



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

APRIL 2024

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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April 2024

Contributing Authors

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

Compiled by

David Baker

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God is love

Before the initiation of God's covenant purpose for us, there was only the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. There was no sin in God, nor was He able to be tempted to sin, for *He is love*. **1Jn 4:16**. Note that He did not become love, for He has no beginning nor end; He is I AM. God cannot be anything other than who He is. This does not mean that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit have no choice. Rather, Their choice is revealed by the expression of Their love. They live in freedom, choosing to give Themselves to each other in constant offering. This is Their fellowship in one Spirit. Love is personified through this fellowship of offering, and reveals Their name 'Yahweh *Elohim*'. This love was acutely manifest by the covenant declaration of *Elohim*. In the fellowship of love that belongs to Their name, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit *chose*, saying, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' **Gen 1:26**.

God's covenant initiative to make us in Their image and likeness is Their desire to share Their life and fellowship with mankind. Choice is essential to Their life and fellowship because it works by 'giving-love'. That is, without the dignity and accountability of choice, nothing can be given. Accordingly, the freedom of choice is fundamental to our creation and to God's plan for us. In the unfolding of God's plan, we are all given the opportunity to choose either what God has chosen for us (to be made in the image and likeness of God) or to choose sin (any alternative to God's perfect will for us). **Deu 30:19-20**. **Jos 24:14-15**. Eternal life belongs to those who choose what God has chosen for them. Eternal death is the portion that belongs to those who choose sin. The offering of Christ on the cross established the place, and implications, of choice, for every person.

Further Study 1 JOHN 4

God in the flesh

By Eternal Spirit, Yahweh Son emptied Himself and was begotten by the Father as the Son of God. **Php 2:5-7**. This established the beginning of God's creation. Through this process, the Son of God received a heavenly body. Even at this point, He was unable to sin or be tempted to sin. **1Jn 3:9**. It was not until the Son of God *came in the flesh*, that He could be subject to temptation. This was necessary for the fulfilment of Their covenant purpose to make us in Their image and after Their likeness.

When Jesus was born of the virgin Mary, He was the Son of God in the flesh. **Mat 1:23**. *This was God in the flesh*, for it pleased the Father that all the fullness of Yahweh should dwell in the Son. **Col 1:19**. God came in the flesh to establish, for every person, the choice that belongs to His covenant purpose for them.

He chose to become like us, and in doing so, subjected Himself to temptation to author the pathway upon which a person could choose to become like Him. Through this offering, He would also establish, forever, a sinless environment for a new creation. This happened, first, through Christ's earthly ministry as the Son of God, and then through His offering journey by which He was glorified as our great High Priest and as the Son of Man in the image and likeness of God. Having come in the flesh, God was now able to be tempted. We note that, following His baptism in the Jordan River, Jesus was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be *tempted by the devil*. **Mat 4:1-11**.

Following three failed attempts, Satan then left Jesus, waiting for a more opportune time to tempt Him. **Luk 4:13**. This opportunity arose for Satan when the Father made Christ an offering for sin in the garden of Gethsemane and He commenced the journey through which He was made a Man in the image and likeness of God and glorified as our great High Priest.

Further Study JOHN 1

King of righteousness and King of peace

As the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, Jesus was born as a King-Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. That is, *as the Son of God in the flesh*, He was King of righteousness and King of peace. **Heb 7:1-3**. Although He was a King, His kingdom was not of this world. **Joh 18:33-37**. He had come down from above to proclaim the kingdom of heaven, and thereby reveal the Father to those who would receive Him. **Joh 8:23**.

Jesus' authority as *King of righteousness* was demonstrated as He revealed the Father through the works of obedience that He received from the Father. **Joh 5:30**. These good works included preaching the kingdom of God; the many miracles that He performed; the exercise of His authority over demonic spirits; and even His command over the natural environment. **Joh 10:32. Mat 12:28. Mar 4:39. Act 10:38**. Christ's authority as *King of peace* was expressed through the ministry of peace as He preached the gospel of the kingdom throughout the region of Judea, and ministered forgiveness to sinners. **Joh 14:27. Luk 7:50. Act 10:36-37**.

