



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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AUGUST 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Contributing Authors

Victor Hall

David Baker

Nathan Smith

Peter Hay

Bruce Hamilton

Compiled by

David Baker

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The origin of choice

God the Father has dignified every person with the freedom of choice. The Father wants us to exercise our freedom by choosing the glorious sonship that He prepared for us in Christ Jesus. To do this, we must first recognise that the freedom of choice does not begin with us. Jesus made this clear to His disciples, saying, 'You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.' **Joh 15:16.**

The Father, Son and Holy Spirit first chose us before the heavens and earth were created. As They counselled together, They agreed to create and bring to glory a great multitude of sons who would be born of Their life and be participants in Their fellowship. **Gen 1:26. Heb 2:10.** The Father, Son and Holy Spirit, who made Themselves known to Moses by the name 'Lord God', called Their plan 'the Everlasting Covenant'. **Gen 17:7.**

The name 'Lord God', in the Hebrew language, is 'Yahweh *Elohim*'. This name reveals who He is, how He lives, and how His plan for us is accomplished. The name 'Yahweh' reveals that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are one; They are one Spirit, and live by one life. **Deu 6:4.** The designation '*Elohim*' reveals that each Person has a unique expression of Their one life, an expression that is enabled by the capacity of Their one Spirit.

In the fellowship of Yahweh, before the beginning of creation, the Father, Son and Holy Spirit each made specific offering towards Their covenant plan. The Holy Spirit laid down His life to become the Helper of the Son and of the Father. **Joh 14:16.** The Son emptied Himself to become the Father's Son. **Php 2:5-7.** The Father laid down His life by giving to the Son the fullness of His own expression as Father. **Heb 1:3. Joh 16:15.**

The creation of man

Yahweh Son became the full expression of the Father when He was begotten as the Son of God by the word of the Father, who said, 'You are My Son, today I have begotten You.' **Heb 1:5**. This birthing action was by the Holy Spirit. **Heb 3:7-8**. Through this process, the Son became the Word of God the Father. The apostle John declared, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.' **Joh 1:1**. Accordingly, the Father's will is accomplished through the Son as He proceeds from the fellowship of Yahweh by the capacity of the Holy Spirit.

The first outcome of the Word of God proceeding from the fellowship of Yahweh was the creation of the heavens and the earth, and everything in them. It was all created through the Word of God. As the apostle John explained, 'All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made.' **Joh 1:3**.

The focal point of God's entire creative initiative was the formation of man. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit expressed Their covenant purpose by saying, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness.' **Gen 1:26**. The Lord God formed the physical body of man from the dust of the earth. Then, when He breathed the breath of life into man's nostrils, through the Word, man became a living being. **Gen 2:7**.

Through this process, the Lord God gave mankind identity, including all the faculties that are necessary for relationship with Him and with others. We note, for example, the words of King Solomon who declared, 'The hearing ear and the seeing eye, the Lord [Yahweh] has made them both.' **Pro 20:12**. Because of this, our mind, which is a faculty of our identity, is able to interpret what we hear and see.

Receiving illumination

Our ears and eyes are necessary for receiving the word that proceeds from Yahweh. Yahweh, through the Word of God, meets us and speaks with us. As we hear and receive what the Lord says to us, we receive *illumination* by the Spirit so that we can see what the Father prepared for us in the counsel of Their will. **1Co 2:6-15. Eph 1:17-19.**

Illumination is an *understanding* that we can receive only through the word of God. The Son comes to give us this understanding so that, by the Holy Spirit, we can know that God is our Father, and also know that Jesus became the Son of the Father so that we can be sons of God and members of His body. **1Jn 5:20.**

Importantly, this understanding brings to our attention that there is a choice that we must make. We have been given the right and responsibility to make choices. With this gift, comes accountability. God does not impose Himself upon us. The gifts that He gives are ours to refuse or to accept. Rom 11:29. The gifts that God gives reveal His love for us. Tit 3:4-7.

Paul desired that his hearers would be illuminated to this choice, praying that 'the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe.' **Eph 1:17-19.** He wanted his hearers to know this, so that they could choose it!

