

The
Culture
of
Sonship

STUDY GUIDE

National Youth Convention 2020

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Victor Hall

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Contents

CHAPTER 1

Putting sin to death through the cross	5
Introduction	5
The reproach of Christ	6
Joining the fellowship of reproach	8
Deliverance from sin	9

CHAPTER 2

Knowing Christ	11
Introduction	11
On the road to Emmaus	12
Foolish and slow of heart	14
The response of faith	15
Conclusion	17

CHAPTER 3

God is healing our spiritual sight	19
Renewing and regeneration	20
Recovery of sight by the messenger word	21
The account of Bartimaeus	23

CHAPTER 4

The miracle of new birth	25
Introduction	25
The miracle of natural birth	26
The miracle of new birth	26
Wayside ground	27
Stony ground	27
Thorny ground	28
Left with nothing	29
Good ground	29
Progressing to immortality	30
A confession of repentance	30
Continuing from faith to faith	31

CHAPTER 5

Our mortality in Christ - Part 1	33
Exanastasis	33
Creation and the mortal body	34
The fall of mankind	35
The mortal body under the sun	36
Subjected to futility in hope	37

CHAPTER 6

Our mortality in Christ - Part 2	39
Receiving eternal life	39
Jesus' mortal body	40
Jesus' mortal death	41
Our mortality in Christ	42
Conclusion	43

CHAPTER 7

The culture of a Christian	45
Introduction	45
Paul's experience	46
Paul's example	47

CHAPTER 8

Abiding in Him	51
Knowing Him	52
Two aspects of abiding	52
Christ abides in us	53
We abide in Christ	54
His word abides in us	54

CHAPTER 9

We have an anointing	57
Bound to Christ's offering	58
The works of our sonship	58
Christ's life formed within us	59

CHAPTER 10

Staying in the anointing by proper devotional living	61
Knowing all things concerning our sanctification	62
Continuing in the anointing	62
Christ's ministry in the church	63
How do we receive the apostles' teaching?	64

CHAPTER 11

Learning to devote ourselves to the apostles' doctrine	65
How do we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching?	65
That which we have heard	66
Which we have seen with our eyes	67
That which we have looked upon	68
Which our hands have handled	68

CHAPTER 12

The fellowship of fathers and sons	69
Sonship and fatherhood	69
Sonship and fatherhood in the body of Christ	71
The ongoing offering initiative of a son towards a father	72

Chapter I

Putting sin to death through the cross

Victor Hall

Introduction

The sons of God are recipients of an amazing treasure! When we have been born again, and joined to the fellowship of Yahweh in Christ, *the divine nature has become our life*. The divine nature is the love of God. As the apostle John noted, 'Love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.' 1Jn 4:7-8.

While we believe this wonderful truth, sometimes we don't behave in a manner that is very 'divine'. For example, we get into arguments with others and, in the heat of the moment we say and do things that we later regret. Jas 4:1. At times, we react poorly to the difficulties that we experience in life. Moreover, like Paul, we can fail to fulfil the works that we know we should be doing, and that we want to do. We, instead, end up engaging in activities that we know we shouldn't be doing. Rom 7:15.

Why do we think and act this way if we have received the divine nature? It is because, even though we have been born of God, we have a law within our heart that is 'other than' the law of love. The apostle Paul called it 'another law'. Rom 7:23. He explained that the exercise of this self-centred motivation, which became a trait within every person as a consequence of the fall of mankind, brings us into bondage to the law of sin and death. Rom 7:23. Why so? It is because the thoughts and actions that are motivated by our other law are sin; they are contrary to the works that the Father named for us to do as His sons. These sinful thoughts and actions cause injury to others and bring us under the condemnation of death.

The gospel not only proclaims our sonship; it also declares that, having been born as sons of God, we need to be saved from the other law. Unless we are delivered from living by our own law, so that the love of God becomes the only law by which we live, we will not inherit eternal life as a son of God.

The reproach of Christ

Every thought, motivation and behaviour that is an expression of our other law is a reproach upon the Father. We can simply define 'reproach' as being our rejection of God as our Father and as the source of our life and works. The Father laid the reproaches of mankind against Himself upon Christ when He made Christ's soul an offering for sin, and laid the iniquity of us all upon Him. Isa 53:6,10. As Jesus Himself testified, 'The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on Me.' Psa 69:9. The Father did this to make reproach the instrument by which His judgement upon sin was exercised, and the means by which sin and the other law are destroyed.

Our reproach of the Father was laid on Christ through the seven wounding events that He endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross. Although it was the Father who laid the reproaches of Satan and mankind on Christ, it was not the Father who abused, punched, slapped, scourged, pierced, mocked and reviled Jesus during His offering journey. These reproaches were the expression of our other law that were laid on Christ.

The Father was able to lay all of our reproach upon the Son because the Son had offered Himself to be obedient to the Father's will. As a sin offering, and by the grace of God, Jesus tasted every element of our death - the death of sin - on behalf of every individual person. Heb 2:9.

However, because He died this death *willingly* and *obediently*, this was a completely new and unique kind of death. The apostle Paul declared, 'The death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God.' Rom 6:10.

The sufferings of reproach that Christ endured caused the shedding of His blood. Christ's blood contained the resurrection life that He had received from the Father when He was begotten as the Father's Son before the foundation of the world. As His precious blood was shed and sprinkled upon His mortal body, Christ was progressively *standing up in resurrection life* out of our death. Heb 13:20.

Each wound that Jesus suffered on His offering journey was a specific element of reproach that He endured, and over which He triumphed. Jesus likened the reproaches that were progressively laid on Him to a great flood of water. By His sixth wound, when Christ was nailed to the cross outside the city of Jerusalem, the waters of reproach had 'come up to His neck'. Psa 69:1.

At the conclusion of the six hours of suffering that Jesus experienced while lifted up on the cross, *His work was complete*. He had fulfilled all righteousness as the Son of Man. Jesus then cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. Jesus was stating that He had completed the works that the Father had prepared for Him to do, and yet was still under reproach.

At this point, the reproaches that He had experienced were no longer only up to His neck. He was now immersed in them as they *overflowed* Him. He testified, 'I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing; I have come into deep waters, *where the floods overflow Me*.' Psa 69:2.

This was the final element of reproach that was laid upon Jesus as an offering for sin. It revealed the grief that the Father experienced in the garden of Eden when, through Adam's disobedience, the whole of mankind departed from Him and He was left *alone*. Gen 3:8-9. As Jesus declared, 'Reproach has broken My heart, and I am full of heaviness; I looked for someone to take pity, *but there was none*; and for comforters, *but I found none*.' Psa 69:20. Christ's heart was broken by this final aspect of reproach.

Although His heart had been broken by reproach, the end of Christ's offering was not in Himself. His end, or death, was in the hands of the Father. Making this confession, the Son cried out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.' Luk 23:46.

The Father looked on Jesus because He was poor and of a contrite spirit, who trembled at God's word. Isa 66:2. As the psalmist declared, 'The Lord is near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit.' Psa 34:18. As Christ breathed His last breath, the Father reached out His hands to rescue Him. The Father sent and *drew Jesus out of the many waters of our reproach*. Psa 18:16.

The Father drew the Son into His embrace, and the Son responded, saying, 'My heart is glad, and My glory rejoices; My flesh also will rest in hope. For You will not leave My soul in Sheol, nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. You will show Me the path of life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.' Psa 16:9-11.

Christ's dead body hung on the cross after His Spirit had been received into the hands of the Father. When the soldier pierced His side, grace and supplication, along with blood and water, began to flow as a fountain from His heart. This fountain was *the fruit of His broken heart*. Luk 23:48. Joh 19:34. It was the provision of God to deal with sin and uncleanness for every person who receives the word of the cross and is joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Zec 13:1.

Joining the fellowship of reproach

When the heart of Jesus was broken, the power of the other law in the hearts of men was also broken. The key point for us to understand is that it is only possible for the power of the other law to be broken in our heart when we *join* the fellowship of Christ's broken heart.

We join the fellowship of Christ's broken heart by receiving His word. Christ's word is ministered by His messengers and also through body ministry at communion. Grace and supplication from Christ's broken heart are poured out upon us as we hear this word. Zec 2:10. Our hearts are broken as we draw near to Him and receive what the blood and water of His word are saying to us by the Holy Spirit. Heb 12:24. 1Pe 1:12. We are able to turn in repentance from walking our own way, which leads to death. As those who are poor in spirit, we receive faith to be conformed to Christ's death and to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings in the coming week.

We see that the seventh wound of Christ, which was inflicted outside the camp, is our entry into the fellowship of His reproach. Paul explained that this is to be our faith as we partake of the bread and wine of

communion. He encouraged us, saying that we have a right to eat from the altar, which means to eat Christ's flesh and to drink His blood. Heb 13:10. The implication of participating in the altar is that we are to 'go forth to Him, outside the camp, *bearing His reproach*'. Heb 13:13. We accept that fellowship in His death delivers us from our death, and leads to eternal life. Paul said that this is how we *show forth* Christ's death until He comes. 1Co 11:26.

Deliverance from sin

If we have been illuminated concerning the riches that are found in the fellowship of Christ's reproach, we will understand that we still sin, but are joined to a process through which we are being delivered from the other law that causes us to sin. *This testimony reveals that the truth is in us!* 1Jn 1:8. We are able to obey Paul's exhortation to 'put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry'. Col 3:5. How do we do this?

Each day, as we journey through life in Christ, we experience various situations that may provoke a carnal response within us. These situations may include the self-righteous actions of others toward us. Motivated by the other law within us, we can become embroiled in the rights or wrongs of the situation. When we do this, sin revives, and we come under the condemnation of the Law. Rom 7:9. It kills us! However, the Law has been nailed to the cross in Christ. Col 2:14. When the Law kills us, we die to the Law in Christ. In the fellowship of His death, through which His blood was shed, we find forgiveness through repentance, and come back from the death of sin with Him. Importantly, the other law is being broken in us, and removed from us. Paul called this process 'the circumcision of Christ'. Col 2:11.

At the end of each day, the dead works of those who are conformed to Christ's death are forgotten by God as He casts them into the depths of the sea. Mic 7:19. These are the waters of reproach from which Christ was drawn by the Father at the conclusion of His offering. The Father says, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.' Jer 31:34. His mercies, then, are new each morning. Lam 3:22-23. By these mercies, we are able to present ourselves as living sacrifices each day for participation in Christ's offering. Rom 12:1.

We demonstrate that we have received the mercies of the Lord when we, ourselves, forget what is 'behind' us. Php 3:13. That is, we reckon our fleshly actions and assessments of ourselves and others, from the day

THE CULTURE OF SONSHIP

before, as being dead in the Lord. Importantly, we do not define our life today by the dead works of yesterday. Rather, we reach forward to lay hold of those things that are ahead of us. Php 3:13. These things are the will of God for us, which we are able to fulfil in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Paul described this orientation to life as pressing toward 'the goal for the prize of the *upward call of God in Christ Jesus*'. Php 3:14. The upward call of God is the resurrection life of sonship. This is a great treasure!

Each day, we run the race that is set before us with patience and endurance, '*looking unto Jesus*, the Author and Finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God'. Heb 12:2. We accept that, as sons of God in Christ, we 'may fall seven times' but we rise again in Christ as long as we remain conformed to His death and the fellowship of His offering. Pro 24:16.

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ. In the fellowship of His death, we are being delivered from our other law, and we are living by the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus. Rom 8:1-2. However, if we choose to set our mind on the flesh, rather than being conformed to Christ's death and the fellowship of His sufferings, we will increasingly become weak and sick, and may even die before our time. This is because we are not discerning our participation in the crucified body of Christ. 1Co 11:29-30. Instead of falling and rising again in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, the calamity that we experience in life will be the suffering of our own death. Pro 24:16. It will not result in fruitfulness as a son of God. Luk 8:14.

Those who are in Christ are being led each day by the one Spirit of God, which they receive from the Holy Spirit. Rom 8:5. Rom 8:14. As we live according to the Spirit, we are able to put to death the deeds of the flesh, and to live to God. Rom 8:13. This is because the Spirit, who reveals the Father and the Son, strengthens us with Eternal Spirit to remain conformed to Christ's death and to continue in the fellowship of His sufferings as a member of His body. This is how we are to live as sons of God. Rom 8:14.

