mourn and grieve as for the loss of a firstborn Son. **Zec 12:10**. Zechariah likened this mourning to the outpouring of grief for the death of the great king, Josiah, when he died on the plain of Megiddo. **Zec 12:11**. **2Ch 35:23-25**. The crowd who looked upon Christ accepted their guilt and, in repentance, mourned for the Son whom they had lost. They were joined to the fellowship of Christ's mourning and travail, and were enabled to find repentance, and to receive forgiveness and deliverance from their bondage to sin and the other law. **Mat 5:4**.

They then beat their breasts as Christ's blood sprinkled their hearts. They found forgiveness and, having died with Him, were now buried with Christ in the hope of His resurrection. **Act 2:26**. By this means, they were made ready to receive the word of His resurrection. **Luk 23:48**. The message of Christ's resurrection would proclaim to them that Christ had been raised because they had been justified by His blood. *He had been raised because of their justification*. **Rom 4:24-25**.

It is important to note that it is only possible for the power of the other law to be broken in our heart when we join the fellowship of Christ's broken heart. For this reason, the Father gives us a share, or a participation, in the reproach that was laid upon Christ. He does this to break the power of the other law within us, and to deliver us, by illumination, from the power of our own darkness. This is the wisdom and power of God that has been fully revealed by the cross. For this reason, the apostle Paul exhorted those who partake of the body and blood of Jesus at the communion, to go forth to Christ 'outside the camp, bearing His reproach'. **Heb 13:13**.

My flesh shall rest in hope

Paul understood that joining Christ in the fellowship of His reproach is a great treasure. He counted everything else in his life as loss for the sake of progressively obtaining this prize. **Php 3:8,12-14**. Likewise, Moses chose 'to suffer affliction with the people of God, rather than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*; for he looked to [or was illuminated concerning] the reward'. **Heb 11:24-26**. A person who has truly received illumination regarding the gospel of sonship also esteems the reproach of Christ to be greater treasure than any worldly riches. This is because they can see, and are obtaining, the precious life of Christ as they are being delivered from sin and death in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

As the Mercy Seat, blood for atonement was sprinkled on Christ seven times. This happened through the seven wounding events that He endured as He offered Himself in obedience to the Father, from Gethsemane to Calvary. The blood at each wounding event was able to provide a full atonement for mankind *through the power of exanastasis*, as the Father brought Jesus back from the dead in each wounding event. **Heb 13:20-21**. Through the shedding of Christ's blood, life triumphed over sin and death, and over the other law that brought us into bondage to sin and death.

When Jesus declared, 'It is finished!'; the Son of Man's offering journey was complete, and *exanastasis* had attained a full perfection and expression in Him. **Joh 19:30**. His Spirit had gone to the Father, yet His body remained on earth. Christ's testimony at the conclusion of His offering was, 'Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope'. **Psa 16:9**.

The immortal Head of the church

Christ's flesh rested in *hope* as His body lay in the tomb for three days and three nights. During this time, the Son was at the right hand of the Father. The reason why Christ's body did not decay during this time was because the *exanastasis* life of the Father had already been perfected in His physical body. On the day of resurrection, three days and three nights following His death, His body did not need to be changed into a spiritual body. It had already become spiritual through the power of *exanastasis*. When He returned to His body, which He would never leave again, it was as spiritual as it was material.

Christ was raised from the dead as 'the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep'. **1Co 15:20**. He was also raised as the *Firstborn* from the dead and the immortal Head of the church. **Col 1:18**. **Rev 1:5**. When Mary Magdalene met Jesus early in the morning following His resurrection, she fell at His feet and clung to Him. However, Jesus said to Mary, 'Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God"'. **Joh 20:17**. Jesus was specifically referring to His ascension to the Father to be waved before Him as a firstfruits offering.

After presenting Himself to the Father, Jesus spent forty days speaking to His disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. **Act 1:1-3**. That is, He taught His disciples to be His lampstand church. For example, He taught Peter that showing forth Christ's death is fundamental to the work of overseers in His church. **Joh 21:18-19**. As He breathed on them, they were joined to the fellowship of His body, which is His church. **Joh 20:22**. **Col 1:18**.

The word of resurrection declared

Immediately before His ascension, Jesus said to the disciples, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' **Act 1:8.** When this happened on the Day of Pentecost, they became the 'lamps' of Christ's lampstand church, shining the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to the world.

