



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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DECEMBER 2024

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Come to Me

In this season, the Spirit is calling us to meet Christ eye to eye and face to face so that we can be delivered from the fallen, religious self-image that is an impediment to inheriting eternal salvation. This was the apostle Paul's exhortation when he wrote, 'For consider Him who endured such hostility [contradiction] from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.' **Heb 12:3**.

Jesus experienced this contradiction in the court of Caiaphas, when His justice was taken away as He was bruised for our iniquitous self-image. **Act 8:33. Isa 53:5**. To 'consider Jesus' is to look into His face and to acknowledge that His marred visage is the embodiment of our grotesque religious projections. These projections are the expression of a Christian image that is sourced from within ourselves on the basis of our knowledge of good and evil. It is an alternative image to the new creation image of the Son to which we were predestined by God.

Many Christians do not understand that they can be born from above and, yet, fail to obtain their salvation because they choose to live according to their carnal self-image. This image is fed by former gospels and church traditions and is galvanised by the 'good' works that belong to their own sight and understanding. A person who continues to live in this way will become discouraged when their self-image is compromised or is not being verified by others. Their penitent actions, which they exercise either to fortify or to recover their carnal self-image, cause them to become weary in their Christian pilgrimage. Discouragement and weariness are the evidence that a person is failing to enter 'the rest' that belongs to our salvation in the kingdom of God.

The apostle Paul said, 'For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep.' **1Co 11:30**. A person in this condition is suffering under the judgement of God because they fail to discern their sanctified participation in the *agape* meal as a member of the body of Christ. **1Co 11:29**.

Further reading: Hebrews 12

Take My yoke upon you

A carnal Christian will be unable to discern their sanctified participation in the body of Christ because their sight is hindered. In this regard, their projections serve as 'a veil' over their eyes, impeding their ability to receive the light of the knowledge of their true name and image. This light shines from the face of Christ through the proclamation of the word by messengers who belong to a presbytery.

To 'walk in the light' is to be joined to the pathway of salvation that Christ pioneered for each one of us through His offering and suffering journey. **Heb 5:8-10.** With this salvation in view, Jesus said, 'Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden [on account of your carnal self-image], and I will give you rest [cause you to inherit eternal life]. **Mat 11:28.** We come to Christ to meet Him eye to eye, to be delivered from the drive to be the source of our own name and destiny. Significantly, only those who acknowledge their 'wearied condition' are then able to answer the call to come to Him.

Once our fallen self-image is broken, Jesus Christ says to us, '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 11:29.** As we meet Him eye to eye, we can receive faith to take His yoke upon us. Through faith, we are yoked to Christ by grace. **Rom 5:1-2.** **Heb 4:16.** Each day, as we are led by the Spirit, we journey with Christ on the pathway of salvation. He is our 'Wonderful Counsellor' from whom we learn the obedience that He accomplished for us on His offering journey. **Isa 9:6.** In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we are being progressively made a new creation through regeneration and renewing. **Tit 3:4-7.** That is, we are entering 'the rest' that belongs to those who are obtaining an eternal salvation.

Further reading: Hebrews 3

Line on line, precept upon precept

The Scriptures liken the word that establishes a hearer on the pathway of obedience, to 'the dew of Hermon' upon the mountains of Zion. Specifically, King David wrote, 'Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious oil upon the head, running down on the beard, the beard of Aaron, running down on the edge of his garments. It is like the dew of Hermon, descending upon the mountains of Zion; for there the Lord commanded the *blessing* – life forevermore.' **Psa 133:1-3.**

The word of the Lord is ministered to us 'line upon line' and 'precept upon precept'. To those who have been delivered from bondage to their carnal projections, it leads to 'rest' as they walk by the Spirit in the light of the word and fulfil the obedience that Christ has learned for them, and then priests to them. Declaring this principle, Isaiah said, 'Whom will *He teach knowledge*? And whom will He make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts? For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little. For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, to whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest," and, "This is the refreshing".' **Isa 28:9-12.**

Those who do not have an ear to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches, will remain in bondage to their deluded self-image. Instead of embracing the loss of their reputation in the fellowship of Christ's humiliation as they walk in the light of the word, they will strive to find themselves in some other way. Describing this response to the word, the Lord said: 'Yet they would not hear. But the word of the Lord was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little," that they might go and fall backward, and be broken and snared and caught.' **Isa 28:12-13.** They remain in bondage to the law of sin and death. **Rom 7:23.**

Further reading: Isaiah 28

Rest and refreshing

The word brings rest and refreshing as it rains down upon a hearer because of its cleansing and regenerating effect upon them. The Lord, through the prophet Isaiah, likened the ministry of this word to *raining righteousness* on His people, saying, 'Rain down, you heavens, from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness; let the earth open, *let them bring forth salvation*, and let righteousness spring up together. I, the Lord, have created it.' **Isa 45:8**.