Chapter 2

Knowing Christ

Peter Hay

Introduction

A son of God knows and is known by the Lord, and is joined in Christ to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The apostle John said that this is *eternal life!* 1Jn 5:20. Jesus Himself taught that only those who know Him and are known by Him will be citizens of heaven. Mat 7:23. Of course, the question is, how do we know Jesus?

The first point to note is that we do not know the Lord, nor receive eternal life, through our own good works. Jesus warned, '*Many* will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness!"' Mat 7:22-23. It is sobering to realise that *many* people in the church still endeavour to have life this way.

There are other people who think that they can know God by studying the Scriptures. While the word of God is proclaimed from the Scriptures, and it is essential for us to read and know the Bible, our personal

interpretation of the Scriptures is *not* the way that we come to know the Lord. 2Pe 1:20. Again, Jesus attested to the folly of this mindset, saying, 'You search the Scriptures, for in them you think you have eternal life; and these are they which testify of Me. But you are not willing to come to Me that you may have life.' Joh 5:39-40.

Herein, is the key; to know the Lord, *we must come to Him*. We come to Jesus to take His yoke upon us and to learn from Him. Mat 11:28-29. The beginning point for taking Christ's yoke upon us is to receive the word of Christ that is preached by His messengers. By hearing this word, we receive faith to believe, and to confess, that our life is found in Christ. Rom 10:15,17. 2Co 4:13. This expression of faith is the evidence that we have obtained an introduction into grace. Rom 5:2. Eph 3:12.

Why do we need an introduction into grace? It is the grace of God that becomes our life, and that binds us to Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This is what Paul meant when he exhorted us to 'come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need'. Heb 4:16. 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'. Grace is given to us to tightly bind us to the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body. Grace, therefore, is Christ's yoke that we take upon ourselves by faith.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we learn the obedience of sonship that Jesus learnt through the things that He suffered as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Heb 5:8. This knowledge is not information 'about' sonship or even 'about' Jesus. It is *knowing* Christ and *knowing* our name as a son of God in Him. In this fellowship, His life is becoming our life. Php 3:10-11. Gal 2:20.

We are to eat the bread and drink the wine of communion in faith for our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Significantly, Jesus said that whoever eats His flesh and drinks His blood has eternal life and will be raised up at the last day. Joh 6:54. That is, they would know the Lord and be known by Him! 1Jn 5:20. Jesus summarised this as abiding in Him and He abiding in us. Joh 6:56.

On the road to Emmaus

In his Gospel, Luke recorded an interaction between Jesus and two men that outlined the process through which a person comes to know Christ and is established on the pathway of life that He pioneered for us

through His offering journey. Heb 5:9. It helpfully highlights the key points of response that we all must make in order to *continue* to grow in our knowledge of Christ. Php 3:10.

On the day that Jesus rose from the dead, Cleopas and his friend were journeying from Jerusalem to a village called Emmaus. These men had been followers of Jesus during His earthly ministry. On the basis of the mighty deeds and teaching of Jesus, they had believed that He was the Messiah spoken of by Moses and the prophets. Luk 24:19,21. Deu 18:15. However, after Christ had been put to death on the cross, Cleopas and his friend were disheartened because their expectations of who Jesus was, and what they believed His ministry meant for them, had been confounded.

As the two men made their way to Emmaus, Jesus drew near to them. Yet, their eyes were *restrained* so that they were unable to *know* Him. Luk 24:16. Significantly, it was not the Lord who restrained their eyes. Rather, their inability to know Jesus was because *they* were holding fast to their own understanding of what was written in the Scriptures concerning the Messiah. Their loyalty to this *gospel* meant that they were unable to see or to know Jesus.

The Lord said to the men, 'What *kind of conversation* [or, word] is this that you have with one another as *you walk and are sad?*' Luk 24:17. Jesus' question highlighted the fact that Cleopas and his friend were walking according to a gospel that was unfamiliar to the Lord. It was not the gospel that He had proclaimed to them. And, clearly, *their* gospel was not leading to life and peace. Rom 8:6.

The fruit of their alternative gospel was sorrow and spiritual blindness. Their hearts, which are the spiritual eye of the body, were sick. Luk 11:34. This is because what they were hoping for, based on their own understanding of the Scriptures, had been deferred when Christ was put to death on the cross. Pro 13:12. Cleopas himself said, 'We were hoping that it was He who was going to redeem Israel.' Luk 24:21.

As they remained dedicated to their own understanding of the Scriptures and maintained their own expectations of life as followers of Jesus, they were unable to receive and believe the good news of Christ's resurrection; nor could they receive the call to be born as sons of God in Him. This message was first proclaimed by the women to whom Jesus made Himself known earlier that day. Luk 24:22-24. Joh 20:15. Mat 28:9-10. Although Cleopas and his friend could naturally hear this message, and

were even astonished by what they heard, the life that God had prepared for those who love Him was unable to enter their hearts. 1Co 2:9. We know this because the testimony of the women had brought them no joy. Mat 13:19-20.

Foolish and slow of heart

Jesus began His ministry of the gospel to these men by saying, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!' Luk 24:25. Why did Jesus begin in what seemed to be such a harsh manner? It is because Cleopas and his friend needed to be delivered from their own fleshly gospels and then enabled to receive the light of the word that Jesus was proclaiming to them. The same is true for us all.

King Solomon wrote, 'The way of a fool is right in his own eyes, but he who heeds counsel is wise'. Pro 12:15. By addressing the men as fools, Jesus was calling them to turn in repentance from walking and living in a way that was right in their own eyes. Their own way, motivated by the other law within them, was a veil upon the eyes of their heart so that they could not receive the truth. As they turned to the Lord in response to His word, this veil was being taken away. 2Co 3:16.

When Jesus said to the men that they were 'slow [or dull] of heart to believe', He was addressing the health of their spiritual sight. He was ministering to them the washing of regeneration by the water of the word so that their hearts, which are the spiritual eye of their body, would be able to receive His message. Tit 3:5. Luk 11:34-36. The point is that they were unable to receive the truth contained in the Scriptures through their own comprehension, and while ever their spiritual sight remained darkened.

This is an important point to understand. The apostle Peter said that 'no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation'. 2Pe 1:20. Peter was not implying that there is no merit to a person's devotional engagement with the Scriptures. In fact, this is an activity that is essential to sonship. Pro 25:2. Rather, Peter was highlighting the reality that the truth contained in the Scriptures can only be known and received when it is ministered through the agency of the Spirit, by messengers who are part of a fellowship of first love in Christ. 1Jn 1:1-3. 1Co 2:10-12.

We receive illumination from the Scriptures when we search out the things that we have heard from Christ's messengers. Act 17:11-12. Luke

described this practice as 'continuing steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship'. Act 2:42.

Having called the men to repentance, and ministered healing to their spirits, Jesus proclaimed to them the message of His death and resurrection. That is, He revealed to them His offering, saying, 'Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' Luk 24:26. Jesus was making the point that the glory of sonship is obtained through the sufferings of His offering. Luke recorded that 'beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He [then] expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself'. Luk 24:27.

Later, when the men reflected on Christ's ministry to them, they noted that their hearts burned within them as He spoke to them and as He opened the Scriptures to them. Luk 24:32. As they received Christ's ministry, the prophetic Scriptures concerning Himself and His offering were being confirmed by the Holy Spirit to Cleopas and his friend as the word of truth for their lives. Speaking of this ministry, which causes the hearts of hearers to burn within them, the apostle Peter wrote, 'And so we have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts'. 2Pe 1:19.

The response of faith

As they drew near to the village, Jesus indicated to the men that He was going to continue on from there. However, the two men constrained Him, saying, '*Abide with us*, for it is toward evening, and the day is far spent.' And He went in to stay with them. Luk 24:25. The men's insistence that Jesus abide with them was an expression of the faith that they had received by hearing His message. Rom 10:17. They desired the relationship with Christ that the gospel was calling them to join. They were not going to let the word of God pass them by. In response to their confession of faith, Jesus stayed with them. They were abiding with Him, and He was abiding with them.

When they sat down together to eat, Jesus took bread, blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to them. 'Then their eyes were opened and they *knew Him*; and He vanished from their sight.' Luk 24:31. We note that the primary implication of receiving their sight was not that they were able to recognise Jesus; it was that they *knew Jesus* in the *breaking of the bread!* A new relationship with Him had been established. This is the implication of true illumination.

Addressing this point, the apostle Paul said, '*The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.*'

1Co 10:16-17. The implication of knowing Christ in the breaking of the bread is that we are joined as members in particular to the fellowship of the body of Christ. While we must personally know Christ, we cannot know Him, or ourselves, apart from a tangible and practical connection to His body.

The bread that Jesus broke was the word of God the Father. Jesus had previously taught, 'My Father gives you the true bread from heaven'. Joh 6:32. He then identified Himself as being the bread from heaven. Specifically, He said, 'I am the *living bread* which came down from heaven.' Joh 6:51. Jesus was saying that *He was bread that was alive!* To receive the bread is to receive Christ Himself.

Having come to know Jesus, Cleopas and his friend were born of God. They knew themselves and the works that the Father had prepared for them to do in Christ. In the obedience of faith, '*They rose up* that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those who were with them gathered together, saying, "The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!" And they told about the things that had happened on the road, and how He was known to them in the breaking of bread.' Luk 24:33-35.

Testifying to the disciples of the resurrection of Jesus were the works that the Father had prepared for Cleopas and his friend, in Christ. They were able to testify that Jesus had risen from the dead and that His resurrection life had become their life. This is because they had been delivered from their own fallen perspectives that were leading to death, and had received the light of life through Christ's ministry of the gospel. This resurrection life enabled them to rise up out of the dead works of their own way and to get on with the works that the Father had prepared for them in Christ.

Amazingly, as Cleopas and his friend began to share their testimony to the eleven disciples in Jerusalem, 'Jesus Himself stood in the midst of them, and said to them, "Peace to you".' Luk 24:36. He revealed Himself to those who received the testimony of the messengers whom He had sent.

Conclusion

As we continue to receive the admonition to turn from our own understanding and our own gospels, and to receive the word of faith that reveals to us Christ and His offering, we are continuing to stand by faith in the grace of God. This is our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ as members in particular of His body. In this fellowship, we are progressively knowing Him, knowing ourselves, and knowing one another. Our hearts are assured that we are of the truth as His life is becoming our life as sons of God. 1Jn 3:19. Praise the Lord!

Chapter 3

God is healing our spiritual sight

Michael Fox

As sons of God, our spiritual sight is progressively being healed as we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering. This healing occurs by the word of God, through which we receive grace, mercy and peace. 1Ti 1:2. By this mercy, our spiritual sight is being renewed as we present ourselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Rom 12:1-2. Healthy spiritual eyesight allows a son of God to receive the light of the word of sonship into their heart.

Consider the natural eyesight of a person. They 'see' because light bounces off objects and enters their body through their eyes. There is only one way that the natural light can enter the body - through the eyes. A blind person cannot see natural, physical things, because their eyes are unable to receive the light. A person who has partial vision can receive the light, but their vision is blurry and dim. Glasses, or even eye surgery, may improve their capacity to distinguish between light and darkness, colours, shapes, or to help their eyes to focus more precisely.

In the same way that healthy physical eyesight enables us to see physical things, there is only one way by which we can perceive the things of the Spirit – that is, with *healthy spiritual eyes*. Eph 1:18. 1Co 2:9-10. The capacity to see the things of the Spirit is in a person's spirit. The Scriptures describe the spirit of a person as a 'lamp'. Pro 20:27. Jesus taught that this lamp is the eye of the body. Luk 11:34. The condition of our spirit affects our capacity to receive the light of life and to perceive the things of the Spirit. Luk 11:34. 1Co 2:11-12.

The problem is that, because of sin and the other law within our heart, our spirit is unhealthy, or *degenerate*. This means that our spiritual eyesight is damaged, and we can't see the light clearly. This is why Jesus taught that we must be born again to see the things of the Spirit. Joh 3:3.

When we were born again, our darkened spiritual eyesight began to become clear, or healthy. We received an illumination of our sonship. God is then *continually* healing the spiritual sight of a son of God for the rest of their life. Healing is necessary to the process of maturing and growing up as a son of God. Being continually healed enables us to keep receiving the light of life into our heart. This is why the apostle Paul said, 'Be transformed by the *renewing* of your mind.' Rom 12:2 When our mind, which is a faculty of our spirit, is being renewed, our spiritual sight is being healed. Eph 4:23.

