



# Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

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MAY 2020

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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# **RESTORING MY SOUL**

*A Five Day Devotional Guide*

**May 2020**

## **Contributing Authors**

Victor Hall

Peter Hay

David Baker

## **Compiled by**

David Baker

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## The Alpha and the Omega

The content of the book of Revelation was given to Jesus by the Father to show, or to make known, to His servants in the church age. **Rev 1:1**. Describing how Jesus comes with this message, the apostle John wrote, 'Behold, He is coming with clouds, and every eye will see Him, even they who pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth will mourn because of Him. Even so, Amen.' **Rev 1:7**.

Jesus is coming with clouds as 'the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End, who is and who was and who is to come, the Almighty'. **Rev 1:8**. When Christ makes Himself known to a person as the *Alpha* and *Omega*, they are caused to look on Him and to receive what He has to give to them. Emphasising this point, Jesus concluded the book of Revelation by declaring, 'Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to everyone according to his work. I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.' **Rev 22:12-13**.

At the conclusion of His offering journey, Jesus was manifest as 'I AM' – He who is and who was and who is coming. **Joh 8:28. Rev 1:8**. The reward that is with Jesus, which He gives to everyone according to their works, is the fruit of His finished offering as I AM. On the cross, the Son of Man was both the full manifestation of God's judgement on sin, and the full manifestation of salvation. In this regard, His death on the cross revealed the implications of death for all mankind. Through the word of the cross that is preached by God's messengers, every person is drawn to look on Him whom they have pierced. **Joh 12:32. Zec 12:10**.

## Two choices

Under the influence of grace and supplication, every hearer has a *choice* to make when the word of the cross is preached to them. They can choose to resist the grace of God and continue to walk in unbelief and according to their own understanding. **Heb 10:38. Pro 3:5.** To do so is to follow the way that leads to death. Or, they can receive His invitation to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as the means of gaining their sonship and eternal life. These two possible responses to the word of the cross were typified by the two thieves who were crucified with Christ on Mount Calvary. **Luk 23:39–43.**

The reward that a person receives from Christ is commensurate with their *response to seeing Him* when the word of the cross is preached to them. Those who reject Christ, and the gospel of sonship that He proclaims to them, continue to pursue their own name and works. Their reward will be the torment of eternal judgement. **Jud 1:5. Heb 3:17–18.** In contrast, those who, through repentance and faith, receive Christ's word and are baptised into His death, burial and resurrection, obtain the blessing of eternal salvation. **Heb 5:9.** In the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, His life is becoming their life, and they are able to fulfil the works of sonship that the Father has prepared for them in Christ.

The resurrection life of God, which was resident in the blood of Jesus, is the reward of blessing that belongs to those who receive the salvation of the Lord and are doing the works of sonship that the Father prepared for them in Christ. This life was multiplied and given to become the life of the sons of God when Christ's blood was shed and sprinkled on His body. Christ's blood was shed through the sufferings that He experienced when our reproaches against the Father were progressively laid on Him. **Psa 69:9.**

## Two aspects of blessing

There are two key aspects of blessing that belong to those who do not refuse the gospel that is proclaimed to them by Christ's messengers. In the first instance, they are blessed because their eyes and ears are enabled by the Spirit to see and to hear what God the Father has prepared for those who love Him. **Luk 10:23–24. 1Co 2:9–10.** Those who love God are those who have been born of God and who know Him. **1Jn 4:7.** A hearer whose eyes and ears are blessed is able to *see their calling* as a son of God in Christ. **1Co 1:26.** This is what it means to 'see the kingdom of heaven'. **Joh 3:3.**

The second aspect of blessing is to *enter* the kingdom of heaven. **Joh 3:5.** A person who has received this blessing has been born as a son of God, and has been joined to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings through baptism and an ongoing participation in communion. The apostle John taught that a believer demonstrates that they have been born of God, and love Him, by *keeping His commandments*. **1Jn 5:2.** He said that those who keep the Father's commandments, or word, abide in Christ, and He abides in them. **1Jn 3:24.** This is the implication of 'eating His flesh', which is the bread of communion, and 'drinking His blood', which is the cup of communion. **Joh 6:56.**

Those who partake of the tree of life by eating and drinking the elements of communion have eternal life and will be raised up on the last day. **Joh 6:54.** Eternal life is the blessing that is ministered through the command of the Father. **Psa 133:3.** Significantly, the apostle John concluded the book of Revelation by writing, '*Blessed* are those who do His commandments [as the sons of God], that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may *enter* through the gates into the city [as those who abide in the Son forever]'. **Rev 22:14.**

## The revelation to John

Even though the apostle John had already been born of God and baptised in the name of Jesus, Christ revealed Himself to John as 'the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last'. **Rev 1:11**. This highlights the reality that Jesus continues to come to us in this manner to establish us as sons of God, so that we might attain the full reward of sonship that was prepared for us by the Father, in Him. **Rev 22:12–13**.

