



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

JULY 2023

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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The polarising effect of the word

The apostle Paul described the gospel of God as ‘the power of God unto salvation’. **Rom 1:16**. It is important for us to recognise that this message is not benign. Rather, it has a *polarising* effect upon those who hear it. **Mat 13:11-15**. **Joh 12:38-41**.

Those who are hearing and being illuminated by the gospel of God are realising the darkness of their former understandings. As they acknowledge this darkness and turn in repentance to receive the word of the Lord, proclaimed by His messengers, they are rejoicing in the light of the word and its implications for how they live and walk as a believer. Their hope is being realised as they walk by faith with Christ on the pathway that He has pioneered for their salvation. On this pathway, they are being changed from glory to glory into the likeness of the Son. **2Co 3:18**.

In contrast, others are becoming increasingly dull to the content of the mystery of God and its implications for their lives. The reasons for this increasing insensitivity to the gospel are varied. For some of these people, the word may be theologically engaging, and even novel, but it has little effect on how they see the kingdom and how they live. It is merely information that is added to a corpus of knowledge, the pursuit of which is an identity-verifying endeavour.

For other people, the unfolding revelation of the gospel of God appears to be little more than another statement of what they already know. Others, as they hear the word, are thinking and asking, ‘What is all the fuss about?’ They do not understand what is being declared. These responses to the word demonstrate that a hearer is being overtaken by darkness, and is falling asleep. **1Th 5:4-6**. **1Co 11:30**. They succumb to delusion because they love the darkness of alternative gospels that accord with their own understanding, rather than the light of illumination that belongs to the ministry of the word by the Spirit.

Further Study 1 THESSALONIANS 5

Entering rest

Let us consider the effect of the gospel of God upon those who receive the word and mix it with faith. The prophet Isaiah declared, 'For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "*This is the rest* with which You may cause the weary to rest," and, "*This is the refreshing*"; yet they would not hear.' **Isa 28:10-12.**

The 'rest' and 'refreshing' that the Lord refers to in this passage of Scripture is the rest that belongs to those who *enter* the kingdom of God by being born of water and the Spirit. In this regard, we recall the words of Jesus, who said, 'Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God.' **Joh 3:5.** Through baptism into Christ, and by walking after the Spirit, we enter the kingdom of God as we journey with Him on the pathway of glorification and salvation that He pioneered for us. Speaking of this journey, Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest.* Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will *find rest for your souls.*' **Mat 11:28-29.**

Exhorting his readers to understand this message, Paul said, 'Therefore, since a promise remains of *entering His rest*, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, *not being mixed with faith* in those who heard it. For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: "So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest,'" although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.' **Heb 4:1-3.**

Further Study ISAIAH 12

The fruit of obedience

We recognise that unless we love the word that reveals the mystery of God, and *choose* the fear of the Lord, we will not see, nor enter, the kingdom of heaven through participation in the offering journey that Christ pioneered for us. We will be given over to the darkness of walking according to our own sight and understanding. This implication of how the gospel is received was observed by King Solomon, who wrote, 'Because they hated knowledge and did not choose the fear of the Lord, they would have none of my counsel and despised my every rebuke. Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies.' **Pro 1:29-31**. They are unable to be filled to the fullness of God. **Eph 3:16-19**.

A person who loves the word and the messenger, and who fears the Lord, will be *obedient* to the word. Paul commended the believers in Corinth for this response to the ministry of Titus, writing, 'His affections are greater for you as he remembers the *obedience* of you all, how with *fear and trembling* you received him.' **2Co 7:15**. This demeanour towards the messengers and their message is not a carnal dependency upon them for salvation. Such a connection would be cleaving to the messenger with deceit. **Dan 11:34**. Rather, it is a participation in the fellowship from which the word proceeds. Abiding in this fellowship, a hearer is able to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling. **Php 2:12-13**. The gospel is effective in their life because they have an anointing from the Holy One and they know how to walk in obedience to the word from the beginning. Walking in this manner, they are being brought to glory as a son. **Heb 2:10**.

