

teens

2023

God and His Family

*from whom the whole family
in heaven and earth is named*

Eph 3:15



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Contents

Editorial <i>by Bruce Hamilton</i>	2
A letter from Cleopas <i>by Victor Hall</i>	4
God's purpose for you <i>by Peter Hay</i>	12
The Everlasting Covenant <i>by Peter Hay</i>	16
The New Covenant of the Spirit <i>by Peter Hay</i>	22
The work of the two goats <i>by Nathan Smith</i>	26
The joy and pain of the freedom of choice <i>by Nathan Smith</i>	30
The prayer of Moses - Part 1 <i>by David Baker</i>	34
The prayer of Moses - Part 2 <i>by David Baker</i>	38
The life of God multiplied and given to us <i>by Bruce Hamilton</i>	42
What is man? <i>by Ross Wills</i>	46
Sons of God in overcoming families <i>by Julianne Hamilton</i>	50
Fellowship in the family - by the Spirit <i>by Tim Maurice</i>	54
Testimonies	58
Friends across the nation	66



Editorial

Bruce Hamilton

Welcome to the seventeenth edition of our 'Teens' magazine! The magazine has been prepared in fellowship as a part of the overall initiative of the presbytery towards encouraging, instructing, and building up teenagers who are walking and abiding in fellowship, in their families and in the church.

We eagerly look forward to our annual Northern and Southern Teens camps each year. The camps are a rich time of fellowship in word and song, as teenagers from across Australia gather together to receive the ministry of the word.

This year's theme is *God and His family – from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named*. Eph 3:15.

In this present season, the Lord has been addressing us about being delivered from the darkness of our own understanding, and from the useless gospels that we had formerly believed concerning the pathway of salvation, regeneration, and how we are justified by His grace to become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. Tit 3:5-7.

Wonderfully, Jesus Christ, the risen, glorified Son of Man, has made Himself known to us, causing us to see our calling

as sons of God and sons of men. We are being established on the pathway of salvation that He has pioneered for us through His offering and sufferings on the cross, and we have begun to enter and possess the kingdom of God! We rejoice that we have received the gift of the Holy Spirit and that we have been born again. This is the beginning point of our journey with Him, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, through which we will be made men in the image and likeness of God through His everlasting fatherhood.

Without mercy and illumination by the Spirit, we are indeed foolish and slow of heart to believe the gospel of God contained in the Scriptures. However, as we receive and abide in the word of the Lord as it is proclaimed to us by His messengers, we can turn from our darkness and walk in the light of His word. As sons of God who are established on this pathway, we are revealing Christ as members of His body. Through His fatherhood, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we are being progressively glorified and being made into the image and likeness of God.

We see, on the front cover, a depiction of the vision of Abraham, as he saw his participation, by faith, in the offering and



sufferings of Christ, on the cross, where the work of the Eternal Covenant was finished, and the pathway was established, by which a multitude of glorious sons of God, as numerous as the stars of heaven and too numerous to count, will be brought forth.

In the words of the apostle Peter, we continue to remind one another that 'the Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance' and that 'the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night'. Therefore, we exhort one another to consider what manner of persons we ought to be in holy conduct and godliness as we, 'according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells'. We look forward to these things, giving ourselves to be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless; and to consider that 'the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation'. 2Pe 3:9-15.

Our teenagers continue to 'grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. 2Pe 3:18. They are giving themselves to be known in

fellowship, and they are growing in their confidence to bless others with their testimony.

Many of our teenagers have waited on the Lord and written original songs from the word that they have heard declared to them. This year, we have received over seventy songs! A marvellous effort, and testimony to the life of God in our midst. We look forward to opportunities throughout the coming year to receive and join the ministry of these songs, as we continue in *agape* fellowship at our Sunday communion gatherings and house to house.

What a great blessing it is that we are joined in the one fellowship of the word of God, across the nation and overseas! We thank the Lord for the provision of His word, and for the understanding and life that He is bringing to us.

Have a great camp!
Bruce Hamilton



A letter from Cleopas

Victor Hall

To my dear brethren in Christ,

I want to testify of the kindness of the Lord, who delivered my friend and me from the darkness of our own understanding and from the useless gospels that we had formerly believed concerning the Christ. Tit 3:4. Wonderfully, Jesus Christ, the risen, glorified Son of Man, made Himself known to us, causing us to see our calling as sons of God and sons of men. We were established on the pathway of salvation that He had pioneered for us through His offering and sufferings on the cross, and we began to enter and possess the kingdom of God!

Christ's earthly ministry

I'll begin my account from when we first encountered Jesus, not long after He commenced His ministry in the region of Judea. Hearing Him preach with such authority, and seeing the many amazing miracles that He performed, we were convinced that He was the Messiah, the Deliverer of Israel, promised by Moses and the holy prophets. The members of the Jewish council were sceptical of Jesus, questioning the place of His birth, His parentage, and His education. However,

they, too, could not deny the power that He demonstrated or the authority with which He taught.

During His ministry, Jesus sent the twelve disciples to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, directing them to preach that 'the kingdom of heaven is at hand', and to find 'worthy houses'. Mat 10:6-7,11-13. After they returned, we all observed a notable change in the content of Jesus' teaching. He began to say to us that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things from the elders and the chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised on the third day. Mat 16:21. Luk 9:21-22. Peter rebuked Him for these words. This interaction was memorable, for Jesus said to him, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offence to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men.' Mat 16:23.

The next day, a man implored Jesus to cast a demon out of his son. The demon spirit would seize the boy, causing him to cry out, convulse, foam at the mouth and injure himself. Jesus rebuked the unclean spirit, healing the child and giving him back to his father. We were all amazed at



the majesty of God. However, instead of reflecting on this miracle, Jesus said to us, *'Let these words sink down into your ears, for the Son of Man is about to be betrayed into the hands of men.'* Luk 9:44. Evidently, His words did not sink down into our ears, because we did not understand this saying, or why He had made this statement following such an astonishing exorcism. The meaning of Jesus' words remained hidden from our understanding, and we, with His disciples, were afraid to ask Him about them. Luk 9:45.

After these things, the Lord appointed seventy-two disciples and sent them, two by two, before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. My friend and I were set apart by Jesus for this work. He directed us, saying, 'But whatever house you enter, first say, "Peace to this house." And if a son of peace is there, your peace will rest on it; if not, it will return to you. And remain in the same house, eating and drinking such things as they give, for the labourer is worthy of his wages. Do not go from house to house.' Luk 10:5-7. We found a house of peace in a town called Emmaus, not far from Jerusalem.

Following this season of ministry, we returned to Jesus with great joy, for its fruit had exceeded our expectations. Even the demons had been subject to us in His name! Luk 10:17. However, as Jesus recommissioned us, He asserted that the reason for our rejoicing should not be 'power over spirits', but rather that our names were written in heaven. Specifically, He said, 'I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.' Luk 10:18-20.

The death of Jesus

As you know, Jesus was betrayed into the hands of the Jewish council by His friend, Judas. The Sanhedrin condemned Jesus to death because He confessed to be the Son of God. In response to their demand, 'If you are the Christ, tell us', Jesus said to them, 'If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no

means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God.' Luk 22:67-69. They all then said, 'Are You then the Son of God?', to which He replied, 'You rightly say that I am.' Luk 22:70.

Jesus endured a brutal death, marked by seven wounding events that culminated in His crucifixion on Mount Calvary. Following His decease, His body was secured by Joseph of Arimathea, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He, with Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel whom Jesus had instructed concerning the new birth, prepared the body for burial according to the custom of the Jews. They placed His body in a new tomb in which no one had previously been laid.

We remained in Jerusalem with the disciples, mourning the passing of Jesus, a Man whom we loved, and upon whom we had set our hopes. After three days had passed, some of the women, including Mary Magdalene, excitedly came among the disciples, claiming to have seen and spoken to Jesus who had risen from the dead! Peter and John rushed to the tomb to see for themselves and believed the report. However, the rest of the disciples were incredulous at the account of Christ's resurrection. To the disciples, the words of the women seemed to be emotionally driven nonsense, which they were unable to comprehend as they grieved and remained despondent. Luk 24:11.

Meeting the Man on the road

My friend and I determined to go back to the 'house of peace' we had found when Jesus had first sent us out before His face. We felt that it was necessary to let this household know what had happened to

our Lord in Jerusalem. As we made our way to Emmaus, we reflected together on the things that had transpired. We were so engrossed in our conversation that we did not notice that a man had drawn alongside us. At the time, we did not recognise that it was Jesus. We could not see who this Man really was.

The Man asked us why we were so downcast. It seemed remarkable that He was unaware of what had occurred in Jerusalem. We thought that He must have been the only one who did not know! We explained to the Man that Jesus of Nazareth was a Prophet, mighty in deed and word before God and all the people. The chief priests and Jewish rulers delivered Him to the Romans to be condemned to death and to be crucified. From our reading of the Scriptures, our hearing of His teaching, and our observations of His miracles, we thought that Jesus was the Christ. However, when He died, our expectations had been confounded and we had become somewhat disillusioned.

The Man said to us, 'O foolish ones, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken! Ought not the Christ to have suffered these things and to enter into His glory?' Luk 24:25-26. We now recognise that Jesus was addressing the darkness that lay over the eyes of our hearts so that we had been unable to receive His teaching on His death and resurrection. This was the same veil that prevented us from recognising Christ, the spiritual new Man. Having confronted our foolishness and unbelief, He then began to proclaim to us the gospel of God, beginning from the book of Genesis. Luk 24:27.

The gospel of God

Although we still did not recognise Him, the Man began to explain the work of the Messiah. Beginning in the book of Genesis, He drew our attention to the covenant initiative of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit to make man in Their image and according to Their likeness. Gen 1:26. To our astonishment, He explained that Adam's creation was *not* in the image and likeness of God. Rather, Adam was the 'first man' and a 'type' of Him who was to come – the Christ. Adam was predestined to become a man in the image and likeness of God.

We heard how Adam fell from this predestination when he disobeyed God and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to become the source of his own life and destiny. Significantly, his corruptible body, which was nourished with energy and nutrients by breaking down, or corrupting, food in his stomach, *became mortal*. God had said that this would happen. Gen 2:17. In the day that Adam ate of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he died, and death spread to all men. Rom 5:12. Now, every person's body was corruptible *and* mortal. Prior to the Fall, Adam and Eve's bodies were only corruptible.

Adam and Eve were personally redeemed and recovered to relationship with Yahweh. However, Jesus explained that mankind was recovered to their predestination as sons of God and sons of men when He called Abraham to leave his country, his family and his father's house to enter a land that He would show him. 1Co 15:22. Gen 12:1. Through the Lord's initiative toward him, Abraham replaced Adam as the *beginning of a new humanity*.

Abraham's children were first given to him as the 'dust of the earth'. The Lord said to him, 'I will make your descendants as the *dust of the earth*; so that if a man could number the dust of the earth, then your descendants also could be numbered.' Gen 13:16. The 'dust of the earth' refers to the sons of men who have been lost in Adam. Gen 3:19. It was initially confronting to realise that my friend and I were not sons of Abraham simply because we were born as Jews in his natural lineage. The Man who spoke to us made it very clear that those who are of faith are sons of Abraham! Gal 3:7.

We learnt that Christ, the Seed of God, gave Himself to Abraham to become Abraham's Seed when He said, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' Gen 15:1. He then opened heaven to Abram, saying, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them. ... So shall you descendants be.' Gen 15:5. Abram understood that the Son of God would come in the flesh as his Son. Through the Son's offering, Abram's children, as the dust of the earth, would be made into the image and likeness of God, identified as the stars of heaven!

It is clear that Abraham received Christ, the Seed, into his life when he believed this amazing promise, for the Man drew our attention to the Scripture, 'He believed in the Lord, and He accounted it to him for righteousness'. Gen 15:6. This was Abraham's righteousness and it qualified him to become the father of a new humanity. This was a significant step in Abraham's pilgrimage of faith, which culminated in the offering up of Isaac on Mount Moriah.

The Man who walked with us reminded us that on Moriah the Angel of the Lord called to Abraham from heaven, staying his hand from slaying Isaac. Abraham released Isaac from the altar and stood him to one side. He was then instantly illuminated to see a ram caught by its horns in the thicket. This ram was, in reality, the Christ. At this point, the Word, who had given Himself to become the Son of Abraham, was manifest as the Lamb of God. He was giving Himself to be the offering of His heavenly Father and of His father, Abraham. Abraham took the ram and offered it up instead of his son, Isaac. Symbolically, in this action, Abraham

and the Son offered all the sons of men back to God. Through Christ's death and resurrection, they would be born as sons of God and then become sons of men in the image and likeness of God.

In retrospect, my friend and I have mused on the irony of journeying *away* from Jerusalem while we learnt about Abraham's pilgrimage to Mount Moriah, which was later called Mount Calvary. This is where the Covenant that God made with Abraham and his children was confirmed with an oath! In our delusion, we were walking away from the very context in which the promises of God, contained in the Scriptures, had been fulfilled!

The Man who travelled with us explained from the Psalms and from the other prophetic Scriptures that the ram slain on Mount Moriah foreshadowed the offering of the Son of God who would come in the flesh of Abraham. For example, He drew our attention to the words of Isaiah who prophesied, 'But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our peace was upon Him, and by His stripes we are healed. ... He was oppressed and He was afflicted, yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.' Isa 53:5,7. We now know that when Jesus rose from the death of this offering, He was manifest as the first 'star' of Abraham's children!

Illumination at the *agape* meal

Our hearts *burned* within us as we listened to all that this Man had to say to us on our journey to Emmaus. When we arrived at our destination, the Man indicated that He intended to go on further. However,

we implored Him to abide with us. We did not want Him, nor His message, to pass us by. We wanted to continue to hear what He had to say, and to understand its implications for us. Thankfully, the Man was happy to stay and have a meal with us.

Then, an amazing thing happened. As the Man sat with us at the table, He took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to us. Immediately, our eyes were opened and we knew that it was Jesus. We finally recognised the Son of Man who had been glorified through the offering journey that He had explained to us on the road to Emmaus. He had an incorruptible, immortal, spiritual body; He was the first man to be made in the image and likeness of God. As we knew Him, we saw our calling as sons of God and sons of men who would be made into the same image and likeness through His fatherhood towards us. As soon as we had been illuminated to this great hope, Jesus Christ vanished from our sight!

That very hour, we rose up and returned to Jerusalem. We were not remotely concerned that it was now nighttime. We found the eleven and the others who were gathered together with them. We confessed our foolishness and the darkness of our former gospels, and gave thanks for the illumination that Christ Himself had ministered to us as we had fellowship with Him over a meal. Those who were gathered there testified to us, saying, 'The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!', causing us to rejoice with them. Luk 24:32-34.

As we shared together, Jesus Himself stood in the midst of us all, saying, 'Peace to you'. Those who had not yet seen Jesus were terrified, supposing that they had seen a ghost! However, He said to them, 'Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.' Luk 24:38-39. He then breathed on us and said, 'Receive the Holy Spirit!', and we were born again. This was the beginning point of our journey with Him, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, through which we would be made men in the image and likeness of God through His Everlasting Fatherhood.

I have written this letter for the purpose of highlighting the inadequacy of our own understanding of the gospel. Without mercy and illumination by the Spirit, we are indeed foolish and slow of heart to believe the gospel of God contained in the Scriptures. However, as we receive and abide in the word of the Lord as it is proclaimed to us by His messengers, we can turn from our darkness and walk in the light of His word. As sons of God who are established on this pathway, we are revealing Christ as members of His body. Through His fatherhood, in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we are being progressively glorified and being made into the image and likeness of God.



A letter from Cleopas

Cleopas and his friend needed to be delivered from the darkness of their own understanding and from the useless gospels that they had formerly believed concerning the Christ. In mercy, Jesus Christ, the risen, glorified Son of Man, made Himself known to them, causing them to see their calling as sons of God and sons of men. They were established on the pathway of salvation that He had pioneered for them through His offering and sufferings on the cross and began to enter and possess the kingdom God.

Take some time

Consider the difference between our own understanding and the understanding that comes through the gospel. Share how you are receiving the riches of understanding that belongs to the mystery of God.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray that your hearts will be illuminated to the hope of your calling as sons of God and sons of men.

Sing

'Incline your ear to wisdom'

(Luke and Nadine Pomery)

'The word of God is near'

(Joshua Hay)

Scriptures for reference

Luk 24:13-25. Luk 10:17-20.

Gal 3:1-4.

