



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

MARCH 2021

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Meeting face to face

Jesus Christ wants to have a personal relationship with each one of us. Through the ministry of His word, He draws near to us so that we can meet Him *face to face*. When we meet Christ this way, we are able to receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that shines from His face. **2Co 4:6**. This light is the knowledge of our sonship from the Father. By turning to Christ in response to His word, we look into His face. We see, as if in a mirror, who we are to be as a son of God. **2Co 3:16,18**. As we continue to turn, and to look into the face of the Lord, we are progressively changed into the image of His sonship. **2Co 3:18**. **1Jn 3:2**.

While this is a wonderful reality, when we look into the face of Christ, we first encounter His eyes as a flame of fire. **Rev 1:14**. **Rev 2:18**. Initially, this is a confronting experience, as His word, which the Scriptures describe as a '*goad*', pierces our heart. **Ecc 12:11**. Our heart is laid bare before His eyes. The eyes of the Lord expose the thoughts and intents of our heart, revealing our sin and self-centredness. **Heb 4:12-13**. However, if we do not draw back from the Lord's gaze, we realise that His fiery eyes express His love and mercy to us. This is because, unless we see our sin, we are unable to repent and to find deliverance from sin and from God's judgement upon us. We will remain separated from Christ and under condemnation. This is not what He desires for us! **2Pe 3:9**.

When Christ comes to us with eyes as a flame of fire, He is calling us to be restored to first love, in Him. **Rev 2:4**. He is inviting us to sojourn with Him on the unique pathway of salvation that He pioneered for us through His offering journey. **Heb 5:9**.

True satisfaction

On the pathway of salvation, we are progressively obtaining the blessing that belongs to the sons of God – eternal life in the fellowship of Yahweh. **1Jn 5:11-13**. Through our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, we find deliverance from our sinful rebellion, and are made alive from the death of sin. This is how we are changing ‘from glory to glory’ into the image of Christ’s sonship.

We can only know true satisfaction, or blessing, when our hearts are set on this pilgrimage. **Psa 84:5**. We are delivered from the delusion that satisfaction can be found through the attainment of what we perceive to be good for us, and our avoidance of pain and distress. This is a lie fostered by Satan. Living this way results only in fleeting pleasure, punctuated by feelings of inadequacy, frustration, anxiety, depression and sorrow. It is the foretaste of eternal death and dissatisfaction. As the Lord declared, ‘Their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched.’ **Isa 66:24. Mar 9:43-46**. Instead, as sons of God, we obtain life and peace in the fellowship of Christ’s death and resurrection. We pray, ‘As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.’ **Psa 17:15**. We progressively wake in the likeness of the Son as we are conformed to His death, and are raised in the likeness of His resurrection.

It is not enough to know the Lord by the hearing of our ear. He wants us to *know* Him and to *meet* Him face to face. This was the lesson that Job learned through the things which he suffered. Having been illuminated by the word of the Lord, Job testified, ‘I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore, I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’ **Job 42:5-6**.

The example of Paul

The apostle Paul testified of his personal journey with Christ from first love to fellowship. Having met the Lord face to face, he forsook everything that had previously been gain to him – his cultural heritage, his education, his religious profile, his civic distinction and his self-righteousness. Leaving these behind, Paul's sojourn became his desire to know Christ and the power of His resurrection; to remain in the fellowship of His sufferings; and to be conformed to His death. This pathway gave Paul access to the resurrection life that was in Christ. **Php 3:10-11**. He lived by the sustaining life of Christ in a mortal body. **Gal 2:20. 2Co 4:8-10**.

Paul commenced this journey following his encounter with Christ on the road to Damascus. A light shone around him from heaven and he heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' Paul answered, 'Who are You, Lord?' Jesus replied, 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the *goads*.' **Act 9:3-5**. Through this interaction, Paul experienced and received 'the affection of Christ'. **Php 1:8**. The Lord had come to Paul with eyes like a flame of fire to reveal his sonship to him and to establish him on the path of salvation. This was the Son's initiative of love. **Rev 3:19**.

Significantly, as Paul looked into the face of Christ and asked, 'Who are You, Lord?', he was confessing that he did not know himself. Until this point, all of his religious endeavours were a projection associated with his self-defined image. However, Paul's question demonstrated that he was not drawing back from Christ's gaze, even though the error of his own way was now evident. Paul's heart had been pierced by the word of Christ and was laid bare before the eyes of the Lord; yet, he had received affection *for* Christ and addressed Him as his Lord and Master. This happened as the love of God was poured into Paul's heart by the Holy Spirit. **Rom 5:5**.