Further Study 1 PETER 1

The evidence of a veil

Referring to the polarising effect of the word, Isaiah wrote, 'But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little", that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught'. **Isa 28:13.**

Unless a person turns to the Lord as the word is being spoken by His messengers, a veil remains over their heart. **2Co 3:15-16.** Ambivalence to the word, theological curiosity, contention, and confusion are all responses to the word which indicate that such a veil lies over one's heart. In this condition, a hearer is unable to be enlightened by the gospel. Paul described this implication of failing to receive the word with repentance and faith, writing, 'But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them'. **2Co 4:3-4.** Such a hearer has been taken captive by Satan, the god of this age.

The Galatian church serves as an example of believers who formerly walked according to the Spirit, but had ceased from receiving the word of present truth ministered by Christ through the four faces of His administration in the church. Paul said to them, 'This only I want to learn from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith? Are you so *foolish*? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?' **Gal 3:2-3.**

Evidently, these Christians in Galatia had fallen backwards, were broken, snared and caught in Satan's lie. Significantly, they were unaware of their condition, believing that they were walking in the way that leads to life. They believed that their darkened perspective was light. Jesus said that this was great darkness indeed. **Mat 6:23.**

Further Study MARK 7

Forsaking what was gain

To understand the mystery of God, which Paul described as the primary focus of his ministry, we need to have the same attitude that he had towards this message. **Eph 3:1-4**. Paul testified that he counted all things that were previously gain to him, as loss. These included the old gospel that he had believed, his religious practices and traditions, his cultural heritage, and his former exploits. These had previously been a source of purpose, security and identity verification for Paul. **Php 3:7-8**.

Paul not only counted these things as loss, but he counted them as rubbish for the excellence of knowing Christ Jesus and to gain Christ. He further professed the desire to 'be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith [that comes in the word of present truth]; that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead'. **Php 3:9-11**.

In other words, Paul recognised that walking in the light of the word from the beginning, which is the mystery of godliness, was only possible as he continued to forsake the darkness of his former understandings and practices. This is an ongoing process, noted by Solomon, who taught, 'The path of the just is like the shining sun, that shines *ever brighter unto the perfect day*. The way of the wicked is like darkness; they do not know what makes them stumble'. **Pro 4:18-19**. As we let go of our former understandings, forsaking them as the basis for our reception of the proceeding word, we are to lift up our voice for understanding concerning the mystery of godliness. In doing so, we will be increasingly illuminated to the gospel of God and our participation in its fulfilment.

Further Study PHILIPPIANS 3

Do not let the word pass by

A person who lifts their voice for understanding is not letting the word of present truth pass them by. **Pro 2:1-5**. Consider the example of Cleopas and his friend. Jesus, the risen, glorified, Son of Man came alongside them as they journeyed away from Jerusalem to Emmaus following Christ's crucifixion. Jesus was the substance of what they were predestined to become; *yet they could not see Him*. Symbolically, they were walking away from the heavenly Jerusalem, which they were to enter by joining the offering and suffering journey that Christ had just pioneered for them.

Jesus admonished the men, saying, "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?*" And beginning at Moses and all the Prophets, He expounded to them in all the Scriptures the things concerning Himself: **Luk 24:25-27**. In their sightlessness, they were not so different from the 'foolish Galatians'. However, instead of being offended or despondent at this rebuke, they received the instruction of Christ as He taught them, line upon line, precept upon precept. No doubt, Jesus began in Moses' first book, reminding them of God's everlasting covenant initiative, 'Let us make man in Our image and according to Our likeness'. **Gen 1:26**.

When they drew near to their destination, Jesus indicated that He would be proceeding on from them. However, Cleopas and his friend constrained Him, saying, 'Abide with us'. **Luk 24:28-29**. This is a key response to the word that is characteristic of those who are lifting up their voice for understanding. The men did not simply let the word pass them by because of their inability to comprehend the word. They demonstrated faith by entreating and abiding in the fellowship of the word which was causing their hearts to burn within them. As they participated in the *agape* meal that Jesus extended to them, Luke recorded, 'Their eyes were opened and they knew Him'. **Luk 24:31**.

