



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

AUGUST 2024

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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The gospel of peace

In this season, the Lord is coming to enquire who is worthy, according to their response to the gospel of peace. **Mat 10:11**. The gospel of peace is proclaimed by Christ's disciple-messengers who are sent to establish 'sons of peace'. **Luk 10:6**. As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who *preach the gospel of peace!*' **Rom 10:15**. The call to become a son of peace comes to every *individual*, without their being dependent on the response of others within their household.

The gospel of peace declares the end of all flesh and delivers a person to the enduring word of God by which they are born again to become a new creation. **1Pe 1:23-25**. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'All flesh is grass ... but the word of our God stands forever.' **Isa 40:6-8**. The end of all flesh was fully accomplished in the offering of Christ. **Gen 6:13**. Only those who are established as part of the new creation in Christ will inherit eternal life in fellowship with Yahweh. **2Co 5:17**. The implications of this message are vast. However, the critical issue which we need to negotiate is our *presumption* that the activities that we initiate from our flesh are 'of the Spirit'. **Psa 19:13**.

The messenger extends the gospel of peace to us by testifying that the process of the word is active within their own life. As they minister the word through *testimony*, they are sharing the one bread of which we *all* partake. **1Co 10:16-17**. They are 'of like passions' with the ones with whom they are sharing. **Jas 5:17**. Peace is not some inherent quality within the messenger but, rather, is obtained only through submission to the lordship of Christ. As Peter declared, 'The word which God sent to the children of Israel, *preaching peace through Jesus Christ – He is Lord of all!*' **Act 10:36**.

Further Study ISAIAH 40

Receiving the gospel of peace

The gospel of peace that is ministered in the spirit and power of Elijah proclaims the command of Christ, our great High Priest. **Luk 1:17**. The command of the priesthood of Christ is *the word of our name* to which we are appointed, or predestined. **1Pe 2:8**.

This is the enduring word of God. This command delivers a choice to each of us. We choose to remain in the darkness of our own understanding, or we choose to respond with illumination, leading to obedience. **1Pe 2:6-8**.

In order to become a 'worthy' Christian, we need to receive the gospel of peace with humility. **Jas 1:21**. A person who is becoming worthy confesses, '*I am not worthy of the gospel and of all the Lord's mercies.*' **Gen 32:10**. However, this is not our default response. By default, we *presume* that we are worthy of the gospel because of our upbringing and proximity to the messenger. However, when we are enabled by the anointing of grace ministered in the word, we can repent and turn from this presumed 'right' that we are an heir of the gospel. **Luk 15:18-19**. Instead of *presuming* to be equal to the word and to the messenger, we are enabled to worship God, *being joined to the same fellowship*. **Rev 19:10**.

Importantly, there are certain modes of relating that do not belong on the ground of fellowship that is being extended to us by disciple-messengers. These modes include: seeking empowerment from, or collegiality with, the messenger; being unwilling to let go of control over the agenda of the engagement; seeking to connect with the messenger on a 'mateship' basis; choosing to remain in the flesh and being unwilling to address matters of sanctification; and conducting a conversation of assessment, opinion and complaint. While these attitudes or propensities *are* within us all, we remain unworthy of the gospel *if we are unwilling* to turn from these modes of engagement when the messenger entreats us to fellowship.

Further Study ACTS 10

The fruit of peace

The *first* lesson that we need to learn is to share in open-hearted fellowship with the messengers, who have likewise opened their hearts to us! **2Co 6:11**. **2Co 7:2**. Corporately, we recognise that abiding in open-hearted fellowship has not been our culture. **Luk 10:7**. Rather, we have protected ourselves from the input of others by remaining closed about our struggles. The presentation of a good image that is motivated by the flesh is of no substance and, like chaff, is passing away. However, the very testimony of the messenger as they proclaim the gospel of Christ, of which they are not ashamed, enables us to speak openly about the fleshly dynamics within our lives, marriages and families. **Rom 1:16**. Furthermore, as recipients of the gospel, we extend our hands in hospitality toward the messengers and our brethren as an expression of unfeigned *agape*. **Luk 10:7**. **1Pe 1:22**.

