



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

OCTOBER 2024

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Contributing Authors

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

Compiled by

David Baker

Contents

Monday 30 September	He calls His sheep by name	2
Tuesday 1 October	Meeting Christ.	3
Wednesday 2 October	If you will seek Me	4
Thursday 3 October	Knowing in the light of fellowship	5
Friday 4 October	Hearing, possessing and inheriting.	6
Monday 7 October	Called to be a shepherd	7
Tuesday 8 October	Blindfolding the messenger.	8
Wednesday 9 October	Bound by his own belt.	9
Thursday 10 October	Not yielding to deception	10
Friday 11 October	The ministry of a shepherd	11
Monday 14 October	The temple flock.	12
Tuesday 15 October	The pathway of salvation	13
Wednesday 16 October	The first work of shepherding	14
Thursday 17 October	Hearing a word behind	15
Friday 18 October	Turning to meet the Lord	16
Monday 21 October	Commentary or confession	17
Tuesday 22 October	Penance or repentance	18
Wednesday 23 October	Godly sorrow produces repentance.	19
Thursday 24 October	Clearing and indignation	20
Friday 25 October	Full restoration to the pathway.	21
Monday 28 October	If anyone is sick.	22
Tuesday 29 October	Calling for the elders.	23
Wednesday 30 October	The prayer to anoint with oil	24
Thursday 31 October	The prayer of faith for deliverance.	25
Friday 1 November	The prayer for healing	26

He calls His sheep by name

Jesus identified Himself as 'the good Shepherd' who 'gives His life for the sheep'. **Joh 10:11**. Describing His work as a shepherd, He said, 'He who enters by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the doorkeeper opens, and the sheep hear his voice; *and he calls his own sheep by name and leads them out*. And when he brings out his own sheep, he goes before them; and the *sheep follow him, for they know his voice*.' **Joh 10:2-4**.

In this passage, Jesus explained that the Shepherd first calls His sheep by name. He does this so that they can *meet Him*. He then leads them on the pathway of salvation where they progressively grow in their *knowledge of Him* as they receive and obey His word. Significantly, meeting Christ and knowing Christ are two distinct relational implications of His shepherding initiative. Both are necessary for obtaining salvation as 'the sheep of His pasture'. **Psa 100:3**.

Meeting Christ is *His initiative* toward us. He is the Son of Man who comes 'to seek and to save that which was lost'. **Luk 19:10**. He does this as the good Shepherd who knows us by name. **Mat 18:11-14**. **Joh 10:3**. It is important to recognise that this encounter with the Lord, through which we meet Him, can happen *after* we have received our calling as a son of God.

We know, for example, that Jacob had received his calling as a son of God in the womb of his mother, Rebecca. **Gen 25:23**. Jacob grew up in a covenant family and, after departing for Laban's house, he had a vision of the house of God and the gate of heaven. **Gen 28:17**. He then endured twenty years of mistreatment in the house of Laban, which he was enabled to do because the God of his fathers was with him. **Gen 31:42**. However, Jacob did not meet the Lord eye to eye and face to face until he wrestled with Him at the brook called Jabbok. **Gen 32:24**.

Further Study JOHN 10

Meeting Christ

The wrestle at Jabbok was the Lord's initiative so that Jacob could meet Him. As Jacob clung to Christ by faith, having mercifully been joined to the weakness of Christ's dislocation as his own hip was put out of joint, he found a new expression of fellowship with God. He was able to acknowledge his iniquity and to be delivered from his deceptive self-image. Significantly, having *possessed* his name, 'Prince with God', Jacob then began to *inherit* his name as he journeyed with Christ in the promised land. Jacob's limp marked his fellowship with Christ as he learned his obedience from Him on the pathway of salvation. **Gen 32:31-32**. Jacob was learning who he was as he grew in his knowledge of Christ.

The apostle Paul had a very similar experience to Jacob. He testified that, like Jacob, God had separated him from his mother's womb, to reveal the Son in him. **Gal 1:15-16**. However, Paul did not meet Christ, the Son of Man, until he was knocked to the ground on his way to Damascus. **Act 9:3-6**. The Lord initiated this encounter, saying, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?' **Act 9:4**. Paul's response, 'Who are You, Lord?', revealed that, although he had now met the Lord, he did not know Him. Notably, through this encounter, the blindness associated with Paul's zealous, religious self-image was manifest. **Act 9:8,18**.

Having met the Lord, Paul later testified that he counted everything that had formerly informed his self-image to be excrement, so that he might gain Christ. **Php 3:7-8**. Importantly, he desired to *know Christ* and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to Christ's death, that he might live by *exanastasis* life. **Php 3:10-11**. The point to note is that Paul progressively grew in his knowledge of Christ as he journeyed on the pathway of salvation.

