



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

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DECEMBER 2021

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Two prayer meetings

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul contrasted the mind that is set on the flesh with the mind that is set on the Spirit. He explained that ‘those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit’. **Rom 8:5**. He identified that the outcome for those who set their mind on the flesh is *death*. In contrast to this, the outcome for those who set their mind on the things of the Spirit is ‘life and peace’. **Rom 8:6**.

In Romans Chapter 7, using his own experience, Paul described the carnal problem for a Christian. Even though we may delight in the word of God when it is proclaimed to us, we have another law in our heart which keeps bringing us into bondage to the law of sin. **Rom 7:22-23**. When we recognise this problem, which is common to us all, we need to choose which prayer meeting we are going to join in our search for a remedy! The apostle Paul described two distinct prayer meetings. He described the carnal prayer meeting in Romans Chapter 7, and the spiritual prayer meeting in Romans Chapter 8.

The central feature of the carnal prayer meeting is a perpetual cry to God for *deliverance* from the body of death. **Rom 7:24**. If we continually seek the Lord for deliverance in this way, we will often be looking to others for deliverance as well. This may include our spouse, other family members, friends, health practitioners, and religious leaders. However, rather than continually crying out for deliverance, we need to recognise that if we have been born of the Spirit, we can, and must, set our mind on the things of the Spirit by joining a completely different prayer meeting!

Free to choose

The apostle Paul declared, 'Those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.' **Rom 8:8-9**. As sons of God, we are *free to choose* whether we will set our mind on the things of the flesh or on the things of the Spirit. We received this freedom as soon as we were born of the Spirit. It is important to recognise the accountability that we have all received, as sons of God, to join the spiritual prayer meeting. Ultimately, if we continue to participate in the carnal prayer meeting, it is because we have chosen to do so, and it leads only to damnation. **Rom 8:13**.

As sons of God, we will be delivered from 'the body of death'. However, our deliverance is not the outcome of the carnal prayer meeting, our self motivated repentance, or lengthy pastoral discussion. Our deliverance is the outcome of our ongoing participation in the spiritual prayer meeting! In the flesh, we do not have the capacity to join this prayer meeting. However, as we choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, the Holy Spirit helps our weaknesses by making intercession for us with groanings too deep for words. **Rom 8:26**. In contrast to our own carnal cry for deliverance, the Holy Spirit converts the groanings that we all experience in this fallen world into prayer in the Spirit.

Jesus Christ responds to the intercession of the Holy Spirit by searching our heart with His eyes which are 'like a flame of fire'. **Rom 8:27. Rev 2:18**. This is not a mysterious experience. It is the word of the cross, which is proclaimed by the presbytery in His right hand, that pierces our heart.

Christ's intercession

When we turn in response to the word that is preached to us, we meet Christ eye to eye. The fear of the Lord that we receive in this relational interaction compels us to draw near to God through Christ. As we draw near to God, we know that Jesus Christ is making intercession for us according to the will of God. **Heb 7:25**.

The intercession of Jesus Christ joins us to *the travail of His entire offering journey* from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, so that the will of God is accomplished in our life. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the Father is working all things together for our good. **Rom 8:28**. He is circumcising the other law from our heart. **Rom 2:28-29**. The love of God is also being poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **Rom 5:5**.

Furthermore, as we continue to walk by the Spirit in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, our mind is also being renewed. **Rom 12:1-2**. Notably, it is only when we choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit, by joining the new prayer meeting, that our mind can be renewed in the fellowship of that prayer meeting!

The fruit, which shows that our mind is being renewed, is that we are no longer preoccupied with finding our own name or revealing our own sonship. We recognise that if we have been born as a son of God and been baptised into Christ, we have died with Him, and our sonship is 'hidden with Christ in God'. **Col 3:3**. We know that Jesus Christ has completed the works of our sonship and taken His seat at the right hand of God. **Col 3:1**. Our hope is already in heaven. **Heb 6:17-20**.

Our life is hidden

Our inheritance as sons of God is guaranteed if we continue to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. We know that 'when Christ who is our life appears, then [we] will also appear with Him in glory'. **Col 3:4**. In a similar way, the apostle John declared, 'Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is.' **1Jn 3:2**.