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter proclaimed the message of Christ's resurrection to those who were buried with Christ and were resting in hope for the resurrection. He said to them, 'Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.' **Act 2:23-24.**

These people, who had heard Christ's blood speak when His side was pierced with the soldier's spear, had been justified by His blood. They could now believe and be saved as the Holy Spirit poured the love of God, and the love for God, into their hearts, thus removing the veil of their own blindness from them. They could now know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest, as recipients of the New Covenant. **Jer 31:31-34.**

In response to the word that Peter proclaimed to them, and under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the people responded, saying to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' **Act 2:37.** Peter's response was, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' **Act 2:38-39.**

Messengers of the blood

Paul became a minister of the blood of Christ. Making this point, he explained that it pleased the Father for all the fullness of the Godhead to dwell in Christ so that, by Him, we might be *reconciled* to the Father *'through the blood of His cross'*. **Col 1:19-20**. Paul then explained that we obtain this reconciliation if we continue in the faith and hope that we receive from the gospel, of which Paul was made a minister. **Col 1:21-23**. This means that Paul, as a messenger of Christ, ministered the blood of Christ to his hearers, through which they were reconciled to God.

The blood of Christ is not ministered through the communication of the theology of the cross. The blood of Christ speaks through the testimony of those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This is particularly the case for those whom the Father has called to oversee His house.

The apostle James wrote, 'My brethren, be not many masters [or, teachers], knowing that we shall receive *the greater condemnation'*. **Jas 3:1**. Many people interpret this passage of Scripture to mean that the carnal failings of teachers, or messengers, are punished more swiftly and severely than those of other sinners.

However, this is not a particularly helpful, nor accurate, interpretation of this passage, because the condemnation of sin is the same for every person – i.e. *death*. Jesus made this point when He spoke of the judgement that would be executed against the unfaithful slaves whom the Master had set over His household. He said, 'The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and *appoint him his portion with the unbelievers'*. **Luk 12:46**. When we consider the life and testimony of the apostle Paul, we see that 'the greater condemnation' that he received was *part of his ministry* as a messenger of Christ.

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The marks of the Lord Jesus

The apostle Paul testified that, through his ministry, Christ was publicly portrayed among his hearers as crucified. **Gal 3:1**. By this means, the judgement of God and the salvation of God were being made known to them. This was not merely the explanation of judgement and salvation through the cross. Rather, Paul said that he *bore in his body* 'the marks of the Lord Jesus'. **Gal 6:17**. These were the marks that were caused by the sufferings of death that Christ tasted for every man. **Heb 2:9**.

Paul's ministry as a messenger of God in Christ involved a quotient of suffering under the condemnation of death that belonged to, or was caused by, his hearers. This is what Paul meant when he said to the Colossians, 'I now rejoice in *my sufferings for you*, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the *afflictions of Christ*, for the sake of His body, which is the church'. **Col 1:24**. This was a fundamental reality of the stewardship that he had received from God the Father. He said that the fellowship of Christ's sufferings is foundational to understanding and proclaiming the mystery of the cross, which had been hidden from ages and from generations. **Col 1:25-26**.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul testified of this ministry among them. He said that he and his fellow presbyters spoke before God *in Christ*. **2Co 12:19**. He was addressing those who were living according to the flesh and were in bondage to sin. **2Co 12:20**. Paul's ministry was effective toward the Corinthians as he was humbled among them and mistreated by some of them. This was the suffering of condemnation that Christ had suffered for them, and that Paul was filling up for their sakes.

Paul's ministry

When Paul suffered at the hands of some of his hearers, he 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. **2Co 13:2-4**. 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.

Paul said that, through the ministry of the cross, 'the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ' was diffused in every place and in every interaction. **2Co 2:14-15**. As he conversed with those who were recalcitrant, the sufferings of condemnation that he was experiencing in Christ, as a result of their sin and mistreatment of him, was the aroma of death to them. It was signalling the judgement of death that was their 'reward' if they did not receive the word, find repentance, and come into Christ as a son of God. However, as his hearers humbled themselves, his ministry became the aroma of life, or consolation, to them, so that, in Christ, their judgement was turned to chastisement that was leading to life. **2Co 2:16**.

