



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

OCTOBER 2019

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Contributing Authors

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

Compiled by

David Baker

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Illumination

Illumination is the focal point of the gospel. Establishing this point, the apostle John declared, 'This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light [illumination] and in Him is no darkness at all.' **1Jn 1:5**. John's statement teaches us that receiving illumination is much more than simply coming to know something that we had not previously seen or understood. Illumination is essential to our new birth and to our maturing as sons of God. Those who are born of God are light in the Lord. **Eph 5:8**.

The first aspect of illumination is the command of God the Father, by which the light of God's life shines out of darkness. **2Co 4:6**. This describes illumination coming to a person. Jesus Christ is the Light of life. **Joh 1:4**. He said that He ministered this light by proclaiming the command, or word, of the Father, so that those who believed in the light would become sons of light. **Joh 12:36**. The Father's word declares the sonship of every person, in Christ.

Jesus also said that those who received the *messengers* He sent, received Him, and received the *Father* who sent Him. **Joh 13:20**. In the book of Revelation, Jesus described the messengers He sends as 'seven stars in His right hand'. They minister the light of life, by the Holy Spirit, to those who are in darkness because of their slavery to sin. Jesus explained that a star in His hand is an angel, or messenger (Greek: *aggelos*), of a church. **Rev 1:20**. The *aggelos* is a lamp presbytery that provides the light for a lampstand church. Their message is the gospel of God that shines as light from the face of Christ into the hearts of those who hear and receive them. **2Co 4:6**.

The eyes of our heart enlightened

The second aspect of illumination involves the healing of our spiritual sight so that we are able to receive the light of life that is ministered by Christ's messengers. Jesus said that an eye, or spirit, that is healthy is able to receive the light of the proceeding word. Consequently, this person will be full of light. However, if a person's spirit is degenerate, or evil, their whole being will continue to be in darkness. **Luk 11:34**. 'Darkness' is the fallen human condition. When mankind fell from fellowship with Yahweh, they were alienated from the life of God. **Eph 4:17**. Not only were they physically dying but, also, their spirit was degenerating. This resulted in the blindness of the hearts of men; that is, they were unable to see the things of the Spirit. **1Co 2:9-12**. Consequently, their understanding of God and His plan for them was darkened. **Eph 4:18**.

When the gospel is ministered by those whom the Father has anointed as messengers of Christ, a spirit of grace and supplication is poured out upon their hearers. God's grace enables them to look into Christ's face and to hear His voice. By the work of the Holy Spirit, the word of the Father that they receive from Christ is able to regenerate their identity so that the eye of their body is made healthy. **Tit 3:5**. Paul described regeneration as the work of the Father to strengthen a person in the inner man, or spirit, so that Christ, who is the Light of life, may dwell in their heart by faith. **Eph 3:14-17**.

A believer whose sight is being healed through the regeneration of their spirit is able to receive the light of the knowledge of the glory of God as it shines from the face of Christ. **2Co 4:6**.

Children of light

The third aspect of illumination is to be born of the light and to live as children of light. **Joh 12:36. 1Th 5:5. Eph 5:8.** This happens when Christ, who is the Light of life, dwells in our hearts by faith. Once we have been born of God and have come into Christ through baptism, we are to live by the faith of the Son of God. **Gal 2:20.** His faith is given to us 'from faith to faith' as we continue to receive the light of the gospel that is ministered by Christ's messengers at the communion gathering. **Rom 1:17. Rom 10:17.** By this faith, Jesus offered Himself for our sake. **Gal 2:20.** Having received this same faith, we are to live and walk each day in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, Christ's life is multiplied and given to us to become our life. The apostle Peter described this aspect of illumination as the morning star rising in our heart. **2Pe 1:19.**

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul taught that when Christ dwells in a person's heart by faith, they enter the kingdom of God and are rooted and grounded in love. **Eph 3:17.** As the Scripture states, 'He who abides in love abides in God, and God in him'. **1Jn 4:16.** God becomes their dwelling place; God Himself is their kingdom. They are able then to participate in the fellowship of offering with the Lord and with their brethren in Christ. Offering is the expression of the love of God and demonstrates that a hearer has received illumination. They are able to comprehend and apprehend the love of God, and are, therefore, being filled with the fullness of God, who is love and Light. **Eph 3:17-19. 1Jn 4:16. 1Jn 1:5.**

You are light in the Lord

In his letter to the Ephesians, Paul said, 'You were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord.' **Eph 5:8**. What an amazing statement – *you are light in the Lord!* This is true illumination. We become the light as we continue to receive the light of the Father's word, which is shone into our heart from Christ's face, through the preaching of His messengers. This light is the word of truth from the Father, concerning our sonship. To become the light is to mature as a son of God, and to fulfil the works that the Father prepared for us in Christ.