As the Son of God in the flesh, Jesus fully accomplished the works that the Father had prepared for Him to do. That is, He finished the 'kingly' work of proclaiming the kingdom of heaven and revealing the Father. Accordingly, just prior to the commencement of His offering journey, Jesus prayed to the Father, saying, 'I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do. And now, O Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was.' **Joh 17:4-5**. This marked a shift in the priority of Christ's ministry. He would now be progressively glorified as the *Son of Man* to become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. This process commenced in the garden of Gethsemane.

Further Study HEBREWS 7

The garden of Gethsemane

In the garden of Gethsemane, the offering of Yahweh was revealed in time and space. The Godhead was manifest as torn and bleeding, as each Person offered Themselves so that mankind could be made like Them and be joined to Their fellowship. The unique participation of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit in this offering revealed the faith of each Person. They each obtained faith, which works by 'offering-love', from the word of Their Covenant. **Rom 10:17. Gal 5:6.** This was the word proclaiming Their initiative to make man in Their image and according to Their likeness. **Gen 1:26.** It is important to consider the faith of each Person in the Godhead that was expressed through Their participation in the offering that accomplished Their covenant purpose.

We recall that when Jesus entered the garden, He withdrew from His disciples about a stone's throw. There, He knelt down and prayed, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done.' **Luk 22:41-42.** This statement expressed the same faith that the Son exercised, *before*, when He emptied Himself, entrusting His intrinsic sonship glory to the Father, to be begotten as the Son of God. **Php 2:5-7.** As a Son, He was offering to reveal the Father's will through obedience 'to the point of death, even the death of the cross'. **Php 2:8.** Praying, 'Not My will, but Yours, be done', Jesus entrusted Himself to the Father, believing that the Father would raise Him from the dead and glorify Him with the glory that He had *before*. **1Pe 2:23. Joh 17:5.**

The Son's respect for the Father, and His godly fear, revealed the acceptability of His offering as the Lamb of God. Referring to Christ's offering in Gethsemane, the apostle Paul noted that 'He had *offered up* prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and *was heard [accepted] because of His godly fear*'. **Heb 5:7.**

Further Study LUKE 22

The Lamb slain

Significantly, Christ's offering was *not* progressively made perfect through the things that He suffered, for He was the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world. **Rev 13:8**. That is, He was the embodiment of Yahweh's perfect offering. In this regard, the Father was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, as the Son offered Himself by the capacity of Eternal Spirit from the Holy Spirit. **2Co 5:19. Heb 9:13-14**. By faith, the Holy Spirit had also given Himself to be the life of the Father, through which Christ would be brought back from the death of sin and progressively glorified as the Son of Man. **Eph 3:16. 2Co 3:5-6**. We could say that the Holy Spirit became the Spirit of *exanastasis* and glorification. **Rom 8:11**.

The Holy Spirit strengthened the Son with Eternal Spirit to drink the cup of sin according to the will of the Father. **Luk 22:43**. By this means, Jesus Christ, who had given Himself to reveal the reconciling initiative, or will, of the Father, was made an offering for sin. **2Co 5:21. Isa 53:10**. As God in the flesh, *Jesus was now made mortal*, being fully identified with our separation from God on account of sin. Furthermore, we who were lost to God through Adam's transgression, were made members of His corporate body of sin. **Rom 6:5-6**. Explaining this point, Paul wrote that we see Jesus '*made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone*'. **Heb 2:9**. Having been fully identified with us, the Son of Man was forsaken by God the Father.

The faith of the Father was revealed when He forsook the Son who had become the body of sin. He had given His only begotten Son as an offering for sin, so that whoever believed in Him would have eternal life. **Joh 3:16**.

Further Study 1 PETER 1

Called to be our High Priest

When the Father gave the Son the cup of sin, He was *calling* the Son to *author* a pathway of salvation from the death of sin and separation from God, to eternal life and fellowship with Yahweh. To do this, Jesus Christ needed to learn obedience through the things which He suffered, as He, through Eternal Spirit, priested Himself a living sacrifice. **Heb 5:8-10**. This was a great cost to the Father. Not only had He already lost the whole of mankind through sin, but now, He had also lost His only begotten Son who was numbered with the transgressors. **Isa 53:12**. However, the Father trusted that the Son would proceed, by Eternal Spirit, to accomplish His will by becoming a Man in the image and likeness of God and a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

The rending of the Godhead was manifest, as Jesus, being in agony, prayed more earnestly. His sweat became like great clots of blood all over His body, which fell down to the ground. **Luk 22:44**. The suffering and bleeding of the Lamb of God revealed that the Godhead itself was torn and bleeding; and it remained torn and bleeding until the offering journey was completed.

