

The writings of the apostle John

When we consider the writings of the apostle John, we know that he was already an old man when he received the revelation of Jesus Christ on the island of Patmos. It is generally considered that he wrote the book of Revelation *before* he wrote his Gospel and his letters. This is significant because it means that the Gospel of John and the letters of John have been written with the full revelation of Jesus Christ in view. It also means that the letters of John are, most likely, the final words of the Scripture. He may have been ninety-seven years of age when he wrote them.

We observe that the first letter of John is a summary of the gospel. It is the conclusion of our common salvation. We could say that John, in his old age, reached the 'bottom line' of the gospel. It is evident that all the words of the Scripture had distilled upon him like the dew throughout the course of his life and ministry. John was able to condense the entire gospel into a number of clear and basic propositions. These are the basic propositions of the gospel that every Christian needs to know.

The apostle John was not interested in theological propositions for the sake of intellectual understanding or belief. He was a father in the faith, addressing every individual son of God in a personal way about all the issues that are relevant and important to them. His goal was to clearly state and explain the propositions of the Scripture so that every son of God would know, with confidence, that they are saved and have eternal life. John testified, 'These things I have written to you who believe in the name of the Son of God, *so that you may know that you have eternal life*'.

References:

Deu 32:2

1Jn 5:13

1Jn 2:3,5

1Jn 3:19,24

1Jn 4:13

2Ti 3:16-17

Further Study:

1 John 1

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 4

The prophecy of Zechariah

John built his summary of the gospel upon his personal revelation of the fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. The Lord declared through Zechariah the prophet, 'I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him like the bitter weeping over a firstborn'. Further to this, he declared, 'In that day a fountain will be opened for the house of David and for the inhabitants of Jerusalem, for sin and for impurity'.

The fulfillment of this prophecy began on the day of Christ's death and has continued for the entirety of the church age. It will reach a climax in the days just ahead of us. The prophecy focuses on the house of David and the inhabitants of Jerusalem, but the book of Revelation also applies the prophecy to *all nations*. We read, 'Behold, He is coming with the clouds, and *every eye will see Him*, even those who pierced Him [the Jews]; and *all the tribes of the earth* will mourn over Him'. John clearly knew *when* and *how* the prophecy of Zechariah had been fulfilled, and will be fulfilled in the end of the age, before he began to write his gospel account.

In his gospel narrative, John emphasised that he was an eyewitness at the foot of the cross. He watched as the soldier thrust the spear into Christ's side. He witnessed the blood and the water come from His side, and the profound impact that this had upon all those who were present. John identified that these events were the beginning of the fulfillment of the prophecy, 'They shall look on Him whom they have pierced'.

References:

Zec 12:10

Zec 13:1

Rev 1:7

Joh 19:37

Mat 9:15

Mat 24:30

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Luke 23

Proverbs 5

John's personal testimony

John declared, 'He who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true, and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe'. It is important to recognise that there are four distinct components to this statement. When John said, 'He who has seen has testified', he was speaking as an eyewitness to the events that had transpired. He bore witness to the truth that blood and water had come from the side of Christ. Of course, he was not the only witness of these events. The soldier who pierced Christ said, 'Surely this was the Son of God'. There was also a great crowd that had gathered to watch Christ die. When they saw the spear pierce His side, they returned to Jerusalem 'beating their breasts'. They went home mourning and weeping as the Spirit of grace and supplication began to be poured out upon them. God was preparing them for Peter's message on the Day of Pentecost.

The blood and water from the side of Christ demonstrated that He had become the source of eternal salvation for all those who believe. He was the source of the fountain of eternal life. When John said that 'his testimony is true', he was not reiterating or reinforcing his testimony *about* the blood and water. He was referring to the truth of *his personal testimony as a son of God* that he possessed as *the outcome* of the blood and water from the side of Christ. John was writing this as an old man, with a testimony as a son of God which he knew to be true. The Holy Spirit was evidently bearing witness with his spirit that he was a son of God. John had the testimony of truth within himself. He knew that he had received eternal life in Jesus Christ.