Further Study ACTS 9

If you will seek Me

The pathway of salvation for the apostle Paul was the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, upon which Paul was fulfilling, by *exanastasis*, the obedience that belonged to the knowledge of Christ. Accordingly, he testified, 'Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me.' **Php 3:12.**

While meeting Christ is *His initiative* toward us, we can *give ourselves to seek Him*. This is particularly pertinent for people who have grown up in the church. The Lord, through the prophet Jeremiah, addressed those who wanted to be delivered from bondage to their fallen religious image, saying, 'For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, says the Lord, thoughts of peace and not of evil, to give you a future and a hope. Then you will call upon Me and go and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart. I will be found by you, says the Lord, and I will bring you back from your captivity.' **Jer 29:11-14.**

This is the response of those who are heeding the call of Christ in this season, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.' **Mat 11:28-29.** We come to Christ, seeking to meet Him eye to eye in order to be delivered from our fallen self-image. He yokes us, by grace, to Himself on the pathway of salvation, where we learn from Him and thereby grow in our knowledge of Him and of ourselves. This is salvation as we enter the kingdom through regeneration and renewing, and find rest for our souls. **Tit 3:4-5.**

Further Study JEREMIAH 29

Knowing in the light of fellowship

The experiences of Jacob and Paul demonstrate that, having heard the Lord call our name, we cannot *possess* our name until we 'see' the Shepherd struck and His visage marred more than any man's, in the court of Caiaphas. **Isa 52:14**. This is because our name and true image are in the face of our Redeemer. **Isa 47:4**. As we find deliverance from our self-image, we begin to obtain our name through the ministry of light that shines from His face. **2Co 4:6**. That is, we are able to *inherit* our name as we then walk in this light and participate in the fellowship of the presbytery. **1Jn 1:1-3,7**.

Practically, we receive the word of our name as the light of the knowledge of the glory of God that proceeds from the face of Christ *through* the ministry of the word that proceeds from the fellowship of the presbytery. This principle was epitomised by the naming of Barnabas. Formerly known as Joses, he was named 'Son of Encouragement' by the apostles in the context of their fellowship. As Luke recorded, 'And Joses, *who was also named Barnabas by the apostles* (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold it, and brought the money and laid it at the apostles' feet.' **Act 4:36-37**. Later, along with Paul, Barnabas was set apart by the Holy Spirit, and commended by the presbytery in Antioch, for the work of proclaiming the gospel of God to the Gentiles. **Act 13:2**.

The example of Barnabas stands in stark contrast to the outcome of Ananias and Sapphira's deceit. This couple conspired together to present the image of a committed, offering, household. The money that they gave was not an expression of love through obedience; rather, it was an investment in *their self-image*. It was a deception. Instead of being established on the pathway of sanctification as they walked in the light of the word proceeding from the presbytery, they were slain by the Lord. **Act 5:9-10**.

Further Study 1 JOHN 1

Hearing, possessing and inheriting

The progression of hearing one's call, possessing one's name, and then inheriting one's name on the pathway of salvation, was also exemplified by Peter. Peter's experience is particularly helpful to consider, for he met Christ eye to eye as the Shepherd was, literally, struck in the court of Caiaphas. **Luk 22:61-62**. Then, the pathway of sanctification, to which He was commended by Christ in the presence of his fellow disciples, involved fulfilling the work of a shepherd. **Joh 21:15-17**.

Peter first heard his name being called when Jesus commissioned him as a disciple. Recounting this interaction, the apostle John wrote, 'One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. *You shall be called Cephas [Peter]*" (which is translated, A Stone): **Joh 1:40-42**.

It was not until Peter found deliverance from his carnal self-image, as he met Christ eye to eye and face to face in the court of Caiaphas, that he began to possess the name 'Rock' that was given to him by Christ. This was prophesied to Peter by Christ as the light of the knowledge of his sonship that shone from His face in Caiaphas' court. Christ was learning this obedience as He suffered for Peter's iniquity. The prophetic ministry to Peter was the testimony of Jesus! **Rev 19:10**.

We know that, having received faith through his encounter with the fiery eyes of Christ, Peter went to his house mourning with godly sorrow. Peter's mourning was not without hope. Rather, he went to his house with a song planted in his heart. **Psa 40:1-3**. Peter's song was the confession that he was now possessing the name Rock, which he had been called by the good Shepherd some three and a half years earlier.

Further Study JOB 42

Called to be a shepherd

When Jesus met Peter on the shore of Lake Galilee, He called him to be a shepherd, saying to Peter, 'Feed My lambs', 'Tend My sheep', and 'Feed My sheep'. **Joh 21:15-17**. In order to fulfil this work, Peter would need to walk in the fellowship of Christ's dying and living. Accordingly, Jesus said to him, 'When you were younger [living according to your carnal self-image], you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old [spiritual], you will stretch out your hands, and another [the Holy Spirit] will gird you and carry you where you do not wish [that is, in a way that is not sourced from yourself]'. **Joh 21:18**.

Through the word of Christ at an *agape* meal with his brethren, Peter was joined to the pathway of regeneration and renewing through which he could *inherit* his name as an eternal reward. **Tit 3:4-5**. This pathway is the fellowship of Christ's death and life; it is a participation in the seven wounding events of His offering journey. Each wounding event is a death to an *endpoint*. In this regard, the seven wounding events are seven endpoints of death. As a person embraces an endpoint, they are brought back with Christ, by regeneration, to life, which has no end. Everlasting life is everlasting regeneration, for all things are made new every day, forever.