FURTHER STUDY ACTS 9

The example of Peter

Christ met the apostle Peter in the same way that He met Paul. Although Peter had been a disciple of Christ, his self-righteous and zealous speech at the last supper demonstrated that he had not met the Lord face to face. Prior to his denial of Christ, Peter had believed in the integrity of his own heart and in his own capacity for love. He ardently asserted his readiness to lay down his life for Christ. **Joh 13:37**. However, Peter's religious self-image was brought to nothing when he met Christ eye to eye in the courtyard of Caiaphas. Looking into Christ's marred visage, Peter saw the true condition of his own heart, and began to mourn. **Luk 22:61-62**.

Later, the Lord addressed Peter on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Over breakfast, which was an '*agape* meal', Jesus challenged Peter with a question. He asked him, 'Simon, son of Jonah, do you love [*agape*] Me more than these?' **Joh 21:15**. This is the same question that Christ asks us when He meets us with eyes like a flame of fire. Peter was unable to answer Christ's question. However, as he continued to converse with Christ, face to face, he received the word of his sonship, and the love of God was poured into his heart. How do we know this? The Lord directed Peter to shepherd the flock. These were the works that belonged to Peter's sonship.

Jesus also spoke about how Peter would glorify God as a son, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Joh 21:18**. To this end, Jesus instructed Peter to follow Him on the pathway that He had pioneered for him. **Joh 21:19**. Through this ministry of Christ, Peter found the love of God and affection for Christ. He then received grace to preach the Pentecost sermon.

The children of Israel

Jesus Christ delivered the children of Israel from their slavery in Egypt in order to bring them to Himself. He said to them, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself.' **Exo 19:4**. The Lord's desire for relationship with them was the purpose of their journey. However, when the Lord spoke to them from Mount Sinai, the people drew back in fear, begging that the word should not be spoken to them. **Exo 20:18. Heb 12:18-19**. They asked Moses to relate with the Lord on their behalf, saying, 'You speak with us, and we will hear; but let not God speak with us, lest we die.' **Exo 20:19**.

Then, following their failure to obey the Lord and to enter the promised land, they wandered for forty years in the wilderness. During this time, the Lord sought to meet and to know Israel. However, the generation who had rejected the Lord's invitation for relationship never responded to His love. They always 'erred in their hearts' and complained against Him and His messenger, Moses. As the psalmist noted, 'Again and again they tempted God'. **Psa 78:41**.

The Lord endeavoured to teach the children of Israel how to live as His people and be delivered from the fear of death. On each day of their wilderness sojourn, Yahweh met them in an *agape* meal, feeding them with bread from heaven. **Exo 16:4-5. Psa 78:23-24**. The purpose of this food, which sustained their mortal lives, was to teach them that their lives depended upon receiving and obeying God's word. **Deu 8:3**. However, they refused the Lord and His instruction, turning instead to the worship of other gods. Israel wanted God to be a 'resource' for them. They did not want to know Him or to be His friend, as Abraham and Moses had been. **Jas 2:23. Isa 41:8. Exo 33:11**.

Forsaking the affection of Christ

Many of us were born into Christian families as children of Abraham. We belong to the true nation of Israel. The question for us is, 'Do we, through the Spirit, love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength?' **Deu 6:4-5. Mar 12:29-31.** Have we turned aside from the holy commandment so that we are now in danger of becoming self-seeking idolaters? Of course, most Christians would not identify themselves as being idolaters who have departed from relationship with the Lord. What, then, is the mark of forsaking relationship with Christ?

A telling indicator of our tepid affection for Christ is the deep fear within us of failing to fulfil our own expectations of ourselves and of our lives. **Pro 10:28. Pro 11:7.** These may be our desires for a certain vocation, wealth, possessions, a particular courtship or marriage, ministry profile, and even our appearance. It is evident that we do not love the Lord with all of our heart when our satisfaction in life is diminished because of unfulfilled expectations. We can begin to question the provision of the Lord for us and to seek the fulfilment of our desires elsewhere. We cease receiving our definition from the Father, because we turn our face away from the Son. Instead, we endeavour to name ourselves. **Pro 18:1.** This is idolatry and is motivated by the knowledge of good and evil.

Whether conscious or unconscious, our hunger for the attainment of a self-defined good is our desire for the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. When this desire was aroused within Eve, as she gave heed to the lie of Satan, she 'saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise'. **Gen 3:6.** The knowledge of good and evil can appear the same way to us.

Looking at the wrong tree

What does the tree of the knowledge of good and evil look like to us in a deceived condition? **Gen 3:6**. Viewing the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil as 'good for food' is the quest for empowerment. It involves the identification and procurement of resources – be they social, cultural, physical or financial – to support the attainment of a person's self-defined image. This 'food' is the antithesis of Yahweh's food. His food is participation in a whole burnt offering, through which another is revealed. **Num 28:2**.