References:

Joh 19:34-35 Act 4:33
Luk 23:47-48 1Jn 5:9-11
Joh 3:10-12 Rev 1:9

Further Study: Act 2:22-47

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 6

So that you may believe

When John testified that ‘he knows that he is telling the truth’, he was speaking as a messenger of Jesus Christ. He was a witness of Jesus Christ who was *telling* or proclaiming a message with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. The apostle Paul called this the ‘message of truth’ and the ‘word of truth’. When the word of truth is proclaimed, the Holy Spirit is working with the messenger to anoint the hearer with a Spirit of grace and supplication so that they can look upon Christ whom they have pierced. As a messenger of Jesus Christ, John was not simply conveying that he had seen the blood and water so that we believe that *he saw it*. He wanted us to receive His word and the anointing of the Spirit of God so that we see, by revelation, what he saw!

Why did John want us to receive this revelation? He wanted each and every one of us to look upon Christ whom we have pierced so that we mourn and *believe!* When John said, ‘So that we may believe’, he was not referring to belief in a doctrine or dogma. He was referring to the kind of faith in Jesus Christ as the Son of God that motivates us to join His death by baptism, so that we can live by the life and faith of Jesus. We are reminded of the testimony of the apostle Paul, ‘I have been crucified with Christ, and 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’. John was referring to the faith of the Son of God in us when he declared, ‘This is the victory that has overcome the world – our faith’.

References:

Eph 1:13

Col 1:5

1Jn 5:4-5

Gal 2:20

Gal 1:3-5

Further Study: Hebrews 10

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 7

Assessing our culture

The first letter of John is the elderly apostle's discussion on the implications of the blood and water from the side of Christ, and the witness of the Spirit. He declared that Jesus Christ is 'the One who came by water and blood ... not with the water only, but with the water and with the blood. It is the Spirit who testifies, because the Spirit is the truth.' John continued by identifying three distinct messages that all agree as one. We need to receive the message of the water, the message of the blood and the message of the Spirit to become a son of God. The water is regenerating, the blood is redeeming, and the Holy Spirit is sanctifying.

Receiving the witness of the water, the blood, and the Spirit is the evidence of a 'firstfruits' Christian. We are reminded of the words of Jesus, 'Each tree is known by its own fruit'. It is important that we regularly assess our culture as Christians. We recall that Paul asked the Corinthians to test themselves to see if they were in the faith. He wanted them to know whether or not they were living by the life of Jesus within them. Likewise, we need to consider whether our lives demonstrate the fruit of receiving the witness of the water, the witness of the blood, and the witness of the Spirit.

In this season, it is timely that we consider the nature of the gospel we have embraced as individuals, couples, families and congregations. The Holy Spirit is presently making this clear among us. We need to review and discuss these matters so that we are clear on the gospel that we have received and the gospel that we are proclaiming. We are believers in Jesus, but we need to know that we have eternal life so that we are assured of our own salvation.

References:

1Jn 5:7-8

Mat 12:33

2Co 13:5

Tit 3:5

Rev 5:9

1Pe 1:2

Further Study: 1 Corinthians 6

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 8

There are three that bear witness

John declared, 'For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three *are one*. And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three *agree as one*.' The Three who bear witness in heaven are the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. We know there are three Persons in the Godhead and They 'are one' in the fellowship of one life and one Spirit. The three that bear witness on earth are the water, the blood, and the Spirit. John explained that these three things are 'testifying', or 'bearing witness', which means that they each have a message. There is a message of the water, a message of the blood, and a message of the Spirit.

The witness of the water is the message of the Father. The witness of the blood is the message of the Son. The witness of the Spirit is the message of the Holy Spirit. However, we remember that the Holy Spirit does not speak of Himself. He brings the witness of the sevenfold Spirit of God. He bears witness to the message of the Father and the Son, and then bears witness concerning the truth of every individual's sonship.

We need to understand the distinct message of the water. It is not the same as the message of the blood, but it does agree with the message of blood. The message of the Spirit is a different message again, but the Spirit agrees with the message of water and blood. All three messages are different, but they are complementary to each other. They all 'agree as one'. The three messages are all necessary and working together, so that sons of men can become sons of God.

References:

IJn 5:7-8 NKJV Heb 13:12
 Joh 16:13 Joh 7:16-18
 Joh 15:26 1Co 2:10-13

Further Study:

Romans 15

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 11

The witness of the water

The Father has given us our identity and humanity through the word that He gave to Christ. However, we know that ‘in Adam all died’. We were born dead in trespasses and sins, lost and without hope in this world. When the word of God is proclaimed to us, it is a fountain of life or living water. It is able to regenerate our human heart and renew our human spirit, causing us to be reborn, or born again, from the death of sin. The word is recovering our identity so that we can hear the truth of our name and predestination from the Father.