Freedom to choose

A spirit of grace accompanies the word that brings illumination. By this grace, we are freed from any influence that might impact upon our capacity to choose the 'so great salvation' that is made known to us through the word of God. **Heb 2:1-3.**

This liberty includes relief from the self-centred motivation of the other law in our heart, which would otherwise cause us to choose our own way over God's plan for us. Explaining this liberating effect of the word, Paul wrote, 'It is for freedom [to be whom the Father predestined us to be] that Christ has set us free [from the other law]. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery [to sin]:' **Gal 5:1.**

Not only does the Lord free us to choose the glorious destiny that the Father has chosen for us, but the Holy Spirit ministers conviction to us, provoking us to do the works that belong to our choice. That is, through the ministry of the Spirit, the word has a polarising, or separating, effect upon us as we walk in the way that we have chosen.

When a person rejects the promise of sonship in Christ and chooses, instead, to define their own life and works, they are provoked to hostility towards the Lord's messengers and their message. This response was exemplified by the Jews who were 'cut to the heart' under the conviction of the Spirit, as Stephen proclaimed the gospel to them. They cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at Stephen with one accord, casting him out of the city, where they stoned him. **Act 7:57-58.** In doing so, they forfeited the glorious inheritance that Stephen was revealing to them. As murderers, they were outside of the heavenly Jerusalem, having chosen the darkness of their own way over the light that belongs to the kingdom of heaven. **Rev 22:15**

The conviction of the Spirit

When a person hears the word of a messenger and does not draw back from its illuminating effect upon their heart, the conviction of the Spirit motivates them to repentance and to the obedience of faith. **Joh 16:8**. They draw near for fellowship with those who declare the word, where they are able to choose the life of sonship that God has chosen for them. **Heb 10:19-22**.

Those who responded to Peter's ministry on the Day of Pentecost epitomised this work of the Holy Spirit. Having been convicted by the Spirit as they heard Peter's message, they said to him and to the rest of the apostles, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' **Act 2:37**. Peter replied, 'Repent, and let every one of you be baptised in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.' **Act 2:38-39**.

The promise that belongs to those who choose what God has chosen for them is the blessing of being born of the Spirit as a son of God! **Gal 3:13-14**. Having been born of the Spirit, we must choose to walk by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, every day. That is, we choose to receive our difficulties and distress as a participation in the sufferings of Christ, and to do the works of obedience that belong to our sonship. This is what it means to be blameless. As we walk this way, the Father has promised that we will obtain everything that He has prepared for us in Christ. **1Th 5:23-24**. **Heb 6:17-18**.

The nature of choice

The Father has predestined every person to become His son or daughter by new birth. **2Pe 3:9**. When the word of God is proclaimed to a person by a messenger who is a witness of Jesus Christ, it is accompanied by a spirit of grace and supplication. **Zec 12:10**. We sometimes refer to this as 'prevenient grace', because this grace is operative *before* a person has chosen to receive or reject the word.

It is important to understand the nature of this grace. It is not irresistible. Rather, it gives every person the *freedom to choose* whether they will receive or reject the Father's call to be His son, and to join the fellowship of His household. Without this grace, a fallen human being does not have the capacity to hear the word of God or the freedom to choose how they will respond to it.

The *nature of the choice* that is given to every person is whether they will receive or reject the sonship that the Father is offering to give them. This is an important point. When we consider a person's freedom to choose, it does not mean that they have been given the opportunity to choose between many different alternatives. The choice is always between two alternatives - and it is between two alternatives only! **Deu 11:26-28**.

Moses described the two alternatives to the nation of Israel before they entered the promised land. He said, 'I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you *life and death*, blessing and cursing; therefore *choose life*, that both you and your descendants may live.' **Deu 30:19**. The nature of our choice is simple. We *choose life* by choosing to be the son whom the Father has predestined and called us to be. We *choose death* by pursuing any other alternative.

The need to choose

In the world, the operation of the other law in the fallen human heart is assumed to be the expression of freedom. The other law is our self-centredness. It is our desire to be independent and to be in control of our own lives. The education system in the world actively teaches young people that they are free to be whoever they want to be. This same lie is promoted by the media. **Rom 7:14-15.**

The world purports to offer a smorgasbord of choice. This is a great deception. Of course, a person in the world will make many decisions about their life. However, if they are not choosing to live as a son of God, every decision that they make will be an expression of the other law in their heart. It will be motivated by the law of sin that governs the whole world. **Rom 7:23.**

In the end, the myriad of different pathways in the world all lead to the same destination - eternal death. In stark contrast to this, we choose life by choosing to be a son of God and choosing to live in His house. **Rom 7:24-25.** Significantly, many of us were born as a son of God while we were still in our mother's womb, because of the faith of our parents. **Luk 1:15. Jer 1:5.** We have grown up as those who have always belonged to the Father's house.