Renewing and regeneration

There are two ways in which God is working to heal our sight. First, our spirit is being *renewed* by the Holy Spirit. Tit 3:5. As a son of God who is in Christ, we are a new creation. 2Co 5:17. Having been born again, our new-born spirit is then *made new* on a daily basis. What do we mean by this?

The mercies of the Lord, by which we present ourselves for participation in Christ's offering, are new to us each morning. Lam 3:22-23. By the mercies of God, we are to present ourselves as a living sacrifice. Rom 12:1. The faith that we receive by hearing the word enables us to believe and to confess what God believes about us. By this faith, we present ourselves in offering each day to do the works that the Father has prepared for us. As we present ourselves, the Holy Spirit is working to join us, personally, to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Rom 8:26. The life that is multiplied to us in this fellowship is renewing our spirit. Every day, the expression of our sonship is new!

Further to this, our spirit is also being *regenerated* when the Holy Spirit applies the Father's word of sonship to our spirit. Tit 3:5. Regeneration causes the eye of our body to increase in strength and health. The Scriptures call this application of the word, 'washing of water by the word'. Eph 5:26. Washing clears the eye of dark obscurities which prevent the eye from working properly. What does it 'look like' to be washed? It looks like hearing and receiving the word, and then applying ourselves to understanding by searching the Scriptures and discussing the word with our family, friends and leaders. Act 17:11. We ask questions and listen to the understanding that comes through ongoing discussion and fellowship.

Consider now how we access this healing work of God. It happens in the fellowship of offering. This is why Paul urged us to present ourselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of offering. Rom 12:1. This is the context in which our mind is renewed. Presenting ourselves in the fellowship of offering includes participating in the communion gathering each Sunday, praying in the secret place with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and gathering with our brethren during the week to fellowship in the word. It is also in the context of serving in the program of our local church community. The fellowship of Christ's offering is the context of our life each day. Regeneration and renewing are through the life of God that we receive in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.

If we draw back from the context of fellowship where healing is at work, our perspective regarding the word of God, and regarding our sonship, degenerates. It goes dim, blurry and narrow, eventually resulting in spiritual blindness. Rev 3:17. Our spiritual sight is either being recovered or it is degenerating; there is no middle ground.

Recovery of sight by the messenger word

Jesus taught us how a person's sight is recovered through the healing of their spirit. Luk 4:18. Messengers of God are anointed and sent to preach the gospel, and those who are *poor in spirit* receive healing to their sin-sick spirit and the recovery of their spiritual sight. What does this 'look like', practically?

Messengers are sent to us from the fellowship of presbytery to preach the gospel. We make it our priority to participate in the gatherings where this word is proclaimed. Our focus is receiving the preached word and the cultural understanding that we are being offered. This is the water of the word that washes us.

We come as one who is *poor in spirit*. This means that we humble ourselves, recognising that we will only see and believe what God is showing us if He heals our spirit. We recognise that our perspective of ourselves, of others and of the issues of life, will need to change. A change of perspective according to the word is an example of healing to our spiritual sight.

As we join the dialogue of the word that the presbytery is speaking, we continue to be washed and healed. By pressing in to fellowship and prayer, we gain a healthy and clear perspective on all matters of life. We are being delivered from our self-centred perspectives. An example is that we stop deciding who we will or won't receive the word from, based on our assessment of them. Being continually devoted to the word means that we won't be questioning the relevance of the word before we receive it. Rather, we receive it willingly and cry out for understanding.

When our eye (our spirit) is healthy, our whole body will be full of light. Luk 11:34. A healthy eye not only receives the light, but also shines that same light. This means that we share with others what we have received. We express the reality of who we are as a son of God. We can easily meet and connect with others in fellowship. We grow in our capacity to appreciate others and to be known among our brethren. The testimony of our brethren is that they know us.

How do we know if our eye is dark? Without spiritual insight, we will endeavour to know ourselves in relation to natural reasoning. This means using our natural characteristics, such as our personality, our physical attributes, our abilities and our frailties, to define who we think we are. This way of reasoning is motivated by either inferiority or insecurity.

An *insecure* person will measure their own validity based on how they think others view them. They will not persevere with relationships that do not make them feel good about themselves. Their confidence will be based on the information that they draw from their environment. This may include, for example, reading into the way someone looks at them or doesn't look at them!

An *inferior* person has an imaginary hierarchy in which they peg people as being 'above' or 'below' themselves. They relate to people accordingly. For example, they endeavour to please those whom they deem as 'above' them in order to gain their approval. They may even use the preached word as their standard for assessing themselves and other people. They feel good about themselves when they think that they are already 'doing'

the word. Alternatively, if they believe that they are not measuring up to the word, they think, 'I'm hopeless. I'll have to go and fix this up and sort myself out!'

These are complex ways of thinking about ourselves. These complexities are often accompanied by psychological and emotional distress, including anxiety, depression, frustration, agitation and anger. Col 3:8. We lack confidence in ourselves and doubt that we are accepted by others.

The account of Bartimaeus

The account in the Gospel of Mark regarding Jesus healing a blind man's physical eyesight helps us to understand how God is healing our spiritual eyesight. Mar 10:46-52. Mark recounted the healing of a man called Bartimaeus. Bartimaeus could hear, but was blind. Mar 10:46-47. Hearing and reading the word doesn't necessarily mean that our spiritual sight is healthy. When Bartimaeus heard Jesus, who is the Word, come near, he cried out for *mercy*. Mar 10:47-48. Bartimaeus was evidently *poor in spirit*, because he recognised that he needed to have his sight healed according to the word. Mat 5:3. He cried out for mercy because it is only by the *mercies of God* that we can present ourselves in the fellowship of offering where healing is operative. Rom 12:1. Jesus then 'stood still', giving Bartimaeus an opportunity to present himself for fellowship with Him. Mar 10:49.

The command of Jesus granted Bartimaeus faith, not only to present himself, but also to throw aside his garment on the way! Mar 10:50. The projections that we tailor for ourselves, because of insecurity and inferiority, are the 'garments' that we are to throw aside as we present ourselves in the fellowship of offering. The apostle Paul described this as our initiative to '*put off* the old man which grows corrupt... and be renewed in the spirit of your mind'. Eph 4:22-23. Having presented himself to Jesus, Bartimaeus received the word that brought healing and the recovery of his sight. Mar 10:52. Like Bartimaeus, when we present ourselves in the fellowship of the word, our spiritual sight is recovered through regeneration and the renewing of our spirit.

Jesus then said to Bartimaeus, 'your faith has made you well'. Mar 10:52. To be 'made well' means to be saved from eternal corruption by being healed and made whole. Like Bartimaeus, our faith, which is the faith we have received by hearing the word of Christ, saves us. Our faith saves us because it is by faith that we present ourselves as a living sacrifice in the

THE CULTURE OF SONSHIP

fellowship of Christ's offering. This is the context in which we are being healed. Tit 3:5.

Luke recorded that, immediately after receiving his sight, Bartimaeus followed Jesus, glorifying God. Luk 18:43. We 'follow Jesus' by walking each day in the fellowship of His offering. In this fellowship, we continue to be transformed as our mind is being renewed. We 'glorify God' by expressing sonship. When our whole body is full of the light of sonship, it is evident that our spiritual sight is healthy. Luk 11:36. Those who witnessed Bartimaeus glorifying God also gave praise to God. Luk 18:43. Likewise, our brethren who witness the light of sonship shining from us will have cause to give praise to God.

God wants to keep healing our spiritual sight. By the mercies of God, we keep presenting ourselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of offering. In our daily walk with Christ - from the communion gathering, to prayer, to the ongoing dialogue of the present truth word - the Holy Spirit is with us, constantly renewing our spirit and healing our spiritual sight.

Chapter 4

The miracle of new birth

Stephen Bourne

Introduction

The apostle John recorded a certain evening interaction between Jesus and a man named Nicodemus. Joh 3:1-21. Nicodemus was a religious leader of the Jews, and occupied the very upper levels of society as part of an exclusive religious council who were well-versed in the Old Testament Scriptures. He recognised that Jesus had come from God and that His ministry culture was completely foreign to the culture of the Pharisees. Jesus immediately began to teach Nicodemus about the essence of the gospel of sonship – *the new birth*. Nicodemus replied to Jesus, ‘How can a man be born when he is old? Can he enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born?’ Joh 3:3-4. The new birth was a completely new thought for Nicodemus. Joh 3:9. In this article, we too will be asking a key question; namely, how is it that sons and daughters of men are born again as sons of God?

To begin, we need to first look at the miracle of our natural birth.

The miracle of natural birth

Have you ever stopped to consider how fearfully and wonderfully you have been made? Psa 139:14. Every ability that our body possesses – the capacity to see, hear, smell, touch, speak, reason and think – has been skillfully formed by our Creator. Psa 139:15. However, we have not always been fully developed. We were conceived, or brought into being, within our mother's womb through the action of procreation. Through this action, the seed, or sperm, of our father joined itself to the egg of our mother to create one fertilised egg. It was through this biological process of procreation that we were given both a physical body and an identity (soul and spirit) as our personal possessions. The Scriptures refer to this as our 'outer man' (physical body) and our 'inner man' (identity). 2Co 4:16.

Through the process of procreation, we became the son or daughter of our parents. Each of us inherited some common traits and natural features from our parents – the way we look, speak, think and reason. In fact, we often remark about a person's likeness to their parents. However, we were not created as mere copies of our parents. This is an important point to consider. What sprang forth as new life in the womb was altogether new. We were created as *unique individuals* with a *unique body* and a *unique identity*, though still completely connected to, and brought forth from, our parents.

Once we were born as a little baby, we were completely reliant upon our parents for nurture and sustenance. We slowly grew to be a child, then a teenager. From a teenager, we began to develop into a young adult, before we then matured as an adult. Each phase of growth brought increasing awareness, knowledge, understanding, expression and responsibility. Clearly, maturity did not happen overnight! Our whole natural life is one of maturing and growing up, requiring nurture, discipline, input and instruction from those around us.

Having considered our natural birth, let us now compare this with our spiritual birth.

The miracle of new birth

While each person has been given a *spirit* (identity) through procreation, not everyone is *spiritual*. This is an important distinction. To be spiritual, a person has to be *born again of the Spirit*. Through this process, they become a son of God. This was an amazing new thought for Nicodemus –

one that he, with all of his religious knowledge and training, could not initially fathom. Without the new birth, we are unable to *see* or *enter* the kingdom of God. Joh 3:3,5. 1Co 15:50. Further, without a daily connection to His offering and sufferings, where *His life* is multiplied to become *our life*, this newborn life within us *will* eventually die. Gal 2:20. What are the elements, then, of this new birth?

Jesus described the principle of new birth in the parable of the sower. Mat 13:3-23. Mar 4:2-20. Luk 8:4-15. In this parable, Jesus taught us the way in which the gospel word, as the seed, is sown into the heart of the hearer. The seed is the gospel of sonship proclaimed by messengers who are sent by Christ. The seed that enters our heart *is Christ*. The four grounds - wayside, stony, thorny and good - speak to us of our heart and the way in which we hear and receive the word. Let us now briefly consider these four grounds.

Wayside ground

The person who receives the gospel on *wayside ground* is the one who hears the gospel of sonship, but the seed does not germinate, or bring forth, anything substantial. Mat 13:19. This person does not receive illumination; nor are they born again. As the gospel is proclaimed, Satan comes and *immediately* snatches away what was sown into their heart. Mar 4:15. They are unable to believe to be a son and are robbed of their salvation. Luk 8:12.

Such a person may be filled with great scriptural knowledge, but the gospel word never finds a place in their heart. Joh 8:37. The wayside ground person is *deceived*. They actively choose an alternative gospel and belief system as the source of their life, rather than the simplicity that is in Christ. 2Co 11:3. They rely on *past* 'religious' experiences because the *present* truth of the gospel never truly becomes the culture of their life; namely, what they *say* and what they *do* are very separate actions. Mat 23:3.

Stony ground

The one who receives the word on *stony ground* does, in fact, experience the new birth. They are illuminated and excited at the thought of sonship, even believing that they are a son of God. Mat 13:20. Luk 8:13. Further, they have been born to enter the kingdom of God because the Seed of the gospel, who is Christ, has germinated in their heart, causing His life to spring forth. Mat 13:5.

