

THE STEPS OF
*S*alvation

Walking in the Spirit

PART 5

VICTOR HALL

with Peter Hay & David Baker

THE STEPS OF SALVATION

Walking in the Spirit

PART 5

Victor Hall

with Peter Hay & David Baker

September 2018

Scriptures are quoted from NASB, NKJV, KJV and LITV. Where italicised emphasis is used in Scripture references, this has been added and does not appear in the original translations.

© Victor Hall 2018

Contents

PREFACE	5
Witnesses of His resurrection	6
Living epistles	7
A faithful saying	8
Not trusting in ourselves	9
Attaining to resurrection life	11
In conclusion	12
CHAPTER 1	
Jesus, the Lamb of God	13
The death of Adam	13
A Lamb has been provided	14
The burnt offering	16
The sin offering	17
Christ became our sin and joined our death	18
Offering transfer through the sin offering	20
The blood of the Lamb	21
In Isaac your seed shall be called	22
The travail of Christ's soul	24
Born from the dead	25
The seven wounds of Christ	26
First wound - sweating blood	26
Second wound - bruised for our iniquities	27
Third wound - chastised for our peace	28
Fourth wound - scourged for our healing	29
Fifth wound - the crown of thorns	30
Sixth wound - pierced for our transgressions	30
Seventh wound - Him whom we pierced	31
In conclusion	31
CHAPTER 2	
The priesthood of Christ	33
How we see Jesus	34
The ministry of Christ's eternal priesthood	34
Partaking of communion	35
Coming onto holy ground	36
We shall see Him as He is	37
In the new heavens and earth	37
The significance of priesthood	38

Learning from our great High Priest	39
Seven elements of priesthood	40
Our High Priest leads us	42
Christ's ministry to His lampstand churches	43
Offering and godly fear	44
The eyes of the Lord	46
The sword from His mouth	47
Restoration in the context of the seventh world kingdom	47

CHAPTER 3

The secret of the Lord	49
Introduction	49
Attaining to life in Christ	51
A way of escape through Christ's offering	55
Receiving grace for participation	56
Do not neglect the salvation of God	56
Joined to the offering of Christ by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit	58
Sealed	59
The secret of the Lord	60
The secret place of prayer	61
The fellowship of Christ's offering	61
A corporate mirror	62
The New Covenant	63
Son-priests to the Father	64
Members of the body of Christ	65
Our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit	66
The initiative of the Holy Spirit	67

CHAPTER 4

A cloud of witnesses	69
Faith for fellowship in the afflictions of Christ	69
The incense of fellowship	71
Come boldly to the throne of grace	73
Praying in the Spirit	75
Watching and praying	77
Praying for one another	78
Remaining awake in the fellowship of Christ's offering	79
True Christian piety	80
Godliness is worship	81
He whom You love is sick	83
Embracing the culture of suffering	87

CHAPTER 5

The righteousness of God is revealed by faith	89
Introduction	89
Paul's journey from self-righteousness	92
Counting all things as loss	95
Receiving the righteousness of faith from God	96
Understanding condemnation	98
No condemnation in Christ Jesus	100
Ceasing from self-righteousness	102
Coming to know and believe the love of God	103
Loving ourselves	104
The love of God is poured into our heart	105
The fellowship of Christ's sufferings	106
Chastened for our peace	107
By His stripes we are healed	107
Transformed by the renewing of our mind	108

CHAPTER 6

Delivered from the flesh, to walk in the Spirit	111
Introduction	111
Flesh and Spirit in the church	113
Leaven in the church	114
The leaven of amorality	115
The leaven of inordinate women's ministry	116
The leaven of congregationalism	118
The leaven of collegiality	120
The need for illumination	122
The examples of Daniel and John	123

CHAPTER 7

Speaking from testimony	127
Introduction	127
Wisdom, understanding and the knowledge of the Holy One	128
Wisdom	128
Understanding	129
The knowledge of the Holy One	132
Abiding in the word from the beginning	133
Judges of the word	134
Wisdom from beneath	136
Turning from judging and assessing the word	137
Functioning from the basis of testimony	138
Responding to the flesh, in the Spirit	139
The church is the community of heaven	140

Preface

In many ways, this fifth book in the series entitled *The Steps of Salvation* is a companion to Part 4, 'The offering of Christ and the sprinkling of blood'. In Part 4, we detailed the pathway of salvation that Jesus pioneered for us as He journeyed from the last supper back to the right hand of the Father in heaven. In particular, we focused on the seven wounds of Christ's offering and circumcision, which He received on His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. In summary, the content of Part 4 was a statement of the mystery of 'Christ and Him crucified'. 1Co 2:2. The apostle Paul described this mystery as 'the wisdom of God'. 1Co 2:7.

The Scriptures encourage us to incline our ear to this wisdom. Pro 2:2. This means that we are to give our attention to the mystery of the cross as it is proclaimed to us by Christ, through the presbytery that is in His hand. Rev 1:20. Further to this, in the getting of wisdom, we are exhorted by the Scriptures to apply ourselves to *understanding*. Pro 2:2. Pro 4:7. 'Getting understanding' means that the word of the cross is becoming the culture of our life. It is in our mouth and in our heart, and is being revealed through our conversation and conduct in the fellowship of the body of Christ. Rom 10:8.

Our lives are being transformed when the word of the cross is becoming the culture of our life. This transformation happens as our mind is renewed by the Holy Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Rom 12:2. As our mind is being renewed, we begin to think about

ourselves, and our lives, differently. In the first instance, we cease from thinking of ourselves more highly than we ought and, instead, think with sober judgement, according to the measure of faith that we receive from the word of God. Rom 12:3. We also accept that the circumstances that we experience each day are being priested to us by Christ as a participation in His offering. Paul described thinking this way as setting our mind on the things of the Spirit. Rom 8:5.

Self-righteousness is the greatest enemy of understanding. This is because, in the pursuit of our own righteousness, we selectively appropriate the word of present truth for the purpose of maintaining and projecting a 'good' image of ourselves. We do this when we attempt to integrate various elements of the word into our existing knowledge and practices as a Christian. Jesus was addressing this self-righteous approach to the word when He said, 'No-one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment; or else the new piece pulls away from the old, and the tear is made worse. And no-one puts new wine into old wineskins; or else the new wine bursts the wineskins, the wine is spilled, and the wineskins are ruined. But new wine must be put into new wineskins.' Mar 2:21-22.

The Lord does not want us to 'patch up' our self-righteous and religious way of living, using elements of the word of present truth that we are currently receiving. We are to receive *new* garments! We are clothed with the garments of salvation when we journey in Christ, and with Christ, on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered through His offering. Isa 61:10. Heb 2:10. Heb 5:9. On this pathway, the filthy rags of our self-righteous projections are being removed from us, and we are becoming the righteousness of God in Christ. Isa 61:10. Isa 64:6. 2Co 5:21.

Witnesses of His resurrection

In the book of Acts, Luke noted that 'with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.' Act 4:33. This witness was exemplified on the Day of Pentecost when the apostle Peter reminded the multitude of the words of King David, who said, 'I foresaw the Lord always before my face, for He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken. Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' Act 2:25-28.

Similarly, in the synagogue of Antioch, the apostle Paul declared that the Father raised Christ from the dead, saying to Him, 'I will give you the sure mercies of David.' Act 13:14-15,34. He explained that the sure mercies of David referred to resurrection life, saying, 'Therefore He also says in another Psalm: "You will not allow Your Holy One to see corruption." For David, after he had served his own generation by the will of God, fell asleep, was buried with his fathers, and saw corruption; but He whom God raised up saw no corruption.' Act 13:35-37.

The sure mercies of David is the secret of the Lord. The Lord Himself declared, 'Incline your ear, and come to Me. Hear, and your soul shall live; and I will make an *everlasting covenant* with you - *the sure mercies of David.*' Isa 55:3. Concerning this covenant, David proclaimed, 'The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant.' Psa 25:14.

As we explained in Part 1 of *The Steps of Salvation*, receiving the Everlasting Covenant begins with the adoption. This is the promise of resurrection life that is given to the sons of men. Resurrection life is given to us to overcome the difficulties associated with our mortality. By resurrection life, we are enabled to endure in mortality and to do the works of offering that belong to our name, and are expressed as our sanctification as sons of God. Paul defined living this way as attaining to *exanastasis* - meaning, 'out-resurrection'. Php 3:11.

Elsewhere, Paul described *exanastasis* as the living of Jesus, which He demonstrated while dying for us as a sin offering. Paul testified that he, and his fellow messengers, were always carrying about, in their bodies, the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus might be manifested in their bodies. 2Co 4:10. He reiterated the point, by stating that they were constantly being delivered over to death for Christ's sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in their mortal bodies. 2Co 4:11. This is how they bore witness to the resurrection of Christ by the power of God.

Living epistles

The Scriptures are not just an authentic history of the events of the past, and a prophetic statement of events yet to come, called 'the more sure word of prophecy'. 2Pe 1:19. The Scriptures are the word of God, upon which we rest our hope. They become for us 'sayings' - statements that express the daily realities that encompass our lives. They are a mirror for our lives. As we look into this mirror, with spiritual eyes, the Scriptures reveal whether or not we are living epistles who are demonstrating the

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

culture of faith as sons of God, through sanctified living. 1Co 2:13.
2Co 3:2.

Christ and the apostles were living epistles, who demonstrated the purpose for life through the way in which they lived. Christ did this in perfection. Of course, the apostles were not perfect. However, through fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, they attained to the miracle of experiencing, in their mortal bodies, the same resurrection life that Christ did as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Php 3:11.

This attainment was progressive. As self-righteousness was circumcised from their motivating conscience, through fellowship with Christ in His sufferings, the resurrecting power of God sustained them, physically, in their mortality. It was by this means that the righteousness of faith was active in their lives. Consequently, they no longer trusted in themselves, but in God who raises the dead. 2Co 1:9.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, His blood gave life to the apostles. As they suffered with Christ, His blood sprinkled their hearts, cleansing their conscience so that it ceased to motivate them to serve God with the dead works of self-righteousness. Heb 9:14. The fellowship of Christ's offering was the pathway of discipleship that joined them to the perfection that was in Christ. Christ's perfection was transferred to them as they participated in the fellowship of His offering. By this means, the word of God was near them, in their mouths as a testimony, and in their hearts as a witness to their deliverance from the 'other law' of self-righteousness, with its accompanying sin, depravity and shame. Rom 10:8. They were being saved from sin, and becoming the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. 2Co 5:21.

A faithful saying

In his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul nominated a number of 'faithful sayings', which he declared were 'worthy of all acceptance'. 1Ti 4:9. A faithful saying is a *foundational* saying. It is a statement that we can trust with our life, because it is true. It is evident that these faithful sayings have become the cultural reality of our life when they are in our mouth and in our heart. This happens when we receive and believe the word that Christ's messengers preach to us, from the Scriptures. Rom 10:8. The word has become our culture when we walk by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering, and have fellowship with our brethren in Christ. Rom 10:9. 1Jn 1:3.

Writing to Timothy, Paul penned the following 'faithful saying': 'For if we died with Him, we will also live with Him; if we endure, we will also reign with Him; if we deny Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless [or unbelieving], He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself.' 2Ti 2:11-13.

Through this faithful saying, Paul was explaining that when, at times, we let go of faith and are tempted to draw back from the fellowship of Christ's offering, Christ remains faithful to the goal of presenting us faultless before the presence of the Father. Christ has joined us to the fellowship of His offering, through baptism and sufferings. His sufferings are applied to our life through His priestly ministry, on a daily basis. As we journey with Him in this way, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins - i.e. the sin of unbelief, or self-righteousness - and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1Jn 1:9.

We note, then, that self-righteousness is unbelief. Why so? It is because, when we act in a self-righteous way, we are believing in ourselves, and we are trusting in ourselves. The reason why Christ has joined us to His death, which is already an event of history, and therefore cannot be escaped from, is so that we will not trust in ourselves. Instead, we will trust in God who raised Christ, and who will raise us up with Him. 2Co 1:9-10. Christ trusted the Father to raise Him from the death of our sin. He also trusted the Father to raise Him from physical death to immortality, by resurrection, after His mortal body rested three days and three nights in the tomb. In Christ, we can trust that the Father will raise us up in the same manner.

Even though Christ was sinless, and could say, 'Which of you convinces Me of sin?', He was not self-righteous. Joh 8:46. His righteousness came from God. This is an amazing and important point! Jesus only did the works that the Father gave Him to do. Joh 8:28. Heb 10:7. This was the work of taking away the sin of the world. Joh 1:29. Once we become focused on the righteousness that comes from God through faith, we will live by the same life and power that sustained Christ. Rom 8:11. Resurrection life will be operating within our mortal bodies. Php 3:11. We will not suffer unnecessarily, nor die before our time. 1Co 11:30.

Not trusting in ourselves

As sickness, disease and the physical effects of aging impact upon our quality of life, it is readily apparent that our outward man is perishing. 2Co 4:6. This is a fact of mortality. Medical interventions can alleviate

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

some of these distresses, and may even slow the decline of our physical bodies. However, repair procedures rarely return us to the pristine vigour and function that we may have previously known.

The gap between the limits that mortality is imposing upon us, and the quality of life that is necessary for us to do the works of sonship that the Father has predestined for us, is filled by the grace of God. The grace of God is ministered to every member of the body of Christ through the prayer of faith, and through the exercise of spiritual gifts. The grace of God brings balance to our lives as we are strengthened and enabled to live, and to do the works that belong to our name and sanctification.

A person who trusts in themselves is trusting in their own capacity to be righteous. This, of course, is self-righteousness. The Lord has joined us to Christ's offering, which involves us in His dying and living for us. The situations that we find ourselves in each day, including those that cause us to suffer, are tailored for us by the Lord. It is in the context of our daily lives that our other law, which is self-righteousness, is being cut from us. By this means, we are ceasing from trusting in ourselves, and are trusting in God, who grants resurrection life to us in the midst of our mortality. 2Co 1:9. In this regard, we are being progressively strengthened by the Lord to do the works that belong to our sonship in Christ Jesus. Peter summarised this principle, writing, 'After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you'. 1Pe 5:10.

Paul testified that he pressed on in life to lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus had laid hold of him. Php 3:12. Likewise, when we live by faith in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we understand that Christ has taken hold of our life. He holds us firmly, and we are secure in His arms. He asks us to reach out and take hold of our predestination as a son of God. In Him, we are able to fulfil the righteous works that the Father has given us to do, which are our sanctification. This is because He is delivering us from the other law that motivates our self-righteous assessments and actions.

We are being delivered from living by the other law when our reliance upon our own perceptions and abilities is being undermined through suffering. How does this work? Suffering, trouble and persecution place a limit upon our lives, and can appear to frustrate our capacity to fulfil the will of God. Because of our inability to save or to deliver ourselves in the midst of this suffering, we cannot trust in ourselves. We can only trust

in God, who is able to raise the dead. Our path forward is enabled by the grace of God. Living and walking through life in this way is what the apostles called '*walking in the Spirit*'. Gal 5:16,25.

Attaining to resurrection life

The apostle James instructed the elders of the church to pray for the sick and to anoint them with oil. He said that the prayer of faith would save the sick, and that the Lord would raise them up. If they had committed sins, they would be forgiven those sins. Jas 5:14-15. James explained that the prayer of the elder and, indeed, the ministry of the members of the body of Christ, is for the purpose of ministering the oil of the Spirit of grace to those who are in need.

Those who receive this ministry are enabled by Eternal Spirit to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. As they are conformed to Christ's death, the same Spirit who raised Christ from the dead dwells in them, causing them to be made alive from the death of sin. Rom 8:11. Their sins will be forgiven because of the efficacy of Christ's offering. Furthermore, the propensity to sin will be progressively removed from them in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision. The fruit of this anointing should be that those who have been sick are enabled to serve God, in Christ; they are made adequate to fulfil the will of God. 2Co 3:5.

James further noted that Elijah was a man who had the same nature as ours. Through his ministry of prayer, it did not rain for three years and six months. And, when he prayed again, the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its fruit. Jas 5:17-18. James brought the ministry of Elijah to our remembrance to make the point that this same ministry should be operative in the church today. We are to pray, in Christ, according to the will of God, and for His will to be done. God's will is only known and fulfilled in the fellowship of offering.

Paul explained that in the fellowship of the offering and circumcision of Christ, we are attaining resurrection life while in mortality. Php 3:11. The apostle Peter was making the same point when he wrote that, through faith, we are supplying, or adding, virtue. 2Pe 1:5. To live by faith is to be co-crucified with Christ. Gal 2:20. As we live and walk in this fellowship, we are obtaining virtue. Peter identified nine qualities, or virtues, that a son of God will attain through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. These include moral excellence, knowledge, self-control,

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

perseverance, godliness, brotherly kindness and love. He said that these qualities *are ours*, and *are increasing*, in Christ. 2Pe 1:5-8.

Evidently, there are levels of attainment. In this regard, Paul wrote, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me'. Php 3:12. He then said, 'To the degree that we have already attained, let us walk [in this mortal life] by the same rule.' Php 3:16.

Prayer and body ministry are essential to our attainment of resurrection life in our mortal bodies. As we noted above, it is the prayer of faith that saves the sick because, through this prayer, those who are sick are equipped for their participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. In other words, faith, through prevailing prayer, as well as the gifts of the Spirit, are supplying virtue to others in the body of Christ. This is what the apostle John meant when he wrote, 'If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death'. 1Jn 5:16.

Paul himself testified to the effectiveness of the prayer of faith, writing, 'We had the sentence of death within ourselves so that we would not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead; who delivered us from so great a peril of death, and will deliver us, He on whom we have set our hope. And He will yet deliver us.' 2Co 1:9-10. Significantly, Paul then acknowledged the contribution of the prayer of the saints to their capacity to journey with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. He said, 'You also *helping together in prayer* for us, that thanks may be given by many persons on our behalf for *the gift granted to us through many*.' 2Co 1:11.

In conclusion

The apostle John introduced his first letter by exhorting, 'These things we write to you that your joy may be full.' 1Jn 1:4. We first know this joy when, through the preaching of the word, the Holy Spirit illuminates us to the precious and magnificent promises that are available in Christ Jesus. 2Pe 1:4. However, in order to obtain these promises, and to become partakers of the divine nature, we must be those who are willing to sell everything. Mat 13:44. We 'sell everything' by joining the offering and circumcision of Christ. Php 3:7-11. In this fellowship, we are delivered from our other law, and from the self-righteous assessments that we make of ourselves and of others. Furthermore, we receive the life and virtues of Christ. By this means, our joy is being made full.

Chapter I

Jesus, the Lamb of God

The death of Adam

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit have a purpose and plan for every person. Their intention is for each one of us to be born of Their life and to participate in fellowship with Them, forever. God called this plan His Everlasting Covenant. Gen 17:7. Rev 21:2,7.

As we detailed in Part 3 of *The Steps of Salvation*, Adam and Eve rejected God's plan for them when they disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. The desire to pursue a destiny that was based upon their own perspective of what was good or evil for themselves became part of their identity. It was now in their flesh, affecting how they viewed themselves and others, and their expectations of life. The apostle Paul described this fundamental desire as 'another law' within a person, which brings them into captivity to sin. Rom 7:23.

Sin is 'missing the mark', or falling short, of the standard of God's Law. God's Law is love, and is expressed by offering. Mar 12:29-31. Joh 15:13. Fallen mankind is unable to fulfil the law of love. This is because they live by their own law, which is 'other than' the law of love. Their other law is the desire to define their own destiny, and to live for themselves.

As a consequence of living by the other law, every thought that a person has, and every action that they take, falls short of, or is contrary to, God's Law. This is why those who live by the other law are in captivity to sin.

Satan is the source of sin. He fostered it within mankind because he desires our destruction. As Jesus noted, Satan is 'a murderer from the beginning'. Joh 8:44. The effect of sin within fallen mankind is that the 'first' man - their body, soul and spirit - has become a 'body of sin'. Rom 6:6. In this regard, we can consider the body of sin to be a mutated and corrupting first man. In this mutated and deformed state, we are completely lost. We have become something that is far removed from the image of who God predestined us to be.

Sin is like a cancer within a person, and it is 'killing' them. It does this by arousing within them the desire for a life and a destiny that has its own accompanying position, work, wealth, power and pleasure that they assume belong to their calling. Because fallen mankind pursues this as their life, they remain separated from God, who is the source of all life. The death caused by separation from God is the implication of transgressing God's Law.

Because sin and the other law were now part of Adam and Eve's flesh, the effects of the Fall were passed on to their offspring. As a consequence, death spread to all people. This is because death is the wages, or outcome, of sin. Rom 6:23. God had said to Adam that in the day that he disobeyed God, he would die. Gen 2:17.

Adam and Eve did not physically die once they had eaten the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Their death, in the first instance, was their separation from God and from His will for their lives. Because of this, Adam, Eve, and all their children were cut off from the life of God, and came under the conditions of time and chance as their way of life. Gen 3:22-24. Ecc 9:11. They then experienced sufferings that were associated with their own corruption and mortality, and the travail for survival that gripped all living things. For mankind, these sufferings signalled their inevitable death. After they physically died, unless reconnected to God's predestination for their life, they would forever experience the torment of corruption in the darkness and isolation of their eternal separation from God.

A Lamb has been provided

Thankfully, the fall of mankind did not change God's plan and purpose for us. Provision for our birth from above as sons of God, as well as our

Jesus, the Lamb of God

deliverance from captivity to sin and death, was made by God *before* mankind fell. This provision was Christ, who was ordained as God's offering. The apostle Peter said that Christ 'was foreordained *before* the foundation of the world' to be the Lamb of God for this purpose. 1Pe 1:18-20. Joh 1:35.

The offering of the Lamb of God, outside of time, was revealed in time, when Christ offered Himself as a living sacrifice through six suffering events during His journey from the garden of Gethsemane until His work was finished as He hung on the cross at Calvary. After He had physically died, He was pierced with a spear, causing blood and water to flow from His side. This seventh wound opened a way for us to join the offering of Christ and to receive the promises of the Everlasting Covenant.

Speaking to His disciples prior to His offering, Jesus said, 'Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. *And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me.*' Joh 16:32.

However, we note also that the Son was cut off from the Father when He was made sin. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'He was taken from prison and from judgement, and who will declare His generation? For *He was cut off from the land of the living*; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.' Isa 53:8. After He had fully been made alive from the death of sin, Christ Himself asked, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46.

How was it possible for Christ to continue to be in relationship with the Father in the course of His offering, even though, in Gethsemane, He had been separated from the Father when He became our sin? The offering up of Christ as the Father's Lamb is the key to understanding this contradiction.

As the Lamb of God, the Son was both the burnt offering and the sin offering. It was through the shedding of His blood that He was able to fulfil both offerings. As the apostle Paul summarised, 'For it pleased the Father that in [Christ] all the fullness should dwell [as the vessel of the burnt offering], and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him [as the sin offering], whether things on earth or things in heaven, *having made peace through the blood of His cross* [as the peace offering].' Col 1:19-20.

In this passage, Paul was explaining that Christ's offering as the Lamb of God first revealed the burnt offering. This offering expresses the life

and fellowship of Yahweh Himself. It is the way of first love in heavenly places. However, because of sin, mankind was completely separated from this life and fellowship. As a sin offering, Christ pioneered the path upon which a person could be made alive with Him from the death of sin, and be raised to live in heavenly places. By this means, we who are on earth are reconciled with Him who is in heaven. This resulting peace was only possible through the shedding of His blood as the Lamb of God. We will consider this in more detail.

The burnt offering

Yahweh's offering is Their life and death. That is to say, the nature of Their offering is that They empty Themselves to an endpoint, or death, to reveal the Other. By this means, the life of Yahweh is *multiplied*. Offering is the way which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit live together in the heavenly places. It is the nature of Their fellowship, and reveals that God is love.

The fellowship of Yahweh is symbolised in the Scriptures by the *whole burnt offering*. We note that Yahweh Himself described the daily burnt offerings as 'My offering, My food for My offerings'. Num 28:2. The daily burnt offerings were lambs that were offered in the morning and the evening of each day. Furthermore, a person, of their own freewill, could offer a burnt offering. Lev 1:3. They could offer a bullock or a sheep or a goat or a turtledove or a pigeon. Lev 1:3-14. Irrespective of the animal that was offered, the burnt offering was made in faith for participation in Yahweh's own offering.

The life that is multiplied through the burnt offering is the life that a son of God receives when they are born from above. Furthermore, God intends His sons to be joined to the fellowship of Their offering, and to participate in the multiplication of Their life. This is the goal of God's Everlasting Covenant.

The Son was the vessel of the burnt offering of Yahweh in Gethsemane. This is what Paul meant when he wrote that 'it pleased the Father that in Him [Christ] all the fullness should dwell'. Col 1:19. The fullness of Their life, which was multiplied through the offering of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was made available in the blood of Christ. It was to be given to mankind when it was sprinkled upon the altar of His body while He was dying for us on the cross. Lev 17:11. The burnt offering was made completely apart from sin. Describing this dimension of Christ's offering,

Paul stated that 'God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself'.
2Co 5:19.

The sin offering

Because of sin, mankind was dead to God. We were unable to know or to access the context of Yahweh's offering fellowship, which is the place where Their life becomes our life by offering transfer. In other words, we were unable to join the fellowship of the burnt offering or to receive the life that was multiplied through this offering. For this reason, Christ, as the Lamb of God, was also a *sin offering*.

When Jesus presented Himself as a burnt offering, the Father made Him an offering for sin. This was the second element of Christ's offering as the Lamb of God. John the Baptist identified this aspect of His offering when he declared, 'Behold! 'The Lamb of God who takes away [removes] the sin of the world!' Joh 1:29. In the words of Isaiah, Christ was like a lamb that is led to the slaughter. Isa 53:7.

There were two features of this offering for sin. First, the iniquity of every person was laid upon Christ. This was when the other law that governs our nature, received by every generation from Adam and Eve as a result of their fall into sin, was laid upon Him. Concerning this action, Isaiah prophesied, '*All of us like sheep have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way* [i.e. every person lives by their own law]; but [or, to deal with this] the Lord has caused the iniquity of us all to fall on Him.' Isa 53:6. This other law, which governs the whole of humanity, was described by Paul as 'the body of flesh', which is controlled by sin. Col 2:11. Rom 6:6. The other law was progressively cut from Jesus as a circumcising action, which was accomplished as He received each wound on His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Paul described this process of removing the body of flesh as 'the circumcision of Christ'. Col 2:11. Rom 6:6.

The second feature of Christ's offering for sin as the Lamb of God was that the Father made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him. 2Co 5:21. Again, Isaiah prophesied, 'Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. *When You make His soul an offering for sin*, He shall see His seed, He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labour [travail] of His soul, and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.' Isa 53:10-11.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

As a sin offering, the Son was *made* the sin of every person. This means that His soul, or the essence of His being, was made to be sin itself. Sin is defined as missing the mark by transgressing God's Law, resulting in chaos, destruction and death. We recall that Jesus said, 'And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life.' Joh 3:14-15. The symbol of a serpent on a pole is portraying a suffering snake. Satan is characterised in the Scriptures as a snake, and the source of all sin. Rev 12:9. Eze 28:15. Joh 8:44.

Christ was made sin so that, through His death, sin in the flesh would be condemned and put to death. Rom 8:3. Christ was condemned as sin, and the judgement that fell upon sin, fell upon Him. Sin had to come to an end. Its end could only be accomplished in Christ. He, alone, through offering, could restore and heal the ravages of destruction that transgressing God's Law has caused mankind.

Christ became our sin and joined our death

Death is the wages of sin. Rom 6:23. When Jesus was made an offering for sin, He joined us in our death and separation from God. At this point, He died *our death*. This was the death that was in Adam. 1Co 15:22. As Christ entered the garden of Gethsemane, He was prepared to join us, fully, in our death and separation from God, which had resulted from sin. Even prior to the last supper, Jesus had said, 'Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? "Father, save Me from this hour?" But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name.' Joh 12:27-28.

Then, in Gethsemane, the reality of this death was apparent. Jesus said to His disciples, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.' Mat 26:38. Mar 14:34. At this point, Christ was fully acquainted with the grief associated with the impact of sin, and the accompanying destruction and death that befalls each of us. Isa 53:3. He was not only *aware* of our griefs; He *bore* the griefs that every individual experiences because of the suffering associated with sin. Because of this, Christ is able to gather up, in a bottle, the tears of those who journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering. Psa 56:8.

Having become fully acquainted with our condition, Jesus then drank the cup of sin, wrath and judgement, and was made a sin offering for us. The nature of a sin offering is that it is made to *be* sin. The sin offering then bears the brunt of the wrath of God that is contained in the Law. The end result is punishment and death. Sin is judged and destroyed, and

all that is associated with sin ends in death and eternal separation from God. Significantly, the sin offering is also the basis of a travail that brings forth children. Isa 53:10. We will discuss this in further detail below.

In receiving the wrath and judgement of God for the sin of the whole world, Jesus tasted the suffering of death for every person. He made all of our sufferings, which were because of our sin, to be His. As the Lamb of God, Jesus gathered up our death into *His death*. By this means, Christ's death encompassed and finished our judgement and death.

Inasmuch as Christ was made sin for us, He 'priested' Himself as a sin offering. He said that no-one took His life from Him; He laid it down of His own accord. Christ received this command from the Father. Joh 10:18. Christ was not only our sin offering; He was also God's eternal Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Heb 7:17. As our High Priest, He offered Himself, laying His life down to the Father as a sin offering. We will consider this in more detail in Chapter 2.