The word of righteousness that rains down upon a hearer *brings forth salvation*. This is the implication of the washing of regeneration by the water of the word as a person walks in obedience to the word of Christ on the pathway of salvation. **Heb 5:8-9. Tit 3:4-7. Eph 5:26**.

It is timely to consider whether the ministry of the word, which is addressing our carnal projections, is causing us to be glad and to rejoice through godly mourning, in the same way that Peter rejoiced when he received, and began to inherit, his name. We recall that he went from his encounter with 'the eyes of the Lord', weeping and singing, 'He also brought me up out of a horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my steps. He has put a new song in my mouth – "Praise to our God"'. **Psa 40:2-3**.

If this is not our testimony, is the word of righteousness that is likened to the rain, causing us further discouragement and weariness? If so, we are at risk of the same condemnation as Judas, for we are spurning the faith of God that has been made available to us in His word, and we are choosing to live according to the image of our own fabrication. This will be evident by our contrary responses to the word, which are provoked by oppressive familiar spirits.

Further reading: Hebrews 4

The former rain

The prophet Joel exhorted us to be glad and to rejoice in the Lord on account of the ministry of the word that rains righteousness upon us. He likened this ministry to the 'former rain' and the 'latter rain', writing, 'Be glad then, you children of Zion, and rejoice in the Lord your God; for He has given you the *former rain* faithfully, and He will cause the rain to come down for you – *the former rain, and the latter rain* in the first month. The threshing floors shall be full of wheat, and the vats shall overflow with new wine and oil.' **Joe 2:23-24.**

What are the former and latter rains? In agricultural Israel, the former rain was the Autumn rains (October-November) which fell at seedtime. This rain was necessary for promoting the germination and growth of the seed that was sown. To this end, it is the water of the word that addresses the 'stones' of our heart. The 'latter rain' was the Spring rains (March-April) which fell for a short time prior to the harvest. This rain was necessary to bring the crops to maturity in readiness for the harvest.

The righteousness that is being rained upon us in this season through the word of present truth is the '*former rain*'. It is 'the water of the word' that washes us and regenerates us as we walk in its light. This ministry addresses the ground of our heart so that any impediment to the growth of the seed of the divine nature is removed, and we are able to come to spiritual maturity as a firstfruits people.

Speaking about the water of the word, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'For as the rain comes down, and the snow from heaven, and do not return there, but *water the earth*, and make it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower and bread to the eater, *so shall My word be that goes forth from My mouth.*' **Isa 55:10-11.**

Further reading: Joel 2

Thorns and briars

The apostle Paul wrote, 'For the earth [the ground of our heart] which drinks in the [former] rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God [that is, they are entering rest]; but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.' **Heb 6:7-8.**

The thorns and briars that are brought up from the ground of our heart reflect our response to the word. They 'grow up' within us because we have not found deliverance from the stones of our other law that drive the expression of our self-image. These prickly responses are motivated by familiar spirits and cause us to embrace the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the pleasures of life. **Mat 13:22. Mar 4:19. Luk 8:14.** These are alternative responses to our sanctification, and are compensations for the discontent and discouragement that we feel when our religious projections are not being received or validated.

These pursuits are often confused with *agape* fellowship or offering, affirming that those who take these actions remain deceived by their self-image, and *do not know what spirit that they are of.* **Luk 9:55.** When people gather together on the basis of their reactions to the word, or even in their blindness, they become a faction in the midst of the church. They are walking in darkness. **1Jn 1:6.**

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. 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 reading: Hebrews 6

The call to remember

The polarising effect of 'the water of the word' upon the ground of our heart highlights the need for us to give attention to *how* we are hearing and responding to what the Spirit is saying to the churches. Jesus exhorted us to this consideration, saying, '*Therefore take heed how you hear.* For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have [as a projection] will be taken from him.' **Luk 8:18.**

Peter was delivered from his zealous and religious self-image when the rooster crowed, and he *remembered* the words that Jesus had spoken to him at the last Passover. Concerning this encounter, Luke wrote, 'And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. *Then* Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, "Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times." So Peter went out and wept bitterly'. **Luk 22:61-62.** '*Remembering*' was essential for Peter's conversion from living according to the flesh to walking in a new and living way that led to salvation.