God's purpose for you

Peter Hay

The purpose of Paul's ministry

The apostle Paul said that he had been separated to proclaim *the gospel of God*. The gospel of God reveals how Jesus Christ was begotten of the Father before the heavens and earth were created; how He came in the flesh; His offering journey from the last Passover to Calvary; and His resurrection from the dead. Rom 1:1-4. In summary, the gospel of God details the process by which the Son was established as the first Man who was made in the image and likeness of God.

We were predestined by God to be made into this image and likeness. Gen 1:26. As Paul explained, 'For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be *conformed to the image of His Son*, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren [who are just like Him]. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.' Rom 8:29-30.

The process of our calling, our justification, and our glorification as sons of God and sons of men is *the mystery of God*. It describes how we are made like Christ. Paul suffered great persecution for the

purpose of making this mystery known to his hearers. He wanted them to attain 'to all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.' Col 2:1-3.

In this statement, Paul nominated two dimensions of the mystery – of the Father, and of the Son. These two dimensions of the mystery correspond with two births, which Jesus outlined in His discussion with Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a person needed to be born from above, of the Father, to see the kingdom. Joh 3:3. He then said that a son of God needed to be born of water and the Spirit, by the Son, to enter the kingdom. Joh 3:5.

The word from before the beginning

If we want to understand the gospel of God, the best place to start is at the beginning! This is where the apostle John started. He wrote, 'That which was from [before] *the beginning*, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life ... we declare to you, that you also

may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is *with the Father* and *with His Son Jesus Christ*'. 1Jn 1:1,3.

To join the fellowship through which we are established in the mystery of God – which is of the Father and of Christ – we must receive the word that is from before the beginning. Helpfully, John identified this message, writing '*This is the message* which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that *God is light and in Him is no darkness at all*'. 1Jn 1:5. 'God is light' means that God is a fellowship. 1Jn 1:7.

The name of God

Who God is, and how He lives as a fellowship, is revealed in His name. This was made known to Moses in the burning bush, which was a *fiery light*. After Moses was commissioned to lead the children of Israel out of Egypt and into the promised land, he asked to know the name of the Lord. In response, God said to him, 'I AM WHO I AM. ... The LORD [Yahweh] God [Elohim] of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob ... *This is My name forever*, and this is My memorial to all generations.' Exo 3:14-15.

The name 'I AM' reveals that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are before, and outside of, space and time. They do not live somewhere, for there is nothing outside of God. Furthermore, They do not have a beginning, nor an age of years, for there is no time within Their fellowship. They just *are*! And They are completely satisfied in Their fellowship with one another.

This leads to the next revelation of Their name, which is 'Yahweh'. In Yahweh, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are completely *one Spirit*. Moses established this point, declaring to the children of Israel, 'Hear, O Israel: The LORD [Yahweh] our God [Elohim], the LORD is one!' Deu 6:4. Further emphasising the one Spirit nature of God, Jesus proclaimed, '*God is Spirit*, and those who worship Him must worship *in [one] spirit and [in] truth*.' Joh 4:24.

Jesus' statement enables us to see that the oneness of Yahweh is the fruit of worship in truth by three unique identities – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is expressed in the name *Elohim*. Each Person in *Elohim* is a Spirit, or identity, with a name, who are one Spirit together as Yahweh. In this regard, we could identify Yahweh *Elohim* as 'Yahweh Father', 'Yahweh Son', and 'Yahweh Holy Spirit'.



In Their fellowship, outside of time and space, Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son and Yahweh Holy Spirit are Spirits. They do not need bodies in Their fellowship before, because they do not live in time and space. Importantly, Yahweh Father, Yahweh Son and Yahweh Holy Spirit are completely co-equal. In this regard, the Father is not the Father of the Son, nor is the Holy Spirit the Helper of the Father and the Son.

Elohim's covenant initiative

In this fellowship of light, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit determined together, saying, 'Let *Us* make man in *Our* image, according to *Our* likeness'. Gen 1:26. Significantly, this statement encapsulates the dialogue of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit concerning the sonship predestination of every person who would ever live. This discussion concerning the name of every son of God happened before the Father, Son and Holy Spirit initiated the offering through which Their covenant purpose was brought to pass. It established the *foreknowledge of God*.

It is significant that we were predestined to be made in the image and likeness of *Elohim* – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Accordingly, there are three covenant actions towards this goal through which each Person is revealed by the other Two. By this means, our complete creation will be of the fullness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Col 2:9-10. Eph 3:19. The three Covenants through which *Elohim's* purpose for us is achieved are 'My Covenant', which belongs to the Father; 'The Everlasting Covenant', which belongs to the Son; and 'The New Covenant' of the Holy Spirit.

My Covenant

'My Covenant' is the Covenant of the Father. Through the offering of Yahweh, the Father was revealed as the inexhaustible source of the life of God and the 'architect' of the whole of creation.

To bring this to pass, the Holy Spirit emptied Himself to become the Helper of the Father and the Son by empowering and sanctifying Their unique offerings with Eternal Spirit. As the Helper, the Holy Spirit also revealed the Father and the Son by becoming the life of the Father through which Yahweh Son would be begotten as the Son of God.

Then, by Eternal Spirit, Yahweh Son laid down His glory, as the expression of all sonship, into the hands of the Father. He emptied Himself to the bosom of the Father so that He could be begotten from the bosom of the Father as the Son of God.

By Eternal Spirit, the Father emptied His glory as Father and Word to Yahweh Son when He declared, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' Heb 1:5. Through this declaration, the Son was begotten of the Father, by the Holy Spirit. Heb 3:7. The Father's glory was then to be proclaimed and known *only* through the Son of God as the Word and Seed of the Father. Joh 1:18.

Significantly, when Yahweh the Son was begotten of the Father as the Son of God, *before, the Father's house* was established, and the Son *received a heavenly body*. This was the first mansion in the Father's house. As we will consider in our next article, this birth established the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant.

God's purpose for you

The apostle Paul nominated two dimensions of the mystery of God – of the Father, and of the Son. These two dimensions of the mystery correspond with two births, which Jesus outlined in His discussion with Nicodemus, the teacher of Israel. Jesus explained to Nicodemus that a person needed to be born from above, of the Father, to see the kingdom. Joh 3:3. He then said that a son of God needed to be born of water and the Spirit, by the Son, to enter the kingdom. Joh 3:5.

Take some time

Discuss together the importance of understanding the Covenants of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Testify of your birth to see the kingdom of God and to enter the kingdom of God.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray for understanding concerning the gospel of God and the mystery of God.

Sing

'I was born in Zion' (Penny Smith)

'This is eternal life' (Joshua Hay)

Scriptures for reference

Rom 1:1-4. Col 2:1-3.

Exo 3:14-15. 1Jn 1:1-5.

The Everlasting Covenant

Peter Hay

A beginning established

When Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son of God, a beginning was established! This was the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant. From this beginning, the Son further emptied Himself to reveal the Father. He emptied all the way to the death of the cross, where He declared, 'It is finished'. Joh 19:30. This marked the end of this particular aspect of Yahweh *Elohim's* initiative to make man in Their image and likeness. Jesus Christ was manifest as the New Creation when He was declared, by the Father, to be the Son of God with power according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead. Rom 1:4.

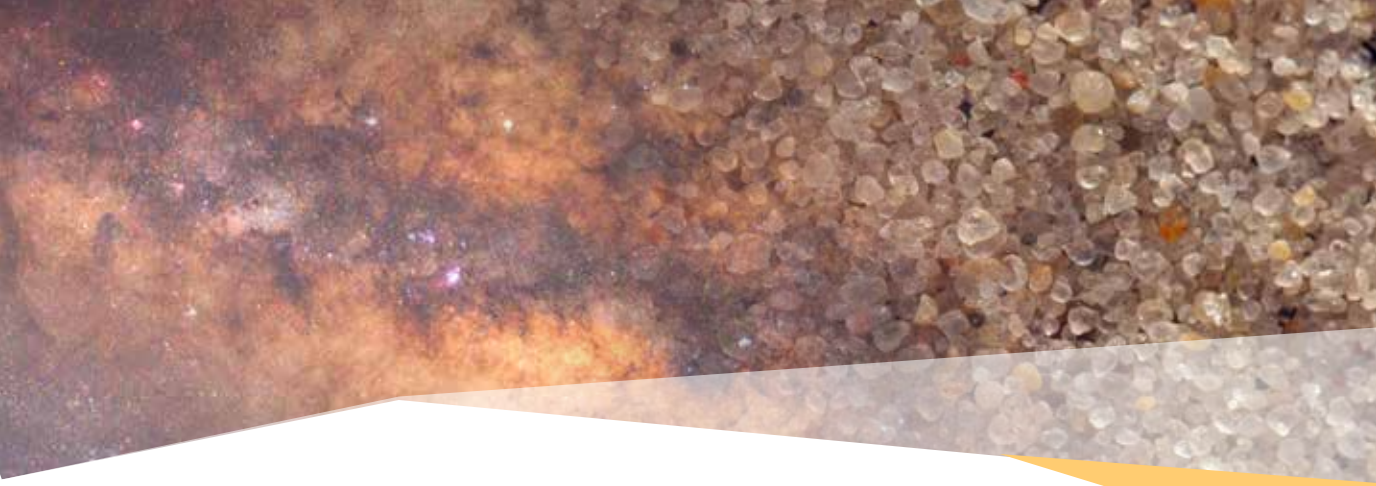
Through the Everlasting Covenant, the Son was revealed as the Beginning and the End of a new creation. Accordingly, He described Himself as 'the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, *the beginning of the creation of God*'. Rev 3:14. He further identified Himself as 'the Alpha and the Omega, *the Beginning and the End*'. Rev 1:8,11-13.

From the beginning, the Son of God revealed the Father, by the Spirit, through the work of creation. Joh 1:3. The first creative work of the Son, according to the

word of the Father, was the establishment of a void, or space, within Yahweh *Elohim*. Remember, there is no space outside of Yahweh, nor room for any other identities within Him. The void was created within Themselves as the context in which the creation would be brought into existence.

In the void, the Son first created the heavens, including the angels. He then created the earth as the context for the natural creation, into which the sons of men would be born and then brought to glory with Him. Moses summarised this initial creative work, writing, 'In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth. The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.' Gen 1:1-2.

Although this was the beginning of creation, it was not the first day of creation. Moses explained that the first day of creation was when God said, 'Let there be light'. Gen 1:3-5. Significantly, on the sixth day of creation, Yahweh *Elohim* formed the body of man from the dust and then breathed into him the breath of lives, and man became a living soul. Gen 1:26. Gen 2:7.



Adam was *not* made complete in the image and likeness of God on the day of his creation. Gen 1:27. We know this because the apostle Paul explained that Adam was ‘a *type* of Him who was to come’. Rom 5:14. A ‘type’ is a figure, or representation, of something else. This means that Adam was not the substance of a man in the image and likeness of God. The One who was to come, of whom Adam was a type, is Jesus Christ, the resurrected and glorified Son of Man.

Emptying to come in the flesh

The Son of God emptied Himself to become flesh as the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, when He was born of the virgin Mary. He laid aside His heavenly body, which remained in the house of the Father in heaven, to take on a mortal body, and was brought to the womb of Mary as the Seed of the Father, by the Holy Spirit.

Through this process, He was made like us – having a physical, corruptible body and a human soul and spirit. Heb 2:17. His corruptible body does not mean that He had a propensity to sin and could die. It means that the energy to sustain his physical body came from the corruption, or breaking down, of food in His stomach. 1Co 6:13. His body was like Adam’s body before Adam sinned and began to die.

Emptying as the Lamb of God

From the last Passover, Christ emptied Himself to the death of the cross, *for our sake*. Emphasising this point, Paul said, ‘For [the Father] made Him who knew no sin to be sin *for us*, that we *might become* the righteousness of God in Him.’ 2Co 5:21. Jesus was made sin in the garden of Gethsemane when the Father made every person, who had been lost to God through Adam’s transgression, to be a member of Christ’s corporate body. We all were given to the Son for judgement or mercy.

As Christ drank the cup of God’s wrath upon the whole world, He began to ‘taste’, with us, the sufferings of mortality because of our sin. Luk 22:42. The physical trauma that Jesus endured in any one of His seven wounds would have been sufficient to kill Him. However, He was strengthened with Eternal Spirit, from the Holy Spirit, for this offering. Heb 9:14. Furthermore, as His blood was being shed in each wound, His mortal body was being preserved and healed. This was the evidence of *anastasis*, or resurrection life, at work in His mortal body. This was the life of God the Father in His blood, bringing Him back from the death associated with mortality. Heb 13:20-21.

In each wound that Christ suffered, something of the fallen, old man was destroyed, and something of the new man was established, or created. Let us now summarise seven key outcomes of Christ's suffering, offering journey.

A new motive

In Gethsemane, Christ destroyed all the alternative 'wills', sourced from the other law, which Satan fathered in mankind. The Scriptures identify five key expressions of 'will' associated with Satan's fatherhood. Satan fell when he said in his heart, '*I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God; I will also sit on the mount of the congregation on the farthest sides of the north; I will ascend above the heights of the clouds, I will be like the Most High.*' Isa 14:13-14. These motives were all fathered in mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to '*be like God*'. Gen 3:5.

Having been strengthened with Eternal Spirit by an angel sent from the Holy Spirit, Jesus began to pray, 'Not My will but Yours be done', even more earnestly. Luk 22:43-44. Mat 26:42. His sweat became like great clots of blood falling down to the ground. Luk 22:44.

As Jesus suffered this extraordinary psychological and physical trauma, all the other wills of fallen mankind, which He embodied, were broken, judged and silenced, forever. At the same time, by the power of *anastasis* in His blood, Christ revealed and established obedience to the will of the Father as the fundamental motive of the new man.

A new face

In the court of Caiaphas, Jesus' face was beaten and bruised for our iniquities. Isa 53:5. The disfigurement of His face reflected the ugliness of our iniquitous idolatry. As His face was brutally marred more than any man's had been before, the idolatrous projections of fallen mankind were judged and destroyed. Isa 52:14.

In this same wounding event, by the power of *anastasis*, Jesus manifest the countenance, or face, of the New Man. The apostle John described the face of the New Man as 'like the sun shining in its strength'. Rev 1:16. This means that it only expresses the truth that is sourced from the Father. There is no shadow of a lie, or projection, in its expression.

One new man

Concerning Christ's wounds in the court of Caiaphas, Matthew wrote, 'They spat in His face and beat Him with their fists; and others slapped Him [lit: beat Him with rods], and said, "Prophecy to us, You Christ; who is the one who hit You?" ' Mat 26:67-68. This was Matthew's account of the fulfilment of Isaiah's prophecy, 'I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting'. Isa 50:6.

When Jesus was beaten with rods, 'the chastisement for our peace was upon Him'. Isa 53:5. Helpfully, Paul addressed the implication of this wound in his letter to the Ephesians. He explained, 'For He Himself is our *peace*, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of

commandments contained in ordinances, *so as to create in Himself one new man* from the two, *thus making peace*, and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity.’ Eph 2:14-16.

The misappropriation of the Law is the basis of all enmity. This is because the Law is used by those who are fleshly, to judge, accuse, or excuse, others, and to justify themselves. Relational disharmony and disconnection are the unavoidable outcomes of relating to one another on this basis.

As Jesus was chastened under the direction of Caiaphas, the High Priest, He took the Law out of their hands and bound it to Himself in order to take it with Him to the cross. He removed the Law as the basis of relating with one another so that, in Himself, He could create one new man from a myriad of nations, tribes, peoples and tongues. Through this wound, the corporate new man began to emerge. It is as if a new plant began to be seen, arising from the one Seed, Christ, who had fallen into the ground and died in Gethsemane.

Healing of the nations

Jesus was taken to Pilate, who sent Him to Herod. After being treated with contempt and mocked by Herod and his men of war, Jesus was then sent back to Pilate who commanded that He be *scourged*. The whip used to scourge Jesus was a terrible instrument that was designed to cause intense pain. A full beating of thirty-nine stripes would bring an individual to the brink of death, having caused approximately one thousand five hundred wounds to their back. Isaiah declared that *by these stripes we are healed*. Isa 53:5.

As Jesus was wounded in this manner, He overcame and judged all the actions of self-preservation that cause many and varied injuries to others. This way of living is the default of fallen mankind who were subjected to time and chance when they departed from fellowship with Yahweh at the tree of life. Through *anastasis*, Christ’s body was further manifest as the Tree of Life whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. Rev 22:2. Those who are joined to His body are branches of the Tree of Life who are able to minister healing to others, as opposed to causing injury through self-preservation.

