

Removing the body of sin

Under the Old Covenant, a son was circumcised eight days after his birth. We can make the obvious observation that a child can only be circumcised after it has been born. When Jesus Christ came into our heart as the Seed of the divine nature, we were born as a son of God. However, the process leading to our new birth did not deliver us from our carnality. Neither did it join us to the New Covenant in Christ's blood. For this reason, we need to join the circumcision of Christ.

Through the circumcision of Christ, the carnal propensities that bring us into bondage to sin are cut off from us. How does this happen? The sin of the whole world was laid upon Christ when He became sin for us. In this regard, He became the collective body of sin. As Christ suffered in the flesh by the capacity of the sevenfold Spirit of God, this body of sin was being cut off from Him. We eat and drink of His body and blood, which is made available to us in the fellowship of the communion meal, in faith for participation in these sufferings so that the body of sin is being cut away from our life.

Christ was being brought back from the death of sin by the Spirit of the Father and by the shedding of His own blood. When we are baptised into Christ, we are baptised into His death and joined to the fellowship of His sufferings. As we receive the portion of sufferings that He gives to us as a participation in His sufferings, the body of our sin which was laid upon Him is removed from us. More than this, we are recipients of all the elements of His redemptive work in His mortal body. This includes the power of His resurrection, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and the sevenfold Spirit of God by the Holy Spirit.

References:

Gen 17:12 IJn 3:5
Lev 12:3 Col 2:11-12
2Co 5:21 Rom 2:29

Further Study: Ephesians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 30

Priestly garments

When we are baptised into the death of Christ, we are also made adequate to serve as priests in the temple of His corporate body. The most fundamental requirement of service and participation in the house of God is to be clothed appropriately. Regarding priestly garments, Yahweh said to Moses, 'They shall be on Aaron and on his sons when they enter the tent of meeting, or when they approach the altar to minister in the holy place, *so that they do not incur guilt and die*. It shall be a statute *forever* to him and to his descendants after him.' Although we are not sons and daughters of Aaron, we have been called to be a kingdom of priests. This is according to the order of Melchizedek. Like Aaron and his sons, we also must be clothed appropriately for participation in the priestly activities of Christ's house.

Priestly garments symbolise a person's mandate, or authority, for serving God. On this point, Isaiah eloquently stated the dilemma for every believer. 'For all of us have become like one who is unclean, and *all our righteous deeds are like a filthy garment*.' Our own righteous deeds are motivated by the other law within us. And while our aspirations for serving God may be admirable, they do not achieve the righteousness of God. They are filthy garments that need to be removed and replaced.

Through baptism, we are able to put off the pursuit of our own righteousness, and put on the garment of Christ's priesthood. This is what Paul meant when he wrote, 'For all of you who were baptised into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ'. Being clothed with Christ has two implications for us. Firstly, we are able to present, or present, ourselves as a living sacrifice that is holy and acceptable to God. Secondly, we are brought into His corporate priesthood as a member of His body.

References:

Exo 28:43 Gal 3:27
Rev 1:6 Rom 12:1
Isa 64:6 Rom 13:14

Further Study: Isaiah 61

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 31

Consecrated for service

Once we have been appropriately clothed for priesthood, we also need to be consecrated for service. In the Old Covenant, the Levitical priesthood was ordained for service in the temple by being washed with water, and having their garments sprinkled with blood and anointing oil. In the New Covenant, we are joined to Christ's Melchizedek priesthood. Our sanctification for service is initiated through baptism, and maintained as we receive the washing of the water by the word, as we are sprinkled with the blood of Christ through our daily participation in the fellowship of His offering and sufferings; and as we are anointed and strengthened for service with the oil of the Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit.

The blood of Christ, in particular, cleanses our conscience from dead works so that we can serve God. Dead works are simply the works that are motivated by our other law. The blood cleanses our conscience so that we are motivated in a different way. We are delivered from the desire to reveal our own righteousness through our activities of service. The outcome of the blood in our lives is that our conscience will bear witness in the Holy Spirit. This means that our initiatives for service are consistent with the way in which the Holy Spirit is leading us. He is the Spirit of truth who leads us in the truth of who God named us to be in the body of Christ.