Inasmuch as becoming mortal was essential to being an offering for sin, it was also necessary for Christ's glorification as a High Priest. As Paul also observed, 'Therefore, in all things He had to be *made like His brethren* [in their mortal condition], that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation [atonement to God] for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself has suffered, being tempted, He is able to aid those who are tempted.' **Heb 2:17-18**.

Further Study HEBREWS 8

Suffering and temptation

Suffering and temptation were fundamental to Christ's glorification as a High Priest, and to the offering of Yahweh through which Their covenant purpose was accomplished. **Luk 24:25-26. Heb 2:9-10.** Significantly, from Gethsemane, Satan, again, endeavoured to tempt Christ to sin. Jesus acknowledged this enterprise when the chief priests, captains of the temple and the elders, came to arrest Him. He said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs? When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness.*' **Luk 22:52-53.**

We see that the Son demonstrated His obedience as He was tempted and tried at all points as we are. Through this suffering process, He remained sinless. That is, He was acquainted with all of the alternatives to obedience, offered by Satan. Through the sufferings of death, He eternally satisfied God's judgement upon them, taking them out into the sea of God's forgetfulness. However, He also fulfilled all righteousness through His obedience to the Father; that is, He did not sin! For this reason, Paul wrote, 'For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was, in all points, tempted as we are, yet without sin.' **Heb 4:15.**

Through obedience, Jesus Christ was made perfect as a Man and was trained to become our great High Priest. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'Though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek"' **Heb 5:8-10.** As He learnt the obedience of a Priest, by the things which He suffered, He was also being made a Man in the image and likeness of God.

Further Study ISAIAH 53

The Pioneer of our salvation

As Jesus learnt obedience through the things that He suffered, by the capacity of Eternal Spirit, He authored the pathway of salvation for each one of us. **Heb 5:8-10**. This was the only way that a pathway into the holiest of holies could be authored for us. **Heb 10:19-22**. Significantly, prior to His offering pilgrimage, there was no priesthood in Yahweh, for it was not needed within Their fellowship, *before*.

Even though the focus of Christ's offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary was on His glorification as High Priest, Jesus was still the King. He made this confession before Pilate, saying, '*You say rightly that I am a king*. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.' **Joh 18:37**. He was further manifest as the King of kings when He was invested with a crown of thorns in the Praetorium, and when the title, identifying Him as 'Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews', was fastened to His cross. **Joh 19:2-3,19**.

Christ's offering and suffering journey as the Son of Man, and as our High Priest, culminated in the breaking of His heart, as He cried out, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' **Mat 27:46**. With this cry, Jesus declared that there was no longer any need for Him to remain forsaken by the Father. He had atoned for us as God the Son in the flesh, and had offered Himself without spot to God as His Lamb. Through this process, He had been crowned with glory and honour as High Priest. He had pioneered a pathway of salvation by which we could be glorified as sons of men in the image and likeness of God.

Further Study HEBREWS 12

The breach opened the way!

When the Son cried out, 'Why have you forsaken Me?'; He was stating that there was no longer any need for Him to remain forsaken. The Son was saying to the Father, 'Here am I and the children whom the Lord has given Me! We are for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion.' **Isa 8:18**. This declaration revealed the glorification of the Son, as well as the glorification of the Father.

Moreover, through this confession, the Father's confidence in the Son was vindicated. This confidence, revealing the faith of the Father, was expressed when the Father made the Son to be an offering for sin, effecting a breach in the Godhead. **Isa 53:10**. The Father did this in hope, that as the Son priested Himself as an offering, by Eternal Spirit, He would return to the Father proclaiming the obedience and salvation of a great multitude of sons.

