

THE STEPS OF
*S*alvation

New Creation

PART 8

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with Peter Hay & David Baker

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Chapter I

The gospel of our salvation

First love is the gospel of sonship

There is only one gospel through which a person can be saved and can receive eternal life. This is the gospel of sonship. The apostle Paul said that he was not ashamed of the gospel of Christ, which is the gospel of sonship, because it contains the power of God for salvation. The power of the Father for salvation is the capacity in His word to birth a hearer as a son of God, and to join them to the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Rom 1:16-17. 1Jn 1:3. The righteousness of God that is in the gospel is revealed when we are born as sons of the Father, in Christ. Rom 1:17. 2Co 5:21.

Jesus Christ admonished the presbytery of the Ephesian church for leaving their 'first love'. Rev 2:1,4. First love is not an emotion; neither is it simply a committed connection with other believers. Rather, *first love is the divine nature*. More specifically, it is the gospel of God through which He births a person as His son. By receiving this message, a hearer is born of God and is joined, in Christ, to the offering fellowship of Yahweh. 1Jn 1:1-3. This reveals God's love for us and is the means by which we become partakers of the divine nature. 1Jn 3:1. 2Pe 1:2-4. We note,

therefore, that the Ephesian presbytery had fallen from first love by turning from the gospel of sonship to other gospels.

Establishing this point further, the apostle John exhorted his readers to be illuminated by the word of sonship that ministered to them the love of God as the divine nature. He wrote, 'Behold [or be illuminated concerning] what *manner of love* the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be *called sons of God!*' 1Jn 3:1. John also explained that 'everyone who loves is [a son who is] *born of God* and *knows God*'. 1Jn 4:7.

To know God is eternal life! This was the highpoint of John's letter. He said, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, that we may *know Him* who is true; and we are *in Him* who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and *eternal life*.' 1Jn 5:20. The understanding that the Son came to give us is a participation in His offering, through which the culture of God's life can become the culture of our life. This culture is *love*, which we are able to express as we are delivered from our sin and self-centredness, and as Christ's life becomes our life in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

In order to return to first love, which means living according to the gospel of sonship, the Ephesian presbytery needed to *remember* from where they had fallen. Furthermore, they needed to *repent* and then to *do the first works*. Rev 2:5. To 'remember' their sonship in Christ, they needed to apply themselves to understanding the word and culture of sonship. Jesus gave us some instructions on how to do this. He said, 'Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.' Mat 7:7-8. This means that, through prayer, we must ask for the gospel of sonship from the Father. We knock on the door by coming to Christ, who is the Door. Joh 10:9. We do this by receiving the word that is proclaimed by His ascension-gift messengers, and continuing in the fellowship of the word with them. Eph 4:7-12. Joh 13:20. 1Jn 1:1-3.

Regarding this request for the word of truth, Jesus said, 'What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a *stone*? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a *serpent*? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give *good things to those who ask Him!*' Mat 7:9-11. Evidently, the gospel of sonship from the Father, which is declared by the Son, is not the 'stone' of a legal standard of righteousness

that needs to be satisfied by His children. Neither is it the 'food' that belongs to the realm of the angels, which Adam and Eve ate when they believed the lie put forward by Satan, 'that serpent of old'. Gen 3:4-5. Rev 20:2. The gospel of sonship is the fruit of the tree of life that enables us to mature as sons of God in the fellowship of Christ. Rev 2:7. We eat this fruit when we partake of the body and blood of Jesus by receiving, believing and obeying the word of the cross as it is proclaimed by Christ's messengers.

The Ephesian presbyters needed to repent from the alternative gospels that they had ministered in the church, so that they could receive the word of truth as true food from the Father. Their 'first works' were to participate, by faith, in the fellowship of the word of present truth that was being ministered to them by Christ through the apostle John. In this fellowship, they could hear what Christ was saying to His church, receive illumination, turn and look into the face of Christ, and rightly divide the word of God by the capacity of the Spirit of God. 1Jn 1:1,3. Rev 2:7. 2Co 3:16-18. 2Co 4:6. 2Ti 2:15. 1Co 2:13. Once re-established in this fellowship, and engaged in these works, they would then be able to proclaim the word of life that was *from the beginning*. This was the word of sonship through which their hearers would then be born as the sons whom the Father had named them to be.

To be restored to first love, and established in the gospel of sonship, we must also recognise and turn from the religious philosophies and doctrinal traditions that we have believed and taught in the church as alternatives to the gospel of sonship. Historically, these doctrines have been the attempts of various leaders and movements, claiming to be part of the church, to define the minimum conditions required for entry into heaven. Let us now consider some examples of these alternative understandings of the gospel.

Alternative understandings of the gospel

The early church fathers, who ministered in the second and third centuries, rejected the gospel of sonship that Paul and the other apostles had outlined in their writings. These church 'fathers' were, in the main, scholars whose theologies were heavily influenced by Greek philosophy. According to their doctrinal assertions, a parent could secure their child's salvation and entry into heaven by presenting them to a priest for infant baptism. This practice of sprinkling infants with water for their salvation

revealed that responsibility for the salvation of children had been formally removed from the family and had been assumed by the church.

Since the Reformation, many within the Evangelical movement have declared that entry into heaven is conditional upon Jesus becoming an individual's personal Saviour. The essential element of this doctrine is that Christ's death on the cross was a legal propitiation that saves a person from the wrath of God that is destroying them because of their sins. Jesus Christ paid the penalty for the sin of the whole of mankind, and this salvation is available to those who meet and receive Christ as their personal Saviour. Many Evangelicals now assert that all that is necessary for a person to enter heaven is to acknowledge this truth and to pray the sinner's prayer. They then receive forgiveness of sins and are saved from eternal damnation.

The reality of becoming an *actual* son of God through *new birth* and its necessity for entering the kingdom of heaven, has been actively rejected by many adherents of this positional, legal gospel. Joh 3:5. For example, in his book, *Institutes of the Christian Religion*, the prominent theologian, John Calvin, argued that a person who claims that they have been born as a son of God is not in their right mind. He reasoned that the gap between the Creator and the creature is infinite. While mankind was deemed to be superior to the animals because they were created in God's image, Calvin considered man's identification as a son of God to be an allegory, or picture, of his relationship with the Creator. With this in mind, Calvin likened the relationship of a person with God to a flower's dependence on the sun for its life and expression.

The restoration of the baptism of the Holy Spirit has been a recent phenomenon within all of the major Christian denominations. Millions of Christians have received this baptism, which is evidenced by speaking in other tongues. This movement became known within the Protestant denominations as 'the Charismatic Renewal'. Catholics who embraced a personal relationship with the Holy Spirit became known as Catholic Pentecostals.

Leaders among the denominations who supported this movement claimed that the Holy Spirit is the power and energy to make the gospel work in the lives of Christians. They believed that, through charismatic renewal, the denominations that comprised the church would be renewed. However, the reality has been that the historic doctrines that govern the denominations have choked this movement. Consequently,

Christians have been bereft of pastoral direction and unable to live effective Christian lives as members of Christ's body, the church.

Another doctrine that has gained popularity, particularly within the Pentecostal movement, is the teaching that a person's salvation involves the necessity for Christians to be delivered from Satan and from the curse of sin, *through blessing*. 'The curse of sin' includes sickness, death, suffering, poverty, demon possession, and any other contrary experience in life. The evidence that a person has found salvation is God's 'blessing' in their life. Through His blessing, which is seen in prosperous, healthy living, they overcome suffering, poverty and the contrary circumstances of life. Exercising faith is seen as the means of accessing God's capacity for deliverance from their distresses and difficulties. Faith is then regarded as being the key to obtaining blessing.

Many Christians came under condemnation as a result of this doctrine. Their failure to believe was cited as the reason why this gospel did not work for them and why they were unable to find relief from their difficulties and distresses. Many became disillusioned and left the Pentecostal movement. To address this crisis, a number of preachers proposed numerous and varied strategies that a person could utilise for the purpose of increasing their faith and achieving the outcome of a successful Christian life. With this goal in view, many books have been written and advanced within the broader church community.

The Latter Rain movement, from which we draw much of our heritage as a stream of churches, proclaimed the necessity for every believer to be born again, joined to the body of Christ through baptism into His name, and filled with the Holy Spirit. All were called to serve as body members under the leadership of those who claimed to have ascension-gift grace. This was sometimes called 'the Christo-centric focus'. An individual's claim to sonship in this age was actively discouraged. Instead, it was taught that the manifestation of the sons of God belongs in the age to come. Sonship was, therefore, not considered to be a necessary emphasis for this present season.

The preoccupation with identifying successful ascension-gift ministries, measured by a person's capacities to build successful, well-run local churches, became a focus of the Latter Rain movement. Narcissism was a trait that motivated some leaders. Many leaders adopted a collegial approach to the presbytery, viewing it as a context for support, security and empowerment. They used the presbytery as a resource for their

ministry initiatives, and as validation for the exercise of control over their local congregations.

This approach to ministry was counterproductive to establishing healthy Christian relationships. For example, some leaders fell into corruption as they endeavoured to compensate for, and escape from, the pressures that were generated from this unusual way of relating. Others suffered emotional and nervous fatigue and, as a result, retired from the ministry.

Times of refreshing

Thankfully, in every generation since the Day of Pentecost, God, through Christ, has preached the gospel of sonship by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. 1Pe 1:12. By receiving, believing and participating in this message, men and women can enter heaven as sons of God. The Scriptures refer to this ministry as 'the day of visitation' and 'times of refreshing from the Lord'. 1Pe 2:12. Act 3:19. For example, the apostle Peter declared, 'Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that *times of refreshing* may come from the presence of the Lord, and that He may send Jesus Christ, *who was preached to you before.*' Act 3:19-20.

The word of God resides in the hearts and mouths of His people. They are His witnesses on the earth. These are believers in every generation who have been persecuted for Christ's sake. Jesus and the apostle Peter identified these witnesses as 'the blessed of God'. Mat 5:11-12. 1Pe 44:14. They are blessed because they are recipients of God's grace in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Because of this, they are able to minister the word of grace to others.

Light comes into the world through the testimonies of those who are ambassadors of Christ. 2Co 5:20. Hearers who receive and walk in the light of their message receive salvation. However, many people remain under condemnation because they love the darkness of their own way and understanding rather than the light that comes from God through the messengers He sends. Joh 3:19. Sadly, this can be true even in the church. This is evident among congregants who presume that God, through forgiveness, has justified their fleshly way of living. They do not see, nor accept, the need to be delivered from their other law through participation in the sufferings of Christ in order to be born of the Spirit and enter heaven. Later in this chapter we will explain how these people are like the wayside ground that Jesus described in His parable of the sower and the seed.

Restoration of the gospel

In recent years, and with much grief, we have come to realise that our gospel was not the gospel of sonship. Although we recognised the need to be born again, we did not understand *how* a person is born again as a son of God. The truth eluded us because of our loyalty to other doctrines and ideologies that were not the gospel of sonship. However, as we have turned to the Lord and applied ourselves to understanding what the Spirit is saying to the churches, the Lord has been restoring the gospel of sonship to us.

We now understand that there are three necessary birthing actions that must take place in our life in order for us to be established in the kingdom of heaven. We must be *born from above* to see the kingdom of heaven. Joh 3:3. And we must be *born of water* and *the Spirit* to enter the kingdom of heaven. Joh 3:5.

We are born to see the kingdom when the seed of the word from the Father has germinated in our heart and we are illuminated to see our calling as a son of God in Christ Jesus. 1Co 1:26. We are born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom when, through baptism and communion we are joined to, and have an ongoing fellowship in, Christ's offering and sufferings as members of His body. Baptism and communion are *ongoing* and *concurrent* realities of our Christian pilgrimage. In this regard, we note the words of Jesus concerning His offering journey - 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptised with you will be baptised.' Mar 10:39.

We are born of water by being baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Rom 6:3-4. Col 2:12. This is our ongoing personal fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ through which we are being delivered from carnality and are growing up in our sonship in Christ. That is, through baptism into Christ, we are delivered from the old creation, which is passing away under the judgement of God, and are established as part of Christ, the corporate new creation. 2Co 5:17.

We are born of the Spirit through our ongoing participation in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. We eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood by receiving and believing His words which are Spirit and life. Joh 6:63-64. In so doing, we abide in Christ and He abides in us. Joh 6:56. The bread of communion, which Jesus identified as His body, is our commitment to fellowship as a member of Christ's body. Luk 22:19.

1Co 10:16-17. The cup of communion, which Jesus identified as the New Covenant in His blood, is our participation in the blood of Christ. Luk 22:20. 1Co 10:16. The life that was in Christ's blood, and that brought Him back from the death of sin, overflows from Him and is given to be our life through fellowship in His sufferings as a member of His body. Heb 13:20. Php 3:11. This life is the *exanastasis* dimension of Yahweh's life, as Eternal Spirit, which becomes our life. As His life overflows to us, it is able to overflow from us to others. We are able to participate in the giving and receiving of this grace of life according to our sanctification as a member of the body of Christ.

Our major focus as presbyteries, and as a church movement, has been to understand the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for us through His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Heb 5:8-9. This eighth volume of *The Steps of Salvation* is a continuation of this focus. As those who are being restored to the pathway of sonship in Christ, we can testify that 'we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul'. Heb 10:39. However, we note that if we do draw back from the gospel of sonship, Christ's soul will have no pleasure in us. Heb 10:38. That is, we will fail to obtain eternal life as a son of God.

New birth through seed-life

A person is unable to enter the kingdom of God unless they are born again as a son of God. Joh 3:5. During His ministry, Jesus used parables to teach the mystery of the kingdom of God. Mar 4:11. His parables revealed the life and culture of sonship. Importantly, Jesus said that a person would be unable to understand His parables, nor their implications for sonship life, unless they first understood the parable of the sower and the seed. Mar 4:13. For this reason, we have used this key parable as our framework for describing the process of becoming a son of God.

The seed is Christ

The first point to note is that the seed 'is the word of God'. Luk 8:11. From the Gospel of John, we learn that Jesus, the only begotten Son of the Father, *is the Word*. Joh 1:1-2. Joh 1:14. When Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son and Seed of the Father, before the creation of the heavens and the earth, the names of every son and daughter of God were written in Him.

The gospel of God is the word that is preached by messengers of the Father who are sent by Christ. 1Th 2:9. Joh 13:20. Rom 10:14-15. We note, therefore, that the sower of the seed is the Father. When a person hears this word, Christ, the Seed, enters their heart. The spirit, or heart, of a person is the ground into which the seed is sown. Their spirit is their identity. The seed must germinate within their spirit, causing them to be born of God, and giving them their name as a son of God.

Wayside ground

Speaking of wayside ground, Jesus said, 'When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and *does not understand it*, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart.' Mat 13:19.

It is significant that Jesus said that the Seed, Christ, is *received* into the heart of this person, yet they are not illuminated to *see* the kingdom of God. Joh 3:3. This highlights an important point. When Christ comes into a person's heart, they are not born unless the seed *germinates* in their heart. This process only begins when a hearer's heart is broken and they become poor in spirit under the influence of grace and supplication. Mat 5:3. In repentance, and by the faith that they receive as they hear God's word, they cry out to the Father to receive the sonship that the gospel is proclaiming to them. Rom 10:17. 2Co 4:13. Paul described this cry as 'the spirit of adoption'. Rom 8:15.

A person who does not understand the gospel of sonship has not been illuminated to see the kingdom of God. They are not receiving the washing of regeneration and renewing of their spirit by the Holy Spirit. Tit 3:5. Without regeneration and renewing, the eye of their body, which is their spirit, is unable to be illuminated by the light of the gospel. Luk 11:34-36. Because of this, the seed of the word is unable to germinate in their heart and bring to them the knowledge of their sonship.

There is prevenient grace inherent in the word of God which enables it to germinate within the heart of a hearer so that they are able to see the kingdom of God. For this reason, a person's inability to understand the word reveals that they have *refused* 'Him who speaks'. Heb 12:25. They have rejected the word that enables them to see their calling as a son of God. 1Co 1:26. Instead, they remain loyal to some alternative philosophy of religion that is sourced from the spirit of the world. The 'wayside' person who attends a church allows Satan to take Christ's word from them by giving their loyalty to the religious agendas and fleshly, theological positions of leaders who deny that it is necessary for a person

to receive God's word so that they can be born of God at a personal level. Jesus identified these leaders as being part of 'the synagogue of Satan'. Rev 2:9. Rev 3:9.

The 'wayside' person gives their loyalty to church leaders and their teaching because they remain in bondage to fear. They accept the suggestion that understanding and certainty can be found only in the catechisms and creeds that belong to the denominations. Understanding that is given by the Holy Spirit when the gospel is preached eludes them, because they have rejected the word of the cross that calls them to be born as a son of God and to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. Adherence to a church and its creed is taught as the alternative to receiving Christ, as the Seed of sonship, into their heart. In this way, the ministers of Satan, typified by Christ as 'birds of the air,' take the word of life from a person's heart. Mar 4:4,15. Paul drew attention to this corrupt trading relationship in the Corinthian church, writing, 'For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, *if one devours you, if one takes from you*, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face'. 2Co 11:20.

Stony ground

On stony ground, the Seed of Christ is received into the heart of a hearer and they are born again as a son of God. Jesus said, 'He who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles.' Mat 13:20-21.

A person who hears the word and receives it with joy has been born again as a son of God. The seed of the word has 'germinated' in their heart. What does it mean for the Seed, who is Christ, to 'germinate' in the heart of a hearer?

We considered earlier that the name of every son of God is in Christ, the Seed. The first action of God the Father is to name us as His son or daughter when we receive Christ into our heart. The name of a son of God is the complete word that defines their identity and works, for eternity. When a person receives their newborn name in the seed of the word that is proclaimed to them, their human identity is redefined by this new name. This is the point of regeneration where their spirit is reborn. This person has received the divine nature as their life. They are now a son of God.

They must now join the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus through baptism or *they will 'die' again*. The life of Christ is only *multiplied* to become their life as they maintain a committed participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. On this point, Jesus was emphatic, saying, 'He who does not take his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life will lose it, and *he who has lost his life for My sake will find it.*' Mat 10:38-39. Although Christ has come *into us*, we must come *into Christ* in order to live as a new creation son of God. 2Co 5:17.

Christ was 'made sin' in the garden of Gethsemane when He drank the cup of cursing that the Father gave Him to drink on our behalf. He died to God, and then came back from death as He was born from among the dead by the blood that fell from His body as an atonement that gave Him life. This was when Christ, the Seed, fell into the ground of humanity and died, and began to come back from the dead as a sheaf of firstfruits. Joh 12:24. 1Co 15:20-23.

It is not only the 'old man', now dead in its carnality and sin, that is crucified with Christ. Christ left Gethsemane with His disciples as the beginning of the new creation. In six more wounding, dying steps, we, as part of the new creation, came to birth with Him. As a son of God with new creation life, we die with Christ in the fellowship of His baptism. We come to maturity as a son of God in the fellowship of Christ's death, as sin and the other law are removed from our life, and His life is multiplied and given to us to be our life. Gal 2:20.

Addressing the implications of baptism, Paul said, 'For you died [when you were baptised into Christ], and your life [*zoe*] is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ who is our life [*zoe*] appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:3-4. When our sonship is hidden with Christ in God, our life is no longer ours to express as we see fit. The life which we now live in the flesh is Christ's life. Gal 2:20. This is an important understanding because, unless we live and die with Christ's life, as a member of His body, we are unable to receive the full glory of our sonship that is necessary for our life in the new heavens and earth.

Having been born from above, and hidden with Christ in God, we are also given the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of our eternal inheritance as a son of God. Rom 8:23. The Holy Spirit leads us into all truth. Joh 16:13. 'All truth' is the word of the Father concerning our sonship in Christ. The Holy Spirit joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, enabling our participation in Christ's offering by strengthening us with

the capacity of Eternal Spirit. Rom 8:26. Heb 9:14. By the Spirit, we are able to fulfil the works that were prepared for us in Christ, as we are being delivered from our propensity to walk according to the principles of the flesh. Importantly, we are a temple for the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:19. He is being revealed in us as He reveals the life of Christ through us.

Each day, as we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, sin is being put to death in us, and the other law is being circumcised from our heart. Furthermore, Christ's *exanastasis* life is bringing us back from the death of sin. It is being multiplied to us to become our life. In this regard, we are growing up in *exanastasis* by the multiplication of the life of the Son of God. Moreover, in Him, we are fulfilling the works that the Father prepared for us to do as His son. Evidently, we are standing up as a son of God, having been *born of water* to enter the kingdom of God. Joh 3:5.

Importantly, by the *exanastasis* life that we receive in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, our identity as a son of God continues to be regenerated and renewed. Our identity is being regenerated from the corruptible to the incorruptible, in Christ. By this means, the material - our physical person - is being made spiritual. We are growing up in Christ, who is the immortal Head of His body, the church. We are only able to grow in Christ if we are a member of His body. Eph 4:15.

Summarising this process, Paul prayed that 'He [the Father] would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being *rooted and grounded in love*, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height - to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God.' Eph 3:16-19.

The person whose heart is likened to stony ground does not accept that their sonship depends upon maintaining their fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. In fact, suffering and tribulation cause them offence. They view themselves as being the victim of their circumstances rather than as being a participant in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Because they are *not joined to this process*, their identity is not being regenerated, and they are not being established in Christ. His life is not becoming their life. For this reason, they become weak in faith, spiritually sick, and may die before they come to maturity as a son of God. 1Co 11:30.

Because of unbelief, these people have drawn back from the Lord and from the fellowship of His offering and sufferings to which He has invited them for their salvation. Unless they find repentance and faith, His soul will have no pleasure in them, and they will fail to enter the kingdom of heaven. Heb 10:38-39.

Thorny ground

Jesus explained that a person whose heart is like thorny ground has esteemed the riches of this world as being greater treasure than the reward of eternal life that is found in the fellowship of Christ's reproach. He said, 'Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful.' Mat 13:22.

There are several indicators that thorns and thistles have taken hold in our heart and have begun to stifle the expression of our sonship life, which is love. The most obvious signs are our 'prickly' responses toward others when we are not received by them in the way that we expected. Thorny ground is also commonly indicated by the 'pointed' judgements that we make about others, including the messengers of Christ and their message. These expectations and judgements reveal that we are living according to a self-defined projection of ourselves. This is who we think we are and how we would like to be known and accepted by others, particularly in the body of Christ. The life that we desire to have in the flesh, and presume to obtain through the accomplishment of our self-defined works, are 'the riches of the world'. This is because they are the riches that were promised to mankind by Satan, who was the ruler of this world. Joh 12:31. He said that we could have life in ourselves and could define our own destiny by eating the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen 3:4-5.

To live this way is to be *deceived*. This is why Jesus described the thorns as 'the cares of this world and the *deceitfulness* of riches'. Mar 13:22. The apostle John said, 'If we say that we have no sin, *we deceive ourselves*, and the truth is not in us.' 1Jn 1:8. Of course, there would be very few people, even in the world, who would say that they have no sin. So, what did the apostle mean? John was pointing out that we are deceived when we believe that our perceptions and activities, which are motivated by the desires of our heart, are spiritual, true, and are leading to life. However, our anxieties, our judgements, our critical appraisals of the word and its relevance to us, as well as specific breaches of relationship in the body of Christ, reveal our true condition. The absence of life and peace, and of

easy fellowship with those who proclaim the word to us, reveals that the word of our sonship is being choked.

Through his letter to the Galatians, Paul highlighted that it is possible to begin 'in the Spirit' and then to revert to living according to the flesh, without even being aware that this transition has happened. He strongly admonished his readers, saying, 'O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you that you should not obey the truth, before whose eyes Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified? ... are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?' Gal 3:1,3. The only way to be recovered from this darkened, or deceived, condition is to receive the light that shines through the ministry of spiritual gifts in the body of Christ.

We can only know our sanctification, which is the truth concerning our name and works as a son of God, by receiving and walking in the light of the knowledge of the glory of God. This light is the word of our sonship from the Father. It is shone into our hearts from the face of Christ, by the Spirit, through the ministry of the members of the body of Christ when we gather for communion. 2Co 4:6. Under the influence of grace and supplication, which accompanies this word, we are able to turn to the Lord in repentance. The veil of our own projections is removed from the eyes of our heart as we renounce the desire to be the source of our own name and works. Paul called these carnal pursuits, 'the hidden things of shame'. 2Co 3:16. 2Co 4:2.

As we are delivered from our carnal projections, which are the outcome of living according to a lie, we are able to worship the Lord in Spirit and in truth as part of the company of true worshippers. Joh 4:23. Spiritual worship is our participation in the fellowship of offering as the particular member of the body of Christ whom the Father has named us to be. Rom 12:1-2. Jesus taught on the nature of true worship during His discussion with the Samaritan woman concerning *where and how* God's people should gather to worship the Lord. He said, 'God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.' Joh 4:24.

This point focuses our attention on the importance of *how* we come together to eat and drink the elements of communion. The communion meal is the Lord's provision for our participation in the New Covenant *as members of His body*. As Jesus said, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him.' Joh 6:56. We eat Christ's flesh and drink His blood by receiving and believing His word which is Spirit and life to us. His word is proclaiming the truth of who we are and is joining

us, as members of His body, to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, our projections, which are motivated by shame, can be put off, and we can minister the life of God to others. Our participation in this fellowship demonstrates that we are citizens of the kingdom of heaven who have been born of the Spirit. Joh 3:5.

Eating and drinking the communion is our commitment to minister the love of God to one another in the body of Christ. We do this by functioning according to our ability as the member of Christ's body whom the Father has made us to be. 1Co 12:18. This ministry is our expression of faith obedience to the word of the Father.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul taught that those who partake of the altar, by eating and drinking the elements of the communion, do so in faith for participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Paul described this as going with Christ 'outside the camp', 'bearing His reproach'. Heb 13:10-13. The reproaches of Christ were the sufferings that He experienced at the hands of wicked men as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Act 2:23. These reproaches were laid on Him by the Father when the Father made Him to be sin. Psa 69:9. 2Co 5:21. He suffered these reproaches as 'the body of sin'. Through baptism, and our ongoing participation in the communion, we are joined to the death that He died as the body of sin. Having been united in His death, we are also raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. Rom 6:5.