This wonderful reality does not negate the need for us to make our own choice. We must choose to remain in the Father's house. We know that a crisis of choice is often precipitated in the life of a young person when the world presents them with what appears to be a viable alternative. However, there is no reason for a young person to wait for this crisis before they make their own choice. In fact, if a young person has already chosen to be a son of God, they are far less vulnerable to the deception of the world, because their choice has already ruled out any other option.

The mystery of choice

When they are presented with the opportunity, why do some people choose to accept the invitation to be a son of God, while others reject it? This is a great mystery. However, we know that the spirit of grace and supplication that accompanies the word gives every person the freedom to make this choice.

Gal 5:1. This means that every person is 'without excuse'. **Rom 1:20.** There are no extenuating circumstances that would preclude a person from responding to the Father's invitation to be a son in His house.

There are many examples in the Scriptures where one person chose life and another person, who was in the same situation, chose death. The most obvious example is the two thieves who were crucified on either side of Jesus. **Luk 23:39-43.** They were both dying with Jesus. However, one thief chose to believe for sonship, became a God-fearer, and asked Jesus to remember Him. The other thief refused to believe, and continued to die under the judgement and wrath of God.

Another well-known example of the mystery of choice is the difference between Jacob and Esau. They were twin brothers who were born together and grew up in the same family. Both brothers had been conceived with the other law in their hearts, and required their nature to be changed. However, equally, they had both been adopted by God the Father while they were still in their mother's womb. **Gen 25:23-24.**

We know that God had chosen a different purpose for the two brothers. This was God's sovereign choice and had nothing to do with the merits or the faults of either brother. **Rom 9:10-11.** Jacob had been chosen by God to be the father of the nation of Israel, who became God's chosen people. Esau had been *chosen by God* to serve his younger brother. The important point is that both brothers had the same opportunity to choose what God had chosen for them.

Which kind of vessel?

Esau was not disadvantaged by God's choice. However, as he grew up and matured, he despised his place in his natural family and his place in the household of God. He decided to trade his birthright for the passing pleasure of a single meal! **Heb 12:15-16**. It is often suggested by commentators that Esau did this shortly after the death of his grandfather, Abraham. If this was the case, Esau would have been about 15 or 16 years old when he sold his birthright.

By rejecting God's choice for his life, Esau chose to become *a vessel of God's wrath*. In contrast to this, Jacob chose to become *a vessel of God's mercy* by submitting himself under the hand of God. His submission under the hand of God included embracing the injustice that he experienced in the house of his uncle, Laban. **Gen 31:41**. He came to understand and appreciate that this chastening was the provision of the Lord's mercy toward him. The Lord was changing his nature and teaching him how to live as a son in His household.

The account of Jacob and Esau highlights the sovereign nature of God's choice. God said to Rebekah, even while the two boys were still in her womb, that the older would serve the younger. **Rom 9:11-12**. However, equally, the account of Jacob and Esau demonstrates that it is *our choice* that determines whether we will become a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy. In response to their choices, the Lord said, concerning the two brothers, 'Jacob I have loved, but Esau I have hated.' **Rom 9:13**.

The apostle Paul asked the question, 'What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the *vessels of wrath* prepared for destruction, that He might make known the riches of His glory on the *vessels of mercy*, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles?' **Rom 9:22-24**.

Further Study 1 TIMOTHY 2

The patience of God

Esau began in the Father's house, but he chose to leave by refusing to serve his younger brother. He became a vessel of wrath. In contrast to this, Paul used Pharaoh as an example of a person who was already living under the wrath of God in the world. Pharaoh rejected the opportunity to become a vessel of mercy when he refused to obey the word of God that was proclaimed to him by Moses. **Exo 5:2.**

In response to Pharaoh's refusal to release the nation of Israel from their captivity in Egypt, God chose to demonstrate His power through him. **Rom 9:17.** He continued to harden the heart of Pharaoh so that he would not let the nation of Israel go. The power of God was revealed by *His sovereign judgement* upon the entire nation of Egypt while, at the same time, His power was also revealed by *His miraculous deliverance* for the nation of Israel. **Exo 18:10-11.**

Even though they had been miraculously delivered from Egypt, we know that the Israelites refused to enter the promised land, because of their unbelief and disobedience. **Heb 3:18-19.** In this way, they also chose to become vessels of wrath. The Lord swore in His wrath that they would never enter His rest. **Heb 3:7-11.** However, He did not destroy them immediately, even though they were now prepared for destruction. For a further forty years, He endured all their reproaches, with much patience and longsuffering, for the sake of the next generation.

