



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

AUGUST 2019

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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August 2019

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Contents

Monday	5 August	Our reproach laid on Him	2
Tuesday	6 August	Resurrection life in His blood	3
Wednesday	7 August	Born again in Gethsemane	4
Thursday	8 August	Our great High Priest	5
Friday	9 August	An everlasting ordinance.....	6
Monday	12 August	The firstborn	7
Tuesday	13 August	A special treasure	8
Wednesday	14 August	Keeping the feast	9
Thursday	15 August	The Last Passover	10
Friday	16 August	The invitation of Jesus	11
Monday	19 August	Breaking the bread of life.....	12
Tuesday	20 August	Judas and Peter	13
Wednesday	21 August	The experience of Peter	14
Thursday	22 August	Staying connected under pressure.....	15
Friday	23 August	Deliverance from fear	16
Monday	26 August	Striving for a good outcome	17
Tuesday	27 August	Power is perfected in weakness	18
Wednesday	28 August	The renewing of our mind	19
Thursday	29 August	Resisting to the shedding of blood	20
Friday	30 August	The blood of Christ cleanses	21

Our reproach laid on Him

Christ is the Passover Lamb of the Father. He is both the burnt offering and sin offering. Christ was an unblemished Lamb. He was without spot and blameless. He knew no sin. **2Co 5:21. Heb 9:13-14. 1Pe 1:18-19.** In the garden of Gethsemane, the Father laid His hands upon Christ to offer Him as the Lamb. This is the same way in which someone would have laid their hands on the sin offering when they brought it to the door of the tabernacle. The laying on of hands was also the action toward a burnt offering in order to make atonement. The Father, in laying His hands upon Christ, was not making atonement for Himself. By the mercy of God, the reproaches that we laid upon Him were laid upon Christ by the Father for our atonement and forgiveness.

To 'reproach' someone means to 'defame, complain against, criticise, blame, taunt, blaspheme, disgrace, shame, reject, or defy' them. These responses are all motivated by self-centredness. We lay reproach on the Father when we reject Him. All of mankind's fallen, sinful actions and responses are a reproach against God – not just the intentional ones.

Christ, as the Lamb, was made to be sin for us. He took on all of our sin when the Father laid His hands upon Christ. **2Co 5:21. Isa 53:10-11.** Through this action, the Father laid the reproaches of all of mankind, against Him, upon the head of Christ, His Son, as the Lamb. The apostle Paul wrote, 'For even Christ did not please Himself; but as it is written, "The reproaches of those who reproached You fell on Me"'. **Rom 15:3. Psa 69:9.** When Christ had all of the reproaches of mankind laid upon Him by the Father, He was cut off from the Father. Christ took upon Himself all of the guilt of mankind. This happened in the garden of Gethsemane.

Resurrection life in His blood

In the garden of Gethsemane, Christ knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not My will, but Yours, be done.' **Luk 22:41-44**. This was His confession of faith as the Lamb without spot or blemish. The apostle Peter, quoting Isaiah, made the point that Christ committed no sin, nor was any deceit found in His mouth. He did not threaten or revile in return. He did not reproach God, or man, as He received the reproaches of all mankind. **1Pe 2:21-23**. Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him with Eternal Spirit.

Being in agony, Christ prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling to the ground. **Luk 22:41-44**. Christ, having received the reproaches, and having been made sin, was cut off from the Father. Christ, the great Shepherd, had been struck. Christ died - reproach had broken His heart. **Psa 69:20**. At the point when He was struck, His blood was being spilled, but He was strengthened by Eternal Spirit. **Luk 22:43**. He began to pray fervently. Christ, by Eternal Spirit, was now 'priesting' Himself as the sin offering. He 'drank the cup' from the Father, was made sin, and died. **Joh 18:11**. However, as His blood was shed, He was instantly being brought back from the dead by the resurrection life in the blood of the Lamb. This was the operation of Christ, the Lamb of the Father, as the burnt offering and sin offering together.

