



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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AUGUST 2018

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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August 2018

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A Religious Zealot

Peter was a zealot in pursuit of a very high religious ideal. He thought that he had the Scriptures to support his case. More than that, Jesus was his good mate. Peter wasn't going to let Him suffer unnecessarily. Jesus' suffering and dying on a cross was, in Peter's mind, a very bad idea. **Mat 16:21-22**. So, when the Roman cohort came to take Jesus away, Peter drew his sword in protection of his good mate and cut off the ear of the high priest's servant. **Joh 18:10**. What a dramatic statement! Peter had promised that he would never forsake the Lord, and now he was about to prove the strength of that promise. **Joh 13:37**.

The problem with promises is that they are only as good as our capacity to fulfil them. The children of Israel promised the Lord that they would obey all of His word and keep His Covenant – no worries at all! **Exo 19:8**. Their response sounded admirable and no doubt their intentions were genuine. The problem was that, like Peter, they were deceived. The reason they were deceived is that there is no power in human flesh to fulfil the righteousness of God. And yet, so often, we still believe that we can do it. **Mar 14:38**. Without the illumination of Christ, we are easily convinced, deep down in our hearts, that wanting to serve God is a righteous motivation. We fail to see that this is not obedience at all.

The deception of this idea is rather like one of the lies of modern education: 'you can be whatever you want to be'. Sorry, but no, you can't. And we certainly can't think, act and love like Yahweh just by wanting to either! As the apostle Paul pointed out, when we try very hard to be personally righteous, we can't even stop committing the most basic sins – like wanting what belongs to someone else. **Rom 7:7-8**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: MARK 14

The illumination of Peter

Peter could only see the events unfolding before him – Jesus’ arrest and torture – from his own perspective. He was under pressure and, like a drowning man, his survival instinct began to override his moral convictions. But something was about to happen at the house of Caiaphas which would change the way he saw everything. It was here, after Peter had watched his good mate, Jesus, being beaten horribly, that he finally received illumination and saw his true condition.

Jesus looked at Peter, and His eyes exposed to him the utter incapacity of his flesh to achieve the righteousness of God – even to achieve his own grandiose idealism. **Luk 22:61-62**. He had no strength, nothing within him at all, that he could say was good or righteous. He was ‘naked before the eyes’ of Jesus. **Heb 4:13**. Having looked into the eyes of Jesus, the darkness of Peter’s own law within him began to pass away; his heart was sprinkled with the blood of Christ. The life of God was ministered to him and began to enlighten him. **Psa 13:3**.

However, there was a further work of restoration required for Peter. This restoration happened at the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him with agape, or the love of God, ‘more than these’. **Joh 21:15**. Jesus was showing Peter that he had loved his own sight – the perspective which sprang out of his creativity and enthusiasm – more than he loved the Lord Himself or his brethren.

This can be true of any of us, especially in the areas of our creativity and competence. We can be easily deceived by the image of what we are able to create for ourselves. This deception can lead us to attempt to establish a name for ourselves by the strength of our own will. That is what iniquity looks like.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: LUKE 22

The restoration of Peter

On the shore of the Sea of Galilee, Jesus asked Peter whether he loved Him with the love of God (agape). Peter's reply was that he couldn't love with God's love (agape) – instead, he loved Jesus as a friend. **Joh 21:15**. When Jesus asked the same question again, Peter's reply was the same. **Joh 21:16**. Peter's reply revealed his problem: he couldn't summon the love of God from within himself. Even though he was very committed to the Lord, he simply didn't have that kind of love.

Peter needed to receive the love of God into his heart; that much was clear. But the real sting of this encounter came with Jesus' third question. Apparently ignoring Peter's previous two replies, Jesus asked bluntly, 'Do you love Me as a friend?' **Joh 21:17**. This was a big downgrade on the previous two questions. Jesus seemed to be asking, 'Can you, Peter, even summon up the love of a friend for Me?' Obviously, Jesus wasn't convinced that Peter could love Him even in this way. And this was the point. The whole edifice of Peter's self-righteousness had to be demolished, including his extravagant claims of eternal mateship. Peter's sonship had to be established by revealing the righteousness of God, not his own righteousness. **Php 3:8-9**.