Christ's death occurred through six cuts, or wounds. Through these wounds, the iniquity (or the body of flesh) of every person was being cut off Him; sin and death were being destroyed; and He was coming back from the death of sin by the glory of the Father, by Eternal Spirit, and by the shedding of His own blood – that is, by the life that was made available from the offering of Yahweh. Paul described this as 'the death that He died', and explained that Christ 'died to sin, once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God'. Rom 6:10. As the Lamb of God, He was the connection between the sin offering for our death, and the burnt offering through which the life of Yahweh is multiplied. Through His death, the life from Their offering was multiplied to us by offering transfer.

Furthermore, through His death as a sin offering, Christ destroyed Satan, sin, and death itself. As the book of Hebrews expounds, 'Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil'. Heb 2:14. Christ triumphed over Satan and sin, and endured the full extent of the wrath of the Law. Through the sin offering, He ended the rule of Satan. He also terminated the Old Covenant.

The righteousness of God was revealed when Christ became our sin, and tasted the suffering of death for every person. He loved the Father and was obedient to His command to become a sin offering. Joh 14:31. He also laid down His life for His friends. Joh 15:13. In doing so, He fulfilled

the Royal Law, because He loved the Lord His God with all of His heart, soul and strength, and He loved His neighbour as Himself. Mar 12:29-31.

Furthermore, Christ established a fellowship in which we could become the righteousness of God in Him. 2Co 5:21. The righteousness that we are now to fulfil as a son of God is to walk with Christ, in faith, each day. Walking in faith with Christ involves our participation in the offering and circumcising work that Christ endured on our behalf from Gethsemane until His work was finished after He was lifted up on the cross. Christ died the death of sin, which involved the judgement of being forsaken by God. The recovery of mankind from the death of sin was accomplished through His reconciling ministry. We, with Him, are no longer judged and forsaken. Now, in Christ, we are becoming the righteous expression of God's life, as we walk with Him in the fellowship of His offering. 2Co 5:21.

Offering transfer through the sin offering

Christ's offering fulfilled all the offerings of the Old Covenant. With this in view, we see that the book of Hebrews draws particular attention to the Day of Atonement. Heb 9:6-28. Unique to the Day of Atonement were two distinct elements of the sin offering that was made for the people. On this day, two goats were taken as the one sin offering. The first goat was slaughtered and its blood was sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat, and then seven times on the altar. The priest then took the second goat, laid his hands on the head of the animal, and confessed all the iniquities and the sins of the children of Israel upon it. By this means, the iniquity and transgressions of the people were transferred to the head of the scapegoat. The goat was then taken outside the camp and led into the wilderness. This was considered to be a place that was cut off from God, or cursed. It was a place of reproach. The kidney and fat portions of the slaughtered goat were offered on the altar, and then the hide, flesh and refuse of the slaughtered goat were burned in a clean place outside the camp.

The principle of offering transfer is revealed in the application of the two goats. As a sin offering, Christ was the scapegoat that was taken outside the camp to 'a place of cursing'. This represents the context of the Gentiles. The grace of atonement and redemption was extended to the Gentiles when Christ was crucified on Mount Calvary, which means, 'the hill of the skull'. Paul noted that Christ was cursed when He was hung on a tree so that the Gentiles would receive the promise of the Spirit through faith. Gal 3:13-14. Christ made it 'a clean place'. He gathered up

everything that was cut off and cursed, and brought it all the way back into the context of sprinkling, by which action the life of Christ is given to us, reconciling us to God.

The Son was also the Lord's 'goat', whose blood was sprinkled to atone for the sins of the whole world, so that they might be *brought near to God*. Writing to the Gentile Christians in Ephesus, Paul declared, 'But now in Christ Jesus you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.' Eph 2:13. From this passage, we note that to come into Christ is to be brought near to God by the blood of Christ. In Him, we are joined to the fellowship of Yahweh.

The blood of the Lamb

Through offering, the life that is in the blood of Christ has been given to mankind. All who receive Christ are able to live through Him. The recovery of their life as an eternal possession is made possible through offering transfer. When we receive the life that is in His blood, we are revealed, because we are able to offer ourselves according to our sanctification. Because it was an offering, Christ's death had the capacity to multiply His life and to give it to us, as a gift, through offering transfer. His death brought us into the fellowship of being 'begotten from the dead' by the multiplying capacity of His life. Rev 1:5. His life was in His blood, and was given to us on the altar of His body to be our life. This is the principle of atonement. 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.' Lev 17:11.

The apostle Peter taught that the blood that was given to be our life was 'the precious blood of Christ, *as of a lamb* without blemish and without spot'. 1Pe 1:19. The life that was multiplied from the offering of Yahweh was made available to us by the Lamb, in the sin offering. This blood redeemed us, and the life in the blood is to become our life.

It is noteworthy that, under the Old Covenant, a lamb could be offered as a peace offering. The Lord specified that 'if his offering as a sacrifice of a *peace offering* to the Lord is of the flock, whether male or female, he shall offer it without blemish. *If he offers a lamb* as his offering, then he shall offer it before the Lord. And he shall lay his hand on the head of his offering, and kill it before the tabernacle of meeting; and Aaron's sons shall sprinkle its blood all around on the altar.' Lev 3:6-8.

We see, then, that the peace offering is joined to the sin offering and the burnt offering, in the Lamb. Paul explained that Christ Himself is our

peace and that, through Him, we have access by one Spirit to the Father. Eph 2:14,18. In other words, we are able to join the fellowship of Yahweh, which is symbolised by the burnt offering. We are recipients of peace through the sprinkling of Christ's blood. As we have already noted, peace was made between that which is in heaven and that which is on earth, through the shedding of Christ's own blood, by offering. Col 1:19-20.

We are recipients of this peace when, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, our heart is sprinkled with His blood. By this means, we are able to serve the living God. Heb 9:14. In other words, we are able to 'priest' ourselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of Yahweh's own offering, according to our name and sanctification as a son of God. Rom 12:1.

As our peace offering, Christ, the Lamb of God, makes the capacities of offering transfer available to us. This gives to us all of the elements of Yahweh's life and fellowship that belong to the burnt offering. These elements are ministered to us in the sin offering, through which we receive an eternal name, and are being born again out of death. This makes us a new creation son of God. Also, the circumcising work of the Father is accomplished in our heart as we fellowship with Christ in His suffering, each day. In this fellowship, our own law, with its self-righteousness, which Paul called 'the other law', is being removed from our heart.

In Isaac your seed shall be called

Abraham's offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah helps us to understand how the offering of the Lamb of God encompasses, or makes peace between, the burnt offering and the sin offering. The interaction between Abraham and Isaac was a picture of the offering of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, in Gethsemane. We noted at the beginning of this chapter that the purpose for Their offering was to bring many sons to glory, in accordance with Their Everlasting Covenant.

We recall that *Elohim* - the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit - said to Abraham, 'Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a *burnt offering* on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.' Gen 22:2. Abraham viewed this offering as being *worship*, and believed that he and Isaac, together, would return from making offering. Gen 22:5.

As they journeyed up the mountain, Isaac said to Abraham, ' "My father!" And he said, "Here I am, my son." And he said, "Behold, the fire and the wood, but where is *the lamb for the burnt offering?*" ' Gen 22:7.

In response to Isaac's query, Abraham said, 'God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son.' Gen 22:8.

Isaac was Abraham's *natural* son. Although he was the son of promise, he was a son of man who had been born under the conditions of the Fall. God had promised this son to Abraham, and had said that, through Isaac, Abraham would become the father of an innumerable company of sons who would be born of the life of God.

When Abraham bound Isaac and laid him on the altar, *Isaac had been made an offering by his father, Abraham*. Gen 22:9. However, Isaac had clearly given himself to be offered by Abraham. He was being obedient to the point of death. Abraham took a knife to slay his son. He then, figuratively, received Isaac back from 'the dead' – from the death of being slain with the knife – through God's provision of a ram to be offered in Isaac's stead. On account of this ram, Isaac, who was a natural son of Abraham, was joined to the burnt offering of Yahweh, and was brought back from the dead. The ram represented the Lamb that Yahweh would provide for Himself. It was the means by which Isaac's death was joined to the death of the burnt offering, and by which he was able to come back from the dead. As we have already noted, the burnt offering is a symbol of Yahweh's covenant fellowship in which Their life is multiplied as They each give Themselves to reveal one another.

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 22:16-18.

Isaac was no longer only the natural son of Abraham; he had also received his calling as a son of God the Father. In type, he had been born again from the dead through the provision of the lamb.

Importantly, Paul explained that the outcome of this offering was that Abraham's seed would be *called in Isaac*. Heb 11:17-19. In other words, from the death of sin, the sons of men would be born again, through the offering of the Lamb of God, to become sons of God. In this regard, the offering of Isaac was a parallel to the offering of the Son. Remembering that 'in Isaac your seed shall be called', we note that Isaiah prophesied that through the travail of the Son as a sin offering, 'He shall see His

seed ... He shall see the labour [travail] of His soul, and be satisfied'.
Isa 53:10-11.

The travail of Christ's soul

The sufferings that Jesus experienced, as a sin offering, while He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary, were a great *travail*. As we have just noted, it was through Christ's progressive travail as a sin offering that sons of God are brought to birth out of death. Before we develop this point further, it is important to recognise that Jesus was the first son of man to be brought to birth through this travail. This is why Paul called Christ 'the Firstborn from the dead'. Col 1:18.

In Gethsemane, Christ was made our sin, and joined us in our death. The Scriptures record that, as He prayed with us, and on our behalf, in Gethsemane, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit. 'And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground.' Luk 22:44. From this point, He began to be born from the death of sin by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 13:20. He continued to be made alive from the death caused by sin, until His redemptive work was finished as He hung on the cross at Calvary. When He declared, 'It is finished!', He was the Firstborn from the dead! Joh 19:30. Col 1:18.

Most importantly, through His death as a sin offering, Christ brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, and made it available to all mankind, if they will participate in His offering. 2Ti 1:8-12. Death has been abolished by Christ in the sin offering. Through Christ's progressive travail as the sin offering, sons of God are brought to birth out of death. This is what the prophet Isaiah was referring to when he wrote, 'When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see His seed [offspring], He shall prolong His days, and the pleasure of the Lord [His covenant desire for many sons] shall prosper in His hand.' Isa 53:10.

We joined this birthing process *before* we were joined, through baptism, to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul said that even when we were dead in trespasses and sins, God, through His grace, made us alive together with Christ. Eph 2:5. This happened when the word of the cross was preached to us and we were born from above. This was the first effect of Christ's travail in our life.

Then, through baptism, we were joined to the circumcision of Christ, and also to the fellowship of His corporate body. We could describe this fellowship as 'the fellowship of the Lamb'. Although we had been made

alive through new birth, we were still struggling with the other law. Because of the other law, sin was exercising its dominion over us. This is why we needed to be joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ. In this fellowship, our other law is being circumcised from our heart as it is cut from Him through the wounds that He received. Moreover, in the fellowship of His suffering travail, our sin is being put to death, and the life in His blood is being transferred to us to become our life. In this way, travail and circumcision are *working together* to birth us by resurrection, and to sanctify us as sons of God. This is how Christ is formed in us. Gal 4:19.

Born from the dead

By the travail of Christ, we are born again from the dead, having been dead to God in trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1-5. We are born from the dead by the resurrection life that is in the blood of Jesus Christ. Paul told us in the book of Hebrews that it was God the Father who brought Jesus up from the dead through the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 13:20.

The apostle Peter also explained that it is God the Father who, according to His great mercy, has caused us to be born to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. 1Pe 1:2-4. The hope that we have been born to receive is the hope of being revealed as a son of God. 1Jn 3:1-3.

Being born from the dead involves us in the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. 2Th 2:13. 1Pe 1:2. The Spirit cuts us free from our self-centredness and sin, and also gives the love of God to us, enabling us to obey Jesus Christ. Jesus then sprinkles our heart with His own blood, and makes the grace and peace of God available to us in fullest measure. 1Pe 1:1-2.

Writing to the Philippians, Paul spoke of Christians as being ‘the true circumcision’, who worship in the Spirit of God, who glory in Christ Jesus, and who put no confidence in the flesh. Php 3:3. Paul then addressed how we should ‘be found in Christ’. Php 3:9. By this, he was referring to the way in which we should desire other people to know us and think about us. Paul said that they should know us only as Christians who are relationally committed in the body of Christ. Within the body of Christ, we should not be exhibiting any self-righteousness, derived from the Law. Our righteousness is given to us because we have faith in Jesus Christ. This righteousness comes from God, and is given to us to fulfil, on the basis of faith. Php 3:9-11.

In fellowship with Christ, we come to know Him personally. The power of His resurrection catches our life up into His overcoming life. In the fellowship of Christ's suffering, the Holy Spirit is able to circumcise our heart from self-centredness, enabling our heart to obey Christ. In this action, we are being conformed to Christ's death. His death was the full expression of His life of offering. When we are joined to Christ's death, we are able to live the same life of offering that He lived. As we live this way, in the fellowship of His offering and travail, we are being born again from the dead with Christ while we are still living in a physical, mortal body. Php 3:10-11.

The travail to bring forth a great company of sons for God began in Christ as He prayed to the Father in the garden of Gethsemane. The travail of the Son and the circumcising work by the Holy Spirit both operate in Christ, and they enable us to be born again and sanctified through the work of the Holy Spirit. Christ then sprinkles our heart with His own blood, enabling us to serve the Father as His priests. Rev 1:5-6.

The seven wounds of Christ

In Part 4 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we outlined, in detail, each wounding event that Christ experienced on His offering journey. His offering revealed the two elements of death that we have been considering in this chapter. It revealed the suffering and death caused by our sin and other law, and it revealed the way of escape from this condition through Christ's death. These two elements of death are evident in each wounding event that Christ experienced as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. As Christ's blood was shed with each wound that He suffered, He was coming back from the death caused by our sin. Heb 13:20. He was being made alive to God.

Let us now remind ourselves of these seven wounds and consider the distinction between our death and His death, in each wounding event.

First wound – sweating blood

In Gethsemane, the issue of whose 'will' a person lives by is revealed. Through this event, the inadequacy of man's will was evident. Speaking to His disciples, Jesus said that 'the spirit is willing'. Mat 26:41. He meant that they had their *own will*. Even though their will was to obey the Lord, they were 'in the flesh' and were completely unable to achieve what they willed to do. In fact, they fell asleep for sorrow because the expectations associated with their own will were unfulfilled. Luk 22:45. The disciples

were asleep, or figuratively dead, in relation to the fellowship of Yahweh's offering. They were unable to see and to participate in this fellowship.

In contrast, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, Christ prayed, 'Not the will of the flesh, but the Father's will be done.' The outcome of Christ's death, which was marked by sweating great drops of blood, was that the will of the flesh was cut from Him, and He was strengthened by the love of God to do the Father's will. Luk 22:43-44.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the Spirit enables us to join the prayer of Christ, who declared to the Father, 'Not My will, but Your will be done'. By this, He meant, 'Not all the self-wills of the world that had been laid on Him, but the Father's will be done'. In Him, our will is being cut from our life, and the capacity for obedience, which is Christ's life, is becoming our life. Gal 2:20.

Second wound – bruised for our iniquities

The second wounding event that Christ endured was in the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. Here, Christ was punched, slapped and buffeted. The prophet Isaiah declared that the resulting bruising was for our iniquities. Isa 53:5. This wounding event revealed the death associated with our own righteousness, and the righteousness of God that was revealed through the death of Christ.

Peter's interactions with Jesus in the lead-up to His offering exemplified the self-righteousness of fallen humanity. Peter believed in the integrity of his own heart, and in his own capacity for *agape* love, saying, 'Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake.' Joh 13:37. Peter was asserting his own capacity for righteousness, yet his question - 'Why can I not follow You now?' - revealed Peter's darkened perspective associated with his own righteousness.

As Peter looked and saw the abuse that Jesus was receiving in the court of Caiaphas, and was queried about his association with Christ, the blindness, ugliness, and failure of his own righteousness was manifest. He lied about his relationship with Jesus, and reacted to his accusers with cursing and swearing. Mar 14:71. His denial, and the associated passions of sin, were the fruit of his self-righteousness. Moreover, they revealed his bondage to the law of sin and death.

In contrast, Christ endured the suffering of death when He was beaten for speaking the truth. Mar 14:61-65. In response to the question, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the blessed?', Jesus answered, 'I am. And you

will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Mar 14:62. Jesus had come to illuminate the world on this point.

As Christ was beaten, the light of life was being revealed. This was demonstrated when Peter looked into the face and eyes of the Lord. The first thing that Peter saw, when he looked at the beaten and marred face of Jesus, was the ugliness of his own righteousness. The eyes of the Lord pierced Peter's heart, and made known to him the failure of his own righteousness. Accepting the bankruptcy of his own righteousness, Peter was able to begin the journey of repentance and recovery to his sanctification as a son of God.

Third wound – chastised for our peace

Also in the court of Caiaphas, Jesus was beaten with rods. Isaiah described these blows with rods as the chastisement, or discipline, for our peace. Isa 53:5. This wound revealed the death associated with going our own way. It also revealed the life, which was manifest through the chastening of the Father, that fell upon Christ for our sake.

Our death is the outcome of going our own way. The prophet Isaiah likened going our own way to being sheep that have gone astray. Isa 53:6. When sheep do this, they get into difficulties from which they are unable to recover or save themselves. We can also liken going our own way to the immature mindset and behaviour of a little child. Rather than going the way that God the Father prepared for us, we pursue a way that we perceive to be better. Our perceptions are informed by our senses.

When Christ was chastened with rods, the Father's hand was disciplining Him for our sake. He did this so that we could become partakers of Christ's holiness, and begin to demonstrate the peaceable fruits of righteousness that belong to firstfruits Christians. Heb 12:11. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the discipline that we receive causes us to mature to become the son whom the Father predestined us to be.

This is what Jesus was saying to Peter when He met him on the shore of Galilee, following His resurrection. The apostle John recorded this interaction, writing, ' "When you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished [you went your own way]; but when you are old [or, mature], you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." This He spoke, signifying by *what death he would glorify God.*' Joh 21:18-19. In the fellowship of Christ's death, Peter would receive chastening, through which he would

mature and walk in the way that the Father had prepared for him as a son of God.

Fourth wound – scourged for our healing

Speaking of Christ, the prophet Isaiah declared that 'by His stripes we are healed'. Isa 53:5. Under the direction of Pilate, Jesus was scourged with the cat o' nine tails. This caused Christ's blood to flow from multiple wounds that peeled the skin from His back. This wounding event revealed the sufferings of humanity, and the sufferings of Christ that were for our healing.

The sufferings of humanity are many and varied, and have diverse causes. For example, people may experience suffering because of their own mistakes or the mistakes of others; they may be born with, or develop, certain impairments; their sufferings may even be associated with particular dispositions such as anxiety, anger or impulsiveness.

Jesus made these sufferings His own when He was scourged by Pilate. The multitude of wounds – some small and some more significant – which were caused by the brutal application of the scourging whip to Christ's back, represented the many and varied sufferings experienced by the sons and daughters of men. These sufferings are common to us all. This is true whether we are born of God or not. As Paul wrote, 'No temptation [or, adversity] has overtaken you but such as is *common to man*'. 1Co 10:13.

A person does not escape suffering when they are born of God and baptised into Christ. Rather, their sufferings are given to them as a participation in Christ's sufferings. Paul said that, although our sufferings are common to man, 'God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it.' 1Co 10:13. 'The way of escape' is not that we are being delivered from our suffering. Rather, it is the capacity to endure suffering in the fellowship of Christ's scourging. In the fellowship of Christ's death, we are recipients of the healing that resulted from the shedding of His blood. We are being healed in our body, soul and spirit, and are being delivered from the propensities of our other law that keep us captive to sin and death.

Fifth wound – the crown of thorns

The crown of thorns, with its mocking and associated buffeting of Christ's head and face, as well as the plucking out of portions of His beard, was the *humiliation* that Christ endured during His fifth wounding. Through this suffering event, Christ was dealing with our pride and projections. It revealed the fallen authority of mankind, which is based in projections, in contrast to the authority of one's sonship name which comes from God.

Those who are dying in Adam have rejected their name as a son of God, which the Father prepared for them before the beginning of creation. Instead, motivated by pride, they endeavour to make a name for themselves. The crown of thorns that Jesus received represented the sufferings that result from every person's pursuit of their own name. In their endeavours to make a name for themselves, a person may exploit and mistreat others. This can cause significant disadvantage and distress to those who have been exploited. However, those who seek advancement in life at the expense of others, are, often, themselves, beset by the torment of anxiety and depression in the pursuit of their goals and riches.

In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the thorny events that we experience in life are for the purpose of dealing with our pride, which is sourced in our other law. This was the experience of the apostle Paul, who described his thorn in the flesh as 'a messenger from Satan to buffet me', so that he would not be lifted up in pride. 2Co 12:7. In Christ, instead of pursuing our own name, we are able to know and live according to the name that the Father has given us. In other words, we are able to stand in the authority of our name, rather than in the projections of who we would like to be.

Sixth wound – pierced for our transgressions

Christ was pierced through for our transgressions by the nails that fastened His hands and feet to the cross. Isa 53:5. Transgression, or sin, is disobedience to the word of the Lord. Paul wrote that 'by one man's disobedience many were made sinners'. Rom 5:19. That is, we were all born with another law within us. When we live by this law, we are captive to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23. We transgress God's Law whether we desire to keep it or not, and, therefore, we come under its condemnation.

Paul contrasted the impact of Adam's disobedience with the obedience of Christ, explaining that 'by one Man's obedience many will be made righteous'. Rom 5:19. When Jesus was crucified on the cross, He removed the Law as the reference point for righteousness. In the fellowship of His death, the other law is being removed from us, and we are ceasing from our fleshly efforts to fulfil God's Law. Instead, we are being enabled to live by faith obedience to the word of our sonship. This is what Paul meant when he testified, 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.' Gal 2:20.

Seventh wound – Him whom we pierced

At the conclusion of Christ's sixth wound, He declared that His redemptive work was complete. He had been made alive from the death caused by sin. Moreover, He had pioneered a pathway upon which we could be born from the death of sin, with Him.

After Christ breathed His last, a spear was thrust into His heart. Joh 19:34. The blood that was shed from this seventh wound was the sum of the previous six sprinklings. As we noted earlier, it became a river, or fountain, of life flowing from His side. Zec 13:1. This piercing opened the way for the sons of men to join the fellowship of Christ's offering, through which the blood of the previous six encounters could be sprinkled on their hearts.

In conclusion

If we view Christ's offering as being simply a payment made on our behalf so that we no longer have to receive the punishment for sin, it demonstrates that we have yet to 'behold' the Lamb of God. Joh 1:36. Christ certainly was our sin offering, and received the punishment for our sin; however, He came back from the death caused by sin. He was born from the dead by the working of God. Col 2:12. In doing so, He pioneered a pathway upon which a person could journey to become the son of God whom the Father predestined them to be.

The whole world was redeemed by the shedding of the precious blood of Jesus. However, we are only made alive to God as we journey on the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered through His offering and suffering. In the fellowship of this offering, we are finding the way of escape from the condemnation of sin, which is death. This is because, in Him, our other law is being circumcised from our heart, and His life is becoming our life.

We must, therefore, understand how we join, and continue in, the fellowship of Christ's offering. The answer is to receive the priestly ministry of Christ, our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

Chapter 2

The priesthood of Christ

In our previous chapter, we considered the offering of Christ. We now turn our attention to Christ's priesthood. The first thing that we note is that Christ '*priested*' *Himself* as a living sacrifice when He journeyed from the last supper to Calvary. His ministry, from the last supper, where He presented His body to His disciples as the elements of the Passover meal, through to the offering of Himself in the progressive steps of His suffering until He died on the cross, took approximately twenty-one hours to accomplish. His offering, once for all, continues to be efficacious for us today, and will be so in the new heavens and earth, because He is priesting this one offering to us, *forever*. As the Father declared, 'You are a priest *forever* according to the order of Melchizedek.' Psa 110:4.

In this chapter, we will discuss the nature of Christ's priesthood, and how He priests His one offering to us today. In this regard, we will consider how Christ, as our High Priest, is addressing us individually, and as churches. His work as our great High Priest is to sanctify us with His own blood, so that we can join with Him in His priestly ministry. Christ is equipping us so that we can serve God the Father in His house as His priests. Rev 1:6. Heb 9:14-15. Heb 13:12.

How we see Jesus

After Jesus died on the cross, His body was buried in a tomb for three days and three nights. He rose from the death of mortality, and spent the next forty days speaking with His disciples about the kingdom of God. Act 1:3. At the end of this time, Jesus ascended into heaven, far above the angels. He was seated on a throne at the right hand of the Father, who put all things under His feet. He was crowned with glory and honour, was given to be the Head over the church, and was set over all the works of the Father. Eph 1:20-22. Heb 2:7-8.

This was a most glorious conclusion to Christ's offering journey. And yet, the apostle Paul said that, at this time, *we don't actually see Jesus this way*. Heb 2:8. This seems to be a contradiction. If all things have been put in subjection to Him, and He is the immortal Head of His body, why is this not the way in which we see Him? How should we see Jesus? Paul explained that, at this point, 'We see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man.' Heb 2:9.

We see Jesus in this way because, in this world, we are mortal, and still need to come to maturity as sons of God. For this reason, we can only truly see Christ as the One who is priesting His offering and His circumcision to every individual who accepts the invitation to join the fellowship of His offering. It is in the fellowship of this offering that we are being changed, and are growing into the image of Christ's sonship.

The ministry of Christ's eternal priesthood

Christ's offering as the Lamb of God was a journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, which involved six wounding events. On this journey, and by the grace of God, Jesus experienced the suffering of death for every person who has ever lived. Heb 2:9. His sufferings were not just on behalf of a collective humanity; He tasted the suffering of death for *every individual*.

Christ gathered all of our death into His death. As He endured the six suffering events of His death, our sin was being destroyed; the iniquity of us all was being circumcised from Him; and He was coming back from our death by the life of Yahweh that was in His blood. He was being made alive to God. 1Pe 3:18.

When Christ's journey was finished, He had offered Himself for the sins of every individual, forever, and had pioneered a pathway for the

salvation and perfection of every son of God. Heb 10:12. Heb 5:9. Because He has tasted the sufferings of death for every individual, the pathway that He has pioneered for each person's salvation is *unique* to them.

How can we join and participate in an offering that was finished almost 2000 years ago? We are able to do this because Christ priests, or ministers, this one offering to us through His Melchizedek priesthood. This is an *eternal* priesthood that operates by the power of an endless life. Heb 7:16-17.

We are first joined to the offering of Christ through baptism into His death, burial and resurrection. Then, as we eat and drink the elements of the communion each week, our participation in this offering becomes a daily and specific reality for us.

Partaking of communion

We recall that the first mention of the high-priestly work of Melchizedek was when He gave bread and wine to Abram, and prophetically declared that Abram would become a co-heir of heaven and earth, with Him. Gen 14:18-20. Under Moses, a grain offering (representing the bread) and a drink offering (representing the wine) were offered with the continual burnt offering of the morning and evening lamb. This offering symbolised Yahweh's own fellowship. Num 28:1-8.

Accordingly, Paul taught that partaking of this bread and wine is a participation, or fellowship, in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. 1Co 10:16. He explained that partaking of these elements joins us to Christ's offered body, and to the process through which His blood is shed and given to us.

Our eating and drinking of the communion elements involves us in receiving and believing the word that our High Priest ministers to us at the communion gathering. On this point, Jesus said to His followers, 'Does this offend you [the necessity to eat His flesh and drink His blood]? What then if you should *see* the Son of Man ascend where He was before [i.e. in heavenly places]? It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit [enabling us to be one loaf, or body], and they are life [the life that we receive from His blood]. But there are some of you who do not *believe*.' Joh 6:61-64.

That is, they were unable to eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood because they would not receive, nor believe, His word. However, if they did eat His flesh and drink His blood, they would be joined to a process

through which they would eventually see Him as He is – seated at the right hand of God.

Coming onto holy ground

Christ continues to testify, concerning His own priestly work, in the midst of the congregation which gathers in His name at the communion table. He does this by proclaiming the Father's name to His brethren, and by singing praise to the Father in the midst of the congregation. Heb 2:11. His testimony reveals the essential ministry of priesthood, which is *worship* and *fellowship*.

True worship and fellowship happens on *holy ground*. Holy ground is an authentic place that embraces reality. It is a place where the truth is spoken, where dialogue is sincere, and where offering has replaced trading, because brethren are being reconciled to the Lord and to one another. Through Christ's priesthood, we are called to come onto the holy ground of the pathway that He pioneered, or established, through His offering journey. The communion fellowship is the full expression of holy ground. At the communion table, then, we receive our access to, and provision for, our journey on holy ground.

The faith that comes by hearing and receiving the word of Christ enables us to present ourselves on the holy ground of this pathway. The first expression of this ground is the fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane. Here, the Holy Spirit joins us to Christ, and to the travail of Christ. Rom 8:23. Heb 2:10. This is where He died the death of our sin, and was cut off from God. We, with Christ, are joined together in the fellowship of a birthing process that was initiated by the Father. Paul said that it is here, in this birthing process, that we are all from one Father, and Jesus is not ashamed to call us His brothers and sisters. Heb 2:11.