The word, as water, must wash us from the sin of our self-projections that are contrary to who the Father made us to be. When it is first proclaimed to us, it calls us to repentance so that we can become who we were truly meant to be. Repentance is essential before the regenerating work of the word can be effective in our lives. The washing of regeneration begins to occur as we embrace pastoral discussion concerning our life and, with humble acceptance, we receive a love of the truth. This love of the truth is described by the apostle Paul as a spirit of adoption that motivates us to come into Christ and be clothed fully in the likeness of His sonship.

The word recovers us to our original humanity as a son of man; but more than this, it recovers us to our predestination of becoming a son of God. The word is restoring us to be who we were predestined to be as part of the ‘new humanity’, established by Jesus Christ in Himself. Having come into Christ, the word continues to address our identity as a son of God. The word of the Father is the ‘word of truth’ that sanctifies us to our name and the works of our sonship in the Lamb’s book of life.

References:

Eph 5:26 Joh 17:17
1Co 15:22 Jas 1:18
Eph 2:1 1Co 6:11

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Titus 3

Proverbs 12

The witness of the blood

We read in the book of Hebrews that we have come to Jesus who is the Mediator of a New Covenant and to the sprinkled blood, which speaks better than the blood of Abel. The blood speaks, and in the very next verse, we are told to not refuse this witness of blood. Many translations insert the word 'Him' so that it reads, 'Do not refuse Him who is speaking'; but the literal translation of this verse is simply, 'Do not refuse the speaking'. It is referring to the witness of the blood of Christ. We cannot be saved unless we receive the *witness* or the message of 'the blood that speaks'. This is the witness of the life of Jesus. The blood of Jesus is the life of the divine human nature. We need to understand what the life of Jesus is, and how it functions in us.

It is the blood that redeems us and restores us to fellowship with God. We have been redeemed and purchased by the blood of Christ to become slaves of righteousness. To this end, the blood must redeem us from the familiar cultures that we have received by tradition from our parents. The blood of Jesus is also *cleansing* our conscience from dead works so that we can serve God as His priests and serve Christ as His slaves. The life of Jesus enables us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice to God, which is our reasonable priestly service. It is the blood of Jesus that enables us to participate in the fellowship of His offering as able ministers of the New Covenant. The blood is enabling us to embrace both the living and the dying of Jesus as our way of life. It enables us to lay down our lives for our brethren and demonstrate the culture of His life within the fellowship of His body, the church.

References:

Heb 12:24 Heb 9:14
Rom 7:14 2Co 3:6
1Co 7:23 2Co 4:10

Further Study: Hebrews 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 13

The witness of the Spirit

We will be familiar with the capacity of the Holy Spirit to bear witness or testify. Jesus said, 'When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of Truth who proceeds from the Father, He will *testify* about Me'. The Holy Spirit bears witness concerning the Son of God. And likewise, He bears witness concerning the work of every son of God in the body of Christ, the church. He bears witness concerning our sonship by *sanctifying* us to our name, works, and the days ordained for us in the Lamb's book of life.

Jesus said concerning the Holy Spirit, 'He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own initiative, but whatever He hears, He will speak; and He will disclose to you what is to come'. The Holy Spirit is the Helper of the Father and the Son. Within the fellowship of the body of Christ, the church, it is the Holy Spirit who continues to bring the word of the Father and the word of the Son. The Holy Spirit continues bearing witness to the water, by speaking to us about our name and works as a human son of God. He continues to bear witness to the blood, by speaking to us about our slavehood, discipleship and priesthood.

Further to this, the Holy Spirit is giving us the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God. As we live by the Spirit, we mature as sons of God who manifest the life of Jesus that has been given to us. We are able to manifest the life of Jesus as sons of God, and minister His life to others as members of the body of Christ. By this means, we demonstrate that we are sons of God. The apostle Paul declared, 'All who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are the sons of God'.

References:

Joh 15:26 2Co 4:10-11
Joh 16:13 1Jn 1:2
Rom 8:11,14

Further Study:

John 14

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 14

Making God a liar

We have considered that the witness of God is the witness of the water, the witness of the blood, and the witness of the Spirit. John declared, 'If we receive the witness of men, the witness of God is greater; for this is the witness of God which He has testified of His Son'. The witness of God is the witness concerning Jesus Christ who is *the* Son of God. And it is the witness of God concerning every person which enables them to become a son of God.