As our mind is being renewed in the fellowship of Christ's offering, we are learning to relinquish control of our life to the Holy Spirit. He has been given to us to be the expression of our name as both a son of God and a member of the body of Christ. When we are led by the Holy Spirit as a son of God, our preoccupation is not to reveal our own sonship. **Rom 8:13-14**. Rather, our preoccupation is to reveal Jesus Christ by revealing the members of His body.

The apostle Paul rejoiced that the mind that is set on the Spirit is 'life and peace'. **Rom 8:6**. It is 'life' because we receive the resurrection life of God in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Even though our outer man is perishing, our inner man is being renewed, day by day. **2Co 4:15-16**. This includes the renewing of our mind. Further to this, Paul declared that the mind that is set on the Spirit is 'peace', because it is our participation in the spiritual prayer meeting that enables us to enter 'the rest' of Christ. **Heb 4:9**. We know that Christ has already perfected our sonship. Rather than striving to fulfil the works of our sonship, we turn our attention to the simplicity of revealing our brethren, in the fellowship of the body of Christ.

Receiving the word

In the first section of Romans Chapter 7, Paul explained that we have been delivered from the Law so that *we can serve in the newness of the Spirit*, and not in the oldness of the letter. **Rom 7:6**. However, he then identified that, even though we have died to the Law with Christ, if we set our mind on the things of the flesh when the word of God is proclaimed to us, it will bring us back into captivity to the law of sin and death. He said, 'I was alive once without the law, but when the commandment came, sin revived and I died.' **Rom 7:9**.

It is helpful to remember that when Paul referred to 'the commandment', it has a much broader application than the commandments that belonged to the Law Covenant. The coming of the commandment equally applies to the proclamation of the word of faith that belongs to the New Covenant. **Rom 10:8**. We must obey the word of faith that is proclaimed to us. However, it is only possible to obey the word of God by setting our mind on the things of the Spirit so that we are receiving the resurrection life of God in the fellowship of Christ's offering. Setting our mind on the Spirit is *believing*. It is the work of faith. **1Co 2:13-14**.

Paul described the operation of the carnal mind that leads to death, by saying that when the word of God is proclaimed to us, it gives the law of sin the opportunity to deceive us into laying hold of the word in the flesh. **Rom 7:8**. That is, it provokes us to *covet the word as a resource* that will facilitate our religious aspirations and projections. This is great deception because, as soon as we lay hold of the word of God as a resource, we immediately come under its judgement. Laying hold of the word in this manner is not an action of faith.

Another law

It is our disobedience to the word of God that brings us under its judgement. Paul highlighted the reality that the person with a carnal mind is well able to *delight* in the Law of God, but they have no capacity to serve or obey it. **Rom 7:22.** Recognising that ‘motive governs mind’, a person may simply be motivated by the law of sin to delight in the Law of God if they perceive it to be beneficial for them to do so. We note that there is a difference between setting our mind on the Law and setting our mind on the Spirit.

Equally, a believer may genuinely delight in the word of God because they have received spiritual illumination. However, Paul testified that regardless of his agreement with the word, and even his will to obey the word, he did not have the capacity for obedience in his flesh. **Rom 7:15.** He came to understand that he had *another* law in his heart which warred against any decision in his mind to be obedient, because it demanded that he remain in control of the parameters of his life. He recognised that this unyielding desire for control in his heart led him back into bondage to the law of sin and under the judgement of God. **Rom 7:23.**

Paul appreciated that his deliverance from the other law in his heart was a lifelong process as he continued to participate in the fellowship of Christ’s offering and sufferings. Furthermore, he understood that he would not be delivered from the pain and suffering that was associated with his mortality until the end of his earthly pilgrimage. Paul embraced the reality of his mortality as his participation in Christ’s sufferings. However, he also looked forward to the day when his mortality would be wholly swallowed up by the resurrection life of God, as his final deliverance from the body of death. **2Co 5:1-5.**

The body of death

When Paul used the term 'body of death', he was using it to refer to the principle of death that is operative within *the whole person*, including the spirit, the soul, and the physical body. In relation to these three aspects of the whole person, we can identify three elements to the body of death.