Through His Melchizedek priesthood, Christ's offering as the Lamb of God, 2000 years ago, is being uniquely applied, today, to the life of each son of God who is in Christ. As believers, we receive all that happens in our day, including our sufferings – whether notable or common to all men – as our unique participation in the events of His offering. This is the mystery of the cross.

Through Christ's eternal capacity as High Priest, and by Eternal Spirit, He is able to apply the efficacy of His offering to our lives each day. This is achieved through fellowship in His offering, which includes our fellowship in His sufferings. In this fellowship, the blood that He shed,

which fell on His body, as our Mercy Seat, in each wounding event, also falls upon our heart. Our heart is being circumcised in Him, and His life is being transferred to us. The life of God is love, and it is being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Heb 9:14. Rom 5:5.

We shall see Him as He is

By the blood of Christ, we proceed to journey with Christ out from the death of sin. As the Firstborn from the dead, Christ has gone before us and has already entered into immortality. We fellowship with Him in His offering journey on earth until we finally come to our point of immortality on the day of His second coming. That is, we continue in the fellowship of Christ's travail for the whole of our life, eagerly awaiting the redemption of our body. Rom 8:23. This is the Day of Resurrection, when we will receive our immortal, spiritual body. The spiritual body possesses the capacities that are essential to our service for God in the new heavens and earth. On the Day of Resurrection, we will see Christ as He is - far above all principalities and powers, and above every name in heaven and on earth. Eph 1:20-22.

The apostle John was making the same point as Paul made when he stated that we are already sons of God, but that the nature of our eternal sonship is not yet fully apparent. 1Jn 3:2. This is because we are still joined to the travail of Christ, through which we are being born from the death of sin. At this time, we see Christ from the perspective of our participation in the fellowship of His offering and suffering. By this offering, He was brought forth from the death of our sin as the Firstborn from the dead. Col 1:18.

However, when Christ returns and is fully revealed to us, 'We shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is'. 1Jn 3:2. We will no longer see Him from the perspective of our need to be delivered from our bondage to sin and death. Instead, as mature sons of God, we will see Him in His full glory, as the One who is seated on His throne in heaven. Heb 2:7-8. This is a great hope, and the source of joy in the midst of the suffering that we experience in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. John said that everyone who has this hope purifies themselves just as the Son is pure. 1Jn 3:3.

In the new heavens and earth

Christ offered Himself once for the sins of every individual, *forever*. Heb 10:12. And Paul said that, by this one offering, Christ 'has perfected

forever those who are being sanctified'. Heb 10:14. The life that is multiplied through this offering will be ministered by Christ to each and every son of God, *for eternity*. Christ was appointed to be a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek for this purpose. As we have already considered, His priesthood operates according to the power of an endless life. Heb 7:16-17. In this way, He was, and is, able to apply all of the elements of His atoning offering, which was finished and complete at Calvary, to each of our lives, today.

In the new heavens and earth, although there will no longer be the need for our fellowship in the circumcision of Christ, our eternal life will still be found in the fellowship of Christ's one offering. Because Christ's offering was effective to deal with sin *forever*, sin will have no power or effect in the new heavens and earth. This is the implication of Christ ruling with a rod of iron. Psa 2:9. Rev 2:27. Rev 19:15. Under this rulership, sin cannot be revived on account of self-centredness.

In summary, our fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ, in this age, has two parts. It is the means by which our sin and self-centredness is being dealt with, and it is also the context in which we are receiving eternal life. However, Paul declared that 'when that which is perfect has come, then that which is in part will be done away'. 1Co 13:10. In other words, in the new heavens and earth, we will no longer need to be joined to the circumcision of Christ. This part will be done away with, because sin and the other law will have been destroyed. However, we will continue to have, and express, eternal life in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

The significance of priesthood

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul specifically and systematically outlined the process through which a person is born of God and is made adequate for priesthood. This process is our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ.

Paul identified Jesus as the Son of Man who had been crowned with glory and honour so that, by the grace of God, He might taste death for every person. Heb 1:5. Heb 2:7. Heb 2:9. This dual crown of glory and honour identified Jesus as our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 3:1. Heb 7:2. We remember that, under the direction of the prophet Zechariah, a double crown - representing kingship and priesthood - had been crafted. It was to be kept in the temple, in the custody of the Levitical High Priest, who was to crown the Melchizedek

High Priest when He came to His temple. Zec 6:11-15. The dual crown recognised the dual ministry of Melchizedek, whose name means 'king of righteousness' and 'king of peace'. Heb 7:2.

Notably, Paul described our great High Priest as the *pioneer* of the pathway upon which the sons of God would obtain their eternal inheritance. Heb 2:10. Christ priested Himself as a living sacrifice, and learned obedience through the things which He suffered as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. As we journey as sons of God in Him and with Him, we learn what Christ our High Priest learnt. Specifically, we learn how to minister as son-priests according to the order of Melchizedek.

From the writings of Paul, and from the book of Revelation, we understand that priesthood is our *eternal inheritance as a son of God*. Christ has made us to be a kingdom of priests to the Father. Rev 1:6. Our inheritance is to serve as priests in the temple of God, forever. Rev 7:14-17. Rev 22:3-5.

Learning from our great High Priest

God has called us to be son-priests. From the Father, through the faith of Abraham, we receive the promise of becoming a son of God by adoption and by new birth. Moses established the example and pattern of priesthood under the Old Covenant. Heb 8:1-6.

Christ is our High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. He is both the Seed of Abraham and the substance of priesthood and offering that Moses received as a pattern. Gal 3:16. We are to serve as priests with Him in the sanctuary of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched in the heavenly places. Rev 7:14-17.

What is the ministry of a priest, and how do we learn to priest according to the order of Melchizedek?

As we noted earlier, Christ priests His one offering to us by giving us a participation in the six wounding events that He endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Our participation in these events is a learning and maturing process through which we are being made adequate as ministers, or priests, of the New Covenant. Everything that Christ experienced and learnt through the sufferings associated with His offering, we are to learn in Him and with Him.

In Christ, we continue to learn priesthood for the whole of our life. This is because priesthood is to be our eternal reward and inheritance. We will minister forever as part of a kingdom of priests.

Seven elements of priesthood

Christ ministers His finished offering to us, today. As we experience each wounding event, there are seven elements of priesthood that we are learning and being made adequate for. All seven elements are being expressed in each and every wounding event that we participate in with Christ.

1. Each wounding event is a learning and maturing process, making us adequate in priesthood. In relation to this implication of our journey with Christ, we note the words of Paul, who wrote, 'It is for discipline that you endure [chastening and scourging in Christ]; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline?' Heb 12:7.

A son of God does not need to have done anything wrong in order to experience the rod of discipline. The apostle Paul said, 'It is for discipline that you endure.' Heb 12:7. We see that the purpose of discipline is to be trained in endurance. In his letter to the Romans, Paul similarly explained that we 'exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance; and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us'. Rom 5:3-5. Through suffering, we are learning our obedience as son-priests, and are coming to know and believe the love that God has for us. Heb 12:6. 1Jn 4:16. That is, as the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our heart, we are being enlarged to love as priests. Rom 5:5. 2Co 6:11. We are able to love ourselves, love the Lord, and to love others as ourselves. Mar 12:29-31.

To love ourselves is to respect our own sonship and priesthood, and to minister accordingly. As we love and respect our sonship and priesthood, we cease from ministering according to shame, which is based in our knowledge of good and evil. In the same way that Christ had compassion upon us, we are able to have compassion on the ignorant and upon those who are not walking in the way of salvation. Heb 5:2. We will discuss this in more detail in Chapter 5.

2. Each wounding event is multiplying Christ's life to us, and to others, through the fellowship of offering transfer. It is for this reason that

when we are having a 'bad' day, on account of the various difficulties that we experience in the fellowship of Christ's offering, it is, in reality, a 'good' day. This is because, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering, His life is becoming our life, and we are able to minister this life to others.

3. Each wounding event is circumcising our fleshly self-centred and self-promoting ways from our heart.
4. Each wounding event is disempowering the principalities and powers of opposing angels and men, taking away their control, disarming them, and giving us power over them. As we hold our peace, rejoice, and give praise to God when we are being persecuted for Christ's name's sake, those who are hostile towards us are being disarmed.

As Paul did, prior to his conversion, those who persecute us find themselves 'kicking against the goads' of the cross of Christ. Act 9:5. The resulting frustration, angst and suffering become an opportunity for them to yield to the lordship of Christ, and to commence their own journey with Christ on the pathway of salvation.

5. Each abusive wounding event becomes an opportunity for us to minister as a priest in the world, imparting the word and life of God to others through the priestly ministry of reconciliation. This is what Paul was teaching when he wrote, 'Now all things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not imputing their trespasses to them, and has committed to us the word of reconciliation'. 2Co 5:18-19.
6. In each wounding event, Christ ended the Old Covenant with its temple and priesthood, taking the Law out of the way and nailing it to His cross. In the same action, He established the New Covenant and its priesthood after the order of Melchizedek. He finished this work, declaring it adequate. He then inaugurated a new priestly economy, having appointed us as priests after this order, according to our name as a son of God.
7. Through each wounding event, He was a judging priest both in the church and in the world. Likewise, in Him, we are to judge as priests. We note, in this regard, the words of Jude, who wrote, 'Now Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied about these men also, saying, "Behold, the Lord comes with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgement on all, to convict all who are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have committed in an ungodly

way, and of all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him”.’ Jud 14-15.

While Jude was referring to the judgement that will occur at the end of the age, even more immediately, in Christ, we are able to discern and judge the cultures within the church that are contrary to godliness, or piety. This is effected by the sword of the word that proceeds from the mouth of the Lord. Rev 2:12,16. Concerning this word, Paul explained, ‘For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.’ Heb 4:12.

We are able to judge in this manner because we have inclined our ear to the wisdom of God that is ministered by Melchizedek through the star messengers who are in His hand, and who have joined, by the Spirit, the fellowship of Yahweh that is established by the word. 1Jn 1:3. Rev 1:16. In this fellowship, we are ‘getting understanding’. That is, the culture of godliness is becoming our culture, because the word of faith that has been preached to us is in our mouth and in our heart. Rom 10:8. This is what it means to be spiritual. In this regard, Paul wrote, ‘But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no-one. For “who has known the mind of the Lord that he may instruct Him?” But we [who are part of this fellowship] have the mind of Christ.’ 1Co 2:15-16.

Our High Priest leads us

Psalms twenty-three provides helpful instruction regarding how the Lord leads us on the pathway of priesthood. King David wrote, ‘The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He makes me to lie down in green pastures; He leads me beside the still waters. He restores my soul; He leads me in the paths of righteousness for His name’s sake.’ Psa 23:1-3. We note that we are led in the paths of God’s righteousness for His name’s sake. This is the name that Christ, our Pioneer and High Priest, declares to us in the midst of the congregation. Heb 2:12.

Many people view the first three verses of David’s famous psalm as a statement of the successful Christian life. They consider the next verses, which pertain to times of trial and difficulty, to be a separate aspect of the Christian experience. They may consider, for example, the valley of the shadow of death to be a time when they are disciplined by the Lord for a moral failure. They may view it as a period of time when they stray

from the Christian faith. They may consider the valley of the shadow to be times of suffering from which the Lord delivers them, through miraculous intervention.

However, this is not what the passage intends. David was saying that being led by still waters is the *same* initiative of the Lord as being led through the valley of the shadow of death. It is one pathway of sonship and priesthood. He wrote, 'Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil; for You are with me; Your rod [for chastening] and Your staff, they comfort me.' Psa 23:4.

David noted that, on this pathway, 'You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies; You anoint my head with oil; my cup runs over. Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life; and I will dwell [as a priest] in the house of the Lord [His temple] forever.' Psa 23:5-6.

With this in view, we either approach our Christian life as a son-priest, or we approach life according to the 'good and evil, success and failure' mindset. The Lord wants to shift us from this fallen and fleshly way of living. As the word of present truth comes among us, we must not let it fall on the wayside of the pathway of priesthood. Mat 13:19. The word of the cross should be central to the way in which we are living and walking each day as a son-priest.

Christ's ministry to His lampstand churches

The Lord is walking among His lampstand churches, watching and yearning over us with His love. God's love is a vehement fire which cannot be quenched by the doctrinal traditions and religious practices of men. Son 8:6. Jas 1:6. Eph 4:14. His fervent and jealous love does not accommodate our self-righteous and well-intentioned initiatives. Deu 4:24. Rather, He comes to refine us as son-priests, so that we are delivered from our fleshly ministry modes, and are enabled to serve God in holiness.

In this season, we are being urged by the Holy Spirit to hear and receive the ministry of Christ, our great High Priest. Rev 2:7. This is because the hour of this present age is late. In the parable of the five wise and five foolish virgins, it was at midnight that the cry was heard, 'Behold, the bridegroom is coming; go out to meet him!' Mat 25:6. The midnight hour is fast approaching. The darkness of corruption and godlessness is covering the peoples of the earth. Like the five wise virgins, we must be ready for the coming of Christ.

The opening chapters of the book of Revelation reveal the demeanour and admonition of the Son of God toward us. He is coming to us and ministering as our great High Priest. This is His demeanour, and His message to us is contained in the letters to the seven churches of Asia. We can receive Christ only according to the way that He is coming to us. Presuming to receive Him in any other way is senseless and unfruitful. It is nothing more than our imagination of who Christ is and what He is saying to the church.

The Lord was referring to Christ's high-priestly initiative toward us when He declared, through the prophet Malachi, 'Behold, I send My messenger, and he will prepare the way before Me. And the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts.' Mal 3:1.

The Messenger of the covenant is Melchizedek, our great High Priest. He is proclaiming the gospel of sonship from the position of a finished offering. What is the implication of receiving His message? The Lord Himself declared, 'But who can endure the day of His coming? And who can stand when He appears? For He is like a refiner's fire and like launderers' soap. He will sit as a refiner and a purifier of silver; He will purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer to the Lord an offering in righteousness.' Mal 3:2-3.

In this season, Christ is coming to every leader, and to every congregation, as a refiner's fire and launderers' soap, to purify us as son-priests. He does this by giving us a participation in the fellowship of His offering. The outcome of this priestly ministry is that we are able to make offering in the righteousness that comes by faith, rather than from the basis of our own righteousness. Offering through faith obedience is holy and acceptable to God. Rom 12:1,3. Rom 16:26.

Offering and godly fear

Regarding Christ's offering, Paul noted that 'in the days of His flesh, He [Christ] offered up both prayers and supplications with loud crying and tears to the One able to save Him from death, and He was heard because of His piety [or, godly fear]. Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation, being designated by God as a high priest according to the order of Melchizedek.' Heb 5:7-9.

The priesthood of Christ

We learn the obedience that Christ learnt through His sufferings as we join the fellowship of His offering, and journey on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered. Mat 11:29-30. On this pathway, we are learning to be son-priests to the Father. Essential to our participation in this offering is the fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane. As we are joined to this prayer meeting, by the Holy Spirit, we are able to express the same godly fear as Christ expressed.

Our fear of God is demonstrated by the way that we fellowship as a community of believers. The same is true for those who are part of the presbytery of the church. Concerning those who received the word of the covenant, which joined them to a process of purification so that they could offer to the Lord in righteousness, Malachi recorded, 'Then *those who feared the Lord spoke to one another*, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name'. Mal 3:16.

In the light of this truth, we recognise that ongoing relational reservations between brethren in the church and in the presbytery, and indifference to Christ's priestly initiative toward them, indicate that a person, or group of people, are pursuing their own righteousness rather than being joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. They are unwilling and unable to speak as a son-priest in this fellowship because they have foregone the faith that comes by hearing the word of God. In reality, they do not fear the Lord. If they remain unwilling to humble themselves, and to turn again to Him, they will forgo true riches, honour and life. Pro 22:4.

The Lord describes those who speak to one another in the fear of the Lord as His 'own possession'. He said, 'They shall be Mine, says the Lord of hosts, on the day that I make them My jewels. And I will spare them as a man spares his own son who serves him. Then you shall again discern between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.' Mal 3:17-18.

The phrase 'My jewels' can equally be translated as 'My special possession' or 'My treasure'. This is what the apostle Peter was referring to when he wrote, 'But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people [His own special possession], that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained

mercy' 1Pe 2:9-10. We see that the Lord was making those who feared Him, and who spoke to one another, to be part of His royal priesthood.

The eyes of the Lord

The Lord is raising up a standard against the spirit of antichrist through the ministry and illumination of present truth that He reveals to His servants who are part of His lampstand presbyteries. These presbyteries are the stars in His right hand as He walks among His churches with eyes as a flame of fire. Rev 1:12-20. This is a feature of Christ's high-priestly demeanour toward us.

Throughout the church age, Christ has been addressing both the presbyteries and congregations of His church. Illumination is necessary for our continuing restoration as a lampstand church. We all must be illuminated by the word of present truth. This illumination comes from the eyes of the Lord as He brings the word of present truth to us through His ascension gift messengers. While these men are sent by the Lord with His message for the presbytery and the church, they are also, themselves, part of the presbytery and the church.

As we turn in response to His word, we look into the eyes of Christ. His eyes are like a flame of fire. This is how Jesus introduced Himself to the presbytery of the church in Thyatira, writing, 'These things *say* the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze'. Rev 2:18. Furthermore, He addressed the seven churches as the One who is searching, illuminating and judging the hearts of those who are in the household of God. Rev 2:23. He is coming and looking at us in this way because He is coming to search our hearts, to illuminate us, and to refine us as son-priests.

The first effect of looking into the eyes of the Lord is that we become aware of the corruption and bankruptcy of our own righteousness. At this point, our inclination is to retreat from the light and conviction that we are experiencing as the word is being preached to us. We can do this by defending our self-righteous position or by denying that what is being proclaimed by Christ's messengers is true.

This does not need to be our response. Grace is being poured out upon us as the word is preached to us. God's prevenient grace enables us to fix our eyes on Jesus. When we do not resist God's grace, we are able to turn from our self-righteousness and to receive the word of faith that is bringing illumination to us, by the Spirit. The Lord meets us this

way in order to refine us so that we can make offering according to our sanctification as a son of God.

The sword from His mouth

The apostle John described the word that is being proclaimed by Christ, our great High Priest, as a sword that proceeds from His mouth. Rev 1:16. The sword of His word pierces our hearts, exposes our motivations, calls us to repentance, and grants us faith to repent and believe. This is so that His righteousness can become the way and mode of our lives.

The sword that proceeds from the mouth of Christ is the word of the cross. In contrast to the Law, which resulted in *condemnation*, the word of the cross brings *conviction* to the hearts of all those who receive it. The apostle Paul declared, 'For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Heb 4:12. The word of the cross *convicts* every believer of their need to personally join the fellowship of Christ's offering so that the other law can be removed from their heart by the circumcision of Christ.

Restoration in the context of the seventh world kingdom

The church is being restored in the midst of the formation of the seventh world kingdom that is to rule over the earth. This kingdom is controlled by the spirit of antichrist. In the context of this emerging kingdom, a great falling away of professing Christians is taking place because of the iniquity of religious self-righteousness and independence that dominates the agenda of the Evangelical and Pentecostal religious traditions.

In King Nebuchadnezzar's prophetic dream of a monument representing five of the seven world kingdoms of history, this seventh kingdom, which becomes an eighth kingdom that is ruled by Antichrist, was depicted as feet of clay mixed with iron. The prophet Daniel explained that, during these final world kingdoms, the lampstand church would grow and become like a stone that would strike the kingdom and destroy it. The church would then become like a great mountain, or kingdom, and fill the whole earth. Dan 2:31-44. Christ is speaking to us and joining us to His offering so that we are part of His church in this age.

Chapter 3

The secret of the Lord

Introduction

Under the Old Covenant, the children of Israel endeavoured to obtain the righteousness of God through their own efforts to keep the Law. Of course, they were unable to do this. The failure of Israel to keep God's covenant served to highlight the weakness of the flesh of all mankind. Rom 3:10-19. God had given the law covenant to Israel to teach them that a person could only be justified, or made acceptable to God, through faith in Christ. Gal 3:24. The nation was to wait for the coming of the Son of God, who would establish a new covenant. In accordance with this covenant, Yahweh would put His Spirit within His people, to enable them to walk in His statutes and to keep His ordinances. Eze 36:27. Paul described this as 'the promise of the Spirit through faith'. Gal 3:14.

With this in mind, we can understand Paul's astonishment and concern when he heard that the Christians in Galatia had reverted to a fleshly and self-righteous form of Christianity that was the same as the way of life under the Old Covenant. He wrote to them, saying, 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified?' Gal 3:1.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

Paul was saying that through his preaching, the offering of Christ on the cross had been ministered to the Galatians. This was the message of the New Covenant. Paul did not mean that he simply preached that Christ had been crucified on a cross. He meant that he, himself, was co-crucified with Christ. 1Co 2:2. Gal 2:20. For this reason, when Paul preached and had fellowship with his hearers, Christ was being publicly portrayed among them as crucified. In other words, the mystery of the cross was being ministered to Paul's hearers from the basis of testimony.

Initially, the Galatians received Paul's message. They had been born of the Spirit and, through baptism, had joined the offering and circumcision of Christ. And yet, the Galatians had begun to deviate from the pathway of salvation that Christ, their High Priest, had pioneered for them. In this regard, Paul wrote, 'This only I want to learn from you: did you receive the Spirit by the works of the Law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh? Have you suffered so many things in vain - if indeed it was in vain?' Gal 3:2-4. Paul then reminded the Galatians that Christ, through His offering, had redeemed them from the cursed way of living to which they were seeking to return. Gal 3:10.

Many Christians presume that they are living in the New Covenant simply because Christ has died for them, and because they are believers. However, as Paul highlighted through the example of the church in Galatia, a Christian is only living in the New Covenant when they continue to receive the word of Christ that He is ministering to His church, and when they continue in the fellowship of His offering.

The traditional theologies that have persisted in the church at large have not effectively communicated the New Covenant. Of course, there have been many messengers of Christ who have ministered during the church age, through whom Christ has been publicly portrayed as crucified. The reality is that these teachers have been part of a remnant of God's people, who have ministered among a nominal religious majority who have not been committed to the gospel of sonship. 2Ti 1:15. 2Th 2:1-3. The cross of Christ, and the blessings of the Everlasting Covenant, remain hidden from believers who preference other 'gospels'. In our day, many Christians are focused on the pursuit of self-righteousness or the attainment of prosperity as an indication of God's blessing and acceptance. None of these 'gospels', however, enable a person to fulfil the righteousness of God.

In the New Covenant, we are born again by the word of God. The righteousness that we are now to fulfil as a son of God is to walk with Christ, in faith, each day. This way of living has replaced keeping the Law as the basis for righteousness. Walking in faith with Christ involves the washing of regeneration, as well as our participation in the offering and circumcising work that Christ accomplished for us from Gethsemane until His work was finished when He was lifted up on the cross at Calvary.

Regeneration and renewing address our natural identity so that, as we continue in the fellowship of the offering and circumcision of Christ, the seed of our sonship, which is planted in our heart, is able to grow and bear fruit unto eternal life. In this way, the expression of our name as a son of God is not hindered by our identity frailties. In the fellowship of Christ's circumcision, the other law, which brings us into bondage to sin, is being removed from us, and is being replaced by the law of the Spirit of life. Rom 8:2. This is the capacity of God's love, which the Holy Spirit pours into our heart. The Holy Spirit is not just helping us to be righteous; He is the expression of the righteousness of God within us. We will consider this in more detail, later in this chapter.

The New Covenant is not the operation of the Father circumcising our hearts by our suffering; i.e. by merely cutting the other law from us so that we can love. If this is all that were to happen, then our love would still be self-righteous. Rather, by joining us to the offering of Christ, the Father is cutting us into the fellowship of the covenant of Yahweh, so that Their love is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. This enables us to love and give according to our name as sons of God and members of Christ's body, which has now become for us the new context for our life.

In this chapter, we will consider the implications of our fellowship in the offering of Christ as it is priested to us each day by Christ. To live in this way is to obtain the secret of the Lord, which He makes known to those who fear Him. Psa 25:14.

Attaining to life in Christ

God (*Elohim*) the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, are three Persons who are, and who possess together, one Spirit and one life; that is, They exist and express Themselves as one God, by offering. This is the nature of Their one life. They minister this life to one another, in love, through the fellowship of offering. Each Person in the Godhead lays down His

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

life, according to His unique name, to reveal the other two. The other two lay down life, according to Their names, to reveal the one. As each One, in turn, reveals the Others, Their offering is so complete that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one. They are fully manifest as one God, called 'Yahweh'.

It is most important to understand that each Person does not have Their own life by which They can live independently from the Others. If this were so, Their end would be in Themselves. Any one of Them would cease to exist if They endeavoured to have life apart from the fellowship of Yahweh.

God is the source of all life. Through offering, Their life is multiplied and extended, beyond Themselves, to creation, as a gift. As Paul explained, Yahweh God '*gives to all life, breath, and all things*'; and, in Him, *all 'live, move, and have [their] being'*. Act 17:25,28.

God created man in His image and according to His likeness. Gen 1:26. Man's life and identity came from Him. However, Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil because they desired to be the source of their own life and destiny. This pursuit only separated them from the fellowship of Yahweh. This is why Adam and Eve died in the day that they ate the fruit. Gen 2:17. They were not being punished by God. Rather, mankind's death was the inevitable consequence of Adam and Eve separating themselves from fellowship with God, who is the source of all life.

When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, mankind's disconnection from the fellowship and life of Yahweh became permanent. This is because the desire to be the source of their own life and destiny became the principle of their life. It became part of their identity, affecting their perception of themselves, and their fundamental motivations for life. Paul called this fallen principle within us, 'the other law'. Rom 7:23.

The other law is a delusion. Satan had deceived Eve into believing that she would be able to sustain her own life apart from God. He said, to her, 'You surely will not die.' Gen 3:4. Moreover, he proposed that, by eating, Eve would become like God. Specifically, he said, 'God knows that in the day you eat of it [the fruit] your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil.' Gen 3:5.

Satan is the evil one. Luk 11:4. Joh 17:15. He was seeking to plant this evil proposition within the spirit of man. When Adam and Eve gave heed to Satan's alternative word, the desire to be like God, and to have life apart from Him, was aroused within them. They ate the fruit to satisfy this desire. This is when Satan's evil was planted within them as another law. In this regard, we recall the words of Paul, who wrote, 'I find then a law, that evil is present with me, the one who wills to do good'. Rom 7:21.

Because Adam and Eve's motivation to eat was so that they might become like God, this desire became the fundamental drive of every son and daughter of man. In other words, the other law motivates a person to self-centred identity projection. They endeavour to create and project an image of who they are, and how they would like to be viewed and received by others. Man does this because he inherently believes that he has the wisdom to create what is good, and to deal with what is evil, as one who has the capacity to distinguish between these elements of existence. This pursuit, however, only maintains man's disconnection from fellowship with God and His life.

As we have already considered, *offering* is God's *life*. His offering is the expression of *love*, because it involves laying one's life down to reveal another. In this regard, God's life is defined by His Law. God's Law is summed up in two commandments - love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind; and love your neighbour as yourself. Mat 22:37-40. Jesus said that if a person kept these commandments, *they would live*. Luk 10:27.

Adam and Eve desired to become like God through the use of His Law as the code of their life. However, once they were cut off from the offering of Yahweh, which is a fellowship of love that is expressed through giving, the Law no longer ministered life to them. Paul himself testified, saying, 'And the commandment, which was to bring life, I found to bring death.' Rom 7:10.

The power of the Law, which is the capacity to love, does not reside in the spirit of man when he seeks to live independently from God. The power of the Law resides in the Spirit that God is. Paul called this 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. Rom 8:2. This law of life, which motivates love, is the only thing that can free us from the law of sin and death.

Jesus came into the world so that we might have life, and have it more abundantly. Joh 10:10. How do we come to receive His life? Jesus said, 'Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.' Joh 6:53-54. We 'eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood' by receiving and believing the word that He ministers to us at the communion gathering. Joh 6:61-64. This word grants to us access and faith for participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Rom 10:17. 1Co 10:16.

Once we are connected to the offering of Christ, the life of God is made available to us. We attain to this life by knowing Christ and the power of His resurrection, by participating in the fellowship of His sufferings, and by being conformed to His death. By this means, we attain to the resurrection from the dead. This is *exanastasis* - resurrection 'out from among the dead', while we are still in a mortal body. Php 3:10-16. This attainment of resurrection life in our mortal bodies is a demonstration that we have been reconnected to the life of God through the offering of Christ. Christ's offering has the capacity to deal with our sin and other law in a progressive way, as we walk together with Him through the experiences of life.

Referring to Jesus, the apostle John wrote, 'In Him was life, and the life was the light of men'. Joh 1:4-5. We recall that the eyes of Adam and Eve were opened to see their nakedness and shame when they ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. However, when the word of God is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit anoints our eyes to see that life is in Christ, and that this life is the light of men.

The faith that comes with the word, by the Holy Spirit, enables us to see and lay hold of the life and destiny that God is giving to us in Christ. As we see and understand, we, in faith, return to Christ to eat of Him, as the Tree of Life; that is, we eat His flesh and drink His blood, which is the substance of His life. By this means, we are joined to the fellowship of His offering and, by offering transfer, His life becomes our life. We are able to live by the life of God. This means that we are able to live by offering in the fellowship of Yahweh. Of course, this is only possible in Christ.