Significantly, the breach in the Godhead was now a way that had been opened for us through Christ's flesh, into the life and fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim*. This is now the pathway for us into the holiest of all! This was indicated by the rending of the veil in the temple, as Jesus declared His offering finished, and then committed His Spirit into the hands of the Father. **Joh 19:30**. **Mat 27:50-51**. The Father lifted Christ, and all of those who received Him, to His bosom. We, with Christ, through His priesthood and offering, were now eternally reconciled to God! **Rom 5:10-11**.

Summarising this outcome of Christ's offering journey, Paul wrote, 'Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, *through the veil, that is, His flesh*, and *having a High Priest over the house of God*, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water'. **Heb 10:19-22**.

Further Study HEBREWS 10

For My name's sake

The offering of Christ, which He completed alone, was, firstly, for the sake of Yahweh *Elohim's* name. That is, God had chosen to come in the flesh and to suffer temptation in the flesh, in order to pioneer a pathway of salvation upon which men could be made in Their image and likeness. This was the means by which Their covenant purpose would come to pass. The Lord God made this clear, declaring, 'I do not do this for your sake, O house of Israel, but for My holy name's sake, which you have profaned among the nations wherever you went.' **Eze 36:22.**

The outcome of this journey was the establishment of a pathway upon which a believer, who obeys the word of Christ, can be cleansed, regenerated and perfected in love. Ezekiel further prophesied, saying, 'For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land. Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgements and do them.' **Eze 36:24-27.**

Our salvation, as Christ priests to us a daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, *is still for His name's sake.* **1Jn 2:12. Psa 106:7-8.** This is because our salvation is the fruit of Their offering and suffering. The Father, Son and Holy Spirit are revealed as Their covenant initiative is fulfilled by this fruit. Significantly, the quality of Christ's offering revealed the integrity of His obedience as a High Priest. *His obedience was essential to His ministry as a reconciler.*

Further Study EZEKIEL 36

Christ's ministry as a reconciler

Having been called by God to be our great High Priest, Jesus Christ was made like us in the garden of Gethsemane, and we were joined to Him as part of the corporate body of sin. He then offered Himself by Eternal Spirit, to learn and fulfil our obedience. **Heb 5:8**. Furthermore, He brought to nothing all of the alternatives to God's predestination for each person. Through this obedience, *God was atoning to God for us*. What do we mean by this?

By definition, a priest is a mediator between two parties. **1Ti 2:5-6**. To fulfil this role, the priest must be fully acquainted with the position of both parties to whom he is ministering reconciliation. **Heb 5:2-3**. With this understanding in mind, we recognise that Jesus is much more than a human conciliator, like the Levitical priests who were appointed under the Old Covenant. They had to offer sacrifices on their own behalf and then on behalf of the people. Theirs was a ministry which was unable to effect change.

In contrast, as our great High Priest, Jesus Christ provided atonement by *offering Himself*. Highlighting this distinction, Paul wrote, 'For such a High Priest was fitting for us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and has become higher than the heavens; who does not need daily, as those high priests [under the Old Covenant], to offer up sacrifices, first for His own sins and then for the people's, for this He did once for all when He offered up Himself'. **Heb 7:26-27**.

Jesus Christ offered Himself as God to Yahweh *Elohim* on our behalf. Equally, He made this offering *as a Man*, in the flesh. Through this offering process, He was pioneering the pathway by which man could be made in the image and likeness of God. As both God and Man, He was the *substance* of the atonement and the reconciliation between the Creator and the creature. Paul was highlighting this magnificent point when he declared that God was in the Man, Christ, reconciling the world to Himself. **2Co 5:18-19**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 5

Established in fellowship

Without a proper understanding of reconciliation and atonement, the gap between the Creator and the creature *remains infinite*. This gap is eternal death, for it is an existence outside of God's purpose and plan for mankind. However, because we have such a great High Priest, the hope of eternal life is steadfast and sure. Through Christ's eternal priesthood, we are established in relationship with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit because we are established, through the obedience that He learnt, in the process by which we are being made in the image and likeness of God – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the eternal life that belongs to those who choose what God has chosen for them! **Heb 9:15. 1Jn 5:20.**