Fundamentally, however, these ones remain unwilling to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and immediately stumble when life becomes too difficult. Mat 13:21. The call to join Christ and the fellowship of His sufferings, with all of its humiliation, *is* the offence to a stony ground person. Heb 10:32-33. Php 3:10. Such a person will consider their sufferings to be strange because, essentially, they believe that the gospel should bring them blessing, and should relieve their suffering. 1Pe 4:12. Eventually, what sprang forth in haste from the original seed quickly withers in their heart because they have no root in themselves. Mat 13:21. This is the key point regarding stony ground in a person's life. *They cannot nourish the seed while they remain unwilling to be connected each day to Christ's death by baptism, and to their participation in communion.* 2Co 5:14-15. Mat 16:25. Col 2:12. 1Co 10:16.

Thorny ground

The hearer who receives the word on *thorny ground* is also born again. Although the seed initially springs forth from the ground of their heart, this new life is eventually choked by the *worries* and *riches* and *pleasures* of this life. Luk 8:14.

Worries can be the many cares, distractions and anxieties that we hold on to, and allow to rule in our hearts and minds. Php 4:6-7. 1Pe 5:7. *Riches* can be the temporary things of this world that we desire to gain - money, reputation, health, friendships, religious affirmation, success, relationships etc. Ecc 4:8. Pro 11:28. 1Ti 6:17. *Pleasures* can be the things that appeal to the lusts of our flesh, which are simply the things in this life that satisfy our desires. 1Jn 2:16. Tit 3:3.

The person whose heart is thorny ground has set their mind on the things of the flesh, not on the things of the Spirit. Rom 8:6. This can manifest itself as a seemingly noble desire to do God's will. Rom 7:21. Ultimately, however, these ones are not illuminated concerning the reward of their sonship that is found *in* the fellowship of Christ's offering. Heb 11:26. This is the key point! They deliberately choose the treasures of the world *above* the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this blind pursuit, they are utterly deceived. Mat 13:22. 2Th 2:10-11. Why is this so? It is because their deception is that they believe that their own fleshly pursuits *are* the way in which the life of God is obtained. By choosing to prioritise their own fleshly pursuits, rather than being joined to Christ, this person never matures as one who gives worth to the Father and His name for them. Joh 4:23. Php 3:7-9.

Left with nothing

Those with hearts likened to these three grounds - wayside, stony and thorny - each *hear* the gospel. However, those where the seed falls on wayside ground are never illuminated, and so are immediately left with nothing. While those with hearts like stony and thorny ground believe for a time, and something of the substance of Christ generates in their hearts, the life that springs up eventually dies.

Ultimately, none of these hearers are faithful to *multiply* the life that was entrusted to them. In other words, none of them are truly illuminated regarding the treasure that Christ's life becomes our life both now and for all eternity. This treasure is only true as we die with Him and bear the reproaches of His offering and sufferings. Heb 11:26. Heb 13:13. Col 3:3. Amazingly, in the fellowship of this offering, even the sinful responses of our flesh that leave us with nothing of our sonship - wayside, stony and thorny - are being dealt with. In the end, *the reward of our sonship is the life that is multiplied in His death, not what is merely sown into our heart.* 2Co 4:17.

In this season, Jesus is teaching us that there is only *one* narrow way that leads to life. Mat 7:14. Christ, the Seed, germinating in our heart and bearing fruit to maturity, *is* that narrow way! Joh 14:6.

Good ground

Only a hearer who, with humility and repentance, receives the Seed, Christ, on good ground is the one who bears fruit to maturity - some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty. Mat 13:23. Jas 1:21. They are a faithful steward of His life. Mat 25:21,23. This one is finding their name as the Father's son *because the life of God is multiplying within their heart.* This is an amazing reality! As the Seed, Christ, begins to multiply within their heart, their name within that Seed begins to emerge. That is, His life is becoming their life. How does this occur?

The Seed of Christ, when sown into our hearts by the messenger, generates within our heart. Then, having found our life as a son of God, we must proceed to die with Christ in baptism. Mat 10:39. Mat 16:25. Col 2:12. As we are joined to this fellowship, the life of Christ within the seed is multiplied to us to become our life.

This is what it means for us to be *in Him* as He is *in us*. Col 1:27. 1Jn 4:13. As a 'good ground' person, we multiply fruit, which is new creation life. This new creation life *is the glory of our sonship*, and becomes our eternal

reward according to the measure of what is multiplied. Gal 2:20. 2Co 5:17. It becomes clear to us that, to enter heaven, we must multiply His life as we progress as sons or daughters of men to become sons of God. Joh 3:5. This is what it means to be a 'firstfruits' Christian. These ones multiply the life of their name as they stand up in identity as a son of God throughout their *whole* life. What, then, is the end goal of a son of God?

Progressing to immortality

The apostle Paul answered this question in the book of Romans. We who have the Spirit of God dwelling in our hearts are eagerly waiting for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our spiritual bodies. Rom 8:23. A son of God eagerly looks to receive the reward, *in the new heavens and new earth*, of what they have multiplied *in this life*. That is, the reward of their immortal sonship. 1Co 15:53-54. Amazingly, the Holy Spirit is our *present* firstfruits measure of this reward. Rom 8:23. 2Co 1:22.

Having been illuminated regarding this amazing gospel, the Lord is requiring us to not be moved away from the hope, regardless of the temptation to draw back from joining Christ each day in the 'mess and muck' of life. Col 1:23. Heb 11:26. We are not those who draw back to destruction, but are those who believe to the saving of our soul. Heb 10:39. Only by a daily connection to His death, through baptism and communion, can His life be multiplied to become our life. Rom 8:35-39. We must be 'steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that [our] toil is not in vain in the Lord'. 1Co 15:58.

In every generation, there is a battle for our souls that is waged every time the gospel is proclaimed, seeking to steal away the reward of our sonship. Heb 10:32. What, then, is the answer? We must continually receive, with humility, the implanted word that is able to save our souls, always turning in repentance to His voice. Jas 1:21. 2Co 3:16. Mat 5:3-4.

A confession of repentance

Having been illuminated, we confess in repentance that the three 'grounds' of the heart that are unable to bring forth sonship - wayside, stony, and thorny - describe the condition of *our heart*, and were the *cause of Christ's suffering*. Heb 10:29. *All of us* have hearts of wayside ground when we trample underfoot the Son of God, and choose to live by an alternative gospel. *All of us* have hearts of stony ground when we regard the blood of the covenant by which He was sanctified to be

unclean; namely, we do not 'reckon' that daily connection to His offering and sufferings through baptism and communion is the *only way* to live and grow. 2Co 5:14-15. And, *all of us* have hearts of thorny ground when we insult the Spirit of grace by rejecting the conviction of the word in favour of pursuing an alternative to joining Christ's offering and sufferings. Heb 10:29.

While we must accept that our life is one of a continual turning in repentance, these fleshly attitudes should not be our *ongoing* testimony. Heb 10:29-30. We must continue to *actively choose* the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as being greater riches than all of the treasures of this temporary world, looking to the eternal reward of our sonship. Heb 11:26. 2Co 4:18. Mat 16:26-27. In this way, bearing our own cross as an individual participation in His offering and sufferings is to become our daily reality. Mat 10:38.

Continuing from faith to faith

Having been conceived of His divine nature, we are to continue to develop so that we are brought forth and are born, throughout our life, as a son of God. This is made reality as the life of Jesus is multiplied and given to us in the fellowship of His offering. Just as our natural maturity takes time, diligence and correction, so too, our spiritual maturity is progressively attained. We must continue from faith to faith, constantly turning in repentance, to be born again from being natural sons and daughters of men to becoming sons of God. Rom 1:17.

Chapter 5

Our mortality in Christ - Part I

Lachlan Perrin

Exanastasis

Since the creation of the world, there have been two events in history that have impacted upon mankind more than any others. The first was the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden of Eden. The second was the crucifixion of Jesus Christ. Both events forever altered our existence on earth and our eternal future. One caused eternal death and damnation; one brought eternal life and salvation. 1Co 15:21-22. A person's *eternal* future is determined by their response to the gospel of Jesus Christ.

When the apostle John described the purpose of his gospel writings, he said, 'These [things] have been written so that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing *you may have life* in His name.' Joh 20:31. The central message of the gospel is that Christ's death has enabled mankind to receive the *eternal* life of God, and to be born again as sons of God while in a *mortal* body. The apostle Paul used the Greek word *exanastasis* to describe the eternal, resurrection life of God dwelling in a human body. Php 3:11.

Over the course of this article and the next, we will consider four dimensions of mortality. The first two, which are addressed in this article, include the mortality of Adam and Eve before the Fall, and the mortality of mankind after the Fall. In the next article, we will discuss Jesus Christ's mortal body and the implications of His offering on the cross. The final point that we will consider is the journey of mortality that we experience as sons of God and members of the body of Christ.

The key cultural lesson across both articles is that *exanastasis* life is transforming our heart and our mind while we possess a mortal body. The very ways with which we appraise and respond to life are, literally, being renewed by the life of God! Instead of making fleshly, or carnal, responses, we are learning to demonstrate the love and righteousness of God. The apostle Paul summarised the journey of *exanastasis*, saying, 'Therefore we do not lose heart, but though our outer man [our mortal body] is decaying, yet our inner man [our spiritual identity] is being renewed day by day [by *exanastasis*].' 2Co 4:16.

Paul was the only New Testament writer to use the Greek word that has been translated as 'renewed' in this verse. The word means 'to renovate, by adding a dimension of strength and vigour, so that a person's life undergoes a qualitative change'. When Paul used this word, 'renew', he was referring to a new kind of life, distinct from a former corrupted way of living. He was referring to *exanastasis* renewing the heart of a son of God across the course of their mortal lifetime.

Creation and the mortal body

When the Lord created mankind, He formed Adam's body from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life. Gen 2:7. The Scripture then described Adam as 'a living being', or 'living soul', because the *biological* life of Adam's mortal body gave expression to his spiritual identity. While a person's identity, or spirit, has *eternal* existence, their earthly body is *not* immortal. Therefore, a person who expresses their identity through the life of their biology will lose all capacity for expression and relationship when their mortal body perishes. It was for this reason that God's intention was always for sons of men to be born a second time, from above, as sons of God who would live and fellowship, eternally, by the *zoe*-life of God. The writers of the New Testament used the Greek word '*zoe*' to differentiate the life of God from the life, or soul, of a person. Joh 5:26. Luk 12:22-23.

In the garden of Eden, through the chemical processes of Adam's biology, the food that he ate sustained his body. While this nourishment gave energy to his earthly body, food was not *preserving* his mortality. The Scriptures clearly tell us that 'man cannot live [indefinitely in his mortality] by bread alone'. Mat 4:4. Instead, Adam's mortal body was sustained through his daily participation in the fellowship of Yahweh at the tree of life. Gen 3:8.

At this point in history, the created world would have been a most astonishing place. As Adam continued to obey the word of life proceeding from the fellowship of Yahweh, he received the wisdom to *perfectly* tend all creation. Just as Adam's mortal body was preserved by the word of God, every animal's mortal body was preserved through the instruction and capacity that Adam received to maintain all creation. Though mortal, Adam and Eve's bodies, *and* the body of every living creature, were not subject to the aging process! 'Aging' did not exist in the world.

Every plant and animal existed in complete harmony together. There was no competition for any resource necessary for life in the paradise that God had created. There was no pain or suffering; no sadness or grief. Death, itself, did not exist in the world. Furthermore, as Adam submitted every work and activity to the sanctification of the Holy Spirit, he made no mistakes, nor had any accidents. The unfolding of every event in time and space was subject to the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit. Chance, luck and coincidence did not exist in the world.

The fall of mankind

When Adam ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he rebelled against the commandment of God. Gen 2:17. Adam and Eve believed that they could become their own source of life and works. But God is the source of all life, all wisdom and all innovation. Interestingly, deception, lying, and the discontentment that drives a person to desire 'more in life', did not exist in the world before Satan's influence. Joh 8:44.

Having eaten from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam became deluded. In this state, he was disconnected from true reality; the fellowship and word of Yahweh. Adam's mortality was no longer sustained by God. The aging process took dominion over his flesh, and over the flesh of every living creature under the sun. Creation, and the laws of nature, were thrown into disorder.

Mortality was now subject to the disharmony of fallen creation and was no longer under the sovereignty of the Holy Spirit in time and space. The resulting fight for survival, coupled with mortality's susceptibility to sickness, accidents, bad weather, bad luck, bad food, emotional distress, depression and so on, meant that suffering and death now encompassed mankind's experience in the world.

The ideals of happiness and contentment that Adam and Eve sought, according to their fallen perspectives of good and evil, were unattainable. Dissatisfaction characterised their personal lives, their marriage and their interactions with the world around them.

