



Restoring my Soul

HE RESTORES MY SOUL, HE LEADS ME IN PATHS

PSA 23:3

SEPTEMBER 2022

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A FIVE DAY DEVOTIONAL GUIDE

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Walking properly in the day

In his letter to the Romans, the apostle Paul explained that God's Law is fulfilled through one commandment; namely, 'You shall love your neighbour *as yourself*'. **Rom 13:9**. Love is expressed through *servicing*, as we lay down our life for others. **Gal 5:13. Joh 15:13**. In order to love another, we must first learn to serve, or love, ourselves. If we do not love ourselves in this manner, the nature of the love that we extend to our neighbours will be a projection. We will be practising a lie.

Serving ourselves requires us to give attention to our daily routine. With this in view, Paul wrote, 'Now it is high time to awake out of sleep; for now our salvation is nearer than when we first believed'. **Rom 13:11**. Those who are obtaining their salvation are not given to 'sleeping in'. Rather, each day, they wake at a reasonable time, and devotionally present themselves for fellowship in the offering and sufferings of Christ. They are oriented to the works that belong to their sonship.

Continuing his instruction, Paul wrote, 'The night is far spent, the day is at hand. Therefore let us cast off the works of darkness, and let us put on the armour of light'. **Rom 13:12**. If we do not get to bed at a reasonable hour, because our activities extend inordinately late into the night, we will be susceptible to, and overtaken by, the works of darkness. Furthermore, our fatigue will undermine our capacity to fulfil God's will for our life as a son of light. **1Th 5:4-8**.

Paul concluded his exhortation by writing, 'Let us walk properly, as in the day'. **Rom 13:13-14**. Paul's instruction to walk 'properly', can also be translated as 'decently'. It refers to the way in which we attend to our person and are aware of our impact on others. This way of life is necessary, not only for our maturity *as sons of God*; it is also beneficial for our *natural*, physical, and psychological wellbeing.

Further Study ROMANS 13

Giving all diligence

The apostle Peter addressed the nature of our conduct as Christians by saying, 'Giving all diligence, add to your faith virtue.' **2Pe 1:5**. Diligence is essential to routine. It is the decent activities of faithfulness that result in *virtue*. A *virtuous* person exhibits a tidy and efficient life. They are who they appear to be. Their 'yes' is 'yes', and their 'no' is 'no', revealing their faithfulness. They do not, for example, tidy up their living quarters only when people come to visit, so as to maintain a good appearance to others. In contrast, a slovenly person is lazy, untidy, disorganised, and slipshod in their work. That is, they fail to complete the tasks to which they are given.

Paul taught that the key to having a successful, warm, and fellowshiping community, which is a group of close friends, is to have the mindset of Christ. **Php 2:1-8**. The mindset and culture of Christ is to be a *servant*. Christ demonstrated this culture among His disciples when, at the last Passover, He dressed as a servant, took a towel, and washed His disciples' feet. **Joh 13:3-5**.

John, the apostle, emphasised what Jesus did at this meal, by providing the details of His service. John recounted that Jesus rose from the supper, laid aside His garments, took a towel, and girded Himself with it. After that, He poured water into a basin and began to wash the disciples' feet, and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded.

We note, in this lesson, the diligent detail that Christ went to as a servant. Christ completed this work of hygiene properly. **Pro 4:23**. He fully immersed Himself in the work of a servant. He identified Himself as a servant by using the towel that He clothed Himself with, as an instrument, with which He washed and dried His disciples' feet. He was diligent to initiate and to complete, in detail, the work that He was to do for that day. **Pro 10:4**.

Fellowship or tradition

Jesus' example and instruction concerning personal hygiene and serving others, when He washed the feet of His disciples, was for the purpose of establishing His disciples in the culture of *agape*. **Joh 13:15**. His teaching stood in stark contrast to what He described as 'the commandments of men', relating to hand washing. In this regard, Jesus was approached by the scribes and Pharisees, who asked, 'Why do Your disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread.' **Mat 15:2**.

In response, Jesus identified them as 'hypocrites', asking them why they transgressed the commandment of God because of their *traditions*. **Mat 15:3**. He quoted the words of the prophet Isaiah, 'These people draw near to Me with their mouth, and honour Me with their lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men.' **Mat 15:8-9**.