Further Study LUKE 21

The outcome of illumination

The spiritual eyes of Cleopas and his friend were opened in the fellowship of the *agape* meal so that they could see Christ. **Luk 24:31**. In seeing the Son who had emptied Himself to the death of the cross and had been glorified as the Son of Man and Son of God, they saw who they were to become in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. Now illuminated to the gospel, Cleopas and his friend rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem. They immediately began to do the works of repentance, walking in the light of the illumination that they had received. **Luk 24:33-35**.

In order to obtain knowledge and understanding regarding the mystery of godliness, we must acknowledge the darkness of our own understanding. As the Lord noted in relation to Cleopas and his friend, this darkness is our foolishness and the outcome of being slow of heart to believe the word of present truth. Making this confession, Agur the son of Jakeh declared, in the book of Proverbs, 'Surely I am more stupid [equally, foolish] than any man, and do not have the understanding of a man [in the image and likeness of God]. I neither learned wisdom nor have knowledge of the Holy One.' **Pro 30:2-3**.

Having acknowledged his foolishness and the inadequacy of his own understanding, Agur was then able to engage in the conversation of faith established by the gospel of God. Accordingly, he asked, 'Who has ascended into heaven, or descended? Who has gathered the wind in His fists? Who has bound the waters in a garment? Who has established all the ends of the earth? What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if you know?' **Pro 30:4**. Of course, the One who ascended and descended was Christ. Through His resurrection, He received the name above every name. Importantly, in the light of the gospel, we know that we are the sons of His everlasting fatherhood! **Isa 9:6**.

Further Study PROVERBS 30

The testimony of Job

In the book of Revelation, the apostle John observed that the citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem were those who overcame the devil by the blood of the Lamb, by the word of their testimony, and because they did not love their lives to the death. **Rev 12:11**. These aspects of overcoming belong to those who have entered the kingdom of heaven, and who are attaining to their predestination as men in the image and likeness of God.

Job, likewise, overcame the devil. Accordingly, his experiences provided helpful detail concerning how a person obtains the understanding necessary for entering and possessing the kingdom of heaven. With this in view, James, the brother of Jesus, exhorted us to remember the *patience, or perseverance*, of Job. **Jas 5:11**. He was a man we could imitate as a notable example of a believer who, through faith and patience, inherited the promises contained in the gospel of God. **Heb 6:11-12**.

Job was described by the Lord as ‘a blameless and upright man, one who fears God and shuns evil.’ **Job 1:8**. However, Job’s own righteousness was insufficient to ensure his salvation. We know this because, at the conclusion of his encounter with the Lord, he confessed, ‘You asked, “Who is this who hides counsel without knowledge?” Therefore I have uttered what I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. Listen, please, and let me speak; You said, “I will question you, and you shall answer Me”. I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees You*. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.’ **Job 42:3-6**.

Job acknowledged that through his own sight, knowledge and understanding, which were based on the gospel he had previously heard, he had been unable to see the Lord. Job’s own knowledge and understanding had produced a religious culture from which he needed to turn, in order to walk in a manner worthy of the illumination that he had received through his encounter with the Lord.

Job's family culture

Prior to the impact of the word of the cross in his life, Job endeavoured to live in a manner that was pleasing to the Lord. However, it is clear that he was unable to train his children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Instead, he compensated for their hedonism and mixed culture, by making offering on their behalf in the mistaken belief that their sins could be covered by his piety. **Job 1:4-5.** In reality, on account of their own cultural depravity, Satan was able to take advantage over his children and they lost their eternal salvation.

