

Understanding why we suffer

The apostle Paul explained that, as believers, we are to share in the sufferings of Christ. Not only that, we are also to *rejoice* in these sufferings, knowing that they are producing an eternal glory for us. Paul testified to the Corinthians, 'I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that will be revealed in us'. The glory that will be revealed in us is our unique inheritance of God's life for eternity. Peter declared, 'To the degree that you share the sufferings of Christ, *keep on rejoicing*, so that also at the revelation of His glory you may rejoice with exultation'. We can certainly rejoice at the opportunity to receive God's life so that His glory is revealed in us. However, rejoicing *when we suffer* is not generally our natural tendency! This is because we have an inbuilt desire to avoid suffering and to minimise its pain.

The experience of suffering on its own, will not enable us to receive God's life. We could endure all manner of difficult circumstances throughout our life, and end up no different from those in the world who do not know God and who also experience suffering in their lives. Simply 'gritting our teeth' to get through the tough times, will certainly not produce any eternal glory in us. This approach only reinforces our natural desire to save ourselves and cope with difficulties in the best way we can. So, how does suffering produce an eternal glory in us? The answer is in our mindset when we are faced with suffering. Will we turn to the Lord and rely completely upon Him to strengthen and train us through the situation? Or, will we turn to our own way of perceiving and coping with the circumstance?

References:

1Pe 4:13

1Pe 1:4

Rom 5:3

Rom 8:18

2Co 4:17

Further Study:

1 Peter 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29

The mind set on the flesh

Often, our first response when we are faced with suffering is to ask, 'Why is this happening to me?' Perhaps more specifically, we ask ourselves, 'What have I done wrong?' We fear that God is punishing us for our shortfalls. We measure what we feel is the success or failure of our life, so that we can make logical conclusions about the reason for our suffering. 'Maybe it was because I did this?' 'Maybe it was because I should have done that?' We hope that if we can work out what we have done wrong, then we will be able to fix the problem and promptly put an end to our suffering!

This response highlights our underlying motivations. There is a principle within us that believes we can 'do well' by ourselves. We believe that we can determine the best way for us to get through life successfully, cope with difficulties, and serve God acceptably. This reasoning, which is according to our self-centred motivations, will never allow us to make sense of our suffering. Suffering will be an offence to us, particularly at times when there seems to be no logical reason for our suffering. This way of thinking only causes us to become disheartened. We become preoccupied with the circumstances of life and the desire to make things turn out better for ourselves. This is what the Bible describes as 'setting our minds on the things of the flesh'.

Paul explained that the mind set on the flesh is hostile to God, because those who are in the flesh cannot please God. This way of living isolates us from God and from His life. Clearly, our minds need to be renewed so that we are no longer bound by living and reasoning according to our flesh. Paul rejoiced that when we are joined to the fellowship of Christ's sufferings, we receive the capacity to overcome the motivations of our flesh.

References:

1Co 2:14 Eph 4:22-24
Php 3:9-11 1Jn 2:15-17
Rom 12:2 1Pe 4:1-2

Further Study: Romans 8

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 1

Joined to Christ's sufferings

Christ experienced the most unjust suffering in the history of the world. However, through every difficult circumstance, He committed Himself into the hands of His Father, to walk the pathway which the Father had set for Him. Through prayer, Christ was able to overcome the temptation to turn to His own resources to cope, even though He had every reason to save Himself. The Father strengthened Him to endure the suffering in His physical body, which led Him all the way to death on the cross. The same power from the Father that strengthened Christ in His suffering, also raised Him from the dead and gave Him a resurrection body. Christ walked this pathway of suffering for our sake, so that we could be given the same power and resurrection life He was given.

We need to be joined to Christ's sufferings so that we can be set free from the desire to live by our own resources, apart from God. Practically, we are joined to Christ's sufferings when our heavenly Father allows us to experience times of difficulty, injustice, and even physical suffering. These sufferings are not a penalty for our sin. Christ paid the price for our sin. Rather, they are specific circumstances which provide an opportunity for us to stop relying on our own coping mechanisms, and turn to the Lord. The Lord uses our suffering to train and enable us to live by His life. As we pray, the Father is able to strengthen us in the day-to-day trials and difficulties of life. He helps us to endure these circumstances with grace and strength that is beyond our natural capacity. This is because we are receiving the resurrection life and power that Christ made available to us.

