

The Gospel of your Salvation

Sanctification by
Water, Spirit, Blood

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March 2011

Scriptures are quoted from NASB, NKJV, KJV and LITV.

Where italicised emphasis is used in Scripture references, these have been added and do not appear in the original translations.

Cover design by Dan Proud

Published by **visionone**

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Preface

The Lord has called His people in all ages to meet and fellowship with Him in offering.¹ Only then can we commence our journey upon the highway of holiness, in the light of the lampstand and arrive at the mercy seat.² As He did for Joshua the high priest, in the days after Judah returned from exile, He is giving us ‘authority in His house’ and ‘places to walk’.³ However, from the beginning He has directed that ‘none shall appear before Me empty-handed’.⁴ We should bring the first and the best. We should seek first His Melchizedek kingdom and His everlasting righteousness. But if we approach the altar with desolate offerings, then we will be rejected. The offering has frequently been desolated, either by God’s own people or by those who have oppressed them.⁵ Using the prophetic language of Isaiah, He will ‘whistle for the fly that is in the remotest part of the rivers of Egypt and for the bee that is in the land of Assyria’.⁶

Perilous times are coming upon the Christian church. We can be confident that God is giving a word to His church that will preserve the remnant. Those who do not receive His word are going out to destruction. The media and the education system are vocal in their atheism, so that our youth are being undermined in their faith. A whole new set of moral values is being imposed upon them. A falling away is occurring among denominations that are endeavouring to stay relevant to the world. They have no foundation or ground upon which to stand when they refuse the word of present truth. Present truth is the rock upon which the

1 Exo 25:21-22

2 Isa 35:8-10

3 Zec 3:7

4 Exo 23:15.

Exo 34:20

5 Isa 1:10-17

6 Isa 7:18

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church must be built if it is to withstand the assault of the gates of hell against it.

God's extraordinary work has determined destruction upon the earth and a complete end.⁷ He is allowing the 'desolator' to overcome the nations that are bringing worthless, desolating offerings. But in the midst of desolation, God is bringing forth a multitude of sons.⁸ By one offering, Jesus has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.⁹ By the sanctifying processes of water, Spirit and blood, we enter into the finished work of Christ.¹⁰ As He is, so are we in this world.¹¹ It is this sanctifying process which is bringing many sons to the glory of full inheritance as heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ.

In this day, the Lord is raising up a lampstand church in every nation so that His people are a light. He is establishing an administration of light in every place to show His glory and bear the testimony of Christ to the nations.¹² Isaiah declared, 'Arise, shine; for your light has come, and the glory of the Lord has risen upon you. For behold, darkness will cover the earth and deep darkness the peoples; but the Lord will rise upon you, and His glory will appear on you. Nations will come to your light, and kings to the brightness of your rising'.¹³

We must bear the testimony of Christ in every place. The Lord Jesus is establishing an administration in a lampstand that can bring forth a multitude of sons. And He is raising up a five-fold ministry which will bring the oil of grace to every lamp on the lampstand. Only then will we 'all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ'.¹⁴ When this is so, what government, principality or power can assail us? The administration of Christ is raised far above all principalities and powers. It is seated with

7 Isa 28:21. Zep 1:18

10 Joh 17:4

13 Isa 60:1-3

8 Heb 2:10

11 1Jn 4:17

14 Eph 4:11-13

9 Heb 10:14

12 Mat 5:14. Php 2:15

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Christ in the heavenly places, in the mercy seat.¹⁵ It is untouchable and unassailable. The church will still endure great tribulation, but the gates of hell cannot prevail against it.¹⁶

The administration of Christ has been committed to a five-fold ministry which has been sent to bring a great company of sons to glory.¹⁷ This administration will be protected. It will overcome and proceed to bring all things into subjection to Christ.¹⁸ This will be in every nation. There will be triumph once such an administration is properly connected to the throne of grace, so that an abundant supply of grace is available to every lamp. God is going to watch over this administration. And the foundation of the Lord will stand firm.¹⁹ It will withstand the coming flood. In our case, we are not yet prevailing because we are still 'mixed' in our culture. We have not yet purged the leaven of the sub-cultures among us.²⁰ We need to hear what the Spirit is saying to us at this time.²¹ We are either raised by the Spirit to be seated with Him in the mercy seat, or we are dead in trespasses and sins.²²

The light of the lampstand church

The book of Revelation reveals Christ walking in His lampstand church throughout the seven dispensations of the church age.²³ He is in the five-fold ministry, walking, supplying the oil of grace and trimming the lamps in our day. His churches are lampstand light-bearers, showing forth the glory of seven Spirits as the fullness of His glory.²⁴ Using the symbolic language of the ancient tabernacle, the book of Revelation details the operation of the sanctuary. And it describes the sanctifying process by which

15 Eph 1:20-23	19 2Ti 2:19	23 Rev 1:13,20
16 Mat 16:18	20 1Co 5:7	24 Rev 4:5
17 Eph 1:10	21 Rev 2:7	
18 Heb 2:8	22 Eph 2:1,5,6	

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the church will be presented before His glorious presence without spot or wrinkle.²⁵

The sanctuary in the heavenly places, with its priesthood and furniture is the context of the book of Revelation. Christ, in five ministries, is walking in His lampstand churches to trim the lamps for the receiving of oil, and to show forth the fruit of light in every son and member in particular. The oil is the resource and supply of grace coming to the lampstand so that the light of the seven-fold Spirit of God can illuminate the way into the holiest. We need to be clear. The purpose of a lampstand is to shed light upon the way into the Most Holy Place, and particularly the mercy seat where Christ is seated.²⁶

It has not escaped our attention that the early church was referred to as 'the way'.²⁷ The lampstand illuminates the path of the just, shining more and more to the place where Christ is seated at the right hand of the Father.²⁸ He has been raised far above all principalities and powers.²⁹ He is in the Ark of the Covenant. This is the throne of grace. And He has been set forth as the Mercy Seat. Jesus Christ has gone into the presence of God in heaven, now to appear for us.³⁰ As our great High Priest, He is sprinkling us with precious blood so that we might cease from sin. We may 'run for refuge within the veil' to the place where His blood has been sprinkled for us. We can boldly approach the throne of grace to find mercy and help in time of need.³¹

The light of the lampstand is the 'seven Spirits of God'.³² It is the light of the glory of God revealed by seven Spirits. The lampstand is revealing His glory, the light of the seven-fold Spirit of God. The glory of the lampstand is 'His glory', but the glory of the Ark of the Covenant is 'our glory' by inheritance. It is to this

25 Jud 1:24

28 Pro 4:18

31 Heb 4:14-16

26 Eph 1:20. Eph 2:6

29 Eph 1:20-23

32 Rev 4:5

27 Act 9:2

30 Heb 9:24

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glory that we are being sprinkled and sanctified. This glory has been perfected in Christ and will become our glory, if we suffer with Him.³³ Finally, the goal for the church is to be the ‘woman’ seen in ‘the ark’ of the testimony, as the revelation of the glory of God.³⁴ This is the hope that enters within the veil and is an anchor for our souls.³⁵ These are the riches of His inheritance in the saints.

Further to this, the light of the lampstand is the light of present truth, the prophetic word ‘made more sure’. It is the lamp in a dark place.³⁶ The word of present truth is proceeding by a five-fold ministry as the oil of grace. A lampstand light is turning us to His testimonies, in the Ark of Testimony.³⁷ Those who seek the truth of a lampstand church will find their hearts burning like lamps.³⁸ The entrance of the word of God brings light.³⁹ Many will hear and many will see. The way to the holiest is open for the multitude to draw near in full assurance of faith, having hearts sprinkled by blood, and bodies washed with pure water.⁴⁰

Let us say again, the lampstand church shines light upon the way of sanctification into the Holy of Holies. It is our goal as a lampstand church to receive oil and shine light on this pathway. Our primary theme in this book is the process of sanctification by water, Spirit, and blood. Nevertheless, there will be no visible way of sanctification without the light of a fully restored and operational lampstand in every nation. And without a five-fold ministry, there will be no oil to reveal the seven Spirits of God.

One lampstand in the nation

When we look at the symbolic illustration of a lampstand church and its administration in the book of Zechariah, we see

33 Rom 8:17

36 2Pe 1:19

40 Heb 10:22

34 Exo 25:22.

37 Psa 119:59

Rev 11:19. Rev 12:1

38 Luk 24:32

35 Heb 6:19

39 Psa 119:130

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one administration and one lampstand for a nation.⁴¹ In our day, we have one lampstand in Australia. Within this one lampstand there should be a fellowship of five-fold ascension gift overseers with walking overseers, various deacons, facilitators and brethren together.

Likewise, in Australia, we have one bowl supplying the oil of grace as the source and means of our fellowship together as congregations in one lampstand. Regardless of the number of people gathering together in any given place, the administration of the oil of grace must be supplied to every house and every congregation by a walking administration of overseers. This supply should not be limited because a small congregation does not have overseers among them.

The question before us at this time is: Where in the nation are the ascension-gifted ministries, committed in a fellowship of administration, to adjust and equip each individual son of God for the work of the deaconing?⁴² Only then will all members of the church grow up into the full stature of sonship and be the light of the world. Only then will the lampstand shine light on the pathway of life, so that sons can go all the way to the mercy seat to be sprinkled seven times with the blood of Christ.

Further to this, we are asking the question: How does each lamp maintain its connection to the lampstand and the ascension-gift overseers? Each lamp cannot behave as if it is the bowl. There is only one bowl for the nation. The bowl is the hand of Christ, or we could say the 'hands cupped together' which receive the oil from the Melchizedek order⁴³. All grace has its source in the bowl; that is, in fellowship with the five-fold ministries. It is then piped to every lamp on the lampstand so that there is a 'fruit of light' in

41 Zec 4:2-14

42 Eph 4:12

43 Heb 5:10

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a specific locality.⁴⁴ For a person, time or action to be sanctified, it must have its source in this fellowship of the bowl.

The church in any nation is to be a properly functioning lampstand. This was the substantial meaning of Zechariah's vision. When we look at the seven churches in Asia, each city was a centre for a region. Each lampstand was, in reality, a city-state or small nation. If we look at Rome, we would say that it was a lampstand church for that province or nation. It was the centre of administration with five ministries, overseers, deacons and brethren all properly represented.

An ascension-gift administration

Defining the elements of administration and lampstand have become important at this time so that the authority of grace is not hindered. The brethren in any locality must meet and interface with the five-fold ascension-gift administration of Christ in an 'oil-lamp-flower' connection. The five-fold administration of Christ is the ascension-gift or raised administration of Christ, for His church. It operates from the mercy seat and flows out through the temple to the altar. The blood of Christ brings us into the fellowship of the five-fold administration of Christ, in heavenly places. His five-fold administration is our administration. It is our life.

Shepherding a church is the work of Christ as the Chief shepherd.⁴⁵ He has committed this mandate to an ascension-gift administration which is adjusting the saints for the work of the ministry. The five ministries are overseers with the shepherding capacity of Christ. They are identifying ability, grace and

44 Zec 4:2. Eph 5:9

45 1Pe 5:4

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authority in the many members of the body of Christ. This five-fold overseeing dimension is an expression of the bowl.

Those in worthy houses will also be attending to the shepherding work, being addicted to the care of the saints in a local lamp church. However, an overseer within a locality has a different shepherding work from an ascension-gift overseer who is walking among the lampstand. The local overseer will himself be adjusted for the work of his ministry. The local overseers are those who are deaconing, tending and teaching in the shepherding dimension of Christ.

Overseers in a locality have the eyes of wisdom to lead the congregation in one spirit with the five ministries. At the same time, they are aware of the limitation within a congregation because of the grace distribution among them. One congregation should not copy another as if that is walking in one spirit. The five ministries, with overseers, have the eyes to see and determine the practical programme and events of a lamp church.

There are small churches among us where there is literally no overseership at all. If a lamp doesn't have some overseership resident in the elders at a minimum level, then it will need to maintain a proper connection with a 'walking oversight'. John simply called this 'fellowship with us'.⁴⁶ A group of brethren in a place should be able live together and not fall into the snares of collegiality and congregationalism. If the proper connections are maintained, then there will still be a lot of freedom for every member to minister according to ability. The exercise of oversight is provided from outside, while each household continues caring for one another, sharing and ministering together.

46 1Jn 1:3

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Jesus Christ is the good Shepherd, and He is also the door of the sheepfold.⁴⁷ Because the five-fold administration is of Christ Himself, it is a doorkeeper administration. If we go in and out of Christ's sheepfold without reference to His five-fold administration, we are following a hireling, not the good Shepherd. Those who come in and out 'another way' maintain a 'sub-culture' within the sheepfold that is not of God, nor is it of the lampstand. To be of such a culture is to misappropriate the benefits of the grace of God coming from the five-fold ministry. When we misappropriate the things of God, we are as thieves and robbers, using them for our own benefit.

In this book, we are considering the gospel of our salvation. We have all been like straying sheep, needing to return to the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls.⁴⁸ Having done so, we are being sanctified by water, Spirit, and blood to an eternal inheritance. We are raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places, in the mercy seat. We need to remember that this is the place of His ascension-gift administration, the authority of His right hand. In this way, we go from being 'straying sheep' to 'the people of His pasture and the sheep of His hand'.⁴⁹ He is the Shepherd and Overseer of our souls, and we are required to obey the ascension-gift overseers who keep watch over our souls, as those who will give an account to their Master and ours.⁵⁰ Submitting to the authority of the five ministries is implicit within the gospel of our salvation.

47 Joh 10:7,11

50 Heb 13:17

48 Isa 53:6. Act 20:28

49 Psa 95:7

CHAPTER 1

The Will of God

In this book, we are considering the most basic of all gospel propositions. How do we, the sons of men, become the sons of God? The apostle Paul called this ‘the gospel of your salvation’. It is the gospel of sonship. The desire and kind intention of the Father’s will is to bring many sons to glory.¹ He chose us before the foundation of the world for this very purpose. He predestined us to adoption through Jesus Christ to Himself.² This is the hope of the gospel.

The kind intention of His will

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul spoke of the kind intention of His will, the mystery of His will, and the counsel of His will.³

1 Eph 1:5,9.
Heb 2:10

3 Eph 1:5. Eph 1:9.
Eph 1:11

2 Eph 1:4,5

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He nominated them in that order. In all cases, he was referring to the will of the Father, but with a different emphasis. The kind intention, mystery, and counsel of the Father's will describe the process by which many sons are brought to glory. The kind intention, or good pleasure, of God the Father is His desire that we should become His sons. This is what the Father 'purposed in Himself'.⁴ And this purpose extends to all people. He desires all men to be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth. Hence, He sends His messengers to proclaim the word of truth, the gospel of sonship, the gospel of our salvation.

In his second letter to the Corinthians, Paul quoted the prophetic word to Solomon, 'And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me'.⁵ The Father's desire is to recover every person to their predestined sonship. This is the outpouring of His love upon us; His kind intention to draw us as sons into His house. The apostle John could only marvel, 'Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called the children of God'.⁶ And God is rich in mercy because of His great love. Even while we were dead in trespasses and sins, He made us alive together with Christ, raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in heavenly places, in the Mercy Seat.⁷

The mystery of His will

If the kind intention of the Father's will is the desire to bring many sons to glory, then the 'mystery of His will' is His plan to bring this purpose to fruition. How do the sons of men become the sons of God? This is indeed a great mystery. Elsewhere, Paul called it the 'mystery of godliness'.⁸ He has predestined us to adoption as

4 Eph 1:9

7 Eph 2:1,4-6

5 2Co 6:18

8 1Ti 3:16

6 1Jn 3:1

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sons through Jesus Christ *according to* the kind intention of His will.⁹ He has made this known to us as the mystery of His will.¹⁰ This is the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints. We can rejoice! God has ‘willed’ to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles.¹¹

The mystery of His will is fully revealed in Jesus Christ. The Father’s eternal purpose has been carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹² Expanding this point in his letter to the Hebrews, Paul said, ‘It was fitting for Him, for whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to perfect the author of their salvation through sufferings’.¹³ Having learned obedience from the things which He suffered and been made perfect, our Lord Jesus is the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him. By one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.¹⁴ Paul developed this further in the third chapter of Ephesians by saying, ‘You have heard of the stewardship of God’s grace which was given to me for you; that by revelation there was made known to me the mystery’.¹⁵ He considered himself to be the very least of all the saints. Nevertheless, this grace was given to him to preach the unfathomable riches of Christ to the Gentiles.¹⁶ It was his mandate to ‘bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages past has been hidden in God who created all things’.¹⁷ In the fifth chapter of Ephesians, he said, ‘This mystery is great’.¹⁸ And finally, in the sixth chapter, he asked the entire church to pray at all times in the Spirit, ‘that utterance may be given to me in the opening of my mouth, to make known with boldness the mystery of the gospel’.¹⁹

9 Eph 1:5

13 Heb 2:10.

16 Eph 3:8

10 Eph 1:9

Heb 5:8,9

17 Eph 3:9

11 Col 1:26,27

14 Heb 10:14

18 Eph 5:32

12 Eph 3:11

15 Eph 3:2,3

19 Eph 6:19

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It has been given to the five-fold ministry to steward this mystery, and bring this mystery to light. They have received a stewardship of grace from Christ Himself to equip the saints for the work of deaconing, until every person comes to the fullness of sonship.²⁰ It is their mandate to proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, to present every man complete in Christ.²¹

The counsel of His will – Three that bear witness

The Father's purpose was brought forth in the counsel of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, before the foundation of the world. This is the counsel of God. In the 'mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'²² The Father revealed His will to bring many sons to glory. The Son emptied Himself to become the slave of that will. Although He existed in the form of God, the Son did not regard equality with God something to be grasped. He emptied Himself to make room for a multitude of sons.²³ Jesus became the Slave-Son in the exercise of the Father's will so that many sons could be brought forth to glory. He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.²⁴ Jesus did nothing from His own initiative, only the things the Father taught Him.²⁵ This is the counsel of God, the gospel of sonship.

In preaching the gospel to the Ephesians, Paul did not shrink from declaring to them the whole counsel of God.²⁶ The counsel of God is immutable and unchangeable. It will not fail. God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by oath. And it is impossible for God to lie.²⁷ The psalmist declared, 'The counsel of

20 Eph 4:11,12

23 Php 2:6,7

26 Act 20:27

21 Col 1:28

24 Phil 2:8

27 Heb 6:17,18

22 Mat 18:16

25 Joh 8:28

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the Lord stands forever, the plans of His heart to all generations'.²⁸ The wise man said, 'There are many plans in a man's heart, nevertheless the Lord's counsel – that will stand'.²⁹ The Father works all things after the counsel of His will.³⁰

The Scripture cannot be broken

The counsel of God is the word settled in the heavens.³¹ By way of declaring it to us, this counsel has been recorded for us in the Scriptures of the apostles and the prophets.³² The counsel of the Lord stands forever, and the Scripture cannot be broken. The fundamental tenet of the Scripture, according to the counsel of His will, is the truth that we are predestined to be sons of God.³³ This truth is irrefutable and unassailable. Jesus said, 'The Scripture cannot be broken'.³⁴

John began his Gospel by saying, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God'.³⁵ He then proceeded to say, 'And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us ... as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God'.³⁶ This is the first truth of the Scripture. It is the gospel of sonship.

John was very specific in the sequence of his writing. We are given the right to become a son of God when we receive, believe and obey the word of Christ. It was only after establishing the gospel of sonship that John proceeded to describe the interaction between Jesus and John the Baptist where it was proclaimed, 'Behold the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world'.³⁷ Our first priority is to receive Christ and His word. Only then do

28 Psa 33:11

32 Eph 2:20

36 Joh 1:12,14

29 Prov 19:21

33 Rom 8:29

37 Joh 1:29

30 Eph 1:11

34 Joh 10:35

31 Psa 119:89

35 Joh 1:1

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we apprehend a process by which we join His offering and the fellowship of His sufferings, to cease from sin.³⁸

In the tenth chapter of John, there is a very interesting account of Jesus speaking with a group of Jews. He proclaimed to them, 'I and the Father are one' and they immediately took up stones to stone Him. They accused Him of blasphemy saying, 'You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God'.³⁹ This was their primary contention. They were not only challenging the Deity of Jesus Himself. They were challenging the very tenet of the Scripture that says the sons of men can become the sons of God.

Jesus' reply is a succinct and provocative summary of the gospel. He said, 'Is it not written in your law, I said, you are gods?'⁴⁰ He was quoting from the Psalms where it is written, 'I said, you are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High'.⁴¹ When He says, 'gods', he means those who are 'born of God'. He is not in any way implying that we become God. That is the spirit of Antichrist. However, He is proclaiming our right to become sons of God by adoption.⁴² This is the kind intention of the Father's will. We have been granted precious and magnificent promises, so that by them we become partakers of the divine nature.⁴³ To deny that Jesus Christ is from God, and coming in our flesh, is equally the spirit of Antichrist.⁴⁴ John said in his first epistle, 'We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us'.⁴⁵

Jesus continued, 'If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, "You are blaspheming", because I said, "I am the Son of God"?'⁴⁶ Jesus refuted their allegations by using the very truth of the

38 Php 3:10. 1Pe 4:1 41 Psa 82:6 44 2Jn 1:7

39 Joh 10:30-33 42 Eph 1:5 45 1Jn 4:6

40 Joh 10:34 43 2Pe 1:4 46 Joh 10:35

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Scripture with which they were trying to condemn Him. If we work backwards through His statement, we are given a brilliant summary of the gospel. In very brief terms, God the Son emptied Himself to become the Son of God.⁴⁷ The Father sanctified Him and sent Him into the world as His only begotten Son, His beloved Son.⁴⁸ The Scripture bears witness to His person and His work. And the Scripture cannot be broken. When we receive Him as the Word of God, He gives us the right to become sons of God.⁴⁹ This is the inheritance for those 'to whom the word of God came'.⁵⁰ They are called 'sons of the Most High, sons of the living God'.

Jesus finished by saying, 'If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me; but if I do them, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in Me, and I in the Father'.⁵¹ Jesus was speaking about the work of adoption. According to His purpose, the Father is working all things after the counsel of His will. While we are dead in trespasses and sins, His mercy places us in the position of a son. The Father then sends forth the Spirit of the Son into our hearts, birthing us, so that we cry out, 'Abba Father!'⁵² We are able to call God our Father, thus fulfilling the Scripture, 'You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High'.⁵³

The coming of the Spirit into our hearts is a pledge and foretaste of our inheritance as sons of God. We are called God's 'purchased possession'.⁵⁴ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs of Christ'.⁵⁵ In this way, the sonship that belongs to the Father's only beloved Son has now been shared with us. Jesus prayed, 'Holy Father, keep them in Your name, which You have given Me, that they may be one, even

47 Php 2:7

50 Joh 10:35

53 Psa 82:6

48 Joh 3:16

51 Joh 10:37,38

54 Eph 1:14

49 Joh 1:1,12,13

52 Gal 4:6. Rom 8:15

55 Rom 8:17

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as We are'.⁵⁶ We are reminded that the Jews picked up stones to stone Him when He said, 'I and the Father are one'.⁵⁷ This particular group would not accept that there was one Son of God. In reality, Jesus was proclaiming that there will be many sons of God!

The Scriptures are a manual with clear instructions on how we attain our sonship. Our sonship is not manifest in this present age. John said in his first epistle, 'Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is.'⁵⁸ The revealing of our sonship is for the next age and we will have a work in the new heavens and new earth. We inherit our sonship at the appearing and the second coming of Jesus. The anxious longing of creation waits eagerly for this day, for the revealing of the sons of God.⁵⁹

The will of God – sanctification

We know that we are being sanctified to do the will of the Father and receive our adoption as sons of God. In the garden, as the obedient Son, Jesus drew aside to pray so that He could find strength for His final hour. 'Not My will, but Yours be done', He prayed.⁶⁰ In the same way, Paul wrote to the Hebrews, 'By this will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all'.⁶¹ We must pray for strength as we find the capacity for obedience. In this way, we can enter into the sanctifying process of His 'once for all' offering.⁶² The entire will of God has been accomplished in one offering by which He has been perfected.