A son of God who partakes of communion in faith for the purpose of joining the reproach of Christ has been *illuminated* concerning the true riches that are found in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Like Paul, they have counted everything else in their life as loss for the sake of obtaining the eternal prize of Christ's *exanastasis* life. Moses, likewise, was illuminated to see this reward. As Paul observed, 'By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*; for he looked to the reward.' Heb 11:24-26.

Growing to firstfruits

Describing those whom He likened to good ground, Jesus said, 'But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.' Mat 13:23. The gospel of Luke

recorded Jesus saying, 'But the ones that fell on the good ground are those who, having *heard the word with a noble and good heart*, keep it and *bear fruit with patience*.' Luk 8:15.

Before we develop these points further, it is helpful to recognise that the good ground reveals the principle of *firstfruits*. The firstfruits were an offering that the children of Israel made to God under the Law Covenant. They offered the first yield of the crops that they had sown each season. Exo 23:19. Notably, the term 'firstfruits' is based on the same Hebrew word for 'firstborn'. Paul described Christ as 'the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep [or were dead]'. He noted that, although we all died *in Adam*, it is *in Christ* that we are made *alive*. 1Co 15:20-22. When Christ comes into our heart, we receive our name as a son of God. This is because the name of each son of God was written in Him before the foundation of the world. However, we are only *made alive with Him* when we are conformed to His death and to the fellowship of each offering event that Christ suffered on His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary.

Each suffering event that Christ endured on this journey was sufficient to kill Him. However, He came back from the death of sin by the resurrection life and power of God that was in His blood. Heb 13:20. He was brought back from the dead by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant as it was sprinkled on His body as a mercy seat, through the injuries caused by those who struck Him. As we continue in the fellowship of His sufferings as a member of His body, we are made alive from the death of sin with Him. Moreover, the *life* in His blood is *multiplied* to become our life. We are able to share this life with others as a part of the body of Christ, by the capacity of the Holy Spirit.

Significantly, Christ is our life, but He is not our name. While each son of God has a unique name, we all share the same life in Christ. This reality is revealed in the sheaf of firstfruits. We observe that Christ spoke of Himself as a grain of wheat that fell into the ground and died. Joh 12:24. Those who are conformed to His death, and are buried with Him, rise from the death of sin with Him. They are in Him, and He is in them. As each grain of wheat in a sheaf is unique, they, with Christ, are unique sons, but all share the same life with Him. Importantly, we note that Jesus, as the first Seed from which the rest have sprung, is the principal Seed in the sheaf of firstfruits.

This highlights the truth that the fruit that is brought forth on good ground is our participation as sons of God in the fellowship of Christ, the Sheaf of firstfruits. In this fellowship, we are no longer slaves of sin,

whose fruit, or end, is death. Rom 6:21. Of course, death is the outcome for those whose hearts *remain* as 'wayside', 'stony' and 'thorny' ground. However, those who have been born of God live by His life, which is found in the culture of offering. By the mercies of God, we present ourselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Through this fellowship, we are set free from our slavery to sin, and can participate in our spiritual service of worship as *slaves of righteousness*. Rom 12:1. Rom 6:18. As slaves of righteousness who obey the doctrine of baptism, we obtain the fruit of our sanctification as sons of God. Rom 6:22. This means that we fulfil the Father's will for our lives by doing the works that belong to our names as sons of God in Christ. 1Th 4:3. Rom 12:2. The outcome of living according to this way is eternal life. Rom 6:22-23.

Returning to the words of Jesus, it is notable that He said that the 'good-ground' person 'heard the word *with* a noble and good heart'. Luk 8:15. This is obviously not speaking about the first time that they heard the word of God. No-one has a noble and good heart before they are born of God. Presuming this to be true is a great error. The Scriptures are clear, 'The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; who can know it?' Jer 17:9.

'A noble and good heart' belongs to a person who has been *born of God*. It is 'noble' because the person is expressing the authority of their name, which they received when they were born of incorruptible seed through the word of God. 1Pe 1:23. Their heart is 'good' because it has been made new through regeneration, new birth, and baptism into Christ. Importantly, the authority that belongs to their sonship is revealed through *slavehood*. Christ demonstrated this principle. He was the Son of God and was crucified as the King of the Jews, yet His death on the cross was in obedience to the Father as a bondsman. Mat 27:37. Php 2:7-8.

A person who is good ground has been co-crucified with Christ. They no longer live by their own principle, or law, of life, but Christ lives in them and is their life. They now live, each day, by the faith of the Son of God. Gal 2:20. They receive and live by the faith of the Son of God by continuing to receive His word as it is proclaimed to them by His messengers and through body ministry at the communion. Rom 10:17. This is why Jesus said that those who receive His word on good ground are those who *continue* to hear the word.

Evidently, a 'good-ground' believer is a *disciple* of Christ. They have 'the tongue of the disciple' because they have received the same spirit of faith

as Jesus received. Isa 50:4. 2Co 4:13. We receive faith as disciples because the Lord awakens our ear to hear as disciples. Isa 50:4. Rom 10:17. We note the words of Paul, 'And since we have the same spirit of faith, according to what is written, "I believed and therefore I spoke," we also believe and therefore speak, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus will also *raise us up with Jesus*, and will *present us with you*.' 2Co 4:13-14.

Our speech, which is by faith, refers to our conduct and conversation in the fellowship of Christ's offering. In the same manner as Christ, we love others and give ourselves for one another. Gal 2:20. As disciples, we do not draw back from our fellowship in the afflictions of Christ, and we are being raised up by *exanastasis* life. We are able to minister this life to others so that they can be raised up and edified with us. 2Co 4:14. Instead of provoking and prodding others in the manner of thorny ground, faith enables us 'to speak a word in season to him who is weary'. Isa 50:4. While this has a daily implication regarding the way that we speak and interact with one another in our houses, it also applies to our participation in body ministry when we gather for communion.

We must keep God's word and bear fruit with patience. This is not through our own capacity for patience. Rather, it is the patience of Jesus Christ. We note, in this regard, the way in which the apostle John identified himself - 'I, John, both your brother and companion in the tribulation and kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ'. Rev 1:9. This was the patience that Jesus demonstrated as He offered Himself *by Eternal Spirit*. Heb 9:14. We receive Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. He joins us to the travail of Christ and enables us each day to endure with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Rom 8:26. In this fellowship, all things work together for our good because we love God and are walking according to His will for our life. Rom 8:27. This is good fruit, indeed.

Chapter 2

Christ conquered sin and death

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul wrote that ‘as sin reigned in death, even so grace might reign through righteousness to eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord’. Rom 5:21. Paul’s statement highlights the distinction between the kingdom of darkness, under the dominion of Satan, and the kingdom of light, established by Christ through His offering on the cross. Elaborating and detailing how Christ brought an end to sin and death, through His obedience to the Father and His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, is the focus of this chapter.

The ‘first man’

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit agreed together to make man in Their image and likeness. Gen 1:26. This was Their Everlasting Covenant. God’s desire was to bring forth a great multitude who were born of His life and, in Christ, would live by every word that proceeded from the Father. His word was to be the source of their life and works in Christ as the Holy Spirit enabled their participation in the offering fellowship of Yahweh. God predestined this for every person, before the foundation of the world. Eph 1:4-5.

According to His covenant plan, God created Adam as ‘the *first man*’ when He breathed the breath of life into his nostrils. 1Co 15:45,47. Gen 2:7. The first man was created by Yahweh *Elohim* with a body, soul and spirit, and in the image and likeness of God. Gen 1:26. The first man had identity from God, and his name as a son of God had been written in Christ, the Father’s Seed, before the foundation of the world. In the fullness of time, every person conceived from Adam was to be born again as a son of God by receiving Christ into their heart and then coming into Christ.

Yahweh *Elohim* placed Adam in the garden of Eden. In Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we explained that Yahweh *Elohim* established this garden as the headquarters of His administration. There, He set the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen 2:9. The fruit of these trees was the food to sustain the two orders of God’s administration. The tree of life was the food that belonged to man, and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was the food that belonged to the angels. Importantly, God said to Adam that, in the day that he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to live by a principle that was other than the way of life that had been appointed for him, *he would die*. Gen 2:17.

The fatherhood of Satan

Jesus described Satan as ‘a *murderer* from the beginning’. Joh 8:44. Satan enticed Adam and Eve to eat the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, knowing that it would cause their death through disconnection from Yahweh and from the tree of life. Through the use of a lie, Satan created the illusion that Adam and Eve could have life outside of the image and likeness of God. He said to Eve, ‘You will not surely die. For God knows that in the day you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and *you will be like God*, knowing good and evil.’ Gen 3:4-5.

Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to satisfy their desire to be ‘*like God*’ but not ‘*of God*’. Consequently, this desire became another law within them, and they ‘died’. Rom 5:12. They were cut off from the fellowship and life of Yahweh. The other law, which the Scriptures also describe as the ‘desires’, or ‘lusts’, of the flesh, became the fundamental basis for how they knew themselves and others, and how they lived. Eph 2:3. It became a ‘principle of evil’ within them. Rom 7:23.

Satan himself also aspired to God-likeness. He claimed, 'I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, *I will be like the Most High.*' Isa 14:14. The pursuit of God-likeness is Satan's desire, which he fathered within us through the use of a lie. Jesus noted this point, saying, 'You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do.' Joh 8:44.

The law of sin

Satan fathered the other law within us in order to have dominion over us. Rom 6:14. The apostle Paul explained that a person's other law brings them into captivity to the *law of sin*, which is from Satan. Rom 7:23. In other words, because the other law became a part of fallen man's identity, the law of sin became their master. To understand the implications of this point, we must first recognise the difference between *our sins*, and *the law, or principle, of sin*. Rom 7:23.

Our sins are our transgressions of God's Law. 1Jn 3:4. To sin is to 'miss the mark', or 'fall short', of God's Law, which is love. Jesus summarised the Law, saying, ' "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. And you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength." This is the first commandment. And the second, like it, is this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself".' Mar 12:29-31. In Scripture, the Law of God is called 'the Royal Law', because it is the expression of who God is as a trinity. Jas 2:8. God is love, and in Him there is no partiality. 1Jn 4:16. Rom 2:11. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit lay down Their lives to reveal One Another in a fellowship. This is love. The only way to fulfil the Law, by loving in this manner, is to be born of God's life.

Our own law, which was fathered in the hearts of mankind by Satan, is 'other than' the Law of love. Consequently, every thought and action that is motivated by our own law transgresses the Law of love and is, therefore, sin. In short, our sins are the outcome of living according to our own law. When we transgress God's Law, we come under its judgement, which is death. This is why Paul said that those who live according to the principle of the flesh are 'dead in trespasses and sins'. Eph 2:1.

The Scriptures also refer to sin as a law that is personified as an identity, or spirit, belonging to Satan. For example, Paul referred to sin as though it were a person, saying, 'Sin, taking occasion by the commandment, deceived me, and by it killed me.' Rom 7:11. More specifically, Paul identified the law of sin as the spirit of Satan, who is the prince of the

power of the air. The law of sin, which is the spirit of Satan, is at work in, or has dominion over, the sons of disobedience. Eph 2:2-3. Fallen mankind are the sons of disobedience because they live by the other law which was established in them through the disobedience of Adam and Eve.

The desire of sin and the desire of our other law are the same - that is, to be like God. However, sin has its own agenda. It lied when it provoked us to God-likeness. Sin is Satan's weapon to control, kill and destroy us. Its real motive comes from Satan, whom Jesus identified as being a thief. He said, 'The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy.' Joh 10:10. Let us now consider how this principle, which belongs to Satan, operates.

A person is born into the world carnal but innocent. That is, they have another law within their heart, but they have not sinned in the womb. When they are born, they are naked and in need, being completely dependent upon their parents for sustenance. As Job testified, 'Naked I came from my mother's womb, and naked shall I return there. The Lord gave, and the Lord has taken away; blessed be the name of the Lord.' Job 1:21.

A baby's cry for nourishment is natural and innocent. However, it is not long before carnality begins to find expression within them as they covet what they believe will give them fulfilment. We note this, for example, in the strong emotional responses of children who, for one reason or another, are unable to have, or to do, what they want. The Scriptures identify this carnal response as being the foolishness that is 'bound up' in the heart of a child. Pro 22:15. This is the expression of the other law that is in their heart as a consequence of the fall of mankind.

Unless a child has been born of God and is joined to the circumcision of Christ through the nurture and admonition of the Lord by their parents, as they grow up, the law of sin will increasingly motivate them to seek life and fulfilment by pursuing the desires of their heart. Eph 6:4. Their desires are to have what they believe is good for them and to avoid what they perceive to be evil. As they live this way, whether they know it or not, they transgress God's Law and come under its condemnation, which is death. They are sons of disobedience who, as we noted earlier, are dead in trespasses and sins. Eph 2:1-3.

The frustrations, disappointments, anxieties and sufferings of a person who is dead in trespasses and sins are a foretaste of their eternal death

in the lake of fire. Because they are afraid of death, they remain under the influence of Satan. The law of sin continues to motivate them to find fulfilment and to have life by pursuing the desires of their flesh. Unable to live by any other principle, they not only miss the mark of who God the Father predestined them to be, they also cause injury to others as they seek to find their own life at the expense of others.

The principle of sin is *manifest*, or revealed, to be at work within us when we come into contact with the commands of God that are articulated as His Law. Rom 7:9. This does not mean that those who have not heard God's word, or Law, have no sin; rather, they have no *awareness* of their sin. As Paul explained, 'I would not have *known* sin except through the law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the law had said, "You shall not covet".' Rom 7:7.

Paul explained that the strength, or power, of sin is the Law. 1Co 15:56. Of course, the Law itself is not sin. Rom 7:7. Rather, sin *uses* the Law to kill us. How does it do this? The command to love is a command that is meant to bring life. However, we are unable to fulfil the Law and to have life through the self-centred efforts of our flesh. To do so, is to live according to 'another law'. Rom 7:23. Sin within us knows this. It certainly does not encourage us to humble ourselves and to repent from living according to the ill-fated desire that Satan fathered within us. Instead, when we hear the command to love, the law of sin within us *provokes us to covet* God-likeness. We are motivated to misappropriate God, others, and the resources that belong to them, for the self-centred purpose of obtaining life without receiving it in, and from, fellowship with Yahweh. Paul called this fleshly motivation of our heart, soul, mind and strength, 'all manner of evil desire'. Rom 7:8.

The Law, which is the word of God, is good, and should bring us life. Rom 7:12. However, unless repentance and faith are the foundations of our sonship in Christ, we will be vulnerable to Satan's deceptive manipulations. Heb 6:1. 1Pe 5:9. The apostle Peter described Satan as our 'adversary who walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour'. 1Pe 5:8. How are we 'devoured'? Sin uses the word of God to provoke the desire within us to have life through our fleshly efforts to fulfil the word. Rom 7:8. Our desire to have life without receiving it through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ is self-centred and is motivated by covetousness. When we pursue life in this way, we transgress the law that says, 'You shall not covet'. Exo 20:17. Rom 7:7.

This self-centred motivation also reveals our *partiality*, because our conduct is for the purpose of finding our own life and revealing ourselves rather than others. Partiality is sin, because we transgress the law that says, 'You shall love your neighbour as yourself'. Jas 2:8-9. When we endeavour to keep the Law through the motivation of our flesh, we are condemned by the Law as a transgressor. Stumbling in relation to just one point of God's Law brings us under the condemnation of the whole Law, resulting in our death. Jas 2:10. Rom 7:8-10.

Our endeavours to have life by keeping the Law only result in frustration, disappointment, depression and the sufferings caused by God's judgement. Whether we acknowledge it or not, these are indicators of our condemnation, which are resulting in 'death'. Satan then uses the fear of death to provoke us *again* to avoid suffering, and to have life, by keeping the Law through the exercise of our flesh. Of course, this repetitive behaviour is futile. It does not, and cannot, lead to life; it only leads to death. This is how sin, or the spirit of Satan, keeps us in bondage through our fear of death. Heb 2:15. It is, in fact, how sin reigns through death. Rom 5:21.

The old man

The *first* man, who had eternal identity, became a *carnal* man when the other law was fathered in him by Satan. The other law, and the law of sin, became the controlling elements of the identity of the first man, bringing him under the dominion of Satan. Paul identified the first man, controlled by sin and the other law, as 'the *old* man'. Rom 6:6.

Now living by the controlling principles of the other law and the law of sin, the old man is deluded and self-centred. 2Co 5:15. His heart is deceitfully wicked, and his mortal body is controlled by sin. Jer 17:9. Rom 7:23. Rom 6:12. In this state, he is cut off from the life of God. The Scriptures define the mortal body of the old man who lives in this carnal, or fleshly, condition as 'the *body of death*'. Rom 6:6.

The Scriptures confined all men under sin

Because of the fall of mankind, the Scriptures confined all men under sin until Christ came, and the promise of sonship was given to those who received it by faith in Him. Gal 3:22. Developing this point further, Paul made a notable distinction between the Scriptures and the Law. He said, 'But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe. But before faith came,

we were kept under guard by the Law, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.’ Gal 3:22-23. Evidently, the Scriptures, which are the word of the Everlasting Covenant, have priority over the Law, because the Law was added to the Scriptures.

We note, in this regard, that ‘the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham *beforehand*, saying, “In you all the nations shall be blessed”.’ Gal 3:8. After this, God added the Law because of the insistence of the children of Israel that they could fulfil the righteousness of God in the flesh. Exo 19:8. Paul described Israel’s response to God and to His word as ‘the transgression’. Gal 3:19. The Law was added as a covenant with the flesh, in order to reveal the nature of sin within mankind, and to serve as a tutor to bring us to Christ. Gal 3:19,24. Rom 7:13.

The Law was also a guardian to keep, or guard, God’s covenant people until faith came, accompanied by the law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus. Gal 4:1-3. Rom 8:2. Until this time, they were carnal and under sin. They had no capacity to live as the sons of God whom they were predestined to be. Instead, under the Old Covenant, they were like little children who were no different from slaves. They did not know how to act or to behave unless given a directive by the Law.

Deliverance from sin and death

Paul explained that the Law has dominion over a person as long as they live. Rom 7:1. And, as we have already considered, we remain under the power of sin whenever we endeavour to fulfil the Law of God in the flesh. However, the good news of the gospel is that ‘sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace’. Rom 6:14. So, how are we delivered from sin’s mastery over us?

In the fullness of time, which was established as part of God’s immutable purpose, and documented in heaven as the Scriptures, Jesus Christ came into the world as the Father’s obedient Slave. Php 2:7-8. He was born of a woman, under the Law, to redeem us from living under the Law, so that we might receive the adoption as sons. Gal 4:4-5. In the garden of Gethsemane, the Father ‘made Him who knew no sin *to be sin* for us, so that we might become the righteousness of God in Him’. 2Co 5:21. Christ Jesus was fully joined to the condition of the first man. He did this to end the existence of the mortal first man, in the cross, and then to bring him forth as a new creation by *exanastasis*, which is the resurrection life of God in a mortal body.

As an act of righteous obedience, Christ submitted Himself to the work of the Father on our behalf. Christ was made a sin offering to suffer once for sins. This happened within the fellowship of Yahweh because of Their love for us. Only within the fellowship of Yahweh could an atonement for sin be conceived and then accomplished. In the fellowship of Yahweh, the Father made the Son a sin offering; and the Holy Spirit, through the power of the Eternal Spirit of Yahweh, enabled the Son to offer Himself to God as an action of righteousness. Isa 53:10. Heb 9:14.

Christ fulfilled the Law

Christ destroyed sin and its power by going forth as God's righteous Slave, conquering and to conquer in the seven reproaching events that He suffered. The world, motivated by sin through the other law, endeavoured to use the Law to kill Christ. We note that when the soldiers, chief priests, captains of the temple and the elders, who were all motivated by the law of sin to kill Christ, came to arrest Him, He said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*' Luk 22:52-53.

As Jesus journeyed from Gethsemane, tasting the sufferings of death for every man, the law of sin took hold on Him to provoke Him to covet life. However, Christ was not carnal. He did not have another law within Him. For this reason, He did not covet life. This was true prior to His offering journey, as well as during His offering journey.

We note, for example, that at end of His forty-day fast, Jesus was hungry. Yet, He did not succumb to Satan's provocation to turn stones into bread to satisfy His hunger and to save His own life. Luk 4:2-4. Likewise, during His offering journey, Jesus refused to drink wine that was laced with an analgesic which could have brought Him some self-preserving relief from the pain of being nailed to the cross. Mat 27:33-34. Jesus refused this compensation because He insisted on remaining connected to our death in obedience to the command of the Father.

Instead of coveting life, Jesus laid His life down for us through offering, demonstrating what He had described as 'greater love'. Joh 15:13. Mar 12:31. Evidently, Jesus did not die under the judgement of the Law. Christ *fulfilled* the Law through the offering of Himself in obedience to the Father. He removed the Law out of the hands of sin by fulfilling it and, by this means, nailed it with Himself to the cross. Once the Law was taken out of the hands of sin by Christ, sin could no longer use the Law

as a weapon to kill and destroy mankind. Sin had reigned in death by the use of Law. Rom 5:21. *Grace* now reigned through Christ's righteous obedience, and the Law was able to minister life as it was fulfilled by being nailed to the cross in Him. Sin was disempowered and could no longer reign over mankind. Rom 7:8.

Christ made sin

In the garden of Gethsemane, the Father made Jesus, who had no other law and who was sinless, to be sin for us. He did this so that we might become sons of God in Christ. 2Co 5:21. Jesus Christ became sin when the Father made every person who had been born, and would be born, to be *a member of Christ's body*. This happened when Jesus drank the cup of cursing that the Father gave to Him. Luk 22:42. By drinking this cup, Jesus, by the grace of God, began to '*taste*' the suffering of death for *everyone*. Heb 2:9.

The cup that the Father gave to Jesus to drink was the cup of wrath that Yahweh *Elohim* had *already* made every person on earth to drink as a judgement because of their sin. He said to the prophet Jeremiah, 'Take this wine cup of fury from My hand, and cause all the nations, to whom I send you, to drink it. *And they will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword* that I will send among them.' Jer 25:15-16.

Jeremiah was to make every inhabitant of the earth drink the cup of God's fury so that the sword of the Lord would be wielded in judgement against them. Every person, from Adam to the last person who would be born as part of the old creation, was made to drink this cup *through the proclamation of Yahweh's word*. 'Therefore *you shall say to them*, "Thus says the Lord of hosts, the God of Israel: 'Drink, be drunk, and vomit! Fall and rise no more, because of the sword which I will send among you'." And it shall be, if they refuse to take the cup from your hand to drink, then you shall say to them, "Thus says the Lord of hosts: '*You shall certainly drink!* For behold, I begin to bring calamity on the city which is called by My name, and should you be utterly unpunished? You shall not be unpunished, for *I will call for a sword on all the inhabitants of the earth*,' says the Lord of hosts".' Jer 25:27-29.

The cup that the Father gave to Jesus to drink was a *communion* in the curse that had been brought upon mankind because of Adam's disobedience. When Christ drank the cup, according to the will of the Father, every person who had already drunk this cup was joined to Him.

They were made members of His corporate body, of which He was the Head. They were all now dying with Him. 2Co 5:14.

The body of sin

When we, whose bodies were dead because of sin and the other law, were placed in Christ by the Father, *Christ's body became the body of sin*. Rom 6:6. Rom 7:24. Every person who would ever be born was made part of Christ's body as He embodied the principle of sin that had dominion over us all. By this means, He took all of us who were in captivity to the law of sin, captive to Himself. Eph 4:8.

Christ had no other law, so He did not require circumcision. However, when we were all joined to His body, so that it became the body of sin, His circumcision was the removal of the body of sin. This was Paul's point when he said, 'Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with.' Rom 6:6. Paul was not speaking only about the necessity for Christians to be crucified with Christ; he was saying, also, that *every person* who was born of Adam as part of the old creation was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be circumcised from Him and done away with.

Christ died as sin through His twenty-one-hour offering journey. His offering journey, from Gethsemane to Calvary, involved seven wounding events. He died our death, making it His death. By this means, He changed the way that we were to die our death because of sin. Our death was a judgement because of sin. Christ died our death by the grace of God, making it His death. By this means, He commuted our judgement to *chastening*.

The circumcision of Christ

When Christ drank the cup of cursing and became the body of sin, the sword of the Lord that had been set against every individual son and daughter of man fell upon Christ and His body. Fallen mankind did not escape the sword; rather, as it struck Christ, it struck us all, in Him. This is because we had become part of His body. As Paul explained, 'If One died for all, then all died [with Him]'. 2Co 5:14. Concerning the action of this sword, the prophet Zechariah declared, ' "*Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, against the Man who is My Companion,*" says the Lord of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered; then I will turn My hand [upon] the little ones".' Zec 13:7.

The sword that had been set against us was a judgement to kill us because of our disobedience and sin. However, as we have already noted, Christ had no other law or sin. His death was not the fruit of disobedience; it was the *outcome* of His *obedience*. It was a completely unique death. This was the death that He died *by the grace of God*. Heb 2:9. That is, *He died by exanastasis!* As the sword struck Him in judgement because of our sin, it was turned, by *exanastasis*, to a circumcision and chastening upon Him. By this action the body of sin was being cut from Him, and He was being made alive from the death of sin as the Firstborn of a corporate new creation.

The seven wounding events that Christ endured were the judgement of God upon the sin and other law of mankind. Through the Son of Man's obedient offering, by the grace of God, this judgement was commuted to seven circumcising and chastening strokes from the Father. The sword that was applied to Christ was the judgements of God that *we* justly deserved because of the reproaches that we had levelled against the Father. The Father then laid these judgements and reproaches upon Christ. Psa 69:9. Describing the sword of reproach with which He was struck, Jesus said, 'Deliver Me from the sword, My precious life from the power of the dog. Save Me from the lion's mouth and from the horns of the wild oxen! You have answered Me.' Psa 22:20-22. These statements reveal the painful insults, mocking, and abuse that accompanied the seven wounding events that Jesus suffered as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary.