Viewing the tree as 'pleasant to the eyes' is the desire for an image that is pleasing, or valued, in society. It involves our investment in activities and resources that optimise and sustain our 'beauty' or profile within a given community. It can also involve the 'charitable' advice that we can give to others, including the church, to improve their image in society. Again, this is at odds with true beauty, or excellence, which is the expression of the divine nature. For example, Peter said, 'Do not let your adornment be merely outward – arranging the hair, wearing gold, or putting on fine apparel – rather let it be the hidden person of the heart, with the *incorruptible* beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which is *very precious* in the sight of God.' **1Pe 3:3-4**.

Wisdom that is sourced from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil involves the utilisation of knowledge to achieve one's self-defined objectives. James described this as 'the wisdom from beneath'. Its use is motivated by bitter envy and self-seeking in one's heart. **Jas 3:14-15**. In contrast, 'the wisdom from above' is the word that we receive in fellowship with the Lord and with one another. Its expression is 'peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy'. **Jas 3:17**.

Do not draw back

If our works are driven by our knowledge of good and evil, we will not be known by Christ on the day of judgement. This is because we have not known Him face to face. Instead, we have endeavoured to name and know ourselves through self-definition. This will be true, irrespective of how active we have been in the church. Because we harden our heart and resist the Holy Spirit, who desires to pour the love of God into our heart, we have no affection for Christ. We do not seek His face. We cannot know Him, and He cannot know us. As Jesus taught, 'Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!"' **Mat 7:22-23.**

When we look into the face of Christ, we see the reflection of our own image as a son of God. **2Co 3:18.** The Holy Spirit is conforming us to that image. We are able to know who we are and who we have been named of the Father to be, for Christ is not only the express image of the Father, He is also the image of *all* of the Father's sons. The imperative is to not recoil from looking into the face of Christ when He addresses us with eyes like a flame of fire. **Luk 8:13.** We must accept that He comes to rebuke and chasten us in love. **Rev 3:19.** He does this by joining us to the fellowship of His offering. The Son speaks to us and calls us to repentance through His command. Receiving and obeying this command marks us as Christ's friends. **Joh 15:14-15.** With Christ's command comes the power to believe and to obey Him. This is a measure of faith that is given to us as a gift. **Rom 10:17. Eph 2:8.**

An initiative of the Father

Throughout our lives, we experience chastening and training in many different ways. Every one of these painful experiences, whether perceived by us as helpful or harsh, is an initiative of the Lord toward a son whom He loves. **Pro 15:10.** As stated in the book of Deuteronomy, 'You should know in your heart that as a man chastens his son, so *the Lord your God chastens you.*' **Deu 8:5.** Before we consider how these experiences can be effective for our formation as sons of God, we firstly need to understand the Father's initiative to chasten Christ, for our sake. As the prophet Isaiah wrote, 'The chastisement for *our* peace was upon Him'. **Isa 53:5.**

The Father's chastening upon Christ was the full expression and fulfilment of all chastening and training. It was the Father's initiative to chasten Christ for our sakes, even though He was chastened with 'the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men'. **2Sa 7:14.** Christ embraced the *measured* chastening of the Father and, in so doing, learned the obedience of our sonship. **Heb 5:8-9.** Chastening is fundamental to sonship. **Heb 12:7.** The chastening of the Lord upon us is an expression of His love and delight for us! **Pro 3:11-12.** The psalmist describes a person who receives the chastening and instruction of the Lord as 'blessed'. **Psa 94:12.**

Christ also endured the *unmeasured* beating and punishment that was motivated by the wrath of men, given to Him under the direction of the high priest and Jewish leaders. Christ endured that abuse and reproach, described by the prophet Jeremiah as 'the chastisement of a cruel one', through the resurrection life that was multiplied through the shedding of His blood. **Jer 30:14.** This was an aspect of 'our death' that He died by the grace of God. **Heb 2:9.** By *exanastasis*, Christ's mortal body was sustained through that abuse so that not a bone of His body was broken. **Joh 19:36.**

Christ was beaten with rods

Christ was chastened by the Father in the third wounding event of His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. In this wounding event, Christ was beaten repeatedly with rods in the courtyard of Caiaphas' house. **Mat 26:67. Luk 22:63.** The Lord spoke of this event through the prophet Nathan, saying, 'I [the Lord] will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits iniquity, *I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.* But My mercy shall not depart from him.' **2Sa 7:14 15.** This prophetic word, spoken firstly concerning Solomon, the son of King David, was fulfilled by Christ in this wounding event. We note that it was the Father's initiative to chasten Christ, even though He suffered under the hands of men.

The teaching of Moses nominated that a wrongdoer could be beaten with a certain number of blows as a means of discipline, measured according to his guilt. **Deu 25:1-3.** The harsh punishment that Christ endured, before Caiaphas, the high priest, was not a measured chastening for the consequences of justice. Rather, as described by the prophet Jeremiah, this was '*the chastisement of a cruel one*'. **Jer 30:14.** Christ was under inquisition by the chief priests, scribes and elders as they endeavoured to 'break Him down' and 'beat' Him into submission.