56 Joh 17:11

59 Rom 8:19

62 Rom 6:10

57 Joh 10:30

60 Luk 22:43,44

58 1Jn 3:2

61 Heb 10:10

The will of God

We join His offering and are sanctified to His perfections as we unite ourselves with Him in our suffering.⁶³ By this participation, we are being sanctified in Him, and the will of God is being fulfilled in His body. ‘Both He who sanctifies and those who are sanctified are all from one Father.’⁶⁴ Sanctification sets us apart to our predestined inheritance. As we partake of the sufferings of Christ we progressively see the glory of our name revealed. Jesus said, ‘For their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they may also be sanctified in truth’.⁶⁵ The will of the Father therefore includes a process for our sanctification. Paul declared to the Thessalonians, ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification’.⁶⁶

‘Holiness’ and ‘sanctification’ are English translations of the same Greek word. To be holy is to be sanctified. To be sanctified is to be wholly set apart to who God foreordained us to be as His sons. ‘Know that the Lord has set apart the godly man for Himself.’⁶⁷ The Father chose us in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him.⁶⁸ Holiness is not just our personal endeavour to achieve good character and moral purity. We will be sanctified entirely when our spirit, soul, and body are preserved without blame before the Lord.⁶⁹ This means we are sanctified away from any deviation or falsehood. ‘But now, says the Lord ... “I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are Mine!”’⁷⁰

We recall that the Holy Spirit instructed the early church to, ‘Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them’.⁷¹ Like them, we are set apart as sons, to our name and works prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.⁷² By the blood of Jesus, we have confidence to enter the holiest place.⁷³ It

63 Php 3:10

67 Psa 4:3

71 Acts 13:2

64 Heb 2:11

68 Eph 1:4

72 Eph 2:10

65 Joh 17:19

69 1Th 5:23

73 Heb 10:19

66 1Th 4:3

70 Isa 43:1

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is the place of complete sanctification and separation to the will of the Father. In this place, 'you' are fully 'you'. This is the place of priests, and like Paul, we can receive grace to be a minister of Christ Jesus, ministering as a priest the gospel of God.⁷⁴

Sanctification and the immutable purpose of God

Our desire is to be sanctified to the 'kind intention' of the heavenly Father. The 'workmanship' of our sanctification was prepared 'beforehand'. 'Eye has not seen ... nor ear heard' what God has prepared.⁷⁵ In this way, the Scripture cannot be broken, and it is our exercise, to know and live according to that word from the beginning. Our sanctification is to the fullest expression of who we are as sons. We have been 'chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood: may grace and peace be yours in the fullest measure'.⁷⁶

God has purposed this way of sanctification as part of the counsel of His will from before the foundation of the world. It is impossible for God to lie, and He desires to, 'show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose'; that is, the 'immutability' of His counsel.⁷⁷ To understand our sanctification, we must understand the immutable purpose of God. In so doing, we will be preserved in sanctification, possessing an unshakeable name, with capacity to fulfil the works the Father prepared for us as sons of the living God.

It is the cross that ensures continuity between His foreordained purpose and our ultimate sanctification. And this is not in response to sin. God's immutable purpose for our sanctification preceded sin. The name of each son is foreknown by

74 Rom 15:16

77 Heb 6:17

75 Eph 2:10. 1Co 2:9

76 1Pe 1:2

The will of God

the Father, sanctified by the Spirit, and sprinkled for obedience.⁷⁸ The thesis of this volume is that His desire for many sons, our very salvation, was agreed upon in ages past, by Father, Son and Holy Spirit in the counsel of Their will. And the witness on earth is by the agency of water, Spirit and blood.⁷⁹ Those who are sanctified and ‘called to be saints’ can be immovably established and preserved among those who are called ‘the brethren of Christ’.⁸⁰ We cannot understand sanctification only in relation to our sin and shortcomings. If we fail to grasp this understanding, we will only ever view our lives as an inquiry into everlasting forgiveness.

Traditionally, the Christian message has rested upon His vicarious death and His resurrection, without a process, in His immutable counsel, for our complete sanctification. His will for every son whom He calls, is according to His choice, and it will stand.⁸¹ This process has been inaugurated by the blood of the covenant.⁸² To be sanctified is to become the son whom the Father has named. In this way, we can walk in the fellowship of one Spirit, with many sons whom the Father is glorifying. By this process, we can rise above our own condemnation, and the verification of our own righteousness.

The process of sanctification

The process of sanctification and the pathway to the perfections of Christ, is through the shame of our own infirmity and suffering, as we reckon them to be the sufferings of Christ. The Father’s mercy brings us to Him so that we can be restored to the way of sanctification. The light of the lampstand is the pathway of light which shines more and more upon our darkness, revealing our sin by bringing us into the fellowship of the sons of

78 1Pe 1:2

1Th 5:23.

79 1Jn 5:7,8

81 Rom 9:11

80 1Co 1:2. 1Th 3:13.

82 Heb 10:19-22

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light.⁸³ This is the path of the just. Hence, the more we proceed, the more we are justified. The temptation to draw back is relieved as Christ, our merciful High Priest, gives more grace.⁸⁴ We must embrace this suffering and move forward. If we draw back into depression or anxiety, there is no relief.

We can conclude that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all active in the work of sanctification. The Father firstly sanctified Christ Himself and sent Him into the world. Our participation in the Son avails His sanctification of us. And finally, the Holy Spirit brings His own sanctifying work to us also. It is in sanctification that we begin to find the capacity to be obedient to the Father and to our sonship. Then we are growing in grace, love and fellowship, to the measure of the fullness of Christ and His perfections.⁸⁵ The Father has conceived a name for each of His sanctified sons. The Son has poured out new creation life for each of His sanctified brethren. And the Holy Spirit has marked out the lines of individual identity. By sanctification we are called 'saints', or 'holy ones', who are joined to the Lord in one Spirit.

83 1Th 5:5

84 Jas 4:6

85 2Pe 3:18. Eph 4:13

CHAPTER 2

Paul's letter to the Ephesians

In this chapter, we will consider the framework used by the apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians. The kind intention of the Father's will is to bring many sons to glory.¹ That is His purpose. And the mystery of His will is that we are predestined to adoption through Jesus Christ.² That is the method; the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord.³ It is according to the kind intention and the mystery of the Father's will that we have hope in Christ.

1 Eph 1:5,9.
Heb 2:10

2 Eph 1:5

3 Eph 3:11

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Having described himself as among ‘the first to hope in Christ’, Paul said, ‘In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of God’s own possession, to the praise of His glory’.⁴ We’ll take our time to step through these two verses because they clearly identify the work of water, Spirit, and blood in the process of our sanctification. Paul referred to three things in sequence. Firstly, we believe and obey the message of truth, the gospel of our salvation. Secondly, and Paul used the word ‘after’ to establish the sequence, we are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance.

Thirdly, this happens ‘with a view’ to the redemption of God’s own possession. This view extends to the end of the age, the day of resurrection, when our sonship is fully revealed. In that sense, it is a ‘long term’ view, but the process begins as soon as we touch the blood of Christ. Blood is the agent of redemption. A few verses earlier, Paul said, ‘In Him we have redemption *through His blood*’.⁵ We are redeemed by the precious blood ‘as of a lamb’.⁶

The activity of water, Spirit, and blood

When we tease those three steps apart, we immediately see the activity of water, Spirit, and blood. The washing of the water of the word is applied when we listen to the message of truth, the gospel of our salvation.⁷ This is the word of truth concerning our sonship. It is the word of the Father. According to the book of Hebrews this word of truth is living, powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword.⁸ It is most certainly a two-edged

4 Eph 1:12.
Eph 1:13-14

5 Eph 1:7

6 1Pe 1:19

7 Eph 5:26

8 Heb 4:12

Paul's letter to the Ephesians

sword. On the one side, it proclaims the truth that we are sons of disobedience, vessels of wrath, sinners and enemies of God. If we refuse this word, then as Jesus said, we will be judged by this word in the last day.⁹ Nevertheless, on the other side, it proclaims the truth of our predestination. It proclaims our name written in the Lamb's book of life from before the foundation of the world.¹⁰

There is a slight distinction between water and the word. The washing of water is *by* the word. To be even more specific, it is *by* the activity of faith and obedience that the word generates in the hearer. It is the activity of faith and obedience that causes us to be born of water, born from the death of sin.¹¹ Implicit within this is the forgiveness of sins. We are reminded of the words of Jesus to Peter, 'You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you'.¹² There are numerous accounts throughout the Gospels where Jesus said to people, 'Your sins are forgiven'.¹³

Dealing with sin

Each sanctifying agent has a specific relationship to sin. We could say that the washing of water gives us forgiveness, although we'll qualify that statement in a moment. The Spirit gives us power to overcome sin, and the blood gives us a process of suffering whereby we cease from sin.¹⁴ Of critical importance here is that forgiveness is meaningless if there is no process by which sin is properly dealt with and removed from our lives. This is why John said that Jesus came by water and blood, and then he was careful to emphasise the point by saying, 'Not with the water only, but with the water and with blood'.¹⁵ Without blood there is no remission, or sending away, of sin.

9 Joh 12:48

11 Joh 3:5

Luk 7:48

10 Rev 13:8.
Rev 21:27

12 Joh 15:3

14 Act 1:8. 1Pe 4:1

13 Mar 2:5. Luk 5:20. 15 1Jn 5:6

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Restating the framework from water, to Spirit, to blood, the Father's kind intention is that we should be adopted as sons.¹⁶ The context for this work is the body of Christ.¹⁷ While we are dead in trespasses and sins, He quickens us, if we are listening, by the word of truth!¹⁸ After this, we receive a pledge of the Spirit who gives power to *overcome* sin.¹⁹ We are sealed with a view to being processed as we join the sufferings of Christ so we cease from sin.²⁰

There is a difference between power over sin and ceasing from sin. When a person is first drawn from the deep mire and floodwaters, there is miraculous power from the Holy Spirit to break the stranglehold of sin and death from around their neck. There is miraculous power to overcome drug addictions and whatever the 'strong enemy' may be. While we are 'without strength', we are delivered from the things that are 'too strong' for us.²¹ We are delivered while we 'were still without strength'.²² However, the purpose of this power is not to merely hold the enemies at bay. It propels us forward into a process of joining the sufferings of Christ in weakness. In this process, our propensity to sin is dealt with. Its foothold in our life is destroyed. Our heart is changed. The blood of Christ sprinkles our heart, cleansing our conscience from dead works so that we can serve the living God as priests in His house.²³ This is the work of the blood, the seven-times sprinkling, which is effective as we join the offering of Christ in weakness.²⁴

16 Eph 1:5	Eph 1:14	23 Heb 9:14
17 1Co 12:13-20	20 1Pe 4:1	24 Lev 16:14
18 Eph 2:1-6	21 Psa 18:17	
19 2Co 1:21-22.	22 Rom 5:6	

According to His mercy

There are many passages in the New Testament which demonstrate this framework. It is the framework that underpins the entire gospel, preached and proclaimed by all of the apostles. In his letter to Titus, Paul declared, 'He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit, whom He poured out upon us richly through Jesus Christ our Saviour, so that being justified by His grace we would be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life'.²⁵ The work of water, Spirit and blood are clearly before us. The washing of regeneration and the renewing of the Holy Spirit are evidently the work of water and Spirit, and then the hope of eternal life is only realised by the work of blood. The blood is new creation life.²⁶ It is eternal life, brought to us as we fellowship in the sufferings of Christ and accrue for ourselves eternal reward.²⁷

In the above passage, Paul said that He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to mercy.²⁸ This is most important. Using the same framework of water, Spirit and blood, the apostle Peter also highlighted the work of mercy. He wrote to those 'who are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, by the sanctifying work of the Spirit, to obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood'.²⁹ And then He continued, 'Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again'.³⁰

25 Tit 3:5-7

27 Php 3:10. 1Ti 6:12

30 1Pe 1:3

26 Lev 17:11. 2Co 5:17.

28 Tit 3:5

Joh 6:53-54

29 1Pe 1:2

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We need to consider that we are not born again by blood. We are born from above, by water and by Spirit, according to His great mercy. The blood is the life of Christ, given to us on the altar, the mercy seat. It is the life of new creation. And we receive this life as we fellowship in His sufferings.³¹ Without the blood of Christ we cannot be born again; but, of itself, blood is not the agent of our new birth. It is according to His great mercy that we are born again. We are born again by the incorruptible seed of the word of God which lives and endures forever.³²

The work of blood

This is important, because if we make blood the agent of our new birth it depletes the work of water, Spirit and blood. It leaves no room for the real work of redemption, and shifts everything to a mysterious transaction and a judicial, positional salvation. It gives birth to phrases such as, 'We are under the blood' and 'Pleading the blood' which don't have any real meaning. People are left in a contradiction. They are told the blood of Christ is effective, but they know they are still dead in trespasses and sins. There is no power to change.

If we make blood the mysterious agent of new birth, it removes the need to be obedient to the word of a messenger which activates the washing of the water of the word.³³ It removes the need for the seal, pledge, and power of the Spirit. And most of all, it removes the need for a participation in the sufferings of Christ whereby we cease from sin.³⁴ Blood is the agent of redemption, but redemption does not bring us into Christ.³⁵ That is the work of mercy. God who is rich in mercy has quickened us and made us alive together with Christ while we were still dead

31 Compare
Rom 8:16-17

33 Eph 5:26

34 1Pe 4:1

32 1Pe 1:23

35 Eph 1:7

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in trespasses and sins.³⁶ Mercy saved us. Mercy birthed us. The Father of mercies brought us forth by the word of truth.³⁷ Blood is not active until we are brought by mercy, all the way to the mercy seat in the heavenly places. Our redemption comes after God has purchased us through Jesus Christ to Himself.³⁸

This is pivotal. There is no work of blood outside of Christ, or apart from being seated with Him in heavenly places, in the mercy seat.³⁹ This is Paul's message in the second chapter of his letter to the Ephesians. 'God, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, even when we were dead in our transgression, made us alive together with Christ ... and raised us up with Him, and seated us with Him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus.'⁴⁰ He raises us *with* Christ, for the express purpose of placing us in Christ, in the heavenly places, in the mercy seat.

This is the place of the seven-times sprinkling; the place where the blood is effective to cleanse our conscience from dead works so that we can serve the living God.⁴¹ There is no other place for sprinkling. The implications of this are immense. We cannot claim the blood of Christ is effective in our lives if we are not an active member of His body, making offering, and participating in the fellowship of His sufferings.⁴² There is no hope of salvation outside of the body of Christ.

In Him, we have redemption

With this in view, we understand why Paul prefaced all of His statements in Ephesians chapter one with the words, 'In Him'. He said the Father chose us '*in Him* before the foundation of the world'.⁴³ '*In Him* we have redemption through His blood.'⁴⁴

36 Eph 2:4-5

40 Eph 2:4-6

43 Eph 1:4

37 2Co 1:3

41 Lev 16:14-17.

44 Eph 1:7

38 Act 20:28. Rev 5:9

Heb 9:14

39 Eph 2:5-6

42 Php 3:10

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‘He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed *in Him*.’⁴⁵ ‘*In Him*, we also have an inheritance.’⁴⁶ ‘You were sealed *in Him* with the Holy Spirit of promise.’⁴⁷ All the way through the first half of the chapter, it is in Him, in Him, and in Him. Paul left us in no doubt about where we find the process of salvation and our inheritance as sons of God.

In the second half of the first chapter, Paul said that he did not cease giving thanks and praying for the Ephesian church.⁴⁸ He prayed that the eyes of their heart would be enlightened to know three things. The first is the hope of His calling. The second is the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints. And the third is the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.⁴⁹ All of this, Paul said, is according to the working of the strength of His might ‘which He brought about in Christ’.⁵⁰ That is the key point. The entire operation of God was brought about ‘in Christ’.

The Father raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places. This is far above all rule and authority and power and dominion. He has bestowed upon Him the name above every name, not only in this age, but also in the age to come. All things are in subjection under His feet, and He is the Head over all things to the church, which is His body.⁵¹ This is the preface to chapter two. The Father, who is rich in mercy, joins us to the ‘working of the strength of might’ which He has ‘already’ brought about in Christ.⁵² He joins us to a finished work.⁵³

Paul nominated three steps of joining us to Christ, bringing us to the place where we are ‘in Him’. The Father makes us alive together with Christ. He then raises us up with Him. And then finally, we are seated with Him in the heavenly places.⁵⁴ Then, and

45 Eph 1:9

49 Eph 1:18-19

53 Heb 4:3. Eph 1:4

46 Eph 1:10-11

50 Eph 1:20

54 Eph 2:5-6

47 Eph 1:13

51 Eph 1:20-23

48 Eph 1:16

52 Eph 1:19

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only then, the blood is sprinkling and the process of redemption is active all the way to a full inheritance. We are joint heirs with Him. We read in the book of Romans that we are 'heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him'. And accordingly, Paul said, 'I consider the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us'.⁵⁵ We are glorified with Christ if we join the fellowship of His sufferings in the mercy seat. We are glorified together to the fullness of the seven-times sprinkling, to the fullness of the riches of His glory. Redemption by blood brings us to the fullness of sonship. It is complete in the inner man on the Day of Atonement and in the outer man on the day of resurrection in the last day. In this present time, we have the firstfruits of the Spirit, but we groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body.⁵⁶

Increasing forever

The process of sanctification brings us to completion and fullness. It begins with mercy, and the washing of the water of the word, and then proceeds to the work of the Spirit and the work of the blood. However, it is not as if mercy ceases when the work of the Spirit begins. Mercy continues to be active, and in fact, continues to increase all the way to the second coming. Jude, the brother of Jesus, began his letter by saying, 'May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you'.⁵⁷ Later he said, 'Beloved, building yourselves up on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting anxiously for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ to eternal life'.⁵⁸

55 Rom 8:17-18

58 Jud 1:20-21

56 Rom 8:23

57 Jud 1:2

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The work of the Spirit is the same. We have the firstfruits as an earnest and a pledge.⁵⁹ It is only a foretaste of the powers of the age to come. And likewise, the blood continues to be sprinkled until the fullness of seven times. Everything is increasing for the new heavens and new earth where the statement is made, 'There will be no end to the increase of His government'.⁶⁰

We participate in the beginnings of this administration as soon as we are raised to sit with Christ in heavenly places. Paul called this the administration suitable for the fullness of times.⁶¹ It is the administration of the mystery whereby grace comes to every man through the right hand of Christ, the five ascension-gift ministries.⁶² The revelation of this administration was Paul's subject in chapter three of his letter to the Ephesians, and then the practical working of this administration was his subject in chapter four. Grace is given to the five ascension-gift ministries for the equipping of the saints for the work of deaconing, for the building up of the body of Christ into the fullness of Him who is the Head.⁶³

Not refusing Him who speaks

Returning to our key verses in chapter one of Ephesians, the beginning of the pathway of sanctification, and indeed salvation, is listening to the message of truth. The truth of our sonship is a 'message' in the mouth of a 'messenger'.⁶⁴ This is the first stumbling stone of the gospel. Will we receive the messenger? When Jesus sent the twelve and the seventy to look for worthy houses, He said to them, 'The one who listens to you listens to Me, and the one who rejects you rejects Me; and he who rejects Me rejects the One who sent Me'.⁶⁵ If we don't receive the messenger, we reject

59 Eph 1:14

62 Eph 4:11

60 Isa 9:7

63 Eph 4:12

61 Eph 1:10

64 Compare Jas 2:25

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the message of truth. By this means, we reject the Father who is rich in mercy toward us, and we reject Christ as our merciful High Priest.⁶⁶

The writer to the Hebrews said, 'See to it that you do not refuse Him who is speaking. For if those did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less will we escape who turn away from Him who warns from heaven.'⁶⁷ When he said, 'Him who is speaking', he meant Jesus Christ who speaks to us by His ascension-gift administration.⁶⁸ It is this administration that 'warns from heaven', for it proceeds from His throne in the heavenly places. Jesus Christ has given a mandate and authority to the five ministries to warn from heaven. Paul said, 'I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God'.⁶⁹ And speaking of Jesus, he said, 'We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom so that we may present every man complete in Christ'.⁷⁰

We cannot be born again and inherit eternal life if we refuse Him who speaks. The Gospel of John begins with this most fundamental truth. 'As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God.'⁷¹ As the Father's Slave and Messenger, Jesus, was frequently refused and rejected. We read of two occasions in the Gospel of John where the crowds picked up stones to kill Him, such was their fury.⁷² On one of these occasions, Jesus said to them, 'Why do you not understand what I am saying? It is because you cannot hear My word'.⁷³ In all cases, receiving the word precedes understanding the word. We can't judge the veracity of the word according to our own understanding, and then decide whether or not we will receive it.

65 Luk 10:16

68 Eph 4:11-12

71 Joh 1:12

66 Eph 2:4. Heb 2:17

69 Col 1:25

72 Joh 8:59. Joh 10:31

67 Heb 12:25

70 Col 1:28

73 Joh 8:43

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By very definition, the message of truth will be completely new to us. It comes to enlighten the eyes of our heart so that we can know the hope of His calling, the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and the surpassing greatness of His power toward us who believe.⁷⁴ If we do not receive His word, we will never know this enlightenment, and we will most certainly never know the surpassing greatness of His power.

The power to believe and obey

When the message of truth first comes to us, we are dead in trespasses and sins, without strength, and enemies of God.⁷⁵ In this fallen condition, we have no inherent capacity within us to receive and obey the word of God. What we do have is the capacity to make a decision. From the very beginning, mankind has possessed this freedom of choice. When the word comes, we can choose not to refuse it, nor resist it. That's why Paul said, 'Do not refuse Him who is speaking'.⁷⁶ And equally, 'Today, if you hear His voice, do not harden your hearts'.⁷⁷ If we don't resist it, the word itself gives us the capacity to receive, believe and obey it. The word is impregnated with the capacity of Christ Himself to believe and obey. It is full of faith. Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ.⁷⁸ And it is full of grace and truth.⁷⁹ In this way, the word reveals the truth of our sonship, births a faith for that sonship in us, and gives us grace to be obedient to that sonship. This is miraculous faith and miraculous obedience, born in us by the word of God. All of this is the gift of God, according to the riches of His mercy, for those who do not resist Him who is speaking.

74 Eph 1:18-19

76 Heb 12:12

79 Joh 1:14

75 Rom 5:6,10.
Eph 2:1

77 Heb 4:7

78 Rom 10:17

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The prophet Isaiah proclaimed, 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts, for as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My word be which goes forth from My mouth; it will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it'.⁸⁰ The word never returns void. It is either effective in salvation or judgement. If we refuse Him who is speaking, then we have that which will judge us at the last day. Jesus said, 'He who rejects Me and does not receive My sayings, has One who judges him; the word I spoke is what will judge him at the last day'.⁸¹

We can be assured that no one misses out on the opportunity to hear the message of truth. His word reaches to the heart of every man, in every place, and in every generation. Those who are ultimately cast into the lake of fire have proactively resisted it throughout the course of their life. They have refused Him who is speaking. In this case, Paul said, 'If we go on sinning wilfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a terrifying expectation of judgement and the fury of a fire which will consume the adversaries'.⁸²

Sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise

Continuing with our key verses, we read, 'After listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation – having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Holy Spirit of promise, who is given as a pledge of our inheritance'.⁸³ The work of the

80 Isa 55:9-11

83 Eph 1:13-14

81 Joh 12:48

82 Heb 10:26-27

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Holy Spirit is implicit within our new birth.⁸⁴ Having received the word and, therefore, the capacity to believe and obey the word, we are placed in the position of a son. The Father then sends forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba Father'.⁸⁵ This transaction is *through* the Holy Spirit, and indeed the Spirit bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God.⁸⁶ This is the meaning of being 'born of the Spirit'.

It is the Father, by the Holy Spirit, who raises us to sit with Christ in the heavenly places.⁸⁷ We are then sealed by the Father with the Holy Spirit of promise. Writing to the Corinthians, Paul said, 'He who establishes us with you in Christ and anointed us is God, who also sealed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts as a pledge'.⁸⁸ Later in this same letter, speaking of the day of resurrection, Paul said, 'Now He who prepared us for this very purpose is God, who gave to us the Spirit as a pledge'.⁸⁹ The Holy Spirit is the pledge of our inheritance because He is the One who brings the Spirit of the Father and the Spirit of the Son to us. Both the Father and the Son are working in us *through* the Holy Spirit. As long as we have the Holy Spirit we can be guaranteed that the work of the Father and the Son is active in our lives.