No doubt, in the course of our lives, we will return to the flesh as a means of attaining to life. However, when the Holy Spirit brings this to our attention, we can repent and return to the fellowship of Christ in which the water, blood and Spirit can be effective in our lives. In this regard, Jude exhorted us to hate 'the garment polluted by the flesh'.

References:

Lev 8:6, 30 Jud 1:23
Heb 9:14 1Ti 4:1-2
Rom 9:1 Rev 7:14

Further Study:

Psalm 51

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 1

The communion

At the last supper, Jesus communed with His disciples, giving them the elements of the bread and wine of the New Covenant. He is our great High Priest. The Gospel of Luke records that ‘when He had taken some bread and given thanks, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, “This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me”. And in the same way, He took the cup after they had eaten, saying, “This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood”.’ Paul explained that the elements of the communion are a point of participation in the body and blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. Partaking of the elements of the New Covenant gives us access to the fellowship of the garden of Gethsemane.

As members of the body of Christ, we are joined by communion to Christ’s dying on a daily basis. This is our ongoing participation in Christ’s circumcision, which is His sufferings. As we eat and drink of the communion elements each week, we are to have faith for participation in these sufferings. This is what Paul meant when he said, ‘For as often as you eat this bread and drink the cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death until He comes’. It is our responsibility to draw near to God in this way. Paul said, ‘Since we have a great priest over the house of God, *let us draw near* with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our heart sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water’. We must draw near to where our great High Priest is ministering the elements of the New Covenant to us, and then join Him in the fellowship of His offering in the garden of Gethsemane.

References:

Luk 22:19-20 Heb 10:21-22
1Co 10:16 Heb 9:13-14
1Co 11:26 2Ti 2:14

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 11

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 2

The garden of Gethsemane

The circumcision of Christ began in the garden of Gethsemane. That was where the first blood began to flow from Christ's mortal body. After Jesus had become sin for us, 'an angel from heaven appeared to Him, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He was praying very fervently; and His sweat became like drops of blood, falling down upon the ground.' To avail ourselves of this precious blood, we must join His prayer.

When Jesus invited His disciples to join the prayer meeting in Gethsemane, He personally took Peter, James and John, and asked them to pray with Him. In the lead-up to this event, each of these men had demonstrated notable fleshly attitudes. Peter had taken Jesus aside and rebuked Him for showing His disciples that He must suffer many things, be killed, and raised on the third day. James and John had asked Jesus to grant that they might sit at His right hand and His left hand in His kingdom. Jesus invited these men to join Him in the fellowship of His sufferings so that they could be delivered from their carnal attitudes and behaviours. This was to occur through their participation with Him in the fellowship of His death and sufferings. We are all invited to Christ's prayer meeting for this same purpose.

Jesus said to His disciples, 'Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'. The exhortation of Jesus applies to us all. Prayer with Christ, by the capacity of the Spirit, is fundamental to our Christian pilgrimage. This is how we are delivered from the temptation to take hold of the law through the flesh as a means of fulfilling the righteousness of God. We can receive the strength of the Spirit of God, by the Holy Spirit, to endure with Christ in prayer and to continue in the pathway of salvation so that this carnal propensity is completely removed from our lives.

References:

Luk 22:43-44 2Pe 2:9
Mat 16:21-23 Rev 3:10
Mat 26:41 Psa 119:32

Further Study:

Galatians 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 3

The Spirit helps our weaknesses

We are joined to Christ's intercessory prayer in Gethsemane by the capacity of the Holy Spirit. Paul explained that 'the Spirit also helps in our weaknesses. For we do not know what we should pray for as we ought, but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.' The Holy Spirit gives us the *same capacity* to pray that Jesus received in the garden of Gethsemane, when an angel strengthened Him with the sevenfold Spirit of God from the Holy Spirit. The groanings that we experience as we pray in the Spirit, are the same groanings that Christ had as He made intercession for us.

