



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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MAY 2021

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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May 2021

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What kind of people?

In His letters to the seven churches, Jesus called believers in every generation to hear what the Spirit is saying. **Rev 2:7**. The Spirit has been revealing to us the things that are about to take place in the earth as we approach the end of this age. **Joh 16:13**. Foreshadowing these times, the apostle Peter asked us to consider what kind of people we ought to be in holy conduct and godliness. **2Pe 3:10-12**. In answer to this question, he exhorted us to be found by Christ 'in peace, *without spot and blameless*'. **2Pe 3:14**.

The apostle Paul, similarly, commanded Timothy to eschew the desire for riches, which gives rise to many foolish and harmful lusts, and to, instead, pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience and gentleness. He urged Timothy to 'keep this commandment without spot, blameless *until* the appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ'. **1Ti 6:11-14**. Paul himself laboured as a messenger of Christ so that his hearers would 'become blameless and harmless, children of God in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation'. **Php 2:14-16**. Evidently, blamelessness is a quality of a son of God.

Many Christians maintain a deluded belief in their own capacity to walk in the manner instructed by Peter and Paul. Their failure to acknowledge their inability to fulfil this command reveals that they believe in their self righteousness. This is great darkness, because they presume that their self defined works are acceptable to God. **Mat 6:23**. **Mat 7:21**. The absence of enduring peace in their lives, particularly in seasons of hardship, is a telling marker of this fallen religious culture.

Other people will be acutely aware of their personal shortcomings. For them, blamelessness will seem like an impossible or, at least, a daunting proposition; perhaps one that is not even worth attempting! In the absence of understanding that comes by the Spirit, they may, presumptuously, continue in their sin, claiming to be covered by the shedding of Christ's blood. However, this also is not blamelessness.

FURTHER STUDY 2 PETER 3

Blamelessness

The first point concerning *the culture of blamelessness* is that it is *not* a state of acceptability with respect to God's Law, through either our good works or because of the shedding of Christ's blood on our behalf. We note, for example, that Paul testified of having been blameless in relation to the Law. Yet, he likened this point of confidence in his flesh to *refuse*. **Php 3:4-6**. He counted it as loss in order to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be conformed to His death. **Php 3:9-10**. Paul's testimony revealed that blamelessness is not a state of sinless perfection; it is a culture of life that is realised through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

In summary, to be 'blameless' is to walk in the light of the finished offering of Christ. Through His offering, Christ has already suffered the judgement of each one of us and has accomplished our sinless perfection. The light of this finished work, which shines from the face of Christ, is the light of the knowledge of our sonship in Him. **2Co 4:6**. If we walk in this light, we have fellowship with the Lord and with one another, and the blood of Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness. **1Jn 1:7**. Moreover, we are able to *become* the righteousness of God in Him. **2Co 5:21**. This means that we are sons of God who are fulfilling the Father's will, in Christ.

Beholding Christ in this way has a life-changing effect on the way in which we live and relate with others. We accept that our sufferings are our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, because He has already experienced them by the grace of God. **Heb 2:9**. Acknowledging this reality demonstrates that we have been co-crucified, or cursed, with Christ. **Gal 2:20**. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, our self-righteousness is being removed from us.

The evidence of change

As we leave our self righteous perspectives in the sea of God's forgetfulness, we are able to cease from our sin and from the judgements that we make about ourselves, our lives, and others. **1Pe 4:1**. These judgements, sourced from the other law within us, are the cause of conflict with our brethren. **Rom 7:23. Jas 4:1-4**. Because we are being delivered from this fallen principle of life, our contributions to these conflicts progressively cease. We are able, as much as it depends on us, to 'live peaceably with all men'. **Rom 12:18**.

Having been conformed to Christ's death, we are made alive in the likeness of His resurrection. **Php 3:10. Rom 6:5**. This is because we are living by Christ's life, which is becoming our life. **Gal 2:20**. The evidence of this transaction is that we are being changed from glory to glory, into the likeness of Christ's sonship. **2Co 3:18**. We are being delivered from the motivation to live for ourselves and, like Christ, are compelled by love to lay down our lives for others. **2Co 5:14-15**. These are the works of our sonship which Christ has already perfected for us.