In this passage of Isaiah's prophecy, which Jesus quoted, the Lord said that the fear of the people had been taught through the commandments of men. The fear that they had learned through the commandments of men, motivated their observance of catechisms and sacred rites, which were bereft of life. It revealed that their religious observance was motivated by the fear of death. They had not learned the fear of the Lord by meeting Him personally, eye to eye and heart to heart. **Isa 29:13**.

Jesus drew the multitude to Himself and explained that it is not what goes into our mouth that defiles us but, rather, it is what proceeds out of our mouth. **Mat 15:10-11**. This is because 'from out of the heart the mouth speaks'. **Luk 6:45**. The disciples informed Jesus that the Pharisees were offended by His teaching. He responded to them, saying, 'Let them alone.' **Mat 15:14**. He was calling them to forsake this fleshly, religious culture so that they could be instructed and established in the fellowship of *agape*.

Further Study COLOSSIANS 2

The abominations in the temple

The prophet Ezekiel recounted a vision that he had received as he sat in his house with the elders of Judah. The hand of the Lord God took Ezekiel by a lock of his hair, and the Spirit lifted him up between heaven and earth, bringing him, in a vision, to Jerusalem, and to the door of the north gate of the inner court of the temple. **Eze 8:3**. Here, the Lord showed Ezekiel the abominable idolatry of 'the house of Israel'.

It is significant that Ezekiel saw that these idolatrous abominations were being perpetrated in the temple and its courts. The people were not building new sites for the worship of idols; nor were they worshipping in foreign sacred places. The implication is that the people presumed that their idolatrous, religious practices were consistent with the customs of the temple. **Psa 50:21**. However, in reality, they were no different from the rituals that marked the idolatry of the Gentile nations. In other words, these citizens of 'the house of Israel' believed that their darkness was light. **Mat 6:22-23**.

In the first case, the Lord brought Ezekiel to the door of the court and instructed him to dig a hole into the wall, where he found another door. Directed by the Lord, Ezekiel entered through the door. He found himself in a room with images of creeping things, abominable beasts, and the idols of the house of Israel, portrayed as pictures on the walls. In front of these images, seventy elders of the house of Israel, each having a censer in his hand, burned incense, symbolising prayer. **Eze 8:8-11**.

The Lord described their idolatrous practices as the activities that the elders did in the dark, each one in the room of their idols. Ezekiel was being shown those who presumed to pray in the house of the Lord; but, in secret, participated in activities that were unclean. **Eze 8:12**. This practice was not only idolatrous but, also, invited unclean spirits into their houses.

The worship of Tammuz

The Lord then directed Ezekiel's attention to even greater abominations. He brought Ezekiel to the north gate of the temple, where women were sitting and weeping for 'Tammuz'. **Eze 8:13-14**. In Babylonian mythology, Tammuz was the god of fertility who possessed powers for new life in nature, which were manifest in Spring. It was believed that he died annually and was reborn year after year, representing the yearly cycle of the seasons and the crops.

Tammuz is one example of what some anthropologists have categorised as 'dying and rising gods' that are represented in many civilisations. Several Bible commentators have associated Tammuz with the worship of the Greek mythological figure Adonis, who has also been categorised in this manner.

The women, whom Ezekiel observed at the door of the gate of the Lord's house, evidently identified themselves as belonging to the house of the Lord. **Eze 33:31**. They were weeping for a 'dying and living god' whom they believed empowered their capacity to bring forth children. Their expression of devotion towards this figure was a perverted love which, in other cultures, motivated sexual promiscuity. They believed in this 'god's' capacity to overcome death with new life and, in so doing, they would attain the romantic culture to which they aspired.

The worship expression of these women was corrupt because they had not sought deliverance from the delusion that is associated with the Fall. We recall that Eve, representing all women, coveted what belonged to God. **Gen 3:4-6**. She wanted God's unique capacity as the source of creation to be the basis of her motherhood. She ate the fruit that belonged exclusively to God, in order to become the *origin of multiplication*. This was the life that she coveted.

Further Study GENESIS 3

A corrupted weeping

A carnal woman believes that, in the family, she is like God. She views herself as the beginning of a house, and believes that a family is created from her. She covets this role as an expression of motherhood; and then she proceeds to live by this principle. This is her delusion, and also the mark of her rejection of headship.