In this wound, Christ fully suffered the abuse and harsh punishment that is dealt to a person through an overpowering relationship, including that of an abusive father or mother. Christ endured that abuse through the resurrection life that was multiplied through the shedding of His blood. As a result, every person can find healing and recovery from an abusive dynamic towards them in their upbringing. After speaking of the chastisement of a cruel one, the Lord said, 'For I [the Lord] will restore health to you and heal you of your wounds.' **Jer 30:17. Job 5:17-18.**

Judgement commuted to chastening

The sufferings that we experience throughout our life, including the vanity of 'time and chance', are common to mankind. **Ecc 1:14. Ecc 9:11. 1Pe 5:9.** These sufferings are part of the judgement of God on the whole world because of sin. By the grace of God, Christ fully partook of the sufferings that are the manifestation of the judgement of God upon each person. **Heb 2:9.** As He died our death, by *exanastasis*, the judgement of God upon Him was *commuted to a chastening* and a circumcision.

The Scriptures teach that instead of leading to our eternal death, the judgement of God can be commuted to chastening through our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. The apostle Paul expressed it this way, 'But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.' **1Co 11:32.** We note that the judgement of God is either commuted to chastening, or it leads to condemnation.

In the Scriptures, 'condemnation' does not refer to our 'feeling of shame' but, rather, it refers to the sentence of punishment that has already been passed upon a person's guilt. **Joh 3:18.** There is no deliverance from condemnation for anyone outside of the fellowship of Christ's offering. However, for those who are conformed to the likeness of Christ's death, this judgement is being changed into a discipline for our benefit. Hence, Paul's rejoicing proclamation, 'There is therefore no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus.' **Rom 8:1.**

The Scriptures teach us the different aspects of chastening and rebuke which we are to receive from the Lord. The chastening of the Father teaches us *sonship*. The chastening of the Son teaches us *discipleship*. Also, the chastening of the Holy Spirit teaches us to *walk according to the Spirit*. As we embrace the chastening of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we are delivered from condemnation, which is God's judgement that has already been passed upon the whole world. **Joh 12:31.**

FURTHER STUDY ROMANS 2

Chastening is a fellowship

How is the judgement of God, of which the whole world has become a recipient, commuted to a chastening in our lives, so that we are trained as sons of God? The Scriptures teach us that chastening is *a fellowship!* Without our participation in the fellowship of the Father's chastening in our lives, the sufferings that we experience remain as the judgement and punishment of God upon us.

In the book of Hebrews, we read, 'But if you are without chastening, of which all have become *partakers*, then you are illegitimate and not sons.' **Heb 12:8**. The apostle Paul explained that to become a genuine son of God, we have to become a partaker of the Lord's chastening through participation and fellowship. We cannot presume that we are maturing as sons of God simply because we are suffering.

Hebrews chapter 12 teaches us that each chastening involves a painful season requiring patience. **Heb 12:7,11**. The word of the Lord, ministered to us throughout the season, is essential for our training because it grants faith and illumination for our participation. **Heb 12:5**. We firstly learn that submission is an essential aspect of fellowship. **Heb 12:9**. By faith, we submit ourselves to the Lord's chastening hand, forsaking the desire for retribution for any perceived injustice or harsh punishment. As we endure the chastening by faith, we yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness as we are trained as sons of God. **Heb 12:11**.

The Scriptures teach three fundamental elements that are necessary for behavioural change and sonship maturity. These are the pain of the chastening, the word of rebuke, and the relational context of a loving parent or friend. We note all three elements in the book of Proverbs, 'The *rod* and *rebuke* give wisdom, but a child *left to himself* brings shame to his mother.' **Pro 29:15**.

A change of behaviour

Parents are accountable to extend the chastening hand of the Father towards their children, as an expression of the love of God. The chastening and admonition of the Lord enables the child to put off immaturity and to learn the obedience of their sonship. **Eph 6:4**. Alternatively, James teaches that any punishment motivated by anger does not produce the righteousness of God, because it is not an expression of fellowship towards the child. **Jam 1:20**. For this reason, the Scripture states, 'Chasten your son while there is hope, and do not set your heart on his destruction.' **Pro 19:18**.

In regard to the word of rebuke, King David testified, 'Let the righteous strike me; it shall be a kindness. And let him rebuke me; it shall be as excellent oil; let my head not refuse it.' **Psa 141:5**. The recognition of sin, and of the behaviour that needs to change, requires a word of rebuke from a loving parent or friend. As we read, 'Faithful are the wounds of a friend, but the kisses of an enemy are deceitful.' **Pro 27:6**. Although the interaction may be unpleasant, or painful, the word of rebuke aligns a person to their sanctification.