A practical example of this motivation will be our desire to participate with our brethren in the agape meal. We recall that Jesus said to His friends, including those who would deny Him and betray Him, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God'. **Luk 22:15-16**. Likewise, those who are part of Christ's kingdom will desire to eat this meal with Him and with their fellow brethren in His body. That is, they will be motivated to share testimony with one another and to pour out on the sacrifice and service of others. This activity is characteristic of one who is a blameless and harmless son of God. **Php 2:14-16**.

The command to Abraham

The very first exhortation to be blameless before the Lord was given to Abraham, the father of all who believe. The Lord said to him, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless.' **Gen 17:1**. This was a specific initiative of the Holy Spirit toward Abraham and Sarah. Receiving new names, and baptism through the sign of circumcision, were fundamental to their capacity to obey this direction. Significantly, this marked a fundamental change in their marriage covenant and culture, which was necessary in bringing forth the child of promise, who was born according to the Spirit. **Gal 4:29**.

It is important to recognise that the relational culture within a house, particularly as it is expressed by the children, will reveal the culture of a marriage. We note that before Abraham and Sarah received grace from the Lord, and applied themselves to the process through which they were able to be blameless before Him, the fruit of their fallen marriage culture was Ishmael. He was born according to the flesh. The fruit of the flesh within a family will be evidenced by conflict, disobedience, scorn and derision among those within the household. This is not a house of peace.

The point for us to note is that our capacity to walk as blameless and harmless children of God until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ involves cultural reformation in our marriages and households. This is an ongoing process that is possible only as we walk by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. By this means, we are able to obtain the blessing that the Lord promised to Abraham when He said that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him. **Gen 12:3. Gen 22:18**.

Three initiatives toward Abraham

Through the prophet Isaiah, the Lord directed the sons and daughters of God, saying, 'Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who bore you; for I called him alone, and *blessed* him and *increased* him.' **Isa 51:2**. The lessons learned by Abraham and Sarah, as the Lord met them during their lives, reveal the way in which their children obtain the promises of God contained in the Everlasting Covenant. Abraham's children are those who have received, and live by, the faith of the Son of God. This is the faith that Abraham received when the word of the Lord came to him, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' **Gen 15:1**.

Isaiah's prophetic statement reveals three key initiatives toward Abraham: He called him; He *blessed* him; and He *increased* him. Paul, similarly, identified three responses that are fundamental to a person's participation in the Everlasting Covenant. He introduced these implications of the gospel by reminding the Corinthians of the covenant which God made with Abraham. 'As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people"' **2Co 6:16**. **Gen 17:7**. Paul then wrote, 'Therefore [1] "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. [2] Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. [3] I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"' **2Co 6:17-18**.

When we consider the life of Abraham, we observe that he experienced three distinct seasons of visitation from the Lord. These correspond with the three responses that are necessary for obtaining the promises contained in the Everlasting Covenant. It is important to consider the seasons of visitation in the life of Abraham because the Lord meets us in the same manner.

Meeting the Son

The first initiative towards Abraham was from the Son. This is chronicled in Chapters 12 to 16 of the book of Genesis. Paul referred to the events during this phase of Abraham's life as 'the steps of the faith which our father Abraham had *while still uncircumcised*'. **Rom 4:11-12**. The primary focus of this initiative was the call for Abraham to leave his country, to depart from his family and from his father's house, and to enter a land that the Lord would show him. **Gen 12:1**. With this call came the promise of blessing. The Lord said to Abraham, 'I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great; and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you; and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' **Gen 12:2-3**.

During this phase of his pilgrimage, Abraham was *illuminated* to see the land that God had promised to give to his descendants as an inheritance. This call was instinct with grace from God, enabling Abraham to *overcome* the world as he walked the length and width of the land. **Gen 13:14-17**. **Gen 14:1-16**. Also, during this phase, Melchizedek blessed Abraham with a share in His inheritance as possessor of heaven and earth, by giving to Abraham a *participation* in the *agape* meal of Yahweh. **Gen 14:18-20**. This season of visitation culminated in the word of the Lord coming to Abraham. As the Word, the Son delivered Abraham from his fear of failing to obtain God's promises, and He became Abraham's faith. By this faith, Abraham was enabled to believe that Christ would become his Son in the flesh. **Gen 15:1-2**. Righteousness was imputed to Abraham because he believed God's promise of sonship. **Gen 15:5-6**. God established His covenant with Abraham by joining him, in type, to the fellowship of Christ's offering on the cross. **Gen 15:9-21**.