John said, 'The one who believes in the Son of God has the testimony in himself; the one who does not believe God has made Him a liar'. Speaking of the testimony of Jesus Christ, we are reminded that John the Baptist said, 'He who has received His testimony has set his seal to this, that *God is true*'. However, if a person does not receive His witness, then they have rejected the truth of His witness. They have, by implication, called God a liar by saying that His witness is not true. To call God a liar would be the height of human arrogance.

When the word of truth is proclaimed to us, it calls us to repentance so that our humanity can be recovered and we can begin the pathway of becoming a son of God. The word has the power to regenerate our human heart and renew our human spirit. However, if we reject it, then the effect of the word will cause us to fall backward until we are snared and taken captive in the net of our own self-will. God will deliver us over to a strong delusion, so that we will be damned because of the sin of not receiving a love for the truth. Instead of believing the truth, we will believe a lie, and thus return to condemnation and fall under the judgement of God.

References:

1Jn 5:9-10 2Th 2:10
Joh 3:33 1Jn 1:10
Isa 28:13 Joh 1:11

Further Study:

John 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 15

Rejecting the threefold witness

In his letter to the Hebrews, the apostle Paul referred to the judgement that is invoked upon those who reject the witness of God, by saying, 'How much severer punishment do you think he will deserve who has trampled underfoot the Son of God, and has regarded as unclean the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and has insulted the Spirit of grace?' We trample underfoot the Son of God when we reject Him and the messengers whom He sends to proclaim the word of the Father to us. If we reject the word of messengers who proclaim the 'word of truth' to us, we are rejecting the witness of the water.

We count the blood of the covenant to be a 'common thing', if we do not recognise the need to receive the life of Jesus as the power and capacity for our priesthood. The blood of Jesus needs to cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we can present our body as a living sacrifice. If we persist in trying to serve God from the basis of our own fallen conscience and the motivations of our flesh, we are rejecting the witness of the blood.

We insult the Spirit of grace if we refuse to walk in the pathway of our sanctification as a son of God. The Holy Spirit is the Helper of the Father and the Son, and He has been sent by Christ to be our Helper. He is able to lead and guide us into the truth of our sonship. He brings the power of the sevenfold Spirit of God to enable us to grow and mature as a son of God. If we reject the testimony of the Holy Spirit, and refuse to walk in the grace of the sevenfold Spirit of God which He brings, we are rejecting the witness of the Spirit.

References:

Heb 10:29

Heb 9:14

Rom 12:1

Joh 16:13

1Co 11:27

Act 7:51

Further Study:

Isaiah 63

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 18

The witness within ourselves

We know that every person can become a son of God by receiving the witness of God. John declared that everyone who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself. The Holy Spirit bears witness with their human spirit that they are a son of God. The truth of this testimony will be confirmed by their brethren in the body of Christ. We are reminded of John's testimony concerning a certain brother called Demetrius. He said, 'Demetrius has received a good testimony from everyone and from the truth itself; and we add our testimony, and you know that our testimony is true'.

John summarised his entire proposition by saying, 'The testimony is this: that God has given us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life.' This is the full witness of God. The summary of the witness of the water, the witness of the blood, and the witness of the Spirit is that God has given us eternal life, and this life is in His Son. This becomes the summary of the testimony which we have in ourselves as sons of God. It will be our personal confession of faith as members of the body of Christ. In this way, the psalmist declared, 'I believed therefore I spoke'.

When we have the testimony within ourselves, we will confidently say, 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid, what will man do to me?' God is our Helper according to the promise that He made with Abraham. Christ is our first Helper, by giving us His life which overcomes death. His life becomes our life. The Holy Spirit is *another Helper*, by bearing witness to the life of Jesus within us and empowering us with the Spirit of God.

References:

3Jn 1:12 1Jn 5:10-12
Heb 13:6 2Co 4:13
Psa 54:4 Joh 14:16

Further Study: Romans 8

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 19

Why is water not enough?

The water of the word is able to regenerate and circumcise the human heart, and also renew the human spirit. It enables a person to believe and be justified by faith. This has been true since the beginning, and was true for all believers in the Old Testament. The book of Hebrews describes the great exploits of all the heroes of faith. These great exploits were possible because these faithful men and women received the witness of water, the witness of the word of God.

We know that Jesus Christ is the Word of God made flesh. The apostle John began his Gospel by saying that 'the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth'. Jesus was the full revelation of the word of the Father in the flesh of mankind. And further to this, Jesus proclaimed the word of the Father throughout the course of His earthly ministry. He had authority to forgive sins, and His word had the power to regenerate, renew and heal all those who received it. All the miracles performed by Jesus bear witness to the power in His word.