We are sealed for the day of our redemption as sons of God. It is incumbent upon us not to grieve the Holy Spirit of God, 'by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption'.⁹⁰ We are the sons of God, here and now, but it does not yet appear what we shall be.⁹¹ In this present time, our lives are hidden with Christ in God, ready to be revealed when He appears. ⁹²The seal is the evidence that we are sons of God, eagerly waiting and longing for that day. The firm foundation of the Lord stands, having this seal,

84 Joh 3:5

87 Eph 2:5-6

90 Eph 4:30

85 Rom 8:15. Gal 4:6

88 2Co 1:22

91 1Jn 3:2

86 Rom 8:16

89 2Co 5:5

92 Col 3:3

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'The Lord knows those who are His'.⁹³ In the book of Revelation, this is called the 'seal of the living God'.⁹⁴

A pledge of our inheritance

The Holy Spirit gives us a foretaste or earnest of the power of our sonship. Like Jesus Christ, we will not be revealed as sons of God 'with power' until the day of resurrection. In this present age, we live in weakness. And yet, by the Holy Spirit we do have a foretaste of the powers of the age to come; the power of our sonship. This is the power of the resurrected life of Christ, revealed and perfected in our weakness.⁹⁵ We remember the Lord saying to Paul, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness'.⁹⁶ The Holy Spirit empowers us to reveal Christ in the midst of our weakness. We are empowered to be His witnesses in the world. Paul testified that his message and his preaching 'were not in persuasive words of wisdom, but in the demonstration of the Spirit and of power'.⁹⁷

We have already identified the work of the Spirit in delivering us from the bondage and power of sin. In the early phase of our Christian lives, this is nothing short of miraculous. The power of the Holy Spirit brings healing, deliverance, and restoration. Writing to the Galatians, Paul reminded them of the way God provided them with the Spirit and worked miracles among them.⁹⁸ However, the power of the Holy Spirit is directed toward us for the express purpose of preparing us to join the fellowship of Christ's sufferings.⁹⁹

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus Himself was strengthened by the Holy Spirit, with the capacity of Eternal Spirit. Eternal Spirit is the capacity of the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of

93 2Ti 2:19

96 2Co 12:9

99 Php 3:10

94 Rev 7:2

97 1Co 2:4

95 Php 3:10-11

98 Gal 3:5

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the Son, and the Holy Spirit. The book of Hebrews tells us that ‘through Eternal Spirit’, He ‘offered Himself without blemish to God’.¹⁰⁰ Jesus had no capacity to endure the suffering of the cross by His own strength. He prayed in the garden for the power to be obedient and the power to endure. He was sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, and empowered by the capacity of Eternal Spirit to make offering. This happened when the angel appeared and strengthened Him.¹⁰¹ He was equipped to fulfil the will of the Father all the way to the cry, ‘It is finished!’¹⁰²

If we don’t proceed from the power of the Spirit to follow Christ on this blood-sprinkled way, we will quickly revert to our previous condition. We will be taken captive again by the law of sin and death, and all our suffering will be in vain.¹⁰³ This was the crisis for the Galatian church. Paul asked them the rhetorical question, ‘Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh? Did you suffer so many things in vain?’¹⁰⁴ There is a process of perfection that is effective. It is the seven-times sprinkling of the blood of Christ upon the mercy seat.¹⁰⁵ Having been raised to sit with Christ in the heavenly places, this must become our preoccupation. We are setting our mind on things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God’.¹⁰⁶

With a view to redemption

Having set our mind on things above, the blood-sprinkled way from Gethsemane to Calvary comes clearly into view. This is the pathway of redemption. We are not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold, ‘but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Christ’.¹⁰⁷ His blood was shed for us in seven wounds, which are seven sprinklings upon

100 Heb 9:14

103 Compare

105 Lev 16:14

101 Luk 22:43

Luk 11:23-26

106 Col 3:1-2

102 Joh 19:30

104 Gal 3:3-4

107 1Pe 1:18-19

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the mercy seat. From the moment we are made alive, raised, and seated with Christ in the heavenly places, these seven sprinklings become active in our life. We are seated with Him in the mercy seat, and the blood is cleansing our conscience from dead works so that we can serve the living God.¹⁰⁸ This is a fellowship in His sufferings whereby we cease from sin.¹⁰⁹

We are reminded of the words of Peter, 'Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin'.¹¹⁰ The blood is both His life and the outcome of His wounds, His suffering. We only touch the blood by a fellowship in His sufferings. Right here, is the crisis for every Christian. We are full of thanksgiving when the Father of mercies reaches down, draws us out of many waters, and sets our feet upon a rock.¹¹¹ We rejoice when the miraculous power of the Holy Spirit is released in our lives. However, will we embrace the sufferings of Christ? Will we withdraw our life from the altar when it's touched by the fiery ordeal?¹¹²

It is the mandate of the five ministries to motivate people toward offering, and then hold them to the commitment of offering in the midst of trial and suffering. If we withdraw ourselves from offering the moment the blood of Christ begins to touch our life, we are in grave danger of trampling underfoot the Son of God.¹¹³ We are regarding as unclean the blood of the covenant by which we are sanctified and insulting the Spirit of grace. The Lord is very clear. 'If anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him'.¹¹⁴ We do not want to be those who draw back to perdition. Rather, we want to be among those who believe to the saving of the

108 Heb 9:14

111 Psa 40:2

114 Heb 10:38

109 1Pe 4:1

112 1Pe 4:12

110 1Pe 4:1

113 Heb 10:29,39

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soul.¹¹⁵ This means embracing the process of suffering by which our redemption is made complete.

We experience suffering so that we cease from sin. And we receive power to continue making offering and endure the suffering. We know the Lord's grace is sufficient and His power is perfected in weakness.¹¹⁶ We must continually present ourselves at the altar, the place of offering, for that is where increase and multiplication take place. If we draw back to our own houses, withdrawing our offering from the altar, then we will incur the blood-guilt of that offering.¹¹⁷ Offering is always from, and in, the fellowship of the temple and the house of God, the body of Christ. Giving ourselves completely to the administration of offering is how we are delivered as a church from congregationalism and collegiality.

With a view to an administration

The apostle Paul used the phrase 'with a view' twice in the first chapter of Ephesians. We are sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise who is given as a pledge of our inheritance *with a view* to the redemption of God's own possession.¹¹⁸ And He has made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him *with a view* to an administration that is suitable for the fullness of times.¹¹⁹ This is the ascension-gift administration of Christ that sums up all things in Christ, things in the heavens and the things on the earth.

Paul considered Himself to be a prisoner of Jesus Christ for the sake of the Gentiles. By revelation, the mystery of the Father's will was made known to him.¹²⁰ And despite being the very least of all saints, grace was given to him to preach to the Gentiles the

115 Jas 1:21

118 Eph 1:14

116 2Co 12:9

119 Eph 1:10

117 Lev 17:3-4

120 Eph 3:1-3

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unfathomable riches of Christ.¹²¹ He received the mandate 'to bring to light what is the administration of the mystery which for ages has been hidden in God who created all things'.¹²² By this means, the manifold wisdom of God is made known through the church to the rulers and the authorities in the heavenly places.¹²³ The administration of the mystery is the administration of offering in the church. The prototype of this administration is the 'eternal purpose' which the Father carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹²⁴

Let us say again, we are 'being sanctified' to the finished work, already completed in the one offering of Jesus Christ. For by one offering, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.¹²⁵ The five ministries are the administration which applies all the elements of sanctification so that we grow up to the full stature of our sonship and name.¹²⁶ They have received a stewardship of grace from Christ Himself for this very purpose. In this way, they are the right hand of Christ; the hand of an ascension-gift administration in the midst of a presbytery, and in the midst of a lampstand church.

When Christ ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men. He gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers. The work of the five ministries is to equip the saints for the work of deaconing.¹²⁷ This is an administration of priesthood and deaconing through which the whole body is built up. Individual members are equipped for their own priesthood, so they can present their bodies as living sacrifices and make acceptable offering.¹²⁸ And more than this, each member is equipped for their own deaconing. In this way, they are empowered to help facilitate the priesthood and offering of others.

121 Eph 3:8

124 Eph 3:11

127 Eph 4:8-12

122 Eph 3:9

125 Heb 10:14

128 Rom 12:1

123 Eph 3:10

126 Eph 4:13

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Grace is given to every member for this work through the hand of Christ, the five ministries. This is the oil from the hand to a lampstand church. To each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift.¹²⁹ When every member is a priest and deacons according to the grace they have received, then the whole body is joined and knit together. Paul called this the 'proper working of every individual part'.¹³⁰ When every member is committed to offering, and revealing the life of another, it causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love. It is by this means that the body grows up in all aspects into Him who is the Head – Christ.

As an apostle and slave of Jesus Christ, Paul considered the equipping of the saints for the work of deaconing to be his mandate. His pastoral burden toward all the churches, and individuals within those churches, is more than apparent in his letters.¹³¹ We know Paul spent three years among the church in Ephesus, teaching them publicly and house-to-house. He did not shrink from declaring to them the whole counsel of God.¹³² He did not cease, night and day, to admonish 'each one' with tears. Paul wrote to the Colossians, 'We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ'.¹³³

Presenting every man complete is the burden, motivation, and mandate of the five ministries. It is incumbent upon all of us to submit to this authority within a lampstand church. Obedience in all things is paramount. Paul received grace and apostleship to bring about the obedience of faith among all the Gentiles.¹³⁴ As a slave of Christ, he did not presume to speak anything other than what Christ had accomplished through him, 'resulting in

129 Eph 4:7 132 Act 20:20,31

130 Eph 4:14-16 133 Col 1:28

131 2Co 11:2 134 Rom 1:5

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the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed'.¹³⁵ Drawing to a close in his letter to the Romans, Paul said, 'The report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you'.¹³⁶ He wrote to the Corinthians, 'We are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete'.¹³⁷

The pathway of sonship is a pathway of obedience in an administration. When we are raised and seated with Christ, we are connected to this administration and the authority of the right hand, which proceeds directly from the throne of Christ. It is the work of overseers to watch over the processes initiated by the five ministries, with wisdom and insight. Deacons make pathways for every man and facilitate the instructions given. Every member of the body accepts their connection and responsibility toward others in the body to assist them in achieving their sonship. The body is joined and knit together by 'what every joint supplies'.¹³⁸

The administration within the body of Christ, from which grace is ministered to us, enables us to walk in fellowship. If we go in and out of the sheepfold without reference to the door-keeper, the five-fold administration, we are not following the good Shepherd.¹³⁹ We are maintaining another way of entry and walking among God's people. Such a person is misappropriating the grace of God and is a thief and a robber. The blood of Christ is to bring us into the fellowship of His five-fold administration.

135 Rom 15:18

138 Eph 4:16

136 Rom 16:19

139 Joh 10:9

137 2Co 10:6

CHAPTER 3

The Father of mercies

Paul opened his letter to the Corinthians by saying, ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort’.¹ The Father of mercies is one of Paul’s primary themes in his letter to the Ephesians as well, although he doesn’t use that term directly. He simply says that God the Father is ‘rich in mercy’. And He is rich in mercy because of His great love with which He has loved us.² According to His mercy, we have been made alive together with Christ, raised with Him, and seated with Him in heavenly places.³ Mercy is the defining characteristic of the Father’s initiative toward us. James understood this when he said, ‘Every good thing given, and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is

1 2Co 1:3

2 Eph 2:4

3 Eph 2:5-6

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no variation or shifting shadow'.⁴ And again, 'Wisdom from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, reasonable, full of mercy and good fruits, unwavering, without hypocrisy'.⁵

It is the testimony of Paul that, although he was a blasphemer, a persecutor, and an insolent man, he 'received mercy'.⁶ Mercy brought him back from the 'death of sin',⁷ and into relationship and fellowship with God and all the saints who are called. Mercy recovered him to the house of the Father to become the son he was predestined and named to be.⁸ The mercy of God is His capacity to recover us and to bring us back to Himself. We know this to be true. Speaking to Israel, He reminded them of 'how I bore you on eagles' wings, and brought you to Myself'.⁹

The Father is rich in mercy, and this mercy is commensurate with and 'according to His great love with which He has loved us'.¹⁰ This great love was revealed and demonstrated when He 'sent His Son to be the propitiation', the Mercy Seat.¹¹ If we were to ask, 'What does mercy look like', we would find that it is the Father exercising His will to bring forth many sons.¹² And it was fully revealed by Jesus Christ, firstly as the Father's only begotten Son, and secondly, when He was set forth publicly as a Mercy Seat.¹³

Rich in mercy

Jesus, as the Father's Slave, is bringing us forth by water, Spirit and blood to the glory of sonship. This is the substance of our inheritance. He is bringing many sons to glory.¹⁴ But what is His inheritance? Paul prayed that the eyes of our heart would be enlightened to know the hope of 'our calling', as well as the

4 Jas 1:17

5 Jas 3:17

6 1Ti 1:13

7 Rom 6:23

8 Act 9:15.

Gal 1:15-16.

2Ti 1:11

9 Exo 19:4

10 Eph 2:4

11 1Jn 4:10

12 Heb 2:10

13 Joh 3:16. 2Pe 1:17

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riches of the glory of 'His inheritance in the saints'. We are His inheritance. And then, as sons, we are 'heirs of God and fellow-heirs with Christ'.¹⁵

The 'riches of glory' which the Father predestined are the inheritance of the 'many sons'.¹⁶ And the Holy Spirit is the pledge and foretaste of this inheritance.¹⁷ With this in view, Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders, commending them 'to God and to the word of His grace, which is able to build up and to give the inheritance among all those who are sanctified'.¹⁸ Therefore, we should give thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. This inheritance is imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away. It is reserved in heaven for you.¹⁹

Mercy is the first initiative of the Father in the 'exercise of His will' toward us.²⁰ In the first case, He initiates His kind intention and desire for many sons. The gospel of sonship is the Father's will. The means by which this is achieved is the mystery of His will. He has predestined us to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ to Himself.²¹ This is revealed in the counsel of His will, which is the foundation of the Eternal Covenant between Father, Son and Holy Spirit.²²

From the outset, we must be clear. We are born again by the mercy of the Father. He brought us forth by a word.²³ And that was the word of our sonship. It is the Father who, 'according to His great mercy has caused us to be born again'.²⁴ We were dead in trespasses and sins, and without hope in the world.²⁵ We were without strength, slaves of sin and enemies of God.²⁶ And yet, God

14	Rom 9:4. Heb 2:10	19	1Pe 1:4	24	1Pe 1:3
15	Rom 8:17	20	Jas 1:18	25	Eph 2:1,12
16	Heb 2:10	21	Eph 1:5	26	Rom 5:6,10.
17	2Co 5:5. 2Co 1:22	22	Eph 1:11		Rom 6:6,17,20
18	Act 20:32	23	1Pe 1:23		

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is rich in mercy. We are born again when, having heard the word, we obey and are placed in the position of a son. We are born again by the living and enduring word of God.²⁷

The apostle Peter has given us a summary of the gospel message. It is according to the foreknowledge of God the Father. We have considered this earlier. It is by the sanctifying work of the Spirit who is given to us as a seal and a pledge. And it is in obedience to Jesus Christ and being sprinkled with His blood.²⁸ Without the shedding of blood, there is no remission, and without the sprinkling, there is no access or place available to us in the heavenly places.²⁹

Our merciful High Priest

The Father ‘sent forth His Son’ to be the ‘merciful Priest’, the sin offering and Mercy Seat of propitiation.³⁰ John said, ‘In this is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins’.³¹ Propitiation is the Father’s work, given to the Slave-Son to ‘redeem the purchased possession’.³² He is bringing many sons to glory. This was achieved by the sprinkling of blood when the Father ‘set forth a mercy seat’.³³

Christ humbled Himself to be found in the appearance of a man, to the position of a slave. He humbled Himself to the involuntary position of trusting obedience by which the works committed to Him by the Father were fulfilled.³⁴ He became obedient to the point of death, even death on the cross.³⁵ The Son had to be made like His brethren in all things, so that He might become a merciful

27 1Pe 1:23

Heb 12:24

34 Heb 10:8-9

28 1 Pet 1:2

30 Gal 4:4. Heb 2:17

35 Php 2:7-8

29 Lev 16:14.

31 1 Jo 4:10

Heb 9:22.

32 Eph 1:14

Heb 10:22.

33 Rom 3:25 (YLT)

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and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God to become the Mercy Seat for the sins of the people.³⁶ Christ is the agent of the Father's mercy and, accordingly, He is a merciful High Priest.

The priests of old were ordained for the work of ministry by the sprinkling of blood. Some of the blood that was on the altar, and some of the anointing oil, was sprinkled on Aaron and on his garments.³⁷ In the garden of Gethsemane, as Jesus cried out concerning the cup He was about to take, He sweated drops of blood from every pore in His body.³⁸ In the fulfilment of the Old Testament type, He was consecrated as our merciful High Priest. And He was set forth as the propitiation for sin.³⁹

Sprinkling the Mercy Seat

After slaying the offerings of old, the former high priest took some of the blood and sprinkled it with his finger on the mercy seat seven times.⁴⁰ He then cleansed the sanctuary, after which he went out to the altar and sprinkled some of the blood on it seven times to cleanse it from the impurities of the sons of Israel.⁴¹ We know that it was necessary for the earthly sanctuary, the copy, to be cleansed in this way. But the heavenly things themselves are cleansed with a better sacrifice.⁴² Christ did not enter a holy place made with hands, but heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us.⁴³ He entered with blood for sprinkling. He is the merciful High Priest, the offering, the Mercy Seat, and the blood of sprinkling.

The seven sprinklings to which both Old and New Testament writers refer are the wounds inflicted upon Jesus. From

36 Heb 2:17

39 Rom 3:25

43 Heb 9:23-24

37 Exo 29:21.

40 Lev 16:14-16

Lev 8:30

41 Lev 16:18-19

38 Luk 22:44

42 Heb 9:23

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Gethsemane, He offered Himself by 'Eternal Spirit' to the Father.⁴⁴ The cross was in view; however, the altar extends beyond the death of the cross. His hour of temptation and trial brought forth the offering of a Slave-Priest. He endured seven wounds from Gethsemane until He cried out, 'It is finished'.⁴⁵ By this means, He became our Mercy Seat.

As our merciful High Priest, He traversed the true tabernacle, cleansed the sanctuary, and then sat down waiting. He will appear a second time without reference to sin; that is to say, those who eagerly await Him will have overcome and ceased from sin.⁴⁶ That which is born of God cannot sin.⁴⁷ He is our propitiation and Mercy Seat, having perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.⁴⁸ We have been raised to sit with Him in the heavenly places in the mercy seat.⁴⁹ We are mercy-seated with Him in the throne of grace. When we touch the mercy seat, we inevitably join the fellowship of His sufferings and afflictions, doing our part to fill up that which is lacking.⁵⁰ By this means, we are being sanctified by the blood of the covenant in the mercy seat.⁵¹

The cross, the altar and the mercy seat

The cross is the means of death, but the altar is both death and life. We must take up our cross and follow.⁵² And we have an altar.⁵³ If we die with Him, then we will live with Him.⁵⁴ The blood is the life and the mercy seat is the propitiation by sprinkling of blood. The blood is taken from the altar to the mercy seat by our merciful High Priest. The life of the flesh is in His blood. The blood is given on the altar to make atonement. It is the blood 'by

44 Heb 9:14

49 Eph 2:6

Luk 9:23

45 Joh 19:30

50 Col 1:24

53 Heb 13:10

46 Heb 9:28

51 Heb 10:29

54 Rom 6:8

47 1Jn 3:9

52 Mat 16:24.

48 Heb 10:14 LITV

Mar 8:34.

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reason of the life' that makes atonement.⁵⁵ This is the efficacy of blood given on the altar and sprinkled on the mercy seat. 'To live is Christ and to die is gain.'⁵⁶ We have an altar of which those who serve the former tabernacle have no right to eat. ⁵⁷ And nor do they have any access to it.

By the death of the cross, the law was nailed back into its place.⁵⁸ Consequently, our adversary the devil was disempowered. Christ who knew no sin, became sin and the curse of sin.⁵⁹ He bore the curse of the law, redeeming us from that curse and delivering us to adoption as sons.⁶⁰ He Himself bore our sins in His body on the cross, so that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By His wounds we are healed.⁶¹ The cross is our death to law and sin.⁶² However, the altar is our redemption because of the blood, granting us access into the heavenly places and to the mercy seat.

The mercy seat is our place with Him. It is the throne of grace. We are raised to sit with Him in the mercy seat in heavenly places.⁶³ Let us draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, so that we may receive 'mercy' and find grace to help in time of need.⁶⁴ Coming to Jesus as 'the mediator of a new covenant', and to His sprinkled blood, we are included in the fellowship of His suffering.⁶⁵ By seven sprinklings we are cleansed, overcoming sin and ceasing from sin. When we are reviled for His name, the Spirit of glory and of God is resting upon us.⁶⁶ The apostle Peter exhorted every believer, 'Since Christ has suffered in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same purpose, because he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin'.⁶⁷ John said, 'As He is, so are we in this world'; and as He walked so also we walk.⁶⁸

55 Lev 17:11

60 Gal 3:13-16

65 Heb 12:24

56 Php 1:21

61 1Pe 2:24

66 1Pe 4:14

57 Heb 13:10

62 Rom 6:6-11

67 1Pe 4:1

58 Col 2:14

63 Eph 2:5-6

68 1Jn 4:17

59 2Co 5:21

64 Heb 4:16

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Publicly displayed as a Mercy Seat

God the Father displayed Jesus before the eyes of all as a Mercy Seat when He hung upon the cross. He was evidently set forth as crucified.⁶⁹ Jesus said, ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so the Son of Man must be lifted up’.⁷⁰ The Bible says that Christ was lifted up as a curse. Paul understood this when he said, ‘Christ redeemed us from the curse of the Law, having become a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree”’.⁷¹

Upon the cross, Jesus was indeed the sin offering. He who knew no sin became sin and became a curse for us. Certainly, Jesus was made sin-sick by the Father’s hand upon Him, afflicting Him and making His soul an offering for sin.⁷² However, He was also the sin-bearer. He was truly taking our infirmities and carrying away our diseases.⁷³ Jeremiah’s words are true. ‘Woe is me, because of my injury! My wound is incurable. But I said, “Truly this is a sickness, and I must bear it”’.⁷⁴

The blood of the cross answers the curse of the law. And because the law has been nailed back into the cross, the power of sin, Satan and death have been destroyed. When Jesus was lifted up as the serpent in the wilderness, He abolished the enmity of law and destroyed the power of death.⁷⁵ The serpent was lifted, cast out and destroyed, thus fulfilling the words of Jesus, ‘The ruler of this world will be cast out’.⁷⁶

As the Mercy Seat, Christ’s propitiatory work was complete at midday. His obedience was fully revealed. However, the journey was not yet complete. For the next three hours, darkness fell over the land.⁷⁷ His cross became the weapon of judgement against

69 Gal 3:1

73 Isa 53:4-5

Eph 2:15

70 Joh 3:14

74 Jer 10:19

76 Joh 12:31

71 Gal 3:13

75 Joh 3:14-16.

77 Mat 27:45

72 Isa 53:10

Joh 12:32-34.

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Satan and the host of wickedness. Having descended to the depths of the bottomless pit and to *cherem*, He was now returning. Many waters had encompassed Him.⁷⁸ The great deep had engulfed Him and weeds had been wrapped around His head. Having reached the lowest parts of the earth, He was now ascending, stripping off principalities and powers and taking them captive.⁷⁹ He was now returning as the victor. He was about to stand up in *exanastasis*; the 'out-resurrection'.⁸⁰

In seven wounds and seven sprinklings, He was the Mercy Seat. He had become our propitiation. He had triumphed over sin and death. His work was now complete. Having been smitten and forsaken, His cry ascended before the Father, 'Why have You forsaken Me?'⁸¹ The Father could not deny the remembrance of our great and merciful High Priest. The everlasting doors were flung open for the King of glory, and the Father received Him again.⁸² The Father reached out His arms and drew Him out of many waters, back into the bosom, the very heart of Yahweh Himself.⁸³ The work for which He had come was complete. Our great High Priest had come back from the death of sin in seven wounds and seven sprinklings. He had become the firstborn from the dead in *exanastasis*.⁸⁴ Thus He could cry, 'It is finished!'

God had set forth His Son to be a Mercy Seat through faith in His blood. This is the blood of sprinkling and the blood which speaks better than the blood of Abel.⁸⁵ More than this, He had become the High Priest of good things to come as He entered the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not with the blood of bulls and goats, but with His own blood. He entered the Most Holy Place in the true tabernacle, that is in heaven itself, having

78 2Sa 22:2-18

Mar 15:34

85 Heb 12:24

79 Eph 4:8-10

82 Psa 24:7

80 Php 3:10-11

83 2Sa 22:17

81 Mat 27:46.

84 Col 1:18. Rev 1:5

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obtained eternal redemption.⁸⁶ Paul accounted that if the blood of bulls and goats sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, how much more the blood of Christ who, through Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without spot to God.⁸⁷ When the spear was thrust into His side, He was already dead. But a new and living way was opened by blood and water.⁸⁸

Seated with Him in the mercy seat

Having sat down at the right hand of the Father in heavenly places, Christ has become our Mercy Seat. By one offering, He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.⁸⁹ As the author of our salvation, He has been perfected through suffering.⁹⁰ The work is finished. When we join His one offering and participate in the fellowship of His sufferings, then His blood is efficacious. If we will obey Jesus Christ, then we will be sprinkled with His blood.⁹¹ Surpassing riches of grace are in the throne of grace, the Mercy Seat, to which we are raised and seated.⁹² The Father is now showing His kind intention toward us in Christ.⁹³ Therefore, we can draw near with confidence to find mercy and grace to help in time of need.⁹⁴

Our merciful High Priest is sanctifying us to that which is already perfect. Jesus Christ has opened the way for our participation and fellowship in His sufferings. If we die with Him, we will live with Him. If we endure with Him, we will reign with Him.⁹⁵ We suffer firstly ‘in Him’, and then we suffer ‘with Him’. And in the place where we are suffering, we are ceasing from sin.⁹⁶ The chastening for our well-being has fallen upon Him who is merciful.⁹⁷ Therefore, we join our reproach to the reproach of

86 Heb 9:11-12

90 Heb 5:8-9

94 Heb 4:16

87 Heb 9:13-14

91 1Pe 1:2

95 2Ti 2:11-12

88 Joh 19:34

92 Eph 2:5-6

96 1Pe 4:1

89 Heb 10:14 LITV

93 Eph 1:5,9

97 Isa 53:5

The Father of mercies

Christ.⁹⁸ Having faith in His blood, we are being sanctified to His finished work.