The godlessness of Job's children was indicative of a carnal union between Job and his wife. It seems that none of the children were godly seed, which is the fruit of a couple who have been made one by receiving a remnant of the Spirit. **Mal 2:15.** Furthermore, under the pressure of losing the lifestyle afforded by Job's wealth and influence, his wife said to him, 'Do you still hold fast to your integrity? Curse God and die!' **Job 2:9.**

Job revealed himself to be the measure of truth as he brought his case before God. He believed in his integrity and righteousness, and he was ready to give a defence for the way that he walked, or the nature of his 'Christian' pilgrimage. For example, he said, 'Oh, that I had one to hear me! Here is my mark. Oh, that the Almighty would answer me, that my Prosecutor had written a book! Surely I would carry it on my shoulder, and bind it on me like a crown; *I would declare to Him the number of my steps.*' **Job 31:35-37.** With this statement, Job revealed the content of the gospel that he had heard and through which he had known God. **Job 42:5.**

Further Study JOB 1

Job's fallen gospel

Job's belief in the integrity of his own heart and the righteousness of his own steps revealed the nature of his fallen gospel. He held to a gospel of acceptability on the basis of sinlessness and works. His suffering was perplexing because he had not sinned. Job's three friends maintained similar gospels, arguing that Job's plight was the fruit of some sin, which they endeavoured to identify. **Job 22:5-11.** Their observations and counsel with respect to sin reflected the doctrines that belong to the traditional church denominations in our day. However, Job rejected their accusations and the need to make confession to these men, maintaining his innocence and his incredulity at what was happening to him.

Job was determined to understand why he was in such a predicament, recognising that his former gospel was unable to answer the matter. He began to lift his voice for understanding, declaring, 'Oh, that my words were written! Oh, that they were inscribed in a book! That they were engraved on a rock with an iron pen and lead, forever! For I know that my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth; and after my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. How my heart yearns within me!' **Job 19:23-27.**

The Lord answered Job, saying, 'Who is this who darkens counsel by words without knowledge? Now prepare yourself *like a man*; I will question you, and you shall answer Me.' **Job 38:2-3.** This is an amazing statement. The Lord was not calling Job to be a man like Adam. Rather, he was inviting him into the discussion that belonged to the offering, emptying death of Christ, through which He was made a man in the image and likeness of God!

Further Study JOB 34

Prepare yourself like a man

The outcome of the Lord's first admonition to Job was that his sight was *only partially recovered*. He responded to the Lord's first discourse, saying, 'Behold, I am vile; what shall I answer You? I lay my hand over my mouth. Once I have spoken, but I will not answer; yes, twice, *but I will proceed no further.*' **Job 40:4-5**. Job recognised that his view of himself and his situation was at odds with the proceeding wisdom of God. He put his hand over his mouth, indicating that he was no longer presuming to speak as the measure of truth. However, he did not know how to converse or conduct himself in this fellowship. His response indicated that he was like the blind man who, when Jesus spat on his eyes and put His hands on him, looked up and saw men like trees, walking. **Mar 8:23-24**.

God addressed Job a second time, saying to him, '*Now prepare yourself like a man*; I will question you, and you shall answer Me: Would you indeed annul My judgement? Would you condemn Me that you may be justified? Have you an arm like God? Or can you thunder with a voice like His? Then adorn yourself with majesty and splendour, and array yourself with glory and beauty.' **Job 40:7-10**. With this statement, Yahweh was revealing to Job that the entitlement to answer in the fellowship of Yahweh required a particular adornment, marked by glory. He was referring to the glory that is progressively obtained by a man through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. Job could not array or glorify himself. However, he was being illuminated to the fellowship of offering and sufferings through which he would be able to obtain such an eternal weight of glory. **2Co 4:16-18**.

Job obtained knowledge and understanding as he received the word of the Lord and forsook his own knowledge and understanding. Illumination brought him to bankruptcy of spirit, leading to repentance, and to faith for his *participation* in the sufferings of Christ.

Further Study MARK 8

Job's priestly ministry

Job came to understand that he would not obtain an eternal inheritance because of sinlessness. Rather, eternal life in fellowship with Yahweh would only be attained through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. As a man, he was now able to embrace his fellowship in the dying of the Lord Jesus Christ, for he saw Jesus and understood the process by which he would be made like Him in the resurrection.

Amazingly, while Job was still sitting on the dung heap with boils all over his body, the Lord directed his three friends, Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar, saying, 'Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Job, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and *My servant Job shall pray for you*. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly [the foolishness of your old gospels and own understandings]; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Job has.' **Job 42:8**.

