



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

AUGUST 2020

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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August 2020

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The communion is a participation

The communion meal is our point of gathering together as the body of Christ. The apostle Paul received instructions directly from Christ regarding the communion and its implications for our lives as sons of God. He said that as often as we eat the bread and drink the cup, we proclaim, or show forth, *the Lord's death* until He comes. **1Co 11:23-26**. Partaking of these elements is our commitment to dying with Christ. He made our death to be His death and then died our death by the grace of God. **Heb 2:9**. As we *die with Christ*, as a member of His body, we are also *raised with Christ* by the life that is in His blood. His life, which is from the Father, becomes our life, and is the life we are to minister to others by the Holy Spirit.

There is nothing mystical or magical in the bread that we eat and the cup that we drink. These elements are a *participation* in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Specifically, the cup is our participation in the blood of Christ. **1Co 10:16**. His blood was shed through the wounds that He received as an offering for sin. The life that was in Christ's blood, and that brought Him back from the death of sin, is given to be our life through fellowship in His sufferings as a member of His body. **Heb 13:20-21. Php 3:11**.

The bread that we break and eat together is our commitment to fellowship as a member of Christ's body. As Paul said, 'The bread which we break, is it not the communion [or participation] of the body of Christ? For we, though many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread.' **1Co 10:16-17**.

The words that I speak

When Jesus spoke of the necessity for members of His body to eat His flesh and drink His blood, He explained to His disciples that this meant receiving, believing and obeying His words which are Spirit and life. **Joh 6:53. Joh 6:63-64.** The apostle John said that the word of Christ is proclaimed by the presbytery. Those who receive this word are joined to their fellowship, which is with the Father and His Son, Jesus Christ. **1Jn 1:1-3.**

The word of Christ that is proclaimed by His messengers at the communion table establishes the ground of our fellowship in the word of present truth. This word addresses the culture of our lives as individuals, families, and as the body of Christ.

We have our fellowship in the body and blood of Christ through the faith that we receive by hearing the word of God. **2Co 4:10-12. Rom 10:17.** Having received faith, we believe God's word and begin our participation in the body and blood of Christ *through testimony*. **2Co 4:13.** In this regard, our eating and drinking is a confession of our conviction of faith as we fellowship together as members of the body of Christ.

This confession continues throughout the week through our *conversation* and *conduct* as sons of God and as members of the body of Christ. This includes our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, devotional living in our houses, fellowship from house to house, offering in the body of Christ, prayer, and caring for the needs of others in the body of Christ.

As we serve one another from this position of faith, the life of Jesus that is in us will be ministered by us, in resurrection power, as a blessing to others. We are truly discerning the Lord's body when we live according to this rule of faith. **1Co 11:29. Php 3:16.** The fear of death is being removed from us and we are able to live victorious lives in Christ.

Our confession of faith

The testimony of a son of God is 'I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live *by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me*'. **Gal 2:20.**

Here is 'a faithful saying' that summarises the confession of those who have received the faith of the Son of God:

- We have chosen to not live for ourselves, and we have chosen to not trust in ourselves as the basis for living. **2Co 5:14-15.** To live now, we trust in God who raises the dead. **2Co 1:9.**
- We accept that we have the sentence of death in ourselves, and are dying Christ's death with Him. **2Co 1:9.** Christ's death is the death from which no-one can escape. He died for us all, so we *all* die with Him. **2Co 5:14.** As we die with Him, in Him, we receive resurrection life and live by His life. **Gal 2:20.**
- For the rest of our time, while living in a mortal body, we no longer live for ourselves nor for the lusts of men. We now live for the will of God. **1Pe 4:1-2.**
- We are being put to death, with Christ, in the flesh, but are made alive in the Spirit. **1Pe 3:18. Rom 8:10.** Our mortal bodies are joined to Christ's mortal body, and His mortal body is the body of sin. However, we are coming alive with Him in each wounding event that we suffer with Him, because the Spirit is giving us life.
- Because of the righteous, obedient death that Christ died for us, His death is now becoming our righteous, obedient death. We are learning how to die in Him. The dying and the living of the Lord Jesus are 'all His benefits' towards us. **Psa 116:12. 2Co 4:8-10.**

Christ learned our obedience

During His offering journey from the first communion until His death on the cross, Jesus suffered as the Lamb of God. **Joh 1:29**. The Lamb of God is the symbol of perfect obedience. At no point did Jesus have an alternative will to the Father's will. **Joh 4:34**. Although He could have employed other options in response to the reproaches that He suffered, He chose only obedience.