Paul exhorted those who had received this illumination to 'walk as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness, and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord'. **Eph 5:8-10**. Those who walk in the light of the illumination that they have received will have fellowship with others in the body of Christ. **1Jn 1:7**. In particular, they will remain connected to those who have been called by Christ to minister His word to them. **1Jn 1:3**.

A hearer is only able to comprehend the word of truth in the fellowship of offering. Our understanding of the truth does not begin with the capacity of our mind for rational thought. In fact, Paul said that the love of God passes knowledge. **Eph 3:19**. When we present ourselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are transformed by the renewing of our mind. **Rom 12:1-2**. We are enabled to think and see differently from the way that a person who remains in the flesh thinks and sees. **1Co 2:9**. True understanding is to know Christ and to be in Christ. John concluded his first epistle with this tremendous point. **1Jn 5:20**.

Keep yourselves from idols

The final statement of John's letter was, 'Little children, keep yourselves from idols. Amen'. **1Jn 5:21**. Having declared such a wonderful message, why did John end his letter in this way? The prophet Jeremiah said that 'a wooden idol is a worthless doctrine'. **Jer 10:8**. With this in mind, John was warning those who are born of God to remain faithful to the illumination that they are receiving through the ministry of Christ's messengers. Inherent in John's warning is the reality that a person can turn away from the light and return to living in the darkness of their own way. This happens when repentance is no longer a foundation in a Christian's life. **Heb 6:1**.

Repentance means 'turning to the Lord'. A person ceases from turning to the Lord when they no longer recognise, nor accept, the need to receive the light of life from Christ as it is ministered by the Holy Spirit through the presbytery. Accompanying this reticence to live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God is their withdrawal from the fellowship of offering in the body of Christ. Instead, they entertain other gospels, including their own perspectives on what it means to be a Christian. These ways of viewing, or approaching, life foster the pursuit of their fleshly desires. For some, this will be their own self-righteous works. For others, it will be power and control over others. For many, it will be the pursuit of pleasures and a comfortable life. A person who does this, chooses the darkness of their own fleshly perspective over the light of life that Christ ministers to them. They are deceived, believing that their darkened perspective is the light. **Mat 6:23**.

Mercifully, when an individual turns to the Lord in repentance, the veil of the flesh is taken away from the eyes of their heart. They are able to look into the face of Christ and receive the light of the word into their heart. **2Co 3:16**.

You are the light of the world

A person who is born from above, and abides in the light, will exhibit the fruit of illumination. Jesus identified this fruit as the blessings outlined in the Beatitudes. **Mat 5:3-12**. As we live and walk in the light, we are being changed and made more glorious in our expression as sons of God. **2Co 3:18**. Through our ongoing fellowship in the offering of Christ, our spirit is being regenerated, and we are able to put off the deeds of the flesh. Christ's life is becoming our life. The darkness of our own way is passing away, and the light of Christ's life is growing increasingly bright within us. **1Jn 2:8. Pro 4:18**.

The fourth aspect of illumination is that we are to be the light of the world. On this point, Jesus said, 'You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.' **Mat 5:14-16**.

A person who has become a light in the Lord, and who walks in the light of fellowship with their brethren in Christ, is part of a lampstand church. They are able to express, or minister, this light to others through their conversation and conduct in the contexts of life in which the Father has placed them. These contexts may include, for example, their extended families, their neighbourhoods, their schools, their workplaces. They are messengers who have been sent to proclaim the gospel in the world. They do this in simplicity and with godly sincerity as witnesses of the resurrection life of Christ in their lives. **2Co 1:12**.