References:

Joh 4:34 Rom 8:11
Mar 1:35 1Ti 2:5-6
Luk 22:43

Further Study: Colossians 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 2

The renewing of our minds

Jesus walks with us and leads us through every circumstance of life. He understands everything we are facing, because He has walked this way before us. We are encouraged to fix our eyes on Him because He is the Author and Pioneer of our faith and salvation. We know that Jesus has endured the pain of the cross, despised the shame, and taken His seat at the right hand of the Father in heaven. He is able to teach us to walk as He walked, and to commit ourselves to the pathway that the Father has planned for us. As we embrace the suffering which is ours to carry according to the will of God, our mind is renewed so that we think differently about the circumstances we face. We are not motivated by our desire to make things easier, or to justify ourselves in the midst of the difficulties. Christ encouraged us that when we learn from Him, we will find rest for our souls. We will know a peace that surpasses all our human understanding, even if our contrary circumstances never change.

We can be content that we may not always understand the reason we experience particular difficulties. We know that God is doing a work, even if we don't yet fully comprehend everything He is doing. He is freeing us from our own reasoning which seeks to define what is 'good' or 'not good', 'just' or 'unjust' for us. We are not afraid of the mistakes we have made. We know that we have all sinned and fallen short of what God has planned for us. We no longer see our suffering as the consequence of us doing something wrong. Rather, as we entrust ourselves to God in every circumstance, we know He is giving us the capacity to turn from our self-centred striving and fulfil His will in our lives.

References:

Mat 11:29 Heb 2:10
Php 4:6 Heb 12:2
Rom 3:23 Gal 6:5

Further Study:

1 Peter 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 3

The love of God poured into our hearts

The apostle Peter encouraged us not to be surprised when we encounter various trials, as though some strange thing is happening to us. Rather, we can rejoice that, in the midst of difficult circumstances, the love of God is poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit. As we begin to understand the true meaning of suffering with Christ, we discover an amazing thing! His love replaces our anxieties. God's perfect love casts out all fear! Instead of being consumed by our own difficulties, we are motivated by the Holy Spirit to demonstrate the love of God toward others. This is how we know we are receiving His life.

We are joined together in Christ, as members of His body, and we walk with one another through the various seasons and stages of life. At times, we will observe those whom we love, experience their own portion of suffering from the hand of the Father. We do not need to become offended at the nature of their suffering, or make our own judgements about the reason for their specific trials. Instead, we join one another in faith, so that we overcome the temptation to revert to the ways of our flesh.

We can pray for one another and encourage one another to believe God in the midst of every circumstance of life. We can delight with one another as we are strengthened by the Father and receive the grace and peace that He gives us. We can rejoice, as the apostle Peter did, that after we have suffered 'for a little while', the God of all grace, who called us to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish us.

References:

1Pe 4:12

Rom 5:5

1Jn 4:18

1Jn 3:14

1Pe 5:10

Eph 3:13

Further Study:

1 John 4

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 4

Peace in every circumstance

In all the contexts of our daily lives, we interact with people who live by the principles of the world. Separated from the life of God, these people live according to the desires of the flesh, the desires of their eyes and the pride of life. To live according to these desires is to live by, what the Bible calls, 'the other law'. The 'other law' is simply 'my law'. Living this way means making decisions on the basis of what people perceive is best for themselves. This involves striving to make a name for themselves, and avoiding things that make them uncomfortable or cause them pain and suffering.

While these attempts may provide a person with some short term satisfaction, security and happiness, their efforts cannot be sustained. We read in the book of Ecclesiastes that all a man gets from his labour and his striving is pain and grief, and his mind does not rest. Anxiety, uncertainty and fear are never far from the minds of those who do not know God. There is no peace for those who are separated from God. The peace of God passes all human comprehension and understanding. It cannot be obtained by any human endeavour, no matter how hard a person tries!