Jesus rounded out His pastoral interview with Peter with a very clear word of direction. **Joh 21:18**. He told Peter that his whole functional mode had been one of self-sourced compliance: 'when you were younger, you used to gird yourself and walk wherever you wished'. In other words, Peter had never been obedient. He had been loyal to Jesus – at least, to his own idea of who Jesus was – but he had never been able to be simply obedient. This was about to change forever. Jesus was delivering Peter over to a process, whereby he would be led where he did not want to go. It was not going to be a direction springing from Peter's inspiration or private judgement.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: JOHN 21

Experiencing condemnation

Most Christians, at one time or another, will experience condemnation when they sin. Because of certain things they have done, or thoughts they have had, they can feel as if they have failed as a Christian. In response to these feelings, some people try harder to live more acceptably to God. Some punish themselves for their failures, while others retreat into self-pity and shame. Some people even give up their sonship, altogether.

This is not the way a Christian should think or live. We all sin and fall short of the glory of God. **Rom 3:23**. As the apostle John wrote, 'If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us.' **1Jn 1:8**. Our sin should not be a surprise to us.

When we are born of God and baptised into Christ, we are joined to a pathway of salvation, upon which we are being progressively delivered from sin and our other law, and we are maturing as sons of God. We know that we are not yet complete as sons of God, but the life of Christ gives us the capacity to continue walking with Him so that we are being progressively changed into the image of His sonship. **Php 3:12-14. 2Co 3:18**.

Importantly, we learn from the apostle Paul, that 'there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death.' **Rom 8:1-2**. He was referring to the condemnation of the law. Christ has removed the judgement of the law so if we are experiencing condemnation, we know that it is the outcome of a judgement that we have made according to our own law. The apostle John reminded us that 'if our heart condemns us, God is greater than our heart, and knows all things.' **1 Jn 3:19-20**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: ROMANS 8

What is condemnation?

A person who is condemned has been judged for breaking, or transgressing, a law. Their condemnation is the consequence of their transgression. When Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, death was the outcome of transgressing the word of the Lord. **Gen 2:16-17**. That is, Adam's transgression resulted in the condemnation of death. This condemnation spread to every person who was born after him, because everyone now lived according to their own law. **Rom 5:16**.

In the days of Moses, the children of Israel said to the Lord that they would keep His law. **Exo 19:8**. The Lord bound the law upon them as a covenant, and said that if they kept the law, they would be righteous and have eternal life. **Lev 18:4-5**. **Deu 6:25**. However, if they transgressed the law, they would die. Of course, no-one was able to keep the law; not even Moses! **Rom 3:10**. **Num 20:12**. Everyone received the same condemnation for breaking God's law.

Why did God give the law to the children of Israel if He knew that they would all be condemned by it? He did this to reveal the weakness of their flesh to them, and to teach them that a person could only be justified, or acceptable to God, through faith in Christ. **Rom 8:3**. **Gal 3:24**.

Through Christ's offering, which involved the sufferings of His death, He ended the condemnation of the law. First, Jesus took our condemnation upon Himself as a sin offering. Through His death, He bore the full judgement and penalty of the law associated with our sin. Once He died, the law no longer had dominion over Him. In other words, having died, He wasn't being judged by the law anymore. **Rom 7:1**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: COLOSSIANS 2

The law nailed to the cross

When Jesus was lifted up on the cross, He took the law out of the way. He did this so that we would not need to relate to the law in the way that the Old Covenant demanded. The law is a hindrance to us because of the self-centredness of our heart. It only brings us under judgement, because we are unable to keep the law. Christ removed the law and nailed it to the cross. **Col 2:14.** It was no longer our reference point for life.

When we are baptised into Christ's death, we are delivered from the condemnation associated with our sin. This is because, in Him, we cease from trying to keep God's law. Instead, we live by the law of the Spirit of life. **Rom 8:2.** What does this mean?

The Holy Spirit joins us, in one Spirit, to the Lord. **1Co 6:17.** In Him, we are not judged by the law, because He has already paid the penalty for our sin and has taken the law out of the way. Most importantly, the propensity within our heart to judge ourselves is being removed from us and we are progressively ceasing from sin.