If a Christian wants to overcome sin, they should go to prayer and fasting. Joining the intercession of Christ with prayer and fasting, shows our preparedness to join the circumcision of Christ. The garden of Gethsemane is where He prayed for us and grieved for our sins. As we endure with Christ in prayer, the Holy Spirit helps us to understand our sanctification. This is the work He has called us to by name. We remember, for example, the account of the church in Antioch. 'While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them".'

In prayer, the Holy Spirit also shows us where we have not remained sanctified to our participation in the life of the body. We begin to grieve because of the impact of our sin on ourselves and others, and the reality that Christ was under judgement for the sin that we committed. Our grief is the evidence of the conviction of the Holy Spirit. We are enabled to endure with Christ in the process which He has invited us to join, so that our sinful propensities are able to be put off.

References:

Rom 8:15, 26-27 Act 13:2
Luk 22:44 Heb 4:15
Heb 5:7

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 6

The principle of atonement

We have access to the blood of Christ once we have been joined to His circumcision. We know that His blood sprinkles our hearts from an evil conscience so that we can join Christ in His priesthood and offering. However, more than this, the life of Christ that is in His blood is given to us as our life. This is the principle of atonement.

Many people will think of atonement as the shedding of Christ's blood, on our behalf, for the forgiveness of our sins. While this is true, it is only part of the process of atonement. The principle of atonement is that the life of Christ was *given to us* as our life, when it was poured out on the altar of His body from Gethsemane to the cross. As we are joined to the fellowship of the cross, we receive His life as our life. There is now a change in how we live. We no longer live by the power of our own life, which is in our blood. Instead, we live by the life of Jesus, which was in His blood, that is given to us as we join the fellowship of His circumcision. The apostle Paul testified, 'I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me'.

Highlighting this point, we recall that Paul made a distinction between the blood that was shed on our behalf for our reconciliation, and the blood that saves us. He wrote, 'For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life'. It saves us because it is eternal life. This is what Jesus said. 'He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day.'

References:

Gal 2:20

Heb 9:14

Rom 5:10

Joh 6:54

Col 3:3-4

1Jn 1:7

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 7

Praying in the secret place

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said, 'For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.' Our life, which is hidden with Christ in God the Father, is the life and glory of our sonship. We recall that Jesus said to His disciples, 'In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you'. Jesus walked the pathway of the cross to prepare a place for the disciples, and every believer, in the Father's house or 'bosom'.

The bosom of the Father is also called 'the secret place'. Jesus taught His disciples to 'go into your room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly'. Likewise, concerning fasting, Jesus said, 'When you fast, anoint your head and wash your face, so that you do not appear to men to be fasting, but to your Father who is in the secret place; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you openly'. Jesus was teaching His disciples what it means to be hidden with Christ in God the Father.

As we consider this theme in the Scriptures, it becomes clear that Jesus was not simply referring to a quiet room for praying that no-one else knows about. The secret place is where we *dwell as sons of God* . For example, King David declared, 'He who *dwells in the secret place* of the Most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty'. The secret place is where our life is hidden. It is also the place where our life is completely safe and secure.

References:

Col 3:3-4

Joh 14:2

Joh 1:18

Mat 6:6, 17-18

Psa 91:1

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Psalm 27

Proverbs 8

Rewarded openly

When we pray in the secret place, we are to pray that the will of God is done. Jesus taught His disciples, 'Pray, then, in this way: "Our Father who is in heaven, hallowed be Your name. Your kingdom come. Your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."' Jesus received the only body in which the will of God could be done on earth and in heaven. He was teaching us to pray to be a part of the body of Christ. This is where the will of God is being done. As a functioning member of the body of Christ, we are not trying to reveal our own sonship. Rather, we are revealing the righteousness of God in Christ. It is His righteousness that is being seen.

Once we have been co-crucified with Christ through baptism, our testimony should be that 'it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God'. To be co-crucified with Christ means that we have joined Christ's offering, and laid down our individual sonship life, so that our priority is to reveal His life as a member of His body. This makes us slaves of His righteousness.