As the angel brought Eternal Spirit and strengthened Christ, resurrection life was ministered to Him, and He began to come back from the death of sin. Eternal Spirit, by the Holy Spirit, was strengthening Him. It is here that Christ was born again as new creation. More than that, everyone who is dead in trespasses and sins was, instantly, born with Him, right there, by His blood.

Born again in Gethsemane

As the resurrection life of Christ, which was in His blood, was bringing Him back to life from the dead, that same life was multiplied, and it is bringing us back to life from the dead. He is coming back from the dead, and we are coming back with Him! When He came back from the death of sin and returned to the Father, He opened the way for the redemption of all mankind, for as many as would receive Him and believe in Him. **Heb 9:11. Joh 1:12-13.**

We are born again as we join Christ in His offering and sufferings, and believe in Him. God sends the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, crying out, 'Abba! Father!' He frees us from being slaves to sin, and He makes us sons of God and heirs of eternal life. **Gal 4:6-7.** By His blood, He brings salvation and deliverance to all who are captive to the bondage of sin and death. In this way, He is our Passover Lamb.

Once we are born again, in Gethsemane, we are not then born again at each step of our journey; nor do we have a static position of being 'born again'. We are born again, but we then journey back from the death of sin with Him through the wounding events that were inflicted upon Him, from the house of Caiaphas through to His crucifixion on the cross at Calvary.

There are two elements that are essential to living as a son of God. Christ must be in our heart, and we must be connected to His offering, by which His resurrection life is multiplied daily. Christ must abide in us, and we must abide in Him. **Joh 15:4. Joh 17:20-26. 1Jn 3:24. 1Jn 4:12-13.** We keep the Passover feast and have access to resurrection life when we eat and drink the communion meal. The communion grants us a participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ, who is the Passover Lamb.

FURTHER STUDY LUKE 22

Our great High Priest

Every day, Christ's offering is ministered to us by Christ through His capacity as our eternal High Priest. **Heb 6:19-20**. This covers every contingency for that day. As Christ ministers to us, we are able to join a particular point of suffering that He endured when His blood flowed. In this fellowship of His sufferings, resurrection life is multiplied to us. **Rev 2:10**. Every circumstance of our life is covered by a suffering event that Christ endured as He journeyed from Gethsemane to the cross. At each wounding event, His blood flowed, and life is multiplied to us.

As we experience His sufferings, resurrection life is active, bringing us back from the dead. The absence of suffering is not the measure of resurrection life. Resurrection life is sustaining us, even when we are suffering. **2Co 1:9**. As we are joined to the offering of Christ in fellowship, the life of Christ that is in His blood brings with it the capacity of Eternal Spirit, giving life to our mortal bodies. **Rom 8:11**. Therefore, we are able to present our bodies as a living sacrifice and to prove what the will of God is for our lives. **Rom 12:1-2**.

This activity reveals who we are, because it reveals the expression of our name. Through offering, we come to know what our name is. Our life is then expressed through the works that belong to our name, and these works are only activated by the resurrection life that is generated from the offering of Christ. By joining His offering at each step that we take on our journey with Christ, His resurrection life is becoming our life. This is resurrection life in our mortal body, enabling us to overcome sin and to priest our lives as sons of God. In the fellowship of His offering, resurrection life is multiplied!