Wonderfully, the gospel that we are receiving is a gospel of peace. It is equipping us to live a life that is not motivated by fear and anxiety. Our feet can be prepared with the gospel of peace as 'shoes' on our feet. When we are prepared with the gospel of peace, the word and the Spirit are directing our paths, so that we walk according to God's will for our lives.

References:

Ijn 2:16

Rom 7:23

Isa 48:22

Php 4:7

Eph 6:15

Isa 61:1

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Ecclesiastes 2

Proverbs 7

Led by the Spirit of God

The apostle Paul declared, 'All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God'. This means that we know where to walk and how to get there. There is no longer any obligation to strive after the things of the flesh. We are secure because we know the Father and we know Jesus Christ. We know our name and the works that the Father has prepared for us to walk in. His grace and peace are multiplied to us in this knowledge, and the Holy Spirit leads us in this truth.

Jesus pioneered the pathway of sonship through His perfect obedience to the Father. This pathway is a new way to live, think and function. It is not according to the principles of the world. Jesus didn't live in the pursuit of satisfying His own desires. Rather, He was completely obedient to the will of His Father, even to the point of death on the cross. He was strengthened by the Spirit of God to walk the pathway set before Him.

By obedience to His word, we are enabled to put away our fleshly desires and to set our mind on the things of the Spirit. We bring every thought captive to the obedience of Christ. It will be clear what our specific obedience is as we live by the proceeding word and partake of the elements of the communion. Each week, we can be confident that His word will light our path. The Spirit leads us on this path and strengthens us to endure every difficult circumstance. If we walk by the Spirit, our lives will demonstrate the fruits of the Spirit. Love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control will be evident in our lives.

References:

Rom 8:14

2Pe 1:2

Joh 16:13

Php 2:8

2Co 10:5

Psa 119:105

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Galatians 5

Proverbs 8

Walking in the Spirit

As Christians who have received the Spirit of Christ, the temptation for us is to revert to walking according to the flesh and the principles of the world. This temptation is the motivation within us to do things our own way, to strive according our own perspectives, to live by our other law! We can strive to feel accepted by our peers, to excel at school, university or work, to be independent, to acquire money and possessions to shore up our future, or just to get things right! These motivations are not aligned with the will of God for our life. Rather, they are indicative of the anxious pursuit of what we think is good for our flesh. When we live by the other law, we are without peace. This is because the flesh and the Spirit are in opposition to one another.

In preparation to walking according to the Spirit, we need to pray in the Spirit. Practically, this will mean having a regular prayer time at the beginning and end of each day. In prayer, we make our requests known to God, and commit every circumstance to Him. As we walk through the course of the day, we know the Spirit's leading, and His peace guards our hearts and our minds. We find that we are no longer striving or anxious, even though we may be facing difficult circumstances.

Let us be encouraged by the words of Jesus, when He said, 'Peace I leave with you; My peace, I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Do not let your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.' As we are obedient to His word, we can be confident that His peace is available to us in every circumstance of our lives. He will answer our prayers and strengthen us to walk each day by His Spirit.

References:

Gal 5:17

Joh 14:27

Eph 6:18

Jud 1:20

Php 4:6-7

Further Study: Psalm 119:25-48

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 9

Temptation

The subject of temptation has featured often in the thoughts and writings of Christians since the earliest centuries of the church. Many conclude that Satan is the source of temptation. Others suggest that temptation is simply an aspect of fallen human nature. Some even propose that God designs specific trials of temptation to give Christians an opportunity to learn how to overcome and, thereby, prove their righteousness. A number of modern churches have taken a different approach, viewing temptation as a self-management issue. Leaders teach practical strategies to help young people avoid sin. Many will remember that it became popular for young Christians to wear silicone wrist bands imprinted with the letters WWJD. This was to remind the wearer in times of temptation, to consider ‘What Would Jesus Do?’ Unfortunately, none of these methods adequately equip Christians to understand and overcome temptation.