This highlights an important point. The mercy of God has been extended to every person, in all generations, through the offering of Jesus Christ. The Father patiently endures godless generations for the sake of giving every person the opportunity to either receive or reject His word. In some families, there may be many generations who reject the word before someone receives the Father's invitation to become His son and to dwell in His household.

Calling and election

God has chosen for everyone to become the son whom He has named them to be, and to live eternally in fellowship with Him. **Isa 45:4. Rom 8:28-30.** The Scriptures refer to this as God's 'calling and election' of each person. However, God never forces His will upon anyone. Rather, we have all been given the freedom to choose between two appointments, or destinies, for our life. **Deu 30:19.**

The first appointment is the blessing, life and fellowship that we can share with God and His people, as we obediently live as the son whom He has named us to be. **1Pe 2:9-10. Eph 2:10.** The second appointment is the cursing, corruption and death that the wicked will experience if they choose to disobey the Father's word and reject His calling upon their lives. **1Pe 2:7-8.**

Many Christians have greatly misunderstood the nature of God's calling and election upon their lives. They have considered God's elect to be an exclusive group of people who have been predestined for salvation, while everyone else is predestined to eternal damnation. They believe that no matter how we live our life, we cannot change whether we belong to the elect group, or to the group predestined to go to hell. This wicked belief is in complete contrast to the gospel of sonship.

The truth is that we have *all* been given the freedom to choose to be a part of God's elect! **2Pe 3:9.** God's elect are those who choose what God has chosen for them. The apostle Peter encouraged us to diligently make our *call* and *election* sure. **2Pe 1:10.** We have been *elected*, or chosen, by the Father to be His sons, and we, too, are required to *elect*, or choose, His fatherhood for our lives. **1Pe 1:1-2.**

An abundant entry

The apostle Peter encouraged every son of God to 'be even more diligent to make your call and election sure, for if you do these things you will never stumble; for so an entrance will be supplied to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ'. **2Pe 1:10-11**.

Our *call*, or *calling*, refers to the unique name that the Father has given to us. **Isa 43:1**. Our spiritual name describes everything that God has elected for us to be and to do, as His sons. With this understanding, we see that we make our call and election sure by simply choosing to walk obediently as the son whom the Father has named us to be, every day!

Of course, choosing to walk this way will mean that we will be joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. Although this is a narrow and difficult path, we can rejoice that Christ supplies us with His divine power to help us to complete the journey. **Mat 7:14. 2Pe 1:2-4**. We rejoice that our fellowship in His offering and sufferings is our abundant entry into His everlasting kingdom.

The apostle Paul revealed to us an amazing truth about God's elect. He explained that the elect are part of the New Jerusalem which is coming down out of heaven! **Heb 12:22-24**. This is not something that will happen somewhere in the future. Rather, God's elect are being built into this heavenly city right now! The New Jerusalem is described in many ways throughout the Scriptures. It is also called the mountain of the Lord, the great and high mountain of the Lord's house, Mount Zion, the great city, the heavenly Jerusalem, a spiritual house, and even the bride of Christ, the Lamb's wife. **Isa 2:2-3. Rev 21:9-11**. Those who have been born of God and baptised into Christ are raised with Him to be part of this city.

The foundations of the city

There are many Scriptures which draw our attention to the *foundations* of the heavenly Jerusalem. **Heb 11:9-10**. Prior to the discovery of concrete, the foundations of buildings were built with large rocks that were buried under the ground. The cornerstone was the first and strongest stone set in the construction of a foundation. All of the other stones were laid in reference to the cornerstone.

Paul wrote, 'Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been *built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief Cornerstone*, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit'. **Eph 2:19-22**.