True authority

The crown of thorns that was thrust onto Christ’s head, and the reed that was placed into His right hand, and was then used to strike Him and drive the thorns into His skull, was the fifth wounding event of Christ’s offering and suffering journey.

Mankind was cursed by God because Adam heeded the voice of his wife, instead of obeying the word of God proceeding to him through the order of headship. Adam’s rejection of Christ as his Head was the basis for all misappropriation and abuse of authority and power by mankind. The Lord God said that because man had rejected the order of authority that belonged to fellowship with Him, the ground would be cursed. Specifically, it would bring forth *thorns and thistles*. Gen 3:17-18.

Through this wounding event, Christ judged and destroyed every authority and power that sets itself against God. The authority of the kingdoms of the world was stripped from them and given to Christ. Through the power of *anastasis*, Christ established headship as the order

of authority that belongs to the new man. Accordingly, He became the Head of all the nations. Psa 18:43.

Constrained to life

Christ then journeyed to Mount Calvary, where His hands and feet were nailed to the cross and He was lifted up before men. Describing this wound, Isaiah declared, 'But He was wounded [lit: to bore a hole in] for our transgressions.' Isa 53:5.

When Jesus' hands and feet were nailed to the cross, and He was lifted up from the earth, the whole of humanity was drawn to Him. Joh 12:32. As part of the corporate body of sin, everyone was nailed with Him to the cross, and given the opportunity to make a choice: either cursing under the judgement of God as transgressors; or blessing as those who are constrained by the love of Christ to judge themselves to be dead with Christ so that they no longer live for themselves, as transgressors, but for Christ. 2Co 5:14-15. The two thieves who were crucified with Christ on the day that He died, represent us all and the choice that we all must make.

Truth declared

At the end of the three hours of great darkness, as Christ was separated from the Father in the lowest parts of the earth with us, He cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Mat 27:46. This was the Son's expression of the grief that was experienced by the Father, as our reproaches against the Father were fully laid upon Him. Christ's heart was physically broken by the grief caused by humanity's rejection of God's fatherhood. The breaking of Christ's heart, by the sorrow of God, was the seventh wound of His offering journey.

In this wound, Christ judged and destroyed the alternative names crafted by mankind, which were all a reproach against the Father. He took us all out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. However, in the lowest parts of the earth, He also fashioned us, and fulfilled the works that belong to our name as a son of God in Him. Psa 139:15-16. Isa 26:12. Through this wound, He established a people who would hear His voice and follow Him as He called them by name.

His body made incorruptible and immortal

Following Christ's seventh wound, the two dimensions of His one offering were complete. Sin and death had been judged and destroyed forever, and everlasting righteousness had been fulfilled. Significantly, His physical body had been changed through the power of *anastasis*. It was now manifest as a perfect, incorruptible and immortal body!

By 'incorruptible', we mean that Jesus' physical body was no longer sustained by energy drawn from natural food or drink. We know this to be the case because Jesus' heart had stopped beating following the seventh wound. Blood, carrying nutrients and oxygen to His body, was no longer being pumped around His body. His body was now only sustained by the Spirit and life of God, through the word of the Father, ministered by the Holy Spirit. His body was immortal, meaning that it could no longer die. The incorruptibility and immortality of Jesus' body is the reason why it did not experience decay as it lay in the tomb for three days and three nights.

The resurrection

The Son declared His offering journey ‘finished’, and then committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. Joh 19:30. Luk 23:46. The Father drew Him out of His physical, immortal body, which was hanging on the cross, and brought Him to His throne. Importantly, we were all drawn out of the waters of God’s judgement and were received into the bosom of the Father, with Christ. *This is where our names as sons of God, were hidden* with Him in the Father.

Christ remained in the bosom of the Father, in fellowship with the Holy Spirit, while His physical body rested in the tomb for three days and three nights. After three days

and three nights, the Father declared, a second time, ‘You are My Son, today I have begotten You.’ Heb 5:5. By the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of the Son returned to His incorruptible, immortal body, which was also clothed with His heavenly, glorified body from the Father. *It was now a spiritual body.* His body was as much spiritual as it was physical.

Importantly, when Christ stepped into His body, it was now corporate. It was a corporate new man. He made every one of us a member of that body. Only this body has resurrection life. The implication is that we can only have resurrection, eternal life, if we are part of Christ, the last Adam.

Devotional Focus

The Everlasting Covenant

When Yahweh Son was begotten as the Son of God, the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant was established. From this beginning, the Son emptied Himself all the way to the death of the cross, where He declared, ‘It is finished’. Joh 19:30. This marked the end of this particular aspect of Yahweh *Elohim*’s initiative to make man in Their image and likeness. Through the Everlasting Covenant, the Son was revealed as the Beginning and the End of a new creation. A key feature of this Covenant was Christ’s offering journey from the last Passover to the cross. In each wound that Christ suffered, something of the fallen, old man was destroyed, and something of the new man was established, or created.

Take some time

Consider your experience of fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Reflect on what is being established in your life as you take up your cross and follow Christ.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray for mercy and grace to keep the word of Christ’s perseverance and to show forth His death as a member of His body.

Sing

‘In Him Who is True’ (Christopher Hamilton)

‘Prepare the way of the Lord’ (Joshua Hay)

Scriptures for reference

Isa 53:1-12. Eph 2:14-16. Rom 1:1-4.

The New Covenant of the Spirit

Peter Hay

In our last article, we considered the astonishing point that one corporate new man was formed by Jesus in the court of Caiaphas when He was *chastened with rods for our peace*. Isa 53:5. Eph 2:14-15. The corporate body of Christ continued to be fashioned until He declared His offering to be complete on the cross. At that point in time, Jesus was, literally, one Man. However, every person who was later born of God, and baptised into Christ, would be joined to this expression of His body. For example, Paul said to the Galatians that through *his* ministry as a member of Christ's body, '*Jesus Christ was clearly portrayed among you as crucified*'. Gal 3:1.

After Jesus committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father, bringing all our names with Him to the Father's throne, His incorruptible, immortal, physical body remained on the cross. A little while later, a soldier pierced the side of His physical body with a spear, causing blood, water, and a spirit of grace and supplication to flow from His side. Joh 19:34. Zec 12:10. These elements are the 'rib' from which the church, the bride of Christ, was formed to be His comparable helper for the work of bringing forth and nurturing sons of God.

Following His resurrection and manifestation as the last Adam and the first Man made in the image and likeness of God, Jesus Christ began to minister to His followers. On the day of His resurrection, He appeared to the eleven disciples, and to those who were with them. He breathed on them, and said to them, 'Receive the Holy Spirit'. Joh 20:22. By this means, they were born of the Father to see the kingdom. 1Pe 1:23.

Through new birth, the identity of a believer was begotten of the Father, and they received the divine nature. As a son of God, they were now in Christ. They received a heavenly body, which He had prepared for them when He went to the Father. This heavenly body, containing their name and life as a son of God, was hidden in the Father. Moreover, they were also being formed as part of the bride of Christ.

To our advantage

All this happened as Christ ministered to His followers – first to the eleven, then to the seventy two, and then to more than five hundred believers who had previously been identified as worthy houses of peace. 1Co 15:4-7. However, earlier, Jesus had said to His disciples, 'It is to your



advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.’ Joh 16:7.

At first glance, it is hard to see why Christ ascending to His throne in heaven is to our advantage. However, the word that is translated ‘advantage’ in this passage means ‘suitable for achieving a particular end’. Jesus was highlighting that there was still a third Covenant that belonged to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit’s initiative to make man in Their image and likeness. *This is the New Covenant of the Spirit.*

It is important to recognise that while Jesus remained with His followers, they did not have a participation in bringing other sons of God to birth as part of the bride of Christ. Sons of God were only being brought forth through Christ. Furthermore, Christ was the only observable New Man. That is, the believers among whom Christ ministered had not yet joined the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, nor were they revealing His glory as members of His body.

Our participation in these two fundamental aspects of the mystery of God is only possible by the Holy Spirit. Speaking of the work of the Spirit, Jesus explained, ‘He [the Holy Spirit] will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it

to you. All things that the Father has are Mine. Therefore I said that He will take of Mine and declare it to you.’ Joh 16:14-15. Furthermore, Jesus said to His disciples that when they were baptised with the Holy Spirit, they would receive power to be His witnesses, as members of His body, in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Act 1:4-8.

The Day of Pentecost

The New Covenant of the Spirit was manifest on the Day of Pentecost, ten days after Christ ascended into heaven and sat down at the right hand of the Father. About one hundred and twenty disciples were baptised with the Holy Spirit. Having been filled with the Holy Spirit, they began speaking with other tongues as He gave them utterance. Act 1:15. Act 2:1-4.

Wonderfully, the heavenly Jerusalem, which is the bride of Christ, came down out of heaven and was *established on the earth*. Rev 21:2. Through the ministry of Peter and his fellow disciples, the gospel of God was proclaimed, and about three thousand souls were born from above of the Father. Act 2:40-41. Evidently, by the Spirit, the corporate bride of Christ had now been made a helper comparable to Him. She was now the mother of all who were being begotten of God. Gal 4:26.

As the hearers received the gospel and were born of the Father to see the kingdom, they were baptised into Christ and were filled with the Holy Spirit. Significantly, they were born of water and the Spirit to enter the kingdom of God as members of the body of Christ.

Living according to the New Covenant of the Spirit

The church is the bride of Christ, the heavenly Jerusalem. This city is also called Mount Zion. Heb 12:22-23. Since the Day of Pentecost, it has been coming down out of heaven and has been established on the earth.

The physical body of Christ is now in heaven, sitting at the right hand of God. Eph 1:20-22. It is the only body that has *anastasis*, or resurrection, life within it. The physical body of Christ is a *temple* made of living stones, which has been set on the top of Mount Zion. Eph 2:19-22. Mount Zion is the connection between the body and the church. Col 1:18.

When a person is born from above as a son of God, through the ministry of the bride of Christ, the church, they receive a heavenly house. This house is a heavenly body which contains their name, life and glory as a son of God. It resides in the Father's house in heaven as one of many mansions belonging to other sons of God. Joh 14:2.

When a son of God is baptised into Christ and filled with the Holy Spirit, they are baptised by one Spirit into the one body of Christ in heaven. 1Co 12:13-14. God the Father places them in the body according to the name that He has given to them. 1Co 12:18. They recognise that their sonship life is hidden with Christ in God,

and they are motivated to reveal Christ on earth, by the power of the Holy Spirit, as mortal members of His one body.

Christ, who is the Head of His own body in heaven, gives to each member of His body a share in His divine nature and immortal life. This is the life that He has in His body in heaven. Jesus spoke of this life, and its allotment to the members of His body, in the parables of the talents and minas. In these parables, Jesus taught that the members of His body, whom He described as 'slaves', were to multiply His life through fellowship in His offering and sufferings.

There are two key implications of this fellowship. First, as we suffer with Christ, His *anastasis*, or resurrection life, flows out from Him to us as *exanastasis*. This is resurrection life, ministered to us by the Holy Spirit. This life sustains us in our mortal bodies as we fulfil the will of the Father as members of the body of Christ. Paul testified of this outcome of fellowship in Christ's sufferings, saying, '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.

The increase of Christ's life, which we receive in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, is further multiplied as we lay our lives down by serving one another in the body of Christ. Gal 5:13. Significantly, Christ is being glorified when the members of His body multiply His life. Because He reveals the Father, the Father is also glorified.

This life, which is multiplied through suffering and by love, becomes the glory of our eternal life. It is stored up in our heavenly body. On the day of resurrection,

our incorruptible, immortal body, which we receive through the fatherhood of the Son, is clothed with the glory of our heavenly body from the Father. This will be a spiritual body which is as much spiritual as it is physical. It will be just like Jesus Christ's resurrection, glorified, spiritual body.

The Holy Spirit has dedicated Himself to ensuring that we obtain the blessing of becoming a son of God and son of man in the image and likeness of God. He yearns jealously within us for this outcome.

Jas 4:5. This is what it means to be sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise. As Paul declared, 'In Him you also trusted, after you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation; in whom also, having believed, you were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession [on the day of resurrection], to the praise of His glory.' Eph 1:13-14.

Devotional *Focus*

The New Covenant of the Spirit

Christ, who is the Head of His corporate body in heaven, gives to each member of His body a share in His divine nature and immortal life. Jesus spoke of this life, and its allotment to the members of His body, in the parables of the talents and minas. In these parables, Jesus taught that the members of His body, whom He described as 'slaves', were to multiply His life through fellowship in His offering and sufferings.

As we suffer with Christ, His *anastasis*, or resurrection life, flows out from Him to us as *exanastasis*. This is resurrection life, ministered to us by the Holy Spirit, which sustains us in our mortal bodies as we fulfil the will of the Father as members of the body of Christ. The increase of Christ's life, which we receive in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, is further multiplied as we lay our life down by serving one another in the body of Christ.

Take some time

Discuss together the importance of the Holy Spirit. Consider how the two aspects of the mystery of God are brought to pass in our lives through the ministry of the Spirit.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Give thanks for the Holy Spirit who has dedicated Himself to your glorification as a son of God and son of man.

Sing

'The mind set on the Spirit' (Ruby Nahuysen)

'I was born in Zion' (Penny Smith)

Scriptures for reference

Joh 16:7. Joh 16:14-15.

Act 1:4-8. Eph 1:13-14.

The work of the two goats

Nathan Smith

In our recent Teens Magazines, we have considered the freedom of choice that has been given to every person. In the next two articles, we will continue our consideration of this topic, particularly in relation to Christ's offering as the Lord's goat and as the scapegoat. When we see these two dimensions of His saving work, we are beholding the one offering of the Lamb of God. Joh 1:29.

In the garden of Gethsemane, the Father gave the cup of our cursing and corruption to Christ. He drank this cup and became our sin. Once He took on our corruption, He began to be sown as a seed that went into the ground to die two kinds of death. 1Co 15:42-44. One kind of death was to end sin and corruption, and the other was to multiply life. Joh 12:24. These two kinds of death were foreshadowed by the two goats that were offered on the Day of Atonement. As the scapegoat, Christ was sown as a natural, corruptible man. As the Lord's goat, He was sown as a spiritual and incorruptible man.

The work of the scapegoat

Christ's work as the scapegoat was seen as He emptied Himself and descended into the great void of forgetfulness. This place of forgetfulness is the sum of all judgement and exclusion for those who

choose the folly of darkness. Joh 3:19. James called this darkness, 'a lie that is against the truth.' Jas 3:14. As Jesus emptied Himself in this way, He was revealed to be the conquering Slave of God, destroying darkness and bringing salvation to mankind. Heb 2:14-15.

As Jesus, the great Shepherd, emptied Himself to the very lowest parts of the earth, He found all the lost sheep who had gone astray. Joh 10:11. Isa 53:6. He destroyed Satan and set everyone free from their bondage to living by the other law. Heb 2:14-16. Rom 7:23. He gathered to Himself every sheep who heard His voice. He called them to forsake their own way, and to follow Him. Joh 10:14-16.

As Christ progressively emptied Himself through seven wounding events, He condemned sin in His flesh. Rom 8:3. This includes every thought, action, and expression motivated by the other law. We remember that the other law was fathered in mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. They believed Satan's lie that they could become the source of their own expression and destiny. As the corporate body of sin, Christ became the embodiment of this sin of projection that sought to be 'like God'.

He did this by taking every thought and expression that promoted itself as an alternative to the word of truth, captive to Himself. 2Co 10:5. He explored every expression of mankind that had set itself against God, and exhausted, judged and destroyed its capacity to be an alternative choice. He emptied in this manner until He had gone to the end of all of the options of nothingness! These 'alternative options of nothingness' are the lies fathered by Satan that oppose the truth of God's word and will. They were circumcised from Christ and destroyed, as He journeyed through each wounding event, until He finally left them all in the sea of God's forgetfulness.

The work of the Lord's goat

As the Lord's goat, the Son exposed all of these elements of 'the lie' as darkness. He did this with the light of the only true choice. Christ emptied all of the lies and alternative choices and expressions to nothingness, in the lowest parts of the sea of God's forgetfulness. All that was left was what had been progressively exalted as the only true choice – the life and fellowship of God's Covenant. This choice has substance. Through seven offering steps as the Lord's goat, Christ proclaimed all reality, all fellowship and light, through the shedding of His blood.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, our alternative choices, motivated by the other law, are being circumcised from us. At the same time,

we are being filled with the fullness of God. Our desire will be to choose the one true choice – to participate in the life and fellowship of God's Covenant. Like King David, our confession will be, '*One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.*' Psa 27:4.