We know that God named and predestined us before the foundation of the world. God also created humankind with a ‘free will’. This means that we are free to choose to receive the will of God and be obedient to His plan for our lives, or we can exercise our own will and live as we wish. The writer to the Hebrews explains that Jesus, who was ‘made like His brethren in all things’, was ‘tempted as we are, yet without sin’. The apostle Paul made a similar point to the Christians in Corinth, noting that ‘no temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man’. The implication is clear. We all face temptation. We cannot simply try to manage the difficulties that arise because of it. We must understand how temptation works in us and be spiritually equipped to overcome it.

References:

Mat 15:18-20

Heb 4:15

1Co 10:13

Mat 26:41

Deu 30:19

Psa 119:30

Further Study:

Hebrews 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 10

Our own desires

We know that the devil is called the 'tempter'. However, is he the cause of our temptation; or, does he simply take advantage of an inclination or propensity that already exists within us? James gives us a helpful starting point in understanding the primary cause of temptation. He said, 'Each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. When desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death.' James dispelled the notion that Satan is the source of our temptation. We are 'drawn away by our own desires and enticed'. It is our inclination to go our own way which is the greatest problem. The book of Romans identifies this problem as the 'other law' which exists within us. It is our preoccupation with our individual life, survival, and fulfilment. The evidence of the other law within us is that our mind will be set on the flesh.

The apostle Paul was clear that if our mind is set on the flesh, then the outcome will be death. We recall that before Satan deceived Eve with a lie, she set her mind on the flesh. This made her vulnerable to temptation. Eve delighted in the law of God on the one hand; but, at the same time, she became impatient. She wanted to realise her predestination to be 'the mother of all the living'. Her mind decided that there was a problem, and it stirred within her another law, which created turmoil within her heart. Satan recognised this unhappiness and promoted an alternate word. It was a lie that targeted Eve's vulnerability. So it is that Satan works by advantage, suggesting that the law of our mind can achieve the same outcome as God's way.

References:

Pro 14:12 Gen 3:20
Rom 8:6 Pro 4:23
Rom 7:23 Mar 7:21-22

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

James 1

Proverbs 11

Overcoming temptation

Jesus addressed the issue of temptation in the parable of the sower. He spoke of ones who become offended and fall away because of temptation. 'Those on the rocky soil are those who, when they hear, receive the word with joy; and these have no firm root; they believe for a while, and in time of temptation fall away.' Despite knowing the joy of receiving new life, it is easy to 'react' and even become 'offended' when we are confronted by the need to pick up our cross and follow Jesus on a pathway that involves suffering and many difficult situations.

Paul identified that we will be motivated by our own law to 'excuse' our responses or even 'accuse' others, based on our own perspective. In a similar way, James wrote of 'the passions within' us being the source of 'conflicts and quarrels'. This is why some Christians joyfully receive salvation, only to fall away because they succumb to the temptation to live by their own law. Unable to bridge the cultural disparity between their mode and that of their Christian friends, they end up walking away from the very context in which they found new life.

We know that God is committed to helping us resist and overcome temptation. Peter wrote that 'the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation'. In a similar way, Paul said that 'God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, so that you will be able to endure it'. The Lord does not give us a 'way of escape' by rescuing us from every difficult situation. He rescues us from temptation by giving us a way to deal with the other law within us. This means that we can endure difficult circumstances and overcome the temptation to become offended and fall away.

References:

Luk 8:13 2Pe 2:9
Rom 2:14-15 1Co 10:13
Jas 4:1

Further Study:

Psalm 34

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

Sonship

The first key for us in overcoming temptation is a commitment, before all else, to our sonship. Sonship describes the way that someone, who has joined Christ in His death, burial and resurrection through baptism, lives. A son of God is focused on living by the power and life of God. In this way, we are enabled to obey the heavenly Father's will and lay down our lives for others.