Thankfully, the Father, in the name of the Son, has sent the Holy Spirit as a Helper to teach us, and to bring to our *remembrance* all the things that Christ speaks to us. **Joh 14:26.** The Spirit brings the words of Christ to our remembrance by opening our ear, morning by morning, to hear our obedience. Those who live by the Spirit testify, 'He awakens Me morning by morning, He awakens My ear to hear as the learned. The Lord God has opened My ear; and I was not rebellious, *nor did I turn away* [from receiving the illumination from the face of Christ]. I gave My back to those who struck Me, and My cheeks to those who plucked out the beard; I did not hide My face from shame and spitting.' **Isa 50:4-6.**

Further reading: John 14

The Helper of our faith

Morning by morning, the Spirit is *the Helper of our faith*. This is the faith that we receive if we do not draw back from the face of Christ. The light of the word proceeds from His face, ministering illumination and causing us to remember the word of our sanctification. We obtain our sanctification as we embrace, by this faith, our fellowship in the seven wounds that belong to the trawling journey of Christ. Each day, this is a place of *mourning* for us as we reckon ourselves dead to sin in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, which include, for example, His chastening and His bruising. It is, equally, a place of triumph as we learn and fulfil, by the capacity of His resurrection life, the obedience that belongs to our sanctification. **Rom 6:11. 2Co 2:14.**

With this daily fellowship in view, the Lord further exhorted us, through the prophet Isaiah, saying, '*Listen to Me*, you who follow after righteousness, you who seek the Lord: *look to the rock* from which you were hewn, and to the hole of the pit from which you were dug. *Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah* who bore you; for I called him alone, and blessed him and increased him.' **Isa 51:1-2.**

The Hebrew word for 'listen' in this passage does not merely mean to 'physically hear something'. It means 'to hear intelligently (or, as one who is learned) in order to be obedient'. As we have already considered, the Spirit opens our ear morning by morning to listen, or to hear, in this manner. **Isa 50:4-6.** Notably, a person who listens 'with the ear of a disciple' is directed to first look to Christ, 'the Rock', from which they are hewn. We are then to look to, or remember, Abraham and Sarah. In this season, a focus on Sarah is particularly pertinent as the Lord is coming to every church 'in a spirit of judgement and burning', in order to establish them as 'elect ladies'. **Isa 4:4. 2Jn 1:1.**

Further reading: Isaiah 51

Remember Sarah

Sarah is a type of the church. For this reason, as churches, we are called to remember her obedience and to follow her faith in the world. The Scriptures teach us that Sarah obeyed her husband, 'calling him Lord'. **1Pe 3:5-6**. This marked her connection, through faith, to the order of headship. In obedience to Abraham's request, Sarah said that she was his sister and was taken into the harems of Pharaoh and Abimelech. Sarah did this to preserve her husband's life and the life of the family. As she obeyed Abraham, without a word, she was protected by the Lord in these two contrary contexts. In fact, Sarah became a judgement upon the nations of Egypt and Philistia, for she was a bride 'who looks forth as the morning, fair as the moon, clear as the sun, awesome as an army with banners'. **Son 6:10**.

The first great test of faith for Sarah was in Egypt. Egypt is a type of the world. In this context, Sarai (as she was named at this stage) overcame the world by faith because she believed the word of the Lord to Abram – 'I will make you a great nation; I will bless you and make your name great ... and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed'. **Gen 12:2-3. 1Jn 5:4-5**. Moreover, she obeyed Abram who prophesied, saying to her, 'Indeed I know that you are a woman of beautiful countenance. Therefore, it will happen, when the Egyptians see you, that they will say, "This is his wife"; and they will kill me, but they will let you live.' **Gen 12:11-12**.

With this statement, Abram was indicating to Sarai that her beauty was a *disadvantage* in this circumstance. If she endeavoured to use her beauty to take control of the situation and bring deliverance through her own enterprise, she would save her own life; however, Abram's life would be lost, and their household would be destroyed. **Pro 14:1**.

Further reading: Genesis 12

The faith obedience of Sarah

Abram was not simply seeking to save himself. Rather, he understood that Sarai could only share in the promise that God had made to him if he lived; hence, his assertion 'that it may be well with me *for your sake*'. In other words, if Sarai took an initiative to preserve her house through the exercise of what were her 'assets' with which to trade in the world, she would save her mortal life but forfeit her eternal inheritance which belonged to the household of faith.

In response to this word from her husband, Sarai abandoned her natural, fallen, inclinations to exercise control over her circumstances through the seductive and manipulative 'work of her hands'. Such endeavours belong to the spirit of the world, which was the very context in which she found herself. They are motivated by the romantic desire that was established in the heart of a woman as a consequence of the Fall. **Gen 3:16**. Living by this fallen desire demonstrates that a woman remains in bondage to Satan through the fear of death. **Heb 2:15**.

