



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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SEPTEMBER 2024

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Turn and live

The Lord desires for every person to be recovered to the life and fellowship that He predestined for them. As the apostle Peter noted, 'The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to *repentance*.' **2Pe 3:9.**

Through the prophet Ezekiel, the Lord Himself declared, "But if a wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed, keeps all My statutes, and does what is lawful and right, *he shall surely live; he shall not die*. None of the transgressions which he has committed shall be remembered against him; because of the righteousness which he has done, he shall live. Do I have any pleasure at all that the wicked should die?" says the Lord God, "and not that he should turn from his ways and live?" **Eze 18:21-23.**

This declaration raises some important questions for us, which we have presumed to understand but which, in reality, our former gospels have not adequately answered. How do we turn from our sins and find forgiveness from God without it being a carnal exercise? What is the role of the elders in this process? How are we restored to relationship with those against whom we have sinned? What is the righteousness that a person must demonstrate in order to live?

Continuing His discourse concerning the implications of recovery from sin, the Lord then said, 'But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness and commits iniquity, and does according to all the abominations that the wicked man does, shall he live? All the righteousness which he has done *shall not be remembered*; because of the *unfaithfulness* of which he is guilty and the sin which he has committed, because of them *he shall die*.' **Eze 18:24.**

The obvious implication of the Lord's statement is that our salvation is not dependent upon how we commence our pilgrimage but, rather, on how we finish it. **1Co 9:24-25.**

Further Study EZEKIEL 18

Our penitent presumption

Turning from righteousness to iniquity does not refer only to denying the Christian faith to live as a person who belongs to the world. Of course, this can happen; however, in the primary sense, it refers to a person who fails to walk in the light of present truth. They continue to walk according to their former gospels and understandings, which, in the light of present truth, become chaff that is destined for eternal burning. **Luk 3:17. Mat 7:21-23.** This is the same end that God has prepared for the sons of the wicked one, whom Jesus likened to tares. **Mat 13:36-42.**

The Lord concluded His exhortation, saying, 'Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin. Cast away from you all the transgressions which you have committed, and get yourselves a new heart and a new spirit. For why should you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies ... therefore turn and live!' **Eze 18:30-32.**

In our religious, carnal presumption, we believe that we are able to do what the Lord commands, and live. The endeavour to cast away our transgressions and obtain for ourselves a new heart and a new spirit, are the actions that belong to *penitent presumption*. We must be illuminated to our incapacity to even repent of our transgressions. When we arrive at the reality of our bankruptcy, we are able to be joined to the regeneration of Christ, which He later also declared through the prophet Ezekiel. **Eze 36:25-31.**

The Scriptures are unequivocal in their assertion that 'there is none righteous, no, not one'. **Rom 3:10. Psa 14:2-3.** Moreover, they insist that there are no initiatives, or actions, that a person can employ to save, or redeem, another person, even on behalf of God. As the sons of Korah attested, 'None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him.' **Psa 49:7.**

Further Study ROMANS 3

I will give you a new heart

It is impossible for a person to become righteous through any action that they take, including making restitution as part of a schedule of penance, irrespective of their sincerity or piety. This is not how a person turns from their sin so that they might live. Likewise, the pastoral directives and sacramental practices advanced by a clergy-style figure towards another, are equally futile endeavours in the pursuit of righteousness. Deliverance from evil cannot be priested by one person to another.

Thankfully, Jesus Himself has accomplished our regeneration and fulfilled the works that belong to our obedience as sons of God, achieving our justification. For this reason, He said, '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 then you will *remember* your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will *loathe yourselves* in your own sight, for your *iniquities and your abominations*.' **Eze 36:25-31**.

If Christ has already accomplished our salvation, why do Christians seek to become righteous through their own religious, or penitent, activities, or through pastoral encounters that are informed by sacramental traditions? Paul similarly questioned the church in Galatia, saying, 'Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?' **Gal 3:1-3**.

If we maintain our carnal practices of religion, we will not be saved. Eternal life through sanctification will not be our portion or our experience. Our salvation depends upon becoming *spiritual*. To become spiritual, we must first find repentance. That is, we must be established on the pathway of salvation that belongs to those who obey Christ.