I AM is the Light of the world

The Lord ministers the light of the gospel of sonship to us as 'I AM'. We first observe this principle in His interaction with Moses at the burning bush. Moses was tending a flock of sheep in the wilderness when the Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire from the midst of a bush. When Moses turned to see the great light of the burning bush, God called him and spoke to him concerning the works that He had prepared for Moses to do as His messenger. **Exo 3:1-12.**

In response to Moses' desire to know who was speaking to him, God introduced Himself to Moses, saying, 'I AM WHO I AM.' **Exo 3:14.** The Lord then said that the *beginning point of the message* that Moses was to minister to the children of Israel was, 'I AM has sent me to you.' **Exo 3:14.** Moses was then to say, 'The Lord [Yahweh] God [*Elohim*] of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has sent me to you. This is My name forever, and this is My memorial to all generations.' **Exo 3:15.**

Why does God reveal Himself as I AM? It is because, as I AM, He is able to meet us and to be met by us. Without this initiative of Yahweh to make Himself known to us by revelation, it is impossible for man, who is created and mortal, to know and understand who God is. When we receive Him as I AM, we are able to perceive and receive all that He is as Yahweh. **Eph 3:19.** Furthermore, we are able to participate in Their fellowship. God is Light, and He revealed Himself to Moses as I AM from the burning bush. To participate in Their fellowship is to join the fire of offering. This is the way of life for those who 'abide in the light'. **1Jn 2:10.**

Jesus Christ is I AM

Jesus Christ is I AM. The apostle Paul said that it pleased the Father for all the fullness of the Godhead to dwell bodily in Christ. **Col 1:19**. This was the outcome of the offering of Yahweh, and happened when the Father said to the Son, 'You are My Son, *today* I have begotten You.' **Heb 1:5**. Jesus Himself testified that He is I AM, saying, 'I AM the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty.' **Rev 1:8**. From His testimony, we recognise that Jesus was not I AM only after His resurrection; He was I AM as He ministered on earth and offered Himself on the cross.

During His earthly ministry, Jesus declared, '*I AM the light of the world*. He who follows Me shall *not walk in darkness*, but *have the light of life*.' **Joh 8:12**. As I AM, and the Light of the world, the Son had come to reveal the Father to all who would receive His words. This is because, by receiving the light of life from the Father, through the gospel that Christ proclaimed, they would be born as sons of God in Christ. Having become 'sons of light', they would no longer live and walk in darkness. **Joh 12:36. Joh 12:44-46**.

The key to obtaining illumination is to hear, receive, and believe the words that Christ speaks through His messengers. **Joh 12:47-48**. Having established that He had come as a light into the world, Jesus said, 'For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak.' **Joh 12:49-50**.

Anointed to bring illumination

At the commencement of His earthly ministry, Jesus testified of His work as the Messenger of the covenant. **Mal 3:1**. Reading from the prophetic Scriptures, He announced, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to preach the gospel to the *poor*; He has sent Me to heal the *brokenhearted*, to proclaim liberty to the *captives* and recovery of *sight to the blind*, to set at liberty those who are oppressed; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord.' **Luk 4:18-19**.

Christ was anointed to minister the word of the Father to those who are *poor in spirit*. He explained to His disciples that those who receive this ministry are recipients of a blessing, saying, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' **Mat 5:3**. The blessing of illumination that the poor in spirit receive, includes the healing and regeneration of their sin-sick spirit, their deliverance from the kingdom of darkness, their release from their captivity to sin and death, and the healing of their spiritual sight, so that they can continue to receive the light of life. By this means, they are able to walk in the light and to share with others what they have received.

The focal point of Christ's work as the Messenger was 'to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord'. **Luk 4:19**. 'The acceptable year of the Lord' refers to the three and a half year ministry of Christ, including His journey from the first communion service until He was raised from the dead to immortality, and seated on His throne at God the Father's right hand. Within this timeframe, Christ, through His ministry and offering work, established God's New Covenant initiative by which many sons of God would be born again and brought to glory. The implication of Christ's statement is that the blessings of the New Covenant begin with illumination, which is given to those who believe in Christ. **Act 26:17-18**.

FURTHER STUDY LUKE 4

Paul's first illumination

The apostle Paul met Jesus Christ on the road to Damascus. As Paul neared Damascus, a light from heaven shone around him, and Jesus spoke to him, saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' **Act 9:3-4**. The effect of the spirit of grace upon Paul was that he was able to recognise the Lord whom he was persecuting. As the light began to shine, and as he heard Christ speak to him, Paul received illumination and was able to acknowledge the lordship of Christ. He said to Jesus, '*Who are you Lord?*' **Act 9:5**.

Although Paul had confessed Christ as Lord, he was still in darkness. He was not born from above through this interaction. Rather, he had looked upon Him whom he had pierced and had begun to mourn alone. The Scripture records that when Paul arose from the ground, he opened his eyes and *saw no-one*. For three days he was without sight, during which time he neither ate nor drank. **Act 9:8-9**. Under the influence of a spirit of supplication, Paul was praying and mourning. **Act 9:11**.