Having turned from this fallen, carnal approach to her situation, Sarai obeyed her husband by the faith that she obtained as she received his direction for their household. Her chaste conduct, as she submitted to her husband in this perilous setting, revealed that her fear of death had been replaced with a fear of the Lord through her connection in the order of headship. **1Pe 3:2,5-6**. By the faith that belonged to the wisdom that she received through the fellowship of headship, she was able to 'build her house' rather than pull it down. Pro 14:1.

The Lord protected Sarai in the harem of Pharaoh. Moreover, He plagued Pharaoh and his house with *great plagues* because of her. **Gen 12:17**. It is remarkable that the faith-obedience of Sarai, in submission to Abram, not only brought deliverance and prosperity to their household, but it was also the means by which the influence of the world upon them was vanquished.

Further reading: 1 Peter 3

Second trial of faith

Sarai's deliverance from Egypt represented the deliverance of the church from the Old Covenant. It is notable, however, that Sarai left Egypt with Hagar, who became for her, in type, a thorn in her flesh, causing her to 'limp'. In this regard, we remember that when Hagar conceived Ishmael, Sarai became despised in her eyes. However, this mocking voice prevented her from becoming lifted up in pride on account of her prophetic destiny. Hagar and her child were the influence of carnality in the household of faith, which has also hampered the bride of Christ throughout the church age. Wonderfully, the Lord has prophesied concerning Sarah, the mother of us all, 'Sing, O barren, you who have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, you who have not laboured with child! For more are the children of the desolate than the children of the married woman.' **Isa 54:1**.

Sarah's second trial of faith was in the harem of Abimelech. He was a Philistine king, who lived in the land that was promised to Abraham. **Gen 20:1**. He was, therefore, a type of the culture of the world in the church. Abimelech was enamoured by Sarah's appearance, which had been revitalised by the resurrection life that she received through the word of the Lord proclaiming her impending motherhood. In this regard, like Satan and the world in the church, Abimelech sought personal gain and fulfilment through connection with this woman, who was an heir of the grace of life. He endeavoured to take advantage over this godly couple. **Mal 2:15**.

As was the case in Egypt, the faith of Sarah was her protection, and the judgements of God were her defence. Abimelech's house represented a religious and alternative way of life to walking blamelessly in an attitude of circumcision. It was a 'synagogue of Satan' steeped in, and empowered by, 'old gospels' that promoted a form of godliness that embraced mixture, but denied that life can only be found through sanctification in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Further reading: Genesis 20

An open door

Through her obedience to Abraham, Sarah was justified and rewarded with 1 000 talents of silver because she had trusted God and counted Him to be a faithful Saviour and Deliverer. **Gen 20:16**. Silver is the symbol of atonement. It was necessary that these talents of silver be given to Sarah by Abimelech so that his household and kingdom could be redeemed from death by the prayer of Abraham, who was a prophet. By this means, salvation came to the house of Abimelech.

We can liken the salvation of Abimelech's household to the promise that Jesus Christ has made to the church of Philadelphia. As one of the daughters of Zion, the Philadelphian church exemplifies the faith of Sarah. Jesus commended them saying, 'I know your works [of faith]. See, I have set before you an open door, and no one can shut it; for you have a little strength, have kept My word, and have not denied My name.' **Rev 3:8**.

Like Sarah, those who belong to the church of Philadelphia are joined to the weakness of Christ as they persevere in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. They are obedient to the word of the Lord, which is ministered through the order of headship in the body of Christ, and they keep faith with the name that they have received and belongs to them only, in the fellowship of His name. For this reason, they are blessed with an open door. This 'open door' not only refers to their access to the Father's house in the time of the end; it includes the capacity and opportunity to proclaim the gospel of sonship to other churches and to those who are in the world. Jesus declared that through this ministry, He would make those of the synagogue of Satan, symbolised by the household of Abimelech, come and worship before their feet, and also make them know that He has loved those who demonstrate the faith of Sarah. **Rev 3:9**.

Further reading: Galatians 4

Remember Lot's wife

Inasmuch as we are directed to remember Sarah, Jesus Himself also directed us to 'remember Lot's wife'. **Luk 17:32**. In contrast to Sarah, Lot's wife was unwilling to obey the angels of the Lord or her husband when the word of God called them to forsake the mixture and corruption of Sodom. Clearly, Lot's wife had family members in Sodom. She was unwilling to leave them to their own accountability for choosing and continuing in their rebellion and corruption.