The death of the seed

The first wound, which Jesus received in Gethsemane, was the purest chastening. This is because it was the only wound that Christ received that was not caused by the hands of wicked men. It revealed *the offering of Yahweh* through which a multitude of sons were brought to birth in Christ by the shedding of His blood.

When He drank the cup of cursing, Christ, the Seed of the Father, fell into the ground of humanity and died. Joh 12:24. As He suffered the agony of this death, an angel strengthened Him with Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit, and He was able to pray even more fervently. Then His sweat became like great clots of blood all over His body, falling down to the ground. Luk 22:43-44. This was the precious blood of the Everlasting Covenant. It contained the resurrection life of God the Father.

As Christ's blood was shed, He was brought back from the death of sin as a new creation by the life that was in His blood. Heb 13:20. The wonderful news of the gospel is that *every* person who would ever live was brought back from the death of sin with Him. Our sonship was brought to birth in Christ through the death that He died. Paul was making this point when he wrote, 'Therefore, as through one man's offence judgement came to all men, resulting in condemnation, even so through one Man's righteous act the free gift came *to all men*, resulting in justification of life'. Rom 5:18. Every person's sonship was brought to birth in Christ through the offering of Yahweh in Gethsemane.

The choice that every person has to make in response to the word of the cross is whether they want to be the son whom the Father made them to be in Christ. This is the choice to come into Christ and to die the death that He died for us. This death is our death that He made to be His death; and we now die *with* Him. When we are conformed to His death and the fellowship of His sufferings, we are able to die by the power of His resurrection life that resides within us (*exanastasis*). Php 3:10-11. Rom 8:11. When we suffer in the flesh in this manner, we cease from sin. 1Pe 4:1.

When a person receives the gospel of sonship, they are illuminated to this great truth. They recognise that the reproaches of Christ, which became a discipline, are also a treasure, because they reveal the love of God the Father and His provision for us to be born again as His sons in Christ. 1Jn 3:1. Paul reminded us of this point, writing, 'For whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives'. Heb 12:6. It is only by illumination that we are able to esteem the reproaches of Christ as being greater riches than the treasures of a world that is under the dominion of Satan. Heb 11:24-26.

Sin and death destroyed

As Christ died through the seven wounding events of His offering journey, the body of sin, which was controlling us, was being killed and removed from His body, and He was also being made alive to God by the Spirit. 1Pe 3:18. Sin and the other law were able to be circumcised from our lives because the Father had made us members of Christ's body.

Sin was dead in Him when sin was dead in us because He was dying our death. When our circumcision as the members of His body was complete, the other law was gone from us in Him, and we were dead to sin as

members of His body. He finished death and perfected obedience for every one of us, *while we were yet sinners*. Rom 5:8.

Through His offering journey, 'the body of sin' was *done away with*. Rom 6:6. 'To be done away with' means that it '*completely evaporated*'. He took it all out in a mortal body. This happened when the flood of wickedness had overflowed Him and He said to the Father, 'Why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. In His flesh as the Son of Man, Christ had taken sin and Satan out into the sea of God's eternal judgement and forgetfulness.

When Christ said, 'It is finished!', sin no longer existed because Satan had been cast out, and the body of sin had been completely destroyed through the circumcision of Christ. Paul described this circumcision as 'the operation of God'. Joh 19:30. Col 2:12. Moreover, having died to sin, He came back from the death of sin by the life that was in His blood, as the New Creation. Heb 13:20. Christ came back from the dead because our sin and other law had been completely removed from us and destroyed in the body of sin. By this means, we were *justified*. As Paul explained, Jesus 'was delivered up *because of our offences*, and was raised *because of our justification*'. Rom 4:25.

A full atonement had been made for mankind, enabling them to become sons of God. The Son committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Luk 23:46. The Father then sent and delivered the Son out of the waters of eternal judgement, bringing Him to Himself. Psa 18:16.

Having finished His offering, Jesus had left behind Him a meal offering and a drink offering. This was made available to the whole world when His side was pierced by the soldier's spear, and blood, water, and grace and supplication began to flow from His broken heart. Joh 19:34. Under the influence of grace and supplication, a hearer could turn in repentance, look on Him whom they had pierced, mourn, and begin to join the fellowship of His offering by partaking of the provision that He had left for them. Zec 12:10.

This provision was prophesied by Joel, who declared, ' "Now, therefore," says the Lord, "Turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning." So rend your heart, and not your garments; return to the Lord your God, for He is gracious and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness; and He relents from doing harm. Who knows if He will turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind Him – a grain offering and a drink offering for the Lord your God?' Joe 2:12-14.

All people drawn to Christ

Christ said, 'And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself.' Joh 12:32. In previous books, we have made the point that this was not, in the first instance, an evangelistic statement by Christ. When Christ was lifted up on the cross, every person's death, as judgement and as salvation, was finished. His body was the full revelation of damnation and salvation for each individual. An individual's salvation or damnation depends on their response to the message of the cross as they are caused to look on Christ and see the wounds that Christ received as He died their death. This message is what the blood of Christ speaks to us. Heb 12:24. We will discuss this further in Chapter 3.

The two thieves who were crucified with Christ on the day that He died, represent the two possible responses that a person can make to the Lord, having been crucified with Him as part of His body. We note these two same opportunities and responses in Peter and in Judas as the blood of Christ also spoke to them during the first three wounding events of His offering journey.

The blood speaks through the word of the cross that is proclaimed by Christ's messengers. We are drawn by Christ to see that we are already dying with Him under the curse of sin. We can choose to come into Christ and be joined to His death and, through fellowship in His offering and sufferings, obtain the salvation that He has already finished for us. Or, we can continue to trust in ourselves and be condemned to the fiery sea of God's forgetfulness as part of the body of sin.

Unless we are converted and are baptised into Christ and His death, we will die in our body of death, which is controlled by the other law and the law of sin. As the other law and the law of sin were taken out into the fiery sea of God's forgetfulness through Christ's offering, we will be taken out with that body of sin when we physically die. In this case, although the Father made us members of Christ's body in Gethsemane, our names will be blotted out of the Lamb's book of life. That is, our names will be forgotten by God as we are forsaken as part of the body of sin. This is damnation.

Dying with Christ, in Him

Under the influence of grace and supplication, as we hear Christ's blood speak to us through the preaching of His messengers, we are caused to look on Him whom we have pierced. Zec 12:10. Like the thief who found

salvation, we see that we are under the same condemnation as Christ who became the body of sin, and we begin to fear God. Luk 23:40. We mourn for causing the death of the Firstborn, and for the loss of our sonship because of sin. The Holy Spirit enables our mourning to be turned to travail as we are joined to the offering prayer and travail of Christ in Gethsemane. We cry out to be remembered by Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, rather than to be forgotten as part of the body of sin that is being forsaken in judgement. Luk 23:42-43.

Evidently, we have been born to see the kingdom of God and have received our name as a son of God in Christ. Joh 3:3. Through baptism and an ongoing participation in the elements of communion, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's death, burial and resurrection. This is the pathway of eternal salvation that He authored and finished for us. As Jesus said to James and John, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptised with you will be baptised.' Mar 10:39.

In relation to baptism, we note that a person who has been born to see the kingdom will proceed to be baptised *into* Christ Jesus in order to enter the kingdom. Through baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, we are delivered from the old creation, which is passing away under the judgement of God, and we are joined, in Christ, to the corporate new creation. 2Co 5:17.

Paul said that 'as many of us as were baptised *into Christ Jesus* were baptised *into His death*'. Rom 6:3. Having come into Christ, we are no longer dying with Christ as a body of death. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the death we are dying is our death that Christ made His death and died, by the grace of God. In Him, we are also dying this death *by the grace of God*. Heb 4:16. By this means, our sufferings are turned from a judgement to a circumcision and a chastisement. Sin remains dead within us as the other law is being cut from our heart by the circumcision of Christ. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we are ceasing from sin, and are living to fulfil the will of God as new creation sons in Christ. 1Pe 4:1-2.

If we reject the light of the word which joins us to the fellowship of Yahweh, the sufferings that we experience are the judgement of God upon us. Unless we turn from walking according to our own deluded perspective and the lusts of our flesh, the sword that would otherwise deliver us from these fallen propensities will cut us from Christ as part of the body of sin. When we physically die, we will go out into the fiery sea of God's forgetfulness with our sin and our other law.

In the same way that we are to continue to live in the reality of our baptism, we must not forsake our gathering together for communion. Heb 10:24-25. Communion is our ongoing participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering as a member of His body. The cup of blessing which we bless is our participation in His blood that flowed as a consequence of His circumcision. In this fellowship, the resurrection life in Christ's blood is becoming our life, and is the life that we minister to others. The bread that we break and eat is our participation in the body of Christ. As a member of His body, we are no longer dying as the body of death. Rather, we are joined to Christ's death. 1Co 10:16-17. We recognise that, each day, Christ is priesting to us our participation in the death and life that He finished for us.

Christ finished our death and perfected our obedience. As we noted previously, the sufferings of death that we experience each day are our portion of the death that Christ has already suffered and died for us, and through which we were delivered from sin and the other law. Having been crucified with Christ, we 'fill up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ'. Col 1:24. To 'fill up His sufferings' means that we progressively die the death of sin that He has already died for us. By this means, the other law within us is being progressively cut from us, and we are raised with Him in the likeness of His resurrection as part of the new creation. In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we cease from sin and fulfil the righteous works of sonship that were prepared by the Father for us to do in Christ.

When Jesus said, 'It is finished!', our death, and the circumcision of the body of sin that was controlling us, *were finished*. For those who are in Christ, sin and the other law are also finished in us, *when we breathe our last breath with Him*. The circumcision of the other law in us is finished for eternity.

Chapter 3

The blood that speaks

Introduction

When the Lord speaks to us through His messengers, He wants us to open our hearts to receive Him. He speaks to us because He wants to know us, and us to know Him. The apostle John summed up his first epistle, emphasising this point. He wrote, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us an understanding, *that we may know Him* who is true; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. *This is the true God and eternal life.*' 1Jn 5:20.

To know and to be known by God, and to be found in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit is the goal of the gospel of our salvation. Eph 1:13. This is the gospel of sonship. There is no other gospel by which a person can be saved. Act 4:12. Only those who know Christ and are known by Him will be citizens of heaven.

On the day when we stand before the judgement seat of Christ, and meet Him face to face, the one pre-eminent question that Christ will ask us is, 'Do I know you, and were you known by the overseers of My house as a son of God who served Me in My body?' Heb 13:17. Jesus said, '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. Knowing and being known by God and others in the body of Christ is essential to salvation.

Drawing near to hear

To know the Lord and to be known by Him, we must draw near to Him. Making this point, the apostle Paul exhorted his readers, saying, 'Let us *draw near* with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.' Heb 10:22.

Later in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul noted that his readers had drawn near to the place to which they were being called by the gospel, saying, 'But *you have come* to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel.' Heb 12:22-24. Significantly, Paul explained that they had *come to Jesus*, the Mediator of the New Covenant, and to the *sprinkling of blood that speaks*.

What do we see and hear as we draw near to Christ and to His blood that speaks? To answer this question, we first need to consider where, and how, the blood of Christ was sprinkled. Paul wrote, 'For all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, whom God set forth as a propitiation [mercy seat, upon which blood was sprinkled seven times for atonement], through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus.' Rom 3:23-26.

From this passage, we note that grace, which we have previously identified as being God's resurrection life, is ministered through the sprinkling of blood, as redemption. The seven wounding events that Christ endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary were seven sprinkling actions. These sprinklings preached and revealed to us the complete, or sevenfold, redemption that is in Christ's blood. When Christ

was lifted up on the cross, His blood began to preach to every creature under heaven. Joh 12:32.

Sprinkled blood in Gethsemane

The mercy seat, where the blood of Christ was sprinkled seven times, is also called the throne of grace. Heb 4:16. This is where Jesus now sits, ever living to make intercession for us as our King-Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 7:24-25. Whereas the mercy seat reveals the ministry of Christ's *priesthood* among us, the throne of grace reveals the dimension of His *kingship*.

We note that the throne of grace is the place of prayer. It is where the dialogue of the Everlasting Covenant is happening. Peter, James and John were invited by Christ, the Son of Man, to watch and pray with Him as He began His intercession for us all in the garden of Gethsemane. As Jesus prayed, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit. Heb 9:14. Luk 22:43. Being in agony, He prayed more earnestly, and His sweat became like great clots of blood falling to the ground. Luk 22:44. As this first sprinkling of His blood fell upon His body, these three disciples saw and heard the Old Covenant being taken away, and the New Covenant being established. This happened as Jesus prayed to the Father, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. Concerning this event, Paul explained, 'Then He said [in Gethsemane], "Behold, I have come to do Your will, O God." He takes away the first [covenant] that He may establish the second [covenant]. By that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.' Heb 10:9-10.

Gethsemane reveals the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is the Everlasting Covenant discussion of Yahweh *Elohim*. In this prayer meeting, on the day of Christ's offering, the Holy Spirit made intercession for us with groanings that cannot be uttered. Rom 8:26. This is because we were to become a temple of the Holy Spirit. 1Co 6:19. His interest was in becoming the expression of our name as a son of God in a firstfruits measure. 2Co 5:5. Rom 8:23. This is a very important point. Through the offering of Yahweh, we become sons of the *Father* and members of the body of *Christ*. As sons, we are made joint heirs with Christ, sharing in His sonship, and are made fellow priests to God. Rom 8:16-17. Rev 1:6. Regarding the *Holy Spirit*, we each become a temple in which He resides and enables the expression and multiplication of the life of God for eternity.

Jesus prayed to the Father for us by the power of Eternal Spirit through the agency of the Holy Spirit. Luk 22:43. Heb 9:14. The Holy Spirit had taken the initiative within the heart of Jesus, by the power of Eternal Spirit, to direct and lead Jesus as He prayed. The Holy Spirit helped Him in His infirmity to pray as He ought. Rom 8:26. The Holy Spirit knew what to pray for in relation to our lives. Jesus was then able to offer up the prayer of the Holy Spirit as incense to God the Father on our account. All things then began to work together for our good. Rom 8:28.

As the Son prayed in the garden of Gethsemane, He began to search our hearts in relation to our names that were written in Him. Rom 8:27. Rev 2:23. Our sonship name is in Christ because it is part of who He is as the Father's Son and Seed. For this reason, our name is the will of God for us. Heb 10:5-7,10. Regarding this point, Paul said, 'Now He who searches the hearts knows what the mind of the Spirit is, because He makes *intercession* for the saints *according to the will of God.*' Rom 8:27. 'The will of God' refers to the works of righteousness that belong to the name and life that the Father prepared for each son of God in Christ.

This was the beginning point of God giving a body to every seed, or son, in Christ. As Paul declared, 'But someone will say, "How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come?" Foolish one, what you sow is not made alive unless it dies. And what you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain – perhaps wheat or some other grain. *But God gives it a body as He pleases [or according to His will], and to each seed [or son] its own body.*' 1Co 15:35-38.

We were all dead and lost to God in trespasses and sins. However, by Eternal Spirit, Christ interceded for us so that we could be born from the dead as sons of God with Him. Through His Melchizedek capacity as King-Priest, He offered Himself as the Father's Seed. All our names were in Him as He offered Himself as a sin offering. He was the Seed, falling into the ground and dying for our sake. Joh 12:24. Having been made an offering for sin, He fell into the ground of humanity and died with us. Joh 12:24. As His blood was shed and sprinkled on His body through the sufferings of death caused by our sin, the name and life of every son of God was being proclaimed. When they receive this word and join the fellowship of Christ's offering, they are begotten from the death of sin with Him.

We noted earlier that Jesus' prayer, which was by the power of Eternal Spirit, was according to the will of God the Father. He prayed, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done.' Luk 22:42. Jesus knew that our own prayer is

ineffective. He knew that we do not know what to pray for, and that we do not know what we are to do to fulfil our sonship. Rom 8:26. He prayed for us as we should pray - 'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. *Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.*' Mat 6:9-10. In Him, and by the capacity that we receive from the Holy Spirit, we are able to join this prayer.

As Jesus prayed by the power of Eternal Spirit, His blood was sprinkled upon His body as the Mercy Seat. This sprinkled blood was speaking better things than the blood of Abel. Abel's blood cried out for judgement. Gen 4:10. Luk 11:49-51. Heb 12:24. Of course, Christ's blood does cry for judgement; however, it also speaks of sonship! It is proclaiming the name and life of our sonship. Christ's blood provided mercy and grace. It was an atonement for our souls, and delivered us from our wilful lawlessness, bringing us back from the death of our sin as sons of God with Him. The New Covenant was established in Christ's blood as He bled.

We are able to leave Gethsemane with Christ and to fellowship with Him in all of the dimensions of His atoning work. This is to be a daily reality for us. Luk 9:23. As we fellowship with Him in each of the sprinkling events of His offering journey, His blood is sprinkled on our hearts. Our hearts are sprinkled clean from an evil conscience so that we are able to serve God as son-priests. Furthermore, through this process, His life is being multiplied to us, and is becoming our life as sons of God.

The blood that speaks has *power*. Paul said that it is 'living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart'. Heb 4:12. His blood tells us, at the gate of Gethsemane, to 'put away our swords' and to live only by the word of the cross that speaks in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Jesus said that, by this means, the Scriptures, which declare our sonship, are fulfilled. Mat 26:52-54. This is how the prophetic Scriptures are 'made more sure' concerning our sonship, which the apostle Peter described as 'the morning star' - or the light of Christ's life - arising in our heart by the Spirit. 2Pe 1:19.

Reproach broke Christ's heart

Mankind rejected the fatherhood of God when Adam disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Through disobedience, the other law was established in the hearts of Adam and

Eve, and in every son and daughter of man who would be born after them, bringing us all into bondage to sin and death, and making us enemies of God. Rom 7:23. Rom 5:10. Every thought, motivation and behaviour that is an expression of the other law in our heart is a self-righteous reproach upon the Father. It is our rejection of God as our Father and the source of our life and works.

Our railing reproach against the Father and His predestination for us as His sons was laid on Christ through the seven wounding events that He endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross. As Jesus declared through the Messianic psalm of David, 'The reproaches of those who reproach You have fallen on Me.' Psa 69:9. This happened when the Father made Christ's soul an offering for sin. Isa 53:10. By laying on Christ the reproaches of mankind against Himself, the Father made reproach the instrument by which His judgement upon sin is exercised, and by which sin and the other law are destroyed.

It is important to note that 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 Christ during His offering journey; it was Satan and mankind. These reproaches were the abusive actions of sinful men that were motivated by the other law. Christ endured these reproaches as an offering for sin. As Caiaphas himself prophesied, 'It is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.' Joh 11:50-51.

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 Christ experienced on the cross, *His work was complete*. He had fulfilled all righteousness as the Son of Man. Recognising the fulfilment of His obedience, Jesus declared, ' "Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani?" that is, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" ' Mat 27:46. This was not a statement of insubordination, as some people have erroneously considered. Rather, Jesus was declaring that He had completed the works of obedience that the Father had prepared for Him to do and was asking why He was still alone and 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. These were the waters of judgement that were manifest in the days of Noah when God declared, 'The end of all flesh has come before Me, for the earth is filled with violence through them; and behold, I will destroy them with the earth.' Gen 6:13. 1Pe 3:19-21.

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. The sin offering was fulfilled when the reproaches overflowed Christ and His heart was broken. As King David prophesied, 'The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart - these, O God, You will not despise.' Psa 51:17.

The mourning of Christ, as His heart was broken, was the final expression of the prayers and supplications that He offered up with vehement cries and tears to the Father throughout His journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Heb 5:7. Although His heart had been broken by reproach, as an offering for sin, Christ's end, or death, was not in

Himself. It was in the hands of the Father who could save Him from death. Acknowledging that His end was not in Himself, but in the hands of the Father, the Son then cried out with a loud voice, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My Spirit.' Luk 23:46.

Paul said that Jesus was heard by the Father because of His *piety*. Heb 5:7. Piety is the expression of godliness. This is not simply 'religious devotion' or 'reverence'. It is living by the culture of God's life, which is love. Christ loved us by laying down His life for us, coming back from the dead by the power of *exanastasis*. Gal 2:20. We could say that piety is the culture of *exanastasis* that was fully revealed and perfected at the conclusion of His offering. Heb 5:7.

The Father looked on Him 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. He sent and drew Him out of many waters, drawing Him into His embrace. Psa 18:16. 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.

The broken heart of Christ was both the full revelation of obedience and righteousness, *and* the full revelation of sin and iniquity that is eternally separate from God. It was the breakpoint where mercy and judgement met in the physical body of Christ on the cross, and where mercy triumphed over judgement. Jas 2:13. This triumph revealed the wisdom of God that is wiser than men and Satan. This is where we see the wisdom of the cross that confounds Satan and opens the eyes of men. When the heart of Christ was broken, the power of the other law in the hearts of men was broken, and Satan was cast out and judged forever.

As we considered in Chapter 2, this was when the body of sin was done away with. It was left in the fiery sea of God's forgetfulness. Christ's body was made the body of sin when the whole of mankind, whose bodies were dead because of sin and the other law, were placed in Christ by the Father, in Gethsemane. The body of sin was being cut from Christ through the circumcising wounds of reproach that He endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Those who reject the salvation of God that is proclaimed by His blood, and continue instead to live

according to the principles of the flesh, are cut from Him as part of the body of sin. However, for those who receive His word and come into Him through baptism and participation in communion, sin remains dead and their other law is being cut from them. It is being forgotten as part of the body of sin.

Grace and supplication flowed from Christ's heart

The crowd who stood at the foot of the cross and who watched Christ die, heard His blood 'speak' as His side was pierced by the soldier's spear and His seventh wounding event ended. Luk 23:48. Joh 19:34. The spirit of grace and supplication, and the blood and water that began to flow as a fountain from Christ's pierced heart, *was the fruit of His broken heart.*

The incense of grace and supplication from Christ began to envelop them. We know that it was incense because Christ had *prayed* that the Father would forgive them. Luk 23:34. 'Incense' refers to the prayer of Christ, by the Spirit. This spirit of grace and supplication, by which He Himself had mourned and prayed, was poured out from His broken heart when it was pierced with a spear. This was the seventh wounding event of His offering journey.

Speaking of this wound, the Lord declared, through the prophet Zechariah, 'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication.' Zec 12:10. Under the influence of grace and supplication, those who were there on that day were enabled to look on Christ with eyes that had been illuminated by the word of the blood that was speaking to them. What did they see? They saw that they had crucified their King, God's firstborn Son. However, they also saw that they had lost their own sonship. This is because Christ was the express image of their sonship. They were all now 'dead with Him' because they had killed Him. 2Co 5:14. Christ, in His offering, laid His life down and died under their hands.

It was the other law that had motivated the people to revile and abuse Christ. However, when the heart of Christ was broken, the power of the other law was broken within their hearts so that they could see and begin to mourn as those who were *broken-hearted*. The spirit of grace and supplication that flowed from Christ's heart joined them to the fellowship of His broken heart. This was *their access* to the sacrifice of Christ and the means by which God drew near to each of them for salvation.

Becoming poor in spirit, as those who have a broken heart, is the first dimension of blessing that a person receives when they do not refuse the word of God, and do not resist the spirit of grace and supplication that is poured out with the word. Jesus said, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.' Mat 5:3.

These people, who had become poor in spirit, began to mourn and grieve as for the loss of a firstborn Son. Zec 12:10. Zechariah likened this mourning to the outpouring of grief for the death of the great king, Josiah, when he died on the plain of Megiddo. Zec 12:11. 2Ch 35:23-25. The crowd who looked upon Christ accepted their guilt and, in repentance, mourned for the Son whom they had lost. They were joined to the fellowship of Christ's mourning and travail, and were enabled to find repentance, and to receive forgiveness and deliverance from their bondage to sin and the other law. This was the comfort that the second dimension of blessing granted to them as those who mourn. Mat 5:4.

They then beat their breasts as Christ's blood sprinkled their hearts. They found forgiveness and, having died with Him, were now buried with Christ in the hope of His resurrection. Act 2:26. By this means, they were made ready to receive the word of His resurrection. Luk 23:48. The message of Christ's resurrection would proclaim to them that Christ had been raised because they had been justified by His blood. *He had been raised because of their justification.* Rom 4:25.

It is important to note 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. For this reason, the Father gives us a share, or a participation, in the reproach that was laid upon Christ. He does this to break the power of the other law within us and to deliver us, by illumination, from the power of our own darkness. This is the wisdom and power of God that has been fully revealed by the cross. For this reason, the apostle Paul exhorted those who partake of the body and blood of Jesus at the communion to go forth to Christ 'outside the camp, bearing His reproach'. Heb 13:13.

As we noted in Chapter 1, Paul understood that joining Christ in the fellowship of His reproach is a great treasure. He counted everything else in his life as loss for the sake of progressively obtaining this prize. Php 3:8,12-14. Likewise, Moses chose 'to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, *esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt*; for he looked to [or was illuminated concerning] the reward'. Heb 11:25-26. A person who has

truly received illumination regarding the gospel of sonship also esteems the reproach of Christ to be greater treasure than any worldly riches. This is because they can see, and are obtaining, the precious life of Christ as they are being delivered from sin and death in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

The immortal body of Christ

As the Mercy Seat, blood for atonement was sprinkled on Christ seven times. This happened through the seven wounding events that He endured as He offered Himself in obedience to the Father from Gethsemane to Calvary. The blood at each wounding event was able to provide a full atonement for mankind *through the power of exanastasis*, as the Father brought Jesus back from the dead in each wounding event. Heb 13:20. Through the shedding of Christ's blood, life triumphed over sin and death, and over the other law that brought us into bondage to sin and death.