Further Study EZEKIEL 11

The nature of man

Using the example of the Gentiles, who had not received the Law Covenant given through Moses, Paul explained that the Law is written in the heart of a person. He said, 'For when Gentiles, who do not have the Law, by nature do the things in the Law, these, although not having the Law, are a law to themselves, who show *the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness*, and between themselves their *thoughts* accusing or else excusing them.' **Rom 2:14-15**.

In this passage, Paul referred to the actions of the conscience, which is a faculty of a person's *spirit*, and the actions of the mind, which is a faculty of their *soul*. To understand the dynamic between these two dimensions of our being, it is helpful to consider the composition of man.

The Lord God created man with a body, soul and spirit. **1Th 5:23**. He fashioned his body from the dust of the earth and breathed into him the breath of 'lives'. By this means, the spirit of man was formed within him, and he became a living, or spiritual, soul. **Gen 2:7. Zec 12:1**. Together, and indivisible, the soul and spirit of a person is called their *inner man*. The *outer man* refers to the physical body of a person. **2Co 4:16**. Their *heart* is the point of meeting between their body, soul and spirit. It is the very essence, or centre, of their person and expression.

Our *identity*, or who we are, resides in our spirit. The conscience is the faculty of our spirit, or identity, through which we are able to know ourselves. The apostle Paul was referring to this capacity when he asked, 'For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him?' **1Co 2:11**.

Further Study GENESIS 2

The other law in our members

Who we are, or want to be, is expressed through the faculties of our soul. These faculties include our will, mind and emotions, and they influence how we behave, make decisions, communicate, and interpret our environment in and through our body. Jesus highlighted this relationship when He taught that '*out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness.*' **Mar 7:21-23.**

Prior to the Fall, the conscience was the faculty of man's spirit through which he could know himself in relation to God, who is Spirit. **Joh 4:24.** In fellowship with Yahweh, what man knew about himself, and how he was to live, was *true*. Who Adam was in relationship to Yahweh, and in relation to the covenant purpose of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, was then expressed through the faculties of his soul as he physically performed the works that belonged to his obedience each day.

Man fell when he disobeyed the word of the Lord and ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to become the source of his own destiny and expression. **Gen 3:6-7.** Consequently, he was separated from the life and fellowship of Yahweh, and another law was established in his '*members*'; that is, right at the meeting point between soul and spirit. **Rom 7:23.** Now, unless a person is born of the Spirit, they can only strive to know themselves through the lie that belongs to their knowledge of good and evil.

We recall that Paul explained to the Romans, in the early part of his letter, that the conscience bears witness to the Law that is written in the heart of a person. **Rom 2:14-15.** Significantly, their conscience is not accusing or excusing them. Rather, the thoughts that belong to their *mind* accuse or excuse them.

Further Study ROMANS 2

The basis for penance

The Law in the heart, to which the conscience bears witness, declares, 'You shall not covet', for covetousness is the fundamental basis of all manner of sinful activities, including adultery (coveting another's spouse), stealing (coveting another's possessions), murder (coveting another's life), and so on. This was Paul's point when he wrote, 'I would not have known covetousness unless the Law [written in my heart] had said, "You shall not covet"'. **Rom 7:7.**

Sin motivates us to aspire to the ideal of not coveting, and to every other ideal proclaimed by the Law. In doing so, we are deceived by sin, believing that we can have life by keeping the Law. **Gal 3:21.** However, the aspiration to achieve this 'good' is covetous. It springs from the desires that belong to another law in our members. These desires include the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, which inform the pursuit of our 'good' self-image. **1Jn 2:16.**

Motivated in this way by sin, we delight in the Law of God with our mind. That is, we view the Law, and the implications of keeping the Law, *to be ideal for us.* This is a self-righteous mind. However, this is covetousness. **Rom 8:6-7.** Moreover, what we will to do, we do not practise, but we end up doing that which we hate, bringing us under the condemnation of the Law. **Rom 7:15. Jas 2:10.**

Feeling condemned by the Law as we fail to attain to the good image to which we aspire, our thoughts accuse or excuse us, becoming the basis of penitent confession and action. Through the rationalisations of the mind, motivated by the fear of death, we take action to remedy our situation. In particular, acts of penance (be they self-defined deeds or determined through a pastoral encounter in the pursuit of absolution) become our self-righteous expression. We do this to avoid the humiliation that belongs to the failure of our self-image.