A spirit of grace and supplication was poured out on John as he heard Jesus specifically declare to him, 'I am the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the First and the Last'. **Rev 1:11**. It is evident that John responded under the influence of grace and supplication because, having heard the word of Jesus behind him, John *turned* in repentance from his focus on the table of showbread, to *look and see* the Son of Man standing in the midst of seven golden lampstands. **Rev 1:12**. The prophet Zechariah declared that turning and looking to see the Son is the effect of grace and supplication. **Zec 12:10**. Christ, through His word, was calling John to move from functioning as part of the administration that was represented by the table of showbread, to be joined to the lampstand administration from which, and among which, Christ was ministering.

Having heard the word of the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, John turned to see Christ who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass. **Rev 1:14–15**. The effect of hearing the word of Jesus and turning to look upon Him was that John fell at Christ's feet as a dead man. **Rev 1:17**. Evidently, John was looking on Him whom he had pierced and was mourning for the death of the Firstborn Son. This is how the Son of Man, who is the *Alpha* and *Omega*, makes Himself known to everyone in the age of the church.



## True mourning

When the Lord comes to meet us with His word, it is, initially, a confronting experience. We can be inclined to withdraw, and hide, from the Lord because we are aware of our own vulnerability, and we fear our own destitution, or nakedness. However, awareness of our fallen condition is *not* the illumination that we receive from the Lord. Rather, it is the knowledge that we have obtained as a result of eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The account of the Fall helps us to recognise this important distinction. We note that after Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, 'the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.' **Gen 3:7**. Their awareness of their destitution, or nakedness, was the effect of the Fall. It was not the illuminating effect of the word of God. Yahweh *Elohim* came looking for Adam and the woman in the garden, calling to Adam, 'Where are you?' **Gen 3:9**. In response to the word of the Lord, Adam said, 'I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because [I knew] I was naked; and I hid myself.' **Gen 3:10**.

Fear and anxiety, because of shame, are our initial responses when the Lord comes to meet us as the *Alpha* and the *Omega*. However, these first emotions are not the mourning that results from looking upon Jesus whom we have killed. **Mat 27:4–5**. The mourning of those who look on Him whom they have pierced is the outcome of receiving grace and supplication that is poured out from Christ's heart as He addresses us *with eyes like a flame of fire*. **Rev 1:14**.

## Two kinds of sorrow

Through repentance, mourning under the influence of grace and supplication from Christ is turned into joy as we are joined, by the Holy Spirit, to the travail of Christ's offering and sufferings. **Rom 8:26**. In this fellowship, we are blessed, because the resurrection life of Christ is becoming *our* life. The apostle Paul defined this mourning as godly sorrow that produces repentance without regret, leading to eternal salvation. **2Co 7:10**.

By His word, Christ draws us to His cross for this purpose. He wants us to join the fellowship of His offering. When He comes with eyes as a flame of fire and calls to us, we must not draw back from Him in fear and shame, nor refuse Him who speaks to us. **Heb 12:25**. Paul reminded us of the words of Jesus, writing, 'Now the just shall live by faith; but if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him'. **Heb 10:38**.

If we only see and believe that Jesus died on our behalf, and we are unwilling to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings, our response to the word will continue to be the expression of shame and nakedness. Instead of godly sorrow joining us to the travail of Christ, through which we obtain our calling as a son of God, our sorrow that is motivated by shame will only produce dead works.

Paul called this 'the sorrow of the world'. **2Co 7:10**. These dead works are our attempts to cover our shame. We can do this in different ways, including endeavouring to alleviate our guilt through the confidential confession of our sin to a clergy style leader; by working harder to do the works that we perceive to be good and pleasing to God; or by assigning blame to others for our sinful condition.