We continue to receive the ministry of peace as we accept *the process* which the word precipitates. **Mat 13:22**. The word comes to bring cultural reformation in our individual lives, in our marriages, in our families and in our relationships from house to house. We become a *son of peace* as we 'sell' all of the earthly treasures that we have accumulated according to the flesh and, instead, walk *as a disciple of Christ*. **Luk 10:6**. Jesus explained that 'selling all' (choosing Him as Lord over every other priority) and becoming His disciple is 'the condition of peace' that He requires from us! **Luk 14:31-33**. The peace which we obtain is a capacity for relationship with God the Father and with one another in the fellowship of the body of Christ. **Eph 2:14-16**. Also, we have peace as we walk in obedience to the Holy Spirit. **Rom 8:6**. The fruit of receiving the gospel of peace is seen in a change of conversation, which is now based at the tree of life, enabling the recovery of fellowship within our houses.

Further Study EPHESIANS 2

Living in the body of Christ

Those who are 'born to see' by the enduring word of God will come to Christ to be built upon Him. **Joh 3:3. 1Pe 2:4-5.** The Holy Spirit, whom we have received as an anointing from Christ, teaches us to 'hide ourselves', through offering, in the body of Christ. **1Jn 2:20,27. Col 3:3.** This contrasts with our desire to 'find ourselves' through self-verifying activities, including the 'good' of our religious endeavours.

The focus of the body of Christ is our *individual sonship*. **Rom 12:4-5.** Jesus likened an individual's participation within the body of Christ to a branch of a vine. He said, 'I am the Vine, you are the branches.' **Joh 15:5.** As the Vinedresser, the Father prunes each 'branch' to the reality of their name and works. **Joh 15:2.** The lesson for us, as branches, is to *abide in the Vine*, so that we bring forth fruit to the glory of the Father. **Joh 15:8.** As we abide in Christ, we bring forth the fruit that He has already accomplished for us in His offering. However, those branches who *cease to bear such fruit* in the fellowship of Christ's offering will eventually be cast out and burned in the fire. **Joh 15:6.**

The Holy Spirit enables our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings. The process of Christ's seven woundings is operative only as we continue to abide *in the fellowship of the corporate body of Christ*. It is through our participation in Christ's seven wounds that we can lay aside all carnality and can be built upon Christ. **1Pe 2:1-3.** Notably, as members of His one body, we are being processed both individually and corporately.

The body of Christ, as the context of our process, is described as 'a threshing floor'. **Mat 3:11-12.** If we do not accept this reality, we may become engaged in many activities that have a *religious* appearance, yet do not result in life.

Further Study JOHN 15

The polarisation of the word

As individuals who are choosing to abide in the fellowship of the body of Christ, *we will continue to experience His processive work* in us each day. Christ uses the word of God as a processive agent to polarise every person either in or out of the kingdom. **Heb 10:32**. It is for this reason that we are to continually take heed to what the Spirit is saying to the churches in every season. **Heb 2:1**.

It is helpful to realise that illumination according to the word of present truth is essential. However, in and of itself, it is not sufficient for salvation. *Illumination should lead us to a response of repentance and faith*, by which we are joined to our personal participation in the body of Christ where the will of God is being fulfilled. Our *engagement in the process* of sanctification is evidence that we are receiving the grace of God. **1Pe 2:1-3**.

The Spirit is our Helper as we choose, by His enabling, His lordship in our life. **2Co 3:17**. As we turn to His lordship, the veil of our self-righteousness is being removed, and we are enabled to meet Christ face to face as He speaks to us through the word of the presbytery, within the context of the body of Christ. **2Co 3:16**.

As we meet Christ, the true condition of our heart and the severity of our disobedience are unmasked. Furthermore, we meet our name and expression as a son of God by looking into Christ's face. It is here that our identity is truly verified and healed.

