



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

FEBRUARY 2021

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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February 2021

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The testimony of Timothy

In the course of his *second* missionary journey, the apostle Paul, accompanied by Silas, visited Derbe and Lystra in the province of Lycaonia. Here they encountered a young man named Timothy. The brethren in Lystra and Iconium spoke well of Timothy because of his faith and his ministry in the region. Paul commissioned Timothy to travel with him throughout Asia and to do the work of an evangelist. **Act 16:1-3. 2Ti 4:5.**

Prior to this, Timothy, with his mother and his grandmother, had come to know the Lord through the ministry of Paul and Barnabas on their *first* missionary journey. Timothy's testimony among the brethren of Lycaonia revealed that he had received Paul's exhortation to give attention to the doctrines that Jesus had taught, particularly those that accorded with godliness. Timothy had been urged to consent to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ, and to conform himself to a godly life. Godly living became the definition of Timothy's faith. By receiving the instruction of Paul, Timothy understood that those who stray from godliness stray from the faith. **1Ti 6:10.**

Timothy had been called by God to inherit eternal life. The call to lay hold of eternal life placed him in a conflict. This conflict is, in fact, common to all believers. Paul noted this in his letter to the Hebrews, writing, 'But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle [or conflict] with sufferings: partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated'. **Heb 10:32-33.** In the midst of this conflict, Timothy needed to fight the good fight of faith and, through faith, succeed to inherit eternal life. **1Ti 6:12.**

The good confession

Discernment and spiritual wisdom were needed by Timothy to avoid the pitfalls that confront every believer. He obtained these capacities by taking heed to Paul's instructions, and was able to confess the good confession of faith in the presence of many witnesses. **Rom 10:17. Col 2:6-7. 1Ti 6:12.** This is why many believers in the province of Lycaonia testified to his commitment and godliness. **Act 16:2.** For Timothy, the good fight of faith, and the good confession, were one and the same. It was the attainment of godliness in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings.

Importantly, Paul described the confession of faith as 'the good confession' that Jesus witnessed before Pontius Pilate. **1Ti 6:13-14.** When Jesus was brought before Pilate, He declared that His kingdom was not of this world. **Joh 18:36.** Moreover, in response to Pilate's query, 'Are You a king?' Jesus said, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, *that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.*' **Joh 18:37.**

The confession of faith is the testimony of a son of God who is a member of the body of Christ. In the same manner as Jesus, they do not live by the principles of this world, because they belong to the kingdom of God. **Joh 3:5.** They are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem. **Heb 12:22.** In the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, they are being delivered from the lie that Satan fathered within mankind as another law. **Rom 7:23.** Instead of living by this fallen principle, they are being established in the truth. This is because they hear, believe and obey the voice of Christ.

The pastoral epistles

Not long before he was martyred in Rome, Paul sent two letters to Timothy and a letter to another disciple named Titus. These three letters are commonly referred to as 'the pastoral epistles'. They contain Paul's final instructions to Timothy and Titus, which were an apostolic charge, or commandment, that they were to obey and implement among the churches. In obedience to these commands, they were to continue the work of apostolic administration as overseers in the body of Christ. This was to be a feature of their good confession of faith.

To execute this charge, Timothy was urged by Paul to follow the example of Christ's faithful obedience to God the Father. He said, 'I urge you in the sight of God who gives life to all things and before Christ Jesus who witnessed the good confession before Pontius Pilate, that you keep this commandment without spot, blameless until our Lord Jesus Christ's appearing, which He will manifest in His own time, He who is the blessed and only Potentate, the King of kings and Lord of lords.' **1Ti 6:13-15.**

Having already demonstrated the good confession, Timothy was to keep Paul's commandments *without spot and blameless* until the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. That is, he was to *continue* to pursue godliness. **1Ti 6:11.** Evidently, the commandments contained in Paul's letters to Timothy and Titus describe how a person of faith walks and ministers in the church in a manner that is without spot and blameless.