Through His offering as the Lord's goat, the Son fulfilled the prophetic word concerning our name as a son of God. He also fulfilled all of the works that belong to our sonship. Isa 26:12. Through the shedding of His blood, He multiplied the life of God to become our life. When Christ declared, from the cross, that His overcoming work was finished, He was lifted out of the death of sin and darkness by the hands of the Father. Joh 19:30. Luk 23:46. As Christ ascended to the bosom of the Father, He brought with Him the name of every son of God. His offering journey pioneered the highway of holiness to the Father's house. Isa 35:8-10. The highway of holiness is a journey from earth to heaven. As we follow Him on the



path of discipleship that He pioneered, we are being progressively glorified as sons of men and sons of God.

Adam's choice

After Adam was created, he was placed in the garden of Eden to fulfill the works that the Father had chosen for him to do. Gen 1:28. Gen 2:15. However, Adam's fulfilment of these works did not indicate that he had chosen what God had chosen for him. Adam's choice was not simply whether to exercise dominion over the creation, or not. Rather, he had to choose whether he would believe, accept, and embrace the call to be a son in fellowship with Yahweh *Elohim*, and reveal Them through this work.

God prepared Adam for this choice and warned him of the consequences of choosing something other than the glorious predestination that the Father had chosen for him. The Lord God said to Adam that in the day he ate of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he would surely die. Gen 2:16-17. The death nominated by God in this statement was the death of the cross! The death of the cross was foreshadowed for all men by the lamb that was offered for Adam and Eve before they were sent out of the garden. Gen 3:21-23. The coverings of skin given to them by the Lord, signified that this lamb was slain as a sin offering, which atoned for their sins and imputed righteousness to them.

Amazingly, this happened *before* they had chosen whether or not to pursue their predestination outside of the garden. This provision reflected the reality of Christ's offering for the whole of mankind, as the

Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. Rev 13:8. 1Jn 2:2. Paul explained that 'God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that *while we were still sinners, Christ died for us*'. Rom 5:8. After Adam and Eve were sent out of the garden, the offering of this lamb gave them another opportunity to choose what God had chosen for them. This 'second-chance' was an amazing expression of the Lord's mercy to them, and to all of mankind!

As one now joined to Christ's death, Adam's ongoing choices outside the garden would either result in his eternal judgement or his recovery and salvation. Adam could now choose to participate in the death of Christ by making offering at the gate of Eden and walking in obedience to the word of the Lord that was proclaimed through the cherubim. As Adam walked in this way, the ground was cursed for his sake. This is because he joined Christ, who carried the curse of our death in His death on the cross. Gal 3:13. Fellowship in this death was the means by which Adam was recovered to his predestination as a man and as a son of God.

Choosing to die daily

Through Christ's death on the cross, a choice has been granted to every person. We must choose what has been offered in the death of Christ, and accept the implications of how we die with Christ – either eternal death or eternal life. This is the polarising effect of the word of the cross. The word of the cross brings us to the valley of decision in the lower parts of the earth, where, by the mercies of God, we can choose, through repentance and faith, the only true and substantial choice for our life.

As those who are choosing life, we follow in the way of salvation that Christ pioneered, participating each day in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. We make the choice to deny ourselves and take up our cross, which is Christ's cross, and *die daily*. Mat 16:24. 1Co 15:31. As we do this, the Holy Spirit enables us to set our minds on things above and walk after the Spirit. Col 3:2. Rom 8:3-6. Each day, we participate in the seven wounding events of Christ's offering, where the curse

was manifest. However, having been conformed to His emptying death, we also participate in the seven redeeming and glorifying implications of His offering and sufferings. As we are joined to the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we are being made like Him; we are being made into the image and likeness of God as sons of men and sons of God.

Devotional Focus

The work of the two goats

As the Lord's goat, the Son exposed all of the elements of Satan's 'lie against the truth' as darkness. He did this with the light of the only true choice. Christ emptied all of the lies and alternative choices and expressions to nothingness, in the lowest parts of the sea of God's forgetfulness. All that was left was what had been progressively exalted as the only true choice – the life and fellowship of God's Covenant. This choice has substance. Through seven offering steps as the Lord's goat, Christ proclaimed all reality, all fellowship and light, through the shedding of His blood.

In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, our alternative choices, motivated by the other law, are being circumcised from us. At the same time, we are being filled with the fullness of God. Our desire will be to choose the one true choice – to participate in the life and fellowship of God's Covenant. Like King David, our confession will be, 'One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.' Psa 27:4.

Take some time

Testify together of finding deliverance from pursuing alternative choices which are part of Satan's 'lie against the truth'. Encourage one another to keep making the one and only *true* choice – to participate in the life and fellowship of God's Covenant.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Give thanks for Christ's work in judging every alternative choice and exalting the only true choice. Pray for one another to keep choosing to participate in the life and fellowship of God's Covenant each day.

Sing

'By faith I am choosing' (Luke & Nadine Pomery)

'I'll say "Yes, Lord"' (Ross Wills)

Scriptures for reference

Joh 3:19. Jas 3:14. Heb 2:14-15.

Jos 24:15. Psa 27:4.

The joy and pain of the freedom of choice

Nathan Smith

Freedom of choice in Yahweh *Elohim*

God's initiative to establish the Everlasting Covenant was an *action of freedom*. Within Their own covenant fellowship, *before*, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each possessed the freedom to choose. Freedom of choice is a fundamental condition of love, because love is demonstrated through *giving*. A person can only give to another if they have the freedom and choice to do so. Giving, or offering, oneself in this manner is essential to the life and expression of Yahweh *Elohim*.

The pure offering love of Yahweh *Elohim* was seen as They freely offered Themselves to one another to bring forth the Everlasting Covenant. Each Person of the Godhead laid down Their life, by name, to reveal the Others. Offering Themselves in this way, was a *choice of faith*. Although the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each chose to lay down Their *own* life, They had no control over whether the other two would choose to do the same. As each One chose to offer Themselves in faith, the others were also able to offer Themselves by Their own freewill. Yahweh *Elohim's* offering was an expression of pure giving, which reveals God, who is love.

Within the covenant fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*, *before*, the Holy Spirit laid down His life to become the Helper of the Father and of the Son by empowering and sanctifying Their unique offerings by Eternal Spirit. He enabled the choice of the Father and the choice of the Son. The Holy Spirit is the enabler of choice. Not only does He enable the choices of the Father and the Son, but He is also enabling us to choose our sonship name and works. Without the enabling of the Holy Spirit, we are unable to make this choice. As we choose what God has chosen for us, the Holy Spirit draws us into Their pure fellowship of offering love. We are caught up into Their fellowship, *before*, where Their freedom of choice is being expressed.

Dignified with God's mercy

We have all been given the dignity and accountability of 'choice'. Jos 24:15. In addition to this, we have also been dignified with God's mercy and judgement. God's mercy is shown to those who choose to live as the son He has named them to be. 1Pe 2:9-10. Eph 2:10. The apostle John wrote, 'Whoever has been born of God does not sin, for His [the Father's] seed remains in him; and he cannot sin, because he has been born of God'. 1Jn 3:9.

Everything that is ‘new creation’ can only be brought forth by *begetting*, or by being ‘born of God [the Father]’. New creation is begotten from Yahweh *Elohim’s* pure offering fellowship, where Their freedom of choice is expressed in love. It is for this reason that everything that is begotten as new creation is completely sinless! New creation cannot deviate from obedience to every word that proceeds from the mouth of God. Mat 4:4. New creation does not need *regeneration* or *redemption*. Rather, new creation *grows* and *matures* according to the principle of the seed. Mat 13:8. Mar 4:26-32.

Yahweh Son was *begotten* as the Son of God from the bosom of the Father. As a new creation who was *begotten* of God, the *Son of God* did not deviate from His works of revealing the Father, because the Father’s seed was in Him. Jesus said, ‘So that the world may know that I love the Father, I do exactly as the Father commanded Me’. Joh 14:31. As the *Son of Man*, we recall that He was continually tried by Satan and tested in all points as we are. Luk 4:2. Heb 4:15. However, because the Father’s seed was in Him, He did not deviate from His obedience.

In contrast to Yahweh Son, Adam was *created* as a son of man who was *not yet begotten* as a new creation son of God. This meant that he had the potential to sin, if he chose to deviate from the name and works that were predestined for him by the Father. We too have been *created* as sons of men. We have been brought forth in fallen mortality, with another law.

Like Adam, we also have the potential to sin and deviate from our predestined name. 1Jn 1:8. This *created* dimension of the sons of men requires *regeneration* and *redemption* from all iniquity. Tit 3:3-7. As we keep choosing to join the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings, our other law is being circumcised from our heart and we are ceasing from sin. Deu 30:6. 1Pe 4:1.

In addition to being *created* as sons of men, we have also been *begotten* as new creation sons of God. The apostle Paul testified that his new creation sonship was not perfect or complete, when he was born again. Rather, it was something that he continued to *grow* and *mature* in. He wrote, ‘Not that I have already obtained it or have already become perfect, but I press on so that I may lay hold of that for which also I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus’. Php 3:12. In the same way that a seed grows and matures into a fruitful tree, our new creation sonship begins in immaturity and requires *chastening* and *training* in order to bring forth fruit. Mat 13:8.



Through our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, we are learning perfect obedience and are being changed from one degree of glory to another. Heb 5:8. 2Co 3:18.

Once this perfecting process has finished in us, we will be both sons of men and sons of God, who no longer sin! This is because the process of our perfection will have taught us to offer with the same freedom and purity that the Lord Himself offers. Our participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ will deliver us to the same freedom of choice expressed in Yahweh *Elohim's* pure fellowship of offering love, *before*. What They are continually choosing will become our eternal choice. We will no longer need to be guarded, and sin can never happen again in us or in the creation.

Dignified with God's judgement

Those who choose to disobey the Father's word and reject His calling upon their lives will experience the judgement and wrath of God. 1Pe 2:8. Their choice causes unimaginable grief to the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Without repentance, these ones will come under God's judgement.

God's judgement belongs to His jealous love. It is coexistent with, coessential to, and coequal with His mercy. God's jealous love preserves the purity of Their offering love, for all of eternity. Anything that violates Their pure fellowship of offering love will be completely consumed and utterly destroyed by the fire of God. Son 8:6-7.

Although the wicked will be judged in the fire of God, Isaiah recorded that the identities of the damned will remain as

an everlasting memorial for us. Isa 66:24. These will include both the angels and the sons of men who have transgressed against the Lord. Through procreation, the sons of men were given an eternal identity. Those who refuse to choose the pathway of redemption, availed to them through their fellowship in Christ's offering, will be eternally judged. Their judgement is their destruction in total silence, where the worm does not die and their fire is not quenched. Mar 9:48. They become an everlasting testimony to what will never happen again.

We can choose but we cannot do

It is important for us to register that, while we can choose to bow our knee and submit to the Father's will for our lives, we do not have the capacity within ourselves to actually *do* it! Php 2:9-11. Paul was very clear on this point, writing, 'I know that in me (that is, in my flesh) nothing good dwells; for to will [or 'to choose'] is present with me, but how to perform what is good I do not find. For the good that I will to do, I do not do; but the evil I will not to do, that I practise.' Rom 7:18-19. Choosing God's will for our life is indeed an essential decision that we must make every day. However, Paul was identifying that having chosen to do God's will, we cannot then proceed to try to obey it in our own strength. If we do, we will find that we continually end up doing the very things that we are trying not to do! This is a most wretched way to live. Rom 7:24.

The capacity for obedience is simply not in us. As sons of men, we have a desperately wicked and deceitful heart, which requires regeneration and redemption. Jer 17:9. This happens as we join the fellowship

of Christ's offering and sufferings. We humble ourselves, crying out as ones who are bankrupt before the Lord. We acknowledge our desire to do His will, but also our incapacity for obedience. As we reach this place of being broken-hearted before the Lord, He joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering. In this fellowship, the other law is circumcised from our heart, and we are given grace which enables us to obey God's will for our

life. As we previously noted, the *enabling of our choice* is the work of the Holy Spirit. Paul taught us that 'it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure'. Php 2:13. Having chosen the Lord's will for our life, it is then God who works in us, enabling us 'to do' His will.

Devotional *Focus*

The joy and pain of the freedom of choice

It is important for us to register that, while we can choose to bow our knee and submit to the Father's will for our life, we do not have the capacity within ourselves to actually do it! Choosing God's will for our life is an essential decision that we must make every day, but we cannot then proceed to try to obey it in our own strength. If we do, we will find that we keep doing the very things that we are trying not to do! The enabling of our choice is the work of the Holy Spirit. Having chosen the Lord's will for our life, it is then God who works in us, enabling us 'to do' His will.

The capacity for obedience is simply not in us. We have a desperately wicked heart, which requires regeneration and redemption. This happens as we humble ourselves and cry out as ones who are bankrupt before the Lord. We acknowledge our desire to do His will, but also our incapacity for obedience. It is from this place that we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering. The other law is circumcised from our heart, and we are given grace which enables us to obey God's will for our life.

Take some time

Discuss our propensity to hear God's word and then immediately go to try to do it. Consider our repentant response to the word every time we receive it.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Thank the Lord for His word and for His messengers who faithfully speak it to us. Pray for one another to keep receiving the word in humility and responding to it with repentance.

Sing

'He will make me adequate' (Penny Smith)

'Walking with Jesus' (Luke & Nadine Pomery)

Scriptures for reference

Php 2:9-11,13. Rom 7:18-19,23-24.

Jer 17:9.

The prayer of Moses

Part One | David Baker

Please show me Your way

The psalmist declared, 'The secret of the Lord is for those who fear Him, and He will make them know *His covenant*.' Psa 25:14. Yahweh refers to this secret as 'My Covenant'. It is the Covenant that belongs exclusively to the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim* before the foundation of the world. It is outside of time and eternity. Significantly, the Covenant of Yahweh includes the timeless discussion between the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, concerning our name and the works of our sonship, as both sons of God and sons of men, for eternity.

The Lord wants to reveal His Covenant to us. In the two parts of this article, we are going to follow Moses up the mountain of God to the place where the Lord revealed the fellowship of Yahweh to him. Exo 34:6. In this profound experience, Moses was caught up in the Spirit to behold the fellowship of Yahweh that predated the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant, the creation of the heavens and the earth, and, of course, his own existence as a human being! Significantly, the Lord wants us all to receive this same illumination as members of the body of Christ who have been raised to sit with Christ in the heavenly places.

It is notable that Moses received this illumination in response to his personal prayer. When the Lord commanded the nation of Israel to continue their journey from Mount Sinai to the promised land, Moses did not yet know whether the Lord intended to travel with them or whether He would send an angel before them. Exo 33:12. Moses said to the Lord, 'Now therefore, *I pray*, if I have found grace in Your sight, show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may find grace in Your sight. And consider that this nation is Your people.' Exo 33:13.

This was a most remarkable prayer. It was the prayer of a God-fearer who was poor in spirit. Moses recognised that he had already received grace in the sight of the Lord. He believed that the Lord knew him and had called him by his name. He was an adopted son of God. However, Moses knew that his salvation was dependent upon seeing and learning *the way of the Lord* so that he could know Him. Moses desired fellowship with the Lord. He understood that this fellowship was the only context in which he would continue to find grace in the sight of the Lord.

The prayer of Moses in the wilderness should become the prayer of every son of God during their earthly pilgrimage in this world. If a person has been born again as a son of God, they will confess that they have already received grace in the sight of the Lord. The apostle Paul declared that 'the free gift' of sonship is the first expression of the Lord's abundant grace toward those who believe. Rom 5:15,17. For many of us, we were the beneficiaries of this abundant grace, while we were still in the womb of our mother, because of the faith of our parents.

It is important to appreciate the grace that we have already received in the sight of the Lord as sons of God. However, it is equally important to recognise that our new birth as sons of God is only the beginning of our pilgrimage. We must press on to learn *the way of the Lord* by embracing our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we come to *know Christ* as the glorified Son of Man who has been made in the image and likeness of God. Php 3:10-14. As we journey with Him on the way that He has pioneered for us, we are being transformed into His image as the Son of Man, from one degree of glory to another. 2Co 3:18.