We are fellow-heirs with Christ when we join the fellowship of His sufferings in the Mercy Seat. If we suffer with Him, we will be glorified with Him.⁹⁹ Christ is the heir of all of the sonship. Everything that belongs to the Father has been given to Him. He is the heir of all things.¹⁰⁰ We have been made alive together with Christ because of the Father's great mercy.¹⁰¹ We are saved by His mercy.¹⁰² Having received the Spirit as a pledge, we have been raised up with Him and seated with Him in the heavenly places.¹⁰³ Therefore, we have become heirs together with Him.¹⁰⁴ We are glorified together with Him to seven times; that is, to all the fullness of sonship. This is our inheritance among all those who are sanctified.

98 Rom 15:3.

2Co 12:10.

Heb 13:13. 1Pe 4:14

99 Rom 8:17

100 Heb 1:2-3

101 Eph 2:5

102 Tit 3:5

103 Eph 2:5-6

104 Rom 8:17

CHAPTER 4

Slaves of Christ

It is a most remarkable truth that Jesus Christ took upon Himself the form of a slave. He humbled Himself to the involuntary position of trusting obedience. Putting aside all of His personal prerogatives and privileges, He became the slave of the Father's will, desire and intention.¹ Although He existed in the form of God, He did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a slave.² For obvious reasons, the translators resisted assigning the title of 'Slave' to Jesus, even though the literal meaning of '*doulos*' is 'slave'. The defining characteristic of a slave is obedience. Having taken upon Himself the form of a slave, the Son continued to humble

1 Heb 10:5-9

2 Php 2:7

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Himself by ‘becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross’.³

Speaking to the Jews who refused to obey His word, Jesus explained His relationship to the Father as a slave. ‘If God were your Father, you would love Me, for I proceeded forth and have come from God, for I have not even come on My own initiative, but He sent Me.’⁴ Earlier in this same interaction, Jesus said, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I Am He. I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me.’⁵ When Jesus offered Himself in this way, in full obedience to the Father, His slavehood was fully revealed. And the works committed to Him by the Father were fulfilled.

Even though Jesus Christ is the Son of God, He died as the obedient Slave of God. This is clear in Paul’s writings to the Philippians, the Gospels, as well as the Old Testament prophetic Scriptures. The prophet Isaiah clearly identified that Christ would come as the Slave. ‘Behold I bring forth My Servant [Slave], the Branch.’⁶ “Behold! My Servant [Slave] whom I uphold, My Elect One in whom My soul delights!”⁷

Let this mind be in you

The apostle Paul implored us to ‘let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus’.⁸ This is the ‘mind of Christ’. He humbled Himself to become the Father’s Slave, and the full expression of His humbling was to the point of death, the death of the cross. The cross is the full manifestation of the faith of the Son because it is the place of absolute obedience. A slave is in the place of involuntary, trusting obedience; the place of faith. It is here that the Son was fully revealed as the Father’s Slave. We must come to

3 Php 2:8

6 Zec 3:8

4 Joh 8:42

7 Isa 42:1

5 Joh 8:28

8 Php 2:5

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the same place for there is only 'one faith'. There is only one Lord, one faith, one baptism.⁹ The faith of the Son is the faith of a slave.

We know that Jesus was fully committed to involuntary slavehood because He prayed, 'Father, if You are willing, remove this cup from Me; yet not My will, but Yours be done'.¹⁰ In the garden of Gethsemane, and all the way to the cross, He was a Slave, an involuntary offering. And therefore, He is the Lamb. Remember that John the Baptist cried out for us to 'behold the Lamb'.¹¹ When we behold the Lamb, we likewise behold the Father's Slave, the Branch.¹² As the Lamb of God, His intention is to do nothing on His own initiative.¹³ He did not open His mouth for any declaration, protest or affirmation. As a sheep before His shearers, He was silent.¹⁴

Concerning His own life, Jesus said, 'No one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative. I have authority to lay it down, and I have authority to take it up again. This commandment I received from My Father.'¹⁵ It was the Son's initiative to become the Father's Slave. No one took His life from Him. Nevertheless, having emptied Himself of His rights and prerogatives,¹⁶ all of His activity became involuntary. He did nothing further on His own initiative. He took hold of the 'will of the Father' as a slave and made it His own by the command of the Father. 'For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment *as to* what to say and what to speak.'¹⁷

9 Eph 4:5

13 Joh 5:30.

16 Php 2:6

10 Luk 22:42

Joh 8:28,42

17 Joh 12:49

11 Joh 1:29

14 Isa 53:7

12 Zec 3:8

15 Joh 10:18

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The Lord's freeman

Jesus spoke of the one who 'seeks to save his life'.¹⁸ A slave does not live for himself. Rather, they have been purchased by a master and have accordingly foregone all rights, prerogatives and privileges. They have determined to do nothing other than reveal the law of their master. Every vestige of self-preservation has to go to the death of the cross. This is an absolute. However, the benefit, as Paul said, is that only a slave is the Lord's freeman.¹⁹ This is an astonishing thing! Until we become a slave, we are not free. If we are bound by self-preservation, we cannot participate in resurrection life.

Jesus exemplified this faith and He trusted that the Father would deliver Him. He trusted that the Father would draw Him out of 'many waters'.²⁰ As the Father's offering, Jesus became sin for us and went to *cherem*, total destruction, outer-darkness, all the way to the lake of fire. The 'cords of death laid hold upon Him', and yet He suffered and survived it because of His perfect obedience.²¹ He stood up out of the death of sin and proclaimed, 'It is finished'.²² He did not seek to save His life, so He found it. He was declared the Son of God with power by the resurrection from the dead.²³

The nature of slavehood

It will be helpful to consider the nature of slavehood to which the Scripture is fundamentally referring. In biblical times, the losing army on the battlefield became the slaves of the conquering assailants. In fact, when a soldier was prevailing over an opponent in hand-to-hand combat, he would put the sword to the man on

18 Luk 17:33

Psa 18:16

Psa 116:3

19 1Co 7:22

21 2Sa 22:6.

22 Joh 19:30

20 2Sa 22:17.

Psa 18:4-5.

23 Rom 1:4

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the ground and declare, 'Doulos [slave] or die'. Should he choose to surrender, at the point of withdrawing the sword, the defeated soldier became his captor's slave. From that day forward, his family, property, and all of his worldly possessions, were no longer his own. The punishment for a runaway slave was, by Roman tradition, death by crucifixion. Thus, to attempt to escape, having pledged subservience to a master, would certainly incur this most severe and painful penalty.

If someone was executed on a pole, a tree or a cross, that was the statement of cursing. The Bible says that Christ was lifted up as a curse. 'Cursed is he who hangs on a tree.'²⁴ And as 'Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness', even so the Son of Man must be lifted up.²⁵ Christ was deemed to be a criminal who should die the death of a cross, the death of a curse. Having humbled Himself to the position of a slave, He died the slave's death. And having become sin, He died the death of sin.²⁶

We must meet Him with the confession of 'Doulos, slave'. Our freedom is to commit to slavehood, and become a 'fellow-slave'²⁷ with the believers of all ages who humble themselves to His Lordship. If we will not be the slave of Christ, we will die the eternal death. Nevertheless, ours is not the law of the battlefield in the truest sense. He doesn't say to us, 'Doulos or die'. He says, 'Doulos and die with Me!'²⁸ Our sentence of eternal judgement is commuted to a fellowship in His sufferings, as we take up our cross and follow Him in the pathway of slavehood and sonship.²⁹ This is the blood-sprinkled way where the blood of Christ is effective in cleansing us from all sin.

24 Gal 3:13	Mat 24:49.	29 Php 3:10
25 Joh 3:14	Col 1:7. Col4:7.	
26 2Co 5:21	Rev 6:11.	
27 Mat 18:28-	Rev 19:10. Rev22:9	
29,31,33.	28 2Ti 2:11	

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A suffering slave

When we become a ‘fellow-slave’ and join our reproach to the reproach of Christ, we become a suffering slave and a fellow-partaker³⁰ of His suffering.³¹ We boldly believe that His sufferings are being shared back to us, since He has ‘tasted our death’ in His vicarious offering. Then we have faith that His blood is speaking, cleansing and sanctifying that which He has already perfected. For by one offering He has perfected for all time those who are being sanctified.³² The cross is making peace and correcting what is marred. It is an ongoing work, enabling us to become able ministers and messengers of the gospel.³³ Christ died as the suffering Slave and then He, as the tender Branch, is bringing forth fruit by resurrection.

Having humbled ourselves as God the Son did, we are love-slaves of the heavenly Father. It is the work of a slave to make offering and reveal another. The Love-Slave offered Himself to reveal the Father.³⁴ The Son offered Himself in slavehood to reveal the Father’s fatherhood. In this way, He is bringing many sons to glory.³⁵ These are the ‘riches of glory upon vessels of mercy’.³⁶ When you are the Father’s minister and slave, you have no voluntary or righteous activity of your own. You will be encompassed by infirmity and with involuntary initiative coming to you from the command of the Father. The initiative is all His and you are the slave.

Remember, Jesus completed the full work of our redemption while He was still alive. In the Old Testament, the offering was a dead sacrifice. A live animal was never placed on the altar and

30 1Co 9:23. Php 1:7.
Rev 1:9

31 Php 3:10. Col 1:24.
1Pe 4:13

32 Heb 10:14

33 2Co 3:6

34 Joh 14:7-9

35 1Jn 3:8. Php 2:8.

Heb 2:14. 2Ti 1:10

36 Rom 9:23

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tortured with fire. They firstly killed the animal, spilling its blood. Christ went far beyond the sacrifices of the Old Testament.³⁷ He endured the sufferings, the pain and agony of a living sacrifice, not entering into the luxury of death until the work of His offering was complete and He declared, 'It is finished'.³⁸ Paul beseeched us to likewise present our bodies a living sacrifice, 'holy, acceptable to God, which is your spiritual service of worship'; that is, our priestly service.³⁹

Slaves of righteousness

The presenting of the 'members of our bodies' as slaves of righteousness is our priestly service.⁴⁰ As our Master, He commands us to no longer present the members of our body to sin, as instruments of unrighteousness. Rather, He says that we are to present ourselves as those who are 'alive from the dead, as slaves of righteousness'.⁴¹ We who were born in trespasses and sins were slaves of sin and death, but He 'led captive a host of captives and gave gifts to men'.⁴² In the first case, this gift was the gift of life. He replaced our death with His life, delivering us from the death of sin by dying it Himself. He took us captive because He took our masters captive. He destroyed the power of Satan, sin and death as He died the death of the cross. What had us bound as captives, He took captive, for we were the willing slaves of sin having presented our members to sin and unrighteousness.⁴³

Jesus did this as the slave of God for He was never the slave of sin. Remember, even though the Father made Him to be sin, He was not the slave of sin.⁴⁴ He committed no sin. He became a slave, but He took all slaves captive to make them slaves of righteousness if they would follow Him. Then, by His love, we

37 Heb 10:12

40 Rom 6:16-18

43 Rom 6:6,17.

38 Joh 19:30

41 Rom 6:13

Rom 7:23

39 Rom 12:1

42 Eph 4:8

44 2Co 5:21

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are constrained to our righteous slavehood. 'For the love of God constrains us having concluded this, that one died for all therefore all died; and He died for all that they who live should no longer live for themselves but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf. Therefore from now on we recognise no one according to the flesh.'⁴⁵ Recognising that we can no longer live for ourselves, we must present ourselves as priests, offering our bodily members as instruments of righteousness⁴⁶ as those alive from the dead.

An offering to the Master

A slave is an offering to their master. They have given themselves up totally to be an acceptable offering. When we are presenting ourselves as a slave of righteousness, it is important to know that we are making acceptable offering, and not just looking for acceptance.⁴⁷ When our own righteousness is bankrupted, when we are weak and without strength, then our Slave and High Priest comes with a confession of faith, enabling us to join His offering and make an acceptable offering. This is the faith of God. His word enables us to have the faith of God.⁴⁸ Without faith expressed from the position of a slave, it is impossible to please God.⁴⁹ We must arrive at the faith of a slave who is approved by His faith. By this, men of old gained approval.⁵⁰ Without faith, love cannot be manifest.

It is interesting that at the last supper, Jesus 'poured water into the basin, and began to wash the disciples' feet and to wipe them with the towel with which He was girded'.⁵¹ As the love-slave of both God and man, Jesus girded Himself with a towel and became the Slave of all. He was now not only the Father's Slave but their Slave as well. Concerning the word which Jesus

45 2Co 5:16

48 Gal 2:20.

50 Heb 11:2

46 Rom 6:13

Rom 10:17

51 Joh 13:5

47 Rom 12:1

49 Heb 11:6

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ministered as the Father's Slave, He said, 'I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me a commandment as to what to say and what to speak'.⁵² Later He said, 'Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father is in Me? The words which I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.'⁵³

This is the mode of the Godhead. Concerning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, 'When He, the Spirit of truth, comes, He will guide you into all the 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.'⁵⁴ The Holy Spirit is Himself committed to doing the will of another. If we are filled and empowered by the Spirit then we will find power to be a love-slave.

The confession of the apostle Paul must become our confession. We are to be fellow-slaves.⁵⁵ The righteousness being revealed is not our own.⁵⁶ However, if we do not arrive at full slavehood, then some of the righteousness will be our own. Do not be self-righteous, deriving your justification from your own law. It was in the commitment to empty Himself that the Son became the Father's Slave.⁵⁷ If we do not understand the necessity of emptying ourselves, as Christ did before the Father and the Holy Spirit, then we will never comprehend slavehood. This is a true slave, a love-slave.

This kind of slave is not coerced into submission by an enforced law and accompanying threat of punishment. We have to move beyond this self-preserving state, which is governed by voluntary initiative and righteous activity of 'my own'. Rather, a broken and contrite heart becomes the attitude of slavehood.⁵⁸ The psalmist declared, 'A broken and contrite heart Thou wilt not

52 Joh 12:49

55 Col 4:7

58 Psa 51:17

53 Joh 14:10

56 Php 3:9

54 Joh 16:13

57 Php 2:6-7

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despise'.⁵⁹ We must imitate the obedient humbling of Christ if we are to become the Father's slave. And we have to come to Christ to become a slave. This is the only way to apprehend our name written in the Lamb's book of life.⁶⁰

The fear of God

Our fear of God is a respect for Him that takes us beyond our own search for self-expression and survival. We glory in the privilege of knowing Him.⁶¹ We fully appreciate Him, when we know Him and fear Him. Only a slave can fully appreciate Him. The astonishing thing is, when we come to the point of faith, He becomes our fear.⁶² We hold Jesus in such respect, such awe, because He is revealing the righteousness of His Master. We fear because 'beside Him there is no other'.⁶³ The prophet Isaiah declared the word of Yahweh; 'I am the Lord, there is no other; besides Me there is no God'.⁶⁴ What is there beside Him? There is only emptiness and wandering in the way of Cain.⁶⁵ And we should fear that more than anything else.

The Father's righteousness and His righteous works became Abraham's works.⁶⁶ They were in true fellowship together - Master and slave; Yahweh and slave. Abraham participated in Christ's offering, and by this means, he participated in the righteousness of God.⁶⁷ Abraham's righteousness was not his own by the works of self-justifying or self-preserving law. He had become the slave of righteousness by faith and found the righteousness of the slave. Abraham didn't just believe God and find that he was righteous before God. His righteousness was fulfilled when he offered

59 Psa 51:17

63 Deu 4:35

67 Compare

60 Rev 21:27

64 Isa 45:5

Heb 11:17-19

61 1Jn 2:3

65 Jud 1:11

62 Luk 1:50. Rev 19:5

66 Jas 2:23

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Isaac.⁶⁸ He understood the Lamb and he offered his son because he was an obedient slave.

On account of this, Isaac also became a love-slave when he submitted to his father. This is the 'fear of Isaac'. We could consider Isaac to be the greatest of all 'God-fearers'. We can barely imagine the extent of his faith and his fear of God, allowing himself to be bound upon the altar by his father. Much later, when Jacob set up the pillar between himself and Laban, he said, 'If the God of my father, the God of Abraham, and the Fear of Isaac, had not been for me, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed'.⁶⁹ It is quite incredible to consider that the 'Fear of Isaac' is used here as one of the names of God.

If we are to be 'able ministers' of the gospel and the Spirit, then we will bring this teaching.⁷⁰ This is the faith of an obedient slave, ably ministering the faith of the righteousness of God. A son receives his sonship by proceeding in and through obedience as a slave. You will never become a true disciple, a brother, or a friend of God, without becoming a slave in the fear of Isaac.

Slave, servants, sons

The New Testament speaks extensively about the glorious inheritance of a son of God. How do we know a son of God? 'As many as are led by the Spirit of God these are the sons of God.'⁷¹ All of us are called and predestined to be sons.⁷² However, we must be a slave of God before we can become a son of God. The apostle John said, 'Beloved now are we the sons of God but it has not yet appeared what we shall be'.⁷³ In the same way, Paul wrote, 'The whole of creation is groaning, waiting for the day of

68 Jas 2:21

71 Rom 8:14

69 Gen 31:42,53

72 2Pe 1:3. Eph 1:5

70 2Co 3:6

73 1Jn 3:2

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resurrection and the revealing of the sons of God'.⁷⁴ The authority of our sonship has not yet been revealed.⁷⁵

Even though we are sons, yet we are known in the house of God only as slaves. How is it then, that John accounted Jesus as saying, "No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you".⁷⁶ His preceding statement is critical. 'You are My friends if you do what I command you.' Abraham was 'the friend of God', and so were David and Moses.⁷⁷ They were His friends because they were obedient slaves. We are called and predestined to be a slave of Christ, a friend of Christ, a disciple of Christ, a priest of Christ, and a deacon of Christ.⁷⁸

Comparing a 'servant' or a 'deacon' with a 'slave', it will be important to remember that the angels are servants, not slaves.⁷⁹ Nor are the angels predestined to be 'sons'. They are deacons to those who will inherit sonship.⁸⁰ When Yahweh Son, God the Son, emptied Himself to create the earth, He informed the angelic hosts of His intention to 'humble Himself lower than the angels',⁸¹ lower than a servant, to the position of a slave. This is an important distinction because we, in Christ, are called to be deacons as well as slaves. They are not the same thing. We are to be slaves who, because of involuntary obedience, receive a stewardship. Paul said, 'If I do this voluntarily, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have a stewardship entrusted to me. What then is my reward, that when I preach the gospel, I may offer the gospel without charge, so as not to make full use of my right in

74 Rom 8:22

Act 7:46

79 Mar 1:13. Heb 1:14

75 1Jn 3:2

78 1Co 4:1. Mat 5:1.

80 Heb 1:14. Heb 1:5

76 Joh 15:15

Rev 20:6.

81 Heb 2:9

77 Exo 33:11. Jas 2:23.

Rom 15:16

the gospel. For though I am free from all *men*, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more.⁸²

Authority to slaves

In this age, God the Son does not give authority to us as sons of God. He only gives authority to slaves, and a stewardship to some, giving them the right to become deacon-slaves.⁸³ Jesus told the parable of the faithful slave. ‘Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. Truly I say to you that he will put him in charge of all his possessions.’⁸⁴ In Luke’s account of the same parable, the word ‘slave’ is deliberately not used here; rather, he uses ‘servant’ (lit *oikonomos* – household manager) to describe who has been given authority.⁸⁵ It is only a faithful and sensible slave who becomes a steward whom the master will put in authority over his slaves. A steward is just a slave who is deaconing. You cannot rule or possess anything unless you are firstly a slave.

Just before His death, Jesus told another parable, describing what would be the nature of slavehood within the kingdom of God until the summation of the church age. ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, “Do business till I come”. But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, “We will not have this man to rule over us”. And it came about when he returned after receiving the kingdom he ordered that these slaves to whom he had given the money be called to him in order that he might know

82 1Co 9:17-19

85 Luk 12:42

83 Luk 19:17

84 Mat 24:45-47

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what business they had done. The first one told him that his one mina had made ten more and his master told him, “Well done, good slave. Because you have been faithful in a very little thing, be in authority over ten cities.”⁸⁶

The Son of God has gone back to heaven to receive a kingdom, leaving His slaves in a house, like ambassadors in an embassy within a hostile nation. The great multitude that made up the early church was the ‘the house’ of the Son. This was a multitude of slaves who belonged to the Son. He had given authority, firstly to the twelve apostles, then to the seventy, and later to the seven deacons. And those with authority were deacon-slaves. If we are among those who say, ‘We will not have this man to reign over us’, because we don’t want to be under the authority of the one to whom God has given authority, the Lord will deal with us as a runaway slave. The Jews would not have Christ to reign over them. He came as a slave, not as a conquering king, and they would not receive Him. They would not receive the suffering Slave.

The one whom God has made a deacon-slave must be found to be diligent and alert. ‘Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this; that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into.’⁸⁷

86 Luk 19:12-17

87 Luk 12:37-40

A thief in the night

References to the thief are not talking about the second coming of Christ; not firstly. To the church in Sardis He said, ‘So remember what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. Therefore if you do not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come to you.’⁸⁸ In the same way, we are told that with the church in Laodicea, He was standing at the door and knocking.⁸⁹ When He is visiting these seven churches, He is coming to talk to slaves through the dispensations of the church age. Christ is constantly coming to all the churches to inquire after His slaves. He comes to inspect us, to give authority to some, and to take back the authority given if we do not use it correctly. The penalty on a slave who is misusing His authority is severe. ‘But if that slave says in his heart, “My master will be a long time in coming”, and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, will receive many lashes; but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging, will receive but few. From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.’⁹⁰

Peter admonished those who are elders to ‘shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock’.⁹¹ Where

88 Rev 3:3

91 1Pe 5:2-3

89 Rev 3:20

90 Luk 12:45-48

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necessary, there must be repentance from overseers and deacons, from their empowerment over the flock. They must return to the demeanour of a slave to whom authority has been given. They must not take advantage of their position in material things or relational matters.

King-Slave-Priest-Lamb

Christ is both King⁹² and Slave⁹³; and He is both Priest⁹⁴ and Lamb⁹⁵, according to the order of Melchizedek.⁹⁶ The life proceeds according to these two elements. While it is easy to identify the ministry of Christ as a priest, what about His kingship? In many respects, it was the nature of Christ's kingship that was most misunderstood and caused the greatest offence throughout His life and ministry. If priesthood carries the life forward, then kingship is the dimension of authority being expressed. However, as we have discussed, it is only an obedient slave to whom authority is given. In simple terms, the way of kingship is 'as one who serves'.⁹⁷ If we grasp at kingship, without having comprehended the imperative of being a priesting-slave, we will never be given authority. We are slaves in the house of the Father, and according to the book of Hebrews, it is a house of priesthood.⁹⁸ The kingdom for this age is a priesting kingdom⁹⁹, not a ruling kingdom.

Jesus Christ emptied Himself to become a Slave and then He humbled Himself to the death of the cross.¹⁰⁰ And then, when He was raised, He was complete in His slavehood. He proclaimed, 'It is finished'.¹⁰¹ It is important to note here that we are not referring to His physical and bodily resurrection; His *anastasis* after three days and nights.¹⁰² We are talking about His *exanastasis*,

92 Mat 2:2. 2Pe 1:11

96 Heb 7:1,17

99 1Pe 2:9

93 Php 2:7

97 Luk 22:27

100 Php 2:7-8

94 Heb 5:6. Heb 7:24

98 Heb 3:3-6.

101 Joh 19:30

95 Rev 5:12. Rev 13:8

Heb 6:20

102 Mar 8:31

Slaves of Christ

or 'out-resurrection', while still alive on the cross. This was His triumphant return from the death of sin on the cross. Jesus was the sin offering for the transgression of man¹⁰³. He was dying to the law and nailing it to His cross¹⁰⁴, and He was destroying the works of the devil¹⁰⁵, while at the same time He was coming back from the death of sin.¹⁰⁶ With every step on that blood-sprinkled way, He was the Father's Slave, from Gethsemane until He proclaimed, 'It is finished'.