The mortal body under the sun

Since the fall of Adam and Eve, the inescapable reality of mortality has kept mankind in bondage to sin because of the fear of death. Heb 2:15. Why is this so? The apostle Paul wrote to the Romans and pointed out that, as a result of the Fall, every son and daughter of Adam and Eve has inherited 'another law' within their identity. Rom 7:23. The fear of death continually stimulates this other law, motivating people to do all that they can to extend, and to give meaning to, their mortal existence. Through their constant lust for life, they break the law of God which states, 'You shall not covet.' Rom 7:7. Their very desire to sustain their mortal life perpetuates their separation from God, and their eternal death.

King Solomon wrote about the futility of a life like this. He wrote, 'Vanity of vanities, all is vanity, what profit has a man from all his labour in which he toils *under the sun*? ... there is no remembrance of former things, nor will there be any remembrance of things that are to come by those who will come after.' Ecc 1:2-11. Living 'under the sun' refers to the self-defined and self-resourced life that a person chooses, outside of God's will. The book of Psalms tells us that these ones are among those who are dead to God, and whom He remembers no more. Psa 88:5. The outcome of living under the sun is that a person's predestined name is erased from the book of life. Rev 3:5.

It is important to recognise that the fear of death also includes the dread associated with a person's lifetime having no meaning, and no memory. Outside of Christ, and with no assurance of salvation, sons of men grow anxious from wondering about their 'legacy'. They ask questions such as, 'Have I made a difference in the world? How will I be remembered? What will I leave behind when I'm gone? Do I matter?' These ways of thinking

reveal a person's other law, which drives them to discover, create or master something 'new' that will give meaning to their life and ensure that they 'leave their mark' in the world. However, 'There is nothing new under the sun'. Ecc 1:9.

In our youth, we may not spend much time thinking about our legacy! However, the self-seeking influence of our other law can still apply. 'Who do *I* want to be? What do *I* want to achieve in life? How will I stand out in the workplace and advance my career? What can I do so that my ministry at church is noticed? How will I set myself apart from other suitors and start a courtship?' The truth is that a self-defining and self-revealing person cannot 'break out' from the limitations of human capacity that were created in Adam. Even those who appear to be innovative or successful in this lifetime, through the exceptional use of their fleshly faculties, have no *eternal* remembrance outside of Christ! 1Pe 1:24-25.

In contrast, when a person submits their life to the Father's will, their works endure to eternal life. This is why the provision of the communion is so important for us. We are receiving wisdom, direction and grace for the week ahead. Jesus said, 'Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal.' Joh 6:27.

Subjected to futility in hope

The curse of vanity and futility is a proactive judgement of God upon the world. The sufferings associated with time and chance are removing every dimension of rebellion against God. The apostle Paul testified, saying, 'For I consider the sufferings of this present time [the judgement of time and chance] are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us ... for the *creation was subjected to futility*, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself also will be set free from its slavery to corruption into the freedom of the glory of the children of God.' Rom 8:18,20,21. Paul was highlighting the reality that every person suffers the afflictions of mortality and the adversity of the fallen world. Thankfully, Christ has subjected us to the suffering of mortality, *in hope*. If we join the fellowship of Christ's offering and death, the sufferings of mortality work for our good. They are 'birth pangs', signalling that we are being brought forth as sons of God.

Chapter 6

Our mortality in Christ - Part 2

Lachlan Perrin

Receiving eternal life

In the previous article, we considered mankind's mortality before and after the fall of Adam and Eve. In this article, we will consider Jesus Christ's mortal body and the implications of His death. We will then discuss our mortality as sons of God and members of Christ's body. To appreciate the significance of Jesus' mortal death, we must understand the difference between mortal life and eternal death; and mortal death and eternal life.

We can think of 'life' as the capacity to express our spirit. When the Lord created Adam as a living soul, Adam expressed his spirit using the biological life of his mortal body. Adam was not complete in the day of his creation because, when the time of his mortality ended, he would lose all capacity for expression and relationship. It was for this reason that God always intended for Adam to be born a second time by receiving the *zoe*-life of God.

When Jesus came into the world, He brought the *zoe*-life of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit into the realm of mortality. The physical blood in His mortal body contained the *zoe*-life of God. Unlike Adam, Jesus expressed His Spirit according to *this* life, not according to the biological life of His mortal body. Jesus declared that His mandate was to share this *zoe*-life of God with sons of men. He said, 'I came that they may have [My *zoe*] life, and have it abundantly.' Joh 10:10.

As Christ's blood was shed during each wounding event from Gethsemane to Calvary, the life that was in His blood was multiplied and ministered to sons of men. Through His sufferings and death, Jesus made the eternal life of God available for us, in our mortality. The apostle Paul described the difference between Adam's mortal body and Christ's mortal body when he wrote, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam [Jesus Christ] became a life-giving spirit.' 1Co 15:45.

Faith enables a son of God to recognise that the sufferings of their mortality are a participation in Christ's offering and death. In this fellowship, they receive the resurrection life that sustained Christ's mortal body during His offering work. As Christians, our confidence is that the life of God that we receive through our fellowship in Christ's offering will continue to give expression to our spiritual identity after our mortal body perishes. The key point, however, is that the life of God that is ministered to our spirit is *already* working a complete moral reformation in our heart and mind throughout our mortal lifetime.

The testimony of our earthly sojourn is, 'While we are in this tent [mortal body], we groan [pray and live according to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit], being burdened [by our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings], because we do not want to be unclothed [without life and expression when our mortal body perishes] but to be clothed [with an immortal, resurrection body], so that what is mortal will be swallowed up by [eternal] life'. 2Co 5:4.

Jesus' mortal body

Yahweh the Father, Son and Spirit existed before the creation of the heavens and earth. They possessed life and expressed Their unique identities, by offering, in a fellowship of one Spirit. When the Son of God came in the flesh, He brought the life of God that gave expression to His identity *before* creation into the realm of time and mortality. Jesus testified, 'For as the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.' Joh 5:26. Clearly, the life that the Father

possesses outside of time and physical creation is not the biological life that we possess in our mortal bodies. What was Jesus saying? He was testifying that the expression of His identity was *not* according to the impulses of His biological life. He did not have another law motivating His heart to satisfy the desires of His flesh. Psa 40:8. Rather, the motivation and energy that He used to express His identity was the divine nature of the Father.

In the account of Jesus travelling to Bethany and raising Lazarus from the dead, He said to Martha, 'I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies.' Joh 11:25. When Jesus said, 'I am the resurrection', He was declaring that He lived by resurrection life *before* His mortal death! In other words, *exanastasis* life was giving expression to His identity while He dwelt in a temporal, mortal body. He was demonstrating, through the resurrection of Lazarus, that He had come to equip sons of men with *exanastasis* life *in their mortality*! And He was proclaiming that all those who receive and live by *exanastasis* life in this age will *continue* to have life in their spirit when their mortal body perishes.

Even though Jesus raised Lazarus from mortal death, it is important to note that *exanastasis* does not only 'quicken' our physical bodies. There will be times when the Lord brings miraculous, sovereign healing to a Christian's physical body. However, the key cultural lesson that we are considering in this article is that the life of God is cleansing our conscience here and now. We read in Hebrews, 'How much more will the blood of Christ, who through eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God'. Heb 9:14. Receiving the life of God genuinely purifies, or 'clears', our hearts and minds from the familiar responses of our other law and from the impulses of our flesh. We are being renewed in our perspectives, responses, behaviour and appreciation of others.

Jesus' mortal death

By the grace of God, Jesus has gathered the experience of every person's mortality, across all time, into His death. Heb 2:9. Every person's eternal future, whether salvation or damnation, has been gathered into Christ's offering on the cross. As our great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek, Jesus ministers a place of participation in His mortal death to every member of His body throughout the ages. He is connecting every

son of God to the fellowship of His one offering; to the life in His sprinkled blood; and to the circumcising work of the Father.

As we, by faith, regard our sufferings to be a fellowship in His death, the blood that was sprinkled upon His body cleanses our conscience, and multiplies the life of God to us. The life of God is delivering us from the fear and anxiety associated with mortal death. When Jesus offered His mortal body on the cross, 'Since the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and might free those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives'. Heb 2:14-15.

We are being delivered from the exhausting and futile striving that is associated with saving or extending our mortal existence! We have accepted that our flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God because we know that our 'mortal [biological body] must put on immortality'. 1Co 15:23. As we participate in the communion meal each week, we rejoice because our spirit is being quickened with *exanastasis* life, despite the ongoing degeneration of our physical body.

Our mortality in Christ

Being a Christian does not mean that we are spared from the sufferings associated with our perishing mortality and the fallen world. Rather, we believe that Jesus Christ, through His mortal offering, has taken every adverse experience that we will encounter, and made them His own. The unpleasant, difficult and trying circumstances that befall us each day have, in fact, been appointed for us by Christ. All things work together for our good in the midst of these circumstances because *exanastasis* life is 'swallowing up' the fallen responses of our flesh that keep us enslaved to sin. Furthermore, as we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering, every event that occurs in time and space has been reconnected to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Remarkably, for a Christian, time and chance have been suspended!

God, by the Holy Spirit, is turning the judgement of time and chance around so that it serves His covenant purpose. We have not been delivered from the sufferings of this present time. Rather, for those who are in Christ, the sufferings that are common to mankind now serve the immutable purpose of God. By the illumination brought by the word of Christ's messengers, we are working 'out [our] salvation with fear and trembling; [recognising] it is God who is at work in [us], both to will and

to work for His good pleasure'. Php 2:12-13. Every situation that provokes us to think in a self-preserving and, if we are honest, a self-centred way, is an opportunity for us to overcome the death of sin by *exanastasis* life. The apostle John said that we will recognise the change in our heart – that we have passed out of death into eternal *zoe*-life – because we now appraise and respond to life according to the love of God. 1Jn 3:14.

For example, in the situation that makes us anxious, we can receive *exanastasis* life so that we are delivered *from* our anxiety *to* the peace of God. God is in control; He is the Author of our days. In the situation that makes us angry, we can receive *exanastasis* life so that we are delivered *from* our anger *to* the *obedience* of Christ. Christ has overcome the world; we don't need to try to conquer it too. When our plans are frustrated and we feel disappointed, we can receive *exanastasis* life so that we are delivered *from* self-sourced ideals and unrealistic expectations *to* the patience and contentment of receiving all things as our portion in Christ. And when relational conflict incites us to view another from our perspective of right and wrong, we can receive *exanastasis* life and be delivered *from* our legalistic judgements *to* the mercy and forgiveness of God.

Conclusion

Exanastasis life is progressively delivering us from ways of thinking and feeling that are provoked by our fleshly fear of mortal death. In Christ, deliverance from adversity is not some kind of stealthy retreat, where we are spared from suffering. We cannot escape the sufferings of our perishing mortality or of the fallen world which has been subjected to corruption. Instead, as we live by faith and receive every circumstance as a fellowship in Christ's mortal death, grace sustains us and the Lord works a moral reformation in our heart. Truly, that which is mortal – our fallen and natural ways of appraising life – is being swallowed up by life eternal.

Chapter 7

The culture of a Christian

David Hall

Introduction

For many Christians, the topic of 'Christian culture' promotes a discussion that may include consideration of family life and devotions, finances and entertainment, community and church priorities, faith initiatives, successes and failures. In their right context, these are all important considerations. However, these points of focus only have meaning for us in terms of Christian culture if they are based in an understanding of the one life and culture of Yahweh. This life and culture is given to each of us through the blood of Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We call this culture '*exanastasis*'. It is the resurrection life of Christ that is being manifest in our mortal bodies.

Exanastasis was working in Christ when, from Gethsemane, He was progressively brought back from the death of sin by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 13:20. This blood was Jesus' blood, and the life in His blood was the sonship life of the Father that was given to Jesus as His life when He was born by the command of the Father, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5. Throughout this experience in

Gethsemane, Jesus was still in a mortal body that was dying and suffering. Jesus was able to endure great violence and pain through His suffering journey. The book of Hebrews calls this capacity to endure 'the grace of God', through which Jesus tasted death for everyone. This grace is *exanastasis*. Heb 2:9.

Through the resurrection life of Christ, we are able to fulfil the will of God, in Christ, in every circumstance that we experience in life, including those that cause us to suffer. These difficulties include the physical infirmity associated with our corrupting mortality that is a result of our fall from grace in Adam. However, when, by faith, we receive these difficulties as a participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we are able to guard our initiative to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings so that we do not become a victim of our circumstances.