In regard to the pain of the chastening, it is helpful to note that we cannot be trained by instruction only. As Proverbs teaches, 'A servant will not be corrected by mere words; for though he understands, he will not respond [or obey]'. **Pro 29:19**. Hence, the 'momentary' pain of the chastening is essential for teaching the consequences of our actions. Pain is a warning system, built into our mortality, that arrests our attention. If heeded, we avoid the 'long term' damage caused by sin. If not heeded, we suffer the pain of the consequences of our actions. This kind of suffering is a result of our foolishness, or stupidity, because we repeat the activity that is causing us and others an injury. The fruit of our sin is death; thus, resurrection life is needed for our recovery. **Jas 1:15**.

Embracing the Father's chastening

The sufferings that we experience throughout our life are an indication of the righteous judgement of God upon the whole world because of sin. **2Th 1:3-5**. There is no inherent blessing in the suffering itself. However, as we *embrace* our participation in Christ's offering, the sufferings that we experience are *commuted* to chastening for our benefit.

Through our participation in the fellowship of chastening and training, which is the practical expression of Christ's third wound, we mature as genuine sons of God. This is what it means to become a *partaker* of the Father's chastening. **Heb 12:8**. The chastening of the Father is for our maturity as sons of God and for the removal of foolishness associated with our immaturity.

An illumination of the love of the Father is required in order for us to embrace His chastening. **1Jn 3:1**. This is not a cognitive exercise whereby we determine that His discipline must be 'beneficial' for us. Rather, by the motivation of His love, we worship the Father in a trusting embrace. Although painful for a season, the chastening of the Father brings forth the fruit of the knowledge of our sonship and the fruit of peace. **Heb 12:11**. It was for this reason that the apostle Paul wrote, 'And let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart.' **Gal 6:9**.

As we embrace the *measured* chastening of the Father toward us, we are aligned to the sanctification of our name and to our works as sons of God, in Christ. Furthermore, the resurrection life of Christ enables us to endure the *unmeasured* punishment and abuse inflicted upon us by 'the hands of men'. This kind of suffering is persecution, which brings forth an eternal reward. **Mat 5:11-12**. No matter what manner of abuse we have suffered, or will suffer, in our lives, it is the Father's initiative to heal our wounds and to make us whole. **Jer 30:17**.

The chastening of the Son

Christ rebukes and chastens us as our High Priest, who is also the immortal Head of His church. **Col 1:18**. The seven letters written to the seven lampstand churches are an expression of the rebuke and chastisement of the Son, as He ministered and spoke among them as their great High Priest. In His letter addressed to the presbytery in Laodicea, Christ was actually speaking to all seven lampstand churches. He said, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent ... he who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'. **Rev 3:19, 22**.

Although it may be initially confronting when the Son chastens us, as we receive His rebuke and meet Him personally, we are illuminated by His immeasurable love toward us. **Eph 3:17-19**. The love of Christ compels us to embrace His chastening and the fellowship of offering that He reveals. **2Co 5:14**. We embrace the chastening of the Son through godly mourning and repentance. **2Co 7:11**. As we read in the book of Psalms, 'Serve the Lord with fear, and rejoice with trembling. *Kiss the Son*, lest He be angry, and you perish in the way, when His wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all those who put their trust in Him.' **Psa 2:11-12**. These verses exhort us to honour and worship the Son by embracing Him when He chastens us.

Through the rebuke that comes by His word, the Son confronts our disobedience, and endeavours to provoke in us a zeal for repentance. **Rev 3:19**. In response to His discipline, we confess, by faith, that He is our 'Lord and Teacher'. **Joh 13:13**. Submission to His *lordship* is demonstrated through our obedience to repent, when we are chastened by Him. Submission to Him as our *Teacher* is demonstrated as we *learn* from Him concerning the work of our priesthood. Through His instruction, we are enabled to join the fellowship of His obedience, as He offered Himself for our sake.

FURTHER STUDY 2 CORINTHIANS 7

Christ addresses our fallen humanity

As Christ speaks to us in love, we come to realise that He is 'walking among us' in judgement. **1Pe 4:17. Rev 1:12-13.** The first phase of His judgement is not an expression of vengeance or wrath upon us. Rather, Christ speaks to us truthfully and in simplicity – exposing what is of the truth and what is of a lie. **1Jn 2:8.** The Scriptures explain that 'all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light'. **Eph 5:13.**

When Christ comes among us in this way, He calls us by name – addressing us in our humanity and exposing the darkness of our ignorance, sin and disobedience. If we refuse to turn in repentance when we are judged by the Lord, we remain in darkness, enslaved to the lusts and projections that belong to our fallen humanity. **1Jn 1:5-6.** If we continue in this state, which is our natural condition, then we are unable to come to the knowledge of the truth. **2Ti 3:7.**

The word of Christ's rebuke and chastening is full of grace and truth. Why is this? His word is an expression of His judgement and is, therefore, full of *truth*. Also, His word gives to us the *grace* to mourn with godly sorrow and to repent of our sin. **Zec 12:10. 2Co 7:10.**

Through His rebuke and chastening, Christ identifies our deeds that are not consistent with the culture of how Yahweh lives. Yahweh lives by offering – each Person of the Godhead lays down His life in offering to reveal the Other. Any other culture, or way of living, is an offence to the Lord. For this reason, Jesus expresses His personal displeasure at our deeds, which are in opposition to the culture of offering. **Rev 2:15.** When the nature of our deeds has been exposed by the word of Christ's rebuke, we are then able to repent of our deeds and to be established in the culture of offering.

