

# Carrying the testimony of truth in our bodies

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## Sabbath rest

The sabbath rest of the people of God is found in the finished work of Christ. We enter this rest through the Holy Spirit, who sanctifies Christ as Lord in our hearts and enables our participation in our overcoming in Christ, which is already complete. The sabbath rest is the rest in which the only works are the works of faith. These are the works which are appointed to each son of God as the obedience of their sonship.

These works include filling up what is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. The only thing lacking is the full measure of participation of the saints who have been appointed to suffer with Christ. This portion of suffering must be filled up to its full measure, which has been appointed by the Lord. When it is complete, the Lord will measure this cup of suffering back upon the world, in equal measure.

'Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven. Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.' Luk 6:37-38.

At the end of the age, as the saints inherit the kingdom, the mercy that flows from the body of Christ, as evil is overcome through good, will cause the multiplied blessings of the life of God to be measured back to the people of God. At the same time, as the wicked pour out violence and condemnation, they will be storing up the full measure of God's wrath, which will be poured back upon them by the Lord.

We are called to demonstrate the mercy of God, keeping ourselves in the love of God and holding fast to the fellowship of the saints. As we learn to show mercy in every situation, we are being delivered from the lie of Satan which constantly tries to provoke us to rise up in condemnation and self-righteousness.

## Carried in our bodies

'Now these things, brethren, I have figuratively transferred to myself and Apollos for your sakes, that you may learn in us not to think beyond what is written, that none of you may be puffed up on behalf of one against the other.' 1Co 4:6.

'And He sent and signified it by His angel to His servant John.' Rev 1:1.

The Lord can signify His word by an angel, who is able to declare the word as though it were God Himself speaking. We see this, for example, when the angel of the Lord visited Abraham. In the book of Revelation, the angel Gabriel signified the word of God to John through the symbolic visions which John received and which the angel was able to interpret for him. Such a word can be obeyed and participated in, because it is the word of God which has come by faith.

However, God does not signify His word in the same way when He uses human beings to declare His message. As Paul described to the Corinthians, the word is first applied in us so that it can be declared as testimony to another. Paul *'figuratively transferred'* to himself and Apollos the imperative of the word which they were labouring over with the saints in Corinth.

Paul personally embodied the message which he was bringing in fear and much trembling. Paul was lifting up Christ among the people with whom he was sharing his life, in such a way that the cross was signified in him, not merely by him.

This is how Jesus authored the pathway of our sonship. Every point of His obedience was fulfilling the righteousness of God in Him. As a result, once He had established the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we were able to follow after Him and participate in His obedience. Thus, when we see Jesus saying, *'Not My will but Yours be done'*, He was being personally obedient to the Father, while also applying and fulfilling the necessity of our obedience to Himself. His obedience was authored as a fellowship and as faith, not as a standard or a mere religious ethic. The whole of our earthly walk as sons of God was applied to Him, and was in Him, including our sin.

This is the miracle of the adoptive transfer, by which He became sin for us, and we received His righteousness. The sin of the whole world was literally, not figuratively, applied to Him, so that we could receive His finished work, and the faith of it. He was lifted up upon the cross and, from that moment, all men began to be drawn to Him.

However, the means by which this drawing takes place is not through belief in His historical offering. Rather, it is through the agency of men, in whom the crucifixion of Christ can be witnessed by others. This is possible as sons of God are joined to, and participate in, the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. It was for this reason that Paul could say to the Galatians, *'Before whose eyes Christ was clearly portrayed as crucified'*. Gal 3:1.

Paul himself had witnessed the same miraculous signification of the cross when he stood by and witnessed the stoning of Stephen. Stephen's righteous overcoming, when he was murdered by the Sanhedrin, allowed Paul to see Christ portrayed as crucified before his own eyes. Stephen had been granted a participation in Christ's finished work for all men.

