

Restoring my Soul

A five day devotional guide

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Contents

WEEK 1

Monday	What is our testimony?
Tuesday	Motivated by a spirit of adoption
Wednesday	Pressing on to a full inheritance
Thursday	From faith to faith
Friday	First love

WEEK 2

Monday	Our calling as sons of God
Tuesday	Understanding your mina
Wednesday	Multipling your mina
Thursday	Understanding talents
Friday	Sober judgement

WEEK 3

Monday	God has a named every person
Tuesday	Two sons
Wednesday	Why has your face fallen?
Thursday	Where is your brother?
Friday	The fatherhood of God

WEEK 4

Monday	Carnal offering
Tuesday	Offering breaks familiar ways
Wednesday	Acceptable offering
Thursday	Offering requires fellowship
Friday	Flesh or spirit

WEEK 5

Monday	Ishamel's upbringing
Tuesday	Ishamel did not pray or offer
Wednesday	No higher calling
Thursday	The deeds of the flesh
Friday	Making offering according to sanctification

What is our testimony?

When we think of a testimony, we often think of its legal description. Someone may be testifying in court, or recounting the events of an incident, and you can see that they are looking backwards in time. They are remembering something that happened, and perhaps, analysing what was wrong or right about the incident. Perhaps, they can even suggest what should be different from now on. Many Christians believe that 'testimony' is such an account. Perhaps, at times, it is more an assessment of their own performance, instead of a testimony of the forward-moving faith of a son of God.

It is important to remember and be thankful for all that God has done for us. However, we can remember the instructions from the Scriptures that remind us to look forward. 'Weeping may endure for a night, but joy comes in the morning.' This shows us the principle. We do engage in real events that impact upon our health, emotions, confidence, etc. But while those events may be our crucible, they are not necessarily our testimony. Our testimony is the confession of the faith of a disciple. This testimony of faith is the motivation to press forward to the inheritance of the full maturity of our sonship. Paul called this motivation, or attitude, 'a spirit of adoption' and 'a spirit of faith', and it is summarised in the cry, 'Abba! Father!'

In the book of Romans, we read that the cry, 'Abba! Father!' is a prayer or confession that expresses the commitment of a son of God to receive, and live by, the word that is proclaimed to them. They are able to see the image of their sonship as defined by the Father, and acknowledge that God is the Father of their life. This confession of faith shows that they have received the faith of God and are now pressing forward to present themselves to do the works of sonship that God has prepared for them to do in Christ.

References:

Psa 30:5

Gal 2:20

Rom 8:15

Rev 12:11

Gal 4:6

Further Study:

Hebrews 11

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 1

Motivated by a spirit of adoption

The apostle Paul reminded the Thessalonians that they should not 'quench the spirit [of adoption]'. His instructions in this chapter, highlight the culture of someone who is motivated by a spirit of adoption. They are to press in, among those who care for their souls, to hear their name being called and their works being defined. This same theme is communicated in Paul's letter to Philemon. Our sanctification is the will of God for our lives. This means that, in a spirit of adoption, we will be motivated each day, to give ourselves to fellowship so we can know and be known of God and our brethren. In this fellowship, our sanctification is made clear to us. We are able to hear the word which gives us an understanding of who we are, and the works of sonship we need to do. We can see now, that it is important that we continue to take heed to the Holy Spirit, as He helps us with a spirit of faith, to press forward in our sonship and to take hold of the kingdom.

The Scriptures refer to another instance of the cry, 'Abba! Father!' This cry comes, not from us, but from the Spirit of the Son who is in us. When a person receives the incorruptible seed of God, they are born from above. Then the Father sends forth the Spirit of the Son to dwell within their heart. The Son rejoices to be with His brethren, and continues to cry out, 'Abba! Father!' within the born-again son of God. He is worshipping the Father within us, and testifying that God is the Father of our spirit. The Spirit of the Son is rejoicing with us, as we also press forward with thanksgiving, to inherit the fullness of our sonship.

References:

1Th 5:19 Rom 12:1-2
Phm 1:4-6 Gal 4:6
1Th 4:3

Further Study: Philippians 3**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 2

Pressing on to a full inheritance

When a believer receives the faith of the Son of God, they become a child of Abraham, and an heir of the promise of sonship. The Father has credited righteousness to them and sees them as a son in His house, but they have not yet matured to the full sonship that God predestined for them. Nevertheless, they have received the faith of God to believe for, and lay hold of, their full inheritance. This is the adoption. Those who receive the adoption on account of believing God, are blessed with Abraham the believer.

Throughout the whole of our Christian journey, we need to continue to take heed when the Holy Spirit energises the spirit of faith which we have received, and which causes us to cry, 'Abba! Father!' At the same time, the Spirit of Christ within us continues to cry out, 'Abba! Father!' bearing witness with our own spirit that we are sons of God. In his letter to the Christians in Rome, Paul said that we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, but still groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body. This means that there is more yet for us to lay hold of, in relation to our sonship.