Further Study ROMANS 7

Dismissed because of carnality

Unless we are connected to the work of our regeneration, which has been wrought for us in Christ, *we cannot be saved*. The parable of the seed and the grounds teaches us that having been born from above through the word of God, we must be joined to the process of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit through which the ground of our heart as a son of man is changed. This is necessary for salvation. **Tit 3:4-7**.

Peter and his fellow disciples learnt this lesson early in Christ's offering journey. At the last Passover, Jesus told them that they could no longer follow Him as His disciples until the work of regeneration and new creation was given to them after He was raised from the dead. Specifically, He said to them, 'Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward.' **Joh 13:36**.

With this statement, Jesus was *dismissing* the disciples. They could no longer be His followers. Jesus was highlighting that the disciples' ministry approach and righteousness was insufficient to save them. Even though they had received power to preach the gospel of the kingdom, to heal the sick, to cleanse lepers, to raise the dead, and to cast out demons, their present condition was fleshly and would only lead to death. **Joh 8:21**.

Their iniquity was already apparent through their estimation of themselves, believing that they had 'graduated' beyond their station as disciples. A key indicator of this presumption was their rivalry and collegiality. They had even become puffed up over and against Christ! **Mat 16:21-23. Joh 12:5**. Their collegiality had reached a climax as they disputed among themselves concerning which of them should be considered to be the greatest. **Luk 22:24**. That is, they were determining who needed to submit to, and receive from, whom in the presbytery. Unless they were delivered from their iniquity and carnal ministry orientation, and were established in their sanctification, *they would die in their sins and their righteousness would be forgotten*. **Eze 18:24**.

Further Study MATTHEW 16

Marred for our iniquity

When Jesus dismissed the disciples, they were offended by His statement and the implication that they were being made redundant. They all insisted that they were capable of bearing the same sufferings that Jesus was about to endure. **Mat 26:35**. Peter was particularly emphatic, asking, 'Lord, why can I not follow You now? *I will lay down my life for Your sake!* **Joh 13:37**.

Peter became the example for us of the failure that belongs to confidence in our own righteousness. The reality is that we have no power over sin until we are yoked to Christ and, by this, are joined to the process of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. **Mat 11:28-30**.

In the court of Caiaphas, Christ absorbed all of our marring. **Isa 52:14**. Our marring is our distorted self-image, or projections, associated with our iniquity. The marring of His face revealed our iniquitous self-image and the consequences of this corruption. It also revealed the judgement of the Law, and of God, upon our iniquity.

However, resurrection life sustained Christ under the onslaught that caused the marring of His face, so that not a bone in His face was broken. **Psa 34:19-20**. By Eternal Spirit, and through the resurrection life of Yahweh in His blood, He endured this buffeting as a discipline, and was progressively brought back from the death of sin. **Heb 13:20-21**. This is the definition of regeneration. By *exanastasis*, the flesh of the first man was being recovered and changed into the flesh of a new humanity as iniquity was being destroyed. That is, He was delivered from the face of carnality, receiving the image, or face, of a spiritual Man.

Peter saw his own iniquitous self-image being laid on Christ, as Christ's face was being beaten. From the eyes of Christ, Peter received *no accusation*; only an eye to eye understanding of his iniquity and incapacity for obedience. This understanding was made fully clear to Peter, *just as the rooster crowed*. **Mat 26:74-75**. At the same moment, Peter saw his regeneration and justification.

Further Study ISAIAH 52

The need to meet Christ

Having seen the Lord face to face in the court of Caiaphas, Peter wept bitterly with godly sorrow. **Mat 26:75**. He abhorred himself in full repentance, as Job did, who confessed, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, *but now my eye sees You*. Therefore I abhor myself [my fleshly projections and expressions], and repent in dust and ashes.' **Job 42:5-6**.