Psalm 107 aptly describes Paul's predicament and his response to the light of the gospel as it broke in upon him. 'Fools, because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, were afflicted. Their soul abhorred all manner of food, and they drew near to the gates of death. Then they cried out to the Lord in their trouble, and He saved them out of their distresses. He sent His word and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.' **Psa 107:17-20**.

Paul's first illumination was that the Lord was going to send to him a messenger named Ananias. The Lord said to Paul that Ananias would lay his hands on him so that he might receive his sight. **Act 9:12**. Christ's messenger would tell Paul what he must do, and that his salvation depended on his obedience to this word.

The messenger to Paul

Jesus sent His messenger, Ananias, to lay hands on Paul so that he would receive his sight. **Act 9:12**. This was much more than simply restoring Paul's physical ability to see. Christ spoke to Ananias about Paul's sonship, saying, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.' **Act 9:15-16**. The message of Paul's sonship was written by the Father on the heart of Ananias, as an epistle of Christ, which he was then to deliver to Paul. **2Co 3:2**. The Lord had laid this charge on Ananias, and he needed to put off the misgivings that he had about Paul, his history, and his intentions, in order to deliver the message that Christ had sent him with. **Act 9:13-14**.

Ananias entered the house where Paul was staying, and laid his hands on him. The laying on of hands signified the initiative of Christ's messenger to connect Paul, his hearer, to the fellowship of the Father and the Son through the message that he had been sent to minister. **1Jn 1:1-3**. Clearly, Ananias' message to Paul was not merely better theological information for Paul to consider. He was ministering to Paul the word from the beginning. Christ, the Seed, is the Word from the beginning, in whom Paul's name as a son of God was written.

To this end, Ananias said to Paul, 'Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you came, has sent me that you may receive your sight and be filled with the Holy Spirit.' **Act 9:17**. Ananias, as a messenger of God sent by Christ, was shining the light of the glory of God from the face of Christ to Paul. As Paul turned to the Lord by receiving Ananias and his message, there immediately fell from his eyes something like scales. **Act 9:18**.

FURTHER STUDY 2 CORINTHIANS 3

The veil is removed

The 'scales' that fell from the eyes of Paul symbolised an impediment to Paul's spiritual sight. We can liken them to a veil over the eyes of his heart, which inhibited his ability to receive the light of life that was shining upon him from the face of Christ through the ministry of a messenger. Paul was turning from his theological training, cultural heritage and religious zeal, which not only caused him to walk in darkness, but also made him an enemy of the cross and of God.

As this veil was removed from the eyes of his heart, he was able to receive the Light of life into his heart. Christ, the Seed of the Father, entered his heart, birthing him as a son of God. **1Pe 1:23**. He was then baptised with the Holy Spirit, and joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through baptism. **Act 9:17-18**. This is what it meant for Paul to 'receive his sight'.

He had received *illumination*, and this illumination transformed his life! The illumination that he had received became a light that was in him, and in which he would now walk. For Paul, illumination was more than receiving true knowledge and understanding; it was a fellowship in the light. Paul called this light 'knowing Christ', 'the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death', through which the light of life, *exanastasis*, was becoming his. **Php 3:10-11**.

The conversion of Paul highlights that fellowship with a messenger is necessary for the veil to be removed from our eyes. In a similar way, the veil was not removed from the eyes of the two disciples who were travelling to Emmaus, until they invited Christ to stay with them for further fellowship. Even though their hearts had burned within them as Christ explained the Scriptures to them, it was only when He broke bread with them that their eyes were opened. **Luk 24:16,28-32**.

The power and coming of our Lord

The apostle Peter summarised the ministry of the New Covenant as ‘making known the *power* and *coming* of our Lord Jesus Christ’. **2Pe 1:16**. Through the testimony of the apostle Paul, we learn that the *power of Christ* is the grace of God that a believer receives from the Father in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings. Jesus said to Paul, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My *strength* is made perfect in *weakness*.’ **2Co 12:9**. Jesus was referring to the weakness that Paul experienced, as the Jews, energised by Satan, persecuted him in every place where he proclaimed the gospel. Paul described this suffering as a thorn in his flesh. **2Co 12:7**. The suffering caused by this thorn was Paul’s participation in the sufferings of Christ. **Php 3:10**.

Paul explained that ‘grace’ was the strength and power of the Lord that was given to him in the fellowship of these sufferings. In his letter to the Philippians, Paul described this grace as being *resurrection life in his mortal body*. **Php 3:11**. The fellowship of Christ’s sufferings was the context in which this grace, or resurrection life, was becoming his life. For this reason, Paul said, ‘Most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me.’ **2Co 12:9**.