Moses wanted to know the way of the Lord. However, the rest of the people did not. They were satisfied with observing the Lord's deeds. The psalmist said, 'He made known His ways to Moses, His acts to the children of Israel.' Psa 103:7. The children of Israel witnessed the ten plagues in the land of Egypt. They miraculously walked through the middle of the Red Sea on dry land. They were sustained by God's supernatural provision for them in the wilderness. However, this was not enough. The people never asked the Lord to reveal His way to them, and consequently, they never came to know the Lord. 1Co 10:1-5.

It is helpful for every son of God who grows up in a Christian household to consider this principle. We do rejoice when we see the outcome of the Lord's dealings in our own life, in our family, and in our church community. However, this is not enough to sustain us on our pilgrimage as a son of God in this world. We cannot receive the faith of God by witnessing His deeds alone. The faith of God is given to us as a gift when we receive and believe His word. Rom 10:17. The fruit of receiving the faith of God will be our desire to know the way of the Lord, so that we can know Him.

Moses asked for illumination to see the way of the Lord because he recognised that *his way* was not the *Lord's way*. The Lord declared through the prophet Isaiah, 'For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways ... for as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts'. Isa 55:8-9. In our fallen condition, the motives of our heart govern our mind and the way that we think. The amount of time that we spend thinking about ourselves reflects the self-centredness in our heart.

We know that there is no self-centredness in the fellowship of Yahweh. The only motivation that we see in the fellowship of Yahweh is *love*. 1Jn 4:8. In the fellowship of one Spirit, the *innumerable thoughts* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit concerning our sonship are the revelation of Their love for us. When the psalmist was illuminated to this wonderful reality, he proclaimed, '*Your thoughts* toward us cannot be recounted to You in order; if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.' Psa 40:5. Psa 139:17. Jer 29:11.

The thoughts of God are called 'the deep things of God'. Psa 92:5. 1Co 2:10. The Scriptures refer to the articulation of the thoughts of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit about us, in Their own fellowship, as the 'counsel of the Lord'. Pro 19:21. This discussion is also called 'the secret of the Lord'. The counsel of the Lord belongs to the Covenant of Yahweh, which is *before* the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant and *outside* of time and eternity. This is an amazing point. Because this dialogue is outside of time, it means that there is an *ever-present* discussion in the fellowship of Yahweh concerning every son of God.

The thoughts of the Lord are further revealed, or expressed, by the way of the Lord. The way of the Lord is *the offering* of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, before the foundation of the world, which brought forth the Everlasting Covenant. For example, in his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul explained that the mind of the Son was revealed by His offering. He said, 'Have this attitude [lit. mind] in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, who, although He existed in the form of God, [He] did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but *emptied Himself*.' Php 2:5-6.

'Emptying' is the unique mode of offering that belongs to the fellowship of Yahweh. It is *the way of offering* in Yahweh which is 'far above our ways'. It is only possible for a son of God, who has been illuminated by the Spirit of God, to understand emptying. 1Co 2:10-12. Without this illumination, emptying will not make any sense to us. Emptying is the antithesis to trading. Trading is the way of Satan that has become the way of the world. We relationally trade with others because we want to gain something from them. In contrast to this, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit empty Themselves to reveal each Other and to reveal us.



The prayer of Moses

Part Two | David Baker

Please show me Your glory


The outcome of emptying is *glorification*. Glory is the revelation of a person's name. In the first case, emptying is giving oneself to glorify another by *revealing their name*. In the fellowship of Yahweh's Covenant, before the foundation of the world, Yahweh the Son emptied His glory into the hands of the Father. He offered Himself to the Father, to reveal the Father, by becoming the Father's Son. He was begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father and the offering of the Holy Spirit. Psa 2:7. This was the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant. In the fullness of time, the Son of God emptied Himself again to become the Son of Abraham in the flesh of mankind. Gal 4:4.

As the Son of Abraham and the Son of God in the flesh, He further emptied Himself on His offering journey from the last supper to the cross. Php 2:8. In a fellowship of giving and receiving, the Father glorified the Son on this same journey. The outcome of Christ's emptying death was *His glorification* as the Son of God and the Son of Man in the image and likeness of God. The apostle Paul declared, 'Therefore God also has highly exalted Him and given Him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee

should bow ... and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.' Php 2:9-11.

When we consider this principle of emptying and glorification in the fellowship of Yahweh, it is notable that Moses prayed to the Lord, 'Please, show me Your glory'. Exo 33:18. Moses did not ask to see the glory of the Lord because he was looking for a profound religious experience that would set him apart from the rest of the people. We know that Moses wanted all the people to receive this same illumination because he kept reminding the Lord that the entire nation belonged to Him. Moses asked to see the glory of the Lord because he wanted to know the Lord and to reveal Him among the people. Exo 33:16.

The Lord answered the prayer of Moses by saying, 'Here is a place by Me, and you shall stand on the rock. So it shall be, while My glory passes by, that I will put you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My hand while I pass by. Then I will take away My hand, and you shall see My back; but My face shall not be seen.' Exo 33:21-23. It is significant that the Lord described the top of the mountain as 'a place by Me'. As Moses climbed the mountain to meet the



Lord, he was making his way to the place that had been prepared by the Lord for him.

In that place, on the top of the mountain, the Lord hid Moses in the cleft of the rock. He then descended in the cloud to proclaim the name of Yahweh to him. The Scriptures record that ‘the LORD [Yahweh] passed before him and proclaimed, “The LORD [Yahweh], the LORD God [Yahweh *Elohim*]”’. Exo 34:6. Prior to this experience, Moses already knew that Yahweh was his God and the Creator of man. Exo 4:11. However, when the Lord proclaimed the name of ‘Yahweh’ *before* the name of ‘Yahweh *Elohim*’, He was revealing the fellowship of Yahweh that existed before He was the God of anything or anyone.

In this remarkable experience, Moses was caught up to behold the glory of Yahweh that existed *before* the beginning of the Everlasting Covenant, *before* the creation of the heavens and the earth, and *before* he was conceived in his mother’s womb. He beheld the fellowship that predated his own existence. Moses was illuminated to see that the fellowship of Yahweh was the source of his own name. That is, he understood that his name as a son of God and a son of Christ was foreknown

in the fellowship of Yahweh before the foundation of the world. The Lord wants each of us to receive this same illumination.

It is important to recognise that Moses only received this illumination once he had been hidden in the cleft of the rock. We know that the rock was symbolic of Christ, and more specifically, the offering of Christ. 1Co 10:4. When we are baptised into Christ, we join the fellowship of His offering. It is the Holy Spirit who enables us, with the power of Eternal Spirit, to join the offering of Christ by *emptying ourselves*. 1Co 12:13. When we join the emptying of Christ, we are raised to sit with Him in the heavenly places. Furthermore, the life of our sonship is hidden with Christ in God. Col 3:3-4.

When our name is hidden with Christ in God, it means that our sonship is safe and secure! 2Ti 1:12. We can cease from our futile and idolatrous attempts to create a name for ourselves. Furthermore, we do not need to reveal our own name as a son of God. As we have considered, *the way of Yahweh* is to reveal another – not to reveal ourselves. As we learn the way of Yahweh, in the fellowship of Christ’s offering, our focus is to reveal Christ, and the glory of His name. Act 1:8. We have been baptised into His name. We reveal His name, through the grace that He supplies, as individual members of His body.

Like Moses, we ask the Lord to show us His glory so that we can reveal Him. Exo 33:18. However, let us highlight two *major differences* in the way that the Lord answered the prayer of Moses and the way that the Lord answers our prayer. Firstly, the Lord *descended* in the cloud to proclaim the name of Yahweh and the name of Yahweh *Elohim* to Moses. In contrast to this, when we are baptised into Christ, *we are raised to sit with Him* in the heavenly places. Eph 2:6. Secondly, Moses only saw the back of the Lord as He passed by him. We have been given the great privilege of seeing the glory of God *in the face* of Jesus Christ! 2Co 4:6.

It was not possible to see the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ until He completed His offering journey from the last supper to the cross. He was glorified as the Son of Man on this journey. On the day of His resurrection, Jesus Christ was declared to be the first Man who had been made in the image and likeness of God. Rom 1:4. Col 1:18. We see the glory of who we have been predestined to become as a son of God and a son of Christ, *in His face*. The apostle Paul declared that '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.

We are illuminated to see the face of Christ every time we turn, with repentance and faith, in response to the word that is proclaimed to us by the messengers of Christ in His right hand. 2Co 3:16. We are being transformed into the image of Christ that is being revealed to us as we continue to walk with Him on His offering journey from the last supper to the cross. As we walk with Him, we come to *know Him*, and

we come to *know ourselves*. We come to know ourselves because His face reflects to us, like a mirror, who we are, and who we have been predestined to become. It is the Holy Spirit who enables all of us to see our own unique reflection in the one face of Christ. 2Co 3:17-18.

We are reminded that Moses prayed to the Lord, 'Show me now Your way, that I may know You and that I may *find grace* in Your sight'. Exo 33:13. As we embrace our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, which is the way of the Lord, we are receiving *the grace* of His resurrection life as mortal members of His body. The apostle Paul described the power of Christ's resurrection life that flows to us in our mortality as '*ex-anastasis*'. Php 3:11. It is the grace of '*ex-anastasis*' which enables us to reveal Christ, and the glory of His name, in the weakness of our mortality. 2Co 12:9.

Significantly, as we reveal the glory of Christ during our lifetime, as a mortal member of His body, the Father is building the glory of our heavenly body which is hidden in Him. 2Co 5:1. In this way, our submission and obedience to the lordship of Christ is 'to the glory of God the Father'. Php 2:11. The glory of our heavenly body as a son of God reveals the Father's glory. On the day of resurrection at the end of the age, we will receive an incorruptible and immortal body from the substance of Christ's own resurrection body. 1Co 15:51-54. Our resurrection body will then be *clothed* with the glory of our heavenly body, giving us a spiritual body for the new heavens and new earth.

The prayer of Moses

The prayer of Moses in the wilderness should become the prayer of every son of God during their earthly pilgrimage in this world. If a person has been born again as a son of God, they will confess that they have already received grace in the sight of the Lord. The apostle Paul declared that 'the free gift' of sonship is the first expression of the Lord's abundant grace toward those who believe. Rom 5:15,17. For many of us, we were the beneficiaries of this abundant grace, while we were still in the womb of our mother, because of the faith of our parents.

It is important to appreciate the grace that we have already received in the sight of the Lord as sons of God. However, it is equally important to recognise that our new birth as sons of God is only the beginning of our pilgrimage. We must press on to *learn the way of the Lord* by embracing our participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. In this fellowship, we come to *know Christ* as the glorified Son of Man who has been made in the image and likeness of God. Php 3:10-14. As we journey with Him on the way that He has pioneered for us, we are being transformed into His image as the Son of Man, from one degree of glory to another. 2Co 3:18.

Take some time

Discuss the difference between:

- His thoughts and our thoughts
- His way and our way
- Seeing His deeds and knowing His way

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray that the Lord would show you *His way* so that you can *know Him*.

Sing

'Teach us Your ways' (Michael Fox)

'Your word is settled forever' (Luke Pomeroy)

Scriptures for reference

Psa 103:7. Isa 55:8-9. Exo 33:13.

Php 2:5-7.

The life of God multiplied and given to us

Bruce Hamilton

The origin of all life is God

In the world, 'life' is generally defined as nothing more than existence, or a state of being. This is because those who reject God have not received a love of the truth and so they are deluded. 2Th 2:9-10. Therefore, they do not have a knowledge of the truth. They are fathered by Satan's lies, and the result of this is that they endeavour to redefine the things of God in their own terms to justify their way of living. For example, 'life', 'love', and 'identity' have all been redefined by the world. However, despite the many and varied definitions that are espoused, not one of them changes what is true.

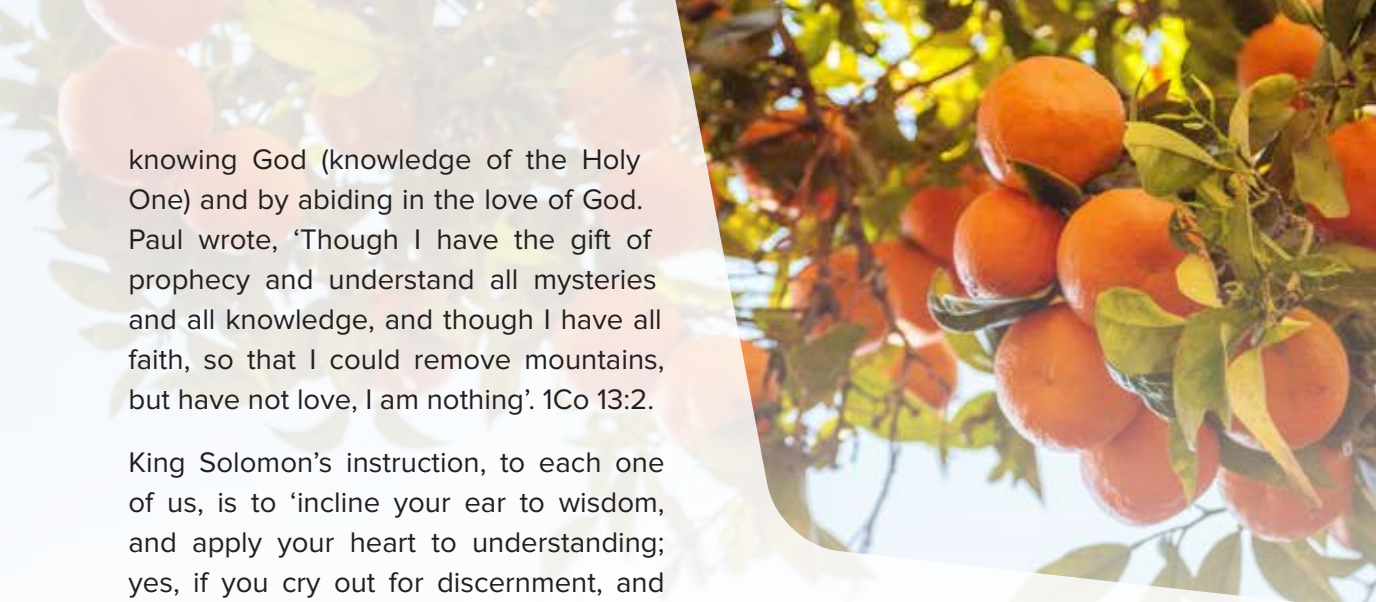
The truth is that the origin of all life is God and there is no life apart from God. The apostle John wrote, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it.' Joh 1:1-5. The apostle Paul wrote, 'God, who made the world and everything in it, since He is Lord of heaven and earth ... gives to all life, breath, and all things ... for in Him we live and move and have our being.' Act 17:24-28.

The Lord is the God of knowledge

The word 'science' literally means 'knowledge'. However, science is fundamentally the pursuit of a knowledge of all things whilst denying the knowledge of God. King Solomon described this as 'vanity and grasping for the wind'. He said, 'I set my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all that is done under heaven; this burdensome task God has given to the sons of man, by which they may be exercised [or afflicted]. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and indeed, all is vanity and grasping for the wind.' Ecc 1:13-14.

God's ways and His understanding are unsearchable. Isa 40:28. Rom 11:33. Therefore, the obvious question is, 'If they are unsearchable, then how can I know God and know His ways?' John answered this in the concluding statement of his first epistle saying, '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 apostle Paul made the point that simply having knowledge is not sufficient for life. True wisdom, knowledge and understanding are only obtained by



knowing God (knowledge of the Holy One) and by abiding in the love of God. 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.

King Solomon's instruction, to each one of us, is to 'incline your ear to wisdom, and apply your heart to understanding; yes, if you cry out for discernment, and lift up your voice for understanding, if you seek her as silver, and search for her as for hidden treasures; then you will understand the fear of the LORD, and find the knowledge of God. For the LORD gives wisdom; from His mouth come knowledge and understanding. ... When wisdom enters your heart, and knowledge is pleasant to your soul, discretion [or choosing according to the purposes of God] will preserve you; understanding will keep you.' Pro 2:2-6,10-11.

There is no 'knowledge' apart from God. 'The LORD is the God of knowledge; and by Him actions are weighed.' 1Sa 2:3.

The multiplication of the life of God

The Scriptures declare and reveal to us that God is love, God is Spirit, and God is one. 1Jn 4:8,16. Joh 4:24. 2Co 3:17. Deu 6:4. Zec 14:9. Mar 12:29. Gal 3:20.