Meeting the Spirit

The second major initiative of Yahweh towards Abraham and his household was the priority of the Holy Spirit. This is recorded in Chapters 17 to 21 of the book of Genesis. It began when Abram was already ninety-nine years old. The Lord appeared to him and declared, 'I am Almighty God; walk before Me and be blameless'. **Gen 17:1**. This season of visitation involved a significant reformation of Abraham and Sarah's marriage covenant, through baptism (signified by circumcision), and by receiving a remnant of the Spirit (signified by new names). The fruit of receiving this ministry of the Spirit was the birth of the promised son, Isaac, whom Paul described as having been born '*according to the Spirit*'. **Gen 21:1-7. Gal 4:29**.

The focus of this phase of Abraham's journey of faith was receiving blessing through sanctification by the Spirit. **Isa 51:2. 2Co 6:17. 2Th 2:13**. Abraham and Sarah were called to be *blameless* before the Lord. This involved being delivered from the unclean, fallen ways of relating, which had resulted in the birth of Ishmael. Paul noted that Ishmael was 'born according to the flesh'. **Gal 4:23**. Abraham and Sarah each received a new name, indicating that they had received a remnant, or portion, of the Spirit. The Lord gave them this portion of His own name because He desired godly children. **Mal 2:15**.

Circumcision, which Abraham received as the sign of God's Everlasting Covenant, symbolised a new culture in his house. Consequently, the Lord said of Abraham, 'I have known him, in order that he may command his children and his household after him, that they keep the way of the Lord, to do righteousness and justice, that the Lord may bring to Abraham what He has spoken to him.' **Gen 18:19**.

Meeting the Father

The third initiative towards Abraham was from the Father. This is documented in Chapter 22 of the book of Genesis. God called Abraham to sacrifice his son, Isaac, on Mount Moriah. Abraham's faith did not waver at this command. Instead, he believed in the resurrection life of God, testifying, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for a burnt offering.' **Gen 22:8.** Abraham, figuratively, received Isaac back from the dead when the Angel of the Lord stayed his hand, and a ram was provided for a sacrifice in Isaac's stead. **Heb 11:19. Gen 22:13.**

Because of Abraham's faith, and Isaac's obedience, God reaffirmed His Everlasting Covenant with Abraham, declaring, 'By Myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this thing and have not withheld your son, your only son, indeed I will greatly bless you, and I will greatly multiply your seed as the stars of the heavens and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your seed shall possess the gate of their enemies. In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.' **Gen 22:15-18.** Through this oath, Abraham obtained the promise that he had been patiently waiting for when, having been illuminated regarding the divine sonship of his children, he believed God and it was accounted to him for righteousness. **Gen 15:5-6. Heb 6:13-15. Jas 2:21-23.**

There are many essential lessons to be learnt from the pilgrimage of Abraham and Sarah, the father and mother of all who believe. However, in our present season, the Spirit has been impressing upon us the need to focus on the recovery of Christian marriages to the order of headship. It is important for every Christian couple to understand this key implication of the Spirit's initiative towards Abraham and his household.

The initiative of the Spirit

In the same way that the Lord appeared to Abram, the Lord calls every Christian couple to 'walk before Him and be blameless'. **Gen 17:1**. This cultural reformation requires diligent application to an ongoing discussion between husband and wife. However, it is important that we understand the nature of this conversation.

It is not a conversation concerning the familiar cultures within families. We deal with these cultures by putting them off when they are illuminated to us through the ministry of the word. **Eph 4:20-24**. Sometimes, they may even require exorcism because of the demonic oppression that these familiar ways invite into an individual's life or into a family. **Act 10:38**. Likewise, this conversation is *not* focused on the temperamental differences between spouses in relation to shame or to the impact of aging. **Eph 4:29-30**. We know that as people grow older and their processing capacity slows, their temperaments narrow and polarise. This may result in the escalation of bickering between a couple, which can be addressed through awareness, understanding and patience. The cultural reformation that the Spirit is calling for, is also *not* an initiative to deal with a person's genetic predispositions or identity frailties which may impact upon a marriage relationship. These require healing and regeneration through the washing of the water by the word. **Eph 5:25-26**.