When Yahweh the Son emptied Himself to the Father, and was begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father, the Father granted the Son to have life in Himself. **Php 2:5-7**. **Heb 1:5**. **Joh 5:26**. Referring to this life, John said that Jesus was full of the grace of God. **Joh 1:14**. This resurrection life was multiplied, and given to become the life of every son of God, when Christ’s blood was shed. **Lev 17:11**. When Christ dwells in a person’s heart by faith, the life of God that is in the Son is given to them as they fellowship with Christ in His offering and sufferings.

Eyewitnesses of His majesty

Peter testified that he and his fellow messengers did not minister this word of the New Covenant through cunningly devised fables. **2Pe 1:16**. By this, he meant that the basis of their ministry was not theological expertise, nor the craft of the sermon, nor commentary on the Scriptures; neither were they espousing helpful principles for achieving a successful life. Rather, the apostles were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty. **2Pe 1:16**.

Explaining what it meant to be eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty, Peter wrote, 'For He [Christ] received from God the Father honour and glory when such a voice came to Him from the Excellent Glory: "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.' **2Pe 1:17-18**. Christ's majesty as King was for Him to be the Son whom the Father declared Him to be. By the word of the Father, Yahweh Son was brought forth and declared to be the Son of God with power. **Heb 1:5. Rom 1:4**. In this way, His kingship was established. Furthermore, having laid down His intrinsic capacity for priesthood, the Son was called by God to be High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. **Heb 5:5-7**. He received honour and glory from the Father, signifying the two offices of this king-priest order. **Heb 2:7,9**.

We see that Christ's majesty was not His own glory. The Father was pleased with the Son because He had revealed the Father throughout His Melchizedek ministry on earth as the Son of God and King-Priest of God Most High. **Heb 5:5-6. Gen 14:18**. His work was to reveal the life of the Father as the Light of life. Those who received Him, by believing His words, received the Father and would no longer abide in darkness. **Joh 12:44-46**.

Messengers of Christ

Peter and his fellow messengers, who were eyewitnesses of Christ's majesty, became His ministers because they accepted the call of the Father to minister in the same manner as Christ ministered. Joined to the fellowship of Yahweh, they ministered by the Holy Spirit, and according to the command of the Father. For this reason, they were able to reveal the Father and the Son to their hearers. As Peter testified, '*And we heard this voice which came from heaven when we were with Him on the holy mountain.*' **2Pe 1:18.**

The success, or otherwise, of their ministry as messengers was not measured by how their message was received, nor by how many people responded to their ministry. This is because, as Christ's messengers, they were not revealing themselves. The same was true for the apostle Paul. Towards the end of his life and ministry, Paul lamented that the whole of Asia had turned away from him and his gospel. **2Ti 1:15.** Yet, Paul had remained faithful to the Father's call on his life to be a bondsman as part of Christ's *aggelos* presbytery. For this reason, Paul was able to testify, '*Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing [as eyewitnesses of His majesty].*' **2Ti 4:8.**

The apostles and their fellow presbyters were the Father's messengers, who were in Christ. Through their ministry by the Spirit, the prophetic word of the Scriptures was made more sure, or confirmed, to their hearers. **2Pe 1:19.** Through their preaching, they were able to illuminate to their hearers what was written in the Scriptures concerning the power and coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. They understood the deep things, or mystery, of God, which were contained in the Scriptures. **1Co 2:10.** Their ministry was not just information; it was life and Spirit to their hearers. **Joh 6:63.**

FURTHER STUDY 1 CORINTHIANS 2

The Day Star rising

There are many Christians who only have a limited understanding of what the gospel is and how it works. They may be committed to following the Lord; however, in the absence of illumination, they live by their own understanding of what it means to be a Christian. **Pro 3:5**. Their perspectives on the Christian life are informed by various theologies that fundamentally deny the need to receive and live by the faith of the Son, and the need to participate in the fellowship of His offering. Veiled by their loyalty to these fleshly teachings, they are unable to see that *the hope of the gospel is sonship*. They do not comprehend that this hope is attained when they are born of the Father and live by the faith of the Son of God in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. **Rom 5:5. Php 3:10-11. Gal 2:20.**

Peter said that his readers would do well to heed the word of Christ's messengers. Their word, which was proclaimed from the Scriptures, was unique. It was a light that shines in a dark place. Peter and his fellow messengers preached the gospel of God that shone from the face of Christ into the hearts of their hearers. Christ, who is the Light of life from the Father, was being shone into their hearts through their message. Peter said that they would do well to heed their message 'as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts'. **2Pe 1:19**. 'The morning star rising in their hearts' was Christ dwelling in their hearts by faith. When this happened, they became light in the Lord. **Eph 5:8**. To receive this illumination is truly a marvellous blessing!