This is fundamental to the effective ministry of an overseer, or watchman. Overseers are slaves of Christ who have been set as stewards over His house. They have received ascension gift grace from Christ – some apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastor-teachers – to equip every person in the body for the work of their ministry by feeding them with the word of present truth. **Eph 4:11-12. Luk 12:42.**

FURTHER STUDY TITUS 2

Watchmen

The Scriptures also refer to overseers as ‘watchmen’. For example, when the Lord commissioned Ezekiel as a prophet, He said to him, ‘Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the house of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me.’ **Eze 3:17**. As a watchman, Ezekiel was to warn the wicked to turn from their wicked ways. He was also required to warn the righteous about the stumbling block that the Lord had placed in front of them because they had turned from righteousness to iniquity. If the wicked or the righteous perished in their sin because of the watchman’s failure to warn them, the blood of those who perished was required at the hand of the watchman. **Eze 3:17-21**.

Through the prophet Jeremiah, the Lord said to His covenant people, ‘Stand in the ways and see, and ask for the old paths, where the good way is, and walk in it; then you will find *rest for your souls*. But they said, “We will not walk in it.” Also, I set watchmen over you, saying, “Listen to the sound of the trumpet!” But they said, “We will not listen!”’ **Jer 6:16-17**.

Jesus also spoke about finding rest for our souls. He declared, ‘Come to Me, all you who labour and are heavy laden, and *I will give you rest*. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will *find rest for your souls*. For My yoke is easy and My burden is light.’ **Mat 11:28-30**. We see that we are yoked to Christ by hearing the message proclaimed by His watchmen, and by walking in the pathway that their word reveals. This pathway is our participation in the fellowship of Christ’s offering. Yoked to Christ in this fellowship, we find rest for our soul.

Watch and pray

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus was manifest as the Shepherd and Overseer, or Watchman, of our souls. **1Pe 2:25**. He specifically called Peter, James and John to join Him in this work of overseership when He asked them to *watch and pray with Him*. **Mat 26:36-41**. As He prayed to the Father, by the Holy Spirit, Jesus received strength to overcome temptation, and the powers of darkness that were arrayed against Him and were seeking His destruction. Likewise, Jesus called His disciples to watch and pray so that they would avoid the temptation to draw back from the fellowship of His offering and to walk according to the flesh. **Mat 26:41**.

This fellowship of prayer in Gethsemane was foundational to the disciples' participation in Christ's offering and sufferings. It was also essential to their capacity to make a good confession before men as witnesses of Christ's death and resurrection. This is true for all those whom the Lord has called to serve as overseers in His house. Making this point, Jesus said to the presbytery of the church in Sardis, 'These things says He who has the seven Spirits of God and the seven stars: I know your works, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. *Be watchful*, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. *Therefore if you will not watch*, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you.' **Rev 3:1-3**.

Although Christ was specifically addressing the presbytery of Sardis, His warning applies to the whole church. He says to us all, 'He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says *to the churches*.' **Rev 3:6**.

FURTHER STUDY LUKE 21

Receiving and hearing

Our capacity to watch and pray with Christ *depends* upon us receiving and obeying the word that is proclaimed from the presbytery by watchmen. As the apostle John declared, 'That which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ.' **1Jn 1:3**.

'Watching and praying' means remembering how we have received and heard the word, holding fast to this word, and repenting. **Rev 3:3**. As we do this, we are able to 'strengthen the things which remain'. 'The things which remain' refers to the substance of our sonship that we have received from the Father, in Christ, by the Holy Spirit. **Php 3:12-15**. Our sonship is strengthened as we, in our weakness, remain joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. We are strengthened by His *exanastasis* life that is given to us in this fellowship. **Php 2:9-11**. As Jesus said to Paul regarding the sufferings that he was experiencing, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness.' **2Co 12:9**.