We continue to cry out by a spirit of adoption, because we have not reached the fullness of our maturity as sons of God. We have received the Spirit of the Son who bears witness within us that we are sons. However, the divine nature has not yet become our nature. We continue to cry out so that Christ will be formed in us through a process of travail. Through baptism, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and have an ongoing participation in His travail.

References:

Rom 4:11 Luk 16:16
Rom 8:22-23 2Ti 4:7-8
Gal 4:19

Further Study: Galatians 3**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 3

From faith to faith

It is the Holy Spirit who joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and travail. He helps us in our supplication when we do not know how to pray. In all of our circumstances, He leads us into the truth of our sonship, and helps us as we pray to build ourselves up in our most holy faith. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, our sin and iniquity are taken from us and are transferred to Christ. At the same time, His life is transferred to us so that it can be formed in us. This is the process we refer to as 'offering transfer'.

As we continue to receive the word of God spoken to us through His messengers, we will also continue to receive the faith of God and to grow from faith to faith. Let's consider for a moment how this works. With every word spoken to us by God through His messengers, faith is also coming to us with that word. We note that faith is not just an ambition, or a hoping for something to happen somewhere in the future. Faith is continually coming by hearing. And hearing is a capacity given to us by God when He gives us the ear of a disciple.

As we grow from faith to faith, we receive increasing access to the grace of God, in which we stand. This is the grace of life that is revealed as the nature of His sonship. It is revealed through offering. We see that faith gives us the capacity to join this offering, so the life that is multiplied through offering becomes ours. He was revealed as the Word in flesh, full of grace and truth. As we respond to the word from faith to faith, we are being changed from glory to glory, into the image of Christ's sonship.

References:

Rom 8:26-28
Jud 1:20
Rom 5:1-2

Joh 1:14
2Co 3:18
Rom 1:17

Further Study:

Romans 10

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 4

First love

Perhaps the greatest challenge faced by the early church was to continue in first love. 'First love' is a term that Jesus used to address the Ephesian church. He also admonished every Christian to hear the same message. The sobering thought for every disciple in every church today is that Jesus said, 'I have this against you, that you have left your first love'. He was strongly indicating that every person needs to recover and grow to maturity in first love.

Jesus continued to speak to the churches, saying, 'Remember therefore *from where* [all of] you have fallen; repent and *do the first works*'. He was indicating that we have fallen, or departed, from a place, or a context. Jesus called this context 'first love'. When Paul wrote to the Ephesian Christians, he called this context of first love, '*heavenly places*'. He further explained that, when sons of God abide together in Christ, they are able to do the good works of sonship that God named for them. Heavenly places is the context where we have *fellowship* with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with other sons of God.

We are able to observe the highpoint of our fellowship when we gather together to the communion table. There, we are able to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood, receive eternal life, and rejoice in the promise of the resurrection. Jesus said, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me and I in him*'. This is the context of first love in which we are to live. To understand how this works, we need to look at how we participate together as a congregation of believers at the communion table. It is also important to look at how we present ourselves for fellowship in our families, and how we minister the life of God as members of the body of Christ.

References:

Rev 2:4,5,7
Eph 2:5-6,10
Joh 6:54-56

Psa 139:16
2Th 1:3

Further Study: 1 Thessalonians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 5

Our calling as sons of God

When we perceive another person's identity, we are appreciating their spirit, as well as the natural abilities they were born with. Every person is born with identity and ability; this is their *natural man*. When a person responds to the word proclaimed to them, their identity begins to be regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. They are beginning to become *spiritual*. Their spirit is reborn by the word of the Father as they receive their name as a son of God, and the Spirit of the Son as their life. Then, through baptism, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Having been born from above, a person receives the authority to express their name as a son of God. Jesus referred to this authority as a 'mina'. Spiritual capacities are also added to them so that they can accomplish the works God has prepared for them. Jesus referred to these as 'talents'.

It is important we understand that a person's name, mina and talents are given to them by God according to their calling. The word 'predestination' describes God's purpose for each of us – that we should be His son. When God reveals His purpose to us, we are able to see our calling.

God's calling for each person is what He has sovereignly chosen, or elected, them to be and to do as His son. His call is revealing to them the nature of the spiritual person He intends them to be. The calling of God is not dependent upon the natural capacities associated with a person's identity. Paul emphasised that the elements of natural competence that man puts his trust in, are not part of God's election, or choosing. God has chosen the foolish and weak things to put to shame the wise and mighty. He did this so that we would rejoice in His life alone, and not in the strength of our flesh.