Exhorting us to this same understanding, the apostle Paul wrote, 'For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.' **Heb 12:3**. Through this unjust hostility, or contradiction, of sinners against Himself, Jesus was humiliated. That is, His image was marred, and His reputation was taken from Him. **Act 8:33**. We must join the fellowship of this wound, where our self-crafted reputation is taken from us so that we can receive our name which defines our sanctification. Christ's marring was the just judgement upon all of our self-naming and projection. **Pro 15:33**.

Paul was saying that unless we are illuminated to this implication of Christ's offering, we will become discouraged in our souls as our reputation is assailed. When our sin is made known to us, we will defend our religious reputation through penance. Furthermore, we will react with carnal intent against those, like the media or worldly authorities, who unjustly treat us and seek to take our reputation from us. These responses are the very iniquity that will cause us to lose our salvation.

We must be illuminated to our iniquitous self-image. If this does not happen, we will continue to walk according to the flesh and will become, increasingly, weak and sick, and will die in our sin. **1Co 11:30**. Our righteousness will be forgotten. **Eze 18:21-24**. The reality is that we were all joined to this wound, a wound that Christ suffered for our deliverance from our self-image and projections, the moment that the Sanhedrin set upon Him. We now, through faith, and by the Holy Spirit, are joined to this offering event with all of its deliverance and benefits.

Further Study ISAIAH 45

The woman brought to Jesus

In relation to our need to be delivered from condemnation, by personally meeting Christ as our Lord, we are all like the woman who was taken in adultery and brought to Him. We recall that very early one morning, Jesus came to the temple to teach the people who had come to Him. 'Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the Law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"' **Joh 8:3-5**. This woman was being accused *with the revealed Law* as she was brought to the only Person who was without sin.

Jesus stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear them. Joh 8:6. His inscription may have been, 'God has numbered your kingdom, and finished it; you have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; your kingdom has been divided, and given to [others]'. **Dan 5:26-28**.

As they continued to petition Him concerning this woman, Jesus 'looked up' and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.' **Joh 8:7**. Conveying the scriptural principle, 'For as a man thinks in his heart, so he is', Christ had already stated, 'You have heard that it was said to those of old, "You shall not commit adultery." But I say to you that whoever looks at a woman to lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart.' **Mat 5:27-28**. **Pro 23:7**. Accordingly, there was no-one who could be saved. Anyone who confessed otherwise was deceived and the truth was not in them. **1Jn 1:8-10**.

Further Study JOHN 8

Where are your accusers?

When Jesus wrote on the ground, and then spoke to the accusers of the woman caught in adultery, they were convicted in their heart. As John recorded, 'Then those who heard it, *being convicted by their conscience*, went out one by one, *beginning with the oldest even to the last*. And Jesus was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.' **Joh 8:9.**

It is notable that this form of conviction did not lead to repentance. It was their conscience bearing witness to the Law written in their heart. It only provoked the *penitent action* of ceasing from their accusation, but it did not establish them as disciples of Christ in fellowship with Him. They continued in their darkness and remained under condemnation.

'When Jesus had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"' **Joh 8:10.** This is what God is saying to all of us in this season. The woman responded to Jesus, saying, 'No one, *Lord!*' **Joh 8:11.** As she submitted to Christ as Lord, her sins were forgiven. Christ said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more.' **Joh 3:17. Joh 8:11.**

This highlights an important point that we must not overlook. Although we are not condemned by the Lord in relation to our sin, *He does not excuse our sin*. The woman needed to find repentance and to walk in a new way. To accomplish the command, 'Go [walk in a new way] and sin no more', she would have to become a disciple of Christ. This command was the ministry of righteousness that exceeds the ministry of condemnation exemplified by her accusers. To obey this command, she would need to join the travail of Christ and sorrow in a godly manner. This is sorrow that leads to repentance and one's establishment as a follower of Christ. **2Co 7:10-11.**

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 7

Penance is not repentance

Those who choose to remain carnally minded when they hear the word of God quench the conviction of the Spirit. Instead of receiving illumination regarding their sin and iniquity, turning to the Lord, and beginning to mourn for Him whom they have pierced, they judge themselves; their thoughts accusing or excusing themselves. **Rom 2:14-15**. Through the rationalisations of their mind, they endeavour to determine the course of action that is necessary to remedy their sinful condition. These actions, whether self-prescribed or defined in a pastoral encounter, *are penance*. They are an attempt to obtain reconciliation with God on our own terms.