If we do not meditate on the word that Christ is ministering to the church through His messengers, we are unable to watch and pray, and our works are not perfect before God. This means that we are not without spot; nor are we blameless before the Lord. Instead, our priestly garments are 'spotted with the flesh'. **Jud 1:23**. Moreover, our bodies are filthy in the sight of the Lord because we endeavour to walk according to our own fallen, or fleshly, understanding. In this deluded condition, we are disconnected from Christ and are at risk of having our names blotted out from the Book of Life. **Rev 3:5**.

Washing our bodies and garments

Concluding His letter to Sardis, Jesus Christ made this promise: 'He who *overcomes* shall be *clothed in white garments*, and *I will not blot out his name* from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.' **Rev 3:5**. We overcome by participating in the process through which our priestly garments are made white, and we are sanctified as a son of God.

Our priestly garments are made white as they are washed in the blood of the Lamb through our fellowship in the sufferings of Christ. **Rev 7:14**. The apostle Paul described this process as 'having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience'. **Heb 10:22**. When our conscience is cleansed, our motive for service as a priest is being made pure. We are delivered from the desire to define our own service according to the knowledge of good and evil. To have our garments washed in the blood of the Lamb qualifies us to serve God as priests and defines us as being 'without fault'. However, our participation in this priestly work is dependent upon us having our bodies washed with pure water.

Our name is confessed by Christ before the Father when our bodies are washed by the pure water of the word. **Heb 10:22**. This is the word of God's Covenant, which proclaims our sonship. It is the water from the laver which is set in the outer court of the true tabernacle in heaven. The outer court is on the earth, where Christ suffered. **Rev 11:1-3,8**. **Rev 15:2-4**. **Heb 13:12**. This affirms that the water of the word, which has the power to cleanse and sanctify those who receive it, is ministered by presbyteries on earth. When our bodies are washed by this word, we are being sanctified to our name as a son of God, and are able to priest ourselves as a living sacrifice in the fellowship of Christ's offering.

Conflict in our families

At times, we experience distress as a consequence of relational difficulties or conflict in our families. We feel the shame and reproach that is associated with the 'muckiness' of dysfunctional relationships. **Psa 41:9. Psa 55:12-14.** We fight against the shame and humiliation resulting from these interactions because we feel devalued in the eyes of others, and our self-worth is being eroded. Seeking justice for our humiliation, we fight for our life and refuse to be put down by those whom we believe are causing us injury.

Addressing our carnal desire for vengeance upon those who threaten and hurt us, James, the Lord's brother, wrote, 'Where do wars and fights come from *among you*? Do they not come from your desires for pleasure that war in your members? You lust and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war. Yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.' **Jas 4:1-3.** Jesus Himself identified families as a fundamental context for these conflicts, saying, 'A man's enemies will be those of his own household.' **Mat 10:36.**

It is notable that James attributed the conflict in families to our unwillingness and inability to watch and pray with Christ. King David testified that prayer was his first response to those who reproached him. 'For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful have opened against me; they have spoken against me with a lying tongue. They have also surrounded me with words of hatred, and fought against me without a cause. *In return for my love they are my accusers, but I give myself to prayer.*' **Psa 109:2-4.** Watching and praying with Christ is the antidote to vengeance.

The capacity for obedience

As we receive the washing of the water by the word, we are enabled by the Spirit to watch and pray with Christ. In fellowship with Him, we are able to resist the temptation to seek vengeance for the cruelty, or perceived cruelty, directed toward us by others, including those in our family. Our heart is sprinkled from an evil conscience, and we are able to appreciate the need to embrace the cross with its accompanying reproach and shame. **Heb 10:22. Heb 13:13.** Believing that the fruit of eternal life is given to those who embrace the cross, we maintain a dignified and faithful participation in this process. The life that we obtain in the fellowship of Christ's sufferings makes us alive from the death of sin, and enables us to obey the command, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head.' **Rom 12:20.**