In his first epistle, John noted that we receive this understanding through the ministry of the Holy Spirit so that 'we may know Him who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life'. 1Jn 5:20. Evidently, through understanding, we are being joined to the fellowship of Christ. We are coming to know Him, personally, and corporately. Importantly, in the fellowship of His offering, we are not just being delivered from our other law; *His life is becoming our life.*

A way of escape through Christ's offering

Mortality does not only denote the unavoidable expiry of our physical lives; it also entails the physical, psychological and emotional distresses that every person experiences throughout the course of their life. These distresses may be caused by sicknesses, genetic predispositions and abnormalities, and the physical encumbrances associated with aging. The implications of mortality for every individual were fixed for them when Adam sinned.

Mortality also encompasses a Christian. Paul noted that Christians experience the temptations and afflictions that are *common to all men*. 1Co 10:13. These temptations and afflictions are common to all men because they are associated with our mortality. Paul then explained that 'God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it'. 1Co 10:13.

Many Christians believe that God helps us to escape from the distresses associated with mortality. However, this is not what Paul was saying. He said that, *with the temptation*, God would make *a way of escape* so that we would *be able to bear it*. To understand what this means, we must consider what we are escaping from; how we escape; and what we are escaping to.

When Jesus became our sin, He joined us in the afflictions associated with the death of Adam. As Isaiah prophesied, 'In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the Angel of His Presence saved them.' Isa 63:9. By joining us in our afflictions, Jesus made the afflictions of every person, His own. This offering commenced in the garden of Gethsemane when Jesus, by the grace of God, began to taste the suffering of death for every person. Heb 2:9. As Jesus presented Himself to the Father for this offering, an angel appeared to Him from heaven and strengthened Him. Jesus then began to pray more earnestly, and His sweat became like great drops of blood. Luk 22:43-44.

The shedding of Christ's blood signalled the commencement of His journey back from the death of Adam. Heb 13:20. With each wound that He received, sin was being killed; the iniquity of mankind was being removed from Him; and He was coming back from the death of sin by the life of Yahweh that was in His blood. On this journey of offering and suffering, Christ was pioneering the pathway of our salvation. This pathway is 'the way of escape' that Paul was referring to in his letter to the Corinthians. 1Co 10:13.

Receiving grace for participation

How do we find this way of escape? We find it by joining the offering of Christ. This is His death, burial, and resurrection. Through offering, Christ became a new context for our life. The Scriptures teach us that everyone who is *in* Christ, though mortal, shall be made alive. Rom 8:10-11. This is because, in Christ, our mortality has been embraced by the grace of God.

As we have already noted, it was by the grace of God that Christ tasted death for every person. Heb 2:9. The grace of God enables us to remain joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. God has established a throne of grace which we can approach so that we may obtain the same grace that He received in order to endure the suffering of *our* death. Paul exhorted us to come boldly to this throne in prayer, to find grace to help us in our time of need. Heb 4:16. Our time of need is our mortal life!

In Christ, we are able to bear the burden of our mortality. This is because we receive the same strength that Christ received, so that we are able to journey on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for us. In this fellowship, we are escaping sin and the other law which would, otherwise, lead to our eternal death. Furthermore, we are coming back from the death of sin with Christ. This means that we are increasingly living by His life, while still in our mortality. Php 3:10-11. Paul was referring to this when he wrote, 'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also *give life to your mortal bodies* through His Spirit who dwells in you'. Rom 8:11.

Importantly, as those who are joined to the offering of Christ, we accept that the sufferings we experience in the course of our life are given to us as a participation in Christ's suffering. The implication of this reality is that when Christ's sufferings, which He has finished, are made complete in us, then *our* sufferings will cease. This is because the healing that He is bringing to us has been achieved. We are escaping from the weakness of living by the principles of fallen flesh, and are being delivered to a new and living way of walking in the Lord.

Do not neglect the salvation of God

Every Sunday in the communion service, when we eat the bread and drink the cup, we commit ourselves afresh to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings and death. In preparation for the weekly realities of life that confront each of us, we need to take time in prayer at the communion table, and to tarry one for another, so that we are renewed in faith and

grace to walk forward in Christ during the coming week, no matter what transpires.

If we neglect the salvation that God has given to us, there is no escape from the afflictions associated with the death caused by sin. Heb 2:3. In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul highlighted the reality that the salvation that God has given to us is the pathway that Christ pioneered from Gethsemane until His work was finished on the cross. Paul explained that it is because this way of salvation is neglected that many among us 'are weak and sick, and a number sleep [or, die before their time]'. 1Co 11:30. They are not being healed, because they are not participating in the offering of Christ, by which He came back from the death caused by sin. Christ came back from this death while still in a mortal body. He has made His resurrection life available to us so that, in the fellowship of His offering, we, also, can experience resurrection life in our mortal body. Php 3:11.

Paul said that if we judge ourselves rightly at the communion table, we will not be judged. However, when we *are* judged, we are being chastened by the Lord so that we will not be condemned with the world. 1Co 11:29-32.

The apostle John clarified the point that there is a sin that is unto death, for which we are *not to pray*. 1Jn 5:16. Furthermore, there is a judgement and suffering in which we can find ourselves, that is *not healing us*. In this case, we are not finding an escape from the death of sin through this suffering. This is because we are not discerning what our participation in the body of Christ should be. Instead we are continuing to pursue a righteousness of our own, which is contrary to Christ's offering and suffering. Because of this, we are failing to walk in the pathway of salvation that He has given to us, and are coming under the judgement of the Lord.

The Lord wants all our sufferings to be Christ's sufferings, as a fellowship in His offering. Our sufferings are not to be an affront to His mercy, nor a trampling of His blood. We are supposed to be sanctified by His blood. In the midst of our suffering, the key is to respond by the Spirit, rather than to draw back in unbelief and anxiety, in the manner of Job's wife. We recall that in the context of the sufferings that Job and his wife experienced, she said, 'Curse God and die!' Job 2:9. We must, instead, press forward in faith and find a way of escape. As Paul reminded us in the book of Hebrews, ' "Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." But we are not of those who

draw back to perdition, but of those who *believe to the saving of the soul.*' Heb 10:38-39.

Joined to the offering of Christ by the Father, Son and Holy Spirit

All three Persons of the Godhead – the Father, Son and Holy Spirit – address us in order to join us to the fellowship of Christ's one offering. They are doing this so that, instead of continuing to pursue our own righteousness, which leads only to the condemnation of death, we might become the righteousness of God in Christ. 2Co 5:21.

We must know and believe, from our heart, that it is because *Christ* loves us that He rebukes and chastens us. 1Jn 4:16. Rev 3:19. He does this so that the peaceable fruit of righteousness that comes from God will become part of our identity, and we will cease from living according to our own way. Heb 12:11. It is for this reason that He exhorts us to 'be zealous and repent' in response to His word. Rev 3:19.

We can only know and believe that Christ loves us in this way if His word has been received into our heart. When we receive His word, it becomes our confession unto salvation. Rom 10:10. We are not believing simply because our minds are convinced that the word is true. Rather, believing means joining the fellowship of Christ's offering. It is evident that we believe the word, because it is in our mouth to speak, and it is in our heart as a cultural foundation. Rom 10:8.

Further to this, *the Father*, through the Holy Spirit, is joining us to the offering of Christ in the secret place of His presence. He is doing this by regenerating us through the seed of new creation, so that we are born of Him as His children, and are also *established* in Christ. 2Co 1:21. As Paul wrote, 'For all the promises of God in Him are Yes, and in Him Amen, to the glory of God through us. Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.' 2Co 1:20-22.

In this 'establishing process', to which the Father is joining us, our name is made known. The Father gives us into the care of the *Holy Spirit*, who leads us in the way of discipleship, training us in the way of sonship so that our sanctification reveals our name.

Sealed

Let us consider, for a moment, what it means to be 'sealed' by God. The Scriptures reveal that the seal of God is the sign of ownership. For example, Paul wrote, 'Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: "The Lord knows those who are His," and, "Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity".' 2Ti 2:19. Likewise, we read in the book of Revelation that, under the sixth seal, the earth, sea and trees were not to be harmed until the angels had sealed the bondservants of God on their foreheads. Rev 7:3.

In Part 1 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we outlined the process through which a person is born from above as a son of God. Revisiting these points, we recall that in response to a hearer's repentant mourning and cry for help to believe what God believes about them, the Son asks the Father to send the Holy Spirit to be with them and in their heart. Joh 14:16-17. Concerning this transaction, Paul explained that it is God the Father who 'sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge [or, down payment, of our sonship]'. 2Co 1:22.

This is the *first* dimension of being sealed as one who belongs to God. The Holy Spirit begins to regenerate and renew our spirit so that the incorruptible seed of the Father can germinate, and take root in our heart. By this means, we are born from above as a son of God.

Next, through baptism into Christ, we join the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. Col 2:11-12. Journeying with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and circumcision is what it means to live and walk by faith. Gal 2:20. Fellowship in the circumcision of Christ is an authentication of, or testimony to, the reality that we have received the righteousness that comes from God as a seal, or a sign.

The experience of Abraham, the father of all who believe, demonstrates this point. Paul explained that, for Abraham, circumcision was a *sign* that he had received the seal of the righteousness of faith, imputed to him as a gift, *before* he had been circumcised. Gen 15:3-6. Gen 17:11. Rom 4:11-12.

When we have the righteousness that comes from faith, we have the seal of God upon us. Having been joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision through baptism, we are then baptised with the Holy Spirit, from the Father, as the guarantee of receiving and expressing our sonship. Peter described this progression at the end of his Pentecost sermon. He declared, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the

name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' Act 2:38-39.

Regarding this *third* dimension of being sealed by God, Paul wrote, 'Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, *by whom* you were sealed for the day of redemption'. Eph 4:30. A seal is a statement of guarantee, a sanctification, and an authority over one's name, to facilitate the sonship of the one who has been sealed. This is so that the Holy Spirit can reveal our sonship life in us. The Holy Spirit is the expression of the firstfruits of a person's sonship in the kingdom of heaven and as a member of the body of Christ.

As we walk after the Spirit, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, the Holy Spirit continues to be the expression of our sonship in a firstfruits measure. Furthermore, we are being delivered from the dying that is in Adam, and are experiencing resurrection life in our mortal body. Php 3:10-11. This process continues until we are fully redeemed from the death of mortality, and have received immortality. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, 'Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body'. Rom 8:23.

The secret of the Lord

King David wrote, 'The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him, and He will show them His covenant'. Psa 25:14. In our day, the Lord shows the New Covenant to those who fear Him. Earlier in his psalm, David described the man who feared the Lord as one who was taught by the Lord to walk in the way that the Lord had chosen for him. Psa 25:12. The outcome of receiving this instruction was that he would dwell in prosperity, or at rest. Because they were humble and able to be led, they, and their children, would inherit the earth. Psa 25:13. Mat 5:5.

There are three co-dependent and necessary dimensions to the secret of the Lord that will be evident in the life of a person who is living and walking in the New Covenant. When these dimensions are not foundational in our life, the New Covenant remains veiled to us. Hence, we will live our life in the mode of the Old Covenant, seeking to fulfil the righteousness of the Law through the efforts of our flesh. 2Co 3:14-15.

The secret place of prayer

First, every person should have a personal awareness of their name and sanctification as a son of God. We first received our name from the Father when we were born from above by the incorruptible word of God. 1Pe 1:23. The word of God continues to define the works of our sonship. With this word, we receive faith, which enables us to believe and obey what the Father is saying to us concerning our sonship. Rom 10:17.

The first work of faith is to *speak*. 2Co 4:13. Rom 10:6-8. To speak by faith means to express our sonship on the holy ground of Yahweh's fellowship. Holy ground is an authentic place that embraces reality. It is a place where the truth is spoken, where dialogue is sincere, and where offering is made. Having received mercy from the Father, and been sealed by Him with the Holy Spirit, we are able to present ourselves, by faith, for participation in this fellowship. Rom 12:1,3.

We first speak by faith in the *secret place of prayer*. 2Co 4:13. Mat 6:6. This is the fellowship of prayer, which Christ revealed in the garden of Gethsemane, and which we join by the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26-28. Here, the Father reveals the secret of our name to us. Jesus said to His disciples, 'But you, when you pray, go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly.' Mat 6:6.

The fellowship of Christ's offering

This fellowship of prayer is foundational to our daily participation in the offering of Christ, which is the *second* dimension of the secret of the Lord. Paul described the secret of the Lord as 'the *mystery* of the cross'. 1Co 2:7-10. He explained that the cross, or the offering of Christ, is a stumbling block and a scandal to the religious sign-seeker, and foolishness to the scientific logic of the Greek. 1Co 1:23. When a person responds in either of these ways to the invitation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to participate in the offering of Christ, it demonstrates that a veil remains over the eyes of their heart. They are unable to rightly discern the Lord's body and their participation in the fellowship of His offering. 1Co 11:29-30.

Every Christian should have a personal testimony of fellowship in the offering of Christ. This should be the reality of our daily Christian experience. In this fellowship, we are fulfilling the works that the Father has prepared for us, in Christ, and are receiving our sufferings - whether big or small - from the Lord, as a participation in His afflictions. This is

the implication of being baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and of eating and drinking the elements of the communion each week.

A corporate mirror

Third, a person who knows the secret of the New Covenant will walk in the light of the word that they are receiving at the communion gathering. 1Jn 1:5. This will involve fellowship with those who proclaim the word of life, recognising that their fellowship is with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit. 1Jn 1:1-3. This is the fellowship of Yahweh. It will also involve breaking open, and eating, the bread of the word within their households, and from house to house. Act 2:46. Act 5:42.

Through the preaching of Christ's messengers, who are part of a presbytery that is in His hand, the light of the gospel shines from the face of Christ. 2Co 4:6-10. We receive this word when we, with unveiled faces, look into Christ's face; that is, we receive the word that is preached to us, and have fellowship with those who are ministering it. This is the second context where we speak by the faith that we have received from the word that is preached to us. 2Co 4:13. Psa 116:12-19. Rom 10:8,17. If we are not meeting the Father in the secret place, we will not be able to speak in the fellowship of Yahweh according to our sanctification. Likewise, if we are not receiving and living the word that is preached to us, our prayers will be hindered. 1Pe 3:7.

Paul said that Christ's face is in *a mirror*. 2Co 3:18. Without a mirror, we cannot truly know ourselves. We are only able to know the reality of our name and works as we look into the mirror and receive a reflection from outside of ourselves. Otherwise, our understanding of ourselves will be completely self-centred. Through the reflection that we receive by looking into the face of Christ, we are able to distinguish between our endeavours – which are projections to cover the shame of pursuing an image for ourselves – and the truth of our name. In this fellowship, we are affirmed of our name and sanctification as we put off our projections. With this clarity, we are able to appreciate the name and sanctification of others, and can make offering by revealing others. This is foundational to worshipping in Spirit and in truth. Joh 4:24.

This mirror is in the fellowship of the presbytery, which is extended to everyone through the preaching of the word. How we receive and walk in the light of this word reveals the extent to which we are looking into the mirror of Christ's face. As the apostle James wrote, 'For if anyone is a

hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror; for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was. But he who looks into the perfect law of liberty and continues in it, and is not a forgetful hearer but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in what he does.' Jas 1:23-25.

The New Covenant

Under the Old Covenant, a person's goal was to attain the righteous requirement of the Law through their own self-righteous efforts. As we noted at the beginning of this chapter, the righteousness of God was not attained by anyone living under the conditions of the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is not just the Old Covenant with additional benefits. The New Covenant is a completely new way to live as God's people. God Himself must write the New Covenant upon our hearts by the Holy Spirit. He enables us to be part of the New Covenant by the power of new creation, which comes from the fellowship of Yahweh.

The first step in being delivered from living according to our own righteousness is to be born from above. This occurs when we receive our name from the Father as a seed. 1Pe 1:23. We are made a new creation and are able to love God. We are also able to love who He has made us to be, and to love others as ourselves. As the apostle John wrote, 'Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God'. 1Jn 4:7. This happens by the Holy Spirit.

The parable of the sower and seed teaches us that, unless we are joined to a process through which the seed of our sonship is able to take root in our heart and to bear fruit, we will return to living according to a righteousness of our own. Mat 13:19-22. We must be joined, through baptism and the communion, to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

In this fellowship, our identity continues to be regenerated, the other law is being removed from our heart, and we are living by the life of Jesus, which is in His blood. His life, which is love, becomes our life when it is sprinkled on our heart in the fellowship of His offering.

In the New Covenant, the righteousness of the Law can only be fulfilled in us if we follow the leading and direction that the Holy Spirit gives. The Holy Spirit is the essential 'ingredient' of the New Covenant. He is the substance and expression of the righteousness that comes from God through faith.

We receive the promised Holy Spirit, and the capacity for righteousness that He brings, when we respond to the word of God that is proclaimed to us. In this regard, we remember that Paul said that we receive the Spirit by the hearing of faith. Gal 3:2. The grace of God comes with the word of God, giving us the capacity to hear and believe what the Lord is saying to us, and to receive the Holy Spirit.

The capacity to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, to love ourselves, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, is the fruit of the Spirit of God once He has taken up residence in our heart. As we will consider later in this chapter, righteousness is not the fruit of simply having our other law circumcised from our heart. We are able to love because the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5.

We see that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each has a specific initiative toward a person that establishes them in the Everlasting Covenant. This also means that there are three distinct realities to our participation in this covenant. We are to be son-priests in the house of the Father, members of the body of Christ who are revealing the life of Christ, and our bodies are to be a temple for the Holy Spirit. These are the implications of being baptised into the name of the Father, the name of the Son and the name of the Holy Spirit. Let us consider these three facets of our sanctification a little more closely.

Son-priests to the Father

In Chapter 2, we discussed the significance of priesthood. Priesthood is our eternal inheritance as a son of God. We know this because the apostle John explained that Christ has made us to be a kingdom of priests to God the Father. Rev 1:6. In the new heavens and earth, we will serve as priests in the Father's temple, forever. Rev 22:3-5.

How has Christ made us a kingdom of priests to the Father? He did it by 'priesting' Himself as a living sacrifice. Christ was designated by the Father as Melchizedek, the great High Priest of the true tabernacle in heaven. When He priested Himself as the Father's sin offering, He was doing so in the true tabernacle. Yet the offering that He made, through the sufferings that He experienced, happened on earth. Through this offering, He pioneered a pathway of salvation from the death of sin. As we journey with Christ upon this pathway, we are being born from the death of sin, and we are learning from Him the way of the Melchizedek priesthood.

We join this pathway when, having been born from above by the incorruptible seed of the Father, through which we receive our name as a son of God, we are baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus. By this means we are receiving Christ's yoke, learning from Him as disciples, and finding the rest for our souls. Together, these aspects indicate that we are obtaining our inheritance as sons of God. Mat 11:28-29.

As we journey with Christ, in the fellowship of His offering, our sin is being put to death, and our other law is being cut from us. We are being delivered from the propensity to make a name for ourselves. As Christ receives our sin and our other law, and destroys them, His life is being transferred to us. By this life, we are being born as sons of God from the death of sin, with Him.

Importantly, through this process, we are coming to know our name, which the Son is declaring to the Father who is in heaven. As disciples, we are learning from Christ how to priest ourselves as a living sacrifice according to our name and sanctification as a son of God. Then, in the same manner as Christ, we are priesting ourselves as living sacrifices. We are ministering as priests to the Father in the true tabernacle by doing the works of our sonship on earth. By this means, we are progressively obtaining our eternal inheritance as son-priests.

Members of the body of Christ

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul wrote, 'You have died [with Christ in baptism] and your [new creation] life is *hidden with Christ in God*. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory'. Col 3:3-4. When we are baptised into Christ, it is our new creation life that dies with Him. The life of our sonship is hidden with Him in the bosom of the Father. The bosom of the Father is also called 'the Father's house'. Joh 14:2-3.

While our own sonship is hidden with Christ in the house of the Father, we are made members of Christ's corporate body on earth, and receive a share in the life and nature of Christ. As part of the fellowship of Christ's body, our preoccupation is no longer the revelation or expression of our own name; and our life is no longer ours to express as we see fit. Rather, we are revealing the life of the Son as the particular member of His body whom the Father has made us to be. In this regard, we remember that the Father places every believer in the body of Christ just as it pleases Him. 1Co 12:13,18.

Through baptism, we become a physical member of Christ's corporate body on earth. He is the immortal Head of His body, and we are the flesh and bones of His body. Eph 5:30. As Paul wrote, 'Holding fast to the [immortal] Head, from whom the entire body, being supplied and held together by the joints and ligaments, grows with a growth which is from God'. Col 2:19. To be held together by the joints and ligaments of the body means that we are tangibly connected to one another in the locations where the Father has placed us. 1Co 12:18. We cannot be members of Christ apart from being members of one another. Eph 4:25. Rom 12:5. As members of Christ's corporate body, we are to minister to, and to edify, one another; and we are to minister the life of Christ to those with whom we interact on a daily basis, in the various contexts of life.

Our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit

When Jesus was outlining the pathway of salvation, He said to His disciples that if they loved Him, they would keep His commandments. He then explained how they would be able to love Him and to keep His commandments. He said, 'I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.' Joh 14:16-17. As we considered earlier, this happens when the Father seals us and gives us the Spirit in our heart as a guarantee of receiving the full inheritance of our sonship. 2Co 1:22.

We note that Jesus did not say that we are enabled to obey His commandments because the other law is removed from our heart. He said that we are able to obey Him because we have received the Holy Spirit. It is important to recognise, however, that when we receive the Holy Spirit, He does not help us to keep the Law. Rather, He helps us by being the expression of the righteousness of God within us. This is fundamental to living in the New Covenant.

Once the Holy Spirit takes up residence in our heart, our body becomes His temple. 1Co 6:19. When we are baptised into the name of the Holy Spirit, He seals our body as a temple for the expression of His name. Eph 1:13. Eph 4:30. This means that His name is recorded upon us as His temple.

The offering of the Holy Spirit within us is to sanctify our spirit and soul so that we can be joined to Christ, become a member of His body

and, through offering, reveal and glorify His name. As well, the Holy Spirit is sanctifying us as son-priests so that we can serve the Father in the temple of His Son, Jesus Christ. For this reason, we also should sanctify ourselves to the Father, to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, and to one another.

When we are living in this way, the righteousness that comes from God through faith is being revealed in us. As we noted earlier, walking and living by the Spirit does not mean asking the Holy Spirit to help and strengthen us to use the Law properly so that we can live and keep the Law. Living in this way would still be according to a righteousness of our own.

Joining the offering of Christ is the only way by which we can receive the New Covenant. We eat and drink the elements of the communion in faith for our ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. 1Co 10:16. This is why Jesus identified the bread and the wine as being the elements of the New Covenant. Luk 22:19-20.

Once a person is joined to the offering of Christ, their life becomes a total package that is priested to them through the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek. The sufferings that they experience in life are not punitive. These sufferings are their participation in the afflictions of Christ. And, in the fellowship of these sufferings, the Angel of His Presence is saving them. Isa 63:9. Their other law is being cut from their heart, and the love of God is being poured into their heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5.

This is how the Holy Spirit writes the Law of God on our hearts and in our minds in the New Covenant. Jer 31:31-33. Paul highlighted the fact that it was the *Holy Spirit* who said, 'This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put My laws into their hearts, and in their minds I will write them.' Heb 10:15-16.

The initiative of the Holy Spirit

Some ministers, in past years, have taught that the Christian life can be likened to driving a car with power steering. They urged their hearers to consider themselves as being the driver of the car, which is on the road to righteousness as a son of God. They used the metaphor of power steering to describe the nature of the help that the Holy Spirit gives to us so that we can live and walk as God's son.

However, we are now coming to understand that this is a self-righteous way of living. If our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit, then we are not

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

the 'driver' of our life. We are, in fact, the 'vehicle', and the Holy Spirit is the 'driver'. Through His sanctifying work, He is leading, directing and empowering our life. He is in charge of the agenda of our life. We, through faith that comes by hearing the word of God, are workers together with Him.

Our faith is to choose to follow the initiative of the Spirit as He leads. Faith is an expression of our freedom. Faith is required as an accountable response to the word of direction that is given to us from the Father and the Son, through the Holy Spirit.

Anxiously asking the Lord to help us to walk as a son of God *is not faith*. Fear and anxiety are the evidence that we are pursuing our own righteousness; we are attempting to maintain control of the agenda of our life. Perfect love - the love of God that is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit - casts out all fear. 1Jn 4:18. Our faith is to work by this love. Gal 5:6. This is how we are to live and walk each day in the New Covenant.

Of course, this is what the Scriptures teach us regarding living in the New Covenant. Paul explained that we do not even know how to pray as we ought. We can hardly be the driver of the vehicle of our life if we are unable to pray according to the will of God! Thankfully, 'The Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered'. Rom 8:26. The Holy Spirit is praying on our behalf, and joining us to the fellowship of Christ's offering.

In this fellowship, Christ is priesting His life to us so that, in the fellowship of His offering, we are able to participate in the will of God being done. As Paul explained, 'Now He who searches the hearts [i.e. Christ] knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes intercession for the saints according to the will of God. And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.' Rom 8:27-28.

Christ is not rewarding our self-righteousness and calling it 'walking in the Spirit'. Rather, His righteousness is our reward for journeying with Him in the fellowship of His offering.

Chapter 4

A cloud of witnesses

Faith for fellowship in the afflictions of Christ

The gospel of sonship was proclaimed to Abraham and to the children of Israel, even before the Son of God had come in the flesh as the Son of Man. The apostle Paul wrote that ‘the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, *preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand*, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed.” So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.’ Gal 3:8-9. Through the word of the Lord, Abraham received faith to believe and obey God. Gen 15:1. And, because of this, God accounted it to him for righteousness. Gen 15:6. Gal 3:6.

When Abraham made offering in obedience to the word of the Lord, he demonstrated that he believed God by faith. This was first evident through his obedient and committed response to God’s command to sacrifice a three year-old heifer, a three year-old female goat, a three year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon. Gen 15:9. Later, Abraham’s faith was tested by God when he was called to sacrifice his son, Isaac, as a burnt offering to the Lord, on Mount Moriah. Gen 22:2. Figuratively, both of these offerings were a participation in the offering of Christ on the cross.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

The gospel that Abraham received and believed was the same message that Moses declared to the children of Israel, who were 'the church in the wilderness'. Act 7:38. However, unlike Abraham, the children of Israel did not receive the faith of God in the word that was proclaimed to them. As Paul explained, '*For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith* in those who heard it.' Heb 4:2. The implication of failing to obey God's word by faith was that the Holy Spirit would not allow that generation to enter the Lord's 'rest'. Heb 3:7,11. The Lord's rest refers to the kingdom of God that belongs to His children. It is the inheritance of the sons of God.

The men and women of the Old Testament who did receive the word of the Lord *lived by faith*. Their faith was the substance of the sonship that they hoped for and that had been promised to Abraham. Heb 11:1. Having received the faith of God in His word, they had seen the promise of sonship from a distance. By faith, they believed God's word, and confessed that they were strangers and exiles on earth. Such a confession indicated that they were looking for a kingdom in which they would dwell as citizens of a heavenly city. Heb 11:13-16.

The substance of their faith was evident in their *willingness to suffer with Christ*. They could see that the promise of eternal sonship would be obtained through Christ's resurrection from the death of sin. For example, Jesus said, 'Abraham rejoiced to see My day [the acceptable day of Christ's offering], and he saw it and was glad.' Joh 8:56. Paul recounted that Moses, by faith, 'refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to *suffer affliction with the people of God* than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, esteeming the *reproach of Christ* greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for *he looked to the reward*'. Heb 11:24-26.

With this same faith, other believing men and women 'were tortured, not accepting their release, *so that they might obtain a better resurrection*; and others experienced mockings and scourgings, yes, also chains and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were tempted, they were put to death with the sword; they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, ill-treated (men of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves and holes in the ground.' Heb 11:35-38.

Paul described these people as '*so great a cloud of witnesses*' that surround us. Heb 12:1. In relation to this cloud of witnesses, Daniel

prophesied, writing, 'I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, *coming with the clouds of heaven!* He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. *Then* to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him [indicating that this was done after He had accomplished a work]. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and His kingdom the one which shall not be destroyed.' Dan 7:13-14. Daniel was prophesying concerning the outcome of Christ's offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary.

The men and women who died in faith for the promises that were available in Christ were the cloud of witnesses who came back from the death of sin with Him. Because we have this cloud of witnesses as an example of how we should live and walk as Christians, Paul said that we are to keep our eyes fixed on Jesus, who authored the pathway of our salvation from the death of sin. Heb 12:2. In other words, Paul was exhorting us to journey with Christ on this pathway in order that we progressively lay hold of the promise of sonship for which the Old Covenant men and women died in faith. On this journey, we are part of the great cloud of witnesses who are inheriting the kingdom of heaven that Christ received following His death, burial and resurrection.

The incense of fellowship

We receive faith in the word that is ministered by Christ through the presbytery that is in His hand. By this faith, we are able to believe God's word and to speak as a son of God. We noted in Chapter 3 that speaking by faith means expressing our sonship on the holy ground of Yahweh's own fellowship. The Scriptures refer to this as our 'conversation'. Psa 50:23. Heb 13:7. Significantly, in both the Old and New Testaments, the word that is translated 'conversation' is equally, and often, translated as 'conduct'. In this regard, speaking by faith in fellowship includes the way in which we live as sons of God, in Christ. The first context in which we speak in this manner is the secret place of prayer. This is the beginning point of our conversation, or conduct, in the fellowship of Christ's offering. 2Co 4:13. Mat 6:6.