The angels of the Lord even took action to 'pluck' Lot, his wife, and their daughters from the fire of God's judgement. **Jud 1:23**. They took hold of Lot's hand, his wife's hand, and the hands of his two daughters to bring them out and set them in a place of safety. **Gen 19:16**. The word to them for their deliverance was, 'Escape for your life! Do not look behind you nor stay anywhere in the plain. Escape to the mountains, lest you be destroyed.' **Gen 19:17**. However, Lot's wife did not hate 'the garment spotted by the flesh'. **Jud 1:23**. Rather, she looked back to Sodom with grief and longing for her godless family. Consequently, she became a pillar of salt. **Gen 19:26**. Her state typified women consumed by bitterness, whose condemnation is the same as those for whom they yearn and embrace. To this end, the judgement of Lot's wife was a sign and wonder. **Deu 28:45-46**.

In this season, the judgements of God are coming among us because of our persistent carnality and our leavened embrace of alternative cultures in our *agape* fellowship, publicly and from house to house. The Lord, through His messengers, is urging us to recognise this judgement and to forsake the religious mixture and sophisticated engagement with those who have rejected God's word and His messengers and who are, therefore, enemies of God. We are to remember this as we partake of the *agape* meal, lest we come under God's judgement for eating and drinking in an unworthy manner. **1Co 11:24-32**.

Further reading: Genesis 19

Seek the Lord

What is the response that we can make to the initiative of the Spirit in this season? Instead of proclaiming our own commitment and righteousness, this is a time to wait patiently for the Lord and to seek to meet Him, so that we can be established on the pathway of salvation upon which we can progressively know Him. The Lord Himself directed us to this response, 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.' **Jer 29:11-13.**

This is the response of those who are hearing what the Spirit is saying. It describes a person who is waiting patiently for the salvation of the Lord. Jeremiah testified to this response in the book of Lamentations. This book was the expression that belonged to his fellowship in the godly sorrow, or travail, that Christ finished for each one of us. Accordingly, he confessed, 'The Lord is good to those who *wait for Him*, to the soul *who seeks Him*. It is good that one should hope and wait quietly for the salvation of the Lord. It is good for a man to bear the yoke in his youth.' **Lam 3:25-27.**

Godly sorrow is the fruit of waiting for the salvation of the Lord by listening to Him and seeking His face. This is not the sorrow of Lot's wife, which is full of regret and leads to death. It is the sorrow of Sarah who walked in obedience to the Lord and to her husband and obtained her sanctification as the mother of a great multitude. The Lord desires for us to be established in this motherhood, where we participate in bringing forth a numberless multitude in the time of the end as part of a chaste bride.

Further reading: Jeremiah 29

Our iniquitous self-image

Our 'image' is how we know ourselves and are known by others. It is the essence of the name through which our identity has its expression. In this regard, an image is not inherently wicked. Rather, the eternal implications of one's image – whether eternal life or eternal death – depends upon the *source* of that image.

We all were predestined to be made into the image and likeness of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. **Gen 1:26**. According to God's immutable plan, this is to happen as we are born to see the kingdom of God and are then born of water and of the Spirit to *enter* the kingdom of God. **Joh 3:3,5**. The kingdom of God is *the fellowship of Yahweh*. Their fellowship is to become both the source and context of our life and expression, forever.

However, this predestination was forsaken through the fall of mankind. Satan deceived Eve with a lie, saying that if she ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil her eyes would be opened, and she would become *like God*. **Gen 3:4-5**. Adam then disobeyed God, and dishonoured Christ as the Head of his house, when he listened to his wife and ate of this fruit. **Gen 3:17**. Through their disobedience, Adam and Eve *strayed* from God's predestination for them as they sought to become the source of their own image and expression. The drive to craft their own image was established as *another law* in their hearts and, by implication, in the heart of every son and daughter who would be born after them. **Rom 7:23**.

Straying from our predestination to be made in the image and likeness of God to, instead, walk in our own way, *is iniquity*. Highlighting this point, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'All we like sheep have gone *astray*; we have turned, every one, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the *iniquity* of us all.' **Isa 53:6**. Evidently, our iniquity is manifest by living according to a self-sourced image.