Christ died as a Slave, came back from the dead by blood, and was declared to be the Son of God with power.¹⁰⁷ Paul summarised our participation in this process in his letter to the Philippians. 'More than this, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ, and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.'¹⁰⁸

If we do not have a righteousness of our own, then we must have somebody else's righteousness. And to extrapolate further, we will have to be a slave of that righteousness. Christ is the Master, and to His righteousness we must become obedient. Christ is the exemplifier of slavehood. When Jesus came to be baptised at the River Jordan, John the Baptist tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I have need to be baptised by You, and do You come to me?'¹⁰⁹ But Jesus said to him, 'Permit it at this time; for in this way it is fitting for us

103 Heb 9:28

105 1Jn 3:8

108 Phi 3:8

104 Rom 8:2-4.

106 Php 3:11

109 Mat 3:14

Col 2:14

107 Rom 1:4

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to fulfil all righteousness'.¹¹⁰ Here, the Slave was being baptised. He was joining the process of circumcision that would lead the way to Calvary. He was committed to being the Father's Slave and fulfilling all righteousness. He is Christ our righteousness, and He is the revealer of the righteousness of God.¹¹¹

Priests and slaves of righteousness

It was the initiative of the Son to empty Himself of His kingship that produced the benefits of a slave. If you will priest your members, as a slave of righteousness, you will derive a benefit. 'What benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life.'¹¹² The benefit is your sanctification to full sonship in the resurrection. And the outcome is eternal life. This is *zoe* life and it is the full and eternal expression of your unique, sanctified identity as a son of God. Sanctification is not a gift; it is a process, revealing through offering the expression of your name. This is the expression of your sonship. It is the covenant of your name, written down in the Lamb's book of life.¹¹³ Offering is the point where slavehood, priesthood, righteousness and sonship meet. Priesthood reveals the slave of righteousness and sanctifies the son to his name and his inheritance. Therefore, presenting our bodies as slaves of righteousness is our priestly service.¹¹⁴ And this sanctifying process is revealing our individual uniqueness as a son of God.

110 Mat 3:15

113 Rev 21:27

111 ICo 1:30

114 Rom 6:18.

112 Rom 6:22

Rom 12:1

CHAPTER 5

The obedience of faith

Writing to all who were ‘beloved of God in Rome’, Paul began by referring to the grace and apostleship he received through Jesus Christ to bring about the ‘obedience of faith among all the Gentiles’.¹ Paul was intent on this goal, and accordingly, the obedience of faith is an integral and recurring theme throughout the book of Romans. In one place, he said, ‘Through one man’s obedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous’.² In this chapter, we are considering the miraculous obedience of Jesus Christ. It is through His obedience to the Father’s will that many sons are brought to glory. He learned obedience from the things

1 Rom 1:5

2 Rom 5:19

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which He suffered.³ And having been perfected, He became the source of eternal salvation to all those who obey Him.⁴

We considered the slavehood of Christ in our previous chapter, and of course, obedience is the activity of a slave. The Son emptied Himself to be a Slave, and ‘humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross’.⁵ He was a ‘slave for obedience’. Paul said to the Romans, ‘Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are the slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness’.⁶ The Father did not force slavehood and obedience upon the Son. Rather, the Son presented Himself to the Father by offering, as a Slave for obedience. It was the obedience of faith and obedience from the heart.⁷

We too can know this miraculous obedience of the Son. When we choose to receive the word of truth, faith is born in our hearts. We are illuminated by the Holy Spirit and our heart burns as we listen to the word of God. The conviction of the Spirit motivates us to obedience. This is a miraculous obedience, empowered by Spirit and the grace of Christ resident within the word. Paul continued, ‘Thanks be to God that though you were a slave of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed’.⁸

Paul preached the gospel of salvation, the word of truth, in the faith that his hearers would apprehend the miraculous obedience of Jesus Christ. When considering his ministry, he did not presume to speak of anything except what Christ had accomplished through him, ‘resulting in the obedience of the Gentiles by word and deed’.⁹ Concluding his letter to the Romans, he testified,

3 Heb 5:8

6 Rom 6:16

8 Rom 6:17

4 Heb 5:9

7 Rom 16:26.

9 Rom 15:18

5 Php 2:8

Rom 6:17

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‘The report of your obedience has reached to all; therefore I am rejoicing over you’.¹⁰ Referring to the revelation of the mystery, he rejoiced that it had been made known to all the nations, leading to ‘obedience of faith’.¹¹

The obedience of Christ reveals who He is

John recorded the words of Jesus as He taught in the temple, ‘When you lift up the Son of Man then you will know that I am He and that I do nothing on My own initiative but speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone for I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.’¹² The Scripture accounts that many people believed in Him as He spoke these words.¹³ However, when it was fulfilled, and He was lifted up at Calvary, His miraculous obedience was revealed to all men. And this miraculous obedience revealed that He was ‘I Am’ who had emptied and humbled Himself to the obedient death of a slave. It revealed that He was obedient in all things, thus fulfilling the work the Father had committed to Him.

In the exercise of His will, the Father activated a process of redemption that would be outworked on the cross, the place of absolute obedience.¹⁴ The cross is the full revelation of the mystery of His will, the eternal purpose which He carried out in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹⁵ When Jesus was lifted up, all men beheld the will of God done in the body of His flesh. And more than this, they saw the Son’s complete obedience to the word of God. They observed the power of the word in action, as Christ, through Eternal Spirit, offered Himself without blemish to God.¹⁶

When Jesus said, ‘I do nothing on My own initiative’, it was a statement of slavery and complete obedience. Christ’s

10 Rom 16:19

13 Joh 8:30

16 Heb 9:14

11 Rom 16:26

14 Jas 1:18

12 Joh 8:28-29

15 Eph 3:11

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only initiative was to lay His life down for us as the Shepherd of His sheep. 'I lay down My life for the sheep ... no one has taken it away from Me, but I lay it down on My own initiative ... this commandment I received from My Father.'¹⁷ It was the Son's initiative to become the Father's Slave but, from that point forward, the activity of His slavehood was involuntary. He took hold of the will of the Father as a slave and made it His own by the command of the Father. He was obedient to the point of death, even the death of the cross.¹⁸

Christ proclaimed that all men would know who He was when He was lifted up because He would be revealed through the obedient work of the cross. Obedience is the means by which an identity is established and the person's name is made known. Our names are written in the Lamb's book of life, from before the foundation of the world, but this name remains in obscurity without miraculous obedience to Christ.¹⁹ This is obedience to our own fundamental identity and predestination as a son of God. Our hearts burn with illumination as we listen to the word of God, and this burning conviction of the Spirit motivates us to obedience.²⁰ We are empowered by the Spirit to do the will of God, and in so doing, the 'word from the beginning' spoken concerning us is revealed.²¹

Covenant for obedience

There is only one covenant with its offering that gives sonship. This covenant and offering is the Everlasting Covenant, and its offering is found in the fellowship of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. It is through this covenant offering and fellowship that every person who accepts the kind invitation of God to become

17 Joh 10:11,17-18 20 Luk 24:32

18 Php 2:8 21 1Jn 1:1

19 Rev 13:8

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His son will come to glory; that is, achieve their sonship. The obedient work of the Son was to establish this offering within the fellowship of Yahweh, for this offering was to be the doorway for access to God for all men.

By this offering, mankind was given the right to become sons of God, but only if they would participate in it.²² The body and blood of Christ offered for us has become our food from which we draw life and strength. By partaking of His offering, we participate in His life and fellowship.²³ In this way, we receive His life and are strengthened so that we can obey God. We are able, therefore, to demonstrate the miraculous obedience of a son of God.

The power of Eternal Spirit

In the garden of Gethsemane, Jesus prayed to the Father for the capacity to obey Him and do His will. He said, 'Not My will but Thine be done'.²⁴ Christ sanctified Himself by listening to the word of the Father and choosing to obey it. He was then strengthened to do the will of God by Eternal Spirit. This was the capacity of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, brought to Him by the Holy Spirit. Accordingly, He was empowered to offer Himself, through Eternal Spirit, without spot to God.²⁵ He demonstrated eternal obedience when He suffered and overcame eternal judgement and punishment, quenching its flames. Because of His obedience, Jesus Christ could not be destroyed. The chains of death and hell could not hold Him.²⁶

The judgement of the cross could not destroy Him because there was no sin in Him; only the will of God being done in His body. Thus, Calvary only served to reveal Him. The fire fell only upon His offering and it was found to be acceptable to God. The

22 Rom 8:16-17

25 Luk 22:43.

23 1Co 10:16

Heb 9:14

24 Luk 22:42

26 Rev 1:8

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smoke of His offering ascended as sweet incense to God.²⁷ He came above the waters of judgement by the resurrecting and redeeming power that was resident within His own blood and was able to finish God's work as a living sacrifice.²⁸ When He cried, 'It is finished' He was begotten from the dead.²⁹ He was born of water because His obedience had been fully executed and manifest.³⁰ To be born of water is to be born into the fellowship of Christ's sanctifying obedience.

When we see Him lifted up

When we see Him lifted up on the cross and see His blood poured out, we know that He is the Son of God because we see His miraculous obedience.³¹ Our heart burns with this illumination. We understand the way of the cross, the way of the blood-sprinkled path of suffering. This blood-sprinkled way is the way of obedience. We are told to take up our cross and follow Him.³² It is the narrow way that leads to life.³³ We follow Him on the blood-sprinkled way, all the way from Gethsemane to the cry, 'It is finished'.³⁴ By His obedience, Christ has authored the way of eternal salvation, and inaugurated a new and living way through the veil of His flesh, to the holiest place of all.³⁵

The writer to the Hebrews extolled the new and living way that Christ has authored and inaugurated. Those who are called to be saints, chosen to be 'holy', will be sanctified by water, Spirit and blood to enter the holiest.³⁶ 'The 'holiest of all' is the place of complete sanctification to the will of the Father. If you are doing

27 Eph 5:2	Mar 14:22-25.	34 Joh 19:30
28 Psa 18:16.	Luk 22:20.	35 Heb 5:9.
Rom 12:1.	Luk 24:27	Heb 10:20
29 Joh 19:30. 1Pe 1:3	32 Mat 16:24.	36 1Co 1:2
30 Joh 3:5	Mar 8:34.	
	Luk 9:23	
31 Mat 26:38-44.	33 Mat 7:14	

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only the will of the Father, you are being fully you, in bondage to nothing; completely free. Paul wrote that only a slave is the Lord's freeman and we know that obedience is the defining characteristic of a slave.³⁷

Christ said, 'I do nothing on My own initiative but I speak and do those things as the Father taught Me'.³⁸ This is the mark of a slave, but it is also the mark of our sonship by which we will be known. We will be known as an obedient people who come boldly by the blood of Christ to the throne of grace, the mercy seat, while we remain in the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ.³⁹ We come firstly to obtain mercy (that is, to be brought back to our name and inheritance) and then to find grace capacity to be obedient. Then, in the fellowship of His sufferings, we are able to cleanse ourselves from disobedience and do the works of God.

Greater works

Concerning the works of His obedient slavehood and sonship, Jesus said, 'Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do, he will do also; and greater works than these he will do; because I go to the Father'.⁴⁰ Just as the Father worked His grace in Christ, enabling Him to fulfil His work on the cross, those who believe in Christ can do the works of the Father. The God of peace, who brought up from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the Eternal Covenant, is able to equip us in every good thing to do His will.⁴¹ We are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them.⁴² These are the 'greater works', the works of obedience to our sonship.

37 1Co 7:22

40 Joh 14:12

38 Joh 8:28

41 Heb 13:20

39 Heb 4:16. 1Jn 1:7

42 Eph 2:10

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It was a supernatural work for God the Son to become the Son of God and then the Son of Man. Then, by His miraculous obedience, He became obedient unto death and established God's offering on earth so that we, the sons of men, could participate in a greater work. Miraculous obedience has been demonstrated and is now available to us by the Spirit. We can do the works of the Son and greater works than these because He has gone to the Father. The greater work He has given us to do is the fulfilment of our individual mandate as a son of God. We are enabled to do this work when we are joined to the same obedience which Christ demonstrated, and by which His offering was accomplished and made effectual.

Let us say this. It was a great and marvellous work for God the Son to empty and humble Himself to the death of the cross. This was His work of sonship. We can only proclaim, 'Great and marvellous are Your works, O Lord God'.⁴³ But how great are the works of our sonship considering that we were dead in trespasses and sins, lost, and without hope in this world? When Jesus said that we will do 'greater works', He was not comparing our works to His. He has fulfilled all the works of our sonship, and we participate in this finished work. Our works are 'greater', only because we have become the sons of God. It is a miracle that we are able to do the works of sonship at all! Hence, Jesus said the Father would show Him greater works, and we would marvel!⁴⁴

The will of God done

Peter wrote to those who are 'elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace

43 Rev 15:3

44 Joh 5:20

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to you and peace be multiplied'.⁴⁵ We are chosen according to the foreknowledge of God the Father that we may obey Jesus Christ and be sprinkled with His blood. Christ offered Himself in miraculous obedience, to mark out all the steps of our obedience in fulfilling the Father's works. This is the meaning of learning obedience by the things that He suffered.⁴⁶ He was obedient to the full extent of our sanctification as sons of God, not just to the will of the Father in redemption.

The Son's miraculous obedience was directed toward inscribing the will of God for our complete sanctification in the one 'volume of the book'.⁴⁷ Now by the obedience of Christ, in His 'once for all' offering, the entire 'will' of God has been accomplished in His body.⁴⁸ By the will of God done in that body, we too have been sanctified. He sanctified Himself so that we could be sanctified.⁴⁹ Further, He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified.⁵⁰ This is a clear statement that He has developed a full process for our sanctification. The will of God, fulfilled by Christ in His one offering, has in fact sanctified us and perfected us forever. All we need to do is participate in the offering, in the body where the will of God is done.⁵¹

The Spirit sanctifies us to our place for life. He defines our context and relationships and then leads us into all truth.⁵² We show our election to God by being led of the Spirit. 'Those who are led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God.'⁵³ He orders our situation so that we can obey Jesus Christ. We are led to a position where the sprinkling of blood is effective for us and we can walk in obedience and fulfil the will of God. Grace, (that is, God's ability in and through us) enables us to be obedient. The

45 1Pe 1:2

48 Heb 10:10

51 Heb 10:5-10

46 Heb 5:8

49 Joh 17:19

52 Joh 16:13

47 Heb 10:7

50 Heb 10:14

53 Rom 8:14

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obedience of faith is the result. And then grace and peace are to be ours in fullest measure.⁵⁴

Obedience from the heart

In his letter to the Romans, Paul rejoiced, ‘Thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, yet you obeyed from the heart that form of doctrine to which you were delivered’.⁵⁵ Our response when called to be a son of God is a free response. It is a response of faith from which our obedience springs. It is, therefore, a completely accountable response. Our obedience is not instinctive like the animals that belong to the created realm, and whose behaviour is simply an inherent obedience to their being. We have been given the right to choose to become a son of God.⁵⁶ And with the choice of faith, He gives us the power to do the obedient works of a son of God by joining us to the offering of Christ. Offering is the only means by which we can receive and achieve sonship.

The evidence of obedience is making offering. If we don’t make offering, then we are fundamentally disobedient to our life, name and predestination, because it was not given to us for ourselves but for another. To walk in proper fellowship, we must be ‘fellow-slaves’ together, walking humbly and obediently amongst the brethren.⁵⁷ A group that is fundamentally disobedient is a fractured group wherein each individual is seeking after a righteousness of their own.⁵⁸ Our imperative is to reveal only the righteousness of another in the stead of the Son who was completely committed to revealing the righteousness of the Father.⁵⁹ Peter implored us to submit ourselves one to the other and be clothed with humility.⁶⁰ Where a culture of submission is foremost, no one is

54 1Pe 1:2

57 Col 1:7. Col 4:7

60 1Pe 5:5

55 Rom 6:17

58 Php 3:9

56 Joh 1:12

59 Mat 11:27. Joh 14:9

The obedience of faith

being dominated or downtrodden but all things are done for the edification of the body.⁶¹ Obedience may be feigned, but finally, submission can never be taken. It has to be given.

Much more than compliance with a law or hierarchy of command, obedience in the Scripture is obeying your God-given name and fundamental identity, not establishing a righteousness of your own.⁶² If you have established a righteousness of your own, you are reinterpreting His word according to your own reasoning and parameters. Until we negotiate the prerogative of the Potter over the clay, we are in disobedience.⁶³ We are those who ‘deeply hide their plans from the Lord and whose deeds are done in a dark place.’⁶⁴ It is the testimony of Paul that, although he was disobedient, a blasphemer, a persecutor and an insolent man, he obtained mercy and learnt miraculous obedience through the Father of mercies.⁶⁵ Mercy brought him back into relationship and fellowship with God, recovering him to the house of the Father to become the son he was predestined and named to be.⁶⁶

Paul wrote, ‘For you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light’.⁶⁷ In the Scripture, darkness is equal to disobedience. We are walking in darkness when we are disobedient to the call and will of God. The capacity for obedience does not reside in anyone. In fact, it is impossible for the natural man. We all begin in a position of disobedience.⁶⁸ God has assigned all to disobedience that He may show mercy to all.⁶⁹ Our imperative is to ‘walk in the light as He is in the light’, for it is only here that we may have fellowship with one another

61 Rom 15:2.
1Co 14:3,12,26.
Eph 4:29

62 Php 3:9

63 Rom 9:21

64 Isa 29:15

65 1Ti 1:13. 2Co 1:3

66 Act 9:15-16.

2Ti 1:11

67 Eph 5:8

68 Tit 3:3

69 Rom 11:32

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and be cleansed of all sin.⁷⁰ Sin is just the behaviour of darkness, the outcome of disobedience.

A person who is dead in trespasses and sin is not made alive unless they are born of water and the Spirit. To be born of water, a person enters the offering of Christ by committing themselves as a disciple and submitting to the Lordship of Christ. The heart is changed when a person believes and obeys the word of God. The first confession of a person who is born of water is that Christ is their Lord and they have become His disciples. Only disciples of Jesus have eternal life.⁷¹ Only a disciple of Christ will participate in His resurrection and demonstrate the power of God as a son of God.⁷²

Jesus said, 'If you continue in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine'.⁷³ When we hear a word and we are illuminated, it is only light to us if we are obedient to that word and continue to walk in it. As we walk in the light and fellowship in the sufferings of Christ, the blood sprinkles the innermost being, the heart out of which comes all kinds of evil thoughts.⁷⁴ We have been enabled to join the fellowship of the blood which sprinkles our hearts from an evil conscience, so that we can be fully obedient and fully separated to our works by the Holy Spirit. Our hearts are sprinkled to the fullness of number seven, to complete obedience, delivering us from everything that binds us and setting us free.

This is the process of our whole life. We are being sanctified by water, Spirit and blood until our obedience is complete.⁷⁵ Paul said, 'We are destroying speculations and every lofty thing raised up against the knowledge of God, and we are taking every thought captive to the obedience of Christ, and we are ready to punish all disobedience, whenever your obedience is complete'.⁷⁶

70 1Jn 1:7

73 Joh 8:31

76 2Co 10:6

71 Joh 8:51

74 Mat 15:19

72 Joh 11:25-26

75 1Co 1:2

CHAPTER 6

Vessels of mercy

Having considered the nature of the Father's mercy and the Son's obedience, we will now turn our attention to the nature of our vessel. In his letter to the Romans, Paul was clear that God has assigned all to disobedience that He may show mercy to all!¹ Therefore, if not for His mercies, we would be hopelessly consumed.² His abundant mercy is the outworking of His love for us. He is the Father of mercies and God of all comfort.³ Though we are dead in trespasses and sins, by His mercy we are born again when we receive His word and respond in obedience.⁴ We are, at that point, born of water.⁵ Indeed, He saves us, not on the basis of our deeds, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit.⁶

1 Rom 11:32

4 Eph 2:5

2 Lam 3:22

5 Joh 3:5

3 2Co 1:3

6 Tit 3:5

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A man, like a clay vessel turned on a potter's wheel, has no foreknowledge or insight into his design. Whether pure or impure, cleansed or uncleansed, mankind has no knowledge without God. Those living in disobedience to His word, which is able to save their souls, believe destiny is shaped in their own hands. 'They say, "How does God know? And is there knowledge with the Most High?"' ⁷ And so we turn our consideration to the nature of our vessel. Is God our Maker? Are we His clay?⁸

When the Bible speaks of a vessel, it is referring to our whole person, not just our physical bodies. We are to become vessels of honour and mercy.⁹ The vessel of our individual identity has been ordained. And He desires to mould us into this vessel so we can fulfil the works prepared for us from before the foundation of the world.¹⁰ The pathway of obedience to this moulding process is the new and living way opened to us by the seven wounds and seven sprinklings of the blood of Christ.¹¹

Marred in the Potter's hand

As the Potter, our heavenly Father wants to make a certain kind of vessel out of our particular piece of clay. Nevertheless, from Adam forward, we have all been marred in His hands. In our marred state, we are vessels of wrath prepared for destruction.¹² It is the Father of mercies who is able to make us into a second vessel, a vessel for honour and a vessel that pleases Him.

The prophet Jeremiah was directed to the potter's house and observed a clay vessel spoiled on the potter's wheel. This vessel was marred in the potter's hand and remade into another vessel as it pleased the potter to make.¹³ As a nation, Israel was marred in the Lord's hands. They were rebellious and disobedient. And yet,

7	Psa 73:11	2Ti 2:20-21	12	Rom 9:22
8	Isa 64:8	10 Eph 2:10	13	Jer 18:4
9	Rom 9:21,23.	11	Heb 10:20	

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the Lord was willing, in His mercy, to make them into another vessel. He wanted to make them a sanctuary and, later, He wanted to make them a lampstand.¹⁴ Quite apart from their marring, the Lord sought to remake them into a vessel that pleased Him as the Potter. The word of the Lord to us is the same, ‘Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?’¹⁵

Without repentance and humility, we are all vessels of wrath. If we are marred in the Potter’s hand because of a hard heart, there will need to be a process by which we are remade into another vessel. The hard particle, the offending part, will need to be removed. It is this process within us that reshapes our vessel for mercy, fit for the Master’s use.¹⁶ This may leave the lump a little smaller than the original, but we must accept that we are being remade for whatever reason and not be filled with disappointment over our vessel. Perhaps we need to let go of our ambitions and expectations so that we can be a vessel that is useful to the Master. Is He making a vessel in His image and likeness, or are we limiting ourselves to the vessel of our own projection?¹⁷

The apostle Paul asked the question, ‘Does not the potter have a right over the clay?’¹⁸ When we are talking about the Master making a vessel of wrath, He is ‘strengthening’ the hardness in the heart of a person who has refused to humble themselves under His hand. The prophet Isaiah warned, ‘Woe to the one who quarrels with his Maker’.¹⁹ Answering back to God, and requesting an explanation as to why He is moulding us, indicates our resistance to the shape of our predestined vessel.²⁰ Any striving to maintain our current shape will ultimately render us unworkable and fractured. If we resist the softening process under His mighty hand, we are strengthened as a vessel for wrath.²¹

14 Psa 114:1-2

17 Gen 1:26

20 Isa 29:1-2,6

15 Jer 18:6

18 Rom 9:21

21 Rom 9:22

16 2Ti 2:21

19 Isa 45:9

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Made into another vessel

As the prophet Jeremiah was observing the potter at the wheel, he was illuminated by the Spirit concerning the nation of Israel.²² In His mercy, the Lord desires to bring illumination to all people with a word of revelation concerning their life and their name, even though all are marred in the Potter's hand. If the Lord is making us into another vessel, we must renew our thinking and find a different perspective concerning our life. The first vessel will not be restored, so we must not try to recover it. If something went wrong on the potter's wheel and He is forming us into another vessel, we can rejoice and be of good cheer.