References:

Tit 3:4-5

1Co 1:27

1Pe 4:10-11

1Co 12:28

Further Study:

Ephesians 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 8

Understanding your mina

We observe a person's sanctification when they express their name as a son of God. Each of us was born as a son of man, and given a name by our parents. However, this is not our name as a son of God. Before the creation of the heavens and earth, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit discussed and named every person. This name defined who they should be and the works they should do. This was all recorded in the book of life. God thought so carefully about each name that the psalmist recorded that His thoughts for each person were 'more in number than the sand'.

A person receives their name by the grace of the Father. This takes place when they are born from above of an incorruptible seed, becoming sons of the Father. All of this happens through faith in the living and enduring word of God. When their name is given to them, it becomes their personal possession. This means they now own their own identity and, importantly, have the authority, or mandate, to express their sonship. This authority is not their name, but it is the mandate to do the works of their sonship. Jesus likened the authority of a person's name to a mina that has been given to them to multiply.

In the parable of the minas, we note that each of the servants received an equal amount of authority as a single mina, through which to express their sonship. In this, we can see that God loves and honours each son of God equally, even though the sanctification of each son is unique. We begin to exercise the authority of our name when we continually present ourselves for fellowship. In fellowship, we can prove the will of God by offering and grow in the understanding of our sanctification and works.

References:

Psa 139:17-18
1Pe 1:23
Luk 10:19-20

Rom 12:1
Act 28:3,5

Further Study:

Luke 19:11-27

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

Multiplying your mina

Faith is the capacity to exercise the authority of one's name and, thus, multiply the mina. As Paul explained, 'Without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and that He is a rewarder of those who seek Him'. A person pleases God by being the person He named them to be. This means that they will receive their reward in the new heavens and earth.

When a person receives their name from the Father, they also receive a 'measure of faith' which enables them to exercise the authority of their name. We see someone's faith when they present themselves to do the works associated with their name. Each time they receive the word and obey it, faith continues to come to them, from 'faith to faith'. As the apostle James testified, 'I will show you my faith by my works'. These works are called, 'the obedience of faith'.

When we do the works of our sonship in the obedience of faith, we are showing forth 'the righteousness of faith'. This begins with a confession of faith. Indeed, the first work of the righteousness of faith is to *speak*. Looking for fellowship, a person will speak in the authority of their name. They will not be relating with others in order to gain affirmation of the image they have of themselves. Rather, they will entrust themselves to the Father, and be able to trust, and openly converse with, their brothers and sisters in Christ. They can speak in the righteousness of faith because the word preached to them is now in them; it is in their mouth and in their heart. Others can bear witness to their faith because they have presented themselves for fellowship according to their sanctification.

References:

Heb 11:56

Rom 12:3

Rom 1:5,17

Rom 10:6-8

Further Study:

James 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

Understanding talents

Jesus taught that the kingdom of heaven 'is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves and entrusted his possessions to them. To one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey.' Talents are gifts of grace that come from the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and are given by Christ. The talents refer to the four dimensions of God's grace that come from Christ's hand. These four dimensions of grace are the word, life, Spirit and love of God. Every son of God receives this grace through the ministry of messengers, who are in Christ's hand as He walks among His lampstand churches.

Christ distributes talents to a person according to their abilities. These abilities are a feature of a person's identity, which continues to be regenerated and renewed by the Holy Spirit. As children grow up, these abilities begin to be seen, and will develop through training, and application to discipline. However, abilities are not talents. It is true that Christ gives us talents according to abilities. But not everyone who has abilities receives multiple talents. Failure to recognise the difference between abilities and talents has been a source of confusion in the church. This confusion has given rise to presumption and corruption within Christian congregations.

A person receives the gift of talents from Christ after they have been born of God, and have come into the house of the Son through baptism. That is, talents are given to slaves of righteousness. Their slavehood to Christ results in their sanctification as a son of God. As a believer participates in the offering of Christ as a member of His body, they are also multiplying the grace of life as a son of God. Their eternal reward, or glory, in the new heavens and earth, depends upon the extent to which the talents they received in this age are multiplied.

References:

Mat 25:14-15,29
Rev 1:20
Rom 6:19
2Ti 1:6

Further Study: Matthew 25:14-30**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 11

Sober judgement

The principle of sober judgement is contained in the words of Paul. 'I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound [or sober] judgement, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith'. A person who has received a measure of faith demonstrates that they are living by faith when they present themselves for fellowship, according to their sanctification. This is a person who views themselves, and others, with sober judgement. They do not think more, or less highly, of themselves than they ought. Rather, by the Spirit, they have cast down the imaginations and high thoughts they have of themselves.

Instead of pursuing an alternative image of themselves, or their ministry, they bring every thought regarding who they are and how they function, into captivity to the obedience of Christ. 'Captivity to the obedience of Christ' describes our slavehood in the house of the Son. This slavehood results in our sanctification as sons of God. We can consider sober judgement as 'rightly discerning the body of Christ' and our participation within His body. When we do not discern the body of Christ from the basis of sanctification, we become weak and sick, and may even die before our time.