Jesus, our forerunner on this pathway, was confronted by various temptations, but overcame them all by maintaining His commitment to the Father's will. His obedience led Him on a journey that included suffering and bloodshed. However, His faithfulness also revealed the power of God that overcame sin and death. As we join the fellowship of His sufferings, we also know the power of that blood and overcome temptation, cease from sin, and manifest His life. The writer of Hebrews tells us that His blood actually cleanses our conscience.

We further note that every temptation on the pathway of suffering that Jesus experienced, became a point of sanctification. In the garden of Gethsemane, He prayed to His Father, 'For their sakes, I sanctify Myself'. Likewise, Jesus said that our sufferings in this world as a son of God, are part of the disciplining hand of God upon us. They process and purify our responses in relation to the temptations and injustices that we experience in life. As such, God does not remove us from every difficult situation. Rather, He strengthens us by His power so that we can endure the trial or hardship, without succumbing to the temptation of setting our mind on the flesh. In this way, we grow to become mature Christians who know our name and work as sons of God.

References:

Heb 6:20 Heb 9:14
Luk 22:42 Joh 17:18-19
Php 3:10 Heb 5:8

Further Study:

Psalm 37

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Watch and pray

The most important response we can make to temptation is prayer. In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus told the disciples that they should 'keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation'. We also remember that the Lord taught His disciples to pray to the Father, 'Lead us not into temptation'. When we are being tempted to exercise our own law because of our sufferings, our first response should be to humble ourselves and go to prayer. Temptation and the other law cannot be overcome by human determination. Yes, we are called to be diligent and proactive in relation to 'watching' and 'guarding ourselves', and even 'resisting' the devil. Jesus Himself taught the disciples that 'if your hand or your foot causes you to stumble, cut it off and throw it from you'. Yet, only God is the source of the grace and strength that will enable us to do these things. And prayer is how we access this capacity.

We also recognise that fellowship is a key to overcoming temptation. When we feel ashamed or isolated, we are much easier to deceive. Our adversary, the Devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour, and the most vulnerable are those who are cut off from the sheepfold. It is interesting to note that Eve was deceived when she was on her own. So it is that God has placed us in families and the fellowship of the church, where we can 'know as we are known'. We can speak regularly about the most practical issues of temptation with those who care for our souls, knowing that God Himself will help and encourage us through these interactions. As the apostle John wrote, 'If we walk in the Light as He Himself is in the Light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin'.

References:

Mat 26:41 1Jn 5:21
 Luk 11:4 Jas 4:7
 2Jn 1:8 Mat 18:8

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

1 John 1

Proverbs 16

Pursuing freedom

One of the fundamental messages of the world is that a person can only be free when they are in charge of their own life. This message proposes that 'you can do what you want and be whatever you want to be'. There are supposedly no limits to what a person can achieve, nor boundaries to who they can be. At schools, universities and work places, young people are being taught the proposition that they can be 'the captain of their own ship', and that they can, and should, determine the course of their own life. They are taught that this is true 'freedom'. However, the promise of finding freedom in this way is the great lie of the devil who is the ruler of this world.

We learn from God's word that if we choose our own way, we don't actually become free. We simply become captive to whatever it is we are pursuing. This may include career ambitions, the pursuit of knowledge, wealth and material possessions, prestige and status. The apostle Paul asked, 'Do you not know that if you present yourselves to anyone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin, which leads to death, or of obedience, which leads to righteousness?' We are either slaves of righteousness leading to life, or we are slaves of sin leading to death. In the end, we are the slave of whomever we obey.

It is a great privilege to be a follower of Jesus and to live according to His word to us. To the world, this kind of thinking is complete foolishness, but to those who hear and believe, it brings life, peace and security. We don't need to be anxious about what job we will have, what courses we will study at school or university, or how we will make enough money. Our priority is simply to seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness.

References:

Rom 6:16 Tit 3:3
Mat 6:24, 33 1Pe 2:16
Rev 3:10

Further Study:

2 Peter 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 17

Receiving the word of God

The only priority that Jesus had during His time on earth was to do the work that the Father had given Him to do. In the face of false accusations and hostile pressures, He refused to deviate from doing the Father's will. This is the example for us. We, too, can hold fast to our faith as we look to God in all circumstances of our lives.