The apostle Peter encouraged us, 'Humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God, that He may exalt you at the proper time'.²³ We will be shaped again and again so our vessel can contain the glory God is bestowing upon us in each season of life. The use of our vessel is preordained by the Lord and there is a proper time for all things and an appointed time for every event under heaven.²⁴ God gives us the opportunity and prerogative to cast ourselves upon His mercy. We could say, ironically, that choosing to obey the revelation of our name brought by His word is our only freedom in life. There is no other freedom. Any other freedom we try to obtain is subjecting ourselves once again to a yoke of bondage.²⁵

Finding freedom in Christ is our obedience to our fundamental identity and person. In contrast, a captive is one who is ensnared by temptations outside the bounds of their predestination, their sanctification and their anointing. Freedom in Christ is not an opportunity for the flesh.²⁶ The apostle Paul reminded the church

22 Jer 18:6

25 Gal 5:1

23 1Pe 5:6

26 Gal 5:13

24 Ecc 3:1

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in Rome about the word spoken to Rebekah concerning Jacob and Esau, ‘The older will serve the younger’.²⁷ Whatever the Lord says, is how it will be. We cannot contend with our Maker.²⁸ If we do, He will convict us of the sin of presumption so that our behaviours, attitudes and aspirations are not simply the evidence of fractures.²⁹ If we will humble, submit and obey, we can be made second vessels of freedom and receive a full eternal reward.³⁰

A vessel of wrath is one who believes they are the master of their own destiny. According to some projection beyond the reality of their sonship, they attempt to shape their own vessel. This is not according to freedom, but rather to the bondage of false expectations. They remain a vessel of wrath. The apostle Paul was acutely aware of this designation. He asked, ‘What if God, although willing to demonstrate His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much patience vessels of wrath prepared for destruction?’³¹

Paul found mercy

In his first letter to Timothy, Paul testified concerning his former life of disobedience having now been born of water, sealed by the Spirit and redeemed by the blood of Jesus. ‘Even though I was formerly a blasphemer and a persecutor and a violent aggressor, I was shown mercy because I acted ignorantly in unbelief.’³² Paul was not just oblivious in his disobedience; he was proactively opposing God’s people. He was full of anger, malice, violence and hatred. He was a vessel of wrath. He continued, ‘It is a trustworthy statement, deserving full acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, among whom I am foremost of all.’³³ Paul had learnt obedience to the gospel of

27 Gen 25:23.

Rom 9:12

28 Isa 45:9

29 Psa 19:13

30 2Jn 1:8

31 Rom 9:22

32 1Ti 1:13

33 1Ti 1:15

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sonship. And he knew from what wretched state of transgression he had come.³⁴ He summarised this full miraculous process of salvation by simply saying, ‘I obtained mercy’.³⁵

We have defined mercy as the Father’s ability to reach down to us, call us by name and bring us to Himself. By adoption, we are brought back to the position of a son in His house. God’s mercy to Israel is most evident in their exodus from captivity in Egypt. Concerning His people, God said, ‘I bore you on eagles’ wings, and brought you to Myself.’³⁶ As a vessel under God’s mighty hand, the process of being brought back to Him is the same process as being reshaped. ‘You shall remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out of there by a mighty hand.’³⁷ This is the mighty hand of God who is the Potter.

The mercy of God extends to all nations and His voice travels to the ends of the earth. The Father of mercies has the capacity to rescue all tribes and tongues and bring them back to Himself.³⁸ ‘He has remembered His lovingkindness [mercy] and His faithfulness to the house of Israel; all the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God.’³⁹ And we do longingly hope and believe that the gospel is sounding forth in the hearing of the nations. This presents each person with the first crisis of the gospel. Like Paul, we become aware of our marred and fractured state and feel like we are the foremost among sinners.⁴⁰ But we find mercy by casting ourselves on the mercy of God. We must despise the shame of our condemnation and move beyond our sense of unworthiness.⁴¹ Should our heart condemn us, God is bigger than our heart.⁴²

34 Rom 7:24

37 Deu 5:15

40 ITi 1:15

35 ITi 1:13

38 Rev 7:9

41 Heb 12:2

36 Exo 19:4

39 Psa 98:3

42 IJn 3:20

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There is power within His word to enable our obedience.⁴³ And He will not withhold His mercy or His compassion towards us.⁴⁴

Mercy to the Gentiles

We are compelled to obey the Lord when He speaks a word causing our hearts to burn.⁴⁵ His promise to us is that He will never allow the righteous to be shaken.⁴⁶ We must believe the Potter has a right over us as the clay, and, in response, we must cast our burden upon Him.⁴⁷ We have no capacity by our own volition to shape ourselves. All we will do is establish a righteousness of our own.⁴⁸ Simple obedience, practically, gives the Potter access to our marred vessel. In this way, John's words are true, 'As many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God'.⁴⁹ We have a free choice, a faith decision, to receive His mercy. Or we could be even more basic and say, we choose not to resist His mercy. He desires to show mercy to all.⁵⁰

In chapter eleven of the book of Romans, Paul considered the question of salvation for all mankind who are shut up as sons of disobedience. 'I say then God has not rejected His people, has He? May it never be! I too am an Israelite, a descendant of Abraham from the tribe of Benjamin. God has not rejected His people whom He foreknew.'⁵¹ Paul was writing against the background of Israel being scattered throughout the nations under the kingdom of Assyria. He understood that they would only be regathered in the fullness of the Gentiles.⁵² A partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in. They have been given a spirit of stupor so they cannot see and cannot hear. But then he continued, 'I say then, they did not stumble so as to

43 2Co 6:7

47 Rom 9:21.

51 Rom 11:2

44 Psa 40:11

48 Rom 10:3

52 Jer 31:10.

45 Luk 24:32

49 Joh 1:12

Rom 11:25

46 Pro 10:30

50 Rom 11:32

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fall, did they? May it never be! But by their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles.⁵³

Paul used the symbolic metaphor of an olive tree to describe sonship life in the body of Christ. Israel, God's chosen people, is likened to natural branches which have been broken off. In the context of Paul's letter, the Gentiles are 'wild branches'. Hence, writing to the Gentiles he said, 'If some of the branches were broken off... you, being a wild olive, were grafted in among them and became a partaker with them of the rich root of the olive tree'.⁵⁴ The Potter has the right to make some vessels for honour and some for common use.⁵⁵ Paul wondered at mercy, 'Behold then the kindness and severity of God; to those who fell, severity, but to you, God's kindness, if you continue in His kindness; otherwise you also will be cut off.'⁵⁶

Our inclusion in the olive tree is the result of our obedience or disobedience to the fashioning process. The vessel of mercy is the result of His mighty hand shaping us. The Lord is sanctifying our vessel for obedience. 'And they also, if they do not continue in their unbelief, will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. For if you were cut off from what is by nature, a wild olive tree, and were grafted contrary to nature into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these who are the natural branches be grafted into their own olive tree?'⁵⁷

Paul described the ability of God to graft branches in and out as a great mystery. So he asked the rhetorical question, 'Who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has become His counsellor?'⁵⁸ To presume God is not at work, bringing salvation to the Gentiles, would be wisdom in our own estimation. Likewise, to presume our salvation is by our own hands is foolishness. God rebuked the

53 Rom 11:8-11

56 Rom 11:22

54 Rom 11:17

57 Rom 11:23-24

55 Rom 9:21

58 Rom 11:34

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house of Israel through the prophet Hosea saying, ‘You are not My people and I am not your God’.⁵⁹ At first, it appears God is assigning His people to a complete and eternal destruction. And yet this is not the case. ‘Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered. And in the place where it is said to them, “You are not My people”, it will be said to them, “You are the sons of the living God”.’⁶⁰

This is an incredible thought. Paul reminded us, ‘If their transgression is riches for the world and their failure is riches for the Gentiles, how much more will their fulfilment be! God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.’ And He is most certainly rich in mercy. It is the richness of this mercy that caused Paul to exclaim, ‘Oh the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God!’⁶¹

By the mercies of God

There are seasons in life where we find ourselves in the place of condemnation. This is the place where we feel unworthy to be called His son. However, it is the mercy of the Father to meet us in that place and call us, once again, a son of the living God. God is going to deal with us in the same manner as the church in Thessalonica. They were in the region of Macedonia, who ‘first gave themselves to the Lord and to us by the will of God’.⁶² We know that to give or offer ourselves by His will, is to present ourselves by the mercies of God.⁶³

The Thessalonians had cast themselves upon the mercy of God. Paul wrote to them concerning the suffering they were enduring, ‘This is a plain indication of God’s righteous judgement so that you will be considered worthy of the kingdom of God’.⁶⁴

59 Hos 1:9

62 2Co 8:5

60 Hos 1:10

63 Rom 12:1

61 Rom 11:12,32-33

64 2Th 1:5

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To be worthy of the kingdom, we must be shaped as a vessel for honour. This process of sanctification by obedience softens hard parts within our vessel. We know that we learn obedience from the things which we suffer.⁶⁵ Our participation in the suffering of Christ is God's righteous judgement, confirming that we are vessels under His hand being prepared for a glorious inheritance.

We are powerless to shape our own vessel, according to the predestination God has for us. We have not known the mind of the Lord. Nor have we first given to Him that it might be paid back.⁶⁶ We have not sketched our own blueprint for life and then asked the Lord to fulfil our design. Our beginning point is the confession that God has shut up all in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all.⁶⁷ Mercy is not firstly the exercise of His compassion. One definition of mercy in the Old Testament is a 'womb cherishing and covering a foetus'.⁶⁸ His mercy is an action of completely covering and gathering us in, and to, Himself.

The prophet Isaiah wrote, 'Surely, they are My people, sons who will not deal falsely. So He became their Saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them. In His love and in His mercy He redeemed them, and He lifted them and carried them all the days of old.'⁶⁹ The mercy of God is much more than His kindness or goodness. He has the ability to reach down to the place where we are, lift us, carry us, and regather us to Himself. Because of His great love with which He loves us, He is rich in mercy towards us.⁷⁰ And the richness of His mercy is the riches of His wisdom.

65 Heb 5:8

67 Rom 11:32

70 Eph 2:4

66 Rom 11:34.

68 Isa 47:6

1Co 2:16

69 Isa 63:8-9

Vessels of mercy

Ultimately, God's purpose for reshaping our vessel is so that we can contain and show forth this same mercy.⁷¹ We are either a vessel of wrath or a vessel of mercy. Our obedience to the word determines which kind of vessel we will be. When we consider obedience, we are not describing a 'yes or no' response to a hierarchy of command. We are talking about genuine submission under the mighty hand of God, whereby we cast our cares upon Him.⁷² Without a proper understanding of obedience, we will say, 'Why does He still find fault? For who has resisted His will?'⁷³ We know obedience when we no longer desire any right of reply to God. Because 'He has mercy on whom He wills, and whom He wills He hardens'.⁷⁴

The Scripture uses the phrase, 'vessel of mercy' with respect to the intrinsic and fundamental predestination that God the Father has named, ordained and given to His sons. God did not foreordain the fall of those branches that have been removed from the olive tree. They were broken off because of disobedience.⁷⁵ God wants to mould our vessel as a vessel of sonship, capable of containing that which He ordained. And He is bringing mercy to us. To be a vessel of mercy means we contain mercy and are an agent of mercy.

Comparing vessels of wrath with vessels of mercy, Paul wrote, 'That He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory'.⁷⁶ We can take great comfort in God's continual dealing with us as vessels of mercy. In this way, the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable.⁷⁷ Those natural branches that have been broken

71 Rom 11:31

74 Rom 9:15

77 Rom 11:29

72 1Pe 5:6-7

75 Rom 11:21

73 Rom 9:19

76 Rom 9:23

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off can be grafted back in if they do not continue in unbelief and disobedience.⁷⁸ When tribulation comes because of the word, we must continue in obedience.⁷⁹ It is of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed.⁸⁰ God's hand of mercy is softening the clay of our lives to reform us into another vessel.⁸¹ We must persevere and endure, remembering His love toward us. For those whom the Lord loves He disciplines.⁸² In this way, we see the great love which the Father has bestowed upon us, that we would be called sons of God.⁸³

If anyone cleanses himself

Paul said that in a large house there are all kinds of vessels. We understand the prerogative of the Potter, but what of the accountability of the vessel? In a large house there are many vessels, some to honour and some dishonour.⁸⁴ So Paul wrote to Timothy, 'If anyone cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honour, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work'.⁸⁵ What does it mean to cleanse ourselves? In prefacing his metaphor of branches being grafted in, Paul wrote, 'If the first piece of dough is holy, the lump is also; and if the root is holy, the branches are too'.⁸⁶ And, in considering a 'lump', we recall Paul's words to the Corinthians, 'Clean out the old leaven so that you may be a new lump, just as you are in fact unleavened'.⁸⁷

It is in the exercise of God's will that He brings us forth as sons.⁸⁸ Our response to the Father's mercy is our obedience, which in turn enables sonship. Our hearts burn upon hearing a word to us, and we are compelled to present ourselves.⁸⁹ Why 'present ourselves'? Removing the chapter distinction between Romans

78 Rom 11:23

82 Heb 12:6

86 Rom 11:16

79 Rev 1:9

83 1Jn 3:1

87 1Co 5:7

80 Lam 3:22

84 2Ti 2:20

88 Jas 1:18

81 Jer 18:4

85 2Ti 2:21

89 Luk 24:32

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eleven and twelve, Paul's instruction about mercy, obedience, being cut off and grafted in, all leads to his key tenet which is proving the will of God by offering. 'I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living sacrifice.'⁹⁰ If our response to mercy is to firstly cleanse ourselves and then present ourselves, we will prove the good, acceptable and perfect will of the Father for our lives.⁹¹ Failing to present ourselves means we are turning back to disobedience.⁹² A vessel of mercy is becoming a vessel of wrath. In the spirit of the Old Testament continual burnt offering, we remain as vessels of mercy as long as we keep covenant with God by presenting ourselves.

Vessels of mercy by covenant

The Father of mercy has the capacity to gather us to our predestined inheritance in Christ. The psalmist wrote, 'Gather My godly ones to Me, those who have made a covenant with Me by sacrifice'.⁹³ We are gathered to the Lord and shaped as vessels of mercy when we make covenant by sacrifice. On one hand, we cannot even begin to make offering until we understand Paul's teaching about God's mercy.

He concluded, 'For of Him and through Him and to Him are all things'.⁹⁴ This is a complete statement on the cycle of offering. 'Of Him' reminds us that it is of 'Your' own we have given.⁹⁵ 'Through Him' reminds us that we cannot have a righteousness of our own and that we have an altar.⁹⁶ And 'to Him' is the complete foundation of our spiritual house, wherein we are priests offering up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.⁹⁷

If God is not meeting someone in their offering, we are compelled to question whether they are presenting themselves

90 Rom 12:1

93 Psa 50:5

96 Php 3:9. Heb 13:10

91 Rom 12:2

94 Rom 11:36

97 1Pe 2:5

92 Act 7:39. Gal 4:9

95 1Ch 29:14

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‘by the mercies of God’.⁹⁸ Likewise, if someone rightly says God is not having mercy on them, it may indicate that they are not presenting themselves in obedience. Regardless of what He asks of us, and no matter how difficult, we must keep covenant with Him by presenting ourselves. Some are caught in the legacy of history and are inadvertently wrestling with God. They are unable to let certain things go, in the fear that they will lose something. If this is our dilemma, we must cast ourselves upon the mercy of God. Likewise, if we self-justify and choose alternate options then we will become a vessel of wrath.⁹⁹ We will be broken off.¹⁰⁰

In the book of Hebrews, Paul said of Abel and Enoch that God bore testimony concerning their gifts.¹⁰¹ The word used for ‘gift’ is otherwise translated ‘offering’. By following their pattern, we are similarly encouraged to obtain a testimony that we are righteous. In this way, He will keep His covenant with us and maintain His mercy toward us. ‘He will love you and He will bless you and He will bless the fruit of your womb and the fruit of your ground, your grain, your new wine, your oil, the increase of your herd, the young of your flock in the land which He swore to give to your fathers.’¹⁰² A person who questions whether God is a God of mercy needs to ask themselves if they are a person of covenant by sacrifice. Do they offer? If we bow the knee in humility and find miraculous obedience, we will know His love and mercy. We can present ourselves by the mercies of God as those alive from the dead.¹⁰³

Vessels of wrath

The promise of the Scripture concerning the nature of our vessel is that any person who cleanses himself will become a

98 Rom 12:1	101 Heb 11:4-5
99 Rom 9:22	102 Deu 7:13
100 Rom 11:20	103 Rom 6:13

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vessel for honour.¹⁰⁴ We are all given opportunity to become vessels of mercy. Defined simply then, a vessel of wrath is someone who chooses not to obey. If a vessel of mercy, fit for the Master's use, is a vessel shaped to contain mercy, then a vessel of wrath contains something else. And 'something else', in the first instance, is just a reservoir of wrath. Anyone instinctively and repeatedly drawn to anger is a vessel of wrath. Bitterness, anguish, resentment, immorality, malice, lack of resolution, jealousy, envy and disappointment all show themselves as evidence of wrath. Wanton aspirations, impatience with the timing of life, unwarranted striving with others, contrariness, and eccentricity causing trespasses, may all be characteristics resident in a vessel of wrath.

It's a frightening thought that God is willing to demonstrate His wrath in order to make known His power.¹⁰⁵ If we contend with our Maker or only feign obedience, we become a vessel of wrath being prepared for destruction.¹⁰⁶ And there may be a phase where God uses that vessel of wrath to demonstrate His power. Why would a God of love do this? In the first case, He has given us freedom of choice to obey. Secondly, 'He did so in order that He may make known the riches of His glory upon vessels of mercy'.¹⁰⁷ Throughout history, the Lord has used entire nations as instruments of judgement in His hand.¹⁰⁸ This is the principle of the desolator. And when their work is complete, they are, in turn, judged and made desolate.¹⁰⁹ This is the extraordinary work of God.¹¹⁰

With this in view, Paul accounted for two examples of a vessel of wrath. The first was Esau, who was the father of the Edomites and the representative of all godless nations.¹¹¹ The second was

104 2Ti 2:21

107 Rom 9:23

110 Isa 28:21

105 Rom 9:22

108 Isa 45:1. Isa 7:17

111 Gen 36:9

106 Isa 45:9

109 Isa 10:5,12

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Pharaoh, who was the leader of Egypt, the first of seven kingdoms used by the Lord as a desolator.¹¹² Paul chose these two examples because they have prophetic significance to his overall theme on the fullness of the Gentiles; but we'll consider them very briefly at the personal level.¹¹³

Esau sought to trade for temporal pleasure and despised his birthright, sonship and inheritance.¹¹⁴ He refused his predestination to serve his younger brother and, accordingly, we would say he refused to be made a second vessel. Rather, he allowed bitterness to take root in his heart so that he was unable to be reconciled to his brother and unable to find a place of repentance before the Lord. Although he sought it diligently with tears, he had no capacity to enter a process of sanctification and find change.¹¹⁵ Evidently, he could not find mercy before the Lord because of His lack of fundamental obedience. The testimony of the Lord is clear, 'Jacob I loved, but Esau I hated'.¹¹⁶

The other vessel of wrath described in the Scripture is Pharaoh, of whom it says God 'hardened his heart'.¹¹⁷ But it is worse than that; God actually strengthened his heart. Over a prolonged period of time, Pharaoh hardened his own heart, and then God 'strengthened' this hardening. God raised him up to demonstrate wrath in him for the sake of the children of Israel.¹¹⁸ How did he come to such a state of complete and prolonged disobedience that God raised him up as an instrument of mercy for others, but judgement upon himself?

Do you harden your heart when the God of all mercy speaks to you? He who hardens his heart will fall into calamity.¹¹⁹ And he who stiffens his neck will be broken suddenly without

112 Exo 6:11

116 Rom 9:13

119 Pro 28:14

113 Rom 11:25

117 Exo 10:20,27.

114 Gen 25:34

Exo 14:8

115 Heb 12:15-17

118 Rom 9:17

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remedy.¹²⁰ There is a line we cross when God no longer leaves us to harden our own heart, but begins to strengthen our calamity to demonstrate His power through us. At that point, it no longer depends on the man who wills or the man who runs, but on God who has mercy.¹²¹ We could hypothesise on the betrayer Judas. Suppose when Jesus dipped the morsel and gave it to him, He was giving Judas an opportunity to cast himself on the mercy of God. The very next words spoken at the last supper were from Jesus, who said, 'What you do, do quickly'.¹²² Judas, like Pharaoh, hardened his heart.

Do you get angry and reactive when the Potter reaches out His hand in mercy to take hold of you? Perhaps in part, your crisis is that you are still 'learning' His unfathomable ways. It may appear to you that the Potter has no understanding.¹²³ But we have not known the mind of the Lord that we might instruct Him. Paul continued this verse, 'But we have the mind of Christ'.¹²⁴ The mind of Christ is the mind of a slave who is malleable and obedient.

Familiar with the fiery trial

We have considered the Lord's desire for many sons as His desire for vessels of mercy who can show forth His mercy.¹²⁵ The working of our lives as clay in the Potter's mighty hands is a fiery ordeal. We are not to be surprised at the fiery ordeal, because it is the testing by which our vessel is refined to contain His mercy.¹²⁶ Peter wrote, 'After you have suffered for a little while, the God of all grace, who called you to His eternal glory in Christ, will Himself perfect, confirm, strengthen and establish you'.¹²⁷ This is the purging of leaven from our vessel.¹²⁸ We recall our suffering

120 Pro 29:1

124 1Co 2:16

128 2Ti 2:21. 1Co 5:7

121 Rom 9:16

125 Heb 2:10

122 Joh 13:27

126 1Pe 4:12

123 Isa 29:16

127 1Pe 5:10

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is to cease from sin.¹²⁹ If we embrace the fiery ordeal, the Spirit of glory will rest upon us.¹³⁰ The prophet Daniel spoke of many who would be refined and purged and made white in the last days.¹³¹ When we become familiar with, and embrace, the fiery trial commensurate with each stage of life, He sets His seal upon us.¹³² We are given white robes to symbolise our capacity as priests to make effective offering.¹³³ This means we have a priestly right and authority to go with boldness to the throne of grace and make requests according to the nature of our vessel.¹³⁴

The Lord our God is a consuming fire.¹³⁵ And He is the Father of mercies dealing with every person as a son.¹³⁶ The fire that processes and purges a believer is the same fire that burns in the lake of fire. They are not separate, as if there is an exclusive fire of condemnation. This is the same fire which will burn seven times brighter in the new heavens and new earth.¹³⁷ We can only imagine the impact of this fire, and heat, seven times, burning eternally upon those who would not obey the gospel.

Paul was evidently familiar with the fiery trial. He wrote to the Philippians, 'For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake, experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me'.¹³⁸ The fiery trial sanctifies us to our sonship and predestination so that we become able ministers of the gospel.¹³⁹ To the Corinthians Paul wrote, 'We have this treasure in earthen vessels so that the surpassing greatness of the power will be of God and not from ourselves. We are afflicted in every way but not crushed, perplexed but not despairing, persecuted but not forsaken, struck down but not destroyed, always carrying about in the earthen vessel the dying

129 1Pe 4:1

133 Rev 7:9

136 2Co 1:3. Heb 12:7

130 1Pe 4:14

134 Heb 4:16. Php 4:6

137 Isa 30:26

131 Dan 12:10

135 Deu 4:24.

138 Php 1:29-30

132 Joh 3:33. Joh 6:27

Heb 12:29

139 2Co 3:6

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of Jesus so that the life of Jesus might be manifested in our body.¹⁴⁰ And we could add, ‘Seen by those who need His mercy’. When we conduct ourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ,¹⁴¹ continually casting ourselves on the mercy of God, we will not be alarmed by our opponents. Our obedience to His word becomes a sign of destruction for them and salvation for us.¹⁴² By becoming a vessel of mercy, we are bringing destruction upon the sons of disobedience while they refuse Him who is speaking to them.¹⁴³

We offend in many ways

If we refuse Him who is speaking to us, we are neglecting God’s mercy.¹⁴⁴ Perhaps this is understandable, because His word leads to the refashioning of our vessel in the fiery ordeal. Nevertheless, we must cast ourselves on the mercy of God. James wrote, ‘We all stumble in many ways’.¹⁴⁵ The word ‘stumble’ means to ‘offend’. Without God’s mercy towards us in our offences, we will remain in the condemnation of our failures. Our condemnation will be equal to our pride because we will be humiliated by our failure. The most extreme outcome of this position is that we will move to justification for our pride, and eventually have no other avenue but to depart from fellowship. Paul described such a person as a castaway. ‘I discipline my body and make it my slave, so that, after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified as a castaway.’¹⁴⁶ We must continually present ourselves before the Lord to remain authentic and legitimate. If we cease to offer in this cycle, we are no longer serving and operating in sonship by the mercies of God.