It is wonderful to consider that the Lord has given to each of us everything that pertains to life and godliness. This means that He has birthed us as a son of God, and gives to us faith and grace, which are necessary for fulfilling the works of sonship that He predestined for us. This is cause for thanksgiving and great confidence! Our testimony can be the expression of a son of God who is exulting in the attainment of our sonship through every season of life. This is because we are making our calling and election sure, and because first love is our context for life.

References:

2Co 10:4-5 1Pe 1:13
1Co 11:29 1Pe 5:8
2Pe 1:3 Tit 2:11-12

Further Study:

Romans 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 12

God has named every person

King David marvelled when he considered Yahweh's thoughts toward him. They were greater in number than the sands of the earth. In fact, before the world was created, God the Father, God the Son and the Holy Spirit recorded Their innumerable thoughts about every person as a 'name' in the book of life. Of course, this name is not the title given to a baby by his or her earthly parents. Rather, Yahweh's name for each person defines His complete will for their life. The Lord calls every person by their unique name, and invites them to embrace His purpose for their life by becoming a son of God. He does this through the preaching of the gospel and the work of the Holy Spirit. The beginning point for fulfilling God's will is to understand and accept the predestined name that He has for us.

The Bible uses the term 'sanctification' to describe a Christian who fulfils God's will for their life, according to their name. A Christian expresses their sanctification by the obedience of their faith, their offering, and their love for the body of Christ. The outcome for those who live in sanctification is eternal life.

The scriptural story of Cain and Abel highlights two contrasting responses to the call of the Lord. One brother, Abel, accepted his name and sanctified his life through obedience to the word of God. Cain, on the other hand, rejected his name, departed from fellowship with God, and lived according to the desires of his flesh. The lessons we learn from the story of Cain and Abel apply to every person. We can think of Cain and Abel as two young adults negotiating their family traditions and culture, deciding whether they will honour God's fatherhood toward them, and choosing whether or not to accept the name that He has for them.

References:

Rev 13:8

1Pe 1:12

Isa 40:26

Joh 1:12

Isa 45:4

Rom 6:22

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Psalm 139

Proverbs 15

Two sons

When Adam and Eve ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, they were seeking an alternative source of life to the word of God. They wanted to be like God, judging good and evil, and defining their own destiny. However, the stolen knowledge became a contrary law within them, only convincing them that the selfish desires of their flesh were 'good'. This fleshly motivation disconnected them from God, who is Spirit, and corrupted their capacity to see themselves, one another, and the world around them, according to the light of God's word.

We read in the book of Genesis that, after Adam and Eve were sent out from the garden of Eden, 'Eve conceived and gave birth to Cain, saying, "I have gotten a man with the help of the Lord".' Soon after, she gave birth to his brother Abel. As a result of the fall, Cain and Abel were born with the 'other' law at work in their hearts, motivating them to pursue the desires of their flesh. This is true for every person born since the fall.

Abel was a keeper of flocks, but Cain, like his father Adam, was a tiller of the ground. It came about in the course of time that Cain brought an offering of the fruit of the ground to the Lord. Abel, on his part, also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of their fat portions. Offering is the means by which a person meets God, proves His will, and receives instruction concerning their predestined name. The apostle Paul told the Corinthians that each man's work is revealed by offering. When we make offering, we invite the Lord to speak to us. His word invites us into a fellowship so that we can become a disciple and live according to His will.

References:

Rom 12:1
Mal 3:10
1Co 3:13

Zec 13:9
1Pe 1:7

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Genesis 4

Proverbs 16

Why has your face fallen?

The Lord accepted Abel's offering because it demonstrated his faith in the name that God had given him. When the Lord showed no regard for Cain's offering, he became angry and his countenance fell. Cain's offering was the fruit of the works that he had chosen for himself. Being a tiller of the ground was a projection for Cain, because this was Adam's mandate, not his. A projection is a self-righteous image that we hold of ourselves. It is not who the Lord has created us to be.

Cain defaulted to family tradition by pursuing his father's mandate to rule over creation. He became angry because he wanted to serve his self-definition, and not serve God. He was demanding that God accept an offering from the basis of his other law, and accept the image that he was projecting. When Cain's countenance, or 'face', fell, it highlighted that his capacity to meet, and be met by others, was impeded because of the false image he held of himself.

Nevertheless, the Lord continued to seek relationship with Cain by speaking His word to him. Yahweh said, 'Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? If you do well, shall you not be accepted?' This should have brought great relief to Cain. The Lord was reassuring him that if he received His word and brought offering according to his name, then he would be accepted by God. The Lord further helped Cain by drawing attention to the presence of another law at work in his body. God said, 'If you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it'. The other law operating within Cain's heart, would become a doorway for sin if he failed in relation to sanctification.