We gain knowledge and skill, which is based on information and experience, when we apply ourselves to be educated and trained in the world. In contrast to this, the Father disciplines and trains us so that we receive His knowledge in our hearts. The word of God becomes our textbook for training, as it is preached to us and understood by illumination. Jesus said, 'If you abide in My word, you are truly My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free'. The word is a lamp to our feet and a light to our path. We can only be free when we allow the word to define the path that we need to walk. As we participate at the communion table, we are joined to a fellowship of believers. It is in this context of fellowship that we can find who the Lord has named us to be. The word that is ministered each week at the communion table gives us both illumination and grace to walk the pathway of our sonship.

No matter how much we strive to find peace and rest, we will never find it without knowing God's will for our lives. We will only know true rest when we submit our will to the Father. In contrast to the message promoted by the world, we will only find true freedom as a son of God by receiving and obeying the word of God for our lives.

References:

I Jn 4:9 Joh 8:31
Heb 2:10 Psa 119:105
Joh 5:30 Joh 17:8

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Acts 17
Proverbs 18

Born from above to see

The apostle Paul taught that, while we were enemies, Christ died for us so that we could be reconciled to God. Through His offering 'once for all' and the shedding of His blood on our behalf, we were justified, or made righteous, in the sight of God. A person receives reconciliation, forgiveness of sins, and justification through faith, which comes by hearing, receiving and believing the word of God.

Our inner man is regenerated by the water of the word and the renewing of the Holy Spirit. This means that the seed of God's life, which comes to us in the word, is able to take root within us. We are born again of this incorruptible seed. The life that we are born of is not mortal life. It is eternal life. This seed comes from God the Father and is specific to each person. It belongs to us as an individual possession.

According to Jesus, the initial response of a believer to the word of God, gives them the capacity to see, by illumination, the kingdom of God and their place in it as His son. While they are born of the seed of God's divine nature, they are still carnal and have within their flesh 'another law'. In the parable of the sower and the seed, Jesus likened these propensities within the heart of a person to 'stony ground' and 'thorny ground'. Unless these propensities are removed from us, we will fail to bring forth fruit to God. With the best of intentions, we will attempt to live acceptably to God by doing what we think is pleasing to Him. Until we are delivered from this principle of life within us, we are slaves to sin, and we remain under the judgement of the law. In this situation, our sonship is at risk of being lost.

References:

Rom 5:8-9

Rom 10:17

Act 10:43

1Pe 1:23

Tit 3:5

Luk 8:11, 13-14

Further Study:

John 9

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 21

Born of water and the Spirit to enter

Jesus said that we must be born from above to see the kingdom of God; but He immediately continued to say that we must be born of water and the Spirit to *enter* the kingdom of God. This is the second phase of our new birth experience. By water and the Spirit, we are joined to a process through which we can be delivered from living by the principles of our flesh, and are given a participation in *Christ's life*.

Having been reconciled to God, forgiven of our sin, justified, and born to see the kingdom, *much more, we are saved by Christ's life*. We also remember that the apostle Peter taught that '*baptism now saves us - not the removal of dirt from the flesh, but an appeal to God for a good conscience*'. A person with a good conscience has had their evil heart sprinkled with the blood of Jesus. Consequently, they are no longer motivated to serve God according to their own way. They are able to serve the living God as priests. In summary, Paul was saying that reconciliation, justification and being born to see the kingdom are necessary, but not sufficient, for salvation and participation in the kingdom of God. *We need Christ's life*.

The life of Christ could be summarised as the elements of His body and His blood. Jesus said, '*Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves*'. The life of the Son is who He is. He is the sum and full expression of all sonship, and this was revealed through His priesthood and offering. Baptism joins us to the fellowship of Christ's priesthood and offering. We then partake of the communion elements each week in faith for our ongoing participation in these dimensions of His life.