Evidently, in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, Job was now learning, and being equipped for, a priestly ministry to those who had been caught in a trespass. **Gal 6:1**. As Job bore in his body the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus Christ, death was working in him; and life, through reconciliation, was able to be ministered to his friends. **2Co 5:18-21**.

These men represented collegial presbyters, whose gospels and associated sacramental practices were not of God. In this regard, they were like those of the synagogue of Satan, of whom Jesus said to the angel of the church of Philadelphia, 'Indeed I will make them come and worship before your feet, and to know that I have loved you.' **Rev 3:9**. Notably, the *aggelos* presbytery of Philadelphia was commended by the Lord for keeping His command to *persevere*. **Rev 3:10**. They had observed and imitated the patience of Job. **Jas 5:11**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 5

We are not the measure of truth

Obtaining understanding involves deliverance from the darkness of the gospels that accord with our own perspective. We can liken this darkness to the blindness that belongs to those whose minds Satan has *blinded*, lest they should be illuminated to the true gospel which reveals the only way to life; **2Co 4:3-4**, that is, the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which we are made into the image and likeness of God, as He was. A person who does not see by illumination will, like Job, inevitably presume to be the measure of what is true.

It is only when we have faith that we cease to be the measure of the truth. We receive faith through illumination. **Rom 10:17**. Illumination is the knowledge of what is true, which then becomes understanding as this knowledge becomes true in us; that is, as our culture is reformed. **Col 2:1-3**.

We must not measure what we hear by what we know. While we do this, we are the source and cannot receive illumination. In order to get wisdom and understanding, we must turn from this approach to the word. **Pro 2:6**. Instead, we must receive the word today as new; a word that brings new creation. Only then, can the veil of our own measuring, by our own knowledge, be taken away. We must turn from our measuring classifications, or clarifications, or definitions, and turn to the Lord. In His face, we see the reflection of our sonship from Christ who is, for us, the last Adam. **2Co 3:14-18**.

Those who are blind and lack understanding, need their sight healed. The healing of our blindness often requires more than one encounter with Christ, the Word. In this regard, we remember the account of the blind man who was healed by Jesus at Bethsaida. Jesus took the blind man by the hand and led him out of the town, spat on his eyes, and put His hands on him. In response to Christ's query regarding what he saw, the man replied, 'I see men like trees, walking'. **Mar 8:23-25**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 3

From faith to faith

When we consider the encounter between Jesus and the blind man at Bethsaida, we note that there are several key elements in relation to this man's healing. **Mar 8:23-25**. First, Christ, the Word, led the man away from the place where he was abiding in darkness. Likewise, we must allow the word to lead us away from our doctrinal traditions and natural rationalisations, which are the habitations of our blindness. **Mat 15:12-14**. We also note that the healing of the man's sight was a recreative initiative by Christ. This healing belongs to the process of regeneration in our fellowship with Christ. **Tit 3:4-5**.

Christ, the Messenger, engaged the blind man in a discussion to ascertain what he was beginning to see. Likewise, when we lift up our voice for understanding, we need to converse with the messenger, and share what we are seeing. Initially, it is unlikely that we will see clearly. We might see a vague outline of the message, or get clarity on one or two points. We must accept that we are in need of further assistance.

In relation to the blind man, Jesus again placed His hands on his eyes and made him look up. The man's sight was restored, and he saw clearly. Similarly, as we continue to entreat fellowship with the messengers who are in Christ's hand, looking up to see the risen Christ, we will also be further illuminated to the mystery of godliness. The mark of this illumination is thanksgiving, and faith to walk in a new way.

Having been established in the fellowship of illumination, we continue to receive the word of present truth each week. We mix this word with the faith that we have received previously, in order to obtain faith for the obedience that belongs to the next step of our pilgrimage on the pathway of sanctification. **Heb 4:2**. In this way, the righteousness of God is being fulfilled in us from faith to faith. **Rom 1:16-17**.