Paul explained that the glorification of the Son of Man as our great High Priest, who now ministers to us a fellowship in His offering, was *the main point* of his letter to the Hebrews. He wrote, '*Now this is the main point* of the things we are saying: We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, *a Minister of the sanctuary* [referring to the context of fellowship with Yahweh] and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected, and not man'. **Heb 8:1-2.**

The implication of Christ's priesthood toward us is initiated by the ministry of Elijah. This is the word that prepares the way before Christ, our great High Priest, who is the Messenger of the Covenant. It proclaims the message, 'All flesh is as grass ... but the word of our God stands forever'. **Isa 40:6-8.** Inherent in this message is the choice to continue to walk according to the flesh, or to turn in repentance and live by faith in obedience to the command of God, proclaimed by Christ.

Further Study 1 JOHN 1

Obedience to Christ

The prophet Malachi declared, 'The Lord, whom you seek [referring to Christ], will suddenly come to His temple, even the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight. Behold, He is coming, says the Lord of hosts.' **Mal 3:1**.

Christ, our great High Priest, is the Messenger of the Covenant. His word, as King-Priest after the order of Melchizedek, is a *command* from the Father. This command is the word of our name. Anything less than this high calling is a denigration of, or insult to, God's love. This is sin. It is to fall short of the glory of God. **Rom 3:21-23**. For this reason, inherent in the word of Christ, is the command to repent of the projections that are alternatives to what God has chosen for us, and to be cleansed of our rebellious, self-righteous iniquity that causes us to depart from the pathway that leads to life.

A person who is obedient to the command of Christ, proclaimed by His messengers, is established in the fellowship of His offering. As they are obedient to this word, He priests to them a participation in the pathway of salvation that He pioneered through His offering journey. As they journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, they are delivered from the propensity to sin, and the love of God is perfected in them.

The apostle John proclaimed this message, saying, 'But whoever keeps His word [the command of the High Priest], truly *the love of God is perfected in him* [he is being made into the image and likeness of God]. By this we know that we are in Him. He who says he abides in Him ought himself also to walk just as He walked.' **1Jn 2:5-6. Eph 5:1-2**. When the love of God has been fully perfected in a believer, the expression of their choice in the fellowship of offering, is the same as that of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, forever.

Further Study 1 JOHN 2

An admonition

Speaking about the beginning of birth pains, and then the time of the end, Jesus said, 'Then many false prophets will rise up and deceive many. And because *lawlessness* [or iniquity] will abound, *the love of many will grow cold*.' **Mat 24:11-12**. This great falling away is just before us. We are witnessing the beginnings of this decline, as false doctrines, promoting the acceptability of the flesh, proliferate in the broader church community, and the congregations of traditional denominations are diminishing. There are reports of many church leaders succumbing to corruption, battling addictions and depression, or departing the ministry altogether.

In short, within churches across the world, many are choosing sin and iniquity over and against the eternal priesthood of Christ, who has established the pathway of their salvation. Because they are choosing their own projections and expression, they have no access to the offering of Christ. He does not know them. As Jesus Himself said, 'Many will say to Me in that day, "Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?" And then I will declare to them, "I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise *lawlessness*!"' **Mat 7:22-23**. Even now, they are coming to His mercy seat in presumption, failing to recognise that this throne of grace is also His judgement seat, for He is Melchizedek, the King-Priest upon His throne.

We must all heed the admonition of the Spirit in this season. He is beseeching us, saying, 'Do not choose sin and iniquity'. **Job 36:21**. If we continue, in rebellion, to choose our own way, we will go into blackness forever, being deceived, thinking that our darkness is light. Jesus said that this was great darkness indeed! **Mat 6:23**. We must receive and walk in the light of the word as it is ministered to us by Christ's messengers. **1Jn 1:7**. Likewise, those who are called to be messengers of Christ, must proclaim the word by the Spirit.

Further Study MATTHEW 24

The ministry of the word

The word of Christ, proclaimed by His messengers, is described as a sharp two-edged sword. We note, in this regard, Paul's description of the word, when he wrote, 'Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.' **Heb 4:11-13**.