An everlasting ordinance

At the time of the first Passover, God 'spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying ... "So this day shall be to you a memorial; and you shall keep it as a feast to the Lord throughout your generations. You shall keep it as a feast by an everlasting ordinance." **Exo 12:1,14.** The Lord also instructed the Israelites to keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread as a memorial throughout their generations as an everlasting ordinance. **Exo 12:17.**

An 'ordinance' is a custom, or observance, appointed by a law or decree. Keeping the Feast of Passover as an everlasting ordinance was to be more than merely the establishment of a public holiday, or an annual festival, to remember and celebrate a significant, historical event. In the same way that the law covenant was a 'tutor to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith', the everlasting ordinance of the Feast of Passover was to bring all generations to Christ. **Gal 3:24. Rom 3:21-26.**

Christ, by His blood, protects and redeems everyone who abides 'in Him'. Christ's blood is the blood of the Everlasting Covenant. Christ is the Passover Lamb. **1Pe 1:18-19. Mat 26:28. Heb 13:20.** The firstborn Christ is the Firstborn over all creation. He is the Firstborn from the dead. **Col 1:15,18. Rev 1:5.** He is the Firstborn among many brethren. **Rom 8:29.** Christ is the First and the Last. **Rev 1:11,17. Rev 22:13. Isa 44:6.** The Lord declared to Moses, 'Consecrate to Me all the firstborn, whatever opens the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and beast; it is Mine.' **Exo 13:2. Num 3:13.** The firstborn represented new life, so the Lord was making the point that He is the source of all life. 'All things were made through Him and, without Him, nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men.' **Joh 1:3-4.**

The firstborn

The firstborn of man represents fruitfulness as the strength of life and as the beginning of a generation. It is for this reason that the firstborn was to inherit a double portion, so that future generations would continue. **Deu 21:17**. An important, and obvious, point to note is that the term 'firstborn' is ordinal. This means that, when there is a first of something, that signals to us that there is more to follow – a second and third, and so on. So, the consecration of the firstborn to the Lord also signalled that all who would follow would also be sanctified to Him. We see this principle in the offering of firstfruits; and in the giving of tithes, being one-tenth, but being representative of the whole. King David wrote in one of his psalms, 'The earth is the Lord's, and all its fullness, the world and those who dwell therein'. **Psa 24:1**.

Before Moses' first encounter with the Pharaoh of Egypt, and before the first plague, the Lord instructed Moses to say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the Lord: "Israel is My son, My firstborn. So I say to you, let My son go that he may serve Me. But if you refuse to let him go, indeed I will kill your son, your firstborn"'. **Exo 4:22-23**. From this statement, we see that the first Passover was more than just the tenth plague that resulted in the Israelites' escape from slavery in Egypt. The Lord explained this to Moses and the Israelites when he met Moses on Mount Sinai. He said, 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' **Exo 19:4-6**.

A special treasure

When the Lord called Israel 'My firstborn,' He was revealing that they belonged to Him, and that the promise of eternal life belonged to them. This is what He meant when He said that He brought them to Himself, and then referred to them as 'a special treasure.' **Exo 19:4-5.** God was reminding the Israelites of the promise of blessing given to Abraham and his descendants, so that they may set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep His commandments. **Gen 22:18. Psa 78:7.** As the Lord's firstborn nation, they were to keep His commandments, to multiply and to be fruitful in the ways of God. However, Israel was not to be the only special people. They were first. God had always intended for all mankind to be His. **Act 2:39.**

The apostle John wrote in the beginning of his epistle, 'As many as received Christ, to them God gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' **Joh 1:12-13.** Every person who is in Christ is a new creation. **2Co 5:17.** They have been born anew as a son of God. They are a member of the body of Christ, the firstborn Son. All who are in Christ are the Lord's firstborn.

The writer of the book of Hebrews referred to these ones as 'the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven.' **Heb 12:23.** An important lesson of the Passover is that the protection and deliverance of the firstborn (Israel, God's own son) was by the sprinkling of blood through faith and obedience. **Exo 4:22-23. Heb 11:28.** This brings us to the all-important point that Christ is the Passover Lamb for all generations. All who abide in Him are protected and redeemed, or bought, by His blood, which is the blood of the New Covenant. **1Co 6:19-20. Heb 13:20.**

Keeping the feast

Many Christians miss the point that the shedding of Christ's blood as the Father's Passover Lamb is for our participation in the life of God. **1Co 10:16**. They regard Christ's death, to save us from our sins, as being a vicarious action, which means that God is still 'afar off'. **Eph 2:13. Deu 30:11-14**. A vicarious action is one that is done for someone else as a substitute for them doing it. There can be no participation in a vicarious action. The effect upon a person of a purely vicarious action will only end up being mystical or magical. There is no substance to it. Our participation through the communion meal is not mystical or magical. It is spiritual. It is not a ritual. It is relational. It is our substantial participation in the fellowship of Yahweh.