As a shepherd of the sheep, Peter would be joined to the great Shepherd who was struck in the face. What happened to Christ would happen to Peter. With this in view, we recall that 'the men who held Jesus mocked Him and beat Him. And having blindfolded Him, they struck Him on the face and asked Him, saying, "Prophecy! Who is the one who struck You?"' And many other things they blasphemously spoke against Him.' **Luk 22:63-65**.

Further Study JOHN 21

Blindfolding the messenger

In the same way as Christ was blindfolded in the court of Caiaphas, Peter's face would be 'blindfolded' by the deceit of those in the midst of the church who would then 'strike' him through their demands for a word that would define their calling and verify their identity. This is indicative of people who lay their own deceit upon the messenger. Entreating the messenger with an idol in their heart, they demand that the messenger prophesy to them by giving to them a statement about their identity, name and situation. **Eze 14:7-8**. By this means, they put the messenger on trial as their resource in this competitive world.

The prophet Daniel declared that messengers would fall on account of those who clung to them with this deceit. **Dan 11:34**. Those messengers who receive the accompanying suffering as a chastening *are refined and purified*. **Dan 11:34-35**. They need to be recovered to the hand of Christ in order to again shine the light of the gospel as a messenger proceeding from a presbytery.

The apostle Peter fell in this manner at Antioch when he ingratiated himself with the Judaisers who had come from James. He was blindfolded as he, with Barnabas, were carried away with the hypocrisy of these Jews from Jerusalem. **Gal 2:11-13**. Notably, a hypocrite is an actor who wears a mask as they assume a particular character or role. It is a deceiving projection of one's self-crafted image. Peter needed to be recovered to his sanctification through regeneration and renewing as he received and responded to the word of Paul, his fellow presbyter. With this end in view, Paul publicly admonished Peter, saying, 'If I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor. For I through the Law died to the Law *that I might live to God!*' **Gal 2:18-19**.

Further Study GALATIANS 2

Bound by his own belt

James was also blindfolded and struck when Paul came to Jerusalem. As a shepherd, he was overcome by the myriads of Jews who identified as believers, but who were zealous for the Law and the temple. James was blindfolded and struck as the Christians threatened to riot, having been informed that Paul had taught the Jews who were among the Gentiles 'to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs'. **Act 21:20-21**. Having succumbed to the pressure of those who held to the gospel traditions of the Old Covenant, James directed Paul to go to the temple with four men who had taken a vow and be purified with them and pay their expenses 'so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the Law'. **Act 21:23-24**.

Paul did not submit himself to this deception, even though he went to the temple at the direction of James. We know this because, earlier, as he made his way to Jerusalem, Paul and his companions came to Caesarea and entered the house of Philip, where he stayed for many days. During this time, a prophet named Agabus took Paul's belt, bound his own hands and feet and said, 'Thus says the Holy Spirit, "So shall the Jews at Jerusalem bind the man who owns this belt, and deliver him into the hands of the Gentiles!"' **Act 21:11**.

Significantly, Paul would not be bound by the Jews in Jerusalem but, rather, by his own belt! With his belt, he was *girding himself with truth*, which sanctified the garment of his priesthood, enabling him to stand in the midst of great hypocrisy, without losing his probity. **Eph 6:14-16**. In this way, Paul was able to be taken, by the Spirit, where he did not desire to go, which was to Rome.

Further Study ACTS 21

Not yielding to deception

Reflecting on Peter's humiliation in Antioch, Paul said that he himself was unwilling to yield submission, for even an hour, to false brethren who sought to bring the church into bondage to former traditions and gospels. He would not receive or engage these ones, in order that the truth of the gospel would continue with his hearers. **Gal 2:4-5**. Saying it another way, if he had yielded to their deception, the truth of the gospel would not have been proclaimed to, nor been effective in, his hearers.

Similarly, Paul reprimanded the Corinthian leaders for putting up with fools under the guise of a form of wisdom which had not come from the fellowship of the presbytery. Specifically, he said to them, 'For you put up with fools gladly, since you yourselves are wise! For you put up with it if one brings you into bondage, if one devours you, if one takes from you, if one exalts himself, if one strikes you on the face. To our shame I say that we were too weak for that! But in whatever anyone is bold – I speak foolishly – I am bold also.' **2Co 11:19-21**. Paul emphasised that the leaders in Corinth were subject to this abuse because they were puffed up, revealing that they were leavened. Consequently, they were unable to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

The messengers of Christ who are standing in their sanctification through regeneration and renewing have no part in, nor obligation to, those within a congregation who engage with such deceit. Like the Judaisers who came to Antioch, and who pursued Paul, those who seek to relate in this manner belong to natural Jerusalem. **Gal 4:25**.