Our connection to the fellowship and offering of Yahweh is symbolised by *incense* in the Scriptures. The incense that was offered in the tabernacle of Moses was comprised of four sweet spices – stacte, onycha, galbanum, and pure frankincense – in equal measure, to which salt was added. Exo 30:34-35. These four spices, with salt, represented the four dimensions of God's grace – word, life/light, Spirit, and love – that we

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

receive through the ministry of the word, by the Spirit. In Part 2 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we considered these dimensions of grace in detail.

To understand the implications of the grace of God being the incense through which we are connected to the fellowship of Yahweh, let us further remind ourselves of how incense was used in the tabernacle of Moses. The incense was to be offered on the golden altar, which was also called 'the altar of incense'. The golden altar was placed in front of the veil that separated the holy place from the most holy place. The most holy place contained the ark of the covenant and the book of Deuteronomy. Exo 30:6.

Every morning, when the high priest tended the lamps of the lampstand, he was to burn incense on the golden altar. Then, each evening as the lamps were lit, he again was to burn incense on the golden altar. The Lord said that the morning and evening offering of incense was to be 'a perpetual [or continual] incense before the Lord throughout your generations'. Exo 30:7-8. This was to signify that the fellowship of prayer in the true tabernacle is *continual*.

Paul was making this same point when he exhorted believers to 'pray without ceasing', as part of fulfilling the will of God in Christ Jesus. 1Th 5:17-18. Obviously, we cannot spend the entirety of each day in a prayer closet, on our knees. So, what did Paul mean? How do we 'pray at all times'?

In Moses' tabernacle, on the Day of Atonement, the golden altar was taken into the most holy place. The priest then placed two handfuls of incense on the fire of the golden altar that was before the Lord. This created a 'cloud of incense' that covered the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. Lev 16:12-13. The high priest met Yahweh in the cloud. Exo 30:36. After the cloud of incense covered the mercy seat, the priest sprinkled the mercy seat seven times, first with the blood of a bull, and then with the blood of a goat.

During this process, the mercy seat was not moved from the most holy place. In contrast, when Christ inaugurated the New Covenant, the blood was sprinkled seven times on *Himself* through seven wounding events on His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Christ is the Mercy Seat, or Propitiation. Rom 3:25. 1Jn 2:2. This means that, from Gethsemane, the cloud created by the incense moved with Christ as He journeyed to the cross.

Grace is the incense that established the fellowship of offering in Gethsemane. Grace was manifest when, in that garden, Christ was set forth as the mercy seat for our atonement. Rom 3:25. The grace of God gave Christ the ability to accomplish the work of atonement on our behalf. Jesus, by the grace of God, began to experience the suffering of death for every individual person who ever lived. Heb 2:9. Through the wounds that He received on His offering journey, sin was being destroyed, our iniquity was cut from Him, and the life of Yahweh was made available as His blood was shed, and fell upon His body. By this same grace, we are enabled to journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

Come boldly to the throne of grace

The faith that we receive by hearing the word of God grants us entry to the grace of God. Paul said that we are to stand, or abide, in this grace in order to obtain the hope of sonship. Rom 5:2. Each day, our entry point into the grace of God is the fellowship of prayer, in Gethsemane. This is where the throne of grace is. With this in view, Paul exhorted all believers to 'come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need'. Heb 4:12.

Drawing from this passage of Scripture, many people presume that God's grace is given to a person when they are experiencing various difficulties in life. From this perspective, they consider grace to be a special capacity from God that is given to a believer to strengthen them when the weakness of their flesh is being exposed by their suffering. In effect, they consider God's grace to be a supplement to their flesh, so that they can fulfil His will.

Others presume to come to the throne of grace when they are aware that they have sinned and fallen short of God's righteousness. They view the throne of grace as the place where God's forgiveness can be sought and received by a penitent believer. God has mercy upon them because of Christ's offering on their behalf. Their acceptance by God is the implication of His grace, or unmerited favour.

Neither of these perspectives explains the grace of God. In fact, both of these understandings are fundamentally self-righteous. Grace is not a supplement for the weakness of our flesh; nor is it God's willingness to accept a person irrespective of their spiritual condition. God's grace is who He is. It reveals the nature of His one life, which is offering.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

We can only come boldly to the throne of grace by the faith that we have received in the word of God. As Paul declared, 'We have boldness and access [to fellowship with Christ] with confidence *through faith* in Him.' Eph 3:12. The mercy that we receive at the throne of grace is an invitation to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. This is why Paul also wrote, 'I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship'. Rom 12:1. The opportunity to present ourselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of Christ's offering is the mercy of God because, in this fellowship, we find the way of escape from our sin and wickedness, which bring us under the condemnation of death. However, more than this, we who were 'far off from God' are brought near, and are able to become the righteousness of God in Christ. 2Co 5:21.

As we have already noted, God's grace is the nature of His life. Paul said that we receive His grace to help 'in time of need'. Our 'time of need' is our mortal life. Unless we are delivered from our self-centredness and sin, and receive God's life, we will die in our sin, physically and eternally.

So, how does the Lord help us? The Greek word that is translated 'help' in this passage is *boetheia*. This word literally means, 'a rope, or chain for tightly binding a vessel'. With this understanding, we see that grace is given to us to tightly bind us to the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body. In this fellowship, we are passing through the waters of judgement that God declared upon mankind. Through baptism into Christ, we were joined to His death, burial and resurrection. In this fellowship, our sin is being destroyed, and our other law is being cut from our heart. The blood that was shed on His body is being sprinkled on our heart. By this means, His life is becoming our life and motivation. Paul described this change in motivation as having our heart sprinkled from an evil, or self-righteous, conscience, so that we are able to serve God. Heb 10:22. Heb 9:14.

As we continue each day in the fellowship of Christ's offering, the grace that we receive through prayer sustains us, enabling us to continue in the fellowship of Christ's body, and to be obedient to God so that His will is accomplished in our life. We are joined, by grace, to the obedience of Christ as He submitted Himself, in prayer, to the Father, saying, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. Our connection to Christ, the Mercy Seat, marks us as part of the cloud of witnesses.

How is this so? We are able to pray without ceasing because we are abiding in the fellowship of Christ's offering each day. We have become part of the sweet aroma of incense, which is the fragrance of Christ's obedient submission to the Father. The fragrant incense of Christ's virtue is being expressed from the heart of every member of Christ's body, the church. This multitude is, thus, likened to a cloud of witnesses, because they are an authentic testimony to the virtues of Christ. As part of the cloud of witnesses, each of us is to journey with Him on the pathway of salvation that He has pioneered. The fellowship of His offering is the context for our life.

Praying in the Spirit

The baptism of the Holy Spirit brings with it the fire of God's own presence. We recall, for example, that when the disciples were filled with the Spirit, flames of fire sat upon each person, and they began to speak with other tongues. Act 2:2-4. We can only approach the presence of God with the fire of the Spirit. The deaths of Nadab and Abihu, under the Old Covenant, should serve as a strong reminder that we must not bring 'strange fire' into the presence of God. Lev 10:1-3. We bring strange fire into the presence of God when we pray from the basis of self-righteousness and anxiety, rather than by the Spirit.

Praying in the Spirit is the fire that ignites the incense of worship with thanksgiving. Because of this, we are able to offer ourselves willingly to God. That is, we become the incense offering itself. We become the cloud that is the sweet fragrance to God as we serve as a living sacrifice in His temple, the church. This is what King David declared when he wrote, 'Thy people offer themselves willingly in the day of Thy power'. Psa 110:3. This literally means, 'Your people *will be* freewill offerings'. They will be part of the fellowship of Yahweh's own offering.

Paul testified to the Corinthians, writing, 'For we are to God the fragrance of Christ among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.' 2Co 2:15-16. Evidently, Paul saw himself as the aroma, or incense, of Christ, as he ministered the gospel as a son of God who was joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. He was the sweet aroma of Christ to those who received the word, and was the aroma of Christ's rejection and death to those who were perishing.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

When we begin to pray in the Spirit, we are joining the fire of God's presence. We are coming to fellowship with God. At this point, we do not know what we should pray for or how we are to offer ourselves. It is important that we recognise and accept that this is true. Otherwise, our prayer will be from the basis of self-righteousness. However, if we are poor in spirit, acknowledging that we do not know how to pray as we should, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. As we pray in tongues, we are *cooperating* with the Spirit as He intercedes for us according to the will of God. Rom 8:26. Through His intercession, we receive grace to surrender to God's will in every circumstance of the day.

We recall that when Jesus was praying, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done', to the Father, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. Heb 9:14. He then began to pray even more earnestly. This is when He began to sweat great drops of blood. Luk 22:42-44. This sprinkling of Christ's blood marked the removal of the self-will that governs the motivation of us all as a result of our fallen humanity. It is also the means by which His life is given to all who are in Christ, so that they are able to obey their heavenly Father.

The Holy Spirit joins us to this fellowship of prayer. Just as Jesus began to pray more earnestly when He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit, the Holy Spirit burns within us with more vehemence, enabling us to pray more earnestly in fellowship with Christ. Christ searches our heart with His eyes, bringing illumination to our *understanding* regarding our motives, which may be corrupted with self-righteousness and sin, and therefore, need to be put off, in Him. We also receive understanding regarding the will of God in which we are to walk. Rom 8:27. The sprinkled blood from Christ's offering of prayer is then applied to our lives, giving us His *zoe* life, which motivates us to live our lives in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul explained that, as we pray in the Spirit, we progress from not knowing how or what to pray, to praying with understanding. He wrote, 'For if I pray in a tongue, my spirit prays, but my understanding is unfruitful. What is the conclusion then? I will pray with the spirit, and I will also pray with the understanding. I will sing with the spirit, and I will also sing with the understanding.' 1Co 14:14-15.

Having begun to pray in the Spirit, we are enabled to pray with understanding. This is how the fire ignites the incense of worship *with thanksgiving*. It demonstrates that we have obtained grace through

prayer in the Spirit. As Paul explained, 'For all things are for your sakes, that *grace*, having spread through the many, *may cause thanksgiving* to abound to the glory of God.' 2Co 4:15.

Thanksgiving is also the fruit of faith, which is demonstrated by obedience. Rom 16:26. Jas 2:17. Paul exhorted believers to be 'established in the faith ... abounding in it with thanksgiving'. Col 2:7. As the Holy Spirit enables our prayer, we are able to speak by faith and to proceed to walk by faith in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision. The fruit of faith obedience is thanksgiving, which abounds to God in the midst of every circumstance of our day.

In this regard, our worship is our own prayer. We are praying with understanding and thanksgiving. This is how we become the incense, and part of the great cloud of witnesses who are journeying with Christ. As we noted earlier, our expression as incense becomes a ministry to others as we continue in the fellowship of Christ's offering throughout the day. 2Co 2:15-16. This is also an aspect of praying at all times in the Spirit. Eph 6:18.

Watching and praying

Essential to our daily and continual participation in the offering of Christ is our obedience to His call to watch and pray with Him in Gethsemane. Jesus said to His disciples, 'Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Mat 26:41. Jesus was not merely saying that we need to stay awake. He was saying that we need to watch *how* we pray and *how* we journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering.

In this regard, we are to look and see whether we are praying and offering in the flesh or in the Spirit; that is, whether it is from the basis of the other law or according to our name as a son of God. As we have already considered, we can only know this in the fellowship of Christ's offering. In this fellowship, we can learn from Christ how to pray, and how to minister in holiness as a son-priest. Mat 11:29.

The communion meal grants us a participation in the offering of the Lamb of God. The call to watch and pray with Jesus is the invitation to watch, and to remain connected to, the pathway of priesthood that He pioneered for us through His offering as the Lamb of God. Our fellowship in this offering is to be our daily reality. This means that, in the midst of the events of each day, we are walking by the Spirit, who is the expression of our sonship. We are not being driven by fear and anxiety.

'Watching' also means that we are mindful of what is coming into our houses. In this regard, heads of households should be watching what comes into their houses, including media content, alternative philosophies, fears, and so on. If fathers are not watching in this way in relation to their own house, they will certainly be unable to see what is coming into the church.

Anxiety, frustration, depression and spiritual fatigue are indications that we are praying and functioning by the flesh; that is, according to a righteousness of our own. If we persist with the flesh, we will fall asleep from sorrow and will be unable to endure in the day of tribulation. However, if we humble ourselves and walk according to the Spirit, who is speaking to the churches, the Spirit Himself will be the expression of our sonship. We will be able to remain in one Spirit with the Lord and with our brethren, and our love will not fail in the season of lawlessness and tribulation that is upon us. Mat 24:9-12.

This is why Jesus said, 'But take heed to yourselves, lest your *hearts be weighed down* [or, your spirit becomes fatigued] with carousing, drunkenness, and cares of this life, and that Day come on you unexpectedly. For it will come as a snare on all those who dwell on the face of the whole earth. Watch therefore, and pray always that you may be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.' Luk 21:34-36.

Jesus was making the point that, if we walk according to the desires of our flesh, which is the other law, our heart will become sorrowful, and the day of Christ's appearing will come upon us suddenly. For this reason, we must watch and pray in order to be counted worthy of escaping this condemnation.

Praying for one another

The call to watch *how* we pray also applies to the way in which we pray for each other, as well as the way in which elders lay hands on those who are sick. In this regard, the apostle James wrote, 'Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven.' Jas 5:14-15.

When hands are laid upon the sick, they are being *separated to join the offering of Christ*. This should be the faith of elders when they pray for the sick. It should also be the faith of those who are requesting prayer.

However, this has not been our understanding of laying on hands; nor has it been the mode of elders as they have prayed for the sick. Instead, our approach has been for the elders to lay hands on those who are suffering, in order to see them delivered from their distress. The Scriptures teach us that the laying on of hands separates a person to their participation in the offering of Christ. We see this, for example, when hands were laid on Paul and Barnabas after the Holy Spirit had set them apart for the work to which they had been called. Act 13:3.

Healing is found in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Christ's life was given to be our life through this offering. In this offering, every impediment to our priestly work can be moved out of the way. This may involve our healing; or it may involve deliverance from the self-righteous perspectives that impede our capacity to love the Lord and our brethren through true service as a son-priest. It was in relation to this point that James wrote, 'If he has committed sins, he will be forgiven'. Jas 5:15. Living according to our self-righteous perspectives is the reason why we sin, and come under the judgement of God. Through Christ's offering, we receive forgiveness. In the fellowship of His offering, the propensity to sin is being removed from us.

The Lord is helping us to make a cultural shift in the way that we pray. We must cease from 'lobbying' the Father to withdraw His hand from the lives of those who are suffering. Such an approach to prayer is not dissimilar to the interventions of some women who address their husbands for dealing too harshly with their children. This way of praying is an affront to the Lord. It is ignorant of the way in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are bringing Their covenant purpose to pass in relation to the life of every individual son of God. In this regard, we must receive illumination from the Lord concerning our propensity to think and pray in this way. We must turn in repentance in order to participate in the fellowship of His offering.

Remaining awake in the fellowship of Christ's offering

In His letter to the church in Sardis, Jesus said, 'Remember therefore *how* you have received and heard; *hold fast and repent*. Therefore if you will not *watch*, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.' Rev 3:3. Jesus was saying that 'watching' refers to how we receive the word that He is bringing to us, and how we are repenting.

Every Christian needs to heed the word of the Lord in this season. This word is calling us to 'wake up' to repentance, and to remain 'awake' in the fellowship of Christ's offering. That is, we must remain awake in the midst of the operation of God, through which the propensity to self-righteousness is being cut from us. The operation of God involves the removal of the other law from our heart, through fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. We can only remain awake, and endure in the fellowship of Christ's circumcision, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, which we receive from the Holy Spirit.

This point is particularly pertinent for those whom the Lord has called to oversee the church as part of a presbytery. If presbyters, individually, and collectively, do not watch, through fellowship in one Spirit with the Lord and each other, they will allow 'thieves' to come into the church and into the presbytery. Luk 12:39. These thieves will rob the 'little ones' - those who belong to the kingdom of God. Mar 10:15. When this happens, Christ Himself will come upon *these presbyters* as a thief. Rev 3:3. That is, He will come to confront them regarding their stewardship. Those who have been ignorant will receive a few stripes. Luk 12:48. However, those who knew the Master's will shall receive many lashes, and some will be cut in two and turned out of the way. Luk 12:46-47.

As a fellowship of churches, and as lamp presbyteries, we have been blessed with illumination concerning the pathway of salvation and the restoration of Christ's lampstand church. However, this means that we cannot claim to be ignorant regarding the matters that Christ is addressing in His churches. For this reason, if elders and deacons do not guard how they receive this word, and fail to repent from their fleshly, self-righteous service, their punishment will be more than a few stripes.

True Christian piety

In this chapter we have made the key point that we are to pray without ceasing, because prayer is a feature of the fellowship of offering. This is the culture of godliness that should characterise the life of a son of God. The Scriptures use the term 'piety' to describe this culture. Piety is most commonly defined as 'religious devotion' or 'reverence'. However, when understood from the perspective, or doctrine, of godliness, *piety* is the culture of being *connected to the offering and circumcision of Christ*.

In the fellowship of the offering and circumcision of Christ, we receive resurrection life, which causes us to be born again from the dead. We are passing from death to life, and resurrection life is in us. This is because

we have received the word of Christ, and believe in God. As Jesus declared, 'He who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgement, but has passed from death into life.' Joh 5:24.

Because we have passed from death to life, our dying and our living is now for the glory of Christ. Jesus revealed this principle when He raised Lazarus from the dead. This was also a feature of Peter's recovery to sanctification on the shore of Galilee. Having called Peter to tend and feed the sheep of His flock, Jesus spoke to him concerning the death by which he would glorify God. Joh 21:15-18. We will illustrate this principle further, later in this chapter.

Through His offering, Jesus gathered up our death - the death of sin - into His death. When we are joined to His death, we are being delivered from the death of sin, and we reveal His death. It is by this means that Jesus Christ is glorified, and all things - our living and our dying - are working together for our good. Rom 8:28.

Christian piety is the expression of godliness. It is interesting to note that Ananias, the man whom the Lord sent to minister to Paul following his conversion on the road to Damascus, was described as a pious, or devout, Christian. Act 22:12. Concerning Paul, the Lord said to Ananias, '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 sufferings of Christ were to become the culture of Paul's life. This would be the implication of his devotion to the Lord, and the means by which he would glorify God.

Reiterating the point, piety is the culture of a Christian who continues in the fellowship of the offering and circumcision of Christ. Their life reveals the living and the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ and, by this means, Jesus is glorified through them. To glorify God is to worship Him. We note, then, that piety is *godly worship*.

Godliness is worship

Our worship is much more than singing spiritual songs of praise and devotion to the Lord when we meet together for communion. In fact, our body ministry will be little more than the sound of clanging cymbals if worship is not a cultural foundation in our life. 1Co 13:1. In this regard, we note that Christ's offering in Gethsemane began with the offering of Himself to God through prayer and worship. This was the offering of

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

incense, and is the first of the offerings by which a person may approach God to participate in the fellowship of the burnt offering.

Similarly, we recall that Abraham and Isaac joined the offering of Christ on Mount Moriah when they went up the mountain to *worship*. Gen 22:5. They were being called to join the burnt offering of Yahweh Himself.

The apostle Paul exhorted us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God. He explained that this is an expression of our spiritual worship. Rom 12:1-2. Participating in the offering and circumcision of Christ on a daily basis is our spiritual worship, and is the means by which we are being perfected. This activity is according to the *doctrine of godliness*.

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul explained that presenting oneself to God as a holy and acceptable offering means living a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and reverence. Notably, Paul made it clear that such a pious person is coming to a knowledge of their sanctification. 1Ti 2:1-4. In other words, the life of God is being manifest in their flesh. Later in his letter, Paul described this process as ‘the mystery of godliness’, writing, ‘By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory’. 1Ti 3:16.

In the same letter, Paul taught that godliness, or Christian piety, is fundamental to living as a Christian in this age and in the age to come. He said, ‘Bodily exercise profits a little, but godliness [or being connected to the offering and circumcision of Christ] is profitable for all things, having promise of the life that now is and of that which is to come.’ 1Ti 4:8.

Paul warned that there were some teachers and leaders in the church who denied the necessity to join the offering and circumcision of Christ. They did not consent to the doctrine, which accords with godliness. In fact, through disputes over words, they directed others away from fellowship with the Father and His Son. Specifically, Paul wrote, ‘If anyone teaches otherwise and does not consent to wholesome words, even the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, and to the doctrine which accords with godliness, he is proud, knowing nothing, but is obsessed with disputes and arguments over words, from which come envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, useless wranglings of men of corrupt minds and destitute of the truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain. From such withdraw yourself.’ 1Ti 6:3-5.

Godliness involves our daily appropriation of the chastening love of the Lord, in Christ. This is true piety. In this way, godliness connects us to Christ's righteousness. 1Ti 4:8. We are to seek this righteousness. Christ exhorted us this way, saying, 'Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you. Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. *Sufficient for the day is its own trouble.*' Mat 6:33-34. As we seek first the kingdom of God by priesting ourselves as a living sacrifice, we will experience trouble from day to day. This is part of our participation in the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ. By this means, He is being glorified.

He whom You love is sick

The principle of Christ being glorified through the sufferings and death that are experienced by His disciples is particularly illustrated through the account of the death and resurrection of Lazarus. We recall that, during His ministry on earth, Jesus established hundreds of house-groups throughout the region of Judea. The household of Lazarus, Martha, and Mary was one of the leadership households in this administration, and Jesus was personally fond of them.

Opening his account of the resurrection of Lazarus, the apostle John wrote, 'Now a certain man was sick, Lazarus of Bethany, the town of Mary and her sister Martha. It was that Mary who anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick. Therefore the sisters sent to Him, saying, "Lord, behold, he whom You love is sick".' Joh 11:1-3. The message that Martha and Mary sent to Jesus was, in essence, a prayer message. *They were praying*, 'Lord, he whom You love is sick.' Many of us pray for our loved ones in a similar manner, drawing the Lord's attention to the suffering, need or problem that a loved one is experiencing.

When Jesus heard this prayer, He did not send any word back to the sisters. Instead, He said to His disciples, 'This sickness [with its accompanying suffering] is not unto death, but for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified by it.' Joh 11:4. Although it seemed as though Jesus was not answering the prayer of the sisters for their sick and suffering brother, Jesus said that this suffering event would rebound to His glory. In other words, Jesus would be glorified through the death of Lazarus.

Challenging the possible perception that, by failing to attend to the sisters' request, Jesus had not cared for Lazarus, John made it clear that 'Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus'. Joh 11:5. John then noted that, because Jesus had heard that Lazarus was sick, He *deliberately* stayed where they were for another two days and let the sickness run its course, resulting in the death of Lazarus. Jesus then went to Bethany with His disciples. By the time they had arrived there, Lazarus had been dead for four days, and they had already buried him.

When Martha heard that Jesus was coming, she went out to meet Him. As the friend of Jesus, she said to Him, 'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died.' Joh 11:21. Martha knew that Jesus had been at Bethabara and could have made the journey to Bethany before the death of her brother. Joh 10:40. Joh 1:28. Recognising that He had decided not to come prior to the death of Lazarus, she asked Jesus why He had come following his burial.

Even though Martha was upset that Jesus had not answered their prayer, and had not come earlier to heal Lazarus, she still believed in Him and accepted Him as her Lord and God. She said to Jesus, 'But even now I know that whatever You ask of God, God will give You.' Joh 11:22. Martha was indicating that she was open to receive whatever Jesus would minister at that time and in their situation; however, she had no expectation that Jesus was going to raise Lazarus from the dead.

Jesus said to Martha, 'Your brother will rise again.' Martha responded by acknowledging that Lazarus would rise again in the resurrection on the Last Day. She had said her goodbyes to her brother and expected to see him again on that day. Joh 11:24.

Jesus then spoke to her these famous words, which the apostle John wrote down for us to read. He said, 'I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live.' Joh 11:25. In this statement, Jesus promised to raise from the dead *all who believe in Him*.

Jesus then said, 'Everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die.' Joh 11:26. By this, He meant that everyone who believes in Jesus Christ *already has resurrection life abiding within their spirit*. Jesus was saying to all of us who believe in Him, that He has already given resurrection life to us.

When Lazarus was alive, he had believed in Jesus. Resurrection life had already been within his spirit. This is what Jesus meant when He spoke earlier to His disciples while He waited in Bethabara for Lazarus to die.

He said to them, 'Our friend Lazarus has *fallen asleep*; but I go, so that I may awaken him out of sleep.' Joh 11:11. In this statement, Jesus was inferring that Lazarus already had resurrection life in his spirit. Even though Lazarus had physically died, he would live – either now or later. Because Lazarus already had resurrection life within his spirit, his death was simply a falling asleep. Jesus was able to wake him from this sleep. At that time, it was a mortal resurrection. On the Last Day, Lazarus would waken to an immortal resurrection.

In the Gospel of Mark, we read about a synagogue official named Jairus. Jairus asked Jesus to come to his house so that Jesus could lay His hands upon his daughter and heal her. As Jesus, His disciples, and Jairus made their way to the house, word was sent telling them that the girl had died. They said, 'Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?' Mar 5:35. Evidently, the people acknowledged that Jesus could have healed the sick girl, but raising the dead was a different proposition. However, Jesus said to Jairus, 'Do not be afraid any longer, *only believe*.' Mar 5:36.

When they arrived at the house, there was a great commotion. People were weeping and wailing. Jesus entered the house and said to them, 'Why make a commotion and weep? The child has not died, but is *asleep*.' Mar 5:39. At this point, those people who were in the house began to laugh at Jesus. It was amusing to them that the One who could heal the sick was apparently unable to recognise when a person was dead. Mar 5:40.

Jesus put them all out of the room, and He took the parents and His disciples to the girl's room, and said to her, 'Little girl, I say to you, arise.' 'Immediately the girl rose up and began to walk, for she was about twelve years of age.' Mar 5:41-42. In the same way that Lazarus' death was a falling asleep because resurrection life was already in him, Jairus' daughter was only 'asleep' because her parents believed in Jesus.

The resurrection of Lazarus, and also of Jairus' daughter, revealed what was available, under the Old Covenant, to those men and women who believed in God. If they believed in Jesus, who was God in the flesh, they already had resurrection life in their spirit.

Returning to the account of the resurrection of Lazarus, we recall that after Jesus had met Martha, she went and called her sister Mary to come to Jesus. Jesus was deeply moved in His spirit, and troubled in Himself, when He saw Mary, and the Jews who were with her, weeping. He asked to be taken to the tomb. As Jesus wept, the Jews recognised how much Jesus

had loved Lazarus, and wondered why the man who had opened the eyes of the blind had not healed His friend, whom He loved. Joh 11:35-36.

Jesus asked that the stone be removed from the mouth of the cave. Martha objected to this, for obvious reasons, saying that Lazarus had been dead for four days. In reply, Jesus said, 'Did I not say to you that if you believe, you will see the glory of God?'

'So they removed the stone. Then Jesus raised His eyes, and said, "Father, I thank You that You have heard Me. I knew that You always hear Me; but because of the people standing around I said it, so that they may believe that You sent Me." When He had said these things, He cried out with a loud voice, "Lazarus, come forth." The man who had died came forth, bound hand and foot with wrappings, and his face was wrapped around with a cloth. Jesus said to them, "Unbind him, and let him go".' Joh 11:41-44.

Lazarus, Martha and Mary believed in Jesus. Through Lazarus' death and resurrection, Christ was glorified. Joh 11:4. We know this because, after Lazarus had been raised from the dead, 'many of the Jews who came to Mary, and saw what He had done, *believed in Him*'. Joh 11:45. Because resurrection life was already in Lazarus, Christ was able to be glorified through Lazarus's dying and living.

When Jesus met Peter on the Sea of Galilee, He said to him, ' "Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish." *This He spoke, signifying by what death he [Peter] would glorify God.* And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me".' Joh 21:18-19.

Because eternal life is already in us as resurrection life, God, through Christ, is able to be glorified in our lives on a daily basis. In fact, this is the *purpose* for which we continue to live, after we have been raised from the death of sin.

Having met and believed Christ, we are walking with Him through life, and are growing in maturity as a son of God. Every issue and every circumstance becomes an opportunity where Christ's life, power, and resurrection life are operative within us, enabling us to demonstrate resurrection life in all situations. Christ is able to be glorified in our lives *on a daily basis*.

Now that we are in Christ, God, through the Holy Spirit, has taken charge of the events that take place in our lives. He works all things – the good and the bad, success and failure, health and sickness – together for our good. In all these things, we can be more than conquerors through faith. Rom 8:37.

Faith for a Christian is not some kind of positive, optimistic, self-affirmation by which we finally ‘win through’. Rather, faith is *our trust in God* that He is in control of our life. He is ordering our life so that we learn what virtue is, and how to live as a son of God in the midst of our difficulties, as well as in prosperity. We simply live as sons of God in all circumstances of life.

God sets these things – prosperity and suffering – over against each other in our lives so that we do not trust in ourselves, but in God who raises the dead. He has delivered us, and will deliver us, from ‘so great a death’. 2Co 1:10. As we live in this way, Christ is glorified in our lives.