The apostle Peter, along with the other apostles of the Lamb, are the twelve foundations of the heavenly Jerusalem. **Rev 21:14**. We recall that the name 'Peter' means 'rock'. Jesus said to Peter, 'You are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church ... and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven'. **Mat 16:18-19**. 'The keys of the kingdom' that were given to Peter and to the other apostles was the gospel of sonship. As this gospel was proclaimed by the apostles, the gates of the New Jerusalem were opened for all men to come to Christ, and to be built into the walls of the city. **Act 2:38-41**.

Peter declared that the only way that we can be built into the Lord's spiritual house is by *coming to Christ*, the chief Cornerstone, 'elect and precious'. **1Pe 2:4-6**. Those who receive this word come to Christ by receiving His invitation to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. As we abide in this fellowship, we are being built into the walls of the heavenly city, as God's elect. **Rev 21:14**.

A stumbling stone

We know that there are many people who have been elected by the Father, but they reject Christ's invitation to come to Him. For these ones, Christ becomes a stone of stumbling and a rock of offence. **1Pe 2:8**. Instead of humbling themselves under His mighty hand, they, rather, choose to continue to live iniquitously by the sight of their own eyes and according to their own understanding. In this state, they are completely deceived and deluded, and are eventually devoured by the sword that proceeds from His mouth. **Isa 1:19-20**.

We recall that Christ rebuked the presbytery in Laodicea because they thought that they were rich. They did not believe that they needed to come to Christ and suffer with Him. However, the truth was that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. **Rev 3:17**.

Unless we continue to come to Christ, and accept that His provision for our cleansing from sin is through the fellowship of His offering, we will not be part of God's elect. Being a member of God's elect is not a position that we attain, and then, can never lose. Rather, God's elect remain built into His house, as they *keep choosing* to make their call and election sure, every day.

Every time that Christ confronts us with His fiery eyes on a particular matter, we must not be like the Laodiceans, who drew back in unbelief, presuming to be rich and in need of nothing. **Heb 10:39. Rev 3:17**. Rather, we need to come to Christ and look upon Him whom we have pierced, and mourn for our iniquity and sin. **Zec 12:10**. We need to quickly acknowledge that we are indeed wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked, in regard to the sin and iniquity that He is addressing in us. The Scriptures call this response, 'sighing and crying for help'. **Lam 3:56**. This is the place of being bankrupt in spirit, where we begin to truly see the depths of our fallen iniquitous condition. **Mat 5:3**.

His provision for our change

Thankfully, when the Lord reveals His judgement upon the iniquity that is in our heart, He does not want us to remain in this wretched state. In fact, He will become quite angry with us if we refuse to deal with our uncleanness after He has revealed our condition to us! However, if we obediently respond in repentance and faith to the word that we have received, we are invited to join the fellowship of Christ's offering. Why? Because it is in *this* fellowship that we are being washed and cleansed of our sin and uncleanness, and are recovered to be the son whom we were called and elected to be! **Eph 5:25-27.**

The apostle John declared that 'if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin.' **1Jn 1:7.** In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, the wretched become full of hope, the miserable sing with everlasting joy, the poor become rich, the blind receive sight, and the naked are clothed with robes of righteousness! **Isa 61:1-3.**

As our great High Priest, Christ priests to us our participation in His offering each day, through the many and varied situations and difficulties that befall us. As we receive our circumstances from His hand, and remain joined to His offering, we find that the carnality that He was addressing in us is being progressively circumcised from our heart. At the same time, the love of God is being poured into our heart, causing us to keep growing in our sonship. In this fellowship, we are being changed from 'glory to glory' as sons of God. **2Co 3:18.**

As we remain committed to this process of change and keep choosing to walk in obedience to the word of our name, we are making our call and election sure, every day. We are walking on the pathway that Christ has pioneered for us as our abundant entry into His everlasting kingdom.

The Lamb's wife

Jesus Christ has a wife! Equally remarkable is the fact that Jesus' bride is a city of which you and I are citizens! In the book of Revelation, we read that an angel said to the apostle John, 'Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife.' **Rev 21:9**. He then carried John away, in the Spirit, to a great and high mountain and showed him the holy Jerusalem descending out of heaven from God the Father. **Rev 21:10**.

Many people have thought that John's vision of the heavenly Jerusalem relates only to the new heavens and earth. However, the apostle Paul made it clear that the sons of God have *already come* to the heavenly city, which he identified as being the church. He said, 'But you have come to *Mount Zion* and to the city of the living God, *the heavenly Jerusalem*, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and *church of the firstborn* who are registered in heaven.' **Heb 12:22-24**.