For example, at the gate of Gethsemane, Peter drew his sword and, in a defensive action, struck the servant of the high priest and cut off his ear. Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?' **Mat 26:52-54**. Christ's preoccupation was to fully drink the cup that the Father had given to Him. **Joh 18:11**.

Jesus, personally, became the sum and expression of all obedience. Although He was the Lamb of God, He *learnt our obedience* through the things which He suffered. **Heb 5:8**. These were the sufferings of our death under the judgement of God. He experienced these sufferings when, by the grace of God, He tasted the death of every person. **Heb 2:9**. As Jesus endured the sufferings of the judgement of God upon us, by the resurrection life in His blood, they were turned to a chastening through which He learned and perfected the obedience of our sonship. **Heb 5:8**.

This is a key point: Through chastening, Christ learnt our obedience and authored the unique pathway of salvation and sonship for *every person*. We are able to obtain this salvation only through obedience to His word. Specifically, Paul said, 'And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to *all who obey Him*.' **Heb 5:9**.

Illumination that leads to mourning

At the point of pain in a wounding event, where Christ suffered because of our sin, how do we find forgiveness and cleansing? How do we find deliverance from the sin that so easily besets us? **Heb 12:1**. Forgiveness and deliverance from sin are found only through *illumination* that leads to *mourning*.

Under the influence of grace and supplication, as the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, we are enabled to look and to see Christ who was wounded because of our sin. We are also illuminated to see that, as Christ died our death, He authored the pathway of our salvation. **Zec 12:10. Heb 12:2**. A person who is illuminated to see Christ in this way will begin to mourn for their sin and for the suffering that Christ endured because of God's judgement upon them.

Paul described this mourning as 'godly sorrow' that produces 'repentance leading to salvation'. **2Co 7:10**. This is because, through godly sorrow, we receive understanding concerning the pathway of our salvation, which is our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. This pathway will involve walking in the light of the illumination that we have received with those we have sinned against, confessing our sins to them, seeking forgiveness and, where possible, making restitution to them. In this fellowship, the blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin and from the death-producing works of an evil conscience. **1Jn 1:7. Heb 10:22**. In this way, true illumination brings understanding, and enables us to see, and to testify to, God's will for our life.

The apostle Paul strongly exhorted us not to refuse the Lord who speaks to us from heaven through the messengers in His right hand. He warned that if we refuse to hear Christ when He speaks to us, we will not escape the judgement of God. **Heb 12:24-25**. This is because a person who refuses Christ's messengers, and their message, rejects the 'so great salvation' that is coming to them in the word of the cross. **Heb 2:2-3**.

FURTHER STUDY 2 CORINTHIANS 7

Causing Christ to suffer

To understand our fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, it is helpful to consider the example of the apostle Paul's Christian pilgrimage.

The *first* aspect of suffering to which Paul testified was the suffering that he caused to Christ through his persecution of the early church. **1Co 15:9**. When the Lord made Himself known to Paul on the road to Damascus, He said, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me? ... I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting. It is hard for you to kick against the goads!' **Act 9:4-5**. Christ was suffering on the cross as Paul abused the members of Christ's body.

Significantly, Paul's persecution of Christ caused considerable injury to his own identity. Before the foundation of the world, the Father had set Paul apart to be the apostle to the Gentiles. **Gal 1:15-16**. This was his predestination as a son of God in Christ. Paul's severe psychological distress, which manifested as manic rage and murderous threats against the disciples, was the pain that resulted from kicking against the word of his sonship. **Act 9:1-2. Act 26:11**.