In the course of His offering journey, Jesus encountered women whose weeping seemed to indicate such a delusion. Note the account of Luke, who wrote, 'And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, "Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed are the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?"' **Luk 23:27-31.**

Unless these women began to mourn for their own fallen condition and its effect on their children, their devotion to Christ would be little more than an idolatrous expression belonging to the abominations of the natural temple and city, upon which condemnation had already been proclaimed. **Jer 8:5-6. Jer 8:12.** Their end would be the same as the city's and the temple's end.

Jesus described this fallen feminine influence in the church as 'the teaching of Jezebel'. He rebuked the presbytery in Thyatira, saying, 'I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent.' **Rev 2:20-21.**

The worship of the sun

The Lord brought Ezekiel into the inner court of the Lord's house and, at the door of the temple, between the porch and the altar, were twenty-five men with their backs toward the temple. They were not facing the throne, where the fellowship of Yahweh abides. Rather, they were facing the East and worshipping the sun. **Eze 8:16.**

While it is quite possible that these men were actually worshipping a pagan sun god, it is more likely that the way in which they presumed to worship God was no different from the worship of solar deities in other cultures. Sun worship is a form of idolatry that was featured in most ancient civilisations. A common characteristic of this pagan worship was the sovereignty of the sun god over the other nominated deities. **Deu 4:19.**

This form of worship in the church is apparent in the rejection of the fellowship of headship as both the administration of the word, and the context in which we walk in the light. **1Jn 1:7.** In this regard, we note that the sun worshippers were standing on the threshold of the temple, but facing East. **Num 2:3. Col 2:18-19.**

We note this corruption of church administration and worship in the hierarchical organisations of many denominations. In fact, this understanding of authority, which is the rejection of the name of Yahweh, is enshrined in the doctrinal decrees upon which a number of churches are built. Consider, for example, this hierarchical view in the Westminster Confession – 'The Father is of none, neither begotten nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father; the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son'.

A fundamental implication of the Westminster Confession is that the Son's existence depends on, and is sourced from, the Father; and the Holy Spirit's existence depends on the Father and the Son. This perceived hierarchy in the Godhead is viewed as an unassailable implication of the inherent distinctions between the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. It demonstrates a fleshly blindness to the fellowship of offering that is fundamental to Yahweh *Elohim*. **Joh 17:3-5.**

Further Study 1 JOHN 1

The overseership of the city

Having made known to Ezekiel the abominable practices of those who presumed to belong to the society of the temple, the Lord called out, 'Let those who have charge over the city draw near, each with a deadly weapon in his hand!' **Eze 9:1**. Six men, having battle axes in their hands, drew near from the upper gate which faced north. One of the men among them was clothed in linen and had an inkhorn in his hand. Most commentators agree that this man was in addition to the six men wielding weapons. These seven men were *overseers* of the city, appointed by the Lord. **Eze 9:2**.

Yahweh directed the man who was clothed with linen and adorned with an inkhorn, saying, 'Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and put a mark on the foreheads of the men who sigh and cry over all the abominations that are done within it.' **Eze 9:4**. While this man could have been a theophany of Christ, it is also possible that he was part of the overseership of the city. Linen clothing was worn by the high priest on the Day of Atonement; however, it was also the attire of the priests for their daily service in the temple. **Lev 16:4. Eze 44:16-17**.

Alluding to the work of overseers who were marking those who sigh and cry, the apostle Paul wrote, 'Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, *as those who must give account*. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.' **Heb 13:17**. In his letter to the Romans, Paul listed the names of those whom he considered to be *approved in Christ*. **Rom 16:3-15**. Significantly, Paul distinguished these firstfruits brethren from those who caused divisions and offences through their preference for doctrines that they had not learned from Paul. He said that they 'do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly, and by smooth words and flattering speech deceive the hearts of the simple.' **Rom 16:17-18**.

Those who sigh and cry

A person does not 'sigh and cry over the abominations' in the house of Israel by pointing out, or even lamenting, what they perceive to be the inadequacies of the presbytery or of the church. The Lord described this behaviour as 'the pointing of the finger', and identified it as a characteristic of those who are transgressors and slaves of sin. **Isa 58:1,9.**

A person begins to sigh and cry when they do not hide themselves from their own flesh. **Isa 58:6-7.** That is, they respond with repentance and faith to the word of the Lord that is proclaimed by His messengers to them and their household. Because of this, they are able to mourn for the iniquity and sin that causes desolation in the church, in the same manner as Daniel mourned; that is, by the faith that comes by receiving the word of present truth. **Dan 9:4-7,12-14.**

Those who mourn in this manner are known by the presbytery because they are *joined* to the fellowship of the presbytery. Describing the culture of this fellowship, the apostle John testified, 'That which was from the beginning, which we have *heard*, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have *looked* upon, and our hands have *handled*, concerning the Word of life.' **1Jn 1:1.** Those who are joined to the fellowship of the presbytery, likewise, have an ear to hear the proceeding word; they receive *illumination* that comes by the Spirit; they *look* upon Christ whom they have pierced, and mourn for their sin with the sorrow that leads to repentance; and they participate in the *expression* of the word, according to their sanctification.