The first element of the body of death is *the other law* that was fathered in the hearts of Adam and Eve by the lie of Satan. **Rom 7:23**. It resides in the heart of every fallen human being. The other law is our desire to be 'like God'; that is, to be in control of our life as the source of our own name and works. The operation of our evil conscience, bearing witness to our own knowledge of good and evil, is the major indication of another law in our heart. **Rom 2:14-15**.

The second element of the body of death is *the law of sin* that is at work in all of our faculties (including our mind, our will, and our emotions) whenever we listen to the word of Satan. The law of sin is 'the spirit of Satan' that deceives us and distorts all of our faculties and senses. **Eph 2:1-3**. It causes us to covet *what does not belong to us*, in the mistaken belief that this will help us to find life and to escape death. We note that the fear of death, in all of its various manifestations, is the primary symptom of the law of sin at work in us. **Heb 2:14-15**.

The third element of the body of death is *our mortal body* that is dying because of sin. **1Co 15:46-49**. Of course, a major symptom of a person's mortality is the pain and suffering that they will invariably experience in their physical body, which includes the degeneration of the body as part of the ageing process.

Serving the Law of God

The apostle Paul rejoiced that there is deliverance from the body of death, by saying, 'I thank God – through Jesus Christ our Lord.' **Rom 7:25**. When Paul made this statement, he was referring to more than a single watershed moment or time of miraculous deliverance. Rather, he thanked God because he had been born as a son of God. He knew that, as a son of God, he was free to set his mind on the things of the Spirit and to find deliverance from the body of death, through his ongoing fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. **Rom 8:14**.

As a son of God who was walking in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, Paul explained, 'So then, with the mind I myself serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the law of sin.' **Rom 7:25**. He rejoiced that he had found the capacity to serve in the newness of the Spirit. **Rom 7:6**. We know that Paul was referring to having 'a spiritual mind', because his mind was in subjection to, *and able to serve*, the Law of God. In contrast to this, he explained that 'the carnal mind is enmity against God; for *it is not subject to the Law of God*, nor indeed can be.' **Rom 8:7**.

Even though he was setting his mind on the things of the Spirit, Paul recognised that his flesh still served the law of sin. **Rom 7:25**. This means that he still had the other law in his heart; he still experienced the emotions of sin; and he was still subject to the constraints of death in his physical body. Nevertheless, Paul rejoiced that this contradiction was being resolved in his life, as he continued to embrace his unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

No condemnation in Christ Jesus

Paul declared, 'There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.' **Rom 8:1**. When Paul used the term 'condemnation', he was not referring to an emotion that a person experiences when their conscience condemns their poor attitudes or behaviours. He was referring to the situation where a person has been tried in a court of law, the sentence has been passed, and the judgement is ready to be executed.

We are not living under condemnation, because the law of the Spirit of life, in the fellowship of Christ's offering, has set us free from the law of sin and death. **Rom 8:2**. We have the Spirit of life when Jesus Christ comes into our heart, and then gives us the Holy Spirit so that we are born of the Spirit. **Rom 8:15**. The apostle Paul proclaimed that if the Holy Spirit dwells within us, we are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit. **Rom 8:9**. We are a son of God who possesses the firstfruits of the Spirit in our mortal body.

As a son of God who is not in bondage to the law of sin and death, we are free and accountable to choose whether we will set our mind on the things of the Spirit or on the things of the flesh. **Rom 8:12**. We set our mind on the things of the Spirit by continuing to embrace our unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. In the fellowship of Christ's offering, the resurrection life of God that was in the blood of Christ is becoming our life through the Holy Spirit who dwells within us.

The Spirit is life

The apostle Paul proclaimed, 'If Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness.' Rom 8:10. When Paul said, 'because of righteousness,' he was referring to the righteous offering of Christ. We read earlier in the book of Romans that 'through *one Man's righteous act*, the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.' **Rom 5:18**. 'Justification of life' means that the resurrection life of Christ gives every son of God the capacity to live a justified life.

Our participation in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the remedy to the carnal dilemma that Paul described in Romans Chapter 7. In the fellowship of the wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, the other law is being circumcised from our heart; and the love of God is being poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us. **Rom 5:5**. The love of God is our *new motivation*, which replaces the emotions of sin. It is also the capacity for our obedience to the word of God that has been proclaimed to us.