We do not obtain the definition of our sonship from our parents, leaders, friends or spouse. Rather, each individual learns who they are from the face of Christ, which is 'the corporate mirror' of the presbytery. **2Co 3:18**. Progressively, we obtain the glory of our sonship through obedience to the word that proceeds from the face of Christ. **Php 3:16**.

Further Study 1 PETER 2

Coming forth as the bride of Christ

It is important to understand that the body of Christ is the context in which the *bride of Christ is being formed*. The blood, water and Spirit, which are operative within the fellowship of the body of Christ, are the elements through which we are processed, washed and established as an overcoming, firstfruits people. These elements are processing us, individually and corporately, within the context of the body of Christ. We are *first* made members of His corporate *body*, and are *subsequently* established as part of the corporate *bride* of Christ. **Eph 5:30-32**. From the body of Christ, His bride is coming forth as a helper who is comparable to Him.

We need to be built together as 'living stones' within the corporate *temple of His body* so that we may obtain our entry, 'through the gates', *into the bride city*. **Rev 22:14**. The bride of Christ is seen as being a multitude of overcoming families and households. Simply being born again and joined to the body of Christ does not automatically grant us entry to, and citizenship in, the bride city. We need to *obtain* this right through a culture of *blamelessness*.

We are a blameless and overcoming people as we walk in the light of the word, where the blood of Christ purifies our souls from sin. **1Pe 1:22**. We are progressively delivered from our former, fallen ways of living as they are purged from our lives. We are then blameless in the sight of God because we are living sanctified lives.

The apostle Peter connected the activity of living stones being built into the temple to spiritual households who are being *restored to the headship of Christ*. **1Pe 3:1,7**. What each person learns from the headship of Christ in the body is then expressed by offering within the context of a household. The fellowship of first love within a family and household is an expression of the bride of Christ on Earth.

Further Study EPHESIANS 5

The river of life

The Holy Spirit enables each person to submit within the order of headship in their household. The order of headship is *a flow of life* as each person learns to make offering according to their sanctification. This flow of life within a house is part of 'the river of life' that flows from the throne in the midst of the New Jerusalem. **Rev 22:1.**

The Holy Spirit is the Helper of the *bride* of Christ, enabling her to be a helper comparable to her Husband, Christ. By the Spirit, the bride has the capacity to nurture the divine nature within children who have been born in covenant homes. It also includes the capacity to compel others to be reconciled to God and to become established as part of the new creation. Within a household, the help of the Holy Spirit is visible as He enables a husband to stand in submission to Christ as His Head; and as He enables a wife to stand in submission to her husband, as unto Christ.

Through obedience to the word of our name, each person receives capacity to lay down their life to reveal another within the fellowship and order of headship. The fellowship and order of headship proceeds from the Father, to Christ, to a husband, and then to a wife. **1Co 11:3.** Relational enmity, or disharmony, is an indication that a couple are stumbling at the 'stumbling stone' through disobedience. **1Pe 2:7-8.** They are disobedient to the word that is establishing them in the order and fellowship of headship.

The formation of a bride as a helper who is comparable to Christ is necessary for the work of bringing to birth, and nurturing, a multitude of sons of God. The bride is the vessel of multiplication. Amazingly, the Lord has chosen *us* to be part of the last generation and, as part of the bride of Christ, we are to bring into the kingdom of God, from every nation, tribe, people and tongue, a multitude which no-one can number. **Rev 7:9-10.**

Further Study JOHN 14

A network of worthy homes

The bride city is a multitude of households who are *knit together* in the fellowship of first love. **Psa 122:3. Luk 10:2.** They form a network, figuratively described as ‘a dragnet’, that can catch a multitude of fish, being representative of people, from the great ‘sea’ of humanity. **Eze 47:10.** Those who are born as sons of God and are delivered from their carnality are gathered into the kingdom of God. On the other hand, those who remain carnal, even though they were born again, are cast into the furnace of fire. **Mat 13:47-50.**