The apostle John also bore witness to this by declaring that Jesus came with water. He came with the word which is living, powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword. However, He didn't come with water only. He came with water and *with blood*. This is a significant point. Why was the witness of water not enough? Why was the power of the word that *creates* not enough? Why was the power of the word that *regenerates* not enough? Why were the miracles of Jesus not enough? Why did He need to lay down His life so that His blood was poured out for us? Why do we need the blood of Christ?

References:

Joh 1:14

Joh 17:8

1Jn 5:6

Joh 14:10

Deu 18:18

Joh 4:10

Further Study:

John 12

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 20

Weak through the flesh

The apostle Paul identified the difficulty and inadequacy of the Old Covenant. It was ineffective because it was *weak through the flesh*. What does this mean? We know that the word itself was not inadequate or ineffective. And we know that the word had the capacity to strengthen the flesh of mankind. It had the capacity to regenerate the heart and renew the spirit. The Scripture accounts that Abraham *grew strong* in faith. Despite the weakness of his own flesh, he was fully convinced that God was able to fulfil everything that He had promised. He believed in God and the power of His word to give life to the dead. On account of this faith, God strengthened the flesh of Abraham and Sarah so that they brought forth a child in their old age, as the heir of the covenant. In a similar way, the book of Hebrews tells us that the heroes of faith ‘conquered kingdoms, performed acts of righteousness, obtained promises, shut the mouth of lions, quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, *from weakness were made strong*, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight’.

If the problem was not in the power of the word, or the capacity of the word to strengthen the flesh, why was the Old Covenant *weak through the flesh*? It was weak through the flesh because it had no capacity to cleanse the conscience with the blood, or life, of Jesus. We read in the book of Hebrews that sacrifices were offered ‘which cannot make the worshipper perfect in conscience’. Paul reasoned that if the sacrifices of old had been effective in cleansing the conscience, then they would not need to be repeated year after year. The Old Testament believers did have access to the forgiveness of God, but they did not have access to the actual life of Jesus, the *divine human* nature.

References:

Rom 8:3 Heb 11:19,34
Isa 55:10-11 Gal 3:13-14
Rom 4:19-21 Heb 10:1-2

Further Study: Hebrews 9

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 21

The spirit is willing but the flesh is weak

We could say that the pinnacle and the limit of the Old Covenant was expressed by Jesus when He said to the disciples, 'The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak'. The disciples had walked with Jesus and received His word. They had received the washing of regeneration. The water of the word had regenerated their hearts and renewed their spirits. They were able to follow Jesus all the way to the garden of Gethsemane to witness His offering. However, the disciples had no capacity to participate in His offering until they received the life of Jesus on the day of His resurrection.

The apostle Paul explained how our 'flesh is weak' in his letter to the Romans. He used himself in a representative way to explain the potential dilemma which confronts every Christian. He said, 'I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man'. A person who is joyfully concurring with the law of God in the inner man has evidently touched regeneration. They have been illuminated by the word and they want to obey the word. Their spirit has been made willing. In this way, we could liken them to 'stony ground' in the parable of the sower. They have received the word with joy!

However, despite this joy and willingness to obey the word, a discrepancy soon emerges in the life of many Christians. It is the discrepancy between a person's willingness and their actual behaviour. Paul summarised this dilemma by saying, 'The good that I want, I do not do, but I practise the very evil that I do not want'. When Paul spoke of 'evil' here, he was not referring to acts of wickedness. He was referring to the person who has received and believed the word, but cannot fulfil the will of God because they are walking according to the flesh.

References:

Mat 26:41 Luk 18:11-14
Joh 13:10 1Co 3:1-3
Isa 6:5 Eph 3:8

Further Study: Romans 7**Daily Proverb:** Proverbs 22

The other law

Why do many Christians find that they cannot fulfil the Lord's will for their lives? Paul identified that there are two motivations, or laws, which war against our desire and capacity to obey the word of God. These laws are hidden within the members of our body; that is, in our flesh. The first is called 'the other law', and the second is called 'the law of sin'. There is a difference between these two laws, but when they collude together, they bring us under the judgement of God, and the result is death. Paul said, 'I joyfully concur with the law of God in the inner man, but I see a different law in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin which is in my members'.