In contrast to all of these considerations, what is the focus of the initiative of the Spirit in relation to the covenant of marriage? It is the establishment of headship on the ground of new creation. Through restoration to this order of fellowship, the couple receives a remnant of the Spirit, enabling them to cultivate and multiply the blessing of the divine nature within their household. Unless a Christian couple lays hold of, and cultivates, this unique portion of the divine nature in their household, their children will be 'unclean'. **1Co 7:14**. That is, they will be like Ishmael; being born and raised according to the principles of the flesh. **Gal 4:23**.

FURTHER STUDY 1 CORINTHIANS 11

Fallen from fellowship

Before the Fall, Adam and Eve enjoyed fellowship with Christ each day, at the tree of life. Accordingly, their marriage was established on the ground of headship. The Father was the head of Christ, Christ was the head of Adam, and Adam was the head of Eve. **1Co 11:3**. While they remained connected in this order of headship, Adam and Eve were able to exercise headship over the whole of creation. **Gen 1:28**. Because of this, all living things were in harmony and at peace.

Adam and Eve fell from fellowship with Yahweh when they ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Eve desired to be 'like God'. **Gen 3:5**. She wanted to be the source of her own image and works, and to create a context for the multiplication and nurture of life, in her image. Adam desired to retain the capacities of wisdom and power within himself in order to exercise dominion and rulership over creation. Both Adam and Eve viewed the forbidden fruit as being good for food, pleasant to the eyes, and desirable for wisdom, to enable their deluded aspirations. **Gen 3:6**. The desire that drove them to eat the fruit became the basis for the expression of their identities, affecting how they viewed themselves and related to one another. It was the source of enmity in their marriage.

Once Adam and Eve fell from fellowship with the Lord, their eyes were opened and they realised that they were naked. **Gen 3:7**. Adam confessed that he was 'afraid' because of his nakedness. **Gen 3:10**. Their nakedness implied that they were now vulnerable to time and chance. They had no covering or defence, other than their own capacity to live through the use of their knowledge of good and evil. Significantly, Adam and Eve's nakedness was their disconnection from the word of their predestination as sons of God.

The mechanisms of shame

When Adam and Eve fell, their eyes were opened and they became afraid because of their nakedness. Ashamed of their fear, Adam and Eve hid themselves and sewed fig leaves together to conceal their nakedness from the Lord and from one another. **Gen 3:7**. The fig leaves symbolised projections of themselves, fashioned to mask the shame of their failing self defined image. These projections replaced the kingship and priesthood that belonged to the expression of their sonship under Christ. They became the basis of relational engagement in every marriage, including the marriage of Abram and Sarai.

Without reformation in response to the initiative of the Spirit, a married couple can meet one another *only* through these relational mechanisms of shame, based in the exercise of the other law, which they have inherited through the fall of mankind. **Rom 7:23**. Their marriage will be a sacramental project, based on the pursuit of fulfilment or empowerment. **1 Ki 21:5-7**. Fulfilment in life will be sought, for example, through romance; through religious ministry activity; through the pursuit of wealth; through cultural status. Where the life agendas of the couple are compatible or shared, the marriage may become a fortress to which the word of truth has little access. Where the life agendas of spouses compete, their marriage relationship will likely be pressured and volatile. Neither marital state is blessed of God. **Psa 4:2**. However, both of these marriage profiles will result in the dystrophy of the husband's identity and the wife's identity.

As individual identities, we can become disenfranchised in our marriage, ministry, and secular employment, when our 'end' is not in the obedience of Christ. **2Co 10:4-5**. A sure sign that our end is not in the obedience of Christ is when we feel as though our initiatives and perspectives are not being adequately acknowledged or valued by others. This is particularly true in the context of a marriage.