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit abide in one Spirit, in fellowship. They have no lack or deficiency and have no need of anything. It was from Their covenant fellowship *before* that They were motivated by Their love to create a context to multiply and share Their life by offering. By the capacity of one Spirit, each Person of the

Godhead empties Themselves of any right or prerogative that is Theirs according to Their individual name and capacity. Having done this, They choose to serve one another in love. Deu 10:12. Gal 5:13. Each One lays down Their one life by the capacities that belong to Their unique name, revealing one another. In this way, the three distinct Persons of the Godhead are revealed. God who is, all at once, one and three is expressed as Yahweh *Elohim*.

The life of God is multiplied through the process of laying down life in offering. We can only understand how this works when we first understand the offering life of Yahweh *Elohim*. We are to not only receive Their life, but are to participate in the multiplication of Their life. We do this by being joined to Their fellowship and by offering in the same way.

It is important to understand that the multiplication of Their one life by one Spirit is the fruit of Their offering love. We can only receive the life of God, and then also multiply the life of God, if we abide in God and He abides in us. When we are one Spirit with the Lord, we live by the same offering love.

The Holy Spirit laid down His life to become the Helper of the Father and of the Son by empowering and sanctifying Their unique offerings with Eternal Spirit. Moreover, as the Helper, the Holy Spirit revealed the Father and the Son by becoming the life of the Father through which Yahweh Son would be begotten as the Son of God. By Eternal Spirit, Yahweh the Son emptied Himself of His prerogative to express all sonship. The Father, by Eternal Spirit, laid down His life by giving to the Son the fullness of His own expression as Father. Heb 1:1-3. Joh 16:15.

The portion of the Father's Spirit, which the Son received through the Holy Spirit, is the seed and name of every son of God who would ever be brought to birth through the gospel. By this birthing, or begetting, action, the Son became the Word and Seed of the Father. Joh 1:1,14. All the names of the sons of God, of which the Father is the source, were now in the Son. Furthermore, all the fullness of the Godhead dwelt in Him. 'As the Father has life in Himself, so He has granted the Son to have life in Himself.' Joh 5:26. 'For as the Father raises the dead and gives life to them, even so the Son gives life to whom He will.' Joh 5:21.

Multiplication as seed

The process of multiplying life, through laying down life and emptying oneself in order to reveal another, can be understood by the principle of the seed. Jesus said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain.' Joh 12:24.

Jesus was explaining that for the life of God to be multiplied and given to us, death is necessary. This will be counterintuitive to

you if your understanding is solely based upon what you observe in nature, which is that something is either alive or it is dead; living things die; once something is dead, it does not live again; death is an endpoint – it is not a beginning. Therefore, we need a different understanding.

Jesus explained the way of offering by which the life of God is multiplied in a multitude of sons of God, when He said to His disciples, 'He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.' Joh 12:25.

When John wrote in the book of Revelation that Satan was defeated by those who 'overcame him by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death', he was identifying the same principle of laying down life. Rev 12:11.

Our participation in multiplying life

As we have freely received the life of God, we are to freely give to others. Mat 10:8. We do this by giving ourselves to live and walk by the Spirit, and to humbly seek the Lord for grace and capacity every day to change our culture to be the culture of offering love, just as the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have shown us.

To express it another way, we are to have the faith of Abraham, who 'did not consider his own body, already dead (since he was about a hundred years old), and the deadness of Sarah's womb', but, rather, he hoped and believed the promise of God without wavering in unbelief. Rom 4:19-20. God's promise to Abraham was that He would make



Abraham's descendants multiply as the stars of heaven, and that in Abraham's seed all of the families and nations of the earth would be blessed. Gen 12:3. Gen 26:4. Act 3:25. This blessing is the inheritance of possessing eternal life through Christ Jesus.

Paul knew the love of God, and he understood, and had learned, how to lay down his life in offering for his brethren. His response was to say, 'For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He 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. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.' Eph 3:14-21.

Devotional *Focus*

Our participation in multiplying life

The life of God is multiplied through the process of laying down life in offering. We can only understand how this works when we first understand the offering life of Yahweh *Elohim*. We are to not only receive Their life, but are to participate in the multiplication of Their life. We do this by being joined to Their fellowship and by offering in the same way.

It is important to understand that the multiplication of Their one life by one Spirit is the fruit of Their offering love. We can only receive the life of God, and then also multiply the life of God, if we abide in God and He abides in us. When we are one Spirit with the Lord we live by the same offering love.

Take some time

Discuss together practical ways that you can lay your life down in offering. What is the evidence that the life of God is being multiplied?

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.

Sing

'Pray in the Holy Spirit'

(Bryan Kaa)

'In Him who is True'

(Christopher Hamilton)

Scriptures for reference

Mat 10:8. Joh 12:25. Eph 1:17-21. Rev 12:11.

What is man?

Ross Wills

What is man – his life

When Job was suffering and enduring his great trial of affliction, at his lowest point he loathed his life and wanted to die.

Job desperately wondered, 'Who am I? And what is my life? And how can I find favour with God?'

He then began to understand God's desire to bless him and show him favour. He cried, 'What is man that You should exalt him, that You should set Your heart on him, that You should visit him every morning.' Job 7:17-18.

In this article, we will discuss the life of mankind, referred to in the Scriptures as 'the sons of men'; and also, the pathway by which sons of men are born as sons of God and established on Christ's offering journey as the Son of Man - the pathway of salvation.

The origin of man

The origin of man belongs in the fellowship discussion of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Their covenant initiative was to create and bring to glory a multitude of sons, who are born of Their life and participants in Their fellowship. This was not from any lack or need in Themselves. This was an initiative of Their love. Man was given the possession of his own identity, giving him the freedom to choose or refuse the call to be a son in fellowship

with Yahweh *Elohim*. For God's love does not seek to control, but He gives of Himself freely and without obligation.

As we have studied previously, Adam and Eve rejected the fatherhood and fellowship of the Lord God. This was through disobedience and eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Satan convinced Eve that this would be good for food and that it would satisfy them. It was pleasing to their eyes and it would give them the life they desired. They were deluded to think that it would give them the wisdom to control their destiny, and that they would not be obligated to anyone or anything. Gen 3:6.

God had warned Adam that if they made this choice they would surely die. Gen 2:16-17. The death nominated by God in this statement was the death of the cross. It would be the means of judgement or recovery for Adam and all mankind. After they had eaten of this fruit, their eyes were opened and they knew they were naked. Gen 3:7. This nakedness was not just that they lacked clothes, but they also lacked direction and purpose for their life. This purpose could only be found in fellowship with the God who had created them.

Because of this choice, God said to Adam and Eve, and by implication to all men, that the ground of their works in their life would be burdensome, difficult, and



without satisfaction. 'In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are and to dust you shall return.' Gen 3:19. This was not the life they were seeking, but it was for their salvation.

King Solomon, to whom God granted great wisdom, set his heart to understand all of man's activities under the sun. He gave himself to understand common sense and foolishness. He tested himself with pleasure, the best food and wine. He made his works great, built the best houses and planted the best crops, acquired servants and herds of animals. He gathered great riches. Whatever his eyes desired he gave to himself, the best of everything. Ecc 1-2.

Solomon's conclusion after all his searching was that the best a man can hope for is to enjoy a good meal with his

family and find satisfaction in his work. Even this was a gift from God. Ecc 2:24. There is no remembrance of things before or after, all is vanity; there is nothing of any enduring value, it is grasping for the wind. In this, he understood the nakedness of man's life that Adam knew.

Consider the history of man. It is calculated that approximately thirty-five to forty billion people have lived on the earth with approximately eight billion people living presently. Of the approximately twenty-seven billion people who have lived and died, millions have died before their fifth birthday, and many more died before they reached adulthood. We may ask, did their life have any purpose or meaning?

Many people have died fighting in wars to defend the freedoms and ideals of the nation where they were born. We wonder if

they would be happy with what that nation has become today. Man has explored the vastness of the universe, climbed the highest mountains, and plumbed the depths of the seas. He has harnessed resources to build cities, stopped rivers from flowing to the sea. He has built large aircraft by which he is able to travel the world, launched rockets into space and has walked on the moon. He has sought by knowledge and has succeeded in curing sicknesses and disease.

Yet man, by all his efforts, has not brought peace to the earth; he has not resolved the enmity between man and woman. Those who have been healed by the advances in medicine eventually die. Man still works by the sweat of his brow and struggles with thorns and thistles that prevent that comfortable life that he is striving for, and, in the end, he will return to the ground, 'For dust you are and to dust you shall return'. Gen 3:17-20. Man considers he is in need of nothing, but he does not know that he is poor, blind and naked. Rev 3:17.

The prophet Isaiah said correctly, All flesh is grass, and its loveliness is like the flower of the field. The grass withers, the flower fades, because the breath of the LORD blows upon it; surely the people are grass. The grass withers the flower fades, but the word of our God stands forever.' Isa 40:6-8.

The apostle Peter, in his letter, quoted this verse from Isaiah. He noted that the word, which is incorruptible, abides forever and does not fade away. By this word, 'the gospel was preached to you'. 1Pe 1:23-25. This gospel of God reveals that the ministry and offering of Christ as the Son of Man is able to deliver man from a self-sourced life of futility. We must join His offering and suffering pathway that He journeyed for

us. Our life is then transformed, and we are able to lay up for ourselves treasure in heaven. Mat 6:19-20.

When a person receives this gospel of God, proclaimed to them from the fellowship of a presbytery, they are caused to behold this stunning expression of God's love. The apostle John directed his readers to this amazing reality saying, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God.' 1Jn 3:1.

A son of God is born again of the life of God. They do not just believe in God. They willingly embrace their participation in the regeneration and adoptive work of Christ, by joining His offering and sufferings as a member of His body. By this process, we are being glorified together with Christ. The apostle Paul said of those who live this way, 'When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.' Col 3:4.

The life of a son of God is not 'vanity of vanities', as Solomon found; rather, it is of great benefit. This is so that we may receive an inheritance that is incorruptible and will not fade away. 1Pe 1:4. We will declare with King David, 'As for me, I will see your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.' Psa 17:15.

When Job was without strength, he was illuminated to see that God's desire was to exalt him, a man on the ash heap; to raise him to sit in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Rom 5:6. Job 7:17. Eph 2:6. We are rejoicing that every day belongs to the pathway that Christ has pioneered for us. As men from the dust, we are being transformed to become sons of light, the very image and likeness of God.

Man's life

When we are motivated to seek fulfilment in life by pursuing anything other than the pathway Christ has authored for us, we will only find emptiness. When we live by these carnal motivations, we reject the fatherhood of God for our life. Christ has overcome and brought to nothing every carnal motivation and every other way that is opposed to His will. We must turn every day, to be led by the Spirit on the path that Christ has authored for us.

Take some time

Discuss together...

What motivations are you turning from?

Consider what it means to walk on the path that Christ has authored for you.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray that we would not be hard-hearted, but quick to turn as we hear His word instructing us today. Pray that each one would know the heights of their sonship in Christ and gladly embrace their fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings.

Sing

'The mind set on the Spirit' (Ruby Nahuysen)

Scriptures for reference

Ecc 9:11-12. 2Co 6:12.

Jas 1:14. Eph 2:6.

Sons of God in overcoming families

Julianne Hamilton

'Family' is at the centre of all God's purposes. It is interesting how God places us in our families. He sets us in our families. He sets our families in fellowship with His people, and He sets them in cities and nations, in their specific times of history. This is no accident! It is all according to God's sovereign design.

King David declared, 'God sets the solitary in families; He brings out those who are bound into prosperity; but the rebellious dwell in a dry land.' Psa 68:6. David clearly communicated in this passage that God sets each of us in our families. By His cleansing and sanctifying work in our lives and families, He is setting us free from our bondages, so that we may grow, mature, and prosper by His word.

King David further warned that we should be careful not to rebel against God's sovereign design for our lives. When we rebel, we dwell in a dry land. We are cut off from the refreshing and washing of water by the word of God. This 'washing of water' is only found as we remain connected in fellowship with God and His family.

It is only by the washing of water by the word that we are cleansed and sanctified as members of the Lord's body. As we submit to the word of His grace, we are cleansed and sanctified by the Holy Spirit, so that He may present us to Himself,

a glorious church, holy, blameless and without spot or blemish. Eph 5:25-27.

Overcoming by faith

As sons of God, we rejoice in the truth that *we are not our own*. 1Co 6:19-20. We wholly belong to Him. Everything that is not of God is being circumcised from our lives by the work of the Holy Spirit, so that we are wholly given to the Lord. 1Co 6:19-20.

Quite simply, *sons of God in overcoming families* are people who believe in Jesus Christ whom the Father has sent. Jesus said, 'This is the work of God, that you *believe in Him* whom He [the Father] sent.' Joh 3:16. Joh 6:29.

The believing work of the sons of God is to *receive the faith of Jesus Christ* by the Holy Spirit, through the hearing of the word of God. By *this* faith, sons of God continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Act 2:42. They faithfully participate, both individually and as families together, in this overcoming reality.

This overcoming 'family of families' is the church of God, the body of Christ, against whom the gates of Hades shall not prevail. Mat 16:18. By their believing works, which is their participation in the Lord's *agape* meal, they overcome by the blood

of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives to the death. Rev 12:11. By this, they obtain the victory that overcomes the world, which is *their* faith. 1Jn 5:4-5.

God's main purpose for His family

We live in a time when God's main purpose for His family is their full participation in His *agape* meal in the heavenly city of God, in Mount Zion. Mount Zion is the dwelling place of God the Father, among the multitude of the sons of God. He has chosen us to be His sons, and to be the place of His dwelling. Psa 132:13-16.

The apostle Paul noted that Abraham, the father of our faith, desired to be a resident of the heavenly city of God. This is why he lived as a pilgrim while he lived upon the earth, dwelling in tents in the land that the Lord God had given to him.

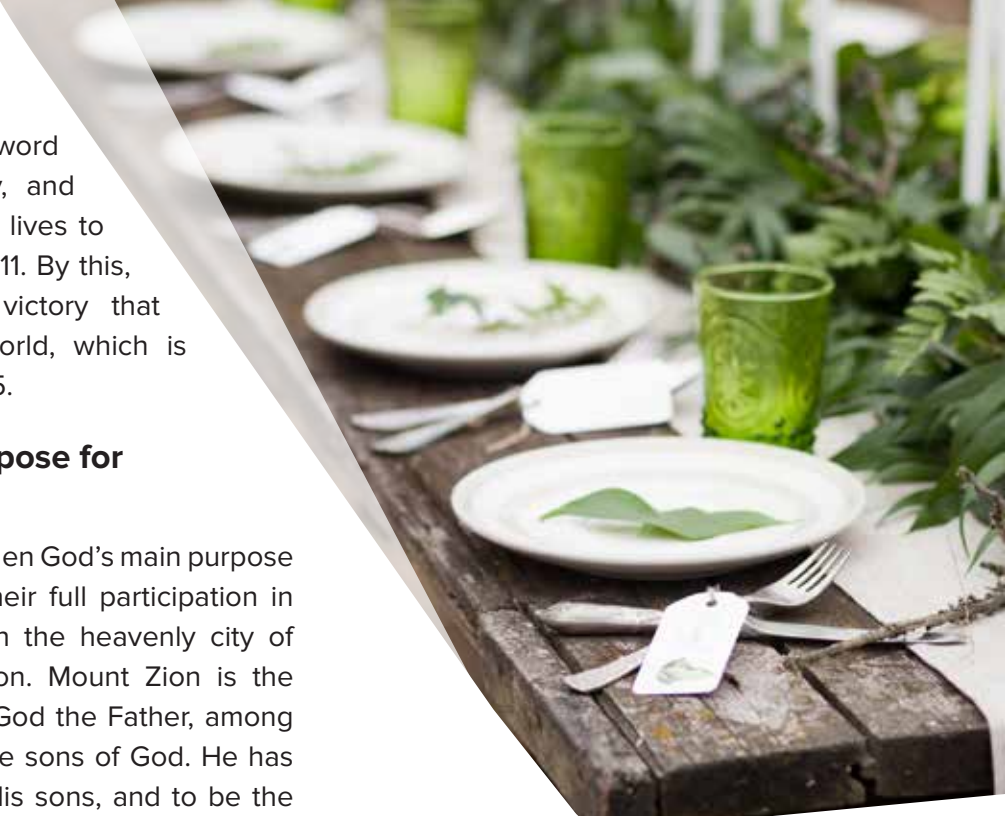
Abraham understood by illumination, that the heavenly city is like no other city on earth. Earthly cities are made by the hands of men. This is a city that is not made with the hands of men. It is a city whose builder and maker is God. Heb 11:10. This city is the sovereign and sanctified heavenly city of God, made by His hand. It is a spiritual destination and 'dwelling place' founded upon Mount Zion. Heb 11:10.