The gospel of God

Without a true understanding of the gospel, which comes through illumination, a person will only be able to set their mind on the flesh. That is, they will live and walk according to the sight of their own eyes, and will pursue a righteousness that they have defined for themselves. The prospects of this way of living are not good. As Paul observed, 'To be carnally minded is death'. **Rom 8:6**. Indeed, as life rolls over them, those who have set their minds this way, find that their faith is powerless to sustain them in seasons of trial and temptation. They become anxious, depressed, and dissatisfied with the Christian life. Eventually, many turn away from the Lord altogether.

Jesus said that in the last days there would be a great falling away from the church. The love of many believers would grow cold because of lawlessness. **Mat 24:12**. Lawlessness abounds in the church when the word of truth has been exchanged for the lie that a person can have life through their own faith and good works. **Rom 1:18-19**. **Rom 1:22-25**. Paul described the word of truth as 'the gospel of God'. **Rom 1:1**. Through this message, a person is born of God and is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering.

Thankfully, the Lord is restoring the gospel of God to those who will heed what the Spirit is saying to the churches. **Rom 1:1**. **Rev 2:7**. This New Covenant message is ministered by the Spirit of God, through messengers of Christ who have been sent by the Father. As they preach the gospel of sonship, the light of this word is shone from the face of Christ, into the hearts of their hearers. **2Co 4:6**. As we receive and walk in the light of this word, Christ abides in us and we abide in Him. In this fellowship, we are able to grow to maturity as the sons whom the Father predestined us to be.

FURTHER STUDY ROMANS 1

Exanastasis is the grace of God

The light of life from the Father is ministered by Christ through messengers who are in His right hand. In the book of Revelation, Christ described these messengers as seven light-bearing stars. He explained that each star in His hand is an angel of a lampstand church. **Rev 1:20**. The Greek word that is translated as 'angel' in these passages of Scripture is '*aggelos*', which literally means 'messenger'.

The *aggelos* of each church is a messenger administration called a 'presbytery'. **1Ti 4:14**. A presbytery is a fellowship of overseers, elders and deacons who have been called by God to care for the church. Within the presbytery, Christ has given some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastor-teachers, to equip the members of the church for their work of ministry. **Eph 4:11-12**. The work of a presbytery, or *aggelos*, is to be the lamp of a lampstand church. They are to minister the light of life among Christ's lampstand churches so that the church, which is the body of Christ, can be a light to the whole world.

God the Father places every son of God in the body of Christ according to His will and purpose. **1Co 12:18**. This is also true for those He places in Christ's hand. Their work as part of an *aggelos* is according to His call on their lives; it is not through the exercise of their own will. As they participate in the fellowship of offering within the body of Christ, the Holy Spirit sets them apart for the work of ministering the word of God in the church. There is a witness within the presbytery, and in the church, of their sanctification by the Holy Spirit for this work. **Act 13:2-3**.

Called and separated

Paul identified himself as 'an apostle of Jesus Christ *by the will of God*'. **2Co 1:1**. He had received his apostleship from God the Father. This was proclaimed to Paul by Ananias, who was sent to him by Christ. **Act 9:10-19**. Jesus said to Paul that Ananias would tell him what he must do. **Act 9:6,12**. The call of God on Paul's life was also confirmed in the midst of the church in Antioch when Paul and Barnabas were set apart and anointed by the Holy Spirit to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles. **Act 13:2-3**. This work was according to Paul's sonship. He noted this in his letter to the Galatians, writing, 'It pleased God, who *separated* me from my mother's womb and *called* me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me'. **Gal 1:15-16**. Similarly, Paul introduced his letter to the Romans by testifying that he had been '*called* to be an apostle, *separated* to the gospel of God [the Father] which He promised before through His prophets in the Holy Scriptures'. **Rom 1:1-2**.

Explaining the purpose for his ministry, Paul said, 'Through Him [the Father] we have received grace and apostleship for *the obedience of faith* among all nations for His name, among whom you also are the called of Jesus Christ.' **Rom 1:4-6**. Like Paul, Christ's messengers receive grace and authority from God the Father so that, as they preach the word of God, their hearers are able to receive, and live by, the faith of the Son of God. **Rom 10:17**. Their hearers demonstrate by their obedience that they have received this word of faith. By the faith that God gifts to them through His word, sons of God are able to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul described this fellowship as '*grace in which we stand*'. **Rom 5:2**. He then explained that this fellowship of grace is the context in which sons of God are established and are able to grow to maturity. **Rom 5:2,5**.