Through His Melchizedek ministry, Christ has already lived the life of each of us and, through His death, has accomplished our righteousness. That is, He has finished the works that belong to our sonship. As the prophet Isaiah declared, 'Jehovah, You will ordain peace for us; *for also You have worked all our works for us.*' **Isa 26:12 LITV.** The Lord has done this by doing the works that the Father gave Him to do on our account. These are the works that the Father prepared for us to do in Christ. **Eph 2:10.** As we remain joined to the Son's faith and life, we receive the capacity to obey God as His son, and to do the priestly works that belong to our name. By this means, our obedience is made known to all men as a testimony of the faith that we have received. **Rom 16:19.**

Access by faith into grace

The apostle Paul proclaimed, 'Having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God.' **Rom 5:1-2**. Through the redemption that is in Christ, we are justified by His faith as long as we do not react to the circumstances of our life and draw back in unbelief from the fellowship of Christ's sufferings. **Rom 5:1. Heb 10:39. Php 3:10**. In this fellowship, forgiveness of our sin is operative, and the sufferings and chastenings that we endure each day are part of the ministry of Christ's offering and priestly work. They are producing sanctification in our life, and are a manifestation of His righteousness so that we are a partaker of His holiness. **Heb 12:10**.

Christ was raised from the dead because we have been justified and made faultless in Him. **Rom 4:25**. The whole of our life is joined to Christ's faultless work which was accomplished from the first communion until His work was finished on the cross. For this reason, at the end of each day, Christ, by His grace, is able to present us as faultless before His Father. **Jud 1:24-25**. Being made faultless is, therefore, a pathway of progressive attainment as we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings.

This is true for us as long as we continue to live and walk in the obedience of faith. We receive the faith of the Son of God by hearing the word that God has placed in the mouths of watchmen who are part of a presbytery. **Gal 2:20. Rom 1:5. Rom 10:17**. If we do not draw back from this word or from the fellowship to which we are being called, we will have great boldness when we stand before the Lord on the day of judgement. **Heb 10:39. 1Jn 4:17**.

Sorrow caused by time and chance

It is important to consider the scriptural principle of 'birth pangs'. Jesus said that these 'sorrows' would begin prior to the time of the end, and would continue until the fulfilment of God's Everlasting Covenant on the earth. **Mat 24:5-8**. The progressive effect of these sorrows is twofold. It is the process of perfection for those who are born of God and are joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as members of His body. However, for those who reject this 'so great salvation', the same sorrows are the foretaste of their eternal judgement. **Heb 2:1-3**.

From the writings of the apostle Paul, we learn that sorrows, or birth pangs, are more than the initiation of the Lord's final judgement upon the earth. He said, 'The creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. *For we know that the whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.*' **Rom 8:20-22**.

The sorrows associated with the judgement of mankind began when Adam and Eve, through their disobedience, fell from fellowship with Yahweh. As a consequence, the whole world was subject to futility, or time and chance. We note the words of King Solomon, who wrote, 'I returned and saw under the sun that – the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, nor bread to the wise, nor riches to men of understanding, nor favour to men of skill; but time and chance happen to them all. For man also does not know his time: like fish taken in a cruel net, like birds caught in a snare, so the sons of men are snared in an evil time, when it falls suddenly upon them.' **Ecc 9:11-12**.

Our conversation with Christ

By offering, Christ has been joined to the death of every son and daughter of man. **Rom 6:5-6**. He made our death to be His death by joining us where we are – under the judgement and curse of time and chance. Christ's offering and sufferings embrace us in the realm of time and chance in which we live. Importantly, the offering of Christ does more than simply encompass the events of time and chance that govern our lives. It deals with the fallen, fleshly attitudes that govern our lives as we seek to escape the impact of the curse that has become our lot because of the Fall. **Rom 6:10-12**.