The word of Christ's rebuke

The word of Christ's rebuke, *firstly*, exposes our sense of personal rejection and failure, which stems from our *own righteousness*. In demonstrating this principle, we recall the rich young ruler's response to Christ's rebuke. Jesus addressed him in love and exposed the false riches of his self-righteousness. **Mar 10:21**. The rich young ruler became despondent when Christ explained to him that his lifelong pursuit of self-righteousness had yielded no eternal reward.

Secondly, the word of Christ's rebuke exposes our *ignorance* by illuminating our loyalty to a false doctrine. As individuals within a Christian community, we have actively chosen to adhere to various beliefs and practices that we have inherited from our religious history; yet, these practices have their origins in variant doctrines which are not consistent with the teaching of the New Testament writers. Christ rebukes and chastens us, even in our ignorance, because we willingly chose these beliefs and practices, believing they would provide us with some kind of spiritual benefit. **Joh 5:39**. Jesus highlighted our accountability for our ignorance in the parable of the stewards who were put over the household. Those who 'did not watch', *in their ignorance*, were still chastened with a few stripes. **Luk 12:48**.

The third aspect exposed by Christ's rebuke is our *failure to take heed* to His word. We recall that Peter, on two occasions during the night of Christ's offering, did not believe what Christ was saying to him regarding the inadequacy of his self-motivated zeal. However, under pressure, Peter was not able to sustain his own zeal and determination to suffer alongside Christ as His disciple. It was during the second and third wounds of Christ's offering that Peter remembered the words of Christ. **Luk 22:61**. He then understood, at a personal level, his failure to accept and take heed to what Christ had said to him. At this point, Peter found grace to mourn and to repent.

FURTHER STUDY JOHN 8

His word as a rod

As Christ was beaten with rods in the court of Caiaphas, His ministry as our great Shepherd was being revealed by the Father. The Father's word is the instrument of Christ's shepherding ministry. Christ uses this instrument in three distinct ways – as a *rod*, as a *staff*, and as a *goad*. These three dimensions of the word of the Father are ministered to us by Christ, and are then applied to our hearts by the Holy Spirit. In this regard, King David testified, 'Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.' **Psa 23:4**. Also, Solomon described the word of the great Shepherd, spoken by His messengers, as 'a goad'. **Ecc 12:11**.

Specifically, the *rod* of correction in Christ's right hand is applied to our lives as the word of His chastening and rebuke. The rod represents His *authority* to shepherd, or tend, the church. Christ testified that He received this authority as a gift from the Father. **Joh 5:26-27**. **Rev 2:27**. Christ has now committed this aspect of His work to those to whom He has given ascension gift grace. **Eph 4:11**. Those with ascension gift grace are called 'overseers'. Their work is to minister the word of Christ's exhortation and rebuke to the presbytery and to the church. Thus, it is through the ministry of those with ascension gift grace that we receive the chastening word of the Son.

As the presbytery heeds the word of Christ's rebuke, spoken to them by those with ascension gift grace, they are enabled to mourn with godly sorrow and to turn in repentance from their disobedience and ignorance. As they are obedient to repent of their former conduct, when chastened by the Lord, they obtain from Christ the capacity to shepherd the church as a presbytery of elders and deacons. **1Pe 5:1-2**. This capacity is demonstrated as they call every believer to embrace the chastening of the Son through godly mourning and repentance.

The need to be spiritually minded

We need to be *spiritually minded* in order for the chastening of the Lord to become effective in our lives. Why is this so? Those who are spiritually minded will appraise the fellowship of Christ's offering as the only context for their participation as sons of God. The apostle Paul taught that to be spiritually minded is 'life and peace', whereas to be carnally minded is death. **Rom 8:6**. Paul also taught that unless we are spiritually minded, the Lord's initiative to chasten us will appear foolish to us. Paul wrote, 'Natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him'. **1Co 2:14**.

In this present season, the whole world is suffering under the judgement of God. For those who are spiritually minded and joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering, these sufferings are commuted to a chastening for their benefit. **1Co 11:32**. However, for every person who is not born of God, these sufferings are not bringing forth any spiritual benefit whatsoever; they are simply a foretaste of eternal death.