When Jesus declared, 'It is finished!', the Son of Man's offering journey was complete, and *exanastasis* had attained a full perfection and expression in Him. Joh 19:30. His Spirit had gone to the Father, yet His body remained on earth. As we noted earlier, Christ's testimony at the conclusion of His offering was, 'Therefore 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 [resurrection] life; in Your presence is fullness of joy; at Your right hand are pleasures forevermore.' Psa 16:9-11.

Christ's flesh rested in *hope* as His body lay in the tomb for three days and three nights. During this time, the Son was at the right hand of the Father. The reason why Christ's body did not decay during this time was because the *exanastasis* life of the Father had *already* been perfected in His physical body. On the day of resurrection, three days and three nights following His death, His body did not need to be changed into a spiritual body. It had already become spiritual through the power of *exanastasis*. When He returned to His body, which He would never leave again, it was as spiritual as it was material.

Christ was raised from the dead as 'the *firstfruits* of those who have fallen asleep'. 1Co 15:20. He was also raised as the *Firstborn* from the dead and the immortal Head of the church. Col 1:18. Rev 1:5. When Mary Magdalene met Jesus early in the morning following His resurrection, she fell at His feet and clung to Him. However, Jesus said to Mary, 'Do not

cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, "I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God".' Joh 20:17. Jesus was specifically referring to His ascension to the Father to be waved before Him as a firstfruits offering. We know this because, not long after this interaction with Mary, and after He had presented Himself to the Father, He met many others who embraced Him and who touched Him. Mat 28:9-10. Joh 20:27.

It is important to note that His ascension to the Father to present Himself as the firstfruits of those who sleep was not His 'glorification'. After presenting Himself to the Father, Jesus spent forty days speaking to His disciples of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God. Act 1:3. That is, He taught His disciples to be His lampstand church. For example, He taught Peter that showing forth Christ's death is fundamental to the work of overseers in His church. Joh 21:18-19. As He breathed on them, they were joined to the fellowship of His body, which is His church. Joh 20:22. Col 1:18.

At the conclusion of forty days, Jesus said to the disciples, 'You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.' Act 1:8. When this happened on the Day of Pentecost, they became the 'lamps' of Christ's lampstand church, shining the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus, to the world. In Chapter 5, we have explained the establishment of Christ's lampstand church in more detail.

After Jesus had finished speaking to His disciples, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. Act 1:9. This was when the Son of Man ascended back to His own throne, and to the glory that He had before as Yahweh Son. Joh 6:62. Eph 1:20-21. As we have considered in Chapter 5, He now ministers to His church as both Son of God and Yahweh Son.

The word of resurrection declared

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter proclaimed the message of Christ's resurrection to those who were buried with Christ and were resting in hope for the resurrection. He said to them, 'Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it.' Act 2:23-24.

These people, who had heard Christ's blood speak when His side was pierced with the soldier's spear, had been justified by His blood. They could now believe and be saved as the Holy Spirit poured the love of God, and the love for God, into their hearts, thus removing the veil of their own blindness from them. They could now know the Lord, from the least of them to the greatest, as recipients of the New Covenant. Jer 31:31-34.

In response to the word that Peter proclaimed to them, and under the conviction of the Holy Spirit, the people responded, saying to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Act 2:37. Peter's response was, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' Act 2:38-39.

We see that the focus of baptism is not the action of being immersed in water, even though this is an essential practice. Rather, the people had already been joined to the death, burial and resurrection of Christ through the word that the blood of sprinkling had proclaimed to them. Baptism was an action of faith because they had received this word and had died with Him, been buried with Him, and were now receiving the word of their sonship in the fellowship of His resurrection. The death, burial and resurrection of Jesus was now the pathway of their life as a member of the body of Christ. In Christ, having put to death their old way of life, they were now able to reach forward to that for which Christ had laid hold of them – the fulfilment of their sonship in Him. Php 3:12-14.

Messengers of the blood

Paul became a minister of the blood of Christ. Making this point, he explained that it pleased the Father for all the fullness of the Godhead to dwell in Christ so that, by Him, we might be *reconciled* to the Father 'through the blood of His cross'. Col 1:19-20. Paul then explained that we obtain this reconciliation if we continue in the faith and hope that we receive from the gospel of which Paul was made a minister. Col 1:21-23. This means that Paul, as a messenger of Christ, ministered the blood of Christ to his hearers, through which they were reconciled to God.

The blood of Christ is not ministered through the communication of the theology of the cross. The blood of Christ speaks through the testimony of those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and

sufferings. This is particularly the case for those whom the Father has called to oversee His house.

The apostle James wrote, 'My brethren, be not many masters [or, teachers], knowing that we shall receive *the greater condemnation*'. Jas 3:1. Many people interpret this passage of Scripture to mean that the carnal failings of teachers, or messengers, are punished more swiftly and severely than those of other sinners.

However, this is not a particularly helpful, nor accurate, interpretation of this passage, because the condemnation of sin is the same for every person - i.e. *death*. Jesus made this point when He spoke of the judgement that would be executed against the unfaithful slaves whom the Master had set over His household. He said, 'The master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and *appoint him his portion with the unbelievers*.' Luk 12:46.

When we consider the life and testimony of the apostle Paul, we see that 'the greater condemnation' that he received was *part of his ministry* as a messenger of Christ. He testified that, through his ministry, Christ was publicly portrayed among his hearers as crucified. Gal 3:1. By this means, the judgement of God and the salvation of God were being made known to them. This was not merely the explanation of judgement and salvation through the cross. Rather, Paul said that he *bore in his body* 'the marks of the Lord Jesus'. Gal 6:17. These were the marks that were caused by the sufferings of death that Christ tasted for every man. Heb 2:9.

Paul's ministry as a messenger of God in Christ involved a quotient of suffering under the condemnation of death that belonged to, or was caused by, his hearers. This is what Paul meant when he said to the Colossians, 'I now rejoice in *my sufferings for you*, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the *afflictions of Christ*, for the sake of His body, which is the church.' Col 1:24. This was a fundamental reality of the stewardship that he had received from God the Father. He said that the fellowship of Christ's sufferings is foundational to understanding and proclaiming the mystery of the cross, which had been hidden from ages and from generations. Col 1:25-26.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul testified of this ministry among them. He said that he and his fellow presbyters spoke before God *in Christ*. 2Co 12:19. He was addressing those who were living according to the flesh and were in bondage to sin. 2Co 12:20. Paul's ministry was

effective toward the Corinthians as he was humbled among them and mistreated by some of them. This was the suffering of condemnation that Christ had suffered for them, and that Paul was filling up for their sakes.

As he suffered because of their mistreatment, Paul was dying with Christ for those who were struggling in their sin and rebellion. To those who received Paul's ministry as he spoke to them in the weakness of Christ, the power of God became mighty in them and brought deliverance to them. 2Co 13:3-4. Paul, also, was personally receiving the life of Christ that was sustaining him as he participated in the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Paul said that, through the ministry of the cross, 'the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ' was diffused in every place and in every interaction. 2Co 2:14-15. As he conversed with those who were recalcitrant, the sufferings of condemnation that he was experiencing in Christ as a result of their sin and mistreatment of him was the aroma of death to them. It was signalling the judgement of death that was their 'reward' if they did not receive the word, find repentance, and come into Christ as a son of God. However, as his hearers humbled themselves, his ministry became the aroma of life, or consolation, to them, so that, in Christ, their judgement was turned to chastisement that was leading to life. 2Co 2:16.

Because Paul was in Christ and he was walking in obedience to the call of God upon his life, he was dying this 'greater condemnation' *by exanastasis*. This was the comfort and consolation that he received from the Father, which was then ministered as life to those to whom he had been sent. To this end, Paul testified, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God. For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also abounds through Christ. Now if we are afflicted, it is for your consolation and salvation, which is effective for enduring the same sufferings which we also suffer. Or if we are comforted, it is for your consolation and salvation.' 2Co 1:3-6.

A person will only be able to endure 'greater condemnation' when this ministry is consistent with their name and grace in Christ. This is why James said, 'Let not many of you become teachers.' Jas 3:1. He was saying that if overseership was not consistent with a person's name and identity, they would not cope with this mode of ministry. Either they would become exhausted, or the growth of the church would be limited by their

capacity to cope with the relational pressures being brought to bear upon them.

The fellowship of Christ's sufferings is fundamental to overseership in the church. Paul commended Timothy, who was a man of proven character, to this faith, saying, 'For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him. *If we endure, we shall also reign with Him*. If we deny Him, He also will deny us. If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.' 2Ti 2:11-13.

Importantly, Paul highlighted the point that Christ's messengers reign as overseers in the church if they endure with Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings. This is fundamental to their authority in this age, and in the age to come. We note the words of Jesus to the presbytery of Thyatira, 'And he who overcomes, and keeps My works until the end, to him I will give power over the nations - "He shall rule them with a rod of iron; they shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels".' Rev 2:26-27.

Receiving the message

The blood of Christ is sprinkled upon us as we hear its message proclaimed by those through whom Christ is publicly portrayed as crucified. Gal 3:1. We are brought near to Christ and are given the New Covenant, which is the law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus. In other words, He gives us His life. Eph 2:13. The law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus makes us free from the law of sin and death as we join the fellowship of His sufferings and sprinkling. Rom 8:2.

As we hear and receive the message that the blood speaks through the preaching of Christ's messengers, the faith of the Son of God is given to us to become our faith. That is, faith comes to us by hearing the word of the blood of Christ. Rom 10:14-17. Christ's blood speaks, saying, 'Do not be afraid ... I am your shield of faith, your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16. Christ becomes our exceedingly great reward because the life in His blood, which is His Spirit, becomes our life. This happens in the fellowship of His offering, where our hearts are sprinkled with His blood, giving to us the treasure, or exceedingly great reward, of His life.

Chapter 4

The pathway of life

Orientation to the fellowship of suffering

In the midst of a suffering, or 'wounding', event that is happening in our lives, the moment that we accept and believe that this wounding event belongs to Christ and is causing Him to bleed, so that His blood is sprinkled on His body, the Father sets forth Christ in our lives as a mercy seat. Accepting and believing this point demonstrates our faith in Christ's blood. As Paul wrote, 'God hath set forth [Jesus Christ] to be a propitiation *through faith in His blood*'. Rom 3:25.

When the Father sets forth Christ in our lives as a mercy seat, He grants to us a connection to Christ's suffering. By this means, as Christ's blood flows from His heart and falls upon His body, it is also *falling upon us*. His blood is then sprinkling our hearts, cleansing our conscience from its death-producing works. Heb 9:14. These works are the fruit of our self-justifying attitudes, which are motivated by the other law within us, and are manifest as the emotions of sin through aggressive behaviour or depression. Rom 7:5.

The whole world is already under the condemnation and judgement of God. The wrath and vengeance of God is already upon us. When the Lord

comes to us and speaks to us, the first words that He speaks to us are words that minister faith to our hearts. His first word to us is 'Fear not; only believe'. Mar 5:36. Gen 15:1. Rev 1:17.

The psalmist declared that Christ comes to us as 'God who forgives' (Heb: *El Nasa*; pronounced 'naw-saw'). He wrote, 'You answered them, O Lord our God; You were to them *God-Who-Forgives*, though *You took vengeance on their deeds.*' Psa 99:8. The closeness of this forgiving God is expressed in 'the hand of God'. Job declared, 'I will teach you about [or by] the hand of God' that lifts, raises and forgives *through chastening*. Job 27:11.

Through the messengers who are in His hand, Christ speaks words of comfort and consolation to us. He has come to deliver us from the greatest of all deaths; the death that is the result of the judgement and vengeance of God. 2Co 1:10. He is among us with eyes like a flame of fire, exposing the wicked motivations of our hearts, which are the fruit of the other law that Satan fathered within us.

If we *receive* Christ's word, and *believe* it, we are delivered from the wrath of God and are brought out from under the place of judgement that was our prison. If we do not receive and believe the word of Christ, we remain under judgement and are in the place where the vengeance of God is executed. Making this point, Jesus said, 'He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.' Joh 3:18.

Christ has come to intervene in our situation. We are suffering because God has made us drink the cup of cursing and suffering that is our just deserts because of our sin. Jer 25:15. Christ takes our cup and drinks it, and then comes under the judgement and punishment that we are suffering. Luk 22:42-44. He makes our death, His death. Heb 2:9. Rom 6:10. As He does this, He tells us not to be afraid, and commands us to believe. Joh 3:18. He then bears our judgement with us, and commutes it to chastening, which is perfecting us. This is the way of life that belongs to a person who has become a spiritual new creation in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Spiritual, not carnal

The sons of God are spiritual people. Paul said that if the Spirit of God dwells within us, we are not carnal, but are *spiritual*. Rom 8:9. However, being spiritual does not mean that we are sinless. The apostle John was

clear on this point, writing, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us'. 1Jn 1:8. How can we be spiritual and, yet, continue to sin? To answer this question, we need to know how a son of God dies with Christ, in Him as a member of His body.

In Chapter 2, we explained that the whole world was crucified with Christ. When He died for all, then all died *with* Him - whether believers or not. 2Co 5:14. He died the death of every person, making their death, *His* death. In this regard, His death as the body of sin revealed both the judgement of God and the salvation of God. *How a person dies with Christ* determines the nature and outcome of the death that they are dying in their mortal body. They will either die with Christ in a body of death *or* their bodies will be dead because of sin as they die with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Rom 7:24. Rom 8:10. In this fellowship, they are being made alive as new creation sons of God.

The judgement of God

Through His twenty-one-hour offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, Christ experienced the judgement of death that belongs to every person because of sin. Heb 2:9. This journey involved six wounding events, which culminated in His crucifixion at Golgotha at 9:00am on the day that He died. As Christ hung on the cross, great darkness fell over the whole land from 12:00pm until 3:00pm.

The torment and suffering that Jesus experienced in each wounding event of His offering journey was gathered up into the cross and into the three hours of darkness that concluded with His death on the cross. This torment and suffering was the judgement of God upon the sin of the whole world. Concerning this torment, Jesus testified, 'The pains of death surrounded me, and the pangs of Sheol laid hold of me; I found trouble and sorrow.' Psa 116:3. The eternal death and darkness of hell reached up and took hold of Him on the cross. Yet, death could not hold Him; He was not abandoned in hell. Act 2:24,27.

Jesus likened the final aspect of reproach that the Father laid upon Him to a great flood that overflowed Him. Psa 69:2. Christ's heart was broken by this final element of reproach. Psa 69:20. He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. The reproach that the Father laid upon the Son took Him to the end, and then beyond the eternal dimension of the lake of fire. By this means, Christ was the full manifestation of reproach and eternal judgement. This was when the body of sin was fully cut from Him and forgotten, or forsaken, by God.

The Father then heard the cry of Jesus, and delivered His soul from death. Psa 116:4,8. This was because the Father is 'near to those who have a broken heart, and saves such as have a contrite spirit'. Psa 34:18.

The sufferings that Christ experienced on His offering journey reveal the judgement of God upon the old creation. People who are carnal continue to live by the other law under the dominion of the principle of sin, which is the spirit of the world. The sufferings that they experience in life are the judgement that Christ suffered for them as the body of sin. These sufferings are causing them to die with Christ in a body of death. Rom 7:24. Unless they find repentance, and Christ comes to abide in them and they in Him, when their mortal life ceases, they will be forgotten by God as part of the body of sin that was taken away into the lake of fire.

The salvation of God

Through *exanastasis*, the judgement of God was turned to chastisement upon Christ. The wounding events that He endured throughout His offering journey became a circumcision by which the body of sin was cut from Him and done away with. Rom 6:6. Col 2:11. This was the death that He died to sin. Rom 6:10. As He offered Himself by Eternal Spirit, He was made alive as a corporate new creation by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 9:14. Heb 13:20. The fellowship of His death and resurrection is the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for every person.

A spiritual person has been born to *see* the kingdom of God and has *entered* the kingdom by being born of water and the Spirit. Joh 3:3,5. As a son of God, they have been freed from their bondage to the principle of sin by *coming into the Lord Jesus Christ* and dying, with Him, the death that He died to sin. This is the implication of being 'co-crucified with Christ' through baptism; and is the daily implication of our participation in the elements of communion. Gal 2:20. 1Co 10:16.

Jesus said, 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood *abides in Me, and I in him.*' Joh 6:56. Paul also taught that *if Christ is in us*, 'the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness'. Rom 8:10. It is important to recognise that the body that is dead because of sin is *not* the body of death. In previous notes, we have explained that the body of death is the mortal body of 'the old man', who lives by the other law, in captivity to the law of sin. Rom 7:24. However, the *body that is dead*

because of sin is the mortal body of a son of God who is *joined* to the *body of sin* in Christ. Rom 6:6.

Christ finished our death and perfected our obedience. In the fellowship of His death, we have been delivered from the judgement of God and from the vagaries of time and chance. The sufferings that we experience each day are the sufferings of our death, which He died for us by the grace of God. Through His Melchizedek priesthood, He gives these sufferings back to us as a participation in His redeeming death. His death on the cross was not a vicarious action in the sense that we no longer have to die. Rather, His offering death *is a participation!* As we die His death, our sin and other law, which caused our death, is removed from us. Furthermore, we are made alive from this death, with Him, by His resurrection life. As spiritual people, we believe that *exanastasis* has redefined our life and death.

The *exanastasis* life that we receive in the fellowship of Christ's offering transforms our sufferings from judgement to discipline so that we cease from sin. Heb 12:5-8. 1Pe 4:1. Help is given to us from the Lord so that we do not suffer beyond what we can bear, and we do not die before our time. 1Co 10:13. 1Co 11:30. Addressing this point, Paul exhorted Christians, saying, '*Let your conduct be without covetousness; be content with such things as you have. For He Himself has said, "I will never leave you nor forsake you."*' So we may boldly say: "*The Lord is my helper; I will not fear. What can man do to me?*" ' Heb 13:5-6.

Forgetting what lies behind

We wake each day as spiritual sons of God in Christ. However, it is not long before we make a carnal response to some difficulty that we encounter, or we react to the fleshly actions of others towards us. The mess, or resulting fallout, from these responses is part of the death caused by our sin, which Christ made His death. As those who are spiritually minded, we *reckon* ourselves dead to sin, with Christ. Rom 6:11. We accept that, as Christ died this death, and made it His death, our sin and other law were being put to death and removed. In the fellowship of His death, our fleshly propensities are being cut from our hearts and we are dying to sin. At the same time, we are being made alive from the death of sin, with Christ, as a son of God.

The evidence of being conformed to Christ's death is that we are granted repentance. We are able to turn from the shame of our fallen, fleshly responses and to receive the knowledge of the truth. 'The knowledge of

the truth' is our works of sonship, which we are to do in Christ. We come to our senses so that we can escape the snare of the devil, which is the motivation to be 'like God' without being 'of God'. 2Ti 2:25. 'To come to our senses' means that we have been delivered from the darkness of our own deluded perspective and are able to see ourselves, and the situations that we find ourselves in, from the Lord's perspective.

God forgives us and forgets our carnal responses, consigning them to the sea of His forgetfulness as we, by the faith that we have received in His blood that speaks, give ourselves to speak with one another about the issues that have resulted in relational discord, and to forgive each other. Practically, we 'draw a line' under the matter and forget it as we press on together to do the works that belong to our sonship in Christ. Php 3:13. The apostle John described this as 'walking in the light'. He explained that this is the means by which the blood of Jesus is able to cleanse us from all sin. 1Jn 1:7. Christ's blood sprinkles our hearts, cleansing our evil conscience from our death-producing works, so that we can serve the living God. Heb 9:14. Heb 10:22.

Of course, by faith, we then walk out the implications of our actions in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The consequences of our carnal responses may even be the sufferings that we are to endure for a season. However, we accept that these sufferings are the chastening of the Father upon us, and are causing us to cease from sin. Consequently, we are enabled to fulfil the will of God in Christ by doing the works of our sonship. 1Pe 4:1-2.

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. He says, 'I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.' Jer 31:34. His mercies, then, are new each morning, revealing the faithfulness of God towards us. Lam 3:22-23. By these mercies, we are able to present ourselves each day for participation in Christ's offering as living sacrifices. 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 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. It is the implication of setting our minds on the Spirit.

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.

Learning the obedience of priesthood

Having been born as sons of God and baptised into Christ, *we are learning obedience* from Christ. We need to learn obedience because we were formerly sons of disobedience who conducted ourselves according to the desires of our other law. Eph 2:2. However, this is not the only reason why we are learning obedience through the things that we suffer in Christ. We are to be yoked with Christ in order to learn *the obedience that He learnt*. Mat 11:29. Heb 5:8.

Obviously, Jesus did not need to learn the obedience of sonship. He was never a son of disobedience. 1Pe 2:22. Prior to His offering on the cross, He was *already* an obedient Son, testifying, 'Therefore *My Father* loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again. No-one takes it from Me, but I lay it down of Myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. *This command I have received from My Father*.' Joh 10:17-18. What, then, was the obedience that Jesus learnt?

To answer this question, it is helpful to recognise that when Paul explained that Jesus learned obedience through the things that He suffered, he was discussing the priesthood of Christ, which was according to the order of Melchizedek. He said that Christ did not glorify Himself to become High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Heb 5:5. Rather, having emptied Himself of His intrinsic glory as Yahweh Son, and coming in the likeness of men, Christ was progressively glorified by God the Father as the High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. This happened through the wounding events that He experienced as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary. Php 2:7. Heb 2:9.

The obedience that Jesus learnt through suffering was His obedience 'to the point of death, even the death of the cross' as the Son of Man. Php 2:8. *By the grace of God*, He tasted the condemnation of death for

every person. Heb 2:9. That is, *He died by exanastasis*. By this means, He came back from the death of sin, and pioneered the pathway of salvation by which we could come back from the death of sin with Him. Significantly, the Son had not 'priested' Himself this way before.

Through offering, Jesus learnt how to be a high priest in relation to every situation and human condition. In this regard, Paul explained, 'We do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin.' Heb 4:15. The purpose of His priesthood was to reconcile us to God *so that* we might become the righteousness of God in Him. In other words, by priesting Himself as a sin offering, He was reconciling us to God so that we could be born of the Father, and could fulfil the works of sonship that the Father had prepared for us in Christ Jesus. Isa 53:10.

While there is only one High Priest, Christ has made us a kingdom of priests to His God and Father. In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we must learn obedience in relation to our priesthood as well as in relation to our sonship. Learning the obedience of priesthood means learning how to lay our lives down by *exanastasis* to reveal the life and works of another. This is the implication of Christ's dying for all, 'that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again'. 2Co 5:15.

In the first instance, our priesthood is a ministry of reconciliation to those who are hostile to God. 2Co 5:18,20. This is not simply telling people about God's love and His purpose for their lives. Rather, it involves our bearing, in Christ, the condemnation of the hearers' death, so that His life might overflow to them. By definition, this involves suffering for the sake of another, often at their hands. Col 1:24. In Chapter 3, we have considered this principle in more detail.

Importantly, we are not learning priesthood only for the purpose of reconciliation. Laying down our lives to reveal the name and works of another is the ongoing expression of those who are priests in the order of Melchizedek, in this age and in the age to come. In the book of Revelation, the apostle John recorded seeing a great multitude of people arrayed in priestly garments. They had come out of great tribulation and had washed their robes in the blood of the Lamb. 'Therefore they are before the throne of God, *and serve Him day and night in His temple*. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them.' Rev 7:15.

Suffering and the love of God

The Spirit is challenging a prevalent and unhelpful misconception held by some, that the Son of God vicariously suffered for everyone and, now, in love, is giving to us a 'package' of suffering for our good. This is not the gospel of sonship. *Suffering has no inherent merit*; it is the harbinger of death because of the righteous judgement of God upon us. We cannot continue to patronise God by thanking Him for our suffering, as though this is the expression of His love for us.

God's love is revealed by the offering of the Son, through which our suffering because of judgement was turned to chastening. Gal 2:20. As we noted earlier, Christ died our death, making it His death. In Him, our judgement is turned to chastisement. We are being delivered from living according to the other law and the principle of sin, and we are growing to maturity as a son of God in Him. Understanding this point, and rightly discerning our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, requires *illumination*.

Turning from darkness to light

Jesus identified Satan as a liar and the father of lies. Joh 8:44. A lie has no substance because it is not true. We note, therefore, that Satan was unable to father anything *substantial* within mankind. Our identities are substantial because they were created by God. Gen 2:7. Adam and Eve, and all who were born from them, came under a delusion when they believed Satan's lie and disobeyed the word of God. The eyes of their hearts were blinded and became sick. Because of the ignorance that was in them, they then lived in darkness. Mat 6:23.

Importantly, it was not the darkness of mankind that came under the wrath of God. Rather, as a consequence of disobedience, mankind came under the judgement and wrath of God because they had pursued the lie of self-validation to substantiate the pursuit of their own life and definition apart from fellowship with Yahweh. This highlights a key point. Even though we are dead in trespasses and sins, we still have identity which is *substantial*. We are, therefore, under the judgement and wrath of God when we live by the principle of the other law.

For this reason, when we are suffering, we need to cry out to the Lord for understanding, so that we might know why we are under judgement and what it is that God is confronting in our lives. We cannot know this

ourselves. The beginning point for our deliverance from wrath is to *receive illumination*.

'Illumination' means 'turning from darkness to the light'. It is a circumcision because it enables repentance. It is the work of the Spirit to convict our hearts of sin, righteousness and the judgement to come. Joh 16:8-11. He does this through the ministry of the gifts that He gives to the members of the church. The gifts of the Spirit bring illumination to us so that we can be delivered from the delusion, or darkness, of our fallen way.

The gifts of the Spirit are the manifestation and ministry of *exanastasis* life operating in the body of Christ. Jesus offered Himself in obedience to the Father by the capacity of Eternal Spirit through the work of the Holy Spirit. Heb 9:14. Christ's blood was shed as He tasted the sufferings of death for every person. Heb 2:9. This was *our* death under the judgement of God, that Christ made to be *His* death. The resurrection life of God in His blood caused these sufferings to be commuted to chastening for Him. By this means, the body of sin was being cut from the Son, and He was made alive from the death of sin by the life in His blood. This was a ministry of life to Him, by the Spirit, that overflowed as life to us.