The Lord says of Zion, 'This is My resting place forever; here I will dwell, for I have desired it. I will abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. I will also clothe her priests with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.' Psa 132:14-16.

The heavenly city

In the book of Psalms, the New Jerusalem is described as 'beautiful in elevation' and 'the joy of the whole earth.' Psa 48:2. The psalmist encourages the reader to walk about this heavenly city, and to observe (by illumination) the beauty of its palaces. Psa 48:3,12. This city is a city of refuge. The psalmist declared, 'God is known in her palaces for a refuge.' Psa 48:3.

The psalmist also encourages the reader to consider the strength and safety of this city, to count her towers and observe her defensive walls, and to be illuminated concerning her fortification and her foundation upon Mount Zion. Consider her capacity to both withstand and overcome her enemies. This city gives strong support in time of need and its inhabitants are safe. Psa 48:12-13. The citizens of this city are an overcoming company who are born of God and have overcome the world by their faith.



More than this, the psalmist encourages the reader to observe that this city is the city of 'the great King.' Psa 48:2. He is the 'Lamb of God', the 'King of kings', and 'Lord of lords'. Rev 17:14. The psalmist called Him the 'Lord of hosts'. Psa 48:8. He is also known as the 'Lord, strong and mighty'. Psa 24:8. He is the 'Lord mighty in battle'. Psa 24:8. We know Him as 'our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ'. Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God, is our overcoming Lord and Saviour. Joh 16:33. He has pioneered an overcoming pathway for us to walk each day in Him.

The citizens of the heavenly city

Abraham understood, by illumination, that the citizens of the heavenly city were his own offspring by faith, numbered as the stars in the heavens and the dust of the earth. Gen 15:5. Further to this, they were an overcoming *family of families* comprised of overcoming sons of God. This was God's promise to him. Heb 6:13-15.

Abraham believed that what God promised to him would come to pass, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness. The promise to every person who has obtained the same faith as Abraham, is that they shall be his sons (by faith), and shall be residents of the overcoming, heavenly city; the city which Abraham foresaw, whose builder and maker was God. Gal 3:6-9.

Returning to Mount Zion

The Lord promised that there would be a day when His watchmen would cry aloud, declaring the return and restoration of the families of the Lord's people to the heavenly city, Mount Zion. Jer 31:6. In that day, His watchmen would lift their voices,

calling these families to return to Mount Zion, thereby making it their 'dwelling place'.

We are rejoicing that we are now in *that* day. The Lord is coming among us in a spirit of judgement and burning, to restore the fellowship of His *agape* meal. He is restoring every family that belongs to the heavenly city, Mount Zion. The Lord is coming among us in this way so that we are prepared for the great and terrible day of the Lord.

A key feature of the Lord's coming is the restoration of the Elijah ministry among His people. This ministry is a key focus of His watchmen who belong to overcoming presbyteries, and its purpose is 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just'. Luk 1:17.

Dwelling in Zion

The word declared by God's watchmen is ministered to individual sons of God, and also to their families. Zec 12:10-14. His watchmen are imploring every son of God, in every family, to personally embrace the cleansing and sanctifying initiative of the Holy Spirit. He is coming, by this ministry, to each one, personally, today.

It is in the family where the Lord God has sovereignly placed us, that we learn how to be members of one another. 'Family' is the context where we learn how to bring forth the fruit of our faith, which is our 'obedience'. Our obedience, then, has further application as we participate in the church, the body of Christ, the family of families. We learn in the family how to be a member individually, and then, also, how to be members of one another, as

members of His body and fellow heirs together of the grace of life.

In other words, the restoration of the fellowship of the *agape* meal in the family, multiplies into the restoration of the fellowship of the *agape* meal in the family of families. The fruit of this multiplication is a people *made ready and prepared for the coming of the Lord*. Luk 1:17.

As we participate as a family of families in the restoration of the *agape* meal, as part of a house-to-house fellowship within the church, we are returning to the heavenly city, as a spiritual people, thereby making Zion our 'dwelling place'.

Devotional Focus

Overcoming the world by faith

'Sons of God in overcoming families' are people who believe in Jesus Christ, whom the Father has sent. Jesus said, 'This is the work of God, that you *believe in Him* whom He [the Father] sent.' Joh 3:16. Joh 6:29.

The believing work of the sons of God is to *receive the faith of Jesus Christ* by the Holy Spirit, through the hearing of the word of God. By this faith, sons of God continue steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers. Act 2:42. They faithfully participate, both individually and as families together, in this overcoming reality.

This overcoming company of the family of families is the church of God, the body of Christ, against whom the gates of Hades shall not prevail. Mat 16:18. By their believing works, they overcome by the blood of the Lamb, the word of their testimony, and by not loving their lives to the death. Rev 12:11. By this, they obtain the victory that overcomes the world, which is *their faith*. 1Jn 5:4-5.

Take some time

Testify of knowing God's capacity to overcome the world by faith.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Pray that each one would be encouraged by the knowledge that the Lord Jesus has us in His sovereign hand. Joh 10:28. He has pioneered an overcoming pathway for us to walk each day in Him. Joh 16:33.

Sing

'Only believe' (Lachlan & Melanie Perrin)

Scriptures for reference

Psa 68:6. Joh 3:16, 6:29, 10:28, 16:33.

1Co 6:19-20. Gal 3:6-9. Rev 12:11.

Fellowship in the family *by the Spirit*

Tim Maurice

Fellowship is defined by the love of the Lord God - Father, Son and Holy Spirit. They live by offering, which is the expression of love that seeks to reveal another, not oneself. This love is 'offering love'. When we are born of the Spirit of God, we receive the love of God which allows us to lay down our life for our friends. Our immediate, nuclear family members are our friends!

In order to have fellowship, we need to be led by the Spirit and not by the flesh. Sons of God are led by the Spirit of God. We are going to look, in particular, at what the apostle Paul says about this important subject.

The Spirit not the flesh

'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.

Fellowship in the family is not firstly based on being related to one another. We are all first sons of God, named by the Father. Our *obligation* is not to the flesh. Abraham understood this. Even though Ishmael was

his son, Abraham had to send the boy away from his household. Abraham knew that the flesh (which Ishmael represented) does not inherit salvation. It is only those who are born of the Spirit who are sons of God.

This principle is essential to our understanding of the gospel. The apostle Paul makes it clear that our flesh is not the carrier of eternal life: 'For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh.' Rom 7:18. He goes on to clarify what he means by this in the same verse: 'For the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not'.

We can all relate to what Paul is saying. He is telling us how we often confuse *wanting* to obey the word of God in our flesh with *choosing* to obey it by the Spirit. Surely, if we want to obey God, that must be good! However, Paul is saying that this is our problem. He says that the 'willing', or the wanting, to do God's will is deeply felt within us, and yet we find that we can't do it. That is because this motive of wanting is in our flesh. It is not of the Spirit. Does this mean that we shouldn't want to obey God? Not at all. The point is: we must recognise our utter incapacity to obey God through the activity of our will.



So how do we obey God? Paul explained how to the Philippians: 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.' Php 2:12-13. God does the willing, not us! We can't will ourselves to be like God. Knowing this is a great relief. We don't have any capacity within our natural selves to live as a son of God. If God did not extend help to us, we would be stuck forever, trying to be like God and failing.

Where did God deal with the incapacity of our wills? The answer is: in the garden of Gethsemane. It was here that Jesus sweated great clots of blood - His shedding of blood - and prayed, 'Not My will, but Yours be done.' Luk 22:42. He prayed for each one of us personally. In doing so, Jesus authored the pathway of sonship for us all. Jesus Himself had to allow God the Father to will and to do His good

pleasure within *Him*. Jesus had to be strengthened by Eternal Spirit to walk out His offering to the Father. He did this as the Son of Man; in other words, as the original New Creation man. That is why He is called 'the Captain of our salvation'. Heb 2:10.

There is nothing in our flesh which can offer in the way that Jesus did; nothing which could please God; nothing which could love Him; nothing with which we could love our brethren. The flesh of man is bereft of spiritual life. If Jesus had not authored a pathway for every person to be born of the Spirit, we could never know God, and we could never obey Him.

Just to be clear, Paul did not say that nothing of God dwells in a Christian; he only said that no good thing dwells in our *flesh*. Because of course, having been born of God, we are temples of the Holy Spirit. The problem is not with what God

has given us. The problem lies in the fact that we have ‘another law’ within us, in addition to the Spirit of God.

‘I find then the principle that evil is present in me, the one who wants to do good. For I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law [another law] in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members.’ Rom 7:21-23.

This is our difficulty. We want to obey the word of God, but we have another law within us, *waging war* against our mind. If we allow this law to dictate where we set our mind, we will have no power to stop sinning in the areas where we most want to obey God. This is where things can get difficult. We need to be careful at this point not to shut down in shame and to start hiding our problems.

We need to walk in the light

The temptation to ‘shut down’ is a signal that we need to talk and to walk in the light. This talking should not involve us saying how dreadful we are, as though our latest mistake makes us a failed Christian. We have all fallen short of the glory of God. But praise be to God, He continues to call us, to renew us by His Spirit, and to perfect His life in us. Our talking should reflect the acknowledgement of the weakness of our flesh, but also the surpassing greatness of God’s power towards us! This is what it means to be poor in spirit.

Walking by the Spirit each day is a choice. Instead of trying to ‘will’ to do good, we instead choose to believe God. This is what Abraham did, ‘Abraham believed God and

it was credited to him as righteousness’. Abraham didn’t will to do good: he believed God. Abraham acknowledged the weakness of his flesh, regarded it as dead, and instead trusted in God’s power for the means to obey through resurrection life. God was at work within Abraham to will and to do *His* good pleasure.

If we could simply will to obey God and then do it, we would not be doing the will of God. We would be fulfilling our own wills. This would mean that we were in fact God and didn’t need His grace. Satan wants us to believe this lie. He exploits the other law within our members and tries to convince us that we should already be pretty nearly perfect. It is essential that we renounce this lie and choose instead to work out our salvation in the fear and trembling of the Lord. We are too weak to do anything else.

When we are illuminated to this truth, we can have fellowship with other sons of God. In the case of our present discussion, this is of particular importance with respect to our families. You will find, as many of you no doubt already have, that when you give up trying to be good and throw yourself on the mercy of God, you also find peace and can relate easily at home. So this is our starting point for fellowship in the family: each one of us choosing to be led by the Spirit and not the agitation of our flesh.

Doing His will by the Spirit

Have you ever tried really hard to do the will of God? Have you ever thought: 'I want to do what the Lord wants, so why do I find it so hard?' Well, the Lord wants to help you with that dilemma. He wants you to stop trying, by your own will, to do His will! He wants you to let *Him* work and to will the capacity to obey Him.

Here's our main Scripture: 'Work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.' Php 2:12-13. The Lord is the One who gives us the capacity to obey Him. That's why Jesus prayed, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done'. He prayed this for us, so that we could fulfil all righteousness in Him, by the Spirit!

Take some time

Discuss together the difference between trying to obey through your own effort and obeying by the Spirit. Consider what it means to do this in your families.

Prayer

Spend time praying in the Holy Spirit. Lift your voices for understanding on how to allow the Lord to work and to will His good pleasure within you, instead of striving in yourself.

Sing

'The mind set on the Spirit' (Ruby Nahuysen)

'I will give you rest' (Luke and Nadine Pomery)

Scripture for reference

Rom 7:18-19.

Testimonies



Amelia Lam

BRISBANE, QLD

Recently I have transitioned into Uni and work which has been a mental rollercoaster. I was constantly second-guessing myself and my relationship with my friends and immediate family. Throughout this season, I've been learning the truth regarding who I am as a son of God. During a conversation at dinner, my dad asked us the question, 'What are the lies that Satan tells you daily?' The lies that I believed were that I wasn't loved, I didn't belong, and that my siblings were far better than me. As someone who tends to live inside their head, these thoughts visited me frequently, and I know I'm not the only one who has thought this way. As we talked, we found that we all had a list of evidence to justify why our thoughts were true and, ultimately, we believed that we were the victims in our circumstances. Dad shared that if we believed in those lies, even partially, we would enable Satan, and he would return to us on those matters.

I was convicted by the Spirit to write a song. When I spoke to my dad, he encouraged me to read the Scriptures. I loved 1 John 3 where he wrote, 'Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.' I was encouraged knowing that I didn't need to define myself based on others' perspectives or even my own. As a son of God, my name is hidden in Christ, therefore, the world cannot know my name because they do not know Him.

I don't doubt that I belong and am loved anymore. I am confident that as I have fellowship and walk with the Lord, the Spirit will reveal where I'm being deceived. His truth abides in me as I abide in Him.

Lucy Johnson

BRISBANE, QLD



The Lord has been showing me where I compare myself with other girls, particularly the way I look and how differently I see myself. It came to the point where I was insecure of what I ate and how much. I was not loving who the Lord made me to be. With the condition that I have, it is physically difficult to lose and maintain weight. I was not loving who the Lord had made me to be, therefore, I was not choosing the circumstances that He had given to me (Spina Bifida). From Richard Kaa's word, I heard the Lord say that I needed to love myself so I could love another. I didn't have the understanding of this yet.

I struggled being open with my parents, and found I began to withdraw from them. A word was brought about the importance of keeping open in fellowship. The example given was that an eating disorder can be stopped six months prior, by just opening your mouth in a fellowship. I was able to chat with Dad and Mum and realise that I was bound by comparison which stopped me from receiving and meeting my friends properly. After a Bible study night, I understood the verse where the house was swept, cleaned out but left empty. I thought this was a good thing. However it allowed the unclean spirits to come back sevenfold. Dad then encouraged me that I now needed to keep in fellowship, otherwise, the same situation would come back seven times stronger. Now I am finding a new fellowship in relating to my parents, peers, and brethren. As I relate, I am not bound by these strongholds, and know, as I walk by the Spirit and not by the flesh, I can be an overcomer and love who the Lord has made me to be.

Matthew Franklin

BRISBANE, QLD



Early this year I went to work and, at the end of my shift, I was told I would no longer have a job as the business didn't have enough hours for me. Through this process, the Lord has illuminated many carnal responses and points of repentance.

The main point of illumination was the Lord revealing my idol of trading for another's validation, which was mainly fuelled at work and school, as I enjoyed the praises from co-workers validating me within the hierarchy of work. Often I would appreciate the validation so I could view myself as better than other co-workers and would enjoy being able to boss people around. After I lost my job, I was embarrassed and I felt invalid at school. Although my friends were supportive, I found in myself that I was not finding validity in the Lord but in the world. Without realising it, I would create a hierarchy in my mind about friends and family in relation to myself; as well, not knowing my thoughts were founded on the culture of hierarchy and trading.

The Lord is showing me through fellowship and prayer some of my idols, and through the Lord's grace there is deliverance. Most of all, He has been constantly reminding me that our validation is not in the world but in God. Simply put, our validation is found in being obedient as a son of God. To all of us He is saying, 'Let go'; at the end of the day, our eternal friends are the ones we can have fellowship with. It does not matter what the world thinks, because our only validation is being a son of God. And the process of the Lord's illumination to me was through fellowship with my family and friends and obedience to the word.

Hamish Loft

MARYBOROUGH, QLD



I am Hamish, and I live in Maryborough. Over the last few years, we have been meeting for church in our house and also travelling to the Sunshine Coast and Gympie for combined church meetings. Our house church meetings look like, praying together, singing, sharing in the word and being able to speak up and share my testimony.

As we don't have a church building, we don't have normal church working bees. We offer to our brethren where they live and help with mowing, gardening, and cleaning.

This year I started High School and noticed a big difference to Primary School. Kids don't have much respect for their teachers and the culture is more about putting others down, than helping each other. I am learning to be diligent to share about my days as we speak together at dinner and devotions.

I have liked the point that Uncle John Hay shared, that we are part of the elect and we need to choose our sonship. An example of choosing my sonship is not loving the things of the world but learning to love my family, brethren, and the word. I liked the point from Uncle Josh's presbytery word about walking in the light. This means when I am at school, which is a dark place, I need to shine as a light. I shine as a light by being obedient to Dad and Mum, my teachers, and my church leaders. I am also learning that wherever I am, I need to set my mind on the Spirit. I do this by praying in the Spirit, being obedient, and learning to love as God loves.