Because Paul was in Christ, and he was walking in obedience to the call of God upon his life, he was dying this 'greater condemnation' *by exanastasis*. This was the comfort and consolation that he received from the Father, which was then ministered as life to those to whom he had been sent. To this end, Paul testified, 'For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.' **2Co 1:5-6**.

The work of overseership

Paul testified concerning his own life and ministry, 'We are hard-pressed on every side, yet not crushed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; struck down, but not destroyed – always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body.' **2Co 4:8-10.**

A messenger will only be able to endure 'greater condemnation' when this ministry is consistent with their name and grace in Christ. This is why James said, 'Let not many of you become teachers.' **Jas 3:1.** He was saying that if overseership was not consistent with a person's name and identity, they would not cope with this mode of ministry. Either, they would become exhausted; or, the growth of the church would be limited by their capacity to cope with the relational pressures being brought to bear upon them.

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is fundamental to overseership in the church. Paul commended Timothy, who was a man of proven character, to this faith, saying, 'For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. *If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.* If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.' **2Ti 2:11-13.**

Importantly, Paul highlighted the point that Christ's messengers reign as overseers in the church if they endure with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. This is fundamental to their authority in this age, and in the age to come. We note the words of Jesus to the presbytery of Thyatira, 'And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations – "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels"' **Rev 2:26-27.**

Faith in His blood

In the midst of a suffering, or 'wounding', event that is happening in our lives, the moment that we accept and believe that this wounding event belongs to Christ and is causing Him to bleed, so that His blood is sprinkled on His body, the Father sets forth Christ in our lives as a mercy seat. Accepting and believing this point demonstrates our faith in Christ's blood. As Paul wrote, 'God hath set forth [Jesus Christ] to be a propitiation *through faith in His blood*'. **Rom 3:23-26.**

When the Father sets forth Christ in our lives as a mercy seat, He grants to us a connection to Christ's suffering. By this means, as Christ's blood flows from His heart and falls upon His body, it is also *falling upon us*. His blood is then sprinkling our hearts, cleansing our conscience from its death-producing works. **Heb 9:13-14.** These works are the fruit of our self-justifying attitudes, which are motivated by the other law within us, and are manifest as the emotions of sin through aggressive behaviour or depression. **Rom 7:5.**

The whole world is already under the condemnation and judgement of God. The wrath and vengeance of God is already upon us. When the Lord comes to us and speaks to us, the first words that He speaks to us are words that minister faith to our hearts. His first word to us is, 'Fear not; only believe'. **Mar 5:35-36. Gen 15:1. Rev 1:17.**

The psalmist declared that Christ comes to us as 'God who forgives' (Heb: *El Nasa*; pronounced 'naw-saw'). He wrote, 'You answered them, O Lord our God; You were to them *God-Who-Forgives*, though *You took vengeance on their deeds*'. **Psa 99:8.** The closeness of this forgiving God is expressed in 'the hand of God'. Job declared, 'I will teach you about [or by] the hand of God' that lifts, raises and forgives *through chastening*. **Job 27:11.**

Deliverance from judgement

As a messenger of Christ, Paul rejoiced that he was 'able to comfort those who are *in any trouble*, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God'. **2Co 1:3-4**. Through the messengers who are in His hand, Christ speaks words of comfort and consolation to us. He has come to deliver us from the greatest of all deaths; the death that is the result of the judgement and vengeance of God. **2Co 1:9-10**. He is among us with eyes like a flame of fire, exposing the wicked motivations of our hearts, which are the fruit of the other law that Satan fathered within us. **Rev 1:14**.

If we *receive* Christ's word, and *believe* it, we are delivered from the wrath of God, and are brought out from under the place of judgement that was our prison. If we do not receive and believe the word of Christ, we remain under judgement and are in the place where the vengeance of God is executed. Making this point, Jesus said, 'He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' **Joh 3:18**.

Christ has come to intervene in our situation. We are suffering because God has made us drink the cup of cursing and suffering that is our just deserts because of our sin. **Jer 25:15**. Christ takes our cup and drinks it, and then comes under the judgement and punishment that we are suffering. **Luk 22:41-44**. He makes our death, His death. **Heb 2:9. Rom 6:10**. As He does this, He tells us not to be afraid, and commands us to believe. **Joh 3:18**. He then bears our judgement with us, and commutes it to chastening, which is perfecting us. This is the way of life that belongs to a person who has become a spiritual new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual, not carnal

The sons of God are spiritual people. Paul said that if the Spirit of God dwells within us, we are not carnal, but we are *spiritual*. **Rom 8:9**. However, being spiritual does not mean that we are sinless. The apostle John was clear on this point, writing, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'. **1Jn 1:8**. How can we be spiritual and, yet, continue to sin? To answer this question, we need to know how a son of God dies with Christ, in Him as a member of His body.