Jesus is making *us* ‘fishers of men’. **Mar 1:17.** After Christ’s resurrection, and the disciples were born from above by receiving the Holy Spirit, Christ met them at the Sea of Tiberias. **Joh 21:1.** He directed them to let down their nets for a catch. Even though they had caught nothing all night, they were obedient to Christ’s command and caught a great multitude of fish without their nets breaking. **Joh 21:11.** This great multitude of fish was a type of the great harvest that would come into the kingdom on the Day of Pentecost and then later during the time of the end. **Isa 66:7-8.**

Even though, figuratively, we have been ‘fishing’ throughout the midnight hour of the church age, through various evangelistic initiatives, we acknowledge that we have indeed ‘caught’ *very few*. Evidently, many of our initiatives were misdirected, because we had not been adequately illuminated to the role of *the bride of Christ* in the birthing and nurturing of sons of God.

Even though we have caught very little to date, now, in obedience to Christ’s command to us, we are able to believe for the ‘catch’ which He will bring forth in this current season, and also in the days just ahead of us in the time of the end. As we are being established as a network of houses who belong to the bride city, we are receiving *grace to compel others*. **Luk 14:23.** This is ‘the gospel of peace’ being shared as a testimony in our mouths.

Further Study LUKE 10

The revelation of His glory

The wondrous outcome of the ministry of the gospel of peace to all people is that 'the glory of the Lord shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together'. **Isa 40:5**. The glory of the Lord, and His purpose to make man in His image and likeness, is fully revealed in Jesus Christ, the glorified and risen Son of Man. **Joh 13:31-32**. However, even more wonderful, and equally humbling, is the fact that God chose that His glory would be revealed and manifest through us! As we respond to the gospel of peace in a worthy manner, we participate in revealing the glory of the Lord because we are becoming the person whom He chose us to be within the fellowship of His kingdom. **Joh 17:10. 1Pe 4:11. 2Th 1:9-12**.

Isaiah referred to the issues which impede our entry into the kingdom of God, as 'valleys and mountains'. **Isa 40:4**. 'Every valley shall be exalted' means that our identity flaws and frailties that prevent us from meeting and relating to others are being healed. 'Every mountain and hill brought low' speaks of the removal of our projections, selfish ambitions and self-expression that war against our name as a son of God. The outcome is that a person has the opportunity to walk on 'level ground', providing them with an abundant entry into the kingdom of God. **2Pe 1:10-11**.

As those who are born of God, it is the love of God being poured into our heart that compels us to walk forward on this pathway of salvation. **2Co 5:14**. Our motivation is not to 'find ourselves'. Rather, the purpose of the gospel is that we would know God and glorify Him. **Joh 17:3. 1Co 6:20**. Having received the love of God, our testimony is that we no longer live for ourselves, but for Christ. **2Co 5:14-15**. We know Him more and more each day through a personal relationship with Him, and we glorify God through our obedient participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Joh 15:8**.

Further Study 2 THESSALONIANS 1

Knowing Him

The apostle Paul testified that his desire to know God is what motivated him to walk on the pathway of salvation. Even though his identity was being recovered, and his projections were being dealt with through his fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, that was not the reason why he took the journey. He actually *counted as rubbish* all of his self-focused desire to become a 'better version' of himself or a more successful Christian, for the sake of gaining Christ. **Php 3:8-11**.

Knowing God and glorifying Him by being the person whom He chose us to be highlights the importance of understanding the nature of the identity and name that God gives to us. A person receives their eternal *identity* from their human parents through the natural process of procreation. The Scriptures refer to the identity of a person as 'the spirit of man', which is formed by the Lord. **Zec 12:1. 1Co 2:11**. However, it is only when a person is born again of the divine nature that they receive their *name as a son of God*.

The gospel of peace proclaims the word of God that stands forever. **Isa 40:6-8**. This is the word of our name as a son of God, which was foreknown, discussed and chosen in the fellowship of Yahweh, *before*. **Psa 33:11. Rom 8:29**. Being born again through this living and enduring word of God enables us to 'stand' in the full measure of who God named us to be, and to participate in the fellowship of Yahweh *Elohim* forever. **1Pe 1:22-25**.