In order to be spiritually minded, we must be *motivated by the love of God*. The love of God is the divine nature of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The love of God, as a motivation, enables us to live and walk as spiritual sons of God. We note, for example, that a sincere love of the brethren is evidence that we have been born of God. **1Pe 1:22-23**.

Also, in order to be spiritually minded, we must have *the mind of Christ*. **1Co 2:16. Php 2:5-8**. Christ laid His life down in obedience to the command of the Father. For us to have the mind, or mindset, of Christ is to offer ourselves in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul explained that priesting our own lives as a living sacrifice in this way is 'our *spiritual* sacrifice of worship'. **Rom 12:1**.

How do we become spiritually minded?

It is the ministry of the Holy Spirit within our lives that *makes us spiritual*. Paul explained that illumination is only possible through the Holy Spirit. He wrote, 'Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God'. **1Co 2:12**. Furthermore, our participation in the New Covenant is only possible through submission to the leading of the Holy Spirit. Let us consider further how the Holy Spirit makes us spiritual.

Specifically, the Holy Spirit pours the *love of God the Father* and the *affection of Jesus Christ* into our hearts. **Rom 5:5**. The love of the Father and the affection of Jesus Christ become our motivation as new creation sons of God.

The *love of God the Father* enables us to give ourselves to the fellowship of the Father's offering. The apostle John testified of the love of the Father when he wrote, 'In this the love of God [the Father] was manifested toward us, that God has sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him'. **1Jn 4:9**. When the love of God the Father is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, we are motivated to join Christ – for Christ is the Father's offering. **1Co 1:9**.

The *affection of Jesus Christ*, also given to us by the Holy Spirit, enables us to lay our lives down in offering. **Php 1:8**. This is what it means to have the mind of Christ. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we abound in knowledge and all discernment. **Php 1:9-11**. Paul taught that he who is 'spiritual' judges, or appraises, all things. **1Co 2:15**. Having the mind of Christ, we are able to discern and approve that which is excellent – that is, the offering of Christ is 'the more excellent way'.

Learning through offering

In his letter to the church of Philippi, the apostle Paul explained how we learn as new creation sons of God. He wrote, 'For God is my witness, how greatly I long for you all with the affection of Jesus Christ. And this I pray, that your love may abound still more and more in knowledge and all discernment, that you may approve the things that are excellent, that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ, being filled with the fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ, to the glory and praise of God'. **Php 1:8-11.**

Sons of God who are joined to Christ's offering are a new creation. **2Co 5:17.** As new creation sons of God, we learn through the fellowship of offering because the love of the Father and the affection of Jesus are poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This is the key point: *We learn through offering!* This is how the chastening of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is made effective in our lives.

New creation sons of God are not learning through the mistakes of the old creation. That is, our maturity as sons of God is not the result of learning from our mistakes, or from life-experiences, or from pain which causes a change of motivation. All of these ways of learning make a distinction, in the natural world, between those who are 'wise' or 'foolish' according to the principles of the world. However, as sons of God, we can only mature through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. The excellencies or virtues of Christ are learned in, and from, the fellowship of offering. **1Pe 2:9.** This is what it means to be filled with the 'fruits of righteousness which are by Jesus Christ'. **Php 1:9-11.** The result is that we are sincere and blameless before God, because as He is, so are we in this world. **Php 1:10. 1Jn 4:17.**

A precious event for Peter

Peter, the 'zealot', learned the value of faith during the second and third chastening events that Christ endured on His offering journey to Calvary. At the last supper, Jesus explained to Peter that He had prayed for him, so that in the midst of the coming events, Peter's faith would not fail but would, rather, be strengthened through grace. **Luk 22:32. 1Pe 5:10.** As a result, Peter's faith and relationship with Christ would be recovered from his own denial of Christ.

Peter's denial of Christ in the court of Caiaphas' house resulted from a number of factors, including - his underlying misunderstanding of the prophetic Scriptures that relate to Christ; his cultural heritage as a Jew; his struggle with the prejudice of the religious and secular leaders of his nation; and the spiritual fear and terror being generated by Satan during this season of spiritual conflict and warfare that Jesus called, '[their] hour and the power of darkness'. **Luk 22:53. Eph 6:12.**

In the court of Caiaphas' house, Christ was abused by the Jewish leaders. It was during this abuse that Peter's faith was beginning to fail. He recoiled and drew back from fellowship with Christ because of the pressure that was being exerted upon him as a follower of Christ. He began to curse and swear, denying that he knew Christ.

Peter was in the midst of a fiery trial. This was a trial of faith. **1Pe 1:6-7.** Christ joined Peter's failure to His offering by looking at Peter. Christ's eyes were as a flame of fire. **Rev 1:14.** Christ's gaze turned this fiery trial into a precious event in Peter's life. It became a season of purifying for Peter. His faith was being purified and was becoming more precious than gold. The fiery gaze of Christ made this offering event a crucible in which the dross of Peter's other law, which was the source of all his carnality, was being purged from his life.