Further reading: Genesis 3

Protecting our reputation

A person's self-image is an alternative to the image to which they were predestined before the foundation of the world. It is a gross *distortion* of their identity expression, and falls terribly short of the glory that God has prepared for them. **Rom 3:23.** Living according to one's self-image is therefore sin, and yields only the damnable deeds of the flesh, including, 'adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like.' **Gal 5:19-21.**

A *projection* is the expression of a person's self-image. How our projection is received and acknowledged by others is the basis of our *reputation*. Because of its connection to the verification of our identity, our reputation is very important to us; it is as though our life depends upon it. Consider, for example, Job. The loss of his reputation was even more grievous to him than the loss of his possessions and the deterioration of his health! Having detailed his reputation, and the high esteem in which he was held before his severe trial, Job lamented, 'And now I am their taunting song; yes, I am their byword. They abhor me, they keep far from me; they do not hesitate to spit in my face. Because He has loosed my bowstring and afflicted me.' **Job 30:9-11.**

The preservation and optimisation of a person's reputation is the reason why many people find it difficult to share openly and honestly with others about their life. It is also the reason why people are unwilling to walk in the light with their brethren in relation to their sin. **1Jn 1:7.** Noting this reticence for open-faced fellowship in the light of the word, Jesus said, '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. For everyone practising evil [that is, walking according to their fallen image] hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed.' **Joh 3:19-20.**

Further reading: John 3

A carnal Christian

A person's self-defined image is also the reference point for their sense of *justice*. With their mind, they appraise themselves and others with reference to their own self-image. Where they fail to attain the presumed 'good' of their self-defined image, they accuse or excuse themselves. **Rom 2:15**. This then informs the actions that they believe they need to take either to consolidate or to reform their projection. Similarly, with their mind, a carnal person also accuses or excuses the impact of other people's actions upon their self-image. Where their self-image has been assailed by another, they seek justice, either through recompense or through vengeance. They believe that their retaliatory actions are just, even though these dealings may be contrary to the Law that is written in their heart. **Gen 4:23-24**.

A carnal Christian is a person who has been born of God but who lives according to the principles of the flesh. The basis of their Christian expression is a religious self-image that is based on their aspirations, good works, former gospels and historical responses. The image of a carnal Christian is informed by the Law of God. **Rom 7:22**. While the Law is not evil, the desire to craft a 'good' religious image by drawing from the Law is both covetous and iniquitous. Those who live this way inevitably bring forth the fruit of the flesh. **Gal 5:19-21**. Their end is no different from the end of those who belong to the world. **Rom 8:6**.

Significantly, no-one, by default, is joined to the process of salvation through which they are being made into the image and likeness of God. Rather, every believer needs to be *converted* from living according to their 'good' self-image so that they can walk according to the Spirit and can inherit eternal salvation through regeneration and renewing. **Tit 3:4-7**. This conversion happens only when we meet Christ eye to eye and acknowledge this fallen, deceitful propensity within us.

Further reading: Galatians 5

Let us keep the feast

The energy and intensity that are associated with our penitent drive to maintain our good Christian self-image, and the emotions of sin that are provoked within us when our reputation is put under relational pressure, highlight that this way of living is *leavened*. This is an issue for every believer. If we are not being delivered from the leavens that feed our religious self-image, and that cause us to exceed our sanctification, we are unable to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread. This means that our participation in the Passover, which is the *agape* meal of the Father's house, is defiled; and we are in danger of being cut off from the kingdom of God.

For this reason, the apostle Paul implored his readers, saying, 'Therefore purge out the old leaven [the old gospels and denominational traditions], that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore, let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.' **1Co 5:7-8**.

A person who is 'keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of *sincerity and truth*' is able to worship the Father in *Spirit and truth*. **Joh 4:24**. That is, they are coming to Christ and are being built together with their brethren upon Him as living stones. They are becoming part of a kingdom of sanctified priests who are offering up spiritual sacrifices to God through Jesus Christ. **1Pe 2:4-5**. To be built upon Christ in this manner, we must be delivered from the iniquitous self-image that causes us to stumble at Him and that brings us under God's judgement. These projections are a lie, meaning that there is no way that we can relate with others sincerely or in the truth. Deliverance from this fallen, deceitful, religious way of living can only happen when we meet Christ eye to eye and face to face.

Further reading: 1 Corinthians 11

Bruised for our iniquities

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Christ was made a sin offering by the Father. He was then taken to the court of Caiaphas, where He was bruised for our iniquities, and was chastised with rods for our peace. **Isa 53:5**. This was the fulfilment of God's word to King David concerning the Son of God who would come from his body. Yahweh declared to David, 'When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. I will be his Father, and he shall be My son. If he commits *iniquity*, I will chasten him with the rod of men and with the blows of the sons of men.' **2Sa 7:12-15**.

Jesus was the Son of David; however, He did not commit iniquity through disobedience to the Father. Rather, through obedience to the Father, Jesus was made our sin, and all of our iniquitous projections were laid upon Him. **Isa 53:6**. Our image was already marred by the ravages of sin. Our 'marring' is our distorted self-image, or projections, resulting from our iniquity. They were laid on Christ through the assertions and endeavours of our self-image, and through our reactions against others when they fail to affirm our projections.