FURTHER STUDY 1 KINGS 21

A religious marriage

In a religious marriage, the woman's submission to her husband is her initiative to forgo, or to subvert, her own life agendas or ministry aspirations, in order to facilitate the initiatives and directions of her husband. Although this has the appearance of submission, in reality, she is recrafting her own image and is redefining the conditions of their romance. By this means, she becomes a benefactor to her husband as she endeavours to facilitate his success, which is critical to the viability of her image. By implication, the man now 'proceeds from her'. **1Co 11:8**. Describing this fallen, and often religious, response, the Lord said that the woman's desire would be for her husband. **Gen 3:16**.

The wife will feel demeaned and disenfranchised when her initiatives to facilitate the work of her husband – including her 'good' ideas and activities – are not accepted or valued. She will feel this way because her initiatives are driven by identity verification. When her initiatives are not appreciated or her husband responds with morose indifference, she will feel as though her identity is not valued. The dystrophy of her identity demonstrates that the end of her endeavour is not in Christ as an extension of His obedience. Rather, its end is in her knowledge of good and evil in the marriage.

A man who endeavours to rule in his house, demanding obedience in the name of headship, is not operating as an extension of the headship that is found in Christ. The Lord described this fallen marriage principle as the man 'ruling over his wife'. **Gen 3:16**. It is evident that his end is not in the obedience of Christ, because his endeavours do not produce the good fruit of fellowship in his house. Instead, they produce reaction and conflict, which are the fruits of thorns and thistles in himself and in other members of his household. **Gen 3:17-18**. This causes him spiritual, and even physical, fatigue, and to withdraw from relationship.

A new name and baptism

A person's identity can only be verified, or truly expressed, according to the name that the Father predestined for them as His son in Christ. This is fundamental to the reformation of every marriage, and requires our recovery to the ground of headship. As each person is delivered from their deluded endeavours to verify their own identity, and receives the grace of God inherent in the word of their name, they are free to express their identity in Spirit and in truth. Abram and Sarai received this grace through the initiative of the Spirit.

Following the command to 'walk before Him and be blameless', the Lord said to Abram, 'Behold, My covenant is with you, and you will be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for *I have made you* a father of many nations.' **Gen 17:5**. The Lord made covenant with Abram, changing his name to Abraham. He did this by placing an element of His own name (YHWH) within Abram's natural name, indicating that Abraham had received a portion of the capacity that belongs to the name of Yahweh. Abraham's new name was not merely an appellation; it was his share in the inheritance that belongs to Christ. **Heb 1:4. Rom 8:16-17.**

Abraham then received circumcision in his flesh as a sign of God's Everlasting Covenant. **Gen 17:7. Gen 17:10-11**. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul explained that true circumcision is baptism into Christ. It is a believer's fellowship in the death and resurrection of Christ, through which they are able to put off the sins of the flesh and be raised with Christ to walk anew by His life. **Col 2:11-15. Rom 6:3-4.**

The seal of faith

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained that circumcision was a seal of the righteousness of faith that Abraham had previously demonstrated while *uncircumcised*. **Rom 4:11**. Prior to Abraham's circumcision, the highpoint of walking in his baptism was participation in Christ's offering, which was symbolised by the sacrifice of a three year old heifer, a three year old female goat, a three year old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. By this means, God established His covenant with Abraham. **Gen 15:9-18**. However, the command to walk blameless before the Lord represented a further implication of baptism for Abraham.

Circumcision is a *seal* of the righteousness of faith. It is a mark of having been built on Christ, the solid foundation of God, through recovery to the order of headship. Notably, Paul explained that the seal on this foundation is, ' "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity"'. **2Ti 2:19**. We can only know the Lord by turning to Him in response to His word and meeting Him face to face. As we do this, and accept our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are delivered from our iniquitous ways of living and relating with one another, which we have inherited through the fall of mankind.

Importantly, we are able to receive the word and grace of our name from the Father. **2Co 3:16,18**. **2Co 4:6**. This describes our recovery to the order of headship. The Holy Spirit is the *seal of promise* who enables our participation in this process which is fundamental to being blameless before the Lord. **Eph 1:13-14**. Through the circumcision of Christ, we are delivered from our fallen relational customs, which were established through disobedience, and we are joined to the obedience of Christ.