For the Israelites, the experience of the first Passover was very real. The firstborn either lived or died as a result of their participation. **Exo 12:23**. There was a specific timeframe. They had to carefully prepare. They had to remove all leaven from their houses. **Exo 12:15**. They had to bake bread. They had to apply the lamb's blood to the doorposts of their houses. For them, it was 'do or die' on that one day. Simply imagining that they would overcome and would be delivered, would not have helped the Israelites. Their actions demonstrated their faith and they had a very hands-on, real participation. Our participation is also very real, and not imaginary. Our actions also demonstrate our faith.

Keeping the Feast of Passover is an 'every day' reality for us. Our participation in the fellowship of Christ's body and blood strengthens us for every day as we continue to walk in the Spirit. Communion is the fellowship of Christ's body and blood. We are joined to Christ's death, burial and resurrection through baptism. And we remain connected to the provision and multiplication of His resurrection life as we continue to abide in Him and to present ourselves as an offering in fellowship.

The Last Passover

Jesus sent Peter and John into the city of Jerusalem to prepare the Passover meal. This preparation included taking a lamb to the temple so that it could be killed by the priests. It also required them to find a suitable house within the city where they could cook the lamb and prepare the Passover meal for Jesus and the rest of the disciples. The city of Jerusalem was very busy at that time of year. Up to a million people would converge upon the city to celebrate the Feast of Passover. However, Peter and John had no trouble finding a suitable house that could accommodate all of the disciples. Jesus had given them all the necessary instructions. **Luk 22:8-13.**

In the evening, Jesus sat down to eat the Passover meal with His disciples in the upper room. He said to them, 'With fervent desire, I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer.' **Luk 22:15.** Jesus was motivated by the fervent and jealous love of God to eat this meal with the disciples, because it was a unique and new Passover celebration. It was the last Passover meal and the first communion meal! The shift from Passover to communion took place when Jesus made the Passover meal a participation, or a fellowship, in His own Person and life.

The disciples had prepared the lamb for the last Passover meal. However, God the Father had prepared Jesus to be the true Passover Lamb. **1Co 5:7.** He was the Lamb of God who had come to take away the sins of the world and to give life to the world. **Joh 1:29. Joh 6:33.** The life of God was resident in His blood. The life in His blood was made available to us when it was sprinkled upon His physical body because of the seven wounding events which He experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We receive the life of Jesus, in His blood, when we join the fellowship of His death.

FURTHER STUDY | CORINTHIANS 11

The invitation of Jesus

Jesus invited the disciples, and all of us, to join the fellowship of His offering when He shared the first communion meal with them. Having blessed the bread, He broke it and gave it to the disciples. Jesus said to them, 'Take, eat, this is My body.' **Mat 26:26**. Following the bread, Jesus took the cup, gave thanks for it, and then passed it to the disciples so that they could drink from it. He said to them, 'Drink from it, all of you; for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.' **Mat 26:27-28**.

We know that Jesus did not give the disciples some of His physical flesh to eat or some of His physical blood to drink. Jesus was not establishing a cannibalistic feast! Neither did Jesus miraculously change the bread and wine into something different or special. The disciples, themselves, did not receive any special benefit or miraculous power from the bread or the wine. Twelve months earlier, Jesus had explained to the disciples, 'It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are Spirit and they are life.' **Joh 6:63**.