As Jesus was buffeted by iniquitous hands, His face was marred more than any man's. Isaiah prophesied concerning this outcome of Christ's bruising for our iniquity, writing, 'Just as many were astonished at you, so His visage was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men.' **Isa 52:14**. The marring of Christ's face was not merely the worst abuse ever experienced by a person; it was the *sum of the marring* of the corporate 'first man', caused by our disobedience and iniquity.

Further reading: Isaiah 53

The Law punished disobedience

We know that Jesus was beaten in the court of Caiaphas, the high priest. This abuse was at the hands of the Jewish council, which comprised the Levitical priesthood, the scribes, the elders and, by association, the Pharisees and Sadducees. Under the Old Covenant, the Levitical priesthood had been granted the mandate to mediate the Law. However, because of their religious presumption, sin within them undertook to use the Law to assail Christ for the purpose of killing Him.

The misappropriation of the Law, which was energised by Satan, was manifest when Caiaphas used the Law to justify harming Jesus and condemning Him to death. He did this in response to Jesus' confession that He was the Christ, the Son of God. **Mat 26:62-64**. The high priest tore his clothes saying, 'You have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?' **Mat 26:65-66**. The rest of the council replied, 'He is deserving of death'. **Mat 26:66**. 'Then they spat in His face and beat Him; and others struck Him with the palms of their hands, saying, "Prophecy to us, Christ! Who is the one who struck You?"' **Mat 26:67-68**.

When Caiaphas tore his garment, the mandate to mediate the Law was taken out of his hands. It now belonged to Christ, the great High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. As the Jewish council began to beat Christ, their iniquitous projections were being laid upon Him and were manifest in His face. Jesus allowed the Law, through the fury of the Levites, who were motivated by sin, to be directed against Himself. He absorbed this violence by the power of Eternal Spirit. **Heb 9:14**. Because He had become their sin, and their iniquity was expressed in His face, the Law, which was destroying His visage, was judging and destroying them! They were being taken out to forgetfulness under the punishment of the Law and the judgement of God.

Further reading: Matthew 26

Disarming principalities and powers

The Law ends in relation to sin when it exerts its wrath against sin and destroys it. When sin is destroyed, the specific application of the Law to that sin also ends. The wages of sin are fully paid when death ends its activity. Death is non-existent in the place where God exists. In other words, sin and those who continue to live in sin, are relegated to God's forgetfulness. They are dead to God. This does not mean that they cease to exist but, rather, that they are dead to God under eternal judgement. This is the definition of eternal death. As He was beaten in the court of Caiaphas, Jesus established this 'end' for iniquity, and for all those who choose to live according to their own way.

The abuse of Christ's face was a marring action that was energised by principalities and powers under the rulership of Satan. As Jesus was being led by the Jewish cohort from the garden of Gethsemane to the court of Caiaphas, He said to them, 'When I was with you daily in the temple, you did not try to seize Me. *But this is your hour, and the power of darkness!*' **Luk 22:53**. Notably, it appears that Jesus was beaten by the members of the Jewish council in the court of Caiaphas for about an hour. **Luk 22:54-59**.

As iniquity was judged and destroyed through the buffeting of Christ's face, He also made a spectacle of all the familiar spirits that energise religious idolatry. He triumphed over them as they were revealed, or made manifest, by the conduct of the priests, the elders, and the scribes, as well as by the factions of the Pharisees and the Sadducees. Paul said, 'Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it.' **Col 2:15**. Their power was broken, and their eternal condemnation was accomplished as they were taken out into the sea of God's forgetfulness *with Christ*. The lake of fire became the place where they were bound and will be tormented for eternity.

Further reading: Colossians 2

Two goats

The destruction of all iniquitous self-image, through the punishment of the Law and the judgement of God, was one aspect of this offering and suffering event. The second element was Christ's fulfilment of the obedience that belongs to each person's *true image*. These two elements of Christ's offering were typified by the two goats offered by the high priest on the Day of Atonement. The scapegoat took the sin, iniquity and transgressions of the people out to 'forgetfulness', while the Lord's goat, through the shedding of blood, which typified resurrection life, redeemed the people to God. Significantly, these two aspects of Christ's one offering revealed His name as Redeemer!

In the book of Acts, Luke quoted a key excerpt of the prophet Isaiah's explanation of Christ's suffering in the court of Caiaphas. This was the passage of Scripture that the Ethiopian official was reading when Philip came alongside his chariot: '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**.

Christ's face was marred more than any man's as He was bruised for our iniquitous self-image. Christ's face represented the focal point of His image and reputation. In this regard, His image and reputation, which were the embodiment of our false image and reputation, were being taken away as He was being humiliated and His justice was being taken away. This was His offering as 'the scapegoat'. We all, in our iniquity, were being judged, forsaken and destroyed in the sea of God's forgetfulness, with Him.