The obedience of Christ

The faith of the Son of God was demonstrated when He gave Himself for us in obedience to the command of the Father. **Gal 2:20. Joh 10:17-18.** Christ humbled Himself and became *obedient* to the point of death, even death on the cross. **Php 2:5 8.** In this way, His 'end' was in the hand of the Father. Because of this, the Father highly exalted Him and gave Him the name which is above every name. **Php 2:9.**

Most significantly, the Spirit enables *our end* to be in the obedience of Christ as He pours the love of God into our heart. **Rom 5:5.** Jesus said, 'As the Father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love.' **Joh 15:9.** This is where our name is found! It is written and given to us on a white stone. As Jesus Himself promised, 'To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.' **Rev 2:17.** This name, which we can know, is the definition and glory of our identity in Christ. We obtain this name in the same way that Christ obtained His name – through the obedience of faith, in the fellowship of Christ's offering. The alternative is to take initiatives where the endpoint of these initiatives is in our own knowledge of good and evil.

Not only did Abraham receive circumcision in his own flesh, but he was directed to also circumcise all the males in his household. **Gen 17:10-13.** In other words, the culture of Abraham's whole household was to reflect the implications of circumcision, or fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. There was to be a change in the way that they lived and related with one another. Abraham was to instruct his household in this way.

Sarai received a new name

After the Lord gave Abram a new name, He also gave a new name to Sarai. Notably, she did not receive her name directly from the Lord but, rather, through the word of the Lord to Abraham. In this way, the Lord gave Abraham the mandate of recognising his wife's predestination in relation to their house. The Lord said to Abraham, 'As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. And I will bless her and also give you a son by her; then I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be from her.' **Gen 17:15-16**. Through this word, the Lord instructed Abraham to give Sarai the same portion of the name of Yahweh that he had already received so that her new name would be Sarah. Together, they received a remnant of the Spirit, which is necessary to bring forth godly seed according to the word of God. **Mal 2:15**.

The meaning of the name 'Sarai' is not readily apparent in the Scriptures; nor is the etymology of her name obvious. Several scholars have proposed that the Hebrew word for 'Sarai' is derived from another Hebrew word meaning 'to fight'. With this in view, they have proposed that 'Sarai' means 'she that strives'. This would certainly accord with her nature prior to the cultural change in Abraham's household following his circumcision. Sarah endeavoured to establish her home on the principles of the world or her own religion. She did this when she gave her maid, Hagar, to Abraham so that she could conceive a child through a surrogate. **Gen 16:3-4**. In short, she endeavoured to fulfil the word to Abraham regarding a multitude of sons, through her own good ideas and undertakings. Evidently, her end was not in Christ; it was in herself. It was in her knowledge of good and evil.

Becoming heirs together

Some commentators have suggested that the name 'Sarai' means 'my princess', whereas 'Sarah' simply means 'princess'. This would reflect the change in the marriage relationship of Abraham and Sarah. Before they received their new names, Sarai was Abram's princess within the romance of their marriage covenant. He subverted the headship of Christ in his life by *servicing* Sarai's agenda when he received her direction and strategy for obtaining the blessing of God. **Gen 16:2.**

By naming Sarah according to the word that he had received from the Lord, Abraham *redefined* the basis of their marriage relationship. She was no longer *his* princess. Abraham's face was now turned to the Lord as he was being delivered, through circumcision, from his former fleshly relational propensities. Sarah received her share in the inheritance that belonged to the name of Lord through Abraham. In the authority of her own name, she was then free to proceed *from* Abraham to become the mother of nations. This was her expression as a princess, or a woman of high rank within the order of headship, according to her name in Christ. **1Pe 3:5-6.** King Solomon described the demeanour of a woman who has received this grace, writing, 'Who is she who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners?' **Son 6:10.** Through the redefinition of their marriage covenant, Abraham and Sarah were now heirs together of the grace of life! **1Pe 3:7.**

The grace of life is the remnant of the Spirit. Importantly, a married couple do not possess a remnant of the Spirit simply because they are Christians. Neither do they obtain this unique portion of the divine nature through the content of their marriage vows. Presuming to possess the blessing of God on these grounds is sacramental. Such an approach to Christian marriage may rob the couple of the true blessing that God desires for every family. **1Co 3:1-3.** It can become the basis of a religious, romantic culture that aspires to be spiritual, but is still carnal.