Further to this, as he embraced his unique participation in the fellowship of Christ's wounding events, Paul rejoiced that he was also receiving, in his mortal body, the grace of the resurrection life of God. He declared, 'If the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.' **Rom 8:11**. It is the resurrection life of God in our mortality that enables us to reveal Christ each day, by fulfilling the works that have been authored for us by Christ on the cross. **2Th 1:11**.

Not debtors to the flesh

We are setting our mind on the things of the flesh when our prayer is an expression of our own will. When we pray this way, we are often motivated by anxiety concerning our own life or by anxiety concerning the lives of others. **Php 4:6.** When the Scripture instructs us to cast our anxiety upon the Lord, this does not mean that, when we are worried about something, we need to pray about it so that we find some sense of relief from our anxiety. **1Pe 5:6-7.** This mode of prayer is nothing more than a fleshly, cathartic exercise. It does not lead to life and peace.

Our natural inclination to become anxious when we are confronted by certain situations is part of our weakness. We cast our anxiety upon the Lord by relinquishing control of our prayer to the Holy Spirit. As we pray in the Holy Spirit, we are being delivered from the 'mind chatter' that consumes our thinking when we are preoccupied with our own circumstances.

The spiritual prayer meeting must become our daily reality. It encompasses the full breadth of our Christian pilgrimage, including the recognition of the reality of our human condition; the nature of our prayer in the Holy Spirit; the way that we receive the word from the messengers of Christ; and the way that we interface with the circumstances of our life. **Eph 6:18-19.**

If we are receiving the resurrection life of God in our mortal body, we are no longer 'debtors to the flesh'. **Rom 8:12.** That is, we are not obliged to live by the principles of the flesh in an endeavour to fulfil the will of God. Paul clearly explained that living this way leads only to death. **Rom 8:13.** In contrast to this, Paul said that we will live if, *by the Spirit*, we are putting to death the deeds of the body. We find grace, in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, to put off the deeds of the flesh.

FURTHER STUDY 1 PETER 4

Our weakness

The prerequisite for our joining the spiritual prayer meeting is our awareness and acknowledgment of our own weaknesses. **Rom 8:26.** That is, rather than believing in the veracity of our own religious idealism or projections, we are connected to the reality of our weakness as one who is bankrupt in spirit. **Mat 5:3.** A person who is spiritually minded will not be eccentric or disconnected from the reality of their fallen human condition or from their mortality. **Rom 7:18-19.** On the contrary, one of the primary hallmarks of a spiritually minded person will be their connection to reality.

The first element of our weakness is our inability to fulfil the will of God in the flesh. **Rom 7:15.** As we have already considered, the other law in our heart is the reason why we cannot obey the word of God, even when we delight in the word and want to obey it. Further to this, regardless of how fervently we endeavour to repent and to align our attitudes and behaviours to the word that we have heard, we do not have the capacity to circumcise our own heart. We do not have the capacity to perform 'a heart operation' on ourselves!

The second element of our weakness is the limits and constraints, along with the pain and suffering, that we experience in our mortal body. Even though we have the Holy Spirit as the firstfruits of our inheritance as a son of God, we still groan within ourselves because of our mortality. We also groan because we live in a world that is in bondage to corruption and has been subjected to futility. **Rom 8:19-23.** We groan within ourselves because we are waiting expectantly for the fulfilment of the adoption, which is the redemption of our body.

The Holy Spirit helps

The third element of our weakness is that we do not know the will of God in relation to our sonship. Paul referred to the revelation of our sonship, including the redemption of our body, as our 'hope'. **Rom 8:24-25**. Our hope is in heaven, because Jesus Christ has already learned our obedience and has completed the works of our sonship. **Heb 5:8**. Remarkably, He has completed the works of sonship that God has prepared for us to do, in this lifetime and for the age to come. We know that Jesus Christ has authored each day of our life by fulfilling the will of God for us. **Psa 139:16**. However, when we wake up in the morning, we do not know yet the will of God for us that day.

This leads us to the fourth element of our weakness. If we do not know what the will of God is for each day, we also do not know what to pray for. Paul specifically identified the nature of our weakness by saying, 'For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought.' **Rom 8:26**. Paul was referring to our inability to pray according to the will of God. However, more than this, he was identifying our incapacity to join the fellowship of the prayer meeting with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Our incapacity to join the fellowship of this prayer meeting, without the help of the Holy Spirit, is the most fundamental and foundational element of our weakness.