The key implication of this description of the word is that it has a polarising effect upon those who hear it. **Act 3:22-23**. The ministry of the word is accompanied by prevenient grace. It makes a breach upon the heart of a hearer, exposing the thoughts and intents of their heart. At this point, they are granted the opportunity to choose the way that leads to life; that is, it calls them to obey the great High Priest and be delivered to the way of blamelessness and sanctification that leads to eternal life. This place of rest is the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, for which we are made adequate as Christ priests to us a participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. **2Co 3:5-6**.

For many years now, we have been preaching the word for *illumination*. This ministry is only by the Spirit. It requires an accountable and deliberate departure from former, fleshly modes of communication, which include theological exposition, sensual appeal, and the promotion of righteousness through compliance. Marking the distinction between this ministry of condemnation, and a ministry that illuminates by the Spirit, the apostle Paul testified, 'For we are not, as so many, *peddling the word of God*; but as *of sincerity*, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God *in Christ*.' **2Co 2:17**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 4

Receiving and proclaiming the gospel

It is important for a messenger to receive and proclaim *the gospel of peace*. The gospel of peace is only known by those who have received, and responded with faith to, this message themselves. Paul was clear that the gospel of peace, which is also the gospel of God, is the only message that brings salvation.

Rom 1:16. A messenger must have their feet shod with the preparation of this gospel. **Eph 6:14-15. Rom 10:14-15.**

The apostle Paul described his ministry by saying, 'For we are not, as so many, *peddling the word of God*; but as *of sincerity*, but as from God, we speak in the sight of God in Christ.' **2Co 2:17.** We note from Paul's statement that the exercise of one's ministry gift must not be independent of their personal sanctification (of sincerity), and their relational submission within the fellowship of the presbytery (in Christ). Many gifted preachers have suffered personal shipwreck on account of their confusion and presumption on this point.

When we receive the word, we need to be illuminated by the Spirit, but this is not, in and of itself, sufficient for salvation. Illumination should lead us to respond to the word in repentance and faith obedience. **Act 20:18-21.** The confession of Job exemplified this response, saying, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You [I have received illumination]. *Therefore I abhor myself [my flesh], and repent in dust and ashes.*' **Job 42:5-6.**

The word itself polarises a person who fails to respond with repentance and faith to the illumination that they have received. Their self-determined interpretations and implications of the word have a deluding effect upon them. Although they may have received illumination, they choose to walk in the darkness of their own understanding of its implications for their life, believing that their response is an expression of the light that they have received. Jesus described this as a great darkness. **Mat 6:23.**

Further Study ACTS 20

Ministering as the bread

In this present season, the Spirit has been urging us to move beyond the ministry of the word for illumination, *to be the bread to one another*. This is fundamental to our participation in the agape meal as part of the body of Christ. **1Co 10:14-17**. We minister the word, as the bread to our hearers, *through testimony*. In doing so, we are not presuming to be the exemplars of the word that we preach. Rather, we are sharing our repentance and faith in response to what the Spirit is saying to the church.

That is, we are bearing witness to the word as it processes us individually, in our marriages, and in our families. Paul often shared in this way. Instead of speaking as one who was successful, he described himself as the chief of sinners, as a man of weak speech, and as a wretched man who was finding deliverance and life through fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. **1Ti 1:15. 1Co 2:3. 2Co 11:6. Rom 7:24-25. Php 3:7-11.**

Testifying in this manner is foundational to the ministry of Elijah in the presbytery and in the church. Furthermore, it is a defining expression of eldership. **Jas 5:13-18**. As James, the brother of Jesus, instructed, 'Is anyone among you sick? *Let him call for the elders of the church*, and let them pray over him anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord ... the effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. *Elijah was a man with a nature like ours.*' **Jas 5:14-17.**

Rather than presuming to speak from expertise or accomplishments, true elders acknowledge that they are men of 'like passions' with their hearers. They are, themselves, joined to a process through which they are being enabled to walk blamelessly by the Spirit. Through their ministry, they extend this fellowship to their hearers. **1Jn 1:1-3.**

Further Study JAMES 5

From testimony to foot washing

It is important to recognise that the word, ministered as bread to a hearer, also has a polarising effect upon them. They are either joined to the fellowship from which the messenger is proclaiming their testimony, or they are appointed to another table. This is a table of demons. This was exemplified by the interaction between Jesus and Judas at the last Passover. Jesus identified His betrayer as the one who received the bread that He dipped in the gravy of the meal. Judas, maintaining his self-righteousness, received the bread from Jesus and immediately Satan entered him. **Joh 13:26-27. 1Co 10:21.** He was no longer part of the fellowship established by the word of Christ; he was of another spirit, and his self-defined good works were to his destruction.