At the same time, the capacity to obey the Lord is being poured into our heart by the Holy Spirit. **Rom 5:5.** We are enabled to love the Lord and to love others. By this means, God's law is being fulfilled in us. **Rom 8:3-4.** Reiterating the point, as our law is being removed from us, and His law is being written on our heart, we are revealing the righteousness of God. We are not fulfilling the righteousness of God through our own strength; we are now fulfilling the law by walking according to the Spirit, in Christ Jesus. This should be a great relief to every Christian, and cause for joyful thanksgiving!

FOR FURTHER STUDY: HEBREWS 8

Only one judgement

Why do many Christians still come under condemnation when they sin? It is because they either do not know, or do not accept, the necessity to join the offering of Christ. They certainly confess that Christ died on their behalf, but they do not believe that they have a participation in His offering.

They judge themselves as being either righteous or unrighteous from the basis of their own law, because it is not being removed from them. Living this way keeps a person captive to sin. In response to their sin, they will either change their perception of what it means to be acceptable to God, or they will condemn and chastise themselves because of their failure. Paul said that people who judge themselves this way, become weak in faith, and depressed, and can even become spiritually dead. **1Co 11:29-30. Pro 13:12.**

We are not to judge ourselves this way. There is only one judgement that the apostle Paul said we are to make, and this judgement is compelled by the love of God that the Holy Spirit pours into our heart. He said that if Christ died for us, then we are to die with Him. We are being relieved of all other judgements, in Him, and are being enabled to live for others. **2Co 5:14.**

When we sin, we can cry out to God for mercy. By His mercy, we are able to present ourselves for participation in His offering. **Rom 12:1.** We receive grace to recover relationships with those whom we have sinned against, and are able to change through the chastening hand of the Father in our lives. This chastening does not cause us to despair or to lose hope. Instead, our sonship is affirmed, and we know that we are loved by God. **Heb 12:5-6.**

FOR FURTHER STUDY: 2 CORINTHIANS 5

Enabled to love

The nature of the Christian life was summed up by Jesus in two laws. He said, “You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.” This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like it: “You shall love your neighbour as yourself.” On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets’ **Mat 22:37-40**.

In order to love the Lord, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, we need to be delivered from the basic desire to live for ourselves. **Deu 30:6**. This desire is called ‘living according to the flesh’, and involves striving to attain a self-defined righteousness, or standard of life. **Rom 8:5. Php 3:9**.

Most importantly, we also need to receive the love of God that the Holy Spirit pours into our heart. **Rom 5:5**. The apostle John described this as ‘the love which God has for us’. He said that we are to know and believe this love for us. **1Jn 4:16**.

We receive the love of God when we are born from above by the incorruptible seed of God’s word. **1Pe 1:22-23**. For this seed to germinate, take root, and bear good fruit in our life, our natural identity needs to be regenerated by the washing of the water by the word of God. **Tit 3:5**.

Regeneration refers to the reviving of a person’s spirit, which has become corrupt because of sin. Both these aspects of birth – the incorruptible seed of our sonship, and the ongoing regeneration of our identity – are necessary for our maturing as a son of God, who is able to love the Lord and to love their brethren as themselves.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: 1 JOHN 4

Loving ourselves

It is significant that God said we are to love our neighbour as ourselves. Loving ourselves is not merely thinking that we are awesome. This way of thinking has no more merit than considering ourselves to be useless. Both are judgements that we make from the basis of our own law. These judgements are not motivated by the love of God. **2Co 5:14**.

The capacity to love ourselves comes from God Himself. This is why we need to know and believe the love that He has for us. **1Jn 4:16**. To love ourselves is to accept and honour who God has named us to be as His son. **1Jn 3:1**.

A person who does not know God cannot love themselves. They can only attempt to create and project an image of themselves. Their sense of self-worth depends on how satisfied they are with this image, and the extent to which their projections are accepted and valued by others.

Through their continual assessment of themselves, and their comparisons with others, they anxiously pursue a better image of themselves. However, they can never be truly satisfied. The more they pursue a 'perfect' image, the less they are able to really know and worth themselves. The effect of this sinful way of living is the progressive frailty, or degeneration, of their identity, which is their human spirit.