Through His twenty-one-hour offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, Christ experienced the judgement of death that belongs to every person because of sin. **Heb 2:9**. This journey involved six wounding events, which culminated in His crucifixion at Golgotha at 9:00am on the day that He died. As Christ hung on the cross, great darkness fell over the whole land from 12:00pm until 3:00pm. **Luk 23:44**. The torment and suffering that Jesus experienced in each wounding event of His offering journey was gathered up into the cross and into the three hours of darkness that concluded with His death on the cross.

It is important to remember that the whole world was crucified with Christ. When He died for all, then all died *with* Him – whether believers or not. **2Co 5:14**. He died the death of every person, making their death, *His* death. In this regard, His death as the body of sin revealed both the judgement of God and the salvation of God. *How a person dies with Christ* determines the nature and outcome of the death that they are dying in their mortal body. They will either die with Christ in a body of death *or* their body will be dead because of sin as they die with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. **Rom 7:24. Rom 8:10**. In this fellowship, they are being made alive as new creation sons of God.

Eternal death and darkness

The torment and suffering that Christ experienced during the three hours of darkness was the judgement of God upon the sin of the whole world. Concerning this torment, Jesus testified, 'The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.' **Psa 116:3**. The eternal death and darkness of hell reached up and took hold of Him on the cross. Yet, death could not hold Him; He was not abandoned in hell. **Act 2:24,27**.

Jesus likened the final aspect of reproach that the Father laid upon Him to a great flood that overflowed Him. **Psa 69:2**. Christ's heart was broken by this final element of reproach. **Psa 69:20**. He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' **Mat 27:46**. The reproach that the Father laid upon the Son took Him to the end, and then beyond the eternal dimension of the lake of fire. By this means, Christ was the full manifestation of reproach and eternal judgement. This was when the body of sin was fully cut from Him and forgotten, or forsaken, by God. The Father then heard the cry of Jesus, and delivered His soul from death. **Psa 116:4,8**. **Psa 34:18**.

The sufferings that Christ experienced on His offering journey reveal the judgement of God upon the old creation. People who are carnal continue to live by the other law under the dominion of the principle of sin, which is the spirit of the world. The sufferings that they experience in life are the judgement that Christ suffered for them as the body of sin. These sufferings are causing them to die with Christ in a body of death. **Rom 7:24**.

Unless they find repentance, and Christ comes to abide in them and they in Him, when their mortal life ceases, they will be forgotten by God as part of the body of sin that was taken away into the lake of fire.

The salvation of God

Through *exanastasis*, the judgement of God was turned to chastisement upon Christ. The wounding events that He endured throughout His offering journey became a circumcision by which the body of sin was cut from Him and done away with. **Rom 6:5-6. Col 2:11.** This was the death that He died to sin. **Rom 6:10.** As He offered Himself by Eternal Spirit, He was made alive as a corporate new creation by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. **Heb 9:13-14. Heb 13:20.** The fellowship of His death and resurrection is the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for every person.

A spiritual person has been born to see the kingdom of God and has *entered* the kingdom by being born of water and the Spirit. **Joh 3:3,5.** As a son of God, they have been freed from their bondage to the principle of sin by *coming into the Lord Jesus Christ* and dying, with Him, the death that He died to sin. This is the implication of being 'co-crucified with Christ' through baptism; and is the daily implication of our participation in the elements of communion. **Gal 2:20. 1Co 10:16.**

Jesus said, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him.*' **Joh 6:56.** Paul also taught that *if Christ is in us,* 'the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness'. **Rom 8:10.** It is important to recognise that the body that is dead because of sin is *not* the body of death. In previous notes, we have explained that the body of death is the mortal body of 'the old man', who lives by the other law, in captivity to the law of sin. **Rom 7:24.** However, the *body that is dead because of sin* is the mortal body of a son of God who is *joined* to the *body of sin* in Christ. **Rom 6:6.**

Forgetting what lies behind

We wake each day as spiritual sons of God in Christ. However, it is not long before we make a carnal response to some difficulty that we encounter, or we react to the fleshly actions of others towards us. The mess, or resulting fallout, from these responses is part of the death caused by our sin, which Christ made His death. As those who are spiritually minded, we *reckon* ourselves dead to sin, with Christ. **Rom 6:11**. In the fellowship of His death, our fleshly propensities are being cut from our heart and we are dying to sin. At the same time, we are being made alive from the death of sin, with Christ, as a son of God.