The bride city was fashioned by the Father from the body of Christ, on the day of His crucifixion. Foreshadowing this event, the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall on the first man, Adam. He took a rib from Adam's side, with which He formed woman to be Adam's helper. **Gen 2:18,21-22**. When Adam saw what the Lord God had made, he said, 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.' **Gen 2:23**. Moses, the author of the book of Genesis, explained that this revealed the principle of *marriage*, writing, 'Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become *one flesh*''. **Gen 2:24**.

Who has heard such a thing?

Paul quoted the book of Genesis to explain that the bride of Christ was taken from the body of Christ, and that they are one flesh. He wrote, 'For we are *members of His body*, of His flesh and of His bones. "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become *one flesh*." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning *Christ and the church*.' **Eph 5:30-32**. In the same way that the woman was taken from the man to be his wife and helper, the bride was fashioned from Christ's side to be a helper in His work of bringing many sons to glory. For this reason, Paul described the heavenly Jerusalem as 'the mother of us all'. **Gal 4:26**.

The bride city was first seen descending out of heaven as the helper of Christ, on the Day of Pentecost. In response to the word of the cross preached by the apostle Peter, three thousand people were saved. **Act 2:40-41**. Hearing Peter's message, and beginning to mourn under the conviction of the Spirit, they drew near for fellowship with Peter and the rest of the apostles. **Act 2:37**. In this fellowship, they met Christ personally, were born of God, and were baptised into Christ, where they were raised to sit with Him in heavenly places. **Eph 2:4-7**. *In one day*, they became sons of God and part of the heavenly Jerusalem!

Remarkably, children of parents who are already part of the bride city, are born of God and caught up to the throne on the day of their conception! Prophesying concerning this great miracle, Isaiah declared, 'Before she was in labour, she gave birth; before her pain came, she delivered a male child. Who has heard such a thing? Who has seen such things? Shall the earth be made to give birth in *one day*?' **Isa 66:7-8**.

Citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem

Whether from conception in a believing household, or through the proclamation of the gospel, as happened on the Day of Pentecost, every person who comes to the mountain of the Lord's house is *born there*. Celebrating this wonderful truth, the psalmist declared, 'And of Zion [the mountain of the Lord's house] it will be said, "This one and that one were *born in her*; and the Most High Himself shall establish her." The Lord will record, when He registers the peoples: "This one was born there"' **Psa 87:5-6**.

What should we expect life to be like in the heavenly Jerusalem? An important condition of our citizenship is *cleanness*. You may recall that blood, water, and a spirit of grace and supplication flowed from Christ's side after it was pierced with a soldier's spear. **Joh 19:34-37. Zec 12:10**. This was 'a fountain for sin and uncleanness'. **Zec 13:1**. Accordingly, those in the bride city, which was formed from the side of Christ, give themselves to the process of sanctification and cleansing that Jesus Himself ministers to them through His word. **Eph 5:25-27**. What does this 'look like'?

Motivated by a spirit of grace and supplication that accompanies the word of the Lord, we turn in repentance from the cultural practices in our life that do not belong in God's house. We then apply ourselves to understanding the implications of the word for our life. As we respond to the word in this manner, it has a washing effect upon us. By faith, we walk in the light of this word, talking with our family, our friends, and our leaders in the church. Furthermore, the Holy Spirit enables our daily participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. As we fellowship in this manner, the blood of Jesus cleanses us from an evil conscience, which would otherwise motivate us to sin. **1Jn 1:7. Heb 10:22**. The New Testament writers summarised this process of sanctification and cleansing as 'walking blamelessly'. **Eph 1:3-4. 2Pe 3:14**.

The river of life

The fountain that began to flow from the side of Christ on the day of His crucifixion is also the river of life that flows from the throne of God in the midst of the New Jerusalem! John observed, 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' **Rev 22:1-2.**

John's observation reveals another key implication of our citizenship in heaven – our participation in the *agape* meal. As sons of God who are being washed by the water of the word and by the blood of Christ, we have the right to eat from the tree of life. **Joh 1:12. Heb 10:22. Rev 2:7.** Its fruit, which is our food, is the ministry of the Spirit that we receive at the *agape* meal. The *agape* meal is not simply a custom or religious practice that we observe. Rather, *agape*, which is the love of God, is how we live and relate with others in our houses, as we meet house to house, and as we gather together at church. It is the culture of the New Jerusalem, and the priority of those who dwell in her.