Paul not only resisted those who sought to bind his face and to demand that he affirm their projections through his engagement with them but, also, he called every believer who had an ear to hear the word, to separate themselves from this mixed trading dynamic within the church. **2Co 6:17-18**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 6

The ministry of a shepherd

While Paul was unwilling to entertain those who sought to cling to him with deceit, he was able to be a father to those who separated themselves from this alternative fellowship that was based in historical connections and denominational traditions. **2Co 6:17-18**. Those who receive this ministry are able to grow as sons and daughters of God because they are walking in the light of the word and are changing, from glory to glory, into the image of the Son. **2Co 3:18**.

Jesus Christ is the great Shepherd of the sheep. **Heb 13:20-21**. He shepherds the flock by sending to them 'under-shepherds'. The apostle Peter identified these under-shepherds as 'elders among the flock, who serve as overseers'. **1Pe 5:1-4**. Their work is to gather His people into the fellowship that exists between the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. This is the fellowship of the name of God, which is the kingdom of God.

Describing the ministry of the word by the good Shepherd, through His under-shepherds, King Solomon wrote, 'The words of the wise are like goads, and the words of scholars [masters of assemblies, or overseers in the Father's house] are like well-driven nails, given by one Shepherd.' **Ecc 12:11**. The nails, given by one Shepherd through the ministry of under-shepherds, secure a hearer in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Under-shepherds do not herd the flock in the manner of a sheepdog, cajoling the responses of their hearers by reiterating and restating the word, or by petitioning their hearers, or through inquisition. Neither do they script the response and expression of people to the word. Rather, they call their hearers by name as they preach the word of Christ from the fellowship of the presbytery. Jesus said, 'My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me. And I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish; neither shall anyone snatch them out of My hand.' **Joh 10:27-28**.

Further Study 1 PETER 5

The temple flock

Shepherds are able to call a person by name because they have insight into the sonship to which their hearer has been called and named to be by the great Shepherd, Christ. This insight is not inherent in their own capacity or understanding, but is found in the light of fellowship that belongs to the presbytery.

A shepherd seeks fellowship with the sheep of Christ's pasture. This dialogue is possible because each person has received the same spirit of faith. **2Co 4:13-14**. Fellowship does not involve scripting for, nor assuming the accountability for, another's life and decisions but, rather, involves commending them to the pathway of sanctification that belongs to their name and obedience. In this regard, we recognise that Christ's sheep are 'the temple flock'. **Eze 34:31. Eze 36:37-38**. That is, they are part of a flock that has been bred and chosen for sacrifice. They are a sacrificial flock!

When Christ the great Shepherd calls His 'sheep' by name, He leads them out to find pasture. **Isa 40:26. Joh 10:3-4**. He places them in 'the flock' in an order where they follow by name. The flock is a fellowship by name. This flock comprises men and women who are being called by name as they follow the good Shepherd, walking in the order of headship. **1Co 11:3**. Note that it is only in the order of headship that a person is able to receive, possess and inherit their name as a son of God.

Each person needs to know Christ, the Shepherd, personally, because He is the One who trains us, or teaches us His name as our Wonderful Counsellor. **Isa 9:6**. He teaches us who the Father has named us to be, which He fulfilled through His offering journey. **Ecc 6:10**. Significantly, the Shepherd teaches us this knowledge through the ministry of His under-shepherds in the church.

Further Study ROMANS 12

The pathway of salvation

When the Angel of the Lord appeared to Joseph, explaining that the child in Mary's womb was conceived of the Holy Spirit, he said to him, 'And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, *for He will save His people from their sins.*' **Mat 1:21.** Jesus did not save us from our sins simply by suffering and dying in our stead. Rather, through His offering journey from Gethsemane to Calvary, He *pioneered a pathway* leading to eternal salvation for those who obey Him. **Heb 5:9. Isa 35:8.** On this pathway, we are joined to a process of regeneration and renewing through which we can find deliverance from sin, and can become the son of God and son of man whom we are predestined to be. **Tit 3:4-5.**

With this in view, the apostle Peter opened his first epistle by addressing us as pilgrims who are on a journey from Earth to heaven. **1Pe 1:1-2.** He explained that we have been born to see our salvation, which is 'a living hope' that is set before us as we walk through life as Christians. **1Pe 1:3-4. Heb 6:17-18.** Although we rejoice in this hope, we are, at times, grieved in our daily sojourn because we are beset by various temptations and trials. These trials test, or prove, our commitment. Through our obedience in the midst of these trials, the genuineness of our faith is demonstrated. When we are put under pressure and we refuse to draw back in unbelief or we refuse to deviate to some other belief system, *our faith is purified.* **1Pe 1:6-7.**

In his first epistle, Peter also exhorted us to be sober and vigilant when we are put under this pressure. This pressure comes from the devil, who 'walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour'. Peter explained that the oppressive pressure that is applied by Satan is a suffering that we all must endure because it belongs to all of our brethren in the world. **1Pe 5:8-9.**

Further Study 1 PETER 1

The first work of shepherding

Peter taught that it is commendable, because of our conscience toward God, when we take a stand against sin, and endure grief and suffering wrongfully. 1Pe 2:19. Satan is successfully resisted and overcome as we remain *steadfast in faith*, which is demonstrated through our obedience in the midst of pressure and contrary circumstances. **1Pe 5:8-11.**

However, under pressure, some people will deviate from the pathway that Christ has authored for their salvation, and they will be *overtaken in a fault*. In fact, from time to time, we are all like sheep who have gone astray and must return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls. **1Pe 2:25.** The elders, or presbyters, who are among the 'sheep', are to 'shepherd the flock of God', and to recover those sheep who are overtaken in a fault. **1Pe 5:1-3. Gal 6:1.**

The first work of shepherding the flock of God is to *proclaim the word of Christ*. This word, ministered from the presbytery through the lordship of the Holy Spirit, comes to every individual. It is proclaimed to both the obedient and the disobedient, urging them towards repentance and the works of faith that belong to their sanctification.