## Known by Christ

Unless we are delivered from our carnal way of living, and become spiritual, we will not be known by Christ on the day of judgement. **Joh 3:6–8**. Our works will not have been the expression of our name as a son of God in Christ. Rather, our works will have been the projections that we have manufactured to cover the shameful nakedness of our self defined image. In other words, Christ will not *know us*, because we have not lived according to our name in Him. Our reward will be the eternal judgement that was manifested by Christ at the conclusion of His offering journey. **Mat 7:21–23**.

When Christ comes to us with eyes like a flame of fire, His word, which we firstly experience as a rebuke, is an invitation to join the fellowship of His offering and sufferings. This initiative reveals His great love for us, which the Scriptures describe as being like a vehement and unquenchable fire. **Son 8:6–7**. Christ comes to join us to Himself, so that, through chastening, we can be delivered from our own way and be joined to the fellowship of His life. He says to us, 'As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent.' **Rev 3:19**. He wants to know us, and for us to know Him.

Job learnt this point. Although he did not understand why he was experiencing such great suffering, he did not draw back from the Lord, even when his wife said to him, 'Curse God and die!' **Job 2:9**. In response to the word of the Lord, who had come to him in his fiery trial, Job confessed, 'I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear, but now my eye sees You. Therefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes.' **Job 42:5–6**. As Job met the Lord eye to eye, he was able to mourn, and to be delivered from serving God from the basis of his own understanding. This was true blessing, because he now knew the Lord, personally.

## The example of Peter and Judas

The interactions of Peter and Judas with Jesus in the court of Caiaphas provide helpful examples of the distinction between true mourning that results from seeing ourselves through Christ's eyes, and the mourning that results from shame. As Jesus was being bruised for Peter's iniquity in the court of Caiaphas, the Lord 'turned and looked at Peter' with eyes like a flame of fire. **Luk 22:61**. In that moment, Peter remembered the words of Jesus, and the iniquity of his heart was revealed to him. By illumination, he understood his wretched condition, and went out and wept bitterly. **Luk 22:61–62**.

The blood of Jesus Christ was speaking to Peter as it was being shed for him. Grace and supplication were poured out from Christ's heart with this word. For this reason, as Peter did not draw back from the Lord's gaze, his heart was broken, and he began to mourn as one who had become poor in spirit. **Mat 5:3**. Peter was blessed because the Lord delivered him from his self righteousness. We know this because, on the shore of Lake Galilee, he confessed that he could not love as God loved. He was then able to receive from Jesus the word that proclaimed his sanctification. **Joh 21:15–19**.

Judas was also in the court of Caiaphas as Christ's blood was being shed for his iniquity. It is likely that Jesus also looked at him during this wounding event. However, unlike Peter, when Judas saw that Jesus had been condemned to death, he withdrew his eyes from the Lord in shame, thereby resisting the grace and supplication that was being poured out as Christ's blood was shed. Instead of mourning for the injuries that he had caused to Christ through his self righteousness, he tried to cover his shame by returning the thirty pieces of silver that he had received from the chief priests and elders. **Mat 27:3**. He evidently found no deliverance from his self righteousness, because he passed judgement on himself and took his own life. **Mat 27:5**. Eternal damnation was his end.

Judas did not believe that Christ was going to die at the hands of the Jewish authorities. He believed that Jesus was the Messiah who would reign upon the earth, and that the disciples would reign with Him. He could not see that the actions that he was taking to facilitate this objective were a betrayal of Christ. **Mat 26:25**. Peter was troubled by Christ's prediction that He would suffer and die on the cross and then be raised from the dead after three days. **Mat 16:21–23**. Furthermore, Peter would not accept Jesus' prophetic warning that he would deny Him three times before the rooster crowed. **Mat 26:34–35**.

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### FURTHER STUDY JOHN 21

## The right hand of Christ

When, under the influence of grace and supplication, we look on Christ in His ascended glory, and see Him as the One whom we have pierced, we, like John, fall at His feet 'as a dead man'. **Rev 1:17**. The first action of Christ is to lay His right hand upon us. In His right hand are His star messengers who proclaim His word to us. Through His messengers, the first word that Christ speaks to us is, 'Do not be afraid; I am the First and the Last.' **Rev 1:17**. This is the same word that Christ spoke to Abraham, saying, 'Do not be afraid, Abram. I am your shield [of faith], your exceedingly great reward.' **Gen 15:1**.