Truly, citizenship of the New Jerusalem is a magnificent inheritance that we have already received in a firstfruits measure. Recognising our magnificent inheritance in the bride city, the psalmist proclaimed to us, 'Enter into His gates with thanksgiving, and into His courts with praise. Be thankful to Him, and bless His name. For the Lord is good; His mercy is everlasting, and His truth endures to all generations.' **Psa 100:4-5.**

A tree planted by the water

Amazingly, the psalmist described those who live by the word of the Lord as being trees planted by the river of life. He wrote, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper.' **Psa 1:3**. Can you see that maturing in the culture of the heavenly city means that you are becoming a tree of life to others?

As you are being rooted and grounded in the culture of love, you are able to draw deeply from the water of the river of life, which is Spirit and life to you. **Col 2:6-7**. The fruit of your lips is a spiritual ministry of life to others. Furthermore, through prayer, you are able to minister healing to others; particularly those who are being saved out of the world and into the kingdom in which you reside.

The apostle Peter explained that this is what it means to be 'the elect'. 'But you are a chosen [lit: *elect*] generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that *you may proclaim* the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvellous light; who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.' **1Pe 2:9-10**.

Evidently, through your testimony as one of the elect, you are proclaiming the message that can deliver a hearer from the kingdom of darkness and into the light of the heavenly city. Your testimony is an evangelistic ministry in the context of the world where you have been placed by the Father! Don't be ashamed of the gospel by trying to make it relevant or understandable to those to whom you have been set as a light. **Act 13:47**. This message is the power of God to salvation for everyone who believes through what you say and how you live! **Rom 1:16**. **Gal 3:1**.

What is a tree of life?

In the natural realm, a tree grows to maturity and bears fruit. Fruit is food. Food provides nourishment and energy to sustain biological life and function. Fruit also contains the seeds of the tree from which it comes. Seeds contain the life of the tree, which enables multiplication of life – that is, more trees of the same kind can grow from the seeds which are contained in the fruit; and then more fruit can be produced. Every tree is known by its own fruit. **Gen 1:12. Luk 6:44. Mat 12:33.**

In the kingdom of God, the tree of life bears the fruit of the life of God. The fruit of the tree of life is food for sons of God. It provides nourishment for growth, and capacity and power to enable each son of God to do the specific works of their sonship – both natural and spiritual works. It was said of Moses that although he ‘was one hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eyes were not dim nor his natural vigour diminished’. **Deu 34:7.**

The fruit of the tree of life contains the seeds of the divine nature – the life of God. The life of God is multiplied as it is shared in the fellowship of Christ’s offering. Jesus described this process, referring to the natural principles of a seed: ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life.’ **Joh 12:24-25.** Jesus taught that a person will be known by the fruit of their life, which is clearly witnessed by their conversation and conduct. **Mat 7:15-20. Mar 7:14-23. Mat 15:18-19.**

Christ is the Tree of life

The tree of life is found only on the ground of God's (that is, Yahweh *Elohim's*) fellowship. Jesus said, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give to eat from the tree of life, which is *in the midst of the Paradise of God.*' **Rev 2:7.** Through His offering on the cross, Christ was revealed as the Tree of Life.

Christ declared, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me.' **Joh 6:53-57.**

The offering fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit was also revealed through the cross. It has been revealed to us that the Father is the *source* of our name and works as a son of God; our name is written in Christ, who gives to us the *substance* of our sonship through His word; and this substance (food) is fed to us by the Holy Spirit, for it is the Spirit who gives *life.* **Joh 6:63. 2Co 3:5-6. 1Co 10:15-16. 1Co 10:17.**

Every son of God is to receive and live by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, through Christ, by the ministry of the Holy Spirit. **Mat 4:4.** Every son of God is also called to participate in the fellowship of offering. Offering is the expression of love. Offering is the way of life that belongs to a son in the Father's house. **Eph 5:2.**

Crucified between thieves

The fruit of the tree of life is not set out like 'a buffet' for each person to come whenever they choose, to take what they desire. If something is not given to you, but you take it because you want it, or think that you need it, then that is stealing. If you steal, then you are a thief – a transgressor of the Law!