The opportunity and capacity to demonstrate the righteousness of God in Christ as His slaves, is the *reward* of dwelling in the secret place of the Most High. In this regard, we are revealed as a member of Christ's body, which is the full expression of sonship. As slaves of Christ, we are given talents to steward as a portion of His sonship. To be 'rewarded openly' is the fruit of dying and being raised with Christ so that we are hidden with Christ in God. Paul made it clear that when Christ, who is our life, appears, then we will appear in glory.

References:

Mat 6:9-10 Heb 2;14
Gal 2:20 2Co 5:21
Col 3:4 1Jn 5:12

Further Study:

Hebrews 10

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 9

Members of His body

When Christ rose from the dead and ascended to the right hand of the Father, He was made Head of the church and received the name above every name. This is the name of the Lord Jesus Christ. When we are baptised into the Lord Jesus Christ, all three Persons of the Godhead are involved in making us members of the body of Christ. By one Spirit, we were all baptised into one body of Christ. The apostle Paul explained that we have been placed in the body of Christ and joined to other believers according to the will and desire of God the Father.

Our work in the body of Christ will be according to the name that has been given to us by the Father. However, we do not do the works of our name for the purpose of finding our life as a son of God. Our sonship has been entrusted to the Father. The works that we do as members of Christ's body are the works that the Father gave Him to accomplish. By faith, we now manifest His sonship by the capacity of His life that has been given to us.

We are connected to Christ the Head as the flesh and bones, joints and ligaments, of His body. In this sense, it is a corporate, physical body that is composed of sons of God in local congregations, who are joined by the bonds of God's love. This is important to note. The body of Christ is not a mystical entity that we are a part of, merely because we have been born again or baptised into a denominational tradition. Our membership of the body of Christ is evident because of our tangible connection with, and ministry to, the believers with whom we have been joined together in the fellowship of one Spirit.

References:

Php 2:9 Eph 1:5
Rom 12:3 Eph 4:7
Col 2:18-19 2Co 10:13

Further Study:

1 Corinthians 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

The pledge of our inheritance

As members of the body of Christ, our preoccupation and work is to reveal the sonship of Christ. Our name and life as a son of God are hidden with Christ in God and will not be revealed in glory until the day of resurrection. However, does this mean that our sonship is not seen at all in this world? We can know our name, and the 'first fruits' of our sonship is seen in this world, to the praise of God the Father, because we have been given the Holy Spirit as the pledge, or down-payment, of our eternal inheritance as sons of God.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul said that God the Father has sealed us and given us the Holy Spirit in our hearts as a pledge. In the same way, he declared to the Ephesians that the Holy Spirit has been given to us as the pledge of our inheritance. The giving of a pledge, or down-payment, signifies that this is the making of a covenant. It is the covenant that the Holy Spirit makes with us. It is true that our sonship is hidden with Christ in God, but the 'first fruits' of our sonship is revealed in us by the Holy Spirit. In fact, the Holy Spirit *is the expression* of our sonship in us. This is an amazing point.

The Holy Spirit does not come to strengthen our sonship; He is the expression of our sonship! In the same way, the Holy Spirit does not bring the down-payment of our sonship; He is the down-payment! For this reason, the Holy Spirit is the essence of the New Covenant. It is the Holy Spirit who joins us to the fellowship of Yahweh, sanctifies us to our name and work, and enables our eternal expression as sons of God.

References:

2Co 1:22

Eph 4:30

2Co 5:5

1Th 5:19

Eph 1:14

Further Study:

Romans 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 13

Not yes and no

In his second letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul explained that he had intended to visit the church on his way to Macedonia, but had decided to send them a letter instead. This was not a decision that he had made in the flesh, simply because he could not make up his mind, or he had changed his mind. He said, 'I was not vacillating when I intended to do this, was I? Or what I purpose, do I purpose according to the flesh, so that with me there will be yes, yes and no, no at the same time?' It is likely that many of the Corinthians had been confused by the change in Paul's travel plans, because they did not understand his real reason.