As members of the body of Christ, we are joined to the dying and the living of Jesus. We are able to minister to one another the resurrection life of God that we receive in the fellowship of Christ's offering. 2Co 4:10-12. This life brings light, as we minister it by the Spirit as a gift to the one in need. Joh 1:4.

When we are suffering, and turn to the Lord in response to His word that comes by the gifts of the Spirit, the power of darkness is *broken*. Explaining this point further, Paul said that the veil over the eyes of our heart, which is the delusion of the other law that causes our darkness, is removed when we turn in repentance to the Lord. 2Co 3:16. The removal of the veil that is causing our darkness is a *circumcision*.

Because this circumcision is removing something that has *no substance*, the moment that we turn to the Lord, there is often a miraculous end to *inordinate* suffering in our life. These sufferings are the direct consequence of walking according to our own deluded perspective. When we walk in darkness, we are unable to 'discern the Lord's body', nor recognise the injuries that we are causing to Christ as we are becoming weak and sick, and are dying under the judgement of God. 1Co 11:29-30.

However, illumination does not necessarily bring an end to all of our suffering. This is because the circumcision that brings illumination delivers us *from* judgement and into the fellowship of Christ's travail and chastening.

We are joined to the travail of Christ by the Holy Spirit as we receive and obey the word of faith that is ministered by Christ through His messengers. The word of faith delivers us from the fear of death, so that we can present ourselves for fellowship in Christ's travail. Rom 8:26. Luk 8:50. In the fellowship of Christ's travail, our spirit is being regenerated and renewed so that the eyes of our heart are healed, enabling us to see clearly. Tit 3:5. Mat 6:22. Christ's life replaces our fallen motivations as it becomes our life. Gal 2:20. The fruit of travail is 'strong consolation and comfort'. Heb 6:18. 2Co 1:4. As we explained in Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, this consolation is the grace of life from God that is becoming our life. Through faith, we have received our introduction into the grace of God in which we stand as a son of God. Rom 5:2.

By the grace of God, we are joined to Christ's death. Heb 4:16. Rom 6:8. The sufferings that we are experiencing are turned from judgement to chastisement, in Him. We are being chastened by the Lord when we are clear about the issues of life that He is addressing; and we are learning obedience through the things that we are suffering. Heb 5:8. Heb 12:11. We are ceasing from the sin of walking according to our own understanding, and we are fulfilling the works that belong to our sonship in Christ. Through offering, the life of Christ is being multiplied and ministered by us to others.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering, our mind is being renewed and we are living differently. Rom 12:1-2. This is because we are being delivered from the delusion, or darkness, that results from living according to our other law. This deluding principle within us is being removed from us by the circumcision of Christ. The lie is being broken, and we are able to be conformed to reality. The Scriptures describe the reality to which we are conformed as 'the knowledge of the truth'. 1Ti 2:4. The *truth* is the word of the Father concerning our name and works as a son of God in Christ. We come to reality through travail and chastisement, which are only found in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Prison houses

Writing to the church in Corinth, Paul highlighted a troubling phenomenon. A person could be born of God and yet come under the judgement that belongs to those who are dead to God in trespasses and the uncircumcision of their flesh. He said that these people ate and drank the elements of the communion in an unworthy manner, because they did not discern the Lord's body. That is, *they did not know, or had forgotten*, that their old man was crucified with Christ so that the body of sin might be done away with. Rom 6:6 As a consequence, they were suffering the judgement that belongs to the body of death. They were becoming weak and sick, and some were even dying before their time. 1Co 11:29-30.

A person will be unable to *discern* the Lord's body if they cease receiving *illumination* from Christ's blood that speaks. Because they cannot see, they cannot reckon themselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. They cease receiving illumination because they refuse the Lord who speaks through the messengers He sends. Heb 12:25. They do not 'lift their voice for understanding'; that is, they do not seek fellowship with those who proclaim the word to them, because their hearts are not open to them. Pro 2:3. They have drawn back in unbelief. Instead, they trust in themselves and their own religious, self-centred understanding of good and evil. Paul described this as being 'carnally minded', and explained that this way of living leads only to death. Rom 8:6.

A common reason why people are unable to receive the word of present truth is because they remain loyal to doctrines, traditions and leaders who have historical significance for them. The Scriptures teach us that those who refuse to deal with their past are *bound to their past*. It becomes the defining influence of their lives. Paul described this influence as part of 'the body of death'. Rom 7:24. This body of death is accompanied by an aroma of death that leads to death. 2Co 2:16. By this, we mean that the body of death is accompanied by the expression of death, including frustration, cynicism, anxiety, depression, anger, corruption. These expressions are the works of the flesh, and Paul said, 'If you live according to the flesh you will die.' Gal 5:19-21. Rom 8:13.

Jesus described a particularly notable manifestation of the body of death when He said, 'Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! *Because you build the tombs of the prophets and adorn the monuments of the righteous.*' Mat 23:29. The scribes and Pharisees built these tombs and monuments in an attempt to define the present reality of their life by

their loyalty and their professed adherence to the ministry of these prophetic messengers of the Lord.

The aroma of death that accompanied their homage to the prophets through the building of tombs and monuments was their persecution of the messengers whom the Lord sent with the word of present truth, to call them from their dead works and to walk in the light of His word. Specifically, Jesus said, 'Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city.' Mat 23:34.

As we have said, this mindset is evident in those who define themselves as being followers of religious leaders of past historical Christian movements. Those who live from this basis derive identity from their connection to these figures and movements, and they judge the proceeding word from the basis of former traditions that no longer have life in them. The tomb of a prophet, or a saint, is not where we are to gather. It is not the basis for *fellowship*. By definition, a tomb is a place of death.

Those who live this way are in 'prison houses' of their own making in the midst of the house of God. Mercifully, even in this circumstance, the Lord turns their judgement into chastening. He does this in the hope that they will not be condemned with the world. 1Co 11:32. The way of escape is in their own hand. If they humble themselves, they will be able to turn, by the grace of God, to the Lord and to receive illumination. Through grace, they will be delivered from darkness and into fellowship in the light, where their sufferings will be commuted from judgement to chastening, in Christ. 1Pe 2:9.

Paul exhorted us all in this regard, writing, 'Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed'. Heb 12:12-13. We 'make straight paths' for our feet by turning to receive the word and by reckoning ourselves to dead to sin and alive to God in Christ. However, if we will not turn to the Lord and be restored to the path that He has perfected for us, we will be turned out of the way.

This reveals that there is a second 'door' to these prison houses. This door does not lead to life but, rather, to the departure of these people from the church itself. Paul described believers who refuse to receive the word of God as those who sin wilfully after having received a knowledge

of the truth. He said that for these people there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. Heb 10:26. They are being taken out and forgotten by God, as part of the body of sin. Heb 10:27. Jesus said that there would be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Mat 13:41-42.

The keys of the kingdom

We cannot escape our captivity, or prisons, without entering the kingdom of God through the Door. Jesus said, '*I am the Door*. If anyone enters by Me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture.' Joh 10:9. A person requires keys to enter through the Door to the kingdom of heaven. Jesus has these keys. He declared to the apostle John, "Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. *And I have the keys of Hades and of Death*.' Rev 1:17-18.

The word 'Hades' literally means 'the unseen realm'. It describes the context of the old creation, in which sin reigned in death. Rom 5:21. Through Christ's offering on the cross, judgement was passed on the whole of the old creation. 2Co 5:17. It was condemned and forgotten by God. That is why the old creation is now an 'unseen realm'.

The keys of Hades and of Death were manifest when Christ died on the cross as the body of sin. Having been made sin, He was brought back from the death of sin by the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Heb 13:20. The old creation passed away when Christ died on the cross. It passed into the sea of God's forgetfulness when Christ was delivered from death, and His Spirit was received into the hands of the Father. Luk 23:46. Psa 18:16. The keys of Hades and Death are the means by which we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and are delivered from our death as part of the old creation to live by the Spirit as a new creation in Christ.

We can identify three keys to the kingdom of God. The *first* key is the word of the cross that grants to us illumination and faith so that we can see and accept our calling as a son of God. 1Co 1:26. Rom 10:17. The *second* key is baptism, through which a son of God is crucified with Christ and joined to the body of sin. Having been united in the likeness of His death through the waters of baptism, we are made alive by the Spirit of the Father, the Holy Spirit and the resurrection life that is in Christ's blood. Rom 6:3-5. Rom 8:11. Heb 13:20. The *third* key is the ministry of the Spirit, enabling our participation in the body and blood of Jesus Christ. The Spirit is the essence of the New Covenant. 2Co 3:6. The

Holy Spirit enables our particular participation in the body of Christ as a son of God. This is because the Spirit is the life and expression of our name as a son of God.

Importantly, Christ did not give these keys to every individual believer or to every believing household. He gave the keys of the kingdom *to His messengers*. Mat 16:16-19. Mat 18:18. Joh 20:22-23. This is a foundational principle in the church. We note Jesus' words to Peter, 'You are Peter, and on this rock [or foundation] I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And *I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven*, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Mat 16:18-19.

Jesus described the messengers to whom He gives the keys of the kingdom as 'doorkeepers'. He said, 'It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and *gave authority* to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the *doorkeeper to watch*.' Mar 13:34. The doorkeepers are to guard the sheepfold. They are to open the door to Christ so that He can speak to His sheep. Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, he who does not enter the sheepfold by the door, but climbs up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out.' Joh 10:1-3.

The authority of the name above every name

The messengers of Christ proclaim the word of the cross. Their message is Christ and Him crucified. 1Co 2:2. They are sent by Christ with this message because all authority has been given to Him by the Father. Jesus said to His disciples, 'All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptising them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, *I am with you always*, even to the end of the age.' Mat 28:18-20.

All authority in heaven and on earth was given to Jesus when He received from the Father the name above every name. Mat 28:18. Php 2:9-10. When a messenger who has been sent by Christ as part of a presbytery proclaims the word of the cross, Christ is with them. Mat 28:20. Through the declaration of the word, they establish the context for meeting in Christ's name. They received this authority from Christ. Mar 13:34. This

was John's point when he said, '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 1:3. The reality of two or three meeting in the name of Jesus requires the ministry of the word from a presbytery that is in Christ's hand. If our fellowship is not with the presbytery, Christ is not with us, even if we claim to be meeting in His name.

The life of the covenant, expressed in the communion meal, is applied to our lives only when we come together as members of Christ's body for fellowship with Him, His messengers, and one another. We receive the keys of covenant life in the fellowship of body ministry. The word of present truth, given to Christ's messengers, is focused for understanding, and applied to our lives, by the Holy Spirit, through the ministry of members of the body of Christ.

Chapter 5

The ministry of a lampstand church

The lampstand is a symbol of the fellowship of light

Christian churches are symbolised in the book of Revelation as seven golden lampstands. Rev 1:20. In the tabernacle of Moses, the lampstand was a piece of furniture that provided light in the holy place. In particular, the lampstand focused light within the holy place so that the priests could approach Yahweh and make offering for themselves and for the nation of Israel. The light from the lampstand directed their way toward the fellowship of Yahweh that shone as a light called the '*Shekinah*' from above the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. Lev 16:2. Isa 37:16. The lampstand within the tabernacle was crafted in the form of an almond tree with seven branches and twenty-two blossoms. The blossom at the top of each branch was the receptacle in which each of the seven lamps was placed. The petals of these flowers were designed and fashioned to reflect and focus the light of the lamp in much the same way as a mirror functions.

From one piece of gold, the lampstand was hammered into the likeness of an almond tree in full blossom. Exo 25:31-40. It was a picture of a

flower opening up in bloom. When, in nature, a tree or plant blossoms, the colour and shape of its flowers communicate its 'desire' for fruitfulness in the coming season. It also sends out a fragrance that attracts pollinators to visit and 'fellowship' with it as it multiplies its life through 'offering'.

The apostle Paul used the imagery of fragrance being diffused to describe the nature and effect of his ministry as a messenger of Christ. Writing to the Corinthians, he said, 'Now thanks be to God who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and through us *diffuses the fragrance* of His knowledge in every place'. 2Co 2:14. In the same way that a flower's fragrance is diffused when it blossoms, the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ was diffused when Paul and his fellow messengers, as an apostolic administration, were set in the flowers, or congregations, of Christ's lampstand church. Paul further explained, 'For we are to God the fragrance [of the body of Christ as a lampstand church] among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To the one we are the aroma of death leading to death, and to the other the aroma of life leading to life.' 2Co 2:15-16.

The lampstand within the holy place was a symbol of the fellowship of light. 1Jn 1:7. Paul used the symbol of a lamp set upon a lampstand to portray the apostolic ministry in which he and his fellow presbyters were engaged. He said, 'For so the Lord has commanded us: "I have *set you* as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth".' Act 13:47. Paul was indicating that they were set as lamps upon a lampstand so that the light of the gospel of sonship would be shone before men. Mat 5:15-16. Light shone in, and from, the church when a lamp presbytery was set in the 'flower' of a church congregation.

The ministry of Christ among the lampstand churches

In the first three chapters of the book of Revelation, Christ addressed the lamp presbyteries of His churches as Yahweh Son, who is also the Son of God and the Son of Man. The apostle John saw Christ standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands, clothed with the girdle and robes of His eternal priesthood as King-Priest. John observed that the Son's 'head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength'. Rev 1:14-16.

As we considered in Part 1 of *Lampstand Churches*, John was identifying the seven elements of Christ's Melchizedek priesthood that were 'designated' through the seven wounding events that He endured during His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary. Heb 5:8-10. These elements of Christ's priesthood are now fully active as He ministers as our great High Priest among His lampstand churches.

Christ, as the immortal Head of His church, speaks first to His lamp presbyters, and then to all those in His churches who have an ear to hear what the Spirit says. Rev 2:1,7. As we will consider further in the next chapter, it is a confronting experience when He meets us in this way. As Yahweh Son, He adjusts some presbyters, while others are rebuked, commended, chastened or judged. He also prophetically declares to His presbyters events that will soon take place and that will become the experience of the congregations over which they preside. When Christ addresses us in this way, He is speaking to us as the Head of the church. He is speaking as Yahweh Son. However, we are *not* being changed into the image of Christ *as Yahweh Son* through this ministry. This is because Yahweh Son is *unique* in His own name and sanctification.

Christ, the Head of His church, is also the Son of God and Son of Man, and holds the position of the Father's Firstborn. He is described as 'the Beginning of the creation of God', 'the firstborn over all creation', 'the firstborn from the dead', and 'the firstborn among many brethren'. Rev 3:14. Col 1:15. Rev 1:5. Rom 8:29. Christ is preeminent in His church because He is the Father's Firstborn, who was appointed as the Head over all creation. Col 1:18. His church is called 'the church of the firstborn whose names are written in heaven', because the church belongs to Him. Heb 12:23. It is for this reason that He walks among us in the full authority of His headship as the Father's Firstborn.

However, as the Son and Seed of God, the Spirit of Christ dwells within the hearts of the sons of God. He is the *express image* of our *sonship*. The light of our sonship from the Father shines from the face of Christ into our hearts. 2Co 3:18. 2Co 4:3-6. As the light of our sonship is shone from the face of Christ, we are being changed from glory to glory *into the image of His sonship as the only begotten Son of the Father*. Joh 1:14. This change is being accomplished by His Spirit that dwells within us. 2Co 3:18.

Christ meets us in both of these aspects of His lordship - as Yahweh Son and Son of God - in the body ministry of a lampstand church. He does this through the combined ministry of the presbytery as a star-lamp that

belongs to a lampstand church, and through the individual members of a congregation, who are symbolised as the 'petals' of the flower in which the lamp is placed.

The light of a lamp presbytery that is part of a 'star' in the right hand of Christ is the glory of Yahweh Son, who walks in the midst of His seven lampstand churches. Rev 1:13. Rev 3:21. We note, in this regard, that one star is comprised of seven lamps that belong to one lampstand. Rev 1:20. The word of Yahweh Son brings prophetic direction, adjustment and change to the presbytery and to the members of the body of Christ through the ascension gift graces of the apostle, the prophet, the evangelist, and the pastor-teacher. These are the gifts that Christ Himself has given to the body for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry. Eph 4:11-12.

As we just noted, a flower on the lampstand symbolises a local communion gathering. The petals of the flower are the individual members of the church. The light of the lamp presbytery shines on the petals of a golden lampstand flower that has been formed to reflect and focus light in front of the lampstand in the manner of a *mirror*. The light that they minister, through body ministry, is the light of the gospel of sonship that shines from the face of Christ into the hearts of their hearers. Through this ministry, sons of God are receiving the light of the knowledge of their sonship from the face of Christ. Every son of God, including those who are part of the presbytery, must receive this ministry if they are to know God, and to be known by Him, as a son.

Explaining this principle of body ministry, Paul wrote, 'For we know *in part* and we prophesy *in part* ... for now we see in a mirror [the image of Christ, who is the image of our sonship], but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known'. 1Co 13:9,12. Paul was explaining that the light that shines through body ministry is *dim*, yet it does minister the light that is necessary for the progressive attainment of a hearer's sonship. 1Co 13:11.

The light is dim because we, as 'petals' who belong to a church congregation, are still in a process of refinement. The divine nature that belongs to us as sons of God is symbolised in the Scriptures as gold, silver and precious stones. 1Co 3:12-13. In relation to the ministry of a lampstand and the petals that belong to its flowers, gold is refined in a furnace to remove the impurities that subdue its brightness and its capacity to reflect the light, which is the knowledge of the glory of God. Mal 3:2-3. 2Co 4:6. Through fiery trials, we are increasingly being made

adequate for our participation in this ministry. 1Pe 1:6-7. 1Pe 4:12-14. Furthermore, as petals, we are adjusted by the hand of Christ to better focus the light of those who minister among us as a lamp when we gather for communion.

The communion gathering is a body ministry service. In this regard, Jesus said that the communion is the New Covenant in Christ's blood.

Luk 22:20. The word of the New Covenant, which is the Everlasting Covenant, is proclaimed by Christ's blood. His life was in His blood, and is the light of men. Lev 17:11. Joh 1:4. Furthermore, we note that Christ is *made known to us* in the breaking of the bread. Luk 24:30-31. The apostle John said that this is eternal life, writing, 'And we know that the Son of God has come and has given us *an understanding* [enlightened by the life in the blood], *that we may know Him who is true*; and we are in Him who is true, in His Son Jesus Christ. This is the true God and *eternal life*.' 1Jn 5:20.

Jesus is the lampstand

The bread and wine of the communion is ministered to us by Christ, our High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Gen 14:18. Through these elements, Christ ministers to us a *participation* in His twenty-one-hour offering journey. 1Co 10:16. The bread and wine of the last supper, which Jesus established as the first communion service, was the provision for His whole offering journey. Through His offering, He fulfilled all things. He was the fulfilment, or substance, of Moses' tabernacle, and of the feasts of the Old Covenant. Col 2:17.

In Gethsemane, Christ was set forth as the Lamb of God. Isa 53:7-8. He was the *Passover* Lamb for the Father's house. Through the sin offering and the burnt offering of Passover, we are redeemed to God, and are born from the death of sin with Christ. Highlighting communion as our fellowship in the Passover, Paul exhorted us, saying, 'Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. *Therefore let us keep the feast*, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' 1Co 5:7-8.

Concerning Christ's offering, the apostle Paul also declared that Christ was set forth as a mercy seat. Through seven wounding events, as He journeyed from Gethsemane to Calvary, His blood was sprinkled seven times upon His body. Rom 3:25. By identifying Jesus as our Mercy Seat, Paul was specifically referring to Him as being the fulfilment of the *Day of Atonement*. In the same way that eating and drinking the communion

is our participation in the Feast of Passover, the communion is also our participation in the Day of Atonement. We know this because Paul exhorted us, saying, 'Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, *having our hearts sprinkled* from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water.' Heb 10:22. To do this, he said that we must not forsake 'the assembling of ourselves together [at communion]'. Heb 10:25.

In the tabernacle of Moses, the mercy seat was the top piece, or lid, of the ark of the covenant. This was the piece of furniture in the most holy place of the tabernacle. On either end of the mercy seat were two cherubim, facing each other. The wings of the cherubim were outstretched above the mercy seat, and their faces were bowed toward the mercy seat.

On the Day of Atonement, Yahweh would appear above the mercy seat, and between the cherubim, in a cloud. Lev 16:2. This cloud was the *Shekinah*, or glory, of God's presence. The high priest approached the ark of the covenant by first placing incense on the coals of the golden altar which, on that day, was brought into the most holy place. When the incense was placed on the coals, it formed a cloud of incense that mingled with the *Shekinah* of Yahweh's presence. Lev 16:13. The high priest then sprinkled the mercy seat seven times with the blood of the sacrifices to make atonement for himself, his family, and for the nation of Israel. Lev 16:14-17.

The key point to note is that the sprinkling of blood happened in the light of Yahweh's own fellowship - i.e. where the *Shekinah* glory of God was manifest. Christ was set forth, or fully revealed, as the Mercy Seat when His blood was sprinkled *a seventh time*. This is most significant. When Christ was wounded a seventh time, all the people of the Earth, whether Jew or Gentile, were given the opportunity to look into the most holy place of the true tabernacle. The question is, 'What do we see when Christ is set forth as our Mercy Seat?' In other words, 'What do we see when we look into the most holy place?'

It is amazing to realise that we see a lampstand! This is how the *Shekinah* glory of God is being expressed in the church age. How do we know this? In the first instance, we know this because Jesus Himself is the Lampstand. He is described in the Scriptures as 'a rod and branch of an almond tree'. Jer 1:11. Isa 11:1. Zec 6:12. As the Branch, He is also the flowers that belong to the branch. Significantly, Jesus identified Himself as 'the light of the world'. Joh 8:12. He was saying that He is the fullness

of lamp-light, which is symbolised in the Scriptures as *seven lamps* of a lampstand.

In Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we explained that the *zoe*-life of the Father, which was in Christ's blood, is *exanastasis* life. The apostle John identified this life as '*the light of men*'. Joh 1:4. Each wounding event that caused Christ's blood to be shed and sprinkled on His body was speaking, and bringing *illumination!* Heb 12:24.

Jesus said to His disciples, 'I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not *walk* in darkness, but have the light of life.' Joh 8:12. We recognise that the journey of Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross was the pathway that revealed the light of life. Each wounding event that caused the blood of Christ to be sprinkled so that it speaks, became the manifestation of a lamp that gives light. In this regard, the offering of Christ comprises *seven illuminating events*. This is an amazing point!

The end of Christ's journey was the cross. This was the highpoint of His journey when all of the elements of His blood were speaking together to bring illumination. Jesus declared, 'If I be lifted up ... I will draw all peoples to Myself.' Joh 12:32. When He was lifted up on the cross, the light of life was fully revealed *as seven lamps on a lampstand*. The seven lamps of the lampstand represent *the seven expressions of light* that are the fruit of the seven sprinklings of Christ's blood.

The restoration of the church

Recognising that Christ was established and revealed as a lampstand through His offering journey has significant implications for how we understand the restoration and expression of His body, represented as seven lampstand churches, in the world. Many people within, and beyond, our stream of churches became enamoured with a doctrine proclaiming the coming together of the body of Christ. This was the belief that God would move on the hearts of people in different church groups, causing them to put off their doctrinal differences and to come together to be the one body of Christ. In a spirit of unity, each person would be affirmed in their unique participation and ministry as part of the church.

However, this doctrine is a *rejection* of the lampstand pattern that Christ had revealed through His offering, and had established through the ministry of the apostle Paul. The writings of Paul, and Christ's letters to the seven lampstand churches of Asia, which were documented for us by

the apostle John in the book of Revelation, reveal that the *only* way that we can be joined together as part of Christ's administration, which is suitable for the fullness of times, is to be born as a son of God and to be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Only those who die with Christ as members of His body are part of the new creation. In this fellowship, every person must put off the carnal projections of shame that are derived from living according to the other law. These are our self-defined works and ministries. As these fleshly propensities are cut from our heart through fellowship in the circumcision of Christ, His blood is sprinkled on our heart, cleansing our evil conscience from dead works, and giving to us Christ's life to be our life. Only through this process are we able to see clearly, and to meet and worship with others in Spirit and in truth. Joh 4:24.

As we approach the time of the end and lawlessness abounds in our society, it is essential that we repent of our loyalty to religious and denominational traditions and ecumenical aspirations. If we do not turn to the Lord and to the fellowship of offering that He is inviting us to join, Jesus said that our love would most certainly grow cold. Mat 24:9-12. However, if we turn to the Lord and are illuminated by the gospel of sonship, we will belong among those who proclaim the gospel of the kingdom in all the world as a witness to all the nations. Mat 24:13-14.

Ministering and receiving the light of life at communion

We gather to eat the bread and wine of communion in faith for our participation in the Feast of Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Practically, we come ready to give and receive through body ministry, which operates when individual members of a congregation, symbolised as 'petals' of a 'flower', reflect and focus the light of a lamp presbytery. A lamp presbytery is part of a star in the right hand of Christ, which reveals the glory of His headship.

Every Christian is to reveal Christ as a member of a lampstand church. This begins with their weekly participation in the communion meal. As Paul declared, 'For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, *you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes.*' 1Co 11:26. We do proclaim His death at the communion gathering, and also during the coming week as we fulfil the works that the Father has prepared for us to do.

Those who partake of the communion are to both *minister* and *receive* the light of life that shines from the face of Christ. That is, as members of

the body of Christ, we are to shine the light of the word that He ministers to us through the stars that are in His hand and that He places in every congregation flower. As we noted earlier, this light shines on the pathway that leads to the *Shekinah*, which is the fellowship of Yahweh. In this fellowship is the counsel of Their Everlasting Covenant in which our sonship name and works are made known and are revealed to us.

In order to receive the light that shines from Christ's face through the ministry of the petals of His lampstand church, we must turn to the Lord so that the veil of who we think we are, and how we should live, can be removed from our eyes. When this happens, we are able to receive the light of life into our hearts, and to be changed into the image of Christ's sonship. Summarising this principle, Paul wrote, 'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord'. 2Co 3:18.