For Stephen, then, his death was not about his own biological decease. Instead, Stephen's death was totally revealing the death of Christ, even though Christ was not being crucified once again. The message which Stephen proclaimed was not in word only, but in deed, through the presentation of his own body as a living sacrifice. At the point of his death, Stephen was revealing the life of God. As a result, the Lord Himself threw open the windows of heaven. Act 7:55-56.

This is how the weakness of God is shown to be stronger than men. And this is the manner in which Paul brought the word of the cross to every place - in weakness and fear and in much trembling.

*'And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God. For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified. I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling. And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.'* 1Co 2:1-5.

The demonstration of the Spirit and of power is through living testimony. Paul brought this testimony everywhere that he went, by carrying about in his body the dying and the living of Christ. Having received the righteousness of God through adoptive transfer, Paul understood that each person who desired to be a son of God had to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In this way, they would have a participation in the transfer of the life of God to themselves, and the transfer of their sin to Christ.

According to Paul's message, people could not be joined to this work through mere words. The power of the message had to be ministered through the expression of a living and authentic testimony, which had been obtained through faith in the work of the blood of Christ, and which was multiplied when a person loved not their own lives to the death. Paul understood that a true messenger was one who carried the evidence of what had been transferred to them (through the miracle of receiving the work of the cross by faith) within their own bodies. A messenger's message was true because it was true in them. They were living epistles of the message of the cross.

Paul had seen the power of this message in Stephen's death. Paul understood that his own sin had pierced Christ, and that there was no removal of this sin unless he found access to the mercy of God. He could testify that God granted him mercy, and that Christ was his Mercy Seat! The granting of this mercy meant that his sin was taken away and, in its place, he was given a share of the righteousness of God! Christ who knew no sin had become sin for Paul, and he, the chief of sinners, had become the righteousness of God.

It is noteworthy that, when the Lord called Ezekiel and Hosea as prophets, He also called them to exemplify the message which they were proclaiming. Their proclamation of God's judgement included a demonstration of that judgement in visible ways. They carried the message within their own bodies, as they presented themselves as a living sacrifice to God. They did not merely proclaim words; the word itself was written upon them through personal experience.

Our *agape* meal is a context in which the gospel is shared by brethren who are the bread and the wine to one another. Each person is a living epistle, upon whom the testimony of Jesus is written by the Holy Spirit and witnessed by those around them. The message is not shared through the exchange of words chosen from the biblical lexicon or by the expression of personal opinions, no matter how strongly held they may be. Our sharing of what is true in us is the '*bread of sincerity and truth*' to our brethren. 1Co 5:8.

This is how we '*keep the feast*' and join in genuine *agape* fellowship together. When the truth is in us, it flows from us as a testimony, the purpose of which is to bless another. A person who does not have the truth in them, but who falsely represents that they do, is functioning after the working of Satan. Satan has no truth in him because he does not stand in *the* truth. However, a son of God has been granted the right to choose to stand in the truth. Having so chosen, they are able to fellowship and love their brethren '*in the truth*'. 2Jn 1:1.

## The knowledge of God

'For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God.' 2Co 10:4-5.

'Beloved, let us love one another, for love is of God; and everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. He who does not love does not know God, for God is love.' 1Jn 4:7-8.

The mode of Satan is to project a lofty, or high, thing against the knowledge of God. He first did this when he foolishly thought that he could ascend above the Lord and be worshipped above God Himself. He now draws men and women to function according to this same mode by sowing a projection, which is a lie, into their hearts. When this lie is believed and acted upon, a person is not only deceived by Satan, but they also begin to deceive themselves and the people around them.

The mark of this deception is that they cannot love their brethren. They will find themselves projecting hypocritical friendliness to people, even while they stumble continually over the word and over the offences that they harbour. That is because the lofty thing that they are projecting, exalts itself against the knowledge of God; and the knowledge of God is evident through our love for one another. Everyone who loves is born of God and knows God. A person who does not love their brethren does not know God.