References:

Joh 3:5-6

Heb 10:22

Rom 5:10

Heb 9:14

1Pe 3:21

Joh 6:53-56

Further Study:

John 6:26-71

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 22

Baptised into His death

When we are baptised into Christ, we are baptised into His death. As we are joined to the process of His death and suffering, we are recipients of all the elements of His redemptive work in His mortal body, including the power of His resurrection, the blood of the Everlasting Covenant, and the sevenfold Spirit of God by the Holy Spirit. We are also hidden with Christ in the bosom of the Father.

Baptism joins us to the process through which sin can be dealt with. The Scriptures teach that the devil is the source of sin. The apostle John explained that 'the one who practises sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning'. We recall that Cain's countenance fell because his offering was rejected by God. Cain's mode of offering demonstrated the principle of 'another law' within him. He wanted to be acceptable to God, but on his own terms. The rejection of his offering provoked in him the sinful passion of anger. He was not able to master the sin that was crouching at the door of his heart and, as a result, he killed his brother. He did the works of his father the devil, who was a murderer from the beginning.

It was the carnality of the other law within Cain that led him to sin. The apostle James explained this principle, when he wrote, 'But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust [carnal desires, motivated by the other law]. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.' As we noted earlier, a new-born Christian has this other law, or propensity to sin, within them. The Holy Spirit urges this new creature to come into Christ so that they can be delivered of this principle within them.

References:

Rom 6:3

Gen 4:6-8

Col 3:3

Joh 8:44

1Jn 3:8

Jas 1:14-15

Further Study:

Galatians 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 23

The life we now live

The apostle Paul declared, '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'. Having been baptised and co-crucified with Christ, this will be our testimony. The life that we now live each day in our flesh is no longer 'our' life. To be co-crucified with Christ means that we have joined Christ's offering, and laid down the expression of 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 Father sanctifies us to a particular work on earth as a member of Christ's body. Notably, this work is according to who the Father named us to be as His son. 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 which has been given to us. This is what it means to die with Christ and be a member of His body. We can see that it is the new creation that dies with Christ.

Christ's corporate body is the ark of our safety and deliverance from the judgement of the world. However, we must understand that when we come into Christ through baptism, we are being joined to the suffering of judgement that Christ experienced on our behalf. This judgement becomes a chastening upon us so that we are delivered from the condemnation of eternal fire that the old creation is under because of sin and wickedness. As Paul summarised, 'When we are judged [with Christ], we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world'.

References:

Gal 2:20 Psa 118:18
 1Co 12:18 Pro 3:11-12
 1Co 11:32

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Psalm 94
 Proverbs 24

Walking in the light

The apostle John explained that although we are born as sons of God, our eternal sonship is not revealed until Christ returns. When He appears, we will be in the likeness of His sonship, having received a resurrection body like His. Everyone who has this hope purifies himself, just as He is pure. A person is only able to purify themselves with the blood of the Lamb. We are able to do this as we continue in the fellowship of Christ's suffering and death, and walk in the light with our brethren in the body of Christ.

Walking in the light means that we live in a transparent way. We are open with one another about our lives, and are committed to preserving the unity of the Spirit within the local church congregation of which we are a part. We are able to receive illumination from God's word as it is ministered by the members of the body of Christ, under the leading of the Holy Spirit. The word gives us clarity on how we are to live and minister the life of God in all the contexts of our life. God's word also illuminates us concerning areas of darkness in our life, of which we may have been ignorant. By this means, the light of the word is dispelling the darkness in our lives. Having received illumination, we are able to repent and give ourselves to the process that God joins us to, so that His blood is able to cleanse us from sin.

To be revealed as sons of God with an eternal inheritance in the new heavens and earth, is the hope that we have 'in Christ'. Paul explained that the first thing that God requires of us before our eternal sonship is revealed, is that we become members of Christ's immortal body, to the praise of His glory. This should be our focus in this life.

References:

1Jn 3:2-3

Eph 1:12

1Jn 1:7

Psa 56:13

Eph 4:3

Rom 13:12

Further Study:

1 John 2

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 25