Through the ministry of His word from His right hand, Christ begins to heal us through regeneration. He strengthens us so that we can join Him where He is – in the midst of His lampstand churches. **Rev 1:12–13**. This highlights a key point. Illumination, and deliverance from sin, are found only in the context of Christ's lampstand churches. We join the fellowship of His lampstand church by receiving and believing the word of His messengers. Without a tangible and active connection to a lampstand church, the life of God within us will not be sustained, and we will be unable to fulfil the works of our sonship.

Reiterating this point, we note that when John was strengthened by the word of Christ, he was called to do the works of sonship that were prepared for him in Christ. His works were to 'write the things which you have seen, and the things which are, and the things which will take place after this'. **Rev 1:19**. Furthermore, Jesus specifically drew John's attention to the mystery of the seven stars in His right hand. He explained to John that they were the angels of the seven churches. **Rev 1:20**. Jesus Christ was highlighting to John the understanding that the works of his sonship were contingent upon his connection to the administration of Christ's lampstand churches.

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FURTHER STUDY ISAIAH 41

## I AM alive forevermore

When Jesus was lifted up on the cross, and He declared that His offering was finished, He was manifest as 'I AM' – the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, the Beginning and the End. **Joh 8:28. Rev 1:8.** He now identified Himself as 'He who lives, and was dead, and behold I AM alive forevermore. Amen.' **Rev 1:18.** The Son had been fully glorified as the High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. Figuratively, He was arrayed in white priestly garments, and the seven dimensions of His priesthood had been fully established. **Rev 1:12–16.**

Christ now meets us *from the cross* as the *Alpha* and the *Omega*, with eyes as a flame of fire. Under the influence of grace and supplication, we are able to look on Him whom we have pierced. Although He ministers to us from the cross through the elements of His priesthood, we now see Him in the midst of His lampstand church. **Rev 1:13.** The response of those who see Him this way, having become poor in spirit and begun to mourn, is, 'Men and brethren, what shall we do?' **Mat 5:3 4. Act 2:37.** The word that proceeds from the right hand of Christ, through His messengers, calls us to repent and to join the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings as part of a lampstand church. **Rev 1:17,20. Act 2:38.**

Through His Melchizedek King Priesthood, Christ ministers to us a daily participation in His finished offering. Having been co-crucified with Him, the life we now live is through our fellowship in the sufferings and life that He has already finished and perfected for us. **Col 1:24. Heb 2:9.** In the fellowship of His death, we are able to die and live with Him by His resurrection life. Moreover, we are able to fulfil the works of our sonship that the Father prepared for us to do, in Christ, as part of a lampstand church.

## Our heart is laid bare

When Christ comes to us with eyes like a flame of fire, His eyes expose our innermost thoughts and motivations, and reveal the shame of our nakedness. Every person first meets Jesus in this way. As the apostle Paul noted, 'There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account.' **Heb 4:13**. This is the effect of His word upon us, and is the reason why He identified Himself as 'I am He who searches the minds and hearts.' **Rev 2:23**.

Our heart is laid bare before Christ's eyes because His word first comes to us as a *goad*. **Act 9:3–5**. Speaking of the effect of the word as a goad, Paul said, 'The word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.' **Heb 4:12**.

What is the dividing line between soul and spirit? Our *spirit*, which is our identity, is the essence of who we are. The *soul* is the volition, expression, or presentation of who we are. The goad of the word divides between the reality of who we are, and the image of ourselves that we are projecting because of the other law that is at work within us.

Paul's cry, 'O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?'; is the confession of one whose spirit and soul were being divided by the goad of the word. **Rom 7:24**. It was dividing between his reality and his projections. He was poor in spirit, recognising that he was poor, wretched, miserable, blind and naked. Under the influence of grace and supplication, he acknowledged that his deliverance from death was not in his own hands; rather, it was through fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. **Rom 7:25**.