The *other law* is best described as our own law. It is the expression of our self-centredness and desire for independence. It could be defined as 'contrariness'. One of the translations calls it 'a different law'. When the word of the Lord is proclaimed to us, it is simply our desire to do things differently. It is our desire to do things our own way. It is our perceived right to choose who we want to be and do what we want to do. This other law causes us to walk after the flesh. For a Christian, walking after the flesh is motivated by our desire to serve God in our own way and by the strength of our own flesh. When we live this way, we are unable to overcome the power of the law of sin that is in us. The result is that our body is dead because of sin. We are unable to present our bodies to God as living sacrifices in the priestly service of God.

References:

Rom 7:22-23 Pe 2:11
Eph 2:1 Gal 6:8
Rom 12:11 1Pe 4:6

Further Study: Galatians 5

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 25

The law of sin

The *law of sin* is the deception that we can find life apart from fellowship with God and obedience to God. It is hidden within the faculties of our flesh, particularly in our desires and emotions. It causes us to desire things that do not belong to our name. In this regard, the apostle John spoke of the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eye, and the boastful pride of life, as the summary of all that is in the world that does not come from the Father. In his discussion on the weakness of our flesh, the apostle Paul personified the law of sin. He did this to show that the law of sin, even though it is in our flesh, finds its source and volition from Satan.

Satan has been the father of lies since the beginning. When God warned Cain, He said to him that sin was crouching like a lion at his door, desiring to devour and destroy him. Peter has warned us in the same way, saying, ‘Your adversary the devil prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour’. Satan seeks to destroy us by using sin to deceive and motivate us to lay hold of the law of God. He knows that if we lay hold of the law of God in this way, it will kill us. This deception causes us to alienate ourselves from the life of God, and our actions invoke the judgement of the law of God upon us. When the other law colludes with the law of sin that is in our members, we are brought into captivity to the law of sin and death. Hence Paul declared, ‘Wretched man that I am, who will set me free from the body of this death?’ We need to be redeemed from this whole process that has its roots in the fall of Adam and Eve.

References:

IJn 2:16

Joh 8:44

Gen 4:7

IPe 5:8

Rom 7:24

Luk 21:34

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Romans 13

Proverbs 26

Delivered through death

In chapter seven of the book of Romans, Paul clearly demonstrated that we cannot deliver ourselves from the weakness of our flesh. Our deliverance only comes through the death of Jesus Christ, our Lord. Why is this so? Because it is only the blood, or life, of Christ that can redeem us from our captivity to the law of sin and give us power over the other law that resides in our flesh. Chapter eight of the book of Romans begins, 'Therefore there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus'. It is helpful to remove the artificial distinction between chapter seven and chapter eight of the book of Romans. Of course, there is no distinction in the original text and it is all part of one discussion.

If we have died with Christ, we are no longer under the eternal judgement of the law of God. The eternal judgement of God has been commuted to a process of chastening in the cross of Christ. Having been nailed to the cross, the law of God has been connected to the life of Jesus. He was the only One who had the capacity to fulfil the law. More than this, His life, by its very own nature, is the full expression of the law. The life of Jesus is the full revelation of the love of God. His life does not sin. Jesus did not seek to save His life in any way. He willingly laid down His life for us. The law is now revealed as the expression of Christ's life from the cross, and is called the 'law of the Spirit of life'. Paul says that this law is now found in the life of Jesus. The law of the life of Jesus is working by positive and proactive offering and action, to set us free from the law of sin that is killing us.

References:

Rom 8:1-2

Col 3:1-3

1Co 11:32

Col 2:14

1Pe 4:1

Joh 10:17-18

Further Study:

Romans 6

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 27

Law established in the New Covenant

It is important to recognise the distinction between the Law of God and the Old Covenant. The Law of God was established in the New Covenant when it was nailed to the cross with Christ. It was taken out of the Old Covenant, and the Old Covenant was then done away with. Jesus said, 'Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfil. For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished.' Paul declared that 'what the law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, God did: by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, so that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit'.

The Law of God has been established in the New Covenant, so that its righteous requirement can be fulfilled in us. Jesus said that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, then we cannot enter the kingdom of heaven. However, unlike the scribes and Pharisees, we are walking after the Spirit, not the flesh. If we walk after the flesh, then the Law will judge, condemn and kill us. If we walk after the Spirit, then the life of Jesus is giving power to our mortal body so we can priest our sonship and fulfil the righteous requirement of the Law. The blood is activating and enabling our priesthood. We read in the book of Revelation that Christ has released us from our sins by His blood and made us to be a kingdom of priests to His God and Father.