FURTHER STUDY EPHESIANS 3

The God of all comfort

The *aggelos* messengers of God minister grace and peace from God the Father and Jesus Christ to their hearers. **2Co 1:2**. They do this by preaching the word of the Father, which Paul called 'the gospel of God'. **Rom 1:1. Rom 15:16. 2Co 11:7. 1Th 2:2-9**. Their ministry of grace and peace, through the gospel of God, is only possible because they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Paul described God as 'the Father of mercies and God of all comfort'. **2Co 1:3**. By the mercies that they receive from the Father, the messengers of Christ present themselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Rom 12:1**. In this fellowship, the Father *comforts* them in all of their tribulations so that, with this comfort, they are able to comfort those who are in any trouble. **2Co 1:4**. Paul further described the comfort that a messenger receives from the Father as the *consolation* that abounds to them in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. **2Co 1:5**. This consolation, which is obtained through participation in Christ's death, is the *exanastasis* that he described in his letter to the Philippians. **Php 3:10-11**.

The consolation that God's messengers receive in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings abounds from the Father, through Christ, because the Son of God abides in them and they abide in the Son. As the sufferings of Christ abound in Christ's messengers, the resurrection life from the Father, which was in the blood of the Son, is being multiplied and given to them. This is the life by which they are to live; and it is the life that they are to minister to their hearers. **Gal 2:20**. This consolation enables their hearers to endure in times of suffering, in the same way that the messengers endure.

The ministry of consolation

The apostle Paul testified to the Corinthians, 'Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation. And our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.' **2Co 1:6-7**. *Exanastasis* from the Father overflows to the messengers as they fellowship with Christ in the sufferings that He endured in the shedding of His blood. This life then overflows from their fellowship in Christ's sufferings, and is given to their hearers through the ministry of the word. When their hearers receive this ministry, they are also able to endure suffering. This is the culture, life and consolation of the whole community of Christ.

Exanastasis is the grace of God. This is a key point. God sustained Christ by the *exanastasis* life in His blood, which He shed as He endured the sufferings of death for everyone. **Heb 13:20**. Christ did this 'by the grace of God'. **Heb 2:9**. The sentence of death that the messengers have in themselves is the sufferings of Christ that abound in them. **2Co 1:5,9**. The life that they receive in the fellowship of these sufferings is the same grace that enabled Christ to endure as He suffered the sentence and condemnation of death that had been passed upon all men because of sin.

The Corinthians received *exanastasis* through the ministry of Paul and from those who had been sent to minister with him. As they received the messengers' word, the Corinthians were able to participate in the same fellowship of offering through which the comfort of God had abounded to the messengers; that is, they were living by grace. They, too, were able to minister grace to others. **2Co 1:11**.

The testimony of the messenger

Christ's messengers minister the New Covenant from the basis of *testimony*. To this end, Paul testified, 'For our boasting is this: *the testimony of our conscience* that we conducted ourselves in the world in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom but by the grace of God, and more abundantly toward you.' **2Co 1:12**.

In this passage of Scripture, Paul was contrasting the ministry of those who are spiritual with the ministry of those who are carnal, or fleshly. Paul's qualification to minister the gospel was not his capacity for communication. Neither was it his natural intellect and theological expertise, even though he had obviously been a talented scholar. **Act 22:3**. In and of themselves, these are expressions of fleshly wisdom, and are characteristics for which worldly teachers and leaders are recognised. By contrasting fleshly wisdom with simplicity and godly sincerity, Paul was implying that fleshly wisdom is nothing more than a sophisticated projection that is *deceitful*.

A person who presumes to minister by way of their fleshly wisdom deceives others, because their ministry is a projection. They are a liar and the truth is not in them, because they are not ministering according to the word of truth that defines their name and works as a son of God. **1Jn 2:4**. They are deceived, because they believe in the veracity of their projection. Their projection is a veil that prevents them from seeing and knowing the things of the Spirit. **2Co 4:3**. **1Co 2:14-16**. Later in his letter, Paul described ministry practices that are based in fleshly wisdom as 'the hidden things of shame'. **2Co 4:2**. The hidden things of shame need to be renounced, or turned from, through repentance, if a person is to be a minister of the Spirit as part of an *aggelos* presbytery.