The evidence of being conformed to Christ's death is that we are granted repentance. We are able to turn from the shame of our fallen, fleshly responses and to receive the knowledge of the truth. 'The knowledge of the truth' is our works of sonship, which we are to do in Christ. We come to our senses so that we can escape the snare of the devil, which is the motivation to be 'like God' without being 'of God'. **2Ti 2:24-25**. 'To come to our senses' means that we have been delivered from the darkness of our own deluded perspective and are able to see ourselves, and the situations that we find ourselves in, from the Lord's perspective.

God forgives us and forgets our carnal responses, consigning them to the sea of His forgetfulness as we, by the faith that we have received in His blood that speaks, give ourselves to speak with one another about the issues that have resulted in relational discord, and to forgive each other. Practically, we 'draw a line' under the matter and forget it, as we press on together to do the works that belong to our sonship in Christ. **Php 3:13-14. Luk 9:61-62**.

Reaching forward to what is ahead

When we 'walk in the light' with one another, Christ's blood sprinkles our heart, cleansing our evil conscience from our death-producing works, so that we can serve the living God. **Heb 9:13-14. Heb 10:22.** Of course, by faith, we still walk out the implications of our actions in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The consequences of our carnal responses may even be the sufferings that we are to endure for a season. However, we accept that these sufferings are the chastening of the Father upon us, and are causing us to cease from sin. Consequently, we are enabled to fulfil the will of God in Christ by doing the works of our sonship. **1Pe 4:1-2.**

At the end of each day, the dead works of those who are conformed to Christ's death are forgotten by God as He casts them into the depths of the sea. **Mic 7:19.** He says, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.' **Jer 31:34.** His mercies, then, are new each morning, revealing the faithfulness of God towards us. **Lam 3:22-23.** By these mercies, we are able to present ourselves each day for participation in Christ's offering as living sacrifices. **Rom 12:1.**

We demonstrate that we have received the mercies of the Lord when we, ourselves, forget what is 'behind' us. **Php 3:13.** That is, we reckon our fleshly actions and assessments of ourselves and others, from the day before, as being dead in the Lord. Importantly, we do not define our life today by the dead works of yesterday. Rather, we reach forward to lay hold of those things that are ahead of us. **Php 3:13.** These things are the will of God for us, which we are able to fulfil in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul described this orientation to life as pressing toward 'the goal for the prize of the *upward call of God in Christ Jesus*'. **Php 3:14.**

Learning Christ's obedience

As sons of God, we need to learn obedience because we were formerly sons of disobedience who conducted ourselves according to the desires of our other law. **Eph 2:1-2**. However, this is not the only reason why we are learning obedience through the things that we suffer in Christ. We are to be yoked with Christ in order to learn *the obedience that He learnt*. **Mat 11:29-30. Heb 5:8**.

Obviously, Jesus did not need to learn the obedience of sonship. He was never a son of disobedience. **1Pe 2:21-22**. Prior to His offering on the cross, He was already an obedient Son, testifying, 'Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *This command I have received from My Father*.' **Joh 10:17-18**. What, then, was the obedience that Jesus learnt?

To answer this question, it is helpful to recognise that when Paul explained that Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered, he was discussing the priesthood of Christ, which was according to the order of Melchizedek. He said that Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. **Heb 5:5**. Christ was glorified by the Father through the wounding events that He experienced as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. **Php 2:9. Heb 2:9**.

The obedience that Jesus learnt through suffering was His obedience 'to the point of death, even the death of the cross' as the Son of Man. **Php 2:8**. *By the grace of God*, He tasted the condemnation of death for every person. **Heb 2:9**. That is, *He died by exanastasis*. By this means, He came back from the death of sin, and pioneered the pathway of salvation by which we could come back from the death of sin with Him. Significantly, the Son had not 'priested' Himself this way before.