Paul declared that the Holy Spirit helps our weakness by making intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered, because they are too deep for words. **Rom 8:26**. The Holy Spirit converts the groaning that we experience, because of our weakness, to *prayer in the Spirit*.

Praying in the Holy Spirit

As we persevere by praying in other tongues, in cooperation with the leadership and burden of the Holy Spirit, we are strengthened with the capacity of Eternal Spirit to pray more earnestly. **Luk 22:43-44**. Our prayer in the Holy Spirit becomes like a river of tongues, or languages, that is flowing from the innermost part of our being. **Joh 7:38**.

When we pray in the Holy Spirit, we are building ourselves up 'in our most holy faith', which we have received from Christ as a gift. **Jud 1:20-21**. In contrast to the fear of death, which compels us to draw back, the faith of Christ motivates us to draw near to lay hold of our unique participation in the fellowship of His offering.

The apostle Paul explained that Jesus Christ hears the prayer of the Holy Spirit through us and knows what *the mind of the Spirit* is. **Rom 8:27**. The mind of the Holy Spirit describes His focus and preoccupation. We know that the Holy Spirit does not reveal Himself. His focus is the revelation of the Father and the Son. **Joh 16:13-15**. The Scripture often likens the Holy Spirit to 'a consuming fire', because He is jealous over the holy ground of the fellowship of Yahweh.

With this goal in view, the preoccupation of the Holy Spirit is our sanctification as sons of God and members of the body of Christ. The apostle James emphasised that 'the Spirit who dwells within us yearns jealously'. **Jas 4:5**. The Father has given us the Holy Spirit, through Jesus Christ, to be the expression of our name as sons of God and members of the body of Christ. When we are being led by the Holy Spirit as sons of God, our preoccupation will be to reveal Jesus Christ by revealing the members of His body.

Jesus Christ searches our heart

When we pray in the Holy Spirit, we are inviting Jesus Christ to search our heart and our mind. When the apostle John saw Jesus Christ seated in the middle of the seven lampstand churches, he identified that He has *eyes like a flame of fire*. **Rev 1:14**. Jesus introduced Himself as the One who has eyes like a flame of fire when He admonished the presbytery and lampstand church in Thyatira. **Rev 2:18**. The eyes of Christ reveal His jealous love for our sanctification as a son of God. However, we must recognise that this jealous love is also *His wrath* upon our sin and uncleanness. **Deu 4:23-24**.

The important point is that Jesus Christ does not, primarily, reveal the condition of our heart to us while we pray. Rather, when we pray in the Spirit, and invite Him to search our heart, He answers our prayer by proclaiming His word to us through the presbytery that is in His right hand. **Rev 1:20**. A presbytery in the right hand of Christ is also likened to the seven lamps upon a lampstand church that shine before the face of Jesus Christ. As messengers of Christ, they are sent before His face to proclaim the word of the cross to us.

It is the word of the cross that is proclaimed to us by the messengers of Christ that has the *capacity* to pierce the depths of our heart. The apostle Paul proclaimed that the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword. It pierces even to the division of soul and spirit and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of our heart. **Heb 4:12**. Significantly, when the word of the cross is proclaimed to us, it is accompanied by the spirit of grace and supplication that enables us to turn to meet Christ eye to eye.

Meeting Christ eye to eye

It is our relational interaction with Jesus Christ, in response to the word, that reveals the true condition of our heart. Having identified that the word of the cross pierces our heart, Paul continued by saying, 'And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and *open to the eyes of Him* to whom we must give account.' **Heb 4:13**. The fruit of meeting Christ eye to eye is 'the fear of the Lord'. We understand that His wrath abides on us because of our sin. The fear of the Lord compels us to flee to Him for refuge. We are saved from His wrath as we mourn for our sin with godly sorrow and then demonstrate the fruit of repentance in our life. **Mat 3:7-8. 2Co 7:10.**

When the word of Christ is proclaimed to us, the Holy Spirit convicts us of the necessity to hear and respond to the word by turning to meet Christ eye to eye. It is the Holy Spirit who says to us, through His convicting work in our heart, 'Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts.' **Heb 3:7-8**. The scriptural meaning of 'today' is the time, or season, when the Lord is speaking to us through the messengers whom He sends to us. This is also called 'the day' or 'the season of our visitation'. **Luk 19:43-44.**