Further to this, through *exanastasis*, we are able to exercise our initiative to do the works of sonship that belong to our name. These are the works of our sanctification as sons of God, and are the evidence that we are attaining the culture of *exanastasis* that belongs to the sons of God. Php 3:11. This initiative is our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Through this initiative, we become ministers of the grace of life to one another as members of the body of Christ. This happens as we walk together in the light of the life of God. 1Jn 1:5-7.

Paul's experience

The apostle Paul wrote that the culture, power, quality and uniqueness of the Christian life, ministered through the gospel, is *exanastasis*. This word '*exanastasis*' is unique to the writing of Paul, and means 'out (of the dead) - resurrection'. Php 3:11. Paul used this term to explain that the Christian life is a fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ through which believers receive and live by the resurrection life of Jesus. 2Co 4:10. Strengthening the point, Paul stated that he was constantly being handed over to death for Christ's sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal body. 2Co 4:11.

It is easy for us to become preoccupied with our suffering. We often focus on the subject of Christ's death and the seven sprinklings of His blood through mortal eyes. Because we are suffering and hurting, our propensity is to focus on the event of His dying. However, the apostle Paul also taught us that *exanastasis* is *the living of Jesus*, which He demonstrated while dying for us as a sin offering. Paul's testimony was

that he was always carrying about in his body the dying of Jesus, so that *the life, also*, of Jesus may be manifested in his mortal body. 2Co 4:10.

Paul's example

In the course of Paul's life, he had suffered and lost everything. In fact, he counted as rubbish all things that would have qualified him in this world for approval and renown. Php 3:7-8. In his writing, Paul clearly indicated that this was his deliberate approach to the culture of his life, having joined the fellowship and sufferings of Christ. Paul continually exercised the faith initiative that he had received from Christ to deny himself, to take up his cross, and to follow Christ. Gal 2:20. Luk 9:22-23.

Paul did not seek to ascend in power or authority but, rather, humbled himself, and was joined to Christ's prayer in Gethsemane. In the book of Acts, Luke recorded that Paul said that he was 'bound [or a prisoner] in spirit' to go to Jerusalem. Act 20:22. The Holy Spirit bore witness through certain prophets, including Agabus, that chains and tribulations awaited him there. His friends all pleaded with him not to go to Jerusalem because it was clear to them all, and from Paul's own mouth, that they would never see him again. Being unable to persuade Paul, and perceiving the will of God, they, also, joined with Paul in the fellowship of Christ's prayer in Gethsemane, saying, 'The will of the Lord be done.' Act 21:14. They were enabled, together, to join the fellowship of Christ's faith. There, at the throne of grace, a complete fellowship commended Paul to the will of God and to the destiny that he was to fulfil in Rome. In this way, Paul was separated to his obedient fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, and for the work of his sonship.

In all of life's circumstances, Paul's faith meant that he was not a victim of circumstances, which included accidents, shipwreck, hunger, exposure; neither was he a victim of persecution at the hands of others. In all of these events, Paul demonstrated that he was constantly being delivered over to death for Christ's sake. Paul and his companions were not delivered over to death so that they would die in their mortality. In the same manner in which Christ was manifesting resurrection life, being brought back from the death of sin in Gethsemane, Paul and his companions also manifested the life of Christ in their mortal bodies. 2Co 4:11.

In order to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, Paul deliberately set his mind on the things that are from above. Believing that he was dying with Christ, he knew also that his own life was safe in God's hands, and that

Christ was his life there and then. Col 3:2-4. Understanding this as *exanastasis*, Paul was able to focus his approach to life so that his priority was to know Christ, the power of His resurrection, the fellowship of His sufferings, and to be conformed to His death, as the means by which he would 'attain to the resurrection [*exanastasis*] from the dead'. Php 3:7,11. He would continue to press on toward the goal of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Php 3:14.

Paul believed that this is what it meant to live by the faith of the Son, which is received by the word of the Father. Gal 2:20. Rom 10:17. If we are to live by the faith of the Son of God, then we, likewise, will experience the life of God progressively becoming our life in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Living by the faith of the Son, which we receive through the word of the Father, means that our culture will display the same life that the Son displayed. This is because He gives us His life. This was the culture that Paul portrayed in his weaknesses. 1Co 2:3. We could call this 'the culture of *exanastasis*'.

Paul explained to us that, as he was being conformed to Christ's death, he was progressively attaining the miracle of resurrection life that Jesus experienced as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Php 3:11. As he suffered with Christ, Paul experienced the circumcision of his own self-righteous motivation (other law). That is, his self-righteous motivations were being cut from his heart. This suffering event was what he referred to as 'the sentence of death'. 2Co 1:9. The righteousness of faith was active in his life, and his propensity to trust in himself was being circumcised from his heart so that he learned to trust in God who raises the dead. 2Co 1:9.

The book of Acts recorded Paul's missionary journeys. In these accounts, there are many examples of *exanastasis* in action. Paraphrasing his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said, 'We have troubles all around us, but we are not defeated. We often don't know what to do, but are not lost. We are persecuted, but God does not leave us. We are hurt sometimes, but we are not destroyed. So, we constantly experience the death of Jesus in our own bodies, but this is in order that the life of Jesus becomes our life. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus' sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So then death is working in us, but life in you.' 2Co 4:8-12.

Many of Paul's endeavours appeared to fail. However, we do not see the 'success' of *exanastasis* as being a successful outcome of deliverance from all suffering. We still experience healing, but our rejoicing is

manifold in the life of Jesus being manifested in our mortal flesh. The evidence of *exanastasis* in us becomes visible as the life that we are receiving overflows through our testimony as life to another person. As we fellowship together in Christ's offering, we are eating of the Tree of Life, who is Christ, and are being healed in our mortality through *exanastasis*. His blood is giving life to us. Even as we suffer, we regard our sufferings as being the sufferings of Christ. His blood then sprinkles our hearts, cleansing our conscience and our motivations from the dead works of self-righteousness. Heb 9:14.

Our journey of discipleship throughout life proves our obedience to the word of the Father, and joins us to the perfection that is in Christ. This perfection is being transferred to us as we continue to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Because of this, we also experience the word of faith that is near to us. It is in our mouths as a testimony of our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering, and in our hearts as a witness that we are being delivered from 'the other law' of self-righteousness. Rom 10:8. We can know the assurance that we are being saved from sin, and are becoming the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus. 2Co 5:21.

When we 'set our mind on the things above', as Paul did, we become focused on the righteousness that comes from God through faith. When we live according to that righteousness, we will live by the same life and power that sustained Christ. Rom 8:11. We will not suffer unnecessarily, nor die before our time. 1Co 11:30.

Chapter 8

Abiding in Him

Luke Pomery

Writing at the end of his life, the apostle John expressed his earnest desire for each of us to know, with certainty, that we are a son of God and that we have eternal life. Specifically, John ministered this assurance by teaching ‘the gospel of *sonship*’. This is the word of God’s Eternal Covenant that proclaims His will for us to become sons of God who live together in fellowship with Him. 1Jn 3:1. 1Jn 1:3. Further to this, John drew our attention to the specific culture and qualities of the Christian life.

When the qualities, or virtues, of Christ’s life are progressively growing within us, it is irrefutable evidence that we are born of God and that we have His life abiding in us. 2Pe 1:8. John eagerly taught us how to recognise these qualities within ourselves. He stated numerous times throughout his first letter, ‘By this we know!’ He did this so that we could identify the evidence of Christ’s life and culture growing within us. Our knowledge that these things are true in us demonstrates that we are sons of God, and that we already have eternal life abiding within us.

Knowing Him

The apostle John then concluded his first letter with his keynote point – knowing God and being known by Him *is* eternal life! 1Jn 5:20. Therefore, we can be confident and can know for certain that we have eternal life, because we *know Him* and are *known by Him!* What an assurance! And, indeed, this is the keynote message of the whole gospel. Jesus prayed in this way for each of us, that we would *know* the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. Joh 17:3. The apostle Paul, likewise, preached the gospel of sonship so that every believer would have a full assurance of understanding, which is to know Christ and to ‘be found in Him’. Col 2:2. Php 3:9-10.

In joyful proclamation, John went even further than this! He showed us what it means to know God – to *know* God is to *abide* in Him! 1Jn 5:20. To ‘abide’ simply means to ‘dwell, remain, reside or wait’. He becomes *our dwelling place*. The psalmist expressed this understanding when he wrote, ‘He who *dwells* in the secret place of the Most High shall *abide* under the shadow of the Almighty’. Psa 91:1. The Scriptures also teach us that we become *His* dwelling place. Psa 68:16. Thus, there are two aspects of abiding – He *abides* in us and we *abide* in Him.

Having just explained that knowing and abiding in God is eternal life, John then concluded his letter by imploring us to keep ourselves from any doctrines other than the gospel of sonship. These doctrines are worthless because they do not minister this assurance of eternal life! 1Jn 5:21. Jer 10:8. There are many ‘false gospels’ and ‘false versions’ of Christianity. These may appear ‘religious’, but there is no substance to them, because they do not teach us how to live as sons of God. Unless a person comes to know God and abides in Him, anything else that they have believed is useless! It is imperative, therefore, that we come to know and believe the true gospel, which is the gospel of sonship.

Two aspects of abiding

Jesus described how we abide in Him and how He abides in us, by using the analogy of a vine with many branches as a symbol of our connection with Him. He said, ‘I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit.’ Joh 15:5. Again, as we can see, there are two aspects of abiding – Christ abides *in us*; and we abide *in Him*. These two aspects, together, are essential to our living as a son of God. We can only truly live as a son of God when Christ abides in our hearts by faith, and when we continue to abide in Him. We continually abide in Him

through our daily connection to the fellowship of His offering and by our ongoing participation in His body.

Paul taught us to examine ourselves in order to prove that Christ abides in us and that we abide in Him! 2Co 13:5. So, how do we 'prove' this? And, what is the 'test'? Let's look further at these two aspects of abiding to discover how this works.

Christ abides in us

First, how do we know that *Christ abides in us*? Paul explained that when the Son of God dwells in our hearts, we live by *His faith*. Eph 3:17. This was Paul's testimony of his own life. He declared that he no longer lived for himself, but that Christ lived in his heart and, as a result, he lived by the faith of the Son of God. Gal 2:20. Faith enables us to live and walk in the same manner and culture as Christ walked. 1Jn 2:6. Through love, Christ gave Himself as an *offering* and sacrifice for our sake. Gal 2:20. Eph 5:2. Thus, *offering* now defines our daily way of life, or culture, as sons of God.

So, how do we know that we are living by Christ's faith and not by our 'own' faith? Helpfully, there are many telling signs that will be an indication to us whenever we are living by our own belief and religious ideals, instead of living by Christ's faith. Some examples are: an inability to hear and receive instruction from others; a constant need for affirmation; becoming increasingly fearful that we are not 'living up' to a perceived 'standard'; and the growing frustration caused by our inability to achieve the will of God - to list a few. When we live according to this way, our capacity to express the life of Christ's sonship is diminishing. Furthermore, the harder we try to fix ourselves, the worse it gets! Jesus likened the condition of living by our own faith to a branch that becomes *increasingly withered*. Joh 15:6. This should be an indicator for us to abandon our 'own faith' and to again receive the word of our sonship.

In contrast, when we live by the faith of the Son of God, we are *growing* in our expression of the life and culture of Christ's sonship. By His faith, we are enabled to obey the command of the Father, which is the word of our sonship. 1Jn 2:3. We reveal the Father by becoming, substantially, the specific son of God whom He predestined us to become. Even when we are learning the 'no' of God, we are still increasing in the knowledge of who we are! We are able to testify that we are growing in our capacity to live as a son of God each day. This *testimony* is evidence that Christ dwells in us and that we are living by His faith. Heb 11:1-2.

We abide in Christ

Second, how do we know that *we abide in Him*? By the mercies of the Father, we present ourselves daily to participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Rom 12:1. 2Co 1:3. The faith of the Son enables us to abide in the fellowship of His offering, and to believe for resurrection life as we are conformed to His death. Furthermore, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's body as a member in particular. 1Co 12:27. Additionally, we eat and drink the communion meal in faith for our ongoing participation in Christ's offering. This is what it means for us to abide in Christ.