The thief who was crucified with Christ was no more wicked than any other person. He had been caught by the Roman authorities who made him an example to the rest of the Jewish community. However, this situation brought the thief into proximity with Christ, enabling him to have a conversation with the Lord and to find salvation. **Luk 23:43**. This man would not have gone to be with Christ in Paradise if he had not accepted that the events governed by time and chance, and his own misguided actions, were a *just* judgement upon his life. **Luk 23:40-42**.

Because of the Fall, we all experience the degenerating effects of time and chance upon our body, soul and spirit. However, because Christ has been joined to our death, time and chance, and our own misguided conduct, do not separate us from the conversation that we must have with Christ in order to be saved. **Rom 8:38-39**. As we receive Christ's word, we are able to find repentance and to walk by faith with Him in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This is the way that leads to life for those who abide in Christ. **Mat 7:14**.

The true vine

In the Scriptures, the kingdoms of men and of God are depicted as vines. For example, the apostle John wrote, 'And another angel came out from the altar, who had power over fire, and he cried with a loud cry to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Thrust in your sharp sickle and *gather the clusters of the vine of the earth*, for her grapes are fully ripe." So the angel thrust his sickle into the earth and gathered the *vine of the earth*, and threw it into the great winepress of the wrath of God.' **Rev 14:18-19.**

Significantly, Jesus described Himself as 'the true Vine' and identified the Father as the Vinedresser of the true Vine. **Joh 15:1.** He further explained, 'I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing. If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.' **Joh 15:5-6.** The true vine, which is the corporate body of Christ, is the kingdom of heaven!

Further establishing this point, Jesus declared before Pilate that He was a king, and that His kingdom was not of this world. He said, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.' **Joh 18:36.** John the Baptist proclaimed the coming of this heavenly kingdom. As Jesus Himself noted, 'From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force.' **Mat 11:12.** By this, Jesus meant that as men and women received the ministry of John the Baptist, and repented, they began to push into the kingdom that Christ had come to establish on earth.

The kingdom of heaven

Under King David, the city of Jerusalem was established as the administrative centre of the kingdom of Israel. Having brought the ark of the covenant into the city, David desired to build a temple for the Lord in Jerusalem. This work was fulfilled by his son, Solomon. Following the dedication of the temple, the Lord appeared to Solomon, saying, 'Now My eyes will be open and My ears attentive to prayer made in this place. For now I have chosen and sanctified this house, that My name may be there forever; and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually.' **2Ch 7:15-16.**

The kingdom of natural Israel was a shadow of the kingdom of heaven, which Christ established through His offering on the cross. At the centre of the kingdom of heaven is the heavenly Jerusalem, to *which we have all come*, by the Spirit, through new birth and baptism into the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. **Heb 12:22.** In the middle of this city is the true temple of God. This is the place of our fellowship with Yahweh, and of our service as a kingdom of priests. **1Jn 1:3. Rev 1:6.** Because we are king-priests who serve God with Christ in the temple of His body, we are citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem and of the kingdom of heaven. **Php 3:20-21.**

When God's works have been fulfilled in this age, the present heavens and earth will be dissolved with fervent heat; the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. **2Pe 3:10,12.** In its place, God will establish a new heaven and a new earth. **Rev 21:1.** At the centre of this everlasting kingdom will be the bride city, the New Jerusalem, which will descend out of heaven from God. **Rev 21:9-10.** The apostle said that there will be no temple in the city, 'for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.' **Rev 21:22.**

The ministry of the Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit, who fills all things, has humbled Himself to come and live in the hearts of men and women. **Joh 14:16**. He dwells within us and has become for us the expression and glory of our sonship. He also speaks to us as we abide with Him in the fellowship of the Father and the Son. **1Jn 1:3**. The Holy Spirit takes the things that belong to the Son and speaks to us of them. **Joh 16:14**. He makes known to us the riches of glory that belong to the Son; He declares them and gives them to us. **Joh 16:13-15**.