FURTHER STUDY EPHESIANS 5

A portion of the Spirit

When a Christian man and woman marry, the Lord meets them with His word to make them one by giving to them a remnant, or portion, of His Spirit. **Mal 2:15**. This portion of the Lord's Spirit is a dimension of the divine nature that uniquely belongs to them, and is the reason why the two can be made one. **Deu 6:4. Eph 5:30-31**. The Lord does this through the process that the Holy Spirit revealed to Abraham. We have previously described this process as the 'bonding' phase of courtship. Once married, a couple is to continue to cultivate and multiply this grace as a culture in their house, by walking blameless before the Lord.

Of course, every person who is born of God receives the divine nature. **2Pe 1:3-4**. Furthermore, through the Holy Spirit, the sons of God are made one with the Lord and with the other members of the body of Christ. **1Co 6:17. Eph 4:4**. However, something *more* of the divine nature, which is unique to the covenant of marriage, established by God, is given to a believing couple so that they can be 'heirs *together* of the grace of life'. **1Pe 3:7**.

Their 'oneness' as a married couple is different from the oneness of the members of the body of Christ. God gives this unique portion of His Spirit to a Christian couple because He seeks godly seed. **Mal 2:15**. These are children who are born and raised as spiritual, or holy, sons of God. **1Co 7:14**. This was signified in the lives of Abraham and Sarah when their names were changed by receiving a 'remnant', or portion, of Yahweh's own name. The Lord did this for them so that they could bring forth Isaac according to the Spirit.

A daughter of Sarah

When a married couple is joined together in one spirit, the woman then *proceeds from the man*. This principle was foreshadowed when Eve was formed from the rib of Adam. **Gen 2:21-23**. Moses explained that this oneness is the reason why ‘a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh’. **Gen 2:24**. The apostle Paul further elaborated, saying, ‘Man is not from woman, *but woman from man*. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels.’ **1Co 11:8 10**.

The married woman proceeds from her husband with the divine nature, and becomes the mother of a family. She then proceeds to be a grandmother and, in this way, she becomes the mother of ‘a multitude’, like Sarah. **Gen 17:16**. This is a *culture* of motherhood, rather than being simply the natural capacity to bear children. Once a believing wife receives the divine nature, she is able to demonstrate the culture of faith that Sarah demonstrated in her marriage to Abraham. Her faith works by this dimension of the divine nature, which is love. **Rom 5:5**.

This culture of faith belongs to a Christian woman who is ‘a daughter of Sarah’. Describing a daughter of Sarah, the apostle Peter wrote, ‘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. For in this manner, in former times, the holy women who trusted in God also adorned themselves, being submissive to their own husbands, *as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, whose daughters you are if you do good and are not afraid with any terror*’. **1Pe 3:3-6**.

The culture of faith

The apostle Peter proclaimed that a woman, who is a daughter of Sarah, will be adorning herself with the divine nature. She will be revealing the incorruptible beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit. We know that these are the qualities of the divine nature because they are 'incorruptible' and 'very precious'. **1Pe 1:3-4. 1Co 3:12-13.** The holy women of faith adorned themselves in this way *through* their submission to their husbands.

A Christian wife's submission to her husband demonstrates the faith of the Son of God, which she receives by hearing the word of God. **Gal 2:20. Rom 10:17.** The faith of the Son of God, which belongs to a godly woman, becomes the same faith in her children as she cultivates its expression in her house. This heritage of faith was exemplified in the life of Timothy. Paul said to him, 'I call to remembrance the genuine faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois and your mother Eunice, and I am persuaded is in you also.' **2Ti 1:5.** Faith was cultivated by Lois in her daughter Eunice, and then by Eunice in her son, Timothy. It became his faith, which was the expression of his life as a son of God.

In this season, the Lord is calling *every* Christian husband and wife to walk before Him and be blameless. Fundamental to our response to this call is a commitment to cultural reformation in our marriages. Our faith for cultural reformation will be demonstrated by our eagerness to consider and discuss the application of the word that is addressing our marriages. As we do this, we are able to appropriate and cultivate the remnant of the Spirit that the Lord uniquely apportions to us as a Christian couple, or spouse, in Christ. Through the expression of this grace in our households, our children are able to be brought forth as spiritual sons of God.



Restoring
my Soul