In a similar way, it is evident that some of the Corinthians were a little confused by Paul's gospel. With this in mind, Paul immediately upgraded the discussion, from his travel plans to the gospel that he had preached among them. He declared, 'As God is faithful, our word to you is not yes and no. For the Son of God, Christ Jesus, who was preached among you by us – by me and Silvanus and Timothy – was not yes and no, but is yes in Him.' Why did Paul need to say this? We know he taught that our sonship is hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father, and will not be revealed in glory until the day of resurrection. However, he also taught that we are sons of God, with a name, who reveal the life and glory of God the Father in this world. How can both of these things be true at the same time? Is our sonship seen, or is it not seen? We know that there is no contradiction between our sonship that is hidden and the 'first fruits' of our sonship that is revealed, when we understand the Person and work of the Holy Spirit.

References:

Mat 5:16, 37 Rom 13:13-14
Jas 5:12 Eph 5:8
Col 3:3-4

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 1**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 14

Worship and fellowship

When we consider the work of the Holy Spirit, it is helpful to consider the distinction between worship and fellowship. To worship something means that we give it worth. We recognise its value to us. People in the world worship all kinds of things. These objects of worship include, for example, notable people in society, valued possessions, key landmarks, and even the creation itself. A person is able to give worth to these things without knowing them or being known by them.

Notably, a person can worship God in the same way. They can study His attributes and rejoice in the outcome of His wondrous works. However, the more they learn *about* Him and His mighty power, the more they become aware of the gap between the spiritual Creator and the fleshly creature. As a consequence of knowing more about God, He seems further away from us, and relationship with Him seems all the more inconceivable. The fact is that the flesh cannot know God.

In the New Covenant, the Holy Spirit does more than anoint us so that we can worship God. He joins us to the fellowship of Yahweh so that we are 'one Spirit' with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit joins us to this fellowship so that we are able to worship God 'in spirit and truth', rather than from afar. Jesus said that the Father desires only this kind of worship. It is the expression of real and genuine fellowship. In the fellowship of Yahweh, the Holy Spirit gives us the capacity to know our name and to recognise and appreciate the name of another. This is what true worship is. It is the appreciation and worth that we give and receive in fellowship with the Lord and one another.

References:

Rom 8:15-16 Jas 4:5
Joh 4:24 1Co 6:17
Joh 16:13 1Co 12:13

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 15

Keeping the unity of the Spirit

It is the Person of the Holy Spirit who gives us the capacity to be 'one Spirit' with the Father, Son and Holy Spirit, and with one another in the body of Christ. Paul was very clear on this point. He said, 'The one who joins himself to the Lord is *one spirit* with Him'. Having been joined to the Lord and one another, it is our responsibility to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We do this by keeping our minds set on the things of the Spirit. As Paul explained, 'The mind set on the Spirit is life and peace'. However, we do violence to the unity of the Spirit when we set our minds on the things of the flesh. This means returning to the flesh as the basis for our Christian lives. The deeds of the flesh are evidently contrary to the unity of the Spirit. In addition to obvious corruptions, they include behaviours such as disputes, dissensions, factions, and envy, which promote division. If we practise these things, we will not inherit the kingdom of God.

In contrast, a person who has received the Holy Spirit and is walking according to the Spirit, has a different motivation. These ones endeavour to put off the flesh as a mode of living, and receive the capacity of the Spirit to be of one mind and one spirit together. In this regard, their initiative and demeanour is toward being united in spirit, and intent on seeing the purposes of God being fulfilled through the effective ministry of each member of the body. Paul summarised this fellowship of the Spirit, saying, 'Therefore if there is any encouragement in Christ, if there is any consolation of love, if there is any fellowship of the Spirit, if any affection and compassion, make my joy complete by being of the same mind, maintaining the same love, united in spirit, intent on one purpose'.