The word that is proclaimed from the presbytery is a 'mirror' to a person regarding their personal and relational situations as they journey in life. This mirror can also be extended to a hearer through the admonition and instruction that they receive in dialogue with shepherding elders. We note these two aspects of the ministry of the word in Paul's instruction to Timothy. He wrote, '*Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching.*' **2Ti 4:2.**

The call to repentance is the first word of the gospel that is proclaimed by the elders. On Solomon's porch, Peter, having illuminated his hearers to their sins, declared, 'Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord.' **Act 3:19.**

Further Study 1 PETER 2

Hearing a word behind

Repentance and conversion are essential before a person's sins are blotted out. This is a condition of obtaining the blessing of eternal life. However, a person can repent only through the conviction of the Spirit in response to His word. **Joh 16:7-8.** When a believer is going astray, the word of God comes to them as a command, issued from behind them. Explaining this point, the prophet Isaiah said, 'Your ears shall hear a word *behind you*, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand or whenever you turn to the left.' **Isa 30:21.** The word proclaims to them the obedience that Christ fulfilled for them when He pioneered the pathway of their salvation.

The apostle John experienced this ministry of the word. He testified that, while he was imprisoned on the island named Patmos, he was 'in the Spirit on the Lord's Day'. He heard, *behind him*, 'a loud voice, as of a trumpet'. **Rev 1:10.** It appears that John needed to be reoriented in relation to his work and walk, for he heard the voice of the Lord *behind him*. In response, John turned and was illuminated 'to see the voice' that spoke with him. This voice was the Spirit speaking. The veil belonging to his present orientation was removed and he saw the Son of Man in the midst of seven lampstands. **Rev 1:12-13.** He was able to see and meet the Lord Jesus Christ eye to eye and face to face. **2Co 3:16-18.**

When John saw the Lord, he fell at His feet as though he were dead. **Rev 1:17.** This is the response of one who declares that they are not worthy of the word. **Gen 32:10. Act 10:25.** In doing so, they reveal themselves to be 'a house of peace', because they can be joined to the fellowship of offering in which the peace of God was brought forth. **Luk 10:5-6. Eph 2:14-18.**

Further Study ISAIAH 48

Turning to meet the Lord

The Lord extended His right hand, which contained the seven stars, to John. As He did this, He said to John, *'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last. I am He who lives, and was dead, and behold, I am alive forevermore. Amen. And I have the keys of Hades and of Death. Write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this.'* **Rev 1:17-19**. Through this initiative from His hand, in which resided the presbyteries of the seven lampstand churches, the Son of Man ministered faith to John, enabling him to stand in his name. **Rev 1:20**. He then declared to John the works that belonged to his obedience; that is, John was to write the things which he had 'seen', the things that 'are', and the things that were 'to come'.

The proceeding word that is ministered to a person who is going astray brings conviction, illuminating them to their sin. It calls them to turn to meet the Lord and to obtain repentance by obeying the word of direction that is being given to them. This direction is summed up by the command, 'This is the way, walk in it'. **Isa 30:21**.

A person begins to mourn as they turn to the lordship of the Spirit and are enlightened by this word. **2Co 3:16-18**. The darkness of their delusion and self-righteousness is dispelled, illuminating to them the knowledge of their transgression. Their response, as exemplified by King David when Nathan the prophet exposed his adultery and murder, is, 'Have mercy upon me, O God, according to Your lovingkindness; according to the multitude of Your tender mercies, blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. *For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.*' **Psa 51:1-3**.

Further Study PSALM 51

Commentary or confession

The first statement of a sinner's confession, as they acknowledge their sin and iniquity, is *a statement of their damnation*. In this regard, they are confessing the truth that, on account of their sin, they are not one of the Lord's people. **Hos 1:10.** To this end, King David's statement concerning his sin demonstrated the beginning point of true confession. He stated, '*Against You, You only, have I sinned*, and done this evil in Your sight – that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge.' **Psa 51:4.** With this initial acknowledgement, the hearer is beginning to demonstrate accountability for their sin. **Luk 18:13-14.**

It is necessary for a person to identify and confess their sin. **Jas 5:16. 1Jn 1:9.** However, the identification of one's sin is not, in and of itself, *repentance*. Viewing one's statement of sin to be repentance, particularly in the first instance, can be merely an action of penance in their pursuit of absolution for their sin. Often, the statements of confession spoken or written by a person seeking relief from condemnation are a *commentary* on all that they have done. In effect, their detailed self-reflection is an assertion that they see their sin. However, because they say that they see, without acknowledging their blindness on account of their uncleanness, *their sin remains*. As Jesus said to the Pharisees, 'If you were blind, you would have no sin; but now you say, "We see." *Therefore your sin remains!* **Joh 9:41.**