References:

Heb 11:4

Num 3:12

Gen 1:28-30

Gen 2:15

Gen 4:5-7

Further Study:

Malachi 3

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 17

Where is your brother?

After God admonished Cain to make acceptable offering, Cain sought fellowship with his brother. Abel had a prophetic gift and could have helped Cain to understand God's word, but Cain could not receive his younger brother. Cain viewed Abel as a resource that could help him to make God accept his carnality. In other words, he had no genuine regard for Abel's prophetic counsel. He was only prepared to receive Abel, if Abel supported his projection. 'When they were in the field, Cain rose up against Abel his brother and killed him'. Cain refused to let go of his self-definition, and his other law caused him to 'kill the messenger'.

Following Abel's murder, the Lord said to Cain, 'Where is Abel your brother?' And Cain said, 'I do not know. Am I my brother's keeper?' Of course, God knew about Abel's death. Even after Cain committed the first murder in history, the Lord was granting him an opportunity to make a penitent and God-fearing response. Sadly, Cain's reply revealed his complete lack of first love. He could not comprehend that caring for Abel, let alone regarding Abel's life, could be more important than the false name that he desired to project.

The Lord said, 'What have you done? The voice of your brother's blood is crying to Me from the ground. Now you are cursed from the ground, which has opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. When you cultivate the ground, it will no longer yield its strength to you; you will be a vagrant and a wanderer on the earth.' It was only then that Cain cried out to the Lord, 'My punishment is too great to bear!' Astonishingly, Cain's outcry was not because of his disconnect from godly predestination, nor for the loss of Abel's life. Rather, Cain was dismayed because God's judgement would hinder his capacity to fulfil the false projection he had idolised.

References:

Gen 4:8-9,13

Psa 10:13-14

Pro 28:3

Joh 8:44

Further Study: Matthew 22:1-14

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 18

The fatherhood of God

The epistle of Jude confirms that 'the way of Cain' leads to spiritual blindness and eternal destruction. Cain's plight began when he rejected the name and works that God had predestined for him. When Cain departed from the presence of the Lord and settled in the land of Nod, he forsook the fatherhood of God, and transgressed the boundaries of his predestination. The Bible instructs believers not to 'move the ancient boundary or go into the fields of the fatherless'. We learn from Cain's example just how imperative it is for all believers to understand and accept the fatherhood of God.

The account of Cain and Abel reveals God's heart to meet every person. He wants to relate to every person as a father does a son. Unlike Adam, who had one Father, Cain had both an earthly father and a heavenly Father. Cain needed to establish a personal relationship with God by offering. This is true for children from covenant households, carnal households, and unbelieving households. We recall the words in the book of Hebrews, 'We had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live?'

Cain's offering was an action of religious ritual. He was not offering to prove God's will; he was offering so that God would accept and bless his fleshly efforts. In this way, Cain was like many religious people today. He liked the idea of being accepted by God, but was unwilling to surrender his right to be self-defining. We read in the book of Hebrews, 'By faith Abel offered to God a better sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained the testimony that he was righteous'. Abel's sacrifice revealed his sincere desire to know the Lord and to fulfil His will; whereas, Cain's sacrifice was carnal and without faith. He thought that he could take hold of God's law concerning offering while, at the same time, live by his own self-centered motivations.

References:

Jud 1:10-11
Pro 23:10
Heb 12:9

Heb 11:4
Gen 4:3-5

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

2 Peter 2

Proverbs 19

Carnal offering

Cain would have considered himself to be very successful when he offered the fruit of the ground. He had overcome the ground, which was cursed because of Adam, by bringing forth an abundant harvest. We can imagine his reaction when God showed no regard for his offering. The Hebrew word that is translated 'regard' means 'gaze at'. God did not so much as look at Cain's offering. Consequently, Cain took offence and became angry because God's refusal to accept his offering belittled the toil it took to produce it, and the projection that it represented. The Lord showed no interest in Cain's offering because it was not an expression of his name and predestination. In the Gospel of Matthew, Jesus highlighted that this scenario will be common for carnal Christians. He warned that many people will presume to call Him, 'Lord', but refuse to do the will of the Father. They will speak about all the things they have done in the name of Jesus, but the Lord will have no regard for their offering and, ultimately, will say to them, 'I never knew you'.

When Cain rejected God's fatherhood, he rejected his own name. The word of God had the capacity to deal with Cain's 'other' law and to regenerate his fallen identity. Yahweh admonished Cain, saying, 'If you do not do well, sin crouches at the door; and its desire is for you, and you [must] rule over it'. When Cain refused to be disciplined by this word, his other law led him into captivity to sin. The apostle John wrote about believers who receive and obey the word of God, saying, 'We know that we are of God, and that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one'. John was saying that if we are not living by faith in the word, we are worldly and under the power of the evil one.