When we are born again, we are illuminated to see the kingdom of God and our place within it. **Joh 3:3**. Jesus highlighted the reality that new birth is the beginning of a life-long journey of salvation by which a person *enters* the kingdom of God. **Joh 3:5**. The Lord's initiative to level all of the valleys and mountains that we are faced with on this journey means that we can make it all the way to the inheritance that He has predestined for us.

Further Study 1 JOHN 2

Valleys and mountains

The 'valleys' in our life refer to the identity flaws and frailties that we have on account of sin, the influence of familiar spirits, and historical hurts. These result in particular expressions of carnality, such as anxiety or depression, laziness, compulsive behaviours or anger. Even though we have been connected to our *name* as a son of God, our capacity to express our identity according to the truth of that name as we meet and relate to others, depends on the ongoing work of regeneration that deals with the condition of our identity. **Tit 3:4-5.** Every person requires this healing of their *identity*.

The 'mountains' refer to our projections and their associated 'wealth' that have been accrued through trading within the economy of Babylon. A projection is the image that we define for ourselves. It is how we desire to be seen by others; but it is a lie and of no substance, because the image is sourced from within us. In contrast, the word of our name, which proceeds to us from God, is the truth and substance of who we are called to be. **2Ti 1:8-9.**

To trade with our projection means that we 'sell' this image to others to gain the 'profit' of feeling valued or of maintaining a desirable reputation. Obviously, this may be the desire to appear successful, intelligent or wise. **Eze 28:5.** Equally, however, a person may choose to appear naive or even unintelligent, in order to avoid taking accountability for their life. They trade on the fact that others will excuse their immature thoughts and behaviours, assuming, 'That is just what they are like'. **Pro 1:22.**

Being a 'good' Christian is often the image that we project. When Jesus addressed the rich young ruler, the man went away sorrowful because he was unwilling to sell all of the riches that he had gained by trading with his 'good' religious projection. Jesus noted with His disciples that 'it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God'. **Mar 10:25.**

Further Study ISAIAH 42

The highway of holiness

We rejoice in the provision of the gospel of peace to deal with our valleys and mountains, because *every* person is born disadvantaged, to some degree or another. Paul explained that, on account of sin, death has spread to all men. **Rom 5:12.** 'Death' is not limited to the expiration of a person's biological life. It also includes *the issues of mortality* - physical weaknesses, sicknesses, diseases, genetic disorders, emotional imbalances, and so on. Furthermore, it includes physical, psychological, and emotional sickness, and the dystrophy of identity due to *oppression by familiar and unclean spirits*. These issues affect the condition of our identity.

Importantly, the effect of the gospel of peace to 'level the road' for every person means that no-one has an excuse to continue in their sin. **Joh 15:22.** No-one is a victim of the damaging effect of sin upon their heart, whether it is because of the sin of others, such as their own family, or on account of their own sin. Regardless of how 'deep' the damage to a person's identity runs or how 'high' they aim in order to make a name for themselves, the grace of God coming with His word enables every person to believe to come forth as new creation as they walk forward in Christ. **2Co 5:17.**

The prophet Isaiah referred to the journey of salvation as a road, or a highway, called 'the Highway of Holiness'. **Isa 35:8.** 'Holiness' can equally mean 'sanctification', which is God's will for us. **1Th 4:3.** We are sanctified when we are being the person whom God named us to be and are doing the works that He prepared for us from *before*. We are set free from our bondage to sin when we are born of God and can, therefore, choose to obey the word of God by the enabling of the Spirit. Through obedience, we obtain our sanctification. In other words, those who obey God grow up to be the person whom the Father, Son and Holy Spirit discussed and chose them to be.

Further Study ISAIAH 35

Walking in obedience

The focus of our Christian life is not on 'fixing ourselves up'. Rather, our focus is to keep *walking with Christ in obedience to His word*. Christ pioneered the highway of holiness through the seven wounding events of His offering and suffering journey. Through fellowship in Christ's journey, we are overcoming our 'valleys' and 'mountains' each day, which allows us to continue to grow to the full measure of our sanctification. **Isa 49:11**. The outcome is that we will inherit eternal life. **Rom 6:22**.