King Solomon described the word of the cross, which is the wisdom from above, as 'a goad given by one Shepherd'. **Ecc 12:11. 1Co 2:6-8**. Jesus identified Himself as the Shepherd who calls each sheep 'by name' by laying His life down for them through offering. **Joh 10:2-3,11**. This was His offering journey from the first communion meal to the cross. Christ was being publicly portrayed to Paul as crucified, through the testimony and conduct of those whom he was persecuting. Paul brought the suffering of judgement upon himself by rejecting his sonship through his self-defined and zealous works, which were causing considerable injury to the members of Christ's body. If Paul had not received illumination from Christ, he most certainly would have died a tormented death under the judgement of God.

Suffering as a member of the body

After Paul was born again as a son of God, and baptised into Christ, he began to suffer with Christ as a member of His body. Concerning Paul's ministry, Jesus said to Ananias, 'I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.' **Act 9:16**. This is the *second* aspect of the sufferings that Paul experienced in his life. Through his sufferings as a messenger of God, Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified among those to whom he had been sent. **Gal 3:1**. By this means, grace and salvation were ministered to them.

Paul wrote in his letter to the Colossians, 'I now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up in my flesh what is lacking in the afflictions of Christ, *for the sake of His body*, which is the church, of which I became a minister according to the stewardship from God which was given to me for you, to fulfil the word of God'. **Col 1:24-25**.

When Paul's hearers received and believed the word of the cross, they were joined in fellowship with him. **1Jn 1:3**. Because Christ had been portrayed as crucified by Paul, his hearers were joined to the cross of Christ and to the fellowship of His sufferings. They were to eat and drink the elements of the communion meal in faith for their daily fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ, as members of His body. **1Co 10:16-17**.

Paul's sufferings for those to whom he had been sent ceased when they were joined, at a personal level, to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. He said to those who were walking in this manner, as part of the corporate new creation, 'From now on let no-one trouble me, for I bear in my body the marks of the Lord Jesus.' **Gal 6:17**. In some churches, however, Paul had to 'travail again' so that Christ would be formed in his hearers. **Gal 4:19. 2Co 12:19-21**.

Suffering as a just implication

When Paul was abused under the hands of those to whom he was sent, he considered these sufferings to be a 'just implication' of his former persecution of the church. **Act 9:16**. To this end, he wrote in his first letter to the Corinthians, 'For I am the least of the apostles, who am not worthy to be called an apostle, *because I persecuted the church of God*. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and His grace toward me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me.' **1Co 15:9-10**. Earlier in this letter, Paul described his labours, which were by the grace of God, as the sufferings that he endured for the sake of the gospel. **1Co 4:11-13**. This was the *third* aspect of suffering that Paul demonstrated.

Paul did not claim, or expect, that his conversion, and the forgiveness of his sins, relieved him of the consequences of his former actions. In this regard, he demonstrated the same spirit of faith as Jacob. Jacob wrestled with the Lord, and received a new name that was commensurate with his predestination as a son of God. He was no longer Jacob, the 'deceiver'. He had been blessed with the name Israel, meaning 'prince with God'. **Gen 32:22-28**.

Nevertheless, Jacob walked from that day forward with a painful limp. Moreover, as Esau came to meet him with four hundred men, Jacob sent all of his own possessions over the ford of Jabbok and into the land in front of him, acknowledging the restitution that was required of him because of his sin against his brother. **Gen 33:1-2**. He had to pay 'the last farthing' in the matter. **Mat 5:25-26**. This, he did willingly, considering the face of his profane brother to be the face of God toward him. **Gen 33:10**.

Suffering to be delivered

The *fourth* aspect of suffering that Paul experienced was ‘a thorn in his flesh.’ **2Co 12:7**. This suffering resulted because a messenger, or apostle, of Satan stirred up the crowds to whom he was preaching, so that they turned against him and physically set upon him with violence. Significantly, Paul understood that this suffering was given to him by God as a protection from pride. As this propensity of his flesh was removed from Paul’s heart, he was preserved from falling under the same condemnation as Satan himself merited. In this way, Satan’s buffeting of Paul, which he received as his participation in the circumcision of Christ, only served to preserve Paul’s spirit from sin. **2Co 12:7**.

Writing to the church in Smyrna, Jesus warned His followers of the suffering that they would endure under the oppression of those who were part of ‘the synagogue of Satan’ in the church. **Rev 2:9**. He said to them, ‘Do not fear any of those things which you are about to suffer. Indeed, the devil is about to throw some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days.’ **Rev 2:10**.