The obedience of priesthood

Through offering, Jesus learnt how to be a high priest in relation to every situation and human condition. In this regard, Paul explained, 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.' **Heb 4:15**. The purpose of His priesthood was to reconcile us to God *so that* we might become the righteousness of God in Him. In other words, by priesting Himself as a sin offering, He was reconciling us to God so that we could be born of the Father, and could fulfil the works of sonship that the Father had prepared for us in Christ Jesus. **Isa 53:10**.

While there is only one High Priest, Christ has made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we must learn obedience in relation to our priesthood, as well as in relation to our sonship. Learning the obedience of priesthood means learning how to lay our lives down by *exanastasis* to reveal the life and works of another. This is the implication of Christ's dying for all, 'that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again'. **2Co 5:15**.

In the first instance, our priesthood is a ministry of reconciliation to those who are hostile to God. **2Co 5:18,20**. This is not simply telling people about God's love and His purpose for their lives. Rather, it involves our bearing, in Christ, the condemnation of the hearers' death, so that His life might overflow to them. By definition, this involves suffering for the sake of another, often at their hands. **Col 1:24**.

Importantly, we are not learning priesthood only for the purpose of reconciliation. Laying down our lives to reveal the name and works of another is the ongoing expression of those who are priests in the order of Melchizedek, in this age and in the age to come. **Rev 7:15**.

Suffering and the love of God

The Spirit is challenging a prevalent and unhelpful misconception held by some, that the Son of God vicariously suffered for everyone and, now, in love, is giving to us a 'package' of suffering for our good. This is not the gospel of sonship. *Suffering has no inherent merit*; it is the harbinger of death because of the righteous judgement of God upon us. We cannot continue to patronise God by thanking Him for our suffering, as though this is the expression of His love for us.

God's love is revealed by the offering of the Son, through which our suffering because of judgement was turned to chastening. **Gal 2:20. 1Co 11:32**. As we noted earlier, Christ died our death, making it His death. In Him, our judgement is turned to chastisement. We are being delivered from living according to the other law and the principle of sin, and we are growing to maturity as a son of God in Him. Understanding this point, and rightly discerning our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, requires *illumination*.

For this reason, when we are suffering, we need to cry out to the Lord for understanding, so that we might know why we are under judgement and what it is that God is confronting in our lives. **Rev 3:19**. We cannot know this ourselves. The beginning point for our deliverance from wrath is to receive illumination. **Pro 15:32**.

'Illumination' means 'turning from darkness to the light'. It is a circumcision because it enables repentance. It is the work of the Spirit to convict our hearts of sin, righteousness and the judgement to come. **Joh 16:8-11**. He does this through the ministry of the gifts that He gives to the members of the church. The gifts of the Spirit bring illumination to us so that we can be delivered from the delusion, or darkness, of our fallen way.

Darkness and judgement

Jesus identified Satan as a liar and the father of lies. **Joh 8:44**. A lie has no substance because it is not true. We note, therefore, that Satan was unable to father anything substantial within mankind. Our identities are *substantial* because they were created by God. **Gen 2:7**. Adam and Eve, and all who were born from them, came under a delusion when they believed Satan's lie and disobeyed the word of God. The eyes of their hearts were blinded and became sick. Because of the ignorance that was in them, they then lived in darkness. **Mat 6:23**.

Importantly, it was not the darkness of mankind that came under the wrath of God. Rather, as a consequence of disobedience, mankind came under the judgement and wrath of God because they had pursued the lie of self-validation, to substantiate the pursuit of their own life and definition apart from fellowship with Yahweh. This highlights a key point. Even though we are dead in trespasses and sins, we still have identity which is *substantial*. We are, therefore, under the judgement and wrath of God when we live by the principle of the other law. **2Pe 2:4,9**.

Jesus offered Himself in obedience to the Father by the capacity of Eternal Spirit through the work of the Holy Spirit. **Heb 9:13-14**. Christ's blood was shed as He tasted the sufferings of death for every person. **Heb 2:9**. This was *our* death under the judgement of God, that Christ made to be *His* death. The resurrection life of God in His blood caused these sufferings to be commuted to chastening for Him. By this means, the body of sin was being cut from the Son, and He was made alive from the death of sin by the life in His blood. This was a ministry of life to Him, by the Spirit, that overflowed as life to us.