Penance is not repentance. Penance is self-motivated and determined through the machinations of our mind which agrees with the Law of God. A person is unable to find cleansing and deliverance from their sin and iniquity through penance. A person is unable to atone for their sin through any action. **Act 4:12**. **1Co 3:11**. This even includes endeavours to make restitution for their sin.

Of course, a person who sorrows in a godly manner will walk in the light and find fellowship with their brethren; and, where possible, they will desire to make restitution. **1Jn 1:7**. However, their motives will not be their own justification. A case in point is the response of Zaccheus to Christ's initiative toward his house. Zaccheus acknowledged his sin, its effect upon others, and the restitution that he wanted to make as part of the works of his repentance. He said to Jesus, 'Look, Lord, I give half of my goods to the poor; and if I have taken anything from anyone by false accusation, I restore fourfold.' **Luk 19:8**. Jesus said to Zaccheus, 'Today salvation has come to this house, *because he also is a son of Abraham*; for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.' **Luk 19:9-10**. Those who are lost can be found and can obtain repentance. This is possible because, like Abraham, they are able to receive the faith of the Son that comes by hearing the word. **Rom 10:17**.

Further Study LUKE 19

Repentance is a gift

Zaccheus was a son of Abraham because he had received faith as the word had access into his heart and his house. To this end, his actions were not a self-righteous exhibition of penance, but a genuine *obedience* that belonged to following Christ. This faith obedience was working by the love of God poured into his heart. **Gal 5:6. Rom 5:5.** In fact, restitution was *not* the first action that Zaccheus took. Rather, Zaccheus forsook his riches. **Luk 18:22.** These were a 'mountain' that had impeded his capacity to follow Christ as a worthy house. By 'selling all', this mountain was removed and he was established as a disciple of Christ. Journeying with Christ, the restitution of what he had stolen was now a work of obedience, motivated by love.

Repentance is a gift that is given to us by Christ. **2Ti 2:24-26.** There is a place of repentance. This is what Esau was unable to find, even though he sought it diligently with tears. This is because he was unwilling to forsake his own image and obey the word of his predestination – that is, 'The older shall serve the younger'. **Gen 25:23.** This gift of repentance was given to Peter when Christ met him eye to eye.

Until a person finds repentance, they have no capacity to deal with their sin. This capacity is only given through a personal encounter with Christ. Faith to receive the capacity and power to overcome sin and then join the obedience of Christ to do the works that belong to our name, *comes after repentance*. This happens when the love of God is poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit, who has come to convict the world of sin, righteousness and judgement, for this is His work. **Rom 5:5. Joh 16:8.**

Further Study 2 TIMOTHY 2

The precious promises

The apostle Peter emphasised the amazing benefits that are available to those who are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering journey. He explained that the divine power of God *gives to us* all things that pertain to life and godliness. This happens through the knowledge of the Father who *calls us*. According to this call, we are given exceedingly great and precious *promises* so that, through these promises, we may be partakers of the divine nature. We are partakers of the divine nature as we escape the corruption that is in the world through lust. **2Pe 1:2-4**. This escape is found by those who are in Christ and journey with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

These benefits belong only to those who become bankrupt in spirit as they abandon the carnal presumption that their penitent actions can achieve the righteousness of God. Affirming this point, the apostle Paul exhorted us, writing, 'Therefore, *having these promises* [through the knowledge of Him who called us], beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit [forsaking penance by embracing fellowship in the light of the word], perfecting holiness [sanctification] in the fear of God.' **2Co 7:1**.