A person's self-reflection and commentary on their condition is the fruit of *self-righteousness*. These penitent expressions are not a substitute for new birth and training. When one turns to Christ, they need 'the sincere milk of the word' so that they may grow from carnal immaturity to become spiritual. **1Co 3:1-3. 1Pe 2:1-3.** 'The milk of the word' is *sound doctrine*. This word gives instruction to a hearer regarding the culture of godliness that belongs to the kingdom of heaven.

Further Study DANIEL 9

Penance or repentance

Commentary, or self-reflection, belongs to penance, which a person who is motivated by the fear of death employs to reinforce their religious self-image. It is idolatry. A messenger who receives and supports such a response is exposed to the same judgement as the sinner. Warning against this mode of counsel, the Lord said, 'And if the prophet is *induced* to speak anything, I the Lord have induced that prophet, and I will stretch out My hand against him and destroy him from among My people Israel. And they shall bear their iniquity; the punishment of the prophet shall be the same as the punishment of the one who inquired.' **Eze 14:9-10.**

The confession of a person who is sorrowing in a godly manner is an expression of faith that is received through illumination as they walk in the light of God's word. Their confession, which is the communication of faith, *will continue to progress in detail and in their understanding of the impact of their sin on others.* This happens as they receive further illumination in the process of mourning. Highlighting this principle, the prophet Zechariah declared, 'And I will pour on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem the Spirit of grace and supplication; then they will look on Me whom they pierced. Yes, they will mourn for Him as one mourns for his *only son*, and grieve for Him as one grieves for a *firstborn*.' **Zec 12:10-11.**

We see in this statement a progression from one's acknowledgement of their sin against the Lord, to mourning for their sin against the little ones who belong to '*the church of the firstborn*'. **Heb 12:22-23.** In this regard, we note that 'the firstborn' is not only Christ, the Person; it refers also to the corporate body of Christ, the church. A repentant person will mourn for the impact of their sin upon their brethren as they continue to mourn for its wounding effect upon Christ.

Further Study ZECHARIAH 12

Godly sorrow produces repentance

A person who, in response to the conviction of the Holy Spirit, has looked on Christ and begun to acknowledge their sin, will mourn with godly sorrow. This is not a pathetic response of condemnation and self-recrimination. Rather, it is a process that demonstrates the obedience of faith, which a believer progressively obtains through illumination from the proceeding word. This mourning '*produces repentance leading to salvation*'. **2Co 7:10**. That is, it leads to the pathway of obedience upon which a person is being saved through regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit. **Tit 3:4-5**.

Godly sorrow was the focus of Christ's intercessory prayer in Gethsemane. Christ has already mourned and fulfilled the repentance of each of us. The faith that He gives to us through the ministry of His word connects us to this process of mourning, which leads to repentance, demonstrated through obedience. Describing our participation in this process of mourning, Paul wrote, 'For observe this very thing, that you *sorrowed in a godly manner*: What diligence it produced in you, what clearing of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what vehement desire, what zeal, what vindication! In all things you proved yourselves to be clear in this matter.' **2Co 7:11**.

A person demonstrates '*diligence*' through their individual application to turn and see the voice of the Spirit. They seek illumination concerning the conviction of the Spirit that has accompanied the word. Exemplifying this response, the psalmist Asaph wrote, 'You hold my eyelids open; I am so troubled that I cannot speak. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times. I call to remembrance my song in the night; I meditate within my heart, *and my spirit makes diligent search*.' **Psa 77:4-6**. In the fellowship of Christ's travail, this diligence in relation to the word becomes a person's precious possession. This is because it is a capacity that belongs to the *exanastasis* life of Christ, which a person obtains in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, revealing that they are obtaining salvation through regeneration. **Pro 12:27. Php 3:10-11**.

Further Study 2 CORINTHIANS 7

Clearing and indignation

The term '*clearing of yourselves*' literally means 'apology' (Greek: *apologia*). No doubt, a repentant sinner will desire to make apology to the one against whom they have sinned. As they do this, it will not be from the basis of justifying themselves or seeking understanding from the people whom they have wounded. However, this is not the primary expression of clearing oneself. The apostle Peter used this same word when he said, 'But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts, and always be ready to give a defence [*apologia*] to everyone who asks you a reason for the hope that is in you, with meekness and fear.' **1Pe 3:15**. A person who is clearing themselves has *received faith through their diligent application to the word of the Lord*. By faith, their conversation and conduct are being reformed as they journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. They are confessing that this fellowship is the only context in which they can change and can obtain wisdom and grace for relational recovery and restitution. **1Jn 1:7**.