However, Jesus said that the outcome of this form of suffering would not be the avoidance of sin only; it also would be *a crown of life* that belongs to those who continue faithfully in the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, even unto death. **Rev 2:10**. Notably, the Lord promised that if we keep His word and do not deny His name, He will make those of the synagogue of Satan to come and worship before our feet, and to know that He loves us. **Rev 3:9**.

Walking in the light

The apostle John, with a presbytery, declared that they had been invited into the fellowship of Yahweh, and had been taught by God concerning the word of life. The eternal life that is with the Father was proclaimed and explained to them, and then manifested and given to them, so that they could see, understand, and handle the life as their own possession. **1Jn 1:1.**

John explained that the work of a presbytery was to bear witness to, and declare, what God had manifested to them within the fellowship of Yahweh. Their work was to invite their hearers to be joined to them in fellowship with the Father and the Son. **1Jn 1:2-3.** The message that the presbytery had been instructed to declare is that 'God the Father is light and in Him is no darkness at all'. **1Jn 1:5.**

The first condition that God places upon anyone, who wants to join His fellowship and obtain eternal life by being born again as His son, is that they must come to the light. Jesus said that those who practise the truth come to the light so that their deeds *may be clearly seen*. They want to know what the truth is, and they want to live in the truth. **Joh 3:20-21.**

The apostle John said that those who walk in the light with God the Father have fellowship with one another. When we acknowledge our darkness and confess our sins, it is the Father who forgives us our sins. The Father then uses the blood of Christ to cleanse us from all unrighteousness by joining us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **1Jn 1:7.** It is God the Father, through Jesus Christ, who takes the initiative to confront us about our sins. If we resist the word of the Father when our sins are confronted, we make God a liar and His word, which is the truth about us, is not in us. **1Jn 1:10.**

Tarry for one another

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul concluded his consideration of the communion meal by saying, 'Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, *tarry one for another*.' **1Co 11:33**. To 'tarry' means 'to wait for one another for the purpose of receiving illumination'.

When we tarry together in fellowship, the life of God is ministered to us as we partake of the communion elements. This life comes to us, giving us illumination, enabling us to turn from our darkness and to practise the truth. **Joh 1:4. 1Jn 1:6**. When we practise the truth, the first thing that we do is have fellowship with one another. **Mat 6:14-15**. This fellowship is an opportunity to resolve issues and matters in the light of the word that we have received from the messengers of Christ. The communion is a fellowship for resolution.

Furthermore, our fellowship with one another includes discussion and prayer as we seek to come to terms with, and acceptance of, the sufferings of Christ that we are enduring, in some measure, as individuals and families. Through discussion and fellowship in the Spirit, our faith can be inspired as we are illuminated to see that our difficulties are an opportunity for blessing. In Christ, they are the chastening of the Lord upon us, and a perfecting process in our life.

The sufferings that cause us heaviness are a '*trial of faith*'. **1Pe 1:6-7**. We need to learn patience when we are being tried with fire in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. Don't forget, faith that survives the fiery trial is a great reward! The apostle Peter said that it is more precious than gold. **1Pe 1:7**. When we accept that our sufferings are a participation in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, and recognise that they are necessary for our perfection, we are expressing faith in Christ's blood, and are participating in the fellowship of His body and blood, which is the New Covenant.

FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 1

Coming to the throne of grace

Jesus Christ is our High Priest who, by offering Himself to God, tasted the sufferings of death that belong to every person. **Heb 2:9**. He is acquainted with our condition, and able to sympathise with our weaknesses. He was tempted in all points, as we are, and did not fail or sin. **Heb 4:15**. Because Christ's offering was successful, Paul was able to exhort us, saying, 'Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.' **Heb 4:16**.

The *throne* of grace is the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. In the Old Covenant, on the Day of Atonement, blood was sprinkled seven times on the mercy seat as an atonement for sins. **Lev 16:14-15**. In his letter to the Romans, Paul explained that, in the New Covenant, God the Father sets forth Jesus Christ in our lives as a mercy seat when we receive and exercise faith in His blood. **Rom 3:23-25**. We demonstrate faith in Christ's blood the moment that we accept and believe that the sufferings we are experiencing in life belong to Christ. They are causing Him to bleed, so that His blood is sprinkled on His body.