## Knocking on the door

The word, as a goad ministered by Christ who has eyes as a flame of fire, had no access to the presbytery of Laodicea. We know this because they were unaware of their true condition. Evidently, their hearts were not being laid bare by the word, as a goad, which is sharper than any two edged sword. Presuming that they were rich, they did not know that they were wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked. **Rev 3:17.** Jesus was knocking on the door of their hearts, desiring them to turn to Him so that they could see their true condition, and could repent, receive His counsel and be established in fellowship with Him. **Rev 3:20.**

Once Christ's word did have access to them, they were able to confess their wretchedness, poverty, lack of sight and nakedness, and to receive the counsel of the Lord. Significantly, they were counselled to buy gold refined in the fire, which symbolises the divine nature; to buy the garments of salvation and priesthood so that the shame of their nakedness would not be seen; and to anoint their eyes with regenerative eye salve so that they could receive illumination. **Rev 3:18.**

In His letter to Sardis, Jesus said that those who overcame the propensity toward independence in the presbytery and the church – which produces only dead works – would be clothed in white garments. Moreover, their names would not be blotted out of the Book of Life. **Rev 3:5.** As it was with their fellow presbyters in Laodicea, the nakedness of their self defined works was being exposed by Christ's eyes, as a flame of fire. When this happened, they were able to turn in repentance, and to mourn as those who were being joined to the travail of Christ. In fellowship with Him, they would be clothed with their garments of priesthood, and would be enabled to fulfil the works of righteousness that belonged to their name as sons of God in Christ.



## The nails that secure us

The word of God that comes as a goad to pierce our heart is also described as a 'nail'. King Solomon concluded his teaching by saying that 'the words of the wise are *as goads*, and as *nails* fastened by the masters of assemblies, which are given from one Shepherd'. **Ecc 12:11**. 'The masters of assemblies' are the seven 'lamps' that make up one 'star' in Christ's hand. The seven stars in His right hand are given by Christ to walk and minister with Him as He walks among His lampstand churches. **Rev 1:20**.

When the word that pierces our heart is received, and we do not turn our eyes from the eyes of Christ that are as a flame of fire, the goad of the word becomes nails that secure us to the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings. The nails that hold us to the cross are the Law of Christ. This is the Royal Law of love. Paul called it 'the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus'. **Rom 8:2**. The law of the Spirit of life is *exanastasis*, or resurrection life.

We are admonished by Christ to join Him and His travailing prayer in Gethsemane. We are able to mourn with Him by the power of Eternal Spirit, to join His offering, and to be born again from the death of sin. As we join the fellowship of the word that is preached by Christ's messengers, we are dying and living with Christ by *exanastasis*, which is the Spirit of life that is in Christ Jesus. This Law of Christ makes us free from the law of sin and death, because the fellowship of Christ's death and resurrection is the means by which the other law, which brings us into captivity to the law of sin, is removed from us. **Rom 8:2. Rom 7:23**.

## His feet as fine brass

Jesus Christ revealed Himself to the presbytery in Thyatira as the Son of God who has eyes like a flame of fire and feet like fine brass, as though refined in a furnace. **Rev 2:18**. This feature of His ministry to His lampstand churches symbolises the pathway of repentance from dead works. In this regard, Christ's feet show us how to walk the pathway of repentance that He authored through His travail.

Christ demonstrated the vehement desire of repentance in Gethsemane as He prayed on our behalf that only the Father's will should be done in our lives. **Mat 26:39**. Of course, Christ did not speak from shame as He prayed. Christ was blessed by Eternal Spirit and was able to become poor in spirit and to mourn unto repentance, on our behalf.

Jesus asked Peter, James and John to watch and pray *with Him*. **Mar 14:33–42**. Christ's sorrow in Gethsemane was *godly sorrow*. He sorrowed in a godly manner by the power of Eternal Spirit. **Luk 22:43–44**. **Heb 9:14**. Jesus wanted Peter, James and John to learn the secret of godly sorrow, which is exercised through the power of Eternal Spirit. However, they were unable to watch and pray with Jesus because they fell asleep for sorrow. **Luk 22:45**.

Through his apostolic word, Paul was able to introduce the Corinthian church to godly sorrow that would lead them to repentance. **2Co 7:9–12**. Through the ministry of this word, Paul was able to reveal Christ to the Corinthians as the One whose feet were as brass refined in a furnace. We know that the Corinthians found repentance. They experienced the refining capacity of the fire of godly sorrow, which produced diligence in them, so that they cleared themselves and found vindication through zealous indignation, fear and vehement desire. In all things, they were able to clear themselves through repentance, and then to clothe themselves in the true garments of priesthood.