In the first instance, '*indignation*' is the implication of meeting the *fiery* eyes of Christ. **Rev 1:14**. **Dan 10:5-6**. This is a confronting experience, as the prophet Nahum attested, writing, 'Who can stand before His *indignation*? And who can endure the fierceness of His anger? His fury is poured out like *fire*, and the rocks are thrown down by Him.' **Nah 1:6**. A person who acknowledges the indignation of the Lord is able to join His indignation. As they meet Christ's fiery eyes, and do not draw back in unbelief, this very fire is ignited in their spirit! **Heb 10:38-39**. That is, as part of their repentance, they are able to embrace the process that is necessary for their purification. Moreover, they are motivated to stand in obedience and accountability to deal with the cultural matters that require attention within their life and household.

Further Study PSALM 90

Full restoration to the pathway

A person obtains '*the fear of the Lord*' through the anointing of the Spirit of God. The fear of the Lord is one of the seven aspects of the Spirit of God. **Isa 11:1-2. Isa 61:1-7. Psa 133:1-3.** A person receives this anointing as they entreat and embrace the fellowship and order of headship in the body of Christ. **Jas 5:14.** Through the fear of the Lord, a person is delivered from bondage to the fear of death, to join the fellowship of Christ's death. They embrace the implications of their participation in the chastening of the Lord and obtain wisdom regarding their obedience as a son of God. **Pro 9:10.**

'*Vehement desire*' is the evidence of the love of God being poured into the heart of the repentant sinner. **Rom 5:5.** Describing the love of Yahweh, the Scriptures declare, 'For love is as strong as death, jealousy as cruel as the grave; its flames are flames of fire, *a most vehement flame*. Many waters cannot quench love, nor can the floods drown it.' **Son 8:6-7.** When the love of God is poured into the heart of a hearer, their focus is on their service of others, and on their participation in the fellowship of offering, rather than on the recovery of their own image and reputation.

This motivation to serve another in love reveals their renewed '*zeal*' for the house of God and for His people. **Psa 69:9.** Having been unable to fellowship with an open face in the *agape* meal because of their darkness and uncleanness, a person's zeal for their full participation in this meal will now become their motivation. They will speak by testimony and confession, joyfully renouncing the hidden things of shame, which include their loyalties to former church doctrines and traditions from which they have formerly obtained identity verification. **2Co 4:2.**

'*Vindication*', or acquittal, is the final stage in the seven steps of mourning. A person who has been vindicated has been completely restored to the pathway of salvation that Christ has pioneered for them.

Further Study PSALM 84

If anyone is sick

The apostle James addressed the difficulties that Christians may encounter on the pathway of salvation as they are beset by various temptations and trials. He wrote, 'Is anyone among you suffering? Let him pray. Is anyone cheerful? Let him sing psalms. 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.' **Jas 5:13-14**. In this passage, James made a distinction between 'suffering' and 'spiritual sickness'.

If we are suffering with Christ, we are to *pray*. We do not know how to pray as we ought, but we pray in the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit helps our weakness by joining us to the prayer meeting of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Jesus Christ searches our heart and makes intercession to the Father for us. **Rom 8:26-27**. In this fellowship of prayer, we receive the grace that is necessary for us to endure the suffering that we are experiencing, and to do the works of obedience that Christ has already learned and finished for us.

In contrast to this, if we are spiritually sick, James said that we need to call for the elders. When he said, 'If anyone is sick', James was not referring only to general physical ailments. He was referring to a person who is *spiritually* sick because they are not participating in the fellowship of the *agape* meal in a worthy manner. In this regard, we are reminded of the words of Paul, who wrote, 'He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgement to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason, many are weak and sick and many sleep.' **1Co 11:29-30**.

This raises an important question. How can we know the difference between the sufferings that belong to fellowship with Christ on the pathway of salvation, and the sufferings of sickness that belong to the judgement of God?

Further Study I CORINTHIANS 11

Calling for the elders

If we are suffering with Christ, we will have *a testimony of change and of the power of resurrection life* by which we are able to fulfil the works that belong to our obedience in the midst of our suffering. **Php 3:10-11**. We will be *growing* in our capacity to participate in *agape* fellowship and to minister life to others. However, if we are weak and sick because the Holy Spirit is resisting us, and we are oppressed by unclean spirits, we will not have a testimony of resurrection life. Rather, our capacity to meet and relate with others will be diminishing. We will not be focused on serving and caring for others, but will become increasingly self-absorbed and focused on our own problems. We are reminded of the reality that 'every tree is known by its own fruit'. **Luk 6:44**.

When a person is sick on account of their sin, their initiative to call the elders is the beginning of their deliverance. **Jas 5:14**. This is because they are recognising the reality of their situation; they are beginning to judge themselves rightly. Likewise, they are beginning to discern the body of Christ rightly because they recognise the need to be properly connected to the headship of Christ. **1Co 11:29**. We note that James said that they must call for 'the elders'. 'Calling for the elders' means that the person is calling for appropriate fellowship with the elders concerning the reality of their situation. They do not ask for a counselling session with a specific elder; nor do they seek to make a *confidential* confessional.