The frailty of a person's identity will be demonstrated in many different ways. This may include, for example, insecurity, self-doubt, feelings of inferiority or superiority, depression, chronic anxiety, addictions, eating disorders, perverted thoughts.

New birth and our fellowship in the offering and circumcision of Christ is the only way by which we can be delivered from this fallen condition. In this fellowship, the desire to pursue an image for ourselves is being progressively removed from us. **Rom 6:5-10**. **Col 2:11**. Furthermore, our identity is being made whole, and the life of God is increasingly becoming our life.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: **1 JOHN 3**

Chastened for our peace

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul wrote, 'My son, do not despise the chastening of the Lord, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the Lord loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives'. **Heb 12:5-6**. We learn that God loves us by joining the chastening and scourging that Jesus experienced on His way to the cross.

Jesus was chastened for our sake in the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. This was when He was beaten with rods. **Luk 22:63**. These blows were the chastisement, or discipline, of the Father for our peace. **Isa 53:5**. **2Sa 7:12-15**. When we receive our daily sufferings as a share in this element of Christ's offering, we are able to come to peace.

Through our fellowship in the chastening that Christ received, the desire to go our own way is being removed from us, and we are learning how to live and walk according to the word of God that defines our sonship. **Psa 94:12**. We know peace because we cease from pursuing an image for ourselves that is in conflict with the sonship that the Father has prepared for us.

We also come to peace with others. This is because we stop striving with, and competing against, our brothers and sisters in Christ. As we accept and value our sonship, we are able to appreciate who God has named others to be. In this way, we are being freed to love our brethren in the same way that we love ourselves.

In addition to peace, the effect of chastening is that we are able to give thanks to God in every circumstance of life. Thanksgiving becomes the fruit of our lips because His life is flourishing within us, and is being expressed by us. The Scriptures call this a 'sacrifice of thanksgiving'. **Lev 7:11-14**. **Heb 13:15**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: HEBREWS 12

By His stripes we are healed

The scourging that Christ received under the direction of Pilate was His fourth wound. The purpose for this wound was our healing. **Isa 53:5**. The whip that was used to scourge Christ had nine leather strands. Each strand had four or five pieces of sharp bone or metal attached to it. A full beating of thirty-nine stripes would have caused approximately 1600 wounds on Christ's back! All of these wounds were for the purpose of bringing healing to the many and varied aberrant behaviours that are associated with the degeneration of the human condition.

The lust of the eyes has a particular influence on the health of our spirit. **1Jn 2:16**. The lust of the eyes refers to the fantasies, projections and dreams that people pursue for themselves as an alternative to their sonship. **Gen 3:6**. As we have already noted, these pursuits only lead us away from the truth of who we are, and into deviant ways of living. These ways of living lead to the fragility, or degeneration, of our identity.

The healing that Christ brought through His scourging is available to us as we eat and drink the elements of the communion. His body and blood have become the fruit of the tree of life, whose leaves are for the healing of the nations. **Rev 22:1-2**. By eating and drinking the communion, we remain joined to the offering of Christ, through which we are delivered from the lust of the eyes.

However, we are also being washed by living water. This is the word of Christ that is ministered to us through body ministry. This water refreshes and heals our natural spirit, and washes us clean from the corrupting influences of the world, with which we come into contact through the week. The washing of regeneration allows the seed of our sonship to grow so that we are able to bear good fruit. In other words, we are able to live as a son of God.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: 1 PETER 2

The pride of life

What do you think of when you hear the word 'pride'? Perhaps you think of a high-achieving person who makes sure everyone knows how good they are. This example illustrates an element of pride. However, the Scriptures show us that pride is much more than simply boasting about our achievements and successes in life.

Put simply, pride is any way of living where we presume to know better than the Lord. This mindset has been inherent in mankind ever since Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. We recall that Eve partook of this fruit because it 'was desirable to make one wise'. **Gen 3:6.**

James wrote that this kind of wisdom is actually earthly, natural, and demonic. **Jas 3:15.** Eve was made in the image and likeness of God, and her preoccupation should have been to remain in His image. **Gen 1:26. 2Co 11:3.** Instead, Satan deceived Eve, and brought to her a different word from that which God had already spoken. Satan convinced Eve that she could become the origin of her own image. He told her that she would become like God, meaning that she could be the source of her own life and works.