References:

Gen 3:17

1Jn 3:12

Heb 12:6

2Co 4:3-4

1Jn 5:19

Further Study:

Matthew 7

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

Offering breaks familiar ways

Cain was a young adult when the Lord sought to establish a personal relationship with him, apart from his parents. We recall that Jesus described the impact of the gospel upon a household, as a sword that cuts each family member to their individual sanctification. He also spoke about the cost of discipleship, saying, 'He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me'. This was a major crisis for Cain because he wanted to continue in his father's work as a farmer, and not receive God's word concerning his own name and works.

Cain's failure in relation to his sanctification occurred because he rejected his name and God's fatherhood and, instead, defaulted to family tradition. We observe that the unavoidable commitment of a Christian disciple is to answer and prove, by offering, the calling of God upon their life, instead of perpetuating their family tradition. A Christian must 'much rather be subject to the Father of spirits' while, nevertheless, respecting their earthly parents.

When a person makes offering by faith, they are demonstrating their desire to be subject to the heavenly Father. Ongoing obedience to the word of God causes faith to reside in a believer's heart. Faith motivates a son of God to continue presenting themselves to do the works of sonship that God has prepared for them. A Christian who has faith to participate in the process of offering will possess the joyful confession, 'Abba! Father!' Their spirit will bear witness in the Holy Spirit that they are a son of God, progressively obtaining the blessing of sonship.

The outcome for a Christian who is verifying their name by offering, is the ongoing renewal of their mind. Confidence in who they are as a son in the house of God replaces, or renews, aspects and mechanisms of their life that are conformed to fallen cultures. In this way, the process of offering delivers a Christian from the bonds of familiar ways and family traditions that would, otherwise, war against their individual sanctification.

References:

Mat 10:34-37
Heb 12:9
2Co 4:13

Rom 8:15
Rom 12:1

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Luke 21

Proverbs 23

Acceptable offering

Cain genuinely thought that his offering was 'good'. But the basis of his opinion was a projected image of himself that he had created using the knowledge of good and evil. His perception of 'good' was distorted by the other law at work in his heart. The Bible confirms that 'all have turned aside and there is none who does good'. There is a big difference between a person's 'good' ideas about offering, and offering that is *acceptable*. True 'good' does not exist outside of God's will. Despite Cain believing that his offering, and the hard work it took to produce it, were 'good', it was unacceptable because it was not the fruit of his predestined name and works.

If the Lord does not receive our offering, we need to ask, 'Why?' instead of becoming offended. This requires fellowship and spiritual illumination. Practically, there are many ways in which this point can apply to our lives. For example, a person might aspire to write songs and choruses that will bless the Lord and their local congregation. They may even spend hours grappling over lyrics, melodies and chords. However, if composing music is not an authentic expression of that person's name, or if those songs have not been inspired by the Lord, they will be dead works.

Furthermore, offering has a locational reality as well. The areas of service and offering within a communion congregation of three hundred people will be different from the areas of offering required in a congregation of thirty people. These examples highlight that offering is not a religious ceremony, or a mechanistic process. Acceptable offering must be motivated by sincere faith in the word of sonship, and be the outcome of a believer's genuine relationship with God. It must also reflect their faith and submission to the geographical and relational context in which God has planted them.

References:

Rom 3:12 Isa 64:6
Mar 10:18 1Pe 2:5
Rom 7:18-20 Eph 5:8-10

Further Study:

James 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 24

Offering requires fellowship

The Lord is speaking to His church today through an administration that ministers His word, grace, and adjustment to every son of God. Offering and relating within the church connects a believer to Christ's administration, and enables them to prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. A person's offering reflects the condition of their heart, their attitudes and their understanding of their sanctification. This is why the process of offering, and the implicit fellowship involved, can leave a person feeling exposed. Their ideas about who they are, their future goals, and their family cultures and traditions are revealed by the nature of their offering.

For this reason, the Bible encourages every believer to live by faith, and to resist drawing back in shame when the light of fellowship identifies fallen familiars and projections. The Lord 'has no pleasure' in the one who draws back from Him, because a person draws back when they cannot surrender control of their life, or their projections. Any personal goal, familiar culture, or relational obligation that causes shame, secrecy and withdrawal from fellowship, is not from God.

It is important to recognise that the outworking of Christ's administration involves tangible relationships with our brothers and sisters in Christ. There are spiritual fathers in the faith who are committed to nurturing the divine nature of God in the heart of believers. And there are overseers, deacons and firstfruits brethren who receive and order our offering. It was the practical fellowship associated with offering that caused Cain's offence to manifest. Carnal responses such as, 'I want to make offering, but no-one will tell me how to do it', or 'My offering is between me and God', have caused many believers to go the way of Cain. The evidence that a person genuinely has faith to make acceptable offering is their ease of participation in fellowship.