Breaking the power of darkness

The gifts of the Spirit are the manifestation and ministry of *exanastasis* life operating in the body of Christ. As members of the body of Christ, we are joined to the dying and the living of Jesus. We are able to minister to one another the resurrection life of God that we receive in the fellowship of Christ's offering. **2Co 4:8-12**. This life brings light, as we minister it by the Spirit as a gift to the one in need. **Joh 1:4**.

When we are suffering, and turn to the Lord in response to His word that comes by the gifts of the Spirit, the power of darkness is *broken*. Explaining this point further, Paul said that the veil over the eyes of our heart, which is the delusion of the other law that causes our darkness, is removed when we turn in repentance to the Lord. **2Co 3:16**. The removal of the veil that is causing our darkness is a *circumcision*.

Because this circumcision is removing something that has *no substance*, the moment that we turn to the Lord, there is often a miraculous end to *inordinate* suffering in our life. These sufferings are the direct consequence of walking according to our own deluded perspective. When we walk in darkness, we are unable to 'discern the Lord's body', nor recognise the injuries that we are causing to Christ as we are becoming weak and sick, and are dying under the judgement of God. **1Co 11:28-30**.

However, illumination does not necessarily bring an end to all of our suffering. This is because the circumcision that brings illumination delivers us *from* judgement and into the fellowship of Christ's travail and chastening. We are joined to the travail of Christ by the Holy Spirit as we receive and obey the word of faith that is ministered by Christ through His messengers. The word of faith delivers us from the fear of death, so that we can present ourselves for fellowship in Christ's travail. **Rom 8:26**. **Luk 8:50**.

Strong consolation

In the fellowship of Christ's travail, our spirit is being regenerated and renewed so that the eyes of our heart are healed, enabling us to see clearly. **Tit 3:4-5. Mat 6:22.** Christ's life replaces our fallen motivations as it becomes our life. **Gal 2:20.** The fruit of travail is 'strong consolation and comfort'. **Heb 6:17-18. 2Co 1:4.** This consolation is the grace of life from God that is becoming our life. Through faith, we have received our introduction into the grace of God in which we stand as a son of God. **Rom 5:1-2.**

By the grace of God, we are joined to Christ's death. **Heb 4:16. Rom 6:8.** The sufferings that we are experiencing are turned from judgement to chastisement, in Him. We are being chastened by the Lord when we are clear about the issues of life that He is addressing; and we are learning obedience through the things that we are suffering. **Heb 5:8. Heb 12:11.** We are ceasing from the sin of walking according to our own understanding, and we are fulfilling the works that belong to our sonship in Christ. Through offering, the life of Christ is being multiplied and ministered by us to others.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, our mind is being renewed and we are living differently. **Rom 12:1-2.** This is because we are being delivered from the delusion, or darkness, that results from living according to our other law. This deluding principle within us is being removed from us by the circumcision of Christ. The lie is being broken, and we are able to be conformed to reality. The Scriptures describe the reality to which we are conformed as 'the knowledge of the truth'. **1Ti 2:3-4.** The *truth* is the word of the Father concerning our name and works as a son of God in Christ. We come to reality through travail and chastisement, which are only found in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

FURTHER STUDY 2 CORINTHIANS 1

Not discerning the body

Writing to the church in Corinth, Paul highlighted a troubling phenomenon. A person could be born of God and yet come under the judgement that belongs to those who are dead to God in trespasses and the uncircumcision of their flesh. He said that these people ate and drank the elements of the communion in an unworthy manner, because they did not discern the Lord's body. That is, *they did not know, or had forgotten*, that their old man was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with. **Rom 6:6**. As a consequence, they were suffering the judgement that belongs to the body of death. They were becoming weak and sick, and some were even dying before their time. **1Co 11:29-30**.

A person will be unable to *discern* the Lord's body if they cease receiving *illumination* from Christ's blood that speaks. Because they cannot see, they cannot reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. They cease receiving illumination because they refuse the Lord who speaks through the messengers He sends. **Heb 12:25**. They do not 'lift their voice for understanding'; that is, they do not seek fellowship with those who proclaim the word to them, because their hearts are not open to them. **Pro 2:3,9**. They have drawn back in unbelief. Instead, they trust in themselves and their own religious, self-centred understanding of good and evil. Paul described this as being 'carnally minded', and explained that this way of living leads only to death. **Rom 8:6**.