The Lord is not asking that we define our own identity flaws and frailties. In fact, most of the time, we are not even aware of the exact nature of the issues within our heart that the Lord is healing. **Pro 21:2**. What we do know is that God is speaking a word to us that grants us *illumination*. **Joh 16:3**. The light of His word illuminates us so that we see the next step that He is directing us to take as He leads us to maturity. We can relax about our perceived 'progress', because entering the kingdom of God is a journey which involves the whole of our life.

Interestingly, our 'mountains' are often our fleshly endeavours to compensate for our 'valleys'. Consider a person who has low self-esteem. This fracture in their identity is a 'valley'. Their compensatory 'mountain' may be their insistence on always dominating conversation with others in order to *appear* strong and confident. This eccentric behaviour impedes their capacity to relate freely with others.

This highlights an important point. It is the Lord who ministers healing to our identity. But when it comes to our projections, and the associated sense of security and worth that we pursue, the Lord asks that we *ourselves* command the mountainous projections in our life to be removed. **Mat 17:19-20**. As our identity is being strengthened and regenerated, we are enabled, more and more, to stand in the reality of who we are, and to put off our projections.

Further Study HEBREWS 12

Faith to remove mountains

The Lord grants us faith in the word that He speaks to us. Removing mountains is our accountable choice, by faith, to turn from our familiar ways of approaching life and relating to others. Jesus instructed His disciples, saying, 'Have faith in God. For assuredly, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, "Be removed and be cast into the sea," and does not doubt in his heart, but believes that those things he says will be done, he will have whatever he says.' **Mar 11:22-23.**
Jas 1:6-7.

He was explaining that when we walk obediently on the pathway of salvation, our identity will be progressively healed from all manner of issues, including low self-esteem, continual doubting, or compulsive behaviours. Then, because our identity is being healed, and we are being established in our obedience as a son of God, we ought to exercise the authority of faith to turn in repentance from our projections and to cast them into the sea of God's forgetfulness. Having received God's mercy to heal our identity flaws, we renounce the projections that we were hiding behind because we were ashamed of our identity flaws. **2Co 4:2.**

Furthermore, we are able also to 'sell all' of the 'riches' that we gain by trading with our projections. We no longer rely on the feeling of being noticed or celebrated by others. We grow in confidence to be ourselves and to express interest, love and care toward others, because we are receiving faith to obey the word of our name.

The apostle James encouraged us to rejoice in this impact of the gospel of peace. **Jas 1:9-11.** We are all the 'rich man' who glories in his humiliation because he is thankful that he is being rightly measured to the truth of his name as a son of God. Likewise, we are all the 'poor man' who rejoices in his exaltation because the identity frailties and flaws that undermine his capacity to meet and relate with others, and to express his identity according to his name, are being healed.

Choosing our name and calling

The faith that we receive when we hear the gospel proclaimed enables us to believe in our name as a son of God, to choose it, and to 'stand up' to be the person whom God has predestined us to be. Christ grants us authority to stand and meet the call of God upon our life. Each son of God receives the same measure of faith which is their authority to express their sanctification. **Rom 12:3.** Jesus referred to this authority as being 'your [one] mina', given to each son. **Luk 19:16.**

We labour with this measure of faith by obeying the word of Christ through the strength of the Holy Spirit who leads us each day. We carry the authority to stand through all manner of difficulties without 'going missing'. We can cope with the realities of relating, even in circumstances where we feel misunderstood or overlooked. The authority that we have from Christ, by faith, is true strength to take accountability for our life, for what we are doing, and for the impact that we are having on others.

As we apply ourselves diligently to the word of our name, we are able to let go of any other fallen pursuit of empowerment. The alternative mechanisms that we employ to gain a sense of importance, power or significance are of the flesh and have no place in the kingdom of God.