Foot washing is a further ministry application of the word, to which the Spirit is presently calling us. Having shared their testimony, as those of like passions with their hearers, messengers wash the feet of their hearers through the specific application of the word to their lives, marriages and families. This application is necessary because Jesus clearly stated that, although a believer is made clean by the word that is preached, they are only made *completely* clean as they participate in washing another's feet. **Joh 13:10.** This happens with the messenger, and with one another, through open-faced fellowship in the word that was preached.

A messenger can only wash the feet of their hearers if they are receiving this washing themselves. Presuming to wash the feet of another, without this application in their own life, is a great error. The feet of messengers are washed as they allow the word to be applied to their life through open-faced communication with their brethren in the presbytery. This cleansing work is apparent in their lives, marriages and families, and in relation to the work to which they have been called by God.

Further Study JOHN 13

The word as a rod

The apostle Paul noted that the word can also be applied as 'a rod'. He wrote to the Corinthians, '*Shall I come to you with a rod, or in love and a spirit of gentleness?*' **1Co 4:18-21**. The word is administered as 'a rod' when messengers address persistent carnality in the church. A clear distinction is made between what is culturally aberrant, and what is of the Spirit. The purpose of this ministry is to join every hearer to the fellowship of Christ's chastening, through which they can be delivered from their carnality and rebellion and grow to maturity as sons of God, and as members of the body of Christ.

The word, as a rod, must not be exercised through frustration or in reaction to the carnal and rebellious responses of those who hear the word. When the word is 'weaponised' in this manner, the messenger, himself, is brought under judgement. In this regard, we note that Moses failed to enter the promised land because he struck the rock twice, with his rod, in frustration at the recalcitrance of the children of Israel. **Num 20:10-12**.

Reiterating this point, the apostle Paul declared that, 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal [meaning, not exercised through emotive reaction] but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds, casting down arguments and every high thing that exalts itself against the knowledge of God, bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.' **2Co 10:4-6**.

When the rod is received by a hearer, it becomes to them a shepherding instrument, leading them on the pathway of salvation that belongs to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Testifying of this implication of the rod, King David wrote, 'Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.' **Psa 23:4**. However, those who continue in their rebellion after the word addresses them, are dashed to pieces, with the nations, by the rod of iron. **Rev 2:26-27**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 10

The word comes for judgement

In the course of His ministry, Jesus healed a man who was born blind. He did this by spitting on the ground, making clay with the saliva, and then crafting two physical eyes from the clay. He then directed the man to wash in the pool of Siloam, which means 'sent'. These were the waters of faith obedience. **Joh 9:6-7.** The man was put out of the synagogue, by the Pharisees, for simply testifying of the sight that he had received from Christ as he had obeyed His word. **Joh 9:33-34.**

Upon hearing of his expulsion, Jesus found that man, asking him, 'Do you believe in the Son of God?' **Joh 9:35.** The man was illuminated to see that Christ was the Son of God, confessing, 'Lord I believe!' And he worshipped Him. **Joh 9:38.** Jesus then said to the man, 'For judgement I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind.' **Joh 9:39.** By this, Jesus highlighted that, through the ministry of His word, a hearer was compelled to make a judgement. They would either respond with illumination, leading to obedience, or would choose the darkness of their own understanding, and be unworthy of the gospel.

As the Lord is ministering His word to us in this season, we must take heed to how we are hearing and responding to the word. **Luk 8:18.** This requires us to recognise how the word is being ministered, and to respond accordingly. The fruit of hearing in this way is that we are joined to the same expression of the word. That is, we are able to be the bread to others through testimony, and we are able to wash one another's feet. We are overcomers who keep Christ's works to the end, receiving power over the nations as He rules them with a rod of iron. **Rev 2:26-27.**

Further Study JOHN 9



Restoring
my Soul