## Two kinds of sight

In the Scriptures, 'sight' is a much broader concept than simply a person's ability to 'see'. It refers to how we 'know' and come to 'understanding'. In this regard, there are two kinds of sight. The first sight is *the knowledge of Christ* that a person receives by eating the fruit of the tree of life. In comparison with the excellence of this knowledge, the apostle Paul counted every other way of knowing and living as loss and as rubbish. **Php 3:8**. He obtained the knowledge of Christ by being conformed to Christ's death and to the fellowship of His sufferings. **Php 3:10**. This was the implication of his ongoing participation in the elements of the communion. **1Co 10:16**. The knowledge, or sight, obtained in this fellowship is *exanastasis*. **Php 3:11**. *Exanastasis* is the resurrection life of God that a person receives in their mortal body. It is the light and sight of those who receive the life of God in the fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings, as a member of His body. **Joh 1:4**.

True sight, found in the fellowship of Yahweh, was forfeited by mankind when Adam and Eve ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil in an endeavour to live by a different knowledge. The second kind of sight – the sight that they obtained by eating this fruit – is *self-knowledge*. The Scripture recorded that 'the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked'. **Gen 3:7**. Their awareness of their nakedness was not only the realisation that they were not wearing any clothes. They also recognised that there was no life, nor works of enduring value, outside of their fellowship with God. Death was the inevitable consequence of their nakedness, and they were afraid.

## Two kinds of fig leaves

Adam and Eve were ashamed of their fear, which was caused by their nakedness. Driven by shame, they manufactured coverings out of fig leaves and hid themselves from God. **Gen 3:7,10**. As a consequence of the Fall, covering oneself with figurative fig leaves is the default initiative that every person who lives according to the flesh takes toward their life. These 'fig leaves' are projections to cover the shame of their failing self image. They encompass the way in which a person lives – what they do, and how they interact with others.

We can identify two primary projections of the flesh that are driven by shame – *inferiority* and *insecurity*. These two 'fig leaves' are the ways of knowing oneself and of engaging with others according to the flesh. Because we are all born with another law in our heart, we all have these identity complexities. We note that Adam and Eve sewed fig *leaves* together. This highlights the reality that our carnal responses are driven by *both* insecurity and inferiority. However, it is evident that people tend to exhibit a temperamental propensity toward one or the other of these shame motivated projections.

Our deliverance from living this way begins by receiving the gospel of sonship. Christ, the Messenger of this covenant, first comes to us, saying, 'Do not be afraid, I am your shield of faith.' **Gen 15:1. Eph 6:16**. Having received this faith, we are able to present ourselves for participation in the offering and sufferings of Christ. **Gen 15:8–18. Rom 12:1**. This is what it means to receive 'our introduction by faith into this grace in which we stand'. **Rom 5:1–2**. In this fellowship of grace, we are delivered from our fallen ways of knowing and seeing, and are recipients of the blessing of God's life. As this life abounds within us, we are increasingly able to see and to know the truth about God, and about ourselves and others.

## A propensity to inferiority

People who have a tendency towards *inferiority* use their own fleshly law to establish and promote their integrity, and to judge the integrity of others. This mode of engagement was most acutely demonstrated by the disciple, Peter. In response to Christ's prophetic statement regarding the scattering of the sheep in the course of His offering, Peter declared, 'Even if all are made to stumble because of You, I will never be made to stumble.' **Mat 26:33**.

Those who have a temperamental propensity to inferiority are often *competitive*. This does not necessarily mean that they are disposed to engagement in sport or games but, rather, that their sense of self is found through their comparisons with others. **2Co 10:12**. Their actions and decisions are often influenced by their perceptions of the success or failure of others, and by their need to remain comparable and relevant to them. **Luk 18:11**. These people find identity verification through their 'success', which they use as the basis for their judgements of themselves and of where they fit within the social order.

The competitive person believes in the validity of the Law in distinguishing the superior from the inferior. This measure is the reference point for their integrity, and for their judgements of the integrity of others. If they compete 'lawfully' – that is, they engage in a particular context with integrity – they consider that their superiority or inferiority is justified, and that any resulting accolades are warranted. **Mat 6:5**. They have very little tolerance, however, for those who obtain recognition or advancement without observing the recognised standards of conduct in a particular setting. **Mar 6:3. Luk 20:20**. They are seen to have 'cheated'. Such a mindset may be evident in academic circles, sporting settings, and even in relational contexts, such as service teams at church.