When the Father sets forth Christ in our lives as a mercy seat, He grants to us a *connection* to Christ's suffering. By this means, as Christ's blood flows from His heart and falls upon His body, it is also *falling upon us*. His blood is then sprinkling our hearts, cleansing our conscience from dead works so that we can serve God by doing His will. **Heb 9:13-14**. This connection to the offering of Christ is the mercy of God, which we receive from the throne of grace when we have faith in Christ's blood.

Judging ourselves rightly

When the love of God is poured into our hearts, through the Holy Spirit, we are compelled to judge ourselves by faith, rather than from the basis of another law. **Rom 7:23.** We must avoid judging ourselves and others by our own measure of what is good and evil. This activity only leads to condemnation and depression. Rather, by faith, we judge 'that if One died for all, then all died'. **2Co 5:14.** This is the judgement that we are to make as we partake of the communion meal.

Paul said that if we judge ourselves by the illumination that we receive when we hear the blood of Christ speaking to us, we are not judged as part of the old creation. This is because, through faith in Christ's blood, we are joined to the fellowship of His sufferings. In this fellowship, the judgement we are under is turned to a chastisement. We are chastened by the Lord so that we will not be condemned with the world. **1Co 11:31-32.**

As we receive God's word, understand and believe it, we are able to fellowship in the body of Christ, and properly participate in the communion meal. In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, we are kept alive by the resurrection life of God that is in Christ's blood. Because we have access to His life, we will not die before our appointed time.

We are kept alive each day so that we are able to die the death that Christ died for us. We die this death in fellowship with Him by the grace that we receive when, by faith, we come boldly to the throne of grace. **Heb 4:16.** This is the same grace that enabled Jesus to endure the sufferings of our death, making it His death. Christ's death is a *death of attainment*. It is a process by which we are being delivered from our disobedience and rebellion against God. It is the process that is perfecting us as Christians. **Php 3:12-14.**

Writing to little children

The apostle John wrote his first epistle so that we would understand how to fellowship with *the Father* and the Son, and with John himself, who was a messenger as part of a presbytery. **1Jn 1:1-3.**

In Chapter 1 of his letter, John showed us the Father. He explained how our sins can be forgiven, and how we can find fellowship with the Father. The word of the Father, which is from the beginning, addresses us concerning our name and sonship. It also addresses our estrangement from the Father and from His household, because of our sins.

In Chapter 2, John explained how we fellowship with *the Son*. He told us that we can only approach the Father for forgiveness when the Son comes with us as our Advocate. **1Jn 2:1.** The word of the Son, which is also from the beginning, is the word that He speaks as our Advocate. John explained that for Jesus Christ to become our Advocate, we must follow the example of His obedient sonship, and obey His commandments as His disciples. **1Jn 2:3-6.**

Through his letter, the apostle John spoke to us as a spiritual father. He addressed three *spiritual age groups* – little children, young men and fathers. **1Jn 2:12-14.** While John wrote to all three spiritual age groups, most of his letter was addressed to those whom he called ‘my little children’. **1Jn 2:1. 1Jn 3:7. 1Jn 4:4. 1Jn 5:21.** The focus of his message was overcoming sin and living as a son of God.

Having made the point that we all sin, John wrote, ‘My little children, these things I write to you, so that you may not sin’. **1Jn 1:8,10. 1Jn 2:1.** Then, in the rest of his letter, he explained the process and pathway that we are to join so that our sins are eradicated and do not lead to our eternal death.

The endpoint of sin

John concluded his letter by writing, 'If anyone sees his brother sinning a sin which does not lead to death, he will ask, and He will give him life for those who commit sin not leading to death. There is *sin leading to death*. I do not say that he should pray about that. All unrighteousness is sin, and there is *sin not leading to death*'. **1Jn 5:16-17**.