Every time that circumstances seem insurmountable, we can pray and thank the Lord, and then ask Him to help us to walk through the trial in the way that He has planned for us. The circumstances then become insignificant, and our focus is shifted to the works of faith that the Lord has called us to do in Christ. He gives us His grace, which is the resurrection life that He has placed within our hearts.

Embracing the culture of suffering

As we conclude this chapter, it is helpful to reaffirm that our salvation is found in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and circumcision. Only in this fellowship can we know the joy of the Lord. This joy is the fruit of being delivered from our own, wicked way of living, and of being established in the life and fellowship of Yahweh Himself. This is what it means to live according to the Spirit. Rom 8:5. Joy, of course, is one of the fruits of the Spirit. Gal 5:22.

For this reason, when we experience sufferings and difficulties during the course of our day, we do not need to draw back in unbelief from the pathway of salvation that Christ has authored for us. Rather, we can *embrace* our daily sufferings – whether big, or small – as our participation in the fellowship of Christ’s offering. This is, in fact, a privilege that Christ, the Father, and the Holy Spirit grant to us. It is foundational to our testimony as those who are part of the cloud of witnesses who are inheriting the kingdom of God.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

In this regard, we remember the example of Peter and John. Luke recorded in the book of Acts that, after having been flogged for preaching in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, 'they went on their way from the presence of the Council, *rejoicing that they had been considered worthy to suffer shame for His name.* And every day, in the temple and from house to house, they kept right on teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.' Act 5:41-42.

Chapter 5

The righteousness of God is revealed by faith

Introduction

In the book of Romans, we are encouraged by the apostle Paul to give attention to the lessons learned by Abraham and King David. Rom 4. Their lives, and the faith that they found as God made Himself known to them, were recorded as examples of how God, in love, deals with mankind. Abraham and David were part of a whole 'cloud of witnesses' who all lived by faith, and from whom we can receive instruction regarding the way of righteousness. Heb 12:1.

In this regard, we observe that Abel, the son of Adam, found faith-righteousness by being joined in one Spirit with God through the fellowship of offering. Heb 11:4. In contrast, we learn, through the example of Cain, that any religious exercise that does not spring from a faith that we receive when God's word is spoken to us, results in enmity and hatred. 1Jn 3:12. This fruit brings us under the judgement of God. Gen 4:6-12.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

We recall that mother Eve 'drew a line' on Cain and his culture in the seventh generation from Adam. From her, we learn the lesson of sanctification, which is necessary for the establishment of godly homes. In the days of Lamech, Eve said that God had appointed her another offspring, or seed, to replace Abel in the genealogy of the sons of God. Gen 4:25. Her faith was righteousness, because it was birthed from the word of God that had been proclaimed to the serpent, Satan. God had said that her seed would crush Satan's head, and all that he stood for. Gen 3:15.

Adam lived for 930 years after he fell into sin. Gen 5:5. He received and obeyed the word that the Lord spoke to him, which was that the ground would be cursed for his sake. Gen 3:17. Frustration and futility became his lot, as a chastening that would bring him to faith-righteousness. He learned that man cannot, through his own efforts, live to fulfil the mandate that has been given to him for his life. Adam was humbled, and came to accept that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Deu 8:3. Mat 4:4.

In the days after the death of Adam, Lamech, the ninth son from Adam in the genealogy of the sons of God, prophesied that his son Noah would give the sons of God rest from the 'work and the toil of their hands', which was a consequence of the Lord's cursing of the ground. Gen 5:29. Noah walked with God, and was blameless. He feared God, and found favour in the eyes of the Lord. Gen 6:8-9. In obedience to God's word, Noah built an ark, and became an heir of the righteousness that is according to faith. Heb 11:7.

The ark, which typified the body of Christ, became a place of refuge for Noah and his family when God, in judgement, 'baptised' the world with a flood. For us, baptism is an antitype of the flood. 1Pe 3:21. The death of Christ was a baptism of judgement that fell upon Him because of our sins, and also for our sake. By joining Christ in His death, burial and resurrection, the body of Christ becomes a refuge for us in the same way that the ark, for Noah, was a refuge and a way of escape from the waters of judgement.

Through the ark, Noah received, in type, resurrection life. The ark brought him above the flood. After the ark rested on the mountains of Ararat, Noah was then able to establish a the new order for the sons of God. This order was given to Abraham so that sons of God would be all those who received, and lived by, Abraham's faith. Gal 3:7. This is why we

are told in Scripture to consider what Abraham found, and what we are finding as his sons.

Throughout his letters, Paul reflected on what he had found on his journey in Christ, and with Christ, as a son of Abraham. First, he found that God the Father had called him, and separated him from his mother's womb, to be a messenger. Gal 1:15. The Father made it known to Paul that He was going to reveal His Son in him. Gal 1:16. Paul then received the mystery of the gospel, which he was to proclaim to the Gentiles. Once Paul began his ministry, he found that his hearers glorified God in him as they received his message. Gal 1:24.

Even though he had found all these things, Paul testified that he had not yet been made perfect in relation to the righteousness of faith. He wrote, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me'. Php 3:12. This is an extraordinary statement, and serves as an exhortation to every believer to continue on the pathway upon which we are delivered from self-righteousness, and are made perfect in relation to the righteousness of faith which comes from God, in Christ.

Indeed, Paul encouraged us in this way, writing, 'Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus'. Php 3:13-14.

We are urged by Paul to join the fellowship of this journey. As we follow the example of Paul, we will mature in the faith-righteousness that comes from God. This journey is on the pathway of offering that Christ pioneered for us. To whatever level of sonship maturity we have attained, we are to walk by that rule, and to continue to walk forward in faith to fill out the name and the sanctification to which God is calling us. Php 3:15-16.

As a fellowship of Christians, we have come from many different backgrounds. Many of us have come from various denominations, while others have been saved out of the world. Irrespective of our background, we can testify that the Lord has found us, and is continuing to direct us in His ways. On this pathway, we are finding that the Father is calling us to be *son-priests* who minister in His house; we are finding that we are *members of the body of Christ*; and we are finding that our bodies are a *temple* for the Holy Spirit. These realities are foundational to the revealing of the righteousness of faith in our mortal bodies.

Paul's journey from self-righteousness

Prior to his conversion, Paul pursued a righteousness that was based on the Law. He even testified that, in relation to the Law, he was blameless! Php 3:6. No doubt, in his zeal for God, and for the covenant that God had made with the children of Israel, Paul asked God to help him to be righteous according to the Law. However, later, as he reflected back on his life, Paul described this pursuit as 'having a righteousness of my own *derived* from the Law'. Php 3:9. This is a notable statement. Paul came to realise that he had used God's Law to define his own standard of 'good'. For this reason, his works were not revealing God's righteousness; they were revealing his own righteousness.

Paul read the Scriptures from this self-righteous position. This meant that he interpreted the Scriptures according to his personal view of righteousness. He believed that his view was right, because it accorded with the understanding that the Jews were God's chosen people. Their corporate view of law-keeping, in the context of the temple, its priesthood, and its ordinances, was considered to be God's will for them, and this was 'right and good'. Everything that came against this position, then, was 'wrong and evil'.

For this reason, Paul considered Christianity to be an evil that challenged what he viewed to be true and righteous. In his mind, Christianity undermined the Jewish nation and its religious culture. Paul regarded the Christian gospel to be contrary to God's will and, therefore, evil. He understood that for good to be good, it must stamp out this evil. To this end, he considered his persecution of the church to be a demonstration of his zeal for God and for God's covenant people. Php 3:6.

In his self-righteous zeal, motivated by the other law within him, Paul ravaged the church, entering house after house, dragging Christian men and women from their homes and putting them into prison. Act 8:3. However, the unwillingness of these people to conform to Paul's religious expectations, and the peace of God that they demonstrated in the midst of their suffering, seemed only to provoke Paul. He became increasingly agitated and unstable, breathing threats and murder against the disciples of the Lord. Act 9:1-2.

As Paul experienced the effects of the other law within him, which brought him under the power of sin, with all of its murderous desires, he would not have considered himself to be in a wretched state. Rather,

he would have justified his attitudes and actions as being the fruit of righteous anger.

On the road to Damascus, the Lord revealed Himself to Paul. He said that through Paul's zealous and self-righteous persecution of the members of the body of Christ, the Lord Himself was being persecuted. Act 9:3,5. Amazingly, this is how the word of the cross of Christ was being ministered to Paul for the purpose of His salvation. The cross of Christ, manifest by those who were suffering as members of His body, was the 'goad' against which Paul was kicking. Act 9:5. Kicking against this goad was causing his emotional and psychological distress.

We know that Paul found repentance following His encounter with Jesus Christ. As a result, he was born from above, of the life of God, baptised into Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit. Act 9:17-18. He also received a word from Ananias, who was a messenger of Christ. Ananias declared that God had appointed Paul to know His will, and to see the Righteous One. By this, he meant that Paul would meet and know Christ, personally, and would speak His word as a witness to all men. Act 22:14-15. As Christ's witness in the world, Paul would suffer many things. Act 9:15-16.

In the early stages of his Christian walk, as one who was young in the Lord, Paul would have felt wretched as he struggled with the issues provoked by his own righteousness, which he defined as another law that was part of his identity. Rom 7:23. He found that he had no ability, through the exercise of self-righteousness, to overcome the power of sin within himself. We note this in Paul's testimony: 'For what I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practising what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate. But if I do the very thing I do not want to do, I agree with the Law, confessing that the Law is good. So now, no longer am I the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me.' Rom 7:15-17.

However, it would appear that, during this time, Paul received a revelation of the mystery of Christ. Eph 3:2-4. With this illumination, Paul realised that he did not have to attain to the righteousness of God through his own efforts to obey God's word. God's righteousness would be given to him as a gift, when he believed; and, by faith, participated in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Rom 5:17. 2Co 4:13-14. Php 3:10-11. By this means, Christ's life would become his life, and he would become the righteousness of God in Christ. Gal 2:20. 2Co 5:21.

Having been illuminated regarding the righteousness of God that comes by faith, Paul rejected the self-righteous mode of his former life, with its violent ministry, and counted it all as 'vile refuse'. Php 3:8. He viewed it

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

as being unacceptable, and that it was not to be part of his offering. It needed to be burned, as it were, outside the camp, in the manner of the unacceptable parts of Israel's offerings. In this regard, we recall that the hide, the flesh, head, legs, entrails and refuse of the sin offering were to be destroyed by being burned with fire in a clean place, outside the camp of the Israelites. Lev 4:11-12. The 'refuse' of our self-righteousness is dealt with in the fellowship of Christ's offering, as we receive our sufferings as a participation in the reproaches that fell on Christ. Heb 13:13.

Although Paul had already been converted, baptised, and filled with the Holy Spirit, he began to understand what it means to walk after the Spirit. He said that those who do not walk after the Spirit, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, will revert to walking after the flesh. They will follow the dictates of God's Law, through self-righteous initiative. Gal 3:2-5. Those who endeavour to keep the Law through the efforts of the flesh have not yet understood that self-righteous activity, as a mode for achieving God's righteousness, does not work. In fact, if they continue in this way of religious living, they make themselves enemies of God. Rom 8:7-8.

The statement of Paul - 'Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?' - communicates his *joyful* realisation that self-righteousness does not work. Rom 7:24. This was a point of relief and thanksgiving for Paul, because it was accompanied by the understanding that, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and suffering, the body of death could be removed from him. No longer would Paul be motivated by good ideas or by the anxious pursuit of his own righteousness. He was now committed to continuing in the fellowship of Christ's offering, and to following the leading of the Holy Spirit, who was the expression of his name and identity.

Paul understood that, in this fellowship, God was pleased to reveal His Son in him so that he might preach Christ to the Gentiles. Gal 1:15-16. The wonder and implications of this revelation staggered Paul. Before discussing this revelation with anyone else, he went to Arabia and Damascus. We can picture Paul during this time, praying, searching the Scriptures, and counting the cost of God's call upon his life.

Three years later, Paul went to Jerusalem, and shared his revelation with the apostle Peter, and with James, the Lord's brother. He then went into the regions of Syria and Cilicia, proclaiming the mystery of the cross, which he had received from the Lord. At this time, the churches in Judea

had not seen Paul's face. However, they kept hearing the report that Paul, who had previously persecuted them, was now preaching the faith that he had once sought to destroy. For this reason, they glorified God in Him. Gal 1:18-24.

Counting all things as loss

As we have been considering, the apostle Paul desired to be found in Christ, not having a righteousness of his own that was derived from the Law. In other words, Paul did not want to be righteous because he was fulfilling the Law or because he was using the Law properly. Neither did he want the Lord to help him to fulfil the Law. Instead, Paul wanted to be *in Christ*, and to have the righteousness that comes from God through faith. Php 3:8-9.

The righteousness that comes from God through faith is the whole package of life that the Father has predestined for us. The Father wants our cooperation so that we reveal the name that He has for us. Our familiar and fallen propensity, however, is to make a name for ourselves. Paul called this 'a righteousness of our own'. Php 3:9. In the pursuit of our own righteousness, we can even draw from the standard of God's Law to define an image and a name for ourselves. We believe that what we are presenting is true. Paul called this 'a strong delusion'. 2Th 2:11-12.

Even after he had been converted, Paul considered any sense of validity, or self-verification, that he derived from his ministry, to be of no value. This is because he understood that ministering in this way was based on a righteousness of his own. It was the same self-righteousness that he had pursued prior to his conversion. In this regard, he wrote, 'I count *all things* but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and *do count them but dung*'. Php 3:8.

In referring to his own righteousness as 'dung', Paul was drawing on the words of the Lord by the prophet Malachi. Through Malachi, the Lord said, 'And now, O priests, this commandment is for you. "*If you will not hear, and if you will not take it to heart, to give glory to My name,*" says the Lord of hosts, "*I will send a curse upon you, and I will curse your blessings.* Yes, I have cursed them already, because you do not take it to heart. Behold, I will rebuke your descendants and *spread refuse [lit: dung] on your faces*, the refuse of *your* solemn feasts; and one will take you away with it. Then you shall know that I have sent this commandment to

you, that My covenant with Levi may continue, says the Lord of hosts”.’ Mal 2:1-4.

Paul recognised and treated every effort to find righteousness and identity expression through keeping the Law as being the excrement of an offering that God threatened to spread upon the face of a priest as his reward for his service, because he had insulted the covenant that God had given to Levi. Mal 2:3. We, too, insult the New Covenant when we live according to our own righteousness, rather than by faith in the fellowship of Christ’s offering.

We cannot simply decide to cease from living according to our own righteousness. In fact, we cannot even diagnose our own righteousness. Such an endeavour is a self-righteous judgement that we make of ourselves. Paul outlined the only way in which we can be delivered from self-righteousness, and can have the righteousness of God. He said, ‘That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.’ Php 3:10-11.

‘Attaining to the resurrection from the dead’ means living by resurrection life while still in a mortal body. Paul was making this same point in his letter to the Romans when he wrote, ‘But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you’. Rom 8:11.

Paul’s reference to attaining resurrection life ‘by any means’ indicated that he was receiving resurrection life in the fellowship of Christ’s offering, by walking in whichever way the Holy Spirit was leading him. In this fellowship, everything that he experienced throughout the course of each day was being priested to him by the Son, according to the will of the Father, and was working together for his good. Rom 8:26-28. Through these experiences, he was being progressively delivered from his own way; and Christ’s life was progressively becoming his life.

Receiving the righteousness of faith from God

The primary goal of every Christian believer should be to live in Christ, not having a righteousness of our own that has been derived from the Law. To confess this means, firstly, that we do not want to attempt to live righteously by trying to use the Law properly. It also means that we do not even want the Lord to help or strengthen us in any way, so that we can live by the Law.

Instead, if we are living by the righteousness of faith that comes from God, we will exhibit the following qualities. Php 3:7-11.

1. We will gain Christ.
2. We will know Him and be baptised into Him.
3. We will know the power of His resurrection. This means that the power of God that raised Christ from the dead will be operative toward us and in us. Rom 8:11.
4. We will know the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. This fellowship will be the means by which the other law - the law that motivates us to the iniquity of self-righteousness - will be circumcised from our life.
5. We will know what it is to be conformed to Christ's death. In other words, we will be joined in fellowship to Christ's offering. Rom 12:1. As a member of the body of Christ, we will be able to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. We will be able to see the sufferings of Christ made complete in our life, causing His life to be multiplied within us. Because of this, we will be able to minister this life as a grace-gift to others.

We note, in this regard, that Christ's offering is the means by which the life of God is multiplied. In this fellowship of His offering, His life is transferred to us. This is because the blood of Christ contained the life of God. When we receive His life in the fellowship of His offering, it becomes the life by which we live. Gal 2:20. Furthermore, as His life is multiplied in us through offering, we are able to minister it to others.

6. As Christ's blood was poured out in love as an offering, His life brought Him back from the death that He was dying because of our sin. As we are joined to the fellowship of His offering, the life of God that is in His blood is given to us as resurrection life. His life delivers us from the death of sin while we are living in our mortal body.
7. More than this, when the Spirit of God who raised Christ from the dead lives in us, He gives life to our mortal body. We are able to carry about in our mortal body the dying of the Lord Jesus, so that the life of Jesus, also, may be manifest in our mortal body. 2Co 4:10-11.

The apostle John described eternal life as an 'understanding'. The *understanding that he described as eternal life* is that, as sons, we know the Father, and believe that He is trustworthy as our Father. He said that

the Son of God has come and 'given us an understanding, that we may know Him who is true [i.e. the Father]'. 1Jn 5:20. Furthermore, we are also to know the Son of God as being trustworthy, and are to belong to Him as a member of His body. This is what it means to 'know Him who is true' and to be 'in Him who is true'. 1Jn 5:20. John then said, 'This is the true God and eternal life.' 1Jn 5:20. We will consider this principle of understanding in more detail in Chapter 7.

Understanding condemnation

Condemnation is an implication of self-righteousness. A common misconception among Christians is that condemnation refers to the shame and regret that a person *feels* when they sin. However, Jesus Himself said, '*This is the condemnation*, that the light has come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.' Joh 3:19. We see that condemnation is not simply a feeling; it is, in fact, a whole way of living. To understand the implications of Jesus' statement, let us begin by considering what it means to 'live in darkness'.

When Jesus said that men love the darkness because their deeds are evil, He was not particularly referring to people who endeavour to conceal their corrupt activities. Rather, Jesus meant that mankind is in darkness because *all* of their deeds are motivated by the evil that is within them. As we considered in Chapter 3, this evil is the *other law* which is present in the heart of every person. Paul recognised this evil within himself, writing, 'I find then a law, that evil is present [in] me, the one who wills to do good'. Rom 7:21.

Even more than being the basis of our evil deeds, the other law makes our spirit, itself, evil and sick. According to Solomon, the spirit of a man is the lamp of the Lord. Jesus described this lamp as being the eye of a person's body. Mat 6:22. He then explained that if a person's eye, or spirit, is evil, their whole body will be 'full of darkness'. Mat 6:23. Evidently, to live by the other law is to be full of darkness.

The 'other law' was established within the spirit of man when Adam and Eve ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Prior to this, they were in the image and likeness of God. The word that they received each day in fellowship with Yahweh sustained their mortal lives, and enlightened them regarding the works that God had prepared for them to do. When, through Satan's deception, Adam and Eve chose the knowledge of good and evil as the basis for their life and works, they chose self centred good and the other law, which became an evil within them.

By this means, they cut themselves off from the life and light of Yahweh. Consequently, fallen mankind are dead in trespasses and sins as they walk in the darkness and futility of their own way. Eph 2:1. Joh 12:25. Not only are they full of darkness, but they also live in the darkness of *separation from Yahweh*.

The outcome of receiving another law, was that mankind became slaves to the fear of death. Heb 2:15. In our democratic society, freedom is defined as the right to exercise our other law to protect ourselves from one another. Christ defined freedom another way. He said that freedom is deliverance from sin, which has control over our life. Joh 8:34-35. Sin exercises dominion over us by motivating our other law to take hold of the Law of God. This is because the Law is meant to give life. Rom 7:10. We misappropriate the Law because we covet life and fear death. Rom 7:8. When we covet, we transgress the Law which says, 'You shall not covet.' Rom 7:7. Consequently, we are brought under judgement and death, and freedom escapes us.

Separated from Yahweh, a person pursues an image of themselves which is based upon their judgement of what is good or evil. The self-defined works associated with this image are sin, even if the person desires to fulfil God's Law. This is because their works are for the purpose of revealing an image of themselves. This way of living is, fundamentally, contrary to God's law of love. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit live by offering; They lay down Their lives to reveal each other. This is the law of love.

How is it, then, that living by the other Law becomes condemnation? A person who is condemned has been judged for breaking, or transgressing, a law. Their condemnation is the *consequence* of their transgression. When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, death was the outcome of transgressing the word of the Lord. God had said to Adam, 'Of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' Gen 2:17. Adam's transgression resulted in the condemnation of death. This condemnation spread to every person who was born of Adam. Why so? It is because those who were born after him proceeded to live according to their own law. Rom 5:16.

In the days of Moses, the children of Israel said to the Lord that they would keep His Law. Exo 19:8. In response, the Lord bound His Law upon them as a covenant, and said that if they kept the Law, they would be righteous, and would have eternal life. Lev 18:4-5. Deu 6:25. However, if

they transgressed the Law, they would die. The children of Israel viewed the Law, and the benefits associated with keeping it, as being good for them. They made the Law the standard of their self-defined good. In this way, God's Law became the basis of their own righteousness. Of course, no-one was able to keep the Law - not even Moses! Rom 3:10. Num 20:12. Everyone, therefore, received the same condemnation for breaking God's Law; they died.

Why did God give the Law to the children of Israel if He knew that they would all be condemned by it? He did this in order to reveal the weakness of their flesh to them, and to teach them that a person could only be justified, or made acceptable to God, through faith in Christ. Rom 8:3. Gal 3:24.

No condemnation in Christ Jesus

Thankfully, Jesus came into the world as a light in the midst of this darkness. Joh 3:19. The apostle John said that the life of God was in Christ, and that this life was the light of men. Joh 1:4. By this, he meant that a person who comes into Christ will be able to live and walk in the light that Christ is revealing, rather than in the darkness of their own way.

The light of life that Jesus came to reveal began to shine before all men when Jesus was lifted up on the cross as an offering. Referring to this offering, Jesus said, 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.' Joh 12:32-33. Once Christ's offering was finished, and His side was pierced with a spear, a way was opened for the gospel of Jesus Christ to be proclaimed to the whole world. Furthermore, a way was opened, through Christ's flesh, for us to join the fellowship of His offering. Paul described journeying with Christ in the fellowship of His offering as walking in 'a new and living way'. Heb 10:20. John called it 'walking in the light'. 1Jn 1:7.

Importantly, we learn from the apostle Paul that 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.' Rom 8:1-2. Christ ended the condemnation of the Law through His offering. In the fellowship of His offering, we are, therefore, no longer under condemnation. How did this happen?

First, in obedience to the Father, Jesus took our condemnation upon Himself as a sin offering. 2Co 5:21. Luk 22:42. Through His death, He bore the full judgement and penalty of the Law that is associated with

our sin. Once He died, the Law no longer had dominion over Him. In other words, having died, He was no longer being judged by the Law. Rom 7:1.

Second, Christ took the Law out of the way. He did this so that we would no longer relate to the Law in the same way that the Old Covenant demanded. The Law is a hindrance to us because of the self-centredness of our heart. It brings us under judgement because we are unable to obey its commands. Christ removed the Law, and nailed it to the cross. Col 2:14. Now, in Christ, the Law is no longer our reference point for life.

When we are baptised into Christ's death, we are delivered from the condemnation associated with our sin. This is because, in Him, we cease from trying to keep God's Law from the basis of our own self-righteousness. Instead, we live by the law of the Spirit of life. Rom 8:2. The Holy Spirit joins us, in one Spirit, to the Lord. 1Co 6:17. In Christ, we are not judged by the Law, because He has already paid the penalty for our sin, and has taken the Law out of the way. Most importantly, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and circumcision, the other law is progressively removed from us, and we are ceasing from sin. As the apostle Peter wrote, 'Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men [i.e. according to the other law], but for the will of God'. 1Pe 4:1-2.

At the same time as the other law is being removed from our heart, through our fellowship in the circumcision of Christ, our sin-sick spirit is being regenerated by the washing of the water by the word, and is being renewed by the Holy Spirit. Tit 3:5. By this means, our heart is being healed and cleansed, and we are enabled to see and receive the word of life that is ministered to us through the preaching of Christ's messengers.

Furthermore, the capacity to obey the Lord is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. Because of this, we are able to love the Lord and to love others. By this means, God's Law is being fulfilled in us. Rom 8:4. This is a most important understanding. We are not able to fulfil the will of God simply because the other law is removed from us, or even because our spirit is being healed. If this were so, we would still be fulfilling God's will through our own efforts. In the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit Himself is the expression of the righteousness of God in us.

Ceasing from self-righteousness

This should be a great relief to every Christian, and cause for joyful thanksgiving! Why, then, do many Christians still come under condemnation when they sin? It is because they either do not know, or do not accept, the necessity to *join* the offering of Christ. They certainly confess that Christ died on their behalf, but they do not believe that the new and living way, in which they are to walk, involves their participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Jesus said that these people love the darkness of their own way and their own perspectives more than they love the light of the word that is ministered by Christ through the presbytery. Joh 3:19. 1Jn 1:3. Their unwillingness to walk in the light of the word is revealed by their disconnection from fellowship. This may be evident, for example, through their relational partiality, theological misgivings, disputes or dissensions. The apostle John explained that a person who continues to walk in darkness is not being cleansed by the blood of Jesus Christ. 1Jn 1:7. This means that they are not joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, through which His blood is given to us to be our life.

People who live in this way judge themselves as being either righteous or unrighteous, from the basis of their own law. They do this because their own law is not being removed from them through the circumcision of Christ. Living according to their own way keeps them captive to sin. Rom 7:23. In response to their failure to attain to the standard of righteousness established by God's word, they will either change their perception of what it means to be acceptable to God or they will condemn and chastise themselves because of their failure. Paul said that people who judge themselves in this way become weak in faith and depressed, and can even become spiritually dead. 1Co 11:30. Pro 13:12.

We are not to judge ourselves in this way. There is only one judgement that the apostle Paul said we are to make, and this judgement is compelled by the love of God that the Holy Spirit pours into our heart. He said that if Christ died for us, then we are to die with Him in the fellowship of His offering. We are being relieved of all other judgements, in Him, and are being enabled to live for others. 2Co 5:14.

When we sin, we can cry out to God for mercy. By His mercy, we are able to present ourselves for participation in His offering. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, we receive grace to recover relationship with those against whom we have sinned. Further, we are able to change because of the chastening hand of the Father upon our lives. This chastening does

not cause us to despair or to lose hope. Instead, our sonship is affirmed, and we know that we are loved by God. Heb 12:5-6.

Coming to know and believe the love of God

'Love' is the culture of a person who is demonstrating the righteousness of God. Jesus said, ' "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind." This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself." On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.' Mat 22:37-40.

Of course, we are unable to fulfil these commandments through our own efforts. Attempting to do so is self-righteous. A common indication that a person is endeavouring to fulfil the command to love from the basis of self-righteousness is their enthusiasm to embrace, in the name of God's love, every person and every mode of conduct in the church. As we will consider in the next chapter, this self-sourced love can become a destructive leaven within a congregation. The promotion of this all-encompassing love, which is lawlessness, is one of the reasons why, in this present time, the love of many evangelical Christians is growing cold. Mat 24:12.

A person who is being delivered from self-righteousness does not rely on their own understanding of love. For this reason, their testimony is the same as that of the apostle John. He wrote, 'We have come to *know* and *have believed* the love which God has for us. God is love, and the one who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him'. 1Jn 4:16.

In order to know and believe the love of God, we must first accept that God's love is not native to us. We must *receive* His love. God *is* love, and He abides within us when we are born from above by the incorruptible seed of the word of God. 1Pe 1:23. To abide in God is to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. His offering reveals the love that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit have for each other and for us. The fellowship of this offering, therefore, is the only context in which we can love God, and love others as ourselves. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from the basic desire to live for ourselves, and are receiving the capacity for love as it is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. We should not be motivated by the demand of others to prove that we are Christians through self-justifying, self-righteous actions.

Loving ourselves

It is significant that God said we are to love our neighbour *as ourselves*. How do we do this? Clearly, the Lord is not commanding us to be conceited or self-admiring. To love ourselves in this self-centred manner is to be satisfied with an image that we have created for ourselves, based on our view of what is good or evil. Significantly, from this same basis, people can loathe themselves. In this state, they are dissatisfied with themselves because they have fallen short of the image to which they aspire.

Self-worth is tenuous when a person endeavours to know themselves from the basis of the knowledge of good and evil. This is because their worth depends upon the extent to which they are content with the image they have of themselves. The value of their self-image will be particularly affected by the affirmation that they receive from others. This way of viewing themselves and others is, in fact, the basis of fallen romance.

The affirmation of who we are should not be a romantic affirmation. A romantic affirmation is fundamentally selfish. When a person lives and relates with others from the basis of fallen romance, they have expectations of how they should be received by others, and who others should be to them. They serve what they perceive to be the agendas of another. However, they do this in an attempt to become who they believe the other person loves. This inevitability results in reaction and conflict, because it is based in unreality and self-centredness.