The primary response of the elders to a person who is sick because of sin is to pray for them. We know that Jesus prayed *three times* in the garden of Gethsemane. **Mat 26:44**. Similarly, we recall that Elijah prayed *three times* for the young boy who died during his stay with the widow in Zarephath. **1Ki 17:21**. Accordingly, James has identified *three dimensions* to the fellowship and ministry of prayer that the presbytery will need to extend toward a person who is spiritually sick.

Further Study JAMES 5

The prayer to anoint with oil

The *first dimension* of prayer is for the elders to *anoint with oil* the person who is sick. James said, 'Let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord.' **Jas 5:14**. This verse has been grossly misunderstood and misapplied across the history of the church. We know that James was not describing a sacrament of anointing with physical oil, and nor was he referring simply to medical treatment. Rather, calling for the elders is for the purpose of an adjustment that enables a person to discern again their place in the body of Christ and to be reconnected to the works of their obedience.

The *oil* is the anointing of the Spirit of the Lord. Significantly, this anointing is 'in the name of the Lord'. Anointing in this manner is not an invocation of the name of the Lord. *The name of the Lord is the fellowship of Yahweh*. The presbyters who come in the name of the Lord are extending this fellowship to the person in their sin-sick condition. **Psa 133:1-3**. The person who is sick has asked for this fellowship, but they themselves have no capacity to join it. The anointing of the Spirit of the Lord enables them to join in fellowship with the elders.

Fellowship with the elders, which is fellowship with the Father and the Son, is *in the fear of the Lord*. **1Jn 1:3**. The fear of the Lord belongs to the Spirit of the Lord. **Isa 11:2**. This anointing is necessary to break the yoke of bondage to the fear of death, which is likely to have been the initial motivation to engage the elders. **Pro 14:27**. The anointing of the Spirit ensures that the interaction is no longer driven by this fallen desire, and that the person who is seeking healing can relate to the elders in sincerity and truth. They are able to acknowledge that in their sinful condition they are 'dead with Christ'. **Col 3:3**.

Further Study ISAIAH 61

The prayer of faith for deliverance

The *second dimension* of prayer is the *prayer of faith* that saves, or delivers, the sick. **Jas 5:15**. The prayer of faith is a ministry of faith to the person. This faith is given to them to enable them to let go of control, and to participate in the obedience of Christ, which is the repentance that He has finished for them.

As the person receives this ministry of faith, they are able to be delivered *from* the bondage of their sin and from the oppression of unclean spirits. And they are delivered *to* the accountability of their own obedience to Christ. The elders are messengers of Christ, but they do not function as intermediaries between the person and Christ. **1Ti 2:5**. Rather, they deliver the sick person to accountably meet Christ themselves.

James continued, 'And the Lord will raise him up.' This reveals that, through faith, the repentant sinner has indeed reckoned themselves dead to sin, and is now beginning to see and walk in obedience by the capacity of resurrection life. **Rom 6:11**. It is the sovereign work of the Lord to awaken the sick person out of their spiritual sleep that leads to spiritual death. **Eph 5:14**.

When a person who is sick first calls for the elders, they are recognising the reality of their situation while, at the same time, they are confessing that they do not have spiritual sight concerning the underlying issues that have caused their condition. The person who is sick must receive light from Christ. This light is *illumination*. The apostle John wrote, 'If we walk in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin'. **1Jn 1:7**. The blood of Christ is not only a cleansing agent; it also contains *the life of Yahweh*, enabling the repentant hearer to rise from the dead. **Lev 17:11**. The work of regeneration and renewing is happening in their life. It is the capacity for their participation in the obedience that Christ has already finished for them.

Further Study MARK 11

The prayer for healing

Once the person who is sick is receiving illumination, they will be able to confess their trespasses to those against whom they have sinned. The *third dimension* of prayer is prayer for healing. James said, 'Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.' **Jas 5:16**. This healing will restore the person's capacity to relate properly in their home and in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. Importantly, we see that apologies and relational restitutions are truly the responses of *obedience*, enabled by resurrection life in the fellowship of Christ's dying and living. They are not the actions of penance that a person employs to recover their tarnished self-image.

The outcome of a genuine fellowship with elders, in the Spirit, is that we are anointed with the oil of joy for mourning, and are delivered from the spirit of heaviness as our garments of priesthood are cleansed. This happens as we are restored to the hope of the gospel, with its joy, even though we are grieved by its various trials. Jesus was anointed for this ministry to us. **Isa 61:1-3**. As we receive this ministry from Him, we are able to minister to one another as part of a kingdom of priests. **Rev 1:6**.

In the fellowship of Gethsemane, we must continue to watch and pray with Christ, lest we fall into the temptation to revert to the actions that come from unbelief – that is, we draw back in unbelief. Prevenient grace, accompanying the word of the Lord, gives us the capacity to choose our sonship. We now walk in fellowship with Christ each day, yoked to His obedience that He has fulfilled for us. His yoke, which enables our obedience, is easy and light. **Mat 11:29-30**. We carry out our works each day through our connection to Christ. This is how repentance works. This message is the gospel that will bring thousands into the kingdom of God as we approach the time of the end.

Further Study 1 KINGS 17



Restoring
my Soul