Writing to the Romans, Paul similarly affirmed the wonderful truth that righteousness is given to us as a gift. **Rom 5:17**. Importantly, the gift of righteousness, which is made available to us after we find repentance, does not negate the need for deliverance from sin. This deliverance is only accomplished through the process and fellowship of the cross. Emphasising this point, Paul then asked, 'What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it? Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death?' **Rom 6:1-3**.

Further Study 2 PETER 1

Light shines from the face of Christ

A person who is in Christ and established as a disciple on the pathway of salvation, which Jesus Christ pioneered for them through His offering and suffering journey, is beholding, as in a mirror, the glory of their sonship as it shines from the face of Jesus Christ. This word illuminates their heart, as Paul explained, writing, 'For it is the God who commanded light to shine out of darkness, who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ'. **2Co 4:6.**

As we behold, and receive, and then walk in, the light that proceeds from the face of Christ, we are being progressively transformed into the image of Christ, *by the Spirit*. **2Co 3:18.** Note that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of regeneration and renewing, who is active within us as we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, as a member of His body. **Tit 3:4-7.**

The light that shines from the face of Christ is the word that is proclaimed by His messengers. A person who receives this message is able to respond by personally *calling on the name of the Lord*. To call on the name of the Lord is to be established in the fellowship of the name, which comes from the Father as an order of headship. By this means, we are established in the fellowship of the body as a disciple on the pathway of salvation. As the apostle Paul explained, 'For "Whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved." How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent?' **Rom 10:13-15.**

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 4

Philip's ministry to the Ethiopian

The ministry of Philip to the Ethiopian eunuch exemplified this point. We recall that this official, who was a man of great authority in the court of Queen Candace, had come to Jerusalem to worship. **Act 8:27**. In the course of his return journey to Ethiopia, he was in his chariot, reading the book of Isaiah. Significantly, he was reading the passage, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter; and as a lamb before its shearer is silent, so He opened not His mouth. In His humiliation His justice was taken away, and who will declare His generation? For His life is taken from the earth.' **Act 8:32-33**.

The Ethiopian was obviously a learned, intelligent man. However, when Philip came alongside him, he acknowledged his need for a messenger. He said to Philip, 'How can I [understand], unless someone guides me?' **Act 8:31**. The word needed to be proclaimed to this man as light shining on him from the face of Christ, through the ministry of a messenger. Having received Philip's ministry, the Ethiopian began to call on the name of the Lord. The content of this expression was, 'See, here is water. What hinders me from being baptised?' **Act 8:36**. Through this action, he was joined to the very death and resurrection that he had been reading about. **Rom 6:3-4**.

Christ's messengers belong to the fellowship of a presbytery through which the headship of Christ is first expressed in the church and to every house. They belong to this administration of the word because they are walking blamelessly by the Spirit, being transformed through the very process that they are proclaiming to others. This was the apostle John's testimony, having been established as part of a presbytery in the right hand of Christ through Christ's initiative toward him. **Rev 1:12-20**.

Further Study ACTS 8

Walking in the light

John introduced his first epistle with this testimony, writing, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have *looked* upon, and our hands have *handled*, concerning the Word of life – the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us – that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, *that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ*'. **1Jn 1:1-3**.

The message that is proclaimed from the fellowship of the presbytery is, 'God is Light and in Him is no darkness at all'. **1Jn 1:5**. This message, with its variegated implications and expressions, is the light that shines from the face of Jesus Christ, defining the *pathway* of salvation and sanctification for every hearer. We know that it defines a pathway of salvation because John then wrote, 'But if we *walk in the light* as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son [made available in seven wounding events] cleanses us from all sin'. **1Jn 1:7**.

When the word is preached by a messenger who is established in the fellowship of the presbytery, it proceeds as light from the face of Christ to a hearer. **2Co 4:6**. A hearer in the church can make one of two possible responses. In submission to the lordship of the Spirit, they can respond with an unveiled face and behold, as in a mirror, the word of their obedience as a son of God. Alternatively, they can respond to the word through the rationalisations of a carnal mind. In doing so, they demonstrate that they *prefer* the darkness that belongs to the veil that lies over the eyes of their understanding. **Mat 6:22-24**.