In this present season, the Holy Spirit is speaking to us of the things that are about to take place upon the earth. **Rev 4:1**. He is showing us things to come. **Joh 16:13**. Firstly, He is proclaiming the same word that He spoke to the prophet Ezekiel after Christ had called him and sent him as a prophet to speak the words of Christ to the children of Israel. **Eze 2:3**.

After Christ had commissioned Ezekiel, the Spirit lifted him up and carried him, in the Spirit, and brought him to the captives of Judah who dwelt at Tel Abib, by the River Chebar. **Eze 3:15**. When the Spirit lifted Ezekiel up into the dimension of the Spirit, the dimension in which He dwelt, He then spoke with a great thunderous voice, saying, 'Blessed is the glory of the Lord [Jesus Christ] from His place!' **Eze 3:12**. So, where is the place of Christ? It is where He is now seated – enthroned at the right hand of the Father in the most holy place of the true tabernacle. **Heb 6:19**. **Heb 8:1**. We are to know this place, for He is inviting men and women everywhere *to come to Him!*

The invitation to come

In view of participation in the heavenly temple, and citizenship of the new heaven and earth, the apostle Peter exhorted us to *come to Jesus*. He wrote, '*Coming to Him* as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ'. **1Pe 2:4-5**.

To 'come to Christ' is to be built as a living stone into a spiritual house. **Eph 2:20-22**. This house is the true temple and the expression of Christ's fellowship, which is the fellowship of Yahweh. As it was in the days of David and Solomon, the temple is in the midst of the Jerusalem from above.

In addition to being built into a spiritual house, 'coming to Christ' means coming all the way into the holy of holies of the true temple, which is the presence beyond the veil. **Heb 6:19**. This is where Christ is now seated. In fact, our soul is anchored in the most holy place when we receive His call to come and be joined to Him, our great High Priest. As we journey with Christ in the fellowship of His offering, we are obtaining, and living by, the faith of the Son of God that He authored and perfected for us. **Gal 2:20. Heb 12:2**. Furthermore, our hearts are being sprinkled clean from an evil conscience by His blood, enabling us to serve as priests to His God and Father. **Heb 9:13-14. Rev 1:6**.

Jesus invited every person to 'come to Him' by joining the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. He said that to be yoked with Him in this manner is the means by which a person can find rest for their soul as they are delivered from the sorrow and fatigue that is associated with God's judgement upon fallen mankind. **Mat 11:28-30**.

To him who overcomes

Significantly, Jesus connected the call to 'come to Him' with eating and drinking. He said, 'I am the Bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.' **Joh 6:35**. He also declared, 'If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.' **Joh 7:37-38**. The call to come to Christ in this manner is the call to first love. It is to participate in the *agape* meal, which is our fellowship at the Tree of Life. This is our fellowship with the Father and the Son, by the Holy Spirit. For this reason, we must hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches! **Rev 2:7**.

Those who come to Christ, by eating His flesh and drinking His blood, are being built as living stones into a spiritual temple. This is the context of our priestly service as we, by the mercies of God, present ourselves as living sacrifices in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Rom 12:1**. In this fellowship, we are overcoming the other law and the law of sin; Christ's life is becoming our life; and we are living by the faith of the Son of God. **Gal 2:20**.

This is what it means to be an overcomer! Jesus exhorted every believer in the church age to overcome in this manner. He said, 'He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My God, and he shall go out no more. I will write on him the name of My God and the name of the city of My God, the New Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My God. *And I will write on him My new name.*' **Rev 3:12**.

Is it not a fellowship?

In the Scriptures, there are numerous examples of a particular approach to making, or establishing, a point. Instead of directly stating the point, a question is posed for the purpose of eliciting a response. A person's response demonstrates either their acceptance of the point or the maintenance of their own view on the subject.