## Inferiority and insecurity

Those who measure themselves as being *inferior* are typically loyal, amicable, and willing to serve. However, because of their belief in their integrity, and because of their competitive disposition, they are often unable to receive and to obey the word of Christ that is spoken by another, particularly if they perceive that person to be weaker or less apt than themselves. **1Ti 4:12.**

Although these people have an agreeable demeanour, they often remain alienated within their communities because of their judgement of themselves and of others. **Pro 18:1.** They behave as benefactors towards those whom they judge to be inferior to themselves, but are compliant and loyal to those whom they view as being superior. **Luk 22:25.** This disposition is common among successful businesspeople, and also among those who aspire to clergy style leadership roles within the church.

People with a temperamental propensity to *insecurity* use their judgements of good and evil to establish a ground for their security and identity expression. Perfectionism with self recrimination results when they do not measure successfully to the projected standards that they set for themselves. Internal emotional conflict and self deprecation stress the individual with anxiety. **Luk 6:37.**

Whereas the relational tendency of the inferior is *competitiveness*, the insecure tend to be *combative*. Their reactions towards others are expressions of control, for the purpose of self verification. Combative responses are used to overpower a perceived threat. This can manifest as either a 'fight' or 'flight' reaction.

Those who tend to respond to life in this manner are not so much concerned about where they fit in relation to others but, rather, about whether the 'good' that they have established for themselves is realised through their endeavours and is acknowledged by others. **Mat 6:2.** The achievement of this good, and the value that others give to them as a consequence of their exploits, becomes their source of identity verification. **Joh 5:44.**

## Anger is the fruit of shame

Anger, or wrath, is an unavoidable fruit of shame. It is the response of a person who falls short of the righteousness to which they aspire in the flesh. It reveals their frustration because of failure, and their resolve to contend with any perceived impediment to the attainment of this righteousness. However, the Scriptures are clear: 'The wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of God'. **Jas 1:20**. Instead, such responses only serve to bring an angry person under the condemnation of the Law. **Mat 5:22**. The answer to the failure of our self knowledge, and to the futile projections that bring forth the fruit of anger, is to be swift to hear the word of God, slow to speak, and slow to wrath. **Jas 1:19**.

The basis and expression of anger in a person who tends toward inferiority is *jealousy*, which is motivated by the fear of rejection and victimisation. Cain's murderous anger, which surfaced when his offering was rejected by God and Abel's offering was accepted, is a notable example of the anger that springs from inferiority. **Gen 4:4-5**.

In the insecure person, *depression*, because of their failure to achieve the standard of good to which they aspire, is the basis of their anger. The threat of harm or destruction because of their failure, whether self defined or as judged by others, causes a strong reaction. This can be directed at themselves and at others.

The fellowship of Christ's offering and sufferings is the only means by which we are able to be delivered from living by fear and shame, expressed through the projections of inferiority and insecurity. This has both a personal and a relational implication for us. That is, our daily and individual participation in Christ's offering and sufferings is contingent upon our receiving the word of faith that is ministered at the Lord's communion table, and upon walking in the light of His word as part of the community of the body of Christ. **1Jn 1:7**.

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FURTHER STUDY JAMES 3

## The solution to shame

The Lord comes to us as the Son of God who has eyes as a flame of fire and feet like fine brass as though refined in a furnace. **Rev 1:14–15. Rev 2:18.** The Lord firstly addresses the fruit of our shame as the One with the solution. Then He addresses the source of our shame with its inferiorities and insecurities. His eyes of fire expose our innermost thoughts and the motivations of our other law. In this regard, they reveal the shame of our nakedness. As the apostle Paul noted, 'There is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account'. **Heb 4:13.**

It is most important that we do not draw back in unbelief and shame when Christ meets us in this way. The Lord Himself said, 'If anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.' **Heb 10:38.** This means that such a person is not a recipient of His life. Instead, they continue to walk in the darkness of their own way, which leads to death. Although Christ's eyes expose the shame of our nakedness, this is not the primary reason why He meets us in this way. His eyes, as a flame of fire, reveal the fellowship of love, which the Scriptures describe as 'a vehement flame that waters cannot quench'. **Son 8:6 7.**

The Lord wants us to be delivered from the vain and fleeting projections that are motivated by shame. This happens through our fellowship in the circumcision of Christ. In Him, we are clothed with garments of righteousness. **Isa 61:10. Rev 3:5,18.** These garments represent the mandate of our name and works as sons of God. In Christ, we are made adequate for our service as kings and priests to God. As we, by offering, fulfil the works of sonship that belong to our name, we are becoming the righteousness of God in Christ.





Restoring  
my Soul