140 2Co 4:7-10

143 Eph 5:6. Col 3:6.

145 Jas 3:2

141 Php 1:28

Heb 12:25

146 1Co 9:27

142 Php 1:28

144 Heb 12:25

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Sow in righteousness and reap in mercy

Hosea prophesied, ‘Sow with a view to righteousness, reap in accordance with kindness [mercy]’.¹⁴⁷ We have to guard our hearts when the Lord begins to draw on us, lest we grow weary and offended. We must once again ask ourselves, ‘What do we have that we did not receive?’¹⁴⁸ In the next chapter, after his report on the Macedonians, Paul wrote, ‘God is able to make all grace abound to you that always having all sufficiency in everything you may have an abundance for every good work’.¹⁴⁹ We need never come short of the grace.¹⁵⁰ And we must never feel incapable, or too weary or busy, to show mercy to others. If we feel we are coming short or are bereft of grace, then we need to sow to ourselves. In the first account, ‘sowing to yourself’ might mean giving yourself to understand the nature of your vessel, and perhaps the fracture in your vessel hindering your usefulness in the Master’s house. Are we finding His mercy and entering into a work as a slave in His house? If we are, then He is able to supply and multiply our seed for sowing and He will increase the harvest of our righteousness.¹⁵¹ Paul understood this cycle of sowing in righteousness to reap in mercy. ‘Oh the depths of the riches... how unsearchable are His judgements and unfathomable His ways!’¹⁵² Our goal, having found mercy and responded obediently, is to become an agent of mercy.

Unless we sow to ourselves in righteousness to continue reaping mercy, we will be left feeling depleted and no longer full of zeal for His house and His work. Jesus instructed us to let our light shine before men in such a way that they may see our works and glorify the Father in heaven.¹⁵³ And He is the Father of mercies because He has the ability to give them a new beginning.

147 Hos 10:12

150 Heb 12:15

153 Mat 5:16

148 1Co 4:7

151 2Co 9:10

149 2Co 9:8

152 Rom 11:33

Vessels of mercy

He gives us a starting point as a vessel of honour when we receive His word. We can reflect with gratitude on all those faithful ones who have taken time to show us mercy and give us a beginning point. We could say they were vessels of mercy from whom we were obtaining mercy.

The prophet Ezekiel declared the Lord as saying, 'I will multiply men on you, all of the house of Israel, all of it; and the cities will be inhabited, the waste places will be rebuilt and I will multiply on you man and beast. And they will increase and be fruitful and I will cause you to be inhabited as you were formerly and will treat you better than at the first and you will know that I am the Lord. Yes, I will cause My people, Israel, to walk on you to possess you and you shall become their inheritance and never again bereave them of children.'¹⁵⁴ Paul spoke in a similar way about the churches in Macedonia; that in a great ordeal of affliction their deep poverty overflowed in a wealth of liberality according to their ability and beyond.¹⁵⁵ They had become vessels of mercy with the capacity to show mercy to others. We could say their 'affliction' was really cultivation within the cycles of sowing and reaping.

Agents of mercy

Having once been disobedient vessels of wrath, He is showing mercy to us. If we will choose obedience then we can be the vessel by which those who are still shut up in disobedience can find mercy. 'Just as you were once disobedient to God but have now been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these also have been disobedient but because of the mercy shown to you they may also be shown mercy'.¹⁵⁶ He wants to empower us as

154 Eze 36:10-12

155 2Co 8:1-3

156 Rom 11:30-31

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vessels of mercy. The degree to which a vessel of wrath is carrying wrath within it, a vessel of mercy likewise contains mercy. This is the point. Paul wrote, 'For this reason I found mercy, so that in me as the foremost, Jesus Christ might demonstrate His perfect patience as an example for those who would believe in Him for eternal life'.¹⁵⁷ If we learn the ordeal of affliction and suffering, and unwavering obedience, we begin to testify as Paul did, 'If God be for you, who can be against you'.¹⁵⁸ All of this is bringing to us the abundance of glory for which vessels of mercy have been prepared.¹⁵⁹ If you suffer for His name then the Spirit of glory is resting upon you.¹⁶⁰ We are believing that God's mercy is not just His capacity to recover us to an inheritance in Him. If we become a vessel of mercy, we contain the grace ability of the Father of mercies to return many prodigal sons to glory.

Concerning our participation in the agency of mercy, Jude wrote, 'Those who are the called, beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ. May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you'.¹⁶¹ This is the same increase referred to in the book of Deuteronomy, 'He will love you and bless you and multiply you'.¹⁶² We are to build ourselves up, through His abundant grace, on our most holy faith¹⁶³. Jude spoke of our participation in God's mercy, 'Have mercy on some who are doubting; save others, snatching them out of the fire'.¹⁶⁴ What purpose, inspiration and direction this provides for the way ahead! Can we respond to the Father of mercies and obediently be reshaped as a vessel fit for His use?¹⁶⁵ If we will sow to our sonship in such righteousness, we will reap in mercy.¹⁶⁶

157 1Ti 1:16

161 Jud 1:1-2

165 2Ti 2:21

158 Rom 8:31

162 Deu 7:13

166 Hos 10:12

159 Rom 9:23

163 Jud 1:20

160 1Pe 4:14

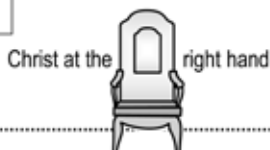
164 Jud 1:22-23

A lampstand administration

The administration of Christ for a nation

'By My Spirit' - Zech 4

The Jewish Nation model



Fullness of grace proceeding in two aspects of Melchisedec order

Apostolic administration

- resources the grace of Christ given from His kingship & priesthood to His ascension gift administrators (Apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors & teachers).
- establishing lampstands

Apostle
Kingship

High Priest
Priesthood

②

⑤

⑦

Antioch Model

- Paul & Barnabas

Presbytery administration

- Ascension gift ministry & overseers remain in fellowship as symbolised by the bowl (5) and then walk as symbolised by the 7 pipes bringing grace to the 7 lamps (symbolising the full number of local churches in a nation).
- Overseers feed, tend and lead. (1 Pet 5:2-3)
- They bring the administration and grace of the Melchisedec Order to the administration of a local church

Roman Model

- Rom 16, Rev 1-3

Lamp / Local church administration

- A fellowship of brethren, deacons & elders (among which there may be an overseer or overseers) who in relationship with the presbytery facilitate the individual expression of each member of the lampstand church to manifest the light of the 7-fold Spirit of God for the profit of all. (1 Cor 12, Eph 4:1,7)
- The manifestation of the Spirit is the light of the lampstand church, the light of God given to each member to minister towards one another and to the world.

Asian Model

- 3 John. Lamp / local church admin. eg. Demetrius

CHAPTER 7

With a view to an administration

Writing to the Ephesians, Paul spoke of the administration suitable for the fullness of times.¹ In all wisdom and insight, the Father has made known to us the mystery of His will ‘with a view’ to this administration.²

Looking back over the years, it is quite evident that the Lord has been leading us. It would be difficult to number the occasions He has advanced our understandings. Nevertheless, we have not departed from our understanding and commitment to the Ephesian pattern. Our sphere of ministry and relationships

1 Eph 1:10

2 Eph 1:8-9

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has increased dramatically. However, the tenets of the Ephesian pattern are as true today as they were those decades ago. Over the course of 35 years, the Ephesian pattern, with a strong emphasis upon 'eldership', has been our model for church structure and pastoral care. One communion table in a communicable city area, a first love commitment among brethren, eldership and fatherhood, are foundational in the structure of a local lamp church. We were very clear that the independent local church model was not viable. In subsequent years, we came to understand there is an administration suitable for the fullness of times, and we were convinced that a church founded on first love could sustain itself and be part of this administration of Christ.

Sometime later, we began to understand the Antioch model, where prophets and teachers were gathered together and giving themselves to the word and prayer. The fact of the word growing and multiplying by this means was not new to us. Even down to the writing of this book, our model is founded upon a commitment to fellowship in the word so that it does truly grow and multiply. The aspect that was new to us in the Antioch model was the Holy Spirit taking an initiative as the Lord of the harvest. He said, 'Set apart for Me, Paul and Barnabas, for the work to which I have called them'.³ It became clear to us that these ascension-gift ministries were looking to establish an Ephesian pattern model in all the cities where they ministered. After preaching and making disciples, they appointed elders in every place. It was given to Paul and Barnabas to establish a lamp-light in each communicable city area.

One of the major understandings which the Lord has brought to us in more recent years is the lampstand church. The Ephesian

3 Acts 13:2

With a view to an administration

pattern is the term we use to describe the fellowship of elders and brethren in a local lamp church. The Antioch model describes the way in which ascension-gift brethren establish multiple lamp churches. We have become acutely aware that you cannot light a lamp unless you are intending to put it on a lampstand. This is the proposition of the book of Zechariah. Upon returning from exile, the nation of Judah was to become a lampstand nation. And this, of course, is the picture of the church in the book of Revelation. There are seven golden lampstands.

We have been giving thorough attention to Paul's description of the church in Rome. On first appraisal, it might appear that there are some discrepancies between this model and the Ephesian pattern. However, it has become quite apparent that it is not an alternative in any way. There are no discrepancies between the Roman church model and the Ephesian pattern. Rome was not an alternate model of independent local churches in one city. The Roman church model is a fellowship of brethren in a lampstand. In the earliest years of the Ephesian pattern, our emphasis was one communion in a communicable city area. We are aware now that we were seeking to establish a lamp church. The Lord had not spoken to us at that time about the necessity of a lampstand. Even though there was an ascension-gift ministry person involved, it was nevertheless the pursuit of a viable lamp in a communicable city area. Over the course of the years, we have become aware of an administration that is suitable for the fullness of times and that this is a lampstand administration.

Each lampstand referred to in the book of Revelation was more akin to a provincial state or a small nation. Each lampstand is addressed according to the leading city from which the word

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sounded forth into that region, and even the regions beyond. Thinking of Ephesus, in the book of Revelation, it is a lampstand church, as Rome is also a lampstand church. It has become obvious to us that the lamp administration of a local church is simply a branch of the lampstand. The lamp emphasis was directed toward finding elders and fathers for the care of a citywide church. However, a lampstand emphasis is directed toward an apostolic administration with a five-fold ministry, supplying oil from a bowl to each lamp church.

The church in Rome

In this chapter, we are taking time to consider the way in which Paul related to the lampstand church in Rome. The diverse types of relationships and congregations are evident. There were apostles, Andronicus and Junias, resident among them.⁴ Priscilla and Aquila were ‘overseeing a church in their house’.⁵ This lampstand had deacons, both male and female, namely Phoebe and others.⁶ Epaphroditus was nominated as a firstfruits.⁷ Many others are noted as fellow-workers, choice men in the Lord. Various households are mentioned including Narcissus and Aristobulus.⁸

Paul drew attention to the overseership of Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas and the brethren with them.⁹ Then he referred to similar overseeing types; Philologus and Julia, Nereus and his sister, Olympas, and all the saints who are with them.¹⁰ There were evidently many different sizes and types of fellowship gatherings.

The apostle Paul was assured and confident of the viability of the lampstand in the nation-state of Rome. He wrote to them, ‘Now to Him who is able to establish you according to my gospel

4 Rom 16:7

6 Rom 16:1

9 Rom 16:14

5 Rom 16:3-5.
1Co 16:19

7 Rom 16:5

10 Rom 16:15

8 Rom 16:8-13

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and the preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery which has been kept secret for long ages past, but now is manifested, and by the Scriptures of the prophets, according to the commandment of the eternal God, has been made known to all the nations, leading to obedience of faith'.¹¹

This lampstand fellowship was committed to the fellowship of the Father and Son with the apostolic administration. The five-fold ministry¹², the overseers¹³, the deacons¹⁴, hosts¹⁵ and brethren¹⁶ were all active and submitted in many viable and diverse lamps within that lampstand.¹⁷ We must not conclude that each gathering assembled together on the basis of convenience. There can be no doubt that Paul was directing the saints in Rome to be of one mind and of one spirit in one lampstand. This was not a sectarian group. Rome was a lampstand in a nation-state region. The nature of their relationships demonstrated one spirit among them.

In this lampstand, the overseers had such a good reputation, that the report of their obedience had reached to all.¹⁸ Paul was rejoicing over them. The overseers had the eyes of wisdom, and they were doorkeeper-shepherds guarding the flock.¹⁹ Paul urged them as brethren to keep their eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which they had learned from him.²⁰ This type was ambitious, comparative, and envious.²¹ Their slavehood was corrupted and certainly not of the type that was humbling and emptying.²² It was not of our Lord Jesus Christ, but of their own appetites.²³ By their smooth and flattering speech, they were deceiving the hearts of the unsuspecting.

11 Rom 16:25-26

16 Rom 16:14,17

21 Rom 2:7,8.

12 Eph 4:11

17 1Pe 5:5

Jam 4:2

13 Act 20:28

18 Rom 16:19

22 Luk 12:43-45.

Php 2:7

14 1Ti 3:8-13

19 1Pe 5:2

23 Rom 16:18

15 Rom 16:23

20 Rom 16:17

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The lampstand overseers in Rome were evidently warring a good warfare, and accordingly, Paul encouraged them to anticipate victory.²⁴ ‘The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet.’

Proper relational connection

We must, at all costs, resist the mode of Diotrophes who was a dissenter. In his epistle, John noted, ‘I wrote something to the church; but Diotrophes, who loves to be first among them, does not accept what we say’.²⁵ John stood up in the full authority of his grace saying, ‘For this reason, if I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does, unjustly accusing us with wicked words; and not satisfied with this, he himself does not receive the brethren either, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church’.²⁶

Where a small lamp gathering does not have overseers or five-fold grace capacity to supply oil, then it will have to maintain a proper connection to the bowl, via walking overseers, if it is to remain viable and grow. Even the lampstand in Rome, which had overseers and apostles resident among it, remained committed and submitted to an apostolic administration.²⁷ Paul used this term to describe the relationship of the various graces within the five, and with the overseers.

The supply of the oil of grace to each lamp is essential for its viable integration and expression within a lamp church.²⁸ The cluster of a knop, bud, and flower symbolises the relationship of one member to another.²⁹ The integration of knop, bud, and flower is dependent upon the effective functioning of overseers. These overseers must have eyes to see and understand the working of

24 1Ti 1:18.

Rom 16:20

25 3Jn 1:9

26 3Jn 1:10

27 Rom 16:23.

28 Psa 133:2

29 Exo 25:33

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each member in particular; who they are as sons of God, and what their ability and grace capacity is.³⁰

If a lamp congregation is young and inexperienced, then the connection to overseers and the five-fold ministry must be directly maintained until a minimum quotient of overseership emerges. While we have an expectation that oil is coming down through a seven-pipe administration³¹, equally graced overseers are growing up into the authority of Christ. Overseers are to be watchmen-shepherds.³²

We must keep faith with the word delivered to us concerning the Ephesian pattern. The tyranny of distance will be a small price for the fellowship of worthy houses to pay if there is insufficient grace to sustain the house church in the local area. They will need to travel. The lamp brethren must not behave as if they are the bowl and resource of oil. The work will not grow. It will be rent with divisions, unless there are shepherd-doorkeepers standing to watch and war according to grace.

The brethren who are serving in the lamp must not become empowered as if 'we are not coming to you'.³³ If a man is a host, then he should continue in the grace of that work without projecting to something beyond. Graced functionaries, whether local or travelling, must be careful not to exceed their mandate. If they are invited or sent to assist in the programme, or to take a lead in a lamp event, they must abide within their limit.³⁴ They should not take up the work of identifying, equipping and adjusting the saints, as if they are part of the five-fold ministry.

If there is one lampstand in Australia, there is only one bowl. The oil is not supplied regionally, but rather by the five-

30 1Co 12:27.

Eph 4:8. 1Co 1:4

31 Zec 4:2

32 Acts 20:28

33 1Co 4:18

34 Mat 8:9

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fold ministers of manifold grace.³⁵ Care must be taken when members are beginning to move forward in ability and grace. The appointment of sons to accountable roles, should be given careful consideration by the five-fold ministries together with the overseers. Decisions should not be pragmatic or need-based in the first instance. We must be aware not to make false promises which will only result in serving functionaries striving to achieve a better standing. We must not intentionally or inadvertently encourage unsustainable projection even if the member has ability. What is the Holy Spirit saying?³⁶ Is an individual being separated by the Holy Spirit to a work, or is the programme in overload and the shortage of personnel becoming acute.³⁷

We are seeking a Roman model for growth and sustainability. We must walk together in one spirit, in one lampstand, regardless of the location, numeric size, and the available graced overseers, deacons and functionaries.³⁸ Every overseer should be walking in the lampstand so that the ‘abundance’ and ‘lack’ issues are adequately supplied.³⁹ If there is an evident lack of overseership in a lamp fellowship, then the heads of houses must walk together in first love without the leaven of ambition, comparison and envy which will grow to malice and wickedness.⁴⁰ We must not be ‘puffed up on behalf of one against the other’.⁴¹ The brethren must not lord it over the flock in the name of programme, order, or discipline.⁴² Walking overseers will assist in the lamp work. Shepherding overseers will need to walk and exercise oversight willingly, particularly among the small house churches.

35 1Pe 4:10

38 Php 1:27.

40 Rev 2:4. 1Co 5:8

36 Rom 8:14. Gal 5:18

2Co 12:18

41 1Co 4:6

37 Act 13:2

39 2Co 8:14

42 Mat 10:25. 1Pe 5:3

The church in every nation

The church in every nation is to be a properly functional lampstand. This was the substantial meaning of Zechariah's vision. Upon their return from exile, the Lord visited Judah in a completely new way. They had been previously ordered as a little sanctuary.⁴³ However, upon their return, the Lord began to speak to them about being a lampstand nation.

When we look at the seven churches in Asia, each nominated city was the centre of a large province or small nation.⁴⁴ There was not only one lampstand in Asia. There were seven lampstands. The city of Ephesus, and its region, was a lampstand with seven lamps. Remember that 'seven' is referring to the number of fullness, not to the actual number of viable lamps. Thinking again of Rome, it was a representative centre with an administration, including the five-fold ministries, overseers, deacons and brethren properly represented.

In the lampstand in Australia, there should be a fellowship of five-fold ministries as ascension-gift overseers, with walking overseers, various deacons, graced functionaries and brethren together. There should be one bowl supplying the oil of grace as a resource to every lamp.⁴⁵ The oil of grace should be the means by which our fellowship together, as lamp congregations in one lampstand, is maintained. The supply of oil is coming from the five-fold ministry. The administration of the oil of grace must be supplying every house and every congregation by a walking administration of overseers. And this should happen regardless of the number of people gathering together in a lamp. The supply of the oil of grace should not be restricted or limited, simply because

43 Eze 11:16

44 Rev2-3. The Lord addresses letters to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea.

45 Zec 4:2

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a congregation is small and does not have overseers among it. On the contrary, this is all the more reason for the walking overseers to come among them.

The issue of one bowl needs to be clearly stated among us. We are saying that there is one supply of oil for the whole lampstand. The administration of oil is with the ascension-gift graces and the overseers with them. Only then will we stand up as a lampstand church to this nation.

Issues and questions

1. Where in the nation are the ascension-gift ministries and functionaries committed in a practical fellowship? This administration has been appointed by Christ Himself to adjust and equip each individual son of God for the work of the ministry. Only then will every member in particular grow up into the full stature of their sonship to be the light of the world.⁴⁶ When the fruit of light is evident, then those outside will be evangelised to their predestination as sons of God.

When the five-fold ascension-gift ministries are working together in an apostolic administration, then the lampstand light will shine on the space in front of it.⁴⁷ It will light up the pathway into the Most Holy Place so that sons can go all the way to the throne of grace and to the mercy seat, be sprinkled with His blood, and achieve their sonship.⁴⁸

2. What grace capacities do we have in each local lamp?
3. How does the administration of Christ supply that which is lacking in each lamp?⁴⁹ In this present season the Holy Spirit

46 Eph 4:13.

Mat 5:14. Php 2:15

47 Num 8:2

48 Exo 26:34.

Lev 16:14-15.

Heb 4:16.

Heb 10:22

49 Php 2:30

With a view to an administration

is emphasising the work of a lampstand administration among the five-fold ministry, the overseers and the deacons. At this time, we are finding many brothers and sisters who are being separated to this work by the Holy Spirit.⁵⁰

Our goal is clear. We are looking for the expression of every part in the lampstand so that the fruit of light will be seen in the lamp.⁵¹ We are looking for a functional walking administration that is among the lamps, so that each member in particular is growing up to the full stature of their sonship.⁵² Each son of God is to achieve their own unique predestination in Christ.

4. How does each lamp maintain its connection to the lampstand? Each lamp cannot behave as if it is the bowl. There is only one bowl for the nation. In practise, the bowl is the hands cupped together in such a way that they can receive the oil of the Melchizedek order flowing from the throne of Christ.

Oil from above

The oil is the interface between the bowl and the lampstand. The light is the fruit of that relationship in any given locality. The administration of the bowl is meeting the administration of the lamp. The flower is representing the fruit of light in an individual or collective ministry initiative.

It will be important to emphasise that the bowl for the nation is the two hands of the Melchizedek order through which the oil of grace flows.⁵³ The oil is coming from the throne of Christ into the bowl. The bowl is the apostolic administration; that is, the

50 Acts 13:2

53 Psa 110:4. Heb 5:6

51 Eph 5:9

52 Eph 4:13

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five-fold ministry graces. The interface between the bowl and the lampstand produces light in a locality. Each lamp is receiving oil through an administration of seven pipes.⁵⁴ Seven is the number of completion, thus indicating that the effective supply of oil will equal an effective outcome in the lamp.

Christ is the King-Priest on His throne. 'It is He who will build the temple of the LORD, and He who will bear the honour and sit and rule on His throne. Thus, He will be a Priest on His throne, and the counsel of peace will be between the two offices'.⁵⁵ He is the Apostle exercising kingship and the Priest administering seven sprinklings.⁵⁶ The oil of grace is administered from between the two offices in the bowl.

The Melchizedek order, which is bringing many sons to glory, is the kingship and priesthood of Christ. The oil of grace is proceeding from one, that is Christ, to two, that is Kingship and Priesthood,⁵⁷ and then it is proceeding to the ascension-gift administrators – apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, teacher.⁵⁸ This is the five-fold ministry. And then it is proceeding in a walking fellowship of overseers. This is manifested as seven stars in the right hand.⁵⁹ The seven with the grace of five are bringing the seven-fold fullness of grace to the lamp.

The bowl

The bowl is the representative picture of the five-fold ministry and their initiatives with the overseers. All grace has its source in the bowl; that is, in the fellowship of the five-fold ministries. For any person, or initiative, or work to be sanctified, it must have its source in this fellowship of the bowl with the five-fold ministry. The Father has committed these works to the Son, and He has, in

54 Zec 4:2 57 Rev 1:6. Rev 5:10

55 Zec 6:13 58 Eph 4:11

56 Lev 16:14-15 59 Rev 1:16, 20

turn, committed them to the five-fold ministry. These works have been laid down to us and we are to reveal them, bringing them forth as the fruit of light.

The ascension-gift administration

It is critical that we understand the elements of a lampstand administration. What and who are the: 1. bowl 2. pipes 3. clusters of knop, bud, and flower.⁶⁰ If we understand this, then the authority of grace will not be hindered. The brethren in any locality must meet and relate with the five-fold ascension-gift administration of Christ in an 'oil-lamp-flower' relationship. The five-fold ministry of Christ is the ascension-gift or raised administration of His throne. This administration operates from the mercy seat, out to the altar, and returns again to the throne of grace.

The five-fold ascension-gift ministry is making the blood of Christ effective in the heavenly places. We have been raised far above all principalities and powers to the mercy seat.⁶¹ The ascension-gift administration of Christ is supplying the oil of grace so that the lamp can manifest the light of seven Spirits, and the fruit of light, for the common good.⁶² And this five-fold administration is supplying the oil of grace to every member of the body of Christ, enabling them to walk in the light of fellowship, bringing forth the fruit of light.⁶³ It is the mandate and goal of this administration to find pathways for every individual son, so that they manifest the light of their own unique sonship.

The five-fold ministry facilitates the grace of Christ into the local church through a walking fellowship of overseers. These overseers connect to the local lamp administration; that is, to the

60 Zec 4:2.

Exo 25:32-35.

Exo 37:18-22

61 Eph 1:21

62 Rev 1:4. Rev 3:1.

Rev 4:5. Rev 5:6.

Eph 5:9

63 1Jn 1:7. Eph 5:9

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brethren, among whom are elders, deacons, and those who are functionaries according to ability.

It is the ascension-gift overseers, along with the local brethren, who are overseeing the local lamp. These local brethren may not necessarily be ascension-gift, but they are connected to the overseership of the five-fold ministry graces. These local brethren are not of themselves the resource of oil because they are not, in the first case, part of the five-fold ministry in the bowl. All overseeing brethren, while living in lamp situations, should be walking among the lamps in the lampstand.