Jesus Christ also gives a measure of *grace* to each son of God according to the abilities that belong to their unique identity. Jesus likened this grace to 'talents'. **Mat 25:15.** Grace keeps us connected to the fellowship of Christ's one offering, through which God's life is multiplied. **Heb 4:16. 2Co 4:15.** Christ's one offering is the context in which we fulfil the good works of sonship, which God prepared beforehand. We each have an accountability to serve one another, to care for one another, and to provide both material and spiritual provision to one another.

Further Study 1 THESSALONIANS 3

All flesh is grass

It is important to recognise the difference between the righteousness of God and what the Bible calls 'our own righteousness'. **Rom 10:3**. In recent months, we have been considering the Elijah ministry in the church. Isaiah summarised the prophetic message of the Elijah ministry, writing, 'All flesh is grass, and all 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 word of God, which stands forever, is *righteous*. Alternatively, our fleshly efforts to 'be' and 'look' Christian, which is one example of what Isaiah identified as being grass that withers and glory that fades, are *unrighteous*. Everything of the flesh is temporal and will pass away. **2Co 4:17-18**. At this time, the Lord is reminding us that if we are unrighteous – of the flesh and carnal – we will not inherit the kingdom of God. **1Co 15:50**. Mercifully, the breath of the Lord is blowing upon us so that we can see, by illumination, where we have created and propagated a self-righteous image of ourselves.

Stated simply, the righteousness of God is the achievement of His will. Before you existed, Yahweh *Elohim* willed to bring you forth in Their image and likeness, as a participant in Their life and fellowship. That is Their covenant purpose for your existence. However, on account of the Fall, and the other law that Satan has fathered in the hearts of mankind, you do not *default* to walking after the righteousness of God. In fact, God has looked from heaven and concluded that there is none righteous among mankind - not even one! **Rom 3:10**.

Further Study 1 JOHN 2

Our self-righteous image

We all have, for varying reasons and with varying designs, built a self-righteous image of ourselves using 'wood, hay and stubble'. **1Co 3:12-13**. This self-righteous image begins in our mind – how we see ourselves – and then influences the way in which we present and express ourselves to others. **Eph 4:20-24**.

A unique combination of factors shapes a person's particular self-righteous projection. For example, their personality type, their physical appearance, the chemistry of relationships within their home and family as they grow up, the fostering (or lack thereof) of godly culture and godly identity from their parents, the influence of worldliness, the school environment and the pressures of social acceptance and friendship groups, time and chance, positive childhood experiences, negative childhood experiences, past hurts, past successes, and so on.

Our fear of death, motivating us toward survival, drives us to 'compute' all of these influences and experiences into a self-defined image of ourselves. We then 'market' this self-righteous projection for the sake of convincing ourselves that we are a worthwhile *somebody*, not a *nobody*. While this process sounds premeditated and wicked, it is the instinctive activity of every person who is not walking in obedience to the word of their sonship.

Thankfully, the apostle Paul taught that the offering of Jesus Christ is the provision for every person to become righteous. He said, 'He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, so *that we might become the righteousness of God in Him*.' **2Co 5:21**. When Jesus Christ rose from the dead, He was the perfect Man in the image and likeness of God. Importantly, the glorified Son of Man, who is adorned with the glory of *His* heavenly body, has also fulfilled *our* righteousness. That is, He is also adorned with the glory of *our* completed sonship! Hence, the breakpoint between crafting and pushing a false righteousness of our own, and apprehending and fulfilling the righteousness of God, is *meeting the Lord face to face*. **Exe 20:35. Deu 34:10**.

Further Study ISAIAH 51

Seeing is believing

Prior to his conversion, the apostle Paul described himself as 'blameless with regard to the righteousness which is in the Law'. **Php 3:6**. The Pharisee, Nicodemus, who came to see Jesus by night, likely possessed the same religious orientation; that is, a strong tradition of seeking righteousness by complying with the Law. **Joh 3:1-2**. Compliance is an expression of self-righteousness. It is a 'clone' of obedience, demonstrated by a person who has learned the 'do's and don'ts' of church community life, but who has not personally met the Lord; the One to whom they must give an account concerning their obedience. **Heb 4:13**.