A person who is deceiving themselves is able to convince themselves that they, and not the people who offend them, are the one who understands the nature of love. They really believe that their projection of themselves is true. This deception functions very powerfully when it comes to their sanctification in relation to unbelievers, especially those who are related to them. Jesus made it very clear that this sanctification was essential for anyone who wanted to come after Him and be His disciple.

'If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple. And whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.' Luk 14:26-27.

This is because we cannot love the Lord with our whole heart until we have forsaken the human loves which lay claim to the priority of our attention and our affections. Because of their power, these loves easily provoke the emotions of sin within us and, therefore, have great potential to lead us away from the Lord. We must be armed with the truth so that we can cast down arguments and the high things which exalt themselves against the knowledge of God. We do this by guarding our fellowship and keeping ourselves in the love of God.

### **Loving much and walking by the Spirit**

Jesus gave an illustration of love when He was in the house of Simon the Pharisee. A woman of poor reputation had come into the house, weeping, and proceeded to wash Jesus' feet with her tears. The religious and carnal people present were offended that Jesus allowed the woman to touch Him, which prompted Him to say this: 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has wet My feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave Me no kiss; but she, since the time I came in, has not ceased to kiss My feet. You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with perfume. For this reason I say to you, her sins, which are many, have been forgiven, for she loved much; but he who is forgiven little, loves little.' Luk 7:44-47.

From this, we can draw some vital conclusions about the nature of the eternal life that we are living and inheriting.

1. He who is forgiven much loves much because the recognition of God's mercy is a revelation and impartation of His love. The forgiveness of sins is not positional. It is understood only as the expression of divine love, which comes to a person who is

completely dead in trespasses and sins, lacking any strength to save themselves. The mercy of God reaches down to such a person through the grace of God, which grants them faith, in spite of their spiritual impotence.

2. The knowledge of mercy in our heart is the precursor of love. When we are illuminated as to His mercy towards us, we begin to love. That is because we understand that He first loved us when we receive His mercy. First love comes as mercy to us and then multiplies when we lay down our life for another. 'This woman' is the picture of the church in travail, worshipping at the feet of Christ. It is also the picture of every soul who has obtained the knowledge of God through meekness and poverty of spirit. This is the true mourning of repentance, which grants us an abundant entry into the kingdom.
3. When we see the depths of how far Christ's love had to go, we can then be raised with Him to the heights. He descended, and afterwards ascended, for us. The comprehension of this journey is an illumination that we acquire with all the saints in the fellowship of agape. We look upon Christ's wounds in the fellowship of His body, which is His people, and we learn to mourn with godly sorrow for our sin which caused His suffering.
4. This godly sorrow is what God turns into the joy of participation in the one offering of Christ. A person who mourns is given the faith to be raised with Christ; to join Him in being raised from the death of sin and to be seated with Christ in heavenly places. This is the faith of a person's baptism. Baptism signals that a person has the witness of mercy in their own heart, and has personally received faith to be raised with Christ and to walk after the Spirit. They confess that their motivation for doing so is the love of God, which compels them to lose their own life so that Christ can be revealed in them.

## God's foreknowledge

We can enlarge our understanding of these points by examining Paul's condensed description of the salvation package in Romans Chapter 8.

'For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.' Rom 8:29-30.

The foreknowledge of God is the fellowship of the Three in the counsel of Their one will. This foreknowledge is the light in which They dwell, the fire of Their love which burns in perpetual offering and loving congress. Their foreknowledge of us reflects Their desire and kind intention towards us, which is for us to be sons of God and to share Their life in the glory of fellowship in one spirit. This foreknowledge is an attribute of the divine fellowship, expressed in the statement that 'God is light'. There is no falsehood in this light, and no unfulfilled aspiration; only the purity of Their fulfilled reality which is expressed in Their shared name of Yahweh, I AM.

Predestination based on His foreknowledge is the basis upon which God says, 'I know you' or, in the negative, 'I never knew you'. God does not know us after the flesh. He only recognises a person who brings forth the fruit of the name by which He knows them, according to what is written about them in the book of life. He does not know a person simply because they identify as believing in the Christian concept of God.