Abiding is the 'antithesis', or opposite, of drawing back. When our participation in Christ's offering and sufferings involves pain, we are *not to let go of faith*. To do so would cause us to draw back in unbelief. Heb 10:39. Rather, we continue to walk with Him in the fellowship of His offering, by faith. This is abiding in Him! For example, if we face relational difficulty and hurt within our Christian family, at this point we have to make a choice. Do we draw back because of the pain that we experience? Or do we persevere in these relationships, knowing that this *is the will of God for us*? 1Pe 4:19. Every problem that we encounter throughout our life is answered by simply *abiding in Him!*

His word abides in us

We can further prove, or know, that we abide in Christ, because *His word* abides in us. 1Jn 2:14. Jesus explained that when we abide in Him and His word abides in us, we learn to walk as sons of God. Joh 8:31. Joh 15:7. At the communion table each week, we hear the word of the Father proclaimed by Christ through the members of His body. Thus, the definition of who we are as sons of God, and the understanding of what He has prepared for us to do, is ministered to us through the preached word and body ministry at the communion table. This is the word by which we live through the week. As we believe and obey the word that He brings to us, we are 'proving' that we abide in Him. 1Jn 3:24. 1Jn 4:15.

We know that, in contrast to this way of living, it is possible to walk away from the communion service and to *forget* the word of sonship that was spoken to us. Jas 1:23-25. Instead of abiding in Christ and in His word, we proceed to live by the darkness of our own choices and perspectives. We forget what manner of person we are and, instead of obeying the word of the Father, we begin to engage an 'alternative' culture with its associated doctrine. Our disobedience is a reproach upon the Father.

Abiding in Him

Psa 69:9. Jesus said that if we do not abide in Him, we become withered and, eventually, we are cast out. Joh 15:6.

However, this does not need to be our experience. Any spiritual malnourishment is resolved by our turning again in repentance and abiding in Him. Jesus encouraged us, teaching that as we abide in Him we bring forth much fruit. Joh 15:5. The fruit is Christ's life and culture being progressively formed within us – and, *by this fruit we know*, for certain, that we are sons of God and are living in fellowship with Him!

Chapter 9

We have an anointing

Luke Pomery

God abides in the sons of God, and they abide in Him. This is fundamental to being a Christian. In the previous article, we looked at what it means for Christ to dwell in our hearts, by faith, and what it means for us to abide in the fellowship of Christ's offering and to participate in the fellowship of His body. In harmony with his teaching on abiding with Christ, the apostle John also taught us about *the Holy Spirit* who dwells, or abides, in us forever. Joh 14:16-17. We see that it is not only Christ who abides in our heart, but that the Holy Spirit abides in us as well.

John described the Holy Spirit as an 'anointing' that we have received from Christ. He said, 'You have an anointing [the Holy Spirit] from the Holy One [Christ], and you know all things.' 1Jn 2:20. The anointing of the Spirit *teaches* us how to walk as sons of God each day. 1Jn 2:27. Furthermore, the anointing of the Spirit also *motivates* us to walk in obedience to the word that the Lord speaks to us. This is why it is so important for us to pray in the Holy Spirit each day. We will now look

further at three key ways in which the Holy Spirit specifically teaches and motivates us to live as sons of God.

Bound to Christ's offering

First, the anointing of the Spirit teaches us to abide in Christ and *constrains us to our participation* in the fellowship of Christ's offering each day. 1Jn 2:27. As we walk through each day, the Holy Spirit compels us to remain connected to Christ's offering, even when we face difficulty and trouble. Mat 6:34. At these times, we are not to throw away our confidence, nor become ashamed of our unique participation with Christ. 1Jn 2:28.

How is it that the Holy Spirit helps us to remain connected to Christ's offering? *Love* is the key. The love of God that is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit keeps us connected to the works of offering that belong to our particular sanctification. It is helpful to remember that it was not the nails that were driven through Christ's hands and feet by men that held Him to the cross. Rather, as Jesus testified, 'No-one takes it [My life] from Me, *but I lay it down.*' Joh 10:18. Through love, Christ *willingly* offered Himself in obedience to the command of the Father. Joh 10:18. It was the *love* of God that held Him to His offering on the cross.

The same is true for us. The Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts! Love then motivates us to obey the word of the Father that declares our sanctification as sons of God. In particular, we are motivated toward our specific participation in the offering of Christ. It is the Spirit who 'binds' us, *by love*, to the offering of Christ. The psalmist expressed this sentiment when he wrote, 'Bind the sacrifice with cords [of love] to the horns of the altar'. Psa 118:27. In this same way, the apostle Paul explained that it is the *love* of Christ that *compels* us to judge that we are joined to the death of Christ. 2Co 5:14.

The works of our sonship

Second, the anointing of the Spirit motivates us each day toward the *works* of obedience that belong to our sonship in Christ. 1Jn 2:27. By the anointing, *we know* what we should be doing! We can be confident that we are able to know and fulfil the works of our sonship, each day, because the Holy Spirit is leading us in this truth. Joh 16:13. For this reason, we do not need others to 'prescribe' the decisions that we should be making in our lives, nor look for someone to provide us with a 'guarantee' of a good outcome. Let's consider this further.

We can all probably recount an occasion when we sought the advice of a person whom we considered to be wiser than ourselves. Perhaps we sought counsel when we were facing an important decision in life. Although we might have desired for that person to simply 'tell us' what we should do, hopefully they refrained from giving such a direction. And why is this? It is because to do so would be to deny the gift of faith and the anointing of the Spirit that we personally receive from Christ. Instead of providing the 'answers' that we seek, a spiritual person will ask us about our faith response to the word of Christ spoken to us at the communion table.

Instead of looking for someone to 'mediate' between us and God, we have the ability to make a decision, in fellowship with others, by the faith of the Son and by the anointing of the Spirit that we have abiding in us! Being 'immobilised' by a constant worry about not getting things 'wrong' is *not* how the Holy Spirit teaches us to live! This motivation is not from God. And, thankfully, the Lord is removing this preoccupation from our hearts through the circumcision of Christ. Col 2:11.

Christ's life formed within us

Third, Jesus said that as we walk in the fellowship of His offering, the Holy Spirit will take that which belongs to Him and *apply it* to our hearts and lives. Joh 16:14-15. By this work of the Holy Spirit, the life of *Christ* (who abides in our heart) is also being 'formed' *in* us to become our life. Gal 4:19. The culture of Christ's life is becoming *our* culture - that is, the very life by which we now live and function. Gal 2:20. 1Jn 2:6. In this way, the Holy Spirit 'writes' the gospel of sonship onto our hearts and minds so that it becomes our expression. Heb 10:15-16.

Through this work of the Holy Spirit, we are bringing forth the *fruit* of Christ's sonship life, day by day. Jesus taught us that every tree is known by its own fruit. Luk 6:44. When we are bringing forth the fruit of His sonship life, we are known and revealed as the sons of God. Each day, we are progressively maturing as the specific son whom the Father has predestined us to become. This fruit of sonship life within us is evidence that *we abide in Christ*, and *He abides in us*. Joh 15:5. This is a great assurance to us and, by this, we know that we have eternal life!

Chapter 10

Staying in the anointing by proper devotional living

Richie Kaa

'As for you, the anointing which you received from Him abides in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you abide in Him.' 1Jn 2:27.

In this article, we will focus on the anointing as the unique teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit. We will consider how we are taught under the anointing. Moreover, we will describe how we remain in the anointing, by defining a proper devotional approach to the word. This is essential to our abiding in Christ and having His word abide in us.

When we were born again and baptised into Christ, we each received His Spirit. Furthermore, we each received the Holy Spirit as an anointing. The priority of the Holy Spirit is to *motivate and to direct us in the way that we should walk through this world*. The anointing of the Holy Spirit motivates us toward the works of our obedience. Through the leading of

the Holy Spirit, we are able to know what we are supposed to be doing each day, and also what we should not be doing. Rom 7:18-20.

Knowing all things concerning our sanctification

The apostle John described the work of the Holy Spirit as an ‘anointing’. He taught that ‘you have an anointing from the Holy One, and the outcome is that you *know all things*’. 1Jn 2:20. To know *all things* is not referring to all ‘knowledge’; it’s to know all things concerning your sanctification as a son of God. This includes the specific details of each day and how to interact and respond in every moment of every day. It’s important that every son of God, after they have come into Christ, understands that all the choices that they make in life come under the direction of the Spirit. This is how every son is given the opportunity to come to a knowledge of their name.

The name of every son of God is a mystery, or secret, that is progressively made known to those who fear the Lord. The evidence that we fear the Lord is that we speak with one another, or fellowship together, concerning the word that we are hearing and receiving. Mal 3:16. Importantly, this speaking is not just casual conversation concerning the word; it is to make a confession of faith. This explains how the word of Christ, preached by His messengers, gifts faith to an individual, motivating them as a particular member of the body of Christ to do the works that are particular to their sanctification.

In His letter to the presbytery of Thyatira, Christ said that, to those who overcome, He will give a white stone with a new name on it, that no man knows, except he who has received it. Rev 2:17. Importantly, this promise of a person knowing their name is accompanied by the receiving of the hidden manna. Hidden manna is the wisdom of God that is ministered to the church as the word of present truth. It’s helpful to note that the knowledge of a person’s name is given in conjunction with the hidden wisdom of God. As they abide in Christ, and His word abides in them, they begin to speak, or confess, the faith that the word has generated within them. Rom 10:17. 2Co 4:13. Faith is, then, the energy and motivation to do the works that belong to their name.

Continuing in the anointing

As we learn to abide in Christ, we are learning how the anointing works and then how to stay under the anointing. This is how we can know the will of God for the whole day. The works that we do, as we remain in the

anointing, are the righteousness of God for that day. This includes knowing how to respond to the things that confront us.

To 'abide' means to '*remain connected*' or to '*draw near*' to the Lord and to continue in the work that He has begun; and we know that He is faithful to complete this work. Php 1:6. But the other side to this equation is that we must *continue steadfastly*, or devote ourselves diligently, to the provision that the Lord has already given us for our fruitfulness.

The devotional life of a Christian is much more than a daily portion of time that we take to read through the day's devotional reading or to review notes taken during the weekly Bible study. There's no question that such disciplines are helpful and supportive. But if this remains the entirety of how we devote ourselves, then we will fall short of the sonship to which we are being called by God. Rather, a son of God who continues in the anointing of the Holy Spirit will draw near to the provision that God has given to them through the program of the church, which is initiated by the presbytery.

Christ's ministry in the church

In the book of Acts, Luke described the culture of the New Testament church, following the Day of Pentecost, writing, 'They continued [1] steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and [2] fellowship, [3] in the breaking of bread, and [4] in prayers'. Act 2:42. Each of these four elements has a corporate and personal application. In the next article we will focus on how we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching, as a key to understanding how the word abides in us.

It's important to acknowledge, up front, that there are two modes by which Christ is currently ministering on earth. The first is by the word that is being proclaimed as part of the *apostles' teaching*. This is the word that Christ is speaking to His church as Yahweh Son. This is how Jesus addressed the presbyteries of His seven churches in the first three chapters of the book of Revelation – as Yahweh Son.

When Yahweh Son speaks, His priority is to address His presbytery, which can also refer to His star-lamp. The focus of His address is to adjust, rebuke, chasten and commend certain presbyters and then to prophetically declare to them, and to the churches that they oversee, events that will soon take place. When Christ speaks to the presbytery and the church in this manner, those who hear His word are not being

changed into the image of Christ as Yahweh Son. Rather, it is the lamp that He is adjusting, so that it can effectively shine the light of life as it is placed in a flower of the lampstand. A 'flower' is a local church congregation. The petals of the flower symbolise each individual member of the congregation.

The second mode of Christ's ministry in the church involves the light of life that is reflected by the petals of the flower through body ministry. We typically participate in this ministry at the communion table, where the light that shines from the face of Christ as the Son of God is ministered by the members of His body according to gift. Receiving this ministry is how we are being changed, from glory to glory, into the image of His sonship. 2Co 3:18. Importantly, the light of our sonship, shining from the face of Christ in body ministry, is actually coming from the Father. The Father is the source of the glory of our sonship, whilst the Son is reflecting the glory of our sonship to us as from a mirror.

How do we receive the apostles' teaching?

The word of Yahweh Son is first revealed to those with apostolic grace who are part of the presbytery. They minister this word in the presbytery and in the church. The three seminars that we are invited to attend during the year - the National Youth Convention, the Regional Easter Seminar, and the National Bible Seminar - are important events in the overall program of the ministry of the word of present truth.