As we receive the light of body ministry, we are able to know the Lord, and to know who we are and the works that we are to do as sons of God. When we receive, and are established in, the fellowship of the Father and the Son (which is the *Shekinah*), we are, in fact, being further formed and established as part of His lampstand church, which is the body of Christ. This is because our work is to reveal the same light, from which we are being born, to others in the church and to the world. We see that to receive the ministry of light from the lampstand, and to participate in this ministry as part of the lampstand, is the fellowship of giving and receiving to which we are joined by partaking of the bread and wine of communion.

Looking into the mirror

In Chapter 4, we contrasted the way in which a spiritual person and a carnal person respond to the contrary circumstances that they experience in life. We noted that in our lives, we all experience distresses such as disputes, sicknesses, losses, accidents and injustices. At times, we make poor responses to these difficulties as we seek to preserve our lives. These responses, motivated by the other law, are sin, and they bring us under the condemnation of the Law.

How we respond in these situations will depend upon the mirror into which we look and from which we receive understanding and direction for our lives. We can either look into the mirror of our own fleshly perspective, which the Scriptures liken to a veil over the eyes of our

heart, or we can look into the mirror of the face of Christ by receiving the word that is ministered by the Spirit at the communion table through the ministry of the members of the body of Christ.

A spiritual person is a son of God who is led by the Spirit of God. Rom 8:14. They are spiritual because they receive the ministry of the New Covenant at communion. That is, they turn to the Lord to receive His word that shines as light from the mirror of His face by the Spirit, through body ministry. Paul described this as the ministry of the Spirit who gives life. 2Co 3:6. By this means, they receive illumination and faith for their participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Joh 1:9. Rom 10:17. In the midst of their difficult circumstances, they recognise that Christ died their death and made it *His* death. As they, in Christ, now die this death with Him, they are able, by the Spirit, to put to death their carnal responses, thoughts and deeds, and to proceed with their obedience as a son of God. Rom 8:13.

In contrast, the carnal Christian, motivated by the other law, will endeavour to use the Law of God to either justify or condemn their carnal responses. Rom 2:15. Responding to life in this manner demonstrates that a person has not been illuminated by the gospel, or else, that they have forgotten the word of God that calls them to receive the chastening of the Lord in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Heb 12:5-6. Responding to life in this manner demonstrates that the eyes of their understanding remain shrouded with a veil of religious, self-righteous justification. This way of relating does not belong to the law of the Spirit of life, which is the Spirit of Christ within a son of God. Rom 8:2.

The veil of our own law is not the mirror into which we are to look. As we noted earlier, the mirror that is able to reflect the image of our sonship into our hearts, enabling us to know ourselves and to progressively proceed in glory from one to degree to another, is found *only* in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

By continuing to receive the ministry of the gospel, we are being progressively illuminated and transformed into the image of Christ's sonship. That is, we are progressively understanding who and what we are to become as sons of God as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's body. In fellowship, we receive the light of the gospel that shines from Christ's face. He is being formed within us as we communicate together in the fellowship of His offering. Gal 4:19. Pro 27:17.

As we grow from being babes in Christ, we mature and are able to put away childish things. 1Co 13:11. By this means, the darkness of our own carnal way of living is passing away, and the light of our sonship is increasingly being revealed in Christ. As we mature, our spiritual sight becomes clearer. As the wise man noted, 'The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines ever brighter unto the perfect day'. Pro 4:18. When the perfect day has come, we will see Christ as He is. 1Jn 3:2.

Paul also spoke to the Philippian church about attaining increasing levels of expression and maturity as sons of God. He said that the resurrection life that is in the Spirit of Christ, who dwells within us, gives to us the capacity to live as sons of God. He then spoke of walking by the rule of progressive attainment, writing, 'Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind'. Php 3:16.

In his epistle, James, the Lord's brother, called 'walking by the rule of progressive attainment', 'the perfect law of liberty'. Jas 1:25. He described the law of liberty as a 'mirror'. Jas 1:23-25. This mirror is the word that teaches us about our sonship, and proclaims what our works are to be, as well as teaching us how we are to relate together as sons of God. James said that, when we look into this mirror, we are under obligation to hear God's word as it is ministered to us. We are not to be forgetful hearers of the word, but we are to be doers of the word. Jas 1:25. He said that if we are not obedient sons, then we are living in deception. Jas 1:23-24. In other words, we are continuing to live in the delusion and darkness of our own way, as the eyes of our heart remain veiled to the word of truth concerning our sonship.

Christ formed in the members of the body of Christ

Virtue comes from the illumination of faith that we receive by hearing the word that Christ's blood speaks to us. As the apostle Peter explained, 'But also for this very reason, giving all diligence, *add to your faith virtue*, to virtue knowledge, to knowledge self-control, to self-control perseverance, to perseverance godliness, to godliness brotherly kindness, and to brotherly kindness love. For if these things are yours and abound, you will be neither barren nor unfruitful *in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*' 2Pe 1:5-8. In this passage of Scripture, Peter was describing the process by which we come to know Christ and are known by Him; that is, how we obtain *exanastasis*, or eternal life. 1Jn 5:20.

'Virtue' refers to the qualities of *exanastasis* life that belong to a son of God, and are to increase in us as we live by the faith of the Son of God, which we receive by hearing His blood that speaks. Rom 10:17.

Heb 12:24. The word that we receive must be mixed with faith in us in order for virtue to be revealed in our lives, enabling us to stand up in our name as sons of God. Heb 4:2. Those who are born of this life must proceed, through baptism, to become members in particular of Christ's body. 1Co 12:27. In other words, Christ must be formed in every hearer if they are to be functional members of the body of Christ. Gal 4:19. Body ministry will not be effective unless we understand what it means to be members of the body of Christ.

So, how is Christ formed within a person? It is through *travail*. When Paul admonished the Galatians for departing from the Spirit to live according to the endeavours and expression of their own flesh, he said to them, 'My little children, for whom I labour [travail] in birth again until Christ is formed in you.' Gal 4:19. Paul was referring to his fellowship in the travail of Christ in Gethsemane.

Messengers of Christ are joined to Christ's travail, which is the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, so that their hearers will receive the faith of the Son of God through the word that they preach. They minister in weakness, speaking in Christ, in the sight of God. 2Co 12:19. Through their ministry, Christ's blood speaks to their hearers because the messengers are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering, through which His blood was sprinkled, and His life was multiplied to become the life of those who joined His offering. Those who then receive this faith by hearing the word that is preached by God's messengers, are joined to the same travail as those who travail for them.

This was Paul's point when he testified, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation, that we may be able to comfort those who are in any trouble, with the comfort with which we ourselves are comforted by God ... and our hope for you is steadfast, because we know that as you are partakers of the sufferings, so also you will partake of the consolation.' 2Co 1:3-4,7.

A true messenger of Christ will have a weak, travailing profile of ministry. They will be putting off any other fleshly mode of ministry that uses bodily presence and self-promoting ministry expression to provoke a response from their hearers, and to gain adherents to their teaching. Those who pursue such carnal approaches to ministry are endeavouring

to minister in the mode of the angels, who are created full of wisdom, and who are mighty in strength and power. Psa 103:20. We note, of course, that Lucifer was full of wisdom and perfect in beauty, and that the workmanship of his timbrels and pipes was prepared for him on the day that he was created. Eze 28:12-13.

Paul described these approaches to ministry as 'hidden things of shame', which he and his fellow presbyters had renounced. 2Co 4:2. This is a key point. Our default mode of ministry will be according to the flesh. We must all repent from viewing these ways of ministering in the church as being legitimate. As we noted in Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, those who pursue this fleshly way of ministry are at risk of becoming ministers of Satan. Certainly, if they will not renounce this mode of ministry through repentance, they will corrupt and will spiritually die.

Paul testified, saying, 'Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified.' 1Co 9:26-27. Likewise, we must not be uncertain about the gospel of sonship, nor regarding our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Neither can we fight as one who 'beats the air', as though a form of fleshly ministry has any capacity to bring change or deliverance to a hearer. To think that it can bring change and can minister life is to be deceived as one who ministers without simplicity or godly sincerity. 2Co 1:12. Instead, we must 'run' as those who are obtaining their sonship by receiving the blood that speaks, and by living in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

It is essential that we hold fast to the Head of the body, who is Yahweh Son, 'from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God'. Col 2:19. We hold fast to Christ, the Head, through fellowship with those who are part of the star-messengers who are in His right hand. These are the lamp presbyteries of Christ's churches. Rev 1:20. 1Jn 1:1-4.

We, who are the members of the body of Christ, are the petals of the flower into which the lamp of the Lord is placed. We are able to participate in the reflecting of the light of the lamp as Christ is being formed in us, and as the love of God is being poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. Rom 5:5. It is through this ministry that the body of Christ is able to make increase of itself in love. Eph 4:16.

The body edifying itself in love

In order to be effective members of the body of Christ, which is the church, we must cease from holding on to our religious traditions and doctrines, and must live according to the gospel of sonship. Paul said that this is necessary so that we are able to *speak the truth in love*.

Eph 4:15. He then said that we are to speak in this way so that we might '*grow up* in all things into Him who is the Head – Christ – from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love'. Eph 4:15-16.

If speaking the truth in love causes us to grow up in Christ, it obviously has a broader application than that of merely talking with other people. 'The truth' is the word of God the Father. Jesus said, 'He who *sent Me is true*; and I speak to the world those things which I *heard from Him*.' Joh 8:26. The Father's word declares our *sonship*. It defines the truth of our name and works which He prepared for us in Christ before the creation of the heavens and the earth.

God is love, and His love is revealed by offering. To speak the truth in love, therefore, is to do the works that belong to our sonship, *by offering*, as a member of the body of Christ. We can only speak the truth by laying down our life to reveal another. This is the nature of offering love that Christ demonstrated. Php 2:5-8. Joh 10:17-18. Joh 15:13. Highlighting the reality that the works of sonship can be expressed only by love, Paul wrote, 'Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, but have not love, *I am nothing*'. 1Co 13:2. Significantly, such an expression of love causes the growth of the whole body for the edifying of itself in love. Let's consider this further.

God the Father composed the body of Christ. 1Co 12:24. The whole body is Christ, and the Father sets each particular member of Christ in the body, *as He pleases*. 1Co 12:18. That is, He sets each person in the body according to His will for the whole of their life as a son of God. Each of us needs to be illuminated regarding our unique name and function as a particular member of the body of Christ. This means that we need to be born of God and to continue to mature and walk as a son of light. Our function is the expression of the love of God that is unique to our sonship. As John explained, 'Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God.' 1Jn 4:7.

Our participation, by offering, in the fellowship of the body of Christ requires *faith*. We receive *the faith of the Son of God* by receiving the word that is spoken to us by His sprinkled blood. This word not only grants to us faith for participation; it also cleanses our heart from dead works so that we are able to serve the living God. We serve God by doing the works that are particular to our function as a member of the body of Christ, rather than by doing the works that belong to our own ideas of who we are and what we should be doing.

As we give ourselves to travail, the Lord will bring to birth the specific capacities that are necessary for our expression as a member of His body. This expression is a ministry of the resurrection life of Christ to one another, in unique and specific ways, which causes the body of Christ to be built up in love.

Lights shining in the world

Paul had learned the lesson that we also must learn as members of the body of Christ, for it is, likewise, our work to diffuse the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ to others. Paul said that the communication of our faith becomes effective when we acknowledge every good thing that is in us, in Christ Jesus. Phi 5-6. 'Every good thing in us' is the life of Christ that is becoming our life. We testify to this reality by the way in which we conduct ourselves and share with others, each day. Through our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, we are being changed, and His life is becoming our life. Those with whom we interact in the course of life are able to observe the culture of Christ by the way that we live, and through the testimony that we share with them. This is how the fragrance of the knowledge of Christ is diffused.

Our work as members of the body of Christ is to focus and reflect the light of life to others. To be effective in this work, we must open our hearts and be hospitable to others with the gospel of Christ. Knowing and being known by others is the essence and implication of the gospel. As we continue to receive and walk in the light of the word that proclaims the message of our sonship, we are being progressively changed from glory to glory, into the image of Christ's sonship. 2Co 3:18. We are able to share, through testimony, the light of this message with others. This is the basis of true hospitality, and the means by which the love of God is expressed to others.

Chapter 6

Beholding Christ when He comes

The Alpha and the Omega

The content of the book of Revelation was given to Jesus by the Father to show, or to make known, to His servants in the church age. Rev 1:1.

Describing how Jesus comes with this message, the apostle John wrote, 'Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.' Rev 1:7.

Jesus is coming with clouds as 'the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'.

Rev 1:8. When Christ makes Himself known to a person as the *Alpha* and *Omega*, they are caused to look on Him and to receive what He has to give to them. Emphasising this point, Jesus concluded the book of Revelation by declaring, 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to *every one* according to his work. I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.'

Rev 22:12-13.

At the conclusion of His offering journey, Jesus was manifest as 'I AM' – Him who is and who was and who is coming. Joh 8:28. Rev 1:8. The reward that is with Jesus, which He gives to everyone according to their works, is the fruit of His finished offering as I AM. On the cross, the Son of Man was both the full manifestation of God's judgement on sin, and the full manifestation of salvation. In this regard, His death on the cross revealed the implications of death for all mankind. Through the word of the cross that is preached by God's messengers, every person is drawn to look on Him whom they have pierced. Joh 12:32. Zec 12:10.

Under the influence of grace and supplication, every hearer has a *choice* to make. They can choose to resist the grace of God and continue to walk in unbelief and according to their own understanding. Heb 10:38. Pro 3:5. To do so is to follow the way that leads to death. Or, they can receive His invitation to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as the means of gaining their sonship and eternal life. These two possible responses to the word of the cross were typified by the two thieves who were crucified with Christ on Mount Calvary. Luk 23:39-43.

The reward that a person receives from Christ is commensurate with their *response to seeing Him* when the word of the cross is preached to them. Those who reject Christ, and the gospel of sonship that He proclaims to them, continue to pursue their own name and works. Their reward will be the torment of eternal judgement. In contrast, those who, through repentance and faith, receive Christ's word and are baptised into His death, burial and resurrection, obtain the blessing of eternal salvation. In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, His life is becoming their life, and they are able to fulfil the works of sonship that the Father has prepared for them in Christ.

The resurrection life of God that was resident in the blood of Jesus is the reward of blessing that belongs to those who receive the salvation of the Lord and are doing the works of sonship that the Father prepared for them in Christ. This life was multiplied and given to become the life of the sons of God when Christ's blood was shed and sprinkled on His body. Christ's blood was shed through the sufferings that He experienced when our reproaches against the Father were progressively laid on Him. Psa 69:9.

There are two key aspects of blessing that belong to those who do not refuse the gospel that is proclaimed to them by Christ's messengers. In the first instance, they are blessed because their eyes and ears are enabled by the Spirit to see and to hear what God the Father has prepared

for those who love Him. Luk 10:23-24. 1Co 2:9-10. Those who love God are those who have been born of God and who know Him. 1Jn 4:7. A hearer whose eyes and ears are blessed is able to *see their calling* as a son of God in Christ. 1Co 1:26. This is what it means to 'see the kingdom of heaven'. Joh 3:3.

The second aspect of blessing is to *enter* the kingdom of heaven. Joh 3:5. A person who has received this blessing has been born as a son of God, and has been joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through baptism and an ongoing participation in communion. The apostle John taught that a believer demonstrates that they have been born of God, and love Him, by *keeping His commandments*. 1Jn 5:2. He said that those who keep the Father's commandments, or word, abide in Christ, and He abides in them. 1Jn 3:22. This is the implication of 'eating His flesh', which is the bread of communion, and 'drinking His blood', which is the cup of communion. Joh 6:56.

Those who partake of the tree of life by eating and drinking the elements of communion have eternal life and will be raised up on the last day. Joh 6:54. Eternal life is the blessing that is ministered through the command of the Father. Psa 133:3. Significantly, the apostle John concluded the book of Revelation by writing, '*Blessed* are those who do His commandments [as the sons of God], that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may *enter* through the gates into the city [as those who abide in the Son forever]'. Rev 22:14.

We obtain the blessing of our name and life as a son of God by hearing, receiving and obeying the command of the Father. That is, we are born again and are baptised into the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Christ abides in us and we abide in Him as we live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God through Christ, the Messenger of the Covenant. Deu 8:3. Mal 3:1. This is the implication of eating Christ's flesh and drinking His blood, which is the fruit of the tree of life. Through our ongoing fellowship in His offering and sufferings, Christ's life is becoming our life and we are being established as citizens of an eternal kingdom.

Grace and supplication poured out on John

Even though the apostle John had already been born of God and baptised in the name of Jesus, Christ revealed Himself to John as 'the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last'. Rev 1:11. This highlights the reality that Jesus continues to come to us in this manner to establish us as sons

of God, so that we might attain the full reward of sonship that was prepared for us by the Father, in Him. Rev 22:12-13.

A spirit of grace and supplication was poured out on John as he heard Jesus specifically declare to him, 'I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last.' Rev 1:11. It is evident that John responded under the influence of grace and supplication because, having heard the word of Jesus behind Him, John *turned* in repentance from his focus on the table of showbread, to *look and see* the Son of Man standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands. Rev 1:12. The prophet Zechariah declared that turning and looking to see the Son is the effect of grace and supplication. Zec 12:10. Christ, through His word, was calling John to move from functioning as part of the administration that was represented by the table of showbread, to be joined to the lampstand administration from which, and among which, Christ was ministering.

Having heard the word of the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, John saw that 'His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and His eyes like a flame of fire; His feet were like fine brass, as if refined in a furnace, and His voice as the sound of many waters; He had in His right hand seven stars, out of His mouth went a sharp two-edged sword, and His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength'. Rev 1:14-16.

The effect of hearing the word of Jesus and turning to look upon Him was that John fell at Christ's feet as a dead man. Rev 1:17. Evidently, John was looking on Him whom he had pierced and was mourning for the death of the Firstborn Son.

This is how the Son of Man, who is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, makes Himself known to everyone in the age of the church. He speaks to us through the symbols of His Melchizedek King-Priesthood. These aspects of His ministry include both the seven attributes that John identified in Chapter 1 of the book of Revelation, and the ways in which Christ identified Himself in His letters to the various churches of Asia. Through these symbols of His Melchizedek King-Priesthood, Christ ministers words of love that rebuke and chasten us. However, He comes, drawing near to us in this manner, because He wants us to draw near to Him and to know Him. Jas 4:8.

True mourning

When the Lord comes to meet us with His word, it is initially a confronting experience. We can be inclined to withdraw, and hide, from

the Lord because we are aware of our own vulnerability, and we fear our own destitution, or nakedness. However, awareness of our fallen condition *is not* the illumination that we receive from the Lord. Rather, it is the knowledge that we have obtained as a result of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The account of the Fall helps us to recognise this important distinction. We note that after Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, 'the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings'. Gen 3:7. Their awareness of their destitution, or nakedness, was the effect of the Fall. It was not the illuminating effect of the word of God. Yahweh *Elohim* came looking for Adam and the woman in the garden, calling to Adam, 'Where are you?' Gen 3:9. In response to the word of the Lord, Adam said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because [I knew] I was naked; and I hid myself.' Gen 3:10.

Fear and anxiety, because of shame, are our initial responses when the Lord comes to meet us as the *Alpha* and the *Omega*. However, these first emotions are not the mourning that results from looking upon Jesus whom we have killed. The mourning of those who look on Him whom they have pierced is the outcome of receiving grace and supplication that is poured out from Christ's heart as He addresses us *with eyes like a flame of fire*. Rev 1:14.

Through repentance, mourning under the influence of grace and supplication from Christ is turned into joy as we are joined, by the Holy Spirit, to the travail of Christ's offering and sufferings. Rom 8:26. In this fellowship, we are blessed, because the resurrection life of Christ is becoming *our* life. The apostle Paul defined this mourning as godly sorrow that produces repentance without regret, leading to eternal salvation. 2Co 7:10.

By His word, Christ draws us to His cross for this purpose. He wants us to join the fellowship of His offering. When He comes with eyes as a flame of fire and calls to us, we must not draw back from Him in fear and shame, nor refuse Him who speaks to us. Heb12:25. Paul reminded us of the words of Jesus, writing, 'Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him'. Heb 10:38.

If we only see and believe that Jesus died on our behalf, and we are unwilling to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, our

response to the word will continue to be the expression of shame and nakedness. Instead of godly sorrow joining us to the travail of Christ, through which we obtain our calling as a son of God, our sorrow that is motivated by shame will only produce dead works. Paul called this 'the sorrow of the world'. 2Co 7:10. These dead works are our attempts to cover our shame. We can do this in different ways, including endeavouring to alleviate our guilt through the confidential confession of our sin to a clergy-style leader; by working harder to do the works that we perceive to be good and pleasing to God; or by assigning blame to others for our sinful condition.

If this is our response to the Lord when He comes to us as the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, our shame and nakedness will be forever before us. Psa 51:3. This is because we have not been united together in the likeness of His death, so that we are receiving resurrection life and are living as spiritual sons of God in Christ. Rom 6:6. Unless we are delivered from our carnal way of living, and become spiritual, we will not be known by Christ on the day of judgement. Joh 3:6-8. Our works will not have been the expression of our name as a son of God in Christ. Rather, our works will have been the projections that we have manufactured to cover the shameful nakedness of our self-defined image. In other words, Christ will not *know* us, because we have not lived according to our name in Him. Our reward will be the eternal judgement that was manifested by Christ at the conclusion of His offering journey.

When Christ comes to us with eyes like a flame of fire, His word, which we firstly experience as a rebuke, is an invitation to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This initiative reveals His great love for us, which the Scriptures describe as being like a vehement and unquenchable fire. Son 8:6-7. Christ comes to join us to Himself, so that, through chastening, we can be delivered from our own way and be joined to the fellowship of His life. He says to us, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.' Rev 3:19. He wants to know us, and for us to know Him.

Job learnt this point. Although he did not understand why he was experiencing such great suffering, he did not draw back from the Lord, even when his wife said to him, 'Curse God and die!' Job 2:9. In response to the word of the Lord, who had come to Him in his fiery trial, Job confessed, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' Job 42:5-6. As Job met the Lord eye to eye, he was able to mourn, and to

be delivered from serving God from the basis of his own understanding. This was true blessing, because he now knew the Lord, personally.

The examples of Peter and Judas

The interactions of Peter and Judas with Jesus in the court of Caiaphas provide helpful examples of the distinction between true mourning that results from seeing ourselves through Christ's eyes, and the mourning that results from shame. Both Peter and Judas were self-righteous and religious zealots. They believed in the integrity of their own hearts rather than in the words of Christ.

Judas did not believe that Christ was going to die at the hands of the Jewish authorities. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah who would reign upon the earth, and that the disciples would reign with Him. He could not see that the actions that he was taking to facilitate this objective were a betrayal of Christ. Mat 26:25. Peter was troubled by Christ's prediction that He would suffer and die on the cross and then be raised from the dead after three days. Mat 16:21-23. Furthermore, Peter would not accept Jesus' prophetic warning that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. Mat 26:34-35.

When Peter denied Jesus for a third time, as Jesus was being bruised for Peter's iniquity in the court of Caiaphas, the Lord 'turned and looked at Peter' with eyes like a flame of fire. Luk 22:61. In that moment, Peter remembered the words of Jesus, and the iniquity of his heart was revealed to him. By illumination, he understood his wretched condition, and went out and wept bitterly. Luk 22:61-62.

The blood of Jesus Christ was speaking to Peter as it was being shed for him. Grace and supplication were poured out from Christ's heart with this word. For this reason, as Peter did not draw back from the Lord's gaze, his heart was broken, and he began to mourn as one who had become poor in spirit. Mat 5:3. Peter was blessed because the Lord delivered him from his self-righteousness. We know this because, on the shore of Lake Galilee, he confessed that he could not love as God loved. He was then able to receive from Jesus the word that proclaimed his sanctification. This was the call of the Father, through Christ, to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and to do the works of shepherding that belonged to his name as a son of God. Joh 21:15-19.

Judas was also in the court of Caiaphas as Christ's blood was being shed for his iniquity. It is likely that Jesus also looked at him during this

wounding event. However, unlike Peter, when Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned to death, he withdrew his eyes from the Lord in shame, thereby resisting the grace and supplication that was being poured out as Christ's blood was shed. Instead of mourning for the injuries that he had caused to Christ through his self-righteousness, he tried to cover his shame by returning the thirty pieces of silver that he had received from the chief priests and elders. Mat 27:3. He evidently found no deliverance from his self-righteousness, because he passed judgement on himself and took his own life. Mat 27:5. Eternal damnation was his end.

Christ lays His right hand on us

When, under the influence of grace and supplication, we look on Christ in His ascended glory, and see Him as the One whom we have pierced, we, like John, fall at His feet 'as a dead man'. Rev 1:17. The first action of Christ is to lay His right hand upon us. In His right hand are His star-messengers who proclaim His word to us. Through His messengers, the first word that Christ speaks to us is, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.' Rev 1:17. This is the same word that Christ spoke to Abraham, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1.

Through the ministry of His word from His right hand, Christ begins to heal us through regeneration. He strengthens us so that we can join Him where He is - in the midst of His lampstand churches. Rev 1:13. This highlights a key point. Illumination, and deliverance from sin, are found only in the context of Christ's lampstand churches. We join the fellowship of His lampstand church by receiving and believing the word of His messengers. Without a tangible and active connection to a lampstand church, the life of God within us will not be sustained, and we will be unable to fulfil the works of our sonship.

Reiterating this point, we note that when John was strengthened by the word of Christ, he was called to do the works of sonship that were prepared for him in Christ. His works were to 'write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this'. Rev 1:19. Furthermore, Jesus specifically drew John's attention to the mystery of the seven stars in His right hand. He explained to John that they were the angels of the seven churches. Rev 1:20. Jesus Christ was highlighting to John the understanding that the works of his sonship were contingent upon His connection to the administration of Christ's lampstand churches.