## Predestination

The faith of Yahweh's foreknowledge, once shared in Their fellowship, then moved to an expression and an identification of the names of individual sons of God. This is called 'predestination'. Those whom He foreknew, He predestined to be sons of God. This naming is essential for a person to be called by name. We are not called generically. This would leave room for us to be birthed according to Satan's lie, which is that we can name ourselves.

The word of God's predestination replaces the lie of Satan and gives to us the word of truth, so that we can walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh. This word of our predestination is the hope which anchors our soul to the faith that was established in the finished work of Christ. In other words, the word of the Father is the full statement of the desire of God, which is His desire for us to inherit our name. The word of the Father is imparted to us by the faith of Christ, whose one offering grants every person the right to be delivered from their bondage to sin and to the power of Satan.

## Calling

Those whom He predestined, He also called; and there is no calling without a predestination. The numberless names which would be called by God were shown to Abraham, our father according to the flesh, as the stars of heaven. Every person was called in Isaac.

'But it is not that the word of God has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called." That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of God; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed. For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son.'" Rom 9:6-9.

We are children of promise who have been given the right to inherit, with Jacob/Israel, the riches of the Father's glory by being born of the Spirit. The Israel of God is not synonymous with natural Israel. Instead, it is the generation of Jacob who seek the Lord, who find the overcoming of conversion from carnal to spiritual.

The offering of Isaac was, in type, the offering of Christ, through which every name that was lost in Adam would be restored to the Father. In fulfilment of this type, the Father was in Christ during His offering on the cross, reconciling the world to Himself. This work is finished; and it is the gift of God to all who believe. But we must believe, and go on believing!

A 'type' is simply the depiction of the faith for something specific, which is fulfilled in the one offering of Christ. A type is given to us for our understanding, so that the faith of God can come to our heart by the word. Thus, Jesus spoke in parables, all of which have their fulfilment in Him and His one offering, for every person who personally joins that offering by faith. We notice that He did not speak any parables after His resurrection. It was all finished. All types are finished, or consummated, in Him.

## Justified

The call of God is to join '*the fear of Isaac*', who is Christ, the Lord Himself. We join His faith when we abide in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This faith justifies us, giving us peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.

This justification is the righteousness of Christ becoming our righteousness through adoptive transfer. When we are justified, we bear witness to the wonderful work of Christ's blood. We marvel at the mercy of God, as we look upon Him who is our Mercy Seat, who was pierced for our sake, and whose soul was made an offering for sin.

We see Him as both the sin-bearer and the New Man; the incarnate Word of our calling who justified us by His faith. This faith is the faith that He received in fellowship with the Father, and which He brings to our heart by the Holy Spirit.

## Glorified

Those whom He justified, He also glorified by giving to them a share in His glory. This glory is known through the fruit which a son of God bears. This fruit glorifies the Father because it represents the multiplication of His word of our predestination. The bearing of fruit brings us the assurance of our salvation. We comprehend with all the saints the length, breadth, depth and height of the love of God, which has come to us as mercy, and which is now bearing fruit in us as eternal life.

In bearing witness to the fruit of the tree of life in ourselves, we see that we are deriving our benefit, resulting in our sanctification, the outcome of which is eternal life. Our sanctification is another way of saying that we are walking by the Spirit and that, as spiritual (not carnal) people, we are doing the will of God each day - *'the will of God, your sanctification'*. 1Th 4:3.

All of this comes to us by the mercy of God, which, when we see it, cuts our heart with a deep wound, which marks us as belonging to God. Just as He was wounded for our sake, so we are wounded in the house of our friends and identified as the Israel of God. For this reason, we love much. As such, we can fulfil the Royal Law and live spiritually, instead of carnally. As we walk each day, led by the Spirit, we are identified as being sons of God.

'So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh— for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.' Rom 8:12-14.