The publications that accompany each of these particular gatherings are a statement, or diary, of the fellowship in the word that the Holy Spirit is presently illuminating to us from the Scriptures. The books and notes are distributed so that we all can be joined to this same discussion, or fellowship, in the word.

The content of these books is further unpacked and digested through the National Bible School program. Every person is invited to read the designated content and then to receive the ministry of those who have been set apart to teach the content. Then, as a follow up, everyone is encouraged to fellowship with their brethren, meeting from house to house, to discuss the implications of the word.

Chapter 11

Learning to devote ourselves to the apostles' doctrine

Richie Kaa

In the previous article, we focused on the anointing as being the unique teaching ministry of the Holy Spirit, who abides in us and teaches us all things concerning our sanctification. We acknowledged that the Holy Spirit abides in us as an anointing as we abide in Christ, and as His word abides in us. We, accordingly, made the link between the word of Christ giving us faith, which then motivates us toward the name and works that belong to our sanctification as a son of God. In this next article, we are going to amplify how His word abides in us by considering what it means to 'devote oneself' to the apostles' doctrine.

How do we devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching?

We devote ourselves to the apostles' teaching by receiving the invitation to join them in fellowship. Importantly, we are joined to this fellowship in the same manner as those who declare the word to us. This was the point that the apostle John made when he wrote, '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 ... that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.' 1Jn 1:1,3.

That which we have heard

The first aspect of fellowship in the word is '*that which we have heard*'. This literally means that the word is first proclaimed to us by the messenger. As we hear the word proclaimed, we are invited to commence a process that generates faith within us so that we are able to mix the word with faith. As the apostle Paul taught, 'For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it'. Heb 4:2. Receiving faith is not a mystical process. Rather, through *confession*, the apostles' doctrine becomes our new culture. Paul described this principle, writing, 'But what does it say? "The word is near you, in your mouth and in your heart" (that is, the word of faith which we preach): that if you *confess with your mouth* the Lord Jesus and *believe in your heart* that God has raised Him from the dead, *you will be saved*. For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation.' Rom 10:8-10. In this passage, Paul described the steps that lead to a confession of faith.

The term 'confess', as it is employed by Paul in Romans Chapter ten, means to 'speak the same thing' as that which has already been proclaimed. Importantly, the action of speaking the same thing is not simply to repeat, or to restate, what one has heard. Rather, it is to speak in the same spirit, being of one mind, or likeminded, with the one who is proclaiming the message. The evidence that the word has been mixed with faith and is becoming yours is that it is now uniquely expressed by you.

The word of God comes near to you when the messenger brings it near. As you receive the word, you must diligently apply yourself to the word, so that the word becomes yours. This means prayerfully meditating on the word, and going back to the Scriptures to search out how those who ministered the word arrived at their points. As you lift your voice for understanding, in both prayer and fellowship, and as you study the word, you will be illuminated on certain points. It is most helpful to record your points of illumination and then to develop these points into your own set

of notes. This is how the word multiplies in and through you. The expression that is birthed through this process becomes a confession of faith in your mouth because the word of the messenger is now dwelling in your heart.

We mix the word with faith by applying ourselves to study the word under the anointing. This is different from the kind of study that university or formal education requires. Each day, as we pray and wait on the Lord, there is an anointing upon us, giving us illumination as we hear, read and study the word. The Bereans were commended for their great eagerness in daily studying the Scriptures to confirm, and to rejoice in, the truth that Paul and Silas were teaching them. Act 17:11. Importantly, they received the word as being as from God, and applied themselves to gain understanding and to confirm that they were 'seeing' in the same way as the messengers saw.

Which we have seen with our eyes

Having heard the word, the apostle John then identified '*which we have seen with our eyes*' as the next aspect of fellowship in the word. As we receive the word, the eyes of our heart are healed, or made healthy, so that we can discern and see by illumination. We are seeing and understanding what the Spirit desires to show us. The eyes of our heart are not simply enlightened to comprehend a new concept; they are enlightened in relation to our name, because this is what the Spirit is sanctifying us to see. Each son will see what is being written on their own heart. In this sense, as we turn to the Lord, the veil of religious culture, including the works that are without faith, can be removed. The veil is the expectation of who we think we are, and who we believe that Christ should be to us. The veil is removed as we turn to the Lord in repentance. When this happens, our eyes begin to see what is according to our name. In this respect, the word is becoming ours by confession.

A confession of faith is an acknowledgement of that which resides within the heart of a believer. Rom 10:9-10. For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks. Luk 6:45. A confession of faith is a 'forward focused' statement, identifying to where a son of God is moving because of the word that dwells in their heart. Such confession is not made upon arrival, but is made in transit as they are progressively becoming whom the Lord named them to be according to His word.

That which we have looked upon

The third step describes '*that which we have looked upon*'. Now that we *see*, we are able to turn in repentance and to look into the face of Christ, and to see the glory of our sonship. The Spirit of Christ dwelling in the heart of each son is the capacity for the specific and focused ministry that builds up the body of Christ in love. The body is built up as individual members reflect the light of the lamp, by gift. This allows the glory of our sonship to be shone into our heart, causing us to mature from glory to glory.

Which our hands have handled

The fourth point describes '*which our hands have handled*'. This concerns the word of life, which we are now learning to handle because we have diligently applied ourselves and are learning how to 'rightly divide' the word. This also describes the process of the word becoming *flesh* in us. In his letter to Timothy, Paul exhorted this younger man to 'diligently and properly apply himself [study] to show himself approved unto God, a workman that need not to be ashamed, rightly dividing [accurately handling] the word of truth'. 2Ti 2:15. A workman is only ashamed if his work is exposed as being poor and inadequate. Diligent application to, or study of, the word is key to what it means to be devoted. As you apply yourself in this way, you will mature as one who is skilful in handling and sharing the word.

John then explained that those who have seen and *bear witnesses* to the life are messengers. He *declared* that the eternal life that was with the Father was now manifested to them. This is how the hearer is connected in fellowship *with the Father and with His Son, Jesus Christ*.

Chapter 12

The fellowship of fathers and sons

Tim Maurice

The reward of the gospel is new birth as a son of God. Every person who believes in Jesus has the right to become a son of God. In order to become a son of God, there must be a meeting point between the initiatives of the Father and Son in the body of Christ. These initiatives will be observed through the motivation of the spirit of adoption in a person. This spirit will stir in that person the desire to become and to live as a son of God. This motivation will necessarily lead them into fellowship with fatherhood in the body of Christ.

Sonship and fatherhood

'You are My Son, today I have begotten you.' Psa 2:7. Act 13:33. Heb 1:5. Heb 5:5.

In this statement, the Father proclaims that the fullness of Yahweh Son is now the Son of Yahweh, because of the initiative of His (the Son's)

offering to the Father. The Father's statement encompasses all that the Son is - His capacities, prerogatives and identity - even though He emptied Himself completely and humbled Himself to become the Son of God and the Son of Man.

In order to make sonship life available to the sons of men, there had to be a Son of God. The initiative for sons belonged to the Father, but His initiative would have been fruitless without the offering of another. Without the Father's initiative, there could be no Son. But it is just as true that, without the offering of Yahweh Son, there could be no Father.

So the Son is equally able to proclaim the Father's fatherhood and His own sonship. Psa 89:26-27. This proclamation breaks forth in every son of God, when the spirit of adoption within them cries out, 'Abba! Father!' Rom 8:15. This cry is the initiative of sonship, motivated by the spirit of adoption in response to the Father's initiative. The Father's initiative is His call for each person to be born as a son of God. This initiative is the result of His kindness and mercy towards us. Eph 2:7. Tit 3:4-5. Rom 11:30-32.

Each of us comes to Christ because we have been drawn by the Father. In coming to Christ, we receive the spirit of adoption. As a result of receiving the spirit of adoption, we receive the Son of God's capacity to make offering to the Father as a son of God. Having looked into the face of Christ, we are enabled to relate directly to the Father as a unique and certain kind of son. We are His son.

The Holy Spirit is equally able to sanctify the Father and the Son to Their unique expressions to Each Other and to all the sons of men. In this way, They are able to make offering to One Another and to us by Eternal Spirit, the fullness of the Spirit of God. The Holy Spirit is also equally able to pour the love of God into our hearts. He writes upon our hearts the very essence of the fellowship that exists in God, which is love.

Love is the fulfilment of the whole Law, enabling us to love God with our whole heart, to love ourselves and to love our neighbours as ourselves. We recognise this law as 'the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. If we do not harden our hearts, the Holy Spirit can write upon our hearts 'today', which is when He speaks. When He speaks, He bears witness to the truth about the Father and the Son. We learn that we can be a son of God. In receiving the faith to be a son of the Father, we are motivated by the love of God to find fellowship with the Father and Son in the body of

Christ. This fellowship with them leads to fellowship with other members of Christ's body.

Sonship and fatherhood in the body of Christ

The Son's declaration to the Father is the initiative of sonship breaking forth, just as the Father's declaration to the Son is the initiative of Father breaking forth. It is the same initiative to make offering as a son that manifests in someone who has received the spirit of adoption. The cry 'Abba! Father!' emerges as a person is motivated by the love of God to declare that the faith of God is true and operative in them - that is, the faith to be a son of God. A father in the body of Christ is able to recognise this initiative and to walk in the fellowship of offering, representing to that person the fatherhood of the Heavenly Father.

Paul shows us that the begetting of sonship is the result of both fellowship and offering; not an act of generation. Paul states that, as a father in the body of Christ, he has 'begotten' sons of the Father. 1Co 4:15. Phi 1:10. John and Peter also referred to the same process. 1Pe 1:3. 1Jn 5:1. They were not saying in any way that they had generated these sons, any more than the Father generated the Son of God from His own substance. They were referring instead to a fellowship that is characterised by the initiatives of fatherhood and sonship. This fellowship results in a new creation. 2Co 5:17.

Paul was able to participate in the fatherhood of God towards those people whose names were written upon his heart by the Holy Spirit. He never presumed to be or to become their father, other than as a participation in the fatherhood of God. He did not claim exclusive fatherhood of anyone, knowing that this was the province of the heavenly Father. And yet, because he had been sanctified to see sons begotten through the gospel, he could rightly refer to himself as their father.

This in no way contravened Jesus' admonition to 'call no man father'. Mat. 23:9. In this instance, Jesus was establishing the fact that, with regard to the new birth, each son of God is personally and directly begotten by the Father. This new birth does not occur by the will of man or the activity of the flesh. It owes nothing to any man's personal initiative or grace capacity. 'The Father of lights' is personally the Father of each son.

However, the grace of fatherhood has been vested in the body of Christ, through the grace of Christ, who is Himself called 'Everlasting Father'.

Isa 9:6. Thus, there is grace operative in the body of Christ that is ministered toward the begetting of individual sons of God. This grace will show itself as the faith to believe for a person to be born of God. A father thus remains committed to a person's name, not to the relative success or failure of their behaviour or endeavours.

The ongoing offering initiative of a son towards a father

We can see, then, that the birthing of sons of God is the result of the initiative of the heavenly Father to all those whom He calls to be His sons. In responding to this initiative, a person is enabled by Christ to make offering to the Father, crying out to be His son. In meeting their heavenly Father, a son of God will also seek out the grace of fatherhood bestowed upon Christ and resident in His body. Importantly, both of these initiatives continue as an ongoing mode of fellowship in the body of Christ.

In other words, having been birthed as a son of God, a person does not cease to exercise sonship initiative. They continue to seek out fatherhood with regard to their maturity and development as a son of God. Equally, a father does not cease to exercise appropriate initiative towards the ongoing development of sons of God in the body of Christ. In fact, such initiative should be a perpetual part of their work.

More than that, a father will look to the day when sons born in the body of Christ are able to exercise fatherhood initiative themselves – even towards the one who may have begotten them through the gospel! That is because every father remains a son for the whole of their life. To be a father in the body of Christ does not mean that a man has climbed up the peck order of grace or seniority. It means that he has personally known 'Him who is from the beginning' and how that beginning - which emerged from what is 'everlasting' - arose as the result of a fellowship of offering. 1Jn 2:13.

A father knows how to make offering so that sons can be begotten through the gospel. More than that, he knows how to engage with sons of God in order to see them grow up without 'lording it over' their faith. Likewise, sons know how to honour fatherhood in the body of Christ without being tied to another person's faith. Just as it is for the Father and Son, the unique identity and function of each person - father or son - are protected by the sanctification of the Holy Spirit.