In summary, when Jesus was lifted up on the cross, and He declared that His offering was finished, He was manifest as 'I AM' - the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. Joh 8:28. Rev 1:8. He now identified Himself as 'He who lives, and was dead, and behold I AM alive forevermore. Amen.' Rev 1:18. The Son had been fully glorified as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Figuratively, He was arrayed in white priestly garments, and the seven dimensions of His priesthood had been fully established. Rev 1:12-16.

Christ now meets us *from the cross* as the Alpha and the Omega, with eyes as a flame of fire. Under the influence of grace and supplication, we are able to look on Him whom we have pierced. Although He ministers to us from the cross through the elements of His priesthood, we now see Him in the midst of His lampstand church. Rev 1:13. The response of those who see Him this way, having become poor in spirit and begun to mourn is, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' Mat 5:3-4. Act 2:37. The word that proceeds from the right hand of Christ, through His messengers, calls us to repent and to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as part of a lampstand church. Rev 1:17,20. Act 2:38.

Through His Melchizedek King-Priesthood, Christ ministers to us a daily participation in His finished offering. Having been co-crucified with Him, the life we now live is through our fellowship in the sufferings and life that He has already finished and perfected for us. As members of His body, we fill up what is lacking in His sufferings by dying our death, which He made His death, and died, by the grace of God. Col 1:24. Heb 2:9. In the fellowship of His death, we are able to die and live with Him by His resurrection life. Moreover, we are able to fulfil the works of our sonship that the Father prepared for us to do, in Christ, as part of a lampstand church.

Eyes like a flame of fire

Jesus addressed the presbytery of Thyatira as 'the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass'. Rev 2:18. He acknowledged their works, love, service, faith and patience. Yet, Jesus had come to them in judgement, because the overseers of the church had allowed the spirit of Jezebel, a false prophetic influence, to teach and seduce His servants to commit sexual immorality and to eat things sacrificed to idols. Rev 2:19-20.

In His earlier letter to the angel of the church in Pergamos, Jesus identified eating things sacrificed to idols, and sexual immorality, as being stumbling blocks arising from the doctrine of Balaam. Rev 2:14. He also rebuked this presbytery for holding to the doctrine of the Nicolaitans. Rev 2:15. His letter to Thyatira revealed that these doctrines flourish, and cause death and destruction in the church, when those who are part of a presbytery receive direction from the spirit of Jezebel and allow it to be an instructive influence in the church.

Because of the teaching of Jezebel, the presbytery of Thyatira was bound by the projections and collegial practices of the Nicolaitans, and faltered as a result of the stumbling blocks of those who held the doctrine of Balaam. Jesus described this culture as 'the depths of Satan'. Rev 2:24. This corrupting influence is a principle that was established when Adam and Eve fell. Eve was deceived by Satan's word. When Adam gave heed to her instruction and direction, his headship was destroyed. Consequently, his children - the whole of humanity - were subjected to the curse of tribulation and death.

Christ's initiative, as the One with eyes as a flame of fire and feet as burnished brass, was to judge the presbytery of Thyatira because of their lack of oversight. It was also to judge the children who had been born of the alternative doctrines that persisted in the church because of the influence of the spirit of Jezebel in their midst. He said that He would 'kill her children with death'. Rev 2:23. We will discuss the spirit of Jezebel in more detail in Chapter 7.

When Christ comes in this manner, His eyes of fire expose our innermost thoughts and motivations, and reveal the shame of our nakedness. Every person first meets Jesus in this way. As the apostle Paul noted, 'There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.' Heb 4:13. This is the effect of His word upon us, and is the reason why He identified Himself as 'I am He who searches the minds and hearts'. Rev 2:23.

Our heart is laid bare before Christ's eyes because His word first comes to us as a *goad*. Act 9:3-5. Speaking of the effect of the word as a goad, Paul said, 'The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' Heb 4:12.

What is the dividing line between soul and spirit? Our *spirit*, which is our identity, is the essence of who we are. The *soul* is the volition, expression, or presentation of who we are. The goad of the word divides between the reality of who we are, and the image of ourselves that we are projecting because of the other law that is at work within us.

Paul's cry, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?', is the confession of one whose spirit and soul were being divided by the goad of the word. Rom 7:24. It was dividing between his reality and his projections. He was poor in spirit, recognising that he was poor, wretched, miserable, blind and naked. The outcome was that he fell at the feet of Christ 'as a dead man'. Under the influence of grace and supplication, he acknowledged that his deliverance from death was not in his own hands; rather, it was through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. This was his *confession and request*, 'I thank God - through Jesus Christ our Lord!' Rom 7:25.

The word, as a goad ministered by Christ who has eyes as a flame of fire, had no access to the presbytery of Laodicea. We know this because they were unaware of their true condition. Evidently, their hearts were not being laid bare by the word, as a goad, which is sharper than any two-edged sword. Presuming that they were rich, they did not know that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. Rev 3:17. Jesus was knocking on the door of their hearts, desiring them to turn to Him so that they could see their true condition, and could repent, receive His counsel and be established in fellowship with Him. Rev 3:20.

Once Christ's word did have access to them, they were able to confess their wretchedness, poverty, lack of sight and nakedness, and to receive the counsel of the Lord. Significantly, they were counselled to buy gold refined in the fire, which symbolises the divine nature; to buy the garments of salvation and priesthood so that the shame of their nakedness would not be seen; and to anoint their eyes with regenerative eye salve so that they could receive illumination. Rev 3:18.

In His letter to Sardis, Jesus said that those who overcame the propensity toward independence in the presbytery and the church - which produces only dead works - would be clothed in white garments. Moreover, their names would not be blotted out of the Book of Life. Rev 3:5. As it was with their fellow presbyters in Laodicea, the nakedness of their self-defined works was being exposed by Christ's eyes, as a flame of fire. When this happened, they were able to turn in repentance, and to mourn as those who were being joined to the travail of Christ. In fellowship with

Him, they would be clothed with their garments of priesthood, and would be enabled to fulfil the works of righteousness that belonged to their name as sons of God in Christ.

Secured in the fellowship of Christ's offering

In Part 6 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we recognised that the word of God that comes as a goad to pierce our heart is also described as a 'nail'. King Solomon concluded his teaching by saying that 'the words of the wise are *as goads*, and as *nails* fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one Shepherd'. Ecc 12:11. 'The masters of assemblies' are the seven 'lamps' that make up one 'star' in Christ's hand. The seven stars in His right hand are given by Christ to walk and minister with Him as He walks among His lampstand churches. Rev 1:20.

When the word that pierces our heart is received, and we do not turn our eyes from the eyes of Christ that are as a flame of fire, the goad of the word becomes nails that secure us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The nails that hold us to the cross are the Law of Christ. This is the Royal Law of love. Paul called it 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. Rom 8:2. As we considered in Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, the law of the Spirit of life is *exanastasis*, or resurrection life.

This is what it means to be 'crucified with Christ'. As we join the fellowship of the word that is preached by Christ's messengers, we are dying and living with Christ by *exanastasis*, which is the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus. This Law of Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death, because the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection is the means by which the other law, which brings us into captivity to the law of sin, is removed from us. Rom 8:2. Rom 7:23.

We are admonished by Christ to join Him and His travailing prayer in Gethsemane. We are able to mourn with Him by the power of Eternal Spirit, to join His offering, and to be born again from the death of sin. We can then proceed with Him to be crucified with the nails that are the word of the cross that divides our heart, separating soul and spirit, so that the other law, fathered within us by the word of Satan, is able to be circumcised from our lives.

His feet as fine brass, refined in a furnace

Because of His mercy, and through grace, Christ also revealed Himself to the presbytery in Thyatira as having feet like fine brass, as though

refined in a furnace. Rev 2:18. This feature of His ministry to His lampstand churches symbolises the pathway of repentance from dead works. In this regard, Christ's feet show us how to walk the pathway of repentance that He authored through His travail.

Christ demonstrated the vehement desire of repentance in Gethsemane as He prayed on our behalf that only the Father's will should be done in our lives. Of course, Christ did not speak from shame as He prayed. Christ was blessed by Eternal Spirit and was able to become poor in spirit and to mourn unto repentance, on our behalf.

These were the first works that Christ accomplished on behalf of those who had sinned in the presbytery at Thyatira, and on our behalf also. Christ was enabling them to repent and to turn from their dead works, and then to *keep* His works until the end. Rev 2:26.

The fruit of keeping Christ's works would be deliverance from the curse of sickness and death that resulted from following in the ways of the harlot church, which is the synagogue of Satan. Jesus Christ promised that those who overcome and keep His works would receive power over the nations. Their triumph over the nations would be because of the weaponry that is symbolised by 'the rod of iron', which would be given to the church. Rev 2:26-27.

The secret of godly sorrow that leads to repentance

Jesus asked Peter, James and John to watch and pray *with Him*. Mar 14:33-42. Christ's sorrow in Gethsemane was *godly sorrow*. He sorrowed in a godly manner by the power of Eternal Spirit. Luk 22:43-44. Heb 9:14. Jesus wanted Peter, James and John to learn the secret of godly sorrow, which is exercised through the power of Eternal Spirit. However, they were unable to watch and pray with Jesus because they fell asleep for sorrow. Luk 22:45. As we considered earlier, the basis for this human sorrow is *shame*.

Through his apostolic word, Paul was able to introduce the Corinthian church to godly sorrow that would lead them to repentance. 2Co 7:9-12. Through the ministry of this word, Paul was able to reveal Christ to the Corinthians as the One whose feet were as brass refined in a furnace.

The Corinthians found repentance. They experienced the refining capacity of the fire of godly sorrow, which produced diligence in them, so that they cleared themselves and found vindication through zealous

indignation, fear and vehement desire. In all things, they were able to clear themselves through repentance, and then to clothe themselves in the true garments of priesthood. This process of mourning is the definition of repentance, symbolised as the feet of Christ shining with the light of godly sorrow as He mourned in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane.

Christ addressing our church movement

As we reflect on our history as a church movement, we recognise that the spirit of Jezebel has been a corrupting influence among us. Christ came, over forty years ago, with eyes like a flame of fire, to address the proliferation of alternative gospels in His church and to call us to return to the gospel of sonship, which is first love.

Although His address was a rebuke, and revealed how far we had fallen from the gospel of sonship, His desire was to see us *restored to first love*. He also gave every presbyter the opportunity to repent in relation to their marriage and family culture, which, for many, had become dysfunctional. Corruption in marriages had allowed the spirit of Jezebel to gain ascendancy and to give direction to the presbytery, and instruction in the church. Over the years, the persistent collegiality of married couples in the ministry, and their empowered ministry endeavours that took precedence over first love in the presbytery, revealed the influence of the spirit of Jezebel in our churches. Also, there has been blindness to the gospel of sonship among presbyters, resulting in other theological schemes and points of emphasis flourishing in its stead. This has impacted upon us individually, as families, and as church communities.

The Lord came among us as a thief in the night. Mat 24:43. Those who had heard the word and knew what God's will was for their lives, and yet failed to respond with repentance and obedience, were 'beaten with many stripes'. Luk 12:47. More than this, because of their corruption, some were 'cut in two' by Christ, and were appointed their portion with the unbelievers.

Those who heard the word of Christ received His rebuke, and then mourned, having been established on the pathway of repentance revealed by His feet of brass as though refined in the fire. As a result of their ignorance, or blindness, their experience has been that Christ has chastened them by beating them 'with a few stripes'. Luk 12:48. This has been for them a pathway of 'mourning, lamentation and woe'. Eze 2:10. Through this process, they are being delivered from their fleshly

propensities and other 'gospels', and are being blessed with the resurrection life of God. In the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, the life of Christ has become their life and is now the life that they are ministering to others.

This whole process was foreshadowed in the prophecy given to Daniel. Daniel was shown a dispensation of 2300 years from the time of the Greek empire until the time of the end. Dan 8:8-14. Within this time period, the messengers whom God the Father sent to His people, including Christ Himself, would fall by 'sword, flame, by captivity and plundering'. Dan 11:33. Daniel prophesied that, during this time, many would cleave to the messengers with deceit and flattery. He described these deceitful people as 'those who do wickedly against the covenant'. Dan 11:32. Instead of having their hearts sprinkled by the blood of the covenant in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, they trample His blood through their self-serving and covetous connection with the messengers.

However, Daniel noted that the people who know their God *would* be strong (with *exanastasis* life) and *would* do great exploits. Dan 11:32. They *would* fulfil the works of sonship prepared for them in Christ as they priested themselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of His offering. Suffering, as part of Christ's offering, would be the means by which they would be refined and made adequate for this priestly service. As Daniel recorded, 'Now when they fall, they shall be aided with a little help; but many shall join with them by intrigue. And some of those of understanding shall fall, to refine them, purify them, and make them white, until the time of the end; because it is still for the appointed time.' Dan 11:34-35. This is how it has been in every generation of the church until this present time. This is how it will continue to be in the next generation.

The example of Ezekiel

The prophet Ezekiel had a similar experience to that of the apostle John. The Son of Man made Himself known to Ezekiel through the symbols of His Melchizedek King-Priesthood. In this regard, Ezekiel saw One with the likeness of a Man, sitting on a throne that was high above the angelic administration and firmament. Eze 1:26. Ezekiel noted that 'His waist and downward' had 'the appearance of fire with brightness all around'. Eze 1:27. Like John, when Ezekiel saw the Lord, he fell on his face as a dead man. Eze 1:28. As the Lord did with the apostle John, He spoke to

Ezekiel, causing him to stand on his feet and to receive the words that God had prepared for him to speak.

The Lord was sending Ezekiel to a rebellious nation. He said to Ezekiel that he was not to be afraid of those to whom he was being sent. In this regard, the Lord was warning him to not come under the oppressive influence of the spirit of Jezebel, who had previously caused the prophet Elijah to fear. The Lord said to Ezekiel, 'And you, son of man, do not be afraid of them nor be afraid of their words, though briars and thorns are with you and you dwell among scorpions; do not be afraid of their words or dismayed by their looks, though they are a rebellious house. You shall speak My words to them, whether they hear or whether they refuse, for they are rebellious.' Eze 2:6-7.

From the Lord's right hand that was outstretched to him, Ezekiel received the word that he was being sent to proclaim as the Lord's messenger. It was a scroll, with 'mourning, lamentation and woe' written on the inside and the outside. The Lord commanded Ezekiel to eat the scroll, which was sweet in his mouth, but bitter in his belly. Mourning, lamentation and woe was the reality of Ezekiel's participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, through which the word of life would be ministered to his hearers. His message, if received, would join his hearers to the same pathway that Christ, as the *Alpha* and *Omega*, had revealed to him. They would also be recipients of the reward that belongs to those who have been illuminated, and who choose the reproaches of Christ over the way of shame symbolised in the Scriptures as 'the riches of Egypt'. Heb 11:26.

The nature of shame

In the Scriptures, 'sight' is a much broader concept than simply a person's ability to 'see'. It refers to how we 'know' and come to 'understanding'. In this regard, there are two kinds of sight. The first sight is *the knowledge of Christ* that a person receives by eating the fruit of the tree of life. In comparison with the excellence of this knowledge, the apostle Paul counted every other way of knowing and living as loss and as rubbish. Php 3:8. He obtained the knowledge of Christ by being conformed to Christ's death and to the fellowship of His sufferings. Php 3:10. This was the implication of his ongoing participation in the elements of the communion. 1Co 10:16. The knowledge, or sight, obtained in this fellowship is *exanastasis*. Php 3:11. *Exanastasis* is the resurrection life of God that a person receives in their mortal body. It is

the light and sight of those who receive the life of God in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, as a member of His body. Joh 1:4.

True sight, found in the fellowship of Yahweh, was forfeited by mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to live by a different knowledge. The second kind of sight - the sight that they obtained by eating this fruit - is *self-knowledge*. The Scripture recorded that 'the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked'. Gen 3:7. Their awareness of their nakedness was not only the realisation that they were not wearing any clothes. They also recognised that there was no life, nor works of enduring value, outside of their fellowship with God. Death was the inevitable consequence of their nakedness, and they were afraid.

Adam and Eve were ashamed of their fear, which was caused by their nakedness. Driven by shame, they manufactured coverings out of fig leaves and hid themselves from God. Gen 3:7,10. As a consequence of the Fall, covering oneself with figurative fig leaves is the default initiative that every person who lives according to the flesh takes toward their life. These 'fig leaves' are projections to cover the shame of their failing self-image. They encompass the way in which a person lives - what they do, and how they interact with others.

We can identify two primary projections of the flesh that are driven by shame - *inferiority* and *insecurity*. These two 'fig leaves' are the ways of knowing oneself and of engaging with others according to the flesh. Because we are all born with another law in our heart, we all have these identity complexities. We note that Adam and Eve sewed fig *leaves* together. This highlights the reality that our carnal responses are driven by *both* insecurity and inferiority. However, it is evident that people tend to exhibit a temperamental propensity toward one or the other of these shame-motivated projections.

Our deliverance from living this way begins by receiving the gospel of sonship. Christ, the Messenger of this covenant, first comes to us, saying, 'Do not be afraid, I am your shield of faith.' Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16. Having received this faith, we are able to present ourselves for participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Gen 15:8-18. Rom 12:1. This is what it means to receive 'our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand'. Rom 5:2. In this fellowship of grace, we are delivered from our fallen ways of knowing and seeing, and are recipients of the blessing of God's life. As this life abounds within us, we are increasingly able to see and to know the truth about God, and about ourselves and others.

The apostle Paul wrote, 'For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?' 1Co 2:11. Paul's point is that we are able to understand how the natural, fleshly man lives and expresses himself. Recognising these propensities is helpful in our understanding of what we are to put off in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, as we walk together in the light of God's word.

King Solomon wrote about the propensities of natural, fallen humanity as they live 'under the sun'. Ecc 1:14. He warned against the use of fallen human philosophy as the means by which we come to understand ourselves and others. Ecc 12:12. Solomon instructed us to seek for the spirit of wisdom and understanding that comes from God. Pro 4:5-7. If we do this, then understanding will be given to us to interpret the Scriptures, particularly those which he wrote down in the book of Proverbs and Ecclesiastes. Ecc 12:9-11. Further, Solomon directed us to fear God and to keep His commandments, which are the rest of the Scriptures given to us by Moses, David and the prophets. Ecc 12:13. Understanding is given to us from the Scriptures through the illumination of the Spirit.

Inferiority

People who have a tendency towards inferiority use their own fleshly law to establish and promote their integrity, and to judge the integrity of others. This mode of engagement was most acutely demonstrated by the disciple, Peter. In response to Christ's prophetic statement regarding the scattering of the sheep in the course of His offering, Peter declared, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.' Mat 26:33.

Those who have a temperamental propensity to inferiority are often *competitive*. This does not necessarily mean that they are disposed to engagement in sport or games but, rather, that their sense of self is found through their comparisons with others. Their actions and decisions are often influenced by their perceptions of the success or failure of others, and by their need to remain comparable and relevant to them. These people find identity verification through their 'success', which they use as the basis for their judgements of themselves and of where they fit within the social order.

The competitive person believes in the validity of the Law in distinguishing the superior from the inferior. This measure is the reference point for their integrity, and for their judgements of the integrity of others. If they compete 'lawfully' - that is, they engage in a

particular context with integrity – they consider that their superiority or inferiority is justified, and that any resulting accolades are warranted. They have very little tolerance, however, for those who obtain recognition or advancement without observing the recognised standards of conduct in a particular setting. They are seen to have ‘cheated’. Such a mindset may be evident in academic circles, sporting settings, and even in relational contexts, such as service teams at church.

Those who measure themselves as being inferior are typically loyal, amicable, and willing to serve. However, because of their belief in their integrity, and because of their competitive disposition, they are often unable to receive and to obey the word of Christ that is spoken by another, particularly if they perceive that person to be weaker or less apt than themselves. Although these people have an agreeable demeanour, they often remain alienated within their communities because of their judgement of themselves and of others. They behave as benefactors towards those whom they judge to be inferior to themselves, but are compliant and loyal to those whom they view as being superior. This disposition is common among successful businesspeople, and also among those who aspire to clergy-style leadership roles within the church.

Insecurity

People with a temperamental propensity to insecurity use their judgements of good and evil to establish a ground for their security and identity expression. Perfectionism with self-recrimination results when they do not measure successfully to the projected standards that they set for themselves. Internal emotional conflict and self-deprecation stress the individual with anxiety.

Whereas the relational tendency of the inferior is competitiveness, the insecure tend to be *combative*. Their reactions towards others are expressions of control, for the purpose of self-verification. Combative responses are used to overpower a perceived threat. This can manifest as either a ‘fight’ or ‘flight’ reaction.

Those who tend to respond to life in this manner are not so much concerned about where they fit in relation to others but, rather, about whether the ‘good’ that they have established for themselves is realised through their endeavours and is acknowledged by others. The achievement of this good, and the value that others give to them as a

consequence of their exploits, becomes their source of identity verification.

Anger

Anger, or wrath, is an unavoidable fruit of shame. It is the response of a person who falls short of the righteousness to which they aspire in the flesh. It reveals their frustration because of failure, and their resolve to contend with any perceived impediment to the attainment of this righteousness. However, the Scriptures are clear: 'The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God'. Jas 1:20. Instead, such responses only serve to bring an angry person under the condemnation of the Law. Mat 5:22. The answer to the failure of our self-knowledge, and to the futile projections that bring forth the fruit of anger, is to be swift to hear the word of God, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. Jas 1:19.

The basis and expression of anger in a person who tends toward inferiority is *jealousy*, which is motivated by the fear of rejection and victimisation. Cain's murderous anger, which surfaced when his offering was rejected by God and Abel's offering was accepted, is a notable example of the anger that springs from inferiority.

In the insecure person, *depression*, because of their failure to achieve the standard of good to which they aspire, is the basis of their anger. The threat of harm or destruction because of their failure, whether self-defined or as judged by others, causes a strong reaction. This can be directed at themselves and at others. We note, in this regard, that anger based in depression is an expression of self-harm, and is the basis of suicide. This expression of anger is a rejection of what an individual judges to be their failed, worthless and irredeemable life. This form of anger was exemplified by Judas.

The solution to shame

The fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the only means by which we are able to be delivered from living by fear and shame, expressed through the projections of inferiority and insecurity. This has both a personal and a relational implication for us. That is, our daily and individual participation in Christ's offering and sufferings is contingent upon our receiving the word of faith that is ministered at the Lord's communion table, and upon walking in the light of His word as part of the community of the body of Christ. 1Jn 1:7.

Christ's first word to us, ministered from the star-messengers in His right hand, is, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death.' Rev 1:17-18. As He did with Abraham, the Lord comes to us as the beginning and end of our confession of faith so that we are able to join the fellowship of His offering and to receive the blessing of His life. Gen 15:1. Heb 12:2. Heb 10:23.

The Lord comes to us in this way as the Son of God who has eyes as a flame of fire and feet like fine brass as though refined in a furnace. Rev 1:14-15. Rev 2:18. The Lord firstly addresses the fruit of our shame as the One with the solution. Then He addresses the source of our shame with its inferiorities and insecurities. His eyes of fire expose our innermost thoughts and the motivations of our other law. In this regard, they reveal the shame of our nakedness. As the apostle Paul noted, 'There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account'. Heb 4:13.

It is most important that we do not draw back in unbelief and shame when Christ meets us in this way. The Lord Himself said, 'If anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' Heb 10:38. This means that such a person is not a recipient of His life. Instead, they continue to walk in the darkness of their own way, which leads to death. Although Christ's eyes expose the shame of our nakedness, this is not the primary reason why He meets us in this way. His eyes, as a flame of fire, reveal the fellowship of love, which the Scriptures describe as 'a vehement flame that waters cannot quench'. Son 8:6-7.

The Lord wants us to be delivered from the vain and fleeting projections that are motivated by shame. This happens through our fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. In Him, we are clothed with garments of righteousness. These garments represent the mandate of our name and works as sons of God. In Christ, we are made adequate for our service as kings and priests to God. As we, by offering, fulfil the works of sonship that belong to our name, we are becoming the righteousness of God in Christ.

Walk in the ways of your heart

Writing to young people in the book of Ecclesiastes, King Solomon said, 'Rejoice, O young man, in your youth, and let your heart cheer you in the days of your youth; walk in the ways of your heart, and in the sight of

your eyes; but know that for all these God will bring you into judgement.' Ecc 11:9.

Solomon's point is not that young people should engage in activities that they think God will be pleased with, and to avoid activities that they think He will be displeased with. That is living by the knowledge of good and evil. As we have considered in these notes, living according to this way leads only to death. The focus of Solomon's exhortation is 'the ways of your heart' and 'the sight of your eyes'. What is the *motivating* influence in our life; and how are we *seeing*?

Solomon then said, '*Therefore* remove sorrow from your heart, and put away evil from your flesh, for childhood and youth are vanity.' Ecc 11:10. The only way that sorrow can be removed from our heart, and evil put away from our flesh, is through the circumcision of Christ, in the fellowship of His offering. It is in this fellowship that we are able to put off the old man that grows corrupt, and to put on the new man, Christ. Eph 4:22-24.

Chapter 7

The restoration of Christian families

The Lord promised to Abraham, the father of all who believe, that all the families of the earth would be blessed in him. Gen 12:3. This promised blessing is the divine nature. Gal 3:14. 2Pe 1:3-4. It is the life of Christ that becomes the life of a son of God when they are born from above and are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Although each individual person receives this blessing, it is cultivated and has its first expression in the context of a family or household. Psa 68:6. The life of Christ is further cultivated within us as we meet for communion and fellowship from house to house. In the context of our families, and as we fellowship from house to house, we receive the word of God and minister His life to one another as members of the body of Christ.

The Scriptures teach us that the Lord jealously watches over and guards His Spirit whom He has placed within us. Jas 4:5. Christ is among us with eyes as a flame of fire, searching our minds and hearts in relation to our familiar ways, giving us opportunity to turn from fallen family cultures

and to be established in the culture that belongs to His household. Rev 2:18,23. This can be a confronting experience. However, we must not draw back from the Lord when He comes to address our marriages and families with His word. His word is bringing salvation to us, and is a protection for us as the time of the end fast approaches.