A shepherding administration

Shepherding a church is the work of Christ as the Chief Shepherd.⁶⁴ He has committed this mandate to an ascension-gift administration with overseers who are adjusting the saints for the work of the ministry.⁶⁵ The five ministries are overseers with the shepherding capacity of Christ.⁶⁶ It is their role to identify ability, grace and authority among the many members. This overseeing capacity of the five-fold ministry is the expression of the authority of the bowl.

A lamp overseer has a different shepherding work to an ascension-gift overseer. The local overseer will himself be adjusted for the work of his ministry. The lamp overseers are shepherding as those who deacon, tend and teach. Men and women in worthy houses will also be attending to the shepherding work of the church. They are addicted to the care of the saints in a local lamp church.⁶⁷

64 1Pe 5:4

67 1Co 16:15

65 Eph 4:11,12

66 Joh 21:15-17

A doorkeeper administration

Christ is the door of the sheepfold.⁶⁸ And because the five-fold administration is of Christ Himself, it is therefore a doorkeeper administration. To go in and out of Christ's sheepfold without reference to His five-fold administration, is to follow a hireling and not the good Shepherd.⁶⁹ We must not maintain another way of entry, while continuing to walk among God's people. This is a 'sub-culture' of thieves and robbers who misappropriate the benefits of the grace coming from the five-fold ministry.⁷⁰ This 'sub-culture' within the sheepfold is not of God, nor is it of the lampstand.

Eldership and a local lamp

For a gathering of individuals to be a lamp, there must be some emerging overseership. At minimum, there must be a fellowship of brethren who are connected to overseers, and a five-fold ministry that is coming among them. It has been given to overseers to willingly shepherd the flock.⁷¹ However, within the brethren, there will also be elders who are fathers among the flock. Their primary motivation is to nurture every member so that they mature in sonship. These elders have managed their own households well, keeping their children under control with all dignity. If a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?⁷² Not all elders are overseers, but they are all shepherds.

68 Joh 10:7

71 1Pe 5:2

69 Joh 10:9,11-14

72 1Ti 3:4,5

70 Joh 10:1

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Overseership and a local lamp

The particular work of the overseer in a lamp is to connect themselves to the oil of grace coming from the bowl, while at the same time overseeing the flock within a local lamp. The overseers and deacons in a lamp must connect to the five ministries in the bowl, and they do this through seven pipes.⁷³ Seven is the administration of the seven Spirits of God coming down from above.⁷⁴ The oil is flowing from five in the bowl, to seven. In this way, the house is being properly cared for and overseen.

Overseers have been given authority over the house. They are doorkeepers, and they are to watch for there are many adversaries. Overseers must shepherd the flock willingly because the Holy Spirit has made them overseers. The overseer in a lamp is not necessarily deaconing a programme, or necessarily a graced functionary. The overseer is a shepherd, and his role is to watch, guard and tend the expression of sonship within the local lamp.

The oil is coming from the bowl in a five-fold ministry. This oil constitutes an abundance of grace resources for the deacons and functionaries to be effective, so that the lamp reveals the fruit of light in its locality.⁷⁵ Lamp overseers and deacons are not themselves in the bowl, but they are connected to the bowl through the administration of seven pipes and seven Spirits. However, some overseers will be part of the five-fold ministry. The five-fold ministry is giving a direction to the lamp overseers so that the programme is effective for the revealing of sons and the fruit of light. The local lamp overseers are to watch for the enemies. They are to be shepherds, not hirelings.

73 Zec 4:2

74 Rev 4:5

75 Eph 5:9

With a view to an administration

If the lamp and its overseers are not properly connected to the bowl, then that lamp will not sustain itself. The fellowship of the lamp and flower in a local area is a fellowship of elders, deacons, and overseers. The lamp is part of the administration of Christ. The flower, from which the light of seven Spirits shines forth, is the members in particular.⁷⁶ The flower is revealing the effective ministry and fruit of each member of a lampstand church.

The lamp is the point of connection between the cluster of knop, bud, and flower and the oil of grace that is coming from the ascension-gift administration. The lamp and flower are the fusion point where the oil of grace and the manifestation of light meet together. In practical terms, the light is in the flower and it is the fruit of the effective working of every individual part.⁷⁷ There will be no light unless there is a proper interface between the administration of grace coming down, and the knop, bud, and flower growing up.

The oil of grace that is in the bowl must be piped to every local lamp church. If the local lamp is not properly connected to both the national lampstand and the five-fold ministry in the bowl, then it cannot sustain itself. In every local lamp, particular individuals are represented by the cluster of knop, bud, and flower.

Because the oil is coming to each individual lamp in full measure, that is, in seven pipes, the lamp in each locality can express the grace and authority of Christ in its community. Thinking of the model of the church in Rome, the authority and grace of Christ can be expressed even within a small church in the house.

76 1Co 12:27

77 Eph 4:16

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If each person in the local lamp church is part of the organic relationship between knop, bud, and flower, then they will be a legitimate and functional part of the lampstand branch. They will be fully involved with the oil of grace that is coming from the five ministries. They are receiving and responding to the word as it is ministered. They are a slave of righteousness and, consequently, abide in the house.⁷⁸

The lampstand light should be revealed in the flower, as the light and revelation of the seven-fold Spirit of God. The flower is a member in particular, but it is also the collective expression of the many members of the body of Christ. When grace is given to many members according to their abilities, empowering them to make offering, then there will be a corporate expression of the seven-fold Spirit of God.

We are noting that many local lamps are struggling to sustain themselves. This is one of the issues at hand. We must activate a walking administration of five ministries with overseers. It is mostly not within the scope and province of local brethren to open pathways for every individual member.⁷⁹ The five-fold ministry has been appointed by Christ to adjust the lampstand church so that each part is working properly, according to the grace given. Only then will the body make growth of itself. Pathways for the expression of each member will need to be overseen by a walking administration. However, the local brethren, that is, the elders and deacons, will facilitate these things.

At this time, the Spirit is motivating many individuals to step forward and present themselves with their abilities as an offering. The local elders and brethren must not hinder or impede this emerging faith expression.

78 Jas 1:21. Joh 8:35

79 Psa 23:3. Psa 25:4

Grace according to the measure of Christ's gift

Grace is given to each particular part; that is, each member in particular according to the measure of Christ's gift.⁸⁰ The purpose of an ascension-gift administration is to enable each individual to receive the grace of Christ and manifest the Spirit 'for the common good'. 'To each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.'⁸¹ Then the manifestation of the Spirit will be revealed as light from the lamp of the lampstand. It will be revealed as the fruit of the light from each flower in the lampstand church.⁸²

The seven stars are a walking administration of overseers, and they connect to the local lamp administration made up of elders and deacons. The elders and the deacons facilitate the expression of grace in every individual. This manifestation is the fruit of light in the flower. And this fruit is according to their abilities, and grace-talents given according to those abilities.⁸³ Remember, that to each one grace is given according to the measure of Christ's gift.⁸⁴

When each member in particular is able to be an expression and manifestation of the Spirit for the common good, then there will be diversity of operations within the lamp and lampstand. Put simply, the lampstand is the expression of every individual manifesting the Spirit according to their own gift, in order and by course.

The sin of presumption

At this present time, we must take note of the danger of presuming upon the authority of the five-fold ministry. Overseers

80 Eph 4:7

83 Mat 25:15

81 1Co 12:7, 27

84 Eph 4:7

82 Eph 5:9

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and deacons in a lamp must ensure that they are not empowered from their homes. If this is so, then the direction that is coming according to the grace of Christ will be reinterpreted according to the 'sub-culture' of the home. This is to assume and presume upon the authority of the five-fold ministry.

The household of Ananias and Sapphira is an example of this presumption. They had made a commitment to live by offering and submit themselves to the five-fold ministry of Christ. They had made an offering commitment. However, they collaborated together and withdrew their commitment. This resulted in the destruction of their house.⁸⁵ This kind of desolation is among us, and it is incumbent upon us all to address family 'sub-culture'.

The presumption of Simon the Sorcerer is an example of those who have projected themselves to an empowered position when they have not been called to overseership.⁸⁶ We must take care that we are not appointing people from a pragmatic and programme based perspective. Simon the Sorcerer was seeking power and control. However, Peter rebuked him saying that he was in the 'gall of bitterness and the bond of iniquity'.⁸⁷ The sheep hear the voice of a shepherd.⁸⁸ We must not find ourselves appointing people in local lamp churches who are not shepherds or overseers.

Not puffed up

There are three kinds of leaven that will affect the local lamp and its relationships. The first is the condition of being puffed up, one against the other.⁸⁹ Then there is the situation of being puffed up as if there is no walking administration that is coming. And thirdly, the leaven of immorality demonstrates that all the lines of sanctification have been blurred and confused.

85 Act 5:1-10

88 Joh 10:3, 16, 27

Col 2:18. 1Ti 3:6

86 Act 8:18-19

89 1Co 4:6,18-19.

87 Act 8:20-23

1Co 5:2. 1Co 13:4.

With a view to an administration

It is this second leaven which promotes the sin of presumption.⁹⁰ We know that Paul had a serious degree of difficulty with the Corinthian church. He said, 'Some have become arrogant, as though I were not coming to you'.⁹¹ And again, 'This is the third time I am coming to you ... and now being absent I write to those who have sinned before, and to all the rest, that if I come again I will not spare anyone'.⁹²

The point of confusion is around the bowl. The lamp deacons and elders are not in the bowl. The lamp is receiving the resource of grace in its fullness from a five-fold ministry. What is it that is coming to the lamps through the pipes? It is the grace of Christ in the ascension-gift brethren themselves. It is not just the word that they are bringing. If the brethren in the lamps, and those who are in the administration of the pipes, are not receiving the five ministries, then there will be no oil.

This was the case with Diotrephes. John said, 'If I come, I will call attention to his deeds which he does ... he himself does not receive the brethren, and he forbids those who desire to do so and puts them out of the church'.⁹³

At this time it is important that we deal with the failures among the brethren; that is, among the elders and the deacons. Those who have assumed the work of overseers, but have not been called to do so, are finding themselves under duress. They are responding with presumption and overstatement or with complexity and understatement.

90 Psa 19:13

93 3Jn 1:10

91 1Co 4:18

92 2Co 13:1-2

Presumption of a deacon or functionary

The presumption of a deacon and a functionary is usually around matters of programme. The lamp deacon is not in the bowl. He is deaconing in the lamp. The deacon is inclined toward a good outcome and might be presumptuous with respect to the decisions that have been made among the ascension-gift authorities. In their endeavour to open pathways, people can be handled and balanced for good outcomes. This approach is often pragmatic, practical and situational. The deacon can be inclined to take ascendancy over the ascension-gift grace for the sake of a practical outcome. Partiality based in practical outcomes, might see the deacon taking priority over the overseers and elders with respect to the growth, nurturing, and maturity of each individual.

Likewise, a gifted functionary might be inclined toward presumption. If they have been invited or sent to assist a local lamp they must be careful to abide within the scope of their work. We are familiar with the brother whose fame in the things of the gospel spread throughout the churches⁹⁴. The gifted functionary, or the functionary with ability, must not exceed their limit and begin adjusting the local lamp, its elders and overseers. Likewise, the skilled functionary must not confuse the needs of the event in which they are ministering with the more substantial needs of the local church. They must not rally individuals in every place to service their programme. The appointment of supportive functionaries will be in the province of the overseers. The members in particular are not a resource for a gifted functionary.

With a view to administration, these are some of the issues before us at this time. The mandate of the administration of Christ

With a view to an administration

is to bring forth a multitude of sons in every place.⁹⁵ It fulfils this mandate by ensuring that the grace of Christ is piped to each individual son of God, thus enabling them to come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.⁹⁶ The gospel of our salvation is only apprehended in this way. Such an administration truly belongs to Christ and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.

95 Heb 2:10. Rev 7:9

96 Eph 4:13

GLOSSARY

Able minister	A deacon of the Spirit, equipped and qualified
Acceptable offering	Offering commensurate with the offerer
Administration	Gk Oikonomia, the economy of the house, context for deacons
Adoption	The process by which we become sons of God
Affliction	Pressure of an olive press, crushing, experiences to produce godliness, the great multitude for the Day of Atonement
Almond branch	Branch of a lampstand, code word for 'I am hastening to fulfil My word'
Altar	Bronze, place of offering
Anastasis	Christ's physical and bodily resurrection

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Angelos	Corporate messenger, seven stars in the right hand, seven-five
Antichrist	The man of sin, oppose, denying Christ in the flesh
Apostle	Grace from Christ, under-oarsman, steward of the mystery, connected to the throne of the Son
Apostolic administration	Five-fold ministry supplying oil of grace to a lampstand church
Ark of the Covenant	Place of the shekinah glory in the tabernacle and temple, symbol of new creation life
Ascension-gift	Five ministry graces that reveal the ascended administration of Christ
Atonement	The outcome of seven sprinklings upon the mercy seat
Authority	(See Kingship)
Babylon	City in Chaldea, spiritual city of harlotry, the great whore, desolate offerings, abominations, corrupted by trading, woman in the ephah, enshrined in a temple / sanctuary, joined to the nations by trading, rides on the beast, drunk on the blood of the saints, hated and made desolate by three kings
Baptism	Into Christ, into His name, identification - Him with us, us with Him; death, burial, resurrection (See Name)

Glossary

Blood	Blood of Christ, as of a lamb, agent of new birth, new creation life, redeeming, sanctifying, cleansing
Body of Christ	The many members with Christ as Head
Bondslave	Gk- doulos, slave with Christ (incorrectly translated bondservant)
Born of the Spirit	Those who have received the Spirit as the pledge
Born of water	Those who have the word of their sonship
Bowl	Brass vessel for blood, golden vessel for wine, golden vessel for incense and fire, golden bowl with oil above the lampstand, seven golden bowls/vials of wrath
Branch	Almond - structure of a lampstand, vine, Christ, Joseph, David, Zerubbabel
Brethren	Group of men living together in first love
Bud	Second in cluster of lampstand branch (See Lampstand, Cluster)
Burnt offering	Whole and continual offering, morning and evening sacrifice, accepted on behalf of the offerer
Calvary	The place outside Jerusalem where Jesus was crucified
Circumcision	8 th day procedure to cut off flesh
Clay	Metaphor for our life
Cleansing	Process of sanctification

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Cluster	Knop, bud, flower in a lampstand; compare blade, head mature grain, symbol of growing and bearing fruit
Collegiality	Colleagues, demanding equality
Communion	Koinonia, participation, fellowship together with Christ at His table, bread and wine (See fellowship)
Confession	Testimony before God of sin or faith
Consecration	Set apart
Corporate messenger	Angelos, group of overseers, elders and deacons, stars in the right hand
Counsel of His will	Dialogue of Father, Son, Holy Spirit
Covenant	Cut and sealed, promise, agreement
Cup of blessing	The wine of communion, bringing life
Cup of salvation	Provision of saving life
Cup of suffering	Participation with Christ in His sufferings
Cup of wrath	Poured out wherever the blood of sanctification is trampled
Curse	Absence of blessing, penalty for disobedience
Day of Atonement	Tenth day of the seventh month, wholly cleansed of sin, marriage of Christ to the church
Deacon	Seven deacons, one who serves in the work, pouring out upon priests and offering, minister, servant
Dead works	Self-motivated works
Desolate offering	Corrupt and defiled offering

Glossary

Desolation	Destruction because of the failure of offering
Disciple	One trained and deaconing
Disobedience	Resistance to the word of a messenger
Divine nature	Life of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit
Drink offering	Poured out on the offering for a sweet aroma
Door keeper	Overseer who is watching and guarding
Elder	A father who shepherds, tends and guards the flock
Elect	Those chosen for sanctification
Elohim	Three persons of Godhead – Father, Son, Holy Spirit
Emptying	Laying aside all personal prerogative
Ephesian pattern	Brethren and elders living in first love
Eternal	From the testimony of Yahweh and the council of Elohim, Eternal Covenant, gospel, life
Eternal life	The particular life belonging to each name written in the Lamb's book
Eternal Spirit	the capacity of the Spirit of the Father, the Spirit of the Son, and the Holy Spirit
Evangelism	Proclamation, saving of a soul
Evangelist	Proclaimer, ascension-gift of Christ
Evil conscience	Conscience seared by repetitive

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	disobedience
Exanastasis	Life of God in a mortal body
Extraordinary work	The work of God to bring a complete end
Father of mercies	The intention of the Father to gather us to Himself
Fear of Isaac	The obedient faith of Isaac
Fellowship	Gk Koinonia, proper relational connection, fellowship of the Son, in His sufferings, of the body of Christ (See Communion)
Fellowship of His suffering	Intention to suffer with Christ
Fiery trial	Fiery ordeal, testing of our faith
First love	Love of the brethren, commitment to each other
Firstfruits	Heb Minchah, the first of the harvest, remembered , Israel, Christ, church, Stephanas
Five-fold	The five ascension-gifts of Christ to His church
Five-seven	Seven stars in the right hand of five ministries (See Angelos)
Flower	Third in cluster of lampstand branch
Forgiveness	Remission of sin granting freedom
Freedom	The liberty of a son of God, the right to 'do' and 'be'
Friend	Slave who knows what the Master is doing

Glossary

Fruit	Outcome of labour, natural or spiritual
Fruit of light	Result of oil in a lamp
Fullness of times	The time of restoration until the end of all things
Functionary	A deacon with a work
Garment	Kingdom of priests walking in white, white robes of priesthood, authority to walk in the holy place, righteous works of the saints
Gentiles	Wild branches
Gethsemane	The oil press, the hour of trial
Glory	Unique revelation of identity and name
Godhead	Life – Father, Son and Holy Spirit
Gold, golden	Symbol of Divine life, oil of the seven Spirits, bowls, sickle, trial of faith producing faith
Good conscience	No consciousness of sin
Grace	The capacity of Christ to be priests and make offering
Great Shepherd	Christ as shepherd and carer of the flock
Hardness of heart	Outcome of continual disobedience
Heavenly places	Place of the raised church, seated with Christ, the heavenlies
Heirs of promise	Inheritance of sons
High Priest	Priest who entered the most holy place on the Day of Atonement

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Highway of holiness	Pathway of sanctification to the mercy seat
Holy	Sanctified, set apart
Holy of holies	Third heaven, place of the ark, cherubim, and mercy seat
Holy place	sanctuary of the tabernacle, table of shewbread, lampstand, altar of incense
Humility	Attitude to reveal another
Immanuel	Name of 'God with us' - in the land, in desolation, Jesus Christ
Infirmity	Weakness, frailty, without strength
Inheritance	Portion of sons
Involuntary	Against my will
Israel	Prophet to Israel and Judah, the extraordinary work of God, the remnant, natural branches
Judgement	God's righteous judgement upon the saints, sentence upon the wicked, day of judgement, judgement seat
Kind intention	The Father's desire, the will of God, many sons, proven by offering
Kingship	Administration and face of the Lion, reigning, authority
Knop	First in cluster of lampstand branch
Lamb	Jesus Christ, the fullness of offering, book of life
Lamb's book of life	Record of - names, work, will and purpose of God, revelation of Jesus Christ, seven seals, seven thunders

Glossary

Lamp	Lamp of Israel, kingship and priesthood of Melchizedek, seven lamps upon a lampstand church
Lampstand	Seventy parts, cluster of knop, bud, flower, golden, symbol of a church in a region, light of the world, seven Spirits of God, seven lamps
Law	Command of God which cannot be broken
Leaven	That which corrupts, ferments
Light	The life of God revealed
Living sacrifice	Burnt offering, wholly and continually given, sufferings of Christ
Local lamp	A group that reveals the fruit of light
Love-slave	Slave who is obedient from the heart, born in their love for the master
Master	Ruler of slave/doulos
Melchizedek	Jesus Christ, administration of kingship and priesthood
Mercy	Capacity of the Father to gather us to Himself
Mercy Seat	Upon the ark of the covenant, the place of sprinkling
Messenger	Proclaiming the word, angels and men
Mystery of His will	His kind intention, hidden in ages past
Name	Predetermined identity and work of a son of God

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New and living way	Path from the altar to the mercy seat
New birth	Born again by the exercise of the Father's will
New Covenant	Covenant in the blood of Christ
New creation	Life of God in sons
New heavens and new earth	Place of eternal life when time is no more
Obedience	Commitment to follow the Master
Offering	A representative gift to God
Oil	Supply for the lamps, fuel for light, life, grace, Spirit, word
Oil of grace	Life of God given for a lampstand
Olive trees	Sons of oil, source of oil, Melchizedek order, four administrations, law and prophets
Overseer	KJV - Bishop, one who is in oversight in the church
Passover	14 th day of the 1 st month, Christ the Lamb offered
Pastor	Five-fold ministry shepherd
Paul	Ascension-gift apostle, light to the Gentiles, master builder
Peace offering	Hebrew harvest offering for increase and multiplication, three levels - freewill, thanksgiving and vow
Pipes	Connection between lamp and bowl
Potter	Maker of a vessel, God to us

Glossary

Pouring out	Drink offering upon the sacrifice and priesthood of faith, seven vials / bowls of wrath, Holy Spirit at Pentecost (See Drink offering)
Predestination	From the Father, identity, work, each man's calling, determined before time, in the council of Elohim, in the Lamb's book of life
Present truth	Specific word of a messenger to a lampstand church, lamp in a dark place
Priesthood	Authority to make offering and enter the presence of God
Prophet	Steward of the mystery, secondly after apostle
Redemption	Purchase of a slave
Repentance	Turning
Restoration	Recovering individuals, families, churches to God's purpose
Resurrection	Life out of death
Riches of His glory	Full inheritance of sonship
Righteousness	Priesthood - white robes, kingship - waging war, work and fruit of sonship
Roman model	Lampstand church in Rome
Sacrifice	The presentation of an offering at the altar, shedding blood, living sacrifice - to prove the will of God
Saints	Those being sanctified

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Salvation	Process of coming to eternal life and immortality
Sanctification	Process of finding full sonship
Sanctuary	Gk Naos, the holy place /temple, altar of incense, lampstand, table of shewbread (See Holy Place, Temple)
Satan	Adversary, opposer
Scripture	Written word of God
Seal	Identification of kingship and priesthood upon bondslaves, closure/prohibition upon vision and prophecy, seven-sealed book, Holy Spirit
Second coming	Return of Jesus to those waiting
Second vessel	Vessel remade by the Potter
Seven spirits	Life of God coming in Spirit
Seven stars	Overseers in the hand of the five-fold ministry
Seven times sprinkling	Blood upon the mercy seat, in the sanctuary, upon the altar
Seven-five	(See Five-seven), seven stars in the right hand of five ministries
Sheep	Metaphor of God's people
Sheepfold	Safe place in the fellowship of Christ
Shepherd	Carer of people
Shepherding overseer	Carer of people with wisdom to see
Sin	Violation of God's law - identity
Sin offering	Sacrifice for sin

Glossary

Slave	One who has humbled to do the will of another
Sonship	From the Father, life of Christ given to many sons by new birth
Sprinkling	Blood from seven wounds of Jesus upon the mercy seat
Stewardship	Province of accountable deacons
Submission	Offering obedience
Suffering	Enduring pain and affliction with Christ
Tabernacle	Context for priesthood and offering
Teacher	Five-fold ministry, deaconing the word
Temple	Built by Solomon, restored by Zerubbabel, dwelling place of God, temple of Christ's body, temple in heavenly places
Temptation	Lure of sin leading to violation
Testimony	Account of the life within us
Throne of grace	Mercy seat, finding mercy and help
Transgression	Causes abomination, violation of priesthood, corruption of offering, treachery against covenant, trampling of the courts
Trespass	Heb Trumah; a sideways slip, a sin done in ignorance, trespass offering
Trial of faith	Season of time for proving faith
Tribulation	Affliction, crushing of the olive
Unfathomable riches	The mercy of God upon all who believe and obey

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Unleavened	Nothing contaminated
Unrighteousness	No justification of life before God
Vengeance	The exercise of God's wrath
Vessel	Son of God containing mercy, son of disobedience containing wrath
Vessel for dishonour	Son of disobedience
Vessel for honour	Fit for the Master's use
Vessel of mercy	Object of mercy - receiving the mercy of the Father
Vessel of wrath	Object of wrath - receiving wrath in their person
Vicarious death	Christ dying in our place
Vine	Metaphor of relationship in Christ
Voluntary	According to my will
Walking administration	Five-fold ministry and overseers in a lampstand church
Walking overseer	One walking – eyes of wisdom upon sons of God
Washing of water	Effect of the word upon us
Weak conscience	Unable to appraise in the Holy Spirit
Wisdom	Application to understanding, coming from above
Works	Appointed labour, predetermined for a son of God, written in the Lamb's book of life
Worthy house	Son of peace – receiving a messenger
Wrath	Judgement of God
Yahweh	Three Persons in One, The Lord our God is One

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