When a person lives in this way, their self-defined works are merely a projection. They are endeavouring to compensate for the fact that they are completely disconnected from the name and works that the Lord has defined for them.

The apostle John said that living by this wisdom is 'the pride of life'. **1Jn 2:16.** The pride of life is one aspect of the other law. We see the pride of life at work when someone misuses their abilities and the authority of their name to promote and empower themselves. Rather than giving glory and honour to the One who has named and formed them, they are preoccupied with bringing glory and honour to themselves. **Mat 5:16. Joh 7:18.**

FOR FURTHER STUDY: DANIEL 4

What does pride look like?

The pride of life can present itself in many different ways. For example, many of us will know someone who is completely consumed with trying to be successful and achieving their goals in life. We may know others who are less motivated, but still maintain that they are free to 'do what they want to do' and to 'be what they want to be'. One of the most common forms of pride for a Christian is the desire to present well, or to make a 'good showing in the flesh'. **Gal 6:12**. They become like a clever chameleon and behave differently according to the circumstance they find themselves in – at school, at church or at home – in order to be accepted. **Jud 1:12**.

Christians can also easily fall into the trap of misusing God's word to support their own self-centred ambitions. Even someone putting themselves down, claiming they are 'a nobody' and are incapable of doing what the Lord has asked of them, is an example of pride!

Regardless of what form our pride takes, it is always driven by the same mechanism – the desire to be the origin of our own image, and the source of our own life and works. A person living according to this self-defined wisdom is 'walking according to the flesh'. **Rom 8:3-5**. They are using their natural senses and their own perception of good and evil to assess themselves, their environment, and those around them. They chase after what they decide to be 'good' and run away from what they decide to be 'evil'.

To live our life presuming that we know better than the Lord is the ultimate arrogance. **Rom 9:20-21**. Concerning such pride, the prophet Isaiah declared, 'Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker. Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, that what is made would say to its maker, "He did not make me"; or what is formed say to him who formed it, "He has no understanding"?' **Isa 29:16**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: JUDE 1

The fruit of contention

The prophet Isaiah declared that it is the height of presumption for us to contend with the Lord by not accepting who He has made us to be and by trying to be the source of our own name and works. **Isa 45:9**. This presumptuous attitude was also illustrated by James. He wrote, 'Come now, you who say, "Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit." Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are just a vapour that appears for a little while and then vanishes away. Instead, you ought to say, "If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that." But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil' **Jas 4:13-16**.

In truth, there is no profit in living by the projection of our own wisdom and the strength of our own hands. Living this way will only produce 'the deeds of the flesh', such as enmity, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, and envying'. **Gal 5:19-21**.

James tells us that a person living according to this kind of arrogant wisdom will be full of bitter jealousy and selfish ambition. **Jas 3:14**. They will be relentless in their pursuit of status and success. They will compare themselves to others and compete with others, ultimately trying to conquer them in order to gain an advantage over them. Those being conquered will obviously suffer significant pain and distress. However, the one trying to conquer others will also be tormented with anxiety and fear as they try to reach and maintain their goals, and will become depressed when they fail to achieve them.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: **1 CORINTHIANS 3**

Cursed for our sake

After Adam ate the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, he and Eve realised that they were naked and separated from the life of God. They were afraid and ashamed. **Gen 3:7-10**. God barred the way to the tree of life because of Adam's sin. He also told Adam that He had cursed the ground so it would now bring forth thorns and thistles 'for his sake'. **Gen 3:17,24**.

How could 'cursing the ground' possibly help Adam, when he was already naked, afraid, ashamed, and facing death? Cursing the ground was an expression of God's love and mercy toward mankind. Even though Adam had just separated mankind from God by bringing sin and death into the world, God's immediate response was to provide a way of recovery. **Rom 5:12**. Through the curse, mankind could be restored to relationship with God, and to their predestination as sons of God. **Rom 8:20-21**.

The fifth wound which Christ suffered on His journey to the cross was caused by the crown of thorns being driven into His head by a mock sceptre. **Mat 27:29**. It was through this suffering event that Christ dealt with our pride and projections. The very thorns that were woven together and driven into Christ's head signified the curse upon all of mankind. They represented all of the difficult and conflicting situations in our life. These 'thorns' frustrate us in everything we do and undermine the work and success of our hands.