Further reading: Acts 8

Not a bone was broken

If, through the word of the cross, we meet Christ face to face, and we are illuminated to see the impact of our projections upon Him, our default propensity to craft an image for ourselves can be broken in us. We will cease from trying to regain our reputation through good works, or penance, and will cease from demanding justice as our reputation is being dismantled or assailed. Instead of fighting for our life when we are not received in the way we want to be, we are able to 'turn the other cheek', thereby embracing our fellowship in Christ's bruising, for our deliverance from iniquity. **Mat 5:39**. This is not a religious action but, rather, it is our acceptance that our reputation does need to be taken away in the fellowship of Christ's humiliation.

However, we demonstrate that we are drawing back from looking into Christ's marred face, in unbelief, when we endeavour to excuse ourselves or to find another word or reflection that supports our self-image; or when we spitefully react against the messengers as though they are the ones who are taking our justice from us. When we do this, we are going out to destruction with the very image that was being destroyed as Christ was humiliated and His justice was taken away.

Amazingly, at the same time as Christ's visage was being marred so horrendously, not a bone in His face was broken! Prophesying of this miraculous deliverance, King David declared, 'Many are the afflictions of the righteous, but the Lord delivers him out of them all. He guards all his bones; *not one of them is broken.*' **Psa 34:19-20**.

By Eternal Spirit, and through the resurrection life of Yahweh in His blood, Jesus endured the buffeting of wicked hands *as a discipline* upon Him. Consequently, He was progressively brought back from the death of sin. **Heb 13:20**. This revealed His ministry as 'the Lord's goat' and as the suffering High Priest.

Further reading: Psalm 34

The knowledge of Christ

In the context of His suffering, and by the capacity of resurrection life in His blood, Jesus learned and accomplished the obedience that belongs to our true name and image. **Heb 5:8**. This was the 'knowledge' that achieved our justification. The Lord declared this work through the prophet Isaiah, saying, 'By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.' **Isa 53:11**.

The knowledge that Jesus learned through the things that He suffered are the works that belong to our obedience as sons of God and members of His body. A person can receive this knowledge when they are delivered from the delusion that belongs to their self-image. This is because they have met their Redeemer! The psalmist Asaph rejoiced in this deliverance, declaring, 'When He slew them [took their self-image out to forgetfulness], *then they sought Him*; and they returned and sought earnestly for God. Then they *remembered* that God was their rock, and the Most High God *their Redeemer*.' **Psa 78:34-35**.

When we meet our Redeemer, we are able to receive from His face the knowledge of our true name and image. This knowledge shines as 'the light of life' from His face through the proclamation of the gospel of God by His messengers. Each day, as we walk in the light of the word, we are possessing and inheriting our name as we receive instruction from our Redeemer whose name is '*Wonderful Counsellor*'. **Isa 9:6**. By the capacity of resurrection life, which we obtain through regeneration and renewing on the pathway of salvation, we are bringing forth the fruit of obedience that He already has brought forth for us. This fruit is our eternal life. **Rom 6:23**.

'Calling on the name of the Lord' is the response of a person who is poor in spirit, being illuminated to see that their salvation is found as they *learn their sanctification* by journeying with Christ on the pathway of salvation that He pioneered for them.

Further reading: Philippians 3

Prayer for faith

When Jesus dismissed the disciples prior to the commencement of His offering journey, He brought an end to their former righteousness and to their carnal approach to ministry. He did this so that they could be established on the pathway of salvation that He was about to author for them. *Joh 13:36*. They did not understand Christ's instruction and were, instead, offended that they were being made redundant. **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**. Jesus answered Peter, saying, 'Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times.' **Joh 13:38**. Significantly, in the context of this discussion, Jesus also said to Peter, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But *I have prayed for you*, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren.' **Luk 22:31-32**.

Later, in the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus invited Peter to join the fellowship of this *same prayer*. He said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' **Mar 14:37-38**. It is important to recognise that Jesus was not saying that Peter needed to watch and pray so that he could overcome the temptation to deny Him. Jesus had already made it clear that this *would* occur. In fact, the collapse of Peter's projection through denial was *necessary* for his salvation.

The temptation, for which Jesus had prayed for Peter, was to draw back in self-righteous condemnation when he met Jesus eye to eye. **Heb 10:38-39**. If Peter drew back in unbelief, he would fail to receive faith for his participation in the process of regeneration and renewing that Jesus was establishing for his salvation. He would draw back to destruction. **Heb 10:35-39**.

Further reading: Hebrews 10



Restoring
my Soul