References:

1Co 6:17 Gal 5:19-21
Eph 4:3 Php 2:1-2
Rom 8:6 1Co 12:13

Further Study: Philippians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 16

Our Christian pilgrimage

As sons of God and members of the body of Christ, our physical bodies are called a 'tent' in which we live and sojourn in a pilgrimage on earth. Our 'tent' is a temporary dwelling in which we reveal Christ's life on earth. In the same manner in which the patriarchs walked throughout the land of Canaan to possess it, we progressively possess 'this place and that' as we walk throughout the kingdom. The kingdom of heaven is the 'promised land' of Christ's sonship that we are possessing. This is the kingdom of the Son. Paul wrote, 'He has delivered us from the power of darkness and conveyed us into the kingdom of the Son of His love'. We also note that we are to be fellow partakers 'in the tribulation and kingdom and perseverance which are in Jesus'.

As we journey throughout the kingdom of the Son, we progressively possess the promises of God and learn the lessons of sanctification that each place brings. These are seasons or experiences of life, where the Lord specifically meets us for the purpose of bringing us to a further point of maturity as a son of God. They are, invariably, points of crisis in our lives, through which we are coming to know God in a deeper and more personal way. This is how we come to know the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, and thereby, make our calling and election sure as sons of God. As we learn the lessons of faith, calling and election, the 'promised land' of our eternal inheritance becomes our possession, by sanctification. We demonstrate that we are possessing the kingdom, because we are bearing the fruit of righteousness and attaining to eternal life. We are becoming the certain firstfruits that the Father predestined us to be.

References:

2Co 5:1
Gen 13:17
8Col 1:13

Rev 1:9
Mat 22:31-32
Jas 1:18

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

2 Peter 1

Proverbs 17

The life in His blood

When a believer comes into the body of Christ through baptism, the life of sonship is in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Son Himself is giving us His life as a covenant in His blood. Although His life is given to us as a possession, it is ours by sharing, or fellowship. In this fellowship, there is an offering transfer that occurs, where Christ is receiving our sin, and we are receiving, or partaking, of His life. This has implications for how we live and walk each day as Christians, and it enables us to be priests to God.

Christ's sufferings were the result of His being wounded. Isaiah the prophet, speaking of Christ, said, 'He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement for our wellbeing was upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed'. Every kind of wound that Christ endured, cut His body open, causing His blood to be poured out. Christ's blood was the element within His body that contained His life. As Christ suffered and His blood flowed from His body, the life that was in His blood was given to us as a possession.

It was on account of our carnality and sin that Christ was wounded. Christ wants us to meet Him, make covenant with Him, and then join Him in fellowship, at the point in time when God the Father laid on Him, as our sin offering, the punishment for our transgressions and iniquities. That point in time was His passion that led to His death on Calvary. The life of Christ is given to us on the condition that we suffer with Him, in order that we may be glorified together with Him.

References:

Mar 14:24
Rom 5:9
1Co 10:16

Isa 53:5-6
Rom 8:16-17
Rev 1:5-6

Further Study: Leviticus 17

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 20

The Mediator of the New Covenant

Jesus Christ made covenant with us in His blood and body at the last supper. The covenant then became active when His blood began to flow from His body, as He agonised for us in prayer in the garden of Gethsemane. This is where Christ invited His disciples to watch and pray with Him, lest they enter into temptation. Regarding the inauguration of this covenant, Paul taught, 'For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it. For a covenant is valid only when men are dead, for it is never in force while the one who made it lives. Therefore, even the first covenant was not inaugurated without blood.'

From Gethsemane to Calvary, the blood that Christ shed, flowed all over His body. He was both the Mercy Seat and the Altar, upon which the blood was being 'sprinkled'. As the Mercy Seat, the shedding of His blood was a propitiation for our sin. As the Altar, the shedding of His blood was giving to us a share in His life. He was the Mediator of a new covenant so that, through His death for our sake, we 'who have been called may receive the promise of eternal life'.

As new creation sons of God, we must die with Christ. It is important to recognise that there was no carnality in Christ's offering. When we join His offering, we are joined to a perfect dying, and His blood is purging our heart from an evil conscience, which is the basis of our carnal motivations. For this reason, His death, and our participation in it, is profitable. Paul reminds us that 'if I give all my possessions to feed the poor, and if I surrender my body to be burned, but do not have love, it profits me nothing'.