A common reason why people are unable to receive the word of present truth is because they remain loyal to doctrines, traditions and leaders who have historical significance for them. The Scriptures teach us that those who refuse to deal with their past are *bound to* their past. It becomes the defining influence of their lives. Paul described this influence as part of 'the body of death'. **Rom 7:24**.

The tombs of the prophets

The evidence that a person is not being delivered from their body of death will be an *aroma of death* that leads to death. **2Co 2:16**. By this, we mean that the body of death is accompanied by the expression of death, including frustration, cynicism, anxiety, depression, anger, and corruption. These expressions are the works of the flesh, and Paul said, 'If you live according to the flesh you will die.' **Gal 5:19-21. Rom 8:13.**

Jesus described a particularly notable manifestation of the body of death, when He said, 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! *Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.*' **Mat 23:29**. The scribes and Pharisees built these tombs and monuments in an attempt to define the present reality of their life by their loyalty and their professed adherence to the ministry of these prophetic messengers of the Lord.

The aroma of death that accompanied their homage to the prophets, through the building of tombs and monuments, was their persecution of the messengers whom the Lord sent with the word of present truth, to call them from their dead works, and to walk in the light of His word. Specifically, Jesus said, 'Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.' **Mat 23:34**.

As we have said, this mindset is evident in those who define themselves as being followers of religious leaders of past historical Christian movements. Those who live from this basis derive identity from their connection to these figures and movements, and they judge the proceeding word from the basis of former traditions that no longer have life in them. The tomb of a prophet, or a saint, is not where we are to gather. It is not the basis for *fellowship*. By definition, a tomb is a place of death.

FURTHER STUDY LUKE 11:33-54

Prison houses

Those who live this way are in 'prison houses' of their own making in the midst of the house of God. Mercifully, even in this circumstance, the Lord turns their judgement into chastening. He does this in the hope that they will not be condemned with the world. **1Co 11:32**. The way of escape is in their own hand. If they humble themselves, they will be able to turn, by the grace of God, to the Lord and to receive illumination. Through grace, they will be delivered from darkness and into fellowship in the light, where their sufferings will be commuted from judgement to chastening, in Christ. **1Pe 2:9**.

Paul exhorted us all in this regard, writing, 'Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed'. **Heb 12:12-13**. We 'make straight paths' for our feet by turning to receive the word and by reckoning ourselves to be dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. However, if we will not turn to the Lord and be restored to the path that He has perfected for us, we will be turned out of the way.

This reveals that there is a second 'door' to these prison houses. This door does not lead to life but, rather, to the departure of these people from the church itself. Paul described believers who refuse to receive the word of God as those who sin wilfully after having received a knowledge of the truth. He said that, for these people, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. **Heb 10:26**. They are being taken out and forgotten by God, as part of the body of sin. **Heb 10:27**. Jesus said that there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. **Mat 13:41-42**.

The keys of the kingdom

We cannot escape our captivity, or prisons, without entering the kingdom of God through the Door. Jesus said, *'I am the Door. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.'* **Joh 10:9**. A person requires keys to enter through the Door to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus has these keys. He declared to the apostle John, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. *And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.'* **Rev 1:17-18**.

The keys of Hades and of Death are also the keys of the kingdom. They are the means by which we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and are delivered from our death as part of the old creation to live by the Spirit as a new creation in Christ. **Heb 13:20. 2 Co 5:17**.

We can identify three keys to the kingdom of God. The *first* key is the word of the cross that grants to us illumination and faith so that we can see and accept our calling as a son of God. **1Co 1:26. Rom 10:17**.

The *second* key is baptism, through which a son of God is crucified with Christ and joined to the body of sin. Having been united in the likeness of His death through the waters of baptism, we are made alive by the Spirit of the Father, the Holy Spirit and the resurrection life that is in Christ's blood. **Rom 6:3-5. Rom 8:11. Heb 13:20**.

The *third* key is the ministry of the Spirit, enabling our participation in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is the essence of the New Covenant. **2Co 3:5-6**. The Holy Spirit enables our particular participation in the body of Christ as a son of God. This is because the Spirit is the life and expression of our name as a son of God.



Restoring
my Soul