References:

Rom 12:1-2 Pro 14:14
Heb 10:25,38 1Jn 5:16
Psa 44:18

Further Study:

Leviticus 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25

Flesh or spirit

There are two ways of responding to our calling - by the Spirit or by the flesh. When we respond to our calling by the Spirit, we live as spiritual sons of God. When we respond to our calling by the flesh, we live as carnal sons. The alternative to being who God has called us to be is to try to be whatever we want to be. In the book of Galatians, the apostle Paul highlighted the difference between living by the Spirit and living by the flesh. To illustrate his point, Paul contrasted the nature of Ishmael's birth with that of Isaac. Ishmael represents the flesh and that which is born enslaved by the bondwoman, while Isaac represents the Spirit and that which is born of the freewoman.

It is evident that Ishmael did not understand calling and sanctification. At seventeen years of age, he mocked his three year-old brother at a feast to celebrate a season of growth in Isaac's life. Because Ishmael was not living in his own sanctification, he could not honour Isaac's sanctification. Ishmael's mocking was a persecution of the covenant seed in whom all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Ishmael's mocking showed that he had set himself against the Spirit.

Ishmael did not consider himself, or others, with sober judgement. Instead of Ishmael allowing the Holy Spirit to give him the capacity to love, honour and appreciate others, his self-centeredness led him to comparison, competition, jealousy, conflict and feelings of alienation. With no capacity to love, and no way to reconcile his 'feelings', Ishmael kicked out against the Spirit. When we live according to the flesh, bound by its self-centeredness, we hurt others. It is evident, by Ishmael's mocking of Isaac, that he did not speak from a spirit of faith. His speech demonstrated that he had given himself over to the emotions of the flesh, and that he was hostile to the things of the Spirit.

References:

Gen 21:1-2,9
Rom 12:3
2Th 2:10

Further Study:

Galatians 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 26

Ishmael's upbringing

Prior to Ishmael's birth, his mother, Hagar, had left Abraham's house because she was being mistreated by Sarah. However, the angel of the Lord found Hagar and instructed her to return to Abraham's house and to submit to Sarah's authority. The Lord gave her a promise, saying, 'God has heard you'. This promise was to be passed to Ishmael, whose name means, 'God hears'. Hagar was to return to Abraham's house and submit to Sarah's motherhood for the sake of Ishmael.

Instead of submission and sanctification, Hagar mothered the cultures of Egypt in Ishmael. These are cultures that despise the people of God. Instead of raising him as a young man whom 'God heard', she raised him as a wild donkey whose hand was against others. He despised the culture of godliness and mocked the covenant, the promises, and the one born of the Spirit. Ishmael's speech showed that he was in bondage to fear.

Ishmael, who was circumcised at the age of thirteen, on the same day as Abraham, did not demonstrate faith toward his circumcision. Consequently, there was no 'putting off of the flesh' evidenced in his life. Paul likened Ishmael's birth and Hagar's motherhood to Mt Sinai, where the nation of Israel said, 'All You have said, we will do'. But they did not keep the law, and nor could they keep it. Their response was carnal. In fact, they were hostile to what God had said, because their minds were set on the things of the flesh.

Baptism joins us to the circumcision of Christ which is 'made without hands' and applied to our heart. Wherever there is no faith to walk in our baptism, the other law rules our life. As a result, we are taken captive by another word. This robs us of the simplicity that comes from pure devotion to Christ and, instead, we are plagued by complexities, fears and insecurities.

References:

Col 2:8,11-12

Gal 4:29

Rom 2:29

Rom 8:7

Exo 19:8

Further Study:

Genesis 16

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29

Ishmael did not pray or offer

Ishmael's name means, 'God hears'. This was a promise from God. Ishmael could have brought everything to God in prayer; however, it is clear that Ishmael was not a young man of prayer. Consequently, Ishmael could not love his brother because, among other things, he did not seek the Lord in the secret place. Further to this, he did not deal with the propensities of his flesh and, therefore, found no place for repentance, nor any faith for offering. Unlike his father, Abraham, Ishmael was unwilling to submit to the sufferings in the house of faith that typify a fellowship in offering.

Abraham spoke a word of faith to Isaac, when he said, 'God will provide for Himself a lamb for the offering'. As we join the fellowship of faith according to our sanctification, we too receive the faith of Abraham and Isaac, knowing that God *has* provided *for us* a Lamb – Jesus Christ. Our faith for fellowship joins us to the offering of Jesus Christ and to the fellowship of His sufferings.

Even though God had commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, Isaac was not a victim. Ishmael and Hagar, however, saw themselves as victims. A person who is not addressing the issue of the other law, will perceive themselves as a victim when their chosen way of living is examined by the Lord. Adjustment will only reinforce their perception, leading them to justify their position, not as a son, but as a victim.