Further Study ROMANS 3

The Holy Spirit is our Helper

Jesus honoured the Holy Spirit by explaining to His disciples that it was to their *advantage* that He return to the Father, saying, '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**. Notably, He identified the Holy Spirit as 'the Helper'. He is the Helper of the Father and the Son, and He is our Helper.

The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of sanctification and of truth, who enables the fellowship of worship in Yahweh. **1Pe 1:1-2. Joh 16:13. Php 2:1-2**. He is the One who gives us the life of God, and who joins us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through which we are being sanctified to our name and works as sons of the Father. He has devoted Himself to our sanctification as sons of God, leading us in the truth of our name as a son of God, and resisting us when we endeavour to walk after the flesh. **Joh 16:13. Rom 8:6-7**.

Once a believer has been born of God, their body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit. **1Co 6:19**. They are a vessel for His expression. We worship the Holy Spirit with reverent honour by walking after the Spirit in the way that He is leading, rather than by walking according to the flesh. This worship is evident through our speech and conduct, particularly in the *agape* meal. Accordingly, Paul wrote, 'Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, and you are not your own? For you were bought at a price; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, which are God's.' **1Co 6:19-20**. When we have become a temple of the Holy Spirit, He makes our whole being – body, soul and spirit – a temple of God, through Eternal Spirit. **1Co 3:16**.

Further Study JOHN 16

Sealed for the day of redemption

Fellowship is the capacity and initiative of the Holy Spirit. The evidence that our body is a temple for the Holy Spirit will be our desire for fellowship with one another, in one Spirit. This is a fundamental implication of the love of God being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. **Rom 5:5.**

This is a key implication of receiving the seal of the Spirit. To this end, the apostle 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, to the praise of His glory.' **Eph 1:13-14.**

The Greek word that is translated 'sealed' in this passage is '*sphragizo*'. It means 'to be stamped with a signet for security or preservation'. Being sealed with the Holy Spirit is more than an identification that we are a son of God. It means that He has *dedicated Himself* to ensuring that we obtain the blessing of sonship. With this in mind, the apostle Paul exhorted us, saying, 'And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed [*sphragizo*] for the day of redemption.' **Eph 4:30.** The question, of course, is how do we grieve the Holy Spirit?

We grieve the Spirit when, having begun to walk according to the leading of the Spirit of truth, we give heed to Satan's lie, and choose to walk according to the sight of our own eyes and the understanding of our own heart. **Act 7:51.** When we set our mind in this way, acting on the basis of our own fleshly perspective, we reject the word of the messengers, which is proclaimed by the Holy Spirit. Consequently, we do violence to the one Spirit *agape* fellowship that belongs to the presbytery, and to the Father and the Son. **1Jn 1:3.**

Further Study EPHESIANS 4

Enmity with the Spirit

Worldly sorrow in response to the initiative of the Holy Spirit is evidenced by a person's impassioned resistance to the conviction that He brings. **Joh 16:8**. Stephen noted this response in his hearers as he proclaimed to them the gospel of God. He said, 'You stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always *resist the Holy Spirit*; as your fathers did, so do you. Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute?' **Act 7:51-52**.

Hearing this message, they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed their teeth at Stephen, revealing their fallen angst. Driven by these emotions, they cried out with a loud voice and stopped their ears. They ran at the messenger with one accord, casting him out of the city and stoning him. **Act 7:57-58**.

A person who has been born of God, baptised into Christ, and filled with the Holy Spirit, will experience distress when they choose to walk after the flesh. Their distress, or grief, is caused by the Holy Spirit who is at enmity with the flesh. Highlighting this reality, Paul wrote, 'For the flesh lusts against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh; and these are contrary to one another, so that you do not do the things that you wish'. **Gal 5:17**. Evidently, the distress that a person experiences is caused by the Holy Spirit who frustrates their fleshly endeavours.

However, the Holy Spirit will not strive with a person forever. **Gen 6:3**. He can be taken away from us. **Psa 51:11**. A key indicator that the Holy Spirit has departed from us is that we are relieved of the distress associated with His resistance to our carnal ways. A person in this condition is no longer simply a carnal believer. They have now returned to the condition of the natural man, being unable to receive the things of the Spirit. **1Co 2:14**. They erroneously believe that relief from their distress is the evidence that their own way is the truth. They do not know that they are now reserved for destruction. **2Pe 2:4,9**.