In the beginning, Eve stole the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and gave it to Adam. **Gen 3:6**. God knew that this tendency to steal would lead Adam to reach out his hand to take from the tree of life, in an attempt to resolve their sin apart from fellowship with God; so God barred the way to the tree of life. **Gen 3:22-24**. From this time forward, it has been the fallen nature of humankind to covet and take for themselves what does not belong to them – especially the things of God. It is no coincidence, then, that Christ was crucified between two thieves.

Remember that Christ was 'numbered with the transgressors'. **Isa 53:12**. **Mar 15:27-28**. **Luk 22:37**. **2Co 5:21**. Jesus was crucified between two thieves. **Mar 15:27**. **Luk 23:39-43**. Your participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ includes the identification that you are a criminal with regard to the Law of God. Both thieves, who were either side of Christ on the cross, acknowledged that they were powerless to change their situation. However, one accused and mocked Christ, and only wanted Him to use His power to save his life without him having to change his ways. The other thief feared God, desired to be known and remembered by Christ, and acknowledged that Christ was crucified unjustly, having become sin, for his sake. Christ said to this thief, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise.' **Luk 23:43**. The question for us to answer is, 'Which kind of thief are we?'

The fruit of the tree of life

The fruit of the tree of life is fed to us each day by the Holy Spirit. You are built up, and you receive a supply of everything that you need for each day, as you join the fellowship of God at the tree of life. You do this as you pray in the Holy Spirit each day, and as you continue to live and walk in the Spirit each day. **Jud 1:20-21. 2Ti 3:16-17. 2Pe 1:2-4. Gal 5:25.**

The apostle Peter specifically identified eight fruits of the Spirit which are aspects of the divine nature that belong to a son of God, in Christ. **2Pe 1:1-11.** Peter explained that if these qualities are yours and abound, it is the evidence that you are a 'partaker of the divine nature' and that you will be fruitful 'in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ'.

Similarly to Peter, the apostle Paul identified nine fruits of the Spirit that are exhibited by those who walk according to the Spirit. Paul said to the Galatians that these fruits belong to those who are Christ's, and who have crucified the flesh, with its passions and desires. That is, they are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Gal 5:22-26.**

When considered together, Peter and Paul nominated twelve, not seventeen, fruits of the Spirit: (1) faith, or faithfulness; (2) virtue; (3) knowledge; (4) self-control; (5) perseverance, or longsuffering; (6) godliness; (7) brotherly kindness; (8) love; (9) joy; (10) peace; (11) goodness; and (12) gentleness.

Significantly, these fruits are the divine nature, given by the Spirit. The divine nature is the wisdom of God, which is fed to a person as fruit from the tree of life. The Spirit feeds these fruits to a son of God as the food that is necessary for the expression of their name and works, in every context of life. As you receive and eat the fruit of the tree of life, you receive capacity to do the works that belong to your sonship in Christ.

Becoming trees of life

When your food is the fruit of the tree of life, you are enabled with authority and capacity from God to do the works that belong to your sonship, and to accountably choose how to respond and behave in the middle of various circumstances. This authority and capacity are enabled by the resource of wisdom, righteousness, sanctification and redemption that is made available to us by Christ, from the tree of life. Wisdom 'is a tree of life to those who take hold of her, and happy are all who retain her'. **Pro 3:13,18.**

More than this, when you are living this way, you are also fruitful. Jesus said, 'You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.' **Joh 15:16.** 'The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life.' **Pro 11:30.** 'A wholesome tongue is a tree of life.' **Pro 15:4.**

The fruit of your conversation and conduct multiplies the life of God to others as you live, by faith, with the righteousness that is from God. Being a son of God whose behaviour and conversation edifies, exhorts and comforts others, means that you become a tree of life to others. **1Co 14:3-4.** This is possible only as you continue, every day, to present yourself to Christ, the Tree of Life, in fellowship with the Father and Son, by the Holy Spirit.

The Spirit joins you to *Their fellowship* as you pray in the Spirit each day, embrace your unique participation in Christ's offering and sufferings, and walk in open-hearted fellowship with your fellow brethren in Christ. As you live in this way, you will be a tree of life, planted by the river of life, bringing forth the fruit of the Spirit in its season. And whatever you do in the Lord, which are the works of your sonship, will prosper. **Psa 1:3.**



Restoring
my Soul