Having received the command from God, Abraham proceeded in faith obedience, calling Isaac to journey with him. Isaac was 'of the same faith as Abraham', enabling him to proceed in faith obedience. Faith obedience and simplicity was the nature of their fellowship as the two of them walked on and worshipped together. Our worship is to offer ourselves to God as a living sacrifice, according to our sanctification.

References:

Php 4:6-7 2Co 4:13
Rom 12:1-2 2Pe 1:1
1Th 4:3

Further Study: Genesis 22

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 30

No higher calling

There is no higher calling in life than the call to be a son of God. John highlighted this, when he said, ‘See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God; and *such* we are’. While we are *all* called to be sons of God, *only you* can be the son whom God predestined *you* to be. There is a word of truth that belongs to each person. That word is their sanctification. Without sanctification, we cannot be the son whom God predestined us to be. The only alternative is to make an ‘image’ for ourselves, and to project to others who we want to be, or who we think we are. Any such projection is not according to God’s word of truth for us. As such, we live a lie that is fathered by the devil.

The apostle Peter exhorts us to be ‘all the more diligent’ in making our calling and election sure. Diligence is ‘a speedy, eager, and keen response’ to the word, motivating us forward and demonstrating the spirit of adoption in a believer. The spirit of adoption is also described by Paul as ‘a spirit of faith’. It is by faith that sons of God present themselves for fellowship with their brethren. As the word of God comes to us, it grants us faith to stand as a son according to the will of God. When we live in this way, holding fast to the word of truth, we walk in a manner that is worthy of our calling. Full of faith and sure in our sanctification, we recognise that all things are working together for our good. Unlike Ishmael, we do not have to react, lose heart, or ‘kick’ when life becomes difficult, or appears to be unfair.

References:

IJn 3:1
Joh 8:44
2Pe 1:10

2Co 4:13
Php 2:16
3Jn 1:3-4

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 31

The deeds of the flesh

While Ishmael did not demonstrate faith toward his circumcision, Isaac did. Isaac was circumcised on the eighth day, as a demonstration of the faith of his parents. His journey of offering with Abraham up the mountain, was where he demonstrated his faith toward that circumcision. We exercise ourselves in the faith of our baptism when we, by the Spirit, determine to put off the deeds of the flesh each day. This means keeping ourselves in daily connection to the truth through prayer and fellowship. As we turn to the Lord and set our mind on the Spirit, we find the freedom to live as the son whom God has called us to be.

When we are not living by the Spirit, and putting to death the deeds of the flesh, our mindset becomes hostile toward God. Our predicament is the misplaced desire for the flesh to live before God. The person living according to the flesh, says, 'My intentions in serving God were good. That should be good enough.' This is the carnal dilemma. The carnal Christian is powerless to walk in obedience to the word of God. They believe that the blessing of God can be obtained without the need for an ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a sanctified member of His body. Their prayer sounds a lot like, 'Oh, that my flesh might live before You, Lord!'

God's response is, 'No!' The flesh cannot live before God, and we should stop asking God to bless our best intentions. Instead, we must cry out in repentance and faith to receive the circumcising cut that our flesh needs, so that we can be free from the other law that works in us. In this fellowship, we are delivered from the desire to live by any principle other than the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus.

References:

Gen 21:4

1Pe 3:21

Rom 2:15

Rom 8:5-7

1Co 3:3

Rom 7:24-25

Further Study:**Daily Proverb:**

Colossians 2

Proverbs 1

Making offering according to sanctification

The call to live as a son of God is made sure by offering. A person standing in their sanctification will, by faith, present themselves in the authority of their name for fellowship in the body of Christ. Through offering, they multiply the life of God. This is how we offer ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God. Offering according to our sanctification proves what the will of God is. It is not, firstly, what we do, but *who we are*, that is pleasing to God.

As we proceed to make offering, we will know a fellowship in which the Lord has His hand on our life. By faith, we carry the wood for the altar, knowing the necessary cut to our flesh as God deals with us as His son. We may recognise this *load* as being a constraint from God. We see that God uses very practical areas of life to demonstrate how He 'works together' for our good. For example, He may use one of the many pressures of life to act as a constraint, that impacts on how we make offering and on the journey that we walk to make that offering. In these constraints, or disciplines, we find that God is helping us with our sanctification. The offering that proves the will of God is the one offered according to sanctification. Anything else, regardless of our best intentions or sincerity, is not pleasing to God.

Even though these constraints may be difficult and painful, we will know that we are a much-loved son of God who is formed by the hand of a loving Father. Joining the fellowship of Christ's offering is the crisis for every person who has received the call to be a son of God. The covenant of sonship is confirmed in the fellowship of offering. We should take care as to how we partake of the communion, because it is at communion that we find our participation in the offering of Jesus Christ.

References:

Rom 12:1-2 Rom 6:22
1Th 4:3-4 1Th 5:23
2Th 2:13

Further Study:

Titus 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2