The seventh world kingdom

The seventh world kingdom, spoken of by the prophet Daniel, is taking shape and beginning to exercise its rulership over the nations of the earth. The 'little horn', which is one of the two ruling principles of this kingdom, is the manifestation of the spirit of antichrist in the world. The little horn advocates for minority and special interest groups at the expense of the rights and expression of the majority. This ruling principle is hostile towards God and persecutes all those who are part of His church and live by His word. Dan 7:25. 2Th 2:4.

Through the writings of Daniel, we understand that the seventh world kingdom is a divided kingdom. This is because the little horn undermines and usurps the authority of those who are elected by the people to govern the people. Providing insight into how the little horn achieves this, Daniel wrote, 'In this horn, were eyes like the eyes of a man, and a mouth speaking pompous words'. Dan 7:8. The little horn exerts its influence on society by making strong representation in the policy-making processes of government and non-government agencies. It communicates more broadly and directly to society through the media, which serves as its mouthpiece so that it can speak its 'great boasts'.

In this present season, the culture and constitution of the Christian family is being assailed by the little horn as it pursues the secularisation of society, and wars against all that is called God and is worshipped. 2Th 2:4. This is readily apparent in popular media, through the content of television programs, films and music. However, it is also becoming increasingly pronounced in the curricula and policies of education systems, particularly in Western society.

For example, children are being taught to question the fundamental realities of gender and sexuality, and to view sexual experimentation and promiscuity as a normal part of adolescent development. Those who question, resist or challenge these 'principles' are marginalised and ridiculed as being naive, intellectually simple and even dangerous. An implication of these initiatives, and other policy practices beyond the education system, is that the discipline and instruction of children in

families is being redefined as an abuse of a child's human right to 'find themselves' through experimentation and exploration.

To this end, there are several government-funded agencies that operate to identify children who are deemed 'at risk' because of the limitations placed on them by their parents. These agencies are empowered to assist children to leave their Christian families, and to support their transition to contemporary societal engagement.

Laziness bringing forth thorns

It is troubling that many Christian families have remained ignorant of the little horn's assault on their faith and culture. They have not been diligent to watch over the affairs of their house. They do not sufficiently consider, nor question, what their children are learning in school. Often, this apathy is accompanied by irregular, and even non-existent, family devotions. Instead of resisting the spirit of the world, many families have opened the doors and windows of their houses to the principles of the seventh world kingdom through their inordinate use of social media, and through their excessive consumption of television, movies, and online material.

The parents of these families are unaware that their cultural orientations, and those of their children, have become more like those of the world than those of the household of God. Interestingly, these families often appear to be the most socially aware and engaged. However, their malaise in relation to the mixture in their homes reveals that they are *deceived*. In effect, they do not believe that their culture is sinful when, in fact, the divine nature within their houses is being choked by the deceitfulness of riches. 1Jn 1:8-10. Mat 13:22.

Reiterating this point, we note the observations of King Solomon, who said that the lazy man is 'devoid of understanding'. Pro 24:30. Consequently, the walls protecting his field, which is the inheritance of blessing that belongs to him and his family, were broken down. There was nothing preventing the entry of other philosophies and cultures into the ground of his family. The outcome was that his field was overgrown with thorns and covered with nettles. Pro 24:31. As the principle of thorny ground teaches us, it was unfruitful. Mar 4:19.

Some parents fail to maintain the sanctification and Christian culture of their houses because they are *afraid* that their recalcitrant children will leave the home if they contradict them or if they try to establish clear

lines regarding the behaviours and attitudes that are acceptable within the household. These compromises, which are based in fear, are a form of laziness. We note, in this regard, that Jesus called the servant who hid his talent because of fear, 'wicked and lazy'. Mat 25:24-26.

This culture of compromise, motivated by a fallen understanding of love, and the pursuit of short-term peace, does not produce good fruit. In fact, it produces only thorny, painful and *fruitless* relationships in the house. Relational disharmony, and continual conflict in the house, are sufferings that result from the mixed culture. These sufferings are the judgement of God on the house because of disobedience.

The example of Israel in the promised land

This principle is helpfully illustrated by the failure of the children of Israel to drive out the inhabitants of the land that God promised to their fathers. These inhabitants represent the cultures of the world that we are to drive from our homes as we hear and obey the word of God that is ministered at the communion table.

As the nation of Israel prepared to enter the promised land, Jesus made a promise to them through the words of Moses. Num 33:50-51. He said that if they would *diligently* drive out all of the inhabitants of the land, and would destroy all of their idols and places of worship, He would dispossess the inhabitants of the land, and the Israelites would obtain their inheritance as part of the firstborn nation. Num 33:52-54. Later, Joshua reaffirmed the word of the Lord to Israel, saying that if they loved the Lord their God, *He* would fight for them. They would receive supernatural capacity from the Lord to overcome their enemies, so that just *one* of God's covenant people would be able to chase a thousand men from the land! Jos 23:10-11.

The Lord warned, however, that if they did not drive out the inhabitants of the land, those who remained would become irritants in their eyes, and thorns in their eyes, and would harass them in the places where they dwelt. Num 33:55. Significantly, Joshua said to the people that, if they were disobedient, Yahweh *Elohim* would no longer drive the nations out before them. Instead, the inhabitants that remained would become snares and traps, and scourges on their sides, and thorns in their eyes, until the Israelites perished from the good land that God had given to them as an inheritance. Jos 23:13.

We observe that the children of Israel were not obedient to the command of the Lord. He sent His Angel to them, saying, 'I led you up from Egypt and brought you to the land of which I swore to your fathers; and I said, "I will never break My covenant with you. And you shall make no covenant with the inhabitants of this land; you shall tear down their altars." But you have not obeyed My voice. Why have you done this? Therefore I also said, "I will not drive them out before you; but they shall be thorns in your side, and their gods shall be a snare to you".' Jdg 2:1-3.

The spirit and power of Elijah

Through the prophet Malachi, the Lord declared, 'Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.' Mal 4:5-6.

'The great day of the Lord' refers to His judgement upon the seventh world kingdom in the time of the end. The book of Revelation reveals that this judgement will commence at the opening of the sixth seal. Rev 6:16-17. The point for us to recognise is that the ministry of Elijah *precedes* this judgement. It is a prophetic mandate that is given to the presbyteries in the right hand of Christ to be proclaimed to God's covenant people during the establishment and commencement of the seventh world kingdom. By receiving and responding to this prophetic ministry, the church will be sustained in the day of trial, and will be prepared for the coming of Christ. This time is upon us, and the Lord, by His Spirit, is addressing the church concerning the cultures of our families.

Speaking of John the Baptist, the Angel of the Lord said, 'He will also go before [the Lord] in the *spirit and power of Elijah*, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.' Luk 1:17. John the Baptist's ministry was an expression of the spirit and power of Elijah, but it was not the complete fulfilment of Malachi's prophecy. As we have just noted, this prophecy will have its final fulfilment as we approach the time of the end.

This ministry of the spirit and power of Elijah has been given to the presbyteries who are being restored to the right hand of Christ. When this ministry is received, the hearts of the fathers can be turned to their children, and the hearts of the children can be turned to their fathers.

Significantly, the disobedient are turned to 'the wisdom of the just'. The wisdom of the just is the word of the cross that Christ has committed to presbyteries who have been restored to first love. 1Co 2:7. 1Jn 1:1. Jas 3:17.

Through obedience to the word of the cross, we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we are delivered from living according to the principles of the flesh that cause us to be deceived and vulnerable to the destructive influences of the spirit of the world. We are able to live, instead, by the supernatural capacity of *exanastasis* life.

Practically, as we walk in the light of the word in our houses, we have fellowship together, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from sin. 1Jn 1:7. That is, as we devotionally discuss the word of present truth in our houses, we are able to see the cultures that need to be put off. Furthermore, we are made adequate, by grace, to walk in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ becomes the culture of the house, and is the means by which each person within the household obtains the inheritance of their sonship.

When participation in Christ's offering and sufferings is the culture of a family, each person within the family can know the assurance of God's grace in every circumstance of life. They do not need to be afraid of the repercussions or persecutions arising from their obedient commitment to the culture of godliness, which is sanctification. This is because they are joined to the offering through which Christ overcame the world. Jesus said to His disciples, 'Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me. These things I have spoken to you, *that in Me you may have peace*. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, *I have overcome the world*.' Joh 16:32-33.

Three generations

Fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ is our participation in the baptism and cup of Christ. As Jesus said, 'You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptised with you will be baptised.' Mar 10:39.

The baptism of Christ raises another implication of the spirit and power of Elijah. We recall that the Lord promised to send this ministry before the 'great and dreadful day of the Lord', which He described as 'burning like an oven'. Mal 4:1,5. Significantly, Jesus referred to the outcome of His baptism as 'sending fire on the earth'. Specifically, He said, 'I came to *send fire on the earth*, and how I wish it were already kindled! *But I have a baptism to be baptised with*, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!' Luk 12:49-50. Evidently, the great day of the Lord is a fruit of the finished offering of Christ, which He identified as His baptism.

Jesus then said, 'Do you suppose that I came to give peace on earth? I tell you, not at all, but rather division. For from now on five in one house will be divided: three against two, and two against three. Father will be divided against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.' Luk 12:51-53.

In this statement, Christ identified one house as comprising three generations – grandparents, parents, and children. This is the first and most fundamental reality of house to house fellowship. It is within this context that the spirit and power of Elijah is ministered to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to the fathers.

Notably, Jesus said that His offering would bring *division* in a house. At first glance, this appears to be at odds with the ministry of Elijah. However, 'turning' does not simply mean that people in a household come to agreement on matters or commit to interacting with one another more regularly, although this may be an *outcome* of turning. First and foremost, turning is the implication of the cross being established between every relationship in a house.

Through the ministry of the gospel, the cross of Christ makes a breach on a family's culture, requiring each individual to respond to His word. This is the word that is ministered at the communion, which Paul described as partaking of the *altar*. Heb 13:10. We note that the recovery of the nation of Israel from their idolatry under the influence of Jezebel, commenced when Elijah had called them to *come near to him*. He built an altar, which he saturated with water, symbolising the word, and placed the sin offering upon it. In response to his prayer, the Lord answered by fire. The people responded saying, 'The Lord, He is God! The Lord, He is God!' 1Ki 18:30-39.

Those who receive illumination through repentance and faith in response to the word of God, die with Christ, by grace, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. They are delivered from their fallen and familiar relational propensities. Consequently, they are able to present themselves to meet the other members of their house in the Spirit, and in the truth of their name as a son of God. That is, they are able to *present themselves* to meet in a fellowship of offering.

God desires that every member of a household meets in this manner. However, if a person continues to walk according to the sight of their own eyes, they will remain in darkness and under the judgement of God. In this instance, the word of the cross makes a division between those who are dying in a body of death under the judgement of God, and those who are dying with Christ, by grace, as a member of His body.

We see that the word of the cross brings healing and life in a family if it is received. However, if it is not received, the cross makes a clear division between a family's familiar culture, which is under judgement with Christ, and the culture of His house. Life and peace are the fruit of God's culture.

The spirit of Jezebel

The ministry of Elijah brings to our attention another key theme in Scripture – the spirit of Jezebel. Jesus addressed the presbyteries of the churches in Asia on this issue. The presbytery are supposed to be the spiritual fathers of the church. They serve God the Father under Christ, who is the Head of the church, ministering from His hand as He walks among His lampstand churches. Rev 1:20.

Christ addressed the presbytery in Thyatira, rebuking them because they had allowed a woman, whom He named as Jezebel, to minister among them as a spiritual mother, and to exercise authority over the church as a prophetess. Rev 2:20. The source of her ministry was Satan. Jesus likened her children – those who ministered with her – to the prophets of Baal, whom Jezebel, the wife of King Ahab, had appointed to replace the ministry of the true prophets of the Lord in Israel. 1Ki 18:4.

Jesus called this whole situation 'the deep things of Satan'. Rev 2:24. The deep things of Satan refers to the devices that he employs to deceive and destroy mankind. The most cunning device that Satan used against mankind was demonstrated in the garden of Eden. He deceived Eve with his lies and caused her to transgress God's word by eating the fruit of the

tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Gen 3:1-5. Satan then provoked Eve to speak to Adam the word that she had received from Satan. As a prophetess, Eve ministered the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to Adam as an alternative to the fellowship that they had with God when they ate from the tree of life. Gen 3:6. The result of this fallen mode of relating in their marriage was that death spread to all mankind. Rom 5:12.

By identifying the ministry of Jezebel within the midst of the presbytery and the church of Thyatira, Jesus was associating them with the mode of rulership exhibited by Ahab and Jezebel in the nation of Israel. He used the account of Ahab and Jezebel's marriage and rulership to admonish and instruct the fathers of the church in Thyatira. His intention was to give them understanding regarding how ministry and marriage relationships *should* and *should not* function in the church.

Through idolatry, Jezebel presumed to take over the culture of Israel and to give spiritual direction to the nation. Her spiritual children were the prophets of Baal. Ahab, who represented the face of the lion in the administration of Israel, had vacated his position as the spiritual head of the nation. He gave room for, and supported, his wife's idolatrous ministry endeavours, and deferred to her advice and direction. Consequently, the prophet Elijah said of Ahab, 'There was no-one like Ahab who sold himself to do wickedness in the sight of the Lord, because Jezebel his wife stirred him up.' 1Ki 21:25.

The fallen nature of their marriage and its destructive effect on the people of the Lord was exemplified in the death of Naboth. The vineyard that belonged to Naboth was the heritage and provision of God for his life and for his household. Naboth described it as 'the inheritance of his fathers'. 1Ki 21:3. In this regard, we can liken the field to his *sonship*. Ahab coveted what belonged to Naboth. He wanted to have Naboth's land for the purpose of cultivating a vegetable garden. 1Ki 21:2. We note the resemblance of Ahab's desire, to the self-defined works of Cain, who was a tiller of the ground. Gen 4:2.

When Ahab was unable to have his own way, he became piqued and upset, and behaved in an immature manner. He perceived Naboth's refusal to trade with him as being a rejection of his role as the leader of 'the church of Israel'. He went to his house sullenly and displeased with this congregant. He lay on his bed, turned away his face, and refused to eat any food. Jezebel said to Ahab, 'You now exercise authority over Israel! Arise, eat food [that I am giving to you], and let your heart be

cheerful; *I will give you the vineyard of Naboth the Jezreelite.*' 1Ki 21:7. Not only did Jezebel speak into a situation that was outside of her accountability, but she also misappropriated his authority and took action on his behalf.

Jezebel wrote letters in Ahab's name, misappropriating the authority of his seal. She called the men, the elders and the nobles of the city in which Naboth lived to participate in a fast. Then, with flattering deceit, she seated Naboth in a place of honour among the people. She called two worthless men to bear witness against Naboth, saying that he had blasphemed God and the king. He was condemned by their false message, resulting in his death by stoning, outside the gate. 1Ki 21:8-13.

God's judgement burned against Ahab, Jezebel and all of her children because of the corruption and death that their fallen marriage had brought on the household of Naboth and, indeed, upon the whole nation of Israel, through the prophets of Baal whom Jezebel had appointed and supported in their midst. Concerning Jezebel, the Lord said, 'The dogs shall eat Jezebel by the wall of Jezreel. The dogs shall eat whoever belongs to Ahab and dies in the city, and the birds of the air shall eat whoever dies in the field.' 1Ki 21:23-24.

By identifying Jezebel in the midst of the church in Thyatira, Jesus was revealing that this corrupt mode of relating was evident in the marriages of some of the presbyters and was having an impact within the church. The judgement that befell Ahab and Jezebel was proclaimed upon those who operate by this same principle. Jesus declared, 'And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works.' Rev 2:21-23.

Although Christ wrote specifically to the presbytery and church of Thyatira, we are all called to hear what the Spirit is saying to the *churches* in relation to this matter. Rev 2:29. He is first calling all presbyters to consider their marriages, and to turn from the fallen ways of relating that allow the spirit of Jezebel to have influence in the church. The heads of every family are, likewise, being called to turn from these fallen ways of relating so that the life of God can be effectively cultivated in their households.

Recovering Christian marriages

In Part 7 of *The Steps of Salvation*, we considered the food that God had prepared in the garden of Eden for the purpose of nourishing and sustaining the two orders of His administration. The fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was food for the angelic order, while the fruit of the tree of life was the provision of life for mankind. Gen 2:9.

Adam and Eve gave heed to the lie that Satan advanced through the use of illusion. Consequently, the desire to obtain what Satan was proposing, by eating the food that belonged to angels, was aroused within them. Eve ate this fruit because she saw herself as the one who, like God, had the capacity to multiply the identities of mankind. She further believed that she could nurture them with the wisdom that she had received from the knowledge of good and evil. Gen 3:5.

In contrast, Adam desired dominance and rulership over creation through the exercise of his own wisdom and power. He ate the food that belonged to the angels because he wanted to be *like the angels* - mighty in power. 2Pe 2:11. No doubt, he believed that, through the exercise of this wisdom and power, he would be able to fulfil the will of God, which was to subdue the earth and to have dominion over every living thing. Gen 1:28.

The result of eating the food that belonged to angels was that Adam and Eve were separated from the order of seed-life that Yahweh *Elohim* had ordained for them. Having separated themselves from the light and life that they knew in fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life, they were in darkness, and were dead to God. Moreover, the desire that motivated them to take and eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil became another law within their hearts. This law, which was now part of their identity, was passed on, through procreation, to all their children.

Unless we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's circumcision, we will continue to live by the 'other law'. It will be the fundamental motivating influence of our life, and the basis of our perception of what is 'true'. The circumcision of Christ is the only means by which the other law is removed from our heart. Furthermore, in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, His redeeming blood is effective in our life to cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we can serve God in the fellowship of His offering. Heb 9:14. This is true for every person, including those who are called to be messengers of the gospel of God.

This point has not been well understood by many church leaders who, in practice, reject the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as being the necessary condition for their ministry. This has also been a mindset of some leaders in our stream of churches.

Failed ministry marriages

Although the desire for dominance and rulership is a fundamental drive within fallen men, we are unable to attain the ideals of this desire. In response to this failure, many ministry men seek to strengthen their failed ministry projections by *inviting their wives into the ministry with them*. When a leader does this, he 'shares' his headship with his wife.

Practically, the man invites his wife to reason with him regarding the expression of his mandate as a husband, a father and a leader. She progressively 'coaches' him in relation to his ministry by reflecting on his performance, identifying his faults, absolving him of sin, compensating for his immaturities and insecurities, making suggestions to improve his ministry expression, etc. In some extreme cases, the wife will script her husband's function in the church and in the home. Often, either at the behest of her husband, or simply because of her association with him, she may assume a ministry or pastoral profile within the church to complement the ministry of her husband.

When this is the nature of a man's marriage, his wife has become the face of God to him. Because of his failure to achieve the cherub-like expression to which he aspires, the man's confidence is diminished. He increasingly depends upon his wife's support and affirmation. This dependency is often demonstrated when a man verbalises how much he relies on his wife. This sentiment is commonly accompanied by praise for her and by his seemingly light-hearted self-deprecations. However, Paul described this as being the *false humility* of those who worship angels, intruding into things which they have not seen, being vainly puffed up by their fleshly minds, and not holding fast to the Head [Christ]. Col 2:18-19.

Women who live in this kind of marriage relationship are unable to relate with other women as sisters. Instead, they tend to associate with likeminded and similarly empowered women within the church. In the absence of such connections, they tend to be disconnected from other women. They are unable to easily and genuinely meet others because they engage with them from the basis of a projection.

The potential symptoms of a failed marriage are numerous and diverse. Typically, however, a wife will manifest some form of neurosis, such as anxiety or depression. The husband will either be angry and reactive or he will be compliant with, yet relationally disengaged from, his wife. Intimacy between the husband and the wife is often lacking in marriages that follow this profile. Under these conditions, many have succumbed to corruption as they indulge, or compensate, themselves in various ways, attempting to escape the pressure to present well, when their marriage is actually dysfunctional.

Falling short of the grace of God

When a man chooses to include his wife in this headship discussion, *she becomes his mirror*. This is a great corruption, because it subverts the headship of Christ. Paul was clear; Christ is the Head of a man. 1Co 11:3. The face of Christ is the only mirror into which a person is to look in order to receive the knowledge of God's will for their life as His son. 2Co 3:18.

A leader who looks into the face of his wife, rather than into the face of Christ, in the fellowship of the presbytery and as Christ's word is ministered at the communion table, *is being disobedient*. He is not deceived but, rather, has accountably chosen this fallen mode of marriage over and against the order of marriage that was established by God in the beginning. 1Ti 2:14. Gen 2:23-24. His wife, however, falls into transgression because *she is deceived*. 1Ti 2:14. She responds to his entreaty in the deluded belief that her 'God-like' observations, suggestions and directions are part of her role as his 'helper' in the marriage.

A wife who does this is not a helper comparable to her husband and head. She now has a share of his headship. Consequently, the man's head is covered, and his ministry activities dishonour Christ. The woman's head is uncovered. Her ministry endeavours bring dishonour to her husband. Shame is the fundamental mode of their marriage and of their ministry. 1Co 11:3-15.

A husband and wife whose marriage is not being recovered to the order of headship, which is the culture of offering, will fall short of the grace of God. 1Pe 3:7. Rom 3:23. Not only will they be unable to stand in grace themselves but, also, they will be unable to minister the grace of life to others. Bereft of grace, the couple will seek a common and mutually beneficial ground upon which to relate with one another in order to

remain viable as a ministering couple in the church. They will view the work of ministry as a point of compatibility, and will relate with one another as fellow workers or ministers. Leadership couples may spend a lifetime presenting a unified and successful front yet, in reality, their marriage has failed.

Implications for marriage counselling

Understanding this point is particularly important for those who are involved in pre-marriage counselling. It is evident that a ministry-sharing arrangement is an element of a leadership couple's marriage when the woman presumes to address a young courting man on matters of culture and preparation for marriage. Paul was clear that such engagement is inordinate, writing, 'I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence'. 1Ti 2:12.

In this scenario, the leadership couple, together, are addressing the courting couple from the basis of their own failed marriage. Such an approach to courtship counselling is a corrupting influence. It will not help the young couple to establish their house in the culture of Christ. Instead, it will place a veil over the young man's face, and will encourage the young woman to pursue God-likeness, rather than godliness, as her culture and the culture of their house.

The pathway of recovery

This fallen mode of marriage is unavoidable for those who endeavour to function in the presbytery on the basis of *collegiality*. This is because collegiality is the commitment to relationship with other presbyters for the sake of *mutual empowerment*. A collegial presbytery is a group of leaders who aspire to minister *as angels*. They make room for the expression of others so that their own ministry expression is acknowledged and advanced.

Collegiality has been a pervasive and corrupting influence within our presbytery for many years. This goes some way in explaining why the marriages of so many presbyters have faltered. Unfortunately, many men in the presbytery who have not repented of their collegial culture still think that their marriages are healthy and viable because of the self-perceived success of their ministry. Rather, with new eyes, we must all see the true condition of our marriages, and join the process of restoration to the culture of marriage that God intended for us.

The Lord is speaking to each of us concerning this matter. With His word, He is pouring out a spirit of grace and supplication upon us so that we are able to see the true condition of our marriages, and can mourn for the sin of our disobedience to Christ. As we receive this word, and begin to mourn, the Holy Spirit turns our mourning into travail. This travail is the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which our marriages are able to be restored and made new in Christ.

The headship of a man can only be recovered when he looks into the face of his Head, Christ. The primary point of reflection from the face of Christ happens through body ministry at the communion gathering. Moreover, for those whom the Lord has called to care for the church as part of a presbytery, there is a particular expression of Christ's headship that they must receive in the fellowship of presbytery.

Each couple will need to become real with each other about their culture, and to prayerfully consider where their marriage requires restoration. A man must deal with the curse on his own ground first. He must not look to his wife but, rather, must accept that his ground is cursed because he is disobedient. Each man must deal with the curse of his own ground by repentance, so that he can be connected by faith to the headship of Christ.

Once he connects with Christ his Head, he must find his name, stand up and speak by the faith that he receives by hearing the word of God as it is ministered from the face of Christ. He is then able to invite his wife to be the helper comparable to that expression. A wife, on the other hand, can find her own name as a sister and a mother only according to the word of her sanctification.

In this regard, it is most important for us to recognise that a woman cannot share her husband's ministry with him. Likewise, she does not have a ministry function because of the name and grace that belongs to her husband. This is true of every married couple, but is particularly so when the husband has a tithe-supported work in the church.

A wife must find and know her own sanctified participation as a sister to her brethren in the body of Christ. Gal 3:28. By hearing the word of the Lord, she can receive faith for participation in the body of Christ according to her own name and sanctification as a son of God. She is able to pray and prophesy because she has respect for God's order of headship, and has received faith for participation in the fellowship of the body of Christ by hearing the word ministered at the communion

gathering. Even if her husband does not live in obedience to the word of God, she is able, as a son of God, to conduct herself as a sister, a wife and a mother in the church. 1Pe 3:1. She will not use body ministry as a forum to address issues in her own home or to reprimand her husband.

In conclusion

This chapter has been direct and clear because we have, historically, been slow to hear what the Lord is saying to us about our marriages and families. Many have failed to recognise the implications of the fall of mankind upon their marriages and their engagement as couples in the church. This is because they have believed in the integrity of their romantic ministry projections upon which their marriages were established.

The Lord addressed the church of Thyatira with eyes as a flame of fire, because the spirit of Jezebel had gained ascendancy in the presbytery and in the church as a result of the corruption of marriages among them. Significantly, Jesus said that He came to them in this way so that *all the churches* would know that He searches the hearts and the minds, and gives to each person according to their works. Rev 2:23.

The hour is late in the immutable plan of God for mankind, and the urgency of the Spirit in relation to these matters is acute. We must give heed to what the Lord is saying to all the churches regarding our families and our marriages, so that we are included among those who have been made ready for the coming of our Lord. Luk 1:17.