The trial of faith

Let us consider how we walk through the trial of faith. Through His Melchizedek priesthood, Jesus was fully acquainted with the experiences of our humanity, and has joined all of our failures, sin, trouble and pain to His offering on the cross. **Heb 4:15**. By the capacity of Eternal Spirit, Jesus suffered all of these elements that belong to 'our death' and reconciled all of humanity to His one offering. **Heb 9:13-14**.

Since Christ has already suffered the experiences of our humanity, they are no longer the reference point for what we are learning. **Heb 4:15**. Rather, His offering is our reference point. The Holy Spirit gives us the capacity of Eternal Spirit which strengthens and enables us to join Christ's offering. As we participate by Eternal Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering, His chastening is made effective in our lives. He brings us back from the death of our sin by the resurrection life that was multiplied to us through the shedding of His blood. **2Ti 1:10**.

The various sufferings and seasons of spiritual warfare that we encounter are trials of faith in our lives. Through His word, Jesus engages us with eyes as a flame of fire, so that we are illuminated by His love. The hope of our sonship does not disappoint, because the love of the Father and the affection of Jesus are poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. **Rom 5:5**. This love compels us to appraise the pathway of Christ's offering as 'the more excellent way', and to appraise all the matters of our life as already being joined to His offering. **1Co 12:31**.

Through our participation in Christ's offering, the chastening of the Lord aligns us to the sanctification of our name, works and ministry as sons and priests. Peace is the result. As Paul wrote, 'Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ'. **1Th 5:23**.

FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 4

Remembering all His benefits

King David described our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ as a 'blessing', or 'benefit', that we receive from the Lord. He wrote, 'Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all His benefits'. **Psa 103:2**. The abundance of the Lord's benefits toward us, of which we are to remind one another, is our daily participation in the finished offering of Christ. For this reason, each day of our participation in His offering is a benefit!

David testified of his own response to the Lord's benefits toward him, when he wrote, 'What shall I render to the Lord for all His benefits toward me? I shall lift up the cup of salvation and call upon the name of the Lord.' **Psa 116:12-13**. We 'lift up the cup of salvation' by declaring, through testimony, that there is only one pathway of salvation for every son of God. Through His offering, Jesus Christ has perfected, forever, the sonship to which we are being sanctified through our participation with Him each day. **Heb 10:14**.

We are blessed by the Lord's initiative to join us, each day, to the offering of Christ. The Scriptures describe this as 'the mercies of the Lord'. As we read, 'Through the Lord's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; great is Your faithfulness.' **Lam 3:22-23**. Without our participation in His offering and sufferings, we would be consumed by our sin and iniquity. The confession of faith which we are to maintain is that His mercies are new today! Hence, the psalmist wrote, 'I will sing of the mercies of the Lord forever'. **Psa 89:1**.

The apostle Paul spoke of the mercies of God as being the means by which we present ourselves for participation in Christ's offering. **Rom 12:1**. While it is the Lord's mercy to priest to us a daily participation in His offering, it is our response of faith to present ourselves as 'participants' in His offering.

Remembering through illumination and dialogue

Christ's instruction to us, through the apostle Paul, is to eat and drink in remembrance of Him. **1Co 11:24-25**. In doing so, we are not remembering the historic event of Jesus' crucifixion that He suffered on our behalf. Rather, we are remembering that Jesus Christ is priesting to us a daily participation in His offering. This is His priestly work as High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. **Heb 5:9-10**. This 'remembering' is not a cognitive exercise. Rather, it is by illumination.

The word of Christ's messengers illuminates the Melchizedek priesthood of Christ, the hope to which we have been called and, also, the next step in our unique participation in Christ's finished offering. **Eph 1:18. Psa 119:105**. We remember, through illumination and dialogue, our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. We are to remind one another, in dialogue, that every situation we encounter is an opportunity for our participation in Christ's offering. By faith, and through this encouragement, we continue to walk on the pathway that has been illuminated to us by the word of God and confirmed in our fellowship with one another.

Our dialogue together involves edifying, exhorting and comforting one another with the truth of the Scriptures and toward our unique participation in the fellowship of offering. **1Th 4:18. 1Co 14:3**. The apostle Paul described our sharing together in this way: 'For you can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged'. **1Co 14:31**. We prophesy by reflecting the light of the word of present truth and by maintaining the good confession of faith that Jesus proclaimed throughout His offering journey. **Rev 19:10**. The prophetic word is confirmed, or revealed, in us as we take heed together in our *agape* meals and remain connected to the fellowship of offering throughout the course of our lives. **2Pe 1:19**.

FURTHER STUDY EPHESIANS 1



Restoring
my Soul