After giving His instructions to the man with the inkhorn, the Lord then directed the other men who had battle axes in their hands, saying, 'Go after him through the city and kill; do not let your eye spare, nor have any pity ... but do not come near anyone on whom is the mark; and begin at My sanctuary'. **Eze 9:5-6.**

Further Study DANIEL 9

The weapons of our warfare

The ‘destroying weapons’ in the hands of these presbyters were also described as ‘shattering weapons’. The apostle Paul referred to these weapons in his second letter to the Corinthians, writing, ‘For the weapons of our warfare are not carnal but mighty in God for pulling down strongholds ... bringing every thought into captivity to the obedience of Christ, and being ready to punish all disobedience when your obedience is fulfilled.’ **2Co 10:4-6**.

The word, which brings the judgement of God upon a person, is not wielded by overseers with malice or the intent to harm. Rather, in obedience to the Father, they speak the word of truth that makes a distinction between darkness and light, and between what is unclean and clean. **Eph 4:11-15. Eze 44:23**. The effect of this word depends on how a person receives it. Those who receive and believe this message are connected to the process through which they can be delivered from their iniquity, cleansed of their sin, and established in their sanctification as part of the body of Christ. **2Pe 2:4,9**. However, those who reject the word are polarised out of the heavenly city, where they are forgotten by God. This is the desolating effect of the spiritual weapons of warfare in the hands of the presbytery.

Jesus addressed these two effects of His word – the nomination of those who were part of His people, and the desolation of the disobedient – saying, ‘And shall God not avenge *His own elect who cry out day and night to Him*, though He bears long with them? I tell you that He will avenge them speedily. Nevertheless, when the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?’ **Luk 18:7-8**. The elect, who sigh and cry to the Lord day and night, are being built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets as part of the walls of the heavenly Jerusalem. However, those who reject this message are devoid of faith, and are reserved for the judgement that belongs to those who remain outside the heavenly city. **Rev 14:19-20**.

Bloodshed and perversity

After the sovereign judgement of God upon the city, Ezekiel noted that *he was left alone*. **Eze 9:8**. There was not one person left alive in the temple, nor in the city of Jerusalem. We know that this prophecy was graphically fulfilled when natural Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus in AD70. Aware of the magnitude of this desolation, Ezekiel fell on his face and cried out to the Lord, saying, 'Ah, Lord God! Will You destroy all the remnant of Israel in pouring out Your fury on Jerusalem?' **Eze 9:8**.

In response, the Lord said to Ezekiel, 'The iniquity of the house of Israel and Judah is exceedingly great, and the land is full of *bloodshed*, and the city full of *perversity*; for they say, "The Lord has forsaken the land, and the Lord does not see!" And as for Me also, My eye will neither spare, nor will I have pity, but I will recompense their deeds on their own head.' **Eze 9:9-10**.

The *bloodshed* in the land is the effect of the murderous and backbiting tongue that persists in the church. **2Co 12:20**. This describes the communication of those who, motivated by envy and self seeking, speak evil of the church and its leaders, seeking their destruction. It gives rise to divisions, strife, and relational reservations. **Jas 4:1-2**.

The *perversity* describes all the behaviours, attitudes, and expectations of those within a community of faith, that are contrary to the culture of godliness that is defined by sound doctrine. It is a great wickedness when these unclean practices are overlooked, and even embraced, in the church, under the guise of religious love and the presumption of God's unconditional forgiveness. **1Co 5:1-2**.

While the Lord's eye does not spare in judgement upon the bloodshed and uncleanness of His holy city, His eyes are also the means by which deliverance and cleansing are obtained by those who do mourn and find repentance in response to His word. This was the promise that He made through the prophet Isaiah. **Isa 3:8**. **Isa 61:3**.