If we have a spiritual mind, we will recognise the imperative of responding to the word of the Lord in a timely manner. At the same time, we do not need to anxiously pre-empt the circumcising hand of the Father in our life. The circumcising work that the Father needs to do in our heart has already been finished in the offering of Christ. We are confident that the Father, who has begun a good work in us, will complete the work according to His own sovereign timing. **Php 1:6.**

Fleshly alternatives

When Jesus Christ speaks to us through His messengers, the word is always accompanied by the spirit of grace and supplication which gives us the freedom and capacity to respond to the word. **Zec 12:10**. However, many Christians have not yet found the simplicity of turning to meet Christ in response to His word and to the conviction of the Holy Spirit. This is the evidence that their mind is still set on the things of the flesh.

When this is the case, a believer may turn aside to various alternatives in their pursuit to find spiritual wisdom and direction. For example, they may rigidly hold on to past doctrines and practices, when the Lord is calling them to move forward in repentance and faith. **2Co 3:15-16**. Equally, instead of joining the fellowship of the word that has been publicly proclaimed to them, they may preference their own personal interpretation of the Scriptures and its implication for their life. Speaking as part of Christ's messenger administration, the apostle Peter declared, 'We have the prophetic word confirmed, which you do well to heed as a light that shines in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts; knowing this first, that no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation.' **2Pe 1:19-21**.

Another common alternative to meeting Christ, in response to the word and the conviction of the Holy Spirit, is to become preoccupied with our own self analysis and self diagnosis. The Scripture is clear that this is a futile and unfruitful exercise. It is not possible to know the condition of our heart through self examination. **Jer 17:9**. The fruit of self examination may be a form of sorrow in relation to our own perceived failures or shortcomings. However, it is only the godly sorrow, that is the fruit of meeting Christ eye to eye, that leads to genuine repentance without regret.

Not looking for signs

Many Christians set their mind on the things of the flesh by trying to interpret the events and circumstances of their life as though they are *signs* from the Lord. **1Co 1:22-25**. For example, on the assumption that their circumstances will be favourable when the Lord approves of their direction in life, a person may assume that adverse and difficult circumstances are *a sign* from the Lord that they are going the wrong way. Equally, a person may jump to the conclusion that the Lord is addressing a certain issue in their life because of the circumstances that they are encountering. It is important to recognise that the Lord is not relying on our own subjective interpretation of our circumstances to communicate with us. Rather, it is the word that is preached to us that is 'a lamp to our feet and a light to our path'. **Psa 119:105**.

When the word of faith is proclaimed to us, we receive illumination through the convicting work of the Holy Spirit in our heart. **Joh 16:8-11. Rom 8:16**. We then receive further illumination when we present ourselves to discuss the word that we have received in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. **Luk 24:29-31**. The apostle Paul tells us that we are to examine ourselves in the fellowship of the *agape* meal. **1Co 11:28**. However, this is not an exercise of self analysis or a subjective reflection on our present circumstances. We examine ourselves, by the Spirit, in the light of the word that we have received. In this fellowship with our brethren in the *agape* meal, we are being delivered from every other futile method of trying to interpret what the Lord is saying to us. When we are rightly connected to our brethren in the fellowship of the *agape* meal, we know that Jesus Christ Himself is making intercession for us to the Father. **Rom 8:27**.

All things work together

The will of God is accomplished in our lives in the fellowship of Christ's offering journey. The apostle Paul declared, 'And we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are the called according to His purpose.' **Rom 8:28**. When we consider this verse, it is important to recognise that *God is not the cause of our suffering*. We know that all the pain and suffering in the world is the result of mankind's rejection of the fatherhood of God. We also know that Jesus Christ did not come to deliver us from this suffering. Rather, by the grace of God, on His offering journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, He fully joined us in our fallen human condition by becoming the *body of sin*, and then by *tasting death* for every person. **Heb 2:9**.

Jesus Christ died our death, on His journey from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross, while, at the same time, the resurrection life of God that was in His blood brought Him back from the death of our sin. **Heb 13:20-21**. For this reason, each wounding event that He suffered became a circumcising action upon Him, which was removing the body of sin from Him. **Col 2:11**. The apostle Peter described the offering of Christ by saying, 'When He was reviled, He did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously.' **1Pe 2:23**. In this way, the death that Christ died, *He died to sin*, once, for all men. **Rom 6:10**.