Further Study 1 JOHN 1

Loving the darkness

The apostle Paul declared, '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 [having no faith because they do not have an ear to hear the word], 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**. In the context of the church, this is likely to be a person who delights in the Law of God according to the inward man. **Rom 7:22**. That is, with their carnal mind they agree with the word because it accords with their own reason. It is astonishing and sobering to consider that a person can hear the word of God and fail to receive its light because of their investment in their own good image, a 'good' that may even be informed by the very word they hear.

The gospel remains veiled to these people because they love the darkness of their own image rather than the light. This is their condemnation. They are condemned because they do not believe in the name of the Lord, nor do they submit to Christ as their Head. **1Jn 5:13**. **1Co 11:3**. Earlier, we noted that a person is unable to believe in, or call upon, the name of the Lord when they do not receive and walk in the light of the gospel proclaimed by Christ's messengers. **Rom 10:13-15**. Their rejection of the word is revealed by their inability to be *obedient*, even though they may agree with the message that has been proclaimed.

Detailing the condemnation associated with preferring the darkness associated with one's self-image, Jesus declared, 'He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, *because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God* [which is necessary for salvation]. And this is the condemnation, that the light has come into the world, and *men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil*.' **Joh 3:18-19**.

Further Study ISAIAH 30

The condemnation of a darkened mind

The polarising effect of the word upon a person who prefers the darkness of their own perspective is the inability to see, hear, or turn. **Rom 11:7-8**. They cannot be healed. This is God's judgement upon them as He gives them over to their choice.

Jesus highlighted this condemnation in His statement on the purpose of parables. He said to His disciples, 'Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says: "Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, and seeing you will see and not perceive; for the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, and their eyes they have closed, lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, so that I should heal them.'" **Mat 13:13-15**.

Those who love the darkness will 'walk in darkness'. **1Jn 1:6**. That is, in the same way that those who walk in the light have fellowship with one another, those who walk in darkness will tend to find connection with each other in the church. The people who are most confident in the flesh, believing that their darkened perspective is light, tend to become the mentors of those who are susceptible to an alternative conversation. A person's susceptibility to this alternative conversation may be on account of their naivety, their history, their carnal immaturities, or their own fondness for the darkness.

Unless they find repentance and are established on the pathway of light that belongs to salvation, they will be found as sons of disobedience, typified as tares. Their fellowship in the dark will be acknowledged as the Lord directs His *aggelos*, saying, 'First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn.' **Mat 13:30**.

Further Study EPHESIANS 2

The basis of factions

Walking in darkness is the basis of *factions* within a congregation. **Act 20:30**. These factions can impact upon the *agape* meal. Commenting on alternative communities that had emerged in the Corinthian church, the apostle Paul said, 'First of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved [or found worthy] may be recognised among you. Therefore, when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper [that is, participate in the *agape* meal]'. **1Co 11:18-20**.

In the fellowship that belongs to Yahweh, which should be the fellowship of the presbytery, there 'is no darkness at all'. **1Jn 1:5**. Those who love the darkness are unable, and disinclined, to find fellowship with the presbytery because they do not walk in the light. That is, they are not obedient to the word proceeding from the fellowship of the presbytery. Consequently, they stumble at Christ and the word that He speaks through His messengers. **1Pe 2:7-8**.

It is notable that those who love the darkness are unable to perceive the difference between what they say they see, and the light of illumination proceeding from the fellowship of the Father and the Son, which is the fellowship of the presbytery. The implication of one's inability to recognise this distinction is that the light that they claim is in them is actually darkness. Jesus described this as very great darkness indeed. **Mat 6:23**.

Those who remain in darkness latently view the church as a resource to verify their self-image. They may pursue this verification by cleaving with deceit to the messengers who belong to the presbytery, or by feeding on sheep whom they draw to themselves through relational dependency. In these instances, a person whose perspective is darkened may regress further to become like 'a wolf in sheep's clothing'. **Mat 7:15-16. Jud 1:10-12**.

Further Study 1 CORINTHIANS 3



Restoring
my Soul