The disciples were blessed in the first communion meal because they received the word of the New Covenant. The word of the New Covenant was the invitation to receive all of the promises that God had given to Abraham when the gospel was first preached to him. **Gen 15:1. Gal 3:8**. This was a word of faith! It blessed the disciples with the faith to believe that Jesus would live in their hearts and that they would live in the fellowship of His body. **Joh 14:20**. Furthermore, it blessed the disciples with the faith to believe that the life of Jesus would become their life as they walked with Him from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. The apostle Paul referred to this as faith in the blood of Christ. **Rom 3:25**.

Breaking the bread of life

Jesus blessed the disciples by proclaiming the word of the New Covenant to them. **Luk 22:19-20**. He then proceeded to break the bread of life by continuing to minister the word of life, by the Spirit, to each of the disciples. The Gospel of John records the way in which Jesus continued to minister the word of life to the disciples as the substance of the communion meal.

Importantly, Jesus began His ministry by girding Himself with a towel, pouring water into a basin, and washing the feet of each of the disciples. **Joh 13:3-11**. When Peter questioned Him about this, Jesus replied, 'What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this.' **Joh 13:7**. By girding Himself with a towel and washing the feet of the disciples, Jesus demonstrated that He had emptied Himself to become the Slave of the Father. This was His only qualification for ministry at the communion table.

As the Slave of the Father, Jesus faithfully ministered the word of the Father to the disciples concerning the events that were about to unfold. He revealed the purpose of His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, by saying, 'In My Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.' **Joh 14:2**. Jesus prophesied in this way in order to build up the faith of the disciples, and to comfort them so that their hearts were not troubled by the traumatic events that were about to transpire. **Joh 14:1. 1Co 14:3**.

Significantly, Jesus proclaimed to the disciples that He would go ahead of them as the Pioneer of their salvation, and that He would then grant them a participation in His offering and sufferings. **Joh 13:36**. In this fellowship, He explained that they would know Him and the power of His resurrection in their mortal bodies. **Joh 14:19. Php 3:10-11**.

FURTHER STUDY JOHN 14

Judas and Peter

During the first communion meal, Jesus testified, 'He who eats bread with Me has lifted up His heel against Me.' **Joh 13:18**. Immediately after this, Jesus became troubled in spirit and brought a specific word of knowledge to the disciples. He said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me.' **Joh 13:21**. When Jesus brought this word of knowledge, He was granting Judas one final opportunity for repentance. However, Judas was unwilling to humble himself to receive this word of truth that had the power to deliver him from his self-righteous blindness. He rejected Christ's word even as he received the bread from His hand. The outcome of his choice was that Satan entered his heart, and that Jesus appointed him to his own place of judgement in the lake of fire. **Joh 13:27**.

Once Judas had left the communion meal, Jesus continued to minister to the other eleven disciples, whom He called 'little children.' **Joh 13:33**. His ministry included a specific word of knowledge for Peter. Jesus said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow until you have denied Me three times.' **Joh 13:38**. Peter resisted this word because he trusted in the integrity of his own heart and in the legitimacy of his own religious motivations.

We can identify the reality that Judas and Peter were both self-righteous. The significant difference between the two men was that Peter possessed the blessing of faith from Christ because he had received the word of the New Covenant. Judas did not possess this faith. Even though he was present with the rest of the disciples during the communion meal, he had rejected the word of the New Covenant. He did not eat and drink the communion in faith for a participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Without this faith, he ate and drank damnation to himself. **1Co 11:28-29**. **2Co 13:5**.

The experience of Peter

Peter ate and drank the communion in faith for his participation in Christ's offering. This was true, even though he did not 'judge himself rightly' in relation to the nature of his participation. **1Co 11:31**. The biggest error of judgement that Peter made was his assumption that he could fulfil the will of God in the flesh. This faulty assumption led to other errors of judgement – for example, chopping off the ear of the slave of the high priest at the gate of the garden of Gethsemane. **Joh 18:10-11**. Nevertheless, Jesus continued to be merciful and gracious toward Peter. He had prayed that Peter's faith would not fail during this crisis in his life. **Luk 22:32**.