References:

Mat 5:17-18,20
Rom 8:3-4
Rev 1:5-6

Gal 3:13
Heb 10:9-10
Col 2:13-14

Further Study:

Daily Proverb:

Galatians 4

Proverbs 28

New Covenant activated by blood

One of the major tenets of the book of Hebrews is that the New Covenant was activated by the blood of Christ. This covenant could not be realised until the life of Jesus was made available to us by the shedding of His blood. Christ had to die before the New Covenant could come into force. As He offered Himself to God as a living sacrifice upon the cross, the bequeathing process of the Eternal Covenant began to operate. The life of the Son of God was made available to us by offering. This life was promised to us before the foundation of the world, and was poured out for us by the offering of Jesus Christ from the garden of Gethsemane to the cross. We are reminded of the words of Jesus at the last supper, 'This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in My blood'. It is *this life* that makes us a son of God as we receive it.

The blood of Christ was able to activate the New Covenant because of its power to cleanse our conscience from every self-centered and self-seeking activity, and enable us to do God's will and serve Him acceptably as His priests. The blood of Jesus, by its very essence, ministers life. It sustained Christ as He offered Himself to God. It brought Him back from the death of sin; and further to this, it enabled Him to conquer death and be raised to immortality. When Christ was raised immortal, He was also raised as a life-giving Spirit. The immortal life of Jesus has been made available to us since His resurrection. The body of Christ, the church, is the context in which we receive His resurrection life and power. We receive this life as we *participate* individually in His many-membered body.

References:

Luk 22:20 Php 3:10
Heb 9:14-17 Heb 12:24
Lev 17:11 Heb 7:22

Further Study:

Hebrews 8

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 29

Redeemed by His blood

Jesus Christ has *set us free* from our bondage to the law of sin and death by redemption. We have been redeemed by His blood. The meaning of 'redemption' is to 'purchase back'. Having sold ourselves into slavery, we must be redeemed by Christ. The blood of Christ redeems and releases us from our slavery to sin. However, much more this, the blood purchases us as slaves of Christ. It is important to recognise that we have been redeemed as slaves, not redeemed as sons. A slave is purchased or redeemed, whereas a son is born. This is an important distinction. We cannot lay hold of the benefits of redemption without acknowledging that we have been purchased by Christ to become His slaves.

Paul declared, 'For you have been bought with a price, therefore glorify God in your body'. And likewise, 'You were bought with a price, do not become the slaves of men'. In his letter to the Colossians, Paul said, 'See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to *the tradition of men*, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ'. We cannot serve two masters. The prophet Hosea declared, 'Ephraim is oppressed, crushed in judgement, because he was determined to follow man's command'.

In contrast to this, we present ourselves to Christ to become slaves of righteousness. This will involve presenting ourselves to the administration of Christ in the church. As a slave of Christ, we are required to submit ourselves to the order of authority that He has established in His church. It is within this order of authority that we will receive the word of righteousness concerning our own name and work. We are set free from sin, by the blood, to become slaves of obedience to the word of righteousness which has become our new master.

References:

Eph 1:7 1Co 6:20 Hos 5:11
Rom 6:17-18 1Co 7:23 Col 2:8-9

Further Study: 1 Peter 1

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 1

His blood cleanses our conscience

We read in the book of Hebrews that the blood of Christ cleanses our conscience from dead works so that we can begin serving God as His priests. 'Dead works' describes all works that are motivated by the flesh. The works of the flesh lead to death, by alienating us from the life of God and bringing us under the judgement of the law of God. The blood of Jesus, which is His life, purges our conscience by giving us a new will and motivation. It purges our conscience so that we do not love with our own love; we love with His love. As the Holy Spirit pours the love of God into our hearts, the love of God replaces our fallen human volition. Our life is no longer controlled by our own law. The apostle Paul said, 'The love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died'. A better translation of this verse is, 'The love of Christ controls us'. The love of Christ must become the sole motivation of our priestly service.

This point has significant pastoral implications. There are many things that we try to do as Christians. However, it is only the life of Jesus within us that enables us to live a successful Christian life. If we try in our own capacity to love with the love of Jesus, it is a dead work. Instead of trying to love with the love of Jesus, we must allow the blood of Jesus to purge our motivations first, and then empower us for the service of our priesthood. If we do not do this, we are subject to nervous excitement, failure and fear. We are reminded that perfect love casts out fear. If we are controlled by the love of Christ, there will be no room for anxiety or fear in our lives.