With the unique journey of Jesus Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross clearly in view, Peter declared to every Christian, 'To this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps.' **1Pe 2:21**.

Arm yourselves with this mind

When Jesus Christ, with His eyes like a flame of fire, reveals the iniquity that is in our heart, we 'flee for refuge' to the cross to lay hold of our unique participation in the wounding events of Christ. **Heb 6:17-18**. This is how we obtain mercy. As we are being conformed to His death, we are dying, with Him, to our own sin, so that we might live for righteousness as a son of God. **1Pe 2:24**. In the fellowship of Christ's wounding events, the resurrection life of God in His blood is healing us from the malignant disease of sin in our life.

The suffering that we now experience as a son of God in this world is our participation in the circumcision of Christ. It is the necessary 'heart operation' that is *saving our life*, because the other law is being removed from our heart and we are ceasing from sin. **Col 2:11**. Furthermore, we are receiving the resurrection life of God in our mortality, which is our capacity to live as a son of God. For this reason, if we are setting our mind on the things of the Spirit, we will not be viewing ourselves as the victim of our difficult or painful circumstances.

The apostle Peter said, 'Since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also *with the same mind*, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the will of God.' **1Pe 4:1-2**. When Peter instructed us to be *armed*, or *equipped*, with the mind of Christ in relation to this matter, it is evident that there is a significant degree of spiritual warfare around this issue. The victim mindset is a common form of uncleanness that causes a person to become oppressed by unclean spirits. **Rom 13:12-14**.

To those who love God

In contrast to the victim mindset, which is an attitude that is completely self absorbed, Paul explained that the first outcome of God working all things together for our good is that we are enabled to *love God*. **Rom 8:28**. We receive the love of God as a gift when we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's wounding events. In the fellowship of Christ's wounding events, the other law is being circumcised and removed *from our heart*. At the same time, the love of God is being poured *into our heart*. **Rom 5:5**.

Significantly, in the same way that the love of God in the heart of Christ was the motivation and the capacity for His obedience to the Father, the love of God that is poured into our heart is the motivation and capacity for our obedience as a son of God. **Joh 15:10**. The fruit of the love of God being poured into our heart will be our obedience to the doctrine of our baptism. Having explained the reality of our baptism into the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, the apostle Paul proclaimed, 'But God be thanked that though you were slaves of sin, yet you *obeyed from the heart* that form of doctrine to which you were delivered.' **Rom 6:17**.

In a similar way, Paul explained to the Corinthians, 'For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again.' **2Co 5:14-15**. This is a helpful verse, because it highlights that it is the love of Christ that compels or constrains us to a change of mindset. Recalling that 'motive governs mind', it is our changing motivation, as the love of God is being poured into our heart through the Holy Spirit, that is foundational to the renewing of our mind.

Called according to His purpose

When our preoccupation is to reveal others in the fellowship of the body of Christ, we are also obtaining our sanctification as those who are 'called according to His purpose'. **Rom 8:28**. Paul expanded this statement concerning the purpose of God when he described it as being 'the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord'. **Eph 3:8-12**. The Father has accomplished His *eternal purpose* for every son of God in the offering of Jesus Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross.

Remarkably, Jesus Christ learned our obedience and fulfilled the works of our sonship while He was in the lowest parts of the earth. **Psa 139:15-16**. He descended to the lowest parts of the earth from 12pm to 3pm on the day of His crucifixion, when darkness covered the whole earth. During those three hours, Jesus Christ tasted the fullness of our eternal death while, at the same time, He worked miracles for the dead. **Psa 88:5-7,10-12**. He authored each day of our life for us as a son of God. If we continue to walk with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, we will inherit the full glory of our eternal inheritance, on the day of resurrection.

Paul explained how we obtain our sanctification by saying, 'For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be *conformed* to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren.' **Rom 8:29**. We are conformed to the image of the Son because, if we are united with Him in the likeness of His death, we are also united with Him in the likeness of His resurrection. **Rom 6:5**. Paul further summarised what has already been accomplished for every son of God in the offering of Christ, by saying, 'Whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified.' **Rom 8:30**.