In the house of Caiaphas, Peter experienced significant pressure that caused him to swear, curse, and to vehemently deny that he knew Jesus. **Mat 26:69-75**. This pressure was a judgement upon him. However, because of the faith that Peter had received from Christ as a gift, this judgement was not leading to damnation. It was the expression of the Lord's mercy upon him. He was being chastened by the Lord so that the religious projection that he had concerning himself could be removed, and so that he could find the truth of his name. **1Co 11:32**. **1Co 3:15**. When Jesus looked at him, Peter immediately remembered the word that had been spoken to him in the communion service. **Luk 22:61**.

The chastening that Peter experienced in the house of Caiaphas was part of the cup of blessing that Christ had given him to drink, because it caused him to recognise that he was bankrupt in spirit. **1Co 10:16**. It enabled him to 'judge himself rightly'. As soon as he became bankrupt in spirit, he was blessed with access to the grace of Christ. **Mat 5:3**. He began to turn to the Lord in repentance. The veil of his self-righteousness was removed from his eyes so that he could see the hope of his glorious calling as a son of God. **2Co 3:16**.

FURTHER STUDY MATTHEW 26:30-75

Staying connected under pressure

The gospel revolves around the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ. Without His death, there would be no shedding of His blood for our sin; nor would there be any hope of the resurrection. We would be in a miserable state. But the fact is that Jesus has died, and He has been raised. **Rom 4:20-25**. And now, by faith, we can be made alive in Christ. Not only are we made alive; but, also, we can now live every day in, and by, the faith of Christ Himself. **Gal 2:20**. This means that we can walk in resurrection life. He is the resurrection and the life! **Joh 11:25**.

We all know and believe that. But there is a question that many of us are still coming to understand. It is, 'How do we overcome by the Spirit and not walk after the flesh?' After all, we are still sinful, mortal, and are not always spiritual. So, how can we live a genuine Christian life without being merely religious?

The answer is found in our communion table! In our weekly communion meal, we have been given access to fellowship in Christ's body and to the life in His blood. **1Co 10:16**. This is what sustains us and keeps us in the love of God. We can walk in the Spirit if we remain in the fellowship of Christ's body. **Gal 5:16**. In this fellowship, suffering is not a strange thing. Knowing this allows us to remain real with one another. We don't need to pretend that we are feeling terrific when we're not. And we shouldn't feel any pressure to say something religious when things aren't going so well. We can be honest about the mess.

If we are going to walk by the Spirit, we need to understand that things are going to go very wrong sometimes, even though we are sons of God. And that is normal. More than that, we need to know that God is particularly able to work in us when things go wrong. He deals with us individually, because each of us is a unique person. We stay connected to communion by our participation.

Deliverance from fear

The 'other law', or the 'the law of self', is powered by the fear of death. **Heb 2:14-15**. Human beings fear death in all of its forms. That could mean dying physically; but it could also mean losing in sport, being sick, being humiliated, being rejected, losing an argument, or not being praised for something that we feel good at doing. Death comes in many forms. The human race is permanently driven by the fear of every kind of loss.

This, in turn, provokes an unconscious and permanent anxiety. **Luk 12:29**. Some people try to pretend that the anxiety isn't there; others simply don't see it; another group, meanwhile, becomes depressed in the face of their anxiety and loses hope in the meaning of life. This last group suffers from, what King Solomon described as being, the awareness of the vanity and emptiness of life. **Ecc 2:11**. These people have touched on a truth, but have not yet been delivered over to the truth, which would set them free. So, what is the 'truth'? The truth sounds like a contradiction, but it really isn't so.