Many of you have grown up in Christian homes. At the point of conception, you were a recipient of the divine nature. Your Christian parents have taught you the culture and customs that are associated with church attendance. You have been baptised into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and have received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. You offer in various service teams at church and participate in *agape* fellowship. However, it is sobering to recognise that compliance (obedience's clone) is perfect for propping up a self-righteous Christian image. The truth is that no-one, regardless of their Christian heritage, is able to repent from their self-righteousness until they meet the Lord face to face.

The apostle Paul declared, 'For God, who said, "Light shall shine out of darkness," is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the Light of the knowledge of the glory of God *in the face of Christ*'. **2Co 4:6**. The light of the knowledge of the glory of God is the knowledge of our finished sonship. Paul testified, '*For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but that I shall know just as I also am known.*' **1Co 13:11-12**. In seeing the hope of the glory of our sonship, mirrored to us from the face of Christ, we truly believe and receive a desire to obey Jesus as our Lord and Master.

Further Study JOHN 3

The example of Paul

The account of Saul's conversion and the example of his ministry life that followed demonstrate the response and testimony of someone who has met the Lord face to face. In that sense, Paul shared the same testimony as Job. **Job 42:5**. As a child, he had heard of the Lord because he was instructed in the customary religious rites of the Jews. However, he needed to behold Jesus face to face.

We read in the book of Acts, 'As he was travelling, it happened that he was approaching Damascus, and suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him'. **Act 9:3**. Saul was *seeing* the glory of Christ, the perfect Man in the image and likeness of God. He said, 'Who are You, Lord?' **Act 9:5**. In this statement, Saul acknowledged Christ as his Lord. He also confessed that, despite his strong religious pedigree, he did not know the Lord at all!

Remarkably, the Scripture notes that 'the men who travelled with him stood speechless, hearing the voice *but seeing no-one*'. **Act 9:7**. This is a sobering point. We may be in the company of those who attend church and hear the voice of Jesus, but may not see Him ourselves. **Psa 24:6**. **Psa 80:19**. Saul was granted the opportunity for repentance because the Lord, in His mercy, shone His face upon him. This illumination granted Saul the opportunity to choose Christ's lordship and to be saved; or, alternatively, to spurn God's calling upon his life and thus be damned.

The evidence that a person does not have a personal relationship with the Lord will be their inability to speak by faith about their deliverance *from* self-righteousness *to* living by the righteousness of God. In other words, they will not be able to testify of knowing their name from the Lord, because they have only the false name that they have created and pursued for themselves. We see that a person's testimony of repentance and faith will include *both* their identification of what they are *turning from* and the faith of what they are *turning to*. **Act 14:14-16**. **Act 26:19-20**.

Further Study ACTS 9

Paul's testimony of repentance

The men who travelled with Saul, who did not see Jesus, were 'speechless'. We are reminded of the unworthy guests in the parable of the wedding feast, who had not made themselves ready for the time when the Father will take His seat. The Father Himself will say to guests such as those, "Friend, how did you come in here without wedding clothes [a priestly garment of righteousness]?" And *the man was speechless.* **Mat 22:12.** Importantly, we are personally accountable for sharing a sincere testimony when we participate in *agape* fellowship. Compliance and a jargonistic commentary of the word of present truth *will* leave us speechless when God Himself asks us for our testimony.

Having seen the glory of his sonship in the face of Christ, Paul abhorred his self-righteousness. He said, 'Whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, *not having a righteousness of my own* derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith.' **Php 3:7-9.**

Furthermore, having met the Lord face to face and renounced his self-righteousness, the apostle Paul testified of being content in every circumstance. **Php 4:11.** There is great contentment for us when we are delivered from self-righteousness! In contrast, 'keeping up the appearance' of a projection, and being devoid of the grace of God, is an exhausting and anxiety-filled way to live. King David testified, 'As for me, *I shall behold Your face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Your likeness when I awake.*' **Psa 17:15.** We find great satisfaction when we walk in obedience to the righteous name and works that God has predestined for us.

Further Study PHILIPPIANS 3



Restoring
my Soul