A person who lives in this way will be continually assessing themselves, and comparing themselves with others, in order to create a better image of themselves. However, they can never be truly satisfied. The more they pursue a 'perfect' image, the less they are able to really know and worth themselves. An effect of this sinful way of living is the progressive frailty, or degeneration, of their identity.

Identity fragility based on self-assessment and rejection manifests in many and varied ways. It may be expressed, for example, through emotional and mental instability, personal insecurity, angry outbursts, chronic anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, perverted thinking, etc. These identity frailties need to be healed if a person is to receive and live by the love of God. We will discuss the recovery of identity in more detail below.

The capacity to love ourselves comes from God. This is why we need to know and believe the love that He has for us. 1Jn 4:16. To love ourselves

is to accept and honour who God has named us to be as His son. 1Jn 3:1. We first come to know the love of God when we receive our name as a son of God through new birth. Our name and sanctification is further made known to us as we present ourselves for participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. By offering, we are able to prove the will of God, which is our sanctification. Rom 12:2. 1Th 4:3. Finally, we are commended to our name and works as a son of God, when we look into the corporate face of Christ, through fellowship with our brethren.

If loving ourselves refers to accepting and delighting in who God made us to be, then loving others is the capacity to appreciate whom the Lord has made them to be. More than this, it involves laying our life down according to our name, to reveal the name of another. This is the love of God, because this is how God Himself lives.

The love of God is poured into our heart

New birth and our fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ is the only way by which we can be delivered from the desire to create and project an image of ourselves. Deliverance from this propensity is necessary if we want to love the Lord, love ourselves, and love our neighbour as ourselves. In this fellowship, the other law, by which we either promote ourselves, or depreciate ourselves, is being progressively removed from us. Rom 6:5-10. Col 2:11. Furthermore, our identity is being regenerated, and the life of God is increasingly becoming our life. This happens because the love of God is being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5.

We know that the love of God has been poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit when we are full of conviction! Jesus said that when the Holy Spirit comes, 'He will convict the world of sin, and of righteousness, and of judgement.' Joh 16:8.

Through *the conviction of sin*, we are made aware of our fleshly endeavours to create and project an image of ourselves. As we have already noted, this image is an alternative to our name and sanctification as a son of God. Desiring this image reveals that we have not believed, nor received, God's word about us. Without the conviction of the Holy Spirit, which comes as the word is preached to us, we will continue to live in the delusion that our projections are the expression of our sonship. In this self-righteous condition, we are in captivity to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23-24. We believe that the darkness within us is the light. Jesus said that this is indeed great darkness. Mat 6:23.

A person who has received the conviction of sin will present themselves to the Lord, and in fellowship with their brethren, to obey the word that they have heard. 1Jn 1:7. This is the evidence of repentance and faith towards God. Heb 6:1. The apostle John said that when we confess our sins to one another, the Lord is faithful and just to forgive us. 1Jn 1:9. Then, as we continue to walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering, the propensity to pursue an image for ourselves is being removed from us. In the fellowship of these sufferings, the blood of Christ is sprinkling our heart clean from the evil of pursuing our own righteousness. 1Jn 1:7. Heb 9:14. Because of this, we are able to serve God.

Jesus described the Holy Spirit as 'the Spirit of truth' who would lead us into the truth of our name and sanctification as a son of God. Joh 16:13. When the Spirit of truth *convicts us of righteousness*, He is confirming to us the righteous works of God that belong to our name. These are the works that we are to do as son-priests who are part of the body of Christ. We fulfil these works by offering and, in so doing, demonstrate the love of God.

The conviction of judgement refers to our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul was referring to the conviction of judgement when he wrote, 'For the *love of Christ* compels us, because *we judge thus*: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again'. 2Co 5:14-15. Through baptism into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, we are joined to the fellowship of His body. Noah and his family were delivered through the waters of judgement by finding refuge in the ark. In the same way, we, In Christ, are being delivered from the condemnation that has been proclaimed on the whole world as we continue in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings

While all six wounds of Christ's offering are effective in delivering us from sin and the other law, and to give us His life, Paul specifically nominated our fellowship in Christ's chastening and scourging as contexts in which we can come to know and believe God's love for us. Drawing from the book of Proverbs, he wrote, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; *for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives*'. Heb 12:5-6.

Chastened for our peace

Jesus was chastised, or disciplined, by the Father, for our peace, when He was beaten with rods in the court of Caiaphas, the high priest. Isa 53:5. 2Sa 7:12-15. This was the third wounding event that Christ endured on His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary.

When we receive our daily sufferings as a share in this element of Christ's offering, we are able to come to peace. Through our fellowship in the chastening that Christ received, the desire to go our own way is being removed from us, and we are learning how to live and walk according to the word of God that defines our sonship. We know peace because we cease from pursuing an image for ourselves that is in conflict with the sonship that the Father has prepared for us.

Through this process, we also come to peace with others. This is because we stop striving with, and competing against, our brothers and sisters in Christ. As we accept and value our sonship, we are able to appreciate who God has named others to be. In this way, we are being freed to love our brethren in the same way that we love ourselves.

In addition to peace, the effect of chastening is that we are able to give thanks to God in every circumstance of life. Thanksgiving becomes the fruit of our lips, because His life is flourishing within us, and is being expressed by us. The Scriptures call this a 'sacrifice of thanksgiving'. Lev 7:11-14. Heb 13:15. We are able to worship in Spirit and truth, because the love of God is being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, and because we are living in the truth of our name, instead of in the lie of a projection.

By His stripes we are healed

The scourging that Christ received under the direction of Pilate was His fourth wound. The purpose of this wound was *our healing*. Isa 53:5. In particular, scourging is the means by which our identity, or spirit, is healed through the washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit.

In Part 4 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we learnt that the whip that was used to scourge Christ had nine leather strands. Each strand had four or five pieces of sharp bone or metal attached to it. A full beating of thirty-nine stripes would have caused approximately 1600 wounds on Christ's back! All of these wounds were for the purpose of bringing healing to the many

and varied aberrant behaviours that are associated with the degeneration of our human condition.

The lust of the eyes has a particular influence on the health of our spirit. 'The lust of the eyes' refers to the fantasies, projections and dreams that people pursue for themselves as an alternative to their sonship. As we have already noted, these pursuits only lead us away from the truth of who we are, and into deviant ways of living. These ways of living lead to the fragility, or degeneration, of our identity.

The healing that Christ brought through His scourging is available to us as we eat and drink the elements of the communion. His body and blood have become the fruit of the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:2. By eating and drinking the communion, we remain joined to the offering of Christ, through which we are delivered from the lust of the eyes. Importantly, in the fellowship of His sufferings, we are receiving the healing that Christ achieved through His scourging. It is here that He heals the broken-hearted and binds up their wounds. Psa 147:3.

Transformed by the renewing of our mind

The apostle James explained that it is through the various trials that we experience as part of the chastening hand of the Father in our life, that we are made perfect and complete. He wrote, 'My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces patience. But let patience have its perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing.' Jas 1:2-4.

James then highlighted the reality that the antidote to instability is to receive wisdom from God, and to live by faith in fellowship with Christ. Specifically, he said, 'If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways.' Jas 1:5-8. Offering transfer is being frustrated for the person who doubts. This is because they are not living by faith and, therefore, are not walking in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The renewing of our mind is important to the recovery of our identity, and to living as a son of God. We must cease from the recriminating mind-chatter that is endemic to living according to the flesh. This is what Paul was advancing when he wrote, 'For those who live according

to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace.' Rom 8:5-6.

In order for our mind to cease from being motivated by the flesh, it needs to be set on the things of the Spirit. Here is a key: 'the things of the Spirit' refers to the word being proclaimed at this present time. It is the word of present truth. The effect of receiving and believing the word is that we continue in the fellowship of the Father, and of His Son, as a living sacrifice. In this fellowship, we cease from pursuing our own righteousness, and are being transformed by the renewing of our mind. There is no condemnation in Christ.

Chapter 6

Delivered from the flesh, to walk in the Spirit

Introduction

The apostle Paul explained that the events of the Old Testament were written for our learning so that, through the patience and comfort of the Scriptures, we might be firmly established in the hope of sonship. Rom 15:4. Drawing attention to one of the key lessons of the Scriptures, Paul contrasted the lives of Hagar and her son Ishmael, with the lives of Sarah and her son Isaac. He explained that they represented two covenants - one of the flesh, and the other of the Spirit. Gal 4:21-31. Paul did this to highlight that these two covenants are competing modes of life within the church.

Hagar was a bondwoman. Her son, Ishmael, was born according to the flesh. Paul identified Hagar as representing the Old Covenant, which proceeded from Mount Sinai. He said that Mount Sinai now corresponded to natural Jerusalem, whose citizens continue to live under the conditions of the Old Covenant, and remain in bondage to the flesh. Gal 4:24-25. In this discussion, Paul was not referring only to the Jewish nation;

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

he was also speaking about Christians who endeavour to attain to the righteousness of God through the keeping of the Law. Gal 4:28-31.

In contrast to Hagar, Paul nominated Sarah as representing the New Covenant. He described her as 'the Jerusalem from above'. Her son, Isaac, was the child of promise who was born according to the Spirit. Paul then explained that Sarah is the mother of all the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. These are the sons of God, who have received their calling in Isaac. Gal 4:26-28. Gen 22:18. Heb 11:17-19.

The book of Genesis recorded that there was enmity between Hagar and Sarah, and between Ishmael and Isaac. Once Hagar had fallen pregnant with Ishmael, she despised Sarah, and was unwilling to submit to Sarah's authority within the household of faith. Gen 16:4,9. Then, when Isaac was born, he was mocked by Ishmael, prompting Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael out of his house. Gen 21:9-14.

The enmity between the flesh and the Spirit continued in the next generation. This was despite the fact that, unlike in Abraham's household, there were no competing motherhoods in Isaac's household. Isaac's wife, Rebekah, was a covenant mother like Sarah. She was not from Egypt; nor was she a surrogate mother like Hagar. Interestingly, the Scriptures note that Isaac 'took Rebekah and she became his wife, and he loved her. So *Isaac was comforted after his mother's death.*' Gen 24:67. We suggest, in this regard, that Rebekah was of the same spirit and motherhood as Sarah.

When Rebekah fell pregnant with twins, the two children struggled together within her womb. In prayer, Rebekah travailed for the two children, seeking to understand the reason for, and the nature of, their struggle. Gen 25:22. In this way, she joined herself, through prayer, to the travail of Christ. This was the travail spoken of by the prophet Isaiah, through which the sons of God would be brought to birth from the death of sin. Isa 53:10-11.

The Lord answered Rebekah's query through revelation. She understood from the Lord that the two boys in her womb were two nations, or peoples. Gen 25:23. One nation would be a people who set their minds on, and walked after, the flesh. The other nation would be a people who set their minds on, and walked after, the Spirit.

It is remarkable that these two conflicting ways of living could come forth from the one covenant household. To understand how this happened, we must recognise that the distinction between Esau and Jacob was not

their spiritual condition at birth. They were both heirs of the blessing that belonged to a covenant household, and they were both born in a carnal state. We know, of course, that Esau was a profane man who sold his birthright for a morsel of food. Heb 12:16. However, Jacob was also fleshly. He coveted the blessing that belonged to his brother, and endeavoured to obtain it through deceit. The factor that distinguished Jacob from Esau was Jacob's faith response to the word of the Lord, and his willingness to receive his sufferings as being from the Lord.

Esau considered himself to be a victim of injustice, and would neither acknowledge, nor submit to, the sovereign election of the Lord in relation to the blessing of the firstborn. He was full of indignation and self-centred regret, which only bore the fruit of contention and murderous rage within him. In contrast, Jacob endured twenty years of injustice and suffering at the hands of Laban. He testified that he had endured these afflictions because the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac had been with him. Gen 31:38-42. 'The Fear of Isaac' was a reference to Abraham's offering of Isaac on Mount Moriah. Gen 22:2. This event was a figure of Christ's offering on the cross. In this regard, Jacob was testifying that his sufferings had been a participation in the afflictions of Christ.

Jacob wrestled with the Lord, in prayer, through the night. As the dawn approached, the Lord helped Jacob to overcome his self-centredness, by dislocating his hip. Jacob acknowledged his iniquitous condition, confessing to the Lord that he was a deceiver. Gen 32:27. In response, the Lord re-named Jacob, 'Israel', meaning 'Prince with God'. Gen 32:28. This was the blessing that Jacob had desired. He had obtained his sanctification as a son of God, in accordance with the word that the Lord had declared to his mother. He had been delivered from his former fleshly way of living, and was now inheriting the Spirit, by faith. It is notable that Jacob's sanctification was accompanied by ongoing suffering, due to his dislocated hip. Gen 32:31. This was part of the narrow and difficult way that, for Jacob, was leading to eternal life. Mat 7:14.

Flesh and Spirit in the church

The lesson that Rebekah's sons were supposed to learn, in order to receive the promised blessing of sonship, was the need to shift from being carnally-minded to become spiritually-minded. For Jacob, this shift happened through his obedience to the word of the Lord, and through his patient endurance in the seasons of suffering that he experienced. Every Christian in the church needs to learn this same lesson. Gal 5:16.

Rom 8:5. In order to inherit our sonship, we must be joined to the process through which we are being delivered from living by the other law, which is in our flesh. This process is called 'walking in the Spirit'. It involves our fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ. We participate in this offering by the faith which we receive from the word of God.

The need to shift from living according to the principles of the flesh, to living and walking in the Spirit, applies, equally, to us as a community of believers. As a church movement, we have been blessed with the word of illumination. This word, which ascension-gifted brethren have received by revelation, has been laid down in the midst of a fellowship of elders and deacons. Reflecting upon our history as a movement, it is apparent that the fruit of this word within the presbytery, and among the congregations, has been mixed.

Of course, many people are walking in the light of the word, and are bearing the fruit of the Spirit as they mature in their sonship. Nevertheless, our journey as a church has been marked by various initiatives and practices, which can only be described as 'deeds of the flesh'. Many of these practices have been based upon church and clergy traditions, which have been appropriated by those who have assumed a ministry profile within the church. Not only have these practices failed to minister the Spirit, but they have also, at times, caused hurt and distress within our congregations.

Leaven in the church

Our historical conduct as a presbytery and as local congregations reveals that many of us have maintained the implicit belief that there are numerous ways of walking that we have considered to be 'spiritual'. More specifically, we have believed that our own familiar ways of walking and living as Christians are inherently spiritual. Yet, this way of viewing the Christian experience only demonstrates that our perspective has been shrouded by the motivations and activity of our flesh.

When a veil lies over the eyes of our heart, we are unable to see that the way in which we are living and walking as a Christian is at odds with the way in which the Spirit, through the word of present truth, is urging us to walk. Like the Laodiceans, we do not realise or believe that we are wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Rev 3:17. We certainly do not accept that Christ is not with us in our endeavours.

There is only one way of walking that is spiritual. This is to walk on the pathway of offering which Christ, by Eternal Spirit, pioneered. Heb 2:10. Heb 5:9. Heb 9:14. He calls us to join His offering, and to journey together with Him on this pathway. It is the narrow way that leads to life. Mat 7:14. In contrast to walking in the way of the Spirit, walking according to the flesh has many expressions. This is because it is based in each person's own perspective of who God is, and what it means to follow Him. Jesus called this 'the broad way that leads to destruction', and noted that there are many who walk in this manner. Mat 7:13.

The apostle Paul described the influence of these fleshly and self-righteous ways of living as 'leavens' that affect the culture of a whole church if they are not addressed. 1Co 5:6. We are all personally responsible and accountable for our responses to the word, and for our conduct in the church. However, leaven becomes a particular problem within a congregation when leaders themselves are entertaining, and even cultivating, these alternative cultures.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul identified four leavens that broadly represent the many and varied ways of walking in the church, and that are according to the flesh. As we reflect on our history, it is evident that these leavens have been, and continue to be, among us.

The leaven of amorality

We have used the term 'amorality' to describe a religious culture of 'niceness' within the church which, in the name of the love of God, embraces every person and every mode of conduct. This leaven was particularly notable among the Christians in Corinth. Paul had received a report of sexual immorality in the church, the likes of which the Gentiles would not have considered acceptable. 1Co 5:1. Paul rebuked the Corinthians for accommodating this person and their conduct, writing, 'You are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you'. 1Co 5:2. He then explained that if this leaven of amorality was not removed from them, the whole congregation would be affected, and they would be unable to keep the Feast of Passover, which is fulfilled by eating the communion meal. 1Co 5:6-8.

In their sophistication and presumption, the Christians in Corinth were unable to see that embracing this man, and overlooking his deeds, was a corruption. More than this, they did not realise that they were in opposition to Christ! Paul, as Christ's messenger, had given this man

over to Satan so that, through this suffering, he might be delivered from his wicked ways, and his spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord.

1Co 5:5.

Christians who maintain the view that Jesus receives every person as they are, and so the church should do so as well, do not understand, nor accept, the jealous love of God. They do not recognise that God comes to judge those who are in His church because He is removing from it everything that offends. They forget that, even though Jesus had delivered the children of Israel out of Egypt, He judged and slaughtered them in the wilderness because of their *unbelief*. Jud 1:5.

God's love and mercy are not demonstrated by overlooking a person's wickedness. God demonstrates His mercy by granting a person a participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. In this fellowship, the judgement that a person is under because of their wickedness is commuted to a discipline. As they are chastened by the Father, in Christ, they can be delivered from their deviances, and enabled to serve God acceptably.

People who deny the necessity to be joined to the offering and circumcision of Christ are often offended by their sufferings, and by the sufferings that they see others experiencing. They may even attempt, through prayer, to 'lobby' the Father to withdraw His hand from the lives of those who are in distress. Praying in this way dishonours the Lord, and denies the grace that is available to every son of God to continue in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The leaven of inordinate women's ministry

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul attended to the issue of women ministering in the church with their heads uncovered. He wrote, 'Every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonours her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered.'

1Co 11:5-6.

Paul was not referring to whether or not a woman wears a hat or a scarf on her head at church. We know this because, earlier in this passage, he reminded his readers 'that the Head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the Head of Christ is God'. 1Co 11:3. Paul was drawing attention to the order by which the grace of life is ministered to every household. A woman's head is covered through right relational

order with her husband. The basis for this relationship is sanctification and honour. 1Th 4:4. Her sanctification is to be the person whom God named her to be, and to relate to her husband from this basis. She gives honour to her husband by revealing his sanctification as her head. She does this by offering her submission to his headship. By this means, they are heirs together of the grace of life, and this life is multiplied in their house, and from their house. 1Pe 3:7.

A woman dishonours her head when she has rejected the headship of her husband, yet presumes to minister in the church. As we read earlier, Paul likened this to having her head shaved. The meaning of this statement requires some contextual explanation. Corinth was a significant port city in the time of Paul's ministry. Merchants and sailors who stopped at the port would frequent the Temple of Aphrodite to procure services from one of the 1000 cult prostitutes who were 'ministering' in the temple. Notably, it was common for these prostitutes to have their heads shaved, in accordance with their religious order.

Paul was equating a woman who prayed and prophesied in the church with her head uncovered, to a cult prostitute who mediated between her client and the gods. In so doing, Paul implied that this same fallen, religious dynamic is at work when a woman rejects the headship of her husband, and usurps the headship of Christ in the church for the sake of exercising her own ministry.

As we have elaborated in Part 1 of *Lampstand Churches*, this mode of ministry was identified by Jesus as 'the doctrine of Jezebel'. Writing to the presbytery of the church in Thyatira, Jesus said, 'You allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols.' Rev 2:20. We see, in Jesus' description, the distinct similarity to the cult prostitutes to whom Paul referred in his letter to the Corinthians.

Why is this behaviour a leaven? It is because a woman has an inherent capacity for *multiplication*. When this corrupt mode of ministry continues unabated, it multiplies *corruption* in the church, giving rise to idolatry, and even to immorality. Jesus described this as producing the 'children' of Jezebel. Rev 2:23.

Of course, women have a vital participation in the ministry of the church. They are able to prophesy, preach and teach. 1Co 14:31. Tit 2:3-5. Php 4:3. Rom 16:1. However, Paul was clear that women were not to teach or to have authority over men. 1Ti 2:12. The point is that their ministry, in and of itself, is not leaven. The question for women, and indeed for

men as well, is whether they are ministering in order, by offering. In this regard, a wife does not cease to be under the headship of her husband when she enters the church or stands to pray. To think that way would be a shameful rejection of her own sanctification. It dishonours Christ, and her husband, bringing her, and those who support her ministry, under the condemnation of death. Rev 2:22-23.

The leaven of congregationalism

Congregationalism is another leaven that Paul identified within the Corinthian church. This leaven is a corrupt culture where individuals and factions presume to exercise authority in the church in spite of the authority that Christ Himself has established within the presbytery. Paul was addressing this culture when he wrote, 'Now some are puffed up, as though I [as a messenger of Christ] were not coming to you. But I will come to you shortly, if the Lord wills, and I will know, not the word of those who are puffed up, but the power.' 1Co 4:18-19.

Congregationalism follows the same democratic principles that operate in the world. It promotes the right of every household to express their own religious views, and to have their needs met by the church. Factions may form within the congregation when households that share similar views and religious objectives align themselves with one another.

Significantly, congregationalism is often expressed through the voices of key figures who are either self-appointed or who have become the representatives of a faction. Considering themselves to be speaking on behalf of, and in the best interests of, the congregation, these people presume to assess the word and direction that is given by Christ through the apostolic administration that is in His hand. Even presbyters can act in this manner, viewing their role in the presbytery to be a voice for the concerns of the people.

People who are this way inclined often take it upon themselves to question or to correct what they view to be doctrinal errors in the word of present truth. In this regard, they set themselves as the arbiters of what is right and true. Most often, these 'corrections' are not proposed in the presbytery, but in social settings, such as in people's homes. Similarly, they feel free to counsel their acquaintances against following the direction that the Spirit is bringing to the church when this direction fails to accord with their own views.

Their rightness is the basis of their authority. However, their rights and arguments are merely part of a projection. In this way, they are wrapping

their *mina*, which is the true authority of their name, in the cloth of self-righteous projection. Luk 19:20. Significantly, they are not keeping the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. Eph 4:3. In other words, they are not being who the Lord made them to be, and they are defiling the sanctification of others. For this reason, their wisdom is not of the Spirit, 'but is earthly, sensual, demonic'. Jas 3:15. In contrast, the wisdom that is found in the Spirit 'is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy'. Jas 3:17.

Congregationalism, with its claimed democratic rights, is *not* body life; nor is it body ministry. A person does not have authority in the church simply because they have the authority to exercise their own sonship; or because they are a head of a household; or because they have a participation in the ministry of Christ's word and life as a member of the body of Christ. While these are all valid and vital realities of life in the body of Christ, they do not endow a person with grace to oversee the church. Such grace resides in the presbytery, and is given by Christ Himself. Eph 4:11.

Of course, every person in the church is free to ask questions and to raise concerns regarding the activities of the church and the conduct of those who lead. This is not a leaven. The leaven of congregationalism is manifest when those who are raising concerns become *an alternative authority* in the church, demanding the acquiescence of the presbytery to their views. This is further compounded when these ones draw brethren to themselves and away from the fellowship of the presbytery that is with the Father and His Son. 1Jn 1:3.

The leaven of congregationalism was prevalent in the church at Laodicea. Jesus described Himself as being on *the outside* of this church. He was standing at the door of the church, and knocking, to see if there were any leaders who were willing to hear His voice and to open the door of their heart to Him. He said, 'If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me.' Rev 3:20.

The name Laodicea means 'the justice of the people'. It can also be translated as 'the right of the people'. A leader with a Laodicean profile will endeavour to meet the needs and to *serve the agenda* of the congregation. The success of a leader in this kind of congregation will be dependent upon their ability to gain the approval, and to meet the needs, of the most powerful factions within the church. In this regard, *the*

congregation is their master and has replaced the lordship of Christ that is expressed through an apostolic administration in His right hand.

The Laodicean condition excludes Christ from His church, and replaces it with human, self-based and, therefore, self-righteous, religious activity. This spiritual sickness is the most virulent of all the diseases that afflict a community of Christians. It is a leaven that denies that Christ appoints ministry-graced leaders to be masters and overseers of His church. Act 20:28. Luk 12:42.

Those who follow this persuasion gather to themselves, and promote, teachers who suit their disposition and direction. Leaders are pressed to endorse individual initiatives as a right that belongs to members of a Christian community. Ministering according to name, which is approved in the fellowship of offering, has not been understood, accepted or agreed with, by these people.

The leaven of collegiality

A fourth leaven that affects the church is collegiality. Paul was referring to this leaven when he addressed the envy, strife and divisions that were apparent in the Corinthian church. These relational difficulties stemmed from the loyalty of the congregation to particular leaders. He said to them, 'For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men? For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?' 1Co 3:3-4.

Paul was using himself and Apollos to highlight a tendency that had been fostered in the church by various leaders and their supporters. To this end, he wrote, 'Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, *that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other*'. 1Co 4:6.

It is apparent that the leaders in Corinth functioned as colleagues who fostered and were supported by loyal groups within the church. These leaders were their pastors. Paul was rebuking the leaders as well as the congregation for this carnal behaviour, which undermined the first love fellowship of the presbytery, and stifled the priestly activity of each son-priest in the church.

In His letter to the Ephesian church, recorded in the book of Revelation, Jesus identified this leaven as the 'doctrine' and 'deeds' of the Nicolaitans. Rev 2:6,15. As we considered in Part 4 of *The Steps of*

Salvation, the Lord uses a person's name to communicate something of their nature. The name 'Nicolaitan' means 'ruler of the people'. Evidently, Jesus was referring to a group who presumed to 'lord it over' the people in the church. As we have noted from the example of the Corinthians, this leaven gains traction within a church when members of the congregation support and advance this form of leadership.

A leader in the church may justify this mode because of their clergy position, their education and training, or the perceived success of their ministry. They may also be using the true apostolic administration of Christ as a resource, and have become puffed up and empowered because of their proximity to those with ascension gift grace. Leaders with a Nicolaitan profile will approach the word of God and other leaders as a *resource* for their own ministry.

Leaders of this kind will often form affiliations with one another as ministry colleagues for the sake of mutual empowerment. It is common for a Nicolaitan leader to have a 'collegial' approach among other leaders, and then an 'autocratic' approach when they are among their own congregation. In contrast to a true overseer, who will proceed from the fellowship of offering in a presbytery to be an example among the flock, a Nicolaitan leader will proceed from an empowered position to lord it over the flock.

From a practical perspective, collegial brethren will often adopt a *middle-management approach* to administration. They will be inclined to delegate to others the work that they themselves should be doing as a slave of Christ. At the same time, because of their anxious need to control those around them, they will inhibit others in the congregation from finding their name and work. A leader with such a profile will often feel threatened by the success of those around them, because they perceive this to be undermining their own sense of validity and ministry profile.

Consistent with this middle-management approach, a collegial presbyter will often presume to be the one who is required to interpret and apply the word for others. Similarly, *they* may define the response to the word that is required by a person, rather than allowing each believer to demonstrate the initiative and accountability of their own faith toward fellowship and offering. The need for a leader to micro-manage and to control those around them is the evidence of their anxiety. It also demonstrates their need to maintain the projection that they have created for themselves, in order to cover their own shame and sense of inferiority or insecurity.

The need for illumination

The use of leaven to symbolise various aspects of self-righteous ministry within the church has its source in the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The Feast of Unleavened Bread was part of the holy convocation of the Passover, established by Moses as a memorial commemorating Israel's miraculous deliverance from Egypt. Exo 12:14-20. Lev 23:5-8. The apostle Paul used the symbol of leaven to describe the corrupting influence of our human motivations upon our pursuit of righteousness. 'Purging out leaven' means repenting from all our self-righteous endeavours. Paul described this activity as 'repentance from dead works'. Heb 6:1.

A person who functions from self-righteousness will be ignorant of their condition. This is because they believe in their own integrity and uprightness. Their self-righteous projections are a veil over the eyes of their heart, which blinds them to their failures and to their true condition. Jesus noted that those who minister from this basis are easily offended when their interpretation of the word is not recognised or advanced. He described them as 'blind leaders of the blind'. Mat 15:14.

Illumination by the word of God is the beginning point for our recovery from self-righteousness, so that the leaven can be purged from our lives, our households, and our congregations. The only initiative that we can take in this regard is to humble ourselves before the Lord. He gives grace to the humble so that they can receive His word. 1Pe 5:5. Rom 10:17. The illumination that they receive enables them, firstly, to see their self-righteous condition so that, in repentance and faith, they can then turn to the Lord. Heb 6:1. The Lord meets them in their repentance to establish them in their sanctification. By this means, they are able to fulfil His will for their life.

We test and prove our sanctification by *offering*. Paul instructed us in this way, writing, 'I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service ... that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.' Rom 12:1-2. The will of God is our sanctification. 1Th 4:3. His 'will' refers to the works that are associated with our name, which is written in the book of life. Heb 10:7. Psa 139:16.

Through offering, in Christ, it becomes apparent as to whether our initiatives are actions of faith or are sinful projections. Significantly, it is only in the fellowship of Christ's offering that we are able to resolve this issue. This is because, as the Lamb of God, Jesus was both the burnt

offering and the sin offering. As we participate in the sin offering, we are also made adequate to participate acceptably in the burnt offering.