Further Study JAMES 3

Cleansing the city

The Lord, through Isaiah, addressed the way in which His heavenly city would be cleansed of depravity and bloodshed. He introduced this subject by making known the condition of His bride city, which was in need of cleansing. He said, 'And in that day seven women shall take hold of one man, saying, "We will eat our own food and wear our own apparel; only let us be called by your name, to take away our reproach"'. **Isa 4:1**.

These seven women represent the fullness of what should be a chaste church, betrothed to one Man, Christ. **2Co 11:2**. However, it is clear that these seven women had been deceived by Satan. They had been corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ, because they had given their ear to other 'gospels'. **2Co 11:3**. Accordingly, the leaders and congregants of their churches believed in their freedom to choose the word, or food, by which they would live. Furthermore, they presumed to be the origin of their own ministry expression, symbolised by the assertion that they would wear their own apparel. Yet, they expected Christ, their Betrothed, to *vicariously* deliver them from the consequences of their sin.

The Lord then said, 'In that day the Branch of the Lord shall be beautiful and glorious; and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and appealing for those of Israel who have escaped'. **Isa 4:2**. This is an amazing statement. 'The Branch of the Lord' refers to the overcomers in a lampstand church. The overcoming remnant will be left in Zion and remain in the heavenly Jerusalem. **Isa 4:3**. They are called 'sanctified', meaning that they are sons of God who are born in the city and are finding deliverance from the uncleanness that would exclude them from the city. Significantly, their names are written in the tree of life, the substance of which is fed to them through the fruit of the tree of life as they participate in the Lord's *agape* meal. **Rev 2:7**.

The effect of His eyes

In his letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul exhorted those who believed his word to separate themselves from the alternative cultures that do not belong to the heavenly Jerusalem. He described the conversation and conduct of these contrary cultures as 'lawlessness, darkness, and idolatry'. He implored those with an ear to hear, saying, 'You are the temple of the living God. As God has said: "I will dwell in them and walk among them. I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Therefore "Come out from among them and be separate, says the Lord. Do not touch what is unclean, and I will receive you. I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty"'. **2Co 6:16-18**.

Through Isaiah, the Lord explained how those who belong to His holy city are delivered from the uncleanness and idolatry that would otherwise mark their connection to the harlot woman. He said that He would wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion and would purge the blood of Jerusalem 'by the spirit of judgement and by the spirit of burning'. **Isa 4:4**. This spirit of judgement and burning is the effect of His eyes, which are as a flame of fire. **Rev 1:14**.

The apostle Paul directed our attention to this cleansing work in his letter to the Hebrews. He wrote, 'Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. For 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. And 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 4:11-13**.

Further Study MALACHI 3

The separating process

To those who disobey His word, the eyes of the Lord initiate the judgement that excludes them from entering the rest that belongs to their citizenship in the heavenly Jerusalem. He swears in His wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' **Heb 4:2-3**. These people come under the judgement of God because they are not marked as those who sigh and cry for the abominations that Christ's eyes reveal in their own heart, and in the congregation of which they are part.

In contrast, those who do not draw back from Christ's eyes when His word pierces their heart are made aware of the uncleanness associated with their iniquity and sin. They confess, as Isaiah did, 'Woe is me, for I am undone! Because I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts.' **Isa 6:5**. They are joined to the process, through which they can find deliverance from their own iniquity, cleansing from their sin, and can bear witness to this process as those who are concerned for the sanctification of the Lord's house.

John the Baptist identified this process, which is initiated by the eyes of Christ, as being baptism with the Holy Spirit and fire. He declared, 'He will baptise you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly clean out His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.' **Mat 3:11-12**.

The psalmist warned that the ungodly are not planted by streams of living water in the bride city. Rather, they are 'like the chaff which the wind drives away. Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, but the way of the ungodly shall perish.' **Psa 1:4-6**.

Jannes and Jambres

In his first letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul described those who were unclean in the church, who were demonically oppressed, and were driven to evangelise others to the worship of their idols. **2Ti 3:1-5**. Paul then continued, saying, 'For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. Now as *Jannes* and *Jambres* resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was.' **2Ti 3:6-9**.

Jannes and Jambres were two of the sorcerers who resisted Moses as he ministered God's deliverance to the children of Israel from their captivity in Egypt. In their first interaction with the Egyptian magicians, Moses directed Aaron to cast his rod before Pharaoh, where it became a serpent. Jannes and Jambres cast their rods to the ground, whereupon they also became serpents. Aaron's rod swallowed up the rods that belonged to the magicians, revealing the authority and priority of Moses and Aaron over the magicians and their sorcery. **Exo 7:9-12**.