I am looking forward to my first teenager's camp this year!

Rachel Davies

GYMPIE, QLD



The word is coming refining our hearts and bringing a multitude of sons to glory. I am rejoicing in this refinement and His initiative towards me, and know that I need to be fully connected to *agape* fellowship, because it is here that I know healing.

Earlier this year I was hearing the verse, 'Where ... "you are not My people", there they shall be called sons of the living God.' Rom 9:26. Not really understanding the contradiction, I just skipped over 'you are not My people' and liked the sound of 'sons of the living God'. The word is coming each week. Increasingly I'm seeing where the Lord is addressing my heart, showing me that I am not His. He is showing me because He wants me to receive His eyes of judgement, turn to Him, and receive His mercy and repent so that I am part of His cleansed bride.

As a son of God, I'm encouraged as He shows me the depths of my iniquity. This is part of His love. It's clear to me that it's a journey, not a checklist. I am putting off my propensity (driven by fear and anxiety) to look ahead, worry, and try in my might to get everything done. I continue to look to the Lord for healing.

This year, with Dad and Mum travelling to PNG regularly, I need to be content and obedient. I would love to go with them to PNG, or for them to stay home, but this is just a 'poor me' propensity. Joining my context and giving myself faithfully in the small things, schoolwork, music practice, hospitality, caring for the property, sowing towards my siblings, is how I'm serving the Lord and joining the offering of my family in the one offering of Christ.

Morgan Serek

EMERALD, QLD



Hi, my name is Morgan Serek and I'm 17 and live in Emerald. Over the past year, the Lord has shown me a lot of areas in my life that need cutting out and also things that need to be brought into the light.

Last year I was offered a full-time carpentry apprenticeship and so, in fellowship, I left school for that. This was a big change in my life, moving out into the world of working, and during this time I've seen a big difference in my life. For about 6 months of the year, I was leaving Emerald to work in Yeppoon and other places that were 4-6 hours away. Luckily, I was able to come home on the weekends, but I still found it very hard. Being away from my family and friends, not being there for devotions, and just not being in our home was a real trial, but in talking to Dad I could see that the Lord had put me in this place. I could see what I was actually doing concerning my life as a son of God and could see how poorly I was focused on the Lord, and how poor my prayer and devotion and my participation in talking at the *agape* meal was. This had me torn between the things I wanted to do and the Lord. But as I heard a word from the messengers, I could let go of the things of the past and walk in a new way. This really stuck in my heart because I could see I was gradually overcoming holding back. I now have a joy in my heart that the Lord is making me see Him, and I see myself not running to the darkness but walking in a new way.

Esther Tynan

CAIRNS, QLD



Hi from Cairns. My name is Esther Tynan, and I am in Year 11.

This year, I had found myself struggling to know how to truly connect to God's word because I did not know how to apply it to my life. I would go to church every week and hear His word, but throughout the week I would forget it. This made me feel like I wasn't being a good enough Christian and it felt like I didn't have a strong relationship with God. After talking with my parents, and focusing on the recent word at church about Abraham being our father, I have come to realise that all we have to do is make a simple turn to face Christ each day, just like Abraham. When we hear and believe the word, simply responding in fellowship connects us to the word. If we hear the word, we need to respond by immediately obeying what we hear, instead of dismissing it and thinking it's not for us.

Recently I came to realise that I do have a testimony of how the word is being applied in my life from day to day. We were taught about the importance of coming to the tree of life every morning and abiding there for the rest of the day, so our thoughts and conversations will be of God. When I heard this word, at first I didn't think it was relevant to me. However, during the next week at school, I found that I needed to walk away from many worldly conversations that were happening around me. This made me realise how the word spoken was being applied in my life and that every word we hear is important to us.

Noah Tindall

SOUTHERN HIGHLANDS, NSW



Hi, I'm Noah. I'm from the Bowral church in NSW and I go to church with my Dad, Mum, older sister, and younger brother.

Earlier this year I was finding it hard to participate and share in the *agape* meal. The truth is, I was finding it hard to make an effort to speak and not just sit there and listen or think about other stuff (and look like I was listening). Often, I didn't like sharing because I felt the things I had to say weren't as important or relevant as what other people were sharing, because I thought my illumination was less compared to other people.

However, I now believe that the *agape* meal is not just us having a meal and talking about God. I know the Lord is calling me to stop comparing and, instead, choose to lay down my life at the *agape* meal, to minister my testimony to others - to either illuminate someone else, or to start a conversation which lets the Lord talk to everyone. I'm actually beginning to have faith to be part of the 144 000, who sing a new song as the firstfruits of God. How amazing is that!

I am also very thankful that as a son of God, I can talk to my parents and have conversations about things that are going on in my life. I know that other kids at school can't have that sort of conversation with their parents.

Zarli Wilk

NEWCASTLE, NSW



Hi, my name is Zarli and I'm from Newcastle, NSW. My family joined the fellowship in March 2022, and it has completely changed how we relate to one another in the home, from devotion, prayer, and our conversations.

In the past year, I can see change in my family. Finding conversation with my parents wasn't really something I would seek before we came to the fellowship. And as I have gone along, I have had to learn how to converse with my parents and to choose them.

I recently had illumination about choosing my family when I am in the middle of suffering, which I am still learning how to do. Recently while I was very sick through the night, I prayed to the Lord and He gave me strength to walk out the following day without me even realising. At the end of the day, I found conversation with my parents around participating in suffering. During this conversation with my parents, the Lord illuminated to me that He had answered my prayer, and I got through the day without striving and was able to look back at my participation in obedience. Previously, I would have tended to be a victim and tried to run the house with my emotions as I suffered.

I'm thankful that the Lord has placed me in my family and that He has brought us to this fellowship. While it hasn't always been easy, I can see Him doing His work in me and my family.

Brianna Gale

PERTH, WA



Hi! My name's Brianna and I'm from Perth. I'm looking forward to joining with you all at teens camp!

Over the past two years I found that the Lord has broken in on me and changed my life. As I entered the senior years of school, I found that I was wavering within my faith. Early in 2022, I was greatly convicted by the Holy Spirit about who I was living my life for. I was blessed as He met me when I turned to Him. I found that even though I felt distant from the Lord all I had to do was simply turn. During the 2022 teens camp, I found a joy and lightness in the Lord. This has been a joyous time of learning the name that the Lord has given me.

I have been learning to set clear boundaries with my friends at school in all my interactions within my day and trust the Lord in each circumstance. I am learning that to be planted means choosing what the Lord has chosen for me each day. I found that in doing this I had to let go of my romantic ideas of what I could be doing with my time, and instead listen to what the Lord has for me. An example of this is giving up a lead position in the school musical for this year. Even though I missed out on something I thought I wanted, the Lord gave me a sense of peace and I was able to give myself fully to the things that were from the Lord for my days. These are the simple things of my participation at church, my study, and to be fully participating within my family. I have been thankful to the Lord for this time of learning.

Mianna Ready

ADELAIDE, SA



This year I have been learning how to trust God and my parents, especially when it comes to managing my time each day. Often, I can get stressed and overwhelmed by my schoolwork, but as a family we have been learning that often the word 'overwhelmed' comes from trying to keep up with our projections. I've realised that a lot of the stress I experience about schoolwork comes from trying to make everything perfect for me.

The year has been really busy, which often has led to me not having much time to do my schoolwork. I've had to learn to listen to a word from my parents, to close my laptop, stop stressing and to draw a line under the day, rather than staying up to finish the works that I want to do. I am instead learning to obediently fulfil the works that the Lord has planned for my sanctification as a son of God each day.

Justin Ready

ADELAIDE, SA



This year I have been illuminated towards my bottom-line fallen ways of thinking and functioning, things that I cannot change myself - specifically, the areas of trading and hierarchy which I saw everywhere in my life. However, rather than this being a point for condemnation, it has brought me so much excitement and joy as I know that the Lord is only illuminating it to me because He plans to change it.

One clear spot where I was functioning by this pecking order was the school bands, where I entertained thoughts around who was a better or worse player than me. This led to me often practising with the motivation of moving up to a better spot in the band or even moving up into the top band. While this approach was a big part of what really got me choosing to do my saxophone practice, instead of viewing it as a chore, I am now seeing the Lord help me transition into a new mode of practice. I am doing the exact same thing but now out of enjoyment and as an offering to my parents who have called me to it.

I am not perfected in this area yet and know that I can still fall into this way of thinking. But how good is it that although I am accountable for how I live, I can commit these fallen ways of thinking to the Lord and know that He is changing my culture to one of offering.

Max Millar

MELBOURNE, VIC



The Lord is teaching me about the sufferings that I have to join as a teen. Through the teenage years as a Christian, I am learning to participate in the sufferings the Lord has for me and choosing the Lord for myself.

Practically, this looks like missing out on some activities, choosing His people as my people, rearranging my priorities, being comfortable with the void and not always filling it, and refusing the temptations the world has to offer.

Some examples of these sufferings would be having to have the conversation with my boss when I used to work at the bike store, about why I have to finish early on some Saturday's (because of the Bible study) or things that I would want to do/go along with to be accepted by my school friends, that aren't part of my sanctification.

These circumstances often challenge me because the Lord requires me to respond the opposite way of what my fleshly instinct is. But lately, I have been hearing to embrace these circumstances and not run from them or do my best to make it easier. That way I am blocking the Lord from teaching me. I am seeing the way I should be dealing with these circumstances is to come in weakness to the Lord, humbly knowing that I am lame and need the Lord's strength and guidance to get through each circumstance. So, I am learning to embrace my circumstances from the Lord without being a victim about it, and learning to pray and meet the Lord, asking for His strength in it.

Ruby Vercoe

MELBOURNE, VIC



As I began Year 12 this year, the Lord has been teaching me how to trust Him in every circumstance, not only when I feel like I'm in control. I thought I was walking out each day, trusting in what the Lord had for me, but this was only when I felt comfortable in the context He had me in.

As the term continued, more work and SACs were being assigned and I started to feel like I didn't have enough time, and even that church and devotions with my family were cutting into the time I needed to get on top of the work. Eventually, my striving to be in control inevitably failed, and I was completely overwhelmed by everything I had to do.

I began looking further and further into the week, then the month ahead of me, and even to the next year and what that was going to look like. I felt completely incapable of walking this out! As I began to talk with mum and dad, they simply encouraged me to be diligent, one day at a time, and continue to put the Lord first.

With the recent word that's been coming, the Lord has illuminated to me that every circumstance I have is from Him, and I've had to choose to believe that my context this year is joining me to His offering and sufferings.

I've been learning to set my mind on the Spirit every day, because this is the only way I can remain in simplicity, believing that the Lord has my life in His hands.

Mackenzie Hay

WARWICK, QLD



I have been encouraged by hearing that Christ has already run my race, and now walks with me each day through the circumstances I face. Even though some things at school have been pretty difficult, I don't need to hide away because He has called me a son, and has gone before me as my pioneer. I am learning to set my mind on things above by choosing to believe the word that I'm hearing. In particular, I was encouraged to hear the word about Christ being made like me, so that I can be made like Him as I walk with Him each day. I was encouraged to hear uncle Peter share that I can set my mind this way each day as I meet the Lord in prayer, and continue to fellowship with my family and friends.

Peter McCabe

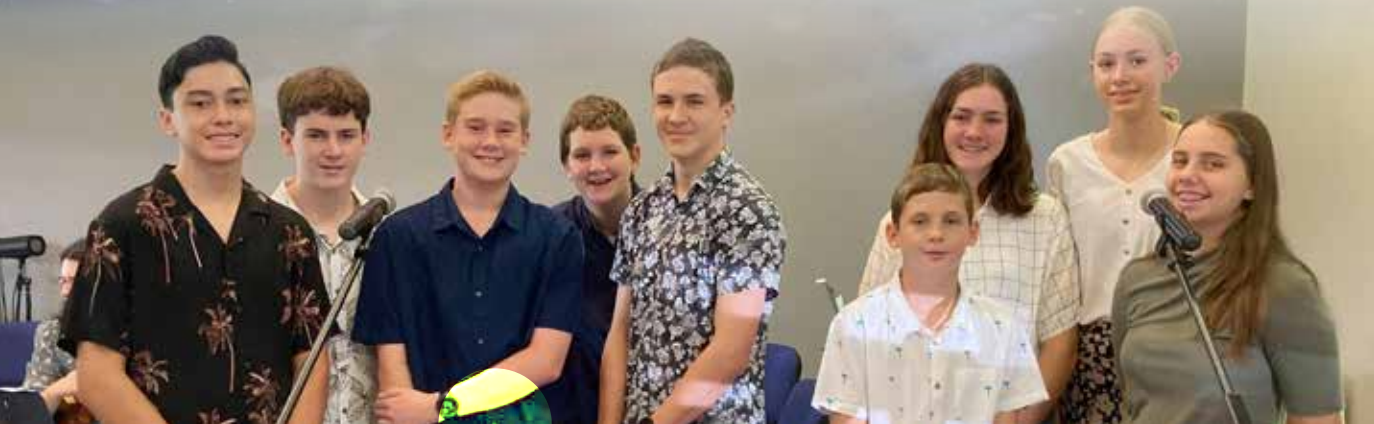
TOOWOOMBA, QLD



At the start of this year, I heard a word at church about setting our eyes on the Lord and coming to meet Him face to face. Exactly a week later, I was hiking in the Bunya Mountains when I fell into a Gympie Gympie tree and got coated from ankle to mid-thigh with its spores. As I came to discover, the Gympie Gympie tree is the most poisonous plant in Australia and one of the most poisonous in the world. The pain that I felt over the following days was extreme. After two days of being in the hospital's acute pains unit, and on six separate types of painkillers, I was left in a state where I couldn't feel the pain, but my body knew it was in agony. I was visited by Dave Baker who reminded me of the word from the previous weekend. He encouraged me that Christ had already joined me in the pain that I was experiencing, and that this situation was an opportunity for me to set my eyes on Him.

I spent the following hours praying with my family, and other church members, and I truly came to meet the Lord in a new way. The medical staff expected me to need more heavy pain killers that night and then spend several more days in hospital. However, the pain began to subside. It was the first night since the accident that I managed to get any real sleep and then I was released the next day. I was also blessed that it only took a month for the toxic spores to work their way out of my skin, which is considered a quick recovery time. This year, I am continuing to learn that I need to keep my eyes on the Lord, rather than looking at my circumstances or the ways of the world. This is something that I need to choose each day.

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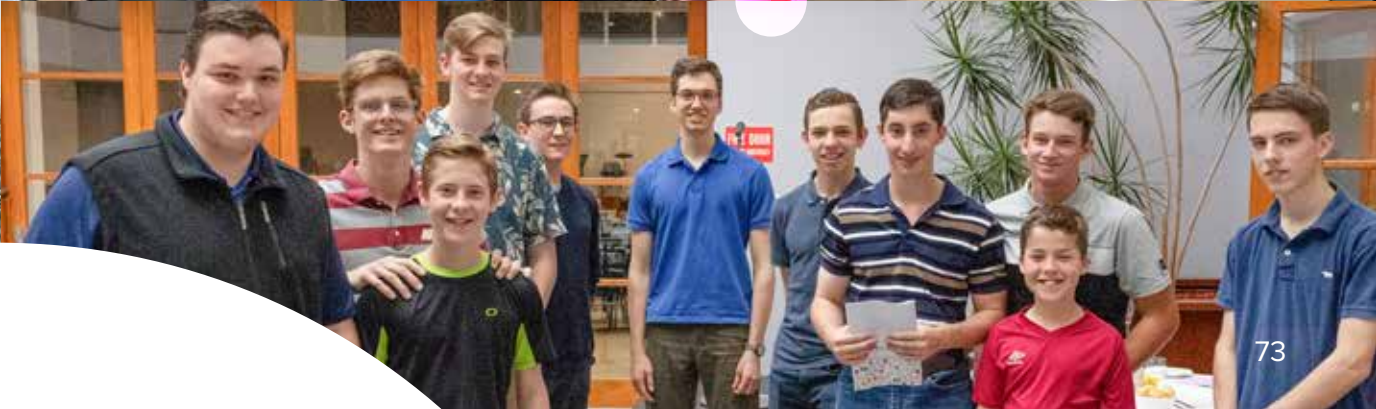
PERTH





BRISBANE







+teenagers
counting the cost
Luke 14:27-33