What shall we say then?

The apostle Paul explained how we set our mind on the things of the Spirit by joining the spiritual prayer meeting. He then immediately turned his attention to the need for us to make a response to the proposition that he had so clearly explained to us. He was provoking us to consider whether our mindset is consistent with the mind that is set on the Spirit. He began by saying, 'What then shall we say to these things?' **Rom 8:31**. He was effectively saying, 'What is our response?'

Paul then asked, 'If God is for us, who can be against us?' **Rom 8:31**. When he asked this question, he was not referring to the misguided notion that God is our greatest 'supporter' when we decide to take our own self righteous, religious initiatives. We know that if we are walking after the flesh, the Holy Spirit will be our greatest adversary. **Gal 5:17**. Rather, Paul was directing our attention to the full provision of God that has been freely given to us in Christ's offering. He continued, 'He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?' **Rom 8:32**. **2Pe 1:2-3**.

Paul then asked, 'Who shall bring a charge against God's elect?' **Rom 8:33**. This is a significant question which is foundational to what it means to walk blamelessly before the Lord. In the early part of his letter to the Romans, Paul spent a considerable amount of time establishing that we are all 'without excuse' and 'blameworthy'. We are fully accountable for our iniquity and rebellion. **Rom 1:20-21**. However, when Christ was delivered up because of our offences, He was also raised because of our justification. **Rom 4:24-25**. The physical resurrection of Christ is the guarantee that He has learned our obedience and has perfected our sonship. Paul was drawing our attention to the finished work of Christ when he declared, 'It is God who justifies.' **Rom 8:33**.

FURTHER STUDY 2 PETER 1

Walking blamelessly

We are walking blamelessly as we continue to walk in the light of the word that Christ proclaims to us from His finished position, where He is seated at the right hand of God. We are part of God's elect if we are walking in the fellowship of Christ's offering, in obedience to the truth, so that our heart is being purified for a sincere love of the brethren. **1Pe 1:22**. We are overcoming Satan, who stands to continually accuse us before the throne of God, as we are learning to love one another from the heart. **Rev 12:10-11**.

Paul's next question was, 'Who is he who condemns?' **Rom 8:34**. We know there is now no condemnation, which means 'damnation', for those who are in Jesus Christ, and are setting their mind on the things of the Spirit. If we are embracing our fellowship in Christ's offering and sufferings, the law of the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus has set us free from the law of sin and death. **Rom 8:2**. We are under no obligation to the flesh. There is no reason for us to revert to the carnal prayer meeting that Paul described in Romans Chapter 7.

Rather, we choose to set our mind on the things of the Spirit by presenting ourselves for participation in the new prayer meeting that Paul described in Romans Chapter 8. We present ourselves to God for obedience as those who are alive from the dead. **Rom 6:13**. As we continue to present ourselves in this manner, we know that God is working all things together for our good, because Jesus Christ is making intercession for us according to the will of God. Paul drew our attention to this specific point by continuing, 'It is Christ who died, and furthermore is also risen, who is even at the right hand of God, *who also makes intercession for us.*' **Rom 8:34**.

Who shall separate us?

Paul's final question was, 'Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword?' **Rom 8:35**. We may experience many of these things in the fellowship of the wounding events that Christ experienced from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We have been called to 'go outside the camp' with Christ to bear His reproach. **Heb 13:13**. Paul continued to say, 'As it is written: "For your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter"' **Rom 8:36**. However, if we are being conformed to the death of Christ, we know that no one can take our life from us. **Joh 10:17-18**.

The apostle Paul continued, 'Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us.' **Rom 8:37**. He highlighted the fact that, if we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, *we are never the victim of our circumstances*. We are more than conquerors because our participation in the wounding events of Christ is the context in which we are receiving the resurrection life of God that was in the blood of Christ. **2Co 2:14**. If we continue in the faith of His word, so that we are not moved away from the hope of this gospel, we rejoice that Jesus Christ will present us to the Father at the end of our lifetime as those who are holy, blameless and above reproach, in His sight. **Col 1:21-23**.

Paul concluded with the confession of his own faith by saying, 'I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any created thing, shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.' **Rom 8:38-39**.



Restoring
my Soul