Further Study GALATIANS 5

Blasphemy against the Spirit

If a believer sets themselves against the Spirit by walking after the flesh, they begin to 'quench' the Holy Spirit. **1Th 5:19**. If they fail to repent of their carnality, even presuming to use the power of the Holy Spirit to achieve their self-centred projections, they revile, or show contempt for, the Holy Spirit. In doing so, they *blaspheme His name*. This rebellious idolatry is not tolerated by the Father or the Son. Jesus Himself said, 'Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.' **Mat 12:31-32**.

Because a believer blasphemes the Spirit, who has devoted Himself to their blessing as a son of God, they are *devoted to destruction* by God the Father. Summarising this principle, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'In His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bore them and carried them all the days of old. *But they rebelled and grieved His Holy Spirit; so He turned Himself against them as an enemy, and He fought against them.*' **Isa 63:9-10**. It is confronting to realise that God makes enemies of those who rebel against the Holy Spirit. He becomes set on, or dedicated to, their destruction.

The key point is that the Holy Spirit brings to our person the fellowship of God, making us a temple of God. **1Co 3:16**. This is a feature of His dedication to our blessing as a son of God. **Eph 1:13-14**. Rom 8:16. However, if we sin against the Holy Spirit and defile the temple of our body, the Scripture is clear, *God will destroy us*. **1Co 3:17**. If we find no place of repentance, we will become *cherem*, which means 'an accursed thing'.

Further Study 2 PETER 2

Judgement in the New Covenant

The apostle Paul highlighted that this principle of judgement, which was outlined in the Old Testament, applied even more definitively in the New Covenant of the Spirit. In his letter to the Corinthians, he noted that the nation of Israel came under the judgement of God in the wilderness. He then wrote, *'Now these things are our example, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer.'* **1Co 10:6-10**. Paul concluded this specific exhortation with the warning, *'Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall.'* **1Co 10:12**.

Likewise, in his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul warned that if we *sin wilfully* after we have received a knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins. In other words, Christ's offering no longer avails for our salvation. It only defines our condemnation as one dedicated to destruction. Paul described this dedication as 'a certain fearful expectation of judgement, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.' **Heb 10:26-27**. Paul noted that, under the Old Covenant, anyone who rejected the law of Moses died without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. **Heb 10:28**. With this in mind, he then asked, 'Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the Covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace?' **Heb 10:29**.

Further Study HEBREWS 10

Praying by the Spirit

If God has dedicated a person to destruction because of their idolatry, we must not embrace them, or pray for them, in some deluded initiative of love, lest, by taking hold of them in this way, we are devoted by God to destruction *with them*. **Jer 7:16. Eze 14:7-10.** Instead, we are to pray according to the Spirit for our loved ones who are pursuing the flesh, warning them of the judgement to come, and beseeching them to fear God. **Luk 23:40.** We will only be able to save some if we fear the Lord ourselves, and hate even their garments which are defiled by the flesh. **Jud 1:22-23.**

King David demonstrated the godly sorrow that belongs to a person who is turning from the desires of the flesh, to walk again according to the Spirit. In his repentance, he prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and *do not take Your Holy Spirit from me*. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and *uphold me by Your generous Spirit*. Then I will teach transgressors Your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You.' **Psa 51:10-13.**

A son of God is established in the godly sorrow that belongs to fellowship with the Holy Spirit when they set their minds on the Spirit. Acknowledging the weakness of their fleshly perspective and understanding, they *cooperate* with the Holy Spirit who prays within them to the Father and the Son. This prayer is with *groanings too deep for words!* **Rom 8:26.** The Son hears the prayer of the Holy Spirit and intercedes for us to the Father according to what He hears from the Holy Spirit. He then priests to us a participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings so that we can fulfil the will of God as we walk after the Spirit.

Further Study ROMANS 8



Restoring
my Soul