Yet, Pharaoh hardened his heart. Therefore, the Lord directed Moses to turn water into blood. The magicians were able to turn water to blood with their enchantments, as well. Similarly, the Egyptian magicians were also able to bring up frogs on the land of Egypt by their enchantments. **Exo 7:17. Exo 7:22. Exo 8:6. Exo 8:7**.

However, when Moses directed Aaron to stretch out his rod and strike the dust of the land so that it became lice throughout all the land of Egypt, the sorcerers were unable to bring forth lice through their enchantments. They said to Pharaoh, 'This is the finger of God.' **Exo 8:18-19**. Then, with the fourth plague, the Lord distinguished between the children of Israel and the nation of Egypt.

Further Study EXODUS 7

The finger of God

Jesus referred to 'the finger of God' during His own ministry. In response to the claim that He cast out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of demons, Jesus said, 'Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation, and a house divided against a house falls. If Satan also is divided against himself, how will his kingdom stand ... but if I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you.' **Luk 11:17-20.**

What is the point that we must understand? Jannes and Jambres ministered by the power of enchantments, enabled by demonic spirits. Paul was highlighting that those in the church who are lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, etc, are similarly beset by unclean and familiar spirits. **2Ti 3:2-5.** These spirits feed upon, and are energised by, a person's uncleanness. Unless they receive the ministry of the finger of God, through which they can be cleansed of their bloodshed and perversity, they have no access to, or part in, the kingdom of heaven. In fact, they are outside the city and are enemies of Christ. **Rev 22:14-15.**

The finger of God is extended towards a person in this condition through the ministry of messengers who are part of a presbytery in the hand of Christ. **Rev 1:20.** The Lord extends this cleansing initiative to all of His people, and we are all in need of His mercy in this regard. Those who receive the word that brings this deliverance are those who sigh and cry for the abominations that are in their lives, in their families, and in the church. **Eze 9:4.** Sons of God who are illuminated in this way will not endeavour to embrace those whose conduct reveals their uncleanness. **2Ch 19:2. Psalms 45:7.** Rather, in humility, and by taking heed to themselves, they will testify of the process through which a person can be delivered from the kingdom of darkness and into the light that is the fellowship of the heavenly city. **1Ti 4:16.**

Blessed is the man

The outcome for a person who is fully participating in the fellowship of the Lord's word is beautifully summarised in Psalm 1. The psalmist begins, 'Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful; but his delight is in the Law of the Lord, and in His Law he meditates day and night'. **Psa 1:1-2**. The blessing that a person obtains through their delight in the word of the Lord is the blessing that was promised to Abraham. This is the blessing of sonship that belongs to those who are born of the Spirit. **Rom 4:16**.

The psalmist continued, 'He shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that brings forth its fruit in its season, whose leaf also shall not wither; and whatever he does shall prosper'. **Psa 1:3**. In the book of Revelation, John observed this very principle, writing, 'And he showed me a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding from the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the tree of life, which bore twelve fruits, each tree yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations.' **Rev 22:1-2**.

The sons of God are trees planted by the river of life. They are planted there because their sin and uncleanness are being washed away by this water. Being rooted and grounded in the culture of '*agape*', they are able to draw deeply from the water of the word, which is Spirit and life to them. **Eph 5:25-26**. Consequently, the fruit of their lips is a spiritual ministry of life to others. **Heb 13:14-15**. Through prayer, their figurative leaves minister healing to those who are responding to the call to come out from the kingdom of darkness and to be born as a son of light and a citizen of the New Jerusalem.

Further Study PSALM 1

Oppression by unclean spirits

Oppression by familiar and unclean spirits is proportional to our withdrawal from *agape* fellowship. When we withdraw from relationships with others in the church, we are not rightly discerning the Lord's body. The apostle Paul said that for this reason many are weak, and sick, and some even die before their time. **1Co 11:29-30**.

Considering ourselves to be the victim of the rejection of others is a withdrawal from *agape* fellowship. As a victim, we consider ourselves to be righteous because, by definition, we have not been the aggressor. We feel that we have the right to indulge ourselves in self-righteous anger and reaction, which we direct towards those who have offended us. This reaction may not necessarily be overt, but can be sophisticated as we avoid engagement with our nominated antagonists.