Simplicity and godly sincerity

Paul testified that he had conducted himself in the world, as a messenger of Christ, in simplicity and godly sincerity. **2Co 1:12**. This was the way that he conducted himself among the Corinthian church. The simplicity and godly sincerity of a messenger's conduct is the reality that Christ dwells within them, and they abide in Christ. Their conduct in the world is not their own good works, which reveal the glory of their natural identity. It is their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In this fellowship, the grace of life from the Father, by which Christ offered Himself and came back from the death of sin, overflows from Him to them to become their life. This overflow of life is then able to be ministered 'abundantly' towards their hearers. **2Co 1:12**.

A spiritual person ministers the grace of God as *exanastasis*. This was the basis of Paul's apostleship, and is a foundational condition for ministry as part of an *aggelos* presbytery. Paul warned that if this is not the testimony and conduct of Christ's messengers, they are at risk of being taken advantage of by Satan. **2Co 2:11**. Later in his letter to the Corinthians, Paul identified those who continue to minister from the basis of fleshly wisdom as being messengers of Satan. He described them as 'false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ'. **2Co 11:13-15**.

The grace of God is the wisdom from above. **Jas 3:17**. This is the word of the cross. Paul made this point in his first letter to the Corinthians, explaining that the wisdom of God was a mystery which God had ordained before the ages. **1Co 2:7**. Paul had not ministered this mystery with excellence of speech, nor according to fleshly wisdom but, rather, by knowing Jesus Christ and Him crucified, and then revealing Him in this very way to his hearers. **1Co 2:1-2**.

Fellowship with the messenger

The apostle John declared, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.' **1Jn 1:3**. The messengers of Christ proclaim the word of life from the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This is their participation in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. John explained that those who receive their message are joined to the same fellowship. Those who participate in this fellowship are able to obtain understanding and the knowledge of the Holy One. **Pro 2:2-5**. This was Paul's desire as he exhorted them, 'For we are not writing any other things to you than what you read or understand. Now I trust *you will understand*, even to the end.' **2Co 1:13-14**.

Understanding comes to individuals when they meet together for fellowship in the word of present truth, which is the wisdom of God. **1Jn 1:1-2**. In this fellowship, light is shining in relation to the implications of the word, so that each person is gaining further illumination concerning how to live as a son of God and to function as a member of the body of Christ. The evidence that a person is 'getting understanding' is that *exanastasis* is *becoming the culture of their life*. They are motivated and equipped to make offering in the fellowship of His body.

Paul's commitment to fellowship in the word with the Corinthians was motivated by his obedience to the Father who had called him to be a messenger to them. He was certainly not compelled by their enthusiasm for his message, by their appreciation for his ministry, nor by their affection for him. In fact, the Corinthians treated Paul dreadfully. For example, they maligned him for his weak bodily presence and contemptible speech. **2Co 10:10**.

You are in our hearts

Many people within the Corinthian church rejected the message of Paul in favour of other deceitful workers and their more appealing gospels. **2Co 11:3-4,13-14**. Moreover, they queried his competence, and even his sanity! **1Co 4:10-13**. He said to them, 'The more abundantly I love you, the less I am loved.' **2Co 12:15**.

From a natural perspective, there seemed to be little merit in persisting with his care for the Corinthians. However, the Father had given Paul to the Corinthians, and the Corinthians had been given to Paul. Regardless of the way in which he had been treated by the Corinthians, Paul testified to them, 'I have said before that *you are in our hearts*, to die together and to live together.' **2Co 7:3**.

Noting this reality, Paul wrote, '(As also you have understood us in part), that *we are your boast as you also are ours*, in the day of the Lord Jesus.' **2Co 1:14**. Later in his letter, Paul affirmed this point, saying, 'We, however, will not boast beyond measure, but within the limits of the sphere *which God appointed us* — a sphere which especially includes you.' **2Co 10:13**. For this reason, Paul declared, 'I am jealous for you with godly jealousy.' **2Co 11:2**.

The salvation of the Corinthians depended upon receiving the message that Paul had been sent by the Father to proclaim, in Christ, to them. **2Co 12:19**. Although the Corinthians entertained many other teachers, these alternative messengers were unable to minister the word of life to them. **1Co 4:15**. The same is true in the church today. Only those who have been sent by the Father can minister the word through which a person is born of God and is able to mature in sonship. Their message is ministered in weakness to those who have been written on their heart, by the Father, as an epistle of Christ. **2Co 3:2-3**.



Restoring
my Soul