It is helpful to note that the pathway for dealing with sin which does not lead to death, and the pathway of reprobation which leads to eternal damnation, were exemplified by the two thieves who were crucified with Christ on Mount Calvary. **Luk 23:39-43**. One thief received illumination as the blood of Christ spoke to him. His confession, as a God-fearer, was that the judgement of God upon him because of his sin, was just. Yet, he recognised that Christ was dying his death with him. He joined the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, and obtained the reward of eternal life as a son of God.

The other thief remained in bondage to the fear of death. As he was dying under the judgement of God, he continued to insult and abuse Christ, demanding, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us.' **Luk 23:39**. He was hostile to God and died as an enemy of the cross. **Luk 23:40. Rom 8:6-7. Php 3:18-19**.

God does not want any of us to perish in this manner. **2Pe 3:9**. Let us, therefore, stay in discussion with the apostle John as he teaches us how to overcome sin. To do so, we must maintain the attitude of 'a little one' who is receiving the kingdom of God. **Mat 18:3-5**. Then we will learn how our sins are forgiven. Furthermore, we will know how to assure our hearts before God as those who are being delivered from self-condemnation. **1Jn 3:19-20**.

Fear and shame

When a person lives by the other law, in bondage to the spirit of Satan, they accuse or excuse themselves in relation to their sin, from the basis of their knowledge of good and evil. **Rom 7:23. Rom 2:14-15.** This disposition is not godly; it is driven by fear and shame, which are the heritage of mankind because of Adam's rebellion.

God had said to Adam, 'Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat; but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die.' **Gen 2:16-17.** However, through the use of a lie, Satan created the illusion that Adam and Eve could have life and become the source of their own destiny, outside of their fellowship with God. **Gen 3:4-5.** Adam and Eve disobeyed God and ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil to satisfy their desire to be '*like God*' but not '*of God*'.

The only substantial thing that Adam and Eve found as a result of eating the fruit from the tree that gives the knowledge of good and evil is that their eyes were opened, and they realised that they were *naked*. This was not just their awareness that they were not wearing any clothes. They realised that they were cut off from God, and from His life, and had no name or works of enduring value outside of Him.

Adam confessed that he was afraid *because* of his nakedness. **Gen 3:10.** His nakedness implied that he was now vulnerable. He had cut himself loose to time and chance. **Ecc 9:11.** He had no covering, or defence, other than his own capacity to survive through the use of the knowledge of good and evil. Death was the inevitable consequence of Adam's nakedness, and he was afraid.

That you may be healed

When we sin, Christ comes to us as our Advocate, telling us that forgiveness will depend upon a repentance that is commensurate with our sinful behaviour. **1Jn 2:1**. Our behaviour cannot be excused. Nor can we blame our sin on others, or upon any other factor, such as a disadvantaged background or some temperamental disposition or lameness that we have as a consequence of our fallen condition.

We all have identity frailties and complexities that require healing and regeneration. The apostle James noted that many of our faults, or trespasses, spring from our spiritual 'lameness'. In this regard, he wrote, 'Confess your *faults* one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be *healed*'. **Jas 5:16**.

The apostle Paul addressed this same matter in his exhortation concerning striving against sin and enduring the chastening of the Father. **Heb 12:4-7**. He said, 'Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be turned out of the way, *but rather be healed*'. **Heb 12:12-13**.

We were all born with personality traits that need modification through training and discipline. For instance, some people are more prone to anxiety and depression than others. Some tend towards a lack of motivation and laziness. Others are compulsive or driven. Some of us have more acute difficulties, such as personality fractures that may even be identifiable as personality disorders.

Most people do not deliberately, or purposefully, endeavour to sin against others. As we have understood from the writings of James and Paul, many of our sinful motivations and behaviours spring from these identity, or spiritual, frailties. However, this does not excuse our sin; nor does it relieve us of our accountability for our sin and its effects upon others. **Rom 1:20-21**. The Lord wants to bring deliverance from sin through the healing of our lameness, so that we are able to know peace and balance in our lives as sons of God.

FURTHER STUDY HEBREWS 12

Following Christ's example

In relation to finding deliverance from sin, the apostle John directed us to follow the example of Jesus. As we noted earlier, he wrote, 'By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And *we also ought* to lay down our lives for the brethren.' **1Jn 3:16**.