References:

Heb 9:14 Mat 22:36-37
2Co 5:14 1Jn 4:19
Rev 1:5 Eph 3:16-19

Further Study:

Romans 5

Daily Proverb:

Proverbs 2

The dying and living of Jesus

We cannot overcome anxiety by telling ourselves not to be anxious! The only way we can overcome anxiety is if we have the life of Jesus in us. Why is this so? Because it is only the life of Jesus that dies and lives! The blood gives us the life of Jesus as the antidote to anxiety and fear. It sets us free from bondage to Satan because of our fear of death. Once we believe in it, accept it, and trust it, we are able to embrace both the dying and the living of Jesus as our way of life.

The life of Jesus lays itself down to the death, and lives again, by the power of God. It's a constant expression of dying and living, which is the full expression of a life of offering. When the life of Jesus is dying, it is demonstrating the power of God and, in that phase, it is sharing life with others. In laying down life, it is demonstrating the unfailing love of God. When abounding in life, it is manifesting the culture and fellowship of the kingdom of God, the body of Christ. The life of Jesus is the life and culture of the body of Christ, the church, which is the new creation in the world.

With this in view, we understand why the apostle Paul said that he had learned to be content in all circumstances. He had learned the secret regarding how the life of Jesus works. He testified, 'I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need'. Paul knew that he needed to participate in both the dying and the living of the Lord Jesus.

References:

Heb 2:14-15 2Co 12:9
2Co 13:4 Luk 1:74-75
Php 4:12 2Co 1:9-10

Further Study: 2 Corinthians 4

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 3

The mystery of Christ

In his letter to the Colossians, Paul referred to the way we receive the life of Jesus in our humanity as the 'mystery of Christ'. God wanted him to make the 'riches of the glory of this mystery' known among all the Gentile churches. He defined the mystery as 'Christ in you, the hope of glory'. He referred to the same mystery when he wrote to the Ephesians. He testified that this mystery had not been made known to the sons of men in other generations. He was referring to the work of Christ to establish 'one new man' in Himself, through the work of the cross. Christ has established a new humanity by offering. The witness of the blood is the way the life of Jesus works in us, replacing our way of living with His life, and causing us to enter into His rest. We come to rest because our life is hidden with Christ in God.

We observe that the witness of the blood is the primary theme of the book of Ephesians. Paul began this letter by saying, 'In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace which He made to abound toward us in all wisdom and prudence'. What is abounding to us in all wisdom and prudence? In the first case, it is not the riches of His grace which are abounding to us; it is the blood of Christ. We know that the blood of Christ has made provision for the forgiveness of sins, and we are being redeemed in Christ by His blood. But much more than this, His blood is becoming our life. The blood of Christ is abounding to us in all wisdom and prudence. The Spirit of grace bears witness to the blood.

References:

Col 1:27 Eph 1:7-8
Eph 2:7 Rom 9:23
Col 3:3 1Ti 1:16

Further Study: Ephesians 3

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 4

His life becomes our life

In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul said that ‘we have this treasure in earthen vessels, so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves’. He was referring to the life of Jesus in our mortal bodies, which enables us to die and live with Christ. For this reason, we are ‘always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our body. For we who live are always delivered to death for Jesus’ sake, that the life of Jesus also may be manifested in our mortal flesh.’ In the same way, Paul wrote to the Galatians, ‘I have been crucified with Christ, and 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’.

The blood of Christ is the life of Christ, and He gives us His life through the process of offering. We are reminded of the words of the Lord, ‘The life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you on the altar to make atonement for your souls, for it is the blood by reason of the life that makes atonement’. When we join the offering of Christ, His life is given to us and it makes atonement for us. There are a number of elements to the meaning of ‘atonement’. However, the principle of atonement culminates in the substitution of one life for another. We are saved when Christ’s life is exchanged for our human life. His life is given to us, causing us to live. We who were dead in trespasses and sins are made alive in Christ. This is the meaning of ‘true substitution’. True substitution is only found by participation in the fellowship of the offering of Christ.

References:

2Co 4:7, 10-11
Gal 2:20
Lev 17:11

Eph 2:1
1Pe 3:18
Rom 8:11

Further Study: Galatians 2

Daily Proverb: Proverbs 5