Through Christ's finished work, a fountain was opened for sin and uncleanness. The water of this fountain is the word of God, ministered to us by the Spirit. The word of God, as water, washes and sanctifies us. Eph 5:25-27. 'Uncleanness' refers to the projections of ourselves that we present in order to make a name for ourselves, and to cover our nakedness and shame. If we continue to offer from the basis of our projections, idolatry will become our motivation, causing us to be cut off from the covenant. However, through our participation in the fellowship of offering, we are made adequate to offer acceptably and according to our sanctification. Rom 12:1. We are joined to this fellowship because we receive and walk in the word that is laid down to us by ascension gift messengers. 1Jn 1:3.

The examples of Daniel and John

When the Lord comes to us as our great High Priest, we first become aware of the inadequacy and failure of our own righteousness. This was Daniel's experience. He had given himself to pray and mourn for three weeks. Dan 10:2-3. In other words, he was presenting himself to watch and pray. At the end of this time, Gabriel came to Daniel as a theophany of Christ, dressed in the garments of priesthood. Daniel recorded, 'I lifted my eyes and looked, and behold, a certain man clothed in linen, whose waist was girded with gold of Uphaz! His body was like beryl, his face like the appearance of lightning, his eyes like torches of fire, his arms and feet like burnished bronze in colour, and the sound of his words like the voice of a multitude.' Dan 10:5-6.

Daniel testified that the impact of Christ's appearing to him in this way was that 'my comeliness was turned in me into corruption, and I retained no strength. Yet I heard the sound of his words; and while I heard the sound of his words I was in a deep sleep on my face, with my face to the ground.' Dan 10:8-9. Daniel was saying that his own righteousness, or comeliness, was revealed to be corruption within him. Furthermore, his own strength, even to pray in relation to the will of God, was shown to be insufficient. Consequently, he found himself in a deep sleep, with His face toward the ground. At this point, his situation was no different from that of the disciples who fell asleep, because of sorrow, in the garden of Gethsemane. Luk 22:45.

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

This was the beginning of true illumination for Daniel. It was at this point that he received the capacity to see what the Lord was saying to him and to the Jewish nation. Most significantly, through illumination and repentance, Daniel was enabled by God to do the works that belonged to his sanctification. The Lord, as a priest, revealed Himself to Daniel for the purpose of strengthening him so that he could do the works that belonged to his sanctification. This was the purpose of the Lord's initiative toward him. Daniel recounted, "Then behold, a hand touched me and set me trembling on my hands and knees. He said to me, "O Daniel, man of high esteem, understand the words that I am about to tell you and stand upright, for I have now been sent to you." And when he had spoken this word to me, I stood up trembling. Then he said to me, "Do not be afraid, Daniel, for from the first day that you set your heart on understanding this and on humbling yourself before your God, your words were heard, and I have come in response to your words".' Dan 10:10-12.

The apostle John's experience was the same as Daniel's. He was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day, watching and praying. 'The Lord's Day' is not a particular day of the week. The Lord's Day refers to the acceptable day of Christ's offering. John was saying that, by the Spirit, he was praying with Christ in Gethsemane. While he was watching, he heard a voice behind him. Rev 1:10. Evidently, John had been looking in the wrong direction. He had been watching and praying in view of an administration symbolised by the table of showbread. Of course, this was the administration that he had been appointed to by the Lord, as one of the twelve apostles. However, to hear a voice behind him meant that the voice was coming from the lampstand!

When John turned to the word that was coming to him, he saw the Son of Man arrayed in His priestly demeanour. Christ was speaking from the administration that was represented by the lampstand; He was not speaking, at this time, from the administration represented by the table of showbread. John's 'turning to the word' indicated his repentance from his former orientation, and his desire to receive Christ's word, however and from wherever it was coming.

The effect of seeing Jesus in this way was that John fell at the feet of Christ as a dead man. As the Lord did for Daniel, He laid His right hand on John and said to him, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take

place after this. The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand, and the seven golden lampstands: The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches, and the seven lampstands which you saw are the seven churches.' Rev 1:17-20.

By laying His right hand upon John, Jesus was connecting him to the star presbytery which was in His hand, and among the lampstands. Rev 1:20. The Lord was also equipping and enabling John for the works that the Lord had prepared for him to do. He was to write down the things that were being revealed to him, for the sake of Christ's church.

John's repentance from his former ministry orientation, and his faith towards God, were demonstrated by the way in which he referred to himself in his epistles, which were written following the book of Revelation. In these letters, John identified himself as 'the Elder' who was part of a fellowship of brethren. From this fellowship, these brethren proclaimed the word from the beginning, so that those who received it would be joined to their fellowship. Their fellowship was the fellowship of Yahweh. 2Jn 1. 3Jn 1. 1Jn 1:1-3.

Chapter 7

Speaking from testimony

Introduction

Just prior to His ascension into heaven, Jesus said to His disciples that when they had been filled with the Holy Spirit, they would become Christ's witnesses in Jerusalem, in all of Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Act 1:8. A witness is a person who is able to testify concerning something they have seen, heard or experienced. This is how the apostle John described those who were part of the presbytery, writing, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life ... we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us'. 1Jn 1:1,3.

Through testimony, those who are part of this fellowship make disciples of their hearers, baptising them into the name of the Father, the name of the Son, and the name of the Holy Spirit. Mat 28:19. In other words, those who receive and respond to the word that is ministered through testimony from the presbytery are being joined to this same fellowship; this is the fellowship of Yahweh Himself. 1Jn 1:3. Significantly, Jesus directed His witnesses to *teach* the commands of Christ. We note, therefore, that testimony should be the basis for teaching in the church.

This brings us to the key point of this chapter. Our witness in the world is to speak from *testimony*, and not from the rightness of theology. We are able to minister the word of life to others because, through repentance and faith toward God, the word is now in our mouth and in our heart. Heb 6:1. Rom 10:8. This is demonstrated by how we live and relate with others. The apostle Paul said that we are living epistles, read and known of all men. 2Co 3:2. When the word of faith is in our mouth, as the expression that comes from our heart, we will be expressing the righteousness of faith by the Spirit. Rom 8:6,10. Our demeanour will not be the expression of religious self-righteousness.

It is evident that we have received the word that is preached to us, because we confess, through testimony, the lordship that Jesus has over our lives. Rom 10:9. This confession is being demonstrated in us because we believe that Christ was raised from the dead after His work of offering was completed on our behalf. His resurrection was the sign that God had justified and received us as His children. Rom 4:25. With our mouth, we speak of the saving power of God that is active in our life. With our heart, we are believing for the righteousness that comes from God. Rom 10:9-11. This is the reality of our life, because we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Wisdom, understanding and the knowledge of the Holy One

Wisdom, understanding and the knowledge of the Holy One are three dimensions of the word of life that are essential to living as covenant believers. We are able to speak from testimony when these three dimensions of the word are a reality in our life. King Solomon said, '*Wisdom is the principal thing; therefore get wisdom. And in all your getting, get understanding.*' Pro 4:7. He also said that if we incline our ear to wisdom, and lift up our voice for understanding, then we will 'understand the fear of the Lord, and *find the knowledge of God*'. Pro 2:2-5.

Wisdom

The word of the Lord that is proclaimed from the presbytery is *the wisdom of God*. As Paul declared, 'We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained *before the ages* for our glory.' 1Co 2:7. The apostle John described this wisdom as being the word of life *from the beginning* which was heard, seen, looked upon and

handled in a presbytery. 1Jn 1:1. It is the wisdom of God which comes down from heaven. Jas 3:17.

The wisdom of God is the light of present truth. It should be ministered directly to every individual, and to every household, through the proclamation of the word of life. This happens publicly and house to house, by those with ascension gift grace, who are part of the presbytery that is in the hand of Christ. Act 20:20. Eph 4:11-12.

Receiving the word of present truth as it is proclaimed by ascension gift messengers of Christ will be the *primary initiative* of every son and daughter of God who recognises that 'wisdom is the principal thing'. Pro 4:7. We will recognise that this is the bread that comes down from heaven, by which we live. Joh 6:50-51,63. Mat 4:4. This word defines the works of our sonship, and establishes the ground of fellowship and offering in the presbytery and, therefore, in the church.

Those who view the word of present truth as 'the principal thing' will delight in the word of the Lord, and will make every effort to hear, receive and devotionally consider what is being proclaimed to them. This attitude was demonstrated by the Christians in Berea. In the book of Acts, Luke recorded that the Bereans 'received the word with great eagerness [or, a willing mind], examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so'. Act 17:11. For this reason, Luke described these hearers as 'noble-minded'. Act 17:11. As a consequence of engaging with the word in this manner, many of the Bereans became *believers*. Act 17:12. Becoming a believer was more than simply receiving and agreeing with the wisdom from above. It was marked by a change in the way that the Berean hearers lived. They were beginning to 'get understanding'.

Understanding

The Scriptures teach that understanding is 'a wellspring of life'. Pro 16:22. Acknowledging this truth, the psalmist prayed, 'Give me understanding, and I shall live.' Psa 119:144. Understanding is necessary so that we are able to live and walk in the light of the word that we have received.

If getting wisdom involves humbling ourselves and receiving the word of present truth, then understanding involves *buying* the word that we are receiving. Pro 23:23. To buy the word, we must recognise that there is a price to pay in order to have the word. Jesus likened paying the price for the word to 'treasure hidden in a field, which a man found and hid; and for joy over it he goes and sells all that he has and buys that

THE STEPS OF SALVATION - PART 5

field'. Mat 13:44. The hidden treasure is the secret of the Lord, which we considered in Chapter 3.

Paying the price for the word means joining the fellowship of Christ's offering. To be found in Christ, we must 'sell', or let go of, all the things that we use to validate our ministry as sons of God, including our right to judge the word, our self-centred expectations of the Christian life, our self-defined initiatives, our qualifications, our ministry successes and failures, our traditions, etc. Like Paul, we are to count them all as 'dung' in view of the excellence, or great value, of knowing Christ and being found in Him. Php 3:8.

In the first instance, the joy demonstrated by the man who purchased the field is the same joy that Paul referred to when he said, 'I joyfully concur with the Law of God [or, the word from above] in the inner man.' Rom 7:22. However, Paul noted that he was unable to fulfil the word of God because the other law within him was waging war with the law of his mind, and was bringing him into captivity to the law of sin. Rom 7:23.

This is why, having heard and being initially delighted in the word, we must sell everything to have the word. We must join the fellowship established by the word. By this means, our 'joy may be full'. 1Jn 1:4. This is the joy of the Lord Himself, for which He endured the cross and despised the shame associated with our fallen condition. Likewise, when we experience suffering because of the word, we are to receive these sufferings as our participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Mar 4:17. Php 3:10. Moreover, we must despise the shame of pursuing an image of our own making, by allowing this propensity within us to be removed through our fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. We are able to put off the pursuit of this other image, with its projections, in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Paul was making this point when he wrote that we should not walk in the manner of those who are 'darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart'. Eph 4:18. Rather than receiving the word that proceeds from the presbytery, these people prefer a wisdom that is earthy, sensual and demonic. Jas 3:15. Paul said, 'You did not learn Christ in this way, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind,

and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.' Eph 4:20-24.

Understanding comes to individuals when they meet together for fellowship in the word of present truth. 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 in sanctification – that is, how to minister as a son-priest in the house of the Father, how to function as a member of the body of Christ, and what it means to be a temple for the Holy Spirit. The evidence that a person is 'getting understanding' is that the word is becoming the culture of their life. They are motivated and equipped to make offering in the fellowship of His body. That is, they speak, or express, the word that they have received from the hand of the Lord, according to their sanctification as a son of God.

In the book of Malachi, we read that those who feared the Lord received the word of Melchizedek, the great High Priest. Mal 3:16. This is Christ, who is walking among His lampstand churches, speaking to His church through the messengers who are in His hand, so that every son-priest can be sanctified and enabled to make offering in righteousness. Mal 3:1-2. Rev 1:10-20. Malachi noted that those who received the word spoke to one another about what they were hearing. Specifically, he recorded, 'Then those who feared the Lord spoke to one another, and the Lord listened and heard them; so a book of remembrance was written before Him for those who fear the Lord and who meditate on His name'. Mal 3:16.

Importantly, the Lord Himself listened to the conversation of those who were finding fellowship together, and a book of remembrance was opened to them. This is the book in which their names were written. The Lord was granting illumination and understanding to them. The understanding that they were receiving was not merely their comprehension of what the Lord was saying. More than that, they were understanding how to walk in the light of this word, by faith, and according to the sanctification of their name, which was written in the book. This is how they were living, having obtained understanding. Psa 119:144. Rom 6:22.

The apostle John explained that it is the Son of God Himself who gives us understanding. 1Jn 5:20. This is because He is the Word from the beginning. Joh 1:1-2. Jesus said that His flesh is the bread which comes down from heaven. Joh 6:51. We eat His flesh by receiving and believing the words that He speaks to us through His messengers. Joh 6:63-64.

Joh 13:20. Our partaking of Christ's flesh joins us to the fellowship of His body. 1Co 10:17. In this fellowship, it is evident that we are getting understanding, because the word that was proclaimed to us is the word that we speak to one another, and is becoming the cultural expression of our life. It is in our mouth and in our heart. Rom 10:8. In other words, our spirit is confessing, or testifying of, the life of Christ that is in our flesh and in the flesh of our brethren. 1Jn 4:2.

Significantly, John explained that the Son of God has given us an understanding, 'that we may *know Him* who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and eternal life.' 1Jn 5:20. John was explaining that receiving understanding from Christ is for the purpose of knowing and being found in Christ. This is the knowledge of the Holy One.

The knowledge of the Holy One

King Solomon said that if we would *incline* our ear to the wisdom which comes down from above, and *apply* our heart to understanding through fellowship in the word that we have received, 'then you will understand the fear of the Lord, and *find the knowledge of God*'. Pro 2:2,5.

The knowledge of God, or of the Holy One, is knowing God and living in fellowship with Him as a son of God. A person who knows God in this way lives by offering, and is participating in the fulfilment of His will. They are living in fellowship with the Lord and with their brethren, and are becoming the person whom God predestined them to be. They are obtaining their eternal inheritance as His son because they are becoming the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. 2Co 5:21.

Paul summarised this principle in his letter to the Ephesians. He prayed, 'That the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the *spirit of wisdom* and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the *eyes of your understanding being enlightened*; that you may *know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints*, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power.' Eph 1:17-19.

The knowledge of the Holy One is not merely information about God or about how we live as His people. To have the knowledge of the Holy One is to know the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who are Light, and to know ourselves and one another according to sanctification. That is, we walk in the light of the word that we have received and that is now in our flesh.

1Jn 1:5,7. This is what it means to know Him who is from the beginning, as one who is mature in the Lord. 1Jn 2:13-14.

A person who has received and is walking in the word of life is compelled by the love of God to judge that, if Christ died their death for them, then they are to die Christ's death. The offering of Christ is the context of their life. 2Co 5:14. Explaining the implications of living in the fellowship of this offering, Paul wrote, 'Therefore, from now on, we [know] no-one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer.' 2Co 5:16. Notably, a person who has received this knowledge, and judges that the only way to life is in the fellowship of Christ's offering, has ceased from their judgements of the word and the messenger.

Abiding in the word from the beginning

The apostle John taught that, in order to have the knowledge of the Holy One, we must abide in the *word from the beginning*. 1Jn 2:24. As we discussed at the beginning of this chapter, the word from the beginning is the word that is heard, seen, beheld and handled in the presbytery. 1Jn 1:1. It is the wisdom of God that comes down from above. John further explained that this word is the preoccupation of fathers who know *Him who is from the beginning*. 1Jn 2:13-14.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul described the word from the beginning as 'the milk of the word'. Heb 5:12. He further explained that the milk of the word refers to the sayings, or oracles, of God Himself. This is the word of God that encompasses our predestination as sons of God. It is the word of present truth. 2Pe 1:12.

Our participation in the fellowship of the body of Christ is hindered when we do not believe that the milk of the word applies to us. That is, we approach the fellowship that is established by the word, including the communion gathering, in a manner that assumes that we have matured beyond the need to receive the milk of the word. When we view ourselves in this way, we become the judges of the oracles of God. Our judgements and assessments demonstrate that we have not received this word and do not have understanding, even if we agree with what is being said.

Paul wrote that a person who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness. Heb 5:13. In the context of this passage, it is apparent that he meant that they used the milk of the word for a purpose other than its consumption. That is, they, themselves, were not receiving the word. This is why he said, 'You have come to need milk.' Heb 5:12.

Instead of the word from the beginning being their food, they were assessing the word, and selectively drawing from it to service their own righteous endeavours. They were unskilled in the word of righteousness because they did not receive and believe the word, and were not joined to the fellowship of Yahweh. This means that they were unable to bear testimony as a fruitful son of God, and were not maturing in the way of the Lord.

In reality, a person who is mature receives the milk of the word. They speak this word by faith and according to sanctification in the fellowship of offering. They do not cease from receiving the word in this way but, rather, grow in their knowledge of Him who is from the beginning. The apostle John identified these ones as being fathers in the church. 1Jn 2:13-14. They demonstrate that they are eating meat, because they are participating in the fellowship of Yahweh according to their name and sanctification. In this regard, 'meat' is not a word from God that is different from the 'milk' of the word. Rather, a person who eats meat is doing the will of the Father, in Christ, *because* they continue to receive and walk in the word of present truth. Jesus Himself testified, 'My meat is to do the will of Him who sent me, and to finish His work.' Joh 4:34.

Those who partake of the milk of the word are getting understanding as spiritual son-priests. Through faith obedience, they have their senses exercised to discern between that which is spiritual and that which is of the flesh. Heb 5:14. This is what defines a mature, spiritual person. They cease from being judges of the presbytery; and so, they have the mind of Christ. Only those who are in the fellowship of Christ have the mind of Christ. 1Co 2:16.

Judges of the word

Many of the relational and cultural difficulties that arise within churches, as well as in presbyteries, are because the word that Christ is ministering within them is neither being received nor believed. This does not necessarily mean that people disagree with the ministered word. Rather, they are *not buying the word*.

A person who agrees with the word is not, by implication, receiving wisdom, understanding and knowledge. This is because a person's agreement with the word can come from the basis of their judgement of the word, and from their assessments of the messengers who are preaching it. Approaching the word in this manner is inherently self-righteous.

Judging the word is not necessarily a cynical or malicious activity. A person who is judging the word may simply be engaging with it in a manner that endeavours to fit the ministered word into their existing theological or religious understanding. When the preached word contradicts their own knowledge, they may ask, for example, 'Does this mean that we no longer believe "this", or do "that"?' Such an approach to the word is often accompanied by the thinking that 'the goal posts' of life are being changed again. This mindset is completely at odds with living by the proceeding word.

A person who is judging the word is, obviously, not selling everything to buy it. Instead, from the basis of their self-righteous position, they selectively appropriate the word for their own use. They strongly support content that accords with their own perspective and experience, and query or reject those elements of the word that conflict with their own understanding. When this is the basis for a person's participation and ministry in the church, they are 'peddling the word of God'. It is significant that Paul contrasted peddling the word of God with his own approach to ministry, which was to speak, in Christ, through testimony. 2Co 2:17.

Those who peddle the word of God claim to be believers, but their partiality in relation to the word, and their assessments of the presbytery, reveal that they are not getting understanding; nor are they finding the knowledge of the Holy One. Instead, they lean on their own understanding of theology, and commentate on the word. Pro 3:5. It is apparent that their knowledge has caused them to become puffed up when their ministry is either collegial or congregational in nature. 1Co 8:1.

As we considered in Chapter 6, these two leavens can have a pervasive and detrimental impact upon believers in the church. Gal 5:9. For example, those who minister from the basis of their own understanding may begin to speak evil of those who are in the presbytery and, with great, swelling words, will draw those who are weak in faith to themselves and to their perspective. 2Pe 2:10,18. The apostle Peter said that, when this happens, those who have previously escaped the pollutions of the world through 'the knowledge of the Lord' are again entangled in them and overcome by them. Their situation is worse than it was before their conversion. 2Pe 2:20-21.

Wisdom from beneath

Our Communion gatherings, Bible School meetings, and Home Fellowship meetings are not contexts for the communication of theological information and commentary on the word of present truth. These meetings are not a platform for people to reinterpret the word for others from the basis of their assessments of the word or from their view of what people need.

When this happens, a third level of ministry is being expressed within the church. This third level is an alternative to the ministry of the word of present truth by the Holy Spirit, publicly and from house to house. It is a fleshly initiative that is not a ministry of the Spirit. For this reason, it is not what Christ, by the Spirit, is saying to the churches.

The apostle James likened this alternative word ministry to 'wisdom from beneath'. He said that the wisdom from beneath is ministered by those who are proud, and who are not speaking according to their sanctification. Jas 3:14. James clarified the point that 'this wisdom does not descend from above, but is earthly, sensual, demonic'. Jas 3:15. Instead of promoting understanding, it only brings forth confusion, and cultivates contentions. Jas 3:16.

In contrast, the wisdom from above establishes *fellowship*. In this fellowship, understanding is multiplied. As James noted, 'The wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy. Now the fruit of righteousness is sown in peace by those who make peace.' Jas 3:17-18. Only a person who is skilled in the word of righteousness is able to sow the fruit of righteousness in peace. This simply means that they are able to minister the word of life, which is the gospel of sonship, to another person, through testimony. In other words, through offering, they are speaking according to their name and sanctification.

Illumination is found in the fellowship of the presbytery. Every son of God - whether they are a leader or not - should be receiving this illumination. This is because they are joined to the fellowship of the presbytery. In this fellowship, they are responding in repentance and faith to the word of Christ that He is ministering through the ascension gift graces that are among the presbytery.

If we are committed to walking in the light of the word, we will not endeavour to minister our own inspiration, or word, as an alternative to

what the Lord is saying to His church. Christ has committed His word to a presbytery which is in His hand. Having joined this fellowship through our faithful response to the word, as we minister, by offering, the word that is now in our mouth and in our heart, understanding will be multiplied to others. The outcome of ministering in this way is that those who hear what we say with our mouth, and observe through our conduct, are being further equipped to participate in this same fellowship. 1Jn 1:1-3.

Turning from judging and assessing the word

While ever we judge the word, we are preferring our own way and perspective over the way in which the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are seeking to establish us. The implication of treating the word in this manner is that we remain in the death of Adam. This is another way of saying that we are 'in the flesh', rather than in the Spirit. A person who remains in Adam instead of joining the death of Christ will be anxious to avoid death. They are not simply fearing the end of their mortal life; additionally, they are fearing the loss of their own expression and validity. Saving their own life will become their preoccupation, and will prevent them from finding their life in Christ. Mat 16:25.

A person who judges and assesses the word separates themselves from the fellowship that is established by the word. When they exercise themselves in this way, they are not exhibiting the love of God, even though they may be quite visible and functional within the church. 1Co 13:1-3. Their judgements and assessments reveal that they do not trust the Lord and His messengers, and that they are deviating from the narrow way of sanctification that is found only in Christ. The resulting destruction is not what God desires for us. For this reason, we are exhorted by the Scriptures, which say, 'Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him, and He will make your paths straight.' Pro 3:5-6.

When we turn in repentance to the Lord and His word, the veil of our self-righteous perspective can be removed from the eyes of our heart. 2Co 3:16. We are able to join the fellowship that the word establishes, and to participate with faith obedience. The wise man said, 'Do not be wise in your own eyes; fear the Lord and depart from evil.' Pro 3:7. He was saying, 'Stop judging the wisdom that comes down from heaven.' We fear the Lord by speaking the word that we hear and receive with our brethren. Mal 3:16. By this means, we gain understanding in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are able to renounce the hidden things of shame and to depart from living from the basis of our own law, which leads to death. Solomon said that doing this 'will be health to your flesh and strength to your bones'. Pro 3:8.

Functioning from the basis of testimony

Paul functioned from the basis of testimony, having received understanding concerning the mystery of Christ. That is, he had learned the secret of fellowship in the offering of Christ. Specifically, he wrote, 'I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance *I have learned the secret* of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things [in] Him who strengthens me'. Php 4:12-13.

This understanding was the sound doctrine that Paul commended to Timothy and Titus as 'faithful sayings'. For example, to Timothy, Paul wrote, 'This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.' 2Ti 2:11-13.

Just prior to this faithful saying, Paul wrote, 'And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also'. 2Ti 2:2. Paul had ministered the word to Timothy in the fellowship of a presbytery. Evidently, Timothy had received this word, because Paul said that he was to be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus. 2Ti 2:1. This is the grace that comes with the word. Act 20:32. Because Timothy had received this word, he was to speak it according to his sanctification, so that others could join the same fellowship of which Timothy was a part. This fellowship would involve suffering and hardship, which Timothy was to endure as a good soldier of Christ. 2Ti 2:3. Notably, Paul said to Timothy, 'Consider what I say, and may the Lord give you understanding in all things.' 2Ti 2:7.

Paul could encourage Timothy to endure in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings because this was the reality of his own life. Speaking of the offering of Christ and his participation in this offering, Paul wrote, 'Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel, for which I suffer trouble as an evildoer, even to the point of chains; but the word of God is not chained. Therefore I endure all things for the sake of the elect, that they

also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory.' 2Ti 2:8-10. This testimony must be the basis of our ministry as well.

Responding to the flesh, in the Spirit

Speaking from testimony is the only way in which we can respond to those who remain veiled to the light of the word because of their loyalty to an Old Covenant gospel. In this regard, Paul wrote to Timothy, saying, 'I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires, and will turn away their ears from the truth and will turn aside to myths.' 2Ti 4:1-4.

A person who is weary, anxious and frustrated in the presbytery or in the church is not enduring sound doctrine. They are unable to fellowship in the light of the word because of the way in which they treat the word and the messenger. Consequently, their joy is not full. 1Jn 1:4. They are coming under the judgement of God because they are not rightly discerning the body of Christ. They are not judging themselves to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's death, and are caught in the trespass of their own righteousness. 1Co 11:29-32. It is only in Christ, through fellowship with their brethren, that a person is able to put off their self-righteous ministry. 1Jn 1:7. This fellowship is extended to them by those who are spiritual. Gal 6:1.

Paul said that when a brother or sister is caught in such a trespass, a spiritual person, in a spirit of gentleness, is able to restore them to fellowship. A spiritual person is one who is joined to the fellowship of the presbytery because they are receiving and walking in the light of the word. Paul warned the spiritual person to carefully consider their own mode of interaction with the one caught in a trespass, lest they engage with them from the basis of self-righteous judgements. Gal 6:1-2. Such an approach only exacerbates divisions, and disconnects, from the fellowship of the Spirit, the one who is endeavouring to restore their brother.

Through his ministry to the Christians in Corinth, Paul demonstrated how a spiritual person restored those who were caught in a trespass. He spoke to them from the basis of testimony, 'in Christ'. 2Co 2:17. 2Co 12:19.

What did this look like in practice? Paul's mode was to come among the Corinthians in weakness. He expected to be humiliated and mistreated by some of them. 2Co 12:20-21. This was part of his fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Coming from this fellowship, Paul committed himself to mourn and travail for the many who had sinned. 2Co 12:21. This mourning and travail was the travail 'of the Spirit', to which Paul was joined as he maintained his participation in the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rom 8:26-28.

Because Paul was weak in Christ through humiliation, much labour and suffering, Christ was mighty toward Paul's hearers, and in his hearers. 2Co 13:3. The life and power of God was being ministered to them as Paul filled up what was lacking in the sufferings of Christ for their sake. By this means, Christ was being formed in them. Col 1:24. Gal 4:19. This is the principle of 'offering transfer'. More specifically, as Paul 'died with them' through the suffering that he experienced at their hands, they were able to receive Christ's life from him, and to come back from the death of sin with him.

The church is the community of heaven

A public and house to house structure is only valid as an expression of church life if it is built upon the foundation of wisdom, understanding and the knowledge of the Holy One.

The organisation of a Christian community so that it reflects the heavenly reality of the kingdom of God does not make it viable. That is, the church is not simply a copy of heavenly realities, claiming to represent God as it interfaces with the secular community. It is not merely teaching good principles for life, nor theology as a science, so that the church, along with its ethics, is relevant to and compatible with the dictates of modern thinking.

The church *is* the community of heaven, on earth. It has been born from above. Its faith, which is the expression of its life and culture, comes directly from God. This faith is the fruit of the seed of the word that is planted in a person's heart. God, through Christ, sends messengers whose work is to proclaim the word of God to mankind. Their word is the wisdom of God.

We must receive this wisdom if we are to be part of this community of heaven. It is evident that we are part of this community when we speak by faith in the fellowship that the word establishes. That is, 'speaking by faith' means 'getting understanding'.

Speaking from testimony

When a person has understanding, they are able to recognise that which is from above. They know the secret of the Lord. They know their name and can appreciate the names of others. Their obedience to the word, and submission to others, is the demonstration of faith. They have received what is laid down to them by offering, and they respond by offering because the word of faith is in their mouth and in their heart. In other words, their submission and obedience is not demanded from them by those who are in the presbytery. It is given by offering. This is the culture of understanding.

When the anointing of the Spirit is upon a person so that they are getting understanding from the wisdom of God that is proclaimed to them, they do not need anyone to teach them how to participate in the fellowship of offering. The outcome of this anointing and of getting understanding is that a person will abide in Christ. 1Jn 2:27. Their conduct will be consistent with the culture that is being established by the word. This is because the word is in their mouth and in their heart.