In many cases, the thorns in our lives will be the volatile and prickly responses of other people towards us. So how do these 'thorns' help us to deal with our pride? The testimony of the apostle Paul provides us with a helpful example. Paul received many amazing revelations directly from the Lord. However, he himself admitted that, because of this, he was particularly vulnerable to exalting himself and becoming proud. God knew that this mechanism in Paul needed to be removed, so He gave him 'a thorn in his flesh'. **2Co 12:7**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: GENESIS 3

A thorn in the flesh

The apostle Paul testified that he had been given 'a thorn in the flesh'. **2Co 12:7**. Practically speaking, Paul's 'thorn' was a demonic messenger of Satan. It continually tormented him by stirring up the Jews against him wherever he went. How strange that God would choose to help Paul by giving him a demonically energised, vicious and angry horde of Jews to hinder him in his work! Clearly, dealing with Paul's pride was a much higher priority for God than his productivity and success.

Paul eventually came to understand that, although the thorn in his flesh was painful and frustrating, it was, nevertheless, specifically given to him by God to address the problem of his pride. **2Co 12:7**. Paul came to peace and submitted himself to the process that the thorn was working in his life. As he did so, his pride was being dealt with, and his 'other law' was being removed. **2Co 12:10**.

God's provision of the thorn to Paul was so effective that, by the end of Paul's life, his pride and 'other law' were completely gone! The Scriptures account that, by the end of Paul's life, the angry hordes had gone, and there was no longer anything hindering him in his work. **Act 28:30-31**. God removed the thorn from Paul's flesh, because it had been fully effective and was no longer necessary.

When we are provoked by thorny experiences in our lives, our initial response is to react. If we choose to view ourselves as a victim, we will 'fight back' and try to conquer the situation. This is the other law operating within our heart. However, we don't need to respond in this way. **Mat 5:39**. When the frustrations of the curse provoke us, we must acknowledge our weakness and turn again to the Lord. Like Paul, we must remember that the difficult or contrary circumstances that are frustrating us are actually an opportunity to fellowship in the sufferings of Christ.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: 2 CORINTHIANS 12

Pierced for our transgressions

The prophet Isaiah declared that God's righteous Servant would be smitten and afflicted, and that He would suffer much physical stress and pain. **Isa 53:7-8**. He noted that Jesus Christ would be wounded in several ways and, as a consequence of these woundings, His blood would be shed to give us life.

This was fulfilled about 700 years later, when Christ was crucified on a cross at Calvary. This was Christ's work in redeeming mankind, which was completed when, from the cross, He declared, 'It is finished!' **Joh 19:30**. The prophet Isaiah particularly noted that He [Christ] would be pierced through for our transgressions. This was the sixth sprinkling of blood from Jesus' body. **Isa 53:5**.

As we look at this work of God for our sake, we are amazed by the love and mercy of God. The apostle John declared, 'Behold' – as though he were saying, 'Would you look at this!' He was drawing our attention to the great love of God that has been expressed toward us, so we can become sons of God. **1Jn 3:1**. What an amazing gift!

When God sought to have fellowship with mankind, He first chose the nation of Israel. He gave them 'the law' to live by, and declared, 'If you will obey My law, I will bless you and make you great.' **Deu 15:4-6**. The law was God's righteous standard for man, and it was 'good'. **Rom 7:12**. But the Israelites were unable to keep the law of God because of the weakness of their flesh.

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul concluded that love is the fulfilment of the law. **Rom 13:8,10**. We, like the Israelites, are unable to meet God's righteous requirements. We are unable to love another as ourselves. Therefore, we have transgressed and missed the mark of His calling for us. Christ was pierced through for our transgressions. **Isa 53:5**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: ISAIAH 53

My transgressions

Transgressions are the self-sourced motivations and activities that we do to find life and identity. This includes things that we may consider 'good', arising from our self-righteous motivations – not just the wicked things that we do. Isaiah called this 'turning to our own way'. **Isa 53:6**. In the same way, the apostle Peter likened us to sheep who have gone astray. **1 Pet 2:25**.