However, these responses are 'the emotions of sin', which are stirred up within us when we exercise our other law. **Rom 7:5**. Paul explained that living by the other law brings us into bondage, or captivity, to Satan. **Rom 7:23**. He feeds on the energy associated with the passions that are aroused within us, causing us anxiety, fatigue, and sickness.

Following the fall of mankind, the Lord God cursed the devil, saying, 'You shall eat dust all the days of your life.' **Gen 3:14**. Satan would no longer be sustained by the food of angels. Rather, he would feed on fallen mankind, of whom the Lord God said, 'For dust you are, and to dust you shall return.' **Gen 3:19**.

The apostle James described how Satan feeds on those who are unclean. He noted that when we are beset by bitter envy and self-seeking, there is a wisdom that we presume to possess. This self-righteous wisdom is based on our knowledge of good and evil. That is, it belongs to those who are *earthly*, rather than *heavenly*. It becomes sensual, or emotive, and then demonic. **Jas 3:14-15**. Significantly, James explained that 'where envy and self-seeking exist, confusion and *every evil thing are there*.' **Jas 3:16**.

Further Study ROMANS 7

The disempowerment of Satan

Maintaining our right to be a victim is motivated by our other law. This is the wisdom that is earthly and sensual, which makes us vulnerable to the oppression of demonic spirits. Our envy and self-seeking, which Satan only inflames, separate us from *agape* fellowship, which we noted earlier, results in weakness and sickness.

Jesus answered this dilemma for us when He was nailed to the cross. His prayer, which He prayed on our behalf, was, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do.' **Luk 23:34**. In this prayerful statement, Jesus took the Law out of the way, and mercy triumphed over judgement. **Col 2:13-14**. **Jas 2:13**. Satan and His power was destroyed, and the other law, which he fathered within us, lost its power. **Heb 2:14-15**. We were given access to the heavenly places, and also given the work of casting Satan down from heaven. **Luk 10:18-20**. **Rev 12:10-11**.

We fulfil this work as we join Christ's offering, made available to us in the fellowship of His cross, from day to day. As we participate in the offering prayer that Jesus made from the cross, we find deliverance from our other law, which feeds power to Satan as the means for our destruction or sickness. **Rom 7:23**. We are able to bless those who curse us and, thereby, demonstrate that we are a son of our Father in heaven. **Luk 6:27-28**. **Rom 12:14**.

Satan, who would otherwise oppress us, is disempowered as we participate in the offering and sufferings of Christ. He cannot touch us, nor exercise any power over us. In fact, the Lord has declared to Satan that the sons of God will recognise his impotence, saying, 'Those who see you will gaze at you, and consider you, saying: "Is this the man who made the earth tremble, who shook kingdoms, who made the world as a wilderness and destroyed its cities, who did not open the house of his prisoners?"' **Isa 14:16-17**.

Further Study LUKE 10

A steadfast spirit

King David exemplified the response of faith that we can make in the face of behaviour that we perceive to be mistreatment or injustice. As David fled Jerusalem following Absalom's treason, Shimei the Benjaminite, a relative of Saul, cursed David, and threw stones at him and his companions, suggesting that David's misfortune was warranted because of the blood that he had shed.

Instead of viewing himself as being a victim of this abuse, and exercising the right to counter Shimei's aggression, David declared, 'See how my son who came from my own body seeks my life. How much more now may this Benjaminite? Let him alone, and let him curse; for so the Lord has ordered him. It may be that the Lord will look on my affliction, and that the Lord will repay me with good for his cursing this day.' **2Sa 16:11-12.**

In this season, let us keep in mind the words of King David, who prayed, 'Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence [which is *agape* fellowship], and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.' **Psa 51:10-11.** A 'steadfast' spirit is one which is not driven by anxiety, reaction or emotions. It is a settled and steadfast demeanour.

As we pray and fast in this way, let us also be prepared to testify of healing as we are delivered from our own offences and the destructive victim mindsets that we have maintained. **Psa 55:12-14.** These are the mechanisms of oppression which expose us to the deceit of Satan, by which he endeavours to misappropriate our life, causing us spiritual dystrophy, weakness, and sickness. This word, God is giving to us, and to our extended families who are walking with us in the body of Christ, so that we can find healing through fellowship together in the kingdom of God. **Psa 12:5.**



Restoring
my Soul