The truth is that, in order to be delivered from the fear of death, we need to 'die'. **Php 1:21**. We need to die with Christ. In dying with Christ, our suffering is no longer something horrible, having no benefit to us. **1Co 11:32**. It becomes for us the context where the grace of God is coming to us, and where we receive the life of Christ. As we die with Christ, He gives us His life and cuts away the other law from us. **Rom 6:8**. This is why we need to stay connected to the communion table. We can't die with Christ by trying to. If we stay connected to His death, not drawing back to protect ourselves, a miracle takes place in our lives. **Mar 8:35**. We stay connected by remaining in fellowship with the Lord by offering ourselves daily to Him, and by partaking of the weekly communion meal. This meal is our participation in His body and in the work of His blood.

Striving for a good outcome

The apostle Paul said, 'I delight in the law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members.' **Rom 7:22-23**. Paul was saying that a number of things happen when we hear the word of God, and become motivated to fulfil it. The first thing that happens is that we delight in the word. **Psa 19:8**. We hear a preached word, or read new content, and find ourselves excited by its compelling truth. We want that word to be true in our lives. All we need to do is believe, right? But, hang on a moment. Paul told us that something else has started to happen at the same time.

While we're delighting in the word, this thing called 'another law' has also become active. This law tells us that when we want something good, we have the ability to get it. That goes as much for the good word of God as it does for anything else. Just because we hear, and want God's word, doesn't necessarily mean that we are being spiritual. Pursuing a good outcome does not, in itself, purify our motives, or our methods. Unless we are being led by the Spirit - even when we want a spiritual outcome - we will try to achieve it by using our other law; in other words, by using the flesh. And the flesh cannot produce the life of God. **Rom 8:13**.

The only way that the other law can be overcome, and then removed, is by us dying with Christ. As we do so, this law is removed from us. **Col 2:11-12**. It ceases to be part of the way in which we think. It no longer motivates us to save our lives, or to react when we undergo discipline! The only death that can achieve all of that is the death of Christ. We must join His death. **Rom 6:10**.

Power is perfected in weakness

When we encounter difficult circumstances, we often revert to trying to resolve the issues by the power of our flesh. The evidence that we are doing so is that we will become frustrated and upset because we have lost control of a situation. This becomes really important, because when we become frustrated enough to give up, we know that we are actually very close to joining His death. **2Co 1:9**.

The apostle Paul shared his testimony with the Corinthians about how he had learned to rejoice in his weakness in all of its forms. This was a huge moment in Paul's life; a major revelation. It wasn't a 'ho-hum' event that occurred when a small matter of doctrine fell into place for him. It was the result of Paul finding his life almost impossible to bear. He felt that his portion of suffering was intolerable. The Lord's words to him, therefore, were life-changing and immensely powerful. **2Co 12:7-10**.

Paul's testimony sums up both ends of what we are looking at. At the front end, we see a person asking the Lord to take away their suffering. That person is you and me, as well as Paul. Paul used himself as the example, but wrote it down for all of us. His natural first response was to see the thorn in his flesh as something bad and, therefore, something that God, who is good, should remove from his life. After Paul had spent a lot of effort praying in this way, the Lord told him that he had missed the point of what was going on. **1Pe 4:12-13**. The weakness that He was bringing to Paul was the effect of the death of Christ in his life, which was the only way by which Paul was going to be delivered from pride. Unless he joined the death of Christ, Paul could only walk after the flesh. The Lord was training Paul as His example, working out the truth of the gospel in him, so that he could minister it to others. **Psa 144:1**.

The renewing of our mind

The apostle Paul came to understand that ‘the package’ of his life was being delivered to him, personally, by the Father, for his perfection. Therefore, the suffering in that package was the love of God towards him. By remaining in fellowship with Christ - that is, by not seeking removal of the suffering - Paul found the grace to ‘die daily’. **1Co 15:31**. Now, this is a very big deal. Until we have been trained otherwise, we will recoil from the pain of discipline. In ordinary life, we don’t think that pain is good – because it isn’t! It hurts, and we naturally avoid it. But Paul’s testimony shows us that we can be transformed by the renewing of our minds, as we stay connected to Christ through offering. **Rom 12:1-2**.