Similarly, the apostle Peter wrote, 'For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, *leaving us an example*, that you should follow His steps: "Who committed no sin, nor was deceit found in His mouth"; who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.' **1Pe 2:21-23**.

Jesus Himself also called us to follow His example in relation to washing one another's feet. He said, 'If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.' **Joh 13:14-15**.

The Son will only be our Advocate with the Father if we obey His commands as disciples, and follow His example of offering. We do this by laying down our lives in offering for our brethren. **1Jn 2:1-6**. That is, we love one another, not only in word, but in deed and in truth. **1Jn 3:18**. This is only possible when we are born of God and joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

To live in the truth is to live together in open-hearted fellowship. This is the implication of walking in the light of God's word. **1Jn 1:7**. As we abide in the light, we are being delivered from the propensities that cause us to stumble and sin against God. **1Jn 2:10**. However, John warned that he who hates his brother, or does not obey the commands of Christ, is in darkness. He does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. **1Jn 2:11**.

Rest for our souls

When we live in open-hearted fellowship with one another, we abide in the Son, and He is our Advocate with the Father. Importantly, we *know* that we are of the truth. Our heart assures us before God. **1Jn 3:19**. We find rest for our souls as we cease striving to attain righteousness through our fleshly endeavour to pursue what we perceive to be good and avoid what we believe to be evil. This way of living inevitably results in condemnation and in further attempts, motivated by shame, to appear acceptable to God. **Ecc 4:6**

When our souls are at rest, as we are yoked with Christ and are learning from Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we no longer react to others from the basis of fear and shame, which are sourced from the other law. **Mat 11:29-30**. Instead, we speak according to our name as a son of God. This is the expression of the love of God, and is pleasing to Him.

The Son of Man was given power on earth to forgive sins. **Mar 2:10-11**. Even though Jesus has the authority to forgive sins, John teaches us that it is the Father who forgives our sins when Christ advocates for us. **1Jn 2:1**. He is our Advocate with the Father when we pray in the manner that He instructed us. Jesus said, 'In this manner, therefore, pray: our Father in heaven, hallowed be Your name ... forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.' **Mat 6:9,12**.

Forgiveness is the fruit of fellowship whereby people find relational healing and connection with the Father and with Christ, and with one another. It is not found through the confidential confession of sins by a person who is seeking counselling and absolution from a professional, religious leader. This kind of religious activity is carnal in its motivation and does not minister forgiveness or life.

The blessing of salvation

The Beatitudes, outlined in the Gospel of Matthew, are Christ's summary of the steps of salvation. **Mat 5:3-12**. The first foundation of salvation for those who hear and receive the gospel is that God grants to them repentance. **2Ti 2:24-25**. Repentance is an amazing gift that enables us to empty ourselves of our fallen projections as we accept that they are nothing more than lies. This is the blessing of becoming 'poor in spirit'. The kingdom of heaven belongs to those who are poor in spirit, because they are born to see the kingdom. **Mat 5:3. Joh 3:3**.

A person who has become poor in spirit sees their sinful condition, and mourns. This is the second foundation of salvation. **Mat 5:4**. We mourn for the injuries that we have caused the Son of God to suffer as a consequence of our sin; and we mourn for the loss of our sonship. Jesus said that comfort is the blessing that belongs to those who mourn. **Mat 5:4**. This is the comfort that the Holy Spirit ministers to us as He turns our mourning into fellowship in the travail of Christ. **Joh 14:16. Rom 8:26-27**. In this fellowship, we are being delivered from sin and the other law, and are able to fulfil the works of righteousness that belong to our sonship in Christ.

The desire to live in the reality of our baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to maintain an ongoing fellowship in the body and blood of Jesus, is the expression of faith that belongs to those who are meek, and who hunger and thirst for righteousness. **Mat 5:5-6**. As we abide in Christ, and He abides in us, our heart is being changed, because the frailties of our spirit are being healed, and the other law is being removed from our life through the circumcision of Christ. **Col 2:11-12**. We are blessed because we are fulfilling the will of God for our life, and are obtaining the inheritance of our sonship. **Mat 5:5**.



Restoring
my Soul