Our transgressions separate us from the life of God that He wants to share with us. These deeds and attitudes of ours have pierced Christ. Even though we were not present when the nails were driven into His hands and feet, we were the ones who caused His wounds. **Rom 4:25**. Every person needs to realise that 'He was pierced for my transgressions'. **Isa 53:5**. He didn't just do this for me; it was because of me. In His physical body, He bore the pain and judgement of my transgressions, and His blood was shed to redeem me. We can all confess, 'If I were the only person alive, He would have done it for me'. Jesus has experienced the suffering of death for every individual person. **Heb 2:9**.

Thomas was among the first people to receive this illumination. In the days following the death of Jesus, he was probably weighed down with the guilt of his own transgressions. Perhaps it was with great regret that he reflected on his own behaviour at the last supper when all the disciples argued with one another about who was the greatest. Similarly, he had not been able to pray with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane and had promptly deserted Him during His greatest time of need. No doubt, these failures weighed heavily upon him! However, he was delivered from this weight of condemnation as soon as he touched the nail prints in the hands of Jesus. **Joh 20:26-28**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: PSALM 25

The salvation of Thomas

When Jesus had risen from the dead, He showed Himself to the disciples. Thomas was not with them. The disciples were full of excitement and joy after seeing Jesus, and immediately came to report to Thomas, declaring that they had seen Jesus – that He had risen from the dead and had appeared to them. **Joh 20:24-28**.

Thomas was unable to be consoled. He said, 'Unless I lay my hand on the nail prints in His hands and place my hand in His side, I cannot believe.' He was still distressed regarding his own transgressions. And perhaps, he was recalling how the Israelites would lay their hands on the sin offering, thus identifying with it as they brought their offering to the altar. **Lev 4:24**. He desired to be identified with Christ.

Perhaps the words of Isaiah were burning in his heart, 'He was pierced through for our transgressions'. **Isa 53:5**. He needed Jesus' blood to sprinkle his heart so that he could believe. **Heb 10:22**. It wasn't enough for Thomas to hear from the other disciples; he needed to know for himself.

Jesus appeared to the disciples a second time and sought to speak to Thomas. Jesus, looking at Thomas, said, 'Come and touch the nail prints in My hands and place your hand in My side.' **Joh 20:27**. He was meeting Thomas eye-to-eye. He was speaking to Thomas, saying, 'I know you. I can sympathise with your weaknesses.' **Heb 4:15**. As Thomas' heart was being sprinkled from all his guilt and shame, his response to Jesus was, 'My Lord and my God!' **Joh 20:28**.

In the same way that Jesus spoke to Thomas, He wants to speak to each one of us. He was numbered with us - the transgressors. He is making intercession for us. **Isa 53:12**. He does not come to condemn us, but to lead us on the pathway of life. By His knowledge of the way of our salvation, He will justify us. **Isa 53:11**.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: JOHN 20

The new and living way

Jesus has been pierced through for our transgressions. However, we need to lay hold of the redemption that He offers each one of us, by joining the fellowship of His death. We do this in baptism. **Rom 6:3**. When we die with Christ, we are dead to the law. **Rom 7:4**. It no longer has any jurisdiction over us. We are free from the judgement and condemnation of the law. Furthermore, as we participate in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, our own law, which causes us to go our own way and transgress the law of God, is being removed from us. **Psa 103:12**.

The seventh and final wound was inflicted on Christ when a soldier thrust a spear in His side. **Joh 19:34**. This caused blood and water to flow from His heart. As His flesh was pierced, the veil in the temple was torn from top to bottom. **Mar 15:38**. When the veil in the temple was torn in two, it signified that Christ has opened up a new and living way for us to walk as sons of God. **Heb 10:19-20**. This is the way of our salvation.

The apostle Paul declared, 'Let us draw near [to God] with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water'. **Heb 10:22**. The water that flowed from the side of Christ is applied to our lives as we receive the ministry of His word to us. It is washing us and removing the veil that is on our heart, so we can see and believe. We now understand that every trial, difficulty and persecution that we face, has been laid on Christ. They are His sufferings, and He is allowing us to participate with Him in these difficulties for our salvation. In this fellowship, His blood is cleansing our conscience and giving us eternal life.

FOR FURTHER STUDY: HEBREWS 10