Paul found the power to walk through his suffering without trying to save his own life. More than that, he was able to minister the testimony of this experience to others. This testimony came as faith to them. It carried with it a sweet-smelling aroma, which was the aroma of the offering of Christ. **Eph 5:2**. And God intends the same for us. As we participate in His wounds, He shares His life with us. This is the aroma of the offering of Christ Himself!

The unpleasant events in our lives, then, are not strange or unusual. They are normal. The ordinary Christian life is not ‘smooth sailing’. God is not a giant magician who waves His wand and takes away all of our pain. That day will come. But it will not be by the waving of a wand, and it won’t be because our suffering is inconvenient to any of us here and now. The day when there is no more pain or sorrow will be in the new heavens and new earth. **Rev 21:4**. Until then, we are in training. We are being trained in how to fellowship. When we learn how to rest in fellowship with the Lord, we begin to understand how God Himself lives. This will mean that we possess a testimony about the life of God. The gospel will be real. Others will see in us the dying and the living of Jesus. **1Ti 1:16**.

Resisting to the shedding of blood

We read in the letter to the Hebrews, 'For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons.' **Heb 12:3-5**. What does it mean to resist to the shedding of blood? That sounds extreme. Do we need to make ourselves bleed? Not at all! 'To the shedding of blood' means that, because we are standing in our sanctification, the blood of Christ is being 'sprinkled upon us' for our redemption and healing.

What do we mean by 'sprinkled'? Sprinkling was what the high priest did with the atoning blood in the tabernacle under the Old Covenant. The blood of the sacrifice was sprinkled on various parts of the tabernacle, including the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant. **Heb 9:19-21**. But we have a better High Priest! And He (Jesus) is also 'our Mercy Seat', the One who has been sprinkled with blood for our sin. He is the Mercy Seat of the New Covenant. **Heb 12:22-24. Rom 3:25. Heb 10:22**.

Jesus was sprinkled with blood as He suffered at each point on His journey to the cross. We join Him on this journey as we join His death; and, in this way, we are sprinkled with His blood. As we resist the sin of drawing back from our suffering, Christ sprinkles us with His blood. In so doing, He shares His life with us. In this way, we are given the capacity of 'the new man'. We don't have to rely upon our own resources. In fact, that's what we must not do. If we really are joined to the death of Christ - not in some imaginary way, but genuinely connected to Him and His death - then that's where the blood that He shed is available. And it's not available anywhere else except in His death.

The blood of Christ cleanses

We celebrate His death as we join together at the communion table and partake of His life among our brethren. That's where we stay connected to His death. And, of course, that means staying connected relationally at all times. One of the effects of suffering is that it can cause us to withdraw from other people. But here again, the Scriptures have something to say to us. The apostle John exhorted us that 'if we walk in the light, as He is in the light, we have fellowship, and the blood of Jesus Christ cleanses us from all unrighteousness'. **1Jn 1:7**. Here is another aspect of the shedding of blood: it works when we walk in the light of fellowship among our brethren. This doesn't mean that we continually talk about what's wrong with us. Rather, it means that we remain in the fellowship of light, where the fire of God is - among those who are living in obedience to the word of God.

The apostle Peter declared that we have been chosen 'according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience *and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ*'. **1Pe 1:2. Heb 10:22**. Christ was sprinkled first, for us, because our sin was laid upon Him. His blood was shed as He bore the reproach of our sin. The sprinkling that now takes place in our lives is as a result of what we, personally, have laid upon Him. Our lives become messy because we are still sinful, immature, or badly formed. So, we need to be joined to Christ's sufferings in order to share in His life as the means of our recovery. As part of this process, we share in the reproach that was laid upon Him for us. This is where we endure by faith, prayerfully walking out our salvation in fear and trembling. **Heb 13:12-13**.



Restoring
my Soul