References:

Luk 22:19-20 Heb 8:6
Mat 26:38-41 Heb 12:24
1Co 13:3 1Ti 2:5

Further Study:

Hebrews 9

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Christ purges our conscience

When we join the death of Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cry, 'It is finished', we know that a circumcision is happening to our hearts. Motivations and attitudes that are detrimental to us, are being cut from our lives. We are not trusting in ourselves while we suffer, but in God who raises the dead.

In his letter to the Hebrews, Paul wrote, 'How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?' 'Purging' is a combination of suffering and the power of the life of Christ to cleanse the heart. Christ's wounds were His suffering, and caused His blood to be poured out. The apostle Peter reminded us that by His wounds we are healed.

The blood is the element that contains Christ's life, and His life is given to us in the fellowship of His offering. His life is a treasure that sustains us in the afflictions that we suffer, so that we are not crushed or destroyed. At the same time, Christ's life contains the full expression of all that He is; that is, His motivations are given to us! These cleanse our hearts from evil, selfish motivations, enabling us to serve God as His priests.

Christ's life causes the love of Christ to control our motivations. This is what Paul was saying when he wrote, 'For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all died; and He died for all, so that they who live might no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf'. When the love of Christ controls us and we live for Him, it is clear to everyone that we are a new creation.

References:

2Co 1:9 2Co 4:7-8
Heb 9:14 Eph 3:8
1Pe 2:24 2Co 3:5-6

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 22

Ambassadors of Christ

When we join Christ in the fellowship of His suffering, we are joined to more than just a participation with Christ in the suffering that we caused Him on account of our sin. The suffering that is caused by the sin of others also becomes *our portion* of Christ's sufferings so that, through it, we are perfected.

By joining Christ in the fellowship of His sufferings, we become His disciples. Jesus asked us to take His yoke and learn of Him. His sufferings are a training context for us. Through suffering, Jesus was personally putting into effect all of the principles of offering that were part of His identity as the Son of God. By this means, He was perfecting knowledge through experience. Isaiah said, 'By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many'.

Christ wants to share this knowledge with us. The Father has not only reconciled us to Himself through Christ, to whom He gave the ministry of reconciliation, but He has also given to us the ministry of reconciliation. The specific aspect of the ministry of reconciliation that has been committed to us, is 'the word of reconciliation'. The message that we are to proclaim, is that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

We are now ambassadors for Christ. God is using our voice on behalf of Christ, to proclaim the word of reconciliation. In this way, God is appealing to others through us, so that they might be reconciled to God. As members of Christ's body, we have replaced His physical presence on earth. We are now God's ministering priests in Christ's stead on the earth. This means that we will be involved in the sufferings of Christ in a most positive and proactive way.

References:

Mat 11:29 Rev 1:6
Isa 53:11 Col 1:24
2Co 5:18-21 2Ti 1:8

Further Study:

Hebrews 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 23

The aroma of life

As we proclaim the word of sonship in this world, we will experience tribulation and affliction. This will be the same 'contradiction of sinners' that Christ endured against Himself. These experiences are how we manifest, in a real way, the dying of Christ in this world. And, by this means, the life of Jesus is being manifest through us to others.

Paul said that God always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To one, we are an aroma of death to death, and to the other an aroma of life to life. We are the aroma of death to those who are afflicting us, because they seek our destruction. However, to those who are receiving and responding to the life that we are sharing with them, we are the aroma of life.

We are carrying in our body the dying of Jesus, so that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. The effect of our participation in the sufferings of Christ is that, as His death works in us, the life of Jesus is ministered to others. Our faith is that, as we die with Christ in the fellowship of ministering His life to others, we will also be raised with Him to the reward of eternal glory, as the result of our labours. As Paul explained, we are 'heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him'. This kind of affliction is called by Paul 'momentary and light', and produces for us a permanent, glorious, and solid reward that is out of all proportion to our pain. Our reward will be beyond all comparison.

References:

Heb 12:3
2Co 2:14-16
2Co 4:10, 17

Rom 8:16-17
Php 4:18

Further Study:

Luke 4:14-44

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 24