Consider, for example, the way in which the Jews discussed the identity of Jesus. The apostle John recounted, 'And many of the people believed in Him, and said, "When the Christ comes, *will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?*"' The Pharisees heard the crowd murmuring these things concerning Him, and the Pharisees and the chief priests sent officers to take Him.' **Joh 7:31-32**. In this instance, the question relating to Jesus' works compelled the hearers either to believe that He was the Christ or to deny that He was the Christ. Furthermore, they were provoked to make a response that was commensurate with their belief.

In his epistles, the apostle Paul also employed this way of making a point. In relation to the communion, he said, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, *is it not the communion [fellowship] of the blood of Christ?* The bread which we break, *is it not the communion [fellowship] of the body of Christ?*' **1Co 10:16**.

Paul's questions prompt us to consider what the bread and cup of communion *are to us*. If the elements are a fellowship, then they *are not* a memorial of Christ's historical offering. Neither are the bread or the cup being transubstantiated to become something else for us. Importantly, when *we* answer that the elements of communion *are* a fellowship in the body and blood of Christ, we are beginning to exercise faith for participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ as members of His body. **1Co 1:9. Heb 3:14. Eph 2:19-22**. We demonstrate this faith through our dialogue and conduct with one another as we eat and drink the *agape* meal. **Eph 5:18-21**.

Building up one another

Over the past number of months, we have received the proclamation and consolidation of what the Spirit, on behalf of Christ, is saying to us. **Rev 2:7**. The consolidation of this word in our lives - individually, as families, and as churches - is a culture that defines our living. This is a reality for us as long as we do not set aside the grace of God. **Gal 2:21**.

The culture of godliness is not achieved simply through cognitive understanding, or through some kind of information-sifting activity. Rather, when the word is proclaimed to us through the Holy Spirit, it comes instinct with its own faith. **Rom 10:17**. We need to feed on this word. As we meditate and fellowship together, we build one another up in our most holy faith. **Jud 1:20-21**. Building one another up is the unique exercise that establishes us in Christian culture. **Heb 13:7**. This is the 'way of escape' from our own carnality and disobedience. **1Co 10:12-13**.

When we come together for the *agape* meal, we do not invoke a blessing upon the food and drink so that, through consecration, it becomes some kind of special spiritual food. Rather, the blessing is a thanksgiving for the grace that we have received which enables us, through body ministry, to feed one another, spiritually. We do this as we dialogue together in faith within the fellowshiping context of the *agape* meal.

The apostle Paul focused our attention on this fellowship, writing, 'The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion [fellowship] of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion [fellowship] 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**.

Blessing with the Spirit

We, being many, are one bread and one body because we, individually, are partaking of the one bread. **1Co 10:17**. This is Christ, who identified Himself as the living Bread which came down from heaven. **Joh 6:51**. We have come to Him as individuals, and as a corporate body, and are feeding on His word. As we receive Christ's word, it ministers the Spirit and life of God to us as His body and blood. **Joh 6:63**.

There is no eucharistic presence in the food and drink that we bless as a thanksgiving when we come together. The capacity to bless one another and to speak in faith – that is, to bless with the Spirit – is in us. **1Co 14:16**. This capacity has been given to us, and is multiplied within us, because we have come to Christ and have been yoked with Him in the fellowship of His offering. **Mat 11:28-30**. We have access, by faith, into this grace in which we stand. **Rom 5:2**. We are standing in grace and are able to minister the communion fellowship of Christ's body and blood to each other.

The food for which we give thanks in the *agape* meal is not an oblation. That is, the elements are not dedicated as a sacrifice that is offered to God. Eating and drinking together is a participation in fellowship. It is an expression of our participation in Christ's one offering as members of His body.

In dialogue, as we eat and drink of the communion meal together, we proclaim our faith in Christ's death, and also speak of our participation in His death as an expression of our obedience of faith. We accept, in faith, that Christ has joined our death to His death. Because of this, whether we live or die, we belong to the Lord and are able to show forth His offering capacity, and overcoming death, until He comes. **Rom 14:8**. **1Co 11:26**.



Restoring
my Soul